Members' Voice Task Force: Report and Recommendations

June 2023

Executive Summary

AIA President Peter Exley, FAIA, appointed the Members' Voice Task Force (MVTF) in 2021 to examine how effectively the AIA's Board of Directors and the Strategic Council perceives member outlooks and questions, and how readily members perceive their opportunities to contribute or, at the very least, to understand the relationships of member groups to each other with regard to the AIA's strategic goals.

The MVTF carefully worked through a multi-step process to engage stakeholder groups throughout the AIA over the course of two years.

Weighing the results of interviews and conversations, the MVTF also took a broader view of the implications that their recommendations might have on several dimensions, including AIA operations, governance, and communications.

The MVTF's recommendations suggest a strategy for the Board of Directors and the Strategic Council to consider: to clarify and refine the AIA governance model.

"As we talk about equity in the profession, this task force aims to demystify and understand how the Board and the Strategic Council govern the AIA and urge it forward to be ideally useful. The singular focus of its work has been to suggest ways to provide access to all members, volunteers, and component and chapter staff to the structures of the AIA and empower them to participate and contribute to its future."—Peter Exley, FAIA

Their recommendations include three broad areas for further discussion:
- **Cultivate a culture of trust.**
- **Enhance collaboration and coordination within the AIA and among its groups.**
- **Strengthen the relationship between the Board and the Strategic Council**.

Within these areas, the MVTF recommends tactics that create possibilities for a new overarching strategy to take root. They include: develop and widely communicate the vision of the organization; ensure appropriate resources are allocated to support that vision; create more opportunities for open discussion and feedback (as well as create a mechanism to report those discussions back to members); make the work of the Strategic Council more accessible to members and more relevant to the AIA's state components and local chapters; and create an interactive platform for members to raise issues, receive responses, and hear how others are dealing with commonly occurring issues.

Ultimately, the MVTF encourages AIA leaders not to *see* members as a structural monolith that must be accommodated or tolerated, but rather to *hear* the individual and collective member voices, and acknowledge them.

Overview

This report summarizes the purpose and formation of the Members' Voice Task Force (MVTF) its research methodology, and its recommendations.

In 2021, AIA President Peter Exley, FAIA, appointed Jessica Sheridan, AIA, as the MVTF chair. A diverse group of members was convened, representing different demographics, leadership positions, membership categories, and constituencies. Those members included:

Jessica Sheridan, AIA, chair
Carl Elefante, FAIA, co-vice chair
Jana Itzen, AIA, co-vice chair
Patricia Acevedo Fuentes, AIA
Rusty Bienvenue
Sarah Curry, Assoc. AIA, NOMA
Dwayne R. Eshenbaugh, AIA
Peter Exley, FAIA
Daniel S. Hart, FAIA, PE
William Hercules, FAIA
Angela Lammers, CAE
Brynnemarie Lanciotti, AIA
Evelyn M. Lee, FAIA
Amrita Raja, AIA
Kate Schwennsen, FAIA
Nicki Dennis Stephens, Hon. AIA, LEED Green Assoc.
Belinda Stewart, FAIA
William R. Turner Jr., AIA
Pam Day, Hon. AIA, staff

Task force charge

The MVTF was charged to:

1. Analyze the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the Strategic Council, and their accountability to the members
2. Examine the effectiveness of the Board of Directors and the Strategic Council, their relationship to one another, and to members and member groups
3. Make recommendations to increase governance transparency, accountability, and communication
4. Study the resources and processes required to allow for greater member input to the Board of Directors and the Strategic Council
5. Identify any cultural changes or process adjustments necessary to provide a meaningful and transparent connection between members and the organization

6. Study the resolutions process and whether this is the best method for members and components to surface issues they feel are important to the profession to the attention of the Board of Directors
7. Seek direction from the Board of Directors, when needed, to investigate additional areas of study

Background

In 2014, the delegates to the AIA Annual Meeting in Chicago approved a new governance structure to include two bodies: a smaller Board of Directors that was charged with making fiduciary decisions on behalf of the organization, and a Strategic Council that was charged with providing thought leadership to the Board and other AIA bodies, as well as guidance on professional issues, opportunities, and threats.

