



Guidelines for Rocket Fund Applications – 2025

Apply Here: <https://platform.younoodle.com/client/entry-rounds/caltech rocket fund 2025/apply>

Deadline: By 11.59 pm Friday March 3, 2025. Information:
stephanie.yanchinski@caltech.edu

Awards: \$25,000 - \$100,000, with opportunities for additional funding from partners

Eligibility: Incorporated or in process; \$4 million equity investment cap at Rocket Fund application deadline; companies closing a round during RF process are still eligible; faculty, students, new graduates post-doctoral researchers as well as garage entrepreneurs welcomed; fits technology scope of Rocket fund tracks, listed below; national and international companies may apply but with goal of establishing California presence, legally able to operate in the US, and have a US corporate bank account; demonstration site with either customer or accepted “gold standard” lab testing facility, either arranged or being finalized; company strategic RF goal : open up beachhead (SOM) market that leads to customer orders or new investment; estimated timeframe for designing and building the first commercial prototype for demonstrating: 12 months from time of receiving the award. Software platforms qualify if they are innovative and fit within and support the RF track sectors

We Look For:

- Strong, third-party validated technologies (e.g., patents, university research, DOE national lab e.g., NREL, ARPA-E or Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) data, utility field testing or UL certification) or innovative software platforms with early demonstration of market value
- Clear idea of the value proposition of the product, market segments and target customers for establishing your beachhead (early adopter) niche
- Well-defined use of Rocket Funds with a potential customer providing a test site for your technology demonstration
- Serious attention to broad impact

Broadening Participation: In 2021 the Rocket Fund established a commitment to broaden participation and draw in talent from every corner of innovation tackling the problems of sustainability. We look for those with a mission to have as meaningful impact as possible, including spreading the benefits of cleantech and sustainability to all levels of our communities. A significant portion of the scoring during the competition will address this challenge. Please ensure you describe fully the factors that show your company's commitment to your technology's impact with widespread product adoption, and the corporate strategic considerations that indicate you are considering how to enhance your approach to this challenge.

Scope: The Rocket Fund provides competitive grants for funding early commercial prototype development (TRL 5 – 7, DOE*) in cleantech and sustainability startups. Rocket Fund covers: Initial prototype design, build out and installation; equipment purchase; consulting support for specialized tasks such as programming user interfaces and manufacturing process development, product engineering and scale up; technology certification; testing by “gold standard” laboratories or services, recognized by your potential customers for technology/product validation and for developing a manufacturing process.

Rocket Fund Tracks:

Rocket Fund 2024 Tracks	
Track 1: Building Technologies Advanced Insulation materials/installation Advanced window technology Demand response/demand flexibility Efficient lighting Hot water system technologies Innovative HVAC/cooling systems Low carbon building materials & coatings Nanogrids/backup power systems Smart electric panels/breakers Smart energy management systems/controls & automation Smart/efficient appliances Technology for adoption/behavior change	Track 2: Transportation Alternative fuels including biofuels Decarbonized construction equipment Electric Vehicles EV battery technology EV charging Fuel cell electric vehicles Hydrogen fueling Low/no emissions trucking Off-road - rail, marine, aviation Onboard hydrogen storage Smart logistics - shipping efficiency, data tracking Vehicle to grid, vehicle to building & vehicle to home charging
Track 3: Energy Technologies Battery electricity storage - grid scale Electric grid security Fuel Cell technology Geothermal energy Grid+pipeline coupling Hydrogen storage Long duration energy storage Microgrid systems Pipeline monitoring/management Renewable electricity generation Renewable heat generation Renewable hydrogen production Renewable synthetic fuels - electrofuels Technology for grid design/planning/operations Waste to energy	Track 4: Agricultural & Food Technologies Agriculture management platforms & controls Crop yield improvement/resilience Fertilizer production innovation & alternatives Food production technologies Indoor/urban agriculture Precision agriculture/soil sensors Smart Farm Equipment Soil amendments Waste biomass utilization Water management advancements
Track 5: Water Anaerobic digestion Desalination Grey water Low pressure membrane technology Management & Controls - Commercial Management & Controls - Residential PFAS elimination Photocatalytic innovation Waste water processing Water system filtering & purification Water power technologies	Track 6: Climate and Environment Technologies Air quality management technologies Carbon dioxide removal (air/water capture) Carbon dioxide sequestration, repurposing & storage Carbon utilization Environmental cleanup Industrial decarbonization - chemicals, iron & steel, cement, food/beverage Material reuse/recycling Methane emissions - detection, elimination, repurposing Wildfire management
RSI Office of Entrepreneurial Programs 11.12.23	

Schedule:

Rocket Fund 2025 Timetable		
	Completion Date	Time
Applications close	Friday, 3/3	11.59 pm
Stage 1: Initial screening	3/4 - 3/14	
Notification of Semi-Finalists	3/15	
Stage 2: Semi-Finals		
Candidates complete due diligence forms	3/15 - 3/31	11.59 pm
TAC Review Meeting	Friday, 4/25	2.30 pm - 4.30 pm
Finalists notified	Saturday 5/3	
Finalist Presentation Preparation	5/4- 5/19	11.59 pm
Stage 3: Finals		
Rocket Fund Finals Day 1 - Presentations (virtual)	Monday, 6/2	8.30 am - 12.30 pm
Rocket Fund Finals Day 2 - Presentations & Discussion	Tuesday, 6/3	8.30 am - 2.00 pm
Review, additional Due Diligence	6/4 - 6/13	
Awardees Notified	Saturday 6/14	
RSI Office of Entrepreneurial Programs 09.25.24		

* From the Electric Power Research Institute, based on Department of Energy Information

TRL (Technology Readiness Levels)	
1	Exploratory research transition basic science into laboratory applications
2	Technology concepts and/or application formulated
3	Proof of concept validation
4	Subsystem or component validation in laboratory environment to simulate service conditions
5	Early system validation demonstrated in laboratory or limited field application
6	Early field demonstration and system refinements completed.
7	Complete system demonstration in an operational environment.
8	Early commercial deployment
9	Wide-scale commercial deployment

The Office of Entrepreneurial Programs, Resnick Sustainability Institute, November 2024