

# Guides for Equitable Practice

Guides for understanding and building equity  
in the architecture profession

SECOND EDITION  
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**AIA**

**W**



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# Colophon

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- 5 Negotiation
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- 8 Engaging Community
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- Glossary

The *Guides for Equitable Practice* (the guides) are comprised of nine independent guides with executive summaries, this introduction, and a glossary.

# Foreword

I am pleased to present again the AIA's *Guides for Equitable Practice*, created in partnership with the University of Washington, the University of Minnesota, and the American Institute of Architects' Equity and the Future of Architecture Committee (EQFA). The guides are a vital part of AIA's long-term commitment to leading efforts that ensure that the profession of architecture is as diverse as the nation it serves. These guides are an essential step toward that end. Each includes real-world-derived best practices, relevant research, and other tools to help address a variety of employment and personnel issues about equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Since these guides were first conceived, the urgency for architects to lead efforts to find solutions for many of our society's most pressing problems has skyrocketed. The multiple layers of challenges facing people and the built environment have become more starkly visible during the tumultuous events surrounding or triggered by the 2020 global pandemic and the newly heightened attention to systemic racism in the U.S. To successfully meet these challenges, as well as the unknown challenges ahead, will require the talent, passion, and creativity of a diverse cohort of students, professionals, and leaders.

Broadly, these guides will help you make the business and professional case for ensuring that your organization meets the career development, professional environment, and cultural awareness expectations of current and future employees and clients. Ultimately, we hope that these guides will shape our shared goal of a more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and just profession for all without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic background. It is EQFA's intent to encourage an ongoing, meaningful, and productive dialogue among all members about how best to realize this future for the profession of architecture.

— Emily Grandstaff Rice, FAIA  
Chair, Equity and Future of Architecture Committee  
December 2020



# Introduction

## KEY TOPICS

antiracism  
assimilation  
audience  
business case  
context  
diversity  
equity  
ethics  
framework  
guides  
identity  
inclusion  
institutional racism  
institutional sexism  
intersectionality  
justice  
language  
methodology  
practice  
profession  
research  
structural inequality

The need for equitable practice in the architecture profession is becoming ever clearer and more urgent. Yet knowing the issues at hand and how people are affected by them, how to turn intent into action, and how to define success can be challenging. These guides provide support for informed discussions and concrete next steps to help turn intent into action.

This introduction outlines the goals, context, methodology, content, framework, and core concepts of the guides and key ideas on how to start.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What are the Guides for Equitable Practice?

The *Guides for Equitable Practice* are one component of a broad commitment by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to overcome inequities and advance the profession, the careers of individual architects, and the quality of the built environment by creating more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and just workplaces and interactions.

The individual guides meet needs identified by the AIA and its constituents in the context of increased national attention to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Some aspects of American culture have evolved radically in the past decade: for instance, broad public recognition of structural inequities highlighted by Black Lives Matter and the #MeToo movement, legalization of single-sex marriage, and recognition of nonbinary genders. The architecture profession has experienced deepening appreciation for the connection between public health and the built environment, changes in practice to incorporate universal design, and inclusionary principles reinforced by codes and regulations and design justice. However, persistent gender and racial pay gaps and racial disparities in health outcomes, school achievement, housing, and incarceration, are examples that show that many aspects of culture have not changed and that institutional racism and/or sexism are deeply rooted in systems and processes that perpetuate these inequities. Increasingly, corporations have responded to calls for societal change by connecting their own diversity and inclusion efforts to their ethical reputations and ways to protect or increase their market share. Even more importantly, research showing improved decision-making and creativity by diverse teams has increased attention to how people's differences can be leveraged to increase performance.

The AIA has long anchored the profession with policies and resources on ethics and practices, and it is logical that the Institute would sponsor the development of urgently needed guidance at this time. Many recent resources on equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice, while

not all architecture specific, are extremely valuable to anyone working in or leading the architectural profession. These guides augment those resources, translating relevant research into action.

## CONTEXT

The *Guides for Equitable Practice* emerged from a series of AIA resolutions responding to growing awareness of equity issues and the need for greater understanding of ways to improve the architecture community. As the guides developed over several years, they evolved to meet changing needs of an audience with increased resolve to connect intent to action.

In 2015, the AIA board ratified Resolution 15-1: Equity in Architecture, which was passed by member delegates at the National Convention, calling for “women and men to realize the goal of equitable practice in order to retain talent, advance the architecture profession, and communicate the value of design in society.”<sup>1</sup> The resolution directed the establishment of a Commission on Equity in Architecture, which in 2017 released five areas of focus with eleven priority recommendations for “expanding and strengthening the profession’s commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in every practice,” to be implemented by the AIA over the following three years.<sup>2</sup> The Equity and Future of Architecture Committee (EQFA) was launched in 2017 to implement the recommendations and support related initiatives. To begin addressing the fourth recommendation, “create guides for equitable, diverse, and inclusive practice,” the EQFA developed a list of topics for the guides. In 2018, the AIA issued a request for proposals to develop the guides and selected the research team initially based at the University of Minnesota. The core of this team later moved to the University of Washington, where the majority of the guides were completed. The first edition, published in three stages, was completed in late 2019. By 2020, conditions had changed so much that major revisions were needed to reflect new research and heightened consciousness and commitment to actively engage in equitable practices. In 2020, the team also added an executive summary for each guide and a comprehensive glossary.



## APPROACH

The AIA selected our research team to create these guides for the AIA EQFA committee, which established the basic structure of topics after looking at the Australian *Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice* as a model. Working with AIA leadership, EQFA members, expert consultants, and other interested parties, the research team led the research, design, and writing of these guides. The views expressed, while reflective of the wide range of perspectives, are our own.

We believe architects advance a more just society through the built environments they design. Our intention with these guides is to support architects who seek to practice equitably while harnessing the power of inclusive decision-making in their work. Translating these goals into reality can be difficult. Therefore, the guides share knowledge, generate discussion, deepen self-awareness, and support organizational discovery and change around discernible and nameable concepts, thereby advancing the architectural profession to become more equitable and inclusive, more effectively serving our communities and clients, and advancing justice. We understand that many of the topics are complex and are at times discussed in politically charged terms. While not ignoring public discourse, the premise of these guides is to provide our readers with frameworks for fully valuing the contributions of people who have identities different from theirs and for removing obstacles to their full engagement.

It was important to include in the guides both the individual level and the system level, since every individual, each firm, and the profession as a whole are located within a system of institutions that have structurally advantaged and disadvantaged people based on their identities. Additionally, U.S. architecture firms work within our country's dominant culture, which has characteristics and norms—individualism, belief in objectivity, desire for psychological comfort instead of challenging conversations—that mask and sustain inequality. At times these guides offer alternatives to dominant cultural norms, and in other instances we simply acknowledge how culture drives past and present patterns and perceptions. We offer the reader four different frames through which to understand the topics and issues: internalized (for the individual), interpersonal (working with others), institutional (within institutions and systems of power), and structural (between institutions and across society).<sup>3</sup> While readers may believe their agency is limited to what they can do for themselves or their firms, in reading these guides, additional pathways and personal responsibility and potential for influencing change may become apparent.

## AUDIENCE

The guides are intended for individuals, firms, and other organizations within the architectural community. At the time of writing, members of the architecture community are predominantly white men, so the guides generally speak to dominant culture. However, the intention of the guides is to emphasize belonging and welcoming for people from both dominant and nondominant cultures and to bridge between different cultural points of view. Though the antecedents to these guides (in particular, AIA research, the *Parlour Guides*, and the research done by Equity by Design) were primarily gender focused, as is the majority of current research, the AIA's intent was that the guides should define differences broadly and acknowledge that experiences of gender, race, and all the other categories of difference, even as they overlap. Therefore, the guides include the range of identities in the profession and address the importance of acknowledging, valuing, and benefiting from the differences between them. We emphasize data about people of color and women since the research on discrimination against these groups in the workplace is substantial and there is broad societal recognition of the persistent marginalization of Black and Indigenous people. At the same time, there is growing awareness and research on issues around other identities, such as gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, social class, age, and disability. In addition, the concept of intersectionality adds another dimension to our understanding of identity: it explains that identities are multifaceted and that these intersections result in different experiences for young Black women and older white women, for example.<sup>4</sup>

Each guide opens with an introduction that defines core topics and supports a shared understanding of them. It then presents information through several lenses to connect to readers at different stages of their careers and levels of development around these topics. Recognizing that people and groups can share similar goals but prefer different means to achieve them, we hope that the guides provide readers a resource to better learn and practice what moves them and their organizational culture forward in ways that support their values-, mission-, and vision-driven efforts.

## METHODOLOGY

In regular dialogue with the EQFA project management team, the researchers developed the outlines and drafts via a thorough review of industry-wide surveys, academic research, and qualitative perspectives from a diverse group of architects and others. The team consulted several experts on the professional workplace, including Joan Williams, founder of Women's Leadership Edge, and Anne Weisberg, formerly of the Families and Work Institute, who produced some of the resources cited in the guides. To gain a broader view of experiences and



needs related to equity in the profession, and for related quotes and stories, the research team interviewed almost one hundred people in-depth. Men and women, representing a range of race/ethnicities, ages, geographic locations, practice types, and career experiences, were asked about their own experiences with equity in the profession, changes they think are needed, and how the guides could be most useful. The team also held a workshop at the AIA 2018 Conference on Architecture during which draft content of the guides provided the basis for discussion and feedback.

Drafts were reviewed by the AIA staff, legal counsel, members of the EQFA committee, interviewees, focus groups from a component chapter (AIA Minnesota) and the University of Minnesota School of Architecture students, and experts in equity, diversity, and inclusion research and training. Feedback from reviewers helped to shape the tenor, level of detail, content, and graphic style and format of the guides.

### LANGUAGE AND PUNCTUATION

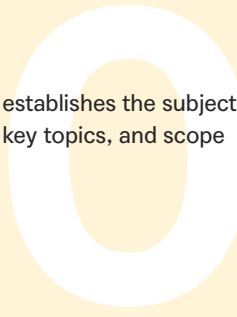
Terms and acronyms evolve and have come rapidly in and out of favor; in the guides we have chosen to use some of the most current terms at the time of writing. Many of these, such as *cisgender*, appear in the Glossary. Descriptors, including *people of color* / *BIPOC*, *ALANA*, *Black*, *African American*, *Asian American*, and *Latino/Latina/Latinx*, often emerge from within groups, as an expression of solidarity, but become used by out-groups without an understanding of or a regard for context, and are robbed of their political force. In addition, coining and using terms, such as *BIPOC*, that intermingle groups with vastly different histories and lived experiences is seen by many as a way of erasing distinctions, marginalizing those groups, and maintaining the dominance of the majority culture.

In the 2020 edition of the guides, we have followed the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook's guidance to capitalize *Black* and *Indigenous*; we agree with the AP's assessment that language has evolved and that these terms reflect not only skin color but a degree of shared culture and identity. On the other hand, the AP Stylebook does not capitalize *white*, nor do the guides.

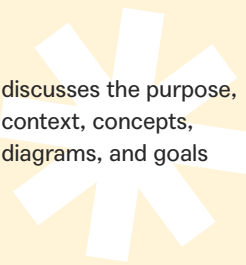
There has been long debate over whether certain racial terms, such as *black* or *indigenous people*, should be capitalized as proper nouns. W.E.B. DuBois led a campaign in the early 1900s to persuade the press to capitalize *Negro* stating that a lowercase n denoted disrespect and racism. Presently, legal scholar Kwame Anthony Appiah advocates for capitalizing both *Black* and *White*, as both are socially constructed, not natural, identities. Other style guides, including the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide, also call for names of racial and ethnic groups to be capitalized—

*Black*, *White*, *Indigenous People*, *Hispanic*, *Aboriginal*, etc., although “*Indigenous people*” when describing specific individuals. (The APA guide is silent on whether *brown*—a category of skin color that includes *Latino/Latina/Latinx*, *Arab*, and *South Asian people*—should be capitalized.)

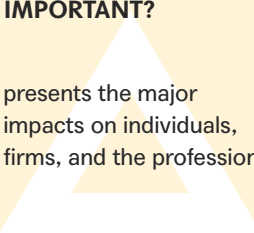
Still, the decision to capitalize *white* is contested. As referenced above, in June 2020, the AP changed its style guide, widely used throughout the journalism industry, to capitalize *Black*. The following month, after further deliberation, the AP decided not to capitalize *white*. Many, including the AP, argue that *white* doesn't merit capitalization, as doing so confers an undeserved dignity and would give credence to the beliefs of *white* supremacists, who do capitalize it; because *white* is merely a skin color, rather than a shared identity or culture; because *white* is a broad category that includes capitalized subgroups like *Italian American* and *Irish American*; or that the decision should not be made hand-in-hand with the decision to capitalize *Black* but each considered separately. Others state that lowercase *white* frames whiteness as a neutral standard and absolves *white* people from taking responsibility for eradicating injustice and inequality.<sup>5</sup>

**GUIDE COVER**


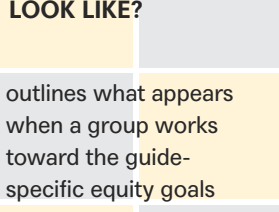
establishes the subject, key topics, and scope

**WHAT IS IT?**


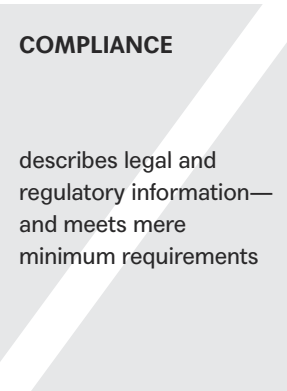
discusses the purpose, context, concepts, diagrams, and goals

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**


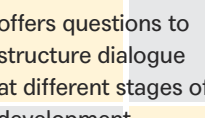
presents the major impacts on individuals, firms, and the profession

**WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?**


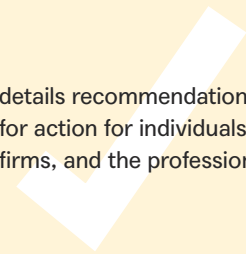
outlines what appears when a group works toward the guide-specific equity goals

**COMPLIANCE**



describes legal and regulatory information—and meets mere minimum requirements

**ASSESS**


offers questions to structure dialogue at different stages of development

**ACT**


details recommendations for action for individuals, firms, and the profession

**CONSIDER**


shares stories with questions to frame and prompt discussion

**RESOURCES**

collects selected books, articles, websites, and tools related to topic areas

**NOTES**

lists comments and citations for research sources

0.00 Chapter Section

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persper ferero omnis  
dolorei cienesinim

**NAVIGATION**

shows guide subject, section, and page number

**QUOTES**

highlight individual experiences and encourage reflection on related content

**HOW TO USE THE GUIDES**

The *Guides for Equitable Practice* include this introduction plus nine independent guides, which are structured consistently, plus a glossary of terms used in the guides.

Within each guide, the sections can be read in sequence or discretely and can be extracted or rearranged as needed.



# What is equitable practice?

Our profession progresses when we acknowledge, foreground, and change the structures and systems that place higher value on some people and certain skills over others. Calling out how these systems create barriers to participation, we can set goals and take actions to stop perpetuating patterns and norms we believe are harming our profession and limiting our ability to serve our clients and society. Equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice are essential terms in this discussion. Since people use the terms differently and sometimes interchangeably, we describe them here to establish shared meanings and interrelationships as you read and use the guides.

## EQUITY

Equity means conditions are level and impartial. Working to guarantee equitable treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement means identifying, acknowledging, and eliminating societal and professional barriers that have disadvantaged many groups in the past (also known as institutional or structural inequities based on group identities). A variety of solutions help identify and dismantle barriers to inclusion for people with different identities—there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Regarding the question of whether to focus on achieving equity or equality for people in the profession, the guides maintain that equity is necessary to acknowledge and solve problems with our current imperfect frameworks, and that equality is a limited view focused on creating ideal conditions for the present and future but that does not meet the additional needs of groups that have been disadvantaged in the past.

## DIVERSITY

In the workplace, diversity is neither inherently positive nor negative. It means that there is a mix of kinds of people present, and it may be a measure or outcome of equitable and just practices. It often implies that differences are categorized through identity markers, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, age, and disability, which have all been factors in marginalization (and have thus placed these categories in legally protected classes). People, of course, are much more than mere categories, and there are many characteristics that can make a difference in the workplace. It can be convenient to assume that identities are similar when they actually are not. For example, the general term *people of color* does not capture important differences between a Black person's experience compared to that of an Asian person. Additionally, identities intersect, with two or more identities equally or differently prominent or influential in one's self-perception or perception by others.

At times, “diversity of thought” is invoked to justify an otherwise-homogeneous group's composition; however, it is likely that a group of people who have the same identity markers will be more limited in the perspectives they can bring to finding creative solutions and how

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“The profession is limited by the people who are seeking to become engaged in it, the people who are getting architecture degrees. It's more important than ever that we work together in broadening that spectrum.”

Director, Business Owner,  
Sole Practitioner, and Educator,  
White, Female, 38

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well they can work with and serve others outside their group. On the other hand, if a diverse group of employees has not become proficient in using their differences and mutually adapt their thinking and behavior to reach shared goals, then the benefits of their diversity will be difficult to attain.

## INCLUSION

Inclusion in the workplace requires creating an environment in which everyone is welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. Like diversity, inclusion can be an outcome of using equitable and just practices. These guides stress that inclusion is more than simply being at the table—it means that those present at the table are able to equally contribute to discussions and decision-making and have the ability to help change systems. They can feel a sense of belonging. And, importantly, no one has more or less power because of a difference in identity.

Yet inclusion can be tricky. People who are different from the workplace norm may minimize or downplay their differences in order to get along within the group. The pressure to assimilate can put stress on them and limit the value their differences could bring to the work. Conversely, if people bring forward their differences and the group has not learned how to work effectively across differences, the resulting stress can lead to less successful outcomes. Inclusion cannot happen if a person must assimilate into the workplace culture, since the potential value of their differences is lost. Therefore, inclusion relies on mutual adaptation through which differences are embraced and negotiated. It is at this point that diversity can begin to drive superior outcomes.

## JUSTICE

Justice, or social justice, denotes the assurance of fair treatment; equal economic, political, and social rights; and actively removing barriers to create equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It also encompasses a repairing of past wrongs, transformative justice, and accountability. Design justice calls for architects and other design professionals to practice in ways that actively engage in challenging structural inequities embodied in or supported by the built environment.

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“We want to make architecture an equitable place of study and practice because of the diversity of the world and cities, and we want the same voices of our clients to be within our firms.”

Professor, Administrator, and Architect,  
Black, Female, 40s

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# Why is equitable practice important?

The cases to be made for equitable practice—moral, ethical, business, professional, and societal—all rely on bolstering practices that are inclusive of differences and equitable in approach, process, and effect. Each case may be compelling to different people and useful for motivating change within different audiences and situations. Consequently, understanding all of the cases can help build consensus in groups with many viewpoints.

**Moral case** · Equity, diversity, and inclusion are often embraced as “doing the right thing for the right reason.” This frame can be powerful in communicating the sincerity of a person’s or firm’s motives for equity work and also for spurring an individual or group toward gaining more insight into issues and learning how best to act. But the moral case on its own is not enough, and if not used within an equitable framework it can lead to biased decisions. Acknowledgment of how the structural inequities built into our society affect our moral reasoning also means taking much responsibility. For instance, does being antiracist mean actively engaging in countering these structures? How do we decide what is right? What do we do if we have to choose between two mutually exclusive things that both seem right? What if our dominant cultural preference for “either/or” choices obscures pathways for “both/and” solutions? Moral reasoning is difficult to extricate from social norms, and, therefore, sometimes even well-intentioned actions can lead to an inequitable behavior or policy.

**Ethical case** · The AIA Code of Ethics (5.101) specifically requires that members “treat their colleagues and employees with mutual respect, and provide an equitable working environment.” The ethical case for diversity and inclusion is based on the premise that members of the profession share values of fairness and justice and believe that anyone should have the opportunity to enter and work within the profession. If employees who hold

this belief perceive unfairness or discrimination, their loyalty to an organization diminishes. Similar negative effects can occur if broad statements about equity are not matched with action. On the other hand, when individuals perceive that their organization’s values are congruent with their own values and that it supports their well-being, they are more likely to want to be part of it and contribute to achieving equity, diversity, and inclusion goals.<sup>6</sup> It is the premise of these guides that making progress on equity, inclusion, and justice goals is a worthwhile endeavor benefiting all firms regardless of any individual firm’s progress or lack of progress on firm-specific diversity goals.

There is less consensus about the role of social justice—or of design justice—in architecture. A growing movement advocates that all architects and offices should directly confront inequities that are deeply embedded in systems and practices and acknowledge that these structural problems form the context for all types of offices. Accepting this premise means that, regardless of any individual or offices’ direct involvement with creating those systems, unless they are actively

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“When you employ or manage people, you have an inherent power over those people. When people are looking to you for their livelihood, you as an employer and a professional have a real responsibility to know what your role is and act appropriately. You have the welfare of people at the root of your professional practice.”

Firm Founder and Principal,  
White, Male, 60

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disassembling, resisting, or remaking them, they are perpetuating them. It follows, then, that the ethics of social justice in architecture and the built environment call for architecture professionals to think broadly about the impact of their work on communities and society.<sup>7</sup>

**Business case** • The business case for diversity is a powerful driver for firm leaders. First, because diversity has become valued both within and outside of the workplace, managing it poorly can be costly and lead to brand harm or boycotts. Second, businesses with personnel who reflect the diversity of their markets will have a competitive advantage in both marketing and quality of client service and community engagement. Third, harnessing the value of diversity is a clear strategy for improving the economic growth of a business by increasing organizational outcomes related to effectiveness, performance, and innovation, such as lowered costs, increased revenue, and greater creativity.

Framing a firm's commitment to diversity solely in economic terms or without equity and justice goals can open the door to behavior that favors profit over people and may signal to employees that diversity efforts are disingenuous.<sup>8</sup> Equity and commitment to social justice are increasingly recognized additions to brand value if well supported. However, if sympathetic statements of support for social-justice advocacy groups are not matched by business policies and actions, such sentiments can be a liability. Therefore, the business case for diversity depends on well-rounded, well-managed, inclusive, equitable practices. Employees, managers, and leaders need awareness, skills, and support, underpinned by an agreement among senior leaders that the benefits are worth the investment.

**Professional case** • The professional case rests on the belief that we should and can make our profession better through equity, diversity, and inclusion. If we do, we can expect a larger and more diverse pool of talent and can support more creativity in our work and thereby improve the quality of the built environment for more people, clarify the perception and value of the profession, spur economic growth, and increase the ability of the profession to address and adapt to new challenges.

**Societal case** • The impacts of inequitable practices within society are vast, and the contributing factors numerous, making it feel difficult to make changes as individuals or even as a profession. Even so, we do have the knowledge and power to take steps toward equity, diversity, and inclusion that bring immediate benefit for individuals and groups and will lead to greater positive institutional and structural change within and beyond our profession.

# Act

Here are some key ideas to help you get started building equity in architecture, for use as a reference to make connections between the more detailed information and recommendations outlined in each guide. Individuals, managers, firms, organizations—we are in this together!

## **KNOW YOUR MOTIVATION**

- Understand what best motivates you to make practice more inclusive, equitable, and just.
- Be aware of your own patterns and biases—we all have them.

## **CONSIDER PERSPECTIVES BEYOND YOUR OWN**

- Increase your capacity to acknowledge, value, and work effectively with people who are different from you.
- Try shifting your perspective or frame to test out thinking about issues in new ways.
- Avoid making assumptions about what others think, want, or are motivated by—ask and listen.
- Share stories, resources, and knowledge.

## **EQUIP YOURSELF AND OTHERS TO MAKE CHANGE**

- Learn what it takes to contribute to a positive workplace culture.
- Be an advocate for yourself and others.
- Be an ally to others.
- Commit to actively preventing harassment and discrimination through antiracist and antisexist practices.
- Know your rights and responsibilities as an individual and employer.



# Resources

## ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION

### **Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession – Kathryn H. Anthony (2001)**

Surveys and interviews of four hundred architects looking at factors that lead to discrimination and how lack of diversity hurts the professions. Recommendations for ways to change. A foundational text that remains relevant today.

### **Diversity in the Profession of Architecture, Executive Summary – AIA (2016)**

<http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-05/Diversity-DiversityinArchitecture.pdf>

### **Diversity in the Profession of Architecture, Key Findings – AIA (2015)**

<https://www.architecturalrecord.com/ext/resources/news/2016/03-Mar/AIA-Diversity-Survey/AIA-Diversity-Architecture-Survey-02.pdf>

Summary of perceptions of factors that affect the choice of architecture as a profession, job satisfaction, and retention.

### **Equity by Design Metrics: Key Findings from the 2016 Equity in Architecture Survey – Equity by Design (2016)**

<http://eqxdesign.com/blog/2017/2/14/eqxd-metrics-key-findings-from-the-2016-equity-in-architecture-survey>

### **Equity in Architecture Survey (2018)**

<http://eqxdesign.com/equity-in-architecture-survey-2018>

Summaries and analyses of findings from the most recent surveys, focusing on career dynamics (factors that affect perceptions and experiences throughout a career in architecture) and career pinch points (personal and professional milestones that affect career progression).

### **Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice – Parlour (2014)**

<http://www.archiparlour.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Guide0-Introduction2.pdf>

A set of eleven guides to equitable practice focusing on gender equality in architecture in Australia: 1) Pay Equity, 2) Long Hours, 3) Part-Time Work, 4) Flexibility, 5) Recruitment, 6) Career Progression, 7) Negotiation, 8) Career Break, 9) Leadership, 10) Mentoring, and 11) Registration.

### **Structural Inequality: Black Architects in the United States – Victoria Kaplan (2006)**

Voices of twenty Black architects describing lifelong discrimination, marginalization, and pervasive racism in the profession, as well as their ways of navigating. Book addresses larger structural issues in architecture that currently make disadvantage inevitable.

## DIVERSITY

### **American Association of People with Disabilities**

<https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/employment/>

The work of this advocacy organization includes information and resources on employment.

### **Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters – Vivian Hunt, Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle, Sara Prince, and Kevin Dolan – McKinsey (2020)**

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

Business case draws the connection between diversity, inclusion, performance, and increased profitability.

### **How to Get Men Involved with Gender Parity Initiatives – Elad N. Sherf and Subra Tangirala – HBR (2017)**

<https://hbr.org/2017/09/how-to-get-men-involved-with-gender-parity-initiatives>

Asserts that men avoid involvement in gender-parity efforts, although they have relevant experience and can benefit directly; encourages positive, supportive action. Broadly applicable to the creation of equity initiatives that include stakeholders beyond those most directly affected.

### **Only Skin Deep: Reexamining the Business Case for Diversity – Deloitte Point of View (2011)**

[https://www.ced.org/pdf/Deloitte\\_-\\_Only\\_Skin\\_Deep.pdf](https://www.ced.org/pdf/Deloitte_-_Only_Skin_Deep.pdf)

Aimed at organizations interested in the business case for diversity. Expands the demographic definition of diversity to include the diversity of ideas that comes from multiple backgrounds and experiences.

### Out and Equal Workplace Advocates

<http://www.outandequal.org>

Nonprofit dedicated to LGBTQ workplace equality.

**Fact sheet** · <http://outandequal.org/2017-workplace-equality-fact-sheet/>

**Best practices** · <http://outandequal.org/20-steps/>

### Why Diversity Matters – Catalyst (2013)

[http://www.catalyst.org/system/files/why\\_diversity\\_matters\\_catalyst\\_0.pdf](http://www.catalyst.org/system/files/why_diversity_matters_catalyst_0.pdf)

Summary of Catalyst diversity studies makes the business case for diversity: improving financial performance, leveraging talent, reflecting the marketplace, building reputation, and group performance.

## GENERAL RESOURCES

### Antiracism Resources

<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/antiracismresources>

Compilation of resources to support both Black, Indigenous, and other people of color and potential antiracism allies.

### Being Black in Corporate America – Center for Talent Innovation (2019)

[https://www.talentinnovation.org/\\_private/assets/BeingBlack-KeyFindings-CTI.pdf](https://www.talentinnovation.org/_private/assets/BeingBlack-KeyFindings-CTI.pdf)

Statistical data and analysis that provide the basis for understanding the specific challenges of Black professionals and ways to overcome them.

### Catalyst

<https://www.catalyst.org/>

Researches many topics related to equity, diversity, inclusion in general and in relation to specific underrepresented groups. Resources to help companies better understand the issues; case studies and tools to help with implementing changes.

### Center for WorkLife Law

<https://worklifelaw.org/>

Provides tools and resources around the topics of women's leadership, families, and bias. Note that a partnership between the AIA and Women's Leadership Edge allows all AIA members access to WLE materials through a portal on the AIA equity web page.

**Bias Interrupters** · <https://biasinterrupters.org/>

Offers many tool kits and worksheets for individuals and organizations to interrupt bias.

**Women's Leadership Edge** ·

<https://www.womensleadershipedge.org/>

Wide array of tools to help organizations support, advance, and retain women employees: parallels in engineering and law.

### CEOs Action for Diversity and Inclusion

<https://www.ceoaction.com/>

CEO members pledge to advance diversity and inclusion; actions taken by each company and the outcomes are catalogued.

### Deloitte

[https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/topics/value-of-diversity-and-inclusion.html?icid=left\\_diversity](https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/topics/value-of-diversity-and-inclusion.html?icid=left_diversity)

Variety of articles with perspectives and insights on business and leadership topics. The company was a pioneer in equitable practices.

### Gallup

<https://www.gallup.com/home.aspx>

Collection of tools and services to assist companies in data collection and analytics, including culture, employee engagement, and diversity.

### Harvard Business Review

<https://hbr.org/>

Succinct articles summarize research from a variety of sources on business topics, including equity, diversity, and inclusion.

### Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/>

General overview of implicit bias and comprehensive annual reviews of current research into implicit bias across many fields.

### Lean In

<https://leanin.org/>

Focused on empowering women to achieve their goals through women's peer groups, public awareness, and education.

### Making Commitments to Racial Justice Actionable – Rasha Diab, Thomas Ferrel, Beth Godbee, and Neil Simpkins – Across the Disciplines (2013)

<https://wac.colostate.edu/atd/race/diabetal.cfm>

Offers a framework for both self-work and work-with-others in the process of moving from consciousness to constructive antiracist action.

### Pew Research Center

<http://www.pewresearch.org/>

Research looks at issues, attitudes, and trends through a social science lens.

### Racial Equity Tools

[racialequitytools.org](http://racialequitytools.org)

Website designed to support individuals and groups interested in advancing racial justice; includes research, tools, curricula, and guidance.

**Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)**

<https://www.shrm.org/>

Thorough array of resources for any size employer; tools include legal compliance and a variety of human resources topics.

**White Supremacy Culture – Tema Okun – dRworks**

[https://www.dismantlingracism.org](https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf)

[/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun\\_-\\_white\\_sup\\_culture.pdf](https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf)

List of norms and standards that unconsciously reinforce white culture preferences; suggests alternate ways of thinking and working.

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## SECOND EDITION

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# Intercultural Competence

## KEY TOPICS

agent identity  
assimilation  
bridging  
capacity  
culture  
design justice  
discrimination  
dominant culture  
explicit bias  
implicit bias  
intercultural development  
intersectionality  
justice  
mindset  
nondominant culture  
norms  
only  
stereotype threat  
stereotypes  
target identity

SECOND EDITION  
PUBLISHED DECEMBER 2020

To increase the value of diversity in our profession, we must develop inclusive, equitable workplaces in which unbiased, culturally aware thoughts and actions guide our practice.

This guide outlines the importance of increasing intercultural competence and actively reducing bias in the U.S. architecture workplace against people with nondominant identities—such as people who are women, immigrants, people with disabilities, single, LGBTQIA+, young and old, less educated, or of certain races, ethnicities, religions, or socioeconomic classes—and recommends actions for doing so.



**AIA**

**W**



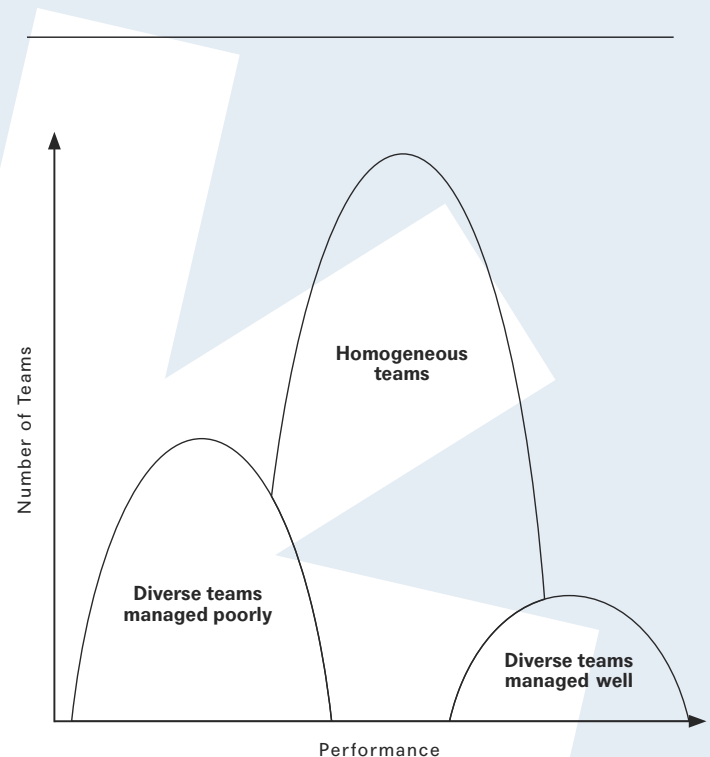
The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What is intercultural competence?

Increasingly, organizations are seeing the value of workplaces in which differences are recognized as strengths that contribute to reaching common goals. Actively developing inclusiveness is important to support people individually and collectively within the firm, and it also matters for how the firm and its employees connect with individuals and groups outside the firm.

Diversity in architecture—varying the identity mix of employees and leaders—is being encouraged to improve the profession by bringing different perspectives and ways of thinking into our work and by better reflecting clients and end users. Yet diversity on its own is only the presence of difference. Even when groups are diverse, the dominant culture still holds power (for example, a firm with half men and half women leaders does not guarantee that women's input is equally considered or influential). We do a disservice to our profession to call for diversity alone: the value of diversity comes in what is done with it. For differences to have a positive impact, people must have the skills to work across and gain from heterogeneity.

Mixed groups are more productive, creative, and innovative than homogeneous groups if they have developed the capacity to leverage what everyone has to offer. Without this ability, diversity in some situations may even be detrimental—mixed teams can clash, leading to the perception that they make things “harder” or “not



## TEAM PERFORMANCE AND DIVERSITY

Research has shown that well-managed homogeneous teams outperform poorly managed diverse teams, while well-managed diverse teams outstrip all others.<sup>1</sup>

worth it.” The important question in this context is: how can we best support diverse teams to work well together and thus improve results?

How do we build an equitable and inclusive environment where differences have a positive impact? And how might a homogeneous firm practice inclusiveness and equity? Developing intercultural competence—an individual's or group's ability to function effectively across cultures—is one way to address this need.<sup>2</sup> Intercultural competence is the capacity to shift perspective and behavior so as to bridge cultural differences in order to reach identified goals. Intercultural competence is not an innate ability



or a strength of certain personality types or group makeup, it is a developmental capacity. Just like learning a language, it is a skill that is developed over time with practice, by anyone who chooses to make the effort.

Because the ability to function across cultures is not generally taught and personal experience varies widely, people differ in their abilities to recognize and respond effectively to cultural differences and commonalities. According to a leading assessment tool for intercultural competence, the Intercultural Development Inventory, the developmental continuum spans mindsets from monocultural to intercultural. Each person's level of competence for engaging differences and commonalities can be improved through active practice.<sup>3</sup> Competence orientations (and what to practice) are divided into five stages:

- denial - one fails to see the presence of difference (practice noticing difference)
- polarization - one judges difference (find commonalities or pride)
- minimization - one de-emphasizes difference (practice self-awareness)
- acceptance - one deeply comprehends difference (practice action)
- adaptation - one has the capacity to effectively bridge differences (practice defining role, goal, core values)

Currently, a majority of people (about 60%) are in a transitional “minimization” mindset in which they can recognize differences but focus instead on commonalities to maintain their own or the dominant group's comfort or to survive as a nondominant group member within a dominant group. To learn to acknowledge, appreciate, and analyze differences, as well as commonalities, and to use them effectively toward identified goals—rather than shy away from differences—one needs to first develop self-awareness about their own culturally learned thoughts and behaviors. Then, one can begin to more deeply recognize and appreciate cultural differences with others in perceptions and practices and, with practice, be able to shift perspective and behavior in authentic and culturally appropriate ways according to context and goals.

Individuals who have lifelong experience as members of nondominant groups are usually already aware of, steeped in, and adept at adapting to the culture of others (i.e., dominant culture). Readers with dominant culture identities are the most likely to find the topics in this guide to be challenging. For these readers, it may be

“At its core it’s really about making sure people are having conversations with people who are different from them. You can teach tools, but unless people are actually meeting people and building those relationships, a tool is just a tool.”

Licensure Candidate and Recent Graduate,  
South Asian, Male, 26

difficult or uncomfortable to be asked to become more self-aware and build the ability to navigate difference. Facing this discomfort may mean acknowledging active or passive ways that dominant culture has benefited those who share the dominant culture identity.

### CULTURE

To build individual and group capacity to work effectively across people's differences, it is essential to understand culture. Culture is the shared patterns in a social group that determine appropriate behavior and help us make meaning of our environment. We work within and negotiate culture all the time, whether or not we are aware of it. Every group or organization has a dominant culture and subcultures. In white, middle-class, dominant culture in the U.S., certain patterns are the norm—either/or thinking over both/and thinking, individual leadership over groups, expedient decision-making over deliberation. For example, the dominant culture favors perfectionism and taking personal responsibility to avoid mistakes rather than seeing them as opportunities for growth or for celebrating what went well and what was learned.<sup>4</sup>

A common way of understanding culture is with the model of the “cultural iceberg.” Cultural aspects that are visible or explicit are represented by the part of the iceberg above water. Elements of explicit culture are things that are commonly easy to perceive, such as how people dress, the language they use, types of spaces they create, and types of food they eat. The unseen or implicit aspects of culture exist below the water line; they are what can sink the ship of a relationship or endeavor if they are not understood and can affect the ability to communicate and work toward shared goals.<sup>5</sup> Examples of implicit culture are subconscious and unconscious attitudes toward work roles (Are people of color and white women expected to be responsible for a firm's



work in equity, diversity, and inclusion? Are Black people really more suited to government and community work?), gender roles (Is it more appropriate for a man or woman to be a stay-at-home parent?), and work ethic (Is someone more committed if they work more hours?). (For more on the cultural iceberg and how to see culture in your team, group, or organization, refer to the *Workplace Culture* guide.)

## IDENTITY

In addition to culture, it is also important to understand identity and how it works. Everyone's identity—race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship status, social class, religion, age, abilities, and family roles—has multiple facets, both inherent and chosen. Identities can be clearly expressed or discerned (such as an obvious physical disability, perhaps, or conforming gender) or can be more internalized and difficult to see (such as sexual orientation or a hidden disability). Each person's multifaceted identities create complex variations and intersections. Intersectionality means that one identity facet does not stand alone. Identities intersect, so that, for example, Black is not a monolithic category; the experiences and perspectives of individual Black people are infused with all of their other identities and vice versa.

It is a natural tendency of the human brain to categorize experiences to make meaning of ourselves and our surroundings. Even though identities are social constructions, they are very real, given the value and meaning ascribed to the presence or absence of certain identity markers.

Context determines how we judge—make meaning—of identity markers. Identity markers, such as the color of someone's skin or their apparent gender, have been assigned different meanings and values in different cultural contexts. For example, some cultures consistently defer to the knowledge of elders, while others applaud youth and dismiss the contributions of those over a certain age. Whichever identity is the "norm" is considered the dominant identity of that culture; whichever is the minority, or "different," is considered the nondominant identity. Whether or not an aspect of our identity is dominant depends on our specific cultural situation. For example, if you are a thirty-year-old architect in a firm led by thirty-six-year-old partners, being young is a dominant identity. But if you are a thirty-year-old architect in a firm led by partners mostly over fifty, being young is a nondominant identity.

In addition to situationally impacted identity (dominant and nondominant), there are the concepts of target and agent identities. A *target identity* is a social-identity group that is discriminated against, marginalized, oppressed, or exploited by someone of the dominant culture or dominant culture's system of institutions. An *agent*

*identity* is an identity that has advantages by birth or acquisition and knowingly or unknowingly receives unfair benefit or privileges over members of target groups.<sup>6</sup> Target and agent identities are determined by large-scale contexts, such as history or nation, and therefore remain more constant across daily situations than dominant and nondominant ones. In broad cultural contexts, like the United States as a whole, systemic outcomes illustrate the preference for certain identities over others. For example, white men have preferred/agent identity, and women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color have target identities. A variety of examples show preference for cisgender white men (those who were designated as male at birth)—they are more likely to have higher salaries, more likely to have a job in the C-suite, are less likely to be sexually harassed—reflecting the myriad ways in which they are valued as "more than" others.

In terms of how target/agent and dominant/nondominant identity relate, first consider that in the United States, being African American is a target identity and in most architecture firms, it is also a nondominant identity. In a firm that is predominantly African American or led by African American leaders, being African American is the dominant identity group. Even so, because the firm practices in a white-dominated profession and society, being African American would remain a target identity both within and outside of the firm.

In the United States (and therefore in the U.S. architecture profession), target groups include women, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, poor or working-class people, LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, people without a college degree, and immigrants. Agent groups include men, white people, owning-class (having enough assets to pay basic bills without having to work),

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"I'm still white but I gave up that male privilege. I thought I was pretty open-minded, but sitting here on the other side watching, I missed all the cues. Not only transgender but any marginalized groups or nonwhite, middle-class groups and your female architects, really listen to them. Don't play lip service."

Firm Owner, White,  
Transgender Female, 60s

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heterosexual individuals, people without disabilities, people with a college degree, and U.S.-born citizens. Most people possess both target and agent identities. The combination of different identities creates what is called intersectionality. For example, a Black woman shares one aspect of her identity with white women and a different aspect with Black men, and both are target identities; however, Black women will not have all the same experiences or perspectives as Black men or white women. It is crucial to understand that most architects are white men who have an agent identity, whether or not they want it. Having agent identities does not necessarily mean that you knowingly or purposefully use our identity unfairly over members of target groups; nonetheless, you benefit from this privilege whether or not you are aware of it. Awareness of advantages that stem from agent identities is the first step in learning how to use one's identity to contribute to racial and social justice.

### BIAS

In the process of increasing intercultural capacity through expanded awareness and skills, culturally learned biases can be recognized, understood, addressed, and minimized. Bias can be explicit or implicit, and both occur at the level of the individual, group, and institution.

*Explicit bias* occurs when one is conscious of their prejudices and attitudes toward a certain group. For example, explicit negative bias could take the form of hate speech toward someone for their sexual orientation or could be overt institutional racism such as race-based housing discrimination.<sup>7</sup> People are more likely to express explicit bias when they perceive a threat to their well-being and may justify unfair treatment toward individuals of that group when they believe their bias to be valid. Social norms against prejudice help people consciously control behavior that expresses their explicit biases, but their biases may remain. In the case of explicit bias, emphasizing commonalities between groups or recognizing a common group identity that includes the target group can help reduce initial tension, and connecting with people from the judged group can begin to build trust. Yet it is important to then go beyond highlighting commonalities to see and appreciate differences between the groups.

*Implicit biases* are the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner, are activated involuntarily without awareness or intent, and can be either positive or negative.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, it is important to take responsibility for our implicit biases—once we know we may have them, they are no longer always unconscious. For example, imagine Frank, who explicitly believes that women and men are equally suited for careers outside the home. Despite his egalitarian belief, Frank might nevertheless implicitly associate women with the home

more than the workplace (due to dominant-culture messages, such as advertisements or women being paid less than men for their work), and this implicit association might result in biased behavior, such as trusting feedback from female coworkers less, hiring men over equally qualified women, or assigning more career-advancing projects to men.<sup>9</sup> Once Frank learns about bias, he is responsible for recognizing and interrupting it in his own decisions, but in the workplace, he should not need to manage it completely on his own—policies, protocols, and practices should provide him with support to help prevent biased decisions, check his decisions for bias, and provide an opportunity to make corrections.

Biases are conveyed to us by culture, politics, social settings, laws, major events, and mass media. The cumulative effect of these messages is the perpetuation of unchallenged inequalities, such as institutional racism, sexism, or ableism. Even those who are disadvantaged by these biases may perpetuate them because they are socially ingrained via the dominant culture. It can be easy to deny unintentional bias precisely because it is often invisible or goes unaddressed. However, when we acknowledge that we are all receiving messages about who is and is not “acceptable” or “competent,” we can begin to notice, name, pause, and reprogram how we receive that information. Going further, we can investigate our instincts to uncover where we learned certain values, thoughts, and behavior, and monitor, adjust, and improve how we share new messages that do not inadvertently reinforce dominant-culture frameworks. For instance, silence when issues of race come up in conversation can be seen as tacit support for the status quo and as an impediment to actively combating bias.

Many types of implicit bias are common in the workplace.<sup>10</sup> Some of them include:

- anchoring bias (the tendency to rely on the first observation or piece of information available)
- affinity bias (favoring people like ourselves)
- attribution bias (bias in evaluating reasons for your own and others' behaviors)
- blind spot (identifying biases in others but not in oneself)
- confirmation bias (seeking information that confirms pre-existing beliefs or assumptions)
- conformity bias (bias caused by peer pressure)
- halo effect (thinking everything about a person is good because you like that person)

- in-group bias (perceiving positively people who are similar to those in the group)
- out-group bias (perceiving negatively people who are different from those in the group)
- perception bias (inability to objectively judge members of certain groups because of stereotyping)

Bias can affect how we perceive all facets of identity: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical traits and ability, religion, geography, immigration status, family and marital status, education, socioeconomic class, accent and vocabulary, and introversion/extroversion. The impact of implicit bias can lead to inequity in almost every aspect of a business, from recruiting, hiring, onboarding, assignment opportunities, evaluation, promotion, compensation, and leadership composition to everyday behaviors and group culture.