The goal was to create a leadership structure that could be unified in its voice, responsive to new challenges and opportunities, and representative of its membership. This shift was part of the AIA's multi-year "Repositioning" initiative.

AIA staff and volunteer leaders were keen to evaluate the effectiveness of the AIA's governance structure in the years that followed the Board and the Strategic Council's transition and, in 2016, AIA President Russ Davidson, FAIA, appointed a task force to galvanize some of these questions. The task force recommended improvements that clarified roles and responsibilities between the Board and the Strategic Council; optimized communications and meetings among the respective members of the Board and the Strategic Council (as well as communications between Board and Strategic Council); and allocated resources to help the Strategic Council realize the fullest potential of an assembly body.

In 2019, the AIA performed a governance audit to evaluate barriers to participation, both real and perceived, to refine procedures to create greater transparency.

In 2021, AIA members from several states expressed renewed interest in how effectively the new governance structure was meeting member expectations. They raised questions about the relationship of the Board of Directors and the Strategic Council to each other, as well as their respective relationships to individuals and groups throughout the organization.

In response to those requests for investigation, 2021 AIA President Peter Exley, FAIA, appointed what would become the Members' Voice Task Force (MVTF), so named for its interest in how individual members and member groups may influence the AIA's future governance and its capacity to absorb and respond to member feedback.

Since the MVTF's formation, and in the course of its work, the AIA implemented changes identified by the MVTF to reflect, strengthen, and amplify the member voice. Those changes included:

Pivoting to meet new challenges	● Rebranded Grassroots as the AIA Leadership Summit ● Refocused the AIA Leadership Summit on bolstering AIA component leaders by strengthening their leadership skills and their understanding of the component network
Enhancing communication with leaders	● Expanded AIA's Leadership Exchange Network to improve connectivity between AIA components, the AIA Board of Directors, and the Strategic Council ● Expanded Leadership Exchange Network agendas to incorporate time for Strategic Council representatives
Improving the resolutions process	● Improved guidelines that now accompany the call for resolutions ● Focused definition of resolutions included (Bylaws amendments, policy changes)
Connecting Strategic Council members	● Created templates for the Strategic Council to provide better and more direct connections to their constituencies. ● Connected Strategic Council representatives with their state board leadership, and encouraged those state boards to include the Strategic Council representatives at board meetings ● Implemented regular and consistent opportunities for communication between Board and the Strategic Council leadership

Process and Methodology

On behalf of the MVTF, AIA retained Tecker International (Tecker) to identify a multi-phase process in which each phase was grounded in the findings of its preceding phase.

Phase 1 began with interviewing stakeholders closely associated with AIA leadership to establish a baseline set of questions for the following phase.

Phase 2 included interviews with individual members who participate in AIA affinity groups.

Phase 3 included interviews with willing participants from Phases 1 and 2, to reconfirm specific ideas and complete a feedback loop that was critical to verifying the content of the MVTF's recommendations.

"We wanted to put in place a process that reflected what we'd want to see from our AIA National Board of Directors—or any board of directors—that included the right stakeholders whose diversity of backgrounds enriched our investigation in the first two phases," says MVTF Chair Jessica Sheridan, AIA. "By creating a feedback loop in the third phase, we could make sure we were hearing people correctly."

Members of the MVTF met virtually each month from 2021 to 2023 for most of their time together, except for an in-person workshop aimed at developing their lines of inquiry, reviewing their progress, and staying focused on their goals. Smaller groups working on specific areas of the MVTF's work met periodically to coordinate and complete their evaluations of the research data. The Board reviewed the progress of the MVTF along the way, offering direction and suggestions.

**Phase 1
(July-December
2021)**

The MVTF began its work in 2021 to understand the collective "members' voice"—how informed members are about key issues and how much agency members have within the structure of the AIA to raise questions or express concerns—as well as the perceptions of key groups within the AIA of that voice.

