AIA

Fellowship 101

Your quick start guide to applying for fellowship

What is AIA Fellowship?

Fellowship is a membership category honoring individuals for their exceptional work and contributions to architecture and society. Fellows use the FAIA designation and become members of the [College of Fellows](#) (COF).

Members can apply for fellowship after they have accrued <u>at least 10 years of Architect Membership</u>.

Candidates are reviewed and elevated to the COF by a jury of their peers (fellows). The jury selects candidates who have "shown distinction in fulfilling the fellowship objects", and we'll cover the objects later.

The mission of College of Fellows is to

- stimulate a sharing of interests among fellows.

- promote the purposes of the Institute.

- advance the profession of architecture.

- mentor young architects.

- be of ever-increasing service to society.

Pro tip! Your component can verify your membership history and help you determine whether you are eligible. You can also contact **aiamembershiphistory@aia.org**

Assembling your team

Once you have determined that you are eligible to apply, it's time to identify the people who will help you complete your submission.

- Nominator(s)

- Sponsor

- Reference writers

Nominator

You can be nominated by a <u>component</u> or a <u>group of members</u>.

- The jury does not see who nominated you and both paths are equally valid.

- Your nominator(s) will sign a required form for your application.

Pro tip! Some components have their own internal nomination processes, so if you decide to go that route, connect with them well in advance of submissions opening.

Sponsor

Your sponsor is your <u>coach</u> and <u>active collaborator</u> through the submission process. They have important deliverables such as their letter and declaration forms. They also act as your liaison with the reference writers.

Choose someone who <u>knows you well and is your best critic</u>. You are allowed to switch sponsors to find a better fit.

Pro tip! Your sponsor can be a firm colleague, but this will put greater onus on your portfolio to demonstrate your impact beyond the firm.

Reference writers

Each submission needs <u>at least seven confidential reference letters</u>. Since you will not be able to see the letters, it's important that your reference writers:

- know your work well and can speak personally to your contributions.

- are given background information by your sponsor about your argument for elevation and the types of examples you'll be presenting.

Aim for a <u>diverse group of voices</u> (colleagues, competitors, clients, students, etc.) that represent a <u>broad geographic impact</u>.

Pro tip! Once your writers have accepted your request, connect them with your sponsor and remove yourself from the process.

Note: Direction and guidance from your sponsor is ok, but coercion or improper influence on the writers by you or anyone acting on your behalf is grounds for disqualification.

Choosing your object

Each candidate selects an object/sub-object under which to apply. As we mentioned in the first section, the jury looks for candidates who have <u>fulfilled their object criteria in exemplary ways</u>.

Select an object that <u>helps you to tell a compelling story</u> and make your case for elevation.

- There may be multiple objects that are relevant to your work, and sometimes the "right" object may not be the one you initially think.

- Your object <u>should align with your strongest impacts</u>. Reviewing the object criteria with your sponsor is a good first step.

Object One: To promote the aesthetic, scientific, and practical efficiency of the profession.

Sub-objects: Design, urban design, or preservation

• The portfolio should communicate your unique design approach/process and how it is impacting the profession.

• The jury looks for peer recognition and knowledge-sharing through national and local awards, jury service, articles, etc.

Object Two: To advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of practice.

Sub-objects: Practice Management or Technical Advancement

- The portfolio should show how are you sharing your innovations or firm model with the profession.

- At least one of your exhibits should be a non-project like a training program or a specific technical tool.

Object Three: To coordinate the building industry and the profession of architecture.

Sub-objects: Led the Institute or Led a Related Organization

- The jury is looking for extensive and diverse relevance, particularly at the national level.

- It's not enough to list leadership positions—what actions did you take? What was the outcome? What is the legacy?

Object Four: To ensure the advancement of the living standards of people through their improved environment.

Sub-objects: Public Service, Government, or Industry Organizations

- It's important to document the benefit to AIA and the profession. How is your work affecting policies? How are you making things easier for architects in the profession?

Object Five: To make the profession of ever-increasing service to society.

Sub-objects: Alternative Career, Volunteer, or Service to Society

- It's important to show how your background as an architect has helped you succeed beyond the profession.

- Use outcome data to demonstrate how your work serves society.

- It must be clear you are not gaining commissions through volunteer service and that it is not used as marketing tool.

Object Six: To advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education and training.

