RISD Maharam Fellowship
for Social Justice and Sustainability
Summer 2027

WEBSITE:
Fellows - https://risdmaharamfellows.com/
Process - https://careercenter.risd.edu/risd-managed-grants

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Application Deadline: Thursday, February 25, 2027, at 12:00 PM NOON ET

Info Session: Mid-November
Application opens: By the end of November
Awards are announced: By mid-March
Fellowship experience to take place: Between June and August 2027

Please make careful note of the deadline date, time, and time zone. In order to be fair to all RISD applicants who submitted on time, we do not accept incomplete or late applications. It is important to not submit applications at the last minute. If you submit early and reach out to us because you have a technical issue, uploaded the wrong document, realized you made a mistake, or get stuck in any way, we can likely help you. We want you to successfully submit! It is good practice to submit 2-3 days before an application deadline. Be sure to not only start the application before the deadline but complete it. If you do not hit the submit button before the deadline time, your application will not go through and will not be accepted.

DESCRIPTION

The RISD Maharam Fellowship is a prestigious $5,000 fellowship to support RISD students who have designed a summer internship experience with an organization in which artists/designers are not usually found or where artists/designers can contribute to the mission of the organization in a meaningful way. Maharam, a textile producer, is committed to making the art and design world more fair, diverse, and creative. The Fellowship focuses on two of the most urgent issues of our time - social justice and sustainability. The Fellowship will support internship work that aspires to advance social progress or safeguard the environment or even combine both of these important issues. The nature of the internship should explore the role of innovative, critical, creative thinkers to solve problems and demonstrate the various ways artists and designers can have a positive impact. The internship organization must be a government organization, non-governmental organization, or non-profit organization (not a for-profit company).

The RISD Maharam Fellowship is an amazing opportunity for RISD students because:

- You will be driven to explore outside of the RISD art and design world.
- You will learn how to articulate and explain your work, and the importance of art and design thinking for finding solutions to problems that have social and/or sustainability impact.
- You will build language and communication skills that cross organization types and cultures.
- You will find new avenues for networking and opening doors for future opportunities.
- Your experience and work may receive RISD media support which will give you greater exposure.

Of note:

- TIME COMMITMENT: Recipients should expect the RISD Maharam Fellowship to be their key focus during the internship, which must take place during the summer (June-August). The Fellowship requires that recipients devote focused time, energy, and reflection to the experience.
- INTERNSHIP SITE: It is recommended that the Fellowship does not duplicate or take place at previous Fellowship organizations. Check out Maharam Fellow's organizations and projects by reviewing the Current Fellow and Past Fellows on the website: https://risdmaharamfellows.com/
- ARTWORKS REGISTRATION: All recipients must register their internship in Artworks by the June internship deadline and submit a final evaluation in Artworks by August, in addition to the required final report due by the end of September. Internships can be taken not for credit but must still be registered in Artworks. Those for credit must be registered in Artworks and receive departmental approval for the credit.
- HEALTH INSURANCE: U.S. citizens and international students traveling outside of the U.S. will have health insurance coverage provided by RISD unless the experience is in their home country.
- FINANCIAL AID RECIPIENTS: Following U.S. government regulations, all institutional funding has to be considered in financial aid packages. If you are a recipient of financial aid and not graduating June 2027, this award may impact your financial aid package for 2027-2028. (If you are graduating June 2027 it has no impact.) It is important that you meet with RISD Student Financial Services (SFS) to discuss the impact BEFORE you apply. Make an appointment with SFS at https://sfs.risd.edu/contact.
- TAX IMPLICATIONS: For tax purposes, this award is considered a fellowship, and is considered taxable income by the IRS.
  *ALL Students: RISD adheres to the U.S. government tax law for all grants and fellowships offered by RISD.
  *International Students: Please note that a portion for your award may be withheld and your award amount may be decreased based on IRS requirements.
  *RISD Tax Guidance for Fellowships:
  - Click on the link https://sites.google.com/risd.edu/risd-procurement-services/accounts-payable/faq
  - On the left side menu, scroll the bottom of Resources, review the document "Tax Guidance for Fellowships"
  - This applies not only to Fellowships, but also Grants, Scholarships, and Awards.
  - IRS Information: https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc421

