

## Throughout history, every generation has faced times that required an abundance of imagination and fortitude. We live in such a time.

Public trust in institutions across sectors has plummeted, the nature of truth has come into question, and the pressures on our social and natural systems have increased dramatically. Racial disparities, born of the institutional racism that is part of our nation's legacy, persist today. These disquieting facts call us to be brutally realistic *and* fiercely optimistic. Yes, optimistic, because history has also shown us the *power* of people and communities that share a resolve to make positive change happen.

This Strategic Framework grounds us in our mission, values, and approach to philanthropy, even as the dynamism of the world around us requires perpetual adaptability and strategic agility. We see this document as a source of guidance as we meet this moment with hope and courage.

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*We envision a world that recognizes the dignity of every human being,  
a world where we celebrate the creativity of the arts and sciences  
and come together to protect our one and only Earth.*

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The McKnight Foundation is a fourth-generation family foundation that was established by William L. McKnight and his wife, Maude L. McKnight, in 1953. As an early leader of 3M, Mr. McKnight earned a reputation for spurring innovation and recognizing the creative potential in others—practices that live on at the Foundation. Their daughter, Virginia McKnight Binger, then set the standard for the Foundation's work with her singular compassion and spirit of generosity.

Since the early years of the Foundation, the tectonic forces of technology, demography, politics, globalization, and ecological shifts have shaped our modern reality. While much has changed, McKnight's commitment to doing good endures.

Today, the McKnight Foundation works across many disciplines, sectors, and geographic boundaries. We support communities in our home state of Minnesota, known as *Mni Sota Makoce* to the Dakota, whom we acknowledge and respect as the first people of this land. Beyond Minnesota, our work spans several continents. Our diverse programs are united in a quest to improve our shared fate. We envision a world that recognizes the dignity of every human being, a world where we celebrate the creativity of the arts and sciences and come together to protect our one and only Earth.

In our multiple roles, and leveraging all our assets—this is our vision and steadfast commitment.

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## Our Mission

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The McKnight Foundation,  
a family foundation based in Minnesota,  
advances a more **just**,  
**creative**, and **abundant** future  
where people and planet thrive.

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# Our Values

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## **STEWARDSHIP**

Our deepest responsibility is to use all of our resources for mission impact.

We deploy the Foundation's resources in a transparent manner and seek to maximize our relevance, credibility, and effectiveness.



## **EQUITY**

We embed an equity approach across the Foundation because we see it as mission critical. We align our policies, practices, and resources so that people have genuine opportunities to thrive locally and globally.



## **RESPECT**

Authentic and mutually accountable relationships matter deeply to us.

We equip ourselves with the intercultural competency mindset and skills to help us bridge differences of all kinds.



## **CURIOSITY**

We value ongoing learning, and we look outward and reflect internally to discover opportunities for greater impact. It is only when we act with humility, ask big questions, and practice deep listening that we can open ourselves to new ideas and relationships.

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# Our Approach

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## OUR MULTIPLE ROLES AND RESOURCES

We act as a funder, convener, thought leader, and as an employer, economic entity, and institutional investor. We use *all* our resources and leverage all forms of capital, including social investment and philanthropic risk capital, to realize our mission. We leverage a robust toolkit that includes grantmaking, collaboration, policy reform, research, strategic communications, and investments.

## ADAPTIVE ACTION

In our complex, rapidly changing, and unpredictable world, we take an adaptive approach to move forward together with creativity and agility. To enhance our effectiveness, we observe what patterns emerge from our practices as well as from external changes and adjust our strategy accordingly. We learn from our actions, and we act on our learnings.

## STRATEGIC SYSTEMS ORIENTATION

We address the underlying drivers of systemic challenges, including institutional structures, policies, market failures, public attitudes, and cultural norms. We balance our sense of urgency for results with the stability and sustained commitment necessary to effect long-term systems change.

## PLACE-BASED

We bring a place-based perspective that values long-term commitment, comprehensive strategies, and deep relationships with community stakeholders. The health and vitality of our civil society depend on engaged, informed people fully participating in the decisions governing their lives.

## PRAGMATISM

To be effective, we choose pragmatism over dogmatism. We adopt a practical solutions orientation that thoughtfully calibrates risk to accelerate progress.

## INNOVATION

We collaborate with others to test and develop new ideas and pathways because systems innovation often emerges from many interrelated, iterative actions. We pursue ambitious long-term goals and look for innovation at the intersection of difference.

## CREDIBLE INFLUENCE

Credible influence, the ability to guide external trends in a direction that serves our mission and values, requires thoughtful stewardship. To exert credible influence, we align our policies and practices to more fully embody the values and vision we seek in the community. We foster a strong work culture built on expectations of high trust and high performance.

## INTERDEPENDENCE

Nature has taught us that every part is connected to a greater whole, and we see how essential it is to work with and across diverse sectors and interests to advance collaborative solutions that ensure a positive future.

## A FOCUS ON RACIAL EQUITY

Because of the data showing deep and persistent racial inequities in Minnesota, we begin with an explicit focus on race, which we see as intertwined with other forms of marginalization. Fairness may require different strategies depending on different contexts to reach universal goals.

## FACTS AND KNOWLEDGE

We value scientific evidence, support fact-based analysis, and examine independent data to help inform our strategies. We also value knowledge from different cultures and vantage points.