Carnegie Mellon University
Wilton E. Scott Institute
for Energy Innovation

Carnegie Mellon University
The Block Center
FOR TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

2025 Seed Grant for AI & Energy

The [Wilton E. Scott Institute for Energy Innovation](#) and the [Block Center for Technology and Society](#) have launched a joint seed grant to fund a **research project at the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and energy**. Jointly, the Scott Institute and Block Center will make an award in the range $10,000 – 75,000 to individuals or small groups. Recipients of these awards are expected to apply for larger, externally funded projects at the end of the seed project.

Prior to submitting a proposal for this award, interested faculty need to become a [Scott Institute Faculty Affiliate](#) and a Block Center Faculty Affiliate. If you are interested in becoming a faculty affiliate of The Block Center, please contact the Block Center Program Managers Cole Gessner (coleg@andrew.cmu.edu) and Hannah Graber (hgraber@andrew.cmu.edu).

Application Instructions

To apply for the seed grant, faculty should prepare a brief proposal (max 1 page, 12-point type) following the format below. Submissions as PI will be limited to one per person (not precluding participation on other proposals).

- **Project Summary –** A brief summary of the proposed activity that outlines the problem to be addressed, explains why it is important, how the proposed solution will address the problem, and who will be involved in the work.

- **Leverage –** Discussion of how a small seed grant can lay the foundation for an expanded activity, preferably including specific suggestions for sources of future support and some indication of the long-term potential for growth of this activity. Please give some indication of the closest related work currently underway at Carnegie Mellon and any prospects for matching or in-kind support that can amplify the impact of the grant.

- **Impact –** We are focused on projects that hold the potential to have significant technical, policy, or entrepreneurial impact in the next few years. While we will consider all activities, they have suggested that we focus on activities that combine technical, behavioral and policy dimensions and are most likely to build on CMU's strengths.

- **Budget –** Budget will be provided preferentially for support of PhD students, equipment, and salary for non-tenure track faculty or staff. Overhead will not be charged. Budgets must be spent out by June 30, 2026.

Applications must be submitted via [this online form](#) by 1/24/2025.

Application guidance

The Scott Institute and the Block Center are eager to promote new collaborations and therefore, preference will be given to proposals that involve multiple faculty and new interdisciplinary interactions (inter-school, inter-departmental or inter-center). Priority will be given to those proposals with the capacity to create new activities that can ultimately engage multiple faculty members across disciplines and research methodologies or domains. We discourage proposals that are simply requesting funding to continue an existing line of work.

Successful applicants will be asked to keep the Scott Institute and the Block Center aware of their efforts to raise funding for research related to their seed project. At the conclusion of the project, we will ask for a ~1 page summary of progress and impact. The Scott Institute and Block Center will also ask for periodic updates on efforts to develop intellectual property, to transfer technology to the private sector, and to initiate startup enterprises.

While we will treat all proposals with discretion to protect faculty ideas, we may on occasion explore, with permission from the applicants, synergies among proposals by sharing summaries of proposal content with another applicant. In particular, we may explore possible collaborations among separate investigators when it might be beneficial or add valuable new perspectives to a project. We will also explore ways to support individual proposals with external sponsors, with the permission and leadership of the applicants.

Application Reviews

Proposals will be reviewed by a faculty committee comprised of Scott Institute Faculty and Block Center Affiliates. Reviewers who are party to a proposal will not be asked to rank their own submission. Final selection of grant winners will be made by the Scott Institute and Block Center leadership.

For more information, please contact [Daniel Tkacik](Scott Institute) and [Steve Wray](Block Center)