To avoid biased outcomes, simply trying to be fair has limited effectiveness compared to first learning concrete, effective strategies to reduce the influence of bias and then adapting them to your work in the practice of architecture.<sup>11</sup> The likelihood that bias may influence thoughts and actions increases under several conditions:

- during heightened emotional states
- where and when there is ambiguity
- if social categories are easily recognizable
- when the effort put into thinking is low
- under pressured circumstances
- when there is a lack of feedback<sup>12</sup>

Feeling angry, for example, will increase one's biased judgments against stigmatized individuals, even if the emotion is not related to the situation.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, thoughtful, multifaceted strategies to address conscious and unconscious biases and build intercultural capacity create an environment in which individual and group attitudes and behaviors and institutionalized practices can be queried and improved.

Although everyone holds biases, the advantages experienced by people with agent identities mean that the bulk of responsibility for overcoming bias falls on them. When people with agent identities point out and correct the negative effects of bias, they lighten the mental and emotional load for people with target identities who regularly experience those effects.

People in dominant groups can learn about bias by reading, watching films and videos, actively noticing, and listening to others' experiences and perspectives. These are powerful tools that help those with agent identities to question and examine their assumptions about people or situations. Because bias is deeply embedded in and reinforced by culture, establishing new habits is key to making change. Those who habitually seek ways to see things through the eyes of others can build intercultural fluency that leads to change at many scales.

The following section, "Experiences and Perspectives in Architecture," offers opportunities to practice listening, questioning, and seeing from different perspectives. Even if it is uncomfortable, consider judiciously and respectfully asking questions of others who do not share your identity about their experiences working in the profession and what is important to them about those experiences. While listening, develop your skills in finding both the commonalities with and differences from your own experiences and identities. As your intercultural fluency improves, it will become clearer what actions you can take to be an ally to those with whom you do not share an identity and be a bridge for them to people who do. Established allies and partners can take action for positive change.

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**"People have to get comfortable with the uncomfortable and have the right facilitation approach, acknowledging where there is tension in the room. Set the stage at bias trainings, so people know they may hear things they don't like but are there to learn."**

**Principal and Owner,  
White, Female, 60**

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## EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES IN ARCHITECTURE

The following perspectives are responses to the questions: What stereotypes, bias, or discrimination do you anticipate, worry about, or have experienced in the architecture workplace and based on which of your identities? How does this expectation or experience affect you or cause you to alter your thinking or behavior?

“I have been very fortunate to have enjoyed and experienced firsthand all of the advantages bestowed on an educated, professional, white male. My workplace experience has been positive and always associated with my ability and experience, never tied to any other identifiers. It allows me to assume that those who meet me are evaluating me, my firm, and our work and are not considering any other factors in selecting or working with us.”

Firm Founder and Principal, White, Male, 60

“I am most concerned about being typecast by my race and gender in a way that diminishes my voice and experience as an individual with her own opinions. I wish that others (such as white males) would speak up more about issues related to gender and racial equity. I feel a responsibility to champion this cause, but I also care deeply about other things. If more white men would add their voices to equity issues, it would provide more space for minorities and women to spend time on other issues that are often more highly regarded by the academy, practice, and society at large.”

Professor, Administrator, and Architect,  
Black, Female, 40s

“The most significant biases toward me are for being female and Asian, and then sometimes looking young. When I sense that someone is engaging with me as if I were in my twenties, I mention that my son is in seventh grade. Or if I feel like they are reacting differently to me because I’m a woman, I might try to be less assertive—or more assertive. And then sometimes I just say, ‘Screw it. I’ll be whomever I want to be and you can take it or leave it.’”

Firm Owner, Asian, Female, 45

“I have not experienced any bias that I can remember. This causes me to go out of my way to be clear, open-minded, and generous to those who I work with, teach, or serve.”

Firm Owner and Principal, White, Female, 53

“I worry about white fragility and having the uncomfortable conversations. A quote from Dr. Robin DiAngelo: ‘Our socialization renders us racially illiterate.’ When you add a lack of humility to that illiteracy (because we don’t know what we don’t know), you get the breakdown we so often see when trying to engage white people in meaningful conversations about race.”

Principal and Owner, White, Female, 60

“I have experienced gender bias. It encourages me to empower others regardless of their demographic.”

CEO and Owner,  
White, Female, 59

“I have experienced racial and gender bias. I do more than needed (overcompensate) in terms of performance and limit social interactions to what is absolutely necessary.”

Educator, South Asian, Female, 50s

“I see an increase in bias against older generations, both male and female, and because of it, we are losing experienced individuals and the firm’s important legacy.”

Principal and Owner,  
White, Male, 45–50

“I am acutely aware that I have to excel at all times. I cannot have a bad day publicly.”

Managing Partner and Firm Owner,  
Black, Male, 46



“As a woman, I worry that when I speak up in meetings, it can be construed as being too mouthy. I am frequently interrupted, and my ideas are often wrongly attributed to the men in the room. When men speak up, they are seen as powerful contributors and leaders. Some of the ways this affects me is that I may hold back from sharing ideas/thoughts, and I have decided not to coauthor works with others (studies show women receive less credit for coauthored work than males), risking not seeming like a team player. I also worry that 1) as a wife/mother, it is assumed that I am not the primary breadwinner and thus do not need raises/promotions, 2) since my partner earns more than me, my career trajectory/earned income/impact potential is less important, and 3) I am judged on my accomplishments, whereas men are evaluated for their potential. The way this affects me is I tend to underestimate the value of my contributions, both in terms of appropriate earned income and effective execution of shared vision/objective.”

Business Owner, Sole Practitioner, and Educator,  
White, Female, Gen X

“I can’t think of any obvious incidents of bias or discrimination. For me, the incidents are more like microaggressions. After years and years, these add up along with my experiences outside the profession (which are much more obviously discriminatory).”

Architect, White, Male, Gay, 38

“I am concerned about bias based on my race, religion, and appearance (I have long locks). With low numbers for African American professionals, there are fewer opportunities for me and my peers. It makes me work from a position of disadvantage. I have to be very proactive and very hopeful that I am provided opportunities. It is an undue pressure and only through the intervention of allies can this be overcome. Navigating basic office politics devoid of racial bias is difficult enough, let alone having to self-advocate for chances to contribute and perform new roles. It makes me have to master my flaws and sharpen my skills above and beyond what is required of my peers in order to achieve a level playing ground.”

Senior Project Manager, Black, Male, 41

“Every day I worry about not being ‘good enough’ and being seen as inferior to my fellow male coworkers. It’s not so much a fear as it is a worry because I have experienced being seen as such. It’s usually about tone and choice of phrasing, for instance, ‘I need you to get this done by the end of the day, do you think you can handle it?’ And if not the choice of phrasing, it is definitely the tone that triggers these thoughts. Because I think that way, I have been known as the overachiever in many different settings due to trying to be the best and not be seen as inferior or less than.”

Architectural Designer,  
African American, Female, 25

“Being Native American, I experience the stereotypes that we all live in teepees, are not educated, live off the government, and don’t pay for health care and taxes. We need to educate others about who we are and that we can be traditional and live in an urban environment.”

Owner, Principal-in-Charge, and CEO,  
Native American, Female, 35–40

“Worrying about how you will be seen or treated can be detrimental to someone’s career development as it could lead to less participation or involvement if a workplace is perceived as noninclusive or apathetic. For example, I worry about gender stereotypes in situations if I’m not considered for a particular project or task or invited to meetings. I always try and consider if I am letting my own fear of discrimination impede me from stepping up.”

Architectural Associate, American Indian,  
Hispanic/Latina, Female, 27

“Even though English has always been my primary language, sometimes people struggle to understand my accent or (occasionally) assume that I am not fluent. While this doesn’t really stop me from achieving, sometimes people misunderstand what I say and I have to elaborate. I find myself having to restate or reword what I say. Sometimes, I spend a lot of energy thinking about how I should pronounce something or phrase something so that I can get my meaning across.”

Licensure Candidate and Recent Graduate,  
South Asian, Male, 26

# Why is intercultural competence important?

Bias—explicit or implicit—creates circumstances that impede working relationships, lead to exclusion, systemically contribute to perpetuating unfair advantages of certain groups, and limit the benefits of equity, diversity, and inclusion. As the architecture profession and its clientele become more diverse and design processes engage more stakeholders, individuals and firms will work in an array of contexts with different cultural patterns. Cultural awareness, or a lack of it, is shown to affect psychological, behavioral, and performance outcomes at all organizational levels.<sup>14</sup>

Dominant culture in the U.S. intersects with the architectural profession, reinforcing many aspects of the profession and making them particularly difficult to change. For example, the trope of the hero-architect is amplified by the white middle-class cultural preference for individuals over groups and emphasis on individual credentials and achievements. And criticism as an expected part of the discipline reinforces dominant cultural norms of skepticism and perfectionism over more supportive, collaborative styles that are often the norm in nondominant cultures. All of this is at odds with today's collaborative practices, desire for work-life balance, and the increasingly diverse backgrounds of practitioners.

## INDIVIDUALS

**Behavior** · Assumptions and biases of all kinds, both overt and subtle, affect the behavior of individuals and those around them. Bias-driven behaviors left unchecked will undermine other behaviors that are meant to be guided by decisions that are intentional, goal-directed, and values-aligned.

**Decisions** · Bias and cultural norms shape how groups determine what is appropriate, including defining the “right” decisions. Project teams who desire conformity or harmony may succumb to groupthink, with members less inclined to question one another or explore innovative alternatives.

**Power** · Bias reinforces inequitable power structures and dynamics between dominant and nondominant groups and contributes to an uneven playing field where gaps are created, reinforced, and amplified over time.

**Health** · The stresses of communication difficulties, misconceptions, and uncertainty negatively affect mental and physical health, with a disproportionate impact on nondominant members. Increasing intercultural competence can spread the discomfort fairly, help decrease emotional and physical exhaustion and burnout, and increase psychological well-being by lowering anxiety.

**Performance** · Building intercultural capacity supports optimism and the ability to regulate emotions (e.g., lower anxiety, frustration, contempt) when working across lines of differences, resulting in clearer communication, increased trust, and strong relationships for creative problem solving.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, a firm climate in which diversity is valued cues individuals to improve their performance in intercultural contexts.

**Networks** · Intercultural competence enhances the ability to connect more effectively with a broad range of colleagues, clients, and stakeholders and develop genuine friendships, authentic working relationships, and innovative cohorts. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide).

## FIRMS

**Recruitment and retention** · Intercultural competence is shown to increase effectiveness in meeting diversity and inclusion goals in recruiting and staffing.<sup>16</sup> When a firm's stated values of equity, diversity, and inclusion are consistent with workplace culture and behaviors, individuals are more likely to be attracted, stay, and recommend it to others. In addition to discrimination, harassment, or even violence, the accumulation of even small slights (termed microaggressions or subtle acts of exclusion, often resulting from implicit bias) contributes to talent leaving firms and the profession. (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide).

**Teamwork** · Interculturally competent teams exhibit high levels of cooperation within and beyond their group and are more likely to frequently share ideas with those who are culturally different.<sup>17</sup>

**Leveraging diverse teams** · Cultural differences have the potential to either hinder or help effective teamwork, team creativity, and performance. Diverse teams might take longer to arrive at solutions, especially initially, but their solutions may be more relevant and valuable when they build cultural patterns that incorporate a greater range of perspectives and ideas.<sup>18</sup> "Slow down to go fast."

**Leadership potential and effectiveness** · Intercultural competencies include many of the most valued leadership skills, such as providing a sense of safety and belonging, openness, encouraging learning and individual growth, empowering others, and maintaining high ethical standards.<sup>19</sup> A manager's cultural awareness can lead to more fruitful client and partner relationships.

**Markets** · Performance in working with diverse partners and clients improves when cultural awareness is higher firm-wide, and especially across management. Intercultural capacities and skills allow firms to work successfully with multiple types of clients in a variety of locations. Firms that take a stance on equity and social issues that is supported by specific, concrete actions are more credible than those that make broad philosophical statements of values that are only loosely reflected in their practices.

**Capacity for change** · Intercultural competence builds the capacity of individuals and groups to consistently, effectively, and authentically adapt, including the ability to shift perspectives and behaviors in order to drive toward shared goals.

## PROFESSION

**Community engagement** · For individuals with sufficient cultural self-awareness, a key method for increasing intercultural competence is to learn about diverse groups through sustained, interactive civic engagement. Not only can diverse local groups benefit from working with firms that are interculturally effective, but the firms, in turn, build capacity for tackling challenges with a broader scope of clients. (See the *Engaging Community* guide.)

**Quality of built environment** · The ability of our profession to reflect the cultural needs, values, and traditions of diverse groups in the practice of architecture is a key factor in improving the built environment for people across race, gender, class, and abilities. Increasingly, architects are positioned to call attention to differences in the quality of the built environments accessible to communities of color.

**Design justice** · Firms that are diverse and culturally competent and that engage in design justice can contribute to environmental, racial, and social justice and to the alleviation or elimination of, for example, homelessness, substandard housing, and health disparities.

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"Whenever I speak to women, what I tell them is that they don't have to act like a man, think like a man, behave like a man, design like a man to be in the profession. In fact, it's important they do not. The profession needs their perspectives because their perspectives are different. And for African Americans, Latinos, young people, it's important for the profession at large to embrace and capture their thinking to become more relevant and more needed by society."

Architect as Association Manager,  
White, Female, 60-ish

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# Our workplace improves intercultural competence when...

## AWARENESS

firm leaders model responsibility for recognizing and improving their attitudes and biases

individuals actively listen to each other

firm leaders and managers embrace individual differences, perspectives, and communication styles

people know and honor preferred names and pronouns

identity groups openly communicate how they are misunderstood or made to feel they do not belong

statements on social inequities are specifically tied to actions and practices

## DEVELOPMENT

firm leaders set the standards and expectations for noticing, addressing, and mitigating biases

the firm supports inclusive and balanced dialogue

diverse teams and their leaders receive support for holding complex conversations

employees set goals for increasing their capacity to navigate cross-culturally

the firm offers intercultural learning opportunities

marginalized employees and groups are appropriately reconnected to the organization

## COMPLIANCE

unlawful discrimination of any kind is not tolerated

business practices are analyzed for discrimination

firm leaders and members realize what constitutes microaggressions or subtle acts of exclusion, understand their damage, and commit to eliminating them

## INFLUENCE

communication patterns and discussions reflect multiple cultural perspectives

challenges are resolved using a variety of approaches

cultural differences are bridged by adapting strategies

individuals with different levels of intercultural competence cross-mentor

allies deeply understand the views of the people with identities different than their own

groups form to discuss and advocate for specific equity, diversity, and inclusion strategies

# Compliance

This section is intended to introduce you to important legal information regarding discrimination and suggestions for maintaining a discrimination-free workplace but is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

## DISCRIMINATION

Interactions that take place in the practice of architecture may be unethical or unlawful if they reflect intentional or unintentional discrimination. Reducing bias and increasing intercultural awareness and opportunities for open communication in the workplace can help prevent discrimination. All forms of discrimination—whether or not they meet legal standards of discrimination—have serious negative consequences for individuals and firms and undermine the ethical standards and ideals of our profession.

### UNDERSTAND THE LAW AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

In the United States, federal law prohibits discrimination in certain contexts against someone on the basis of sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), race, ethnicity, religion, nation of origin, age, disability, genetic information, or military service.

In the employment arena, both disparate treatment (intentional and generally directed at a specific individual or individuals) and disparate impact (unintentional) employment discrimination against these protected groups are prohibited.<sup>20</sup> Most states have additional laws prohibiting discrimination, which often include protected classes beyond those recognized at the federal level. Educational institutions are governed by Title IX, which prohibits discrimination in education based on gender and ensures equal opportunity on the basis of sex. Furthermore, all discrimination laws prohibit retaliation against employees who have engaged in “protected activity,” meaning that they have complained of actions they believe in good faith to be discriminatory, or they have supported another employee in pursuit of such a claim.

The following are some key details regarding employment discrimination and claims:

- When an employment policy or practice that appears to be neutral has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group, it is said to have disparate or adverse impact.
- Disparate impact can result from systemic discrimination (patterns of behavior, policies, or practices that are parts of structures of an organization that create or perpetuate disadvantages).
- The majority of individual employment-discrimination claims are brought under the disparate-treatment theory, which states that an adverse employment action (for example, a failure to hire, demotion, denial of promotion, or termination) is alleged to have been based, at least in part, on the employee’s membership in a protected class.
- Employee-selection procedures—especially testing, education requirements, physical requirements, and evaluations of work samples, as well as pay and promotion policies and practices—are typical topics for disparate-impact claims.
- At the federal level, an employee asserting a claim of discrimination must first “exhaust administrative remedies” before they can file a claim in court. This requires that the employee first file a charge of discrimination with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and obtain a right-to-sue letter. Some state discrimination laws have a similar exhaustion-of-remedies procedure, but many do not require this administrative step.
- Claims are usually decided based on the statistical analysis of data.
- If a policy or practice in question causes a disparate impact, the employer must show that it is both job related and consistent with business necessity.

- Retaliation claims are asserted in a large percentage of discrimination cases. Retaliation claims can be challenging for employers to defend—there is often an issue of whether the employee’s prior complaint played some role in the employer’s ultimate adverse employment decision.
- For the reason above, employers are strongly advised to carefully document their employment decisions and to take seriously all internal complaints by employees, thoroughly investigating and documenting the outcome of the investigation.

The AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2018) is explicit about discrimination:

- Canon I, Rule 1.401 states: “Members shall not engage in harassment or discrimination in their professional activities on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age, disability, caregiver status, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.”
- Canon V, Ethical Standard 5.1 states: “Professional Environment: Members should provide their associates and employees with a fair and equitable working environment, compensate them fairly, and facilitate their professional development.”
- Canon V, Rule 5.101 states: “Members shall treat their colleagues and employees with mutual respect, and provide an equitable working environment.”<sup>21</sup>

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“I was interested in a leadership position at a firm that was opening a new office. The only reason they could give me for not being selected was they couldn’t see me fitting in the back room, which was all men. (All the women on staff were administrative.) They were concerned they ‘wouldn’t be able to cuss,’ and it would change the dynamic if a woman were there. The partner called and was super-apologetic but said he couldn’t change the mindset of the leadership.”

Workplace Strategist,  
Asian, Female, 39

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# Assess

## AWARENESS

**Where is each person starting from with respect to bias and cultural self-awareness?** · Are employees willing to devote the time and resources to learn about bias and become aware of their own biases? · How are implicit and explicit attitudes affecting performance? · What psychometric tests and guidance are offered for employees geared toward individual development and team building? (See the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

**What biases and intercultural tendencies are dominant in your organization?** · What actions have you taken to highlight or correct them? · How do they demonstrate your firm's position on social issues? · Has your firm done an assessment of all employees' experiences of intercultural competence and bias in the organization? · How do implicit attitudes and common patterns of behavior affect the workplace? · Do allies deeply understand the point of view of those they seek to support?

## DEVELOPMENT

**How are you interrupting bias and building intercultural capacity?** · How does your firm determine what needs to be addressed and who gets to contribute? · What are your equity, diversity, and inclusion goals? · What metrics and benchmarks are used for evaluating change? · Do you form diverse project teams that accurately represent current and prospective client, user, and community perspectives? How do you communicate your commitment to these stakeholders?

**Is intercultural thinking developed as a framework?** · In addition to fostering an individual's awareness of the organizational culture (procedures, policies, norms, systems), is the firm supporting employees in increasing knowledge of the values, social-interaction norms, and patterns of different cultures? · Is everyone taught cultural perspective-taking skills (determining relevance of situational cues within cultural context) so that they can detect, analyze, value, and consider others' points of view? · Do people with agent identities understand the extra burden borne by those with target identities and actively assume responsibility?

## INFLUENCE

**Can employees shift their perspective and behavior in a variety of cultural contexts?** · What intercultural communication skills (imparting and receiving information cross-culturally) and culturally aware interpersonal skills (in showing respect and tact, negotiating with people, building relationships and rapport) are exhibited? · Does the workplace benefit from employees who can culturally adapt (maintaining positive relationships by modifying their own behavior to respect others' values or customs in the pursuit of clear goals)?

**How are you preparing team and firm leaders to respond to comments critical of an individual's or the firm's intercultural competence?** · Are firm leaders and employees sensitive to perceptions about equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture and actively working to improve them? · Is increased intercultural capacity cultivated at all levels? · Are the organizational vision and core values, as well as mutual interactions and idea exchange between peers and leaders, informed by cross-cultural learning and understanding? · What measurement and adjustment cycles are in place to guide evaluation and development?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

Everyone can contribute to disrupting historical cultural patterns that subjugate or exclude certain groups, creating a level playing field for marginalized professionals and increasing the capacity to bridge across differences.

### NOTICE AND NAME CULTURE AND BIAS

Awareness of cultural patterns that reinforce a hierarchy of human worth is the first step toward interrupting those patterns and acting in alignment with your values.

→ **Continue increasing your cultural self-awareness.**

Considering the intersection of your different identities, what parts are you most aware of, and how did you learn the significance of your identities? Is there a difference between the stated value of your identities and the behaviors and interests you may be expected to demonstrate? What parts of your identity are within or outside the dominant culture, and how has that led to advantages or disadvantages you have experienced? If you have experienced advantages, do you take on additional responsibilities to ease the burden on those who do not share your privilege?

→ **Learn how bias works,** where it occurs in the workplace and what its damaging effects are, and what your own biases are. Build your conscious awareness by taking assessments, such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).<sup>22</sup>

→ **Build relationships.** Deepening relationships with those who are different from you can help counter stereotypic associations in the mind and provide new information upon which to draw. At the same time, practice noticing and unpacking the impact of regularly espoused stereotypes.

→ **Be aware of stereotype threat,** i.e., the risk of unconsciously conforming to negative stereotypes about one's own group, especially at critical moments of performance, such as during interviews and presentations.<sup>23</sup>

→ **Become aware of your organization's current cultural patterns.**

What are the norms? How have particular perspectives and behaviors been assigned meaning? What has been deemed appropriate and inappropriate? Who decided and how? How are your current patterns serving or inhibiting your ability to get closer to your goals? (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.)

→ **Practice cocreating shared meaning.** The more diverse individual worldviews are, the more differences there are in values and filters, and this can make communication difficult.<sup>24</sup> For instance, if one person views the success of a project as completing a perfectly coordinated drawing set, another person as maintaining a cohesive and happy team, and yet another as achieving a certain margin of profit, agreeing on the goal of a project might be difficult. Think of communication as a process, and keep in mind that context greatly influences what the interaction means to each person, how the individual might react, and their preference for how to coordinate with others. Develop protocols with your colleagues to start a pattern of asking questions that deepen understanding and relationships.

→ **Become an attuned listener,** and attempt to understand the culturally rooted perspectives others may be using—slow down, notice, and unpack assumptions you may be making and ask questions to grasp the full picture of a situation without judgment. This takes practice!

→ **Actively consider multiple perspectives.** One method for this is D.I.V.E.: *Describe* (describe what you hear or see), *Interpret* (think of several interpretations for it), *Verify* (possibly ask others if your interpretations seem correct, but watch out for groupthink or dominant cultural perspectives that back up what you were already thinking), *Evaluate* (evaluate interpretations according to what you and others value).<sup>25</sup>

- **Seek feedback from colleagues or mentors** to gauge if your past behavior or performance has been perceived as fair, if you consistently and effectively bridge differences, and how you could improve.

### KNOW YOUR ROLE AND BE PROACTIVE

Understand your position within your group and how the role you play supports you in taking action to improve any situation. It is important to recognize your positional power (whether power over, power to, power with, or power from within,) as well as any power afforded by your identity. Both are real and have an impact on how you can be an effective agent for values and goal-driven change.

- **Learn to be effective in your communication and interactions.** Communicate thoughtfully and try to receive meaning as it was intended. On the other hand, when someone perceives a remark as racist, sexist, or offensive in any way, the speaker's intent matters far less than the impact on the receiver. Use the Platinum Rule: treat others the way they want to be treated.
- **Investigate your instincts—learn how to correct and interrupt your own biased thinking and actions.** Even our instincts were developed (often subconsciously or unconsciously) because of our experiences with cultural patterns: we have been told or shown what we are supposed to be afraid of, what to value, and what to expect. Practice changing your automatic reactions by making positive associations with nonmajority groups, negating stereotypes, and affirming counterstereotypes.<sup>26</sup> Engage with different role models, ideally through doing meaningful work together. In situations where a stereotype related to another person's identity might affect decisions, reduce negative bias by imagining or viewing images of admired people who have a similar identity.

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“Have the courage to say something if necessary. If a woman is being disrespected or not acknowledged, sometimes it just takes somebody to step up and say or do the right thing. Sometimes it's just about courage.”

Partner and Founder,  
White, Male, 48

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- **Learn when and how to interrupt bias when it is directed toward you and others** by engaging in role-playing scenarios with others. Advocates with dominant and/or agent identities can play an important role by acting as an ally. Interrupting bias, prejudice, and harassment can have a profound impact.
- **Develop conflict fluency.** Remember your goal throughout a situation, and focus on determining what it will take to manage the conflict rather than being right. When respective goals and multiple perspectives are understood, you are more likely to come up with different ways to approach both challenges and opportunities. Increase your capacity to sit with discomfort, and continually check your assumptions.
- **Learn how to frame bias interventions as constructive opportunities.** Aim to respond without embarrassing the person you are questioning and without damaging your own reputation or relationships in the group. By assuming the best intentions of everyone involved, you can act clearly, without judgment, and use the evidence available to support gentle but direct observations, questions, and suggestions.
- **Experiment with and assess bias interventions in order to improve** both individual effectiveness and team effectiveness. Observe and discuss how the intervention felt, what worked, and what you want to try differently. Develop an apology protocol to establish an agreed-upon way for receiving feedback and making amends.

### BE A GOOD MANAGER

Managers play an essential role in growing and maintaining a positive set of intercultural practices that are inclusive and fair for all employees. A myriad of different solutions and interventions can work to create an equitable workplace.

- **Cultivate protocols and patterns for staff to build practices of individually and collectively navigating discomfort** in an open and supportive atmosphere, which will allow uncomfortable but needed conversations to occur. To have courageous conversations, stay engaged, expect to experience discomfort, share your lived experience, and know that closure may not be reached.<sup>27</sup>
- **Foster multicultural teams to understand, incorporate, and leverage their differences** to perform at high levels. One method is for the team to use the framework of M.B.I.: *Map* (describe team member differences and their impacts), *Bridge* (communicate taking into account differences), *Integrate* (bring together and leverage differences).<sup>28</sup>



- **Create an open, dynamic process for making decisions** that impact others, since explicit dialogue can be more helpful than assuming shared meaning, values, and goals. Articulate your own goals and reasoning, and include other perspectives before committing to the decision, rather than after. This helps you evaluate your thought process and also provides others with a clear view on your logic and an opportunity to provide additional information. When receiving information that will be used for making decisions, take notes so that you are able to go back and review rather than rely on memory.
- **Learn to interrupt bias, especially in key situations** when bias consistently occurs and does damage to individuals and organizations. In general, do not exacerbate the impacts of bias due to stereotype threat by calling attention to demographic differences at critical moments, as doing so may adversely affect the performance of employees with nondominant identities.
- **Enforce agreed-upon meeting protocols**, since in meetings, people of color, women, and others from nondominant groups tend to be interrupted more often than cisgender white men. It is preferable to develop protocols together for what works best in your culture to foster inclusivity—consider having a no-interruption policy, sharing the agenda before the meeting, or assigning people specific parts to lead. After meetings, allow people to continue to contribute in case they were not able to do so during the meeting. Meet separately with anyone who consistently interrupts others to make them aware of the impact of their habit so they can change
- **Respect everyone's personal lives and responsibilities when determining job assignments**, without judging based on your personal views. Do not make assumptions about hours, assignments, or the type of work they can or want to do. Make sure no one is carrying an unequal burden of work, whether or not they have a spouse or children.
- **Discuss upcoming parenthood productively.** Congratulate the person, extend support, and talk through leave policies and transition plans. Do not communicate disapproval or judgment that expresses any personal hardship or inconvenience you or the business will have.
- **Assume that workers of all genders and sexual orientations will need to take parental and other types of leave** at any stage in their career, and work with firm leadership to make full, partial, or intermittent leaves available. Remember that different

people and groups caretake, parent, heal, and grieve differently. Discuss any concerns the employee has, and upon their return from leave, continue to offer career-advancing opportunities regularly. (There is a cultural pattern in the United States of undervaluing and penalizing women who become or are parents.)

- **Beware of tokenism**, and guard against competition between people with similar demographics for limited advancement options. Remember that changing the mix of people (diversifying) is just one part of the path toward equitable practice. It is sometimes assumed that the presence and contributions of any nondominant-culture hire will automatically fix things. However, just because someone is part of a nondominant cultural community does not mean that person is not subject to upholding dominant-culture perspectives, beliefs, and expectations, especially when they are the only member of that community present.
- **Seek to determine if bias might be involved when you perceive a stressed relationship between individuals.** An illustration: when people from underrepresented groups attain more advanced roles, they can have unfair expectations of others in the same underrepresented group. If they had to work harder and/or assimilate to dominant culture to advance, they may expect the same of those

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“I was the only woman in a coordination meeting, and when the agenda came to my scope of work, I spoke up to add information to the discussion. An older male turned to me and said, ‘When you’re fifty and a man, then you can speak.’ Everyone laughed but me. He came by my desk later and put his hand on my shoulder and said with a grin, ‘Hey, I was just joking, you know.’ He never asked me what I thought, or how I felt. In retrospect, I can see how occurrences like this have impacted my understanding of identity and career.”

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Architect and Educator,  
White, Female, 36

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working their way up. For example, women leaders or managers can sometimes be especially hard on other women, often because of their own career acculturation.<sup>29</sup>

- **Make sure that certain groups are not required to demonstrate greater loyalty** than others in order to be recognized or to advance.
- **Ensure that everyone receives the same level and quality of staff support**, since, at times, members of underrepresented groups receive less support. Give clear direction to staff and pay attention, investigate issues, and adjust any related systems as needed. (See the *Mentorship and Sponsorship* guide.)

### FIRMS

Engaged firms can effect change at a structural level. Bias is currently embedded in dominant cultural patterns, values, and frameworks, and bias will continue if the dominant culture is left unchanged. Therefore, in rebuilding new bias-minimizing structures through both individual and systemic actions, firms have the ability to put in place new cultural patterns, cocreated through equitable and inclusive practice, and significantly aid firm-wide and broader industry-wide change.

### UNDERSTAND YOUR INTERCULTURAL CAPACITY AND BIASES

Investigating all aspects of your organization for bias and identifying ways to increase intercultural capacity will reveal opportunities for change and support shared commitment toward achieving your equity, diversity, and inclusion goals. (See the *Measuring Progress* guide for details.)

- **Take a detailed inventory of your organization's patterns and practices**, coming to a shared understanding of your organization's current culture. (See the *Workplace Culture* and *Measuring Progress* guides.)
- **Conduct a review of your organization to screen for bias**, and look especially for signs of systemic bias impacting people of color and women. Include written and visual materials (such as your website, personnel policies, and benefits) in your review, since written information represents your organization's agreed-upon and stated rules, values, and practices.

- **Run regular audits of diversity, and administer climate surveys** or other tools to inventory how systemic barriers are impacting traditionally marginalized groups. (For review and audit suggestions, see the *Workplace Culture*, *Compensation*, and *Measuring Progress* guides.)
- **Hold focus groups with employees with nonmajority identities**. Ask what barriers they face at work, and gather suggestions for how to improve perceptions and behavior. Follow through with targeted actions, and adjust as you learn what works and what does not. If possible, consider hiring an expert for this work to ensure greater candidness.
- **Inquire into the impact of the firm's current decision-making processes**, and examine how they are in or out of alignment with your equity, diversity, and inclusion goals (e.g., ask who is present, who is absent, how is that determined, and if processes are used inconsistently). Look for sources of stress in decision-making processes. For example, when there is not enough time to make decisions, it is more likely that judgments will be biased because one cannot thoroughly review and process information.

### COMMUNICATE YOUR CULTURE

- **Cultivate a shared understanding of the organization's mission and core values**. Include the firm's commitment to intercultural capacity as integral to the firm's activities and decision-making.
- **Insert positive cues into your communications to reinforce an equitable culture**. Your firm's public stance on broader social and racial justice issues, if supported by genuine action, can help make internal conversations about and commitments to equity and inclusion more authentic and trustworthy. Make it clear that the organization values diversity and that it considers the capacity to bridge cultural differences to be a key leadership competency. This can help increase trust by signaling to nonmajority individuals that the firm is serious about including a myriad of voices, perspectives, and cultural practices.<sup>30</sup>
- **Increase the feeling of social belonging in the firm** by ensuring that all are welcomed and are receiving the cues they need to feel that it is genuine.<sup>31</sup>
- **Convey that nondominant groups are seen and valued** by reflecting diverse identity groups in your choice of, for example, art, food at meetings, inspirational stories, and room names.<sup>32</sup> (See the *Engaging Community* guide.)

- **Publicly recognize individuals** who, through their actions, demonstrate commitment to increasing the value of diversity and equitable practices.

## LEAD YOUR CULTURE

- **Increase the representation of nondominant groups** in your organization at all levels. Ensure that their roles and responsibilities are consequential, appropriately compensated, and not merely a token. (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.)
- **Consider the role of dominant-culture identities in your policies and practices.** Examine whether your firm perpetuates patterns that have historically disadvantaged some groups. For example, if events or approved days off are currently based on Christian holidays, find ways of recognizing dates that are significant to different cultural and ethnic groups to foster inclusion and engagement.
- **Actively remove barriers** for those with identities that have historically been excluded or disadvantaged. For example, create a communication path between affinity groups and firm leadership.
- **Create an inclusive workplace for transgender and gender-nonconforming employees.** Have established policies and practices relating to gender-identity and presentation-based discrimination, benefits access, record keeping, facilities access, dress codes, and self-identification. In addition to a pronoun policy, make it a norm to offer and ask for pronoun preferences rather than making assumptions based on how you perceive someone's appearance (such as in interviews and email signatures or during onboarding or introduction processes). Allow gender-inclusive pronouns, such as *they*, *them*, *theirs*, *ze*, *hir*, and *hirs*, as well as no pronouns for those who request you only use their name.<sup>33</sup>
- **Structure processes in which there is discretion in making decisions to flag and minimize bias** (e.g., candidate selection, hiring, role appointment, compensation, promotion, partnership). Establish and gain precommitment to criteria (to prevent them from being redefined based on desires or biases), remind people of the criteria, and hold decision-makers accountable.<sup>34</sup>
- **Provide intercultural learning opportunities** to foster respectful interactions with diverse groups of people, with time built in for individual and group reflection. Opportunities could include a lunch-time session with someone inside or outside the organization who is willing to share how their identities have impacted the way they view the world and how they are perceived and treated by others; visits to other spaces, places, and leaders with diverse identities and approaches; or a design collaboration sequence with people from different communities.
- **Offer effective training programs and coaching** in implicit bias and intercultural competence.<sup>35</sup> Have training on shared protocols in your firm for nondominant groups to bring feedback and for how your team commits to allyship across multiple lines of difference.
- **Develop the capacity of individual managers to listen and lead.** Create a peer-review process to provide feedback to managers on areas of bias related to important decision-making.
- **Appoint a person or group to check bias and champion intercultural capacity building** (including opportunities to learn, reflect, and try out new patterns of thinking and behaving). Provide protocols for how and when the firm would seek mediation or conflict-management expertise internally and externally. Be conscious of the identity of those tasked with this role and the impact on them, given the additional pressures they face. For example, people from target identity groups may be asked more often and/or find it harder to decline than others.

## PROFESSION

Increasing the inclusion and value of the diverse people and leaders in the profession requires a conscious, concerted approach. This section speaks to practitioners who are involved with architecture groups, societies, and organizations outside of their firm, such as schools and the AIA. Speaking up, making commitments, and following through on matters of social, racial, and environmental justice improves the profession and communities.

## KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING

- **Conduct focus groups** (ideally professionally facilitated) that span across organizations and types of practitioners to discuss common issues within the practice of architecture and architecture workplaces.
- **Bring in outside experts to share their knowledge and expertise** on bias and intercultural capacity building in the workplace.
- **Visit or reach out to professional groups in other locations and other professions** to ask for and offer new perspectives and strategies on issues important to your group, and attend conferences and other events that bring your group new relationships, learning, and practice.

- **Stay aware of issues and research** in bias and intercultural competence. Follow sources such as American Association of University Women (AAUW), Catalyst, Cook Ross, Cultural Intelligence Center, Great Place to Work Institute, *Harvard Business Review*, Kirwan Institute, Lean In, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and Women's Leadership Edge (WLE). Your AIA membership may provide you with additional access to these resources.

#### CHANGE PROFESSION-WIDE CULTURE AND BIAS

- **Call out the elephants in the room.** For every social inequity, there is a space, place, or environment that supports the perpetuation of injustice. Acknowledging the role of architecture and architects breaks the silence that makes the profession complicit. Whether the topic is gentrification or prisons, engaging in dialogue and seeking deeper understanding of the role, responsibilities, and limitations of our profession is crucial.
- **Practice equity, diversity, and inclusion in your own organization**—have staff and leadership reflect the broad constituency that the profession is striving for. Consider what qualifications and processes you have developed that can help you recruit and retain board or committee members who span a variety of differences.
- **Create opportunities for authentic relationship building** across a variety of identities. This is especially important for members of small firms who may feel more challenged in building a diverse staff.
- **Hire experts to hold workshops** about the impacts of ability, class, race, gender, and sexuality on bias and cultural patterns in our field, both historic and current. Reach leaders to speed up the process of systemic change.
- **Gather examples of proven practices for reducing bias, and develop concrete strategies** for catching and interrupting identity-driven bias, discrimination, harassment, and violence. Be explicit about the bias to be addressed and try to use profession-specific scenarios on how to do it step by step.
- **Recognize employers and individuals** through criteria, standards, awards, and publications for building intercultural capacity and minimizing bias in practice.
- **Publicly highlight a diverse range of types of work by practitioners with nonmajority identities**, such as architects of color, women, and those with disabilities. Organize a long-term plan to portray accurate, bias-free, nontokenizing, and equitable representations in the media.
- **Work with college and university architecture programs to support diversity and intercultural competence in the profession**, through initiatives like secondary-school outreach and early-career mentorship. Use inclusive, equitable practices when connecting with administrators, faculty, and students, and cultivate cultural and identity awareness in interactions between the academic and practice communities.

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“People have to get comfortable with the uncomfortable and have the right facilitation approach, acknowledging where there is tension in the room. Set the stage at bias trainings, so people know they may hear things they don’t like but are there to learn.”

Principal and Owner,  
White, Female, 60

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# Consider

## I SAW IT OVER AND OVER

I worked at a number of firms of varying sizes, primarily larger, from forty to five hundred. At larger firms, in my experience, there is very, very little diversity. The people of color who were hired were generally hired for clerical, receptionist, mailroom positions—that kind of stuff. I was only one of two Black people working at any given time at any firm that I worked at. There were very few Latino/Chicano folks, if any, and very few Asian architects.

So my experience in those situations was always: you feel like an outsider. You are not generally the first person picked for promotions and for opportunities. You're usually bypassed for somebody who is white and male, with a certain look. Even though that person may not know anything or do much work, that person is generally given credit for a lot of work that the team comes up with and lands on an upward track.

That sends a message to people who don't look like that particular young white male employee that that's the hierarchy. Even though you may be doing the work or be smarter or have better ideas, it doesn't matter. There's an understanding that this is the type of person who's going to advance in the profession and that you're supposed to be a cog in the wheel and let this person take the credit for whatever ideas and productivity come out of the teams. I saw that over and over again.



It was obvious to everybody that this is how things work in this industry. I knew I was going to have to start my own practice if I was going to live up to my fullest potential, that I wasn't going to get the opportunity to really demonstrate my ability at the level that I was capable of.

— Managing Partner and Firm Owner, Black, Male, 46



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DISCUSS:

- What is being seen “over and over”? What types of bias are at play in this story?
- What protocols could lead to consistent noticing and naming of how race, gender, and other identities are affecting work and work culture?
- What are ways to ensure an employee with a nonmajority identity is recognized as and feels like an equal?
- How could the recipients of privileged treatment respond in such situations?
- What are potential strategies for more accurately determining and rewarding contributions within teamwork?
- What is the broad systemic pattern at work here, and what could change to interrupt and dismantle it?



# Consider

## WHERE'S THE ARCHITECT?


I was an intern at a firm when I was in graduate school. It was a [minority-owned] firm. We were in a meeting, and we had engineers in our meeting. At one point the engineer said we needed coffee, and everyone looked at me and said, “Are you going to make us some coffee?” and I looked at them and said, “I don’t know how to make coffee.” They were shocked that I didn’t know how to make coffee. They thought my role was to be the secretary, take minutes, and wait on them. “I don’t drink coffee. But if you’d like I’ll get someone to make coffee.”

Culturally, when people look at me, they expect women in my culture to know how to cook. When I say, “I don’t know how to make coffee,” I get the “you’re worthless” kind of look. My parents never taught me how to make coffee, but give me something to build, I can do that. Now that I’m an architect, every time I go onto construction sites, I hear, “The architect’s here, the architect’s here. Where’s the architect?” They look at me, “But you’re a woman.” I think, “What do you expect an architect to look like?” I think they expect a male in all black, in a suit walking the construction site. They’re shocked and don’t know what to say. Even with other women, when I go to meetings they’ll say, “Where’s the architect?...But you’re a woman, and you’re so young.”

— Owner, Principal in Charge, and CEO, Native American, Female, 35–40

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DISCUSS:

- What are the roles of bias and intercultural competence in these scenarios?
  - Who is asked and expected to do office housework (e.g., taking minutes, cleaning up after meetings, planning parties) and why? How might doing office housework affect career progression, and how could it be handled fairly?
  - How can a person who is not recognized or respected as an architect by consultants, contractors, or clients, prepare and respond to unfair behavior or expectations? What can they do if their response does not break through someone's bias or spur a change?
  - What is the responsibility of other people in these situations? In what ways could an advocate help?
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# Consider

## SEEING FROM THE OTHER SIDE

I don't know if it's just our training or the male perspective of things, but having spent a couple decades with that white male privilege and then shifting—I'm still white but I gave up that male privilege—I thought I was pretty open-minded. But sitting here on the other side watching, I missed so many of the cues from other team members. Please really listen to everyone, not only transgenders, but any marginalized groups that are nonwhite, or not middle-class, and your female architects. Don't pay lip service. Just take a moment and ask, "Did I really say that? Or did I really just miss that?" We would get a lot more diversity and inclusion in the profession if we really valued everyone's voice. Unfortunately, our training is all we're going to be Howard Roark or Frank Lloyd Wright. It's a team sport, but we're not trained that way in school. We've got to get past that ego and listen. Even before I transitioned, at a larger firm, you'd say, "This is a team effort," and when I'd be leading the team they'd say, "John, you're doing a great job," but when I said "The team did a great job" it was seen as a sign of weakness. We must get past that to get people of all backgrounds to join the profession.

— Firm Owner, White, Transgender Female, 60s

I can't wrap my head around the fact that we still do this—that a woman would make a point and be dismissed and a man take the credit. I know it happens, and it blows my mind that there are people who still do that. I haven't worked on any all-male teams. A big part of the fact that our teams have had women—which is not intentional—is that my wife is my partner.

So from day one, we've been 50% women. Maybe it's subconscious: I know what my wife's been through to get where she is, and I've seen the difference in how contractors or clients treat her. There are a lot of people who assume that she's an interior designer. If it's blatant [chauvinism], we'll have a conversation because it's rude. If it's not intentional, I put her out in front of me. I make it overly clear that she is the leader. She *is* the leader. I defer to her. I ask her, make it clear, I turn to her and say, "This is a question for her," and redirect them. I can't remember a time when someone's been blatantly chauvinistic, but it's very clear that even some women clients treat us differently. That's what you're trying to change.

— Partner and Founder, White, Male, 48

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DISCUSS:

- In the first story, the speaker describes how she observed and experienced bias differently before and after her transition. What types of bias might people in your workplace be experiencing? Whatever your identity, what cues or clues about implicit and explicit bias might you be missing that could be impeding inclusivity and equity in your firm?
- In the second story, the speaker empathizes with his wife's experiences of bias on the job. What events have you witnessed or participated in that have helped you to empathize with someone else's experience of bias in the workplace?
- How does your firm listen to equity, diversity, and inclusion concerns? Whose concerns are being listened to and which individuals or groups are not being listened to? How could you improve your own listening skills to better understand what biases are occurring and when they occur in the workplace?
- In the second story, the speaker feels comfortable calling out bias directly or using actions that attempt to correct the behavior, such as communicating to a client that his wife is a leader. If you witness bias in the workplace, would you feel comfortable calling it out or trying to correct it? Why or why not? How might your own identity shape your comfort level with correcting bias? What strategies could you use to help overcome bias directed at others? What strategies could your firm use to correct bias in the workplace and between employees and clients?
- How might framing project success as a team effort rather than an individual effort reduce or possibly increase bias? What are some different communication strategies that you or firm leaders could use to eliminate bias when celebrating success?

# Consider

## **SPEAKING WHILE FEMALE**


I didn't feel the glass ceiling at the lower levels; people were thrilled to have me....I was the only woman leader in my local organization. They were so excited to have my help and perspective, but the higher I went, the more challenging it sometimes became. When I joined the [influential elected group of architectural leaders], I was thirty-eight, which was really young for the group.

