

# Clean Energy Fund Recommendations | Spring 2019

Submitted by the Socially Responsible Investment Advisory Council to Richard Cate, VP for Finance

## Executive Summary

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As part of the call for proposals for the Spring 2019 Clean Energy Fund Forum, the members of the SRI Advisory Council received four proposals and invited all of the proposers to present at the Clean Energy Fund Forum on March 6th in the Livak Ballroom, Davis Center. Two proposals were vetted by the Infrastructure Committee (see the [Organizational Chart](#) for more details) and the other two came directly from community members under the ‘Academics and Co-curricular Education’ heading. The group used the same metrics to vote on proposals as in the past and particularly emphasizes the potential for *impact* on university community and the alignment with CEF goals.

**The SRI Advisory Council voted to fund \$15,910 of the \$38,520 requested by proposers at the CEF Forum in Spring. The group recommends funding three proposals at close to full funding requests (Carbon Offset Resource, Signage for Solar Panels, Storytelling Proposal) and not funding one the proposal at this time (Wind Turbine Repairs). The Graduate College also released a call for proposals this spring and funded one proposal submitted by Materials Masters Student Robin Rice at \$17, 046.45 for the development of organic semiconductors for Organic Photovoltaics in cutting edge clean energy research.**

Though the number of proposals received was lower than previous semesters, the SRI Advisory Council feels that in general, they were of higher quality. Outreach efforts like adding more information to the Clean Energy Fund website, specifically the Active Transportation Plan, the STARS Technical Manual and the Climate Action Plan, encouraged proposers to align their ideas with existing initiatives on campus. In addition, a new student group (CALL), facilitated by SRI Advisory Council faculty representative, Amy Seidl, has actively developed proposals and continues to take an interest in the CEF.

This academic year also marked the beginning of the SRI Advisory Council’s partnership with the Grossman School of Business’ SIMBA Graduate Program. Thirteen graduate students presented to the SRI Advisory Council during the fall semester and presented their analyses and approach for impact investments for the \$10 million operating funds. This spring, this same group won the Total Impact Portfolio Challenge, an inter-collegiate impact investing competition, beating schools like Yale, Columbia and Boston University. They attribute some of their success to their work the SRI Advisory Council and Dana Investments, the firm guiding the impact investing efforts at the university.

## Proposal Recommendations

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### Recommendation to fully fund Carbon Offset Proposal

**Name of presenter:** Will Corcoran, undergraduate student and SRI Advisory Council member

**Proposal summary:** This concept was developed by Will and several other students to address the largest source of carbon emissions for most students during their time at UVM, which is international air travel. This proposal aims to develop an online resource for students that describes options and methods for offsetting air travel. This proposal will occur in two phases. Phase 1 funding is designed to support an internship to conduct initial research on what a carbon offset resource might include. Students will return to the CEF to request funding for Phase 2 following the internship research.

**Funding request:** Phase 1: \$1,650.

**Recommendation:** Members expressed strong support for the project and the motion to fully fund the Phase 1 passed easily. **Recommendation for full funding of Phase 1 of the project at \$1,650.**

### Recommendation to deny funding for Wind Turbine Repairs

**Name of presenter:** Rich Wolbach, Energy Manager

**Proposal summary:** The 10kW Bergey demonstration wind turbine near Jeffords Hall is not currently functional and in need of repair. This proposal originally came through the Infrastructure Committee to fund new components on the turbine.

**Funding request:** \$15,000 was requested to buy a new inverter and hire a consultant to the work.

**Recommendation:** The Advisory Council members deliberated on this at length, over several meetings. The recommendation is to *deny funding* for the turbine repairs for several reasons. This is very old technology now (installed in 2006) and is not producing significant amounts of electricity – approximately enough to run the lights over the parking lot near Jeffords Hall. Several of the turbines that were installed around the state of Vermont during this time are no longer running, another indication of how technology has evolved and this model is obsolete. This turbine site is not appropriate for generating optimal power and can (and sometimes is) considered a misleading model for renewable energy by members of the university community. The group voted to deny funding and requests that Rich Wolbach conduct research on the feasibility of a 25kW turbine at the Miller Farm or another location that receives optimal wind to power a new turbine. **The SRI Advisory Council recommends *not funding this proposal and requesting new ideas from the Physical Plant and Infrastructure Committee to develop renewable energy on or near campus that uses current technology and optimal siting. This was a unanimous vote to deny funding.***

### **Recommendation to partially fund Signage for the Wind Turbine and Solar Panels**

**Name of presenter:** Erica Spiegel, Physical Plant

**Proposal summary:** This proposal requested funding for signage near the central heating plant to describe the solar panels on the building and signage near the Bergey wind turbine. The sign near the central heating plant is old and weathered and in need of repair.

**Funding request:** \$4,110 for both signs - \$3,100 for one sign

**Recommendation:** The group voted unanimously to fund the sign near the central heating plant. They request that students be involved in the design of the graphics. **The recommendation is to fund the signage request at \$3,100.**

### **Recommendation to partially fund the Clean Energy Storytelling and Data Collection Project**

**Name of presenter:** Richard Watts, professor and Sophie Smith, undergraduate student

**Proposal summary:** This proposal attempts to celebrate and communicate the work of the CEF by engaging students to develop digital materials that capture and market the CEF projects on campus. This proposal included funding for a professional photographer, student interns to support data collection and design of materials, and print brochures for visiting students.

**Funding request:** \$17,760

**Recommendation:** The group deliberated on this proposal over the course of the spring semester and requested a modified proposal that cut funding for the photographer and reduced some of the paper use. Ultimately, the group decided that the opportunity to gain exposure and recognition for the CEF was of utmost importance and voted to partially fund this proposal with several key caveats.

The group requests that the final deliverable be a Powerpoint instead of a brochure, to reduce the use of paper and likelihood of dozens of unused brochures. The SRI Advisory Council will have the rights to the final photographs, established by a contract with the photographer and will have editorial oversight of the final product. Richard and Sophie (the proposers) are encouraged to think about a second proposal to develop mapping and other content that may eventually be developed and integrated at strategic locations around campus. Two examples the SRIAC members discussed are 1) a map of CEF projects and a short history of the new bike storage kiosks that will begin construction this summer or 2) a storyboard in Waterman Hall. **The final recommendation from the SRI Advisory Council is to partially fund this proposal at \$11, 160, with the parameters stated above.**