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants:

- Applicants must be a currently enrolled Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Fifth Year, or Graduate Student.
  - Exceptions: Students are welcome to apply in February even if they are graduating in June 2027, but they must be an enrolled RISD student the Spring semester before the summer of the internship. They will engage in this internship beginning Summer 2027. Students are also welcome to apply in February even if they are graduating in December 2026. They will engage in this internship beginning Summer 2027.
- Applicants must be in good academic and community standing.
- Applicants can be of any major and work in any medium.
- Applicants of any citizenship are eligible. For international students, if the internship is in the United States and you are returning for Fall 2027, you must have Employment Authorization in the form of Curricular Practical Training (CPT) before beginning work as an intern and you must take the internship for credit. If you are graduating, you must have Employment

Authorization in the form or Optional Practical Training (OPT) before beginning work.
- Students may only receive one RISD Maharam Fellowship during their RISD career.
- Students can apply for, but can only receive, one of these grants in the same year: Maharam, Discovery, or Turner. However, students can receive the RISD Internship Support Grant along with the Maharam Fellowship in the same year. Why do I have this in green?
- Students may apply as a team. Only teams of 2 will be considered. Each student must submit a separate application describing their specific skills, interests, role, and goals. Each team member is eligible for the full Fellowship award.

Internships:
- The internship must be unpaid.
- The internship organization must be a government organization, non-governmental organization, or non-profit organization (not a for-profit company).
- Internships can be local, in the U.S., overseas, or in your home country. If your internship is outside your home country, it will be important to demonstrate a strong support system.
- Internships may be on-site, hybrid, or remote.
- This award will be applied to one internship experience with one organization.
- The internship can be taken for credit or non-credit. Unless you are an international student and the internship is in the United States and you are returning for Fall 2026; then it must be for credit.
- The internship must take place during the Summer, June to August.
- The internship must be at least 8 weeks.
- The internship must be at least 20 hours a week.
- Weeks/hours for Architecture students: You are highly encouraged to work a total of 280 hours if possible to meet your department's requirements; typically, this is 35-40 hours per week for 7-8 weeks.
- Internships that are arranged for by an internship placement service or through a third-party organization are not eligible. This includes any organization that requires fee-for-service, fee-for-materials, or mandatory donations to the organization.

RISD Notice of Nondiscrimination: RISD does not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, student, or applicant for admission on the basis of actual, perceived, or association with people with protected characteristics. For more information regarding RISD's Nondiscrimination Policy, including RISD's full Notice of Nondiscrimination, visit: https://students.risd.edu/living-risd/equity-compliance/policies-procedures

SELECTION CRITERIA

Please keep in mind that this is a competitive grant and funding is limited. All components of the application are considered in selecting recipients.

APPLICATION MATERIALS
- Application materials are complete by the due date.
- All requirements must be met and instructions followed.
- Attention should be paid to the quality and presentation of materials. Attachments are formatted neatly and scanned documents are legible.
- Responses must answer the questions asked and must be clear, concise, and comprehensive.

STUDENT READINESS
- Articulates a solid understanding of and interest in the field, type of work, location, and other

matters involved in the proposed internship.
- Demonstrates the ability and desire to undertake the internship and have an impact through past experiences, skills, coursework, research, and mentoring.
- Shows deep interest in applying art/design thinking to an organization in which artists/designers are not usually found or where artists/designers can contribute to the mission of the organization in a meaningful way.
- Demonstrates initiative, innovation, creativity, and critical thinking and practice.
- Demonstrates maturity, a strong work ethic, and interest in stretching beyond ones' current skill set.

