

# **DRAFT - McKnight Foundation – Full Proposal – Midwest Climate & Energy Funds – December 4, 2019**

## **Organization’s Mission Statement**

The City of Northfield works for the common good of our residents and businesses and the improvement of our community by providing excellent, innovative municipal services that carry out the City’s vision for a high quality of life for all.

**Describe your organization’s goals, major programs, activities, key collaborations, or services.** *(For universities, government agencies, describe only the department or entity for which funding is being requested.)*

In 2019, the City of Northfield created a new, temporary position with the title of Program Coordinator, to work in the Administration office. At this time, the position is funded with reserve funds for two years ending in April 2021. The three main responsibilities of this position are: (1) Project management and coordination of the city’s work on Climate Action through development and implementation of Climate Action Plan, (2) Project management and coordination of work on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion aspects of our City 2018-2020 strategic plan, and (3) Working with staff on tracking and reporting of the Strategic Plan efforts across departments. All three of these responsibilities require the Program Coordinator to work with staff, partners and volunteers across the city to help move work forward.

As the City recently adopted the Climate Action Plan at our November 5, 2019 Council meeting, we are looking for ways to provide a full-time, permanent staff position to support implementation of this plan. Focus areas of the plan in the first few years will include activities such as:

- Assessment of city assets and a plan to reduce emissions from city operations including a fleet assessment and potential for on-site solar.
- Build relationships with large energy users and gathering support for meeting climate goals.
- Develop a building benchmarking program.
- Add 1 MW of additional renewable energy in the community.
- Carry out education, policy and demonstration actions in our Partners in Energy plan.
- Tree planting and restoration efforts.
- Expand mobility options including biking and walking.
- Work toward becoming “zero-waste”.
- Establish farm-to-school program.

To do justice to work required in this plan, the current temporary staffing with shared roles will need to shift. The City will be determining how to make that shift while also finding ways to manage the other duties. Funding is being requested to help support and expand work of this position with regard to the work on the Climate Action Plan.

**Which populations, communities, and/or stakeholders are priorities for your work and how do you engage them?**

Our work on climate action involves a wide range of people and institutions within our community. Examples of stakeholders include homeowners, apartment residents and building owners, small

businesses, commercial and industrial businesses, St. Olaf College, Carleton College, the Northfield School District, and Northfield Hospitals & Clinics. As part of our Climate Action Plan, we note the need to consider affordability and ways to provide options for all income levels to participate in and benefit from actions such as energy efficiency and renewable energy generation.

One way we are engaging lower income homeowners and those with limited English proficiency is through a partnership with a local community organization called Growing up Healthy. They are working with residents in two manufactured home parts to participate in Home Energy Squad visits that will help with energy efficiency actions in their homes. Growing up Healthy staff help residents schedule the visits, attend the visits and provide translation if needed and assist with follow-up actions. These efforts help the residents save money and reduce energy use and helps the City reach our climate reduction goals. The City has also applied for a grant from the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS) to look at solar potential across the community. A subset we plan to target is multifamily buildings especially those providing affordable housing.

As the building energy use from the “large consumers” is a significant portion of the greenhouse gas emissions from the City, we will be focusing efforts on relationship building with them and ways they can support each other on energy efficiency and renewable energy procurement. Engaging these large consumers in sharing success stories, meeting with each other periodically and providing tours for each other are several of the steps we plan to take. We are collaborating with our Chamber of Commerce to help build connections and offer meeting space.

Overall education across the community is an important step to raise awareness around the Climate Action Plan and how individuals and small businesses can take action. Workshops and educational events on a variety of topics such as energy efficiency, renewable energy options, waste reduction, electric vehicles, tree planting, net-zero buildings and others are being planned. All these efforts will take support and assistance from community partners such as the Rotary Club Climate Action Team, the Sustainability office, faculty and staff at both Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges, Cannon River Watershed Partnership, 50 North (senior center), Greenvale Park Community School, local congregations, service clubs and more. Finding ways to incorporate the messages and actions we want to get out with existing events and engagement opportunities is a key strategy we are adopting.

We are also participating in the Green Step Cities program, Partners in Energy, a Renewable Energy Procurement Network and Building Benchmarking Cohort to better connect with other municipalities working on these efforts. There is much to learn from them and share with them.

