

# GoodCitizen

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**McKnight Foundation  
Midwest Climate & Energy  
Program Officer  
Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota**

## **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.

McKnight is a philanthropic leader based in Minneapolis and grants more than \$90 million annually across the Midwest, the U.S. and internationally. They prioritize 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 [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 has doubled its giving to \$32 million over the past two years, reflecting the urgency of the climate crisis and the high priority it has been given by the Board. The Climate program is poised as a regional and national leader with an opportunity to demonstrate how to accelerate a just economic transition that results in meeting decarbonization and equity goals.

The goal of the Midwest Climate & Energy (MC&E) 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 is pursuing 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.

McKnight's Midwest Climate and Energy program also engages in innovative mission-aligned efforts beyond traditional grantmaking, from how they invest their endowment to their efforts to reimagine and rebuild a more equitable and sustainable Twin Cities.

- To better align their investments with their mission, in October of 2021 McKnight announced that they would achieve [net zero greenhouse gas emissions](#) across their \$3 billion endowment by 2050 at the latest.
- Through the recently launched [GroundBreak Coalition](#), McKnight sees a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to define a new paradigm for community development finance that finally addresses systemic racism, rights historical wrongs, closes racial gaps in income and wealth, and boldly meets the climate moment.

## **The Opportunity**

The McKnight Foundation seeks a Program Officer to advance the work that will bring MC&E's ambitious goals to fruition. The new Program Officer will help shape and guide the trajectory of the Foundation's climate initiatives. The Program Officer role presents an exciting opportunity for thought leadership around philanthropic interventions, informed by a deep commitment to racial equity, 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 & Energy, the Program Officer will oversee and build significant grant portfolios and partnerships with intermediary funders and actively collaborate with McKnight's Impact Investing team and Vibrant & Equitable Communities program team. The MC&E program, grounded in racial and economic justice, uses its philanthropic funding to support efforts that build power through partnership to achieve systems change at scale to advance bold and equitable action on the climate crisis.

## **Key Responsibilities**

### **Strategic Program Implementation**

- Manage 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 emerging opportunities, and build new concepts.
- Measure and track progress of grantee portfolio while incorporating learning into program activities.
- 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.

- Deepen and maintain strong mutually beneficial partnerships with grantees and community members.
- 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 policymakers 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 their 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**

McKnight seeks an individual who demonstrates an unwavering passion for and commitment to solving the climate crisis and addressing racial equity within the context of climate solutions. They are a deeply curious and credible systems-thinking climate expert who brings either technical and policy knowledge of decarbonization or experience in movement-building across climate solutions to the role. Direct experience in energy systems, electrifying transportation and buildings, and sequestering carbon on working lands is desired.

The Program Officer leads with a strategic mindset and demonstrates a proven ability to identify and translate strategic vision into tangible action and outcomes. Strong listening and synthesizing skills are essential; along with the ability to organize, prioritize, and meet deadlines in fast-paced environments with multiple and competing demands. The preferred candidate should have a tolerance for and thrive in ambiguity.

The Program Officer is comfortable reaching beyond their current areas of expertise to become knowledgeable across all aspects of McKnight's work with the ability to quickly see connections, opportunities, and intersections. They possess strong analytical skills and an ability to influence change in highly nuanced contexts while taking a proactive and forward-looking approach.

Humble and self-aware, the ideal candidate possesses a high level of emotional intelligence and the ability to be versatile and diplomatic. They operate from a place of respect for the organization's grantees and help create an environment of continuous learning with partner organizations and sector experts.

The Program Officer actively participates in the Foundation's work to integrate justice and equity into all facets of its programming. They are an empathetic listener and natural collaborator with a personal commitment to expanding their own cultural competency.

## Qualifications

Candidates must have a minimum of 5 years of experience in climate, climate justice, and energy issues on a local or national level; previous philanthropy experience is not required although desirable.

Candidates who have engaged in direct work on carbon reduction generally or specifically within the areas in which McKnight is placing big bets (Transform the Energy System, Electrify Transportation and Buildings, Carbon Sequestration on working lands in the Midwest) are of great interest as are candidates who have developed their expertise at the intersection of climate and equity whether in movement building, running campaigns, grassroots organizing or related activities.

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 Program Officer candidates bring lived experience or a demonstrated commitment to climate justice 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; relocation support will be provided. The position is based in Minneapolis, MN and the Foundation is currently using a hybrid model (3 days in office and 2 days work from home). Remote work is not an option.

The salary range for the Program Officer positions is: \$117,000 - \$123,500.

### 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 Jailan Adly.

The following team from GoodCitizen is assisting the McKnight Foundation in their search:

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