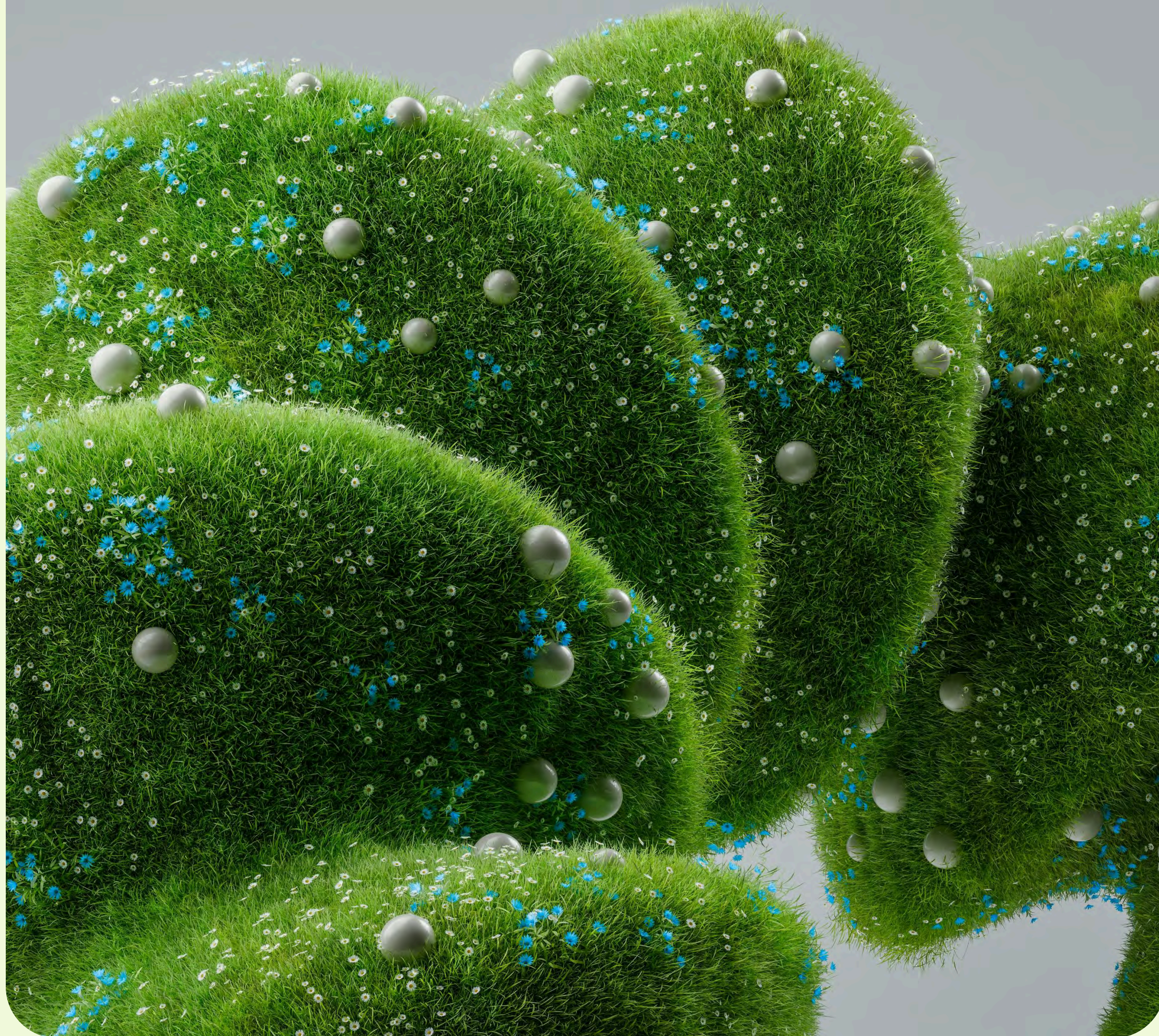




Shift's Landmark Design Competition Brief

00. What's in this document



01. Invitation to Design

02. Overview & Objectives

03. Competition Overview

04. Submission & Selection

05. Technical Information of the Competition

06. Additional Background & Context

07. Frequently Asked Questions

01. Letter of invitation

Dear Architects,

—— The world is being forced to face the profound and, at times, unimaginable consequences of climate change — this is not breaking news. That I am launching an [international architecture competition](#) that challenges architects to contribute to the greatest comeback in the history of our planet, probably is. I sincerely hope this will become the most important 'brief' of your career.

You should know this brief is as personal as it is professional. As a father of two young girls — Mira (4) and Illinca (1.5)—I am deeply concerned about and invested in their futures. As an impact investor and entrepreneur, I am now in a position to do something about it.

This is why I founded Shift, a 'steward-owned' social enterprise with the mission to ignite massive climate action by transforming the general feeling of despair into one of hope. Because the fact is, there are already solutions that address the urgency of the climate and biodiversity crisis. We have choices that can be adopted and massively scaled up. With Shift, I have created a platform dedicated to giving these solutions — and the people behind them — the same amount of positivity, energy and attention often given to the typical tech start-up.

By consolidating the most promising climate initiatives, activists and entrepreneurs onto a single platform and space, we can shift the conversation from complacency and powerlessness to create the sense of urgency needed for massive climate and sustainable action.

This brief is a call to action to help envision a space that matches this vision. I truly believe that it is going to take a "new Wonder of the World" to grab people's attention and inspire them to action. A 'place' where people come to be informed and educated, to co-create a greener, more biodiverse, kinder and more equitable world. The goal is to create a landmark that breaks from traditional notions and functions and exists as a beacon of hope for human ingenuity and collective action.

In my experience as co-founder of the investment company [Rockstart](#), I have had the privilege to guide various startups to success, including Hubs (exit \$330 million to NYSE: ProtoLabs), iClinic (Exit €27.9M to NASDAQ: Afya) and Dan.com (Exit to GoDaddy for \$71.4M), among many others. I also discovered that some of the most exciting companies I backed featured disruptive sustainable innovations—like turning apple pulp into fake leather and P2P lending platforms. Fantastic companies, but ones that also struggled to scale up and reach their full potential due to both a lack of public awareness and because their business models required some sort of behavior change.

As a venture capitalist, investing in behavior change is a hard sell, but with Shift I have now created a vehicle focused entirely on inspiring people to do just that: embrace sustainable behavior.

For Shift to be successful, I need your help. Throughout history, architecture has captured the imagination of citizens. We must now deliver a similar beacon for the age of environmentalism.

What will our Shift landmark look like and feel like? I can't wait for you to show me, our jury and the world. I hope our brief will inspire you, surprise you and most of all fuel your imagination.

Don Ritzen

Founder of 



Overview & Objectives

02

02.01 The Shift Mission Needs a Physical Space

Shift currently exists as a digital platform that brings together countless inspiring sustainable and circular initiatives from around the world — and the 'climate heroes' responsible for making them happen. As proud as we are of this digital space, these stories and initiatives need a place in the physical world; A place where they can empower more people to collectively work towards transforming the dominant social narrative from one of denial and powerlessness to hope and action. We believe that a powerful destination for sustainability — the Shift landmark — is key to this mission.

We challenge you as architects to redefine what constitutes a modern-day architectural landmark. Imagine an icon, or even an anti-icon, that invites visitors to see the world through a fresh lens. Its impact does not need to come from its size, but from its power to symbolize transformation and ignite collective action around the climate crisis.

The purpose of this competition, which will span two stages from January to October 2025, is to conceive of and design the first Shift landmark in the Netherlands, with a specific location still to be disclosed. This competition is for the first of what is envisioned to be a series of Shift landmarks that span the globe — one on each continent.

Another key motivation behind this competition is to inspire innovation around the future of sustainability and experience design. In this spirit, all those who submit ideas and which are not shortlisted will retain ownership of their intellectual property to use in future projects.

The design could take the form of a single building or series of structures which house (immersive) exhibitions, permanent installations, hospitality, education and public programming. We have intentionally left these open-ended; participants are encouraged to harness their own creativity.

Shortlisted teams from this international open call will advance to the next stage, to design the landmark. This is not simply a visioning exercise; we are actually going to build this. As co-founder of Rockstart, Don has guided 350+ early-stage startups to a collective net worth of €1.7 billion and helped raise € 110 million to date. As such, Shift has a financial roadmap in place and relationships with institutional investors and high-net-worth individuals to develop the design and realize the first Shift landmark. The budget for the Shift landmark is up to €250 million (hard and soft costs both included).

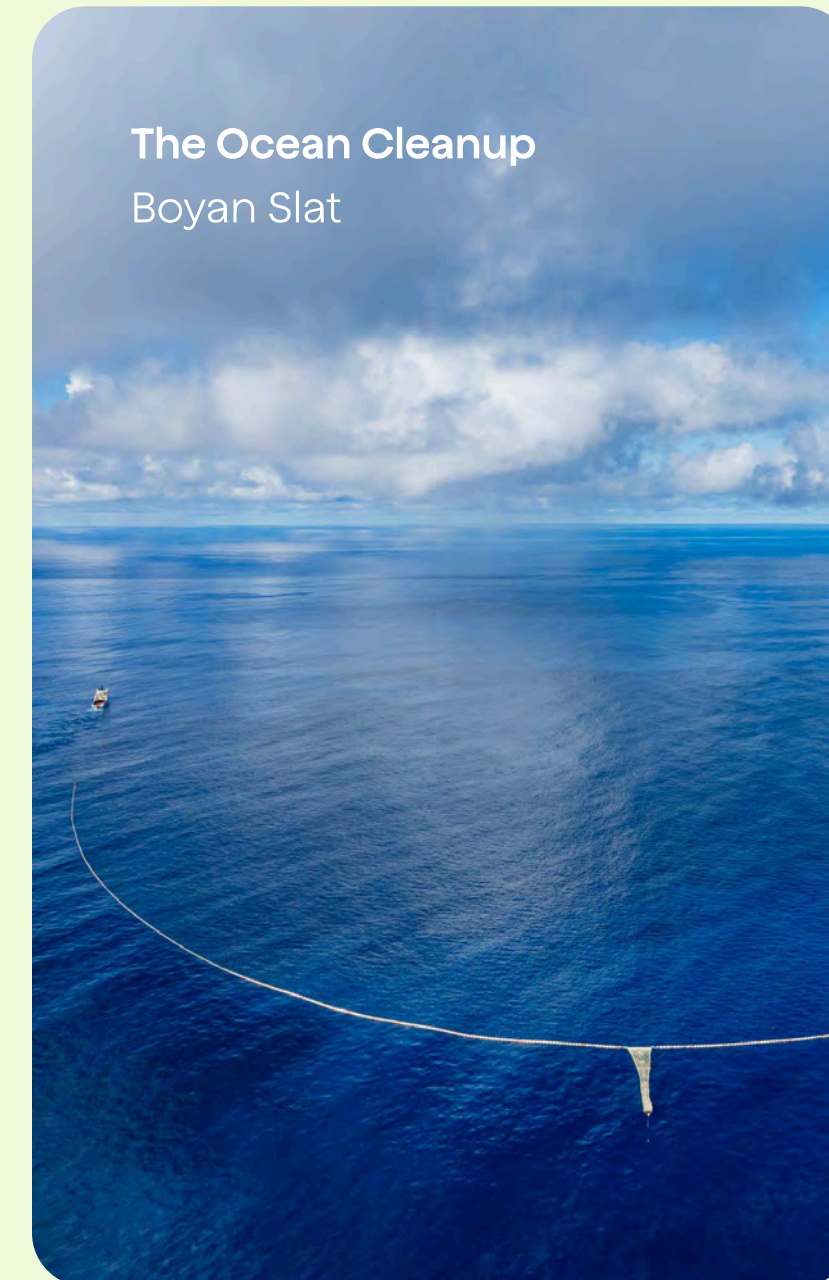
Join us in envisioning a project that stands at the forefront of architectural innovation, discussion and inspiration for a sustainable future.



Boyan Slat
Environmental Entrepreneur



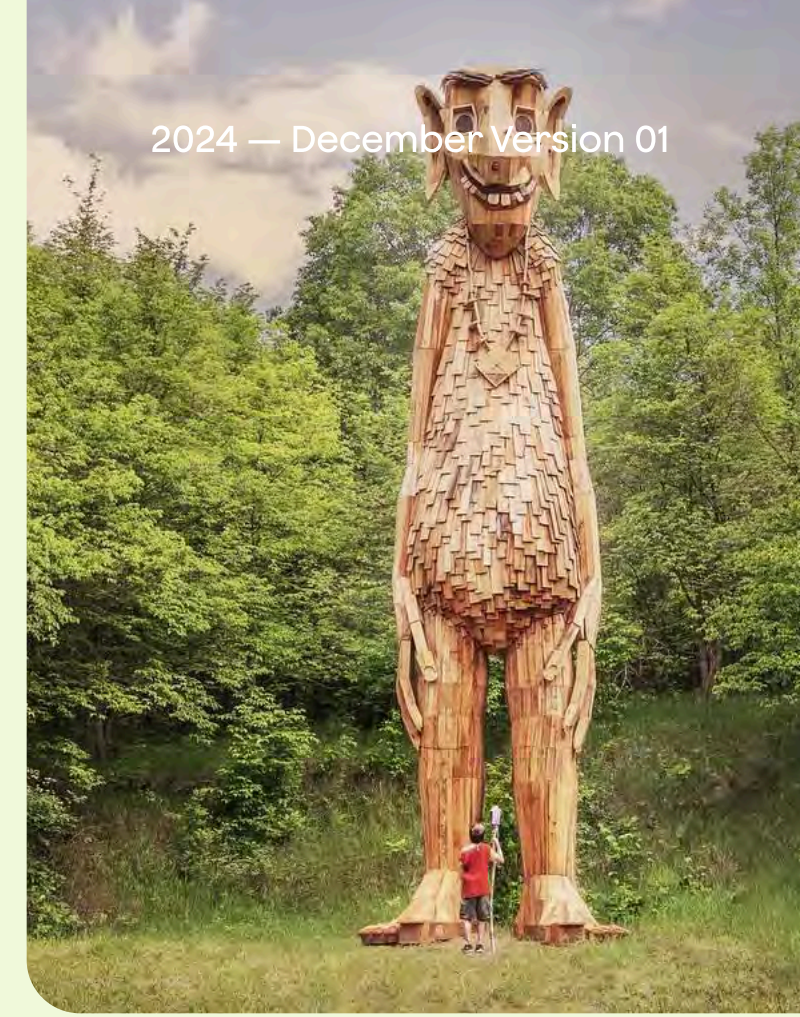
Thomas Dambo
Recycle Artist



The Ocean Cleanup
Boyan Slat



Sven Kallen
Social Entrepreneur



2024 — December Version 01



Aunty Ivy
Cultural Ambassador

02.01 Vision

At this critical moment in our planet's history, this project aims to inspire millions to adopt sustainable lifestyles, drive change in their workplace and trigger the social tipping point needed for real change. This competition is the catalyst to kickstart that journey.

Here's why you should be a part of it:

Our Ambition: Systemic Change

We aim to create a landmark that serves as a symbol of transformation—one that inspires a global shift toward sustainability. This place will be a beacon of hope, a source of inspiration and a call to action for millions of people to co-create a greener, more biodiverse and more equitable world. We want to know: what should this place look and feel like? How can we make it an immersive space for education, inspiration and learning?

We Value Your Ideas

Our process is an open, collaborative dialogue about how sustainability, technology and aesthetics can intersect in innovative ways. By participating, you'll contribute to a vision that benefits everyone involved, especially you. Your ideas will help shape something with a true global impact.

Let's Create a Place that Moves People

We're not asking merely for a building. We're asking you to envision a holistic experience that will activate millions — a place that unites people around a shared purpose and inspires action.

Redefining Dynamic Design

This is your opportunity to explore how adaptability and change can define a 21st-century landmark. We want a structure that evolves and endures, continually inspiring and engaging people for generations to come. Challenge us with a vision for a landmark that sustainably renews itself—both in form and function—while amplifying its message.

A Process as well as a Product

This is more than a competition; it is a process that will shape something new and profound in a novel way. We'll share our successes and challenges with the world, hoping others will learn alongside us.

Add Real Value to the City and Community

Your ideas will offer more than inspiration—they will offer a tangible, measurable impact. The project should contribute positively to its environment—human, animal, plant and soil. More biodiversity, less CO2, more happiness. These outcomes should be visible and measurable in your concept.

