

## MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

### Senior Program Officer, Midwest Climate & Energy Minneapolis, Minnesota

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The McKnight Foundation (McKnight, Foundation) is seeking nominations and applications for the position of Senior Program Officer within the Midwest Climate & Energy (MC&E) program. The MC&E program is building incredible momentum in advancing bold climate solutions across the region and beyond. This includes new and expanded leadership (including the Program Director, a new Director of Strategic Climate Initiatives role, and a leaderful team), exciting grantmaking portfolios, partnerships that will move the needle on climate in the years ahead, and an increased institutional commitment to achieving the highest expression of McKnight's mission at the intersection of climate action and racial equity. The team is committed to innovative, systems change approaches to grantmaking that leverage partnerships and values-based practices in order to support bold action and measurable impact in the climate crisis.

The new Senior Program officer will both oversee a grantmaking portfolio in clean energy and building decarbonization with place-based focus in Michigan and Minnesota and will support strategic partnerships and aligned impact goals across the climate team. The ideal candidate will be a seasoned strategist and field leader with relevant networks and experience who thrives in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment. They will bring leadership and technical expertise in clean energy and building decarbonization at both local and systems levels. They will demonstrate successful and collaborative approaches to working across sectors and with multiple stakeholders internally and externally and will bring humility and curiosity to the work. The successful candidate will share McKnight's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and will demonstrate effective approaches for centering and improving conditions for communities disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis.

#### ABOUT MCKNIGHT

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The [McKnight Foundation](#), a Minnesota-based family foundation, advances a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive. Established in 1953, the McKnight Foundation is deeply committed to advancing climate solutions in the Midwest; building an equitable and inclusive Minnesota; and supporting the arts and culture in Minnesota, neuroscience, and global food systems.

The Midwest Climate and Energy (MC&E) program aims to take bold and urgent action on the climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the region and advancing an equitable clean energy transition. Using a systems change lens, the program focuses on four key sectoral pathways: transforming the energy system, decarbonizing buildings, decarbonizing transportation, and supporting working lands. The Climate program also supports a cross-programmatic strategy focused on strengthening democratic participation and civic engagement. Following the passage of historic policies at the state and federal levels in recent years, the MC&E program is focused on ensuring equitable implementation and building effective climate solutions throughout the Midwest to benefit all communities.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

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The **Senior Program Officer** will both lead a portfolio of work dedicated to clean energy and building decarbonization and support strategy and coalition efforts across the broader Midwest Climate & Energy portfolio. Reporting to the Program Director, and in collaboration with Program Officers, the Senior Program Officer will drive the development and implementation of grantmaking strategy, manage a portfolio of grants, collaborate and build relationships with key internal and external stakeholders, and contribute to program evaluation and learning cycles. As a thought leader with relevant networks and professional experiences to support the energy and buildings portfolios and broader philanthropic strategy, the Senior Program officer will also represent McKnight at various meetings and events and will demonstrate effective approaches for centering and improving conditions for communities disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis.

The Senior Program Officer will be responsible for providing leadership and driving success in the following key areas:

### **Field Engagement and Leadership**

- Work collaboratively with grantees, peer funders, partners, policymakers, and relevant networks for high-level partnerships to advance the field toward more significant impact and contribute to thought leadership.
- Identify strategic priorities, gaps, emerging opportunities, and opportunities to advance changemaking through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Participate in and lead networks, affinity groups, community meetings and convenings, and other external efforts to learn about relevant issues and trends to advance the Foundation's strategies and represent the Foundation and its work particularly in new venues and to new audiences.
- Mentor and develop Program Officers in core area(s) of expertise, related to both content and philanthropic capacities.

### **Program Management and Execution**

- Lead the development, planning, and implementation of the Transform the Energy System and Decarbonize Buildings strategies to advance strategic priorities and ensure grantmaking principles and program practices align with Foundation values and operating principles.
- Develop learning and evaluation strategies and apply grantmaking knowledge and best practices to guide the evolution of the Transform the Energy System and Decarbonize Buildings strategies, including looking for lessons, opportunities, and innovations in the field to broaden scale and deepen impact of grantmaking investments.
- Collaborate in the review of grant requests, funding recommendations, and reports for team and board approval.
- Partner with Program and Grants Associates in the grants administrative process by composing and processing grant-related documents, including financial review and due diligence, and correspondence in a timely fashion.
- Work closely with members of the investments, operations, and communications teams on cross-functional projects such as budgeting and data sharing, storytelling, and thought leadership.
- Identify and guide potential grantees through the Foundation's proposal process, including its compliance-related procedures and financial controls.

- Contribute to the development and connection of strategy across portfolios and programs to more broadly influence Foundation strategy.

