

2022 REQUEST FOR INNOVATIONS

What is a “Request for Innovations (RFI)?”

The word “innovation” can have a broad set of definitions and applications. At the Boston Society for Architecture (BSA), “innovation” means exploring new ways of thinking about and doing design. The Request for Innovations (RFI) lives somewhere between a Request for Proposals and a Request for Ideas. We are open to a variety of responses, which may be project-based or exploratory in nature.

The Ask

How might we do architecture differently?

The BSA believes that to enrich architecture is to advance the pursuits of equity and climate adaptation in the built environment. We maintain that our diverse network and engaged community is uniquely positioned to harness the power of design to address social and environmental issues in Greater Boston.

Through its inaugural Request for Innovations (RFI), the BSA seeks proposals from collaborators who might have ideas to suggest: “How might we do architecture differently?” We welcome proposals from any individual or group. Architects, designers, community members, policymakers, academics, nonprofits, for-profits, and others are all encouraged to apply. Proposals should push boundaries and speak to shifts in design practices or processes that better enable architects and architecture to address social inequities, climate change, and their intersections.

The Opportunity

Collaboration and experimentation

We want to catalyze the expertise of architects, designers, community members, policymakers, academics, and others to push ideas forward in actionable ways. Together, we will experiment with new ways of working that acknowledge, and push beyond, the limitations of traditional or conventional architecture practice. We welcome proposals that include partners across disciplines, lived experiences, and diverse points of view.

Proposed projects should span 6-18 months and could involve research, capacity building, creative engagement, pilots, or other modes of work. Outcomes should point to actionable and replicable steps that could be adopted into the practices of others working in or engaging with the built environment. The impact should center on the Greater Boston area, but may offer potential to scale beyond the region.

Those selected in response to this RFI will enter into a collaborative process of discovery, risk-taking, and critical inquiry -- we want to experiment together at the edges of architecture. Working together with project leaders and teams, the BSA will be prototyping new ways of working, to champion new ideas, and develop deeper models of collaboration and partnership. Lessons learned from the inaugural year will be integrated into future programming the BSA devises to further ingrain these practices into the profession and to support its members and partners for years to come.

BSA

Mission

The BSA's mission is to improve the quality of life for Boston-area residents by championing innovation in the built environment. We deliver on our mission through two connected streams of work:

- Enabling architects to excel in their profession by offering education and networking opportunities, and advocating for the profession at local, state, and national levels.
- Catalyzing and collaborating on innovation initiatives aimed at addressing equity and sustainability challenges in the built environment.

These streams of work are synergistic: architects apply their skills to collaborative initiatives, which in turn inform their knowledge and capabilities. Both are designed to ensure a thriving architectural community that is tackling the issues of our era.

Values

The Boston Society for Architecture seeks to improve the quality of life for Boston-area residents by championing innovation in the built environment. To achieve this, the BSA aims to engage the diverse and passionate network of architects and designers through a portfolio of collaborative initiatives, applying solutions that move us toward a more equitable and sustainable future.

We believe:

- Systemic change requires deep partnerships.
We curate ideas that activate our network and partnerships to influence broader ecosystems.
- Progress demands diverse perspectives.
We embrace inclusivity, as everyone has a role to play to drive outcomes equitably in the built environment.
- Climate and equity are connected.
We understand that climate change impacts communities that are the least responsible and most vulnerable.
- For true impact, we need action and audacity.
We think big and take risks on innovative solutions alongside partners.
- Transformative work is never done.
We imagine and build desirable futures through continuous collaboration and experimentation.

BSA Resources

Overview

We believe that each project has the potential to utilize the power of architecture and design to not only imagine, but to provide tangible outcomes that lead to real change. Driven by this belief, the BSA will invest its time, expertise, and resources to support the design, development, and delivery of each initiative.

Assessment of resource needs will be part of the evaluation and collaborative engagement designed into our process, and a pathway for each selected initiative will come with a plan to manage resource needs. Applicants will be asked to provide a general budget, including financial resources that are needed, and to identify those that are already secured. The BSA will work with you to find funding for the work as necessary to achieve the project's ambitions.

