



Women's Leadership Summit 2025

Call for Proposals

Every year, the AIA Women's Leadership Summit (WLS) brings together the Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) industry's largest network of women for a premier leadership training experience. Through our Call for Proposals, we invite leaders from across the industry to contribute their expertise through a session or workshop designed to help women:

- Lead boldly in today's evolving workplace
- Excel at every career stage—from emerging professionals to seasoned executives
- Drive transformative change in the AEC space

WLS is an empowering gathering where women in the profession:

- **Building Connections That Matter:** Discover a thriving community of women architects ready to inspire, support, and uplift each other.
- **Empowering Women, Redefining Leadership:** Unlock the resources and confidence to lead boldly and shape the future of architecture.
- **Turning Inspiration into Action:** Be part of transformative conversations that spark innovation and drive real change in the industry.
- **Celebrating Women Shaping the Future:** Join us in honoring the trailblazers and rising stars defining what's next in architecture.
- **Tools to Thrive, Skills to Lead:** Gain the insights, strategies, and confidence to excel at every stage of your career

Contents

2025 theme: Lead Boldly	1
About the theme	1
How to use the theme	1
What makes a good proposal?	2
Track options.....	3
Workplace culture	3
Leadership and career advancement.....	3
Business operations and organizational systems	4
Design excellence	4
Career, community, and health: strategies for professional and personal success	5
Audiences	6
Proposal tips	7
Review process	8
Review timeline	8
Submission process and required fields	9
Other important information.....	12



2025 Theme: Lead Boldly

About the theme

This year's theme, *Lead Boldly*, is both a call to action and a guiding principle for the Women's Leadership Summit. It dares us to imagine the future of architecture differently—and to claim our role in shaping it. Lead Boldly is about collective power, visionary leadership, and a shared commitment to building a profession that reflects our values. It's not just about being included in the future—it's about owning it, leading it, and transforming it through bold ideas, intentional action, and a new vision for what leadership looks like. Whether you're starting your journey, managing a team, or shaping firm culture, this is about leading with authenticity, standing firm in your values, creating community, and building momentum that moves us all forward. Together, we're not just moving the profession forward—we're remaking it.

We're using this theme as the foundation for every aspect of the Summit—from keynote speakers and session topics to wellness activities and networking opportunities. It's helping us center authenticity, equity, and bold vision in how we design the experience.

How to use the theme

While your proposal does not need to use the theme as its title or match it word-for-word, successful submissions will thoughtfully reflect its spirit. Proposals should connect to the core ideas behind the theme: authenticity, innovation, visionary leadership, equity, and collective momentum. Whether you're sharing a bold new approach, personal leadership journey, transformative firm initiative, or community-based action, show us how your session embodies the values of Lead Boldly.

Basically: you don't have to say the words "lead boldly"—but we should feel it in your proposal. Let this theme inspire you.



What makes a good proposal?

We're looking for sessions that inspire attendees to lead with authenticity, drive change with purpose, and reimagine the future of architecture. Your proposal should reflect **bold thinking**, **actionable insights**, and a **commitment to advancing the profession**.

Strong proposals are specific, impactful, and designed to be active, engaging learning experiences. We're especially interested in content that challenges assumptions, introduces fresh perspectives, and equips attendees at all career stages with tools they can immediately apply. Sessions should be relevant to a wide range of knowledge levels and offer something participants can't find anywhere else. Sessions typically accommodate 150–200 attendees.

We encourage you to draw from AIA's research and frameworks where relevant, including:

- [Guides for Equitable Practice](#)
- [Equitable Development Frameworks](#)
- [AIA Framework for Design Excellence](#)
- [The Elephant in the Well-Designed Room bias investigation](#)

Please, no passive lectures, recycled content, or entry-level material. Proposals should not promote specific products, services, or vendors.

Track options

Workplace culture

Theme: Tools and strategies to cultivate healthy and equitable value-driven workplaces where people can thrive, perform, lead, and influence change from any career level, from early career to firm leadership.

Topics:

- **Intersectionality and intersectional feminism:** Explore how layered identities shape workplace experiences and the role of intersectionality in building more just and inclusive work environments.
- **Intercultural competency:** Develop skills to lead within diverse workplaces, fostering communication and connection that promote true inclusivity and psychological safety.
- **Talent recruitment, retention, and management:** Share innovative best practices in attracting, recruiting, managing, and retaining a resilient and diverse workforce.
- **Accessibility, belonging, and inclusion in practice:** Promote best practices that center an accessible and inclusive workplace that drives innovative outcomes.
- **Organizational culture:** Reimagine firm culture through a lens of equity, empathy, excellence, and courage, cultivating the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that define the character and personality of an organization. See [AIA's Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession](#) (Elephant in the Well-Designed Room).