I will never, ever forget this: I had spent the first several meetings sitting quietly because I was so nervous and intimidated. It was mostly men, fifty-two people. We were talking about the structure of the organization, and I said, "To me, it would make sense if the VPs were aligned with the main areas of responsibility in the organization." The then head of the organization said "that was the dumbest thing" he'd ever heard. Ten minutes later, another person, who was a man, said exactly the same thing, and it was accepted, voted on, and passed unanimously. It was appalling that the head of the organization would treat a group member that way. I had trained myself not to cry or show emotion; I cried for two hours in my hotel room. I was so angry and so hurt. The head of the organization called to apologize the next week, but he never really understood why it was a problem.

— Architect and Association Manager, White, Female, 60s

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DISCUSS:

- What biases are present in this story? Who is responsible?
  - Could this woman have advocated for herself in this situation? If so, how? What might have been the impact?
  - In what ways could other group members have intervened during or after the meeting? What could be done to help prevent a situation like this?
  - How might you intervene when you see an idea co-opted? Would you feel comfortable interrupting the situation by saying, "I've been thinking about that point ever since [name] said it; I'm glad you brought [her] idea up again"?
  - How can you better ensure that the perspectives of people with nondominant/target identities are sought, included, and valued in mixed-identity groups?
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# Consider

## SIMPLE-MINDED

I went to [a historically Black university], so the people who taught me architecture looked like me. Someone from your culture makes architecture a reality for you; you connect to it. It's not a foreign thing that you're never allowed to reach; it becomes attainable. A professor who joined the faculty came in with a different mindset. We were having crits, and he made a comment on a Latino guy's design that I will never forget. He said, "There's a difference between a simple idea and a simple-minded idea." We were all upset, and we complained, and the professor had to apologize to the students the next day. "Destroy to rebuild" doesn't play well in every community. People understanding cultural differences is another thing.

— Senior Project Manager, Black, Male, 41

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### DISCUSS:

- What cultural differences do you think are at play in this situation?
- What is the difference between a simple idea and a simple-minded idea? What stereotype does "simple-minded" evoke in American culture? Why would saying "simple-minded" be upsetting in this context?
- What does "destroy to rebuild" refer to in this story? How does it relate to dominant U.S. and architecture culture? What might be other cultural perspectives?
- How could the new professor have navigated this situation more effectively? What could he have said instead?
- How could this group determine critique protocols and practices for what is appropriate and communicate them to new reviewers?

# Resources

## INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND BIAS

### A Conversation on Race – New York Times (2017)

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/your-stories/conversations-on-race>

Series of videos features conversations with people of many different races to demonstrate a variety of experiences of people in the United States.

### Cultural Competence: The Nuts & Bolts of Diversity & Inclusion – Mercedes Martin and Billy Vaughn – Diversity Officer Magazine (2018)

<http://diversityofficermagazine.com/cultural-competence/cultural-competence-the-nuts-bolts-of-diversity-inclusion-2/>

General overview of cultural competence and what is required for effective training, including the framework for training and levels of cultural competence.

### Everyday Bias: Further Explorations into How the Unconscious Mind Shapes Our World at Work – Howard Ross – Cook Ross (2014)

[https://cookross.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/everyday\\_bias\\_thought\\_paper\\_021615\\_FINAL.pdf](https://cookross.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/everyday_bias_thought_paper_021615_FINAL.pdf)

Overview on what unconscious bias is, why it happens, and why it is important, including research that has been done on ways unconscious bias is prevalent in the workplace. The second half of the report contains ways to recognize and address unconscious bias.

### Glossary of Terms – Human Rights Campaign

[https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms?utm\\_source=GS&utm\\_medium=AD&utm\\_campaign=BPI-HRC-Grant&utm\\_content=276004739478&utm\\_term=gender%20RBFEiwApwLevTGFweh3IT3QNQOg7rtd2OBkowlTRUKfg\\_GsjJef00KfinStHpR-whoC-9cQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms?utm_source=GS&utm_medium=AD&utm_campaign=BPI-HRC-Grant&utm_content=276004739478&utm_term=gender%20RBFEiwApwLevTGFweh3IT3QNQOg7rtd2OBkowlTRUKfg_GsjJef00KfinStHpR-whoC-9cQAvD_BwE)

Provides terms and definitions to help guide conversations about gender identity and sexual orientation.

### Implicit Bias Review and Annual Reports – Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (2016)

<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/>

General overview of implicit bias and comprehensive annual reviews of current research across different fields. Includes research in assessment and mitigation.

### Racial and Ethnic Identity – American Psychological Association (2020)

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>

Up-to-date guide to terms for different racial and ethnic groups.

### White Supremacy Culture – Tema Okun – dRworks

[https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White\\_Supremacy\\_Culture\\_Okun.pdf](https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White_Supremacy_Culture_Okun.pdf)

Describes social norms of dominant, white U.S. culture and their antidotes.

## TOOLS AND TOOL KITS

### The 6-D Model of National Culture – Geert Hofstede

<https://geerthofstede.com/culture-geert-hofstede-gert-jan-hofstede/6d-model-of-national-culture/>

Six fundamental dimensions of cultural differences between nations. A useful framework for diagnosing difference and conflict and bridging gaps.

### Bias Interrupters – Center for Worklife Law

<https://biasinterrupters.org/>

Tool kits and worksheets for individuals and organizations to interrupt bias.

### Building Culturally Competent Organizations – University of Kansas

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culturally-competent-organizations/main>

Part of the Community Toolbox, a set of chapters that provide actionable steps to improve community-building skills. Chapter 27 focuses on cultural competence; section 7 describes what a culturally competent organization is and lists several ways to build cultural competence.

### Catalyst Resources

<https://www.catalyst.org/topics/unconscious-bias/>

A compendium of Catalyst articles, recordings, posts, and infographics.

#### → Be Inclusive Everyday

<http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/be-inclusive-every-day>

Series of infographics, overviews, and ways to combat unconscious bias.

#### → Flip the Script

<https://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/flip-script>

Offers alternatives to harmful language in the workplace that reinforces negative stereotypes and hampers individual authenticity. Recommended language regarding race and ethnicity, LGBTQ, women, and men.

#### → How to Combat Unconscious Bias

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/infographic-how-to-combat-unconscious-bias-as-a-leader-in-your-organization/>

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/infographic-how-to-combat-unconscious-bias-as-an-individual/>

One-page infographics for leaders and individuals.

#### → What Is Covering?

<https://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/what-covering>

How people attempt to combat and minimize the impact of negative bias on themselves.

#### → What Is Unconscious Bias?

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/infographic-what-is-unconscious-bias/>

Infographic covering basic definitions, characteristics, and survey data.

### Cognitive Bias Codex – John Manoogian III and Buster Benson (2017)

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Cognitive\\_bias\\_codex\\_en.svg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Cognitive_bias_codex_en.svg)

Complete (as of 2016) list of over 180 cognitive biases with links to information on each.

### Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege – University of Southern California (2017)

<https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/>

Group activities to facilitate discourse about diversity challenges: identity, power, and privilege.

### Implicit Association Tests – Project Implicit

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Numerous implicit association tests to help individuals assess their degree of implicit bias. Some categories include: race, gender, disability, sexuality.

### Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) – Mitchell Hammer

<https://idiinventory.com/>

Assessment of intercultural competence. Test evaluates mindsets on a scale from monocultural to intercultural: denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, adaptation.

### Overcoming Workplace Bias - Society for Human Resource Management

[membership required for access]

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/pages/overcoming-workplace-bias.aspx>

Broad collection of resources for ensuring equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination, prejudice, and bias.

# Notes

1. Poorly managed diverse teams suppress differences or have uncontrolled conflict. In well-managed teams, differences are nurtured and integrated into team processes. For more, see Joseph J. Distefano and Martha L. Maznevski, "Creating Value with Diverse Teams in Global Management," *Organizational Dynamics* 29, no. 1 (September 2000): 45–63.
2. Arthur L. Whaley and King E. Davis, "Cultural Competence and Evidence-based Practice in Mental Health Services: A Complementary Perspective," *American Psychology* 62, no. 6 (September 2007): 563–74.
3. Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), accessed September 27, 2018, <https://idiinventory.com/>.
4. Tema Okun, "White Supremacy Culture," dRworks, accessed August 2, 2020, [https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White\\_Supremacy\\_Culture\\_Okun.pdf](https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White_Supremacy_Culture_Okun.pdf).
5. Gary Weaver developed the iceberg analogy of culture in "Understanding and Coping with Cross-Cultural Adjustment Stress," in *Cross-Cultural Orientation: New Conceptualizations and Applications*, ed. R. M. Paige (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986). With reference to the work of Edward T. Hall's concept of visible and invisible culture in *Beyond Culture* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1976).
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# Workplace Culture

## KEY TOPICS

acculturation  
alignment  
assimilation  
climate  
culture change  
engagement  
firm structure  
goals  
harassment  
patterns  
policies  
practices  
protected class  
sexual harassment  
transparency

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Workplace culture affects every aspect of the work we do, and everyone is responsible for it. Questioning the assumption “that’s just how we do things” can bring change to ways of thinking and doing and, ultimately, to systems that advantage some individuals and groups while disadvantaging others.

This guide outlines the importance of understanding and managing workplace culture and offers strategies for how to start the process, establish goals, and bring about change.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee



# What is workplace culture?

Workplace culture is the tacit social order of an organization, the shared patterns that determine what is viewed as appropriate individual and group behavior and that help us make meaning of our collective environment. Its implicit and explicit systems define how an organization works in practice, regardless of written policy or stated intent. (For more on culture, see the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

The concept of workplace culture arose in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Today we recognize that workplaces are dynamic: they can both reflect and influence social change. What is understood as a workplace today is becoming more complex with the expanding number of physical and virtual environments in which people work, as well as the increase in the diverse types of people with often ambiguous or quickly changing roles.

Overall, the ideal workplace culture is both strong and healthy. Building a *strong* culture depends on two things: one, having a clear culture that everyone can articulate; two, continually aligning staff and processes with that culture. Building a *healthy* workplace culture depends on the engagement of its people, which deepens when diverse needs and thoughts are recognized, included, and relied on in decision-making. In addition, organizational values, expressed not only in words but more powerfully in behavior, underpin workplace culture.

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“Listen and be aware of your team because ‘it’s always been done this way’ is dangerous.”

Principal and Owner,  
White, Male, 45–50

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## ARCHITECTURE WORKPLACE CULTURE

There is no single ideal workplace culture: the place, people, and goals of every firm are different, and consequently, the culture of every firm is different. Since the ways in which equity, diversity, and inclusion are addressed within a workplace are directly tied to its goals and culture, it is vital for firm leaders and employees to both understand their goals and become more aware of current objective and subjective cultural patterns driving perception and behavior in their firm. They can build from the cultural iceberg model introduced in the *Intercultural Competence* guide, starting with what is easily seen above the surface (objective culture) and then exploring patterns that are most often developed and reinforced below the surface (subjective culture).

Many cultural elements are considered “just the way things are in architecture.” Discussing them in generalities can reinforce stereotypes that may not be positive or inclusive. As the profession begins to come to terms with the connection between its own culture and historical and present inequities in large-scale social structures, only by the examination of current dominant culture patterns as they are understood within the field will discourse advance. These patterns are formed and perpetuated by architectural education, publications, workplaces, professional groups, and the everyday language and behaviors of many architects.

Architectural culture contributes to the continued structural imbalances in American culture. Architecture culture is reinforced by societal culture. In the case of U.S. architecture firms, white, middle-class, dominant culture preferences exacerbate the model of the individual designer of objects, who has singular abilities. With awareness of how culture drives perceptions comes the responsibility to disrupt internal patterns within our culture and those to which we contribute in the larger society.<sup>2</sup>

Like the tip of the iceberg, patterns of objective dominant culture are relatively discernible: when asked to picture a stereotypical architect, many people will think of an affluent white male, dressed in black, perhaps with interesting glasses. When picturing an architecture workplace, people familiar with architecture may envision an open studio with workstations and a pinup space where people use words like fenestration and typology

and long hours are the norm. As in the submerged portion of the iceberg, patterns of subjective dominant architecture culture are numerous, varied, and difficult to discern: when asked what the architect's attitudes are toward service, some will answer "client driven" and others "society driven" or "environment driven." Or they may sense that one architect prefers control or individual influence more than teamwork or vice versa.

The examples of objective and subjective dominant culture in the *Architecture's Cultural Iceberg* diagram on the following page will differ from firm to firm, and there will be other cultural patterns that are specific to particular offices. For example, words used to describe firm types or practice areas (residential, boutique, minority owned, commercial, community based) suggest different cultures. Additional layers to the firm's culture include its location (urban, suburban, industrial, rural), the identity of the leaders, and the projects for which they are known.

The *Architecture's Cultural Iceberg* diagram is a starting point for recognizing and naming patterns and associated meanings within your current workplace practices. It can help to consider a point of view from outside the firm—what are you conveying, especially to people and communities with different identities, vantage points, and expectations from yours? What kind of culture would you expect from your firm's name and how it presents itself to the public? If we understand values as the essential principles that guide and mold decisions and behavior, what might your culture say about your values? It can also help to look at instances when an employee's behavior is deemed "inappropriate" and how that evaluation might change based on a different cultural expectation. (For additional questions, see the Assess section of this guide and the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

Workplace culture affects every way we think and act in relation to our work, which is why it is important to know what it is and then to manage it. Culture merits the same attention we give to core aspects of our business, such as design or accounting. As architects, we know that building and maintaining something requires the integration and coordination of many things. A workplace is no different, and attending to culture is like designing and operating a building with consideration of its inhabitants. And just as buildings are almost always built to be inhabited, they also contribute to the fabric of their surroundings and work within the climate and orientation of a site. A firm's workplace culture is set within political and social forces that cannot be ignored. Firms that believe their work and their culture can be shaped separately from deeply rooted social structures limit their relevance and may find themselves unable to shift with changing social needs.

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"One person I worked with, he had a colleague at another office, and they primarily worked on schools. In a rural district with a mostly conservative school board, he would actually change the inflection of his voice to sound less homosexual in those conservative spaces. I might possibly do it unconsciously too; that's a conscious decision to assimilate and to appear less in a way that might trigger a negative reaction."

Firm Owner, White, Cisgender,  
Gay, Male, 31 Years Old

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## O B J E C T I V E

*seen* shared culture—  
you can see or point to:

**artifacts we produce** · sketches, models, drawing sets  
**behaviors we value** · working long hours, moonlighting  
**common dress** · in black, with interesting glasses  
**language we often employ** · façade, massing, jury  
**narratives we share** · famous architects being odd or difficult  
**spaces we inhabit** · arrays of desks and usable wall surfaces, open storage for books and materials  
**tools we use** · X-Acto knife, modeling software, 3-D printer  
**traditions we continue** · pinups, competitions, awards

## S U B J E C T I V E

*unseen* shared culture—  
attitudes, expectations, stereotypes,  
assumptions about:

**age** · the young are inexhaustible and do not know very much; the middle aged gain responsibility after years of hard work and paying dues; older architects are repositories of knowledge to be respected but are technologically inept  
**authorship** · individuals are the creative force on projects; teamwork is used for production  
**autonomy** · architecture on its own has the power to change society through the objects we create; too much integration can compromise the designer's voice  
**body language** · attention is directed toward the artifacts of architectural representation in the room; projecting confidence and authority means you can work on job sites and with clients  
**class** · architects distinguish themselves from working-class laborers; privilege or lack thereof is not discussed  
**commitment** · staff members have to be available when needed; those who take advantage of flexible workplace options are less interested in advancement  
**education** · higher education is necessary and valued; status is attached to program and degree type  
**gender roles** · men are ambitious and assertive; women are supportive and nurturing and do interiors and landscape  
**money** · opportunity and achievement are more important than income; fees are too low to do good work and compensate well  
**objects** · designed artifact is lasting; people and uses are ephemeral  
**parenthood** · people without children can work late hours; fathers are dependable, mothers struggle  
**personality** · a person's personality determines their role; self-promotion is necessary to advance  
**race and ethnicity** · most architects are white; architects from underrepresented groups are different; people of color work on community and government projects  
**relationship to authority** · most architects follow rules; the avant-garde buck or undermine authority and power  
**roles** · architects are polymaths (artist, technologist, inventor, scientist); designers are visionaries; others are support  
**speaking** · the person with the most power talks the most; dialect, accent, and vocabulary signal status  
**types of work** · part-time work has lower status than full-time work; "domestic" or office-help tasks are done by women  
**work assignments** · interns should receive growth opportunities; work is assigned according to firm, not employee, needs; staff who can do detailed work should do production  
**ways of working** · different generations use different tools; heads go down for long periods to meet deadlines  
**work ethic** · good design takes much time and iteration; personal sacrifice is necessary at times during a project and career

### ARCHITECTURE'S CULTURAL ICEBERG

Examples of dominant culture's patterns or assumptions of what is "appropriate" in the architectural profession in the United States.

Notice which aspects of the example stereotypes could be limiting for some individuals or groups in a workplace setting and that might impede the ability of architects across identities to contribute and do their best work.

# Why is workplace culture important?

Workplace culture is fundamental to an organization, yet it is complex and must be understood and effectively managed for a business and its employees to thrive. In the process of managing workplace culture, issues and opportunities related to equity, diversity, and inclusion can be linked with specific aspects of the organization—e.g., structure, physical artifacts, communication, behavior—and can lead to actions that are aligned and consistent with both values and goals.

The impact of workplace culture is not only internal—it faces outward to clients and communities and shows up in how firms speak about and take action on larger social issues. (See the *Engaging Community* guide.)

## INDIVIDUALS

**Engagement** · Culture is “just the way we do things around here”; engagement is “how people feel about the way things work around here.” Engagement is key to a healthy culture, and a lack of engagement signals problems in the culture. Moreover, organizations with high engagement are more successful.<sup>3</sup>

**Trust** · Working effectively with others requires trust, and different people need different actions and activities in order to build and maintain that trust. Increasing trust increases psychological safety, shifting behavior from survival mode in which analytical reasoning shuts down to a “broaden-and-build” mode in which strategic thinking is stimulated.<sup>4</sup> High levels of trust are necessary for teams to meet ambitious goals.<sup>5</sup>

**Recruiting** · When culture is clearly aligned with business goals and values, it can attract the “right fit” and lead to high engagement, yet it is important to understand how to determine fit without perpetuating bias and exclusion. Instead of focusing on how an applicant fits into a firm’s current culture, evaluation might alternatively be based on how they would add to culture or how their demonstrated values align with the firm’s.<sup>6</sup> (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.)

**Productivity** · Positive workplace environments—caring, respectful, forgiving, inspiring, meaningful—support individual productivity. Negative environments, characterized by lack of transparency, trust, agency, teamwork, physical and psychological safety, reasonable work hours, health insurance, or job security, lead to stress, higher health-related costs, and disengagement, reflected in absenteeism, errors, and accidents.<sup>7</sup>

**Retention** · Alignment of an individual’s values with company values is a top predictor of an individual’s satisfaction with the workplace culture, while negative workplace culture leads to an almost 50% increase in voluntary turnover—and turnover costs (recruiting, training, lowered productivity, lost expertise, lowered morale, etc.) are high.<sup>8</sup> A cocreated inclusive culture means more loyal employees, aiding in retention. (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.)

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“As long as you have strong core values you’re striving for every day, your team will deliver. It’s not about the free ice cream and the ping-pong table, culture is about whether everybody knows what they’re doing and what they’re working for. It takes effort, not a quote on the wall.”

Principal and Owner,  
White, Male, 45–50

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## FIRMS

**Firm structure** • Structure and culture are interdependent: they develop in tandem, and changing one will affect the other.<sup>9</sup> Firm leaders can make positive and intentional changes to culture by considering their structure (e.g., hierarchical or horizontal) and vice versa. Maintaining consistency between the two ensures employees and clients will be able to adapt to change.

**Communication** • What management intends may not be what employees or outsiders perceive. Formal written and spoken materials and informal day-to-day language and behaviors in an office can either support or subvert a positive internal culture and affect how the firm is viewed externally. Dominant culture patterns that feel exclusionary or discriminatory to some people may be conveyed unintentionally; yet in a culture of openness and authenticity, such instances can present opportunities to build awareness and curiosity about underlying patterns and lead to better intentions and impacts.

One example of possible mismatches between intention and impact was firms' public responses to the Black Lives Matter cause in spring of 2020. Some firms' statements reflected philosophical support for antiracism but rang hollow either because firm demographics and project types, in the absence of any other evidence, suggest otherwise or because the statements were not supported by commitments to concrete, constructive action.

**Strategic planning** • "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."<sup>10</sup> The economic stability and growth of a business rely on good business strategies; however, strategy can only succeed if there is a culture in place that supports it. Culture is particularly important during times of change, such as leadership transition and succession.

**Risk** • Workplace cultures that lack basic ethics and legal compliance are at risk. Formal guidelines can help mitigate bad behavior, but they are often not enough to prevent or stop it. Policies and practices work best when they reflect a strong and healthy culture; otherwise, if they are not consistent with other messaging, they might be viewed as irrelevant, or even as obstacles, to achieving business goals.<sup>11</sup>

**Marketing** • A distinct culture with aligned branding gives a business competitive advantage in attracting and retaining employees and clients and helps increase operational efficiency and quality. If your brand purpose and goals are understood by employees, then they are able to reinforce them in their work.<sup>12</sup>

**Clients** • Clients will bring their own culturally informed biases, beliefs, and expectations to bear on the working relationships and outcomes of a project. Employees with greater intercultural awareness have greater capacity to bridge potential cultural differences between client and firm and evaluate choices that may impact the firm's values and practices.

## PROFESSION

**Architecture culture** • Increasing the ability of a larger number of firms and other groups in architecture to clearly see and manage their own cultures will help raise the bar for our collective architecture culture, increasing equity across the profession.

**Perception** • Identity and brand are quick to be damaged and slow to recover; therefore, for the success of each workplace and the profession as a whole, it is crucial to actively manage culture and how it is perceived internally and externally. An organization that is known for a culture of equitable inclusion will be better positioned to attract and retain talent with diverse experiences and identities and fulfill the needs of a range of clients and partners and the building industry.

**Equity and justice** • A profession that is responsible for the quality of the built environment needs workplace cultures that embrace and support equity and justice, so that their work contributes to healthy, sustainable, just communities.

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"I was born with birth defects, missing two fingers from each hand and two toes from each foot. It was a tough haul in the early days. I worked for firms that didn't want to put me in front of clients: we're in an image-driven business, and they didn't want to scare people off."

Principal and Owner, White, Male, Straight,  
Differently Abled, 60s

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# We have a strong and healthy workplace culture when...

## CLARITY

the workplace culture is deliberately shaped

100% of people in the organization can describe its culture

clients are aware of and can connect with the firm's values

firm leaders understand and are intentional about where they are able to lead and advocate effectively and where they are still learning

the time required for collaborative, inclusive practices is made a priority when setting workloads and schedules

## COMPLIANCE

risks are controlled to protect workers from harm, whether physical, emotional, or mental

the work environment is supportive, not hostile

harassment is not tolerated and has clear consequences

## ALIGNMENT

values and goals of the business align with the workplace culture

language and behaviors reinforce positive culture

onboarding and ongoing training teach how to be effective within the workplace

messaging from leaders, managers, human resources is consistent

leaders and employees work together to assess and guide culture

## TRUST

everyone is respected and interacts respectfully

everyone is heard when sharing their perspectives

some risk-taking is allowed

everyday mistakes are explored and corrected, not punished

problems are met with curiosity, not blame

work environment is engaging, not threatening

success is a win-win outcome

## ENGAGEMENT

social relationships are fostered

everyone takes responsibility for a positive culture

leaders model empathy, compassion, and justice

leaders are seen as fair and able to forgo self-interest

the meaningfulness of work is real and emphasized

retention is high, absenteeism is low

employee and client referrals are common



# Compliance

This section is intended to introduce you to important legal information regarding harassment and describes the mere minimum requirements. It is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

## HARASSMENT

Workplace harassment interferes with an individual's work performance, well-being, and career, creates a negative work environment, undermines equity goals, puts firms at legal risk, and damages our profession's reputation. Culturally, there is an increasing expectation in all workplaces that sexual and other forms of harassment be prohibited; legally, harassment based on an employee's membership in a protected class is prohibited. Creating and maintaining a workplace culture in which employees are empowered to speak up about issues of concern helps prevent harassment.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note that even though there have been laws and policies in place, the pervasive nature of sexual harassment in U.S. workplaces is of concern and necessitates digging into cultural practices and patterns, including exploring how gender and power impact what workplaces are like for women and feminine-presenting people. A significant percentage of architecture professionals, approximately two-thirds, report having experienced sexual harassment at work, on a jobsite, or in another location. Within this group, 85% of women and 25% of men indicate they have been harassed, yet only 31% reported it to HR or a manager and fewer than .05% filed a lawsuit or claim with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).<sup>14</sup> Even though the #MeToo movement is often portrayed in the media as a white and/or wealthy women's issue, it is not. It spans gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, household-income levels, disability, age, and regions. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)

While a one-time offensive touch, remark, or behavior might not violate federal or state laws, if left unaddressed, such behavior can lead to the creation of a hostile work environment. Regular workplace training is an important tool to help employers ensure safe and harassment-free workplaces by educating employees as to conduct

expectations and empowering them to raise concerns before a hostile environment is created. It is also important that firms develop ways to retain employees affected by harassment, appropriately address employees who harass, and provide support to all involved for healing, making amends, and rebuilding trust.

## UNDERSTAND THE LAW

Federal law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or military service, and most states have additional laws prohibiting discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination against any individual or group is unacceptable, but federal lawmakers, noticing patterns of discrimination, named groups that are legally protected against discrimination, called protected classes. The EEOC is the primary agency ensuring protection. (Educational institutions are governed by Title IX, which addresses equal opportunity in education, including the right of all students to be free from sexual violence and sexual harassment.) Unlawful harassment is a form of discrimination that can be directed at an individual based on any protected characteristic. The following are some key details regarding sexual (and other forms of) harassment and claims:

- Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct that is offensive, intimidating, or threatening and is directed at an individual or group because of their sex.
- There are two types of sexual harassment: "quid pro quo" (real or implied promises of preferential treatment for submitting to sexual conduct or threats of retribution for refusing to submit) and "hostile work environment" (interfering with one's ability to do their job due to unwelcome conduct of a threatening, offensive, or sexual nature that is directed at the individual).
- While quid pro quo harassment is necessarily sexual in nature, a hostile work environment is not limited to sexual harassment but can be created when offensive or intimidating conduct is directed at an individual or group of any protected class.

- A legally actionable hostile environment involves conduct that is either severe or pervasive. A severe incident could be a one-time event, such as an assault; pervasive harassment can occur as a result of less significant events that occur repeatedly over time. It can be difficult to determine when small acts, sometimes called microaggressions, rise to the level of persistent or pervasive enough to be considered harassment.
- Unlawful harassment can be physical (for example, physical conduct that is sexual in nature or gestures that are physically threatening), verbal (for example, derogatory or explicit comments of a sexual nature or that denigrate a racial or religious group), or visual (pictures, images, cartoons, posters).
- Unlawful harassment can occur between employees inside or outside of the physical work premises (such as during business travel or a visit to a client site) and during or outside of working hours (such as at an employer-sponsored social event or happy hour).
- Any individual who is connected to the employee's work environment can be considered a harasser (for example, other employees, clients, customers or vendors).
- Employers can be held liable for unlawful harassment committed by both employees and nonemployees (if an employee is impacted).
- Complainants are legally protected from retaliation when they raise harassment complaints in good faith.<sup>15</sup>

### **HAVE PREVENTION MEASURES SUPPORTED BY POLICY**

To focus on prevention, establish adequate knowledge and reporting processes.<sup>16</sup> Written policy is essential to help guide employee and manager actions and to help safeguard firms from harassment liability. But remember, harassment is illegal, and a firm can be held accountable whether or not it has an anti-harassment policy.

#### **Prevention**

- Be clear that harassment will not be tolerated and that there are clear consequences.
- Develop a written policy that is discussed with and signed by every employee.
- Have multiple pathways by which individuals can report incidents.
- Mandate recurrent, engaging training.
- Fully investigate claims, and have clear remediation.

#### **Policy**

- Define harassment to your employees.
- Prohibit harassment, with examples of how it occurs and how to respond.
- Outline disciplinary measures (e.g., written warning, coaching, demotion, termination).
- Communicate your commitment to confidentiality.

### **RESPOND TO VIOLATIONS**

Appropriate and timely responses help protect everyone involved in a harassment scenario. The best course of action, if available, is to use formal complaint procedures within the workplace; this ensures that employers have the opportunity to stop harassment and are held accountable. It can be difficult to speak up about harassment, but doing so will help workplace harassment come to be seen as a social issue rather than just an individual's problem.

#### **Individuals**

- If possible, address the situation immediately with the harasser; make it clear that you find the behavior unacceptable and that it must stop.
- Write down the incident with the date, time, a factual account, and names of any witnesses. (For details on how to document and report sexual harassment, see the Resources section of this guide.)
- Report the incident to your manager, your manager's supervisor, or to HR. (See also "Use the law" below.)
- If harassment continues, consider writing a letter to the harasser stating the facts of what has happened, how you object to their behavior, and what you want them to change; save a copy of the letter.

#### **Managers**

- Take all complaints and concerns seriously.
- Suspend judgment and remain neutral toward the complainant and respondent. (Many factors, such as physiology, culture, and power dynamics, can bring harassment complainants and respondents to act or speak in ways that are counter to behavior that you might personally expect.<sup>17</sup>)
- Report the incident to HR or a firm leader immediately.

- Take action to make the complainant's workplace safe and to prevent recurrent conduct or retaliation.

**Human Resources or Firm Leader**

- Advise the complainant and respondent of the situation's seriousness.
- Notify police if there is alleged criminal activity.
- Arrange an investigation and report the situation to company officials.
- Notify the complainant and respondent of actions to be taken and oversee the actions.

**USE THE LAW**

Unfortunately, those who are harassed cannot always depend on their workplaces to adequately address a harassment situation. Given the prevalence of small firms in the profession, many firms do not have a dedicated human-resources professional on staff or may not even have an anti-harassment policy. Such situations may result in an employee facing workplace harassment having no one from whom to seek redress. In some firms, a highly visible leader may be a harasser who, due to his or her power and control over the organization, is essentially immune from recourse. And even if there are anti-harassment policies in place, long working hours may lead to situations in which professional rules of behavior are transgressed. Finally, some firms are quick to apply a one-size-fits-all remedy to anyone accused of harassment, and they fail to fully investigate such claims to arrive at findings that are based on the unique facts, evidence, and witness credibility. It is important that alleged harassers be treated fairly and equitably in this process as well and that firms do not rush to judgment without fully and carefully investigating the allegations and reaching well-reasoned findings.

The following are options that employees subjected to workplace harassment can explore, even in the absence of workplace policies or procedures that effectively address such concerns:

- If your firm has fifteen or more employees, file a timely complaint with the EEOC.<sup>18</sup>
- Contact your state, county, and city agencies that enforce harassment laws, called Fair Employment Practices Agencies (FEPA), which often cover smaller-sized companies.<sup>19</sup>
- Check with local government for county and city human-rights agencies that have a complaint procedure for enforcing local discrimination ordinances.<sup>20</sup>
- File a complaint promptly following the discrimination or harassment, often within 180 days of the last discriminatory act. (Statutes of limitation vary per agency and jurisdiction.)
- Seek legal assistance from a private lawyer or a legal aid organization.<sup>21</sup>

# Assess

## CLARITY

**Can 100% of employees describe your workplace culture?** · Are there groups that cannot? · How does the organization communicate its culture? · Are there recognizable subcultures, and do they coexist or conflict? · Does employee conduct align with the organization's values and goals?

**How do you go beyond diversity to equity and justice in your workplace?** · Does your firm recruit for diversity, then onboard for sameness? · Are you asking people to assimilate (lose important differences) or acculturate (retain important differences) in relation to dominant-group thinking and behavior?

## TRUST

**What behaviors are rewarded?** · How are behaviors that contribute to a positive workplace culture supported, evaluated, and recognized, and do all employees have the opportunity to perform them? · Are there new behaviors that can be encouraged and rewarded? · Are people held equally accountable for their actions?

**How are issues managed?** · Is it safe for all employees to take risks, ask for help, and learn from mistakes? · Are problems communicated and discussed, and is there time and support offered to address and learn from them? · Do you have a culture where courageous conversations can take place, even when they are uncomfortable?

## POWER

**Who shapes culture in your workplace?** · Do the leaders' attitudes and behaviors align with the business strategy? · How do firm members influence justice externally, such as in government and regulatory agencies? · Are leaders equipped to lead? · How do people with different identities, experiences, and positions contribute to shaping the culture?

**Who benefits from the culture, and who is disadvantaged?** · Does the culture support everyone to do their best work? · Do organization and individual values mesh? · Does your culture prize some aspects of work (for example, design) over others, causing you to undervalue people who contribute in other areas?

## CONNECTIONS

**How do cultures of your clients affect your firm culture?** · Do you recognize the full range of cultural identities or workplace cultures of clients and end users? · Are you engaging their cultures effectively in all communications? · Do the needs and values of clients play a role in how teams are managed or individuals are treated? · If so, are those client needs and values congruent with your firm's culture?

**What other cultures impact your workplace culture?** · Is there a legacy culture at your firm that helps or hinders the goals for your future culture? · Which local, regional, and national communities and schools do you engage with? · Do you pay attention to generational and social changes and adapt to them? · What stances do you take with respect to larger social issues, and how do you enact them?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

Each person in a firm contributes to its culture and has the ability to reinforce or question it.

### KNOW THE CULTURE

Make culture a part of your exploration when seeking and starting a new job or when reconsidering your current one.

- **Identify employers with cultures that you can support.** Research their policies and discuss their culture in your interview and negotiation processes.
- **Read onboarding materials, and observe the “rituals” and unspoken rules** that keep the office running. Ask for clarification and tips from peers and supervisors to verify your assumptions, and ask for feedback on your cultural integration during your first months on the job.
- **Be aware of how your own values, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations relate** to the culture of your workplace. Similarly, learn about the cultures that other employees bring to work by asking questions and listening, and consider what their context means for them within the office culture. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

### SHAPE YOUR ROLE AND BE PROACTIVE

Your relationship to your firm culture is important for your career and for those connected to you.

- **Understand project, team, and firm goals** and how to collaborate with peers and superiors to achieve those goals. Have a plan in place for being a positive actor within your team and firm culture.
- **Engage in or initiate team activities** during the workday and outside of the office.
- **Look for opportunities for growth.** Consider forming an employee interest group around a topic that is important to you.<sup>22</sup> This, in turn, can contribute to your development as a leader in your firm.

→ **Look for things you can personally change.** Expand your ability to be a bridge, advocate, and bias interrupter, so that you can help others become more interculturally competent and just. Consider whether you may be contributing to an aspect of your firm’s culture that you believe is negative and, if so, work to correct it; when an issue is outside your control, make constructive suggestions rather than complaints.

→ **Understand your personal boundaries and your rights** according to office policies and employment law. When you see or experience something that runs counter to them, speak up. For example, if there is a culture of long work hours at your firm, assess what that means for you and how to navigate it. If you feel or see negative effects, discuss them with your supervisor, along with what changes can be made individually or firm-wide. Also, talk with other team members about work hours—how to guard against competition to put in the most number of hours and to value one another’s work on quality rather than hours put in.

→ **Consider finding a different work situation that might be a better fit** if there is an important aspect of your firm’s culture that significantly diverges from your values and seems immutable.

### BE A GOOD MANAGER

Managers—those with responsibility for others—are central in shaping and guiding culture in the workplace.

- **Create the conditions for physical and psychological safety** in your group. Encourage those you manage to speak up, and foster trust by becoming familiar with who they are and relating to them individually.
- **Know your own leadership style** and how it fits with your firm’s culture.



- **Stay connected**, and foster social connections within your team.
- **Show empathy** and make a sincere effort to help others, so that your team members will do the same.

### FIRMS

Each group of people that forms a workplace has the opportunity to produce a unique, robust, and positive culture. Whether a firm is just starting out or is decades into its practice, the shared patterns that determine appropriate behavior within the group can support or hinder business goals.

### UNDERSTAND YOUR CULTURE

Every step in managing your firm culture involves knowing what it is and how it works.

- **Outline your firm's mission and purpose**, including values, goals, and strategies, and how they align. Fill in this sentence to check for misalignment or mixed messages: "We *say* that \_\_\_\_, but when we \_\_\_\_, or when we don't \_\_\_\_, we're conveying \_\_\_\_ instead."
- **Ensure that senior leaders have a common understanding** of the existing company culture and what they want it to be in the future. Use structured discussion, a culture-alignment tool, or a consultant to measure the degree of alignment between individual leadership styles and organizational culture to determine the impacts leaders have.
- **Observe your firm structure**—the way your firm organizes and coordinates its work—and how it supports (or could better support) worker engagement and satisfaction and design and profitability goals.<sup>23</sup> Consider ownership and management structures (how decisions are made, who the gatekeepers are, how communication happens), as well as team structures (studio, matrix, market sector, gig, distributed) and the project delivery models you employ.
- **Look for unintended consequences**—for example, notice if there are subgroups that are linked to higher or lower performance. Learn the career pinch points for different demographic groups, and evaluate what your firm structure and culture do to exacerbate or alleviate problems. (Pinch points in architecture include finding the right job fit, gaining licensure, caregiving, reduced paths forward at certain personal and career crossroads, transitions to leadership, and retirement.<sup>24</sup>) (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)
- **Assess how your organization's context** (time, place, market) affects your culture, including the norms and values of your local/regional/national cultures, client cultures, or a legacy culture.
- **Learn from your employees.** Organize open discussions, and welcome anonymous feedback and suggestions for change. Conduct exit interviews using a reputable party outside the firm, if possible, to foster candidness.<sup>25</sup> Appreciate the emotional labor it takes to offer this feedback, and do not assume that everyone will participate.
- **Assume the burden** of educating yourself about points of view that are less familiar or less comfortable. Do not rely on employees with target identities to educate others, especially if they are an "only," but give them support if they are willing to offer their insight and guidance.
- **Administer culture surveys**, which focus on values, and climate surveys, which focus on attitudes and perceptions. Cover a variety of areas, such as staff roles, project management, transparency, sense of belonging, and quality of collaboration in teams and with clients.
- **Create and administer a regular review process.**
- **Incorporate metrics into feedback loops** to enable everyone to integrate the firm's values into their performance goals.
- **Consider hiring a third-party consultant** to evaluate your firm culture and structure.

### COMMUNICATE YOUR CULTURE

Everyone needs to understand the core values and accepted behaviors, best practices, and activities of their workplace. Have multiple ways for employees to learn about your firm's culture and changes.

- **Communicate your culture formally and informally.** Provide an onboarding program, an employee handbook, and mentoring. (See the *Recruitment and Retention* and *Mentorship and Sponsorship* guides.) Share information and firm stories in break areas, newsletters, and social events.
- **Help managers continually orient to the firm's culture**, especially when change is occurring and when seeking effective ways to lead employees in aligning with business goals.
- **Provide opportunities for employees to celebrate** aspects of your firm culture.



- **Audit messaging regularly** to check for bias-free and inclusive language.
- **Make sure that your public statements are on target and credible.** When taking a stand on an issue or communicating in a crisis, take the time to test whether your statement is more than empty words. Consider what steps and commitments you will make (or have made) to back it up, and be sure that they are believable.

## LEAD YOUR CULTURE

Workplace culture is affected by a variety of factors, but it is shaped by firm leaders establishing accepted attitudes and behaviors.

- **Tackle the problems and opportunities you see in your firm culture**—poor practices will not right themselves. Change can be uncomfortable, especially for those who have had a strong hand in forming the firm. Seek opportunities to hold up a mirror in order to understand if firm patterns reflect one's personal ways of thinking or doing and if they currently support the goals and work of the larger team.
- **Think holistically** about how every strategy, decision, or communication relates to your culture; be ready to adjust one to maintain alignment with another. Be careful to look at impacts across every group in the firm—what benefits one person or group might come at the expense of another. How your leaders respond externally to current events and issues can have more impact on employees than you realize.
- **Focus on improving practices that make it difficult for underrepresented groups** to enter and sustain employment within the profession or have an equal voice and equal opportunities for advancement—practices such as long work hours and assignment of office tasks and part-time or flexible work (which have significantly greater impact on women at certain points in their careers). Also look at norms around licensure, pay, mentorship/sponsorship, promotion, and leadership that affect all underrepresented groups in architecture.
- **Know that good management is key.** Have the right metrics in place to hire or develop skilled managers, and give them the training and resources they need to lead great teams.
- **Have more diverse leadership** to help set inclusive workplace culture from the top. Your culture guides who becomes leaders, and it is likely that leaders will perpetuate the culture in which they advanced. Therefore, to robustly build diversity where it is lacking, change must take place in the culture itself rather than by changing the behaviors of the more diverse individuals you wish to promote. This transformation is most successful when the top leaders agree on the need for change and hold themselves accountable for progress.<sup>26</sup>
- **Empower culture champions** or ambassadors to demonstrate by example what it looks like to embody the firm's culture or desired culture—based on how they do their work and balance their professional and personal life—and highlight the contributions of employees who help to create a positive cultural climate.

## FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is a key factor in a healthy workplace culture.<sup>27</sup> Creating a culture of engagement begins with leadership and is reinforced through open and consistent communication. There are concrete ways to support employee engagement and improve performance based on treating employees as active participants in their (and the company's) future and in supporting them to perform their best. (For more on engagement, see the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.)

- **Provide a structured onboarding process**, ideally for six months, to integrate new employees into the firm and reduce high turnover, which detracts from office culture.<sup>28</sup>
- **Clarify work expectations**, and outline how each part of the work is meaningful and relates to advancement. Acknowledge employee accomplishments, both professional and personal. Share the company's goals and achievements with employees, and invite employees to participate in discussing the firm's future strategy.
- **Provide employees with the resources needed** to do their work, and provide ongoing feedback, mentorship, and professional development opportunities. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)
- **Support social relationships** in the workplace. In addition to all-team meetings, plan different kinds of social events that resonate with different people; ask those who do not typically attend what they would like to do as a group. Consider what spaces in the office foster socializing and how they might attract more participants. Create wellness challenges or other group activities.<sup>29</sup>
- **Encourage managers to establish connections** with new employees from day one, and hold managers accountable for their team's engagement and how it relates to group performance.<sup>30</sup>

## PROFESSION

No individual, firm, or school can enact profession-wide cultural shifts on its own, and no firm's culture exists in isolation. Local, regional, and national professional organizations, including AIA chapters, have an important role to play and are vehicles for understanding, communicating, and advocating for positive workplace cultures. Social movements, such as Black Lives Matter, Global Climate Strike, and #MeToo, touch all aspects of society and built environments. By getting involved, individuals seeking to support change in their workplace can broaden their lens and have their voice heard beyond the boundaries of one firm or profession.

### KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING

Factors that affect workplace culture and ways of looking at it are continually expanding and changing.

- **Stay attuned** to important social issues, thought, and research that relate to the profession, including what is published in journals and through groups such as the AIA, American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), Equity by Design (EQxD), National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), National Organization of Minority Architecture Students (NOMAS), and the Architecture Lobby.
- **Look for sources that offer perspectives different from your own experience**, attend professional events that are outside of your comfort zone, and ask people about their experiences.
- **Conduct your own research** through surveys or case studies on a topic important to your group or community, and share it with others.

### SUPPORT POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE PROFESSION-WIDE

Every contribution to local and national questions can make an impact.

- **Seek out ways to work with and through national organizations**, bringing change from within and building upon existing infrastructure.
- **Discuss, write about, and present** on topics important to your group to open up the conversation for new ideas and joint efforts both within the group and with a broader audience.

- **Offer professional development**, creative opportunities, and social events related to current topics like social justice, flexible work, harassment, and gender identity in the workplace.
- **Connect with schools, faculty, and students to model and help instill positive workplace culture practices**, such as work hours and expectations. Share what to be aware of when entering the workforce or engaging with practitioners and firms to better prepare everyone to be active and effective in culture change.<sup>31</sup>

### LOOK BEYOND ARCHITECTURE

Learn what issues and problem-solving approaches are occurring in other professions and industries, and ask what might be relevant for improving the current and future practice of architecture. Workplace frameworks are continually evolving as societies change—use a mix of resources to stay connected to the conversations.

- **Pay attention to social movements, such as environmental justice, fair trade, or disability rights**, and educate yourself on the underlying issues and history to help the architectural profession advance in understanding and constructive action.
- **Bring in a diverse range of outside experts** to share their knowledge on workplace issues, and discuss your thoughts afterward as a group on possible impacts and whether or not action should be taken.
- **Follow business-oriented sources**, such as *Harvard Business Review*, Gallup, Forbes, Deloitte, McKinsey, Pew Research Center, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Catalyst, Great Place to Work Institute, Lean In, and Women's Leadership Edge.
- **Be aware of discussions and resources developed by other parts of the building industry** through groups like the AIGA, the professional association for design, Associated General Contractors (AGC), Construction Owners Association of America (COAA), Construction Users Roundtable (CURT), and Lean Construction Institute (LCI).

# Consider

## THE PROFESSION HAS NO ROOM FOR ME

After I moved to my current firm, I started watching the show *Mad Men*, and I thought, “Oh my God, I worked for *Mad Men*.”

I was marginalized when I walked into the room. It didn’t matter what I said, it’s what I look like. There was not much I could have done. So there’ve just been these unforeseen obstacles and walls. And in some sense, it’s been happening my whole life and I just didn’t realize it. Now I’m realizing that I don’t believe that if I went to a different organization it’d be any different, because the profession has no room for me. I’d have to go to a Black-owned firm for it to be different. Or be silent. It’s a systemic problem.

