

Clean Energy Fund Recommendations | Spring 2018

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

Executive Summary

As part of the call for proposals for the Spring 2018 Clean Energy Fund Forum, the members of the SRI Advisory Council received eleven proposals (compared to seven proposals in fall 2017) and invited seven of these proposals to present at the Clean Energy Fund Forum on March 22nd. One presentation was vetted by the Infrastructure Committee (see the [Organizational Chart](#) for more details) and five proposals came directly from community members under the ‘Academics and Co-curricular Education’ heading. One proposal, SunShares, was an infrastructure project proposed by a member of the Infrastructure Committee but without the approval of the entire group. Evaluation of the proposals occurred using metrics developed by the SRI Advisory Council, including alignment with CEF goals, potential for impact and the quality of the overall proposal.

The SRI Advisory Council voted to fund three of the proposals from the spring forum. The SRIAC recommends fully funding one proposal, a student-led “Sustainable Transportation Education Initiative” and partially funding two proposals, the “Waste to Clean Energy Lecture Series” and the RSENr “Net-Zero Ready” proposal.

The SRI Advisory Council recommends no funding for the student-led AERO Club. The three remaining proposals show potential and SRIAC recommends sending its suggestions, (collected during the deliberation) for strengthening each application, with encouragement to resubmit for the fall 2018 forum.

Proposal Recommendations

AERO

Name of presenter: Jack Zimmerman and other members of AERO, students

Proposal summary: UVM AERO (Alternative Energy Racing Organization) is a student-run organization, modeled after a progressive engineering firm that researches, develops, and races hybrid and electric open wheel racecars. AERO did not receive funding in fall 2017 and returned to seek funding again. The SRIAC made several suggestions and explained reservations to Jack Zimmerman through multiple emails between Elizabeth and Jack. AERO reduced its funding request by close to half and acknowledged the feedback received regarding the project's limited reach among students and limited connections to clean energy on campus.

Funding request: \$22,639

Recommendation: Members expressed several major reservations about this proposal, very similar to the concerns raised in the fall. Members expressed doubts that this proposal supports the university community noting that the club includes approximately 30 students, less of whom actually work on the cars and highlighted that the CEF has funded this club for several years. The group noted no significant changes to the proposal aside from the change in the funding request. The group also discussed the possibility that the Engineering College actively support the club. **A unanimous motion was passed not to fund this proposal.**

Covered Bike Racks

Name of presenter: Richard Watts, professor

Proposal summary: Richard proposed funding 3-5 covered bike racks across campus following an extensive and broad stakeholder engagement process, including the Campus Planning Department, student clubs, Parking and Transportation and others. He proposed a timeline for engaging student interns and gathering feedback on locations and details of the proposed bike racks.

Funding request: Up to \$30,000, exact costs not yet known.

Recommendation: The proposal captures an idea that the SRIAC is in favor of. However, the proposal was missing important details including a delineated budget, the support of key personnel on campus and more information on the type and location of the covered racks. The SRIAC is very hopeful that after further information gathering, a stronger proposal could be submitted in the fall. **The SRIAC took a unanimous vote for no funding, with encouragement to resubmit a more detailed proposal in the fall.**

HempCrete Building Demonstration Project

Name of presenter: Steve Lefkovitz, student

Proposal summary: This proposal was brought forward with the support of the Renewable Energy Network, a student club. HempCrete is a renewable building material with a hemp plant base, similar to concrete. Steve proposed building a structure on campus with this material as a demonstration and learning opportunity for students.

Funding request: \$10,000

Recommendation: Similar to the proposal for the covered bike racks, the SRIAC noted a lack of critical details necessary for funding a project like this. Most importantly, a new building requires a permit obtained through the university's planning process. In general, members like the idea of a practical learning opportunity for students promoting a new, less energy-intensive building material, but need more information to move forward. **SRIAC voted unanimously to withhold funding, make recommendations to Steve for a stronger proposal and suggest returning in the fall.**

SunShares

Name of presenter: Gioia Thompson

Proposal summary: SunShares is a program from VEIC to give employees access to low-cost community solar-generated energy. The proposal included the installation of a 150-200 kW solar system on UVM property and the creation of an LLC to leverage the private capital from VEIC to then pass on membership in the community solar project to UVM employees. Employees would benefit from bill credits for solar generation.

Funding request: \$10,000.

Recommendation: While innovative and a direct application of clean energy on campus, two major reservations arose during deliberations. The proposal largely benefits UVM employees, who do not pay into the CEF. Some graduate students could benefit, but most undergraduate students would be unable to benefit from this model. In addition, the creation of an LLC not advisable. **The group was unanimous in its recommendation not to fund SunShares.**

Sustainable Transportation Education Initiative

Name of presenter: Thomas Maron, Morgan Dreibelbis, Devin Spindel, Deirdre Gill, students

Proposal summary: This proposal is an education initiative to increase awareness of sustainable transportation options on campus. Through Facebook posts (including "boosting", using a specific software strategy available for purchase), flyers, banners and ads across campus, the proposers aim to increase students understanding of the bike share, CarShare Vermont, bus options and rideshare options.

Funding request: \$3,000

Recommendation: **This request for funding passed unanimously.** Members were strongly in support of this proposal. It's not costly, has clean energy benefits across campus and involves all students.

RSENR Net-Zero

Name of presenter: Gary Hawley, Jon Erickson, professors

Proposal summary: This proposal is part of a broad effort to achieve Net-Zero energy at the Rubenstein School, which is defined by creating as much renewable energy as is consumed. This proposal was first brought to the CEF Infrastructure Committee in fall 2017. At that time, members of the committee asked Gary Hawley to condense the scope of the proposal and work closely with Physical Plant to develop a proposal that could be feasible for the staff resources available from the Physical Plant. Several meetings ensued with various stakeholders involved, including Dean Nancy Mathews, Gary, Claire Burlingham and Elizabeth Palchak and one 15-person meeting including Luce Hillman and Richard Walbach to discuss next steps for the proposal. Gary was encouraged to pursue energy audits as a first step towards the end goals of the proposal. At the spring CEF forum, Gary presented a proposal asking for funding for audits of Bittersweet, Aiken, the Rubenstein Lab and the Forest Science Lab.

Funding request: \$69,031 to \$91,031 depending on the cost of the firm. The cost to RSENR is \$10,481.

Recommendation: This proposal inspired extensive deliberation amongst the members. The project proposed is part of a much larger effort to make RSENR competitive among its peers for its sustainability efforts. However, the funding request is large, will benefit only one school with UVM that has already made significant gains towards energy use reductions and the need from Physical Plant staff is a concern. Members propose funding half of the request and suggesting the Rubenstein School commit more funds to the effort. **Members passed a motion to fund the project at an amount not to exceed \$50,000 and request that the Rubenstein School contribute half of the necessary funds to move forward as part of a cost-share model.**

Waste to Clean Energy Lecture Series

Name of presenter: Anju Krivov, lecturer

Proposal summary: The Waste to Clean Energy lecture series is similar to the Clean Energy Lecture series that the CEF has funded several times. This course instead focuses on opportunities to turn to waste into usable clean energy. Prof. Krivov proposes to invite multiple speakers over the course of a semester to discuss relevant topics and allow course credit for class attendance. This model mirrors the Clean Energy Lecture series.

Funding request: \$25,000

Recommendation: **Members passed a motion to fund the course at \$17,500, minus the cost of the instructor (\$7,500).** This is the same approach used for funding the Clean Energy Lecture Series. **Members also propose stipulating that the lecture series must be open to the university community and broadly marketed.**