

THE BOB CARDOZA CLASS FUND RESEARCH GRANT 2026-2027

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Mission and Overview

The **Bob Cardoza CLASS Fund Research Grant** (<https://www.classfund.org/>) supports scholarship and research that advances knowledge for the landscape industry, including landscape architecture, horticulture, landscape contracting, and related fields.

Through a cooperative relationship with the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA, www.thecela.org), the CLASS Fund solicits and reviews research proposals from faculty at CELA member institutions and other eligible academic units in the continental United States.

Calls for Proposals are issued every other year. Proposals are reviewed by a selection committee consisting of representatives from both CELA and the CLASS Fund. The fund amount is approximately \$25,000, or as otherwise determined by the CLASS Fund Board of Directors. CELA's indirect cost policy limits overhead to 12%; it is the responsibility of the applicant(s) to work this out with their respective universities.

Research Focus

The grant encourages innovative research ideas related to landscape architecture, horticulture, or landscape contracting in the following subject areas:

- Issues surrounding climate change, such as resilience, stormwater management, air quality, urban heat island effect, green infrastructure, and decarbonization;
- Sustainable or alternative transportation;
- Community capacity building or development;
- Social, cultural, and environmental capital.

Research with an interdisciplinary nature or potential to create resilient solutions that address social, economic, or environmental sustainability is welcome.

Eligibility

Faculty from all CELA member schools in good standing **within the continental USA** are eligible to submit proposals. Faculty in landscape industry fields from other colleges and universities **within the continental USA** may also apply.

Funding and Project Duration

Projects are funded for a 12-month period, from the date that the grant is awarded, beginning in December (typically) of the awarding year, and ending in December (typically) of the

following year. No extensions will be provided outside of this timeline, unless special circumstances arise and are communicated to CLASS Chair and an extension is approved.

Payment of the fund occurs in quarterly increments upon successful completion of work, and submission of quarterly reports to the CLASS Chair covering the relevant work for that period.

Payments may be adjusted according to the specific requirements of the recipient's institution. ***CELA's indirect cost policy limits overhead and indirect costs to 12%. It is the responsibility of the applicant(s) to work this out with their respective universities.***

Review and Award Process

CELA issues the Call for Proposals via email and on its website. Proposals are reviewed by a selection committee consisting of representatives from both CELA and the CLASS Fund. The committee is chaired by the CELA Vice President for Research & Creative Scholarship (VPR).

The **Selection Committee** includes:

ORGANIZATION	TITLE	No.	VOTING/NON-VOTING
CELA	Vice President for Research & Creative Scholarship, Chair	1	Voting
CELA	Additional representative (from the Standing Committee on Research or an appropriate alternative identified by CELA)	1	Voting
CLASS Fund	CLASS Fund Chair or a designated representative, as otherwise selected by the CLASS Fund Board of Directors	1	Voting
CLASS Fund	Additional representatives from CLASS Fund	2	Voting
CELA	Executive Director	1	Non-Voting

(CLASS Fund and CELA reserve the right to modify membership of the selection committee.)

Selection Criteria:

- Does the proposal meet all the requirements in the Call, including format, grammar, page limit, budget, and so on?
- Is the proposed study innovative? Does it represent a new or significantly expanded area of knowledge in terms of breadth and depth?
- Are the methods appropriate to the work proposed?
- Does the proposal demonstrate adequate preparation on the part of the researcher?
- Is the project feasible? Can the question(s) be answered by the methods and timeframe proposed?
- Does the researcher(s) have the capacity and resources necessary to successfully complete the proposed work?

- Does the proposed study have the potential to provide solutions to real-world problems?
- Does the proposal include undergraduate/graduate students as research assistants to foster future professionals?
- Does the proposed study support collaboration across disciplines or support social, economic, or environmental sustainability?
- Does the proposal have potential to enhance ongoing or future research?

Following review, the selection committee submits its recommendations for the successful proposal(s) to the Bob Cardoza/CLASS Fund Board of Directors, or its designated representatives, for review and approval. Awardees are then notified by the selection committee.

CLASS Fund reserves the right not to make an award if it is deemed by the selection committee that the submissions do not meet the CLASS Fund requirements. CLASS Fund may also award multiple smaller awards if recommended by the selection committee.

