



LAF Case Study Investigation Program

Application Instructions: Project Proposal for Firms

The Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF) is pleased to announce the call for Project Proposals for the 2021 *Case Study Investigation Program* (CSI).

This document provides background information and instructions on the materials needed for a firm to propose one or two projects for study for the 2021 CSI program, which runs from February 3 to August 4, 2021.

The full set of application materials must be submitted by 11:59pm EDT on November 1, 2020.

For more information about CSI, visit: <http://www.lafoundation.org/csi>. Please contact LAF Program Manager Megan Barnes (mbarnes@lafoundation.org) with questions.

Case Study Investigation: Firms and Projects

Case Study Investigation supports designers in assessing and documenting the performance of exemplary landscape projects. Through CSI, select practitioners work with LAF-funded faculty-student research teams to produce [Case Study Briefs](#) for the *Landscape Performance Series*. This online database of over 150 case studies is used by designers, students, researchers, policy-makers, and advocates to find precedents and make the case for sustainable landscape solutions.

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OVERVIEW

The *Case Study Investigation* (CSI) program is a unique research collaboration and training program for faculty, students, and practitioners. Through CSI, LAF funded faculty-student research teams work with leading practitioners to document the impacts of exemplary, high-performing landscape projects. Teams develop methods to quantify the environmental, social, and economic benefits of built projects and produce Case Study Briefs for LAF's [Landscape Performance Series](#).

Faculty and design firms apply to CSI in partnership to produce a case study of a specific built landscape project.* Each research team is led by a faculty CSI Research Fellow and supported by a student Research Assistant. The academic team interfaces with a Firm Liaison, who provides information about the project goals, design, design and construction process, and intended performance. Clients, site managers, and other project stakeholders may also contribute data and insights.

The CSI program runs annually from February to August. During the spring, faculty-student teams work with firm liaisons to develop the research plan and case study narrative. Site visits and field data collection are primarily conducted during the summer. The academic teams use this information to craft the performance benefits and document the project in the online [Case Study Brief](#) format. Throughout this process, LAF provides training, iterative feedback, and opportunities for interaction among teams. Final case studies undergo a peer review process and are published to the *Landscape Performance Series* in the fall.

**LAF may be able to assist in matching prospective CSI Research Fellows with prospective firms/projects based on geographic proximity, common interests, and relevant expertise. Potential applicants wishing to be matched should contact LAF well in advance of the application deadline to discuss.*

PROGRAM GOALS

The CSI program is highly collaborative and helps to bridge the gap between research and design practice. By investing in this research, LAF is generating much-needed information and precedents to evaluate performance, demonstrate value, and make the case for sustainable landscape solutions. The *Landscape Performance Series* database of over 150 case studies is used by designers, students, researchers, journalists, policy-makers, and advocates.

Because resources (including time, expertise, and funding) are often limited for performance evaluation, the CSI program seeks to identify valid, defensible, and replicable metrics and methods that can be used within a short timeframe by non-experts with limited resources. This makes the 6-month CSI program an ideal testing ground for new methods.

As a training program, CSI is an important impetus in moving the landscape architecture discipline toward designing every project with specific performance objectives, documenting project goals and design intent, routinely collecting performance data, and integrating landscape performance in design education.



ELIGIBILITY

To participate in CSI, designers apply with a particular project to be studied. For design firms, the applicant must be the landscape architect of record for the project. Nonprofit organizations, government agencies, facilities departments, and other entities that engage landscape architects are also eligible, provided that they played a primary role in the design and implementation of the project.

Proposed projects must be built and operating/in use for at least one year by the time the CSI program begins in February. Completed phases of a multi-phase project are eligible, as are discrete, easily distinguished portions of a larger project. Projects completed more than 10 years ago are not recommended for CSI because landscape performance should be measured against the project's design goals and intent, and over time this information is often lost and/or the built project is modified.

