



MCSI Research Seed Grant Program in Sustainability

Application Deadline: ~~Monday, February 17, 2025~~ Extended Deadline: February 28, 2025

Awardees Announced: April 11, 2025

Funds Distributed: May-June 2025

Reports Due: May 2026

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: The Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation (MCSI) at the University of Pittsburgh is requesting faculty seed grant proposals for interdisciplinary sustainability research initiatives.

MCSI aims to catalyze and expand Pitt’s research capacity to accelerate equitable solutions to pressing sustainability challenges.

With our faculty partners, we do this through 4 broad [research themes](#).

MCSI Research Seed Grants aim to:

- (1) catalyze the formation of convergent research teams focused on sustainability and associated solutions;
- (2) fund projects capable of obtaining external funding upon completion; and
- (3) enhance Pitt’s national recognition in sustainability and the visibility of interdisciplinary sustainability research and education on campus.

REGENERATIVE SOLUTIONS RESPECTING PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

- Circular Economy & Sustainable Materials
- Water Equity
- Complex Sustainable Systems
- Just Energy Transition

LEAD: Goetz Vesper, Engineering



THRIVING FUTURES IN THE FACE OF REGIONAL CHANGE

- Climate & Health
- Sustainable Healthcare
- Urban Food
- Community Resilience and Equitable Built Environments

LEAD: Tina Ndoh, Public Health



RESILIENT ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

- Water
- Ecosystems
- Biodiversity
- Ecological Justice & Natural Resources

LEAD:

Justin Kitzes

Cori Zawacki

Biological Sciences



ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

- De/Growth
- Preserving Our Past to Understand Our Future
- Climate Anxiety
- Environmental Justice, Film Studies, & Media Disinformation

LEAD: Ruth Mostern, History



If you would like to brainstorm a research topic, need help identifying collaborators or are looking for input, please feel free to reach out to any of our research leads identified below. In addition, if you have an idea that does not fit within these topical areas, please reach out to Dr. Melissa Bilec (mbilec@pitt.edu).

Requirements

Eligibility:

A University of Pittsburgh faculty member (tenure or non-tenure stream) must be a Co-PI on the proposal, however, collaborations with Pitt staff and students are encouraged. In addition, due to the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability we highly encourage collaborations between departments and schools.

Budgets:

A maximum of \$65,000 can be requested. All grants will be funded for a one-year period beginning July 1, 2025. Funds can be used for undergraduate and graduate student support and post-doctoral support. Funds can also be used to support sustainability projects related to campus improvements and living laboratory projects. Small amounts of funds will be considered for equipment, supplies, and travel. If your work requires different budget considerations, please email Gena Kovalcik (gmk9@pitt.edu).

Body of the Proposal:

The body of the proposal should not exceed *five single-spaced pages* and should employ a 12-point font size and one-inch margins. The five-page limit excludes references. The body of the proposal should provide:

- A clear statement of goals and rationale for the work.
- A strong connection to sustainability and the [research thrust areas](#) noted above.
- A detailed work plan.
- A description of the proposed work that describes how it differs from previous approaches.
- If a proposed solution is designed to be more sustainable than current analogs, then a means by which the new solution will be validated (*vis-à-vis* sustainability) should be included in the proposal.
- A set of milestones that will allow judgment of project success.

Budget

Proposals must include a 1-page budget and 1-page maximum budget justification.

Note regarding graduate students: For SSOE, in developing your budget, please note that graduate students will be supported as Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs). For GSRs the budgets should include: stipend, 50% fringe, and \$8000 in tuition per term (fall and spring; no summer tuition). (Note: GSRs on FTDH do not require tuition support, so this choice is also available, pending current student support.)

OPTIONAL Appendices (CVs, current support):

- While not required, the PI and all co-PIs may include a 2-page CV (NSF or NIH formats are acceptable, but not required).
- Please provide current support if related to the proposal.
- If any matching support is being provided, this should be detailed in a letter of support.

Important Submission instructions:

Proposals are due ~~February 17, 2025~~. Extended Deadline: February 28, 2025

In a single-PDF please include (Proposal Cover Page, Body of the Proposal, Budget)

Your single PDF File should be named *LastNameSeedGrant2025* and be submitted via our Qualtrics [Form](#)

Proposals are reviewed by a committee of internal and external advisors.

Reporting Requirements:

Recipients of an award from the MCSI Seed Grant program must fulfill the following requirements:

- Three to five PowerPoint slides summarizing the goals and outcome of the work due on May 1, 2026.
- Acknowledgement of MCSI funding in any publications resulting from the work.

For additional information contact: Melissa M. Bilec (mbilec@pitt.edu), Gena M. Kovalcik (gmk9@pitt.edu)