



Senior Program Officer

Global Collaboration for Resilient Food Systems

September 2024

About McKnight Foundation

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.

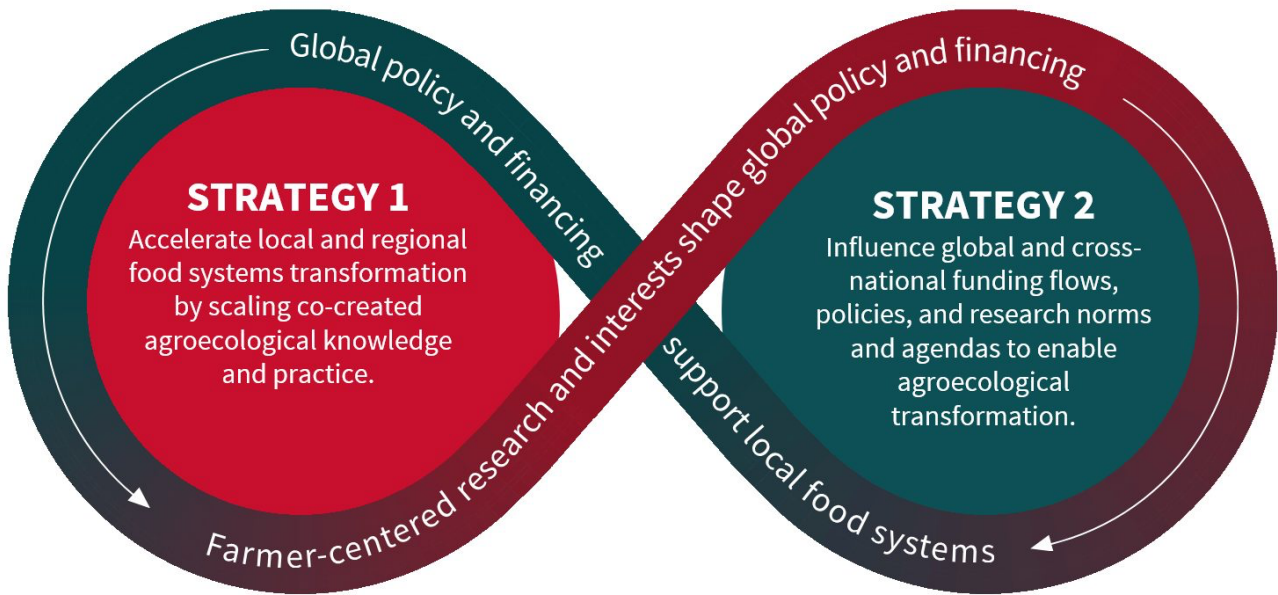
Global Collaboration for Resilient Food Systems

The McKnight Foundation's Global Collaboration for Resilient Food Systems (CRFS)—formerly called the Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP)—cultivates resilient food systems globally by bridging farmer-centered agroecological research, action, and influence.

Two intertwined strategies, one regional and one global, advance this goal. We believe that by bridging grounded knowledge and initiatives to global and cross-national processes, we will increase the likelihood that agroecological transformation will be supported by global funding flows, policies, and research norms and agendas.

Strategy 1: Accelerate local and regional food systems transformation by scaling co-created agroecological knowledge and practice.

Strategy 2: Influence global and cross-national funding flows, policies, and research norms and agendas to enable agroecological transformation.



[source: <https://www.mcknight.org/wp-content/uploads/mcknight-global-food-strategy-loops-1.jpg>]

The program primarily funds participatory, collaborative research on agroecology. Grants support research and action in three regional communities of Practice (CoP) in Africa and South America. Regional projects typically link international, national, and/or local organizations with communities of smallholder farmers, researchers, development professionals, and other stakeholders. The program also funds cross-cutting projects that support aspects of work across the three regions or address global opportunities to influence the enabling environment. Our projects generate technical and social innovations to improve productivity, livelihoods, nutrition, and equity for farming communities. Large-scale impact is realized when new ideas, technologies, or processes are adapted to different contexts, when insights from research catalyze change in policy and practice, and when innovation inspires further success.

