



## 2021 Summary of AIA Honors & Awards (H&A) Independent Equity Assessment

In December 2021, the AIA Board of Directors adopted this motion:

*The Board of Directors accepts the reports of the Honors and Awards and Governance Assessments as presented at this meeting and acknowledges that the diversity of the profession must be improved to make the assessment recommendations effective.*

*Accordingly, the Board reaffirms its support of the Framework for Design Excellence and the Equity Framework, and commits to:*

- *Leading collaborative organizations to make meaningful change to improve diversity in the profession.*
- *Dismantling barriers within all AIA systems, which include AIA's governance, internal policies, vendor selection, hiring and retention of AIA staff, and any business practice that intentionally or unintentionally contributes to injustice and exclusion.*
- *Developing an equitable and open process, free of real or perceived barriers to generate stronger diversity on the Board of Directors. This process will demonstrate clear expectations and pathways for participating in AIA leadership, aligning with recommendations from the Board-approved 2020 Leadership Pathways Task Force report.*
- *Directing structural and cultural change to facilitate and elevate organizational equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) priorities and expectations for AIA components, members, the Strategic Council, and all AIA committees, task forces, and juries.*

### **FINDINGS**

As directed by the Board, AIA seeks to dismantle barriers within its systems, governance, honors and awards, internal policies, vendor selection process, HR and staffing, and business practices. This summary addresses the results of a comprehensive, independent analysis of AIA's Honors & Awards program.

The review was conducted from late 2020 through the summer of 2021. The analysis was provided by the Rickinson Group, a specialized quantitative and qualitative research firm, and the 360 Group, a San Francisco-based national executive search firm dedicated to creating social impact through a deep commitment to diversity and inclusion. They were chosen by AIA because of their expertise, commitment, and focus on the work of non-for-profits.

The review included a documentation of existing award requirements, analysis of existing processes, survey of those participating (including recipients, non-recipients, and former jurors), and a targeted set of interviews for applicants, recipients, jurors, and AIA leadership. Critical

strategic and operational aspects were identified that should be addressed to attract a diverse applicant pool to AIA's Honors & Awards programs, and to ensure that AIA equitably assesses and recognizes deserving individuals and notable projects. For those areas, we have clear guidance from the review results. Many of these findings complement and support the December 2021 release of the AIA and the University of California Hastings College of the Law study on workplace bias. ([LINK](#))

It is important to note that this analysis encompasses all Honors & Awards programs, including Fellowship and Knowledge Community awards. While not required, it is recommended that component honors and awards programs consider how these national guidelines might be applied to their programs.

Finally, and most importantly, in addition to strategic and operational changes, there are larger, overarching societal and cultural obstacles that have significant impact on every AIA goal that pertains to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). This equity assessment does not attempt to directly address every obstacle that may exist, but to bring them to the attention of the Board for its consideration.

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have summarized the findings from the Honors & Awards assessments which are broken down into two areas: those that require **organization-wide or profession-wide attention** and those that are specific to the **Honors & Awards operational function**.

### **Organizational/Professional Focus**

- Continue to align the 2021-2025 strategic priorities of climate action for human and ecological health and advance racial, ethnic, and gender equity throughout the Honors & Awards programs.
- Increase awareness about the Framework for Design Excellence and its principles, formerly known as the Committee on the Environment (COTE) Top Ten toolkit. The Framework was incorporated within the Honors & Awards programs in 2020.
- Strengthen and deeply embed the principles of EDI and belonging into the AIA Framework for Design Excellence (FDE).
- Build momentum and expand support for EDI and human and ecological health principles across the organization's programs, activities, and volunteer network in support of holistically achieving its stated strategic priorities.

## **Honors & Awards Operational Focus**

- Examine and streamline the application process. Applications often require access to strong and powerful networks within and outside of AIA, a commitment of firm staff or personal time, and financial resources to create an aesthetically acceptable and compelling award submission and presentation. Further, a familiarity with the inner workings of AIA may unintentionally create implicit obstacles for applicants and disproportionately impact underrepresented populations.
- Reduce and eliminate conscious and unconscious bias in the selection process by improving scoring, evaluation, promotion, and selection of applicants to ensure clear and consistent processes for all Honors & Awards.
- Recruit, enhance, and build upon the composition of Honors & Awards juries to ensure they are reflective of a diverse slate of participants (both lived and professional experiences). Though applicants and recipients are slightly more demographically diverse than the membership, jury diversity has also increased in recent years and will require continued leadership engagement and appropriate approval to ensure consistency with EDI goals.
- Improve data collection and report on metrics. Data related to submissions and juries is insufficient thus making tracking EDI progress difficult.
- Improve coordination and consistency across the different groups engaged in Honors & Awards processes. Ensure that cooperation, best practices, and a common commitment to organizational goals and priorities is sustained.

## **TIMELINE**

The implementation is a phased approach between 2022 and 2023, with most or all recommendations implemented, by the end of 2023.