



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

LAF Case Study Investigation Program

Application Instructions: CSI Research Fellows

The Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF) is pleased to announce the call for CSI faculty Research Fellows for the 2026 *Case Study Investigation Program* (CSI).

This document provides background information and instructions on the materials needed for a faculty member to apply for the 2026 CSI program, which runs from February 2 to August 3, 2026.

The full set of application materials must be submitted **by 11:59pm EDT on November 1, 2025.**

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

Case Study Investigation: CSI Research Fellows

LAF's *Case Study Investigation* program is a unique opportunity for faculty with demonstrated interest or expertise in landscape performance. The CSI program allows faculty members to sharpen research skills, build relationships with leading landscape architecture firms, collaborate with peers, and gain exposure in the field of landscape performance. Participating students have an unparalleled opportunity to interact with practitioners and gain hands-on experience while receiving substantial training to build research and quantitative skills and gain a deeper understanding of the design and evaluation process.

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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 late spring and 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 and winter.

**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. Prospective 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 200 case studies is used by designers, students, researchers, journalists, policymakers, 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.



CSI STRUCTURE

All program activities culminate in the final product of a Case Study Brief and associated Methods document. The program structure consists of six written deliverables that progressively build upon one another, online group meetings, written and video training materials, and post-program webinars to present findings to the public. For the six deliverables, academic teams submit their work in written form. Extensive guidance and written feedback is provided by LAF staff after each deliverable. Additional support is provided upon request through individual team meetings and email. Academic teams are highly encouraged to interact with one another within the CSI cohort where desired, but some teams choose to work independently. Division of CSI-related responsibilities between faculty Research Fellows, student Research Assistants, and firm liaisons is at the discretion of each team.

CSI STIPEND

Faculty may apply to produce one or two [Case Study Briefs](#) through the CSI program. Funding is awarded to academic teams based on the number of projects/case studies:

For one case study

CSI Research Fellow honorarium: \$500
Student Research Assistant stipend: \$4,500
Maximum F&A: \$600 (LAF's Indirect Cost Policy limits overhead to 12%)

For two case studies

CSI Research Fellow honorarium: \$1,000
Student Research Assistant stipend: \$9,000
Maximum F&A: \$1,200 (LAF's Indirect Cost Policy limits overhead to 12%)

CSI EXPECTATIONS

Faculty Research Fellow: CSI Research Fellows provide the knowledge base for preparing case studies, expertise in quantifying landscape benefits, and academic rigor. Specifically, the faculty Research Fellows:

- Lead the CSI team collaborations among faculty, students, and practitioners
- Work with firms to identify the performance benefits of select landscape projects
- Develop methods to quantify environmental, social, and economic benefits and coordinate on-site research
- Oversee the case study preparation process
- Coordinate with LAF staff and serve as LAF's liaison to the university for administrative matters



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- Manage the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process through the university (where applicable)
- Participate in CSI program webinars and iterative case study reviews
- Present their findings during a public webinar

CSI Research Fellows are expected to devote 1-5 hours per week from February to May and 5-20 hours per week from June to August to fulfilling the above responsibilities. The exact time commitment depends on the number of case studies (1 or 2), previous experience, the strength and independence of the Research Assistant, and the availability of information.

Student Research Assistant: Each CSI Research Fellow selects a currently enrolled student to participate in the CSI program as a Research Assistant and work under the Fellow's direction. Students do not apply directly to the CSI program.

The student should have strong critical thinking, project management, fact finding, and quantitative skills and must be available to participate for the duration of the CSI program. Students should have completed a Research Methods course prior to the start of CSI; master's or PhD students are preferred. The student should also have excellent communication skills and professionalism to work collaboratively with firm liaisons, project stakeholders, and LAF staff. Student Research Assistants:

- Gather project information from design firms, clients, site managers, and other sources
- Assist in identifying potential performance benefits and methods to quantify them
- Conduct or assist with on-site research including site observations, measurements, and surveys
- Manage quantitative data and perform calculations
- Develop the Case Study Brief(s) and Methods Document(s) for deliverable deadlines
- Participate in CSI program webinars and iterative case study reviews

Student Research Assistants are expected to devote 5-10 hours per week from February to May and 20-40 hours per week from June to August to fulfilling the above responsibilities. The exact time commitment depends on the number of case studies (1 or 2), the student's experience and ability, and the nature of the project(s) being studied.

