design for freedom
grace farms

# 2027 Design for Freedom Pilot Project Request for Proposal

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Grace Farms invites you to respond to the Request for Proposal (RFP) for consideration in the Design for Freedom Pilot Project Program.

## 1. Introduction

Design for Freedom by Grace Farms is a movement creating a radical paradigm shift within the built environment by eradicating forced and child labor from the building materials supply chain. Each Design for Freedom Pilot Project raises awareness of the risks of exploitative labor practices among project partners, contractors, designers, engineers, manufacturers, suppliers, occupants, and consumers.

The Pilot Project program puts Design for Freedom principles into practice, offering industry leaders the opportunity to demonstrate ethical supply chains and human rights due diligence in completed works. The Design for Freedom Pilot Project program conducts research at the forefront of the Design for Freedom movement to gain insight into the process of supply chain transparency within the built environment.

**Three fundamental and inextricably linked principles guide our mission:**

1 | **Find and address embedded forced labor**
project stakeholders can no longer profit from the slavery or exploitation discount.

2 | **Pursue ethical decarbonization**
recognize and address the connection between the climate crisis and forced labor embedded in building materials supply chains.

3 | **Prioritize circularity**
reusing and recycling materials shortens the supply chain, reducing the risk of forced labor at the source or extraction level.

## 2. Goals and Objectives

**To demonstrate responsible sourcing strategies**
that meet the needs of the project and advance the use of ethical and transparent supply chains.

**To contribute to the industry's body of knowledge on effective strategies**
to trace materials along the supply chain to the point of raw material extraction.

**To advance the transformation of procurement practices and supply chains**
by specifying materials that reduce the risk of embedded forced and child labor.

## 3. Project Commitment

The Project Team includes the Owner, Architect, Contractor and other key consultants, as appropriate based on the project scope and relevant material selections.

### Project Qualifications

Each Pilot Project should meet the following qualifications:

- Significant project design work must begin by the end of 2027. Projects with later timelines are encouraged to submit a proposal in the following year's RFP process.
- The majority of project funding must be secured by the public Pilot Project announcement in March 2027.
- Commitments must be made by the Owner, Contractor and Architect/Designer, including dedicated staff to support supply chain mapping, research, and due diligence to fulfill the Pilot Project requirements.
- On-site labor and wages must be tracked through certified payroll.

### Design Considerations

Grace Farms invites teams to submit projects that incorporate one or more of the following elements:

- A mission-aligned purpose and building identity.
- Signage, visual representations, or educational sessions that teach occupants and visitors about ethical sourcing.
- An inclusive design that engages the community and promotes public access.
- A distinct geographic location that expands Design for Freedom's global reach.
- A typology not yet represented by Design for Freedom Pilot Projects, such as Multi-Family Housing, Workplaces, Mixed-Use Developments, Landscape & Planning, Science & Innovation Centers, Performing Arts, Healthcare, Hospitality, Civic & Government, Transportation and Industrial Buildings.

### Grace Farms Foundation Responsibilities

To actualize the Pilot Project, Grace Farms Foundation will:

- Educate owners, project leadership, and key stakeholders on the Pilot Project process, responsibilities, and commitment.
- Act as a responsible materials adviser to guide material selection.
- Facilitate collaboration between the project team and manufacturers, certifiers, and industry experts on forced and child labor.
- Direct the project team to risk assessment tools and resources that can be used to evaluate identified materials.

**Pilot Project Deliverables**

The Project Team will work alongside Grace Farms to identify materials, determined for project impact, with the aim of tracing them end-to-end within the supply chain. At a minimum, each Pilot Project requires the following deliverables:

a. **Project Materials:** A project is considered an official Design for Freedom Pilot Project because it meets requirements to provide significant documentation on the labor practices of an identified number of building materials.
   - Identify and trace a minimum of 10 products, recognizing that a specific product could contain multiple material components.
   - For each specification, three unique options are researched to facilitate informed decision-making and ensure responsible material selection. Utilizing closed specifications is a preferred option when viable.
   - Include at least one circular, upcycled, salvaged, or reclaimed material.
   - Select a variety of structural, interior, and innovative materials that are visible, accessible, determined to have project impact for occupants and visitors, and provide educational opportunities. Material selections should represent a holistic view of the building throughout different phases of the project.
   - Use relevant certifications that include third-party fair labor auditing.
   - Employ supply chain risk analysis and assessment processes and technology to inform decision-making.

