



Shift Competition Q&A Directory

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1. Competition Rules & Process

1.1. What types of visual submissions are allowed in Stage One, and why are renderings not required?

Visuals may include sketches, collages, diagrams or any reference imagery. We are explicitly not allowing renderings for Stage One to level the playing field and encourage as many creative minds as possible to tackle the challenge of creating the Shift Landmark. We do accept AI-generated imagery and sketches.

1.2. Will the jury have access to the names of the teams during Stage 1 and Stage 2, or will the review process be blind?

Yes, the jury will have the names of the teams during both Stage One and Two – this is not a blind competition.

1.3. Are there opportunities to contribute to Shift outside of this competition, and will similar competitions be held in the future?

Shift always welcomes ambassadors and in the future: co-owners of the Shift landmark, however: for the next couple of years we don't foresee any new competitions happening. The moment the first World Wonder is open, or close to being open; is the moment that we're going to start looking at expanding to other continents.

1.4. What existing projects illustrate Shift's vision and serve as inspiration for this competition?

While Shift and its team have projects that personally inspire us, we do not want this to impact the design of the Shift Landmark, which will be selected by an expert jury, with diverse expertise for helping to discern the submissions that best align with the mission and vision of the project.

1.5. What are the intellectual property policies and confidentiality measures for submissions, and how will compensation and attribution be handled if non-winning ideas are used?

We want to encourage those who participate but are not selected to have the opportunity to carry their visions forward for a sustainable future. Therefore, all the IP of designs that are not selected will remain with the architects. We only ask for permission to publicize designs as part of sharing our journey and learning processes at future conferences and in other such forums. One of the ambitions of this competition is to accelerate sustainable practices across the entire field.

1.6. Will there be opportunities for workshops or design charrettes in Stage Two?

While the process does not entail formal design charrettes, there will be the opportunity for the shortlisted teams to visit the selected location and engage directly with the municipality to inform their ideas.

1.7. How does the number of expected Stage One submissions and the pre-selection of two firms for Stage Two affect participants' chances of winning?

Because this is an open competition, we cannot gauge the expected number of submissions for Stage One. While there are two pre-selected firms, the remaining three spots will be chosen through the open competition.

1.8. Will the winning team have any input on the development of the Shift App?

Yes, input is definitely welcome and valued. It's part of our DNA to surround ourselves with the smartest people we know, and continuously challenge ourselves on how we can do better. The final decision for the direction of the app course always lies with the Shift team.

2. Eligibility & Team Requirements

2.1. Are companies, individuals, and specialists such as subcontractors or experience designers allowed to participate in multiple teams or submit multiple proposals?

Yes, subcontractors and other experts can be included by multiple team leaders as part of their team composition.

2.2. To what extent can team composition, including the lead architect, be adjusted between Stage One and Stage Two?

The team composition submitted as part of Stage One submission materials is understood to be in draft form. There will be the opportunity for firms to revisit and expand upon them until May 14th. Between May 14 and 21, 2025 Shift will approve the extended team structure, before the formal commencement of Stage Two.

2.3. What are the team composition requirements for Stage One, and can a collective serve as the lead architect if its members meet the required qualifications?

For Stage One, each team must have a lead architect, and yes, if a collaborative is submitting and its members have the necessary qualifications, this is permissible. For the full list of eligibility criteria, please refer to section 4.1 of the design brief.

2.4. Can non-architects, such as artists or interdisciplinary thinkers, participate in the competition?

Yes, the list of expertise included in the brief is merely suggestions, and we encourage teams to get creative and think outside the box about the kinds of expertise that would strengthen their proposal for a design and programmatic perspective.

