



# SUSTAIN

Our overarching goal is to optimize the use of all Foundation resources to contribute to building and strengthening socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable communities.

Decisions made today must serve the well-being of future generations.

— McKnight Strategic Framework, 2015-2017

**INSIDE:**

2015 Grantmaking

Highlights

Program Snapshots

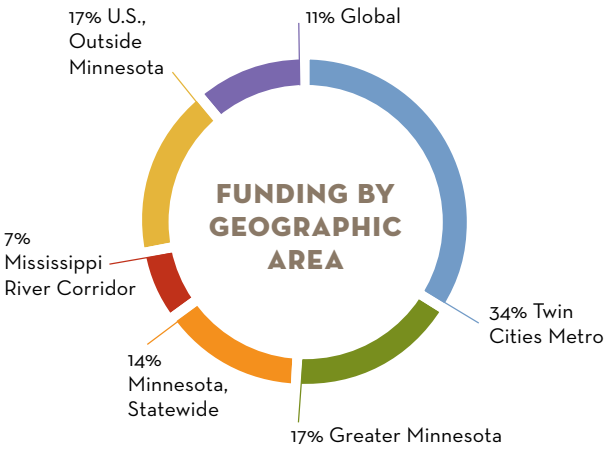
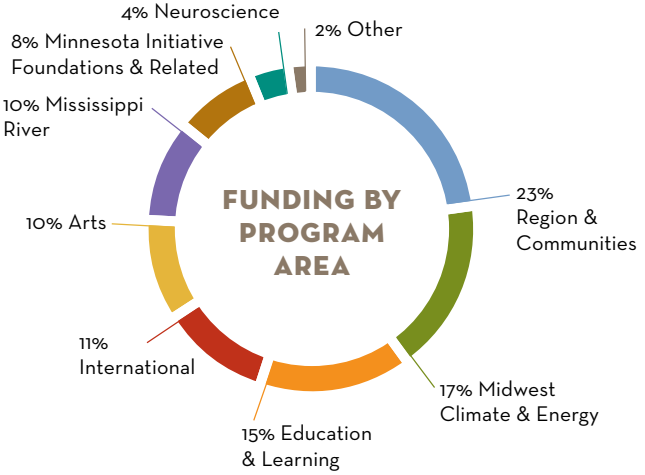
The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. We use all our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve.

McKnight's Strategic Framework, updated in 2015, expresses our commitment to seeking solutions that are socially equitable, economically efficient, and environmentally sound. Looking back on the year, we share stories of this commitment from across our program areas.

The Foundation was created in 1953 and independently endowed by William and Maude McKnight. Program interests include regional economic and community development, Minnesota's arts and artists, early literacy, youth development, Midwest climate and energy, Mississippi River water quality, neuroscience research, international crop research, and rural livelihoods.

**LEARN MORE: [MCKNIGHT.ORG/ABOUT](https://mcknight.org/about)**

# FUNDING AT A GLANCE



**\$88.4**

MILLION Total grant funding

**\$2.2**

BILLION Endowment as of 12/31/2015

These totals are pre-audit.

**2015**  
**AND BEYOND**



McKnight's commitment to sustainability can be measured in many ways. These numbers reflect our investment in multifaceted, long-term support for our grantees and partners.

# 42%

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In 2015, 42% of McKnight's grantmaking payout went to support grantees' general operations.

# 430

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A total of 430 grants were approved to 365 organizations in 2015.

# 79%

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In 2015, 79% of McKnight's grantmaking was tied to multiyear commitments.

# 5,100

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To help advance program objectives, McKnight hosted 5,100 people at 216 meetings and events in 2015, with an estimated value to partners of \$343,180.



# VALUE ARTISTS

Investing in the lifeblood of  
Minnesota's arts ecosystem

## ARTS

**Program Goal:** To support working artists to create and contribute to vibrant communities. Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive.

Vickie Benson, program director

The Foundation's investment in working artists is long-standing, broad, and deep. Since the beginning of the McKnight Artist Fellowships Program in 1982, we have awarded more than 1,700 fellowships in 12 different disciplines.

