

SOM  
FOUNDATION

# 2025 RESEARCH PRIZE

Research Prize **2025**

Cover: Image by Span.

# SOM FOUNDATION

1.	Fellowship	3
2.	Topic: Exploring the Potential of Mobility Corridors	3
3.	Eligibility	3
4.	Expected Outcomes	3
5.	Application Requirements	4
6.	Application Format	5
7.	Application Deadline	5
8.	Jury	5
9.	Evaluation Criteria	5
10.	Notification of Award	6
11.	Recipient Responsibilities	6
12.	Copyright	6
13.	Questions	6

## 1. Fellowship

In 2018, the SOM Foundation introduced the Research Prize to cultivate new ideas and meaningful research that addresses the critical issues of our time. Each year, two \$30,000 prizes are awarded to faculty-led interdisciplinary teams based in the United States to conduct original research that contributes to the SOM Foundation's current topic.

## 2. Topic: Exploring the Potential of Mobility Corridors

This year's topic aims to explore how every scale of movement infrastructure shapes our built environment. How might new approaches to mobility corridors provide sustainable growth, from improving how people and goods move from place to place to supporting the ecosystems, communities, and activities that surround them? Ultimately, how can existing or proposed interconnected systems help define the future of our cities?

## 3. Eligibility

The Research Prize is open to faculty currently teaching at a professionally accredited bachelor's degree, master's degree, or PhD program in architecture, landscape architecture, interior architecture, urban design, or engineering in the United States. The research must be developed in a studio and/or seminar within the academic institution. The lead faculty member(s) will be expected to work in a collaborative manner with faculty from other disciplines, leading professionals, nonprofit organizations, and/or community representatives in addition to students enrolled in the studio and/or seminar. Collaborator(s) can be based worldwide.

SOM Foundation affiliated members and SOM employees should not be included as part of the proposals. Faculty from previously awarded proposals are not eligible. However, previously awarded academic institutions can submit new proposals.

## 4. Expected Outcomes

During the research period, the SOM Foundation will schedule periodic check-ins for the purpose of providing feedback and focus to maintain a high level of excellence throughout the research effort.

Research is expected to be completed a year after its start date. The start date can vary to match academic calendars but needs to be no later than August 31, 2026.

The winning teams will be required to thoroughly document the research findings and develop conclusions or suggestions for application to professional practice. The final report should advance the discussion around the selected topic and be visually compelling.

The lead faculty member(s) and academic institution may present the results at the end of the project at a public event held at their institution. Faculty will be responsible for seeking out additional opportunities to disseminate research findings at relevant professional, public, and civic events, as well as in online and print publications.

## 5. Application Requirements

### Title Page

- Title of research project
- Name(s) and institutional affiliation of lead faculty member(s) and collaborator(s)
- Keywords
- Date of application

### Abstract

- Provide a maximum 250-word abstract summarizing the topic of the proposed research. Specifically, the abstract should include the problems or conditions that demonstrate the need for the research, the research question that will be addressed, the scope and proposed methodology of the work, and the expected outcomes of the project.

### Description

- Provide a maximum 750-word expository description of the area of focus, scope, and outcomes of the proposed work. Include the institutional context of the research (e.g., team composition, travel, facilities, institutional support, etc.). Images that support the description of the project are encouraged.

### Work Plan

- Identify project collaborator(s), schedule, key milestones, preliminary budget, final products, and a draft syllabus.

### Preliminary Budget

- Provide itemized use of the award funds (e.g., research assistance, travel, equipment, software, supplies, etc.). Please include additional funds or in-kind support, if any, provided by other funding sources. Administrative costs should be kept to a minimum and never to exceed 10% of the award. Funding for any publication(s) beyond the required final report, exhibition, dedicated website, and/or final public event should not exceed 10% of the award.

### Supporting Documentation

- CV(s) of lead faculty member(s)
- Examples of student studio and/or seminar work produced under the instruction of the lead faculty member(s); examples from multiple students in a single studio and/or seminar are preferred
- Letter of support from the supervising department head or chief academic officer of the department, college, or university of the lead faculty member(s)

### Supplemental Documentation

- Provide a maximum of 20 pages of additional documentation directly related to the proposed research program (e.g., copies of completed or speculative creative work or building designs, relevant writing or other documents that establish unique qualifications).

## 6. Application Format

- Single PDF format
- 8.5"x 11", portrait orientation
- 35 pages maximum
- 100 MB maximum

## 7. Application Deadline

Submit information via the application form no later than **Monday, November 10, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. CST**. Applications received after that time will not be considered.

You should receive an email confirming the information you submitted. If not, please contact us at [info@somfoundation.com](mailto:info@somfoundation.com).

## 8. Jury

This year's jury will be led by SOM Foundation Executive Director **Iker Gil** and will include:

- **Gia Biagi** (Secretary of Transportation, Illinois Department of Transportation, Chicago)
- **Julia Day** (Partner and Project Director, Gehl, New York City)
- **Kit Krankel McCullough** (Teaching Professor, University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ann Arbor)
- **Jeffrey Sriver** (Director of Transportation Planning, Chicago Department of Transportation, Chicago)

The SOM Foundation reserves the right to choose not to award, to co-award, or to split the award as the jury deems appropriate.

## 9. Evaluation Criteria

The jury will consider the following factors while evaluating proposals:

- Relevance to SOM Foundation's annual topic
- Innovation, clarity, and rigorousness of proposal
- Potential impact of proposed research
- Approach to student engagement in all areas of the proposed research program
- Feasibility in terms of methodology, approach, timeline, and budget
- Expertise, qualifications, and prior achievements of research team

## 10. Notification of Award

The winners will be notified no later than Monday, January 26, 2026.

## 11. Recipient Responsibilities

By accepting an award, the recipients agree to:

- Provide progress reports via email to the SOM Foundation Executive Director.
- Complete the research and final report by December 31, 2027, or within an agreed-upon time, depending on circumstances.
- Forfeit all fellowship money to the SOM Foundation in the event that research and final report are not completed by December 31, 2027, unless prior written approval is received from the SOM Foundation Executive Director.

Any changes to the proposal, including the schedule and budget allocation, need to be submitted in writing and approved by the SOM Foundation.

## 12. Copyright

The winning applications will become part of the SOM Foundation's archive. The SOM Foundation reserves the right to publish the winning applications—and the recipients' monthly progress reports and final report—or any portion of them in press releases, presentations, exhibits, history books, and similar publications, as well as for public access and educational purposes in all media, including online. Authors will retain the copyright of their work.

## 13. Questions

Please contact [info@somfoundation.com](mailto:info@somfoundation.com) with any remaining questions.