To ensure impartiality, the MVTF directed Tecker to convene stakeholder interviews with representatives from groups who are viewed within the AIA structure as being closely linked to leadership. These groups included:

- AIA Board of Directors
- AIA Strategic Council
- AIA Staff (Senior Leadership Team, or SLT)
- Council of Architectural Component Executives (CACE)
- National Associates Committee (NAC) Advisory Committee
- Young Architects Forum (YAF) Advisory Committee
- AIA Members' Voice Task Force
- AIA Members' Voice Task Force Cabinets (individuals selected by members of the task force)

Tecker determined the content and cadence of the questions, as well as the format of the answers in both individual interviews and group interviews. Based on these interviews and discussions, the MVTF observed several characteristics of the AIA's current approach to member engagement and the ability of members to raise questions or express concerns. Those characteristics included:

- Multiple, distinct, and seemingly uncoordinated methods of engaging leaders and members in discussions of priorities
- A desire to streamline the input process to hear more voices and allow them to have impact
- The Strategic Council's three roles—first, to provide an avenue for communication between components and AIA; second, to provide the strategic foresight into the future priorities of architects; and third, to serve as a "think tank" that goes deep into issues
- There is a desire to collaborate with AIA and among all components, to coordinate the development of trend analysis usable during all the strategic planning processes
- National, state, and local AIA leaders often view each other as different entities (even if, legally, they are) rather than mutually interested parties
- There is a perception that the national organization is not connected to the priorities of the state and local levels of the organization

- While communication needs work in several key ways, the most important is that members need to have access to what creates value, and to feel heard
- There needs to be clarity in the various communications roles focusing on input and understanding, rather than updating and explaining
- We must ensure the breadth of perspectives are included when we solicit member input from all demographics within the diverse membership
- There is a lack of clarity on roles, which presents conflicting expectations between staff and volunteers
- There are successful models of an open and iterative process leading to successful outcomes that are based on transparency, inclusion, and trust
- There needs to be a balance between broad engagement on issues, and deep dives focused on the benefit to a few people

Based on these observations, and in consultation with Tecker, the MVTF organized its research around broad topics, which MVTF Chair Sheridan presented to the Board of Directors and membership at the 2022 Annual Meeting.

Those topics centered around how AIA gathers information from individual members on trends and concerns that matter to them and defining the unique characteristics of different member groups. The MVTF identified ways for members to interact and intersect with other groups of AIA members to elevate issues.

Develop a culture of trust among all parties

To shape a culture of trust, AIA must develop and widely communicate the vision of the organization and use that vision to navigate difficult times.

Trust can be developed by implementing more open forums for discussion, input, and feedback and making the work of the Strategic Council more accessible to members.

Mid-term strategies for developing trust include developing a unified structure for the Strategic Council to engage with local components.

In the long term, it's important to develop a structure for ongoing reporting, input, and feedback from members and create an interactive platform for them to raise issues, receive responses, and hear how others are dealing with issues they may have.

Improve quality of collaboration and coordination at all levels of the AIA	The MVTF looked at how AIA ensures priorities and programs complement each other and are coordinated.

The key concept is optimization, and short-term goals included better communication between key offices, prioritizing staff resources to serve all communities, improving the website, and creating a clearinghouse of resources that are interactive and accessible.

Supporting AIA volunteer groups with more complete and purposeful staffing was raised in a few contexts. While most comments addressed AIA National groups, the Strategic Council and small and unstaffed components were most frequently referenced. In both contexts, interview subjects expressed concerns about members devoting time and effort to initiatives that are not satisfactorily completed due to lack of resources, or taking on work that is not reasonably delegated to member volunteers. Is AIA employing the best and most appropriate models for engaging member volunteers in work to advance the Institute and profession? Is it employing the best and most appropriate models for supporting those volunteer efforts with staff and other resources?

Strengthen the mutual relationship shared by the Board and the Strategic Council

What, exactly, is the role of the Board of Directors? Of the Strategic Council?

Does the role of the Strategic Council need to be further narrowed/defined to clarify its position within the AIA?

The MVTF identified continuing to develop the Leadership Exchange Network and evaluating AIA's Bylaws and Rules of the Board as important tactics to pursue.

Evaluate the resolutions process

The MVTF examined the resolutions process and whether it was adequate for members and components to raise important professional issues.

A more open process was developed to ensure resolutions coming to the delegates at the Annual Meeting were appropriate for national consideration.

By establishing a year-round Resolutions Committee and providing components and members with resolution coaches or mentors, AIA can create opportunities for greater participation in (and awareness of) governance.

