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Contact:
Sarah Lemagie
PR & Communications Officer
(612) 672-3877
slemagie@mplsfoundation.org

Minneapolis Climate Action and Racial Equity Fund awards its first grants

*Grants support local projects in diverse Minneapolis communities;
the fund's second grant rounds opens August 1.*

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – A new charitable fund that supports local action on climate change has awarded its first grants.

The Minneapolis Climate Action and Racial Equity Fund, a partnership between the City of Minneapolis, The Minneapolis Foundation and the McKnight Foundation, today announced funding to three local organizations that are doing innovative work throughout the city, particularly in diverse, low-income neighborhoods where residents are often disproportionately affected by climate change.

“The scale of the climate crisis is immense, but this fund gives us the tangible, local actions we can see and feel. Better, it gives individuals the chance to partner with the rest of the community so one person’s actions can be part of a movement with real impact,” said R.T. Rybak, President and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation, which administers the fund.

“We are inspired by the strong response to the Climate Action and Racial Equity Fund,” said Kate Wulford, President of the McKnight Foundation. “The funded projects demonstrate that Minneapolis communities are motivated to act urgently to address climate change while ensuring that our clean energy transition leaves no one behind. They demonstrate innovative approaches to increasing access to clean transportation options, bringing energy efficiency services to communities that need them most, and spreading the benefits of the clean energy transition more equitably. With the continued support of our partners, these local solutions can be a catalyst to broader change in our region and state.”

The fund’s second grant round will open on August 1. The three grants awarded in the first round are as follows:

- **\$25,000 to MN Renewable Now** for a project that will combine strong community relationships with clean energy program expertise to empower North Minneapolis residents to take clean energy actions. This project will reduce greenhouse gas

emissions in two ways: First, it will spur businesses and residents to switch to renewable electricity. Second, it will capitalize on the fruits of recent Home Energy Squad visits to drive insulation and heating system upgrades, thus reducing residential energy consumption. Outreach will be done by local residents who are passionate about building a culture around sustainable energy in a community that has been historically under-resourced, yet has a vast interest in being more “green.”

- **\$17,500 to Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light** for a youth-led environmental justice project that will enable young people in two North Minneapolis congregations to decrease their carbon footprint while building power and wealth in their community. With this grant, youth at Shiloh Temple and Masjid An-Nur will work together to conduct formal energy audits at both houses of worship. The youth will shadow energy assessors, analyze the data, and work with Center for Energy and the Environment and the Minority Contractor's Union to develop a work plan. With help from adult leaders, they will commission the work and plan at least two events to showcase the plan, hand out light bulbs and help community members set up energy audits in their homes.
- **\$25,000 to HOURCAR** for community outreach and engagement in support of a new all-electric carsharing network that HOURCAR is developing in partnership with Xcel Energy and the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The network, which will have 150 electric vehicles and 70 mobility hubs with charging infrastructure, will have a focus on service to disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities of color. Half of the hubs will be located in diverse, high-poverty neighborhoods, and 10 of the proposed hubs are located within the Green Zones designated by the City of Minneapolis. In preparation for the project, HOURCAR has developed a community engagement initiative to strengthen relationships with and collect feedback from communities where the project is proposed to operate.

Overall, the Fund received \$291,000 in total requests from 17 grant applications. Applications were reviewed by a committee composed of staff members at The Minneapolis Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the City of Minneapolis, and the Mayor's Office as well as several residents who serve on City of Minneapolis working committees.

The fund was created to connect corporate and philanthropic giving with place-based, community-driven initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the city of Minneapolis. Because of their scale, local climate action initiatives often lack significant dedicated funding.

"This grant is crucial to our mission and valuable for our community," said Robert Hull, Board Chair of MN Renewable Now. "Often times, North Minneapolis residents get left out of the renewable energy conversation due to complicated engagement implemented by those who are unfamiliar with how North Minneapolis communicates and relates. We are a North Minneapolis organization led by Northsiders who are passionate about familiarizing and educating North Minneapolis about renewable energy and how to act now."

The Minneapolis Climate Action and Racial Equity Fund was seeded with \$100,000 from the McKnight Foundation. Since it launched this spring, the fund has received more than \$22,000 in additional contributions, including gifts from the Xcel Energy Foundation and Askov Finlayson. Businesses and members of the public can contribute to the fund by texting **climatempls** to **243725**, or by going to www.climatempls.org.

Applications for the fund's second grant round will be accepted until the deadline of 4:30 p.m. on September 16, with award notification by November 1. Eligible applicants include schools, churches, neighborhood organizations, business associations, 501c3 nonprofits and charitable or grassroots organizations with a fiscal agent. Previous applicants are welcome to reapply.

The fund offers grants for place-based, community-driven initiatives and projects that result in a demonstrable reduction in local greenhouse gas emissions. Grant awards are expected to range between \$2,500 and \$25,000. Funding will support proposals that further one or more goals of the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan, which include:

- Increasing energy efficiency
- Encouraging the use of renewable energy
- A reduction in vehicle miles traveled
- Efforts to recycle, reuse and otherwise reduce the community's waste stream

Funded projects should also advance the City of Minneapolis' Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan, a four-year plan to embed racial equity principles throughout the city's work.

"Some are content with being on the cutting edge of the fight to curb climate change – but in Minneapolis we are working to set the curve," said Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. "That requires testing new approaches and working with environmental justice community partners. Thanks to the outpouring of support for the Climate Action and Racial Equity Fund, we'll help local innovators do even more strong work on everything from renewable energy to more efficient transit."

To learn more about the fund, contribute to it or apply for a grant, go to www.climatempls.org.

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About The Minneapolis Foundation: *For more than 100 years, The Minneapolis Foundation has connected people, resources, and ideas to improve lives in Minnesota and beyond. The Foundation manages \$890 million in assets, providing customized and tax-smart giving solutions that result in the average annual distribution of more than \$50 million in grants. The Foundation brings people together to unite behind common goals and spark positive change in our community. www.minneapolisfoundation.org*

About the McKnight Foundation: *The McKnight Foundation, a family foundation based in Minnesota, advances a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive. Program interests include regional economic and community development, Minnesota's arts and artists, education equity, youth engagement, Midwest climate and energy, Mississippi River water quality, neuroscience research, international crop research, and rural livelihoods. Founded in 1953 and independently endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the Foundation has assets of approximately \$2.2 billion and grants about \$90 million a year. www.mcknight.org*