Find out more here: <https://www.mcknight.org/programs/global-foods/our-approach/>

The Role

Role: Senior Program Officer - Global Collaboration for Resilient Food Systems (CRFS)

Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Reports To: Program Director - Global Collaboration for Resilient Food Systems (CRFS)

Salary: USD \$156,560 + benefits



Job Summary

The senior program officer reports directly to the program director and works closely with one or more of the Foundation's programs. In addition to being responsible for strategic leadership for program, operational, team, and organizational activities, this position is responsible for developing and implementing grantmaking efforts, managing a portfolio of grants, collaborating with key stakeholders, contributing to program evaluation and learning cycles, and standing in for the program director when needed. Key to this work is maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders, representing the foundation in various meetings and events, and supporting diversity, equity, and belonging commitments.

The senior program officer will bring deep knowledge of the regenerative agriculture and agroecology sector, with strong research credentials and a appreciation of the critical levers for influencing research norms, policy agendas and systems change in global food systems transformation. With a global program focus spanning 10 countries in the Andes and across Africa, it will be valuable for the senior program officer to bring some direct lived experience of this funding geography or similar contexts. A relevant additional language would also be advantageous.

Within the CRFS, the program director's remit is to translate vision to strategy, whilst the senior program officer is responsible for the onward journey of strategy into implementation, as such they will contribute to strategic thinking and lead on implementation.

Responsibilities

Building relationships, leading strategy, nurturing an ecosystem of systems change action.

- Identify strategic priorities, gaps, and opportunities to advance changemaking in program areas through the lens of equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Serve as point person for one or more key high-level partnerships, including intermediary partners, regrantors, and/or major grantees.
- Develop and maintain relationships with consultant teams (as appropriate), existing grantees, and new prospects to learn from current work, explore emerging opportunities, troubleshoot and build new concepts.
- Mentor and develop Program Officers in core area(s) of expertise, related to both content and philanthropic capacities.



Foundation Grantmaking and operations.

- Provide leadership for one or more programmatic strategies, including setting strategic direction and managing a portfolio of grants, which may be significantly complex, related to a program's ability to advance its strategic priorities.
- Ensure that grantmaking principles and program practices align with Foundation values and operating principles.
- Collaborate in the review of grant requests, funding recommendations, and reports for team and board approval.
- 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 or programs and influence foundation strategy more broadly.

Leading changemaking actions.

- Lead and support changemaking through system changes, convening, collaboration, and networking among grantees and other relevant peer organizations, including collective learning, joint campaigns and initiatives, coalition building, and networking across different programs.
- Contribute to program evaluation/learning cycles related to subject matter expertise.
- Continually learn about and track trends and evolutions in changemaking, identifying new opportunities for the foundation's grantmaking and changemaking initiatives.
- Foster relationships with nonprofits, policymakers, funders, networks, and other groups working on similar issues to lead changemaking efforts.

Foster and nurture relationships with key external stakeholders in the food systems transformation, global consultant team, and key internal and external stakeholders.

- Contribute to and collaborate with the leadership team to develop the focus of the annual leadership team meeting and with the regional teams and community of practice activities on annual priorities.
- In partnership with internal and external communications teams, manage strategic and tactical program communications related to strategies, ensuring timely and effective execution.
- Responsible for strategically supervising regional teams to contribute to impact aligned with goals and strategies in consultation with the Program Director.



Working across programs and with our amplifying functions: Grants & Program Operations, Learning, and Communications.

- Partner with the program director, program team members, and colleagues working across programs and the enterprise to develop strategy, grantmaking, and evaluation plans.
- Partner with the program and grants associate 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.
- Partner with learning to develop grantee learning plans and measure progress, incorporating knowledge from grantmaking experience into program activities and sharing learning across the program team.
- In collaboration with the program director, ensure the team is operating effectively with clear and consistent communications, meetings are well-prepped and facilitated, important decision points are identified, made and followed up on, as designated by the program director.

Leader in the field of philanthropy, representing the foundation in sector space.