2.5. Are there any measures in place to support smaller firms in competing against larger firms?

Yes, the competition has put several measures in place to help smaller firms compete against larger ones:

- *Open to All Sizes – Both large and small firms can enter, and Stage One is designed to level the playing field by not requiring expensive renderings or floor plans. This makes it more accessible for firms with fewer resources.*
- *Encouraging Partnerships – Smaller firms are welcome to team up with more established firms to strengthen their proposals, which can help balance experience and innovation.*
- *Guaranteed Spots for Smaller Firms – While two firms (one larger and one smaller with a strong sustainability focus) are pre-selected for Stage Two, three additional firms will be chosen from the open call, giving smaller firms a real chance to make it through.*

- *Financial Support – If a firm makes it to Stage Two, they'll receive €40,000 to develop their proposal, helping to ease financial pressure. The winning team will get an additional €50,000.*
- *Expanding Teams in Stage Two – If selected, firms can bring in additional experts in different fields to help strengthen their proposal, making it easier for smaller firms to compete on equal footing.*

2.6. Are there any exceptions to the competition requirements for participants who do not meet all requirements, and can a chartered landscape architect serve as a lead in Stage One?

There are no exceptions for participants who do not meet all eligibility requirements. The lead architect for Stage One must hold a master's degree in architecture and have the right to practice as an architect in their country of residence. A chartered landscape architect does not meet the specified criteria to serve as a lead in Stage One; however, landscape designers are encouraged to be part of multidisciplinary teams in Stage Two.

2.7. Does the required 1,500 m² hybrid service/public building experience need to be within the current firm, and is it mandatory or just preferred for the lead architect?

This experience will strengthen the submission, demonstrating the ability to build with this kind of ambition, but firms will not be disqualified if they do not have it.

2.8. What are the requirements for team leaders in the competition?

- *To lead a team in the competition, the team leader (lead architect) must meet the following requirements:*
- *Right to Practice – They must be a licensed architect in their country of residence.*
Educational Background – They must have a master's degree in architecture from an accredited institution.
- *Project Experience – Ideally, they should have completed at least one hybrid service/public building project (like a museum, library, performing arts center, school, or health center) with a minimum completed floor area of 1,500 m².*
- *For teams that advance to Stage Two, if the lead architect is not licensed to practice in the Netherlands, they must bring in a local architect who is. The competition also encourages teams to add experts from different disciplines, like sustainability specialists, structural engineers, and experienced designers, to strengthen their proposals.*

3. Funding & Implementation

3.1. Does the competition provide long-term funding for future operational tasks, such as updates and content curation?

The competition itself doesn't provide long-term funding for future operations like updates and content curation, but the Shift landmark has a financial plan in place. The project is backed by a network of private investors, institutional capital, and a unique ownership model where 95% of the company is controlled by a foundation. We make sure that profits are reinvested into the mission rather than going to shareholders.

Once the landmark is built, the expectation is that revenue will primarily come from ticket sales (ranging from €20–€45), and there's also a plan for crowdfunding, allowing visitors and supporters to invest in the project. This approach is designed to keep the landmark financially sustainable over time, covering updates, content curation, and ongoing operational needs

3.2. What level of involvement is expected from the architect in terms of time commitment or deliverables for fundraising presentations?

Architect firms should expect to be collaborators on various presentations of their ideas and designs to funding entities – this is the extent of their participation in the fundraising process.

3.3. Will participants receive financial compensation, including travel and accommodation support for international experts?

Firms that are shortlisted for Stage Two will be required to travel to the Netherlands for a (1) site visit and (2) jury meeting/pitch event – travel and accommodation expenses will be covered by Shift for up to three members of each team and more details are available upon request.

3.4. Will the team be held to the cost estimation provided as part of their submission?

No, because Stage One designs are in the abstract, this level of detail is understood not to be available and will change for Stage Two of the competition.

4. Location & Site Selection

4.1. Can proposals explore different environmental settings, or is the competition limited to urban locations?

During Stage One, Shift will 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

4.2. What is the third location that you mentioned during the webinar?

Shift is currently in conversation with 2 locations in and close to Zaanstad and 1 location in Rotterdam.

4.3. What are the criteria for selecting the project location, and can participants have input on this decision?

The criteria are based on: location characteristics, procedural characteristics, collaboration and financial criteria. The process of choosing the best location can not be directly influenced by participants.