Sub-objects: Education, Literature, or Research

- Demonstrate impact through teaching tools and student work.

- Show how your research has changed the profession and include metrics.

- Include some project work to give credibility to your role as an architectural educator, writer, etc.

Pro tip! Visit the resources tab on the fellowship website to download previous submissions in your object and see how others told their stories.

Anatomy of a submission

Fellowship portfolio

Section 1

- Sponsor Letter
- Summary of Achievements

Section 2

- 2.2: Significant Work
- 2.2: Significant Awards, Honors & Recognition
- 2.3: Significant Publications

Section 3

- Exhibits

Reference Letters (confidential/uploaded separately)

Other materials

In addition to the portfolio, you will be asked to provide materials which the jury does not review, including:

- nomination signature sheet

- Code of Ethics and other member attestations (candidate and sponsor)

- image credit information

- headshot

Section 1: Sponsor Letter & Summary of Achievements
These two pages should reinforce each other and <u>set the stage for the rest of the portfolio</u>.

- Your sponsor's letter describes <u>why they believe</u> you are a qualified in relation to your object and summary framework.

- The Summary of Achievements is a high-level narrative of <u>why you believe</u> you are qualified. It includes your Summary Statement, which encapsulates your argument for elevation.

- Your Summary Statement may change multiple times as you assemble and refine your argument for elevation. This is normal!

Pro tip! Your sponsor's letter is the first page of the portfolio, but its often helpful to write it last or review it after the portfolio is complete.

Section 2: Significant Work, Recognition, and Publications

This section takes <u>a broad look at the impact</u> of your work in relation to your object.

- This is about <u>your</u> impact on the profession, so avoid language like "the team did X" and speak to what you specifically did.

- Group similar accomplishments together to reinforce their impact and explain any time gaps.

- Consider your use of space. Too little white space can make the section challenging to understand. Too much can make it feel like you are running out of things to say.

Section 3: Exhibits

In contrast to Section 2, which is about breadth, an exhibit is <u>an in-depth exploration of a project</u> that emphasizes your contributions and discusses how your involvement contributed to its success.

- Select exhibits that <u>tie directly to your object and summary framework</u>. Otherwise, they will feel disconnected and dilute your argument.

- Lead with your strongest work.

Pro tip! There is required information for each exhibit, and some objects have additional exhibit requirements. Double check the criteria to avoid a DQ!

Pro tip! Don't reuse marketing text; the portfolio is about you and your unique contributions.

Reference letters

As we mentioned earlier, the references are confidential, so <u>the writers submit them separately</u>.

When you enter your writers' information into your application, they receive the letter format criteria and a unique link to upload their letter.

Pro tip! You can track letter uploads and send a reminders via the submission platform. Look for "Pending 3rd Party Action" in the lefthand menu.

What about application year?

Great question! Members are allowed to submit three consecutive applications for fellowship before they must take a year off.

- You are a First-year candidate if you <u>did not apply in the previous cycle</u>, whether it's your first time applying, or you just took a year off.

- You are a Second-year candidate if you applied as a First-year in the immediate past cycle.

- You are a Third-year candidate if you applied as a second-year in the immediate past cycle.

Pro tip! Any time you take a year off for any reason, you return as a First-year candidate.

Second- and Third-year applications

Here are some of the ways these applications will differ from a First-Year:

- More reference letters! Second-years can include up to 10 letters and Third-years up to 13.

- Letter rollover—candidates choose in their application which previous letters they want to keep or swap. This is optional and up to you!

- Nomination rollover—candidates upload the previous signature sheet.

Pro tip! The Jury will expect to see a response to previous comments in Second- and Third-Year portfolios, and this may require more editing than you think!

Need help?

- **Your team:** Check in regularly with your sponsor and other trusted collaborators for feedback.

- **Your component:** Many have resources to help you prepare your portfolio.

- **AIA National:** Contact us with questions at honorsawards@aia.org.

Don't forget!

The [Fellowship website](#) has a tab of resources to help prepare your submission, including:

- a sample application with program criteria, guidelines, and tips.

- examples of successful submissions by object

- supplemental forms like the photographer's release

Next steps

We recommend that you visit the [Fellowship website](#) to

1. **Familiarize yourself with this year's schedule.** It can be helpful to work backwards from the deadline when setting your own goals.

2. **Download and review the sample application.** This includes the full program criteria and even more best practices.

Thank you.