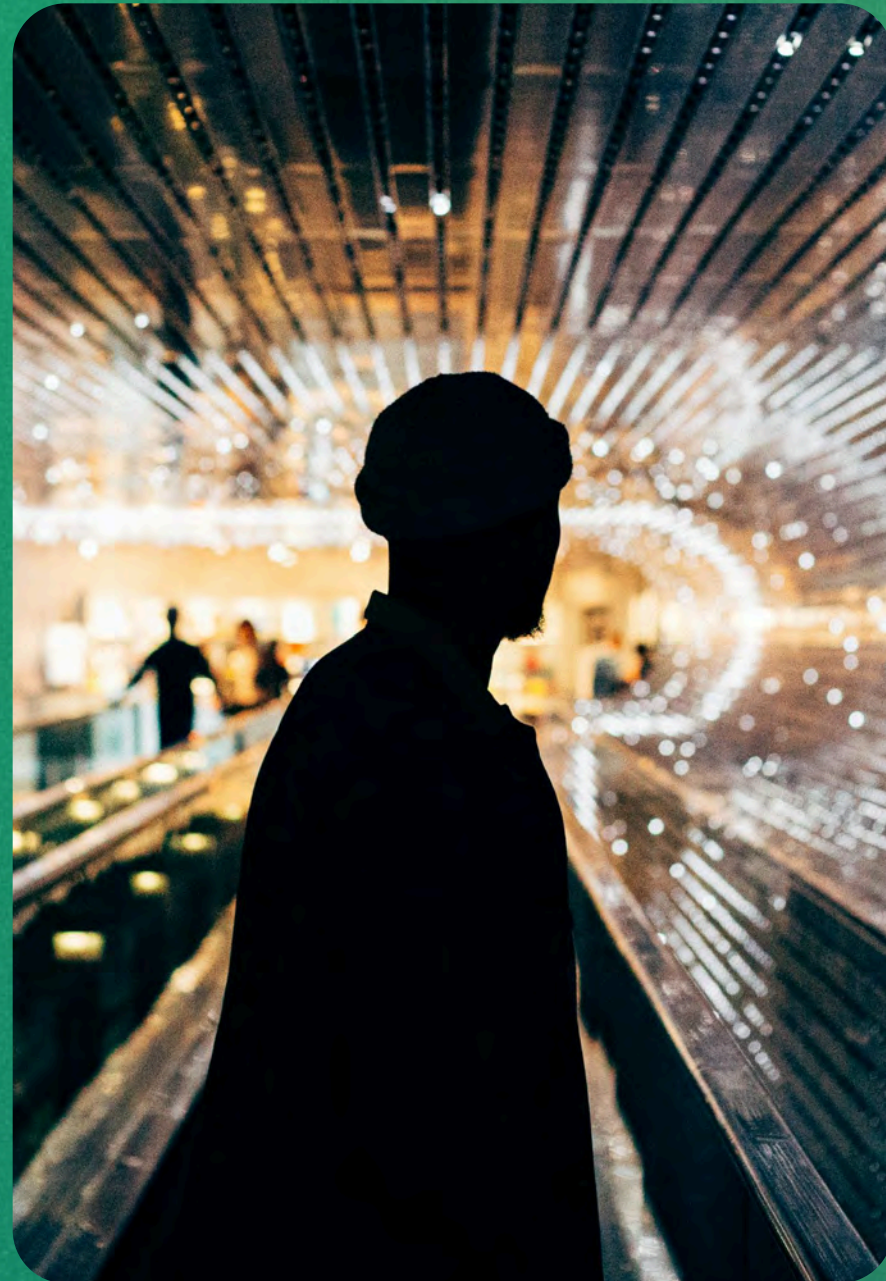
This is Uncharted Territory for All of Us

This isn't a traditional competition. We are not asking you to design a specific building at this stage in the process. There are no fixed spaces, footprints or revenue-based requirements. Instead, we ask you to demonstrate the societal impact of your vision for the future. You'll create a value case, not just a business case, measuring the project's positive effect on the world.

We are Committed to Realizing this Vision

This competition is not merely a conceptual exercise; we have a team of people dedicated to bringing this vision to fruition. We are currently in discussions with several Dutch municipalities to secure a location for this landmark. With the support of a network comprising 300 private investors and institutional backers, we have access to the necessary funding and resources to transform the winning design into reality.

Competition Overview



03

03.01. Format

The competition unfolds in two stages, from January to October 2025. Stage One aims to generate bold, conceptual visions for the Shift landmark through an international open call. Five teams in total will progress to Stage Two and be asked to refine their conceptual ideas and produce detailed designs. The winning team will be selected after jury deliberations and invited to move on to the next phase of design.



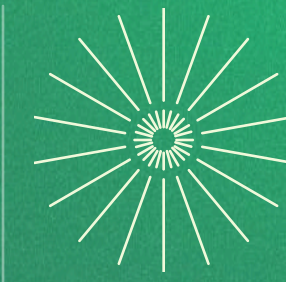
Stage One Concept & Vision

January 2025 – March 2025

In Stage One participants are encouraged to think big. We are looking for wide-ranging conceptual ideas (not designs!) that demonstrate the greatest potential for development. With the explicit goal of leveling the playing field and encouraging innovation, we have left specifications around the building's size or its programmatic uses up to participants. To attract the greatest diversity of firms to the competition, we do not require any formal designs; so no renderings, floor plans or designs for the building's exterior at this stage.

At least three firms will be shortlisted from the open call. They will be joined by two pre-qualified firms invited by Shift. This will include one larger practice with a strong track record of creating extraordinary architecture and a commitment to furthering its sustainability profile. The other will be a practice with a strong sustainability track record and the ambition to scale up. For more details on the rationale behind the two prequalified participants, please reference the FAQ section at the end of this brief.

During Stage One, Shift will intentionally still be in discussions with municipalities across the Netherlands to secure the ideal project location. We encourage participants to consider sharing features of a potential location that would support the success of their vision, such as proximity to a transportation hub or certain topographic characteristics. After Stage One and before the start of Stage Two, the selected location will be announced, enabling teams to respond more precisely to the site conditions and surrounding environment.



Stage Two Design Development

May 2025 – October 2025

In Stage Two, the five selected entries will receive feedback on their Stage One ideas from the jury and Shift team, at which point they will be prompted to translate their conceptual ideas into more detailed concept designs, including key perspectives of the building, high-level floor plans, space diagrams, look & feel mood boards and a site plan (as specified in the Stage Two assignment requirements below). Participants will also be asked to expand their teams in accordance with the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 5.1.

To inform these designs, teams will engage in a series of collaborative sessions with the Shift team, the selected municipality and the competition jury. Early in Stage Two, three members of each selected team will be invited to visit the site, meet with municipal representatives and attend an exclusive group dinner with Shift stakeholders, investors and the other shortlisted teams. This will be an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the site and its context, forge connections with key stakeholders and have direct interaction with representatives of the selected municipality.

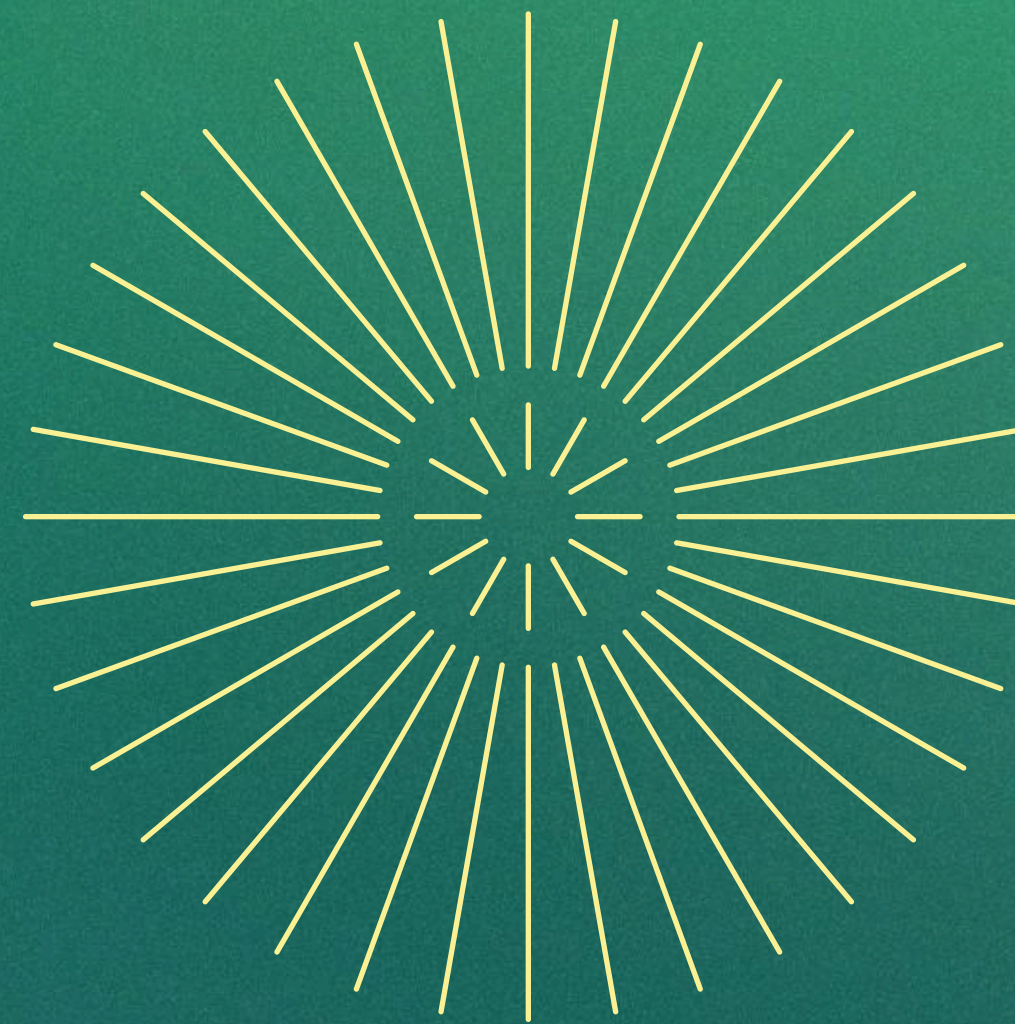
Later in Stage Two (Fall 2025), a maximum of three members per team will return for the Jury Deliberation and Pitch Presentation, on location in Amsterdam. This public event will feature keynote speakers, expert panels and insights from the Shift team, who will share key learnings from the competition process. The event promises to be both celebratory and informative, with an expected audience of 200 attendees, plus a live online broadcast for a global audience. The pitch presentations will be followed by a final closed-door interview with the jury.

Once selected, the winning team and Shift will enter into an agreement, and the project will move forward to secure financing and finalize the land agreement.

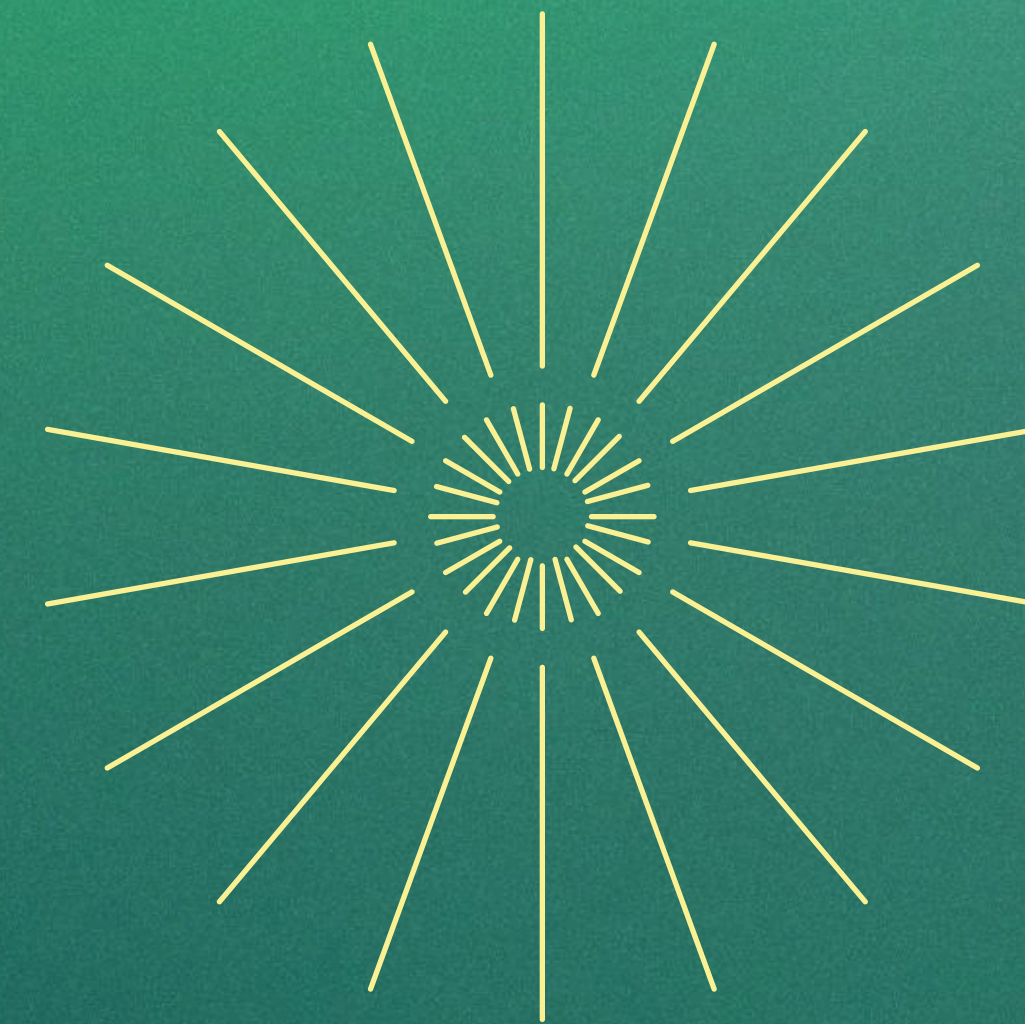
03.02 The Assignment

Below are detailed submission requirements for Stage One and a summary of what will be required of shortlisted teams for Stage Two. In lieu of layouts or cost estimates in Stage One, we ask participants to align their visions with the following guidelines:

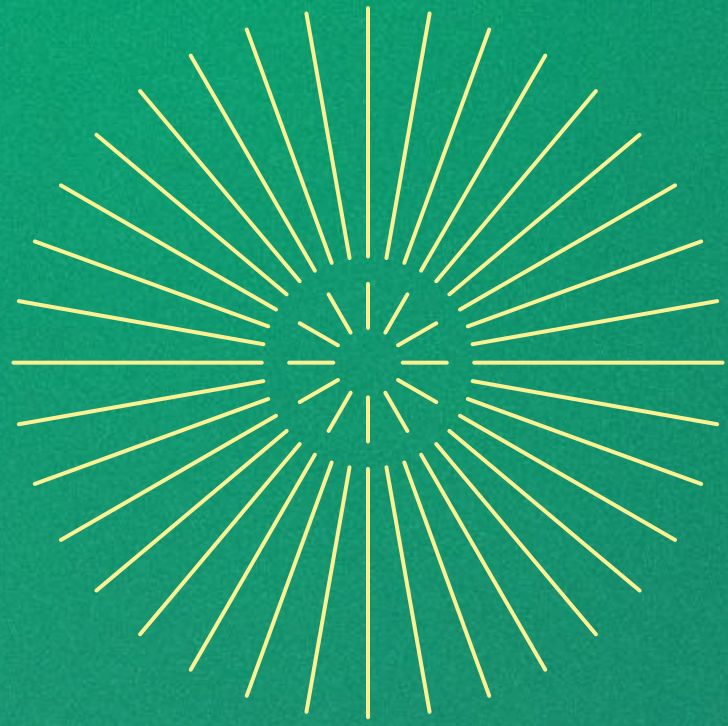
- Offer a compelling balance of aesthetics, design and sustainability.
- Encourage interaction with its environment, both in the physical sense and with respect to the surrounding communities.
- Consider the defining characteristics of a potential location where it could be situated. It is still undecided, but expected characteristics are going to be one or more of the following: close to a body of water, in urban environment, near a transportation hub, etc.
- Create a destination that supports meeting, learning, collaborating and celebrating and can accommodate an annual visitorship of 1 to 1.5 million people —an immersive space where visitors can engage in creativity, enjoy hospitality and 'consume the change.' It is not a place for habitation, but for experiential transformation.
- Offer an experience that is energizing and self-sufficient, both literally and symbolically.