4.4. Will teams have any input on site selection?

The selection of a project site will not be decided in collaboration with teams. This process is currently underway and a location will be shared with shortlisted teams after the close of

Stage One, so that teams can respond more precisely to the specific site conditions as they refine and develop their design proposals.

4.5. How does the estimated visitor count impact the required venue size?

The Shift Landmark is projected to attract 1 to 1.5 million visitors annually, which directly impacts the venue's size and design. While the exact size of the location is not predetermined, the project will require a large, adaptable site capable of handling over a million visitors annually, with space for exhibitions, immersive experiences, and public engagement. The final site will be selected based on municipal partnerships, infrastructure accessibility, and the feasibility of realizing the vision.

4.6. Should Stage One designs be adaptable to any location, or are they expected to respond to specific site conditions?

Stage One submissions are not expected to respond to any specific site conditions, and should be adaptable based on the location that is announced before the start of Stage Two

4.7. What is the expected size of the project location?

The landmark must accommodate 1 to 1.5 million annual visitors with a total project budget is up to €250 million, covering both hard and soft costs. While the exact size of the location is not predetermined, the project will require a large, adaptable site capable of handling over a million visitors annually, with space for exhibitions, immersive experiences, and public engagement. The final site will be selected based on municipal partnerships, infrastructure accessibility, and the feasibility of realizing the vision.

4.8. When can participants expect an official announcement of the final project location, including any third site under consideration?

An official announcement of the project location will coincide with the announcement of the five shortlisted teams, prior to the commencement of Stage Two of the competition.

4.9. Why was the Netherlands chosen as the location for this landmark and were any other countries considered?

The Netherlands is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to rising sea levels. Despite its green reputation, it is a country that is among the worst in Europe in adopting renewable energy; therefore, it's an apt place to lead by example in sustainability.

5. Project Scope & Design Requirements

5.1. Should the immersive experience be nature-based, tech-driven, or a combination of both?

The immersive experience could combine both nature-based and tech-driven elements to create an emotional, educational, and action-inspiring journey, or could focus on one of the two.

5.2. Can you provide an estimate of the functional space required (e.g., office space, gathering space)?

We have consciously left out numbers for expected functional space, in order to maximise freedom and creativity for architects. What we can say is that The Shift Landmark will require one or more large, multifunctional space(s) that includes:

- *Expansive gathering/exhibition areas for up to 1.5 million visitors annually.*
- *Flexible educational and event spaces for interactive engagement.*
- *Operational and administrative spaces for managing daily activities.*
- *Potential hospitality spaces (restaurants, event venues) for revenue generation.*

5.3. Can Stage One proposals take non-traditional forms such as open concepts or land art, given references to 'opening hours,' 'ticketing,' and 'floorplans' in the brief?

Yes, Stage One proposals can take non-traditional forms, such as open-air spaces, land art, or immersive outdoor experiences, as long as they align with Shift's mission and expected visitor numbers and goals for behaviour change. However, if shortlisted, the concept may need further refinement in Stage Two to address programmatic needs like ticketing, visitor flow, and spatial functionality.

5.4. How can we reconcile ornamental details with the sustainability vision and ethos of the project?

Ornamentation should not be purely aesthetic but rather integrated with function, education, and sustainability goals. By using, for example, biomimetic principles, sustainable materials, interactive storytelling, and adaptable design, ornamental details can enhance both the beauty and impact of the Shift Landmark.

5.5. Is it possible to suggest ideas that require new technology or have not yet been built, similar to the Sydney Opera House, which was constructed years after its design?

Yes, if you have a groundbreaking idea that relies on future advancements, Shift encourages you to propose it as long as it's realistic. They are actively looking for designs that redefine what an architectural landmark can be and how it can shape a more sustainable future.

5.6. Are the foundation area, height, and overall scale of the structure predefined, or is this left to the architects' discretion?