Leadership and career advancement

Theme: Bold ideas and practical tools for developing leadership skills, maintaining professional growth, ensuring an open path to success within the profession, and overcoming major challenges.

Topics:

- **Leadership and professional development:** Build leadership skills and maintain professional growth to shape culture and drive change within the profession.
- **Improving pipelines into leadership:** Apply best practices in developing a strong leadership pipeline and improving representation across the board.
- **Mentorship, sponsorship, and networking:** Promote mentorship, sponsorship, and networking and apply best practices in program implementation to foster meaningful relationships and support systems across generations and identities
- **Transition and succession planning:** Apply best practices to create intentional succession plans to transition leadership to the next generation of leaders.
- **Exploring traditional and non-traditional career paths:** Uncover opportunities to leverage your strengths and explore a variety of career paths within the profession and adjacent fields that align with your skills and interests.

Business operations and organizational systems

Theme: Strategies and tools that embed equity into core business practices and create systems that balance purpose, profitability, and long-term impact.

Topics:

- **Organizational behavior and culture:** Examine how individuals, groups, and organizations interact and influence one another, from an equity lens.
- **Strategic planning and business prosperity:** Apply best practices in strategic planning to design resilient business models that ensure business continuity, where equity, innovation, and growth reinforce one another.
- **Business fundamentals and financial management:** Promote the fundamentals of business and how bottom-line prosperity can also benefit employees.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Share the journey of launching or growing a business with bold intention, especially from underrepresented founders and emerging voices, providing resources for small businesses, women's business enterprises, disadvantaged business enterprises, and/or minority business enterprises.
- **Equity-driven business practices:** Promote best practices in establishing business models, policies, or workflows that move past compliance and lead to equitable outcomes for employees and the communities we serve. Check out the [AIA Guides for Equitable Practice](#) for inspiration.

Design excellence

Theme: Share bold architectural thinking, innovative design strategies, or case studies that showcase architectural responses to environmental challenges, emphasizing sustainable and energy-efficient practices; and design principles that prioritize equity, inclusivity, well-being, and community-engaged needs.

Topics:

- **Innovation in design:** Highlight projects with innovative design strategies balancing aesthetics, function, and societal impact. Check out the [AIA Framework for Design Excellence](#).
- **Project delivery:** Share stories across the lifecycle or phases of a project, including initiation, planning, design, execution, that demonstrate diverse collaboration, transparency, and community-centered leadership.
- **Climate action and resilience:** Showcase projects that demonstrate climate leadership, addressing the risks of aging infrastructure, natural disasters, and climate change.



- **Equitable design and community engagement:** Explore design strategies that center diverse community voices and deliver equitable and responsive spaces. Consider using the [AIA Equitable Development Frameworks](#).
- **Gender equity in design:** Explore how architecture and design can and is disrupting binaries—creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for all.

Career, community, and health: strategies for professional and personal success

Theme: Engage in conversations around personal growth, community building, career management, self-empowerment and real-world issues impacting the workplace and the profession.

Topics:

- **Personal health and well-being:** Engage in honest conversations around challenges, best practices, and the realities of maintaining physical, mental, and emotional health both in and outside of the workplace.
- **Managing personal and professional lives:** Engage in candid discussion on challenges and approaches in aligning professional ambition with personal joy and fulfillment.
- **Community-building and restorative practices:** Explore ways to find or foster a supportive community and engage in restorative practices that promote well-being and nurture a sense of belonging.
- **Career management and self-empowerment:** Highlight tools and strategies to help individuals own their own career path, build their personal professional narrative, and lead from wherever they are.

Audiences

Address which one of these target career stages your session is geared for. Allied professionals (such as interior designers, engineers, construction managers, landscape architects) will also be in attendance.