ELIGIBILITY

Faculty Research Fellow: Candidates must hold a faculty, adjunct, or visiting instructor position at an accredited institution of higher learning. Candidates are not required to be employed within a landscape architecture department, although it is preferred. Candidates will be considered from related fields including but not limited to: urban design, planning, ecology, architecture, or engineering. If candidates hold a position within a landscape architecture department, the degree program itself does not need to be accredited by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB).



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While having only one faculty Research Fellow is encouraged, up to two faculty may be named with the understanding that only one faculty stipend will be provided by LAF; it may be divided as determined by the research team.

Student Research Assistant: A prospective student Research Assistant must be a currently enrolled graduate student, PhD candidate, or undergraduate student in special cases. The student's anticipated graduation date should not fall within the CSI program timeline.

While having only one Research Assistant is encouraged, up to three students may be selected with the understanding that only one student stipend will be provided by LAF; it may be divided as determined by the research team.

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 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.

Additional consideration will be given to teams and projects that have the potential to produce case studies with a strong narrative, goals, and benefits related to: (1) climate change and resilience, (2) diversity, equity, and inclusion, and/or (3) biodiversity.

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.



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Visit <http://lafoundation.slideroom.com> to use the system. Once you have created an account, scroll down to select the appropriate application type (Research Fellow), and click “Begin” to start the application process. You may save, edit, and review your work prior to submitting. An application fee of \$10 (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 project(s) and firm liaison(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 unless noted.

CSI Research Fellow Candidates: Required Materials

1. **Applicant Information:** This section requests basic information about the faculty applicant(s) and their proposed project(s)/firm partner(s).
 - Faculty applicant name, contact, and demographic information (option to add a second faculty applicant)
 - Project/firm information (option to add a second project/firm)
 - Project name, firm name, and firm liaison name
 - Why this project/firm was selected
 - Strategy for visiting the project site if it is more than 1-2 hours away
2. **Applicant Experience:** This section evaluates the faculty applicant’s experience and interests related to landscape performance evaluation.
 - How do you think CSI and landscape performance fit into the larger context of research in landscape architecture, and how will this type of research shape the future of the discipline?
 - Why do you want to participate in CSI?
 - Rate your knowledge and experience in topics related to landscape performance evaluation and key aspects of the CSI program
 - Indicate your understanding of your university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process for human subject research



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3. **Case Study Critique:** This section requires you to select one of three Case Study Briefs developed in past years through the CSI program and respond to the following questions.
 - Which of the Case Study Brief's Performance Benefit(s) and method(s) is/are the most compelling? Why?
 - What are some ways an educator, practitioner, and/or advocate could make use of the information presented in the case study?
4. **Research Assistant:** This section requests information about the proposed student Research Assistant(s). Up to two students can be named in the online form. If you are naming a third student, please email their information to mbarnes@lafoundation.org.
 - Student name, contact, and degree information
 - Relevant coursework and previous experience in landscape performance and/or post-occupancy evaluation including required Research Methods course
 - Why do you recommend the student for CSI?
 - Why is the student interested in participating in CSI? (in their own words)
 - Does the student have any other significant commitments during the summer?
5. **Schedule + Accessibility:** This section verifies understanding of the time commitment required and provides an opportunity to report any accessibility requirements.
 - If selected, the faculty Research Fellow agrees to devote 1-5 hours per week from February to May 2026 and 5-20 hours per week from June to early August 2026 to fulfilling their CSI responsibilities.
 - If selected, the student Research Assistant agrees to devote 5-10 hours per week from February to May 2026 and 30-40 hours per week from June to early August 2026 to fulfilling their CSI responsibilities.
 - Confirmation that the host university is in compliance with ADA guidelines and disclosure of any accessibility requirements for the faculty and/or student.
6. **Department Head Form:** Submit a signed Department Head Form confirming their awareness and support of your intent to participate in CSI. If you are a Department Head, you may sign your own form. The form may be found here:
<https://www.lafoundation.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/CSI-2026-Department-Head-Form.pdf>



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7. **Curriculum Vitae:** Submit a current CV for the faculty Research Fellow applicant. If you have named a second faculty member, please submit the additional CV via email to mbarnes@lafoundation.org.