It’s really hard, but it’s also terrifying because I’m in this by myself. I’m already scared to speak out and to have a voice at the table. This has made it worse because I already feel the burden to speak up for other people who don’t speak up for themselves, and now I feel I’m also speaking for and representing a whole group of people I don’t even know. I just want to practice architecture—do good work and grow and have opportunities like everybody else and be able to look at my career and know there was a trajectory.

If I were a white woman, my life could be different. I recognize there are so many variables, and it’s all relative. [Another architect] was talking about all the things that make him powerful, making references to equity. “I’m a white man; I’m powerful, I’m educated; I’ve got all these things.” I’ve got most of those things that make you powerful as well. But even if I graduated from

Harvard, I would have to say so for you to listen to me, so clearly there's an issue. As long as I'm educated anywhere, it shouldn't matter. What is it that I have to contribute and say? Why do I have to start the conversation with a preference and a qualifier? I was saying to someone, "In order for me to make a point, I have to say that I got that information from someone else or that someone else has backed up that information." That person said, "Yeah, but you can't say that to everybody because they go on the defensive because they feel like you're proving to them that someone else said it, therefore it is doctrine." I can't win. You don't want to hear it if I say I looked it up and decided this is what we should do, but you still want to know that it's confirmed. It's exhausting.

— Architect, Black, Female, 30–40

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DISCUSS:

- The speaker talks about her experiences as a profession-wide issue, not just an issue within a single firm. What types of political and social forces contribute to the inequitable workplace cultures this speaker has experienced in architecture firms? What ways can firms try to change, speak up about, or take action on to mitigate these inequities within and outside of the workplace? What can the profession at large do to promote and support positive workplace cultures profession-wide?
- The speaker talks about several internal conflicts: she wants to stay silent but feels that she is a burden when not speaking up for others; she feels that when she does speak up, she is representing a group of people she doesn't know—she just wants to practice architecture and do good work like “everybody else.” How can people with agent identities help alleviate these internal conflicts and take primary responsibility for the work of EDI? What responsibilities should firm leaders assume to build more equitable workplaces?
- The speaker states that her life would be different if she were a white woman. Why and how do you think her professional experiences would be different if this were the case? What experiences might they have in common? What similarities and differences do you have with others in your firm based on your own intersectional identity and theirs? What assumptions might you be making about the workplace experiences of those who share a part of your identity? What experiences of these same people might be invisible to you?
- What are the sources of credibility in architecture culture? How can we broaden them to include a greater range of professionals? Are there ways we can benefit if we break from the value that our culture places on credentials?
- What role does ego play in questioning or downplaying the qualifications of others? Is there a culture of ego fragility in architecture? How does the desire for autonomy affect interactions and collaboration with others?

# Consider

## A PLACE WHERE I BELONG

I was working for a national union, taking a break from architecture to do some labor organizing. Then my current boss called and talked to me about her firm, how she's trying to diversify it and get more people with different experiences together. I think I got lucky: everyone there is a cisgender woman, and that changes the environment so much. It's hard to explain but I feel extremely comfortable at work. Sometimes when a client shows up with a different energy, you can feel it. Where I work feels like a good environment to be in. The work we do is not what I would consider stuff that's benefiting the world, 'cause it's luxury apartment renovations, but I think we have a good philosophy of reusing materials and building with as little waste and as efficiently as possible. Those projects are still worthwhile.

— Architectural Designer, Asian American, Nonbinary, Queer, 28

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### DISCUSS:

- What do you imagine has made this person's workplace culture feel comfortable for them to work in? Are there ways this workplace may feel different for people with other identities?
- What assumptions might this person be making about how their colleagues' identities affect the culture in their workplace? How does the philosophy of the firm's work align with this person's cultural experience? How might the types of clients and projects affect workplace culture?
- What different kinds of "client energy" have you experienced, and how have they affected team and office culture and project dynamics?
- What is the balance in your firm between formal policies and practices and more informal intangibles in contributing to a workplace that "feels like a good environment"?
- Do the demographics of your firm make it more comfortable or less so for members of certain gender identities?

# Consider

## MANAGING CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

I remember having a commitment on Wednesday nights that required me to leave at 6:30 p.m., and consistently, the receptionist would say I was going part-time. The office, many times, had the expectation we would work on Sundays, so even on weekends people felt like they needed to participate or you're not being collegial or part of the group. I understand that, and yet I found a way to make choices and prioritize what I wanted, so that while it involved many "walks of shame," leaving earlier than everybody else, it also made me feel empowered to know that I'm somebody who gets their work done and you can rely on, yet you might not want to come to me on a Thursday at 7:00 p.m. with a deadline for the next morning. I found a way to be very happy in that office, but it wasn't easy.

— Director, Business Owner, Sole Practitioner, and Educator, White, Female, 38



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DISCUSS:

- What is objectively occurring in this story, and what assumptions might you and those within the story possibly be making? What questions would you ask to make a well-informed recommendation as a way forward?
- What stereotypes or biases could “walk of shame” relate to in terms of this person’s identities? What might the receptionist’s statement say about her expectations for full-time work and her role in the office? Does “going part-time” sound negative?
- How might a person with a different mix of identities perceive the same situation or possibly be treated differently by others when exhibiting the same behavior? Why?
- If you were to ask different people in this firm what the appropriate and inappropriate number of hours worked in a week should be, do you think there would be a consistent answer? What does “working hard” look like, and who gets to decide? Why do you think the receptionist was there at 6:30 p.m.?
- How could this type of culture impact employees working toward licensure, with caregiving obligations, who have certain disabilities, or have different value systems? Who might this type of culture keep out of the firm? Would there be value to the firm to be inclusive of a greater range of employees with a greater need for flexibility in when, where, and how they work?
- In what ways is communication happening within this story? What might this person discuss with her colleagues and manager about changes in work times and perception? How could the firm clarify its values related to employee work times and clearly communicate expectations of how much time should be put toward work, when work happens, and how commitment is evaluated?

# Consider

## PROVE IT AGAIN

Watching other women, I noticed that their responsibility wasn't acknowledged in the same way as their male colleagues'. At the end of the day, there was a glass ceiling at that office for women who wanted to become a principal. During design pinups, the work I was doing was scrutinized and questioned more than the work of my male colleagues—I had to support my design argument more. This was different from what I experienced in school. It was noticeable within the staff: a tendency among male designers to question women's work more than their own work or other men's work, sometimes bringing the woman to tears. At some point you realize that's not how you want to practice, and that was why people left.

— Architect, White, Female, 30–40

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### DISCUSS:

- What types of biases you see in this story?
- Why do you think her experience in the workplace was different from her experience in school?
- What are the direct and indirect consequences of the behavior of the men designers for the women designers and the firm? Do the men designers have a responsibility to correct their behavior and its repercussions?
- What strategies could the women designers or men allies use in these situations?
- What might be changed culturally and structurally within the firm to prevent these situations and how?
- Do you think the glass ceiling at the firm is related to women's designs being scrutinized more? If so, how? What effects might this have on the health of the business?
- In what other situations do some people have to prove their competence more than people of dominant groups? Have you noticed double standards where you work?
- How do these types of workplace cultures affect the profession? If so, do you see them more with some identity groups than others?

# Consider

## DRESSING THE PART

I'm starting to market to clients and being looked at for my potential [to be a firm leader]. I was not really thinking about this until recently, but a lot of our clients are white males, older, and a lot of folks in my firm are white and from all around the country. Many who are local and not white, they tend to dress up more than those who are from outside our area. I think it's because they feel inferior, they need to prove something more. But I never really thought it was happening to me, but it is. That's why I wear this stuff when I represent myself. It was a surprise to realize that I have to do these things to make myself feel like I'm carving a path to continue on that trajectory, or else I'm going to fall behind.

— Emerging Professional Architect, Asian, Male, 32

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### DISCUSS:

- When you choose what clothing to wear to work, is your identity a factor in the decision? Does your identity give you more or less latitude in your choices compared to coworkers from other identity groups?
- How did you figure out what clothing was acceptable in your workplace? Are there other cultural aspects of your workplace that are more or less explicitly communicated?
- How do you establish credibility in your workplace? What do you see others doing to establish their credibility?
- The speaker noted that his choice of clothing may help him continue on a path to leadership and not fall behind. Is this an equity issue? Is it a sign of unhealthy firm culture?

# Consider

## SHE'S SO HOT

A woman professor came to our city to speak at convention. All the men around me said, “Wow, she’s hot, look at that.” Since I was in a leadership position, and they were right behind me, I turned around and said, “You have to stop, you can’t do this right now.” They were somewhat chastened, but the gist of all the chatter—after an amazing presentation—was “she was hot, I’d watch her lecture any time.” It comes up over and over again when we’ll be discussing speakers—“Let’s get her back again.” I look at those guys, and I say it to them sometimes, “You’ve got daughters. How would you like if your daughter came and the main takeaway was how attractive or unattractive she was?” It’s a way men are able to compartmentalize their thinking...if you bring it around to things that are important to them and can identify with, they can reorganize their thinking.

— Firm Founder and Principal, White, Male, 60

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### DISCUSS:

- What does this story reveal about bias and the diversity within this group?
- What did this leader do well, and what, if anything, could be improved? What other arguments could be used to help the men respect the woman speaker? Does the reference to daughters perpetuate a perception that women need to be protected by men?
- What could someone not in a position of power, male or female, do in this situation? Since not speaking up implies consent, one option is to quickly say something to deflate the conversation, like “Whoa! Those comments are silly!” The topic can then be gently resumed at a later time with the individuals, either on your own or with an ally: “Hey, what you said the other day made me uncomfortable, can we talk about it?” What other options are there?
- How could this “locker room” talk be stopped, either with individual action or through a change in culture?

# Consider


## HE TOUCHED ME

The first thing to improve in architecture must be sexual harassment. My experience wasn't aggressive, it was everyday encounters. The office was in a region where the culture is for men to kiss women on the cheek, but certain practices crossed the line. Design principals would touch my side or pat the small of my back. I once peeled someone's fingers off my side and said, "Could you just not touch me?" I was catcalled in the corridor. It was supposed to be funny, but over time it's harmful. It affected what I wore, where I would stand; it creates a background of noise in your head in what's already a difficult job. It became distracting and otherwise unprofessional. There wasn't anyone to talk to about it and no HR, and I eventually left to work at a different firm, as have other women. [The firm I left] has since formed a kind of HR committee to address the issue, but it's not really working. I don't know what I would have done differently. Now I feel like I can speak up for myself, but brand new out of school working for a fancy design firm, I didn't feel like I could speak up—I might have been fired or switched to a team that wasn't as strong in design.

— Architect, White, Female, 30–40

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DISCUSS:

- What type of harassment might this constitute? Quid pro quo or hostile work environment? Severe or persistent?
  - How can a workplace and its employees distinguish between behavior that is harmless or harmful, regardless of the intent?
  - What role might regional culture play in this firm's culture?
  - Is there anything the woman could have done differently to prevent being harassed? Why do you think harassment continued after she directly and verbally asked for inappropriate behavior to stop? What courses of action might be advisable to her before, during, and after the incidents?
  - To whom might she have been able to report? What should happen once someone in the firm is notified of the incidents, in terms of both the specific harassment scenarios and firm-wide? What should the woman do if the harassment continues after she reports it?
  - How are the employee and the firm undermined by the behaviors of the design principals?
  - Do you think the HR committee is a good idea? What could it do to most effectively help prevent future harassment in the firm? What other approaches could the firm take besides forming and calling upon the committee?
- 



# Consider

## BEING AN OPENLY GAY ARCHITECT

In twenty-plus years of practicing architecture, I only spent six months working in a large commercial firm. Very early on it became apparent that I did not fit with the company culture. While I was a white male—enough to give me a leg up—I was openly gay in a very straight male culture. There were no overt actions or comments. However, I never fit into any of the cliques within the company. I wasn't married. Didn't have kids. Didn't have a history of infidelity. I simply did not fit, and today, the leadership in the company is still exclusively white, male, and straight.

After this, in the early years with my prior firm, we were struggling to gain a foothold in the market. A local gay realtor recommended joining the local LGBT chamber of commerce as a means of creating some visibility within the community. One of my partners made it clear from the start that I would be responsible for maintaining activity within the organization because they were—as she put it—“your people.” Her idea of funny took an ironic twist when she had to attend the chamber's orientation lunch because I had been up all night working on a deadline and was too tired. However, in eight years of being members (the membership was dropped when I exited the firm), my two partners attended a total of two events, and every other activity was left to me.

As a firm owner, being an openly gay architect has provided me with some opportunities I might have missed otherwise. I worked with an older gay couple to create a new house they could enjoy when they retire. I was approached because they wanted to work with an LGBT architect—both

for their own comfort and to support the LGBT community. I mentioned this to one of my partners, who commented that their decision felt a little discriminatory given the number of straight architects. Perhaps with a little too much glee, I was happy to point out that there was no national nondiscrimination law that included sexual orientation—either gay or straight—and she would have to accept that.

— Architect, White, Male, Gay, 50

Coming out can be a difficult process for people, especially if you're raised in a very binary or traditional family structure. Coming out professionally is also a struggle, especially if your work isn't open to this diversity. For larger firms wanting to be more inclusive, it could be looking at their restroom situation: are there gender-neutral or family restroom options? Also making sure that people who are LGBTQ have a place at the decision-making table and a voice in the process. It would be impossible for a firm to change that doesn't have those voices involved. Larger firms may have a task force or an LGBTQ group that meets regularly. For smaller firms, it comes down to the heart of the people in charge, and there's no easy way to change someone's heart other than sharing your story and building empathy. I don't know how appropriate it would be to bring up in an interview other than to say, "We have an open environment where everyone is welcome." You're always building trust with a new company. It's all about the company's values and if they're living those values of being accepting and inclusive. That's a big ask but it's what I would hope for if I were to work at another firm: to have those values at the forefront of who I am and how I practice.

— Firm Owner, White, Cisgender, Gay, Male, 31 years old

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DISCUSS:

- What stereotypes do you perceive within the first speaker's stories? Is discrimination occurring? If so, does it have a positive or negative effect? Is it unlawful?
- What type of dominant-group patterns at the first speaker's large commercial firm might have kept him from feeling it was a fit? Do you think it would have been possible for the firm to make changes to increase his feeling of inclusion? What cues does the second speaker look for to determine whether a workplace is open and inclusive? How can firms convey that it is important that all employees feel included?
- How do you think the first speaker interpreted the actions and responses of the female partner? What other information would you want to know to better evaluate people's behaviors in these situations?
- Are there situations in which it is an appropriate strategy for partners to divide up their outreach to specific communities? What factors should be considered in making this decision? What does it communicate internally or externally if the partners do (or do not) take this approach?
- Are there recognizable differences between small-firm and large-firm cultures that affect people with nondominant identities? Which identities? What are the differences? What other cultural differences might you see, such as generational, geographic, or racial and ethnic, that could affect attitudes and acceptance?
- When onboarding or interviewing candidates for jobs, do you intentionally choose language to indicate openness or welcome to those with nonbinary identities? How direct or indirect are you about your receptivity to specific identities?
- What strategies can firms use to create cultural change in the workplace? What impact does the size of a firm have on the ability to create cultural change?

# Consider

## DIVERSE CLIENTS

My client base represents a very successful, high-end, sort of high-net-worth group. It is not socioeconomically diverse, but about a third of our clients are people who identify as gay or lesbian. It's been interesting for me because when we bring young people in they're often startled—many come from suburban backgrounds, go to large land-grant universities where the same stereotypes are reinforced, so coming into an environment where you work with, engage with, and earn a living from accomplished people in open relationships, with children, it can be a shock for them. I'm really proud we have clients who are different in some ways from our staff because it says a lot about how we're able to engage and embrace and work with clients. I have a lot of pride in that aspect of our practice.

— Firm Founder and Principal, White, Male, 60

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### DISCUSS:

- What are the different aspects of identity that you notice are recognized by the speaker in this story? Do you think he is making assumptions about different identity groups? Should those assumptions be discussed, and if so, how, and toward what goal?
- What do you think might be contributing factors for this firm's successful relationship with a gay and lesbian client base? What might those factors say about the firm's culture?
- Do you think that the client's possible differences in ways of thinking or doing might affect the firm's culture? If so, how?
- How might the firm support the young employees who are shocked when they begin working with gay or lesbian clients? What are the ways to prepare employees to work with people who are different from them?
- If the firm sought to expand its client base to include people with other types of differences (e.g., race, class, age, ability), what might be some strategies they could try?

# Consider

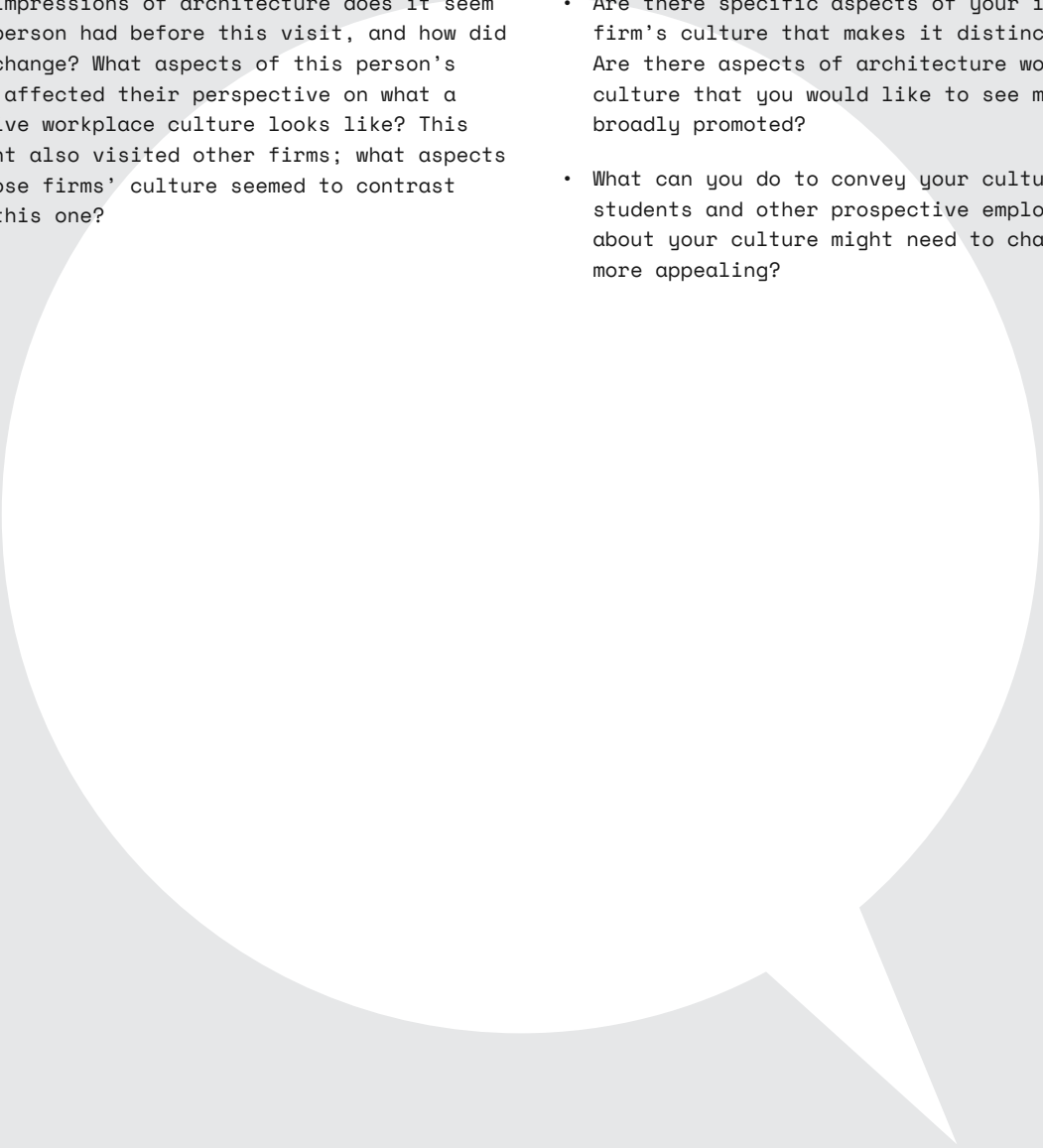
## CONVEYING YOUR FIRM CULTURE AND FINDING YOUR FIT

Our class visited several firms. One mid-sized design firm felt more close-knit than a lot of the others: the studio culture was a lot deeper, a lot more involved. We went as a group: they took us on a nice tour, bought us lunch—unlike some of the others, that stood out to us. Then they sat with us in their conference room answering all our questions, concerns, comments, and ideas, and they even had a presentation for us. That opened our eyes to what to expect in a studio. On top of that, a lot of them were licensed architects. I'd never been in a room with so many. They offered advice, help, training, and tutoring skills, so it felt like even if we were not to get a job there, they would still give us that mentorship and assistance. That honed in on the feeling of family. It was a really nice and tight-knit studio culture: everyone seemed to love each other. We were there for three hours. They seemed to really want to help us out, especially with the licensing exams. They really attracted my attention as a possible location I'd like to work at. That's where the sense of family and studio culture is so much more important, comparing to my school's studio, "We can definitely do this, we're all in this together, let's get our licenses, let's make a name for ourselves in the field." That really helped me set that attitude up in my mind even more solidly than before.

— Student, Black, Male, 20

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DISCUSS:

- What did this firm do to create a positive experience for the students? Did this firm's intent seem to match the student's perception? Are there times when the two might not match? What activities does your own firm participate in that can help set positive workplace culture expectations for students?
  - What impressions of architecture does it seem this person had before this visit, and how did they change? What aspects of this person's visit affected their perspective on what a positive workplace culture looks like? This student also visited other firms; what aspects of those firms' culture seemed to contrast with this one?
  - How did your first experiences visiting or interning at an architecture firm shape your cultural expectations about the architecture workplace? How have these expectations evolved over time? What events in your career set your expectations about workplace culture higher or lower?
  - Are there specific aspects of your individual firm's culture that makes it distinctive? Are there aspects of architecture workplace culture that you would like to see more broadly promoted?
  - What can you do to convey your culture to students and other prospective employees? What about your culture might need to change to be more appealing?
- 



# Resources

## FIRM CULTURE

### Be Inclusive – Catalyst

<https://www.catalyst.org/topics/inclusion/>

Website provides a variety of resources provide tools, perspectives, and information on building an inclusive work environment for all employees.

### Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: Optimizing Organizational Culture for Success – Society for Human Resource Management (2015)

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/business-solutions/documents/2015-job-satisfaction-and-engagement-report.pdf>

Based on a survey of six hundred people, the research summarizes the key factors that lead to job satisfaction in the following categories: career development, employee relationships in management, compensation and benefits, and work environment.

### Great Place to Work Institute

<https://www.greatplacetowork.com/>

Research, certification, publications, and speakers on the characteristics of “great places to work” for all.

### Organizational Culture and Leadership – Edgar Schein (5th ed., 2016)

Foundational text addressing the elements of culture and the role of leadership in creating change at different stages of organizational life.

### The Research Is Clear: Long Hours Backfire for People and for Companies – *Harvard Business Review* – Sarah Green Carmichael (2002)

<https://hbr.org/2015/08/the-research-is-clear-long-hours-backfire-for-people-and-for-companies>

Analysis of studies that show working longer hours does not increase productivity and leads to high stress levels and poorer health. In addition, overworked employees have more difficulty interacting with each other, make more mistakes, and generally lose sight of the bigger picture. All of these together reveal a point beyond which working more hours eliminates the benefits.

### Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture – Denise Scott Brown (1989)

<http://www.mascontext.com/issues/27-debate-fall-15/room-at-the-top-sexism-and-the-star-system-in-architecture/>

A personal account illustrating the legacy of architecture’s “star system” that attributes designs, ideas, and work to the most famous leader in a firm. Scott Brown writes, “The star system, which sees the firm as a pyramid with a designer on top, has little to do with today’s complex relations in architecture and construction.” Still relevant to how the profession is seen, how firms are structured, and how architecture is evaluated.

## HARASSMENT

### How to Report Sexual Harassment – Nolo

<https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/fighting-sexual-harassment-29532.html>

List of steps for individuals who are experiencing sexual harassment to curtail it, report it, or file a complaint.

### A Step-by-Step Guide to Documenting Sexual Harassment – Rae Nudson (2018)

<https://gen.medium.com/a-step-by-step-guide-to-documenting-sexual-harassment-fc0a07102c42>

Thorough guidance for victims and bystanders on how to keep a record of harassment.

### What Do I Need to Know about Workplace Harassment – U.S. Department of Labor

[www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/internal/policies/workplace-harassment/2012](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/internal/policies/workplace-harassment/2012)

Guidance and information for compliance with sexual harassment laws, including definitions and reporting of sexual harassment, when harassment violates the law, and how to report. Directed to DOL employees but broadly applicable.

**What Employers Need to Know – Catalyst (2018)**

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace-what-employers-need-to-know/>

Infographics that show how employers can address sexual harassment, including guidelines for preparation, prevention, and response. Also includes recommendations to address workplace-culture issues surrounding sexual harassment.

**Workplace Harassment Resources**

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/workplace-harassment-resources.aspx>

A collection of resources for companies; includes guides for compliance and policies, training, investigation, and research.

# Notes

1. Perspectives and research on organization culture expanded in the 1970s and 1980s with the growth of corporate culture and interest in management practices. For a comprehensive background, see Steve W. J. Kozlowski, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a foundational read, see Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

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4. Amy C. Edmondson and Zhike Lei, “Psychological Safety: The History, Renaissance, and Future of an Interpersonal Construct,” *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 1 (January 10, 2014): 23–43, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091305>; Barbara L. Fredrickson, “The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 56, no. 3 (2001): 218–26, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3122271/>.

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9. Nebojša Janićijević, “The Mutual Impact of Organizational Culture and Structure,” *Economic Annals* LVIII, no. 198 (July–September 2013), <http://www.ekof.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/263.pdf>.

10. This saying is often attributed to Peter Drucker, but its origin is unclear.

11. Nicole Sandford, “Corporate Culture: The Center of Strong Ethics and Compliance,” *Risk & Compliance Journal* (in the *Wall Street Journal*), January 20, 2015, <https://deloitte.wsj.com/riskandcompliance/2015/01/20/corporate-culture-the-center-of-strong-ethics-and-compliance/>.

12. Denise Lee Yohn, “Why Your Company Culture Should Match Your Brand,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 26, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/06/why-your-company-culture-should-match-your-brand>.

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14. Miriam Sitz, “In Record Survey, 66 Percent of Architects Report Harassment,” *Architectural Record*, October 19, 2018, <https://www.architecturalrecord.com/articles/13677-in-record-survey-66-percent-of-architects-report-harassment>. In the United States more broadly, 38% of women and 13% of men say they have been sexually harassed in the workplace, and when asked where they experiences the most sexual abuse throughout their lifetimes, the workplace was the third most common answer from both women and men. See

more on the Sexual Harassment page of the Catalyst website, <https://www.catalyst.org/sexual-harassment>. See also Holly Kearl, *The Facts Behind the #MeToo Movement: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault* (Reston, VA: Stop Street Harassment, 2018), <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/resources/2018-national-sexual-abuse-report/>.

15. The full federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission appear at <https://www.eeoc.gov/employers>. Consult with an employment attorney or advisor to stay current on state and federal law.

16. Orient yourself with more extensive guidance on procedures for harassment policies and responses. See “Sexual Harassment Policy and Complaint/Investigation Procedure,” Society for Human Resource Management, May 24, 2018 [subscription required], [https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/policies/pages/cms\\_000554.aspx](https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/policies/pages/cms_000554.aspx). See also Susan M. Heathfield, “Sexual Harassment: How to Prevent and Address Sexual Harassment in the Workplace,” Balance Careers, March 22, 2018, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/sexual-harassment-1918253>.

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18. See “Filing A Charge of Discrimination,” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.eeoc.gov/employees/charge.cfm>.

19. See “Fair Employment Practices Agencies (FEPAs) and Dual Filing,” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.eeoc.gov/employees/fepa.cfm>.

20. The Filing a Harassment Claim page on the Workplace Fairness website, though not perfect, can help in locating some agencies, <https://www.workplacefairness.org/filing-harassment-complaint>.

21. If you intend to litigate, look for a lawyer early in the process. There are resources for locating legal help through different groups: for victims of sex discrimination, see the National Women’s Law Center, <https://nwlc.org/legal-assistance/>; and for transgender and LGBTQIA+ resources, see <https://www.hrc.org/resources/lgbt-employee-resources> and the “Additional Help” page on the National Center for Transgender Equality website, <https://transequality.org/additional-help#legal>.

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# Compensation

## KEY TOPICS

audit  
compensation philosophy  
compensation policy  
compensation structure  
discrimination  
external equity  
flexible work  
internal equity  
merit  
office housework  
parity  
productivity  
salary bands/pay bands  
transparency  
wage gap

SECOND EDITION  
PUBLISHED DECEMBER 2020

How well employees are compensated for work depends on access to opportunities, the value that is placed on different kinds of work, firm pay practices, and fee structures. Removing compensation gaps supports the influx, development, and retention of talent and the economic stability and growth of individuals, firms, and the profession.

This guide discusses current wage gaps in architecture, how they occur, and what their impacts are, and suggests steps for evaluating, establishing, and maintaining equity and parity in compensation.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What is compensation?

Compensation is the sum of all tangible and intangible value that employers provide to employees in exchange for work. Employers use compensation to attract, recognize, and retain employees. Employees use it to achieve a standard of living, gauge the relative value of their work contribution to an employer and to society, and make employment choices.

Compensation in the contemporary workplace consists of three categories: direct financial compensation, indirect financial compensation, and nonfinancial compensation.

- *Direct financial compensation* is money paid directly to employees, including hourly pay, salary, overtime, and bonuses.
- *Indirect financial compensation* has financial value but is not paid monetarily: paid time off (vacation, sick leave, personal time), paid family and medical leave, health insurance, disability insurance, life insurance, retirement contributions, pension, stock options, profit sharing, relocation expenses, travel expenses, registration costs, educational benefits, employee services (like childcare, low-cost or free meals, counseling, legal referral, career planning, wellness plans, gym memberships), and employee perks (such as the use of laptops, phones, event tickets, vehicles, apartments).
- *Nonfinancial compensation* is nonmonetary but has value for career building and increasing job satisfaction: *opportunities* such as plum assignments, promotions, increased decision-making and leadership responsibilities, mentorship and sponsorship, training; *recognition* through praise and awards, time with leaders, networking introductions, recommendations; *quality of experience* through workspace upgrades, more desirable tasks, flexibility, positive relationships.

## GAPS

That compensation in the United States is neither equal nor equitable is clearly reflected in the wage gaps in almost every demographic—gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, physical ability, age—for both salaried and hourly workers, regardless of education level, occupation, or industry.<sup>1</sup> These are some gaps as of 2017: Compared to a dollar earned by white men, Asian women earn 87 cents, white women earn 79 cents, Black women earn 63 cents, Latinas earn 54 cents; and mothers earn 71 cents compared to fathers.<sup>2</sup> Compared to a dollar earned by Asian men, white men earn 84 cents, Black men earn 64 cents, and Hispanic men earn 56 cents. Compared to people without disabilities, people with disabilities earn 68 cents, and compared to men with disabilities, women with disabilities earn 72 cents.<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that gay and bisexual men are paid 10–32% less than heterosexual men, and lesbians are paid less than men but possibly more than heterosexual women. Transgender households are four times more likely to have a household income of less than \$10,000 than the population as a whole, and transgender people of color fare even worse.<sup>4</sup>

Wage gaps will not go away on their own. Looking at the gender wage gap for women as compared to men, for example, in the United States it was near 60% in the 1960s; today it is nearly 80%, with most progress in closing the gap occurring between 1980–98 but slowing considerably since then.<sup>5</sup> Narrowing education and experience gaps played a large role in that convergence but no longer accounts substantially for the gender wage gap. Currently, the gap is smallest at the start of careers and grows largest later in careers at top pay scales.

What causes wage gaps? Approximately 50% of the gender wage gap is attributable to people's location in the labor market (i.e., which occupations men and women hold in which industries, at which firms they are employed, and the level they occupy in the hierarchy), 15% to experience (due to work interruptions and shorter hours for women in high-skill occupations, with wage penalties for flexible work arrangements and motherhood), and 38% to factors more difficult to attribute, relating to conventional gender roles and identity and likely stemming from bias and discrimination.<sup>6</sup> For example, research shows that traits



associated with each gender are rewarded unequally in the workplace, due to double standards regarding personality, risk-taking, competitiveness, and negotiation. Men are typically rewarded for exhibiting traits traditionally considered masculine, but when women exhibit these same traits, they are not rewarded but are often penalized for them—a “double bind.”

Studies on wage and opportunity gaps show there are intersections between gender and race.<sup>7</sup> For example, in the legal profession, men and women of color and white women all experience “prove-it-again” bias, requiring that they do more and perform better to receive respect and recognition; and their evaluations and access to opportunities are hindered by systemic and unconscious bias.<sup>8</sup>

Employee compensation in architecture follows a similar pattern. Salary data reveal that on average, white men earn more than men of color, who earn more than white women, with women of color earning the least. Average salaries for men are higher than women’s at every year of experience, with average starting pay difference within a few thousand dollars, then increasingly diverging to approximately a 15% pay gap in late career. For both men and women, earnings are most commonly cited as integral to career success, and lack of compensation (in the form of pay, promotions, opportunities, professional development, and meaningful work) is the predominant reason why both men and women leave architecture jobs or leave the profession altogether.<sup>9</sup>

### PARITY AND EQUITY

Ideally, the value of compensation would equal the value of work, with employee and employer agreeing on these two values. Compensation is equitable when employees with similar skills, education, experience, qualifications, seniority, location, and performance receive the same compensation.<sup>10</sup>

Two comparable employees who do the same work for different compensation lack parity. *Pay parity* or equality in the legal sense is *equal pay for equal work*, requiring that there be no pay gap based on gender (and in some states, race or ethnicity) for any reason when comparing two people who do the same work. Currently, women are paid on average 4% less than men, and as much as 45% less, for the same role, and men are offered higher salaries than women for the same work 63% of the time.<sup>11</sup> This type of pay inequality between demographic groups is relatively easy to determine and can be immediately addressed in every workplace, as mandated by law. (See the Compliance section of this guide.)

Two comparable employees who do different work of equal value for different compensation lack equity. *Pay equity* in the legal sense is *equal pay for work of equal value*, requiring that there be no pay gap between people of any protected group who perform work of the same value and that pay be administered fairly. Though both pay disparity and pay inequity contribute to wage gaps, the gaps overwhelmingly result from pay inequity.

Calculating equal value and determining what is fair can be difficult, with much room for error. Yet pay equity is critical for reducing discrimination and increasing overall equity, since people with nondominant/target identities often perform different work than people with dominant/agent identities (some by choice, some not), and their work is not always fairly compensated according to its value. For example, women’s employment is often concentrated in jobs and fields that tend to be undervalued compared with men’s jobs. The median pay for information technology managers (mostly men) is 27% higher than for human resource managers (mostly women); when more women became designers, the overall wages for designers fell 34%.<sup>12</sup>

Within a single organization, compensation gaps occur due to inconsistent practices influenced by bias and discrimination and exacerbated by lack of transparency—only 13% of businesses with under a thousand employees are transparent with their employees about pay policies and rates, and those small- and medium-sized businesses have gender gaps that exceed the national average.<sup>13</sup>

When looking at how to make compensation fair internally, firms also have to consider external factors to remain competitive in the market and be able to recruit and retain employees. Perceived inequity or unfairness, either internal (compared to other employees in the firm)

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“There are a lot of other careers that have a better work-life balance and higher pay. These things are just essential, and until they’re addressed, until real systemic change is realized, I’m worried about the profession and about our ability to be more diverse.”

Director, Business Owner, Sole Practitioner,  
and Educator, White, Female, 38

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or external (compared to employees in other firms), can result in low morale and loss of organizational effectiveness. For example, if employees feel they are being unfairly compensated, they may decrease their efforts or leave the organization, damaging the firm's overall performance.

To address the broader institutional issue that employee roles are a predominant contributor to wage gaps—and roles are not necessarily properly valued or equitably attainable across demographic groups—there should also be a focus on fairness among all employees and leaders at a firm, between the lowest- and highest-paid workers, and not just between employees at the same level. One significant measure of equity is the ratio of compensation of firm leaders to lowest-paid employees. Similarly, employee productivity at all levels that contributes to firm profits should be recognized and equitably rewarded.

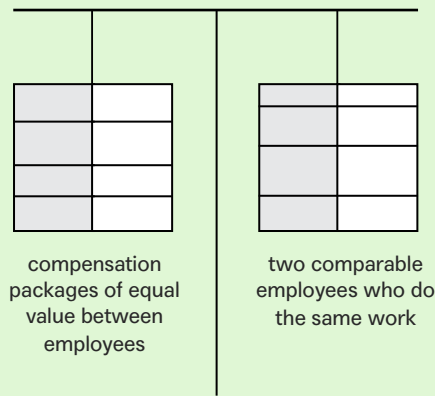
To truly achieve compensation equity, and no longer have wage gaps between any demographic groups, involves addressing larger societal structures to ensure that work is compensated according to its actual value to society and that there are no barriers for anyone to enter and advance in their chosen line of work. Because that is not the reality today, we can establish compensation equity as a shared goal within our profession and act to make other structures in society more just.

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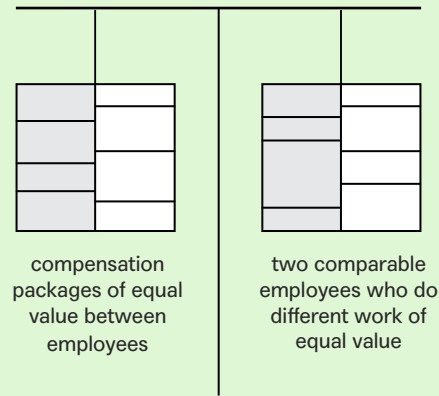
**“In our industry it is taboo to talk at all about salary: who’s making what. It’s very taboo. We’re taught that you don’t discuss it, and it’s against the rules to discuss what you make with any of your colleagues, from management and ownership down.”**

**Managing Partner, Firm Owner,  
Black, Male, 46**

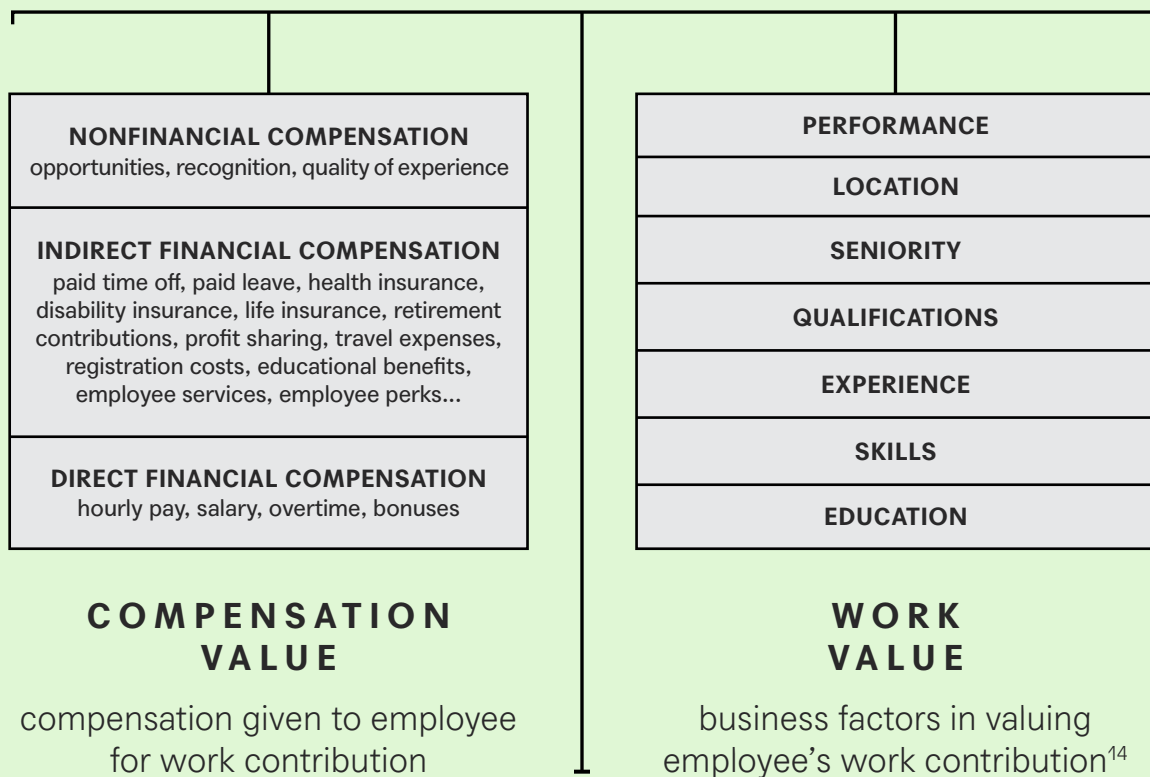
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**PARITY**  
equal pay for equal work



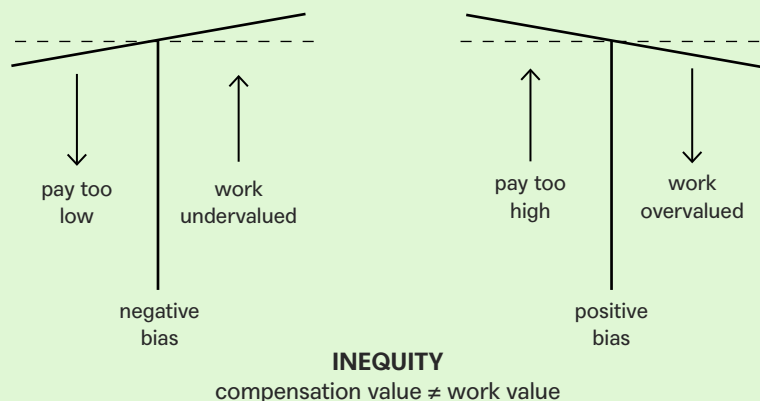
**EQUITY**  
equal pay for equal value



#### COMPENSATION-EQUITY SCALE

To compensate means to equalize or balance what is given with what is given back; the two sides counterbalance.

For compensation value to equal work value and balance the scale for an individual employee and between employees, all factors need to be included in the weighing with the correct valuation and be free of bias and discrimination.



# Why are compensation parity and equity important?

Compensation signals the value an individual brings to the workplace, the values of a business, and the value of work within society. It is a mechanism by which the workforce makes choices and businesses operate. The soundness of this mechanism is compromised when compensation decisions are based on characteristics other than bona fide business factors: the relationship between value given by an employee and value returned by an employer becomes inequitable, and both parties are impacted negatively.

In architecture, this mechanism is constrained by the profession's typical commodity- and service-based business model.<sup>15</sup> At most firms the revenue available for employee pay and other benefits is relatively low in comparison to other industries. While new and better-communicated value propositions and possibly large structural changes could change the magnitude of fees for architectural work, more money in the system will not by itself solve compensation-equity issues, and in some respects could even exacerbate them—higher paying professions, such as law, finance, and technology, still have equity issues. On the other hand, investing in equity, diversity, and inclusion can increase the value of our work, allowing gains generated to be invested back into businesses and people.

## INDIVIDUALS

**Self-determination** • Transparency about salaries and clear links between career stage, experience, and pay help individuals make informed choices based on distinct pathways and expectations.<sup>16</sup>

**Merit** • Employment decisions based on merit can help level the playing field, yet bias can taint seemingly objective determinations of “what is good.” When merit is espoused as an organizational value, merit-based decisions and rewards without strong equitable practices throughout the firm result in more biased outcomes that favor dominant groups, a “paradox of meritocracy.”<sup>17</sup>

**Job satisfaction** • Equal pay contributes to engagement, motivation, productivity, and retention.<sup>18</sup>

**Financial security** • Suppressed earnings reduce one's means of securing life necessities and opportunities and for balancing work, personal, and family life. An early-career pay discrepancy magnifies over time, leading to a large lifetime pay loss.<sup>19</sup> Cumulative gaps have significant consequences, including fewer resources to draw on in later years.<sup>20</sup> (See the *Negotiation* guide.)

**Debt** • As socioeconomic, racial, and gender diversity in schools increase and the nation's student loan crisis balloons, the number of students with loan debt and the amount of their debts—especially for women—increases.<sup>21</sup> Lower pay scales in architecture compared to other professions make justifying staying in or even choosing to enter the profession more difficult.<sup>22</sup>

**Caregiving** • Inflexible workplaces, stereotyping, and discrimination reinforce traditional roles, often leading fathers to work more hours and mothers to work fewer hours than they would like or the lesser-paid (in a heterosexual couple, more often a woman) to leave the workforce to provide childcare. The departure is framed as a choice, but it is most often a result of low or unequal pay and gender discrimination.<sup>23</sup>

**Quality of life** • Pay gaps diminish the quality of life for underpaid employees and contribute to their stress and to physical and mental health issues.<sup>24</sup>

## FIRMS

**Workplace culture** • How a firm structures its compensation system and manages internal equity (within the firm) and external equity (between the firm and other organizations) may support or impair the firm's desired culture. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.)

**Recruitment and retention** • Transparency about pay scales and salary bands plus demonstrated commitment to pay equity help attract and keep talent. Low pay is the third most cited reason for both men and women leaving their most recent architecture job.<sup>25</sup> (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.)

**Cost of turnover** • Considering the costs in time and money of turnover—offboarding, hiring, onboarding, training, and lost productivity as a new employee learns the ropes—the actual cost of losing and replacing an employee can be as much as five times an annual salary.<sup>6</sup>

**Morale** • Fair and transparent pay structures and systems send employees a positive message that the firm values them and is dedicated to improving pay equity in society at large. This contributes to productivity and commitment, and reduces absenteeism.<sup>27</sup>

**Employee development** • Transparency helps employees at all levels understand the business of architecture, map their role in it, self-advocate, and navigate toward leadership. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)

**The law** • Pay discrimination subjects a firm to expensive, time-consuming, and reputation-damaging legal claims.<sup>28</sup>

## PROFESSION

**Perception** • For the profession to be trusted and to thrive, architects must be perceived as upholding high standards and contributing to a better society in which people are valued and fairly rewarded.