- Represent McKnight by participating in and attending community meetings and convenings, program-related meetings, field visits, and informal gatherings, including domestic and/or international travel as required, including standing in for the program director or president as needed.
- Identify opportunities for innovation in the grantmaking space, exploring new approaches, including equity-centered grantmaking processes, non-traditional types of support, and other continuous adaptations to grantmaking in the program focus area to enhance existing strategies and strengthen external networks.
- Maintain current information about local, regional, national, and (if applicable) international activities related to the Foundation's changemaking interests across McKnight.
- In addition to the program director, serve as the principal point of contact related to engagement with McKnight Foundation institutional leadership and governance (president, board, board liaisons, program advisory panels, etc.)

Participate in Foundation-wide meetings and events.

- Attend and actively participate in integrated program team, staff meetings, and retreats.
- Participate in cross-functional work groups as appropriate.
- Support diversity, equity, and belonging commitments.



Candidate profile

Foundation-wide Competencies

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

Minimum Education and Experience

- Bachelor's degree and seven (7) years of related full-time professional work experience relevant to the program focus area or a combination of equivalent experience and training.
- Experience in and with a foundation, nonprofit, or government field is preferred.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Ability to work effectively and collaboratively across the organization, sectors, and cultures.
- Ability to work collaboratively and respectfully with a variety of people and groups, particularly nonprofit organizations, community leaders, governmental organizations, and research institutions or universities.
- Demonstrates an understanding of how financial information can be used to determine the health of an organization.
- Ability to make sense of complex, high quantity, and sometimes contradictory information to effectively solve problems.
- Demonstrated ability to lead through complexity on internal and external projects and initiatives to drive change.
- Ability to develop people to meet their career goals and organization's goals.
- Ability to adapt approach and demeanor to match the shifting demands of different situations.
- Ability to analyze, question and identify key issues and use data to support conclusions.
- Ability to view issues and challenges from multiple dimensions and apply intellectual energy and creativity.
- Ability to prepare clearly written summaries and analysis.
- Ability to engage others and influence shared outcomes.
- Knowledge of governance and operations of nonprofit organizations.
- Ability to communicate effectively interpersonally and in group presentations.



- Ability to handle heavy workload and meet deadlines.
- Approach to work on diversity, equity, and inclusion with courage and optimism, understanding DEI requires a sustained commitment.

Working Conditions and Physical Effort

- Work is normally performed in an office work environment with very little physical effort required.
- There are frequent off-site meetings required
- There are frequent evening meetings or events required.
- Some national travel is required.
- 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.

How to Apply

All correspondence, at this stage, should be via Oxford HR. To apply for this post, click on the “Apply” button on the job advert page, complete our online application form, and submit your CV and cover letter as two different documents, which should be prepared before applying as they will be considered in the application process.

The cover letter should be no more than two pages long and explain why you are interested in this post and how your skills and experience make you a good fit.

The document should be saved in PDF in the following format: Your First Name-Your Last Name-Document Name-Date (mmyy) e.g., Pat-Jones-CV-012023-McKnightFoundation or Pat-Jones-CoverLetter-012023- McKnightFoundation.

Timeline

Closing Date:	10 November 2024
First stage interviews:	25 November – 05 December (indicative)
Final interviews:	09 – 20 December (indicative)

Selection process

All candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the role email to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.



Equality Statement

Equality and diversity are at the core of McKnight Foundation values. Staff are expected to work collectively and individually to promote a constructive and sensitive approach to others from a variety of backgrounds, where the work of others is valued and respected.

Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion, please email at dbond@oxfordhr.com in the first instance.

About Oxford HR

Exceptional leaders can inspire change and propel purpose-led organisations towards reaching their world-changing goals. Finding such leaders can be a challenge; and yet their transition into leadership is vital to an organisations mission and success.

Oxford HR is a global leadership consultancy dedicated to searching for and supporting remarkable leaders and teams in purpose-led organisations.

We understand the nuances of purpose-led leadership because we've worked in organisations across the breadth of the sector ourselves. We've also worked with such organisations since 1995; so we appreciate just what benefits impactful people can bring.