Washington Architectural Foundation

Request for Proposals

DC Mass Timber Accelerator

Funding for Project Teams Pursuing Mass Timber Construction

Issued by:	Washington Architectural Foundation (WAF)
RFP Title:	DC Mass Timber Accelerator, Request for Proposals
Release Date:	**November 2, 2026**
Application Deadline:	**February 15, 2027 at 4:00 PM ET**
Eligible Project Location:	National Capital Region
Contact:	**Katie Spencer, kspencer@aiadc.com**

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Washington Architectural Foundation (WAF) is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify and fund project teams pursuing, or considering, the use of mass timber construction for a building project located within the National Capital Region, with a preference for the District of Columbia. Through this Accelerator, WAF seeks to advance the adoption of mass timber building systems by providing selected project teams with financial support and technical assistance to explore the feasibility, costs, and benefits of building with mass timber.

Mass timber construction offers the potential for faster construction schedules, reduced embodied carbon, and distinctive architectural character through exposed wood design. This program is intended to generate successful projects that demonstrate these benefits, informs future projects, and builds local design and construction capacity around mass timber systems.

2. Background

The Washington Architectural Foundation is dedicated to educating and engaging our DC community about the transformative power of architecture.

This Accelerator is co-funded by the Softwood Lumber Board (SLB), the USDA Forest Service, and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, which provide financial support for local governments and organizations to explore, implement, and showcase the benefits of advanced wood building systems. Selected project teams will also receive expert technical assistance and education from WoodWorks on structural design, fire resistance, code compliance, and detailing of mass timber systems throughout their engagement in the program.

2.1 About the Program Partners

About the Softwood Lumber Board

The Softwood Lumber Board is an industry-funded initiative established to promote the uses as well as the environmental and economic benefits of softwood lumber products. Programs and initiatives supported by the SLB, including American Wood Council, Think Wood, and WoodWorks, focus on increasing the demand for lumber products in the United States.

About the USDA Forest Service

The USDA Forest Service has brought people and communities together to answer the call of conservation for more than 100 years. Grounded in world-class science and rooted in communities, the Forest Service connects people with nature and to each other. The Forest Service cares for shared natural resources in ways that promote lasting economic, ecological, and social vitality. 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands contribute more than $13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. The Forest Service also maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world and assists state and private landowners, helping to steward about 900 million forested acres in the U.S., including 130 million acres in urban areas, which most Americans now call home.

About the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity established in 2006 at the request of the United States and Canadian governments under the terms of the Softwood Lumber Agreement between the two countries. The Endowment works collaboratively with public and private partners to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities, with a vision of sustainably managed forests that support marketable products, clean water, wildlife habitat, and other ecological services alongside healthy, vibrant forest-reliant communities.

About WoodWorks

WoodWorks – Wood Products Council provides education and free technical support related to the design, engineering, and construction of commercial and multifamily wood buildings in the United States. A non-profit staffed with structural engineers, architects, and construction experts, WoodWorks has the expertise to assist with all aspects of wood building design.

3. Program Goals

Through this Accelerator, WAF aims to:

- Identify the potential for cost savings and shorter construction timelines through the use of mass timber construction.
- Raise public awareness of the embodied carbon reduction potential, economic benefits, and aesthetic qualities of mass timber construction.
- Connect design and development teams with technical experts and local stakeholders interested in advancing mass timber use.
- Introduce practitioners to the technical details and feasibility of mass timber construction.
- Generate a documented case study and lessons learned to inform future mass timber projects and programs.
- Assess workforce capacity and the potential for job creation associated with expanded mass timber construction.

4. Award and Program Structure

The Washington Architectural Foundation will select up to FOUR (4) project teams through a competitive process. The selected teams will receive a grant award and technical assistance to support exploration and, where feasible, implementation of mass timber building systems within their project.

4.1 Grant Award and Deliverables

The award amount will be $40,000 for each selected team. The awarded teams will be required to provide the following deliverables within the term of their agreements.

- Quarterly narrative reports;
- Project documentation, including renderings, technical and structural drawings depicting the use of mass timber, and a projected construction schedule (e.g., comparing the mass timber approach to an equivalent steel or concrete structure);
- Support of communications efforts undertaken by WAF and/or funders (e.g., providing quotes for a press release, participating in a funder-produced case study interview, approving use of project images/name);
- Participation in Program events as listed under Section 8;
- Final written report (e.g., lessons learned, cost/schedule comparison to a conventional build, obstacles encountered, recommendations for future mass timber projects).

4.2 Technical Assistance

The selected teams will receive technical assistance and education from WoodWorks throughout their engagement in the Accelerator, covering structural design, fire resistance, code compliance, and detailing of mass timber systems. WoodWorks is a non-profit staffed with structural engineers, architects, and construction experts, and provides this support at no cost to participating teams.

5. Eligibility

To be eligible for consideration, an applicant project must meet the following requirements:

- The project must consist of a single building located within National Capital Region, defined for purposes of this RFP as: the District of Columbia; Southern Maryland (Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties); and Northern Virginia (Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties, and the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church). Preference will be given for projects located in the District of Columbia.
- A project may include more than one building, but the applicant must identify one prototypical building as the Accelerator's focus.
- The applicant teams may include architecture, design, development, engineering, or construction firms with a project in active development.
- No prior experience with mass timber construction is required.
- The project should be in an early enough stage of planning and permitting to allow meaningful exploration of mass timber systems within the Accelerator timeline.
- Team members are not required to be physically based in the National Capital Area, but the project site must be located there, and team members should expect to participate in program milestone events.