STRENGTH AND FIT OF INTERNSHIP SITE
- Internship provides opportunities for activities and experiences the student applicant will be exposed to new processes and ways of thinking.
    - The most competitive proposals are those that are less directly related to art/design and provide internship experiences in which RISD students are tapping into other skills and learning outside their field of study, outside the studio, and working with non-artists and designers with different perspectives. Maharam is interested in supporting internships that provide experiences that students can't get from RISD. This is the opportunity for students to do something different to expand their practice.
- Organization is prepared and qualified to create a learning environment and provide appropriate supervision for the fellowship.
- Organization acknowledges an understanding of the student's interests and learning outcomes.
- Organization agrees to take an active role in the student's internship experience in ways that support the RISD Maharam Fellowship's mission.
- Internship is arranged so applicants have a voice in their work and will engage in exploration and problem solving rather than only specific set tasks arranged by the organization.
- Experience aligns with the applicant's intended career interests/goals.
- It is recommended that the Fellowship does not duplicate or take place at previous Fellowship organizations. Check out Maharam Fellow's organizations and projects by reviewing the Current Fellow and Past Fellows on the website: https://risdmaharamfellows.com/

ACTIVITIES & FEASIBILITY
- Activities and responsibilities are clearly described.
- The timeline and goals articulated and achievable.
- Expenses are realistic. This should be addressed in your Application Response for Expenses.
- Applicant has appropriate support in place for the internship experience.

IMPACT
- Learning objectives are articulated.
- Significance to applicant's education and practice is well-described and compelling.
- The opportunity will have an impact on the student and further their work, along with potential impact on the internship organization, community, and/or society.
- Consideration of how art and design thinking can have a positive impact on social justice or safeguarding the environment or even combining both of these important issues.

HYBRID/REMOTE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES
- Hybrid and remote internship experiences should adhere to RISD's Guidelines for Remote Internships for an effective experience: https://careercenter.risd.edu/guidelines-remote-internships

APPLICATION PROCESS & COMPONENTS

- Students must fill out and submit the RISD Application online by the deadline. The link to the online application can be found at http://careercenter.risd.edu/risd-managed-grants The application components are:

  - APPLICANT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC INFORMATION
  - INTERNSHIP INFORMATION
  - RESPONSES to the following in 1 PDF. Please include the question text as headers before your responses, and use 1-inch margins, Times New Roman 12-point font, and single spaced rows:

    ***TIP:** This is a grant to determine how to best work with others and within an organization to make change together. Be careful of "I statements," consider where "we" might make sense instead.

    - ESSAY 1) What is the name, location, and services of the organization? How familiar are you with their mission? What is it you want to learn from this experience? (250-word max)
    - ESSAY 2) How did you find the internship? Describe how you made the connection and your communication with the organization. (250-word max)
    - ESSAY 3) What are the problem(s) or issue(s) that the organization is addressing and how are they impacting change in the areas of social justice and/or sustainability? Are they: affecting change in larger systems or practices? creating educational initiatives? and/or developing advocacy for specific audiences? What have you found in your research? Tell us why you care. (250-word max)
    - ESSAY 4) What will be your main activities and responsibilities? In what ways will you have a voice in your work and contribute in a meaningful way? Please provide at least 2-3 things you hope to accomplish through this experience. (250-word max)
    - ESSAY 5) What non-art/design activities or responsibilities might be part of your experience? Keep in mind it is critical for you to engage significantly with the organization including staff, constituents, and the public – such as attending meetings, seeing how systems work and decisions are made, understanding how the organization is funded, and participating in the day-to-day culture, etc.? (250-word max)
    - ESSAY 6) How are you prepared for this internship experience? How is this the right time in your academic and artistic growth for this experience? What skills do you have now that will help you to be successful in this internship? (250-word max)
    - ESSAY 7) Describe the impact this grant will have on you - academically, artistically, professionally, and/or personally. What skills do you hope to gain? (250 word max)
    - ESSAY 8) How are you prepared to work and live in the community where the Fellowship is located? What do you know about the communities the organization serves? Do you have plans to engage with them? If you are proposing an internship outside of Rhode Island or your home state or country, describe your support system. (250-word max)

- TIMELINE) Provide a general timeline that gives a sense of how your internship experience will unfold and how your supervisor and co-workers will support you. This could be a weekly calendar outlining activities, meetings, and events, including the people you will work with. We understand some of this may be hypothetical and things will change, but having a plan will help you get started and be productive. And it will help us understand your vision. Include the expected number of weeks and hours per week. (1 page ONLY)

- EXPENSES) Provide an overview of your expenses and anticipated costs which may include travel, housing, meals, materials, supplies, equipment, or other related expenses. Show your expenses in a table format with columns for "Item," "Description," and "Amount." AND, do the math – include totals. (1 page ONLY)
  - This funding is to help you realize your proposed summer internship experience. Therefore, expenses listed should demonstrate the use of the $5,000 during the summer to fulfill the internship.
  - If your expenses are significantly over or under, please address in a short narrative below your Expenses table. Consider that this is a grant for $5,000 and feasibility is a factor in selection.
  - If your experience is hybrid/remote, you may still include housing, meals, materials, supplies, and equipment.
  - This funding should NOT be applied to cover organization program participation fees or materials/equipment that benefit the day-to-day organization such as paper, printing, or items that will be staying with the organization. This funding is for you!