Project Support and Development

BSA staff will act as project partners, working with each awarded project to develop and finalize plans, facilitate the process, reach intended goals, and quantify deliverables. Throughout this process, methods and metrics to evaluate each initiative's objectives, processes, and anticipated results will be finalized and are intended to build on the RFI submission. In addition to its dedicated staff, the BSA is supported by a network of architects, designers, allied professionals, policy leaders, and community members whose expertise and knowledge may advance the development of a project.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples of the ways the BSA has worked with partners in the past. This may help to inform how you wish to work with us on your proposed project:

- Charrette/Workshop Facilitation
- Communications and Promotion
- Conferences, Panels, Symposia
- Hosting/Access to Space
- Convening/Networking Opportunities
- Design Competitions
- Public Engagement
- Educational Content Creation
- Exhibitions
- Policy Advocacy
- Research

To see how we have supported past and present projects, explore the pages below.

[Decarbonizing Concrete in Boston](#)



[Future Decker](#)



[Malden Center for Arts and Culture](#)



Moving Towards Impact

We hope to develop partnerships with our project teams that continue to grow long after the project is completed. The BSA will build on the outcomes of our collaborative work to further opportunities for impact. This may take the form of case studies, lecture series, tool kits, exhibitions, policy proposals, or other depending on the nature of the work.

Selection

Selection Criteria

We are open to unique points of view, points of entry, and approaches to the identification of the problem and the proposed mechanism for its resolution. Proposals will be evaluated based on their ability to:

- Improve outcomes for Boston-area residents
- Encourage new and emerging modes of practice or collaboration
- Result in innovative outcomes in the built environment that advance climate adaptation/resilience and equity
- Utilize the experience, knowledge, and skills of architects and designers
- Engage and activate the BSA's network of members and allied professionals
- Lead to learnings, proof points, and solutions
- Encourage collaboration or co-design opportunities
- Scale

Selection Process

The process begins with open dialogue with BSA staff who are available to help support, reflect upon, and help to refine your proposal. Once the submission period ends, a decision-making body representing BSA staff and board members (the "selection committee") will evaluate submissions and select a shortlist of projects to advance.

Once a shortlist of projects is selected, BSA staff will work with respondents to ensure that everyone is aligned on goals, expectations, roles, and deliverables. Finalists will be required to present their proposals at an open house where BSA members, partner organizations, and funding partners will be present before the final selections are announced.

In this inaugural round, the BSA will select 2-3 projects.

Timeline

Phase 1: Project Submission

BSA staff will be available for questions and support throughout the application window. Optional events for those interested in working through an idea, individually or in a group, will also be available.

Application period opens	11.01.22
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Submissions will be accepted during a 12-week window (11.01.22 - 01.20.23).

<u>Information Session and Workshop</u>	11.15.22
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Want to learn more about the RFI and explore ideas with others? Join BSA staff for an in-person workshop at the BSA. The event will begin with an overview of the RFI, followed by the opportunity to ask questions, get help with the submission form, and work through any sticking points in your process. RSVP is required.

<u>Virtual Office Hours</u>	11.22.22 - 01.17.23
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Need help shaping your idea? Have a question about the submission form or process? BSA staff are available to help. Join us at our virtual office hours throughout November, December, and January. Time slots are available in 30-minute intervals. RSVP is required.

Application period closes	01.20.23
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Submissions are due by 11:59 PM EST. All responses must be submitted by the deadline to be considered. The submission form will be inaccessible once the deadline has past.

Phase 2: Project Review and Selection

BSA staff will be working alongside the selection committee to review proposals and select a shortlist of potential projects. BSA staff will work closely with the selected shortlist of applicants to prepare for the Open House.

Shortlist of applicants notified	02.10.23
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Open House Night for shortlisted applicants	03.01.23
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Projects selected and project teams notified	03.10.23
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Phase 3: Project Planning

Once selected, applicants will be notified and mutual agreements will be finalized. BSA staff will begin to co-develop plans with the project team(s) and publicly announce the winning projects.

Project partners begin work with BSA staff to develop timelines and work plans.	03.13.23
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Agreement

Collaboration and Ideas

The BSA will establish a collaborative process with project teams from initial application to final outcomes and deliverables. A mutually agreed upon process will prioritize shared ownership of all aspects of product development and outcomes.

The BSA is not soliciting ideas that are already under intellectual property or contractual obligations.

Application

Deadline

January 20, 2023, 11:59 PM EST

Requirement

Submit your proposal using the [Project Submission Form](#).

11.01.22 - 01.20.23

Optional

Attend the [Information Session + Workshop](#).

11.15.22

Attend a virtual [Office Hours](#) session.

11.22.22 - 01.17.23

Questions

Check out the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). BSA staff will continue to update the page as questions and comments are received.

For additional questions, email us at innovations@architects.org.