5.1 Eligible Mass Timber Materials

To be eligible, an applicant project must incorporate at least one of the following mass timber systems:

- Cross-laminated timber (CLT), including both solid-sawn and structural composite lumber variants
- Nail-laminated timber (NLT)
- Glued-laminated timber (glulam)
- Dowel-laminated timber (DLT)
- Other mass timber products approved by the Accelerator organizers upon request

Mixed-material (hybrid) solutions are also eligible, provided the project's structural system is predominantly composed of mass timber components used in conjunction with other structural materials.

5.2 Eligible Expenses

Awarded funds may be used only for costs incurred after the team has been selected and only for the following:

- Design and engineering: Architectural, structural, and other engineering services for the mass timber design. This includes evaluating structural options, fire and life safety strategies, building enclosure detailing, and coordination with mechanical and electrical systems.
- Cost and schedule analysis: Cost estimating, and comparing the mass timber approach to an equivalent steel or concrete building.
- Code review and approvals: Code analysis, consultation with the local building department, peer review, and preparation of permit documents related to the mass timber system.
- Technical studies: Whole-building or structural life cycle assessment (LCA), and acoustic, vibration, fire, or building enclosure studies and modeling.
- Program deliverables: Preparing the reports, documentation, and presentation materials required under the subaward agreement.
- Other expenses as requested. Awarded funds may not be used for materials, products, or building components; construction labor or other construction costs; land acquisition of financing costs; activities intended to influence legislation or government policy or action.

5.3 Wood Sourcing and Sustainability

Wood sourced for the proposed project should demonstrate sustainable forest management that contributes to forest and watershed health. Several approaches are used to ensure a sustainable supply of wood products, including federal, state, and local regulations; third-party certifications; and best management practices. Preference will also be given to projects that commit to using domestically manufactured mass timber.

6. Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis according to the following criteria:

- Location: Project must be located within the National Capital Area.
- Planning and Permitting Readiness: The project should be positioned to actively participate in the Accelerator and fully assess mass timber solutions within the program timeline.
- Building Use and Typology: Projects of any building type are eligible to apply. WAF is especially interested in entries that demonstrate innovative use of mass timber for affordable housing, K-12 schools, and mixed-use development, though projects representing other typologies and a range of scales and heights are welcome and will be considered.
- Sustainability and Resiliency Commitment: Applicant projects should demonstrate an overarching commitment to sustainable development and carbon emissions reduction.
- Feasibility of Implementation: Applicant projects should demonstrate strong potential for implementing mass timber construction practices.
- Wood Sourcing: Preference will be given to projects that commit to using domestically manufactured mass timber, and that can demonstrate sustainable forest management in their wood supply chain.

7. Application Requirements

Applications must be submitted as a single PDF document to WAF by the deadline stated above. Applicants should be concise and focused to allow the Selection Committee to clearly evaluate the merits of the proposal. Applications must include the following information:

- Applicant Contact: Name, phone number, email address, firm name, and firm address for the principal team contact. All communications will be directed to this contact.
- Project Name and Location: Confirmation that the project is located within the National Capital Area, with specific details about the anticipated exact location.
- Project Planning and Permitting Status.
- Team Description: Firm name and lead representative for each primary discipline (e.g., developer, architect, structural engineer, code consultant, sustainability consultant, cost estimator, contractor).
- Team Experience: Brief description of the project team's relevant expertise. Prior mass timber experience is not required.
- Project Description, including:
    - Building typology and use(s)
    - Building characteristics, including area (square feet) and height (stories and feet)
    - Development illustrations, including site plans, building plans, and elevations, if available.
    - Sustainability goals, including certifications, carbon neutrality targets, or resiliency objectives, if applicable
- Mass Timber Statement of Interest: A brief explanation of the team's motivation for applying to the Accelerator and for pursuing mass timber construction.
- Intended Use of Funds: How any awarded funds would be used by the applicant.

8. Program Timeline and Events

The anticipated program timeline is as follows. Dates for milestone events will be finalized in coordination with the selected teams.

November 2, 2026	RFP Released, Application Period Opens
February 15, 2027 (4:00 PM ET)	Application Deadline
March 1, 2027	Selection Announced; Deliverables Finalized with Selected Team
April 16, 2027	Accelerator Kickoff Event
July 30, 2027	Mid-Program Review
December 17, 2027	Final Review and Program Close

8.1 Kickoff Event

The selected teams will participate in a kickoff event with WoodWorks advisors, WAF staff, and program partners to introduce the program and establish a communication framework and program goals.

8.2 Mid-Program Review

The selected teams will present on project progress, and discuss challenges and opportunities encountered while designing with mass timber, to WAF staff, program partners, and invited guests.

8.3 Final Review

The selected teams will present final project designs and applicable deliverables, and share lessons learned from participation in the Accelerator.

9. Submission Instructions

Applications must be received no later than February 1, 2027 at 4:00 PM ET. Applications received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Applications should be submitted by email with the subject line

“Mass Timber Accelerator Application” to:

Katie Spencer, Director of Programs

kspencer@aiadc.com

Questions regarding the application or program may be submitted in writing to the same contact.