➢ INTERNSHIP OFFER LETTER. In order to understand commitment and feasibility, the RISD Selection Committee places value on details and structure provided by the organization in the offer letter. The offer letter, ideally on official organization/business letterhead and signed by the letter writer, should be a formal invitation from the internship supervisor and include:
- Contact information including the contact's title
- Confirmation the organization is a government organization, non-governmental organization, or non-profit organization (not a for-profit company)
- Confirmation the internship is unpaid
- The specific time period (weeks and hours)
- Indication there is a position and appropriate work for the student
- List of potential activities
- Description of potential outcomes
- Agreement to mentor/support the student and provide appropriate resources

For hybrid or remote internship experiences, the organization should review RISD's Guidelines for Remote Internships and include details for these guidelines in the offer letter on how they will support a hybrid or remote experience: https://careercenter.risd.edu/guidelines-remote-internships

➢ RESUME. Include most recent employment, community involvement, volunteer service, exhibitions, awards, achievements, and other accomplishments.

➢ Unofficial TRANSCRIPT. This can only be accessed on a computer; not through the mobile or iPad app.
1) Go to Workday, then Menu, then Academics.

2) Under Academic Records, select Generate Unofficial Transcript.
3) File outputs as a PDF. Save this PDF.
4) Review the transcript. Your submitted transcript should include the courses you are registered for in the Spring 2027 semester. (If you are graduating in December 2026, your transcript should be complete through graduation.)
5) Check the size of this document. The transcript file you receive is often quite large. You will likely need to compress this file considering your application cannot exceed 25MB in uploads.
6) Upload this PDF into your application.

- LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION. One – and only one - letter of recommendation from a faculty member or supervisor addressing your preparedness for the internship and feasibility. This letter should not be from someone at the proposed internship site. The letter should be emailed directly to Lisa Cramer, lcramer@risd.edu, from the recommender by the application deadline. (It CANNOT be emailed from the student applicant.) The letter should ideally be a PDF scan of the letter with a signature.
  - ***Note:*** This requirement is included not only as a factor, amongst many, to determine selection, but this is a significant part of academic and professional life in the U.S. and abroad. This is a learning and networking step. If this process makes you nervous or you don't know who to ask or where to start, reach out to a RISD Career Center Advisor. We are happy to guide you through this process.

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS:

- **Each attachment can be up to 3MB, however, please note that the TOTAL upload cannot be over 25MB.**
- **Avoid submitting at the last minute. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.**
- Review the guidelines and required materials carefully before you begin the application.
- Follow all directions carefully.
- Prepare your application in advance in a word document and check your spelling. **The application form will not save your answers once you leave the page.**
- Documents/Responses within a PDF should be in the same order as listed in the guidelines. Please include the question text as headers before your responses, and use 1 inch margins, Times New Roman 12-point font, and single spaced rows.
- Attachments should be named appropriately as file names are visible to reviewers.
- After you submit you will see a submission screen and receive an email confirming a successful submission.

TIMELINE

November/December

- Attend the RISD Maharam Fellows Information Session **November 11, 2026.**
- Review the application guidelines and application form carefully.
- Explore the RISD Mahram Fellows' blog for inspiration: http://risdmaharamfellows.com/
- Gain further inspiration for potential opportunities through sites such as: Idealist (non-profit orgs), Climate Base (climate & sustainability), USA.Gov List of Government Agencies (government), National Science Foundation List of R&D Centers (science & research), Women Eco Artists Dialog (WEAD).
- Review the potential organizations' website and materials carefully to understand their mission, services, and language in order to articulate why you are a good fit and why they might need you.

