

Our Strategic Framework: 2015-2017

The McKnight Foundation is a 4th-generation family foundation. We channel support through multiple program areas that reflect the Foundation's diverse interests. McKnight's board and staff are guided by our mission and values, developing and adjusting strategies based on a process of ongoing learning, reflection, and adaptive action.

In 2011, McKnight's board and staff developed a Strategic Framework for 2012-2014. After consideration of organizational performance and relevant external trends, McKnight's board adopted an updated Strategic Framework for 2015-2017. Our overarching goal is to optimize the use of all Foundation resources to contribute to building and strengthening socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable communities.

Our decisions today must serve the well-being of future generations. At home in Minnesota and around the world, quality relationships and deep understanding of place inform our strategies and ongoing learning.

In addition to our core grantmaking, McKnight's approach encompasses research, pursuit of policy reform, impact investing, strategic communications, and collaboration across issues and sectors. We pursue ambitious goals, drawing upon abundant resources of creativity, research and data, existing and emergent knowledge, and collaboration with diverse grantees, partners, and multiple program stakeholders.

While details vary across program strategies and structures, this Strategic Framework reflects the Foundation's philanthropic approach, describing the roles we play and the ways we work.

McKnight Foundation

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Our Core Beliefs

Balancing focused goals with an ever-changing landscape, we rely on McKnight's mission and values to inform the daily decisions and actions of our board and staff.

Our Mission

The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. We use all our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve.

Our Values

Accountability — We use the Foundation's resources in a transparent manner for public benefit. We assume responsibility for high-quality decisionmaking based upon analysis, wisdom, experience, and judgment.

Innovation — We collaborate with others to test and develop new ideas and pathways to address complex problems.

Integrity — We strive to do the right thing. We are honest and forthright, and people can trust what we say.

Respect — We listen to diverse perspectives. We approach relationships with humility, openness, and honesty. We engage constructively with partners, colleagues, and the communities we serve.



Program Goals

Arts — Support working artists to create vibrant communities. Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive.

Education — Prepare Minnesota students to succeed in an increasingly global society by investing in educators, engaging families, and supporting youth.

Impact Investing — Invest our endowment in ways that advance financial, program, and learning returns. We act as an owner of assets, a consumer of financial products, a shareholder, and a market participant to advance sustainability and select program goals.

International — Collaborative Crop Research: Improve access to local, sustainable, nutritious food using collaborative research and knowledge-sharing with smallholder farmers, research institutions, and development organizations.

Southeast Asia: Support balanced approaches to community resource rights and natural resource management.

McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience — Bring science closer to the day when diseases of the brain and behavior can be accurately diagnosed, prevented, and treated.

Midwest Climate & Energy — Foster and support climate and energy leadership in the Midwest, making the region a model for the world by reducing energy-related greenhouse emissions.

Minnesota Initiative Foundations — Support six independent regional foundations to make Greater Minnesota stronger and more prosperous.

Mississippi River — Restore the water quality and resilience of the Mississippi River.

Region & Communities — Create livable communities and expand opportunities for all to thrive by increasing efficient and sustainable regional metropolitan development.

Our Commitment

As we respond to external trends while staying true to our mission and values, McKnight's board and staff commit to:

- ❖ Nurture deep relationships with the people closest to the issues we address, reflecting founder William L. McKnight's belief in entrusting and empowering others to foster initiative and innovation. In his own words, "If you put fences around people, you get sheep."
- ❖ Understand the context in which we operate. We regularly analyze key trends tied to cultural, economic, environmental, political, racial, scientific, and technological shifts and disparities. We adapt our strategies as needed to support equitable and sustainable solutions in a changing world.
- ❖ Employ adaptive action to enhance our effectiveness as we work within complex and interconnected issues and systems. First we look for patterns. Then we dive deeper to explore the implications and options for moving forward. Finally, we take adaptive action based on what we've learned.
- ❖ Leverage our staff's inquisitive nature, knowledge in specific subject areas, and ease in navigating across programs, disciplines, and sectors in collaborative efforts.
- ❖ Use our credible influence to engage with a broad range of stakeholders in and across issues and sectors to advance alignment for shared outcomes. We employ integrative approaches linking people, place, and possibility.
- ❖ Ensure place-based perspectives are present in national and global philanthropic collaborations that focus on policy and systems change. We seek to infuse fresh perspectives, knowledge, and resources into all the places where we work.
- ❖ Use a robust toolkit that includes grantmaking, collaboration, policy reform, research, communications, and investments to discover, spur, and support approaches for tangible benefits and more resilient systems.
- ❖ Work collaboratively across communities and sectors to eliminate deep and persistent cultural, economic, and racial barriers to shared well-being. The civic and economic vitality of our home state of Minnesota depends on inclusive and equitable opportunities for everyone.