## Proposal Information

**Type of Funding Support Requesting:** Program/Project

**Purpose of Request (one line)**

To build staff capacity for implementation of the city's Climate Action Plan

**Total Request Amount** – \$50,000

**Number of months Requesting Funding** – 18

Year 1 = \$25,000, Year 2 = \$25,000

**Summary of Request** *(based on the program goals described on McKnight's website, what do you hope to accomplish and how?) (500 words)*

The City of Northfield shares the McKnight Foundation's goal of taking bold action on the climate crisis by dramatically cutting carbon pollution in the Midwest by 2030. In our Climate Action Plan, which we adopted on November 5, 2019, we have set the goals of receiving 100% Carbon-Free Electricity by 2030 and being a Carbon-Free community by 2040. One key strategy to support our Climate Action Plan is to increase our staff capacity to a full-time position to focus on coordination and implementation of the plan. Our current Program Coordinator splits her time between three project areas, one of which is the Climate Action Plan. Support from McKnight will allow us to expand this position to 75% time in 2020 with the goal of moving to 100% time in 2021.

Included in our Climate Action Plan is an emissions calculation for the entire community. Based on this, we know that Building Energy use is 85% of the greenhouse gas emissions from the City of Northfield. A significant piece of that is from our "large consumers" – City buildings, the Northfield Hospital, St. Olaf College, Carleton College and our commercial/industrial and manufacturing businesses such as Post Consumer Brands and others. We are seeing shifts to renewable electricity both "behind the meter" in our community and through support of programs such as community solar gardens and wind and solar through Xcel Energy. While our goal of 100% Carbon-Free Electricity by 2030 is ambitious, we feel the technology exists to get us there. The second goal of being a Carbon-Free community by 2040, which we see as including carbon neutrality strategies, is going to be a bigger leap. Helping our large and small consumers of natural gas convert to carbon-free electricity is a big challenge.

The Climate Action Plan is written as a higher-level guidance document for the next twenty years. It lays out strategies around the overall themes of education and engagement, policy and planning, implementation and demonstration and supporting the plan. It includes a list of one-three year targets that have been noted previously in this document, which will be where our efforts are focused in the short-term. Having a dedicated, full-time staff person to lead these efforts, develop project work plans, keep momentum going and build relationships across these sectors of our community will allow us to make progress toward our climate goals.

Northfield has history of concern for environmental and social issues. There is strong and growing interest across the community in addressing the climate crisis. Other small cities in our region are looking to Northfield as an example of how Climate Action Plans can happen. The more we can do to strengthen our staff capacity to implement our plan, the larger impact we anticipate making in reducing

our greenhouse gas emissions within our boundaries and being a local and statewide leader who can help others.

**Total Program/Project Budget – \$217,648 (estimated)**

<b>City of Northfield Climate Action Program</b>				
<b>Feb 2020 - August 2021</b>				
<b>Estimated Expenses*</b>				
	<b>2020 (Feb - Dec)</b>	<b>2021 (through August, 2021)</b>	<b>Total</b>	
<b>Program Coordinator Salary and Fringe</b>	<b>\$68,360</b>	<b>\$66,288</b>	<b>\$134,648</b>	<b>assuming Climate is 75% of position for 11 months in 2020 and 100% for 8 months of 2021</b>
<b>Education/Outreach</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$14,000</b>	
<b>Professional Services</b>	<b>\$14,000</b>	<b>\$10,500</b>	<b>\$24,500</b>	
<b>Implementation Actions</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	
<b>Staff training/conferences</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$111,860</b>	<b>\$102,788</b>	<b>\$215,648</b>	
<b>Estimated Income</b>				
<b>City Reserve Funds</b>	<b>\$49,860</b>	<b>\$50,788</b>	<b>\$100,648</b>	
<b>City Enterprise Funds (Garbage, Stormwater)</b>	<b>\$14,000</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$21,000</b>	
<b>City General Funds</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	
<b>Xcel Partners in Energy</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	
<b>Clean Energy Resource Teams Grant</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	
<b>McKnight Foundation</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$114,860</b>	<b>\$102,788</b>	<b>\$217,648</b>	
<b>* This budget could be higher as some projects are in development now and we aren't sure what will happen in 2020 or 2021 yet.</b>				
<b>Income is also dependent on City Council approving budget requests.</b>				
<b>Percent from McKnight</b>	<b>23%</b>			

**Percent of Budget Requested** (*What percentage of your total program/project budget are you requesting from McKnight?*) 23%

**Committed Funds** (*List up to 10 committed sources and amounts of funding.*) - City of Northfield Reserve Funds for Program Coordinator (committed through April 2021) - \$101,504

Xcel Energy Partners in Energy - \$3,000

CERTs - \$3,000 (award will be announced in January)

**Potential Funding** – (*List up to 10 sources and amounts of funding that have been applied for but not received to-date.*)

City of Northfield 2020 Budget - \$83,860

City of Northfield 2021 Budget - \$77,788

**Goals for Proposed Work** (*Describe the results you expect to achieve, and how they address McKnight's goals and priorities.*)

The City of Northfield's goals are:

Goal 1: Transition our staffing structure to allow for a full-time Sustainability Coordinator position to implement our Climate Action Plan.