Stage One



Stage Two



Stage One Requirements

All submissions must include the following materials. See Section 4.2 for detailed submission instructions and further specifications:

1. Responses to Key Questions (max 500 words each)

Each response should capture the ethos of your vision and not exceed 500 words.

- What should a 21st-century climate landmark look like and how can it challenge past notions of what constitutes an architectural icon?
- How will your proposed landmark foster collective action and shift behavioral change towards climate change?
- What is your approach to sustainable design and how do you see this applied to the Shift landmark? Is it future-proof? Is it flexible? How will it evolve over time and respond to changing sustainability needs?

Mood Boards (three boards total; each up to five pages

A4-format landscape)

Each response should be accompanied by a visual representation in the form of a mood board. This can include sketches, collages, diagrams and imagery that illustrates your answer and captures the spirit of the landmark you are envisioning. No formal renderings should be included.

2. User Journey (diagram up to three pages A4-format landscape)

Create a diagram that captures the key visitor experience and building program. The diagram should illustrate the key moments of interaction with the space—how visitors will engage with the environment and interact with exhibits or installations. As a specific site is not yet disclosed in Stage One, you may envision your ideal site and demonstrate how it contributes to the Shift experience. Focus on how the experience communicates the project's themes of sustainability, climate action and the future of our planet.

3. Value Case (max 500 words)

We do not require a traditional business case, but rather a value case that demonstrates the potential impact and value of your concept. This should be a 500-word narrative that describes how your design could have measurable and visible positive impacts on the environment, human behavior and society at large.

4. Team Composition

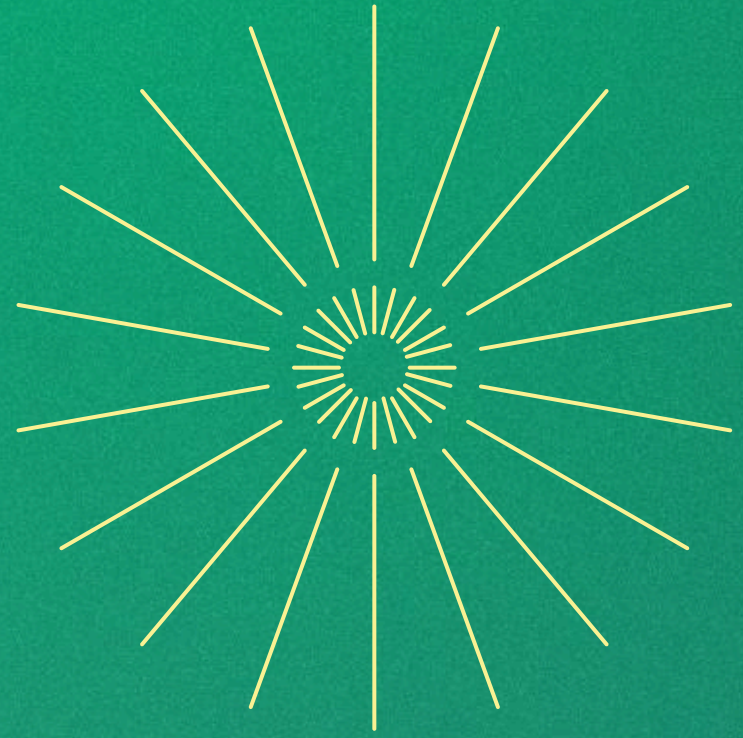
Each team lead should submit a list detailing their draft team composition (including external consultants) to be further built out in Stage Two. The team should strive to enlist various interdisciplinary experts (recommended fields are detailed in the 5.1 Team Eligibility section), to ensure the strength of their proposal across both programmatic needs and design elements.

5. Team Lead Portfolio (max 15 pages in A4-format landscape)

Provide details on 3-5 previous projects your firm has completed, as relevant experience. For each project, include project title, date, budget, location, relevant team members, a brief description, images and drawings including captions. Include the previous information in no more than 15 slides of the firm's submission deck. Please include relevant examples of hybrid service/public building (i.e. a museum, library, performing arts center, education facility, health center) with a minimum completed floor area of 1,500 m².

6. Company Information Form

Each team lead should fill out a form outlining all relevant information regarding the team lead and your consultant team members. This form is accessible through a link in the submission instructions section. Please note that Stage Two will require this form to be filled out by selected team members.



Stage Two Requirements

Three teams will be selected from the open call to advance to Stage Two, and will be joined by the two pre-qualified teams.

Those selected will be asked to develop their conceptual proposals and produce designs based on Stage One feedback from the jury, the Shift team and the selected municipality. Designs should begin to address technical, contextual and programmatic elements in the form of more detailed architectural drawings and plans.

After the submission deadline in September, Stage Two teams will be invited to Amsterdam to present their designs at a public pitch event in October as part of the jury deliberation.

1. Design Concept Summary

Provide a **summary document** that outlines the refined architectural concept, how it integrates into the urban context and how it will facilitate more sustainable behavior change.

Key considerations:

- How does the design support sustainability in terms of materials, energy use and environmental integration? Teams can decide if they think it is fitting to apply a measurement system to their designs to achieve the optimal commitment to sustainable development.
- What programmatic elements have been introduced to support the landmark's mission of inspiring action and education? How is the design flexible and adaptive in order to foster interaction, learning and inspiration?

2. Building Space Diagram 1:200

Submit a diagram illustrating the allocation and flow of spaces within the building. This should demonstrate how the landmark can cater to different types of experiences—from passive exploration to active participation in sustainability programs—and can accommodate an annual visitorship of 1 to 1.5 million people.

3. High-Level Floor Plans 1:100

Submit **floor plans** with a **low level of detail** to show the general layout of the landmark's spaces.

4. Expanded Mood Board (max ten pages A4-format horizontal)

Provide an expanded mood board that includes **6-20** reference materials (e.g., images, sketches, diagrams, text). This should visually communicate the aesthetic, cultural and sensory experience of the landmark, as well as its sustainability features and how it resonates with a global audience.

5. Site Plan 1:400

Submit a schematic site plan that illustrates how your design interacts with the surrounding urban and natural context. How does the site connect to the larger community and environment? What impact does the landmark have on its immediate surroundings, both socially and environmentally?

6. Renderings (A3 format landscape)

At this stage, a **visual representation** of your proposed visitor experience will be requested:

- **Image 1:** One rendering of the **main exterior view**, focusing on how the landmark stands as an icon while integrating into its surrounding landscape.
- **Image 2:** One rendering of the **ground-level entrance** showing how visitors enter the space and are greeted by the experience.
- **Image 3:** Two renderings of the **interior** depicting an immersive space where visitors engage with the project's themes, learn and participate in the experience.

7. Expanded Team Composition

Provide an expanded list of recruited interdisciplinary expertise (recommended fields are detailed in the 4.1 Team Eligibility section), to ensure the strength of their proposal across both programmatic and design elements. Solicit a completed **Company Information Form** from each.

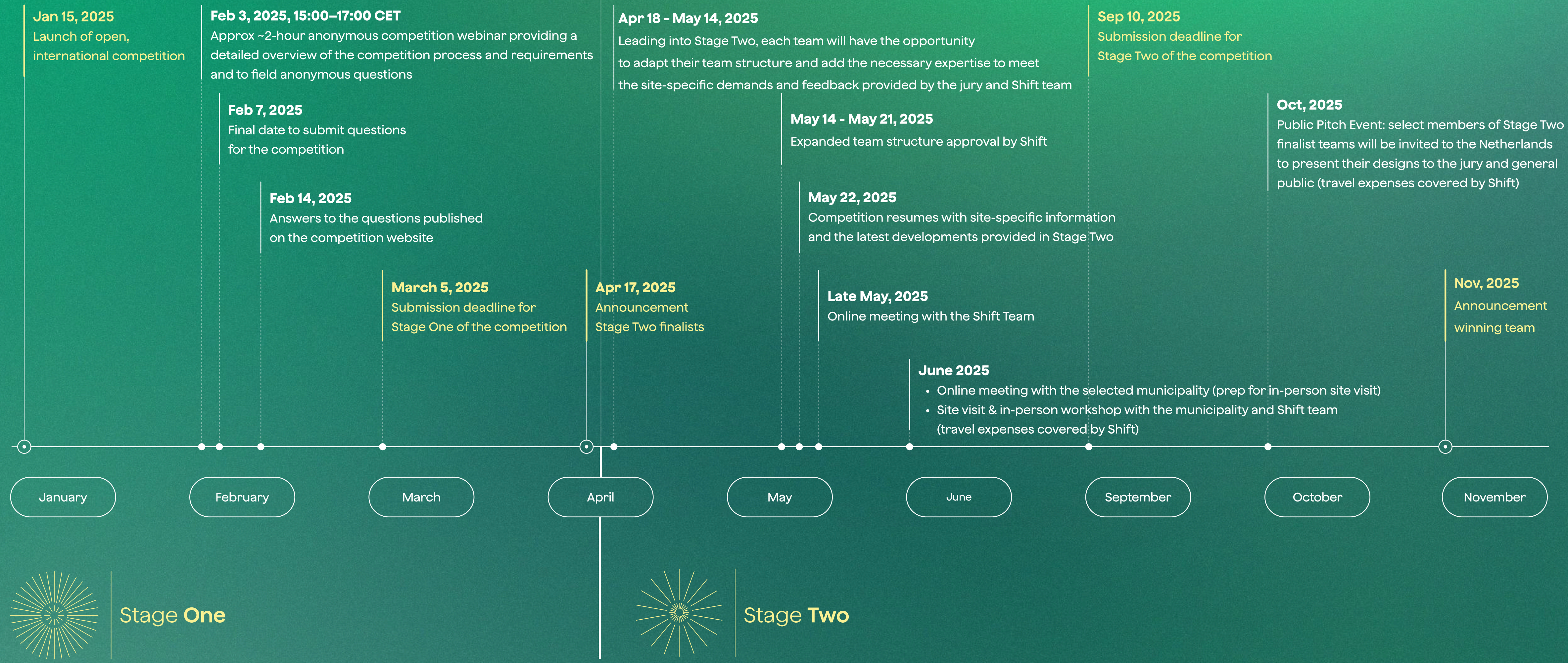
8. Sustainability Vision

Provide an in-depth explanation of the sustainability vision for your design, including ecological, social and economic sustainability principles. How will the landmark reduce its carbon footprint, support biodiversity and integrate sustainable systems like water management, energy use and material sourcing?

9. Fee Proposal

Provide a detailed fee proposal outlining your design service costs and breakdown by project stage, along with initial estimates of the costs for the proposed design.

03.03 Timeline



Submission & Selection



04

04.01. Team Eligibility

Stage One

Stage One of the competition is open internationally to architecture and design teams — both large and small — that have a bold vision for the future of sustainable architecture. The only requirements to submit are as follows:

Lead Architect Qualifications:

- The lead architect must demonstrate that they have the right to practice as an architect in their country of residence.
- The lead architect must hold a master's degree in architecture from an accredited institution.
- The lead architect will ideally have completed at least one hybrid service/public building project prior to submission (e.g. a museum, library, performing arts center, education facility, health center) with a minimum completed floor area of 1,500 m².

Team Composition Considerations:

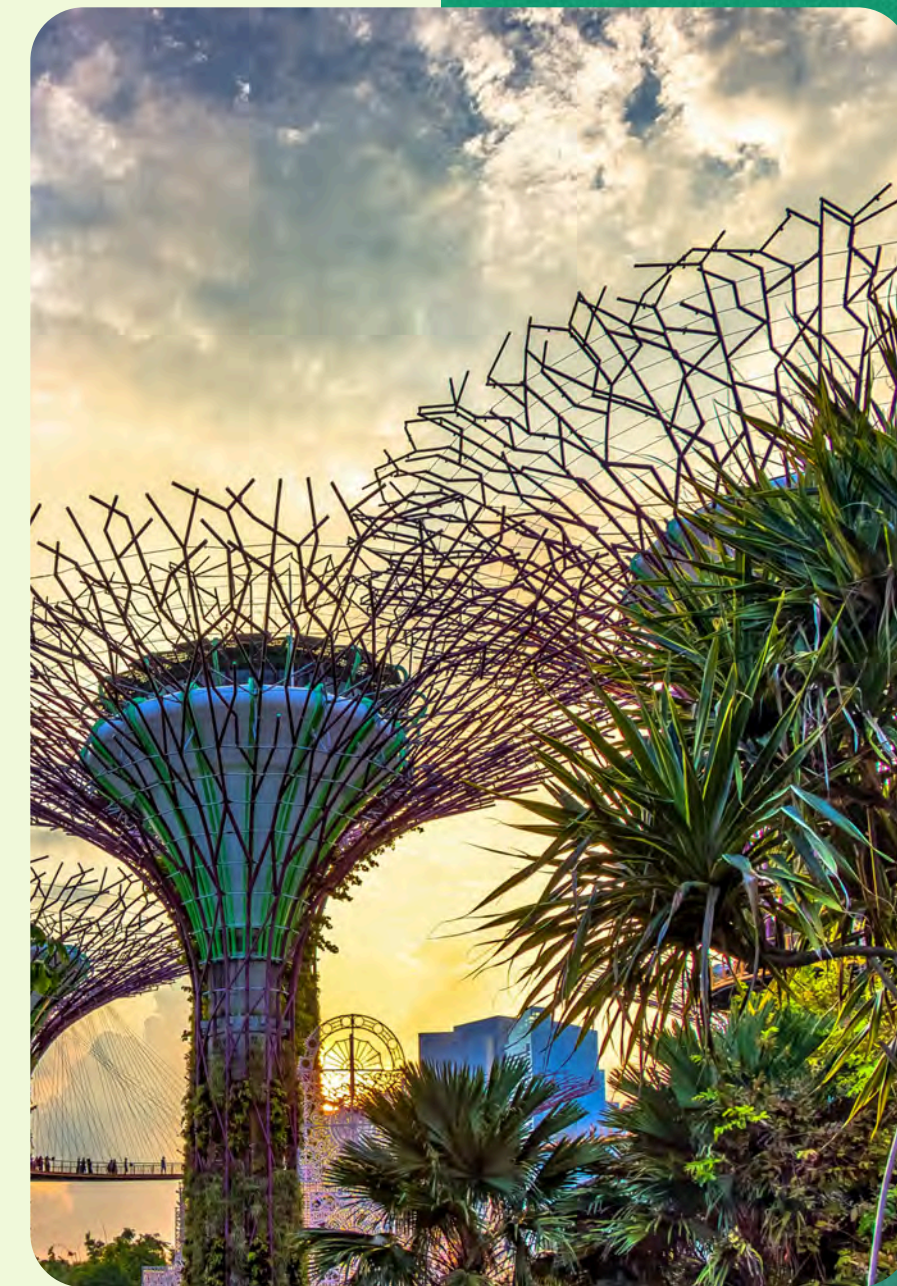
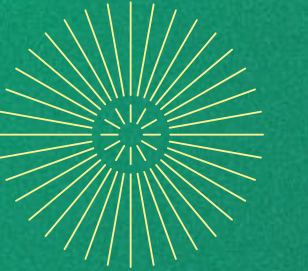
- The competition organizer encourages participating design teams to engage diverse team members and cross-disciplinary expertise.
- The team may choose to bolster their experience by submitting in conjunction with a more established design firm, better equipped to meet the complex project demands.
- No separate registration is required for Stage One. Shift will verify eligibility details from teams selected for Stage Two.

General Eligibility Considerations:

- **Disqualification:** Stage One participants will be disqualified if they submit materials that exceed those detailed in the Stage One requirements. For example: submitting renderings will lead to disqualification, as we are committed to creating a level playing field. Members of the jury, the competition secretary and anyone involved in the preparation of the competition, along with their close associates, are not eligible to participate.
- **Compliance:** Participants must comply with all relevant local, national and international laws related to architectural practice and public procurement.

Stage One

January 2025 - March 2025



04.01. Team Eligibility

Stage Two

In Stage Two, the shortlisted teams are expected to build out their multidisciplinary team with additional expertise ensuring the concept not only becomes strong on the architectural side, but also on the conceptual, experience and programmatic sides. The expanded design team must demonstrate the ability to collaborate across disciplines, integrating feedback from the Shift team and the municipality during the design process.