b. **Research Project:** Partner with one or more of the following experts or organizations to deliver a peer-reviewed research white paper on at least one material. The Grace Farms team will facilitate partnerships with:
   - Academic Leader (Architecture, Business, Engineering, Policy, Real Estate)
   - Manufacturing or Technology Partner
   - Sustainability or Research Consultant
   - Responsible Certifier or Auditor
   - Policy Expert
   - Circularity Expert
   - Trade Union Representative
   - Municipal, State, or Federal Government Program or Agency

c. **Educational Opportunity:** Delivered by members of the Project Team on the research and outcomes of the Pilot.
   - Selected Project Teams are invited to attend the annual Design for Freedom Summit at Grace Farms each March.
   - Regional and national industry speaking engagements.
   - Engagement with state or federal government legislators, economic development corporations, and policymakers through the work on the Pilot Project with transparent suppliers.
   - Exhibit or traveling program partnership with museums, libraries, or schools.
   - Manufacturer or trade-specific training session utilizing learnings from the Pilot Project research.

**d. Case Study:** Each Pilot Project provides significant documentation on the labor practices of identified building materials.

- Summarizes material research, partnerships, and strategies for information retrieval.
- Recognizes manufacturers, with approval, that have provided transparency documentation and created actionable steps toward market transformation.
- Identifies challenges within industries for further investigation in future Pilot Projects.

## 4. Proposal Requirements

☐ **Letter of Intent:** A letter from potential Project Partners outlining commitment to the Pilot Project (maximum 500 words).

☐ **Qualifications:** A one-page statement of your firm's qualifications.

☐ **Similar Projects:** A description of a select number (5 maximum) of previous projects that are similar in program, mission, ethical standards, or sustainable innovation.

☐ **Project Team:** Name, title, and bio of one or two key team members for each project partner.

☐ **Project Summary:** An accurate project description including the street location, city, state, and/or country. Please also include the main program type, with approximate gross square footage of the structure, and additional gross square footage for other programs on-site, including, but not limited to, parking, etc. In addition, provide the size of the site. Include additional sustainability certifications the project is pursuing.

☐ **Identify 10 initial materials** to be traced for ethical sourcing, including potential circular and multi-attribute solutions. Materials identified are preliminary and will be finalized with the Design for Freedom team for optimal project impact.

☐ **Visual Representation** of the project (renderings, site plan, and/or drawings).

☐ **Project Schedule:** Specify where the project is within the construction process and projected key dates for project completion. It is advisable to submit projects currently within the design phases to allow adequate time to accurately research and make informed decisions.

- Design Start (mm/dd/yy)
- Concept Design (number of months)
- Schematic Design (number of months)
- Design Development (number of months)
- Construction Documents (number of months)
- Construction Start (mm/dd/yy)
- Construction (estimated number of months)
- Project Delivery (mm/dd/yy)

## 5. Submission Requirements and Proposal Contact

Please submit your proposal in PDF form via the following link no later than 11:59pm ET on Friday, December 11, 2026. This link is publicly available on our website: Submit Your Proposal

**RFP Candidate Selection Process:**

**January 2027** | Grace Farms will identify shortlisted applicants.

**January 2027** | Grace Farms will reach out to project teams for any additional clarification and/or conduct interviews to meet the team and learn more about the project.

**February 2027** | Selected Pilot Project Teams will be notified.

**March 31, 2027** | Official Design for Freedom Pilot Projects will be publicly announced at the Annual Design for Freedom Summit held at Grace Farms in New Canaan, CT.

**For questions concerning the RFP process:**

Email info@designforfreedom.org by December 1, 2026, at 5:00pm ET.
Questions will be answered and distributed to all project teams on December 4, 2026.

Attend Office Hours hosted by the Design for Freedom team on November 5, 2026 & December 3, 2026. Register Here.

## 6. Proposal Acceptance

Grace Farms reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received under this RFP. You will receive no reimbursement for your expenses in preparing this proposal. A response to this RFP shall not be construed as a contract, nor shall it indicate a commitment of any kind on the part of Grace Farms Foundation.

**Confidentiality**

The Design for Freedom Pilot Project RFP submissions are confidential to Grace Farms Foundation.

## Pilot Project Frequently Asked Questions

**What is a Pilot Project?**

Design for Freedom has developed a Pilot Project Program that is a tangible example demonstrating ethical supply chains in completed works. Each Pilot selects at least ten building materials to examine. Selected products are traced as far back as possible for provenance and labor inputs in order for project teams to make an informed decision when specifying and procuring products. Through this process, each Pilot Project brings awareness to project partners, contractors, designers, engineers, manufacturers, suppliers, owners, occupants, and consumers about the risk of continued exploitative practices and initiates institutional and civic responses.