- Prepare an outline of your skills, experiences, and interests showing the value of your work to submit to the organization.
- Contact organizations to discuss opportunities for creating an internship within their structure. Earlier conversations with your supervisor will ensure that you develop a strong understanding of their needs, they develop a strong understanding of your skills and interests, and you both develop a strong understanding of your role. It takes time to develop together a plan that includes activities, appropriate supervision, and goals that are impactful, yet feasible.
- Consider identifying a faculty member to act as your mentor and assist you in the proposal development to help you solidify your internship experience ideas and outcomes, and strengthen your proposal.
- Make an appointment with a RISD Career Advisor to talk about your internship idea.
- Make an appointment with a RISD Career Advisor to get feedback on your resume. You will need an excellent resume, both to secure your internship and to complete your RISD Maharam Fellowship application.
- If you have any questions or concerns about securing a letter of recommendation, reach out to a RISD Career Advisor. See Note above under Letter of Recommendation.
- If you are a recipient of financial aid and not graduating June 2027, make an appointment with RISD Student Financial Services (SFS) to discuss the impact this award may have on your financial aid package for 2027-2028. Make an appointment with SFS at: https://sfs.risd.edu/contact

January

- Continue conversations with organizations to secure an offer letter
- Draft responses to essay questions. Keep in mind the key factors in selection: readiness, strength and fit, feasibility, and impact.
- Make an appointment with a RISD Career Advisor to discuss your essay responses and/or eligible expenses. See contact below.
- If you need help with writing, we suggest you reach out to the RISD Center for Arts & Language.
- Find a faculty member or former supervisor (not someone at the internship site) willing to write your letter of recommendation.

February

- Finalize essays, timeline, expenses, and all application materials.
- We recommend that you have a verbal offer from an internship site by **February 11**. This gives you time to work with your supervisor(s) on the offer letter.
- We recommend that you have the letter in hand by **February 18.** This gives you time to fine-tune and upload to the application by the deadline.
- Confirm with your reference that their letter of recommendation will be emailed to Lisa Cramer at lcramer@risd.edu by **12:00 PM ET on February 25.**
- Complete the online application by **12:00 PM ET on Thursday, February 25, 2027**. Incomplete or late applications **WILL NOT** be accepted.

March

- Fellowship awardees will be notified of the RISD Selection Committee's decision **by mid-March.**

April

- Fellows must submit acceptance materials, which include the grant agreement, and a headshot photo and project bio for the Maharam Fellows' website.

- Fellows must attend the RISD Maharam Fellowship Kick-Off Dinner **in mid-April.**
- International students should check in with RISD's International Student & Scholar Affairs (ISSA) Office and have their I-20 signed. If the internship is in the United States and you are returning for Fall 2027, you must have Employment Authorization in the form of Curricular Practical Training (CPT) before beginning work as an intern and you must take the internship for credit. If you are graduating, you must have Employment Authorization in the form or Optional Practical Training (OPT) before beginning work.
- Internships taken for credit must receive departmental approval.

May
- All recipients must register their internship in Artworks regardless of whether they are taking the internship for credit or not. Keep in mind the upcoming June internship deadline.
- After you have registered your internship in Artworks and it has been approved, and you have submitted your grant agreement and acceptance materials, RISD Careers will issue your grant payment. You will receive your funding AFTER these steps and RISD payment processing. It is your responsibility to budget your grant funding as needed throughout the summer.
- Internship timeline and schedule for internship check-ins with the RISD Career Center Director, Kevin Jankowski must be determined.

June-August
- Fellows engage in their internships.
- Fellows are required to provide regular blog posts about their experiences on the RISD Maharam Fellows website. Fellows are required to blog at least every two weeks, at least 4 per the 8-week experience.
- Fellows are required to participate in three check-in meetings during the summer with the Director of the Career Center, Kevin Jankowski, via Zoom or in-person – at the beginning, middle, and end of the experience.
- Fellows should take notes throughout their experience in order to complete a detailed final report.
- Fellows submit a final internship evaluation in Artworks by August, in addition to the required final report.

September
- Fellows must submit a final narrative report by the end of September

RISD CONTACT

Lisa Cramer, RISD Grants & Residencies Manager
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Updated 11/2026