

## **McKnight Foundation Senior Program Officer, Midwest Climate & Energy**

### **About McKnight**

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 and are reflected in its [core values](#).

Driven by its mission to advance a more just, creative and abundant future where people and planet thrive, the McKnight Foundation works across many disciplines, sectors, and geographic boundaries. Its diverse programs are united in a quest to improve our shared fate. The Foundation envisions 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.

A philanthropic leader based in Minneapolis and granting more than \$90 million annual across the Midwest, the U.S. and internationally, McKnight prioritizes working in partnership with communities and approaching complex challenges with curiosity and a willingness to take bold steps to achieve significant impact. The Foundation brings a diverse set of tools and resources to meet its mission including grantmaking, investments, collaboration, policy reform, research and strategic communications.

Learn more about [The McKnight Foundation](#).

### **About the Midwest Climate and Energy Program**

In 2019, the McKnight Foundation Board of Directors approved a new mission statement, a new [Strategic Framework](#), and several shifts in programmatic investments. This included a significant expansion of its [Midwest Climate & Energy Program](#) which is on track to double from \$16 million in annual grants in 2020 to \$32 million by 2022 reflecting the urgency of the climate crisis and the high priority it has been given by the Board.

The new goal for the expanded Midwest Climate & Energy program is to take bold action on the climate crisis by dramatically cutting carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030. Achieving this ambitious goal, at the necessary speed and scale, also requires a [healthy democracy](#), grounded in racial and economic justice, one in which all people have the voice and power to bring about change to the issues affecting their lives and livelihoods. The Midwest Climate & Energy program will pursue this strategy in close partnership with the [Vibrant & Equitable Communities](#) program, supporting communities in building powerful multiracial movements for change.

The MC&E Program envisions a thriving, carbon-neutral Midwestern economy by transforming the energy system through clean power, electrifying transportation and buildings, sequestering carbon on working lands, and strengthening democratic participation. Anchored in McKnight's core values, the work engages approaches, policies and processes that empower community voice, mobilize collective action, and address racial equity within the context of climate solutions.

## **The Opportunity**

A new position, the Senior Program Office role offers an exciting opportunity for a seasoned leader with climate and energy expertise to bring thought leadership to the newly expanded program and help to shape and guide the trajectory of the Foundation's ambitious climate initiatives. The senior program officer will leverage philanthropic interventions to support and accelerate innovations and strategies to dramatically cut carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030.

Reporting to the Program Director of Midwest Climate and Energy, the senior program officer will oversee and build out significant grant portfolios and partnerships with intermediary funders and actively collaborate with McKnight's Impact Investing team and Vibrant & Equitable Communities program team.

## **Key Responsibilities**

### Strategic Implementation

- Play a lead role in the design and implementation of one or more decarbonization program strategy areas (i.e. transforming the energy system, electrifying transportation and buildings, and sequestering carbon in working lands in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest). This includes identifying gaps and opportunities in the field ripe for philanthropic engagement and executing a responsive grantmaking strategy to deploy resources.
- Responsible for managing a portfolio of grants that support transforming the energy system, electrifying transportation and buildings and sequestering carbon on working lands in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.
- Develop and maintain relationships with existing grantees and new prospects to learn from current work, explore emergent opportunities and build out new concepts.
- Actively engage with McKnight colleagues in Impact Investing and the Board's Mission Investment Committee to identify and analyze mission and program related investments that advance program goals.

### External Partnerships

- Manage key partnerships with funding intermediaries and oversee new and expanded investments in and through these partners.
- Convene and collaborate with advocacy organizations (including but not limited to those focused on climate justice, environmental protection, democratic participation, and clean energy), foundations, academic institutions, regulators, and policy makers to support cross-sector collaborations that reinforce program goals.
- Serve as a representative of the Foundation in communities of learning and practice, helping to shape the field's response to and support of carbon reduction.

### Thought Leadership and Advocacy

- Represent the Foundation and the MC&E Program to external audiences and provide leadership in our efforts to achieve economy-wide greenhouse gas emission reductions while advancing a commitment to racial equity.
- Serve as a resource on technical and policy issues relating to energy transformation. Track market and political trends to identify high-leverage opportunities for philanthropic intervention.
- Stand as a trusted voice on the interdependence of climate and racial and economic justice.