Phase 2 (December 2021- June 2022)

Building off the results of Phase 1, the MVTF expanded its scope of inquiry in Phase 2 to include a broad cross section of member groups and their leaders as a counterpoint to the stakeholders considered closer to the activities of AIA leadership at the Board and Strategic Council levels. Those member groups included:

- AIA College of Fellows
- AIA Component Presidents
- Board Knowledge Committee/Knowledge Community Chairs
- AIA Large Firm Round Table
- AIA Small Firm Exchange
- Leadership Exchange Network

To guide its investigation in Phase 2, the MVTF identified aspects of the broad topics that needed further clarification from the stakeholders:

- Authentic engagement of critical stakeholders
- Support and buy-in from volunteer leadership and staff
- Objectivity of process
- Transparency of process
- Demonstrated increased member engagement

Tecker concluded its work with the MVTF by conducting interviews with stakeholders in tandem with members of the MVTF. To guide this second round of interviews, the MVTF enhanced the five topics listed at the conclusion of Phase 1 to create actionable lines of inquiry about amplifying the member voice and improving its agency. Those enhancements included:

Improve member engagement at all levels based on the different levels of membership

- Listen to and amplify individual members and member groups' voices
- Allow for "on ramps" and "off ramps" for when members want to be actively engaged
- Identify how to best interact and intersect with the member, or the member group, based on their unique characteristics
- Identify implications of these attributes and the degrees of change required to reach the ideal state

Optimize the relationship shared by the Board and the Strategic Council

- Develop a direct line of communication between the Strategic Council and component presidents (at all levels)
- Focus the Leadership Summit (formerly known as Grassroots) on component leadership and governance (not business development for a firm, advocacy in communities, etc.)
- Evaluate the role of state AIA components in maintaining a network of information between AIA National and local AIA chapters

Increase the frequency and effectiveness of collaboration between the Board and the Strategic Council	● Empower the component's voting delegates: outside of the Annual Meeting, is there a longer-term role for delegates as an on-ramp for more diverse leadership? ● Improve training for incoming component presidents and presidents-elect on the roles of the Board and the Strategic Council, on the issues that AIA is addressing, how a component may raise an issue to the Board or the Strategic Council, etc. ● Publish a resource on the website that makes clear all of the programs that AIA offers (similar to an org chart, but programmatically based) ● Develop, evaluate, and prioritize appropriate support resources to best serve all communities, committees, the Board, and the Strategic Council ● Revamp the website to include a clearinghouse of interactive/accessible resources
Develop a culture of trust among all parties	● Provide more open forums for discussion, input, and feedback. ● Follow up with forum participants on action that is being planned because of the discussion, input, and feedback. ● Create an interactive platform for members to raise issues, hear how other members are dealing with issues, and receive responses from AIA leadership. ● Develop a unified structure for the Strategic Council to engage with their constituencies. ● Develop a structure for ongoing discussion, input, and feedback from members.
Create resources for members to understand resolutions and participate in their creation	● Charge the Strategic Council to help with vetting and investigation of potential resolutions. ● Establish a year-round Resolutions Committee ● Create a network of mentors to help members and components develop their ideas into resolutions. ● Utilize the Leadership Exchange Network to unearth concerns that might otherwise develop into resolutions.

Phase 3 (August 2022-March 2023)

Returning to key stakeholder groups, the MVTF asked the members of those groups to review the broad themes of Phases 1 and 2, which would eventually become the basis of the MVTF's recommendations and to prioritize action items through surveys.

Those surveyed included:
- AIA Board of Directors (https://www.aia.org/leadership)
- AIA Strategic Council (https://www.aia.org/leadership)
- AIA Staff (Senior Leadership Team) (https://www.aia.org/leadership)
- Council of Architectural Component Executives (CACE) - professional staff leadership of components
- National Associates Committee Advisory Committee (https://network.aia.org/nationalassociatescommittee/home)
- Young Architects Forum Advisory Committee (https://www.aia.org/resources/195236-young-architects-forum)
- AIA Members' Voice Task Force
- AIA Members' Voice Task Force Cabinets
- Large Firm Round Table
- Small Firm Exchange (https://network.aia.org/communities/community-home?communitykey=5dccd29e-2089-48ae-8452-471d5068b76d&tab=groupdetails)
- Resolutions Groups tasked with crafting resolutions for review and ratification
- Small Local components - components with fewer than 250 members
- Volunteer-led components
- Knowledge Communities and Board Knowledge Committee (https://www.aia.org/pages/4856-aia-knowledge-communities)
- College of Fellows (https://www.aia.org/college-of-fellows)
- Component Presidents, Component Boards, Delegates

The MVTF sorted the results of these surveys to identify priorities that would prompt action in the areas of procedure, operations, communications, or strategy.

