Landscape Architecture Foundation

LAF Research Grant in Honor of Deb Mitchell
Application Instructions: Pre-proposal

The Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF) is pleased to offer this grant opportunity, which was established by a generous bequest from Debra Mitchell, FASLA, with additional support from SmithGroup.

This document provides background information on the grant application process and instructions to submit a pre-proposal to be considered for the 12- or 18-month grant period that will begin in the summer of fall of 2023.

The full set of pre-proposal materials must be submitted **by 11:59pm EST on December 1, 2022**.

For more information about the research grant, visit: http://www.lafoundation.org/deb-mitchell-grant

LAF Research Grant: Pre-proposals

Calling research-minded landscape architects from academic institutions, professional practice, and other research organizations. The $25,000 LAF Research Grant in Honor of Deb Mitchell supports research projects that are relevant and impactful for the professional practice of landscape architecture. The grant period begins in the summer or fall and runs for 12 or 18 months.

Pre-proposals require general information about the applicant, a short description of the proposed research, and a preliminary budget and schedule. Candidates who are short-listed in the pre-proposal stage will be invited to submit a full proposal by March 1.

The grant was established in memory of Debra Mitchell, FASLA, who was a champion for the value of research to landscape architecture practice.

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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

OVERVIEW

The *LAF Research Grant in Honor of Deb Mitchell* supports research projects that are relevant and impactful for the professional practice of landscape architecture.

Each year, one $25,000 grant is awarded to support a research project that can be completed in a 12- to 18-month period. The research must generate knowledge and insights relevant to the practice of design in order to increase landscape architecture's capacity and impact.

The Principal Investigator must be trained as a landscape architect and currently engaged in the field of landscape architecture as a researcher, educator, professional practitioner, or in some other capacity.

GRANT PURPOSE

The LAF Research Grant in Honor of Deb Mitchell was established to raise the profile of research within landscape architecture, to offer new opportunities for collaborative research, and above all to honor Deb, who was a champion for the value of research to the professional practice of landscape architecture.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants are welcome from academic institutions, professional practice, and other research organizations. Preference will be given to research teams that represent partnerships between academic institutions or research organizations and professional practice.

At least one of the Principal Investigators must be:

- Currently engaged in the field of landscape architecture as a researcher, educator, professional practitioner, or in some other capacity.

- Have a bachelor's or master's degree in landscape architecture. For those with degrees from colleges/universities in the U.S. and Canada, the landscape architecture program must be LAAB- or LAAC-accredited. For those outside of the U.S. and Canada, in locations where landscape architecture is not a recognized degree or profession, a degree in a related discipline is acceptable, provided that the applicant works or teaches as a landscape architect.

- Able to communicate in written and spoken English at an advanced/professional level and provide evidence of proficiency.

Current LAF staff, members of the LAF Board of Directors, and members of LAF committees are not eligible. Former staff and former members of the LAF Board of Directors and committees who meet the above requirements are eligible.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research projects must be relevant and impactful for the professional practice of landscape architecture. The projects must be completed in a 12- to 18-month period.

Proposed research should be related to landscape architecture in one or more of the following areas: sustainability, climate change mitigation or adaptation, resilience, social equity, health and well-being, urbanization, biodiversity, landscape performance, the economic case for sustainable landscapes, design advocacy, design as research, and design innovation.

FUNDING

Each year, LAF awards one $25,000 grant. The grant period begins in the summer or fall and runs for 12 or 18 months as specified in the proposal and final grant agreement. The grant cannot be renewed.

The award is distributed in three payments, based on mutually agreed-upon deliverables and milestones specified in the grant agreement.

Indirect costs are included in the $25,000 award. LAF will pay a maximum total Facilities & Administrative (F&A) cost rate of 12%. Therefore, for this grant award, the maximum F&A is $2,679 (with total direct costs of $22,321). See LAF's Indirect Cost Policy.

If the funds are received by an individual or a design firm, the individual or receiving entity is responsible for any tax implications of the award.

AWARDEE EXPECTATIONS

Grantees are required to submit quarterly progress reports and maintain regular contact with LAF to discuss any challenges. Deliverables and milestones must be completed/submitted as mutually agreed upon and specified in the grant agreement.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Each year, one $25,000 grant is awarded through an open, competitive process. The grant follows a two-stage application and selection process:

Pre-Proposal
Pre-proposals require general information about the applicant, a short description of the proposed research, and a preliminary budget and schedule.

Full Proposal
Candidates who are short-listed in the pre-proposal stage will be invited to submit a full proposal by March 1. These candidates will also participate in a web-based video conversation with jurors about the proposed research in late January/early February.

LAF uses SlideRoom as its online application platform and will only accept applications submitted through this system. All pre-proposal materials must be submitted **by 11:59pm EST December 1.**

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

Visit http://lafoundation.slideroom.com to use the system. Once you have created an account, scroll through the "Programs" to the grant, and click "Begin" to start the application process. You may save, edit, and review your work prior to submitting. An application fee of $25 (USD) must be paid through SlideRoom when the application is submitted.