Last year we commissioned Minneapolis-based artist and activist D.A. Bullock — a 2014 McKnight Media Artist Fellow — to create a documentary short about the program's history and its unique contribution to sustaining Minnesota's arts ecosystem. Today, we have the ability to collect data that demonstrates the positive impact of artists on our economy and our quality of life over time. But the role of artists in nurturing spirit, creating dialogue, and bringing people together has always been timeless and unbounded.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/arts](https://mcknight.org/arts)

# EDUCATION & LEARNING

**Program Goal:** To dramatically increase the percentage of successful third-grade readers, especially among underserved populations, and to increase access to high-quality learning beyond the classroom so that all of Minnesota's youth thrive.

Erin Gavin, program director

At the cornerstone of much of McKnight's early-literacy grantmaking are efforts to build teachers' capacity to provide effective PreK-3 literacy instruction. The policies that govern and support teachers play a key role in building that capacity.

McKnight-supported nonprofit Educators 4 Excellence (E4E) is a national network of over 1,100 educators working in 245 schools, advancing the vision of an elevated teaching profession in which educators are leaders both in and outside the classroom. McKnight renewed funding to E4E in 2015 to engage Minnesota educators in strategic policy reform. Our support helps ensure that teachers are included in the decisions that affect their schools and the growing minds within them.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/literacy](http://mcknight.org/literacy)

## BUILD CAPACITY

Supporting educators to be leaders  
in and outside the classroom





# TAKE ACTION

Using our endowment more fully  
to advance our mission

## IMPACT INVESTING

**Program Goal:** To invest our endowment in ways that advance financial, program, and learning returns. We act as an owner of assets, a consumer of financial products, a shareholder, and a peer investor to advance sustainability and select program goals.

Elizabeth McGeeveran, program director

In 2014, McKnight launched a \$200 million Impact Investing program with the goal of using our endowment more fully to advance our mission. Throughout 2015 the program gained momentum, and we deployed over one-third of this commitment.

Today it is a leading-edge philanthropic practice that serves as a model of pragmatism, transparency, and mission-alignment. Concrete outcomes of this work include a four-point framework articulating our approach to impact investing and a robust web resource tracking our progress and sharing how we approach the entire \$2.1 billion endowment.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/impact](http://mcknight.org/impact)



# INTERNATIONAL

**Program Goal:** To improve access to local, sustainable, nutritious food using collaborative research and knowledge-sharing to strengthen smallholder farmers, research institutions, and development organizations. We support balanced approaches to natural resource management and community resource rights.

Jane Maland Cady, program director

McKnight's Collaborative Crop Research Program funds joint efforts among smallholder farmers, leading researchers, and development practitioners to explore solutions for sustainable, local food systems.

Institute for People, Innovation, and Change in Organizations (PICO), based in Kenya, trains and supports emerging leaders in ecologically focused agricultural research. In 2015, PICO organized cohorts of 40 mentor-mentee pairs of leaders in African agriculture and worked to enhance their leadership and facilitation skills, self-awareness, and communication capacities. Projects such as this reflect our belief in the importance of strengthening both the technical skills of scientific research, and the relationship-building, problem-solving, and knowledge-sharing skills that are equally important to sustainable systems change.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/crop](http://mcknight.org/crop)

## FOSTER TEAMWORK

Enhancing the skills needed to pursue sustainable systems change





# LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Creating a model of sustainability and innovation right here at home

## MIDWEST CLIMATE & ENERGY

**Program Goal:** To foster and support Midwest climate and energy leadership, making the region a national and international leader in addressing climate change by achieving energy-related greenhouse emission reductions.

Aimee Witteman, program director

Local governments and private institutions have repeatedly demonstrated the will to advance leading-edge clean energy solutions. That's one reason we direct our grantmaking resources to activity and leadership at the regional level. Through a grant to the Center for Energy and Environment in 2015, McKnight supported the development of a series of clean energy and efficiency recommendations for the Destination Medical Center, a public-private partnership working to position the Mayo Clinic and city of Rochester as the world's premier center for health.

Anticipated large-scale new development and growth over the next few decades will bring a unique opportunity to foster innovative energy solutions and strategies. The key findings and recommendations emerging from this work will enable the region to become an international leader in clean energy while creating a culture of sustainability and innovation that will last for years to come.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/climate](https://mcknight.org/climate)

# MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATIONS

**Program Goal:** To support six independent regional foundations to make Greater Minnesota stronger and more prosperous.