## **Ideal Candidate**

The McKnight Foundation seeks individuals who demonstrate an unwavering passion for and commitment to solving the climate crisis and addressing racial equity within the context of climate solutions. The senior program officer possesses a combination of analytical skills and an ability to influence change in highly nuanced contexts. A deeply curious and credible thought leader in climate and energy who brings a sophisticated understanding of the technical, political and economic pathways to decarbonization in the industrialized economies of the Upper Midwest is sought for this role.

The senior program officer leads with a strategic mindset and brings a proven ability to identify and translate strategic opportunities into tangible action and outcomes. Strong listening and synthesizing skills are essential, along with the ability and desire to capture, distill, and share what is important, why it matters, and how it relates to overall strategy. The successful candidate organizes, prioritizes, and toggles from strategy development to daily execution with ease, consistently achieving results.

A capacity to navigate the complexity of diverse environments and stakeholder groups, seeking to understand and driving towards common goals from, at times, competing perspectives is essential in this role. A high level of emotional intelligence and the ability to be versatile and diplomatic are key. Leading with a sense of humility and intellectual curiosity, the successful candidate displays a genuine desire to listen to and learn from others. They will operate from a place of respect for the organization's grantees and help to create an environment of continuous learning with partner organizations and sector experts.

The senior program officer is a naturally inquisitive, lifelong learner who is comfortable reaching beyond current areas of expertise and has the intellectual agility to become knowledgeable across the scientific, technical, policy and racial justice aspects of the Foundation's climate work, quickly seeing connections, opportunities, and intersections. The ideal candidate's innate interest in this work fuels a proactive and forward-looking approach, following trends, anticipating changes, and potential impacts to the Foundation.

With exceptional oral and written communication skills, the senior program officer mounts persuasive arguments, and effectively presents new and complex ideas to audiences of varying backgrounds, from community member to elected officials. With strong interpersonal skills and an approachable style, the senior program officer is a team player, empathetic listener and natural collaborator who builds strong relationships inside and outside the Foundation.

The successful candidate is a confident and mature professional who naturally exhibits sound judgment and a high degree of discretion and tact. They are humble with the self-awareness and comfort to set ego and personal ambition aside and focus on the mission and team. The ability to organize, prioritize, and meet deadlines in a fast-paced environment with multiple and competing demands is essential. Candidates should demonstrate a tolerance for ambiguity, with the ability to work independently yet seek input as needed.

An upbeat bridge-builder, the senior program officer fosters a positive, professional atmosphere and connects across issues and functions, actively developing trusting relationships up, down, and across an organization. Cultural sensitivity and cultural competence are essential to success. The ideal candidate is personally devoted to growing their own cultural competence and will actively participate in the Foundation's work to integrate justice and equity into all facets of its work.

## **Qualifications**

Candidates must have a minimum of 10 years of experience in climate and energy issues on a local, regional or national level; previous philanthropy experience an asset. Direct experience working on carbon reduction generally or specifically within the areas in which the McKnight Foundation is placing big bets (Transform the Energy System, Electrify Transportation and Buildings, Carbon Sequestration on working lands in the Midwest) is required. A track record of thought leadership in the field as demonstrated through publications and presentations is of interest. A Bachelor's or Master's degree in a related field is desirable as are certifications in the fields of Climate and Energy.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are core values at McKnight and integral to how staff and board approach their work. Fundamental to the MC&E program goal is a belief that structural racism is a barrier to carbon reduction. It is critical that the senior program officer bring lived experience or a demonstrated commitment to addressing climate and energy through a racial equity lens.

Much of McKnight's climate and energy work is placed based with a focus on Minnesota and the six states that comprise the Upper Midwest. Preference will be given to candidates with knowledge of or personal ties to the region and its people. The position is based in Minneapolis, MN; while the team is working remotely during COVID, employees will return to the office when it is deemed safe.

The salary range for the program officer positions is: \$134,400 - \$146,300

## **To Be Considered**

The McKnight Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and proudly values diversity. We encourage candidates of all backgrounds to apply.

Please submit your resume and cover letter expressing your interest in the position and fit for the role via GoodCitizen's Candidate Portal. Letters may be addressed to Sarah Meyer.

The search for the next Senior Program Officer is being assisted by a team from GoodCitizen:

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