Yes, the foundation area, height, and overall scale of the structure are not predefined and are instead left to the architects' discretion. The competition brief does not state any fixed spaces, footprints, or revenue-based requirements at this stage. Instead, architects are encouraged to think big and challenge traditional notions of what an architectural landmark should be and how it can be an authentic and credible landmark for a sustainable future. That said, while there are no strict size requirements, the landmark should be designed to accommodate an annual visitorship of 1 to 1.5 million people and support activities such as exhibitions, hospitality, and public programming. This gives architects the flexibility to propose structures of varying scales while ensuring they meet the project's functional goals.

5.7. Is the type of materials and construction technology specified for the project?

No, the type of materials and construction technology for the project is not strictly specified. Participants are expected to define their own sustainability criteria and may choose to apply an existing sustainability measurement system to their design. While there are no strict material or technology requirements, the competition places a strong emphasis on

future-proofing, flexibility, and adaptability. Architects are encouraged to propose structures that can evolve over time and integrate new sustainable technologies as they emerge.

You have the freedom to explore cutting-edge materials and construction methods, as long as they align with the core values of sustainability, resilience, and long-term environmental impact.

5.8. Is there a specific program of use required for the landmark, or is it part of the competition to propose a use for it?

There is no specific program of use for the landmark. While the Shift landmark is intended to be a destination for sustainability, education, and inspiration, designers are encouraged to propose how the space will function and engage visitors.

The project outlines some potential programmatic elements to consider, such as:

- *(Immersive) exhibitions and permanent installations focused on sustainability and climate action.*
- *Hospitality, education, and public programming to foster community engagement. Interactive and transformative experiences that inspire behavioral change.*

While there is a broad thematic framework, designers have significant creative freedom to propose a unique and impactful use for the landmark.

5.9. Are net-zero carbon standards, both operationally and in embodied emissions, a baseline requirement for sustainability in this project?

Net-zero carbon is not explicitly mandated as a minimum requirement for stage one, the competition encourages teams to aim for the highest sustainability standards possible, and in line with their concept vision

5.10. What is the estimated amount of functional space required for the project (e.g., office space, gathering space)?

The competition does not specify an exact amount of functional space required for the project. Instead, architects have the freedom to define the scale and spatial organization based on their vision for the Shift landmark.

However, the brief does provide general guidelines regarding the landmark's functionality and visitor capacity:

- *The space should be designed to accommodate 1 to 1.5 million annual visitors.
– It should include areas for (immersive) exhibitions, permanent installations, hospitality, education, and public programming.*
- *The landmark is not meant for habitation but should be an experiential space that fosters learning, collaboration, and action.*
- *The design should encourage interaction with its environment and contribute positively to the surrounding community and ecosystem.*

Since there are no fixed size requirements, you are encouraged to determine the amount and type of functional space necessary to fulfill these goals while making sure that the landmark remains flexible, future-proof, and impactful.

5.11. Will the focus be on using natural or circular materials for the building?

No, the type of materials and construction technology for the project is not strictly specified. Instead, we are encouraging participants to propose innovative and sustainable solutions that align with the Shift landmark's mission. The competition brief explicitly calls for designs that showcase regenerative architecture and stimulate material and energy transitions.

Participants are expected to define their own sustainability criteria and may choose to apply an existing sustainability measurement system to their design. The project should integrate low-carbon, circular, and nature-inclusive principles, ensuring a positive environmental impact.

So, you have the freedom to explore cutting-edge materials and construction methods, as long as they align with the core values of sustainability, resilience, and long-term environmental impact.

6. Stakeholder Engagement & Transparency

6.1. Do you consider climate change a consequence of unsustainable systems and behaviors?

Yes, it is a combination of systemic challenges in how we've structured our societies, capital systems, company structures, etc. but also in what we've come accustomed to in our lifestyles and see as "normal", but is actually heavily polluting.

6.2. How does Shift address the carbon footprint associated with travel, data storage, and visitor impact?

Shift is very aware of the carbon footprint associated with travel, data storage, and visitor impact, and we've built sustainability into our approach. For travel, we encourage visitors to use public transport or electric vehicles by offering discounted tickets for those who choose sustainable options. Plus, our experiment shows that visitors who engage with Shift online program reduce their personal carbon footprint on average by about 25% within six months, so the long-term impact of CO2 reduction will significantly outweigh the travel emissions.