PRE-PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Applicants should submit materials that best highlight relevant work and the ability to complete the proposed research project. Refer to the Application Instructions for more specific information. All submissions must adhere to guidelines and deadlines in order to be considered. Additional materials will not be reviewed.

Required materials

1. **General Application Form**: Complete this online form with basic contact information and eligibility details.

   o The General Application Form requires you to state your research question. View LAF's guidance on how to develop a research question here.

2. **Project Abstract** (500 word max): Upload a PDF with the title and abstract of your research project. It should include the project concept, its significance to the professional practice of landscape architecture, and a brief description of the research methodology. View LAF's guidance on preparing the project abstract at the bottom of this document.

3. **Potential Partners** (1 page max): Upload a PDF that describes potential partners and other relationships that can be leveraged to complete and disseminate the proposed research.

4. **Preliminary Project Budget and Schedule** (1 page max): Upload a PDF that shows the financial scope of the project and how grant funds will be used. Please include any existing funding and match or partner funds available.

5. **CVs of Principal Investigators** (4-page max for each Principal Investigator): Upload a single PDF that outlines career and research history for each Principal Investigator, highlighting relevant experience that supports the ability to complete the research project. If there are 2 Principal Investigators, upload CVs as 2 separate PDFs, not to exceed 4 pages per PDF.

Supplemental materials (if applicable)

6. **Proof of English Language Proficiency (for non-native speakers only):** Upload a PDF with recent Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) results or other evidence of English proficiency. This could also take the form of a written statement from the applicant certifying completion of activities requiring English proficiency, such as degrees sought and/or teaching conducted at English-language universities.

7. **College/University Transcripts (for international applicants only)**: Transcripts are <u>not</u> required for applicants with a LAAB- or LAAC-accredited degree from a U.S. or Canadian

school. Upload one PDF (in English, if possible) relative to applicant's degree type if applicable:

- For applicants with a recognized landscape architecture degree from a school outside the U.S. or Canada, submit a copy of college/university transcripts showing completion of a landscape architecture program.

- For applicants from countries where landscape architecture is not a recognized degree or profession, submit a copy of college/university transcripts showing completion of a degree in a related field, along with course descriptions for each of the landscape architecture-related courses completed.

In addition to the materials above, those applicants who are invited to submit a full proposal will be required to submit the following by March 1. These materials should NOT be submitted as part of the pre-proposal.

- Project Full Proposal
- Projected Outcomes and Dissemination Plan
- Detailed Project Budget and Schedule
- 2 Letters of Support
- Commitment Letters from Partners

SELECTION PROCESS

A jury of experts in landscape architecture and related fields will evaluate each proposal using the following criteria.

- **Research Topic** - The proposed research is relevant and impactful for landscape architecture practice. It fits within one or more of the grant's listed topic areas and is current (or emergent).

- **Quality of Research Design** - The research is well-grounded in relevant literature and case precedent. It poses a clear research question or questions. The investigative protocol is rigorous and methodical. Additional consideration is given for innovation in research design.

- **Researchers and Support** - The research team has the professional and technical background appropriate to the proposed study. Researchers have the support of their firm(s)/institution(s) to carry out and disseminate the research, including accommodation for time and workload.

- **Research Trajectory** - The research plan is grounded in previous experience and/or future promise. Additional consideration is given for research projects with potential scalability or the likelihood of future phases/expansion through grants or corporate/institutional frameworks.

- **Team Composition** - The research team is appropriate to the research topic and design. Interdisciplinary teams are encouraged. Partners have been identified and are committed. Additional consideration is given for teams that bridge academia and practice.

- **Communication Plan** - There is a clearly defined audience for the research. The research team has identified opportunities to disseminate the research and key findings to public, professional, and/or scholarly communities.

Applicants who are short-listed are expected to be available for a web-based video conversation with jurors in late January/early February. Full proposals are due March 1. The applicant selected to receive the grant will be notified by April 1.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: ABSTRACT TIPS

The abstract submitted as part of your Deb Mitchell Research Grant pre-proposal acts as a summary of your proposed research project, clearly communicating key aspects.

The abstract should:

- Specify the question(s) that the proposed research will seek to answer and/or and what issue(s) it addresses.

- Make it clear why the research is important.

- Demonstrate how your proposed work fits into current knowledge about the topic.

- Describe the overall research design.

- Convey the implications of potential findings.

A strong abstract will show the jury that the proposed research is credible, feasible, necessary, and replicable. It should demonstrate knowledge of the subject area and inspire confidence in the applicant's ability to conduct the research.

The abstract is the most important part of the Deb Mitchell Research Grant pre-proposal application as it allows the jury to quickly understand what is being proposed by the applicant. The abstract should contain enough information to convey the key elements listed above, but it should also be succinct and easy to understand. Mostly importantly for the Deb Mitchell Research Grant, the abstract should also convey why the proposed research is relevant and potentially impactful for the professional practice of landscape architecture.