### **Strategic Leadership**

- Lead and support changemaking through a systems change lens, convenings, collaboration, and networking, including identifying collective learning opportunities, joint campaigns and initiatives, coalition building, and networking across different program teams.
- Stay informed and current on relevant field and philanthropic trends, strategies, and activities at the local, regional, national levels.
- In collaboration with the Program Director, ensure the Program team is operating effectively with clear and consistent communications; meetings that are well-prepped and facilitated; and supporting strategic decision making as designated by the Program Director.
- Identify opportunities for innovation in philanthropic practices and grantmaking by exploring new approaches, equity-centered grantmaking processes, non-traditional supports, and other continuous innovations to enhance existing strategies and strengthen external networks.
- In partnership with the Program Director, serve as the principal point of contact related to engagement with Foundation institutional leadership.

### **Shared Organizational Responsibilities**

- Champion the Foundation’s systems level of changemaking and commitments to supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and demonstrate effective approaches for centering and improving conditions for communities disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis.
- Develop relationships with and support colleagues across all teams, recognizing that each individual brings a unique background and perspective to the work, and by participating in cross-functional work groups as appropriate.
- Attend and actively participate in integrated Program team and staff meetings and retreats.

## **QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

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While no one candidate will embody all the qualifications enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

### **Education and Experience**

- Bachelor’s degree required.
- Minimum of 7 years of senior-level, full-time professional experience relevant to program area and/or an equivalent combination of training and experience demonstrating the ability to perform the position’s essential functions.
- Experience working with a board of directors preferred.

### **Strategic Vision and Core Knowledge**

- Broad knowledge of the climate philanthropy field and an understanding of the historical context, institutions, and systems that combine to compound the effects of climate change.
- Ability to apply both a macro and state-level view on relevant trends in the climate change field, with a strong curiosity and interest in tracking the needs and developing areas of the field.

- A proven thought leader with an understanding of and ability to apply changemaking philanthropic knowledge and best practices.
- Demonstrated passion for and investment in advancing justice and equity at a systems level of change.
- Strong and diverse networks of relevant nonprofit organizations, peer funders, policymakers, governmental organizations, research institutions or universities, and community leaders.

#### **Program Leadership**

- Demonstrated leadership experience in strategy and programming in related fields and/or within philanthropy.
- A successful track record in managing complex plans, projects, budgets, and deadlines that require coordination across multiple stakeholders and with minimal support.
- Experience building relationships and working in partnership with diverse audiences.
- Superb communication and external relations skills and demonstrated success in building an organization's profile and reputation in regional, state, national, and professional communities.
- Proven ability to navigate complexity, shifting priorities, and multi-dimensional issues to effectively solve problems and invite intellectual energy and creativity.
- Demonstrated understanding of how financial information can be used to determine the health of an organization.

#### **Foundation-wide Competencies**

- Collaborates
- Communicates Effectively
- Manages Complexity
- Builds Networks
- Being Resilient
- Drives Results
- Strategic Mindset
- Instills Trust

#### **Working Conditions and Physical Effort**

- Work is normally performed in a hybrid office work environment (typically three days in-office per week) with very little physical effort required.
- There are frequent off-site meetings and events that will require travel.
- Regular operation of normal office machines (computer, copier, and fax) is required.
- Lift objects up to 15 lbs., such as file boxes and other office equipment.
- Other duties as assigned.

*The above statements are not intended to encompass all functions and qualifications of the position, rather, they are intended to provide a general framework of the requirements of the position. Job incumbents may be required to perform other functions not specifically addressed in this description.*

## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

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**This opportunity is a full-time, exempt position based in Minneapolis. The hiring salary is \$156,560.** Compensation includes generous time off and participation in the Foundation's comprehensive and robust benefits plan, which includes an annual Tuition Assistance and Professional Development plan and employee spending account programs.

## TO APPLY

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More information about **The McKnight Foundation** may be found at: [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org).

This search is being conducted with assistance from [Katherine Jacobs](#), [Sharon Gerstman](#), and [Ashley Jones](#) of [NPAG](#). Due to the pace of this search, candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible **with a priority deadline of November 1, 2024**. Download the full position profile [here](#). Please apply at [mcknight.org/careers](http://mcknight.org/careers). For more information, please email [ashley@npag.com](mailto:ashley@npag.com). All communications will remain confidential.

**The McKnight Foundation is an equal-opportunity employer and proudly values diversity. Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply. As an employer, McKnight has the opportunity and responsibility to embed equity across its policies and practices-in how teams are hired, trained, developed, and supported, and in how the organization crafts its culture.**

**President Tonya Allen heads a majority women, majority people-of-color senior leadership team. In addition, McKnight has increased diversity at every level and in every department across the Foundation. This didn't happen by chance. It required actively recruiting candidates from a variety of backgrounds and valuing their skills and lived experiences in addition to specific academic degrees or other formal credentials. McKnight's team has a wealth of diversity in perspectives, backgrounds, and lived experiences to advance the Foundation's mission.**