Goal 2: Make significant progress on Climate Action Plan items in 3-year target window that include:

- Assessment of city assets and a plan to reduce emissions from city operations including a fleet assessment and potential for on-site solar.
- Build relationships with large energy users and gathering support for meeting climate goals.
- Develop a building benchmarking program.
- Add 1 MW of additional renewable energy in the community.
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The Midwest Climate & Energy Program at McKnight has the goal to “Foster and support climate and energy leadership in the Midwest, making the region a model for the world by reducing energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.” Our goal to increase staff capacity to implement our climate action plan

will help Northfield to lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Midwest. We will also be able to serve as an example and model for other small communities in Minnesota and the region

**Theory of Change** *(Describe how you believe your actions will lead to intended outcomes.)*

In order to shift our staffing model as noted to implement our Climate Action Plan, we need to explore options for how to make that transition. If we do not do this with intentionality, it is likely we will not be successful. Support from McKnight will help to make this possible.

Having a full-time staff person dedicated to Climate Action Plan implementation will increase the likelihood of meeting our implementation goals.

**Achieving Outcomes** *(Describe your activities, strategies, and how your experience drives your ability to achieve results.)*

Our current staffing model is a full-time Program Coordinator position with project management duties split between our Climate Action Plan, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Strategic Plan tracking. In order to allow for a full-time focus on Sustainability and implementation of the Climate Action Plan, we will need to determine other staffing options and shift funding to cover the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Strategic Plan tracking.

In order to make the transition from a staff person who is able to work part-time climate action to a full-time sustainability position we anticipate the following activities and strategies:

- **Review duties of Program Coordinator and determine how to manage other work.** What is our internal capacity to absorb the work? What partnerships might we form in the community? Where might contracting be appropriate? What duties relate to climate action items in other departments this position can support?
- **Funding the position long-term.** What financial opportunities does the position bring? What savings do we anticipate from energy efficiency and renewable energy that could help offset costs? What other revenue streams are options to fund this work?

As a city, we are always evaluating the services we are providing, funding available and how best to manage workloads. Our City Administrator and Finance Director are experienced in this work. We also have strong relationships with a variety of community partners such as the School District, nonprofits and the two colleges that will help us think about creative ways to manage the work.

With regard to implementation of the Climate Action Plan, we will be focusing on activities mentioned previously in our 3-year target window. Key strategies around activities will be education and relationship building, working with outside resources and consultants to develop projects, long-range planning and budgeting for activities that will need more resources, and working with community volunteers and leaders. This Climate Action Plan is for our entire community. While the City will play a leading role, we know that successful implementation will require participation across the community. Our current Program Coordinator has many years of experience in the area of community engagement

and partnership development from past work as Executive Director of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership. Other members of our staff have experience in energy efficiency for facilities, building project development, financing projects and working with elected officials to gather support. Many of our elected officials and volunteer advisory Board & Commission members have played key roles in past work on climate action and environmental protection to date and will continue to do so in the future.

**Capacity Building Efforts** *(Describe any plans for capacity building efforts to increase your ability to achieve your objectives.)*

To build capacity of our staff we plan to have our Program Coordinator attend local and regional climate conferences, participate in learning networks with other municipalities, and learn more about sustainability topics through webinars, reading and possibly online courses. Other staff and volunteer Board & Commission representatives will be invited to participate and grow their capacity as time permits.

Northfield has two unique opportunities for short-term staffing through students at St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges. Both schools have community-based work-study, academic civic engagement, volunteer options and summer internships. The City is currently using these options and will continue to do so to help in the areas of education/outreach, policy development and research.

Funding this work long-term will require a budgetary commitment on behalf of the City. We will be exploring revenue options such as establishing a locally based carbon fund, franchise fees, grants, and our general operating levy.

**Constituencies** *(Which communities, constituencies, or stakeholders are priorities for your work, and how will you engage them?)*

Our work on climate action involves a wide range of people and institutions within our community. Examples of stakeholders include homeowners, apartment residents and building owners, small businesses, commercial and industrial businesses, St. Olaf College, Carleton College, the Northfield School District, and Northfield Hospitals & Clinics. As part of our Climate Action Plan, we note the need to consider affordability and ways to provide options for all income levels to participate in and benefit from actions such as energy efficiency and renewable energy generation.

