POSITION PROFILE

On behalf of our client, the McKnight Foundation,

CohenTaylor Executive Search Services
is conducting a retained executive search for its

VIBRANT & EQUITABLE
COMMUNITIES
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

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

VISION
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.

VALUES
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.

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.

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.

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.

For more information about the McKnight Foundation’s work, impact, and values, please visit www.mcknight.org.

The McKnight Foundation, an internationally recognized family foundation based in Minnesota, advances a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive. Established in 1953 by William and Maude McKnight, this fourth-generation family foundation is deeply committed to advancing climate solutions in the Midwest; building an equitable and inclusive Minnesota; and supporting the arts in Minnesota, neuroscience, and international crop research. The Foundation had approximately $2.4 billion in assets at the end of 2019 and on average grants about $90 million a year.

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. The current governing board includes actively engaged fourth-generation members of the McKnight family, with soon-to-be fifth-generation involvement, as well as community members who bring diverse perspectives.

Today, the McKnight Foundation works across many disciplines, sectors, and geographic boundaries. McKnight’s work supports communities in its home state of Minnesota and beyond, spanning several continents. 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.

In 2019, the Board of Directors approved a new mission statement, a new Strategic Framework, and several shifts in programmatic investments. This included the sunsetting of a few programs, the expansion of its Midwest Climate & Energy program, and the creation of a new program dedicated to advancing an equitable and inclusive Minnesota.

McKnight is a valued philanthropist and community leader in Minnesota, the broader Midwest, nationally, and internationally. Leveraging the organization’s track record, its ability to work in partnerships, and its willingness to experiment and explore, the Foundation sees many new impact and leadership opportunities ahead. Recognized for its pragmatism, McKnight aspires to make progress on several complex, ambitious challenges facing us today, in the coming decade, and beyond.
PROGRAMS

McKnight advances climate solutions in the Midwest; advances an equitable and inclusive Minnesota; and supports the arts, international crop research, and neuroscience. To realize a future where people and planet thrive, McKnight is increasing its investments in two areas: advancing climate solutions and a more equitable and inclusive Minnesota.

VIBRANT & EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

Equity is one of the four core values in the McKnight Foundation’s Strategic Framework. It is a value that McKnight challenges itself to uphold in its internal policies and practices, and it is a value that guides McKnight as it imagines the change it wants to see in our broader society. This deeply held value will now anchor the development of a new program focused on advancing a more equitable and inclusive Minnesota. The goal: **Build a vibrant future for all Minnesotans with shared power, prosperity, and participation.**

To advance this vibrant future, this new program will honor and build upon what McKnight has learned from the work it has supported in the community over many years, while making space for new ideas. When those who have historically been excluded do well, every Minnesotan benefits. Business, community, and government leaders know firsthand, and research shows, that achieving equity enhances the state’s civic, cultural, and economic vitality. It strengthens the workforce, ensures that local firms can compete in the global economy, and enhances the quality of life for all communities.

The Vibrant & Equitable Communities program focuses on advancing economic mobility, equitable development, and civic engagement:

- **Economic mobility.** As Minnesota’s workforce ages and younger generations become increasingly diverse, McKnight seeks to foster greater racial and economic inclusion. In focusing on economic mobility, we aim to ensure that low-wealth communities, Indigenous people, and communities of color participate and share in our state’s social, cultural, and economic assets, while also strengthening Minnesota’s economic competitiveness.

- **Equitable development.** For much of Minnesota’s history, policies and practices have led to inequities by disinvesting in low-wealth communities, Indigenous people, and communities of color. This work applies racial and economic equity lenses to community development strategies. “Equitable development is a positive development strategy that works to ensure accountable, inclusive, and catalytic investments are made in low wealth communities and communities of color, while also ensuring that these communities are a part of directing and benefiting from these new investments,” according to PolicyLink.

- **Civic engagement.** As communities across Minnesota continue to change, residents are seeking ways to connect with one another, build bridges across lines of difference, solve problems, and create opportunities to address inequality and foster prosperity. While Minnesota has many initiatives that address racial and economic inequality, these efforts have typically taken place in isolation. To make real progress, we need multigenerational, multiracial, multi-sector, and multi-issue civic leaders who can coordinate efforts to build shared power, prosperity, and participation across Minnesota.

