2025 CALL FOR PROPOSALS
Frequently Asked Questions

Sasaki Foundation

Design Grants Guidelines

Who can apply?

The Design Grants fund teams of two to four people to create design solutions for challenges in their neighborhoods. The only team member requirement is including a community representative. Past teams have included designers, artists, community leaders, nonprofit organizations, activists, community organizers, data scientists, urban planners, neighborhood experts, creatives, students, municipal staff, and more. (Note, teams must partner with a public charity to serve as fiscal agent. The public charity is not required to be part of the project team.)

What are design solutions?

We are looking for projects and strategies that address the needs of the community and will benefit from time with design experts. Design to us is a broad idea. At its core, it's a creative process that is about imagining new ideas. Design often results in a tangible, physical outcome in a community, like an installation or physical prototype. Design can also lead to a community program, communications campaign, or other non-physical product. If your project will shape and influence the built environment, it is a design solution.

What geographic area does the call for proposals cover?

Projects must engage communities in Greater Boston or the Massachusetts Gateway Cities.

Will you only award one grant per focus area?

Not necessarily. We will evaluate all proposals based on the established criteria and select the strongest proposals. This could result in more than one project in the same focus area.

Can our proposal address more than one focus area?

Yes. We understand our focus areas interconnect, so projects often have impacts in more than one.

If the focus of our project is outside the listed focus areas, will you still consider it?

Yes. We review all proposals that use design to address equity and strengthen and empower communities.

What does it mean to have an implementable or actionable proposal?

Actionable proposals will result in a project or program that serves the community. You should plan to design and implement your project within the grant period.

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

We are open to both existing and new projects. However, you must plan to complete the work outlined in your proposal during the grant period (September 2025–June 2026).

Can our project be part of a larger ongoing process?

Yes, if you can complete the work outlined in your proposal during the grant period. Your application should explain how the grant-supported work will result in independent and measurable outcomes.

Building a Team

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

We prefer the community representative to be a resident. However, strong personal and professional connections to the community may support the requirement. In your application, make a case for your specific situation. Emphasize how and why you think your project can benefit the community.

Do we need a designer on our team?

No. The only team requirement is to include a community representative. Focus on building a two- to four-person team that can accomplish your project.

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

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

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

Yes. You will find it helpful to have a consistent core group participating in cohort programs. This fosters relationships and promotes cross-pollination of ideas. If you receive a grant, members of your broader project team can participate as needed, with advance notice to accommodate for space.

Can I apply as an individual?

No. The Design Grants program requires that two to four people apply as a team.

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

We award grants to teams of two to four people who live or work in the focus community. While design education is an aspect of our work, the Design Grants program supports community experts to directly benefit communities. Teams can include studio class representation, but should not only include class participants.

Who should I select as fiscal agent?

Your fiscal agent is the organization who receives the grant payments and manages the project's finances. This fiscal agent must be a public charity. If a public charity is not part of your team, you will need to partner with one that can serve in this capacity. Your fiscal agent does not need to be a member of your core team.

Support and Feedback

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

We are hosting weekly office hours and can answer questions sent to info@sasakifoundation.org. You can also download a Word document, available in the online application, to think through your answers offline. 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 welcome feedback on what you would find helpful in the application process. If we see a pattern we can provide more centralized resources.

If you select our team for Pitch Night, do you provide support for developing our presentation?

We are happy to answer questions, provide general guidelines, and give feedback. However, we do not have the capacity to directly help with your presentation.

Do you provide feedback if my application is not selected?

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

Can you help me build a team around my idea?

We are hosting two Design Grants Mixers, one in person and one virtual. Our hope is the events will connect community organizations with colleges and universities or other potential partners. We also 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.

Grant Funding and Benefits

What kind of support can we expect from Sasaki designers if we win?

As a winning team you will lead your project. We recruit volunteer designers to supplement your work through design sessions. These sessions stimulate discussion, generate ideas, and lead to draft concepts. We also host monthly lunch and learns, with designers leading conversations on topics relevant to the cohort. Sasaki does not provide pro bono design services for Design Grants winners. You will not receive construction documents or engineered designs.

Are the grant funds restricted?

No. However, you must include a high-level budget in your application to demonstrate your project's feasibility. Keep in mind grant funding is intended to give your team capacity to move your project towards implementation. Design Grants are not intended to provide operational or capital funding.

Can a project also leverage other funding sources?

Yes. Do keep in mind the Design Grants requirements. If selected, your team will have scheduled sessions with Sasaki designers to provide advice and supplement your project work. You will also gain access to grant-specific programs and additional Sasaki resources. To fully benefit, you will need to spend time both virtually and at 110 Chauncy.

Can grant teams access the Sasaki Foundation space during business hours?

Yes. You can use the space any time during business hours. We also offer programs specific to the cohort, as well as public programs. These programs are typically available in a hybrid format and as recordings whenever possible.

What are the operating hours of the Sasaki Foundation?

The Sasaki Foundation is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. We are flexible with meeting times outside of those hours with advance notice.

Application Details

What is the application process?

Teams submit applications by April 24, 2025. The Sasaki Foundation Board of Trustees and Design Grants jury evaluate the proposals based on the criteria listed in the call for proposals. Selected finalists present their ideas in person at Pitch Night, a public event on May 29, 2025. After Pitch Night, the board and jury reassemble to select grant winners. Visit the Call for Proposals page (www.sasakifoundation.org/2025-call-for-proposals) for program information, including evaluation criteria, focus areas, deliverables, schedule, and the application form.

What is the format of the application?

The application is an online form. You can save your progress to complete the application over multiple sessions. Applications are incomplete until you click the submit button. Once submitted, the team leader will receive an email confirmation. All applications are due by noon on April 24, 2025.

In the application should we describe the problem, or simply the project?

Clearly describe the challenges you are addressing, your process, and your desired outcomes.

Can we submit our proposal before the deadline?

Yes, you can submit your proposal any time before noon on April 24, 2025. We recommend submitting as soon as you are ready to avoid any last minute technical issues.