After refining its priorities and recommendations, the MVTF extrapolated a series of larger, structural improvements to create a more responsive and forward thinking set of actions. Those improvements included:

- o Construct a framework of communication that spans the strata of leadership, component structure, and members that amplifies members' voices.
- o Reaffirm the intent of creating a smaller Board of Directors and a larger Strategic Council purpose, as well as their respective roles and responsibilities.
- o Study all available opportunities for leadership within the AIA and ensure adequate pipelines of volunteer leaders to participate in AIA's governance.
- o Reaffirm the roles and responsibilities of the Strategic Council Moderators and At-large Board Directors as important allies in creating accountability for the Board and the Strategic Council.
- o Review the ways in which each layer of membership is likely to engage with and communicate with the Board and the Strategic Council.

Key Recommendations of the Members' Voice Task Force

The MVTF identified a series of recommendations that related to themes reflecting member service and member value for the AIA today. Those themes included "Cultivating a Culture of Trust," "Strengthening the Relationship Between the Board and the Strategic Council," and "Enhancing Collaboration and Coordination."

These recommendations share the same two objectives. First, to listen to (and amplify) individual members and member groups' voices. Second, to identify how AIA National and its associated groups and leaders can best interact and intersect with each other and its members in meaningful ways.

Recommendation 1.0: Cultivate a culture of trust

1.1 Connect everyone through an interactive platform

Why? Creating an interactive platform for members to raise issues, hear how other members are dealing with issues and receive responses from AIA leadership, creates transparency and effectiveness – two critical ingredients of trust within the AIA – as well as for people outside the organization interested in joining as a member or forging a partnership with architect leaders. Transparency must be more than an ideal. It must be accepted as an operative value for the entire organization.

What are the implications? By evaluating the existing communication paths between general members and the Strategic Council and the Board, and reconsidering the AIA's main digital platforms, AIA will increase diversity of thought among members, the effectiveness of its messages, and the likelihood of greater awareness among target audiences.

Reevaluating communications channels also creates opportunities to answer questions like, "Are we being efficient? Are we responding adequately to trends that are expected? What about challenges that are unexpected?" Providing resources to make AIA reports interactive and capable of measuring responses to these questions creates an important feedback loop on the issues AIA is addressing.

1.2 Share information by developing a structure for ongoing reporting, input, and feedback

Why? By developing a structure for ongoing reporting, input, and feedback from members, as well as developing a way for membership to share their work, concerns, and questions proactively and independently, AIA will close information gaps between those members and AIA leaders, and provide greater clarity on opportunities for engagement and collaboration.

What are the implications? Making all information available and visible is the foundation of transparency. That may begin with high-profile documents such as the Strategic Plan, or a plain-language interpretation of Annual Meeting actions and discussions, or sharing work created by the Strategic Council and the Board, as well as other high-level committees.

A website landing page that maps out all the components, affinity groups, Knowledge Communities, etc., and how they are interconnected, answers questions among current members hoping to get involved, or among prospective members eager to find reasons to join. The creation of an accurate, up-to-date landing page must include the ability to click on a location and see reliable contact information about its offices and leaders.

Recommendation 2.0: Enhance collaboration and coordination

2.1 Develop, evaluate, and prioritize appropriate support resources to best serve all communities, committees, the Board, and the Strategic Council

Why? As a membership association, the value of volunteer leaders to the organization cannot be understated. Equipping leaders with information, providing adequate resources, and recognizing members as a partner in the success of the organization is of paramount importance and can be achieved by strengthening the partnership between volunteer leaders and professional staff.