2026-2027 Timeline

<i>Date</i>	<i>Milestone</i>
October 5, 2026	Proposal submission deadline (5:00 p.m. Eastern).
October 6, 2026	CELA staff shares all proposals with the Selection Committee.
October 6–23, 2026	Proposal review period.
Week of October 26–30, 2026	Selection Committee meets via Zoom to discuss, rank, and decide on the 1st and 2nd (the 2nd choice will not be notified unless the 1st choice withdraws). The CLASS Fund is then notified of the top-ranked proposal.
By November 13, 2026	Recipient notified by CELA (CLASS Fund copied).
By November 20, 2026	Recipient(s) coordinate with CLASS Fund to confirm timeline for reporting and fund distribution.
December 2026	<i>Recipient(s) should begin the project in December 2026 as soon as notification is made.</i>
	At the subsequent meetings of CLASS Fund and CELA and in the next issue of a trade magazine and/or other appropriate outlet, the winner will be announced.
March 15, 2027 June 15, 2027 September 15, 2027 December 15, 2027	Quarterly reporting and fund distribution
December 2027	Final deliverables due

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include the following items:

1. **Cover page.** The cover page should be on a separate sheet that can be easily removed for a blind review. In addition, there must be no identifying information on the main proposal except for the researchers' CVs. Please use the template below and include the project title and list all researchers with name/title/affiliation/email/phone.

Cover Page Template:

Project title:

Researchers:

(PI): Name, Title, Affiliation, Email, Phone #

(co-PI): Name, Title, Affiliation, Email, Phone #

(Research Staff): Name, Title, Affiliation, Email, Phone #

2. Detailed **budget** page (see example worksheet below)

Budget Summary 2026-27 CLASS Fund Research Award Budget Worksheet*

Salary (tenured, tenure track, non-tenure track, professional; gross/total salary figures only)		
Supplies		
Travel		
Student research assistants		
Institutional indirect costs		
Other (please specify)		

***CELA's indirect cost policy limits overhead and indirect to 12%.**

3. **Main proposal text** must include:
 - A. Abstract (50-word maximum)
 - B. Research Problem Statement (100-word maximum)
 - C. Background and Significance (two-page maximum - single line, 12 pt. font)
 - D. Objectives of Study (one-page maximum - single line, 12 pt. font)
 - E. Work Plan including schedule of activities (three-page maximum)
 - F. References
4. **List of deliverables**
5. **Summary CV(s)** (three-page maximum per investigator), including current position, education, background, research experience, selected publications, and so on.

Submission Process

All proposals must be submitted via the [submission portal](#).

Submit proposal cover page and CVs as separate PDFs for blind review. Each page of the full proposal must include page numbers and the proposal title in the footer.

Reporting Requirements

- Quarterly progress updates are due to CLASS Fund and CELA (typically on March 15, June 15, Sept. 15, and Dec. 15). Funds will be disbursed in quarterly increments upon successful completion of the relevant work for that period. Recipients must follow the reporting and fund release schedule specified in the award timeline and contract. No extensions for utilizing the funding outside this timeline will be provided.
- Draft products must be delivered to CELA no later than **12** months after the award. CELA will distribute the draft products to an expert panel for review. Revisions may be requested.
- Final products must be delivered to CELA no later than **12** months after the award for distribution to CLASS Fund and CELA. This is to include final products or a summary of final products that can be posted on the CELA and CLASS Fund home pages. The authors are encouraged to publish or present findings in appropriate professional or scholarly venues. When doing so, authors are required to give appropriate credit to CLASS Fund and to CELA. Specifically, the California Landscape Architectural Student Scholarship Fund (CLASS Fund) is to be acknowledged as the funding source in all materials.
- Selected results may be used by CLASS Fund or CELA in promotional materials to highlight past award winners and their projects.

Report submission format

1. Cover page with identifying information, including project title, investigators, and date
2. Table of Contents including a list of tables, images, figures, and page numbers
3. Executive Summary (three-page maximum)
4. Introduction to the issue/problem under study, including:
 - a. brief summary of relevant past research on the topic(s)
 - b. problem statement or issues under study
5. Description of data collection and analysis methods
6. Description of results
7. Discussion of implications of results in light of the question, past research, and current situation
8. Application to practice in landscape architecture, contracting, horticulture, and/or related fields
9. Recommendations for future research (optional)

- 10. Conclusion
- 11. References
- 12. Appendices (as needed)

Questions

Questions about proposal preparation may be submitted to Hong Wu, CELA VPR and Chair of CELA's Standing Committee on Research & Creative Scholarship, research@thecela.org

For general questions, please contact CELA at staff@thecela.org AND director@thecela.org

Download the RFP as a PDF here.