**How can I integrate responsible sourcing into my practice?**

Read the Design for Freedom International Guidance and Toolkit to understand the scope of the problem, critical issues, and challenges facing the eradication of forced and child labor from the built environment. For actionable solutions, read more about the inherent qualities of at-risk materials within the built environment and related certifications. Utilize the following tools to integrate responsible sourcing into daily practice.

1. Project Team & Supplier Outreach Letter - initiate conversations about ethical sourcing.
2. Ethical Design Requirements, CSI Division & Sample Specifications - require contractors to meet ethical sourcing standards across the project by material type or by spec division. A sample wood specification is included for reference.
3. Self-Assessment Questionnaire - request supply chain information from product manufacturers and suppliers to encourage organizations to assess progress, elevate internal dialogue, and promote external discussion.
4. Ethical Material Tracking Schedule - utilize resources within the tracking schedule to identify regions at high risk for exploitation and identify responsible supply chain certifications.
5. Responsible Certifications, International Frameworks and Standards - filter relevant certifications by material or product type, third-party verification, industry focus, prerequisites and other differentiators.

**Is there a fee associated with initiating a Design for Freedom Pilot Project?**

There is no fee to submit a proposal or participate in the Pilot Project Program. Project teams participate in the program with the understanding that each product investigation adds to the industry's body of knowledge and adds value to the overall project. Grace Farms acts as a facilitator to project teams. Grace Farms and Pilot Project partners dedicate time and resources to develop industry-wide responsible sourcing practices through aligned partnerships and collaboration.

**How many Design for Freedom Pilot Projects are there?**

There are over a dozen Design for Freedom Pilot Projects currently in design or completed on four continents, with a range of typologies. To learn more about the Pilot Project process, materials examined, and outcomes, read the Pilot Project Case Studies.

**Are there any geographical restrictions for pilot projects? Can they be international?**

Currently, Design for Freedom Pilot Projects are located in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia. We hope to continue to represent a diverse number of countries, cities, and communities throughout our portfolio of Pilot Projects. We encourage submissions from outside the United States.

**Can I submit a confidential project? Will Grace Farms sign an NDA?**

Yes, you can submit a confidential project under an NDA. We will work together to identify a public announcement date for a specific project. All selected projects will be announced on March 31st at the 2027 Design for Freedom Summit at Grace Farms.

**How many projects will be selected? How many proposals can I submit?**

We select the projects that most align with our mission and advance the movement. We invite project partners to submit only one proposal annually.

**Are Pilot Projects inclusive of all design typologies, such as community spaces, commercial offices, public or private, non-profit, or government projects?**

Absolutely! We are eager to share how Pilot Projects demonstrate ethical supply chains across programmatic typologies and welcome a diverse array of owners, partners, and project types.

**Will my project receive Design for Freedom certification?**

Design for Freedom is not a certification. The Pilot Project Program is a unique opportunity to conduct research at the forefront of the Design for Freedom movement and gain insight into the process of supply chain transparency within the built environment. Although we do not consider the projects "certified," each project is considered an official Design for Freedom Pilot Project because it meets requirements to provide significant documentation on the labor practices of an identified number of building materials while revealing new outcomes.

**What is the process of a Pilot Project?**

Grace Farms works alongside project teams to develop innovative research tailored for each project. The Design for Freedom team meets regularly with project teams to identify materials for investigation and to support the integration of ethical sourcing. The Design for Freedom team facilitates discussions with industry experts, suppliers, and manufacturers to support informed decision-making.

Each Pilot Project will conclude with a Design for Freedom Pilot Project Case Study developed by Grace Farms to highlight the unique approach, relationships, and outcomes produced by every project. Additionally, project teams may have the opportunity to participate in educational outreach, speaking engagements, and material research projects.

## Additional Design for Freedom Resources

For more information about the movement to end forced labor in the building materials supply chain, explore relevant resources on the Design for Freedom website.

### About Grace Farms

Grace Farms is a cultural and humanitarian center in New Canaan, Connecticut that brings people together across sectors to explore nature, arts, justice, community, and faith at the SANAA-designed River building and Barns on 80 acres of publicly accessible natural landscapes. Since opening in 2015, Grace Farms has welcomed 1 million visitors from around the world to experience its unique integration of arts, architecture, nature, and purpose.

As a destination for arts and culture, Grace Farms presents innovative programming in music, visual and performing arts while fostering contemplation and connection through architecture and nature. Its humanitarian work includes leading the Design for Freedom movement to eliminate forced labor in the building materials supply chain and advancing initiatives to foster more grace and peace locally and globally.

The integration of cultural programming and humanitarian action reflects Grace Farms' collaborative approach to generating new outcomes and meaningful change.