Manager, Midwest Funding Navigator

Summary
Inadequate water infrastructure puts lives, livelihoods, and the environment at risk. Too many communities are ill-equipped to manage stormwater or face contamination from water pollution, and climate change amplifies these threats. Too many households lack reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitation due to failing infrastructure. Systemic disinvestment has fallen along lines of race and class, leading low-income communities and communities of color to bear greater impact of these environmental injustices. Inadequate water infrastructure prevents residents from living the healthy and prosperous lives they deserve. Addressing these problems requires investment in infrastructure.

The federal government’s historic investment of $55 billion for water infrastructure in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) creates a generational opportunity to enhance equity and resilience through increased investment in water infrastructure over the next five years. However, there are many barriers to accessing federal funds. It can be extremely challenging for utilities to initiate the process of assessing needs, designing projects, and applying for funds. With its national and local partners, EPIC is launching a program called the Funding Navigator. The goal is to help many more overburdened communities invest in climate-resilient drinking water provision, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management. Our team of experts in community engagement, funding and finance, project management, and technical assistance will proactively recruit water systems, rapidly diagnose problems, engage technical assistance providers, ensure projects are community-centered, complete applications, and help secure funding from state and federal programs for communities that need it most.

EPIC is seeking to hire a Michigan- or Illinois-based project manager who has: 1) a passion for stepping up to this type of once-in-a-generation opportunity; 2) talent and hands-on experience managing projects involving teams with diverse perspectives or areas of expertise; and 3) experience working with communities or utilities on infrastructure projects. The position has significant flexibility in roles and responsibilities, depending on the skills, experience, and interest of the successful candidate.

Position Description
Reporting to the Funding Navigator Director, the Midwest Funding Navigator Manager will develop, lead, and advance efforts to connect water systems in overburdened Midwest communities with technical assistance and state and federal funds for infrastructure. We are looking for someone with experience with managing projects with teams of contractors or stakeholders; engaging with funding program administrators, water utility managers, municipal leaders, or environmental justice groups; building or leading diverse coalitions; or experience with infrastructure funding programs. We seek candidates who can grow and manage the operation of the Midwest Funding Navigator within a small organizational structure and build momentum as a team leader working with other nonprofits, and technical assistance providers.
We know there is not one ideal candidate who has all the traits listed below. If you have a mix of interests, skills, and experience related to the above – and a passion for this work – please don’t let a gap in your strengths stop you from applying for this role or reaching out.

**Responsibilities**

- Together with the Funding Navigator Director and a team of national and local partners, recruit, build relationships with, and provide guidance and technical assistance to communities through all stages of the investment process, from assessing needs and designing projects to completing applications and securing funding from state and federal programs.
- Optimize collaboration between partners. Provide communication and management of program consultant contracts and MOUs with partners.
- Together with the Funding Navigator Director and team of partners, work with technical assistance providers and community-based organizations to assist in the development of effective infrastructure projects aligned with the Navigator program’s goals.
- Supervise staff, and help build an effective regional team that serves as an advocate for communities that need assistance.
- Identify and participate in industry working groups, associations, and nonprofit collaborations.
- Work with partners to provide thought leadership based on lessons learned. Contribute to case studies, blogs, best practices, and grant reports.
- Participate in webinars, convenings, and public events to highlight prominent issues and solutions.

**Qualifications**

- Bachelor’s degree required. Graduate degree (MBA, MS, MEM, MF, MPA or JD) preferred.
- 4+ years’ experience in one or more of the following areas: project management, water infrastructure design or finance, water utility operational or financial management. We will consider time pursuing a graduate degree toward the 4+ years of experience.
- Expertise supervising and/or coordinating teams to keep project timelines and goals on track.
- Expertise in community-based participatory projects.
- Understanding of federal and state funding programs for water infrastructure.
- Extensive experience leading initiatives that require carrying forward a vision, meeting multiple goals, strategic thinking, quick decision-making, and forming and sharing opinions on policy.
- Strong people and program management skills; this position will work with peers, contractors, and stakeholders on aligned goals.
- Ability to accomplish multiple goals with a focus on outcomes. Work aims to efficiently connect utilities with funds while authentically engaging communities in project development.
- Passion for pursuing equitable outcomes.
- Excellent communication skills.
We will prioritize candidates who can bring:

- Experience working in Michigan or Illinois.
- Community engagement skills and experience.
- Understanding of the technical or financial management of a water system.
- Experience working for or providing technical assistance to a water utility.
- Experience managing, monitoring, and reporting for state or federal government funding programs.
- Experience measuring and evaluating project outcomes.
- Creative thinking and flexibility.
- A network of contacts within water utilities, trade associations, and local or state government agencies.
- Track record of successful fundraising.

Location
The Manager will be based in Michigan or Illinois. Depending on pandemic-related conditions, this position normally requires travel to meetings, conferences, and other events. Work other than travel is done either in an office environment or at the successful candidate’s home office.

Compensation and time commitment
EPIC offers competitive compensation commensurate with experience as well as a generous benefits package.

Salary range
$70,000 - 85,000

Applying
Qualified candidates should send an email to Denise Schmidt at denise@policyinnovation.org with “Manager, Midwest Funding Navigator” in the subject line. Please include a resume and a cover letter. Please also provide any supporting documents we should consider in evaluating your candidacy (e.g., writing samples).

About EPIC
Thank you for your interest in working with EPIC. The Environmental Policy Innovation Center (EPIC) builds policies that deliver spectacular improvement in the speed and scale of environmental progress. A nonprofit start-up, EPIC is committed to finding and highlighting the best approaches to scaling up results quickly. EPIC focuses on clean water, endangered species, environmental markets, and the use of data to further environmental and public health outcomes. Our largest program focuses on delivering better, safer, and more affordable water infrastructure to historically underinvested communities. EPIC operates through a fiscal sponsorship with the Sand County Foundation. These values define the character and culture of our organization:

- Speed. When the planet’s on fire, rapid innovation is better than slow and steady.
- Equity. We are committed to environmental progress and to prosperity for all people, because the most enduring and exceptional outcomes require both.
- Honesty. We bring real data, analysis, and facts to the limelight. Being honest about what is working and not working is not always easy, but we are committed to telling the truth.
- Pragmatism. We focus on ambitious but achievable solutions and believe that compromise and progress is more effective than purity and stasis.
- Wall-less. Innovation happens more in places without hierarchies and where every person and every idea gets respect. We do that.
- Empathy. We must ensure the voices of all people affected by our work are heard. We will support each other and others outside our organization with justice and respect.