There are many examples of abstracts in the field of landscape architecture and beyond. See publications like *Landscape Journal* and the *Landscape Research Record* for examples.

The strongest abstracts will address each of the areas below.

1) Background: Provide brief context or background information for the research topic. This could include what is already known about your research topic and research question through previous research by others (and yourself if applicable). It should contextualize your proposed research within the larger ecosystem of research on the topic.

2) Significance: Why is the proposed research necessary and important? For the Deb Mitchell Research Grant, the abstract should especially focus on why the potential findings or proposed outcomes are relevant and impactful for the discipline of landscape architecture.

3) Methodology and process: Basic research design should be conveyed. This includes if you will use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods and why. What will you do, and how? How will you obtain data? Who will be conducting research activities? When and where will that happen? Although the full details may not be able to be conveyed (due to the word limit or because they are not yet completely fleshed out), the abstract should contain sufficient information for the jury to understand the basics of your research design. Should you be invited to submit a full proposal, there will be opportunities to communicate further detail.

4) Potential findings and/or outputs: Describe what you hope to find out from the research and what outputs are anticipated. Any major objectives of the proposed research should be clear. If applicable, any hypotheses should be included as well. Description of potential outputs is particularly important for the Deb Mitchell Research Grant, which requires a tangible output from the research process. Outputs could come in many different forms including reports, white papers, presentations, media, articles, and more. Creative approaches to outputs are welcomed.

5) Citations/References: LAF requests that you cite your sources as part of the Deb Mitchell Grant pre-proposal abstract. Citations should be located at the bottom of your abstract. They do not count toward the 500-word limit. Cite all sources in your preferred style (e.g. MLA, Chicago).

6) Images (optional): Images (charts, graphs, photographs, etc.) may be included in the Deb Mitchell Research Grant pre-proposal abstract. Image captions do NOT count toward the 500-word limit; however, ensure that any captions are kept to a minimum (i.e. that they do not substantially add to the content of the abstract, respecting the 500-word limit).

Abstracts submitted as part of the pre-proposal for the Deb Mitchell Research grant should *not* include the following:

- Too much background information: While providing background and framing is important, be concise. If 75% of your abstract focuses on defining the problem and giving background, it is likely that the abstract is lacking key information about your methods and process.

- Repetitive information: Do not repeat content from other sections of the application including budget, schedule, and potential partners (except where necessary for clarity).

- Grammatical mistakes: Use proper grammar and double-check spelling, as these issues can significantly impact the jury's impression of your work. Minimize use of passive voice. Using "we" is acceptable (e.g. "We will investigate…"). Keep sentences short, avoiding long run-on sentences.

- Highly technical language: Simplicity of language is often better. The jury is made up of academics and practitioners in landscape architecture or allied professions; they are informed but may not be specialists in your area of study. Ensure your abstract is understandable to someone who may not be familiar with the topic. Avoid jargon and use of acronyms without defining them.

- Imprecise word choices: Because abstracts are limited to 500 words, select your words with intention. Terms like "test," "analyze," "investigate," or "evaluate" help the jury clearly understand what is being proposed.

- Improperly cited sources: Ensure proper credit is given by citing carefully. Citations do not count toward the abstract word limit.

When your abstract is complete, finish by asking yourself (adapted from Germanna Community College):

- Is the abstract *clear*? Will the jury be able to tell what is being proposed)?

- Is the abstract *concise*? Does it convey maximum information without being redundant?

- Is the abstract *correct*? Does it accurately convey the proposed research?

Then review it with this checklist (adapted from McCombes, 2019):

- ☐ The word count is within the required 500-word maximum (not including citations and image captions).

- ☐ The research question and any objectives are clearly stated.

- ☐ The relevance to the discipline of landscape architecture is clear.

- ☐ The methodology, potential implications of findings, and any potential outputs are succinctly and clearly described.

- ☐ The abstract could be understood by someone without prior knowledge of the topic.

Consulting these tips and cited resources does not guarantee acceptance to LAF Deb Mitchell Research Grant program. The recommended resources below are current as of September 2022 and are not guaranteed to remain available and up to date.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING ON ABSTRACT DEVELOPMENT

Conservation Leadership Programme. "Writing an Abstract for an Article, Proposal, or Report," 2014. https://www.conservationleadershipprogramme.org/media/2014/09/Writing-an-Abstract.pdf

Germanna Community College Academic Center for Excellence. "How to Write an Abstract," 2014. http://www.germanna.edu/wp-content/uploads/tutoring/handouts/How-to-Write-an-Abstract.pdf

McCombes, Shona. "How to Write an Abstract." Scribbr, 2019. https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/abstract/

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USCLibraries. "Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: The Abstract." University of Southern California. Accessed July 13, 2022. https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/abstract

University of Michigan Research and Sponsored Projects. "Research Proposals - Abstract or Summary," 2014. https://orsp.umich.edu/research-proposals-abstract-or-summary#:~:text=To%20present%20the%20essential%20meaning,potential%20impact%20of%20the%20work.

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