As for data storage, while it's not a huge part of our footprint, we aim to use energy-efficient, sustainable hosting solutions. And in terms of visitor impact, we make sustainability personal—everyone takes an impact scan to see where they can make a difference, and we guide them toward real-world actions they can commit to.

The big picture goal is that Shift doesn't just minimize its footprint but actually helps people create lasting, meaningful change in their own lives.

6.3. Will Shift disclose its investment sources, and are there any restrictions on accepting funds from fossil fuel companies?

Shift has disclosed that its funding comes from impact-focused private Investors and Family Offices – Specific backers include De Hoge Dennen, Erik Schut (Investor in Hardt Hyperloop, Sympower, and other impact-driven ventures) and Alef Ahrendsen (Founder of New Motion). Shift is not planning to receive investments from Fossil Fuel companies.

6.4. Is the competition’s design process intended to be documented or recorded for media purposes, such as a (Netflix) documentary?

Yes, the ambition is to document and share the full journey of this design process and the realization of the project's broader ambitions to drive behaviour change. After giving proper consent, shortlisted firms and their designs in development will be documented at key project milestones, including site visits, public event, etc.

7. Submission Criteria & Evaluation

7.1. Can team members include their portfolios alongside the team lead architect’s portfolio to showcase their expertise and projects?

For Stage One, we are only requesting portfolio materials for the designated Team Lead or team lead’s firm. If the submission is shortlisted for Stage Two, the experiences and qualifications of consortia members will be incorporated into the evaluation for that phase.

7.2. Does the 15–page limit apply to each project individually, or to the total portfolio?

The 15–page limit applies to the total portfolio of 3–5 projects that demonstrate relevant experience, not to each project individually.

7.3. How should a consortium fill out the company information form?

Every team should select one firm as the lead for the purposes of filling out the company information but should indicate in the draft team composition in the general application that it is a consortium behind the submission. For consortiums, we welcome strong, multidisciplinary collaborations and will evaluate both the depth and innovation of their concept, as well as the commitment and expertise of their assembled team for Stage Two

7.4. How will company details and initial team composition factor into the selection of the Stage One winners?

Team composition will play a role in the selection process for Phase One, but it’s not the main driver: those are the evaluation criteria listed in the brief. The competition is open to architecture and design teams of all sizes, and there are no strict requirements beyond having a lead architect who is qualified to practice in their country (Section 4.1).

However, teams that demonstrate a diverse and interdisciplinary approach will likely have a competitive edge (e.g. in thinking through their concept proposal). The competition encourages architects to collaborate with experts in sustainability, experience design, social sciences, and engineering to create a well-rounded vision (Section 4.1). While a fully built-out team is not required for Stage One, teams should submit a draft team composition and show they have the expertise to develop their concept further in Stage Two (Section 3.2).

7.5. Must all lead architect qualification documents be translated into English?

Yes, English is the formal language of the competition and all documents must be translated into English for review by the jury.

7.6. Should the value case be presented in A4 landscape format like the other documents?

All submission components should be compiled into a single PDF in A4 landscape.

7.7. What are our expectations for how the value case is presented, can we give some guidance?

For Stage One we are looking for a value case that captures the tangible and intangible benefits and effects inherent to your vision. A more traditional business case will be requested for Stage Two, once a clear program and design has been developed. Elements for the Stage One submission value case could touch on the following:

- *Positive effects on climate change and behaviour change*
- *Visitor (flows)*
- *Materials used*
- *Biodiversity*
- *Social effects in neighbourhood and society at large*

You could also include your thinking on how your vision will become feasible and achievable

8. Miscellaneous

8.1. What is the current development status of the Shift App? Is it fully developed or still in beta?

The Shift app is now in beta and available in Dutch [in the App Store](#) because we are focusing on collaborating with Dutch Municipalities. Our aim is that in 6-12 months it will also be available in English.