What are the implications? To create and monitor an encouraging and supportive structure for national staff to collaborate with components, communities, and committees, it is necessary to recognize the value of each entity to the organization by asking what they uniquely represent, what they are capable of accomplishing, and who they are accountable to in their work. These are participatory dialogues among groups and staff-led coordination with existing initiatives.

Such efforts must be documented and the expectations they create must be articulated and agreed upon.

2.2 Improve training for incoming component leadership

Why? The strength of the organization lies in the quality of its volunteer leaders and their ability to meaningfully contribute to the organization. By utilizing national resources, the AIA can provide a baseline of training for all volunteer leaders.

What are the implications? Centralize existing resources related to component leaders. AIA will then refocus the Leadership Summit exclusively on, as the title states, "leadership" and governance, rather than business development or government advocacy.

By centralizing resources, AIA will create an infrastructure for member questions and feedback to be registered and routed to appropriate leadership groups. Finally, if resources are concentrated, AIA will be able to better evaluate the efficacy of its initiatives.

How do we study this further? Consider a review of the structure of CACE. Although the MVTF focused on the effectiveness of AIA National practices and bodies, it quickly became clear that many issues of concern implied "two-way" solutions. For AIA National to be more effective also requires all layers to work together more effectively. Most of that domain is in the AIA component network. Resources across AIA components vary greatly and don't always correspond to component size.

Over the past several years, AIA has worked to reorganize chapters and sections, establish standards, etc. Is the organization of AIA's domain the most appropriate for supporting member needs and interests? Helping members become engaged?

In evaluating the role of the AIA President, the commitment required for this office is perceived to be "too big," and a barrier to participation. The perception is that the time commitment and other aspects of the role make it feasible for only a privileged few. AIA must advocate for firms to be more supportive of all volunteers.

2.3 Evaluate AIA's communication strategy

Why? The website is the primary, initial interface for most members across all backgrounds; it is the first point of contact and platform for initial interaction and demonstrates the organization's values regarding transparency and member service. It must be built not just to address member satisfaction now but look to the future.

The website must be member-focused; a cultural shift is required in how this resource is designed, implemented, and maintained as a clearinghouse. In short, refining the communications strategy means connecting the dots for members so they can find what they need and engage with what they're seeing.

What are the implications? The overall member expectation is for a website includes basic information, functionality, and clarity in how it organizes information.

The website's future development, timeline, and next-gen plan is a critical topic as volunteer leaders, as well as chapter and component staff, contemplate the future of their projects and initiatives. By publishing a roadmap or plan for future member communications (and offering opportunities for input), interested members (not to mention the Board and the Strategic Council) can form a more complete view of member engagement and its possibilities.

A customized user experience for individuals whose habits, interests, and own engagement history is an added value to all members.

Recommendation 3.0: Strengthen the relationship between the Board and the Strategic Council

3.1 Clarify the role of the Strategic Council as a body that represents members' perspectives

Why? The move to a state-based model is perceived by stakeholders as a better means to provide a direct conduit between state and local components and AIA National.

Strategic Council members who don't represent a state, represent other membership categories and subject matter expertise. The Leadership Exchange Network and state board meetings already facilitate this, but their interactions are inconsistent.

What are the implications? A graphic that visually demonstrates the relationship of components, their leaders, the Strategic Council, and the Board, is needed. CACE is often seen as the main resource and point-of-contact for components; component executives are encouraged to ensure their presidents and presidents-elect know who their Strategic Council representatives are and to help them understand each other's roles in communicating and collaborating. The Strategic Council must also be more proactive in facilitating and fostering relationships with leaders and members in their states or with entities they represent. In turn, component leaders must be proactive in communicating national issues with the state and local components (and vice versa). Finally, in developing a repository of topics, the AIA would create access to information for components as needed and continuously update them about the repository's offerings.

3.2 Clarify the role of the Strategic Council to provide long-term thinking, and to advise the Board and other AIA bodies on important issues

Why? While the AIA has access to stakeholders across its membership, the Strategic Council is the one entity that is identified to provide the strategic thinking around issues and advise the Board and other AIA bodies on those issues. Its recommendations to the Board and other AIA bodies empowers qualified stakeholders to raise issues for debate and consideration.

What are the implications? The strict bilateral relationship between the Board and the Strategic Council expands to include other voices that might have valuable insights or resources that can be considered.

