

Program Officer – Great Lakes & Drinking Water

Environment · Chicago, Illinois (Hybrid)

FOUNDATION OVERVIEW

The Joyce Foundation is a private, nonpartisan philanthropy that invests in public policies and strategies to advance racial equity and economic mobility for the next generation in the Great Lakes region. We support policy research, development, and advocacy in six program areas: Culture, Democracy, Education & Economic Mobility, Environment, Gun Violence Prevention & Justice Reform, and Journalism. We focus our grant making primarily in the region, while also exploring promising, evidence-informed policy solutions nationally and at the federal level. The Joyce Foundation makes charitable distributions of \$50 million annually from assets exceeding \$1 billion.

The Foundation's commitment to racial equity and economic mobility is reflected in our strategic grant-making priorities, which aim to improve outcomes for all young people, with a focus on young people of color who disproportionately face structural barriers to social and economic progress. Our work on this front is ongoing. We are committed to aligning our policies, practices, and resources to foster equitable opportunity for all. The Foundation has a staff of 35 and is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

For more than three decades, the Joyce Foundation has been a leading funder of environmental policy work related to the Great Lakes. We are working to address three of the region's critical long-term environmental challenges: climate change, the safety and accessibility of the water we drink, and the health of the Great Lakes.

One of every five gallons of fresh water on the surface of the planet is found in the Great Lakes, which provide clean, abundant drinking water for 40 million people in our region. Yet the future health of the lakes is far from assured, given major threats to their physical, chemical, and biological integrity. Public and private sector decisions made in the next decade will likely determine whether the Great Lakes will be healthy enough to provide for the next generation as they have provided for us.

Protecting the health of our region depends on protecting the health of the Great Lakes and the water systems that serve our communities. In its Great Lakes and Drinking Water focus area, the Foundation works to accelerate actions to protect the region's freshwater, upgrade our water infrastructure, and improve access to safe, affordable drinking water. You can read more about the Environment Program [here](#).

The members of the Environment Program work together closely, collaborating to carry out the program's priorities. The Program Director, Elizabeth Cisar, manages the Foundation's work on Great Lakes and Drinking Water issues and provides overall leadership and direction for the Environment Program. Program Officer Marisol Becerra leads the Foundation's Climate Solutions Focus Area. The Program Officer being sought in this

announcement will manage a portion of the Foundation's water-related grantmaking. The Program Director and the successful candidate will define the new Program Officer's grant portfolio based on the candidate's subject-matter expertise, prior experience, and areas of interest. The Program Director and Program Officers are supported by the Program Assistant and an interdepartmental team of grants management, communications, and administrative professionals.

POSITION SUMMARY:

The Joyce Foundation seeks a collaborative, strategic Program Officer with Great Lakes and drinking water policy expertise to manage grants within the Great Lakes and Drinking Water portfolio of the Environment Program. The position is located in Chicago and requires three days per week in the office. The Program Officer will also work closely with the Program Director and their peer Program Officer to develop recommendations for the Environment Program's 2026-2031 strategic plan.

In addition to its grantmaking activities, the Foundation often convenes local, state, regional, and national thought leaders and climate policy experts to share ideas and identify new opportunities. The Program Officer will bring enthusiasm along with strong content knowledge of state and regional Great Lakes policy and/or state and local drinking water policy, including familiarity with environmental justice issues and equitable infrastructure funding strategies. The Program Officer will develop relationships with other donors, seeking opportunities for co-funding. The goal of these activities is to scale up the Foundation's impact and support efforts to address the long-term environmental challenges that threaten the next generation in the Great Lakes region.

PRINCIPAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategy Execution

- Assist the Program Director to implement the program's current federal, state, and regional policy strategies.
 - To help ensure that the Great Lakes remain healthy enough to provide for the next generation as they have provided for us, we will address major threats to their physical, chemical, and biological integrity, with a focus on efforts to:
 - Improve water infrastructure performance, management, and funding, with a focus on remedying water system disparities in communities of color
 - Prevent unsustainable diversions from the Great Lakes by enforcing the Great Lakes Compact
 - Prevent groundwater depletion (proposals currently by invitation only)
 - Reduce polluted runoff in rural and urban areas
 - Prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species
- To help make certain that the next generation in our region has access to safe, affordable drinking water, by supporting equitable water policy that ensures that water systems and infrastructure provide safe, affordable water services for everyone.

