



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership

Application Instructions: Mid-career candidates (6-17 years of experience)

The Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF) is pleased to announce the call for applications for its 2026-27 LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership. The year-long fellowship will run from June 2026 to June 2027.

This document provides background information and instructions on the materials needed for mid-career professionals to apply to be part of the 2026-27 LAF Fellowship cohort.

The full set of application materials (including the employer letter of support and reference letters) must be submitted **by 11:59pm EDT on September 15, 2025**.

For more information about the fellowship, visit: <http://www.lafoundation.org/laf-fellowship>

LAF Fellowship: Mid-Career Professionals

Calling mid-career professionals with 6-17 years of professional experience in landscape architecture who are looking to engage with a diverse, intergenerational cohort and advance ideas that have the potential for powerful impact beyond the traditional scope of practice.

The LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership supports the transformational leadership growth of mid-career professionals who are curious, committed, and open to the challenge of tackling complex problems and contributing solutions to drive positive change in the world.

This fellowship is for those who would find profound benefit in an intense, foundational year of reflection, mentorship, and deep exploration of ideas outside of their current professional lives in practice, academia, public, or non-profit sector work.

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OVERVIEW

The *LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership* was established to foster transformational leadership capacity and support innovation to advance the field of landscape architecture. The fellowship is an opportunity for landscape architecture professionals to dedicate the equivalent of 3 months' time over the course of one year to nurture emerging ideas and to think deeply. It is designed as a time to reflect, research, explore, create, test, and develop ideas into action.

Each year, 3-4 mid-career and senior-level fellowships are awarded through a competitive application process based on a proposed project. Selected Fellows receive a \$25,000 financial award and participate in three 2.5-day residencies over the course of a year, as well as monthly video calls. Their projects must demonstrate the potential to bring about impactful change to the environment and humanity and have the capacity to grow the leadership potential of landscape architects.

PROGRAM GOALS

As we confront increasingly complex and interrelated environmental, social, and economic challenges of the 21st century, this fellowship brings together a diverse group of landscape architecture professionals to develop and test new ideas in support of a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable world. It is an entrepreneurial investment in the people and ideas that will drive the future of the profession.

The *LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership* nurtures and inspires landscape architecture professionals toward the following goals:

1) Support Innovation in Landscape Architecture

By providing a testing ground with critical review and constructive feedback, the fellowship facilitates the realization of each Fellow's proposed project. Through inquiry that raises supportive questions, Fellows explore, tune, and evolve their ideas. The fellowship provides support and guidance to set goals, overcome obstacles, and identify next steps.

Fellows take advantage of LAF's broad reach and network within the discipline. They present their ideas, engage in critical discussion, and collaborate with leading academics, practitioners, allied organizations, and industry partners. Additionally, Fellows are expected to share their work strategically with the public in ways that will increase the visibility of landscape architecture and its role in addressing critical issues.

2) Cultivate Transformational Leadership

Effective innovation requires criticality, courage, and profound insights into the world in which we live. Through readings and discussions, Fellows explore transformation leadership and are tasked with building leadership capacity during their fellowship year. They discover their intrinsic motivation and identify the change they want to see and why.



3) Foster Intergenerational Mentorship

The fellowship also aims to build leadership capacity through intergenerational mentorship. The Fellows and emerging professionals from LAF's *Olmsted Scholars Program* are brought together as a cohort team. Throughout the year, this intergenerational team will present, discuss, and provide guidance and support to each other towards the pursuit of their ideas and future endeavors. This structure fosters camaraderie as cohort participants mentor, inspire, and teach one another.

FELLOWSHIP STRUCTURE

Each year, 3-4 Fellows and up to 2 emerging professionals from LAF's *Olmsted Scholars Program* are selected for the *LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership*. These 5-6 individuals are brought together as a cohort team and participate in the fellowship together under the guidance and support of two fellowship facilitators.

Three residencies form the core of the year-long fellowship program. At the residencies, Fellows present their projects and progress, explore the concepts of transformational leadership, and participate in facilitated discussions. The time between residencies provides an open structure for Fellows to work in-depth on their projects with monthly check-in calls. At the final residency, Fellows share their findings and results with targeted stakeholders in a symposium format.

The final residency for one cohort overlaps with the first residency for the following year's cohort, allowing for more knowledge-sharing and exchange.

FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

LAF awards 3-4 mid-career and senior-level fellowships annually, based on the merit of the applicant pool and available funding.

- Each selected Fellow receives one \$25,000 award*. The award is distributed in three payments of \$8,333.33 upon successful completion of each Residency. Attendance at residencies is mandatory for payment of funds.
- LAF also provides travel and lodging stipends for each Fellow to attend the three residencies.