If a proposed CSI project site is not open to the public/its typical user group at the time of application due to the COVID-19 pandemic or related circumstances, we recommend that the project not be submitted for CSI this year.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

For designers, CSI is a unique opportunity to document and showcase exemplary work, expand capacity to capture performance information, build relationships with academic researchers, and support an unparalleled professional development experience for students. It also allows firms to demonstrate leadership in performance-based design and strengthen relationships with clients and other project stakeholders.

Although design firms are not compensated for their participation in CSI, Firm Liaisons can earn up to 20 course equivalency Professional Development Hours (PDHs) through the Landscape Architecture Continuing Education System (LA CES).

FIRM EXPECTATIONS

Participation in CSI requires ongoing involvement and commitment from the design firm, particularly the Firm Liaison who serves as the point person for the CSI academic team. The liaison must be responsive and engaged with the research team throughout the CSI program. Specifically, the Firm Liaison is expected to:

- Provide key project information including goals and design intent, site features, challenges, lessons learned, photos, and illustrative plans/drawings
- Provide access or serve as the liaison between the academic team and key project personnel such as firm leadership, colleagues, clients, collaborators, and other project stakeholders
- Assist the research team in identifying potential performance benefits and methods to quantify them



- Participate in CSI program webinars

Firms devote an average of 20-35 staff hours to the CSI program between February and August. The exact time commitment depends on availability of information and previous work done to document the project.

PROJECTS

Proposed projects should have the potential to generate a range of quantified environmental, social, and economic performance benefits. They should reflect innovation in design, materials, policy, partnerships, and/or process for the given project type and geographic region. Projects that yield the most successful case studies have compelling benefits and a compelling narrative that shares not only successes but also challenges, failures, and lessons learned.

CSI research teams are more readily able to produce a set of comprehensive benefits when project goals and design intent have been clearly articulated, baseline information has been collected, and aspects of performance have been modeled during the design process (such as stormwater management) or tracked through operations (such as site use/attendance).

Additional consideration will be given to projects with a strong narrative, goals, and benefits related to: (1) climate change and resilience, and/or (2) diversity, equity, and inclusion.

SELECTION PROCESS

Each year, 5-8 research teams and 10-12 projects are selected for the CSI program through an open, competitive process.

Faculty and design firms apply to the CSI program in partnership, but submit separate applications. Faculty may apply to produce either one or two project case studies with the corresponding design firm(s). Design firms apply with one or more projects and may partner with different faculty members for different projects.

Teams are selected for participation in the CSI program based on their potential to generate high-quality, compelling case studies with a range of quantified environmental, social, and economic benefits. CSI Research Fellows and student Research Assistants are evaluated based on their experience and demonstrated interest in landscape performance evaluation. Projects and firms are evaluated based on the quality of the project and the availability of information to document performance. Additional consideration is given for projects that have a strong "Before/After" image pair that showcases the transformation of the site. Evaluators also consider the strength of the team relationship and commitment to the CSI process.

All applicants will be notified of a decision by mid-December.



APPLICATION PROCESS

LAF uses SlideRoom as its online application platform and will only accept applications submitted through this system. All application materials must be submitted by 11:59pm EDT on November 1.

Visit <http://lafoundation.slideroom.com> to use the system. Once you have created an account, scroll down to select the appropriate application type (CSI Research Fellow or Project Proposal), and click “Begin” to start the application process. You may save, edit, and review your work prior to submitting. An application fee of \$5 (USD) must be paid through SlideRoom when the application is submitted.

APPLICATION CONTENTS

Prospective CSI Research Fellows and design firms apply as a team, but submit separate applications. The CSI Research Fellow application requires the name of the proposed firm liaison(s) and project(s), and the Firm/Project Proposal requires the name of the proposed CSI Research Fellow. All submissions must adhere to guidelines and deadlines in order to be considered. Additional materials will not be reviewed.

Firm/Project Proposals

- Firm Information and Contacts
- Proposed Faculty Partnership
- Project Information
- Supervising Principal Form (<https://www.lafoundation.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/CSI-2021-Supervising-Principal-Form.pdf>)
- Letters of Support (optional but encouraged)
- Project Access Letter (only for sites with restricted access)
- Before/After Images