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**Work Relationships** *(Describe how your work relates to that of others doing similar work, whether they are partners, collaborators or competitors.)*

The City of Northfield is fortunate to have many partners and collaborators in this work. Within our community excellent examples for sustainability, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation exist at Carleton College and St. Olaf College. These two institutions have been leading the way on these topics for many years through the very visible wind turbines, solar panels, and geothermal installations as well as less visible actions with regard to policies and operations. Through faculty and students, the City has access to research assistance and help with short and long-term projects. The Greater Northfield Sustainability Collaborative (GNSC), brings together participants from Carleton College and St. Olaf College and various community organizations to facilitate and coordinate sustainability initiatives in the greater Northfield area and to support the implementation of Northfield’s commitment to the Green Step Cities program. The GNSC will help to coordinate and support initiatives across the community.

The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) is an advisory commission to the Northfield City Council. This group, which has been in existence for several decades, is made up of seven community members who bring environmental issues before the City Council. The EQC will be the lead advisory Commission to oversee the implementation of the Climate Action Plan. The current Program Coordinator serves as a staff liaison to this group.

Manufacturing/Commercial businesses as well as institutional partners such as Post Consumer Brands, Cardinal Glass, Aurora Pharmaceuticals, the Northfield School District, Northfield Hospitals & Clinics and



others will play a key role in energy efficiency and renewable energy use. The City will work closely with them to support their efforts as well as with policy creation.

Nonprofit partners include the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, Healthy Community Initiative and Health Finders, who do work around the issues of the environment as well as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. They will help both implement the Climate Action Plan and help us develop staff transition options.

The Northfield Rotary Club has created a Rotary Climate Action Team (RCAT). This group has helped provide funding to the City for our first public Electric Vehicle charging station. Members of the RCAT have been very involved in the development of the Climate Action Plan and will be of assistance in developing relationships with our business community.

Regionally and statewide partners include: Green Step Cities (Cities of Faribault, Red Wing, Rochester and Winona), Xcel Energy's Partners in Energy program of which Northfield is currently a participant, the University of Minnesota Extension through the Clean Energy Resource Teams and the Farm to School program.

At this time, there are not obvious competitors to our work.

**Measuring and Sharing Success** *(Describe how you will know you are successful, how will you measure success, and how will you share this information to inform others.)*

For our first goal, success will be a staffing model that we have the capacity to sustain and will allow us to implement our Climate Action Plan as fully as possible. We will measure this by the existence of a full-time Sustainability Coordinator position and have a mechanism in place for other work that needs to shift. There will be a budgetary commitment on behalf of the City to maintain this position long-term.

For the second goal, success will mean we have made progress on the 3-year targets. This will include having clear understanding with our partners and collaborators about what the City can do with regard to support and policies and what items others will carry out. The City will be tracking our carbon emissions through the B3 and Energy Star Portfolio Manager platforms. One of our planned actions is to develop a benchmarking program that other large consumers in the community will use for this tracking as well. Through the Partners in Energy program, we will have measures of success around residential and small-consumer energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts.

**Strategic Questions** *(What are the unknowns in this project? What do you hope to learn and how will it inform your other work?)*

Unknowns at this time, which we hope to learn more about, are:

- What will the workload be for a full-time Sustainability Coordinator?
- How and to whom will we shift the other work duties of our program coordinator?
- Will funding be available both for the position and implementation activities?
- Will there be political support when it is time to make this shift?

**Key Staff and Responsibilities** *(List the names of key staff and their responsibilities. If additional staffing is needed, briefly describe the proposed new position(s).)*

City Administrator, Ben Martig –assessment of how to shift work to allow this position to be possible and developing job description for Sustainability Coordinator.

Communications & Human Resources Director, Michelle Mahowald - assist with assessment of how to shift work to allow this position to be possible.

Finance Director, Brenda Angelstad - assist with budget development.

Program Coordinator, Beth Kallestad – work on position transition to Sustainability Coordinator, project management for Climate Action Plan implementation, partnership and relationship development.

**Additional Proposal Information** *(Use this space for any additional information you feel is significant to your request and has not been addressed above.)*

The Climate Action Plan is newly adopted and it spans across multiple areas of city services. As such, the budget for this program and projects is still preliminary. We anticipate it will evolve over the next two years as we better understand needs, apply for additional grant funding and are able to more accurately assess all the areas of our City budget that fit this work.

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