All team members must be available to participate in workshops and meetings, both online and on-site, with the selected municipality and Shift representatives. The competition organizer reserves the right to propose additions and changes to the composition of the winning team after the completion of Stage Two.

Lead Architect Qualifications:

If the lead architect does not have the qualifications to work in The Netherlands, the team must include a local architect licensed to practice in the country.

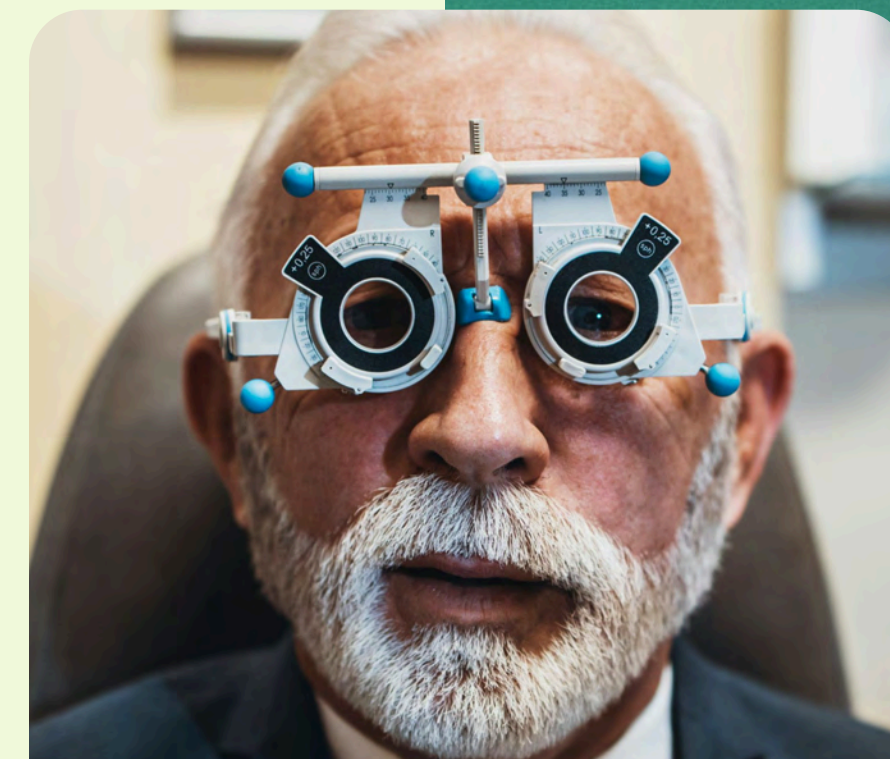
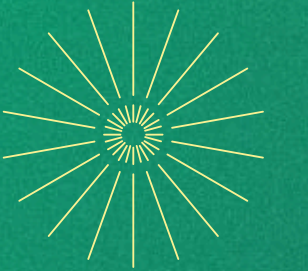
While the lead architect must meet the above qualifications, other team members can come from countries that do not fall under the scope of the EU or GPA 2012.

Recommended Supplementary Expertise:

When assembling the teams, consider including expertise within the following areas:

- **Wild Card:** An innovative thinker or unique expert offering unconventional ideas or skills. This could be an artist, a technology futurist or a magician — an unlikely expert who can help push the boundaries of the design.
- **Social and Environmental Sciences:** Specialists such as anthropologists, sociologists or environmental psychologists and scientists to ensure the design aligns with human behavior and encourages sustainable actions.
- **Experience Design:** Expertise in immersive visitor experience design, ensuring the landmark engages visitors on a multisensory level.
- **Landscape Design:** Expertise in designing outdoor spaces that integrate seamlessly with the landmark's vision and the urban environment.
- **Structural Engineering:** Capable of addressing the complex structural demands of the project.
- **Electrical Engineering:** To ensure the building's energy systems and lighting plans are optimized for sustainability.
- **Sustainability Expertise:** Professionals with deep knowledge of sustainable design and construction practices.
- **Hospitality Advisors:** Experience in designing spaces that can support hospitality functions (e.g., restaurants, event spaces) if this is part of your vision.
- **Cost Estimator:** A specialist to support budgeting, cost estimation and financial forecasting.

Stage Two
May 2025 - September 2025



04.02. Submission Instructions

The **deadline to submit all Stage One materials is March 5th, 2025, 5 pm EST**. Participants should prepare a submission deck with the materials listed below and send in a single **PDF file not exceeding 100 MB in size**.

Competition entries must be electronically submitted before the deadline through the submission portal on the [competition website](#). No separate registration is required.

Submission Materials

(as outlined in detail above in Section 3.2 of the assignment):


- Responses to three key questions (max 500 words each) and corresponding mood boards (three boards total; each up to five pages each in A4-format landscape)
- User Journey Diagram (up to three pages A4-format landscape)
- Value Case (max 500 words)
- Team Lead Portfolio (3-5 previous projects; max 15 pages in A4-format landscape)
- Draft Team Composition (max five pages A4-format)
- Company Information Form ([accessible for download here](#))

Format: PDF

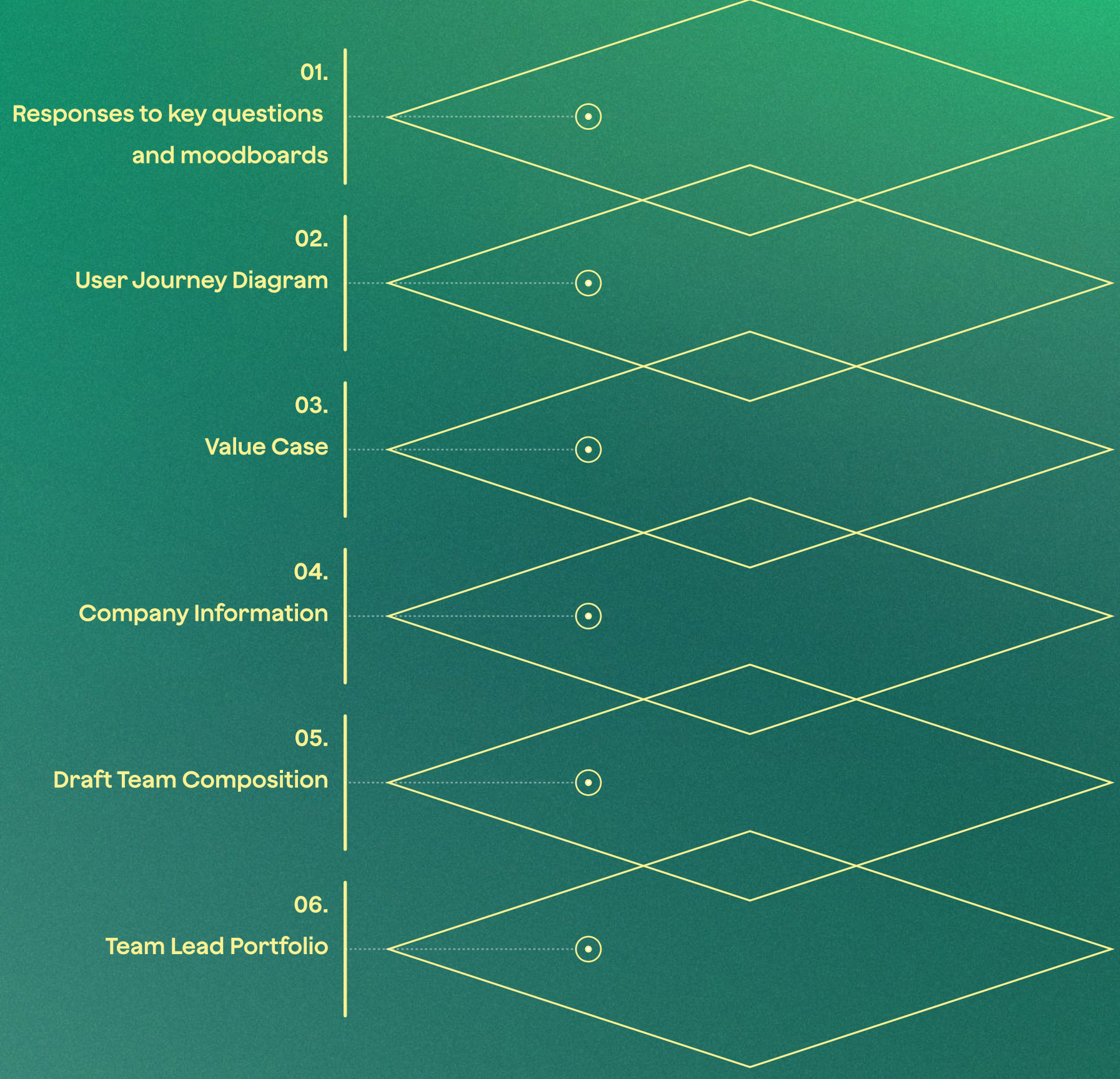
Stage One

Submission Materials

March 5th, 2025, 5 pm EST



Size: 100.000 kilobytes



Timezone: Eastern Standard Time

04.03 Stage One Evaluation Criteria

Stage One evaluation criteria will largely apply to the subsequent stage but will be issued as part of the Stage Two addendum.

Stage One entries will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

04.04. Competition Fees

The competition offers a total prize fund of **€250,000**, to be awarded immediately after the conclusion of Stage Two.

All five firms advancing to Stage Two will receive **€40,000** each, with the winning team receiving an additional **€50,000**.

The goal is to offer the winning team a contract to finalize their design, contingent on the development of various project elements.

Criterion 01

25%

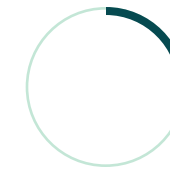


Bold Concept

The concept presents a bold, forward-looking vision for the design of this contemporary landmark that resonates with the design community and the broader public. It challenges traditional architectural norms, inspires a shift in global thinking about design and construction practices, and envisions an aesthetic appeal with the power to attract a large number of visitors from near and far, and all walks of life.

Criterion 02

25%

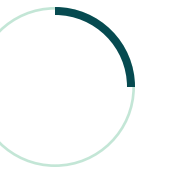


Awareness to Action

In alignment with Shift's mission to inspire climate action, the concept should envision a dynamic and immersive spatial experience, which serves to engage an annual visitor-ship of up to 1.5 million (minimum 1 million) in ways that motivate the adoption of sustainable lifestyles.

Criterion 03

25%



Vision for Sustainability

Your design for the landmark will be a showcase for regenerative architecture stimulating the material and energy transitions. We ask you to propose an objective set of evaluation criteria in which your vision can be assessed and realised. You may also choose one of the existing systems for measuring sustainability to apply to your design.

Criterion 04

10%



Inclusion of Nature

The concept harmoniously integrates with its surroundings – accounting for both plant and animal life of the surrounding ecosystem and incorporating regenerative elements that foster a deeper connection between the built and natural worlds.

Criterion 05

15%



From Vision to Reality

The concept should be both visionary and practically achievable. How well does the design balance creativity with feasibility (based on a value case), including the technical, structural, and engineering considerations and the alignment with the Shift business model?

04.05 Jury



Aric Chen

Director, [Nieuwe Instituut](#)

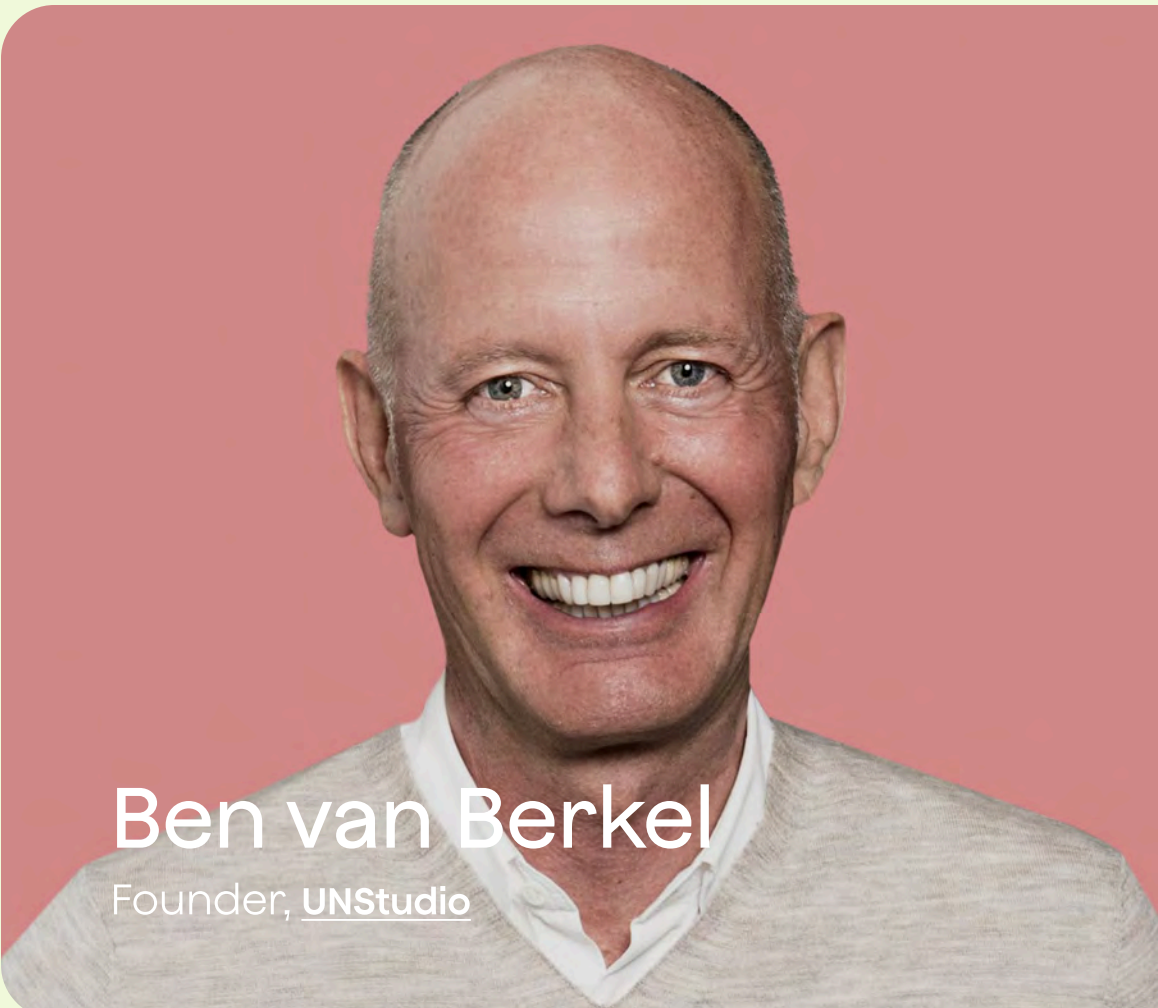
Aric Chen is the **General and Artistic Director** of the **Nieuwe Instituut**, the Netherlands' national museum and institute for architecture, design, and digital culture, in Rotterdam. He has previously served as: Professor and founding Director of the Curatorial Lab at the College of Design & Innovation at Tongji University in Shanghai, China; Curatorial Director of the Design Miami fairs in Miami Beach, USA, and Basel, Switzerland.



Astrid Leyssens

Founder, [We Are Impact Collective](#)

Astrid is the **Founder** of **We Are Impact Collective**, where she drives system change through sustainable impact investing and strategy. With broad experience in both private equity and family office sectors, she advises companies on integrating social and environmental value into their long-term strategies. A seasoned board member, investor and mentor, Astrid excels in guiding organizations through complex challenges while fostering innovation and societal impact.



Ben van Berkel

Founder, [UNStudio](#)

Ben van Berkel is the **Founder** of **UNStudio**, the internationally renowned architecture and design firm. With a focus on innovative, human-centered design, he has led the creation of iconic projects spanning architecture, urban planning and product design. Known for his interdisciplinary approach, Van Berkel's work explores the intersection of architecture, technology and sustainability to shape the built environment of the future.



Dr. Lewis Akenji

Executive Director, [Hot or Cool Institute](#)

Dr. Lewis Akenji is the **Managing Director** of **Hot or Cool Institute**, a public-interest think tank that explores the intersection between society and sustainability. His work takes a political economy lens to economic development and the environment, with implications on the fair distribution of resources within ecological limits.