**Diverse talent** • Only a narrow band of society is able or willing to enter a profession with low, unstable, or inequitable pay, and talent will leave the profession for better opportunities.

**Long-term economic stability** • The cumulative impact of underpaying employees is the creation of a future burden for not only individuals but also society as a whole.

**Investment** • Pay equity is one of the ways the profession can invest in valuing its employees and making holistic EDI change. Just declaring that the profession supports pay equity, without action, is not enough. Over time, the shift in internal value will be reflected in greater creativity and productivity and in increased value placed on our work by clients, users, and communities.

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“By still saying ‘it’s bums in seats,’ or ‘you have to be here between 10 and 4,’ or ‘you have to do 80 hours in two weeks,’ it takes the responsibility away from having the conversation about what you’re actually doing, in terms of what the task is and what it will take to complete. At the end of the day, we’re delivering a building, not 2,000 hours over this timeframe.”

Associate at Large, International Practice,  
Indo-American, Female, 31

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# Compensation becomes more equitable when...

## TRANSPARENCY

the compensation program is intentional and easy to explain

all employees understand the compensation components, structure, and policies

criteria for pay ranges, performance pay, and advancement are clear, communicated, and equitably applied

employees understand their current pay-range placement

leaders openly share how the compensation program relates to the business

talking openly about pay is permitted without retaliation

## ALIGNMENT

the compensation system aligns with the values and goals of the business

job descriptions are accurate and inclusive

onboarding and mentoring convey how to advance in the workplace

variations within salary bands and benefits are tied to criteria and reviewed for bias

audits keep compensation fair and in line with the structure

discrepancies are corrected and recovered through back wages or other agreed-upon compensation

## COMPLIANCE

employers comply with pay equity laws

firms comply with legal requirements in compensating interns

firms respect personal privacy when discussing pay

discrimination is prevented and remediated without retaliation

## FAIRNESS

employees perceive that they are treated fairly

cases and patterns of bias are monitored and mitigated

all employees have equitable opportunity for high-profile assignments, networks, and clients

employees are assessed on the value of their work, not hours in seats

pay and performance evaluations use objective criteria

benefits, including leaves and flextime, are distributed equitably



# Compliance

This section is intended to introduce you to important legal information regarding discrimination and describes the mere minimum requirements. It is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

## COMPENSATION DISCRIMINATION

Employees must be compensated fairly, without discrimination. Compensation that is inequitable (not meeting standards for “equal pay for equal work” and “equal pay for work of equal value”) stunts individual, firm, and profession-wide productivity and growth, undermines diversity goals and a positive work environment, puts firms at legal risk, and limits our profession’s stature.

### UNDERSTAND THE LAW AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Federal, state, and professional regulations regarding compensation equity are becoming increasingly rigorous.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces several federal laws that prohibit discrimination in employment compensation: the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).<sup>29</sup> State and local laws may contain additional requirements.

- All forms of compensation are covered by discrimination law (salary, overtime, bonuses, stock options, profit sharing, life insurance, vacation/holiday pay, allowances, travel expenses, benefits, etc.).
- The EPA addresses pay discrimination according to sex, requiring that men and women receive equal pay for equal work (jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort, and responsibility in similar working conditions) in the same workplace.<sup>30</sup>
- Title VII, the ADEA, and the ADA are broader and prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability, or genetic information, and whether or not a job is substantially equal or within the same workplace.

- The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by providing that the 180-day statute of limitations (or 300 days in some states) for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination resets with each new paycheck affected by the discriminatory action.<sup>31</sup>
- The EEOC requires some businesses to file an annual compliance survey.<sup>32</sup>
- It is against the law to retaliate against an individual for opposing compensation discrimination.
- In some states, it is illegal to ask for or make hiring or compensation decisions based on an applicant’s salary history; employers may be required to provide job-specific pay-scale information to applicants and employees. Employers can be prohibited from providing less favorable opportunities or failing to provide information about promotions or advancement; employers can be required to justify differences in compensation, even differences with other organizations.<sup>33</sup>

The AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is explicit about discrimination and compensation.

- Canon I, Rule 1.401 states: “Members shall not engage in harassment or discrimination in their professional activities on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age, disability, caregiver status, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.”
- Canon V, Ethical Standard 5.1 states: “Professional Environment: Members should provide their colleagues and employees with a fair and equitable working environment, compensate them fairly, and facilitate their professional development.”<sup>34</sup>

## HAVE PREVENTION MEASURES SUPPORTED BY POLICY

It is easier and less costly to prevent than rectify compensation discrimination. Thorough review of practices and clear written policies reduce vulnerabilities.

### Prevention

- Clearly communicate the requirement of nondiscrimination in compensation. Share written policy with all employees.
- Outline multiple ways for employees to flag compensation problems.
- Review pay structures and starting, merit, and promotional pay policies.
- Audit pay practices and correct pay disparities.
- Limit manager discretion in setting pay, monitor compliance with policies, and keep a full record of decisions.
- Fully investigate complaints, and document clear remediation of each situation.

### Policy

- Define compensation parity and equity for employees.
- Deter biased decisions by including examples of how they occur and suggestions for how they can be prevented.
- Outline remediation measures.
- Communicate commitment to nonretaliation and confidentiality.

## RESPOND TO VIOLATIONS

Handling potential compensation violations can be difficult for both the employer and employee. The preferred approach is for the employee and employer to have an open conversation based on clear information, with the employer having the opportunity to address discrepancies. Speaking up should be regarded as an opportunity for all parties to improve equity.

### Individuals

- Keep a written record of your work, performance reviews, and compensation.
- Identify any documents that reflect pay differences for equal work or work of equal value.
- Talk to your manager or HR about the disparity.

“Part of why I left my first job was that my husband, who worked for the same firm in a similar position, was getting raises three times what I was getting, and I had to fight for my increase.”

Architect,  
White, Female, 30–40

- If the discrimination continues, consider writing a formal letter or filing a complaint.

### Managers, Firm Leaders, or Human Resources

- Take all concerns seriously.
- Remain neutral in judgment, and keep each matter confidential.
- Prevent retaliation.
- Conduct an investigation or audit.
- Notify employee of resulting information and action to be taken.
- Update policies as needed.

## USE THE LAW AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Employees experiencing compensation discrimination are not always able to find recourse through their employers. Some firms may not have adequate compensation structures and policies in place to be able to verify if their pay practices are equitable, or they may disagree with the employee regarding how their work is valued. When internal recourse is unavailing, the following are options to consider:

- File a timely complaint with the EEOC.<sup>35</sup>
- Contact your state, county, and city agencies that enforce discrimination laws, called Fair Employment Practices Agencies (FEPA).<sup>36</sup>
- Check with your state’s department of labor.
- Seek legal assistance.<sup>37</sup>
- File a complaint with the AIA National Ethics Council.<sup>38</sup>
- Report an issue to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).<sup>39</sup>

# Assess

## TRANSPARENCY

**Do all employees understand the firm's compensation system?** · How does your firm communicate its compensation structure, policies, and procedures? · Do you have clear job descriptions? · Do employees know your salary bands and evaluation processes and metrics? · Are there consistent messages relating to what work is valued and how rewards are given?

**How are issues addressed?** · Is pay adjusted based on regular pay audits? · Are legal requirements for equal pay and nondiscrimination followed? · Do you have a process for addressing complaints?

## POWER

**Who determines compensation in your workplace?** · Do leaders agree on how compensation practices relate to the organization's business goals? · Are managers and supervisors equipped to make aligned and equitable compensation decisions? · How are employees involved in establishing or understanding the wage structure? · Are employees free to discuss compensation issues among themselves?

**Who benefits from the compensation system?** · Is the ratio of pay between the highest- and lowest-paid employees reasonable? · Do the firm's and employees' values around compensation align? · How do compensation practices support everyone to do their best work? · Is there equal access to desired opportunities and benefits? How are interest gauged and availability determined?

## FAIRNESS

**What is rewarded?** · Do you value performance over hours and define fee structures accordingly? · Have you established guidelines for pay and opportunities for employees who use flexible options? · Does your negotiation policy ensure the final outcome is fair to all?

**How is compensation determined?** · Do you have a process for determining wages that is free from bias? · Do you measure required skills and effort, level of responsibility, experience, and working conditions consistently? · Is your firm's performance-review process objective and fairly administered? · Are bonuses comparable for similar levels of performance? · If there are gaps and variances, are they justifiable using legitimate rationales? · Have you examined historical patterns of pay inequality both in your firm and more broadly and committed to changing them?

## CONNECTIONS

**How do your business practices affect compensation?** · How do your practices influence client and public opinion about the value of architectural services? · Do economic pressures (such as lowering fees to secure work or cost of employee benefits) have a disparate impact on certain employees? · How do you monitor the ways competitive practices affect equity across pay levels?

**What other factors impact compensation?** · Are your pay and other benefits perceived as fair when employees compare them to those of other similar organizations, and is this helping or hurting your equity goals? · How does your compensation philosophy relate to your community and culture? · Do client preferences for subjective things, like certain employee personalities or identities, divert compensation decisions from the firm's objective criteria?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

Persistent gaps and their cumulative impact on careers and life make it important for employees to be aware of issues and diligent in taking steps to help increase equity.

### KNOW THE P(L)AYING FIELD

Stay on top of current compensation information as you enter and operate within the workforce.

- **Learn about the broad and complex issues in compensation** and how they relate to individuals, couples, families, firms, the profession, and society. Have a grasp on the factors that will be present as you make different choices that affect your career—education, firm, role, caregiving, outward expression of certain personality or identity traits, etc.
- **Identify employers with transparent and fair compensation practices** who will value your skills and strengths. During the negotiation process, ask about their pay structures—including pay bands for employees with your experience level—how they handle flexible time, and how they monitor pay equity; cross-check information with current or past employees of the firm. See whether there is diversity in all roles and at all levels and if there is high turnover. If you see a possible issue, ask and find out whether the firm has a plan to address it.
- **Know the range of pay** expected for an employee at your level, size of firm, and location. See resources like the AIA Compensation Survey Salary Calculator, the AIA Compensation Report, and the Architecture Salary Poll.<sup>40</sup>
- **Be aware of industry and federal rules** and requirements for compensation, such as minimum wage, intern, salary, and overtime pay.<sup>41</sup> Sharing past pay information with a new employer can hurt you, and in some states it is illegal for employers to ask for it or consider it. (See the Compliance section of this guide.)
- **Stay abreast of the compensation philosophy and policies** at your firm, especially during review periods and changes in your work situation.

- **Have open conversations with colleagues** of similar and different demographics in your firm, in other firms, and in other roles in the profession (such as specialists and consultants) about compensation details and trends for the purposes of increasing equity.<sup>42</sup>

### KNOW YOUR VALUE AND BE PROACTIVE

Understanding and advocating for equitable compensation is important for you and for motivating organizations to recognize and address inequity in their compensation practices.

- **Track your own performance and development** to be prepared for performance reviews or for any concerns that may arise. Keep a record of your employment history—dates of career milestones, reviews, requests, work contributions and their value to the firm, skill development, achievements, compensation history.
- **Practice negotiation**, and do it effectively. (See the *Negotiation* guide.)
- **Learn to pinpoint and articulate your value** relative to your organization's goals. What work are you doing that matters the most; for what work are you most likely to be rewarded? Is there equity in role and task assignment, or are there certain roles and tasks that might be undervalued because of the identity of the people who typically do them? If you are helping your firm reach its EDI goals, are you being compensated accordingly?
- **Let your supervisors and colleagues know** about your expertise and skills and your goals for development. Have conversations about the importance of compensation reflecting the value of work, which does not always correlate with the number of hours worked.
- **Learn how to write an effective self-evaluation**, and ask for a promotion when you feel it is deserved—or sooner.<sup>43</sup>

- **Enlist allies and sponsors** to support your visibility and help you advance. For Black employees especially, being referred and having advocates helps attain promotions.<sup>44</sup>
- **Affirm your own potential.** For Black employees, self-affirmation is essential to staying the course.<sup>45</sup>
- **Continue your professional development,** training, and networking to build knowledge and connections. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)
- **Consider saying yes to opportunities** or challenges that will build and exhibit the value of your work. Distinguish between opportunities that help you advance and those that do not, such as office housework (scheduling, notes, social planning, managing documents, emotional labor) and low-profile work.

### BE AN ACTIVE MANAGER

Managers are key in ensuring that employees are equitably compensated and the organization benefits from their full potential. Employers should support managers by providing the information, tools, and training they need to effectively and equitably manage compensation. (For additional considerations, see the *Negotiation* and *Recruitment and Retention* guides.)

- **Know the skills of your employees** through direct and structured conversation with each individual, using their resume, current job description, and past work as guides (though not as limitations).
- **Discuss with each employee what their compensation expectations are** and how they align with the firm's compensation structure and policies. Remember to consider and accommodate the different ways that different employees might communicate their expectations; recognize your possible biases around these styles.
- **Clearly define what work is valued and how it is evaluated,** and set goals with your employees that tie together work and compensation targets.
- **Have open conversations about what types of compensation different employees value;** communicate this information to management to keep the firm's approach to compensation relevant.
- **Listen to flexibility requests** from employees, and allow these to be tailored to the individual; discuss and decide up front how to keep compensation equitable according to value of work.

- **Assign work according to experience, talent, skills, and interest,** and give everyone access to work that lets them take risks and develop new skills.
- **Ensure that the most desirable work is assigned equitably.** Discuss with other managers to identify what is lower-profile and higher-profile (career-advancing) work in your organization, regularly assess who is doing what and for how long, and analyze for demographic and supervisor patterns. Use Bias Interrupters worksheets to guide the process.<sup>46</sup> (See Resources section of this guide.)
- **Distribute office housework equally.** Assign tasks to those in administrative support roles if possible, or rotate tasks rather than asking for volunteers. Regularly assess who is doing what, and redistribute the housework of anyone unfairly burdened.<sup>47</sup>
- **Monitor performance reviews for implicit bias.** Distinguish between actual and potential performance, and appraise them separately. Evaluate skills independent of personality. (Read "Identifying & Interrupting Bias in Performance Evaluations."<sup>48</sup>)
- **Encourage employees to promote themselves,** and set the expectation that everyone do so. Have alternatives to self-promotion for employees to share their successes, such as regular emails that list everyone's accomplishments.
- **Give clear and frequent feedback** so employees can recognize and address any issues in the content or perception of their work. Provide guidelines and support for employees to respond, and remember to monitor whether culture-based expectations or biases are inaccurately reinforcing your or the employee's assumptions.

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"I interview people; I recommend them. My boss says, 'Offer them anywhere in this range.' We offered the same salary to one male and one female. The female accepts the job and the male asks for more money. Because of that the guy ends up making more money."

Architect, White, Female,  
Lesbian, Early 30s

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## FIRMS

Compensation in architecture is a perennial issue. The undervaluation of architectural services in our current economy prompts firms, at times, to make tough choices in order to survive, and firm owners are in a position to make choices that could directly or indirectly impact their employees' quality of life and their own.<sup>49</sup> This dilemma can make it possible for unclear and inconsistent compensation practices to arise, causing inequity. Clear and communicated policies and processes can ensure that instance-to-instance decisions are fair, aligned with the firm's equity goals, and compliant with laws and professional ethics. (See the Compliance section of this guide.) Firms that commit to equity in compensation are investing in the long-term health of the business because they will attract and retain a diverse set of engaged, productive, and loyal employees.

**UNDERSTAND YOUR COMPENSATION PRACTICES**

Know your current practices and how they are working; identify issues and opportunities with a focus on equity.

- **Discuss among senior leaders** how they view compensation within the firm, why it has developed as it has, and their ideas for what it could be.
- **Gather your current job descriptions** and see if they reflect your needs and how they compare with similar descriptions in the market.
- **Locate and review current, reputable salary survey data** that is appropriate for your firm.
- **Assess your firm's current compensation system**, and evaluate what has worked well and what has not for employee engagement and performance. Consider compensation structures (array of levels) and policies (procedures for decision-making) as connected to the array of things that constitute compensation in your organization (direct and indirect, monetary and nonmonetary).
- **See if there are certain compensation trends linked** to specific groups or managers within the firm. Repeated instances of certain identity groups receiving high-profile work assignments may be a sign of systemic bias.
- **Evaluate whether and how wage gaps are occurring** at key points (starting pay, merit pay, promotion pay increases), especially at recognized pinch points in architecture (finding the right job fit, gaining licensure, caregiving, reduced paths forward at certain personal and career crossroads, transitions to leadership, retirement), and how they relate to your compensation structure or policies.<sup>50</sup>
- **Examine specific decision-making protocols and practices**, such as automated changes, managerial discretion, and committee review.
- **Notice how your firm's context affects your compensation** (e.g., office locations, recruiting pool, local regulations, client relationships and expectations). Observe how your workplace culture supports or hinders compensation goals. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.)
- **Administer a survey that allows employees to share compensation information and concerns** that may not show up through the firm's data collection (such as indirect financial compensation and nonfinancial compensation that are not recorded or tracked).
- **Ask your current and exiting employees how they perceive compensation fairness** within the firm. Welcome anonymous feedback and suggestions. Whether perceptions turn out to be correct or incorrect, you will be able to communicate back to employees how individual situations relate to policies, and how they are equitable, or will be.
- **Consider hiring a consultant** to evaluate and structure your firm's compensation program.

**ESTABLISH A COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY, STRUCTURE, AND POLICY**

Managing compensation requires that leaders agree on how compensation is defined, what compensation should do, and where it should lead. Consider using a diverse committee that manages compensation to align it with business needs and to ensure that it is equitable, legally and ethically defensible, easy to communicate, and perceived as fair.

- **Write your firm's compensation philosophy** with the purpose of attracting, retaining, and motivating employees equitably. Determine how you will use compensation (direct, indirect, and nonfinancial) to get the results you want. Your approach will vary according to your firm budget, regional economic conditions, and broader market forces and in what aspects you will lead (i.e., pay more than competitors), match, or lag the market.
- **Develop a transparent compensation structure** that supports your compensation philosophy. Update job descriptions and establish pay grades and ranges for the different work within the organization. Consider how work is assigned, how compensation is determined, and what elements of nonwage compensation you will offer.<sup>51</sup> Know how you will determine both equal work and work of equal value.



- **Do a market value analysis** to compare your policies to those of peer firms, and check for external equity.
- **Develop compensation policies.** Include all forms of compensation, and consider how they are weighted (valued) by individuals and by the organization and if there is alignment of values. Include policies for all pay actions (starting pay, merit and promotional pay, bonuses), compensation-related decisions (part-time, flextime, opportunities), and procedures (negotiation, evaluation, audits). Establish how to determine pay differences by factors such as job responsibilities, title, time in job, part-time status, location, time with firm, education, licensure, and prior experience. Recognize specific contributions made by people with target identities to projects in which their involvement is required or otherwise valued. At the same time, avoid patterns of assigning lower-visibility projects or giving fewer choices to employees with target identities.
- **Ensure that your financial operating metrics relate to your equity goals.** Compare compensation-equity measures to firm-wide financial-performance measures—such as utilization and overhead rates, net revenue per employee, and firm profits and investment—to develop an understanding of how compensation value might be more equitably measured or allocated.
- **Update your compensation program** at least every two to five years to stay aligned with market and firm changes. It is easier and less costly to make incremental rather than significant changes.

### BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT COMPENSATION

Transparency is a substantial way of achieving and maintaining compensation equity by ensuring equitable power and accurate perception. While transparency can be uncomfortable at first, opacity allows inequity to continue unchallenged and denies employees information they need to make prudent career and life decisions. Additionally, if employees perceive that compensation is inequitable, whether or not it is true, they will mistrust not only compensation practices but also other management decisions.

- **Develop a value statement** to communicate the firm's compensation philosophy, and have a written policy governing all pay decisions.<sup>52</sup> Discuss them with new employees during onboarding, and keep them readily available for all employees.
- **Create a structure of salary bands** that connect progressively greater job responsibilities with corresponding salary ranges, and ensure that

every employee has access to this structure and can see where they fit within it. Be clear with current and prospective employees about how the firm establishes pay and the timing, criteria, and conditions for pay increases and promotions. Though it is not a recommended practice, if pay history is considered in setting compensation (in states where it is legal), develop and communicate firm policy on how it is used.

- **Consistently and regularly communicate compensation information** and changes with all managers.
- **Inform employees that they are free to openly discuss compensation** without fear of retaliation.
- **Regularly audit messaging** to check that the firm's communication about advancement is bias-free.

### LEAD EQUITABLE COMPENSATION PRACTICES

There are many approaches and resources for improving equity in compensation practices.

- **Base salary offers on job content and the applicant's qualifications,** not on a previous salary. (In some locations, asking for salary history is illegal.) This practice will help to decrease pay gaps profession-wide. Asking "What salary range do you expect?" is a possible alternative to asking about previous salary.
- **Consider the pros and cons of a no-negotiation policy.**<sup>53</sup> This strategy has been proposed as an alternative way of closing pay gaps. (See the *Negotiation* guide.)
- **Reward employees based on performance rather than on visibility.** Some employees may be overlooked due to hours in the office, workspace, alternative work times or locations, or personality.
- **Provide flexible work time and location arrangements** (e.g., flexible hours, compressed workweeks, part-time work, job sharing, working from home, a satellite office, or on the move), which can benefit both employees and employers.<sup>54</sup> Employees who work fewer hours per week often make a lower hourly rate for doing the same work as full-time employees—keep close attention that compensation reflects the value of work. Provide messaging to counteract the stigma sometimes associated with using a flexible arrangement.<sup>55</sup> (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)

- **Conduct regular pay audits** (annually, at minimum) to check for inequity. Include all forms of compensation, both cash and noncash (hourly pay rates, salary, overtime, bonuses, stock options, profit sharing, life insurance, vacation/holiday pay, allowances, travel expenses, benefits, etc.), examine all types of decisions (starting pay, promotional pay, bonuses and profit sharing, benefits, flexibility, etc.), and use multiple analysis methods.<sup>56</sup> Time audits to precede performance reviews so that your raise and promotion decisions can be fair.
- **Schedule and announce pay reviews for all employees at the same time** of year to address salaries holistically. Also review individual employee pay at key milestones: hiring, licensure, and promotion. Be clear on the timeline for follow up with employees on outcomes and decisions, and state if there will be a window of time to negotiate.
- **Monitor performance evaluations**, and track metrics according to supervisor, department, and organization. Examine patterns tied to different demographic groups (men, women, people of color) for rating-level, raise, and promotion trends, especially after a leave or during flexible work arrangements.
- **Address unjustified disparities.** Provide pay increases, along with back pay for the full period of the gap, to bring an affected employee's compensation in line.
- **Do not allow exceptions** to your pay policies. Your employees' trust is invaluable and depends on your transparency and fairness. If someone is adversely affected, consider revising the policy for everyone.

### FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT

Nonfinancial compensation is as important as financial compensation. Offering opportunities equitably helps prevent wage gaps and invests in a firm's most valuable assets. (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.)

- **Make development a part of your organization's culture**, and remove structural barriers in your firm that impede equitable employee opportunity and growth. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.)
- **Provide development opportunities to employees at all levels**, outside of their primary job function—education and training to develop new skills, time with leaders, networking, mentorship, and sponsorship—transparently and equitably.<sup>57</sup>

- **Offer all employees stretch assignments** and a mix of experiences aligned with their career aspirations and developmental needs. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)
- **Announce opportunities widely**, and allow employees to gauge and express their own interest, availability, and suitability. Watch for and flag assumptions made by managers who may be operating based on partial or incorrect information, stereotypes, or personal interests or preferences.
- **Make sure all employees have equal access to the resources**—time, funds, staff, information—they need to pursue their assignments and development.
- **Ensure that workers with flexible and part-time work arrangements have access** to the same opportunities and benefits, training, and promotion opportunities as other employees.<sup>58</sup>

### PROFESSION

The complexities of compensation in the context of the economy and society make it important for those in the profession to share information and address issues.

### KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING

Use a mix of resources to stay connected to the conversation. Learn what issues and problem-solving approaches are occurring within our profession and outside of it.

- **Stay up to date on issues and research in the profession** through groups such as the AIA, American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), American Indian Council of Architects and Engineers, the Architecture Lobby, Arquitectos, Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), Equity by Design (EQxD), National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), National Organization of Minority Architecture Students (NOMAS), and World Deaf Architects.
- **Pay attention to the quickly changing legal and social landscape** around compensation. Bring in outside experts to share their knowledge.
- **Follow business-oriented sources**, such as Catalyst, Deloitte, *Forbes*, Gallup, *Harvard Business Review*, Lean In, McKinsey, Pew Research Center, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and Women's Leadership Edge.

## SUPPORT COMPENSATION EQUITY PROFESSION-WIDE

Be a resource and an advocate for compensation equity throughout the profession.

- **Encourage wide contribution to national-level compensation surveys** conducted by groups like the AIA and EQxD. Consider adding a data set: track, assess, and publish pay rates and other forms of compensation for different firms across geography, size, etc., paired with demographic data.
- **Establish guidelines for *equal value***—roles within architecture that have substantially similar requirements for experience or education—and suggestions on how to determine ranges of pay.
- **Recognize employers** for having high transparency with their employees and for holding regular audits that demonstrate compensation equity.
- **Encourage a diverse range of people to write about and present** on compensation topics.
- **Provide forums for discussion** on compensation equity between employees and firms, and with other industries.
- **Offer professional development and events** addressing current topics like pay transparency and audits, motherhood penalty/fatherhood bonus, office housework, and flexible work arrangements.
- **Provide business resources for sole practitioners and small firms** to help them instill equitable compensation practices as they grow.
- **Participate in efforts to improve professional contract and fee structures** to allow firms to invest more in their employees.
- **Connect with schools to share information and resources** that support learning, discussion, and advocacy around compensation topics relevant to student interns and graduates entering the workforce, such as pay expectations and regulations.

# Consider

## DISCRIMINATION HURTS

For a long time, I wanted to work on local projects, since before I was mostly involved in large international projects. So I joined a small firm, was a bit underpaid but told myself, “It’s a small firm, that’s what they can afford, but it feels like a family and I get more exposure to projects.” However, I changed my job after three and a half years because there was really no room there to grow and advance my career.

Two months after I started at a new firm, one of my female colleagues from the firm I had left informed me that some documents had been miraculously disclosed, or leaked: the salary reports of the firm’s employees from 2000 to 2018. They found out that the women in the firm were being paid on average 5% to 15% less than men; I was one of them, of course. More disturbingly, I learned that at the time that I was the lead designer of a project, one of my male project team members who I had trained and was ten years younger in skills and experience, actually had made twenty thousand dollars a year more than I had. For that project, we had strong evidence of discrimination. A number of my female colleagues and I decided to file a complaint through the EEOC. But you know how slow it can be when you start a legal process. It’s still ongoing but moving at glacial speed.

For me, what mattered most was not necessarily the end result, such as a payback, but to teach them a lesson so they no longer do it to others. But then it’s very stressful. It’s disappointing. These were people who called me “family.” I put my heart and soul into my projects, yet I wasn’t being

compensated enough. They were just discriminating behind closed doors and none of us were aware of that. So how do I know it's not happening in other firms? In my current firm, I'm getting a higher salary, but how do I know my other colleagues with similar or less experience aren't getting paid more than I am? I always heard women are on average being paid 10% to 20% less than men, but then I didn't fully apprehend it until it happened to myself. The gender pay gap is not a myth. It's really happening and it hurts.

— Full-Time Architect at a Large Firm, White, Female, 43

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DISCUSS:

- What forms of discrimination do you think were occurring? Assuming the firm leaders did not intentionally seek to discriminate, what factors, such as biases, processes, or policies, might have contributed to the salary discrimination? What might have prevented this discrimination?
- How did the culture of the firm end up hiding or sustaining pay inequities? How could the firm have been more transparent about their compensation practices? What types of compensation policies or practices would have been better aligned with the firm's culture?
- What could the firm do now to ensure that all employees are being paid equitably?
- Have you experienced or suspected salary discrimination in any firms where you worked? Have you worked at firms where you were confident that salaries were equitably distributed? How do you think these firms' cultures were a factor in perpetuating or preventing discrimination?
- Do you think the speaker's feelings would have been different if the expectation of "family" had been different?

# Consider

## BASE PAY MATRIX


People don't know how to get a raise, how to get recognized—what you do to distinguish yourself and move up—other than by having the same last name as the person who runs the firm, who did not earn their keep but bypassed people who've been there many years. We developed a base pay matrix to address some of those fundamental questions. We set up a transparent base pay for staff—three categories: designer-level, management-level, senior licensed architects. We value years of experience in the profession and years of experience—loyalty—with the firm, so you're moving to the right as you go. When you get to be in a management-level position, making decisions, guiding and directing staff under you, you have higher value to the firm, so you can move up a tier. So a young person can look and see entry-level designer, x dollars an hour, all the way to the top right, senior licensed architect, with twenty years experience, y dollars an hour, and all these steps in between. You see you're not stuck making what you started with indefinitely, but you can see how to move up. We felt that was important for young people wanting to navigate through the profession but also very important for women to see that this is the base pay everybody gets at this experience level—the guy sitting next to me doesn't make more. At the end of the year, we have discretionary bonuses based on productivity, but the base pay is clear, and people are able to chart their career.

— Managing Partner, Firm Owner, Black, Male, 46



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DISCUSS:

- How does this base pay matrix support equity between people in the firm?
  - What are the strengths of this approach? What types of bias could creep in when determining and managing this pay structure and bonuses?
  - What are the “fundamental questions” raised in this story? Are there other policies the firm should create to help address their questions? What other questions can compensation structure address?
  - Are there additional ways this firm can help employees chart their careers in the organization?
  - What reasons can you think of for such low transparency (estimated at only 13% for firms under one thousand people) around compensation for employees? Do you think transparency is hard to achieve in architecture? How might transparency be increased?
- 

# Consider

## LOSS OF FUTURE BENEFIT


Architects aren't taught to look at things from a business standpoint. When people make the decision to be with their kids, we're not taught about the loss of future benefits. They don't play out the scenario of staying in the workforce and advancing in their career and getting to a place, maybe, later in life when they can spend more time with their kids, when they're more comfortable, so they can give their kids different types of experiences. The decision is very much about the present day: "I can only make as much money as I need to pay for childcare, so I'm going to stay home."

For me, I'm not a stay-at-home mom, could never be one, but I don't think there are enough people talking about the full picture of what goes into making that decision because I think it's really hard to come back, especially if you want to stay in the profession. There are basic economics behind why some firms can't support new parents in general—they run at zero profitability once salaries are paid, so it's really hard to support parents who want to leave and come back and get supported as overhead while they're gone. It needs to be a complete mind shift, which is harder to achieve than throwing money at a problem.

— Workplace Strategist, Asian, Female, 39

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DISCUSS:

- What assumptions, values, and goals might this person have that others might not share?
  - What are economic factors that make it difficult to have children and progress in a career in architecture?
  - What are the impacts of staying or leaving the profession?
  - How might the factors and impacts vary for different demographic groups (gender, socioeconomic background/class, education, age, family culture)?
  - In what ways could employees and employers work together to balance caregiving and career progression?
  - How might architecture firms' business models evolve to better support caregiving?
- 

# Consider

## CYCLE OF COMPRESSION

I started at a large firm out of grad school, I was glad to have a job, I had student loans and the economy was in a downturn, and my starting pay—which I was told was nonnegotiable—seemed higher than at other firms. I later found out a male classmate of mine with the same experience level was started at a higher salary and had negotiated.

I was placed in a role that I was happy with at the time because it seemed good for my development, but I later realized it was a trap for women in that firm. They are rarely allowed into design roles (even though I had won design awards throughout my education), and progression in the firm outside the design track is limited because you have little contact with partners, and opportunities for recognition are few. There were annual reviews, but it became clear that if you didn't have an advocate in that room, your performance was irrelevant (my bosses were being continually laid off or fired, and I had to take on their work, which was a lot of responsibility but also meant my advocate was gone). There was no feedback on what decisions for promotion or raises were based on and no guidance on how to advance.

I resigned from the firm on good terms after five years because despite becoming licensed, being dedicated and productive with high-quality work, directing project teams on multi-million-dollar projects, managing parts of billion-dollar projects, bringing positive recognition to the firm via cultivating good consultant, client, and industry relationships...I was still at entry pay

level. The reasoning I was given by a manager was that the economy was still slow—but I knew the firm was making record profits, people on my projects were receiving bonuses, including a male coworker I worked with closely at the same level of responsibility.

I also contributed a lot to the firm in trying to improve the firm culture, but I saw that was not something that led to advancement. On my last day, the office head of HR pulled me aside and said if I came back, I should negotiate for a much higher salary. When I took my next job, in large part due to increased flexibility for work-life balance, I was told their policy set incoming pay based on the salary of my previous job, which locked me back into the low pay set by my prior firm.

— Sole-Proprietor Architect and Educator, White, Female, 36

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DISCUSS:

- What information should this person have known to advocate for her rights and navigate these compensation issues?
- How did their lack of transparency give the employers unequal power?
- What forms of discrimination were possibly occurring? What policies could have been in place and practices shared with the employee for equitably handling negotiation and determining pay?
- How can compensation systems fail in addressing poor management practices, small-scale pay inequities occurring over time, and the organization's underlying philosophical issues?

# Consider

## OVERTIME

Leadership recently called a team meeting between me, a few juniors, and a few intermediate architects regarding unpaid overtime. The senior associate said, “You have to understand the profession that you entered. Architecture is not a nine-to-five profession. We cannot afford to pay you overtime, but we do need more from you. To make the next deadline, maybe you can take one day off during the weekend, but otherwise we need you here.” The only woman in leadership on the team said, “It’s like when you take care of a baby: if you take care of the baby from nine to six, at six, do you just leave and let the baby die? No! This is what makes architecture fun! Because everybody is in it to do great work, not to make money!”

Someone on my team reported what was said at the meeting to HR and because she was told that her identity could not be guaranteed to be kept confidential, she asked HR to not say anything from fear of backlash from the leadership, and nothing was done. HR acknowledged that it is company policy to “pay overtime but only when it has been previously approved.” And apparently, being asked by your project leaders to work overtime does not constitute prior approval. You need to ask the principal to sign off on it before you do the overtime. How convenient that the policy is, “Oh, you should have asked the principal before you did it. Now it’s too late.”

I did make my views on unpaid overtime clear when the project architect and I went to lunch the other week, and he tried to convince me to help him “motivate the others to come in to work without paid overtime.” I



suggested that the firm give us comp days if they aren't intending to pay us. That same week they made everybody put their mobile phone numbers on a spreadsheet for "emergencies only," and the very next week, I worked fifty-two hours and decided not to go in over the weekend. On Saturday I received a text from someone ten years my senior: "Just a no-obligation suggestion—if you would like to assist and actually learn what I have done today to complete the elevator-lobby enlarged plan, feel free to drop by tomorrow between one p.m. to five p.m. I'll be at the office."

Then on Monday, I received a text from the same project architect I'd had lunch with: "You should talk to the principal about these comp days. The thing to remember is that none of this should be seen as quid pro quo on an hour-for-hour basis. It's about an organic give and take, much of that being valuable experience and knowledge gained, a great set for your portfolio, and ultimately a built project. Bean counting the hours for 'fair' compensation is another attitude entirely, and not necessarily one that's fully compatible with this business. The variables and subjectivity are simply too great!"

— Architect, White, Female, 30–40

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#### DISCUSS:

- What are the issues exhibited in this scenario, and why do you think they are occurring? Do you think any legal or ethical bounds have been overstepped?
- What would you recommend this employee do in the short term and the long term? What are the possible positive and negative outcomes of each approach?
- How might expectations and assumptions related to working overtime and receiving overtime pay vary according to people's identities or roles within a firm?
- What are the responsibilities of employees, managers, leaders, and HR toward defining, communicating, and managing work hours and overtime?
- What effects might these types of messages and practices have on compensation equity within the firm?

# Resources

## COMPENSATION IN ARCHITECTURE

### AIA Compensation Report 2019 – AIA

[purchase required]

<https://store.aia.org/products/aia-compensation-report-2017-pdf?variant=37198724609>

Tool compares compensation data for thirty-nine architecture firm positions. Looks at trends in architectural compensation and what incentives are being offered to retain talent.

### AIA Small Firm Compensation Report 2020 – AIA

[purchase required]

<https://www.aia.org/resources/178221-aia-small-firm-compensation-report>

Provides demographic and trend data for sole proprietorships and firms of fewer than three architectural staff employees.

### EQxD Metrics: Pay Equity Series (3 parts) – Annelise Pitts – Equity by Design (2017)

#### Part 1 - Overview

<http://eqxdesign.com/blog/2017/6/26/eq3sh1813brgmzndknr379oy05ajam>

#### Part 2 - From “Equal Pay for Equal Work” to Pay Equity

<http://eqxdesign.com/blog/2017/7/2/eqxd-metrics-from-equal-pay-for-equal-work-to-pay-equity>

#### Part 3 - Closing the Pay Gap

<http://eqxdesign.com>

<http://eqxdesign.com/blog/2017/7/6/9whxr744rkmmej57ggz030qm68t30d>

Three-part series reviews the salary data from the Equity by Design survey. Part 1 describes the state of the pay gap in architecture. Part 2 discusses the primary forces that affect the wage gap. Part 3 addresses ways to close the pay gap through policies and practices.

### Salary Calculator – AIA

<http://info.aia.org/salary/salary.aspx>

Calculator uses salary data from the compensation tool to provide mean and median salaries for various architectural positions, considering geographic location and firm revenue.

## GUIDES AND TOOL KITS

### Bias Interrupters – Center for WorkLife Law

<https://Biasinterrupters.org>

Offers many tool kits and worksheets for individuals and organizations to interrupt bias. See their tool kits for compensation and performance evaluations.

### Interrupting Bias in Performance Evaluations – Women’s Leadership Edge

[subscription provided for AIA members]

<https://www.womensleadershipedge.org/category/webinars/>

Webinar that gives examples of how bias affects performance evaluations, which can be used to determine promotions and merit increases. Gives guidelines for developing a review process that eliminates bias.

### Managing Pay Equity – SHRM (2018)

[subscription required]

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/pages/pay-equity.aspx>

Summarizes the pay gap and laws related to pay equity and offers in-depth guidelines for reviewing pay policies for fairness and for improving policies.

### re:Work Guide: Structure and Check for Pay Equity – Google

<https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/pay-equity/steps/introduction/>

Several-part guide for analyzing pay procedures—starts with an overview of the pay gap and the high-level goals organizations should have regarding pay policies, then provides specific guidelines for reviewing and adjusting policies that may be inequitable.

## WAGE GAPS

### **The Fatherhood Bonus and the Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Pay – Thirdway – Michelle J Budig (2014)**

<https://www.thirdway.org/report/the-fatherhood-bonus-and-the-motherhood-penalty-parenthood-and-the-gender-gap-in-pay>

Analyzes the impact of having a family on the salaries of men and women: men's salaries tend to increase with each child while women's tend to decrease.

### **Graduating to a Pay Gap – Christianne Corbett and Catherine Hill – AAUW (2012)**

[https://aauw-ne.aauw.net/files/2013/07/AAUW\\_Graduating\\_to\\_a\\_Pay\\_Gap\\_Report\\_-\\_2012.pdf](https://aauw-ne.aauw.net/files/2013/07/AAUW_Graduating_to_a_Pay_Gap_Report_-_2012.pdf)

Study of the wage gap between men and women college graduates working full time one year after graduating. Discusses the impact of this immediate pay gap and the disproportionate student-loan debt burden it places on women.

### **How to Achieve Gender Equality in Pay – The Milken Institute Review – Claudia Goldin (2015)**

[https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/goldin/files/gender\\_equality.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/goldin/files/gender_equality.pdf)

Examines the wage gap between genders, factoring for education, age, experience, and industry. Looks at how different job structures affect the gap. Conclusion: the amount of time worked in a week affects hourly rate; those who work longer hours tend to make more money per hour as well.

### **Racial Wage Gap for Men – Payscale (2019)**

<https://www.payscale.com/data/racial-wage-gap-for-men>

Study of wage gaps between white men and men of various racial and ethnic groups.

### **The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap – AAUW (2018)**

<https://www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap/>

Defines the gender pay gap and what causes it and shows how it affects different demographic groups. Suggests ways to address the gap for different groups of people: individuals, employers, and the government. Offers guidelines to address gender-based discrimination at work.

# Notes

1. See *The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap* (Washington, DC: AAUW, Spring 2018), <https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/simple-truth/>. See updated data on how wages vary based on many factors, including race, age, disability, education, and sexual identity and gender orientation. “Databases, Tables, and Calculators by Subject: Pay & Benefits,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed September 24, 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/data/#wages>; “Equal Pay is an LGBT Issue,” National LGBTQ Task Force, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://www.thetaskforce.org/equal-pay-is-an-lgbt-issue/>; and Jackson Gruver, “Racial Wage Gap for Men,” Payscale, May 7, 2019, <https://www.payscale.com/data/racial-wage-gap-for-men>.
2. “America’s Women and the Wage Gap,” National Partnership for Women & Families, April 2018, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>. Men’s salaries tend to increase with each child while women’s salaries tend to decrease; this is true even when accounting for variables such as experience, hours worked, and education, which suggests much of the gap can be attributed to discrimination. For more information, see Claire Cain Miller, “The Motherhood Penalty vs. the Fatherhood Bonus,” *New York Times*, September 6, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/07/upshot/a-child-helps-your-career-if-youre-a-man.html?r=0&abt=0002&abg=0>.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey 1-year Estimates,” accessed September 27, 2018. Data tables available from American FactFinder, <https://factfinder.census.gov>; “Quantifying America’s Gender Wage Gap by Race/Ethnicity,” National Partnership for Women & Families, March 2020, <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/fair-pay/quantifying-americas-gender-wage-gap.pdf>; and Ariane Hegewich, “The Gender Wage Gap: 2017,” Institute for Women’s Policy Research, September 2018, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/C473.pdf>.
4. M. V. Lee Badgett et. al., “Bias in the Workplace: Consistent Evidence of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Discrimination,” Williams Institute, 2007, <https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cklawreview/vol84/iss2/7/>; and Jaime M. Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (Washington, National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011), [https://www.thetaskforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ntds\\_full.pdf](https://www.thetaskforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ntds_full.pdf).
5. Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, “The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations,” (NBER Working Paper Series 21913, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA, January 2016), <http://www.nber.org/papers/w21913.pdf>.
6. Education, region, race, and unionization are not major factors in explaining the gender wage gap. Ibid., 72.
7. Gruver, “Racial Wage Gap for Men.”
8. Liane Jackson, “Race and Gender Bias is Rampant in Law, Says New Report That Also Offers Tools to Fight It,” *ABA Journal*, September 6, 2018, [https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/race\\_and\\_gender\\_is\\_bias\\_rampant\\_in\\_law\\_says\\_new\\_report\\_that\\_also\\_offers\\_too](https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/race_and_gender_is_bias_rampant_in_law_says_new_report_that_also_offers_too).
9. For more information on this and other data, see Annelise Pitts, “EQxD Metrics: Pay Equity Series Overview (1 of 3),” Equity by Design, June 27, 2017, <http://eqxdesign.com/blog/2017/6/26/eq3sh1813brgmzndknr379oy05ajam>.
10. Note that a recently proposed Paycheck Fairness Act would amend the Equal Pay Act to allow employers to differentiate pay only on employee seniority, merit, and production.
11. “The State of Wage Inequality in the Workplace,” HIRED, 2018, <https://hired.com/wage-inequality-report>.
12. Claire Cain Miller, “As Women Take Over a Male-Dominated Field, the Pay Drops,” *New York Times*, March 18, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/20/upshot/as-women-take-over-a-male-dominated-field-the-pay-drops.html>.

13. Stephen Miller, "Close the Gender Pay Gap with Career Parity," Society of Human Resource Managers, April 10, 2018, <http://shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/compensation/pages/gender-pay-gap-closure-requires-career-parity.aspx>.

14. "Compensation Equity: Public Policy Issue Statement," Society for Human Resource Management, April 2018, <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/public-policy/hr-public-policy-issues/Documents/018CompPrincipleStatement.Final.04.10.18.pdf>.

15. Phil Bernstein, "Money, Architects, Value, Building," *Perspecta 47: The Yale Architecture Journal*, 2014.

16. Lydia Frank, "What Is Pay Transparency and Why Does It Matter?" Payscale, accessed June 13, 2018, <https://www.payscale.com/salary-negotiation-guide/what-is-pay-transparency>.

17. Jennifer Whelan, "The Myth of Merit and Unconscious Bias," *Conversation*, October 15, 2013, <https://theconversation.com/the-myth-of-merit-and-unconscious-bias-18876>.

18. American Association of University Women, *The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap* (Washington DC: AAUW, 2018), 22.

19. "The Lifetime Wage Gap, State by State," National Women's Law Center, April 4, 2018, <https://nwlcl.org/resources/the-lifetime-wage-gap-state-by-state/>.

20. United States Congress Joint Economic Committee Democratic Staff, "Gender Pay Inequality: Consequences for Women, Families and the Economy," April 2018, 13–14, [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/0779dc2f-4a4e-4386-b847-9ae919735acc/gender-pay-inequality---us-congress-joint-economic-committee.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/0779dc2f-4a4e-4386-b847-9ae919735acc/gender-pay-inequality---us-congress-joint-economic-committee.pdf).

21. Pay gaps also exacerbate student-loan debt burden. For example, women take on more student loans on average than men, and because they are paid less on average, it takes them longer to repay student loans. See "Deeper in Debt," AAUW, last modified May 2018, <https://www.aauw.org/research/deeper-in-debt/>.