The AIA governance structure is audited on a regular basis to ensure effectiveness and efficiency for the organization and its members. Results of that audit must be shared with all members.

How do we study this further? There is a distinct need for a long-term planning group that is looking beyond the next Strategic Plan that's the responsibility of either the Strategic Council (with the Board retaining its fiduciary role of approval of any such plan), or appointment of a new body separate from and outside of the Board and the Strategic Council.

3.3
Create more opportunities for exchanges among Board, Council, and components

Why? Attendees of Leadership Exchange Network calls have mentioned a desire for the calls to be more participatory. They are opportunities for the Board, Strategic Council, and components to have robust discussions around issues.

What are the implications? The current structure is focused on report-outs with an additional section to include opportunities for further discussion and valuable resources developed by the AIA.

Board members proactively facilitate relationships with leaders and members and, in turn, state-level AIA component leaders proactively communicate national issues with local components (and vice versa).

After each Leadership Exchange Network call, components publish updates in a newsletter to their membership; a repository around issues is developed so components may access information when needed; updates to the repository published to members regularly.

Conclusions

Ensuring adequate representation in a membership organization with more than 96,000 members, increases in difficulty as that organization grows over time.

The AIA has not only refined its governance approach over the last 17 decades since its founding in 1857, but it has prioritized ways to communicate and engage with its members through its publications, outreach, digital strategies, and partnerships.

This praise might seem incongruous as we conclude our report recommending several ways to refocus the AIA Board of Directors and the Strategic Council on the "members' voice." Yet, the spirit of our work as a task force has always been about building on the momentum of AIA's commitment to its members whose voices and outlooks are, now more than ever, worthy of AIA's attention. The focus of our work, then, has been about elevating issues raised by member constituencies for the Board to review and consider for additional study.

The MVTF engaged with a broad spectrum of AIA stakeholder groups, many of which have long histories of recommending their own improvements to how the AIA delivers value to members, where it chooses to fight legislative battles, when business conditions require action, and who to forge alliances with to advance architecture's special contribution to society. All this work has been valuable to one degree or another, and it has created a rich environment of member-focused activity. But that environment often appears impenetrable, which is the fundamental challenge the MVTF hoped to address.

It's clear that the AIA continues to evolve in a positive direction, as its volunteer leaders and staff have endeavored to do over the years. As part of this continuum, the MVTF sees a return to governance basics as a worthy step as AIA endeavors to acknowledge the diversity of its membership and ensure transparency in its actions.

Our recommendations reflect an ongoing process to amplify and honor member voices at AIA, while facilitating the business and governance of the AIA. **Our call for trust, collaboration and coordination, and strengthening relationships is a prescription for the forward momentum the AIA's leaders and its members have come to expect from their organization.**

Acknowledgements

This endeavor would not have been possible without the expertise of all of those who volunteered time over the past two years. First and foremost, I am grateful to the hundreds of stakeholders who generously provided input and feedback on their experiences, as well as their commitment to improving the AIA. The Members' Voice Task Force listened, synthesized, and seriously considered every point made throughout the process.

Sincere thanks to the entire Members' Voice Task Force. Your commitment to staying true to our charge and producing a report that honestly reflects current challenges and obstacles, in addition to successes, demonstrates the true value of the AIA.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Pam Day, Hon. AIA, who provided knowledge, advice, and friendship throughout the past two years. Your contributions as a stakeholder on our task force were invaluable. To my vice co-chairs, Carl Elefante, FAIA, and Jana Itzen, AIA, I am also deeply indebted to your wisdom, guidance, and direction. Thank you, Peter Exley, FAIA, who formed this task force and who identified the need to examine how the AIA can best reflect members' voices. Your prescience represents your strength as a leader.

I would be remiss not to mention the support of our consultants. Tecker International set our task force off in the right direction, providing a structure for our work that was carried out throughout our two years. And William Richards, who adeptly helped compile the massive amount of work into this clear, concise report.

Lastly, I would like to thank the current and future AIA Boards of Directors for taking this report to heart with the intention of improving our organization to benefit our vast membership.

Jessica Sheridan, AIA
Chair, AIA Members' Voice Task Force