- Monitor the Great Lakes and drinking water policy fields by reading, attending meetings, and developing relationships to understand emerging issues, research, and the political and technological developments that affect the program;
- Evaluate the potential policy opportunities and policy context, barriers to success, and capacities of prospective grantees;
- Collaborate with other funders, current and prospective grantees, and other stakeholders, including advocates, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders; and
- Proactively identify activities and projects that would advance the program strategy and support the Foundation's overall mission.

Grantmaking and Oversight

- Cultivate relationships with current and prospective grantees with an eye towards ensuring a diverse portfolio of grantees and partners that lead to projects grounded in and informed by the perspectives of people impacted by current water policy;
- Solicit proposals consistent with the program's budget, strategy, and goals through a process of reviewing letters of inquiry, site visits and other meetings;
- Manage and properly acknowledge proposals and inquiries submitted for their assigned program area in accordance with the Foundation's policies and processes;
- Use program criteria to evaluate proposals, prepare written recommendations, and make oral presentations at proposal review meetings and to the Board of Directors;
- Maintain documentation related to funding requests, recommendations and outcomes;
- Support successful implementation of approved grants and monitor grants for fulfillment of contract requirements and legal compliance, including review of regular grant reports;
- Help build the capacity of grantees, including by pursuing opportunities to build their professional networks, and seeking opportunities to connect them to other funders, policymakers, and the media; and
- Assist the Program Director with managing the budget for the Great Lakes and Drinking Water portfolio.

Program Development & Strategic Planning

- Develop a plan in collaboration with the Program Director to evaluate potential state and regional Great Lakes and drinking water policy opportunities in the Great Lakes region that would inform future program goals, objectives, and program benchmarks for measuring progress.
- When the Foundation begins planning for the 2026-2031 strategy period, the Program Officer will work closely with the Program Director to review the Environment Program's goals and strategies. The Environment Team will develop recommendations for the Board of Directors for the 2026-2031 Environment strategy that account for new potential policy opportunities to address Great Lakes and drinking water issues in the Great Lakes region and align with the Foundation's overall mission. The Environment Team will also investigate opportunities for new strategies that advance both climate and water policy priorities.

External Relations

- Collaborate closely with the External Affairs team to develop and deliver significant messages about the program, grantees, and grantee initiatives;
- Represent the Foundation publicly at events and in partnerships in a manner consistent with our mission and values;
- Use the Foundation's convening ability to bring together groups of grantees, funding colleagues, policymakers, practitioners, community leaders, and others in support of program goals and shared learning; and
- Develop and foster collegial relationships with other grant makers, prospective grantees, other non-profit organizations, and policymakers in the field.

Other Duties

- Performs other duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

- Five or more years of professional work experience in a relevant content field, such as clean water policy, Great Lakes or freshwater advocacy, water infrastructure financing, or environmental policy.
- Experience creating, influencing or analyzing state clean water or drinking water policy is highly valued, along with a personal commitment to the environment.
- Passion for the mission-driven sector and the role philanthropy can have in addressing some of society's most challenging problems. Prior grantmaking or nonprofit experience preferred.
- Demonstrated effectiveness in developing networks and productive working relationships with diverse constituencies, including community-based and environmental justice organizations, and a demonstrated commitment to racial equity in your work or volunteer experience.
- Openness to new ideas and the ability to innovate and take risks in pursuit of high-impact solutions. Flexibility and a good sense of humor.
- Proven analytical and strategic capabilities: the capacity to understand complex issues and organizations, and the ability to conceptualize, evaluate, manage, and implement strategies and projects.
- Exceptional writing skills, including the ability to compose compelling internal and external documents for both experts and general audiences.
- Bachelor's degree or experiential learning equivalent required. An advanced degree is a plus but not required.
- Willingness and ability to travel regularly, especially within the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio; must have valid driver's license.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The annual salary range for this position is \$120,000 to \$135,000. Joyce provides a generous benefits package including health, dental, and vision insurance; a retirement contribution; paid vacation and sick leave; and employer matching donations. The position is located in Chicago and requires three days per week in the office. If the selected candidate needs to relocate to Chicago, the Foundation will pay for reasonable relocation expenses.

TO APPLY

The Foundation has secured assistance from [Flexibly Focused](#) to support the search process. Interested parties are encouraged to apply early. The process is completely confidential. [Click Here to Apply](#)

The interview process will include several rounds of interviews and a writing assessment. First-round interviews for this position will begin in June with an anticipated start date of October 2024.

Please be prepared to upload the following with your application:

- A current resume
- A cover letter that speaks to both your practical and policy experience that prepares you for the role

Commitment to a Diverse and Inclusive Team:

The Foundation is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and seeks to build a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve. The Foundation strongly encourages applications from individuals who identify as a member of a traditionally marginalized and/or underrepresented community.