22. Nicholas Korody, "The State of Debt and the Price of Architecture," *Architect*, November 3, 2014, <https://architect.com/features/article/112509888/the-state-of-debt-and-the-price-of-architecture>.

23. Joan C. Williams, Jessica Manvell, and Stephanie Bornstein, "'Opt Out' or Pushed Out?: How the Press Covers Work/Family Conflict," Center for WorkLife Law, University of California, 2006, <https://www>

[.psychologytoday.com/files/attachments/47131/optoutorpushedoutreportfinal.pdf](https://psychologytoday.com/files/attachments/47131/optoutorpushedoutreportfinal.pdf).

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25. Pitts, "Pay Equity Series Overview."

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29. See "Facts About Equal Pay and Compensation Discrimination," Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed July 18, 2018, <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/facts-about-equal-pay-and-compensation-discrimination>. For broad federal rules and requirements, see the U.S. Department of Labor website on Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa/>.

30. See the full Equal Pay Act of 1963 at <https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/equal-pay-act-1963>.

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32. Generally, a business needs to file if it has (or is owned by a company that has) over one hundred employees or if it has a federal contract of a certain



amount and fifty or more employees. See more information on the EEO-1 Survey at <https://www.eeoc.gov/employers/eo-1-survey>.

33. Stay up-to-date on your state laws. See also recent progressive laws passed in California, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New York.

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35. See “Filing A Charge of Discrimination,” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination>.

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[professionals/intern-declaration-policy/](#). In relatively rare instances, applicable law and AIA policy might sanction the employment of unpaid interns. See the U.S. Department of Labor information, such as “Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act,” last modified January 2018, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/71-flsa-internships>. For additional discussion on the topic, see “Pocket Guide to Labor Law,” Architecture Lobby, accessed September 25, 2018, <http://architecture-lobby.org/project/labor-law-pamphlet/>.

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43. “Writing an Effective Self-evaluation: Worksheet,” Bias Interrupters, 2016, <http://biasinterrupters.org/wp-content/uploads/Worksheet-Writing-an-Effective-Self-Evaluation.pdf>.

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47. See the Bias Interrupters “Small Steps Big Change 2” worksheet for finding out who is doing office housework, <http://biasinterrupters.org/wp-content/uploads/Office-Housework-Survey-Assignments-Document-2.pdf>.

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50. “Equity in Architecture Survey 2016,” Equity by Design, accessed July 9, 2018, [http://eqxdesign.com/eqia2016\\_earlyfindingsinfographics/](http://eqxdesign.com/eqia2016_earlyfindingsinfographics/).



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#### SECOND EDITION

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# Recruitment and Retention

## KEY TOPICS

burnout  
downsizing  
employee commitment  
employee engagement  
employee satisfaction  
feedback  
flexibility  
meaningful work  
microaggressions  
onboarding  
onlys  
performance  
pinch points  
talent  
turnover

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Talent is the lifeblood of any practice, and attracting and retaining talent is essential for the health of the profession overall. Engaging all employees in equitable and inclusive practices will help to recruit and retain a diverse workforce and is an effective means to success for firms of all sizes and types.

This guide outlines the importance of recruitment and retention in architecture, describes ways that help recruit a diverse workforce, and offers strategies for retaining employees through equitable practices at the individual, firm, and professional levels.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What are recruitment and retention?

Recruitment is the practice of attracting new talent by actively searching for, interviewing, and hiring candidates for a firm. It is key for both continuity and expansion of knowledge throughout the profession and for generating new ideas and diverse viewpoints in the practice of design. Retention results from keeping people engaged in the workplace by ensuring that they have what they need to succeed, including access to workplace support structures that help with career advancement and maintain harmony between work and life.

Successful recruitment means finding the right match between a prospective employee and a work environment. Architects recruit based on a variety of criteria, but prospective employees are often first attracted by the firm's quality of design. While employees may be drawn and highly committed to design quality, other factors that contribute to satisfaction and sustained focus in the work environment (e.g., meaningful work, feeling valued, receiving feedback, work/life fit, values alignment, reasonable workload) are crucial for successful retention.

Without meeting these criteria, the profession is susceptible to losing employees to other fields, especially those that require less personal sacrifice or offer higher remuneration. However, due to the cyclical nature of the profession, there may be times when the pressures to meet project needs overshadow carefully planned hiring priorities. Maintaining systems and processes that are nimble, consistent, and equitable can keep both the recruiter and the prospective employee focused on values, goals, and priorities during the recruitment process.

Recruitment for diversity may mean seeking people who have different identities from those currently represented in the firm. It can be helpful to keep in mind the concept of *intersectionality*: identities are

multifaceted, and race and gender present differently as they intersect with other factors, such as physical abilities, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic background.

The first challenge to increasing diversity in architecture begins at the entry point—young people of color are less often exposed to architects and architecture compared to other professions, leading to lower representation in architectural education and in the pool of candidates for employment. This challenge to increasing diversity through recruitment is compounded by implicit and explicit biases at play in firm recruitment practices.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, recruitment practices in architecture that seek out talent via word of mouth, personal references, or refer-a-friend schemes can impede diversity efforts as people's professional networks tend to be relatively homogeneous.<sup>2</sup>

Challenges to retention include: the volatility of the profession, which cycles between growth and downsizing, making it difficult to retain talent and to consistently ensure that there are opportunities for development; low pay relative to other professions; the culture of long hours; and the long path to full professional development. Under these pressures, it is critically important to establish policies and practices that ensure equity—creating a profession that is welcoming to all. Other factors contributing to retention are workplace flexibility, workload, control and autonomy, reward, community, fairness, and alignment of values.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the profession attaches a high value to design, and people with nondominant identities tend to be underrepresented in design areas. An implication of this phenomenon is that these professionals are less valued or must “prove it again”—do more and better work, make greater sacrifices—to be permitted access to design work.<sup>4</sup>

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

It is well documented that *employee engagement*—employees having a high level of involvement in and enthusiasm for their work—has a significant impact on productivity, reduces turnover, and increases retention. It is, therefore, one of the greatest advantages a company can have.<sup>5</sup> Employee engagement goes beyond what we commonly think of as employee satisfaction or employee commitment and incorporates a wide range of cognitive, behavioral, cultural, and organizational elements that can improve or hinder engagement in the workplace.<sup>6</sup>

- **Meaningful work:** Employees feel and hear from others that their work is meaningful (i.e., has value and significance). For architecture professionals, having meaningful work links clearly to retention.
- **Supportive workplaces:** Workplaces that are supportive and fair feel psychologically safe. Psychological safety means that employees feel that they have mutual trust with others, are comfortable sharing new ideas and being themselves without negative consequences, and believe that the tools and resources necessary for their job success are readily obtainable.<sup>7</sup>
- **Effective leadership:** Enthusiasm, satisfaction, and involvement with one's work are feelings that depend on perceptions about a manager's effectiveness. Studies on the connection between manager effectiveness and employee engagement show that work units with employees who view their manager as an effective leader are the most profitable.<sup>8</sup>

The 2018 Equity by Design (EQxD) survey results illustrate the importance of several of these factors.<sup>9</sup> Respondents who sensed that their work had a positive impact on their community were more likely to report that they intended to stay at their firm; when asked “what is the greatest pleasure that you get from working?” the most common response was “doing interesting, challenging work that gives me a sense of accomplishment.” Meanwhile, when asked what values drive them in their careers, the most common response was “stimulation, variation, challenge.” Overall career satisfaction and feelings about whether one is in the right profession were most closely tied to respondents' perceptions of the work that they do.

Respondents' intentions to stay in a particular firm were most closely tied to their perceptions of that firm's culture, including their relationships with peers and firm management. Respondents who indicated that they received one-on-one coaching and feedback at their firms were also more likely to say that they planned to stay.

“I had decided to take a break from architecture and do some labor organizing. Then my boss called and talked to me about her firm, how she was trying to diversify it and get more people with different experience together. She said that I had a really good way of communicating with clients and to other people, other architects, that she said would be beneficial, and that I would be able to grow those skills at her office. My boss would give me assignments, like if there were problems on a project that I wasn't managing, she'd put me on communications to give the project manager extra support. I can teach others what I'm good at, and they get more comfortable with their abilities.”

Architectural Designer, Asian American,  
Nonbinary, Queer, 28

#### CORPORATE PIPELINE REPRESENTATION BY GENDER AND RACE

Percentage of employees by level in 2018. (Graphic adapted from Rachel Thomas et. al., *Women in the Workplace*, Lean In and McKinsey & Company, 2019, [https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace\\_2019.pdf](https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2019.pdf).)

	ENTRY LEVEL	MANAGER	SR. MANAGER/ DIRECTOR	VP	SVP	C-SUITE
WHITE MEN	36%	46%	52%	59%	67%	68%
MEN OF COLOR	16%	16%	13%	12%	9%	9%
WHITE WOMEN	31%	27%	26%	24%	19%	19%
WOMEN OF COLOR	17%	12%	8%	6%	4%	4%

### IMPACT OF INEQUITY ON EMPLOYEES

Research on how inequities can affect employees from underrepresented groups in other professions provides useful information for the architectural profession. For the most part, these findings are echoed in the AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey. While the number of men and women leaving the profession is similar, the percentage impact on women is greater since fewer women enter the profession (despite nearly equal graduation rates from schools). This is particularly noticeable for women of color.<sup>10</sup> The primary reason for the underrepresentation of women is inequity in hiring and promotion.<sup>11</sup> Women are hired at lower rates into entry-level and managerial jobs.<sup>12</sup> They are also less likely to receive promotions to manager-level jobs.<sup>13</sup> These discrepancies in promotion are greater for women of color, particularly Black women.<sup>14</sup> Twice as many people of color in architecture (32%) say that they are less likely to be promoted to more senior positions than white people.<sup>15</sup> (For more on hiring and promotion inequities and their impact on compensation, see the *Compensation* guide. For information on how stereotypes affect evaluation practices, see the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

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“I don’t know if I’m the ‘only,’ but it sure feels like it. At the same time, I’m not even the only LGBT person in my firm; there’s another person, slightly younger but who started before me. It was odd: ‘I know things about your personal life; I don’t know if you’re out at work.’ So there were unspoken things for a couple of months until I figured out he was out at work, and we could relax. ‘I’m not the only one, you’re not the only one,’ but there was a definite period when I wasn’t sure what I was allowed to say about me, or him.”

Architect,  
White, Lesbian, 30s

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Unconscious bias is one explanation for these discrepancies in hiring and promotion, as is access to the managerial support and psychological safety that build employee engagement and equip employees for promotion.<sup>16</sup> For example, women receive less manager support than men in the form of resources, help in navigating organizational politics, opportunities to present their work, promotion of their contributions to others in the workplace, and socializing outside of work.<sup>17</sup> Women also have less access to senior leaders in their company, missing out on occasions to request promotions and new work.<sup>18</sup> These lost opportunities are compounded for women of color and lesbians.<sup>19</sup> Results from the 2018 EQxD survey found significant differences in interactions with managers on the basis of race and ethnicity, with both men and women of color having far less access than white men and women.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, underrepresented groups feel less psychological safety in the workplace. Sixty-four percent of women, along with half of men (particularly men of color and gay men), experience workplace microaggressions, or subtle acts of exclusion, such as having their judgment questioned within their own area of expertise and needing to provide greater evidence of their competence.<sup>21</sup> Microaggression in any of its forms (indirect, intentional or unintentional, and subtle or overt discriminatory slights) can affect the work environment.<sup>22</sup> The ability to identify microaggressions in the first place also varies. Men and women perceive overt gender discrimination at the same rate; however, women identify subtle microaggressions more often than men do.<sup>23</sup> Sexual harassment also remains prevalent, with 35% of women experiencing workplace sexual harassment during their career. These experiences occur more often among women in senior leadership (55%), lesbians (48%), and women in technical fields (45%).<sup>24</sup>

Members of underrepresented groups are also more likely to be an “only”: that is, to experience themselves as the only one of their identity in the workplace. The experience of being the only is relatively common, particularly for people of color, women (especially lesbians), and, in some settings, gay men. Women who are only experience higher levels of microaggressions (over 80%) and are twice as likely to be sexually harassed during their career. Being an only makes it difficult to engage at work, as onlys tend to feel more scrutinized, under greater pressure to perform, and less able to talk about themselves or their lives.<sup>25</sup>

When architecture firms establish support for onlys and strong cultures of engagement for all employees with target identities, they not only improve recruitment and retention (and hence the firm’s profit) but also align their firm with the discipline’s values of equity and societal benefit and, in turn, improve diversity within the firm itself.



# Why are recruitment and retention important?

In the 2016 EQxD survey, the numbers of architecture employees considering leaving their firm were roughly comparable to the percent of U.S. workers who were expected to leave their jobs each year (one in four).<sup>26</sup> Yet 77% of employees who quit stated that they could have been retained by their prior company if their desires for career development, work-life fit, and manager behavior had been met.<sup>27</sup>

The current business model of traditional architectural practice is closely tied to the U.S. and global economies: booms and downturns are the norm, leading to cycles of hiring and downsizing.<sup>28</sup> Mergers and acquisitions can also affect personnel practices, firm culture, and leadership.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, architectural firms increasingly compete for talent with other sectors of the building industry and with other industries that find value in architecture-trained graduates. During economic downturns, while all firms, especially small ones, experience more pressure to lay off employees, larger firms can somewhat more easily afford to shift and retain staff to soften the impact across the organization. These cycles have impacted entire generations of architects since many who graduate and enter a poor job market leave the field and do not return. For some graduates, alternative careers can be positive, and, in general, having strong nonarchitectural pathways for graduates benefits the profession. However, the choice to pursue a nonarchitectural career is arguably most positive when it is supported by the profession and intentionally included in a career plan.

It should be noted that in architecture, there are many assumptions and myths regarding concept-design work as being different or more valued than the many other types of work needed to deliver a project. Architects considering leaving the field may find that remaining in architecture in a nondesign area of practice fits their skills and interest. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide for more on this point.)

## INDIVIDUALS

While recruitment can bring in new talent, how engaged that talent is once in the workplace can strongly influence business outcomes. Businesses that score in the top quartile in employee engagement have almost twice the success (measured by a combination of financial, customer, retention, safety, quality, shrinkage, and absenteeism metrics) compared to companies in the bottom quartile.<sup>30</sup> However, only 31% of employees in the U.S. and 15% of employees worldwide are reportedly “engaged.”<sup>31</sup> This high lack of engagement has a serious impact on productivity and company success.

**Quality of life** · Engaged employees take pleasure in their work, have healthy work-life harmony, and are enthusiastic and energized. They see their workplace as supportive and fair.<sup>32</sup> Workplace flexibility enables employees to care for their families and their health.

**Meaningful work** · Retaining employees after recruitment depends on employees seeing their work as meaningful and valued. Firms whose culture aligns with personal values and that provide feedback on how an employee’s work supports company goals make work more meaningful and engaging for employees.<sup>33</sup> (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.)

**Belonging** · Feeling certain that you belong is a key retention factor. For only especially, firms that support participation in affinity groups within and outside the firm provide an extra sense of belonging. Inclusive communication and work spaces, a clear onboarding process, and welcoming social events can convey an open and inclusive culture.<sup>34</sup>

**Safety** · When employees from underrepresented groups have workplaces that are psychologically and physically safe, they are more likely to be engaged in their work and stay at the firm.

**Access to resources** · Retention requires providing employees with the resources they need to do their jobs. Having equitably distributed and accessible resources improves engagement.



**Career building** · It is important to provide equitable access to design work. Attending to employees who develop specialized expertise, and not pigeonholing them, will ensure that they continue to have choices in the types of work they do.

**Pinch points** · Pinch points are career phases or milestones when progress is most likely to be hindered: education, “paying dues,” attaining licensure, caregiving, and reaching the glass ceiling.<sup>35</sup> These milestones tend to occur during major events, such as changes to a family or caring for an elderly parent—responsibilities that tend to fall more on women.<sup>36</sup> In architecture, pinch points for people of color typically occur earlier, with a lack of role models and exposure to architecture, generally more difficulty in affording the cost of education, and family pressure to pursue careers with more earning potential. After employment, these pinch points take place particularly in the crucial early stages of careers when, for example, fewer people of color are promoted from production to project architect roles within the first seven years of employment, a setback that can have lasting impact.<sup>37</sup> Having employers who understand and support employees during pinch points improves retention. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide.)

**Feeling valued** · Effective recruitment identifies employee potential, interests, and skills. Inviting all employees, including onlys, to contribute to the organization’s collective intelligence improves retention.<sup>38</sup>

#### MANAGERS

**Workplace culture** · Positive workplace cultures have enthusiastic and involved employees. Whether employees perceive management as effective and fair is a predictor of retention and a sign of a positive work culture.<sup>39</sup>

**Equitable feedback** · Managers can ensure that they are providing a variety of feedback—formal and informal, annual and ongoing—equitably among all employees.<sup>40</sup>

#### FIRMS

**Cost of turnover** · The cost of replacing an employee can be as much as five times an annual salary.<sup>41</sup> Effective recruitment and retention practices improve profit.

**Value of talent** · A firm known for a strong workplace culture with high levels of employee engagement and equitable access to resources, support, and mentorship can attract a more diverse and talented applicant pool. Explicitly valuing all types of work, areas of expertise, and contributions promotes greater diversity.

**Strong and healthy firm culture** · How firms recruit and retain their employees affects workplace culture. Fundamentally, firms need to ensure a supportive work environment—for example, by preventing microaggressions that stem from bias and that, when accumulated, can cause feelings of insecurity, self-doubt, and anger and can lead to the departure of nonmajority employees. A high level of employee engagement is an indication that the workplace culture is healthy and well aligned with employees’ values.

**A diverse workforce** · Equitable hiring and promotion practices that address unconscious bias will help increase diversity at each level. Actively seeking a diverse talent pool will yield a greater range of potential candidates and will give more access to different perspectives, skills, and strengths.

**Institutional memory** · Firms that retain employees are able to preserve knowledge of past projects and lessons learned and will be more able to pass this knowledge on to current and future colleagues.

**Ability to win and execute work** · Many architectural projects take multiple years to complete. Firms that retain employees can provide clients with consistent points of contact and sources of knowledge over the life of a project.

#### PROFESSION

**Diversity and talent** · Not everyone is able or willing to enter a profession that requires expensive education and offers low, unstable, or inequitable pay. People from constrained socioeconomic backgrounds may find the cost of architecture school and the necessary supplies to be prohibitive (61% of whites vs. 69% of people of color). In addition, low pay makes it harder to attract students into the profession and to retain professionals who can leave for better opportunities. Respondents to the EQxD 2018 survey reported hesitating before pursuing architecture because of low salary (45% of respondents of color), long hours (25% of respondents), and the cost of the degree. White men are least likely to say that they hesitated before entering the field, while people of color and first- and second-generation college students and their parents are more likely to prefer to choose a degree in higher-paying careers.<sup>42</sup>

**The long path of education and time to licensure** · Compared with other professions, the timeline to professional licensure and maturity is long and can be daunting.

**Lack of visibility of the profession** · The challenge of diversity in recruitment is often due to people not being exposed to the profession until it is too late to consider the relatively long educational and training path to becoming an architect. Many discover architecture by accident. In particular, first-generation college students and young people of lower socioeconomic status are less likely to be aware of the profession and develop the interest and determination to enter it early and assertively enough to counter family and social pressures to enter more lucrative fields.

**The culture of long hours** · The expectation of long workdays begins in school and continues at firms, especially, but not only, those that are perceived as having higher design standards. This demand for time tends to lead to higher-than-typical turnover and burnout. Additionally the distribution of after-hours work can be inequitable, falling disproportionately on those earlier in their careers or those without families. Yet high-quality design work and a high quality of life are not mutually exclusive. For example, some recent design award winners also cited their commitment to a forty-hour workweek for all employees.<sup>43</sup> The most recent EQxD survey finds that forty-hour workweeks tend to lead to better perceptions of work-life fit compared to longer workweeks.<sup>44</sup>

# We more easily recruit and retain employees when...

## ALIGNMENT

members of underrepresented groups feel comfortable and supported when contributing to their firm's collective intelligence

firms recruit for diversity and then embrace difference

diversity and gender balance are communicated as benefiting the whole profession

the profession is known in popular culture and in broader society as open, accessible, and equitable

goals for improving firm diversity are ambitious but realistic and supported by a plan of action

## COMPLIANCE

managers with hiring responsibility understand what can and cannot be asked during an interview

diversity characteristics are set as flexible but expected targets, not quotas

hiring managers are trained in and aware of discrimination laws

## ENGAGEMENT

connections between satisfaction, engagement, and commitment are understood

warning signs of burnout are noticed and addressed early

all employees have equitable access to flexible policies and a psychologically and physically safe workplace

management and employees engage in relationships that support ongoing feedback

firm and employee values are aligned, improving the likelihood of positive engagement

## INFLUENCE

firms reduce tokenism and work to mitigate and eliminate the experience of being the only

the process for attaining desirable opportunities is clear and open

other work responsibilities are seen as equally valuable as design

processes for promotion are designed to interrupt bias and help to advance employees from underrepresented groups toward leadership positions

# Compliance

There are employment laws in place to ensure that recruitment and promotion are being enacted fairly and without discrimination. For instance, because it is unlawful to base hiring decisions on characteristics (sex and race) protected by federal law, recruiters must refrain from asking questions that would elicit such information. Other characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender identity, are protected in certain jurisdictions and not others. Characteristics may also be defined differently in certain jurisdictions (“age” refers to those forty or older under federal law, for example, but refers to those eighteen or older under District of Columbia law). There are also things a firm may and may not do to retain an employee going through a life or career transition. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach for how to best recruit and retain an individual, federal, state and local laws, professional codes of ethics, and professional organizations provide guidelines and legal requirements that will help firms maintain compliance and encourage an equitable workplace culture.

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

While private architecture firms are not subject to the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, they are required by law to have affirmative action programs in place when working as a contractor or subcontractor on a federal-government project. To meet the requirements of Title VII, program implementation should be documented with records regularly maintained and stored. Programs may include training, practices and policies on recruitment, and prohibitions of physical and verbal harassment.

This section is intended to introduce you to important legal information and describes the mere minimum requirements. It is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

Affirmative action policies must also comply with sex discrimination regulations (Executive Order 11246) and guidelines outlined by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

## RECRUITMENT AND INTERVIEWING

While most experienced recruiters know that they cannot ask direct questions relating to protected classes (for example, what church do you attend?), employers should also avoid questions or discussions with applicants and employees that indirectly lead to protected topics such as:

- Were you born in the United States?
- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- That’s an interesting name—where is your family from originally?
- You have an interesting accent. Where is it from?
- How many children do you have?
- Do you intend to have (more) children?
- Who takes care of your children while you work?
- Will you need time off for any religious holidays?
- Did you ever take medical leave at your prior job?
- Did you ever suffer an injury at your prior workplace?
- I see you’re walking with a limp—what happened to your leg?
- Will you need any accommodation to perform this job? (Unless a candidate’s disability is evident or voluntarily disclosed.)
- What does your spouse or partner do for a living?

Instead, all questions during an interview should be focused on determining the candidate’s qualifications for the job in question. Thus, you may ask questions about a candidate’s job skills, prior employment, educational background, experiences with teamwork,

and other questions that relate to the specific requirements of the position. Interview data should always be stored securely and kept confidential. (See the Compliance section of the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

An important part of creating an equitable workplace and maintaining employee engagement is the appropriate handling of allegations and instances of sexual harassment. (For more information, see the Compliance section in the *Workplace Culture* guide.)

### UNDERSTAND THE LAW AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

- While hiring employees with diverse backgrounds is highly desirable, it is unlawful to base a hiring decision on someone's protected status, even when the goal is to build a more diverse workforce. The best way to lawfully increase the likelihood of building a diverse workforce is to ensure that a wide variety of candidates with diverse backgrounds apply. Thus, employers should ensure that recruitment and outreach efforts, including job postings, on-site recruitment, etc., are being conducted in as inclusive a manner as possible. Once a diverse candidate pool exists, the likelihood of hiring qualified diverse candidates dramatically increases.
- Employers also must comply with U.S. immigration laws in connection with their employment practices. For instance, it is unlawful to employ any worker who is not legally authorized to work in the United States, and employers must carefully fulfill the I-9 requirements for verifying all employees' authorization-to-work documents within three business days of an employee's date of hire.

### HAVE PREVENTION MEASURES SUPPORTED BY POLICY

- Employers should train managers and hiring authorities about discrimination and the law.
- Employers should ensure that equal opportunities are available to all employees regardless of race, gender, ability, immigration status, sexual orientation, etc.

### PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE EQUITABLE BUT FLEXIBLE FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- Provide flexible work opportunities. Allow flexible time and workplaces for employees, and ensure that these opportunities are offered fairly and effectively to everyone in the company.
- Know the minimum national, state, and local family-leave requirements. Consider not only what is minimally required but also how to go beyond minimal requirements and the process for creating and complying with these policies.

→ Be mindful to not favor women over men with regard to family-leave or family-care benefits. Leave policies that are focused on bonding with newborns or newly adopted children should provide equal benefits regardless of gender identity. All parents and caregivers need to be encouraged to take leaves for which they are eligible, to avoid creating a culture that confers higher status and career benefits to one class over another. (However, if a leave benefit is tied to disability associated with childbirth, that benefit applies exclusively to employees who bear children.)

- Consider offering a variety of financial and nonfinancial benefits, such as extra vacation, compensation time, and overtime pay.
- When recruiting new employees, consider what benefits were offered to previously hired employees. If benefits for new employees are different from previous ones, ensure that you follow equitable practices to communicate how those differences arose and whether they will be brought into alignment.
- Consider implementing a policy regarding the sponsorship of non-U.S.-citizen candidates through the work visa process, such as H-1B. Note that such processes require the employer to bear certain legal and processing expenses on behalf of the employee.

### VIGILANTLY AVOID CREATING A HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- The accumulation of microaggressions, subtle acts of exclusion, or slights—intentional or unintentional, against any legally protected or nondominant group—when severe or pervasive enough, may result in claims of discrimination or harassment. Training of both managers and employees, along with robust policies that are made widely known, provide multiple channels to register complaints and encourage bystanders to speak up, and will go a long way in promoting a harassment-free workplace.
- Keep in mind that anti-harassment policies should not only prohibit unlawful behaviors but also should set the bar higher for the conduct that the employer wants to cultivate in the workplace. For instance, while unlawful sexual harassment must be severe or pervasive to be actionable, employers should not wait until conduct rises to this level or violates the company harassment policy before taking action. Likewise, while bullying is not technically unlawful if not directed at someone based on their legally protected status, an employer's workplace policies can and should make bullying a violation of its conduct rules.



# Assess

## FAIRNESS

**How is bias identified and mitigated in hiring and promotion?** · How are résumés being screened to identify candidates without bias? · What factors are you using to select candidates? · How are you defining concepts like “culture fit”? · How do you apply these concepts consistently?

**Are access and support provided in an equitable way?** · Are some people benefiting more than others? · Do some people have unique needs for support or accommodation? · Is everyone receiving the support they need from their managers? · Do some people have greater access to senior mentors and sponsors? · Is your management team diverse? · How can your support structures be more equitable?

## INFLUENCE

**What is your firm known for?** · Who do you attract? · Who are you not seeing? · Who is leaving your firm and why? · Do your exit interviews elicit genuine responses? · How do you communicate your values, culture, and priorities to job candidates and current employees? · Is there alignment between your firm’s stated culture and the day-to-day experience of working in your firm? · Do employees have opportunities to express themselves at work?

**Do you acknowledge and address small slights before they accumulate?** · Microaggressions, which individually may appear to be minor, can have great cumulative impact. What mechanisms, policies, or processes are used to uncover and address them as they occur? · How do you respond to those who see microaggressions as trivial?

## DEVELOPMENT

**Are career pinch points addressed?** · Do you know when your employees experience pinch points? · Are there appropriate places to customize, support, or create general policies? · Do employees have the needed flexibility to navigate pinch points? · What are your policies on workplace and schedule flexibility? · Do these policies create barriers for caregivers? · Do these policies support employees who require more time away from the office?

**Does your firm actively build pipelines?** · Do you reach beyond your firm’s networks to find potential candidates? · Do you write job descriptions that attract diverse candidates? · Do you engage with communities that could benefit from architect role models? · Does that engagement include the topics that matter most to those communities? · Do you help address the barriers to entry that underrepresented groups face in architecture?

## POWER

**Who determines who to hire and promote in your workplace?** · Are hiring decisions made by an individual or a group? · Are interviews conducted by the hiring manager or a diverse project team?

**Do you have policies or processes to support your employees when clients, consultants, or partners are misaligned with your firm’s values?** · In situations when your firm’s values and acceptable behaviors (e.g., collaboration, sustainability, equity) are not shared by your client, do your employees feel supported? · Do you productively engage your employees while the differences are addressed? · If there is a choice between losing the client and reconfiguring your team, are employees included in the decision? · In settings outside the office, are your employees given the tools and support to succeed?



# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

Practices and criteria for hiring and promotion, as well as the culture of the firm, will affect your engagement and commitment. Ensuring you receive the support, opportunities, flexibility, and psychological safety you need once you are hired will increase your engagement with the work and your commitment to the firm.

### UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Being informed about the current considerations concerning recruitment and retention in architecture and firm cultures and practices is the first step to finding a place where you can grow in your career.

- **Know your values and priorities.** Know what matters to you at work so you can find a firm that has the environment you need. (See the *Negotiation* guide for more.)
- **Explore the full range of roles and types of work.** Seek opportunities to vary your experiences and broaden your exposure to the wide range of tasks that contribute to project design and delivery.
- **Learn about current issues in equitable recruitment and retention.** Understand how bias can affect recruitment and promotion. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) Consider the range of indicators of employee engagement so you can look for them when identifying places where you want to work.
- **Talk with colleagues from other firms about their experiences.** How do their firms mitigate bias in hiring practices and ensure all employees have equitable access to the resources needed to accomplish their work? How do their firms manage microaggressions and harassment?
- **Be aware of federal rules regarding recruitment and workplace harassment.** Know what types of questions are appropriate for interviews and what types of behaviors are allowed and prohibited in the workplace.

### INCREASE YOUR ENGAGEMENT AT WORK

Keeping engaged at work and having support for your career means keeping the lines of communication open between yourself and senior leaders.

- **Seek out support and mentorship from senior leaders.** If support and mentorship are not available at your firm, go to architecture networking events where you can find mentors from other firms. (See the *Mentorship and Sponsorship* guide.)
- **Avoid burnout by using flexible work options.** If your workplace values employees who are energized and excited about their work, then take advantage of vacations, flexible work time, and other benefits available to you to help you maintain your energy, insight, and desire to continue growing. If taking vacations, comp time, and paid leaves is not the norm, influence your peers to take them and do so yourself. Together you can shift the culture to one where flexibility is not perceived as a lack of commitment. (For more about flexible work arrangements, see the *Advancing Careers* guide.)

### BE AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE MANAGER

Managers are key for ensuring that employees are receiving the mentorship and support needed to excel in the firm and in their careers. Managers need to be seen as fair in how they manage the workplace and in how they recruit and evaluate employees. Employers should support managers by providing the information, tools, and training they need to effectively and equitably recruit new talent and encourage an inclusive and equitable work culture that keeps employees engaged.

- **Neutralize bias when evaluating employees for promotion or retention.** Actively look for positive examples of employee contributions and potential, inclusive of different types of contributions. Provide evidence to support your claims during employee reviews and avoid vague terms such as “culture fit.”<sup>45</sup> Recognize, understand, and counteract implicit bias. For example, men are often evaluated on potential while women are evaluated on performance. Be aware of the “tightrope” (or “double bind”: the

tension between likeability and respect; see the *Compensation* guide for more information) that women, people of color, parents, class migrants, and others often walk in the workplace.<sup>46</sup> Whenever possible, remove subtle bias-triggering information from documents that are used to evaluate individuals, such as names on résumés, to eliminate assumptions about race, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

- **Support and encourage the use of vacation time**, anticipating when it might have the most positive effect, such as after the completion of a project or other milestones. Lead by example and take vacation days, fully unplugged, to recharge and to model expectations for staff.
- **Evaluate employee engagement on an ongoing basis.** Do not wait for annual reviews to ensure that your team feels supported, motivated, and engaged. Give feedback, especially positive feedback, often. Foster ongoing dialogue with your employees to determine how to best support their needs. Consider using surveys or other data-gathering methods to track workplace climate and engagement. (See the *Measuring Progress* guide.)
- **Know what motivates each employee.** Ensure that all team members have access to work that is personally meaningful and rewarding, whether that means impact on clients and end users, opportunities to design, or personal and professional growth.

#### FIRMS

Equitable recruitment and retention practices improve diversity and increase employee engagement, leading to a creative and innovative workplace. They also help raise awareness of the profession and build new pipelines for recruitment of underrepresented groups.

#### HIRE EQUITABLY

There are many steps to building equitable hiring practices. Analyze your current practices, develop awareness of the impact of bias, and then identify where you can disrupt bias to improve workplace diversity.

- **Be prepared for questions about firm EDI**, especially if your current demographics don't reflect your goals.

“The prospective ACE students are exposed to so many great things, and we need to compete to get their attention, so we keep our graphics and social media messaging young and exciting. I think it was also easier for students to connect with us when we went out to recruit. Someone older, it was hard for them to see the next steps in their career—almost too far down the road.

Someone closer in age helped them envision themselves in that position.”

Rising Firm Leader, First Generation  
Mexican-American, Male, 30s

- **Remove professional bias in your hiring practices.** We often believe that people are hired based on merit alone. However, merit-based hiring is a myth.<sup>47</sup> Recast equitable hiring as a business issue, not as a “minority issue” or a “women’s issue.” Understand that selecting more men than women, or not actively identifying and hiring nonmajority job candidates, means the company is missing out on valuable talent and creative ideas. Consider using blind assessments during recruitment.<sup>48</sup>
- **Think about the language used in position descriptions.** Use gender-neutral terms, such as *professional*, *motivated*, or *team-focused*. Or balance terms like *ambitious* or *driven* with other terms like *loyal* or *collaborative*. Keep the focus on job requirements, and leave out nonessentials, like preferred workday times or required experience in previous jobs, to encourage diverse applicants to recognize themselves as qualified.
- **Build hiring managers’ bias awareness and incorporate counteractive measures into hiring processes.** Increasing the awareness of bias is a first step in helping those responsible for hiring use better evaluation tools for selecting diverse talent.<sup>49</sup>

#### IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is essential for retaining talented employees. Implementing the measures below will benefit all employees while also encouraging greater equity, diversity, and inclusion.

→ **Establish a structured onboarding program.**

Structured onboarding helps all employees. Onboarding information that includes the road map to leadership can help new employees from underrepresented groups envision themselves as future leaders and partners, even when firm leadership is not diverse.<sup>50</sup> (For more on onboarding, see the *Workplace Culture* guide.)

→ **Understand pinch points.** Understanding when career pinch points occur can help you identify when employees will need support from the senior leaders and when you should use available company benefits or policies that allow for flex time.

→ **Equip employees with enough information** on compensation policies and practices for them to judge if they are fair. How people feel about pay decisions has more impact on employee satisfaction than does the pay itself.<sup>51</sup>

→ **Make appreciation a part of your culture,** and make sure this value is communicated at all levels of your firm. For employees, satisfaction results first from appreciation, followed by whether they perceive their company as having “a bright future.”<sup>52</sup>

→ **Establish clear performance review policies.** Ensuring that employees receive feedback on their work helps make work expectations clear, provides pathways for advancement, and improves retention. For example, architects of color and women assign a much higher level of importance to having clear written criteria for promotion as a factor in their retention in the field, compared with other respondents. Annual reviews are commonly used for feedback. Ongoing feedback has even greater value, especially for junior employees, but is typically less formal than annual reviews and, as a result, may be more subject to bias. Consider formalizing processes for ongoing feedback to ensure that all employees have frequent, constructive guidance.<sup>53</sup>

→ **Use employee-satisfaction and employee-engagement focus groups and surveys** to better understand employee perceptions, e.g., about whether leadership is supportive and whether different opinions are respected. Make these surveys anonymous if at all possible. Gather data to measure how inclusive your workplace is and collect feedback on how to become more inclusive and equitable.<sup>54</sup> (See the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

→ **Value all activities, not just design.** Provide equal support, visibility, and recognition to people working in all project phases. Make sure that everyone, not just women, is responsible for “office

housework,” and that there is equitable access to design responsibilities and opportunities. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.)

→ **Avoid pigeonholing** or steering professionals into stereotyped roles: women architects as interior designers or programmers, African Americans as government architects, Asian American architects as technologists.<sup>55</sup> Consider that stereotype threat—the conformity to negative or positive labels that results from being reminded of one’s identity group—may contribute to this funneling of people into particular roles.

→ **Create workplace flexibility to support an employee’s work-life harmony.** In the field of architecture, in particular, with its long timeline for licensure and full professional development, as well as large student-loan debt, having flexibility can help employees through pinch points in their careers and aid in retaining them when they might otherwise leave for other, often more lucrative, types of work.<sup>56</sup>

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“When it came to the professional world, it took me a while to realize that I needed a few unique things. At first, I thought that if my desk were set up differently, it would make me feel like the ‘other’....One day, the two firm owners came to me and said, “What do you need for your desk?” My first reaction was to blow them off. Then I realized it’d be helpful if my keyboard and monitor were higher than a normal desk height, so I wouldn’t have to bend over to reach the keyboard. But I didn’t want my work space to look different. I drew what I wanted and had one of my colleagues take some measurements. The office then had the millworker make my added pieces from the same materials the other desks were made of; it blended in with the aesthetic of the office.”

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Senior Associate Principal, White, Male,  
Straight, No Left Arm, Partial Right Arm, 39

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Be mindful that there are complex issues around implementing flexibility at the project team level. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide for more.)

- **Offer as wide of an array of employee benefits as you can imagine and afford.** Flexible hours and locations, access to choice projects, support in taking the Architect Registration Exam® (ARE) (materials, time, fees, bonus or promotion for passing, etc.) can help create a more desirable work situation.<sup>57</sup>
- **Track metrics** on your firm's recruitment, retention, and engagement outcomes and make evidence-based adjustments to address problem areas. (See the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

### CREATE AN INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Employee engagement depends on feeling supported. These measures will help create an inclusive environment that demonstrates respect for a diverse range of employee needs.

- **Understand the value of critical mass.** A critical mass of women and other underrepresented groups will decrease instances of any one employee feeling like the only, or a token representative of an entire group, and lead to more creative, inclusive decision-making.<sup>58</sup> This benefits the individual and the organization alike.<sup>59</sup> Use recruitment as an opportunity to reduce the instances of onlys.
- **Support cross-firm affinity groups and mentorship for onlys and underrepresented groups.** It can take time for a firm's demographics to change. Affinity groups offer mutual support for people with similar experiences, and mentors can help people navigate their careers and handle difficult situations. (See the *Mentorship and Sponsorship* guide.)
- **Create inclusive work spaces for your office and design them for your clients.** Work policies should include access to spaces such as lactation rooms, gender-neutral bathrooms, and space for prayer; the use of preferred pronouns in documents, meetings, and conversation; the selection of transgender-inclusive health insurance; and the implementation of gender-neutral dress policies.
- **Establish gender-transition communication protocols** to ensure that the roles and responsibilities are clear to the transitioning employee and to their supervisors and managers. Allow the transitioning employee to choose when and how to communicate their transition to others.<sup>60</sup>

- **Designate people whom employees can turn to regarding sensitive or confidential matters.** Especially in firms without an HR specialist, it can be difficult to know where to go for support.

- **Maintain employee privacy regarding health and other personal information.** Be aware of laws concerning access to personal information. Limit access to this information to as few people as possible and only discuss it, confidentially, when absolutely necessary. (See more about data privacy in the Compliance section of the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

- **Provide accommodations for people with disabilities.** Accommodations can mean many things, depending on the needs of the individual. These may include physical accommodations and access to specific types of equipment or services (e.g., an American Sign Language interpreter).<sup>61</sup> (For more on accommodations, see the *Advancing Careers* guide.)

### IMPROVE DIVERSITY IN THE PROFESSION

Firms have an important role to play in expanding diversity in our field. Cooperative relationships locally and nationally will increase awareness of architecture and the visibility of the profession and help identify and overcome barriers to entry into the profession.

- **Reach beyond your personal networks** to identify potential job candidates and build a diverse pipeline. Firms often rely on the personal networks of principals and hiring managers to identify job candidates, which can lead to teams that are composed of individuals with similar backgrounds and perspectives. Firms that look beyond their networks to source candidates are able to tap into wider and more diverse talent pools.
- **Collectively develop pipelines.** Consider how your office can work with others (across your firm, with your local architecture school, local AIA components,

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“The education system has to be better attuned to the fact that this is a profession worth going into.”

Principal and Owner, White, Male,  
Straight, Differently Abled, 60s

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other firms, or organizations) to grow pipelines for currently underrepresented groups. Although there is competition between firms in hiring, it benefits everyone in the profession for firms to work together to raise the level of awareness about the profession, remove barriers to entry, and demystify the path to licensure. Make sure that this work is rewarded and valued in your firm.

→ **Develop relationships with schools of architecture and local alumni.** Look outside of your own alumni institutions and develop relationships with local community colleges, technical institutions, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and other institutions that may be underrepresented in your practice.

→ **Develop relationships with local K–12 schools.** Launch or support efforts like the ACE Mentors and the AIA Architecture in Schools programs. Encourage members of your firm to visit local schools to talk about their work.

### HANDLE DOWNTURNS AND LAYOFFS THOUGHTFULLY

During economic downturns or major reorganizations, firms may be inclined to treat employees as expendable, causing sometimes-permanent attrition in the profession.

→ **Retain talent via innovative solutions.** Larger firms with multiple offices can take steps to retain employees who are willing to relocate. Small and large firms can work with peers in their region to retain talent in the profession as a whole, for example, by offering time swaps or training to collectively pool their capacity.

→ **Be equitable and transparent about who is being laid off.** Clearly state the goals or needs for change, the criteria for decisions, and demographic information about who was laid off. Evaluate on the basis of contributions and skills, avoiding “last-in” as the primary criterion; at many firms, on average, white men will have been employed longer than people of color. Check that the downsizing would not disproportionately affect groups that are underrepresented in your office. If it would, evaluate the impact of these layoffs on any established diversity goals. An adverse-impact assessment is one way to see what effects layoffs may have on specific groups of employees.

→ **Give as much consideration and care** to how layoffs are handled as you would any other employment activities, such as hiring, performance reviews, promotions, retirement, and leaves of absence.

→ **Support former employees.** Maintain contact; provide clear policies and support regarding crediting work after the employment change, for both the firm and the former employee, knowing that future growth may result in rehiring.

→ **Plan transitions.** Map how leadership transitions will be communicated and implemented in ways that help current employees see their future in the firm.<sup>62</sup>

→ **Conduct exit interviews** to gain a better understanding of why employees leave; evaluate reasons and make adjustments accordingly. (See the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

### PROFESSION

Managers and firms all contribute to advancing the profession when they recruit and retain equitably, yet larger issues of diversity, inclusion, and systemic racism are best addressed at the scale of the profession. When dialogue occurs through informal or formal structures, societal-level goals can be identified and large-scale strategies for recruiting and retention put in place.

→ **Make architecture a more visible and attractive career to younger and more diverse people.**

Architectural career pathways will become more apparent when we increase awareness and understanding of the profession. Design-based engagements, developed in and with external communities, will accomplish goals beyond the projects themselves; they will make architects and architecture visible and interesting to a wider population. (See the *Engaging Community* guide.)

→ **Crack the “design egg.”** Acknowledge that the opportunity to design is a major draw to the profession, and at the same time address the perceptions that “Big-D Design” is the apex of architectural work and that there is limited access to it.<sup>63</sup> The process of design encompasses far more than drawing. Broadening the definition of design in the profession, practicing inclusive design processes, and recognizing the value of diverse design approaches help frame design as a nonexclusive thought process while maintaining its central position in the practice of architecture.<sup>64</sup>

→ **Continue to tackle the tough issues related to institutional racism that affect recruitment and retention.** Be willing to hold up a mirror to the profession at large. Identify barriers to equity. Involve representative groups in solving the challenges. Avoid overburdening members of underrepresented groups with responsibility for naming the problems or implementing the solutions.

# Consider

## STARTING YOUNG

Our college class just took a study abroad trip to Dubai. It's funny because that's the place I've always wanted to travel to, and I wondered how I was going to make it. When I was in about sixth grade, there was a video I saw when I was getting a haircut. It was about the Palm Island, its grand opening, the fireworks spectacle. I thought, "I have to learn more about this place." From then on I started to notice buildings, landmarks, and I was like, "Oh wow, I have to see these structures, see the architecture." Architecture seemed like something I wanted to learn about.

My sophomore year in high school, the school offered an architecture course so you could get a better feel for what to expect in college and the field. We built a model and everything. And I was like, "This is what architecture is like—the designing, the building, the collaboration with clients." So the video of Dubai and the class I took in high school really helped pre-expose me to architecture.

Seeing the video made me geeky and want to do more. I've always had the chance to look into architecture, research it, look into different famous architects. If I'm really passionate about it, this is where I need to be. I scrapped engineering and construction. I really think the pre-exposure with the video helped a lot.

— Student, Black, Male, 20

Students are getting a lot of misinformation and are not aware of certain programs. There is a need for more information on different programs and paths. There's also a need for a great range of pathways through different programs: two-year programs, transfer programs, internships. We need to communicate that—it's all pretty veiled in the profession. If I'm a high school or middle school student trying to understand the educational paths to get through, that information isn't there.



We also noticed that a lot of schools are directing efforts toward direct recruitment. Maybe some diversity goals are related to it, but mostly it's focused on tenth and eleventh grade, and some ninth graders. We're looking to build a direct line as direct applicants to their programs. Very little is being done in fourth to eighth grade. We looked at some studies that say a lot of students have made up their minds about what they might study pretty early. For students who don't know an architect, architecture is just not on their radar.

