Call for Proposals

Q1: Is the call for proposals only targeting projects that are physical interventions, or does it include other problem-solving approaches, such as community education, workforce development, or organizing as ways to overcome systemic challenges?

A1: The focus of the Sasaki Design Grants program is using the power of design for communities to create more vibrant places, buildings, landscapes, and public realms. Design to us is a broad idea. At its core, it's a creative process that is about imagining new ideas. Design usually results in a tangible, physical outcome in a community (for example, a pilot project for a new stormwater paver system to improve ADA accessibility during downpours). Design can also lead to a community program, creative communications campaign, or other non-physical product. Projects should focus on approaches that shape and influence the built environment with attention to social equity.

Q2: Besides amount, how do the three grant options differ? Do we select an option when applying?

A2: The $15,000 Action Grants and $7,500 Discovery Grants are intended to support research and original ideas with action towards project implementation in the focus community. The $2,500 Exploration Grants are intended to support the introduction and exploration of a project concept in the focus community. Action and Discovery Grants come with the expectation of more time spent collaborating with designers, a full final report, and a presentation. Exploration Grant winners have fewer expectations and are eligible to apply for Action or Discovery Grants in a future cycle. Teams should select a track and tailor their applications accordingly. We will award grants based on the strongest proposals in light of total available funding.

Q3: Will only one grant be awarded per focus area?

A3: Not necessarily. All proposals will be evaluated based on the established criteria, and the strongest proposals will be selected, possibly resulting in more than one project in the same focus area.

Q: Can proposals address more than one focus area?

A: Yes. We understand our focus areas are interconnected, so projects are likely, but not required, to have impacts in more than one.

Q4: If the focus of our project does not fall within the listed focus areas, will you still consider it?

A4: Yes. While we are encouraging proposals in the five focus areas, if you have a project that uses design to address equity and helps strengthen and empower communities, we will review it.

Q5: What geographic area does the call for proposals cover?

A5: We are seeking projects that engage communities in Greater Boston, the Gateway Cities, and Metro West. Note the Sasaki Foundation's home is in Sasaki's new office in downtown Boston and is easily accessible via public transportation. We hope the cohort of winning teams can find opportunities to collaborate together with Sasaki designers and the Sasaki Foundation community, potentially on-site in Boston.

Q6: What does it mean to have an implementable or action-oriented proposal?

A6: We are looking for projects and strategies that address the needs of the community and benefit from the team's time with Sasaki designers. Proposed projects should be designed and implemented within the grant period. Action-oriented proposals should result in a project or program that will serve the community.

Q7: **Do the proposed projects need to be new or can they build upon existing work?**

A7: We are open to both existing projects and new projects that are community focused; however, the work outlined in the proposal must be completed during the grant period (September 2022–June 2023).

Q8: **What is the relative focus of research/technology versus community activity?**

A8: We've tried not to be too prescriptive here; it is up to you to determine that balance. The ultimate goal is for these projects to improve communities, and this can be achieved in a variety of ways including both research/technology and community activity. We created a wide spectrum so you can define your creative interest.

Q9: **In the application should we describe the research problem, or simply the project?**

A9: Yes, the project should clearly describe both the challenges you are addressing and your process/methodology for achieving your desired outcomes.

Q10: **Is it okay if the project is part of a larger ongoing process?**

A10: Yes! It can be part of a larger project as long as the work articulated in the proposal can be completed during the ten-month grant period. We do expect that work funded by the grant will have independent and measurable outcomes. Applications should explain how the grant will directly support meaningful outcomes in a community during the ten-month timeframe that would not be possible otherwise.

Q: **Do you provide support to develop an idea into a proposal that meets the criteria?**

A: We are happy to answer questions if you reach out to info@sasakifoundation.org. You can also download a Word document, available in the online application, that allows you to think through and prepare your answers ahead of filling out the application online. That said, we are not able to directly help with grant writing. We are a small staff with limited capacity, and we want to ensure all teams have equal access and opportunity. We do welcome feedback on what could be helpful for an organization going through our grant application process, so if we see a pattern of needs we can try to provide more centralized resources.

Q: **If my team is selected for Pitch Night, do you provide support for developing our presentations?**

A: We are happy to answer questions, provide general guidelines, and give feedback prior to Pitch Night. However, we do not currently have the capacity to directly help with creating presentations.

Q: **Do you provide feedback if my application is not selected?**

A: As part of our process, we do try to provide feedback for all applications.

Q: **Can you help me build a team around my idea?**

A: Currently we don't have a mechanism to connect community organizations with colleges and universities or other potential partners, but we may explore that possibility in the future. For now, we recommend leveraging your network and current partnerships. You can also reach out to info@sasakifoundation.org. If we have a relevant connection in our network, we will pass along your idea.

Program Guidelines

Q11: **I teach and would like to apply for my studio class. Are studios eligible?**

A11: The grants will be awarded to teams of two to four people who work in the focus community, with the intent to have a direct community mpact. While design education is an aspect of the Sasaki Foundation's work, the Design Grants program is intended to support on-the-ground practitioners and directly benefit communities. Grant teams can include studio class representation, but should not solely include class participants.

Q12: **If we are forming a team to apply for this grant, is it required that we have worked together before?**

A12: Any proven success working together adds strength to your application; however, it is not a requirement.