To learn more, visit: [https://www.mcknight.org/vibrant-and-equitable-communities/](https://www.mcknight.org/vibrant-and-equitable-communities/)
MIDWEST CLIMATE & ENERGY

The Midwest Climate & Energy program envisions a thriving, carbon-neutral Midwestern economy by transforming the energy system—through clean power, electrification of transportations and buildings, and carbon sequestration. Its work engages the region’s public and private leaders, decisionmakers, and residents in building low-carbon communities and economies that are vibrant, equitable, and resilient. In September 2019, McKnight announced an expansion of this program and a new goal to take bold action on the climate crisis by dramatically cutting carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030.

ARTS

The McKnight Arts program believes that Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive. As creators, innovators, and leaders, Minnesota’s working artists are the primary drivers of the state’s heralded arts and culture community. The McKnight Foundation invests in the arts and other sectors to support Minnesota’s working artists and advocate for the value of their work, which nurtures cultural identities, imagines solutions, and catalyzes social change.

INTERNATIONAL

The Collaborative Crop Research Program works on two continents to improve access to local, sustainable, nutritious food using collaborative research, adaptive learning, and knowledge-sharing with smallholder farmers, research institutions, government, and development organizations.

NEUROSCIENCE

The McKnight Endowment Fund for Neuroscience is an independent charitable organization established by the McKnight Foundation that works to bring science closer to the day when diseases of the brain and behavior can be accurately diagnosed, prevented, and treated.
THE ROLE

The McKnight Foundation seeks an experienced leader to guide its new Vibrant & Equitable Communities program, focused on advancing a more equitable and inclusive Minnesota. The goal of the program, anchored in McKnight’s core value of equity, is to build a vibrant future for all Minnesotans with shared power, prosperity, and participation.

Under the leadership of the Vice President of Programs (VPP), the Vibrant & Equitable Communities Program Director will drive programmatic strategy, innovation, and fresh approaches to advance the goal of the new program and to inform how we do our work. In collaboration with the VPP, the Program Director will provide oversight and ensure alignment to the strategic framework resulting in positive systemic change in their area of focus. The Program Director will be joining at a critical moment in McKnight’s history as the Foundation advances its recently adopted Strategic Framework. This leader will steward strong, integrated programming in support of a vibrant and equitable Minnesota. The Program Director will be a strategic thinker and proven program developer, leading the new programming area statewide in Minnesota, while demonstrating skills in navigating strategic tensions creating durable bridges across sectors, geographies, and stakeholders, and approaching problems from different vantage points, all in service of the program’s goals. This role will lead and work closely with a group of program officers responsible for developing strategic programming in economic mobility, equitable development, and civic engagement.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Vibrant & Equitable Communities Program Director will report to the Vice President of Programs and have direct oversight of four staff members:

- Program Officer/Director of Program Implementation
- Three Program Officers

In addition, this role will collaborate with staff members in other amplifying functions day-to-day, including other Program Teams, Impact Investing, Grants & Information Management, Learning, and Communications.

KEY INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to reporting to the VPP, the Vibrant & Equitable Communities Program Director will relate to the following:

- Directors leading Foundation program areas, grantmaking, and learning functions that together advance foundation-wide priorities related to program operations, management and integrated strategy.
- Senior Leadership Team advising on external trends and reputational matters related to advancing program goals and the Foundation’s mission.
- Board of Directors in elevating strategy, learning, and outcomes related to advancing the program goal.
KEY RESPONSIBILITIES
The Vibrant & Equitable Communities Program Director is responsible for the following:

STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP
• Effectively collaborate with peer directors and leadership across the Foundation to integrate processes, facilitate change, ensure alignment, and achieve organizational goals.
• Actively facilitate internal dialogue with peers, staff members, and leadership to address the Foundation’s evolving strategy, structural, and systems changes.