We don't have a concerted effort nationally to tell students that might have an aptitude or interest that this is a potential for them. A lot of students might not even be considering it. Then, if they do decide they want to go into architecture, there are a lot of hidden costs that might deter them.

— Principal, Firm Owner, White, Female, Baby Boomer, Wheelchair User

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DISCUSS:

- What were the things that most influenced the student to want to go into architecture as a career? What inspired you to become an architect? Have you heard stories from others about what influenced them?
- What kinds of motivations, opportunities, or pressures drive people toward or away from a career in architecture? How might this differ for different groups? How can you, as an architecture professional, promote more access to architecture? Is there anything different you would do to promote access for members of groups currently underrepresented in architecture?
- For the student speaker, the previous exposure to video about a visual spectacle with a popular culture audience was critical to opening his curiosity about the field. Are there ways you or your firm could be telling equally compelling stories to the public? What can architecture firms and institutions do to help make architecture more visible across different communities? What are things that you can do to improve the visibility of architecture in your own community?
- How can architecture be made more interesting to students in middle school? To students in high school?

# Consider

## RECRUITING EQUITABLY

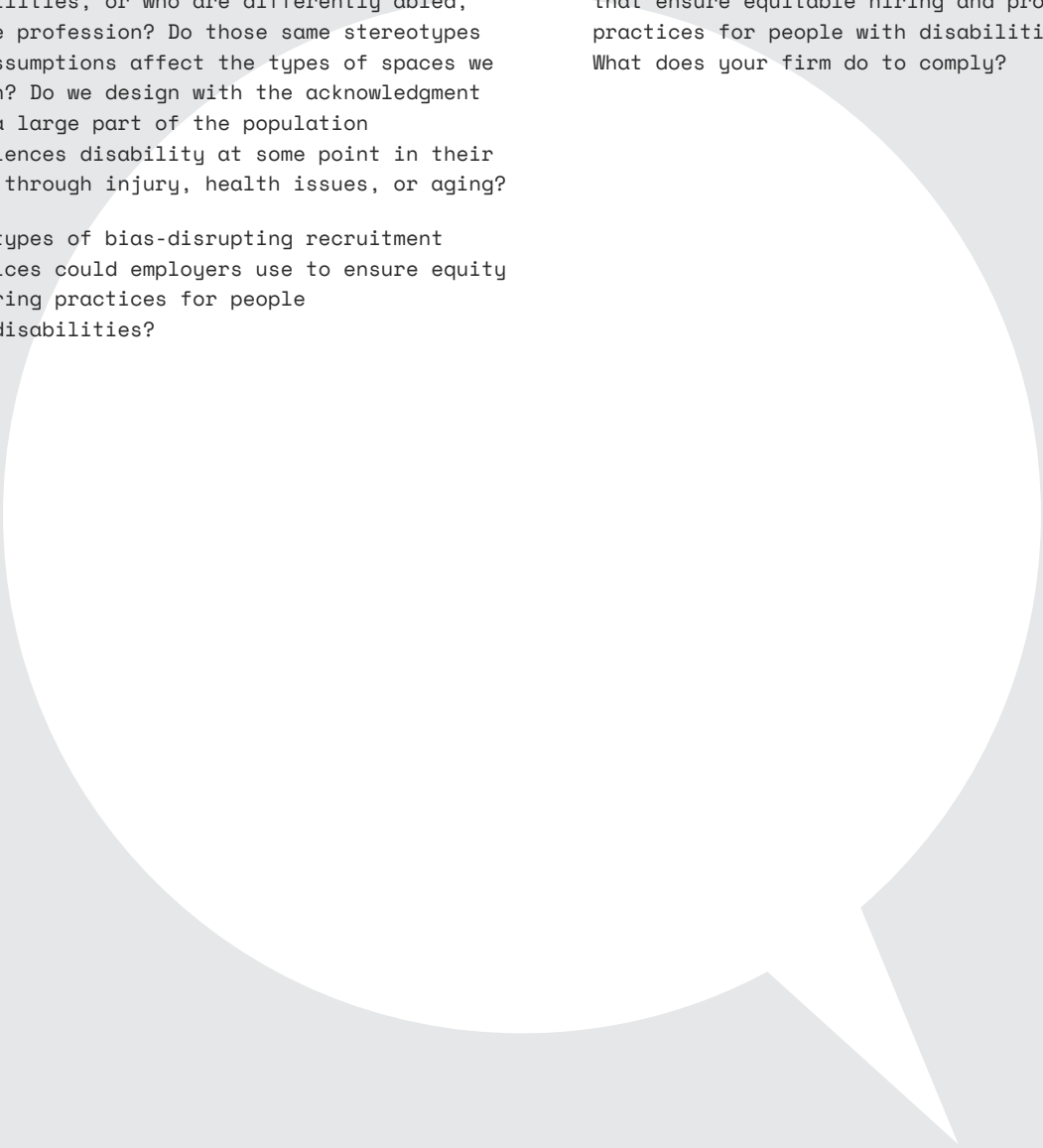
Before the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) highlighted the idea that employment is a civil right, I was looking for architecture jobs as a fresh graduate. I used to drive around to prospective offices to see if I could get in the door. If I could, I would apply. If I got an interview, I would walk in and if the person's jaw dropped to the floor, I'd know they weren't going to consider me. I did find a few people willing to take me on, but the assumption was I would just work in the slide library. It took a lot of work for me to convince employers to let me do more—for example, I convinced one employer that I could work on tenant improvements. At a tenant-improvement project jobsite, there's a building and a floor slab, so I can roll onto that site in my wheelchair and work with the contractor. We need to help architects understand that there are a million different jobs within the field of architecture, that there's a place for everybody, and that we can each find the place that allows us to promote and use our best skills.

These days, larger firms tend to have more equitable hiring processes, which are probably more formalized, and hiring is less of a gut reaction of if we can use them or we can't. A large firm might have more opportunities, although I think any open-minded firm can find ways for someone with a variety of skills to fit in.

— Principal, Firm Owner, White, Female, Baby Boomer, Wheelchair User

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DISCUSS:

- What factors might a member of a specific underrepresented group consider before applying for a position? Are there aspects of your firm that might be considered welcoming or unwelcoming by certain groups?
  - What stereotypes and assumptions are at play in architecture firms that impact people with disabilities, or who are differently abled, in the profession? Do those same stereotypes and assumptions affect the types of spaces we design? Do we design with the acknowledgment that a large part of the population experiences disability at some point in their lives through injury, health issues, or aging?
  - What types of bias-disrupting recruitment practices could employers use to ensure equity in hiring practices for people with disabilities?
  - Why does this person believe that larger firms may have more opportunities for people with disabilities? What assumptions are implied about smaller firms that make them appear less open-minded or less able to hire people with disabilities?
  - What policies and laws are in place today that ensure equitable hiring and promotion practices for people with disabilities? What does your firm do to comply?
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# Consider

## IT'S A LITTLE DAUNTING

Native Americans represent 0% of licensed architects according to the AIA. There are less than five Native American registered women architects and less than twenty Native American male registered in the United States. Most of us do a lot of networking through the American Indian Council of Architects and Engineers (AICAE) to promote and support students by connecting them to Native American professionals. We also do this with students: if we know a student who is interested in architecture, we try to connect them with the AICAE during their high school and/or college years. We reach out individually, make calls. When it's personal, people are more engaged and want to take part.

We start early on with elementary, high school, and college students, getting their interest: what is architecture and the importance of architecture and going back to their communities and serving their communities. I'm always in support of looking at the pipeline. I think when you get Native Americans, this diverse group, it's a little difficult when they're going off to college—they're so tied to their family and language and culture that when they go to school, they don't get much support on the college end. I've seen that it's hard for some of them. Where I live, the architects support the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS). I'm always pushing; I always bring up the memorandum of understanding between AIA and AICAE: we're having a job fair or a golf tournament, and local firms are supporting the AIAS, why don't you guys support the AICAE as well? And they look at me like, why would we do that? Looking at the top Native American students around the country: there are quite a few. It would be nice to get them to the conference to network. When I was a young professional in college and went to conferences, I came back inspired: you want to finish school, you know what it takes to be an architect, and that is what I want to do. For students who don't get to go to conferences, that support is not there.

At the university level, teaching the importance of indigenous architecture in their schools would make Native American students proud of where they come from and their cultural and heritage. We can all learn more about indigenous architecture that has been around for many centuries, but in school we just breeze right by it. The notion is that all Native Americans live in tepees, but they don't. There are so many indigenous structures out there that are used for many different purposes. It's something I think the schools don't really know. In my practice I always educate that we need to learn from the past to move forward to the future, and that includes this idea of indigenous design and planning. What did those structures—a lot are still standing today—what did they do that we're not doing today?

— Architect, CEO, Native American, Female, 30s

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DISCUSS:

- What is it like to consider entering a profession in which you are a small minority? What do you think are some of the obstacles?
- What keeps local architects and firms from supporting the AICAE (or other nonmajority organizations, such as NOMA or NOMAS)?
- Does your firm actively build connections to nonmajority student groups? Do you focus on just one group? What benefits do to the students gain? What benefits do you gain?
- What investment do you or your firm make in the talent pipeline? Is there a collective action that your firm takes with national organizations to build pipelines for currently underrepresented groups?

# Consider

## INEQUITY AFFECTS RETENTION

Generally, female architects and designers are taken a lot less seriously. Most men I've worked with experience a higher level of engagement and exposure and better defined roles that let them grow; hence, they get promoted a lot faster than their female counterparts. I have many times been the only woman in the room, having the men treat me as if I'm not one of them—or guys of my age or level of experience or lower being the ones who get the right attention. For example, I was the lead on a project. We had a conference call with several people in the room: one of my principals and another person on the architecture team, a nice guy and a good colleague. I was the one in charge, but the whole time during the meeting my principal was talking to and addressing everything to my colleague—didn't even make eye contact with me. When someone on the call had a question, they addressed my colleague too. This was quite insulting to me. I was the one leading the job, but I was nonexistent.

I see this happening so often to women. We always have to work twice as hard as our male colleagues. Especially women from other countries (like me)—it's three times as hard....I'm a very responsible person. I take myself seriously, even if others don't. But emotionally and mentally, it really affects me negatively. It's very disappointing, and it seems like there's no end to it. I wonder when will there be a light at the end of the tunnel. I hoped the new generation of men would be different. But they don't care either. For them, it's as if as long as they have their own jobs, they don't care if their female colleagues don't get promotions. They stay quiet. I'm not saying they're responsible, but they're contributing to the status quo. We have good relationships, go out for coffee, work together every day, late nights together, often on deadlines, but why are they getting ahead of me so easily?

— Full-time Architect at a Large Firm, White, Female, 43



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DISCUSS:

- What microaggressions did this person experience at work? How might they affect her pathway to promotion within the firm? And how might they affect her engagement in the workplace?
- What could this person's junior colleague have done to disrupt bias on the project? What responsibility did the colleague have to do anything? How would using these strategies have changed engagement for all participants?

What can firms do to ensure psychological safety for women and other underrepresented groups? Does the role of each individual employee in ensuring psychological safety change based on their level of power or their group identities (gender, socioeconomic background/class, education, age, culture, nationality, physical ability, etc.)?

- Does your firm have a way to proactively identify the negative effect that the speaker refers to? If the situation continues without change, what do you think are the risks to the speaker? What are the risks to the firm?

# Consider

## GIVING TALENT THE CHANCE TO SHINE

One of the things that we are committed to and have been committed to from day one was looking broadly at candidates and seeking out candidates who had talent but perhaps were not being given the opportunities to really display that talent at the firms they were working in. I would like my firm to be rooted in this base of talented folks who maybe haven't had a chance to shine. We will mentor, train them up, give them opportunities they were not going to get anywhere else. That was the basis of our targeted hiring early on.

— Managing Partner and Firm Owner, Black, Male, 46

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### DISCUSS:

- How do you see the continuum from recruitment to retention functioning in your firm? Is it helping people shine?
- Are equity, diversity, and inclusion explicit values of your firm, and if so, how is the firm demonstrating these values in recruitment and retention? What are you doing yourself to advance them?
- How do you identify candidates at other firms without "poaching"? Are there positive and cooperative ways that groups of firms might achieve the kinds of matches described?

# Consider

## CHALLENGES HIRING DIVERSE STAFF

We have tried actively to recruit a diverse population in this firm, but because of the kind of work we do, we aren't required to do so. This is a small firm, nine architects, and we largely work for private clients, so we rarely go after projects during which we would be evaluated on the diversity of our team. So when we meet and engage with young people from underrepresented groups, often we find the candidates we would most like to hire are courted specifically because of their backgrounds to work in firms that do a great deal of public work. In a city like ours, where you have three or four of the largest firms in the country and a bunch of small- and medium-sized firms, there's a tendency for those firms that are larger and do certain kinds of work to attract and retain employees who are different, other than what you would call the "majority." We have a roundtable of firms that do high-end residential, retail interiors, and we could see we're not a good microcosm of America. And it bothers me. Because we're not as attractive as other firms, perhaps, we don't get candidates from underrepresented groups. Four out of nine people in our firm are women, and one of my partners is a woman. I wish we could say we aggressively tried, but we just hire as best we can.

— Firm Founder and Principal, White, Male, 60

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### DISCUSS:

- What do you think the speaker means when he says his firm is not as attractive to diverse candidates? Why would it not be attractive? What could this person's firm do to attract a wider range of candidates?
- What are some of the challenges that smaller firms have when trying to attract diverse talent? What can smaller firms do to better attract a broader range of talent? What can they do to retain that talent?
- What might be some benefits to this type of firm of adding more diverse staff?
- How do some firms express that they value diversity? How are these values manifested in their daily work practices? What more could firms do to show that diversity matters?
- Have clients communicated how they measure and value your firm's diversity? Has this been a factor in winning work or being effective?
- How might regional cultural differences affect how firms approach recruitment and retention of diverse talent? What regional differences have you experienced in how firms recruit and promote talent from underrepresented groups?

# Consider

## ACKNOWLEDGING GENDER INEQUITIES IN THE WORKPLACE


Our firm is very young and was bought three years ago, around when I started. It used to have a very male-dominated culture—the guy at the top yelling, women answering the phones. When I started, there was a transition happening, and they were kind of attempting to get the culture to move from one extreme, but I was still asking, why are only the women answering the phone? I'd comment, "This is bull---," and they'd make some changes. But that said, it's run by three men, and they don't realize they put a lot more on the plate of a few women in the office because they know the women will get it done. The guys in the corner work on one thing and go home. And we women notice stuff that needs to get done, take it on, but still have to get our own jobs done too. I'd wonder, "Why the hell am I doing everything, and this guy's focusing on one thing in the corner?"

There are two of us who do a lot of extra marketing and administrative stuff that takes away from being able to work on architecture. At least that contribution is somewhat acknowledged where I am, and I feel lucky. It makes it better because at least I feel like I get face time with my boss, and I get appreciation, and if nothing else, I know more about how our firm functions because of those things. I'm more involved in decisions above my pay grade than I otherwise would be, decisions being made about what we're doing, why we're doing it. That makes me feel better about my future career.

— Architect, White, Lesbian, Early 30s

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DISCUSS:

- How does this person describe the division of labor in her workplace? Have you experienced similar divisions of labor in your own firm? Who does most of the design work in your firm and who does most of the “office housework”? If there are divisions, how do they affect engagement and retention?
  - This person describes her firm as trying to transition from a male-dominated culture. How does this affect the way the firm will recruit differently than in the past? What would prospective employees be looking for in order to understand the trajectory of the change and the level of support needed to make the transition successful?
  - How do appreciation and acknowledgment help the speaker in this story? What impact do appreciation and acknowledgment of workplace difficulties have on engagement? Does your firm regularly express appreciation and acknowledgment for a job well done?
  - How might perceptions of women, femininity, and sexuality affect how people who identify as female are treated? Are there differences between how you think of cisgender (gender identity corresponding to one’s sex at birth) women, trans women, and/or lesbians? How do these differences play out in practice?
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# Resources

## IMPROVING EQUITY

### **16 Architects of Color Speak Out About the Industry's Race Problem – Asad Syrkett, Tanay Warerkar, and Patrick Sisson – Curbed (2017)**

<https://www.curbed.com/2017/2/22/13843566/minority-architects-diversity-architecture-solutions-advice>

Interviewees discuss barriers they have faced as architects of color and offer recommendations to improve diversity in the profession.

### **Disabilities in the Workplace: Recruitment, Accommodation, and Retention**

– Linda Davis – AAOHN Journal (July 1, 2005)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/216507990505300705>

Detailed guidance and resources for employers seeking to employ and retain workers with both temporary and permanent disabilities.

### **Diversity in the Profession of Architecture – AIA (2016)**

<http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-05/Diversity-DiversityinArchitecture.pdf>

Summary of perceptions of factors that affect the choice of architecture as a profession, job satisfaction, and retention.

### **How Can Architecture Schools Increase Diversity?**

– Melinda D. Anderson – Curbed (2017)

<https://www.curbed.com/2017/2/22/14653054/architecture-schools-diversity>

Recommendations include increasing diversity of faculty, providing mentorship and inclusion programs that support students, addressing cost concerns, and partnering with local schools to increase the visibility of architecture as a career option.

### **Identifying & Interrupting Bias in Hiring – Bias Interrupters**

<https://biasinterrupters.org/toolkits/orgtools/>

Resources include a worksheet that lists common bias types, how they arise in hiring, and how to prevent their influence and a guide on structuring the hiring process to prevent bias at all stages.

### **In Search of a Less Sexist Hiring Process – Harvard Business Review (2014)**

<https://hbr.org/2014/03/in-search-of-a-less-sexist-hiring-process>

An overview of why women are less likely to be hired than equally qualified men and how businesses should adjust hiring practices to be more inclusive.

### **The Pipeline Predicament: Fixing the Talent Pipeline – Bentley University Center for Women and Business (2018)**

<https://www.bentley.edu/centers/center-for-women-and-business/pipeline-research-report-request>

Research report on why the representation of women decreases at higher levels of leadership; issues include access to mentorship, pay inequities, midcareer issues, and bias. Offers strategies for addressing the issues, including reexamining the hiring/recruiting process, the role of culture, and supporting and developing existing talent. Focuses on women but also discusses other underrepresented groups, including people of color.

### **re:Work Guide: Hiring – Google**

<https://rework.withgoogle.com/subjects/hiring/>

Covers aspects of hiring, including recruiting, reviewing resumes, and interviews; offers suggestions for making the hiring process fairer for candidates with different backgrounds and ways to improve the experience for job candidates.

### **Scholarships and Career Resources for Architects of Color – Patrick Sisson – Curbed (2018)**

<https://www.curbed.com/2017/2/22/14669966/scholarships-minority-architects-professional-resources>

List of programs working to help increase diversity in architecture; includes youth, college-level, and professional organization resources and programs.



## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

### **EQxD Metrics: Finding the Right Fit – Annelise Pitts – Equity by Design (2017)**

<http://eqxdesign.com/blog/2017/12/6/eqxd-metrics-finding-the-right-fit>

Survey results from 2016 show the perception of workplace-culture fit by different groups in architecture. Fit is identified as the most determinant factor in why people stay or leave a job.

### **The Formula for a Winning Company Culture – Tim Wolock and Chris Martin – Payscale (2016)**

<https://www.payscale.com/hr/formula-for-a-winning-company-culture>

Identifies key factors for retention and improving employee satisfaction.

### **Measuring the Meaning of Meaningful Work: Development and Validation of the Comprehensive Meaningful Work Scale (CMWS) – Marjolein Lips-Wiersma and Sarah Wright – Group and Organization Management (2012)**

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258137959\\_Measuring\\_the\\_Meaning\\_of\\_Meaningful\\_Work\\_Development\\_and\\_Validation\\_of\\_the\\_Comprehensive\\_Meaningful\\_Work\\_Scale\\_CMWS](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258137959_Measuring_the_Meaning_of_Meaningful_Work_Development_and_Validation_of_the_Comprehensive_Meaningful_Work_Scale_CMWS)

Provides a multidimensional scale for measuring meaningful work.

### **Overcoming the Implementation Gap: How 20 Leading Companies are Making Flexibility Work – Duesen, James, Gill, McKechnie – Boston College Center for Work and Family (2007)**

<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/publications/researchreports/Overcoming%20the%20Implementation%20Gap>

Offering flexible work is a way to increase recruitment and retention. This report outlines five steps for developing and implementing a flexibility policy and case studies of companies who offer flexible options.

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#### SECOND EDITION

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# Negotiation

## KEY TOPICS

advocacy  
anchoring bias  
BATNA  
compensation package  
double bind  
flexibility  
implicit bias  
information asymmetry  
intercultural competence  
objectives  
offer/counteroffer  
policies  
power  
priorities  
salary data  
salary history  
wage gap  
wage transparency  
win-win

SECOND EDITION  
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Negotiation can support equity and inclusion when it is viewed as a collaborative process that seeks to create satisfying solutions for all parties, rather than a competition between adversaries.

This guide calls attention to the importance of equipping architecture professionals with equitable and inclusive negotiation skills in their daily practice.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What is negotiation about?

Negotiation is back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed.<sup>1</sup> There is often an assumption that negotiation is about trying to get the best deal for oneself or one's own interests without regard for the other party; however, this guide advocates "equitable negotiation," or deeply considering the interests of all parties together to reach a fair and mutually satisfying agreement.

When people with dominant-group (agent) identities negotiate with people who have nondominant (target) identities, the power imbalance—manifested in ways of thinking, behaving, and communicating—may lead to unfair outcomes; meanwhile, when people with nondominant identities, like people of color, white women, or people with disabilities, try to negotiate using the traditional norms, they are often judged harshly and penalized.<sup>2</sup> (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide regarding agent and target identities.)

Negotiating for higher pay prior to employment is one significant type of negotiation that can contribute to equity and inclusion. Negotiations also take place often, at different points in an architect's career and for a variety of purposes—for instance, with the owner, on behalf of the building user or to lead discussions on challenging problems, such as cost versus quality. Negotiation can take place during any of the following situations:

- initial employment
- regular salary reviews
- promotions
- external contracts (e.g., client fees, consultants)
- everyday workplace situations (e.g., schedule, project roles, project assignments, prioritizing project resources)
- dispute and conflict resolution (e.g., resolving differences between project team stakeholders)

It is possible to negotiate for a higher salary, a promotion, or a new work opportunity. People can also negotiate terms of employment, including:

- hours, flexible work time, telecommuting
- vacation
- benefits (e.g., health and other types of insurance, time off, child/eldercare)
- licensure support (e.g., time off to study, fee reimbursement, pay raise upon completion)
- timing of future reviews
- amount of leave
- perks (e.g., gym, childcare, pets in the office)
- moving expenses
- employee assistance programs
- retirement contributions

Negotiation is not only an individual pursuit—it can also be conducted to achieve gains for one's team or company. It is a daily activity and important job skill as architects regularly negotiate with designers, builders, clients, public officials, and others.<sup>3</sup> Architects may sometimes take on the role of mediator in negotiations between other parties, especially contractor-client relationships and when dealing with multiparty stakeholder groups on larger projects. (In such cases, the role needs to be managed carefully, since engaging in dispute mediation may create exposure to legal risk.) When negotiating as an architect on behalf of your company or your team, you can negotiate over:

- project fees, services, and scope
- contractor/consultant agreements
- leases
- assumption of risk, insurance coverage
- reimbursable expenses
- extent of community engagement on the project
- prearranged methods for settling disagreements
- use of EDI and justice lens on the project

These everyday negotiations with clients, contractors, managers, and peers about deadlines, schedules, assignments, distribution of labor, and priorities can, over time, establish interpersonal dynamics that have a direct impact on employees, working relationships, and project outcomes.



## POWER AND EQUITY

Power held by either party in the negotiating relationship can influence the outcomes of the negotiation.<sup>4</sup> Sources of negotiation power include one's position, role, or title in the organization that confers the ability to provide raises or create negative outcomes for the other party; one's confidence or psychological power; and a lack of dependence on the outcome.<sup>5</sup> An important but sometimes less visible source of power is membership in the dominant culture. As discussed in the *Intercultural Competence* guide, whether they acknowledge or desire it, all members of a dominant group have advantages over members of nondominant groups. Negotiations may be affected by cultural norms if the negotiating parties differ in their cultural identities. In these cases, those belonging to nondominant groups may be at an additional disadvantage, stemming from their lack of relative power.

Identity is another source of power that advantages those with agent identities. Which culture dominates will shift based on the situation and the players, and large-scale societal forces create consistent advantages for people with agent identities, regardless of context. In the U.S. today, there are many ways that white men experience advantages that give them more power when negotiating with those who have a target identity. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide for how dominant/nondominant and agent/target identities interact.) When those from target identities negotiate, they often obtain less positive results.<sup>6</sup>

Bias (implicit or explicit) based on culture or identity is another factor in negotiation. For example, people of color and white women are perceived more negatively when they attempt to negotiate for salaries (see the *Compensation* guide); their requests are more likely to be overlooked; and they are disadvantaged when pursuing leadership roles.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the intersection of various identities of the negotiating parties—and the associated biases based on these identities—make the power dynamics even more complex. For instance, a salary negotiation between a Black gay employee and a straight white woman partner is different than one between the same employee and a white gay partner. Parties who share more aspects of their identities may find it easier to understand one another. In both scenarios, the skill of the parties to understand points of view different from their own is the key to success.

Negotiation is a social construct developed for specific groups and purposes. It has evolved with rules that favor certain groups and their way of thinking/behaving. Many of these rules have developed and continue to be perpetuated by dominant cultural structures that disadvantage people based on their race, gender, or physical ability/disability. Being aware of how power

can manifest itself in negotiations and using power conscientiously—"power to" and "power with"—can help create agreements that satisfy all parties and support healthy long-term working relationships.

## THE NEGOTIATION GAP AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

Negotiating is not an innate skill but one that improves with practice. However, biased social expectations and perceptions based on gender and race influence who is expected to negotiate and is encouraged to practice. (For more on the impact of social bias, see the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) For example, initiating negotiations can be a thorny process for people of color, particularly Black job candidates.<sup>9</sup> Recent studies on racial bias and negotiation found that racial bias factored into expectations and perceptions of Black job seekers. All evaluators were more likely to perceive Black job seekers as less likely to negotiate and, additionally, expected Black applicants to negotiate less aggressively than their white counterparts. This meant that when Black and white job seekers negotiated in comparable ways, evaluators viewed Black job seekers as more aggressive, which, in a form of backlash, resulted in lower starting salaries.<sup>10</sup>

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"If you're going to get a new job or ask for a raise, talk to all the men you know first, whether or not they're not in architecture, because they'll give you a number at least 30% more than you thought you were going to ask for. And then ask for it. I never thought I'd have the balls to do it—it felt like an outrageous number. And though they countered with a little less, it was still a lot more than I would originally have asked for. I talked to my female friends for a sanity check, but I went with the guys' number, and it worked."

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Associate at Large International Firm,  
Indo-American, Female, 31

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Similarly, while women in architecture tend to initiate negotiations for higher pay more often, women who negotiate—possibly from a lower starting offer—may still end up with lower salaries than their male counterparts.<sup>11</sup> Women are also more hesitant to negotiate when the evaluator is a man.<sup>12</sup> Research on expectations and perceptions of feminine modesty, gender, and leadership has shown that when women do attempt to negotiate in ways deemed “masculine” (i.e., authoritative, direct), they tend to be evaluated harshly and seen as competent but not likeable or hireable.<sup>13</sup>

This dynamic has also appeared in social and behavioral experiments, in which men were found to penalize women more often than men during compensation negotiations; men also preferred to work with women who accepted initial compensation offers rather than countering.<sup>14</sup>

The solution is for firm leaders and managers to become cognizant of bias against these candidates and to examine themselves during negotiations. Firms can adopt compensation structures that discourage more subjective, negatively biased perceptions swaying decisions.

Current and future architects will benefit from a better understanding of the nature and role of negotiation in their profession and from learning and improving their negotiation skills. Engaging in equitable negotiation builds on skills and tools of adaptation discussed in the *Intercultural Competence* guide: identifying one’s goals and objectives, deeply appreciating and understanding the objectives of the other parties, and finding ways to effectively bridge those differences.

Approached in this way, architects can not only negotiate their pay and promotions but also can be effective engaging clients, contractors, and officials who participate in building projects.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, firms and the profession need to offer more training and practice opportunities. Firms can support the profession by explicitly learning about and addressing the impact of systemic racism and sexism and individual biases to remove them from the negotiation process.

#### DIFFERENCE IN CUMULATIVE INCOME BETWEEN A NON-NEGOTIATOR (PERSON A) AND A NEGOTIATOR (PERSON B)

Person A and B are both offered a starting salary of \$60,000.

Person A accepts the offer.

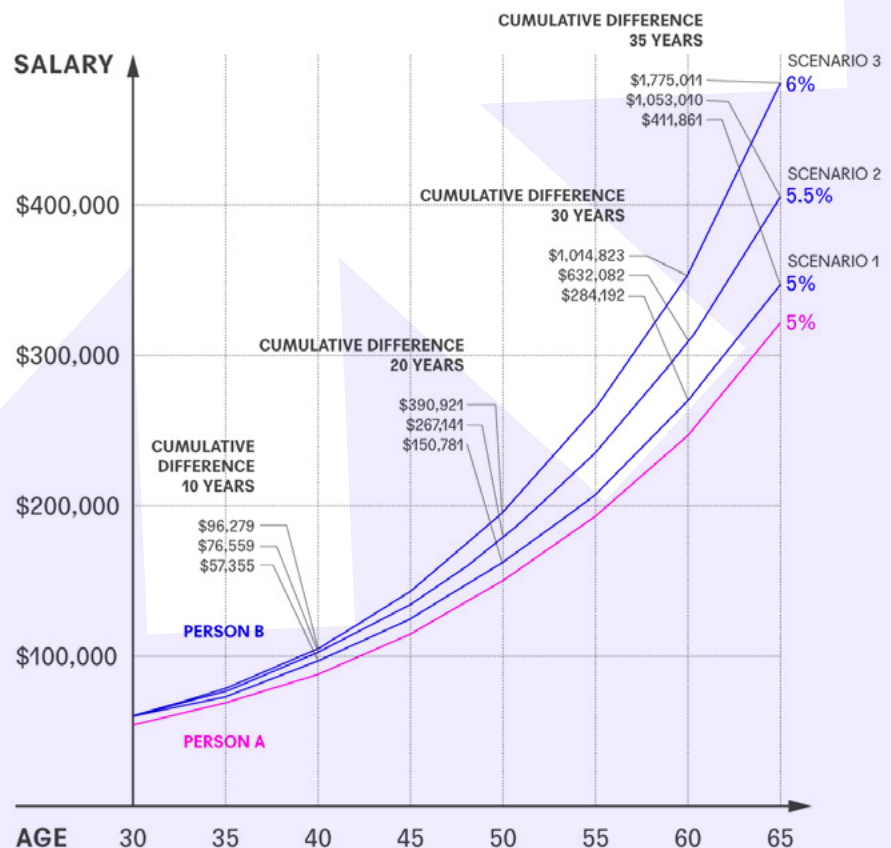
Person B negotiates a salary 7.6% higher (a typical result of salary negotiation).

Then:

Scenario 1. Person A and B each receive the same 5% increase each year.

Scenario 2. B negotiates raises .5% higher each year (or 5.5%) than A.

Scenario 3. B negotiates raises 1% higher (or 6%).<sup>8</sup>



# Why is negotiation important for equitable practice?

Negotiation has an impact on individuals, firms, and the architecture profession as a whole and can create value for all parties when practiced as a creative, collaborative problem-solving activity.

For individuals, negotiation is a useful skill for gaining higher compensation and advancing one's career. Negotiating with one's employer at different points in a career can lead to getting greater work responsibilities, having an important role in career-advancing projects, and earning a new title, firm leadership, or ownership. Negotiation can also help with career fluidity, allowing the individual to change jobs or firms successfully.

For firms, successful negotiations, in which both parties feel like the process is fair, also affect employee retention: successful promotion negotiations demonstrate to employees that they are valued and reinforce their own sense of innovativeness.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, a firm with multiple negotiable parts of its employment package can be more flexible and accommodate individual preferences, potentially leading to longer retention and increased employee engagement. Establishing equitable and transparent practices within strong and healthy workplace cultures requires identifying what individuals in the firm need to succeed and creating openings for discussions about everyone's needs. The end result is mutual advocacy from different points of view, reducing the need for individuals to advocate for themselves or struggle for equitable treatment.

Negotiation is not just a useful skill for gaining higher salaries and advancing one's career but also a requisite skill for those who are self-employed or in a firm and working daily in teams and with contractors and clients. Contract negotiation, in particular, is a rewarding skill that is essential for a firm's success. Negotiation helps affirm the value of architectural services and, hence, supports setting profitable fees. Within a project team, members may negotiate over everyday issues like who will travel with the unwieldy model or if the Building Information Modeling (BIM) lead role will rotate among peers.

Mediating between stakeholder points of view to resolve conflicts and reach decisions is another important form of negotiation. Architects may be in the ideal position to understand the different agendas of the owner, user, and builder and, therefore, to help build shared goals within office teams and wider project teams and navigate trade-offs between cost, quality, speed, and expediency.

## INDIVIDUALS

**Financial security** · Negotiation can make a good offer better, make an unattractive one attractive, and establish a strong salary history. The cost of not negotiating results in an increasing “accumulation of disadvantage” over a lifetime of compensation.<sup>17</sup> (See the graphic on p. 5.04.) Furthermore, 84% of those who negotiate receive higher salaries, with one-fifth gaining as much as 20% more than the initial offer and another fifth receiving 11% to 20% more.<sup>18</sup> Although as noted above, women architects attempt to negotiate salaries more often than men, a more general study of the starting salaries of advanced-degree holders (defined as master's or higher) found that 57% of men but only 7% of women had negotiated their starting salaries, that the starting salary differential between the genders was 7.6%, and that the students who negotiated increased their starting offer by 7.4%—almost enough to erase the differential.<sup>19</sup>

**Future opportunities** · Pay level, whether high or low, is often used as a proxy for achievement and can lead to assumptions about a prospective employee's potential performance.<sup>20</sup> (For information on hiring situations in which salary history cannot be referenced, see the Compliance section of this guide.)

**Satisfaction and quality of life** · Effectively negotiating one's compensation package helps meet specific needs and priorities, such as caretaking responsibilities. The result could be fair and flexible working conditions, longer vacation time, better work-life integration, and even the basic motivation to stay in the profession.

**Skills** · Negotiation is a marketable business skill for every role in architecture. Demonstrating confidence at initiating and carrying out a negotiation indicates that a prospective employee will represent the firm well.

Some employers expect that prospective employees will negotiate their hiring packages and may even look less favorably upon those who do not. Negotiation skills can help individuals gain higher compensation and desired benefits in their first job, obtain new roles and responsibilities, and improve relationships with clients, contractors, public officials, and vendors.<sup>21</sup> Having advanced negotiation skills will help advance careers.

#### MANAGERS

**Engagement** · Negotiations that lead to mutually satisfying outcomes will make new and current employees feel valued and lead to stronger employee engagement and retention.

**Workplace culture** · Workplace culture, policies, and processes need to be balanced with the needs of individual employees. Negotiation practices within the firm that align with statements about how a workplace values its employees can improve employee engagement and advance the firm's desired culture.

**Conflict mediation** · Negotiation is an important tool for reducing and resolving conflict within the workplace and with external parties.

**Project management** · Having negotiation skills means being able to navigate and make decisions internally about firm priorities and engage in productive discussions with clients and consultants.

#### FIRMS

**Retention** · People who have engaged in successful role negotiations report that they are more likely to stay in their current job.<sup>22</sup> Attrition among people of color often stems from dissatisfaction with professional growth and lack of recognition, but clear, written criteria for promotion can help them negotiate from an even footing. Providing prospective employees and those seeking promotions with a wage that reflects their market value also aids in retaining employees. For example, if the employment market favors architecture employees but a firm pays a wage lower than the market level, the firm risks losing its employees.<sup>23</sup>

**Trust** · Effective negotiators aim to understand the needs and interests of both sides. Firms that avoid intimidation and being dismissive of employees or prospective employees earn trust, and their employees will feel more engaged.<sup>24</sup>

**Risk** · Negotiation is an important tool for interrupting and addressing conflict both within the workplace and with external partners, thereby protecting employers and employees alike.

**Partnership** · If a firm negotiates fairly with clients, contractors, consultants, and public officials, it will be viewed as a trusted business partner and is more likely to earn repeat business and referrals.

**Profitability** · Effective negotiation establishes the correct scope to meet client needs while also setting value for the work.

**Centrality** · The ability to negotiate well and fairly contributes to maintaining the architect's essential role in the building process, especially when allocating and managing risk associated with all phases of the project.

#### PROFESSION

**Value of architects** · Professionals who are collaborative, creative, and fair negotiators can establish and uphold the value of architectural services to clients, the industry, communities, and society.

**Community advocacy** · Architects with strong negotiating skills and who understand the complexities of power dynamics can act as community advocates, either as engaged citizens or as professionals who encourage clients to see the value of community engagement on a project. (See the *Engaging Community* guide.)

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“I find that a lot of people sell themselves short. I don't know if it's just that lecture they get: ‘If you're going into this business to make money, you're in the wrong business.’ I try not to let that be a stumbling block. It shows leadership if you come in and say, ‘Here's what I've done, what I can do, and this is what I'm worth.’”

Principal and Owner, White, Male, Straight,  
Differently Aabled, 60

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# Negotiation capability and outcomes improve when...

## TRUST

firm leaders and managers communicate the firm's position, policies, and compensation structure openly

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employees are not penalized for sharing compensation information

---

everyone is committed to negotiation as a win-win practice

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people build bridges across cultural differences

---

negotiations are conducted with the impact on long-term relationships in mind

## ALIGNMENT

in negotiations, people consider the context beyond their own priorities and immediate demands

---

participants research the culture and possible expectations of the other parties beforehand

---

common goals are established up front in fee and contract negotiations

---

participants allow ample time for the negotiation process to reduce pressure, stress, and reversion to cultural stereotyping

---

negotiators have determined their own BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement; your most advantageous available alternative) if negotiations fail

## COMPLIANCE

employers are aware of and observe laws pertaining to compensation

---

employees who share salary information with others are not subject to retaliation (to the degree consistent with applicable law)

---

employers develop and advance their understanding of best practices

---

employers honor antitrust laws protecting and promoting competition

## FAIRNESS

decision-makers understand and appreciate the role of power, culture, and equity in the negotiation process, and have the skills to negotiate in an equitable and inclusive manner

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compensation policy is applied objectively and evenhandedly

---

firm leaders and managers recognize the tendencies of different groups to be rewarded or penalized for advocating on their own behalf and adjust accordingly

---

managers pay attention to cultural differences in negotiation styles and honor them without presuming stereotypes

---

firm leaders take steps to keep negotiations from perpetuating systemic advantages or disadvantages



# Compliance

This section is intended to introduce you to important legal information related to negotiation and describes the mere minimum requirements. It is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

Laws regarding negotiation relate closely to those dealing with recruitment, retention, and compensation. For example, in some states, there are details you may not discuss with an employee when recruiting, such as previous salaries.<sup>25</sup> In general, to be fair, employers should be transparent about available benefits and what other employees receive while customizing equitably to address individual needs or wants. (For more information, see the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.) Other compliance issues related to negotiating roles include ethical considerations and antitrust regulations.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Members of the AIA are dedicated to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and competence. The AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct sets forth guidelines and rules for the conduct of its members in fulfilling those obligations and applies to the professional activities of all classes of members, wherever they occur.<sup>26</sup>

Canon V of the Code of Ethics states:

- [AIA] members should respect the rights and acknowledge the professional aspirations and contributions of their colleagues.

The Code's Ethical Standard 5.1 provides:

- [AIA] members should provide their colleagues and employees with a fair and equitable working environment, compensate them fairly, and facilitate their professional development.

And Rule of Conduct 5.101 mandates:

- [AIA] members shall treat their colleagues and employees with mutual respect, and provide an equitable working environment.

Members who have questions about these or other provisions in the Code of Ethics may contact the AIA's Office of General Counsel.

## AIA ANTITRUST COMPLIANCE

Antitrust laws prevent or control monopolies and promote competition in business.<sup>27</sup> It is the policy and practice of the AIA and its members to comply strictly with all laws, including federal and state antitrust laws, that apply to AIA operations and activities. Compliance with the letter and spirit of antitrust laws is essential to maintaining the Institute's reputation for upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Compliance with antitrust laws does not preclude broad discussions regarding values, market trends, and best practices concerning such business activities as recruitment, retention, and negotiation. In educational settings and with the appropriate context of identified learning objectives, there are opportunities to advance individual, firm, and profession knowledge on topics critical to the financial health and future of architecture.

However, antitrust compliance does require firms to avoid certain anticompetitive behavior. For example, employers from different firms must avoid discussions with each other on any of the following subjects unless otherwise required by law or until they have received approval from their attorneys:

- The compensation paid to employees (including specific agreements on maximum or minimum salaries to be paid or annual pay increases)
- Agreements on benefits to be offered to employees
- Agreements not to hire each other's employees
- Agreements not to hire specific individuals

Employers are strongly urged to consult legal counsel before engaging in any discussions or activities that may affect interfirm competition.

## INFORMATION ASYMMETRY AND WAGE TRANSPARENCY

Some states have laws that protect workers from retaliation for sharing wage information or that prohibit employers from asking candidates for their salary history prior to making an offer of employment. (See the *Compensation* guide.)



# Assess

## COMPLIANCE

**Are your policies and practices consistent with federal and state employment laws?** · Are there state laws governing what you can and cannot discuss with an employee when negotiating? · Does your state have laws that protect workers from retaliation for sharing wage information?

**Are your policies and practices consistent with federal and state antitrust laws?** · How do you simultaneously support healthy competition among firms and constructive, shared discussion regarding best practices in the profession?

**How does your firm keep track of changing laws regarding pay transparency?** · Do you have ways to aggregate data or protect privacy while supporting transparency?

## SKILL

**What negotiation training and experience do you offer?** · What opportunities do employees have to practice negotiating skills when the stakes are low or situations less stressful?

**How do you establish common interests with the other party?** · Do you look at negotiation as a battle or as problem-solving? · Do you work together to cocreate new solutions that benefit both parties?

**Are you aware of the role and impact of culture, identity, bias, and power in negotiation?** · Are you able to bridge cultural differences that may impede negotiations? · How do you mitigate bias during negotiations? · Do you understand intersectionality and its impact on power dynamics?

## INTEGRITY

**Are your proposals, priorities, and BATNAs (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) consistent with your espoused values?** · Do you discuss and analyze them for alignment?

**Do employees seek mutually satisfying solutions?** · Do you reward win-win solutions? · How much latitude do employees and hiring managers have in negotiations? · How do people in your firm treat clients and contractors face-to-face? And how do they speak about them when they are not present?

**How are disagreements and conflicts addressed?** · What policies are there for managing disagreements between employees? · How about for managing conflict between employees and a client, with external teams, or with others?

## PREPARATION

**Before negotiating, do you establish your own interests, priorities, and BATNAs, and do you research the other parties'?** · How do you determine them? · What questions do you ask to help you understand your employee's or client's situation and needs?

**How do you view and manage risk?** · How much and what kind of liability are you willing to take on? · Do you pursue alternative practices when accepting risk helps your firm advance an innovative business model? · Do you find ways to reduce, share, or transfer risk?

**Within compensation packages, what flexibility and choices do employees have for meeting their own needs?** · Do you have consistent compensation packages and offers?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

Negotiating is a key skill in architecture and requires practice. Being a successful negotiator can help with quality of life, job satisfaction, and financial security. Typically, individuals will negotiate for themselves upon recruitment, when seeking promotions, and when making new working arrangements. They also negotiate on behalf of their firms over project fees and with vendors and subcontractors. In addition, when acting as project managers, architects will negotiate to guide difficult choices and ensure design intent is being met.

### NEGOTIATE TO BUILD A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

Everyday situations arise in which negotiating can help individuals promote a robust, healthy workplace, increase engagement, and promote equity.<sup>28</sup>

- **Bring attention to the systemic nature of issues relating to diversity and equity** rather than treating them as stand-alone, personal problems. Link them to core institutional values and goals.
- **Share information** and documented patterns of behavior or research when there are specific equity issues or conflicts. Draw on best practices, creativity, and commitment to resolve them.
- **Develop your social capital.** Build relationships with those who can make organizational changes; expand your network to include those who influence negotiations related to workplace culture; identify opportunities to strengthen these relationships.
- **Be honest in every aspect of every negotiation.** Know your own values and always communicate with integrity. The architecture world is small.
- **Explore whether identity and culture play a role** in negotiation power dynamics or biases.
- **Get training and practice in negotiation.** Negotiation is a learned skill, not an innate talent. Learn to approach negotiations as conversations. You can use the tools in the Resources section of this guide to help develop your skills.

### NEGOTIATE COMPENSATION

- Negotiating compensation packages with your employer can help you improve your short- and long-term financial security and secure an overall package that fits your needs.

- **Know your objectives and priorities.** Plan the elements you wish to negotiate, and articulate for yourself (and possibly for the employer) the desires that underlie the elements. Before negotiating, establish your target for each item (e.g., salary, location, project types, team, work content, benefits, working hours and flexible arrangements, support for licensing exams, employer policies, training, relocation assistance, evaluation timing, bonuses) and how important they are; identify your bottom line for anything that is nonnegotiable. Be optimistic but not unrealistic in your targets. Be prepared to be flexible and exchange some goals for other benefits.
- **Do your research about salaries.** Know the salary range for the job you are applying for or the next level of your career that you are aiming for. Know what salary level might cause the employer to walk away.<sup>29</sup>
- **Know your BATNA**—the best backup you have to accepting a less-than-ideal offer or proposal—and be willing to take it.<sup>30</sup> If you do not have a BATNA, find other alternatives quickly, such as by scheduling interviews with other firms, or refer to objective sources, such as salary surveys.
- **Enter with a positive attitude.** A 2018 study showed that only 39% of job seekers negotiated for a higher salary.<sup>31</sup> Women were discouraged from asking for raises or negotiating employment agreements.<sup>32</sup> In a candidate's market, in particular, overcome any discomfort and use your bargaining power; in an employer's market, prepare to be flexible and creative in finding workable solutions.
- **Practice.** Find a partner to give you feedback in mock interviews.<sup>33</sup> Anticipate who you will be negotiating with in actual negotiations as the power dynamic may be different, depending on each of your agent or target identities, culture, or biases.
- **Have an adaptive communication style.** Again, you are speaking with a potential colleague. Know your preferred style, and learn to adapt to other styles as needed (direct or indirect, casual or formal, discursive or factual and to the point).
- **Express appreciation for the offer.** Frame your objectives as questions, requests for advice, and ways you would add value rather than as demands.