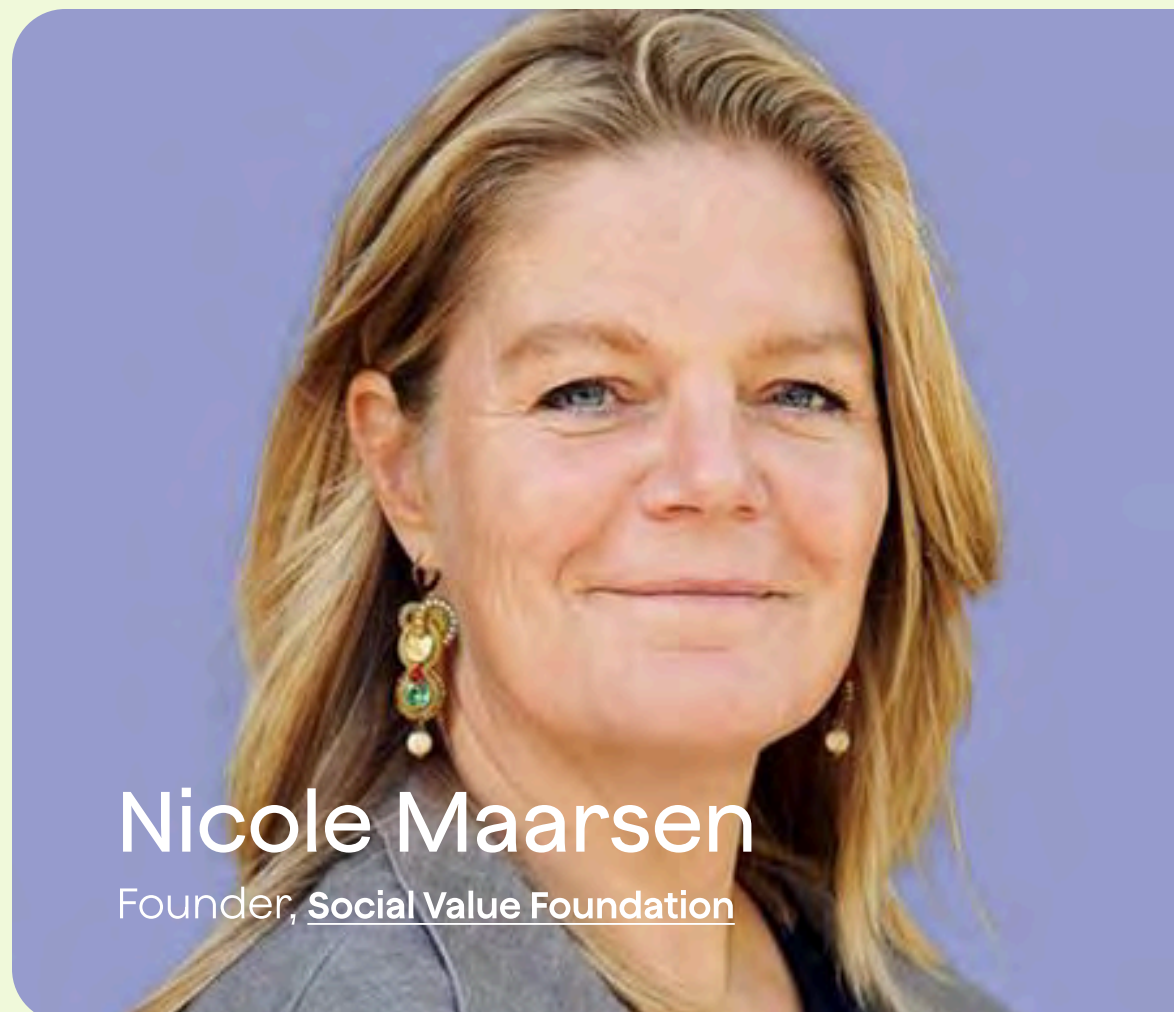
04.05 Jury

**Lodewijk Hoekstra**Founder, [NL Greenlabel](#)

Lodewijk Hoekstra is a passionate advocate for a sustainable world where people and nature exist in harmony. Over the past 20 years he has become well-known as a TV gardener, and has authored books such as Green Happiness. As the quartermaster ambassador for Green Circles Green Healthy City, he works to make municipalities more sustainable, and he co-founded NL Greenlabel to establish a standard for nature-inclusive development.

**Géke Roelink**Director, [NEMO Science Museum](#)

Géke Roelink is the **Director** of the **NEMO Science Museum** in Amsterdam, where she leads initiatives to inspire curiosity and engagement with science and technology. She has a passion for creating educational experiences that make complex scientific concepts accessible to a wide audience. Under her leadership, NEMO continues to innovate in its mission to foster critical thinking and learning through interactive exhibits and programs.

**Nicole Maarsen**Founder, [Social Value Foundation](#)

Nicole Maarsen is the **Founder** of **Social Value Foundation** which focuses on creating healthy, inclusive and resilient ecosystems in cities. She is also a supervisory board member of Home.Earth, an impact real estate company. Over the past 20 years she has held senior roles at ING Real Estate, Syntrus Achmea and Maarsen Groep, and is actively involved in various industry boards, including the Dutch Green Building Council and the Economic Institute for Construction.

Technical Information of the Competition

05

05.01. Competition Rules

EU and national procurement legislation is not applicable since Shift is not a governmental entity.

The following rules apply to this competition process:

1. By participating in this competition and submitting an entry, participants agree to the procedure and conditions set out in this document.
2. Participation in this competition process is at the participant's own expense, except for when participants are selected for Stage Two.
3. Following a submitted entry, the participant concerned may be asked for further information/explanation and/or the participant may be invited for consultation.
4. Before the start of Stage Two, Shift will issue a written invitation to the top five selected firms including the procedure and conditions for Stage Two. The rules for Stage Two will be based on the rules included in this document for Stage One, but will be set out in more detail.'
5. Shift reserves the right to revoke or amend this procedure at any time. Shift is not obliged to enter into any contract. Shift shall not be bound until a contract is validly signed.
6. If a participant does not agree with the contents of this document and/or any decision of Shift in connection with this procedure (including the decision not to enter into a contract with the participant in question), such participant must inform Shift thereof as soon as possible on pain of forfeiting the right to pursue any legal remedy in connection with the point in question at a later date.
7. This procedure is exclusively governed by Dutch law. Disputes shall be submitted to the District Court of Amsterdam.

05.02. Competition Language

The competition language is English. The competition brief and all main appendices are available in English only. All entries shall be submitted in English to be eligible.

05.03. Availability of Competition Documents

All required documents for entering the competition are provided in this brief (PDF) and its appendices, which can be downloaded from the [competition website](#). These materials are to be used exclusively for preparing their submissions; any other use is strictly prohibited. We encourage participants to regularly check the competition website for important updates and notifications throughout the competition period.

05.04. Questions about the Competition Brief

In Stage One, participants and prospective participants can submit their questions after reviewing the competition brief via the [competition website](#). Questions must be submitted by February 7th, 2025, and answers will be published on the website by February 14th. Interested parties can also anonymously tune into a competition webinar on **February 3rd 2025, 15:00–17:00 CET** to review key competition details and pose questions. The login details for the webinar will be shared with people who have downloaded the brief.

05.05. Competition Results & Publication of the Results

The teams selected for Stage Two of the competition will be immediately notified once a decision has been reached and provided with a written summary of jury feedback.

Submissions, including concept designs and supporting materials, may be published by Shift or the authors of the designs with proper credit granted. All results of Stage Two of the competition will be published on and across various platforms, including the competition website and Shift's own channels (e.g. website, newsletter, social media). Similarly, media partners will be actively sought out to fuel the global discussion on sustainable design and provide exposure to participating firms. They can also be used for PR activities, in presentations at events, conferences, exhibitions and the likes. The finalists will also appear in a filmed documentary about the entire project and will be asked to interact with film teams present on certain occasions (e.g. during site visits, public events, important milestones, ceremonies and announcements). This and other footage may also be used by Shift for PR and promotional activities.

05.06. Right of Use of Competition Entries

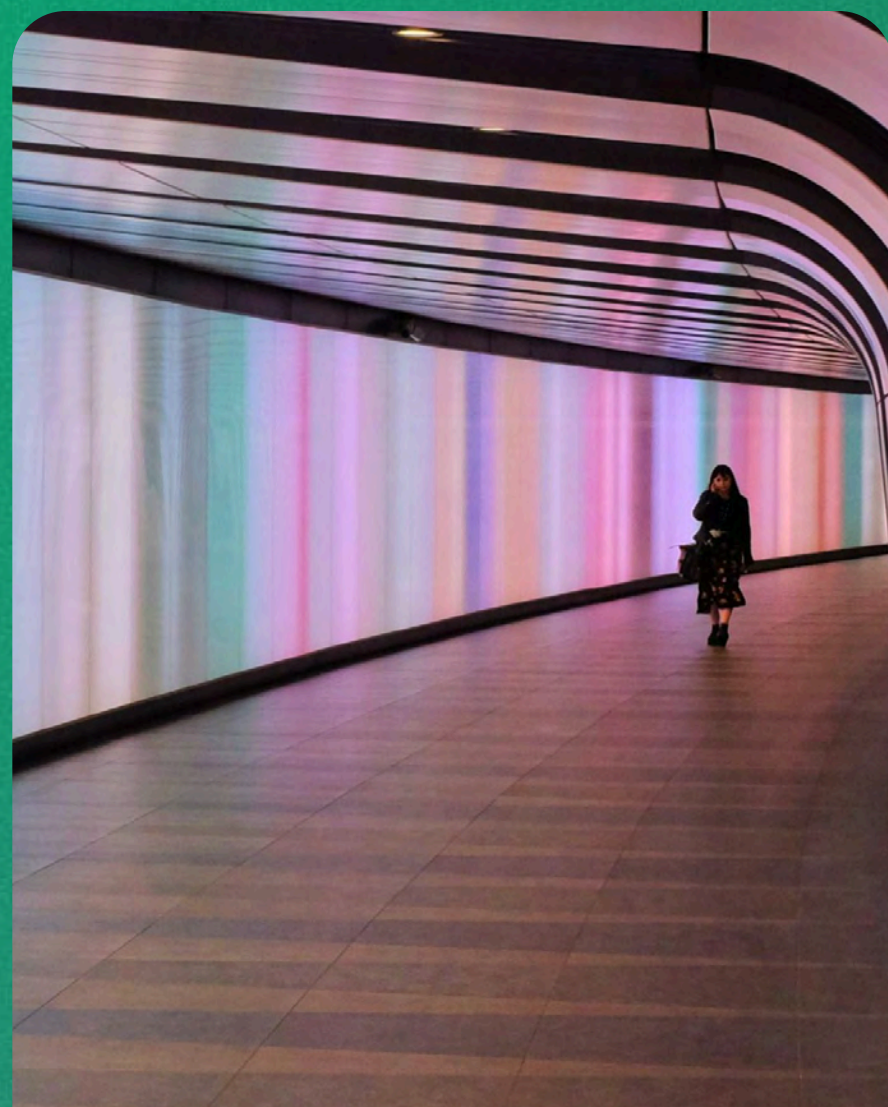
One primary goal of this competition is to inspire visionary ideas with the potential for significant environmental impact. To this end, all intellectual property (IP) associated with submissions will remain the sole property of the submitting firms.

However, the winning firm will grant Shift the irrevocable right to use, copy, modify, and commission modifications of the awarded or purchased entry in accordance with the Dutch Copyright Act (Auteurswet 1912) regardless of whether or not the winning firm is involved in further stages of the project. At this stage, it is our intention to keep the winning firm involved in the project, but under extraordinary circumstances retain the right to continue without them.

The organizer may transfer these rights to third parties involved in executing the project such as construction firms, or another Shift legal entity.

Participants are responsible for ensuring that their entries do not infringe on any third-party intellectual property rights, including patents or copyrights under Dutch law. By submitting an entry, participants confirm that their materials do not contain trade secrets, including as defined by the Dutch Trade Secrets Act (Wbb). The organizer may publish competition materials without compensation, crediting the author, except in cases where entries are submitted anonymously.

Additional Background & Context



06

06.01. The Shift Landmark Visitor Experience

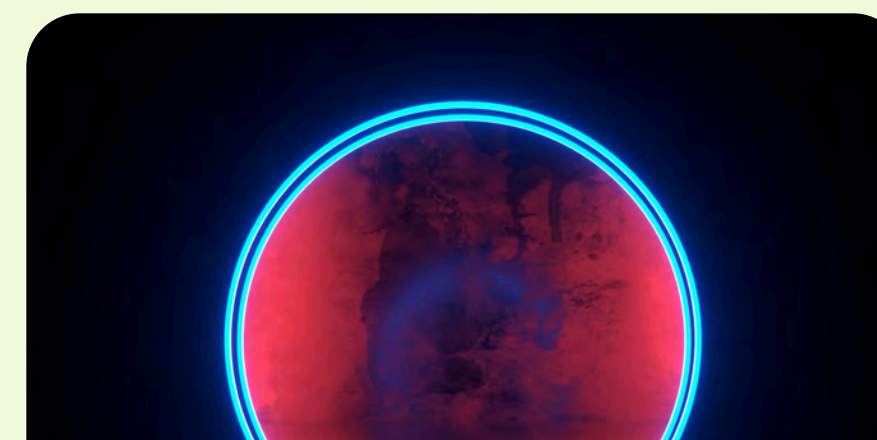
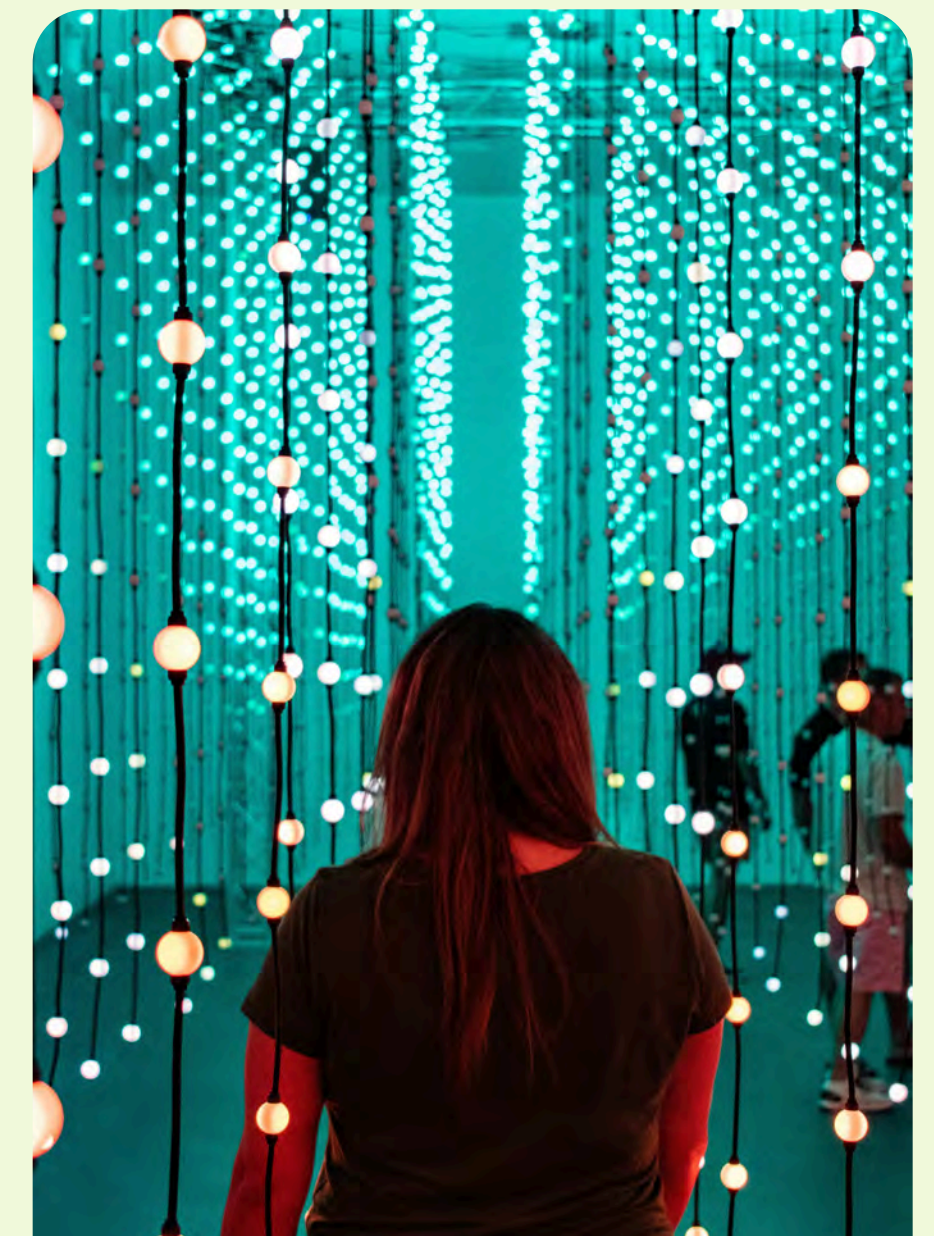
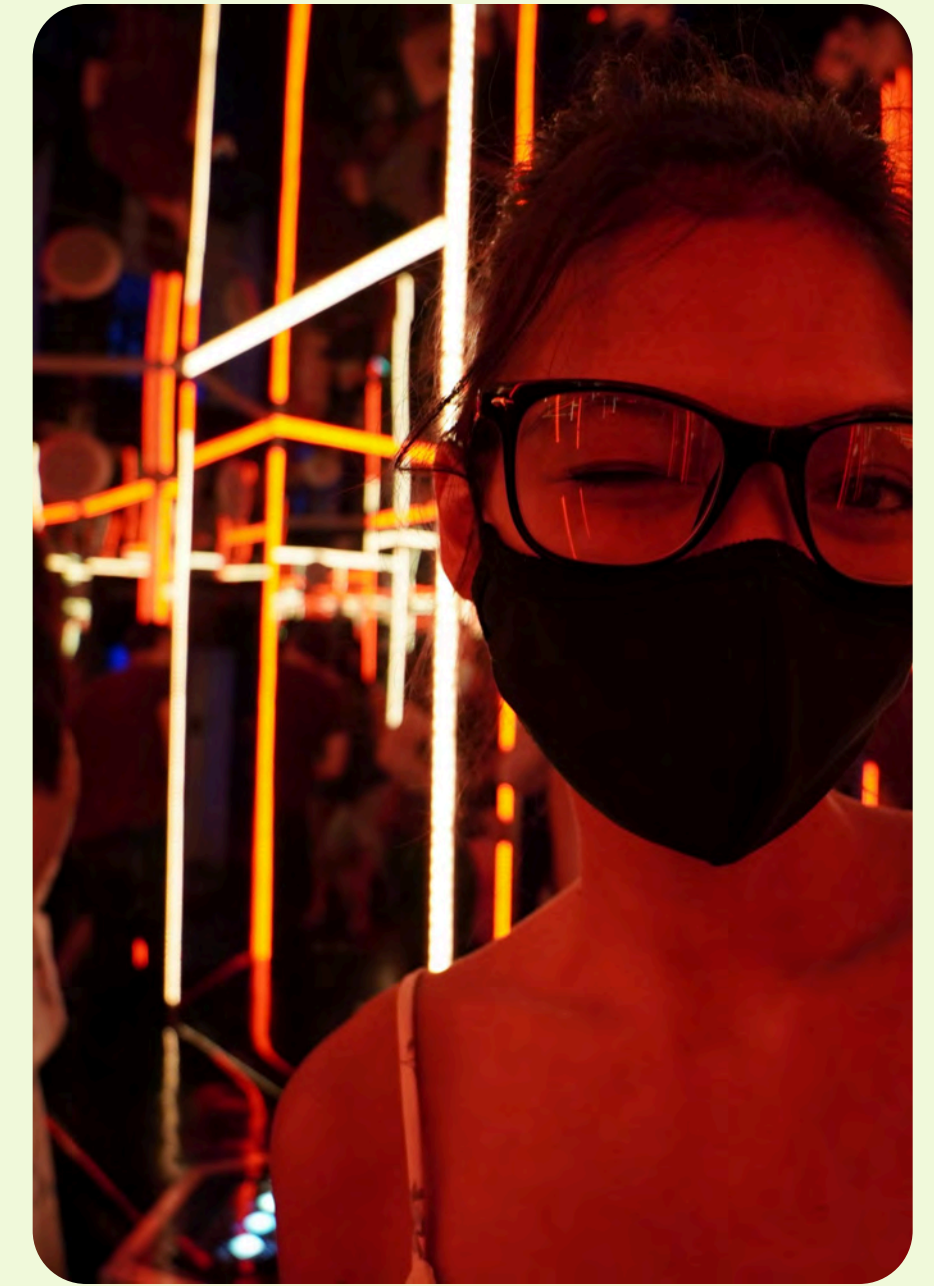
The transformative visitor experience inside the landmark should be created by experts of the participating teams, for example: behavioral science experts, immersive experience designers and/or other creative specialists. To help spark interesting ideas, the following are examples of the kinds of creative visitor experiences imagined by the Shift team:

1. When entering the building, visitors could be met with an immersive experience that engages all senses, creating an emotional response to the urgency of the climate crisis but also showcasing the beauty of our planet and our dependence on it.
2. Visitors could then enter a “zone of hope”: an immersive exposition, featuring stories and portraits of those working to actively change the world in the areas of food, consumption, biodiversity, agriculture, ecology, transportation, energy, architecture, work and social issues. From [Daan Weddepohl](#) and [Fonger Ypma](#) to [Thomas Dambo](#) and [Boyan Slat](#), these “climate and sustainability heroes” and their stories could ignite and inspire visitors to become the best versions of themselves.
3. At visitors' exit, they could be invited to take a digital scan that measures their personal carbon footprints, prompting individuals to reflect on their choices and make a pledge to their own individual sustainability journeys. After their visit, they continue to find inspiration via “climate hero” stories and connect with game changers via our free digital Shift platform.

The Shift team is **very open** to new ideas: both **completely new** and unorthodox, or adopted from or built on the above examples.

We anticipate the opening hours of the Shift landmark to be Monday to Sunday from 09:00-20:00 (9 am - 8 pm) with extended opening times to 22:00 (10 pm) on Fridays and Saturdays.

Ticket sales will constitute the main revenue model (starting at €20 and will range between €20-€45 based on segmented ticketing), but we are open to suggestions.



06.02. Project Budget

The anticipated budget for the Shift landmark is up to €250 million, which includes both hard and soft costs. The design and other professional fees are included in this total amount and are estimated according to typical fees associated with Dutch building projects. Design teams are encouraged to be resource-smart in creating inspiring and thoughtful designs within the financial framework of the project.

06.03. Users

The Shift landmark will be the physical nexus of the various user groups that play an important role in the advancement of the Shift mission to inspire and drive collective action for a sustainable future. Competition participants should consider the ways each will interact with the space.

Global Citizens and Climate Advocates: People from all backgrounds, united by a commitment to climate action, who seek inspiration and direction to contribute to a sustainable future.

Visitors in Search of Inspiration: Individuals, families and groups from the Netherlands and surrounding countries — Benelux, Germany, UK, France— who are looking for a transformative space that fosters optimism and empowers them to take action for the environment.

Local Communities and Future Generations: Residents from the surrounding community, especially younger generations, including students from schools and universities, who will engage with the landmark as an educational resource to inspire and instill sustainable practices in their daily lives.

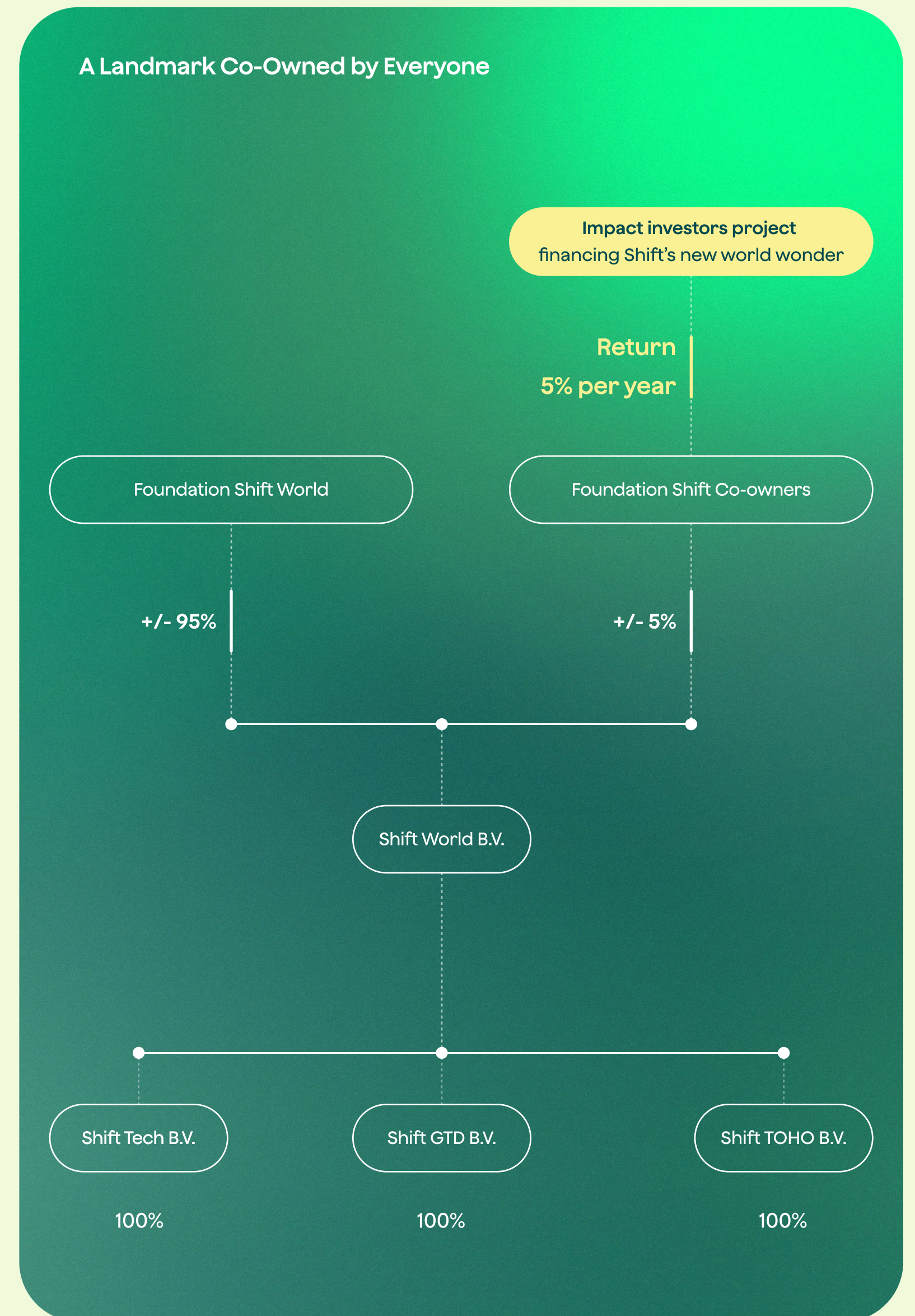
06.04. About the Organizer

Shift is a 'steward-owned' social enterprise founded by social entrepreneur Don Ritzen. While technological innovations and energy transitions are essential, Don believes that true progress hinges on mobilizing individuals to take meaningful action in their daily lives. Several months after Don founded Shift, the IPCC released its Sixth Assessment Report on Climate Change, which dedicated an entire chapter to how behavioral change has the potential to reduce global emissions by 40-70% by 2050. Large-scale individual change will lead to the systemic shifts necessary to meet climate goals.

Financing Vision: A Landmark Co-Owned by Everyone

Shift operates with a unique ownership structure that prioritizes its mission over profit. 95% of the company is owned by a foundation, Stichting Shift World, ensuring that profits are reinvested into advancing the fight against climate change. The remaining 5% is held by impact investors and the residents of the municipalities in which each Shift landmark is to be built. This model ensures that the company remains focused on long-term impact, rather than financial gain.

Shift is supported by a network of partners and impact investors. Shift's first and future landmarks will be primarily funded through family offices and institutional capital. It will also be partially funded through crowdfunding, a model that empowers individuals to directly invest and participate in Shift's mission and become co-owners and stewards of the new world wonder. Once built, visitors will also have the opportunity to invest in the landmark, further deepening community involvement and ownership. Through this approach, Shift plans to phase out institutional and private investors over time, transitioning the landmark to full steward ownership.