TEAM & CULTURE
• Build, strengthen, develop, and support a high-performing team, including skillfully holding tensions.
• Effectively manage technical and financial resources.
• Build and maintain robust relationships with director cohort and senior leadership across the Foundation; a proven collaborator.
• Advance the Foundation’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and foster a culture aligned with the organizational values of curiosity, respect, equity, and stewardship.
• Demonstrate cultural competency and emotional intelligence and communicate with candor and openness when addressing sensitive issues such as mental models/assumptions, power dynamics, historical contexts, and racial inequities.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP
• Continue the development of a new program area and lead the grantmaking strategy in Minnesota.
• Play an active, facilitative role in strategy and systems change dialogues, including effectively addressing sensitive issues such as mental models/assumptions, power dynamics, historical contexts, and racial inequities.
• Maintain accurate and current knowledge about policies, trends, systems, issues, movements, and other relevant data to Minnesota’s social, economic, cultural, and political landscape.
• Identify key leverage points for Foundation investment and recommend and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
• Identify and engage Foundation partners for change efforts, ensuring commitment and readiness to persevere through the change process.
• Develop and maintain strategic external relationships in Minnesota to leverage participation of other foundations, businesses, governmental agencies, and key decision makers and stakeholders in alignment with McKnight Foundation’s core values and program interests.
THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The McKnight Foundation is seeking a proven, confident leader with a passion and vision for building a vibrant future for all Minnesotans with shared power, prosperity, and participation. The ideal candidate will be energized by leading in a dynamic, changing environment, adept at leading teams through change, and willing to dig in and “roll up their sleeves” when necessary. This strategic thinker will have proven program development experience and the ability to lead the development of new programming throughout Minnesota.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Experience shaping strategy in partnership with senior leadership and program officers with the ability to translate strategy into priorities and goals.
- Ability to take a broad view when approaching issues, including using a global lens.
- A thorough understanding of how to leverage best practices in collaboration to achieve program alignment across an organization.
- Capacity to develop and implement impactful programs and effectively communicate conceptual program frameworks to grantseekers, partners, stakeholders, and trustees.
- Comprehensive understanding of program design and development, systems, and networking.
- Ideally have demonstrated experience in innovative grantmaking practices, including and especially program learning and evaluation, strategic alignment, and grantee communication.
- The knowledge and sensitivity to effectively work with and support communities, including appreciation for historical context, discernment of relationship nuances and power dynamics, and understanding of social, racial, and ethnic realities.
- Demonstrated ability to create a climate in which people are motivated to do their best to help the organization achieve its objectives, including collaborating with stakeholders to inspire and manage a high-performing team.
- Ability to advance the Foundation’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and foster a culture of curiosity, innovation, excellence, and purpose.
- Exemplary public communication skills and experience participating in national and regional convenings as a panelist or keynote.
- Ability to take on new opportunities and tough challenges with a sense of urgency and enthusiasm and the ability to manage ambiguity and operate effectively, even when things are not certain or the way forward is not clear.
QUALIFICATIONS OF AN IDEAL CANDIDATE

- Bachelor’s degree and a minimum of 10 years related full-time professional work experience in a directly related field in a foundation, nonprofit, or government field with five or more years of managerial level experience or a combination of equivalent experience and training. Master’s degree is preferred.
- Minimum of eight years of experience in grantmaking or a related field with demonstrated expertise in strategy development and priority-setting.
- Foundation, public sector, or nonprofit experience preferred. Experience working with a board of directors, preferably a family board, is strongly desired.
- Proficiency with written and oral communications while understanding the benefits and risks with digital media.
- Proficiency with technology platforms and software.

For more information or to send your credentials, please email McKnight@cohentaylor.com

All inquiries will remain confidential.

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

Equal Opportunity Employer/Protected Veterans/Individuals with Disabilities

The contractor will not discharge or in any other manner discriminate against employees or applicants because they have inquired about, discussed, or disclosed their own pay or the pay of another employee or applicant. However, employees who have access to the compensation information of other employees or applicants as a part of their essential job functions cannot disclose the pay of other employees or applicants to individuals who do not otherwise have access to compensation information, unless the disclosure is (a) in response to a formal complaint or charge, (b) in furtherance of an investigation, proceeding, hearing, or action, including an investigation conducted by the employer, or (c) consistent with the contractor’s legal duty to furnish information.