Summary of Spurring Science: Examining U.S. Government Grant Activity in AI

This data brief is intended to be an informational resource about U.S. government grants in AI to inform ongoing debates and policy decisions. We analyze trends in how U.S. government agencies are using grants to foster AI research and assess how the U.S. government's approach to funding AI research differs from other areas of research.

While the majority of federal grants are generally awarded to academic recipients, **we find that industry played an outsized role in U.S. government grant funding of AI research between 2017 and 2023. Moreover, departments within the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) appear to prioritize funding industry and AI research relative to other funding agencies.** This shows how the U.S. government's approach to AI grants appears to differ from broader grant-giving activity over the last five years.

- **Twenty-three percent of U.S. government grants awarded to industry were for AI research**. AI was the most common field of research awarded to industry recipients across all fields of research.

- **Industry recipients received 23 percent of all AI grants.** Moreover, industry received four times as many grants for AI research than for other fields of research, showing that industry plays an instrumental role in U.S. government-funded AI research.

- **Departments and agencies within the DOD awarded more grants to industry than other U.S. government agencies.** Seven of the top 10 agencies awarding the highest percentage of the agency's grants to industry are part of the DOD.

- **Roughly a fourth of each of the Departments of the Navy, Air Force, and Army's grants were for AI research.** This suggests that these DOD departments prioritize funding AI research through grants relative to other funding agencies.

More research is needed to examine what topics within the broad category of AI are being funded by different U.S. government agencies. An expansion of this research would help inform policymakers how funding is being allocated for research in AI.

For more information:

- Download the report: https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/spurring-science

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