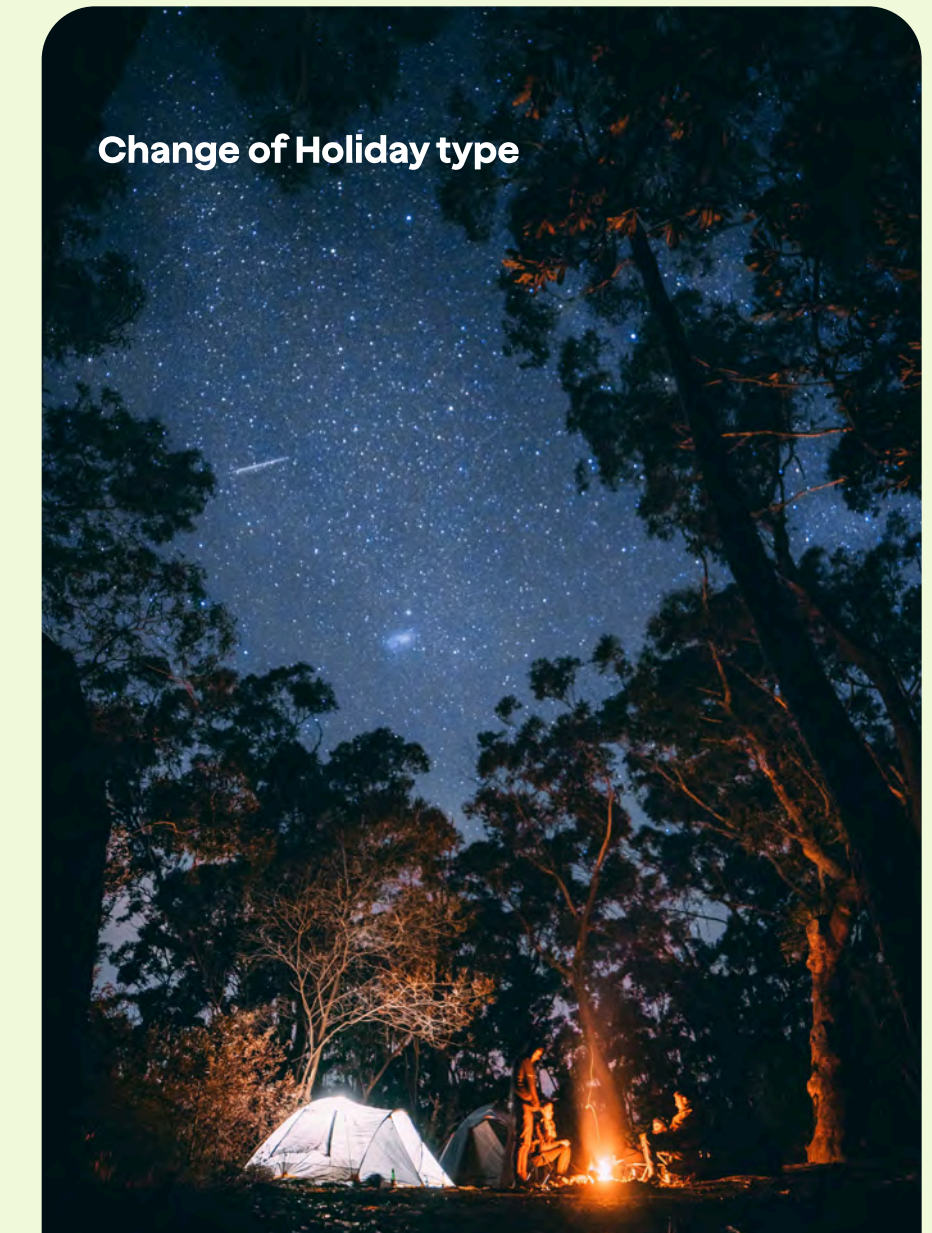
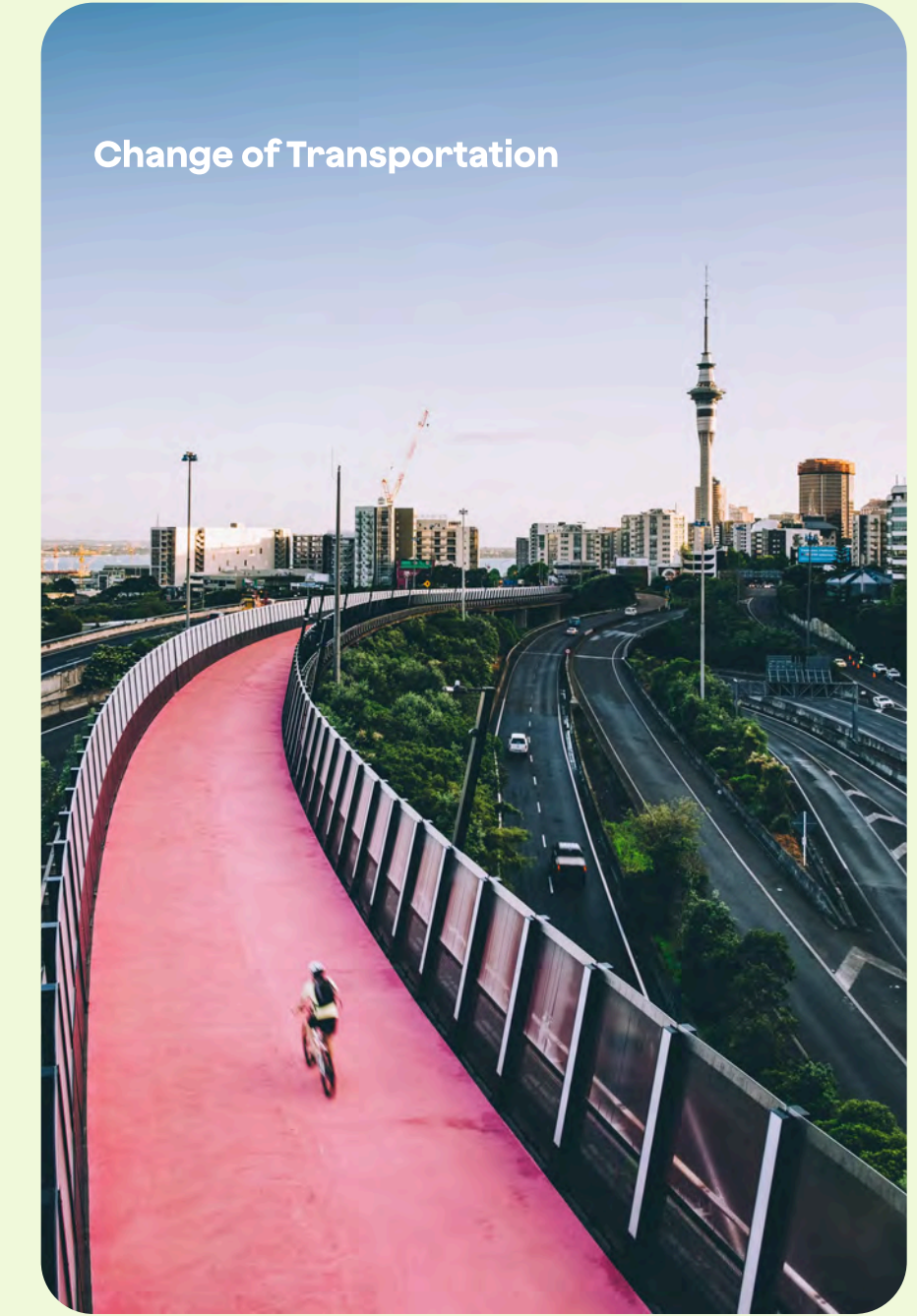
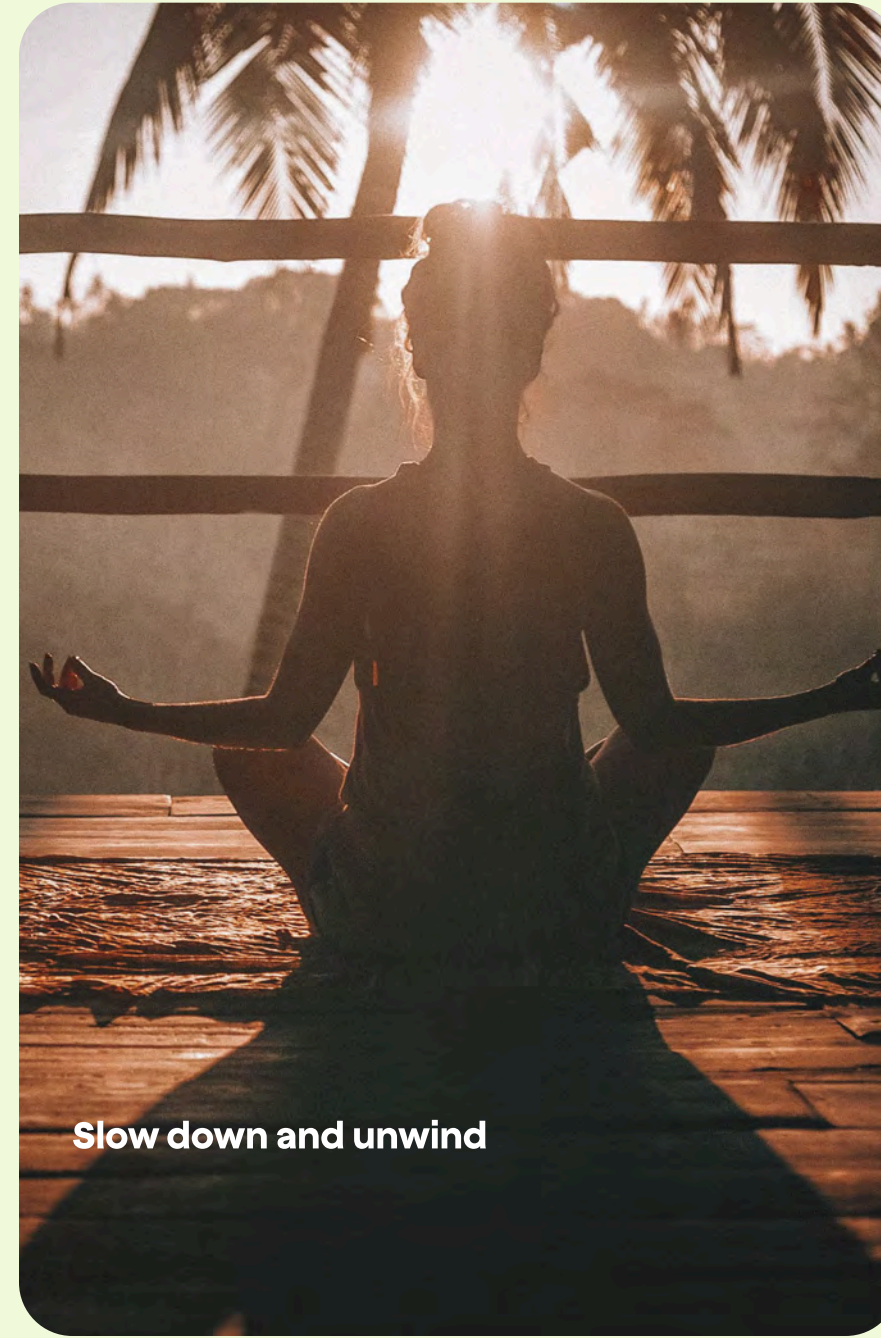


06.05. How Did We Arrive at Shift's Vision?

Perhaps the most profound problem facing climate change is paralysis and inaction. 75% of us are worried about climate change, but only 10% of those living in Western countries are living sustainable lifestyles.

Tackling the roots of climate change is hugely complex; most people feel powerless to act in the face of its many layers, obstacles and interconnections. Yes, it is going to take a massive consortium of businesses, governments and people to solve the most daunting crisis facing humankind. But individuals are not powerless. In fact, according to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report on Climate Change of 2022, behavioral change has the potential to reduce global emissions by 40-70% by 2050.

Lost in all the doom and gloom are the countless individuals and initiatives directly combating climate change. Few realize that many of the solutions needed already exist and have so for some time—solutions like regenerative agriculture, renewable energy, plant-based diets, bio-based and circular buildings. These initiatives and more have the potential for a massive positive effect but need to be further scaled up.



06.06. Insights on Behavioral and Climate Psychology

In developing our vision and concept, we built upon key insights from behavioral and climate psychology. We spent two years seeking answers to our inability to spark massive behavioral change and conducted several small-scale pilots to develop concepts to change that. A few of our favorite behavioral scientists on this topic are [Reint Jan Renes \(KlimaatSpagaat\)](#), [Jan Rotmans](#) and Robert Gifford ([Dragons of Inaction](#)).

However, the most inspirational theory for the development of our vision comes from Per [Espen Stoknes](#), a Norwegian Associate Professor and Co-Director of the [BI Center for Sustainability and Energy](#). He is also a TED Global Speaker and trained psychologist with a doctoral degree in green economics. He wrote the book "[What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming](#)", which won the American Libraries Association's "Outstanding Academic Title" award for 2015. The book was the starting point for his TED talk, which has been viewed over 3.3 million times.

The main barriers according to Stoknes that prevent individual behavior change are listed below:

Per Stoknes: Five Barriers to Inaction

1. Distance: We can't see climate change. We don't see the consequences in our daily life. We know it could have an impact, but far into the future. It can also feel so big or far away, people tend to have the feeling that there is nothing they can do.

2. Doom: climate change is often brought in a negative way. It is a disaster waiting to happen, it will cost a lot of money to fix it, and you will have to sacrifice a lot to help.

3. Dissonance: a feeling of discomfort, caused by knowing that we have to do better in a lot of different ways. To get rid of this discomfort people tend to justify their behavior, or they start to point out how much worse someone else's behavior is compared to theirs.

4. Denial: the mocking of, ignoring or simply denying the problem. When there is no problem, you don't have to feel bad about it, and you don't have to change anything.

5. Identity: this is about holding on to values and morals. Especially conservative values and morals, because you do not want to see them change at all. When climate change goes against these values and morals, you are less likely to get into action and work towards a solution.

Ways to Solve These Barriers, According to Stoknes?



Turn identity by using better signals. Less doom, more focus on indicators that show that our society is making progress in responding to the crisis.

Turn denial into positive storytelling. We're tired of the climate apocalypse story. Hell doesn't sell. Stories about entrepreneurs and citizen led initiatives succeeding with new solutions are needed.

Turn Dissonance into Simplicity by nudging. By better choice architecture we can make climate-friendly behaviours the default and convenient.

Turn Doom into Support by reframing climate to be about human health, or reframing climate as being about new tech opportunities, safety and new jobs.

Turn distance into leading by example, closeby. Use the power of social networks to set new norms for sustainable behaviour.

Frequently Asked Questions

07

07.01. About the Competition

What is the process around the price purse?

We have a total prize purse of **€250.000**. The final 5 selected teams will each receive **€40.000**. They will be granted **€20.000** upon entering Stage Two; the other **€20.000** immediately following the end of the competition. The winning team will receive an additional **€50.000**, right after the announcement of the winner by the jury. Our goal is to offer the winning team a contract to finalize the design of the Shift landmark (contingent on the development of various project elements).

Why are you shortlisting two firms to enter Stage Two in your competition?

While our original intent was to select all five shortlisted firms from an open international competition, we ultimately opted for this hybrid approach due to the following:

1. In our discussions with Dutch municipalities, it is imperative that we demonstrate that we can deliver on the ambition of our project. Demonstrating that one globally renowned architecture firm is already in the running helps to achieve this end. Similarly, a second shortlisted, smaller sustainable firm will illustrate that we are setting the bar high in terms of sustainability. Our choice of shortlisted firms also indicates to entrants the quality and caliber of talent and experience we are looking for.

2. Traditionally, architecture competitions of this nature and stature exclusively invite large and established firms to enter. We opted to shortlist two different types of firms. The first is a large practice with a strong track record of creating extraordinary architecture and a commitment to furthering its sustainability profile. The second is a smaller practice with a strong sustainability track record and the ambition to scale up. Both firms must demonstrate their commitment to reimagining what constitutes a modern-day icon in the sustainable context. While two spots are indeed fixed, we hope that a great diversity of established, emerging and up-and-coming practices will participate and that our competition setup and hybrid approach encourages innovative ideas and unorthodox entries.

Why did you decide to run an open architectural competition, rather than a closed one: for example, inviting ten pioneering sustainable architecture firms to participate?

We consciously opted for an open competition with the goal to kickstart both a creative process and conversation about the future of architecture and the need to design radically more sustainable buildings that ignite massive climate action. We truly believe that the most groundbreaking concepts can come from anywhere. We acknowledge and respect that time and resources are required to enter these types of competitions. We have therefore intentionally kept the requirements for Stage One relatively light and have a vision for IP that we believe is architect-friendly.

Do architects retain IP ownership on entries not selected?

We believe it is going to take nothing less than a “new Wonder of the World” to inspire humanity to take climate action. This is a key motivation behind this competition. If we can inspire the brightest minds in architecture and design to present their visions, we hope to spark a new age of environmentalism. In this spirit, for all those who submit their ideas and are not shortlisted, we sincerely hope you will find a way to realize your sustainable vision and will not stand in your way to making this happen. Stronger still, should you succeed we will be first in line to applaud your success. Why? Because it will be good for humanity.

For this reason, the IP of all designs not selected remains with the architects.

We only ask for permission to publicize your designs as part of sharing our journey and learning processes at future conferences and so on. One of the aims of this project and competition is to accelerate sustainable practices across the entire field; we believe our open approach to IP helps realize this ambition.



07.02. About the Landmark

Why a landmark?

We believe that transformation happens in the real world, and it starts by visiting a place that inspires you to see the world in a different way. Shift currently exists as a digital platform, but for real impact, it also needs to exist in the physical world.

As physical destinations, landmarks have the ability to empower people in ways digital platforms simply cannot — in our case, to transform the dominant narrative from denial and powerlessness to hope and action. A landmark for sustainability — the Shift landmark — is key to this mission. Check out [this video](#) for more information about our vision.

Is calling for a “new Wonder of the World” not a tad bit pretentious?

We don't think so, and here's why:

1. Clearly, the ambition for this landmark is high. This is because the climate stakes are equally high. That said, we are fully aware of the legacy and connotation of World Wonders and hope firms considering participating are able to distinguish between the megalomaniacal structures then and what we are trying to achieve now. At the end of the day, we are looking for a physical location that millions of people will want to visit, a place that is special, that garners media attention and that inspires awe.

2. The word “Wonder” has a broader meaning, which involves curiosity and questioning — wondering how things are done or can be done better. For us, wonder is a necessary bridge to inciting meaningful change.
3. Quite honestly, we have ignored the signs of climate change for so long, and the world is now in such a dire state, that it is literally going to take a wonder to turn things around. And yes, by wonder we mean a miracle. Orchestrating the greatest comeback in the history of the planet isn't impossible, but clearly, it's not going to happen by itself.

Why build something new at all? Why not re-use?

It is possible that the winning design could in fact propose the re-use/retrofitting of an existing structure, or a hybrid solution consisting of both existing and new elements. Due to the great ambition of the project and the wide number of entries expected, we wanted to remove all obstacles to the imagination and not disqualify any ideas from consideration. It is up to the competition teams to present the most profound and impactful path to the future.

Why start the competition without a fixed location?

We began with a vision, not a location. From the project's inception we knew we were stepping into the unknown. Similarly, Stage One of the competition is about presenting a vision that is not tied to a specific location. We believe this is the best possible approach to unlocking the imaginations of participants and for us to end up with the best possible location. Our conversations with municipalities are validating this approach.

Once the first Shift landmark arises, do you plan to build more?