- **Early-career professionals:** These individuals have been in the workforce for 0–4 years. While they may still be exploring their path within the profession, WLS offers an opportunity to build confidence, gain inspiration, and connect with mentors. Early-career attendees can begin to define their own leadership identity, understand the broader landscape of the profession, and cultivate a vision for the kind of impact they want to have. They are the next generation of leaders and WLS plants seeds for their long-term growth and influence in architecture and beyond.
- **Early mid-career professionals:** These individuals have been in the workforce for 5–9 years. At this phase in their careers, individuals have strong technical knowledge and skills needed to execute project work and support teams. They are narrowing in or have already determined their own direction and are starting to articulate how their job should align with their passions. These individuals can be in management or non-management roles, licensed or unlicensed, and follow either a design-track or non-design career track.
- **Late mid-career professionals:** These are individuals with 10–19 years of experience. At this phase in their careers, they have mastered the technical aspects of their field, have been through the full life cycle of several design and construction projects, and have started to mentor and train others. These individuals may be looking to pivot their career to a new role, tackle conflict head-on, and move into more advanced opportunities. They can be in management or non-management roles, licensed or unlicensed, design-track or non-design track.
- **Firm leader, business executive, or firm owner:** These are individuals with 20+ years of experience or people who are in firm-ownership/senior positions. These individuals are entrepreneurial in spirit and focus predominately on design, leadership, business, marketing, and operations-related issues. They are looking to achieve greater business prosperity. These individuals can be sole proprietors, small business owners, principals/directors who oversee a large studio, senior technical staff members, or large firm management.
- **Bonus segment:** Is there an audience track that you believe does not fit in with the categories above? Submit for consideration.

Proposal tips

- Showcase distinctive strategies and insights for thriving and succeeding as a professional woman. Think mentorship, work-life integration, leadership journeys, or breaking industry barriers.
- Craft learning objectives and session descriptions that clearly communicate what your session is about and what attendees will walk away with, regardless of session format.
- Proposals that overtly use artificial intelligence (AI) for their description or learning objectives are subject to disqualification.
- Ensure your content creatively supports or ties into any of the identified priority tracks or themes.
- For walking tours and wellness activities, provide detailed information on the format, group size, duration, and what participants can expect.
- Clear, concise, short titles work best.
- Be specific about educational takeaways and be sure that all elements of your proposal are well aligned with each other.
- No passive lectures or recycled presentations from other events. Highly participatory and engaging sessions are encouraged.
- Sessions may not promote specific products, vendors, or services.
- Check grammar. Submission quality and attention to detail is critical and will be viewed as a reflection of your presentation/session capabilities. Note that if accepted, your submission text will be made public on the Summit agenda page.
- Consider leveraging AIA frameworks and resources.



Review process

All proposals will be blind peer reviewed by the AIA Women's Leadership Summit Advisory Group. Omit any identifying information (individual names and company) from the session title, descriptive text, and the optional images before submitting for the blind review process.

The submission process is highly competitive. The advisory group evaluates submissions and selects the sessions based on criteria such as, but not limited to:

- demonstration that the session promotes the advancement of women and equity in business
- innovative concepts that are forward thinking and push the industry into the future
- strength of projected outcomes and useful solutions for attendees related to the theme
- inclusion of learning objectives that align with the needs of the specified target audience
- evidence of inclusive leadership practices and a diversity of thought, perspectives, and voices among speakers

Review timeline

Note: Dates are subject to change

Task	Deadline
Call for Proposals opens	May 6, 2025
Call for Proposals closes	June 6, 2025
Jury review of proposals	June 9–July 2, 2025
Decision	Early July 2025
Speaker confirmations	Early July 2025
2025 Women's Leadership Summit dates in Atlanta	November 3–5, 2025



Submission process and required fields

Session title

Clear, direct, short titles work best. (Max 10 words)

Session description

Session descriptions will appear in the online schedule. Make yours interesting! Clearly describe what attendees will learn and highlight the unique value your session offers—what makes it a must-attend experience. (Max 300 words)

Learning objectives

What will attendees know or be able to do after attending your session? Provide a minimum of four learning objectives. To qualify for HSW (health, safety, welfare) credits, ensure that three out of four learning objectives are HSW themed. Please use active verbs and words that are clear and measurable. Check out the [Continuing Education Standards](#) guide for more information. Check out this [Ethics and Public Welfare Topics: A Guide to HSW Course Development](#) to learn more about HSW course development and drafting an HSW justification.