**Only individuals, not teams, can apply for the LAF Fellowship and participate in the residencies and monthly calls. However, the proposed project may be a team or group project, provided that the applicant is the team lead. If selected, the LAF Fellow may choose to share the \$25,000 award among team members.*

FELLOWSHIP EXPECTATIONS

- The fellowship project should equate to approximately three months (12 weeks) of work to be completed within the fellowship year. Therefore, time devoted to the project will require a 12-week break from employment, to be taken and distributed at the discretion of the Fellow, over the course of the year.



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- Fellows must attend and complete each of the three 2.5-day Residencies that take place during the fellowship year.
- Fellows must participate in regular (1-2 per month) video calls with the fellowship cohort and facilitator(s). This includes monthly check-ins, a half-day virtual "mini-residency" in the winter, and six leadership conversations throughout the fellowship year.
- Fellows are expected to support, guide, and mentor other members of the cohort throughout the year-long fellowship.

PROJECTS

Each Fellow applies with a proposed project that they will advance during the fellowship year. The project should involve approximately three months of work, and participation in the fellowship should play an integral role in the realization of this pursuit. The fellowship is not an opportunity to seek funding to support the close-out of an existing project. It is an opportunity for Fellows to use their extensive experience and knowledge to drive transformational change that has a life and value beyond the fellowship year.

The project may be a team project, provided that the applicant to the fellowship is the team lead and meets the eligibility requirements. There are no restrictions on the size of the team, but if selected, only the team lead will be recognized as the LAF Fellow and participate in the fellowship. The selected LAF Fellow may choose to share the \$25,000 award among team members.

Projects proposed for the LAF Fellowship in Innovation and Leadership:

- Must demonstrate the potential to bring about impactful change to the environment and humanity. They should drive positive change in the world beyond the traditional scope of landscape architecture practice.
- Should contribute to knowledge and innovation in landscape architecture.
- Do not need to be physical in nature; they may be abstract or concrete.
- May be grounded in theoretical or historical investigations; product, program, or business plan development*; new practice or service models; built work; new technology; or any activity that is most effective in accomplishing the project objectives.
- May engage multiple disciplines if the outcome expands the impact of landscape architecture.

**For projects focused on product or business plan development, the applicant must make the case that the business pursuit serves the advancement of the discipline. Individual gain must not be the primary outcome.*



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RESIDENCIES

Fellows are required to participate in three 2.5-day residencies in Washington, DC. Full attendance and participation in each of the residencies is crucial to the success of the fellowship and is mandatory to receive funding. Travel and lodging stipends are provided.

Residencies consist of presentations, critique, and discussions among cohort members with invited critics that may include academics, practitioners, representatives of allied organizations, industry partners, and current and past members of the LAF Board of Directors.

Residency I: Fellowship Kick-Off

- Deepen commitment of each cohort member to their project pursuit and identify the obstacles in their path
- Establish the cohort as a mentorship and support network
- Introduce “transformational leadership”

Residency II: Fellowship Mid-Point

- Share progress
- Review and critique execution plans and draft dissemination products
- Continue leadership assessment, development, and reflection

Residency III: Final Symposium

- Present project, products, and next steps to the LAF constituents and targeted stakeholders at a symposium event
- Mentor and support the incoming fellowship cohort

VIRTUAL CHECK-INS

Fellows participate in monthly video calls to report on progress and discuss relevant issues. A half-day “mini-residency” is held via video call in the winter. Approximately six additional leadership conversations take place via video call throughout the fellowship year. For these, Fellows are given tailored leadership readings, which they then discuss as a cohort.

Additional discussions and ongoing dialogue are encouraged to enrich mentorship, collaboration, and the overall fellowship experience.



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ELIGIBILITY

- Applicants must 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 in landscape architecture.
- Applicants must have a minimum of 6 years of professional experience in landscape architecture by the September 15 application deadline. This experience can include all types of practice – private, public, academic, non-profit, multi-disciplinary, and other.
- Applicants must be able to communicate in written and spoken English at an advanced/professional level and provide evidence of proficiency.
- Applicants must be able to dedicate time to the fellowship and proposed project. They will be required to obtain a letter of support from their employers for time off from their regular employment.
- 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.

SELECTION PROCESS

Accomplished and insightful leaders in the landscape architecture discipline serve as jurors to review applications and select the fellowship participants. Applicants selected as finalists are expected to be available for a web-based video interview in December. Those selected for the fellowship will be notified in January.

Applicants will be evaluated on the following:

- Quality of the applicant's submission
- Project's contribution to knowledge and innovation in the discipline of landscape architecture
- Project's potential to increase landscape architecture's role in addressing global challenges
- Feasibility of project objectives
- Potential to expand landscape architecture's leadership capacity into new areas
- Applicant's ability to provide and be open to mentorship, both as a mentor and a mentee

Preference will be given to applicants who are at a point in their careers where their participation in the LAF Fellowship is likely to be pivotal for their future growth and development as leaders in the discipline of landscape architecture.



APPLICATION PROCESS

LAF uses SlideRoom as its online application platform and will only accept applications submitted through this system. All application materials (including the employer letter of support and reference letters) must be submitted **by 11:59pm EDT on September 15**.