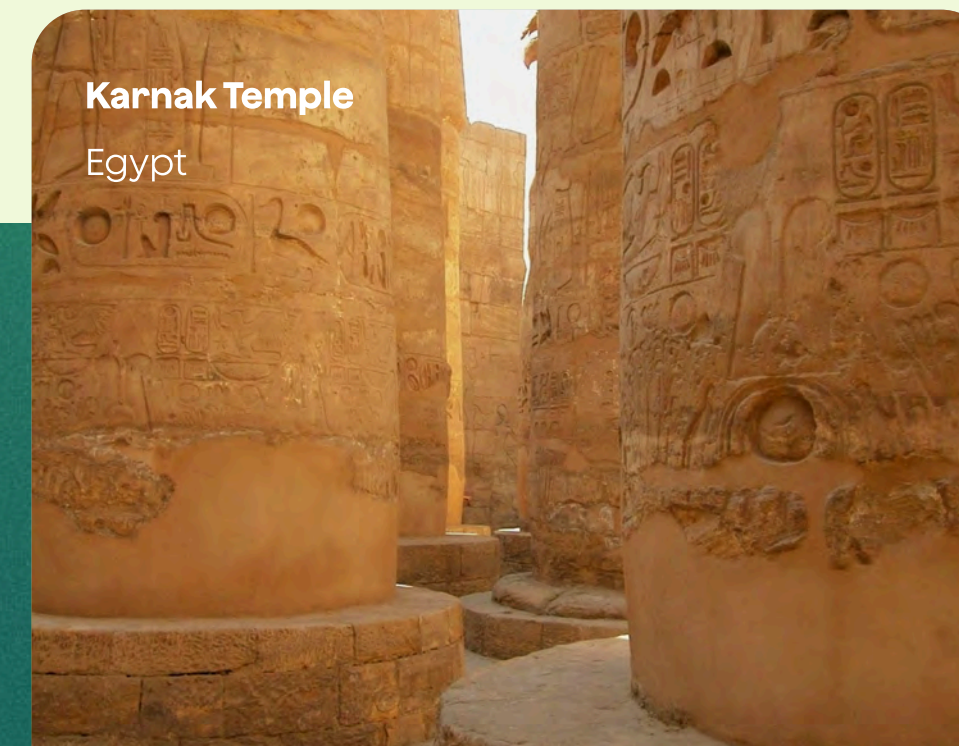
We plan to build a series of Shift landmarks that span the globe — one on each continent. The effects of climate change are indiscriminate and impact everyone; the more people we incite to action, the greater our chances of survival. If our landmark indeed has the profound impact we hope and expect it will have, then the more landmarks the better.



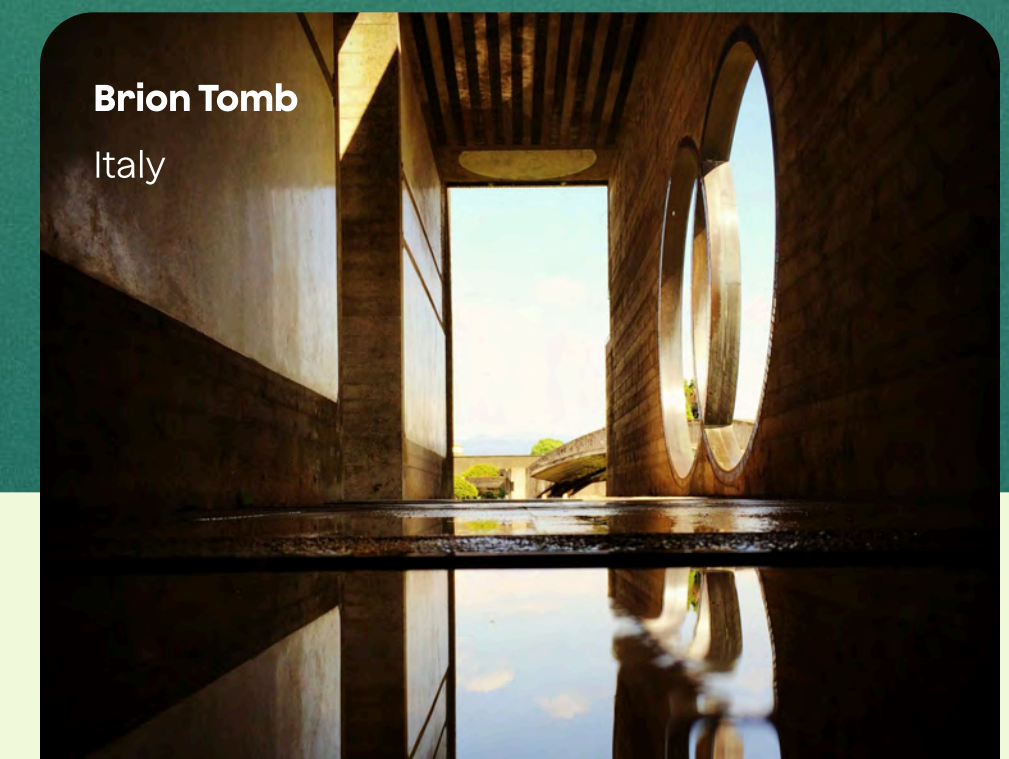
Petra Temple
Jordan



Metropolitan Cathedral of Brasília
Brasil



Karnak Temple
Egypt



Brion Tomb
Italy

07.03. About Shift

Who is behind this?

Shift was founded by social entrepreneur Don Ritzen. Don believes that behavioral change is the biggest challenge to overcoming climate change but is overlooked because it is controversial and confronting. That is why he set out to create an approach that could inspire millions. Before starting Shift, Don was the co-founder of Amsterdam-based accelerator Rockstart, which has offices in Bogota, Copenhagen and Amsterdam. Since its founding in 2010, Rockstart has invested in 350+ early-stage startups to date, of which many are impact-oriented companies such as Peerby and Hubs. Together, these companies are now worth EUR 1.7 billion.

The founder, Don Ritzen, has personally invested almost the entirety of his financial resources into Shift and has worked exclusively on the project for several years with no pay. While he has no personal financial stake in the project, he is putting his money where his mouth is and is leading by example.

Is Shift a foundation or a business?

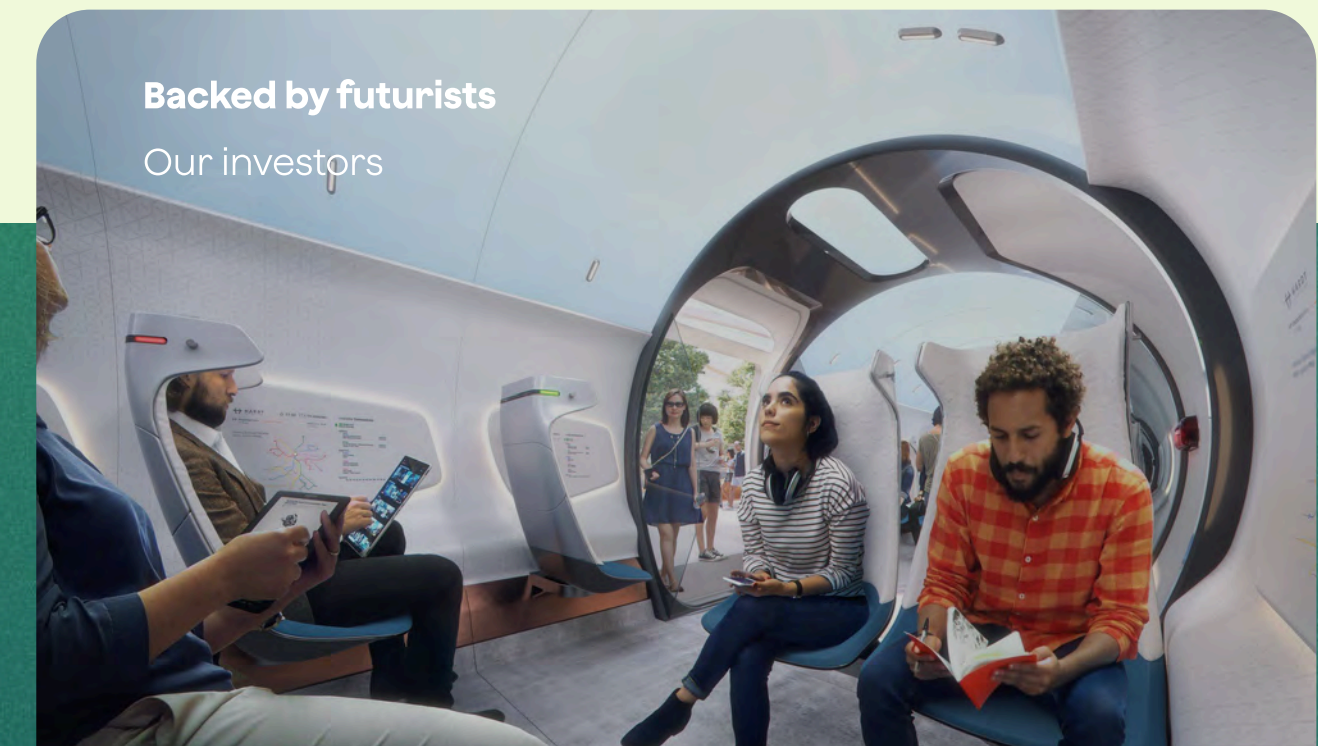
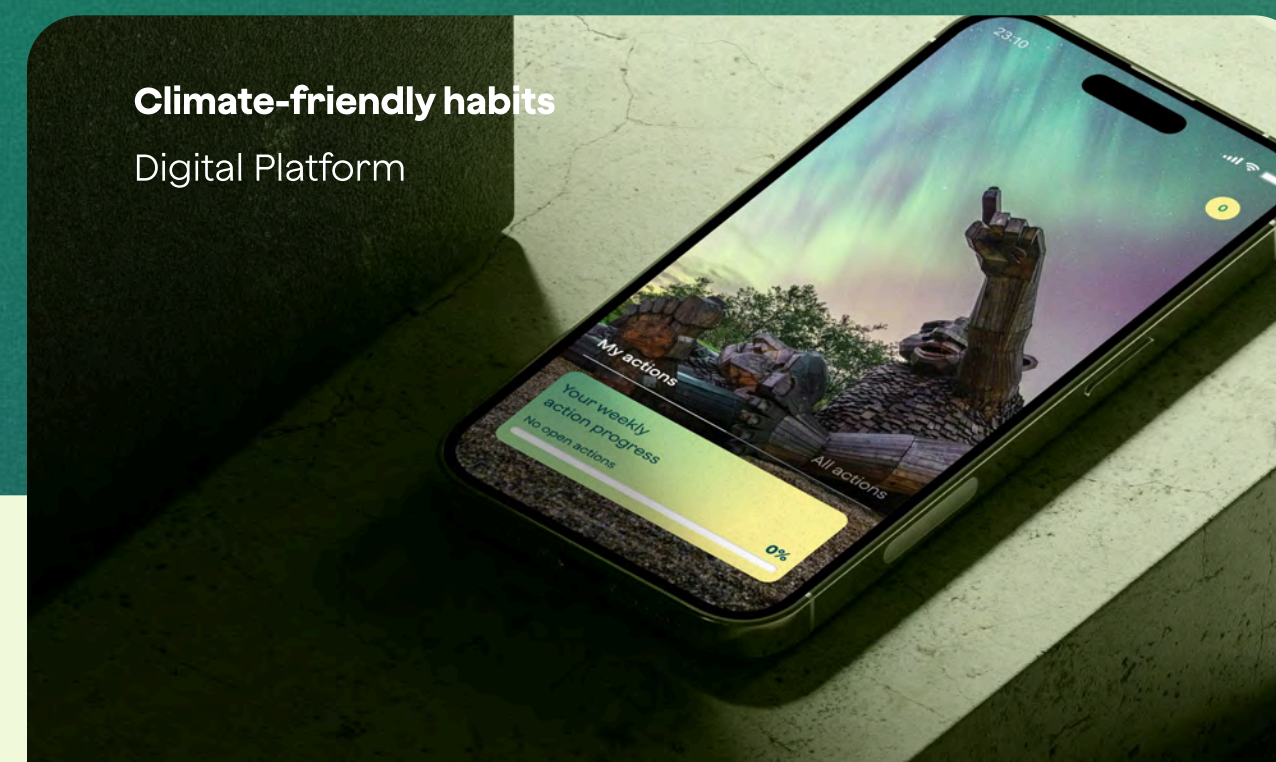
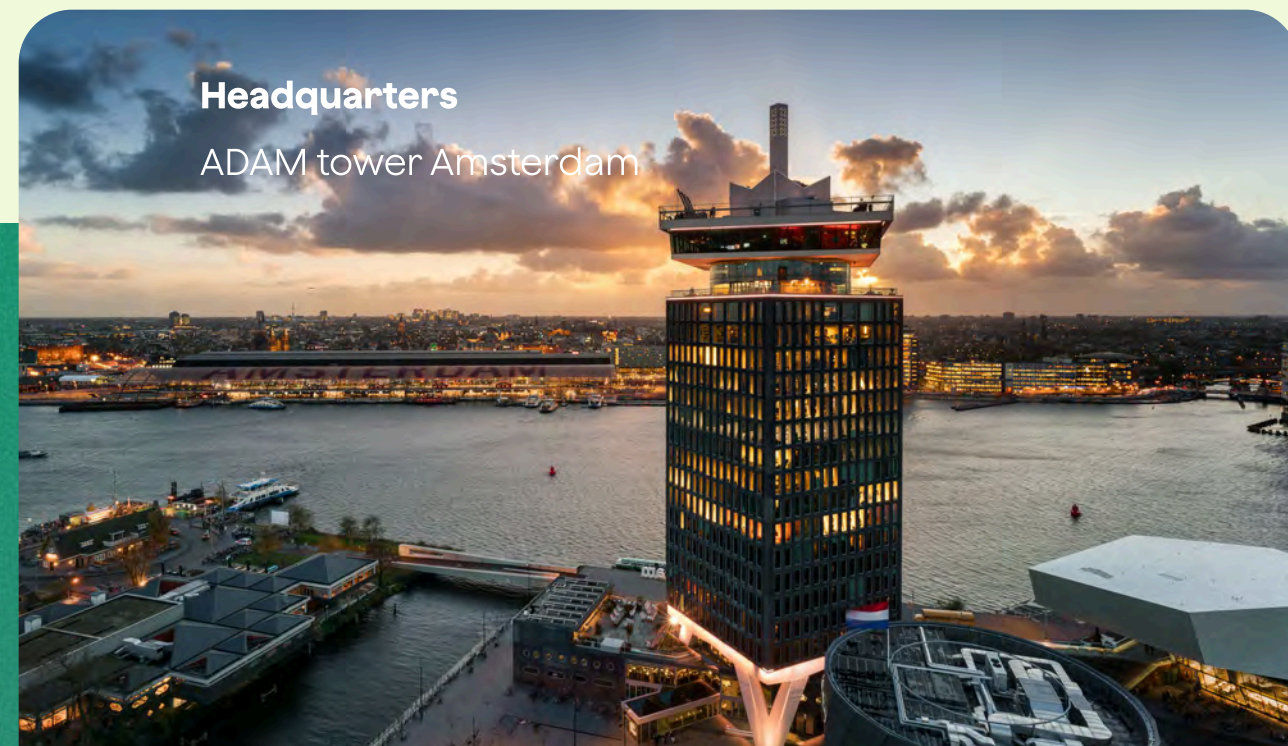
Shift is a steward-owned startup which means that the mission comes first and is embedded in the legal structure. The Shift World BV legal entity is 95% owned by a foundation, Stichting Shift World, with the remaining shares owned by impact investors and crowdfunders who receive a limited upside of 5% return per year. This allows Shift to make a profit in the future and re-invest these profits into the mission. The founder and Shift team are deliberately not shareholders in Shift to ensure their only purpose is to advance its mission: to help solve climate change. Want to read more about Steward Ownership, check out [this website](#).

What are you trying to achieve with Shift?

We spent many years researching climate change psychology, behavioral change and social tipping points. The main lessons learned: we need 25% of people to live a truly sustainable lifestyle in order to set a new normal and inspire the "early majority" to live within planetary boundaries. We are currently at around 10%. Our mission is to create a movement of millions of people to help reach the social tipping point of 25%. Our research shows that when people first take individual ownership and action, they also start to influence the people, organisations and companies around them. This is how we move from individual change to systemic change.

Who else is involved? Who are your partners, advisors and investors?

Shift is currently funded by a group of Dutch investors, private individuals and families amongst which De Hoge Dennen, Erik Schut (investor in Hardt Hyperloop, Sympower and many others) and Alef Ahrendsen (founder New Motion). As the project enters the next stages of development, we will increase this number via our personal relationships with 300 private and institutional investors, e.g. pension funds and banks. It is sufficient to say we have access to the necessary funding and resources to transform the winning design into reality.





Credits

DVDL Cultural Planners (New York)

Is Shift's lead strategy partner and Shift's advisor on the competition model and development.

Editorial, Translation and Proofreading

John Weich, Monumental Propaganda

Rogier Joosten, Studio Я Building Sustainable

Ruben Lentz, Partner BLOC and member of Shift advisory board

Raul Correa-Smith, Member of Shift advisory board

Don Ritzen, Founder & CEO Shift

Silke Neumann and Gabriela Ecke, Bureau N

Identity and Design

Neverland – The Everlasting Creative Experience Agency

Chesney Bruce, Graphic Designer Shift

Legal

Sixt Legal

General

The applications competition are open from:

15th of January 2025

Our website:

[Competition website](#)

Any questions, contact us at:

competition@shift.world

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