Session type

- 1. 12-minute “Ted Talk” style presentation:** By sharing our stories, we empower each other, foster growth, and create connections that drive professional development. During 12-minute “TED Talk-style presentations” speakers will share their personal success stories, including the challenges they’ve faced, their triumphs, and the valuable tips and lessons they’ve learned along the way. This dynamic and engaging format delivers a single, powerful idea in a concise, passionate, and relatable way, combining clear messaging, storytelling, and authenticity to inspire and provoke thought in the audience.
 - Length: 12 minutes
 - Presenters: one
 - Learning objectives: 1-2
- 2. 60-minute interactive presentation/workshop:** A dynamic presentation or workshop that incorporates active learning, interactive discussions, and/or hands-on engagement and participation to facilitate learning. Participants should engage in interactivity with the presenter, real-time problem-solving, and/or break out group work/discussions, ensuring deep engagement around key concepts. Sessions should be structured to foster connectivity and provide practical and actionable takeaways. Include details on how you



will structure the workshop and facilitate learning interactions. Sessions in this category may have 150-200 attendees.

- Length: 60 minutes
- Presenters: Maximum of two
- Learning objectives: Must include at least four

3. 60-minute interactive panel presentation and/or discussion: A diverse, lively, engaging, and advanced-level presentation and discussion on a specific topic. Include details on how you will structure the discussion/presentation and facilitate learning interactions. Sessions in this category may have 150-200 attendees.

- Length: 60 minutes
- Presenters/facilitators: Maximum of four (e.g., three panelists; one moderator)
- Learning objectives: Must include at least four

4. Local walking tour: A guided walking tour that promotes wellness while celebrating the art, history, and culture of Atlanta. These tours should offer attendees an opportunity to explore the city on foot, while engaging with its unique stories, spaces, and communities.

Submissions might include tours of local architecture, public art, historical landmarks, community-based projects, or other spaces designed to foster both movement and meaningful connection to place.

Tours should accommodate up to 50 attendees, take place rain or shine, and be structured in a way that supports a relaxed, engaging pace. Please also include any plans for accessibility or modifications to ensure the experience is inclusive of participants with varying mobility levels.

- Length: Must not exceed 120 minutes (about 2 hours).
- Guides/facilitators: One to two (e.g., organizer; leader)
- Learning objectives: Must include four

5. Wellness activity: Wellness is a critical thread throughout the WLS experience. Wellness activities like walking, running, biking, periodic stretching, gentle seated yoga, sound baths, and meditation support our health and well-being. When submitting your idea, please consider how the activity can be made accessible and inclusive, including modifications or options for individuals with disabilities or varying mobility levels. Our goal is to ensure that all attendees feel welcomed and supported in participating.



Problem statement

Describe the challenge, issue, or topic your session will address and how knowledge and/or application of your solution will benefit professionals and the building industry. Problem statements are not visible by the public. (Max 200 words)

Track

Select the primary priority track your proposed session will address.

Target audience

Select the primary career level your proposed session is geared toward.

Session history

Let us know if this is a new session or if it has been delivered previously.

Post-summit value

Describe the impact your session will have on attendees' future as an individual citizen of the world, as a working professional, and/or as a leader in a business. Be sure this is well aligned with the learning outcomes.

Speakers and tour organizers

All session speakers must be secured at the time of your submission. Submissions with TBD will be disqualified. Changes in speakers for accepted programs must be approved by WLS staff. Include company, job title, credentials, and demographic information per speaker. Speaker credentials are subject to revision to meet AIA brand style guidelines. Speaker-identifying fields will not be visible to reviewers.

Supporting materials

You may upload optional supporting materials (max 5 pages) to help the review committee better understand your proposed session including a sample presentation deck, white paper, supporting photos or images, etc. This may also include a website link or videos. Do not use this upload area to submit additional speakers, CVs, or portfolios. Reviewers will see this field, do not reveal information about your business or speaker(s) identity.

Speaker headshot and bio upload

Please upload a high-resolution headshot (JPG or PNG format) and a professional bio (up to 150 words) for each proposed speaker. For streamlining purposes, these materials will be used for marketing and event promotion, if your proposal is selected. Ensure all files are clearly labeled with the speaker's full name.



Other important information

Speaker benefits

Confirmed WLS 2025 speakers are eligible to receive a 25% discount off their standard registration rate. All confirmed speakers are required to register and attend WLS in Atlanta, GA. AIA does not provide travel support or cover any expenses.

Policies

- If your proposal is accepted, it will be edited to fit within AIA style guidelines.
- AIA educational sessions are noncommercial. Sessions may not promote specific products, vendors, or services.
- If your proposal is accepted, you retain the copyright and all rights attendant to such copyright in your materials; however, you grant AIA permission to use your presentation and the materials you use in your presentation solely for purposes of making your presentation (in part or in whole or in different formats) available as part of AIA's conference materials and/or in other AIA educational offerings, consistent with AIA's mission and purpose. Sessions will not be recorded.