Neal Cuthbert, vice president of program

The Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIFs) are a network of six independent foundations forged in the economic crisis that befell rural Minnesota in the mid-1980s. Built to respond to regional needs and opportunities, each foundation serves its region with unique grants, business loans, leadership programs, and donor services.

Over the past 29 years, their collective efforts to improve the quality of life for the people of Greater Minnesota have resulted in major successes. By 2015, the MIFs had raised over \$200 million in non-McKnight funds and leveraged over \$1 billion through loans; made over 4,400 loans totaling more than \$240 million; created or retained 45,000 jobs; and made 32,000 grants totaling \$190 million. McKnight supports the MIFs' work to keep rural communities resilient and poised for economic success. It is an investment in shared prosperity across the entire state.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/mifs](http://mcknight.org/mifs)

## LOOK FORWARD

Sharing prosperity and opportunity  
across the state of Minnesota





# KEEP IT CLEAN

Protecting clean water for the delicate and priceless resource it is

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER

**Program Goal:** To restore the water quality and resilience of the Mississippi River.

Mark Muller, program director

Minnesota — land of 10,000 lakes, headwaters of the mighty Mississippi, home to Lake Superior's beautiful north shore — has a water problem. Aquifers that provide clean drinking water and crop irrigation are being depleted. Water levels in recreational lakes are declining. The Mississippi River faces the ongoing threat of agricultural pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus runoff. More than a nuisance, a lack of viable water poses serious risks, raising public health concerns and economic doubts about siting new business in the region.

A strategic program refresh, begun in 2015, solidified our commitment to sound federal policy and on-the-ground outreach as priorities in our work to ensure the river's resilience. This will be complemented with expanded efforts to support clean water through sustainability criteria in corporate supply chains. Our grantees are helping realize a future in which we protect and value our state's clean water for the irreplaceable resource it is.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/river](https://mcknight.org/river)

# NEUROSCIENCE

**Program Goal:** To bring science closer to the day when diseases of the brain and behavior can be accurately diagnosed, prevented, and treated.

Eileen Maler, program manager

The Endowment Fund for Neuroscience is McKnight's oldest research program, tracing its origins to 1977. It is a direct legacy of founder William McKnight, who was deeply interested in brain biology and diseases affecting memory.

The Fund supports innovative research in neuroscience through three competitive annual award programs, and counts among its community of scientists five National Medal of Science awardees, seven Nobel Laureates, and more than 80 National Academy of Science members. Clearly, the program has not lacked for accomplished neuroscientists. It has, however, lacked something else: representation of the growing number of accomplished female neuroscientists. A few years ago, an effort was made to address this imbalance, and by 2015 the program had seen an average increase of 19% in the number of female award recipients over 2010-2015 compared with the previous five years.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/neuroscience](http://mcknight.org/neuroscience)

## BRING BALANCE

Expanding the field of brain research  
to include ideas from all scientists





# THRIVE IN THE CITY

Championing open spaces for  
a more livable urban community

## REGION & COMMUNITIES

**Program Goal:** To increase efficient and sustainable regional metropolitan development that creates livable communities and expands opportunities for all to thrive.

Lee Sheehy, program director

Region & Communities grantees helped green infrastructure development blossom in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area in 2015. Organizations provided regional leadership on many fronts: advocating for green space within a 10-minute walk for all; promoting community gardens to meet the health, economic, organizing, and educational needs of residents; and using stormwater planning to improve the environment, school grounds, and longevity of open spaces. They worked together in north Minneapolis to improve the connection to the Mississippi River; along the Green Line through pocket parks and Frogtown Gardens; and in east St. Paul around Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

As champions of parks, gardens, and open spaces, these organizations are tirelessly pursuing the larger goal of a more livable, sustainable, and equitable urban community.

Learn more: [mcknight.org/region](https://mcknight.org/region)

# McKNIGHT LEADERSHIP

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[mcknight.org/staff](http://mcknight.org/staff)

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Downtown Rochester: Destination Medical Center; Iron worker: Joe Rossi

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