Q13: **Can we apply as a dedicated grant team that exists within a broader project team?**

A13: Yes, noting we find it helpful to have a consistent core group of team members participating in programs to help foster relationships and promote cross-pollination of ideas. If your team is selected for a grant, members of the broader project team can participate as needed. We are still determining how teams will be able to utilize our new space, and are happy to discuss your unique space requests as we settle into our new home.

Q14: **Will you fund projects or research by individuals?**

A14: The Design Grants program requires that two to four people apply as a team. The grant is not intended for individuals. The winning teams will form a cohort, supporting broader exchange of ideas across teams. In addition, teams will have opportunities to share ideas and collaborate with design professionals at Sasaki.

Q15: **Does the community representative need to be a resident of the focus community?**

A15: The original intent was for the community representative to be a resident, but strong personal and professional connections to the community may support the requirement. In your application, make a case for your specific situation, and how and why you think your project can benefit residents and the community.

Q16: **Can a municipal staff person be a member of a team? How about a student? And do we need a designer?**

A16: Yes. A municipal staff person can be on the team, as can a student. We often have a combination of graduate students, non-profit organizations, and residents; past teams have also included municipal employees. Beyond having a community representative, there are no team requirements or restrictions. We encourage you to assemble a two- to four-person multidisciplinary team that can successfully accomplish the project scope you propose in your application.

Q17: **Can a project also leverage other funding sources?**

A17: Yes, but keep in mind that benefitting from the grant's access to Sasaki designers and resources requires time spent in Sasaki's downtown office (or on virtual platforms as needed in light of the pandemic). We're excited about the ways our new space will be able to foster collaboration across the cohort and with Sasaki.

Q18: **What are the operating hours of the Sasaki Foundation?**

A18: The Sasaki Foundation is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. We are also flexible regarding meeting times that happen outside of those hours; however, the office space may not be available.

Q19: **Is the Sasaki Foundation space always available to the project teams during business hours?**

Q19: In-person access is currently in flux due to the pandemic, but the cohort is welcome in the space whenever it is safe. In addition to access, we offer programs specific to the cohort as well as relevant public programs, which will shift to virtual as needed.

Q20: **What is the relationship with Sasaki, and what kind of support can we expect from Sasaki designers?**

A20: It is our hope that grantees will take advantage of networking opportunities as well as consultation on design questions. Sasaki will provide consulting on ideas where teams seek guidance. The firm is not providing pro bono design services such as construction documents or engineered designs. Rather, it is offering to stimulate conversation, help generate ideas around specific topics, and draft concepts led by the grantees.

Application Details

Q21: **What is the application process and the relevant criteria?**

A21.   You can find all of the information for the Design Grants program at www.sasakifoundation.org/2022-call-for-proposals. This page includes evaluation criteria, focus areas, deliverables, schedule, and application form.

Q22: **What is the format of the application?**

A22:   The online form is linked on the Call for Proposals page (www.sasakifoundation.org/2022-call-for-proposals). You can save the application to progress at your convenience; applications are considered incomplete until you click the submit button. Once submitted, the team leader will receive an email confirmation. All applications must be received by noon on May 4, 2022.

Q23: **Are the grant funds restricted?**

A23:   The funds are unrestricted; however, a detailed budget is required as part of the application and grantees will be required to provide a final financial report. We will work with winning teams to determine the most efficient way to manage the funds disbursement process.

Q: **Who should I select as fiscal agent?**

A: The fiscal agent is the person or organization who receives the grant payments and is responsible for managing the finances of the project if selected. If a nonprofit is part of the team, we do recommend the nonprofit serve as fiscal agent. Nonprofits (including universities), as well as municipalities, typically already have mechanisms in place to manage grant funds.

Q24: **Can we submit our proposal before the deadline?**

A24:   Yes, proposals may be submitted any time before noon on May 4, 2022. We recommend submitting as soon as you are ready to avoid any last minute techical issues.

Response to COVID-19

Q25: **How is the Sasaki Foundation continuing to respond to COVID-19?**

A25:   First and foremost, we continue to make the necessary adjustments to protect the health of our staff, ambassadors, grantees, program attendees, partners, and communities. In March 2020 we transitioned to a work-from-home model and have continued to implement our programming virtually. We will evaluate whether to conduct Pitch Night virtually or in person as we approach the event date. In this season of social distancing and uncertainty, our mission to empower communities and address social equity through design is more vital than ever. We are excited about the impact our Design Grants program can make in helping communities become more resilient and connected.

Q26: **Are the expectations for winning teams modified due to the ongoing pandemic?**

A26:   Teams can expect to regularly connect with the Sasaki Foundation on their projects to benefit from engagement with Sasaki, the grantee cohort, and the Sasaki Foundation community. Teams will participate in Sasaki Foundation programming and spend dedicated time with Sasaki professionals. During the grant period, we will continue to follow all recommended best practices to protect the health of our cohort, staff, and community, as well as to follow all state and local guidelines. While we hope to have safe opportunities for in-person collaboration in the Sasaki Foundation's new home downtown, the past two years have provided a toolkit of ways to work and connect remotely. Sasaki professionals continue to experiment with and create new ways to use virtual platforms to support a collaborative design process.