Visit <http://lafoundation.slideroom.com> to use the system. Once you have created an account, scroll down to select the appropriate application type (Senior-level, Mid-career, or Recent Olmsted Scholar), and click "Begin" to start the application process. You may save, edit, and review your work prior to submitting. An application fee of \$50 (USD) must be paid through SlideRoom when the application is submitted.

APPLICATION CONTENTS

Applicants should submit materials that best display relevant work, project goals, ability to complete the proposed project, and ability to lead and participate in intergenerational mentorship. 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.
2. **Project Abstract** (200 word max): Upload a PDF with the title and abstract of your project.
3. **Project Proposal** (1,500 word, 3 page max): Upload your project proposal in PDF format. The proposal must be grounded in appropriate literature, practice, and/or observation and include the following sections:
 - **Significance:** Explain what opportunity the project provides for the discipline, landscape architects, and/or sustainable or resilient landscape solutions. Address why there is a need for the proposed project and the intended impacts of the project.
 - **Methods:** Explain the intended methods and process for completing the project. These should be appropriate to the scope and focus of the proposal. All projects must be situated within a literature review.
 - **Outcomes:** Explain the intended outcomes of the project and their ability to be transformational, significant, and replicable.
 - **Stakeholders/Target Audience:** Identify people who need to know about the project. This could include, but should not be limited to: people who could be affected by the project, people who could further the project goals, or major stakeholders/decision makers. Fellows will be expected to be proactive and conduct their own outreach. In addition, LAF can leverage its relationships in the field of landscape architecture to connect Fellows with relevant advisors.
 - **Dissemination:** Identify a minimum of three different modes to disseminate the project outcomes upon completion of the project. This could include, but should not be limited



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to editorials, print journals, online platforms, film, television, or conferences. Please be specific and identify both the type of dissemination products you are looking to create and the audience(s) those products are intended to serve/reach. Fellows will be expected to work in partnership with LAF in the dissemination of their work.

4. **Project Budget** (2 page max): Upload a PDF that demonstrates the financial scope of the project. The budget will not be used to track the fellowship award spending and will not garner additional funding from LAF, but should demonstrate the applicant's understanding of costs associated with project development to achieve the short and/or long-term objectives per the project proposal. Please disclose any existing funding and match or partner funds.
5. **Project Schedule** (2 page max): Upload a PDF that shows the project timeline with significant milestones over the course of the fellowship year, from June 2026 to June 2027. The schedule should clearly outline the time you will dedicate to the project outside of your formal employment - keep in mind that the fellowship is intended to create a break to give you time to think and work deeply on the project.
6. **Reference Letter** (2 page max): Upload a signed letter from a professional reference that addresses your capacity to complete the project and your ability to lead and mentor others.
7. **Employer Support Letter** (2 page max): Upload a signed letter from your employer or supervisor acknowledging their support for you taking time off (approximately 12 weeks) from work for the fellowship. The letter also should address your capacity to complete the project and your ability to lead and mentor others. If you are self-employed or unemployed at time of application, submit one additional Reference Letter.
8. **Curriculum Vitae** (3 page max): Upload a PDF that outlines your career history, highlighting relevant experience that supports your ability to complete the project and your ability to lead and mentor others. Please ensure that your professional experience meets the requirement of 6-17 years of full-time (or full-time equivalent) work and is clearly outlined on your CV.
9. **Portfolio** (10 page max): Upload one PDF (10MB max) with up to 10 pages of relevant material that further supports your ability to complete the project. Provide brief descriptions of your responsibility and role within your submitted materials and identify the firm and client and the roles of other contributors and participants, if applicable.
10. **Statement of Commitment to Attend Residencies:** Check the box that acknowledges that by submitting the application, you commit to attend all three residencies:

I state my intent to attend all three residencies should I be awarded the LAF Fellowship. If I fail to attend any of the residencies, LAF has the right to withhold the relevant proportion of the funding, exclude my work from documentation of the LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership, and dismiss me from the fellowship program.
11. **Statement of Accurate and Complete Information:** Check the box that acknowledges that all information provided is true, accurate, current, and complete.

By agreeing to this statement, I acknowledge that all information provided in this application is true, accurate, current, and complete and that, unless otherwise cited, the



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work included here is my original work. I also acknowledge that if any information I have provided is untrue, inaccurate, not current, or incomplete, or if the work belongs to another, uncited author—either published or unpublished—LAF has the right to reject this application. LAF has the right to notify the jury if they determine that any information provided is false, inaccurate, or plagiarized.

12. **Application Fee:** \$50 to be paid by credit card on SlideRoom.

Supplemental Application Materials (if applicable)

13. **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

14. **College/University Transcripts (for international applicants only):** Transcripts are not 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:

- 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.

15. **Project Contacts (for team projects only):** Upload a PDF with the name, job title, employer, and contact information (mailing address, email address, and phone number) for all members of the project team. The applicant must be the team lead.