- **Do not accept an offer immediately.** Ask for time to consider it, especially if you are weighing it against other offers. On the other hand, don't negotiate unless you are prepared to say yes once you have agreed on the elements of an offer.
- **Watch for the double bind.** Your identity and culture may play a role in how you are perceived and what is expected of you during negotiation. Black professionals and women are typically expected to be less aggressive negotiators and to settle for less. Black job seekers who negotiate are perceived as pushier and, as a result, may receive lower starting salaries. Women who ask for more can be perceived as unlikeable and may be penalized and their reputations tarnished. A flexible negotiation style—from friendly and nonconfrontational to assertive and businesslike—can help address this double bind. However, the responsibility falls to employers to foster awareness of bias among hiring managers and to incorporate structures and practices that mitigate against it, both to diversify their workforce and to benefit from employees who have negotiation skills.<sup>34</sup>

### NEGOTIATE WITHIN AND ON BEHALF OF YOUR FIRM

Architects often need to negotiate with clients, communities, or project team members regarding fees, contracts, their own degree of influence over project decisions, and challenging situations and within their firms about the distribution of resources or time.

- **Outline and know the firm's objectives.** Understanding the business model, cost structures, and project goals and objectives will help you negotiate well on the firm's behalf.
- **Advocate on behalf of others,** especially individuals from underrepresented groups for whom self-promotion can be perceived as negative.<sup>35</sup> Advocate for others and give credit where credit is due to manage unconscious biases in the workplace. If you are from an underrepresented group, form alliances with other employees for mutual advocacy.
- **Stay focused on shared project goals.** Build front-end alignment on project principles, and rely on them throughout contract implementation.<sup>36</sup>
- **Attend to all project stakeholders who affect your team.** Project team members come from companies with a range of workplace cultures. They have their own company agendas to achieve, and especially in the case of clients, there can be power differentials. Ensuring that your team thrives may require negotiation with others to identify differing expectations and norms and to find ways to resolve those differences.

### NAVIGATE CONFLICT

Negotiating with those inside and outside of your firm as a form of conflict resolution will help you work through heightened tensions in ways that will leave all parties feeling heard and appreciated.

- **Learn how to effectively engage and interact when there is conflict.** Conflict is a natural part of the workplace, and deepening your understanding and broadening your skill set for handling it is critical for finding viable solutions.

### FIRMS

Negotiating is imperative for firms to recruit top talent, retain employees, and develop strong working relationships with clients and consultants. Transparent and equitable negotiations help build a diverse workforce and increase inclusivity. Communication between negotiating parties about salary ranges, compensation packages, and negotiation policies is key.

### BE TRANSPARENT AND EQUITABLE

Use transparent negotiation practices and policies to close wage gaps and to ensure that all job candidates know salary ranges and other available forms of compensation and benefits.

- **Mitigate bias in decision-making.** The perception that members of underrepresented groups, particularly women and Black men, are pushy when they negotiate as assertively as white men, leads to inequitable outcomes. At the same time, implicit bias requires these same people to negotiate on their own behalf more frequently. Build awareness and intercultural competence in decision-makers and change inequitable decision-making processes and structures. (See the *Intercultural Competence*, *Compensation*, and *Recruitment and Retention* guides.)
- **Bring up salary range early in negotiations.** Be truthful. Don't exaggerate or lowball. Your candor will help candidates determine early on whether they want to pursue the position.<sup>37</sup>
- **Design compensation packages with guidance on what parts are flexible.** Determine which parts of the compensation package are negotiable and which parts are not. Share this information with hiring managers, employees, and candidates.<sup>38</sup>
- **Be open with employees about salary ranges and promotion criteria.** Establish a top end reserved for the most highly qualified candidates. You can also post salary bands with position descriptions to ensure that prospective employees know what salary

range to expect and how to negotiate accordingly.<sup>39</sup> Maintaining transparency about salary ranges and promotion criteria can help ensure greater equity in compensation, promotion, and partnership agreements.<sup>40</sup> (See the *Compensation* guide.)

- **Be clear about what authority your hiring managers have.** Be transparent and honest with candidates about who the ultimate decision-makers will be and whether you have a policy that allows or prohibits salary negotiation.<sup>41</sup>
- **Research market demand and prevailing local salaries for the position.** Determine the current market demand for applicants, and know what current salaries are for specific roles.<sup>42</sup>
- **Offer fair salaries and be creative with your compensation packages.** Fair salaries and a flexible compensation package can make your workplace more attractive as well as equitable. Combining the right salaries with an offer of other desirable benefits (e.g., a standard forty-hour week plus a choice of comp time or overtime pay; reimbursement for the Architect Registration Examination® [ARE], materials, licenses, AIA membership) will help you draw top candidates.<sup>43</sup> (For more details, see the *Compensation* guide.) If you can't be flexible with salary, find other ways to improve the compensation package and address employee objectives.<sup>44</sup>
- **Remove anchoring bias.** Anchoring bias is the tendency to rely too much on initial data to frame perceptions. When a recruiter learns an applicant's most recent salary, anchoring bias tends to lead to offers based on it. Since women and other nonmajority groups are generally paid less than white men, removing anchoring bias can help to close pay gaps.
- **Equip employees to be effective negotiators.** Some of the ten keys to successful negotiating, published by the Human Resource Planning Society, include: matching the negotiator to the situation and, when you have more than one negotiator, being clear about who is filling what role; planning the first things you intend to say; understanding that the other party's perception of the issue is your entire challenge; and being hard on the issues but gentle on the people.<sup>45</sup>
- **Provide negotiation training.** Training staff to be better negotiators enables them to become more confident and gain important skills that will help them advocate for themselves and the firm. Educate the staff in different styles and methods of negotiating in different contexts.<sup>46</sup>

- **Understand the law.** Know how federal and state employment laws may affect negotiation. Many city and state laws prohibit queries about a candidate's previous salary.<sup>47</sup>

### CONSIDER PROFIT AND RISK

Negotiate with potential clients and partners in a way that carefully considers your firm's profit and risk.

- **Make the value you provide the basis for your fees.** The business model of architecture can improve with a focus on value and metrics over service and hours. When negotiating fee and scope, consider value as foundational.
- **Become conversant with the ways of managing risk.** Evaluate the risks on a given project and establish your preferred strategy for managing them when you negotiate the contract. You may choose to take on more risk for a desirable project or greater profit; reduce it by improving your own knowledge; walk away if the risk is excessive and can't be reduced; allocate it to another, more expert party; or pay to transfer it, for example, to an insurer. These strategies require both the ability to assess risk and liability, as well as negotiation skill, once you have determined your desired outcome.<sup>48</sup>
- **Take calculated risks to break historical patterns of inequity.** Your stance and your firm's advocacy for justice pave the way for broader change.

### PROFESSION

Professional organizations can support equity with programs that provide compensation data and training in negotiation skills.

- **Continue providing and referring to up-to-date salary data.** Knowledge of salary levels in different geographic areas can help firms and employees alike in negotiating equitable, mutually agreeable compensation. The level of compensation required to attract new employees in an architecture labor market that favors new hires can disrupt efforts to achieve parity among existing employees and requires attention to keep the two in balance. (For guidance on salary determination, see the *Compensation* guide.)
- **Provide training in negotiation skills.** Better negotiation skills support architecture in attaining parity with other professions and thereby retaining diverse talent. Offer negotiation training and opportunities to practice.

# Consider

## NEGOTIATING FOR EQUITY

I was so grateful that I was employed that I never really pushed for what I thought I needed and deserved. I just chose to jump ship: I'm not getting it here, so I need to go somewhere else. That's a large part of why I left corporate practice and started my own firm—I'm not very good at asking. In terms of negotiation, I think it is a skill that people with disabilities do need to hone, to ask for what you have a right to and what kinds of accommodations are reasonable in a workplace. There can be physical accommodations: your workstation, your schedule, other things that make it easier and more effective for you to do your job. I do think that with the Americans with Disabilities Act in place, it's a little more clear-cut than when I was younger, in terms of what is a reasonable accommodation.

It's good for employers to know about the Job Accommodation Network, an independent federal agency that supports employers by asking questions like "how would you do that?" and "what are reasonable accommodations?" and, in the case of limited dexterity, "how are they going to work on a computer?" And, for example, there's a wide variety of equipment for low vision, so that shouldn't be a reason to say no to a qualified employee. But I don't know that architects have good information on accommodations. But, really, I think the important thing is for employers to know that if a person seems like they would be a great asset in terms of their work and their



personality, don't let "how will we accommodate them in the workplace?" stop you from hiring them.

— Principal and Firm Owner, White, Female, Baby Boomer, Wheelchair User

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DISCUSS:

- What concerns or fears might this person's past employers have had? What might they have done to encourage her to stay? What power dynamics may have been in play?
- What was the speaker's BATNA with her previous firm? What leverage might she have had with her former employer before leaving? What principles or interests might the two parties have had in common?
- To be equitable negotiators, what are some of the perspectives and skills employers and employees need? Are these different for people who need accommodations? Do you practice these in your workplace? Does your firm train or support employees learning to negotiate?
- What are the costs to the candidate and to the employer of not negotiating?
- What nonnegotiable accommodations do people with disabilities have a right to? What are some reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities? Does your firm have good information on accommodations for people with disabilities?
- What are other things you can ask for during negotiation? What is nonnegotiable for you?



# Consider

## I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S A CULTURAL THING

Talking to my father, I don't know if it's a cultural thing. A lot of my classmates working in tech and other fields change jobs more often [than he is used to]. I talked with my dad about negotiating. He said, "I don't think that's a good thing." He was CEO of a bank for twenty-five years. Whenever it came to raises and negotiation, he said, "I felt better if I offered it, as opposed to them asking for it." That stuck with me. I'd rather prove myself and show my performance and the work I do through the things I do each day, rather than ask for it.

— Rising Firm Leader, First-Generation Mexican American, Male, 30s

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### DISCUSS:

- What expectations do you have about negotiating? Do you think your perception of what is appropriate is influenced by particular people, culture, situations, generational differences, or all of these?
- How do power differences play out in asking or receiving requests?
- What are possible strategies for making a request of a boss who believes as this one does?
- Is it a goal that good performance should eliminate the need for requesting a raise?
- Have you seen or experienced a "double bind," for example, a situation where you found it harder to ask for something because of stereotypes or expectations about your identity?

# Consider

## NEGOTIATE WITH CONFIDENCE

For women to get jobs—it's not easy. I remember after the 2008 recession the job market was pretty bad; it was just a matter of getting any job. But even after the market improved, the fact that we're not taken as seriously as men made me so insecure that I rarely negotiated. My husband said to me every time I was offered a position: "You have to negotiate because if you don't value yourself, why would they?" But each time after hearing the offer I got scared and thought to myself, "This is what I deserve," and that there are a lot of other candidates out there, and if I don't say yes, they'll give it to someone else. But the last time that I negotiated, they improved the original offer.

I told them about my past experiences and that I think I deserve more than this because I've worked on a number of high-profile projects in the past. (I'm not bragging, but I've got a pretty good portfolio.) However, they placed me at a midlevel position. I wasn't sure what that level meant, or its associated scope of work and responsibilities, but I knew I was past a midlevel architect. I said I deserved more than that: I'm changing my job to get a jump and a promotion; otherwise, what's the point?

I also asked them to be a little more clear about my role, what projects they're going to put me on because I've always ended up doing a lot of menial work, cleaning up after male designers. This happens to women so

many times that it's a pattern. We're all architects, we all want to realize our vision, but it's always a bunch of guys who start the project. Then when it gets to construction documents or administration phases, the women coordinate the consultants. I'm honestly so tired of cleaning up after men. I also asked for more vacation. They said no. But they also said, "We're investing in you. You have a very good portfolio and experience. We hope you'll get your license." They raised the offer just a little, but they didn't give me the higher level.

— Full-time Architect, Large Firm, White, Female, 40s

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DISCUSS:

- What possible biases affected the way the hiring managers approached this negotiation? What are some strategies firms could use to keep bias from entering into negotiations?
- What assumptions were being made about the perception of women's work in architecture? What can you observe about the division of labor at architecture firms? Why did this person want to clarify her role during her negotiations?
- What assumptions and biases have affected this person's willingness or reluctance to negotiate? How does the double bind manifest for women who negotiate? What are some strategies that this prospective employee could use to mitigate the double bind?
- Do you think this negotiation was successful? What do you think the negotiation gained for the speaker? And for the firm? What was lost?

# Consider

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR VALUE

Coming out with a master's degree, even postrecession 2012 when I entered the market full time, the salaries I was being offered were pretty low: sub-\$40,000 a year, graduating with six figures of debt. Each time I was offered a salary, I had to make a counteroffer because I couldn't afford to live in this city and pay back my loans. When I was interviewing at a firm, a friend had just left that office, and she provided great mentorship. I learned I had to do research and talk about business points that made sense: what I was billed out at, minus overhead and profit margin, what percent of my billable hours I should fairly be expected to be compensated for. Talking about how high my rent is might build empathy, but they want to hear about what I've done in the office. Crafting my story, how I was valuable as an employee and contributor was something I had to learn.

I was transitioning from one office to another—that's key for millennials because we're not staying at one place for ten-plus years. Each shift is an opportunity to increase your salary. When we're talking to firm principals, they've interviewed hundreds, but this may be only our second or third interview, and they use a lot of power plays. I was asked what my salary was, and I didn't know if I should tell them. They offered me pretty much the same salary, and then later I learned that there was a mandatory extra five hours a week of work at the new firm. It made me feel so devalued. That was a difficult start. I felt blindsided because I didn't know about the requirement

for working hours. I probably should have taken a clue that they were all too busy to meet me before I decided to work there. Getting that perspective would have been super valuable.

— Firm Owner, White, Cisgender, Gay, Male, 31

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DISCUSS:

- What did this person mean by “power play”? What responsibility do firms have to offer a living wage? What is the long-term impact on talent retention for firms that offer low starting salaries?
- What responsibility—and what prospects—do you think graduating students and emerging professionals have to advocate and negotiate for themselves? How does salary pressure reflect on the profession and on firms?
- How can architecture schools help students hone their negotiation skills? What can the profession or local firms do to help students develop these skills before they look for jobs?
- What did this person learn about building a business case and demonstrating his value so that he could negotiate successfully? How might generational differences be changing how or when we negotiate?
- Do you think gender identity played a role in this story? If you were asked to help the speaker prepare for a negotiation, would you draw his attention to any aspect of his identity—race, gender, sexual orientation, or age—and how it might advantage or disadvantage him in different negotiating contexts? As his ally or coach, are there reasons why you would avoid discussing identity, such as stereotype threat or your own discomfort?
- The speaker felt blindsided about an unknown requirement for extra work hours when negotiating, despite doing research. What clues would you watch out for prior to or during a negotiation that might affect your decision to take an offer? How can you get the perspective of other employees before accepting an offer?

# Resources

## NEGOTIATION BASICS

**Architect's Essentials of Contract Negotiation – American Institute of Architects, John Wiley & Sons – Ava J. Abramovitz (2002)**

Fundamental handbook of contract negotiation and long-term implementation; addresses the specific role of the architect in relation to all contractual parties.

**Ask for It: How Women Can Use Negotiation to Get What They Really Want – Linda Babcock and Sarah Laschever (2008)**

Concrete, step-by-step guidance for people who, because of the double bind, have to consciously moderate how they negotiate.

**Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In, Revised Edition – Roger Fisher, William Ury, Bruce Patton (2011)**

Classic text based on the work of the Harvard Negotiation Project offers a method for negotiating business and personal situations and conflicts.

**How to Negotiate Salary: Learn the Best Techniques to Help You Manage the Most Difficult Salary Negotiations and What You Need to Know When Asking for a Raise**

<https://www.pon.harvard.edu/freemium/salary-negotiations/>

Detailed guidance for successfully navigating employment terms.

## NEGOTIATION GAP AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

**Do Women Avoid Salary Negotiations? Evidence from a Large Scale Natural Field Experiment – National Bureau of Economic Research Andreas Leibbrandt and John A. List (2012)**

<https://www.nber.org/papers/w18511>

Studies have shown that women are less likely to initiate negotiations unless a job listing specifically notes that the pay is negotiable. Indicating that negotiation is allowed is one way to attract more diverse employees.

**Getting the Short End of the Stick: Racial Bias in Salary Negotiations – MIT Sloan Management Review – Morela Hernandez and Derek R. Avery (2016)**

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/getting-the-short-end-of-the-stick-racial-bias-in-salary-negotiations/>

Review of both racial and gender differences in salary negotiation. A study of how white versus Black job applicants negotiated and the effect of the biases, expectations, and perceptions of the employers on the results of the negotiations. Proposes ways for companies to address racial bias in negotiations.

**No Salary Negotiations Allowed – SHRM – Joanne Sammer (2015)**

<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/Pages/0915-salary-negotiation-bans.aspx>

Explains the pros and cons of implementing a no-negotiation policy for hiring; includes alternative options to ensure an equal playing field for negotiation.

**Social Incentives for Gender Differences in the Propensity to Initiate Negotiations: Sometimes It Does Hurt to Ask – Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes – Hannah Riley Bowles, Linda Babcock, Lei Lai (2005)**

<https://www.cfa.harvard.edu/cfawis/bowles.pdf>

Investigates gender differences in willingness to initiate compensation negotiations and outcomes, including differing perceptions of men and women who initiate negotiation.



**Women Don't Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding Negotiation – and Positive Strategies for Change**  
– Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever (2003)

Enduring, quintessential, research-based guidance for people (not only women) who wish to develop skill and confidence at negotiating.

**TOOLS AND TOOL KITS**

**Harvard Law School Program on Negotiation**

<https://www.pon.harvard.edu/free-reports/>

Downloadable free reports on a range of relevant topics, including negotiation skills, salary negotiation, BATNA, business negotiations, deal making, conflict resolution, and mediation.

**Negotiation Advice for Women – Lean In – Ashleigh Shelby Rosette**

<https://leanin.org/negotiation>

Series of four videos with tips on how to approach a negotiation, including both general advice and tips for counteracting the specific stereotypes that women face in negotiating.

**Negotiation Skills – Queensland Government**

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/marketing-sales/managing-relationships/negotiating/skills>

Lists tips and strategies for negotiation and lays out the process for a negotiation, including how to proceed when a negotiation fails.

**Women's Leadership Edge**

<http://www.womensleadershipedge.org/>

A wide array of tools to help organizations support, advance, and retain women, with parallels in engineering and law.

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#### SECOND EDITION

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# Mentorship and Sponsorship

## KEY TOPICS

advocate  
affinity bias  
ally  
boundaries  
career advancement  
coaching  
feedback  
formal/informal mentoring  
goals  
intercultural competence  
intergenerational  
influence  
mentoring programs  
networks  
opportunities  
political capital  
power  
protégé  
reciprocal mentorship  
reverse mentoring

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Mentors and, increasingly, sponsors (who use political capital to promote a protégé) are invaluable for career advancement; when they are seen as allies as well, they can help diversify workplaces and build inclusiveness.

This guide provides background and guidance on the value and practice of mentorship and sponsorship from the standpoint of individual mentors and mentees, sponsors and protégés, and firms and organizations that develop formal and informal programs.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What are mentorship and sponsorship?

Mentorship and sponsorship are crucial for recruiting and retaining workers within firms and in the profession. If done equitably and well, these relationships will help retain diverse professionals and can help address achievement gaps.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT ARE MENTORS?

Mentors are counselors and advisors to a professional person, typically in earlier career stages.<sup>2</sup> Mentors may come from inside or outside of one's firm; if from within, they will typically have a more senior role. However, many mentoring relationships develop organically and can be filled by one or more colleagues who provide different types of support and share their distinct expertise. Sylvia Ann Hewlett describes a mentor as someone who gives valuable career support and advice, builds self-esteem, provides a sounding board, contributes to self-assessment and "blue-sky thinking," and is often considered a role model.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, mentors support self-awareness in their mentees while also supporting their growth in knowledge and skills in the profession. Mentors also provide important insights about and guidance within a firm's environment, including issues regarding its politics, unwritten rules, and culture. They may also introduce mentees to important professional networks outside of the firm.<sup>4</sup> Whether mentors are successful in supporting mentees in these ways depends on their ability to build trusting, respectful, transparent relationships, as well as their skill with intercultural bridging and adapting. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

Mentorship can be informal, when two individuals connect personally, or formal, typically created and managed by HR departments or professional organizations.<sup>5</sup> People often have multiple mentors, and the mentoring relationship may be so informal that they don't realize that someone is serving as a mentor to them. Many architecture schools have formal mentoring programs connecting students with local professionals. In some cases, the mentoring relationship continues informally long after the mentee graduates. Finding ways for the relationship to evolve can be both rewarding and challenging. Not every architecture firm has a formal mentoring program. However, groups

of firms, organizations, or interest groups can find ways to match mentors and mentees.

Successful programs can vary widely in the degree of formality of the matching process and oversight. The most traditional form of formal mentoring is one-on-one mentoring between a senior and more junior professional. These relationships are often long-term and provide "personalized dialogue and direct feedback."<sup>6</sup> Ideally, a formal program will provide training for the mentors, particularly in intercultural skills, and will lay out guidelines and expectations for all participants. Reverse mentorship has similarities to traditional one-on-one mentoring relationships, with the notable reversal that the more junior person mentors the more senior person, giving the junior mentor stronger relationships with senior leadership and the more senior mentee knowledge of recent professional developments, such as how to use and benefit from technology. Reciprocal mentorship is another type of one-on-one mentoring relationship between individuals who offer mutual advice and career assistance. In any case, good mentorship is mutually supportive.

Mentorship can also take place in groups, generally a small number of people with common interests who share wisdom with one another or from a mentor; for example, a recently licensed architect might meet with a group of exam takers. Finally, mentorship can take the form of a personal "board of directors," consisting of a spectrum of mentors from within and outside of the profession (e.g., people in other professions, professors, career counselors, family, clergy), who will advise, support career development, and push mentees to be their best by providing a range of perspectives and feedback.<sup>7</sup>

## WHAT ARE SPONSORS?

While the roles of mentor and sponsor can overlap, sponsors are advocates for a person's career, not merely extra-generous mentors.<sup>8</sup> Sponsors provide protection and support and take professional risks on behalf of their protégés, who are typically high-potential, high-performing, loyal employees.<sup>9</sup> As Hewlett says, "Mentors give, whereas sponsors invest."<sup>10</sup> She defines sponsors as senior leaders who believe in their protégés and go out on a limb on their behalf, advocating for their next promotion



or providing air cover so protégés can take risks. Sponsors also help make connections to senior leaders and clients, promoting their protégés' visibility and giving advice on presentation of self and strong, often critical feedback on skill gaps. Sponsors help expand protégés' perceptions of what they are capable of by opening doors to stretch opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

The sponsorship relationship is also reciprocal. Protégés work hard for their sponsors and “wear their brand,” advance sponsors' goals, and exemplify their values in words and actions, making the sponsors look good in front of their colleagues and clients.<sup>12</sup> They advance their sponsors' careers while the sponsors advance theirs.<sup>13</sup> Leaders with protégés are more satisfied in their careers, more desirable for promotion to more advanced positions, and more certain of leaving a legacy.<sup>14</sup> Leaders of color who have acted as sponsors express 24% more satisfaction with their careers than those who have not.<sup>15</sup>

Protégés gain sponsorship by demonstrating their reliability and their potential benefit to the sponsor. While sometimes there is a risk that others will perceive the sponsor-protégé relationship as favoritism—that a senior employee may protect a junior one based on shared interests or identities or favorable unconscious bias—consistent high-value work from a protégé will help to demonstrate that they earned their sponsor's support.<sup>16</sup>

For architects who have an apparent “brand” or are associated with a particular design language or style, the sponsor-protégé relationship may be more complex, as clients, the public, or media may assume that one person (typically the sponsor) is the source of the ideas and that the other is mimicking. Sharing credit and publicly acknowledging the many contributions of protégés and other team members can help counteract this perception.

Unlike mentorship, formal sponsor programs are rare, as sponsors typically initiate sponsoring relationships personally.<sup>17</sup> However, firms can support sponsorship by creating opportunities for employees to introduce themselves to senior leaders, be seen, and show off their work to begin developing these relationships.<sup>18</sup> Firm leaders can also remind potential sponsors that affinity bias (favorably regarding those who are most like ourselves) can be actively countered by seeking out those who are different from them.

### WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT?

Both roles are essential and work in concert, although some sources suggest that sponsorship more directly influences career progression.<sup>19</sup> Mentors are invaluable for professional development and for empathetic guidance in solving workplace challenges. Sponsors advocate for their protégés and their professional advancement. In

fact, influential mentors may evolve into sponsors if they help mentees gain promotions or high-profile projects.<sup>20</sup>

### HOW ARE MENTORS AND SPONSORS DIFFERENT FROM ALLIES?

An ally is a colleague who is a member of the dominant culture, defined as being in a position of privilege or having an agent identity (social identity groups with advantages gained by birth or acquisition; for more, see the *Intercultural Competence* guide), who takes action to support colleagues from target identity groups (social-identity groups that are generally discriminated against or marginalized).<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that one cannot declare oneself an ally; genuine allies are only those people who are so designated by members of the target groups. Allies use their standing or credibility to spread awareness among dominant groups and advocate for greater equity and inclusion. They may also be mentors or sponsors; however, allyship is a specific role that calls for using one's voice to make changes that help others.<sup>22</sup>

### HOW ARE MENTORS AND SPONSORS DIFFERENT FROM COACHES?

Professional coaches typically focus on improving on-the-job performance in a structured, more formal, shorter-term approach. Coaches work with any level of employee, typically in a contractual arrangement with specific, identified goals to support the client's self-awareness, strength building, and professional development. Coaches may or may not have expertise related to their client's profession. The value of coaching comes from the coach's ability to listen, expand their client's own self-knowledge, and support sustained, intentional change. Managers and mentors should also develop coaching skills and coach employees as part of their overall responsibilities.

### EQUITY IN MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP

Supporting interculturally competent mentors and sponsors from dominant groups is crucial for advancing diversity. Sponsorship has a dramatic impact on these mentees and protégés: they are 65% more likely to feel satisfied with their rate of advancement and 57% less likely than their unsponsored peers to leave their current employer within a year. However, due to histories of systemic racism and sexism, most lack a sponsor and tend to distrust those in power in their workplaces to reward them fairly, for instance, believing that “a person who looks like me would never get a top position at my company.”<sup>23</sup>

Both within and outside of the primary manager-employee hierarchy, mentorship and sponsorship relationships can still be subject to the same power dynamics and tensions. For example, sponsors and, typically, mentors, are more senior or have more experience in the profession, making a power imbalance inherent in these relationships. Because of the current



structure of the profession, they are also more likely to be white men. These dynamics can influence how mentees and protégés are selected, as well as how the more junior mentee or protégé speaks or acts with the sponsor or mentor. At the same time, power dynamics based on individual identities can affect relationships and career advancement. In some situations, mentors or sponsors with target identities actually have less power than mentees or protégés with agent identities. For instance, in an office setting, a woman sponsoring a man might find that during client interactions, her protégé is taken more seriously, and he may even be promoted ahead of her. Intersectionality makes these power dynamics even more complex. For example, while a white woman sponsor and a Black man who is her protégé are each likely to have experienced some forms of marginalization, they will not have had exactly the same experiences. In client interactions, they might find that their client's identity and biases influence which of them is assumed to have more authority and is, therefore, taken more seriously.

Finding and keeping sponsors and mentors can also be difficult for people belonging to underrepresented groups. While challenging, having a formal mentorship program was noted by the AIA's Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey as one of the top factors in retaining people of color in firms.<sup>24</sup> There is a relative lack of senior role models for mentees and protégés to draw from, especially for people of color, people with disabilities/different abilities, LGBTQ and non-gender-binary people, and for women at higher levels in the profession. When comparing those who mentor men with those who mentor women, the mentors of men often hold higher positions, are more likely to have decision-making power in the organization, and more often expand their role as mentor into sponsorship.<sup>25</sup> Compared with white women, women of color are less likely to have mentors with organizational influence.<sup>26</sup> With more white men currently at the leadership level in most organizations, people who have similar gender and race identities and experiences have easier access to sponsors.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, women may have less access to male sponsors because of mutual concerns about rumors or suspicions of a sexual relationship that could lead others in the workplace to question motives and outcomes.<sup>28</sup>

However, equal access to—and, more importantly, genuine support from—mentors and sponsors can generally help address achievement gaps.<sup>29</sup> For architecture in particular, 63% of women and 46% of men believe mentoring is an effective way to attract and retain women in the field.<sup>30</sup> Formal mentor matches that intentionally pair people across differences, such as racial groups, gender identities, generations (e.g., Gen Xers and millennials), people with different levels of ability/disability, professional levels, and nationalities can help level the playing field.<sup>31</sup> However, for these types of mentoring

relationships to succeed, it is important that the mentor or mentee from the majority group be trained in allyship and intercultural competence. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

Architecture professionals can also improve the quality of mentorship and sponsorship by focusing on the profession's specific challenges. For example, in some offices there is a perceived hierarchical divide between design roles and nondesign roles, with more nondesign roles and office housework given to women. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.) Mentors and sponsors can help those who prefer to focus on design to stay the course, while senior leaders can elevate the perceived value and importance of other career paths, such as interior design, project management, and technical leadership.

Since the architecture profession has so many small offices, it can also be helpful for architects to look beyond office borders when seeking mentor and sponsor matches, particularly for employees from underrepresented groups. Not only can mentoring occur outside an office, but having mentors outside of architecture is useful for navigating other sectors of the building industry (e.g., engineering, construction, and development) and nonoffice settings (e.g., construction sites, community meetings, and manufacturing plants).

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“After graduation, my professional practice teacher connected me with an ACE regional director, who was a great resource. Now, the tables are almost flipped. At the last conference, my teacher was in the audience and I was presenting. He’s still teaching professional practice at my alma mater; I get on Skype and talk about my experiences to his students. And I got an email from a student he referred to me for a summer internship at my firm. Anyone with his seal of approval is good in my book.”

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Rising Firm Leader, First Generation  
Mexican American, Male, 30s

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# Why are mentorship and sponsorship important?

Mentorship and sponsorship have an impact on individuals, firms, and our profession as a whole. With so many sole practitioners and small firms, it can be challenging for architects to find mentors and sponsors and for the work of mentoring and sponsoring to be consistent and effective. Yet we know that both relationships can help individuals achieve power, influence, promotions, and increased compensation.<sup>32</sup> They are keys to career success and maximized potential and can also help build confidence, self-worth, and a feeling of security in the workplace—important elements of employee engagement and well-being.

These relationships have benefits for sponsors and mentors as well. Mentors gain personal satisfaction and a better understanding of younger workers and may even update their own skills and knowledge base. Sponsors enhance their reputations and tend to be more satisfied with their own career advancement.<sup>33</sup> For firms, encouraging and supporting these relationships means greater retention, a more supportive workplace culture, and improved business outcomes.<sup>34</sup> Mentorship and sponsorship also improve professional knowledge and expertise and amplify innovative discussions in the profession (e.g., data-driven design, environmental justice, mixed reality), propagating knowledge from a few experts in these specialized areas to a broader group of interested architects.<sup>35</sup>

Mentorship and sponsorship can contribute directly to diversity and equity in the profession. Mentors can help increase access to professional and academic opportunities for underrepresented groups, such as people of color and first-generation college students, and expand their professional options. Contact with professionals in the building industry can be a powerful positive experience for high school students. ACE Mentors, a program that connects working professionals in architecture, engineering, and construction with high school students, reports that 88% of their 2017 alumni felt more motivated to attend college, nearly three-quarters of current ACE seniors intended to study related majors in college, and 79% of the 2017 alumni, who were rising sophomores in college, planned to continue their AEC majors.<sup>36</sup>

Architecture is a profession historically based on the idea of apprenticeship. Within that institutional structure, for centuries people of color and women have largely been excluded from mentorship and sponsorship. Today, equal access to mentors and sponsors is essential to the retention and advancement of underrepresented groups. People of color, especially women of color, as well as white women, are less likely to have a mentor, and they cite this lack as a major impediment to career advancement.<sup>37</sup> For people of color, a lack of role models is a significant factor in inequity; a strong network of mentors and sponsors supports advancement. Developing a mentorship program for people of color in firms may also help reduce racial imbalance. Mentorship can help retain professionals from underrepresented groups by providing support and advice at early stages of their careers and during the career “pinch points” that disproportionately affect them (e.g., to and through education, the long path to licensure, extended caregiving, and reaching the glass ceiling).<sup>38</sup> Sponsorship is especially valuable: those who have sponsors are more likely to seek out and receive raises, high-profile assignments, and promotions.<sup>39</sup> And mothers with sponsors are more often employed full time than mothers without sponsors.<sup>40</sup> Making mentorship and sponsorship equitable is one way that the architectural profession can address the achievement gap.<sup>41</sup>

## INDIVIDUALS

**Career advancement** · People of color, women, and other underrepresented groups advance in their careers at a more satisfactory pace if they have mentors or sponsors.<sup>42</sup> They receive exposure to a wider network of professionals, particularly those at senior levels, and expand their individual skills. Research indicates that women and people of color with sponsors or mentors are more likely to seek out “stretch assignments”—high-stakes, visible projects that call for new skills, knowledge, and networks.<sup>43</sup> Career advancement works both ways in mentor-mentee relationships: mentees are promoted five times more often than those without a mentor, and mentors are promoted six times more often than those who do not mentor junior staff.<sup>44</sup>

**Financial security** · Mentors, mentees, sponsors, and protégés alike benefit financially from their participation in these work relationships. Both are more likely to receive raises. Although 70% of women are hesitant to ask for a raise, women with sponsors are 27% more likely to seek one.<sup>45</sup> Both mentors and mentees are 20% more likely to receive a pay increase.<sup>46</sup>

**Healthy workplace** · Connecting with a mentor who is interculturally competent and outside of a supervisory relationship within a firm can provide a safe space for feedback and advice on performance and to learn about how to handle difficult situations at work. This can reduce workplace stress.

**Relationship building** · Working with mentors and sponsors helps individuals develop interpersonal skills and connections that will help them thrive in the workplace. Eighty-three percent of millennials in mentoring relationships reported that they were satisfied with their relationships.<sup>47</sup>

**Happiness** · Those with more social capital (networks of relationships that help groups function effectively) are happier and healthier and experience less stress.<sup>48</sup>

## FIRMS

**Highly skilled workforce** · Offering successful formal mentoring programs and supporting a mentoring and sponsorship culture help create a pool of capable, promotable employees and senior staff with greater leadership and coaching skills.<sup>49</sup> Mentors can help emerging architecture professionals through their career milestones, including internships, being hired, licensure, promotions, “off-ramping” and “on-ramping” when taking and returning from leaves of absence, equity partnership, job transitions, and launching their own firms.

**Workplace diversity** · Members of underrepresented groups benefit from mentorship, sponsorship, and access to key networks to help them remain and advance in firms. Advancing a more diverse pool of professionals can reduce the achievement and pay gap in architecture.<sup>50</sup>

**Workplace culture** · Individual mentoring and mentorship initiatives will thrive if there is a culture that demonstrates support for developing employees and that establishes the expectation that everyone is accountable for the success of mentorship programs.<sup>51</sup> Improving the mentoring culture will improve the workplace culture at large. Firms show their commitment to all their employees when they take time to give opportunities and feedback to newer professionals. Mentor training can be an opportunity to increase intercultural competence in the firm.

**Recruitment and retention** · Formal mentoring programs attract candidates, increasing the firm’s recruitment yield.<sup>52</sup> Having a formal program or a mentoring culture fosters a sense of inclusion and demonstrates to employees that the firm cares about their careers. Mentoring is also an important component of an employee career-development program: early-career architecture professionals who receive one-on-one coaching and feedback report they are more likely to plan on staying in their current position than those who do not.<sup>53</sup> The encouragement of mentors and sponsors will help employees feel supported and engaged, enabling a firm to retain its employees. For example, “return to work” mentors can help mothers choose to stay in architecture after maternity leave.<sup>54</sup> Leaders of small offices can mentor their employees, introduce their staff members to potential mentors outside the firm, and promote AIA chapter mentoring programs.

**Context for employees** · Being mentored and, later, sponsored helps employees become better acclimated and more productive. Mentorship and sponsorship teach employees about the politics of their workplace so they can avoid political missteps. Both types of relationships can also help transmit company knowledge, history, and performance expectations.

**Profitability** · Mentoring is effective for increasing employee commitment to a firm, reducing turnover, and improving company performance.<sup>55</sup> These benefits improve a firm’s bottom line.

**Training** · Training in intercultural competence is essential for success in mentoring and sponsoring people from different identity groups. Without this awareness and skill, the relationship will be less effective and could, in fact, damage the career of a person from an underrepresented group.<sup>56</sup> When combined with training in allyship, mentoring and sponsoring will be even more effective.

## PROFESSION

**Next generation of professionals** · Mentors and sponsors pass down the important knowledge and traditions of the architecture profession.

**Industry skills** · Younger members of the profession have a variety of things to share in addition to technology skills. Depending on their course of study and experience, they may have expertise in sustainable, resilient design; universal design or designing for equity; design for specific populations (e.g., children with autism); or applied research methods. Reciprocal mentoring helps senior professionals learn new skills and approaches as junior professionals familiarize themselves with more traditional skills and knowledge, such as building-construction conventions or experience gained from working with clients over time.

**Innovation** · Emerging areas of practice that require highly specialized knowledge can use mentorship and sponsorship to purposefully connect the few existing experts to a community of mentees or protégés, thereby increasing access to expertise.<sup>57</sup>

**Diversity** · Equitable forms of mentorship and sponsorship improve diversity in the profession by recognizing skills and contributions and actively countering bias. (For more on implicit bias, see the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

**Inclusion and equity** · Mentorship allows long-time professionals with agent identities to deepen their understanding of people with target identities and appreciate their different perspectives, which can enrich a project's programming, design, planning, etc. When done with care and with training in intercultural competence, antiracism, and allyship, it will contribute to greater inclusiveness and the ability to improve equity in the profession and the excellence of design.

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“I’d never touched construction documents, maybe I’d looked at them, or edited a note, but I’d never drawn anything. My boss said, ‘You can learn as you go.’ Her trust made me trust myself and gave me the confidence—I can take this up even if I have no idea what I’m doing....I had room to make mistakes. Even when I was making mistakes, my boss trusted that I would learn and actually help the project. Now I’ve been working for almost two years I’m managing a couple of projects, and I feel like she keeps challenging me, giving me more and more freedom.”

Architectural Designer, Asian American,  
Nonbinary, Queer, 28

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# Mentorship and sponsorship are equitable and inclusive when...

## ALIGNMENT

mentorship programs align with business objectives and needs

programs are implemented thoughtfully and tailored to promote equitable outcomes

formal mentoring-program goals are identified and measured, and mentors are evaluated

a robust mentoring culture provides support and knowledge in a safe environment

mentorship and sponsorship relationships are understood as mutually beneficial

## ENGAGEMENT

formal programs encourage relationships within and across identity and cultural boundaries

mentees and protégés receive honest, sensitive feedback

programs are inventive and flexible to involve people from different offices and fields

mentees and protégés are welcomed at important firm activities and high-profile industry events

mentors and sponsors develop the skills and perspectives of allies and coaches: advocacy, listening, empathy

## SUPPORT

power dynamics and their implications are understood

underrepresented groups have equal or greater access to mentoring and sponsorship

senior leader sponsors and mentors are trained to promote allyship and reduce inequities

in formal programs, mentors and mentees are matched thoughtfully, based on skills and developmental needs

mentors and mentees receive training and opportunities to offer feedback and adjust pairings

## PARAMETERS

training is provided on mentoring between different identities

goals and criteria for selection into formal mentoring programs are transparent and clearly communicated

participants acknowledge power dynamics in the relationship and work to balance them

participants maintain confidentiality

conflicts between a mentee's supervisor and mentor are addressed if or when they arise



# Compliance

This section is intended to introduce you to legal information and ethical considerations related to mentorship and sponsorship and describes the mere minimum requirements. It is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

Participants in mentoring or sponsoring relationships may encounter power dynamics or issues related to workplace ethics. Situations could arise in which awareness of laws related to harassment and discrimination could be important. (See the *Intercultural Competence* and *Workplace Culture* guides.) In general, anyone in such a relationship should maintain high ethical standards and work to ensure that benefits are equitable.

## POWER DIFFERENTIALS

As in any relationship between two people with unequal power, and especially when one of the parties is in a “protected class” of workers (groups protected by law from employment discrimination), there is the potential for transgressing boundaries—whether perceived or actual—as related to harassment. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.) Both parties should be aware of firm policies and avenues for reporting infractions. Explicit, shared expectations from the outset can help keep relationships from being distant or chilly. Both parties can aspire to establish an atmosphere of professional warmth and candor without inappropriate, offensive, or unwanted overtones or behavior.

## IMPLICIT BIAS

In relationships between senior leaders and employees, implicit biases may introduce inappropriate favoritism in ways that lead senior leaders to mentor or sponsor only employees who share the same identities. This could, in turn, give rise to claims of discrimination under federal and state employment laws. It is important to be aware of favoritism to ensure that there is equitable access to mentors and sponsors and that when sponsors choose their protégés they stay conscious of potential bias. Leaders who are in a position to sponsor others could keep the firm’s goal of diversity and equity in mind when choosing protégés and make an extra effort to notice people unlike themselves. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide for more on why people with target

identities often have to meet higher standards in order to gain equal recognition to those with agent identities.)

## EVENHANDEDNESS

As in recruiting and retention (see the *Recruitment and Retention* guide), one size does not fit all: different pairs may approach mentoring or sponsoring relationships differently, but everyone needs to be treated equitably.

## APPROPRIATELY DESIGNATING CREDIT

Intellectual property, credit, and citations cause confusion in the architectural profession. The high degree of collaborative work and complexity of teams and the emphasis on portfolios for hiring and getting work mean that clarity between contributors is very important. If mentors and mentees or sponsors and protégés work closely together, a question may arise about who contributed to the end product. The AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct requires that AIA members accurately state the scope and nature of their responsibilities in connection with the work for which they are claiming credit and to recognize and respect the contributions of their employees, employers, colleagues, and business associates. In addition, acknowledging employees who make substantive contributions is important in helping them feel valued. Because the typical media portrayal of architecture simplistically identifies it as the work of a sole designer, finding ways to tell the story of how design ideas evolved with an interconnected team can benefit the whole profession and honor the intellectual ownership of the design.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

In the course of a mentor relationship, confidential information may arise. As early in the relationship as possible, establish expectations for what can be kept confidential and what cannot. If there does not appear to be danger, mentors should be equipped with resource lists and know about protocols within your firm. In the most extreme case, if a person is a danger to themselves or others, there may be legal, ethical, or policy obligations requiring you to disclose to an authority like firm leaders, an HR director, or law enforcement. Protocols may vary for reporting and for the degree to which identities and other confidential information can be protected, balanced against the legitimate interests of others. (For specifics on sexual harassment, see the *Workplace Culture* guide.)



# Assess

## SELF-AWARENESS

### **Do you have the skills and qualities to be a mentor?**

· Can you listen? · Do you have the intercultural skills to mentor someone with a different identity and culture? · Can you address your mentee's work-related problems and still maintain confidentiality? · Can you provide candid feedback? · Do you understand power dynamics?

**And to be a mentee?** · Can you listen and receive feedback without defensiveness? · Can you ask insightful questions and incorporate new insights into your career? · Are you willing to offer a different perspective?

### **Do you have the skills and qualities to be a sponsor?**

· Can you provide opportunities for your protégé to grow? · How will you react if your protégé equals or exceeds your status? · Do you take steps to mitigate implicit bias when identifying potential protégés, especially if they do not share your identity?

**And to be a protégé?** · Do you acknowledge that the quality of your work reflects on your sponsor's reputation? · Are you aware of interpersonal conflict that may arise as you possibly mature to the status of your sponsor?

## STRUCTURE

**What mentorship-program approach would be best for your firm?** · What business goals and specific career-development needs does your firm aim to address? · Who are the target groups for mentors and mentees? · How will you evaluate your program?

**Do senior and midlevel leaders know the value of active sponsorship?** · Are they encouraged to sponsor members of underrepresented groups, and are their recommendations taken seriously?

**Can you avoid the pitfalls of a formal mentorship program?** · Do you carefully select and train mentors on their roles, responsibilities, and behaviors? · Do participants have clear expectations of the mentoring relationship? · What procedures are in place to terminate a relationship if necessary? · What remains confidential? · Are program goals and selection criteria clear and equitable? · Is the program a part of a larger array of programs to improve retention? · Do you have enough mentors and do you give them support and credit?

## ALIGNMENT

**Does your firm have a robust mentorship and sponsorship culture?** · Do your senior leaders support mentoring and engage in sponsorship? · Do you provide employees the time and resources needed to engage in mentoring relationships? · Do project leaders offer enough information, guidance, and encouragement to emerging professionals, and at the right times? · Do you rotate mentors to prevent burnout and create opportunities for new mentors? · Are sponsors' endorsements considered and acted upon?

**Do you assess the effectiveness of your mentorship and sponsorship activities?** · Are they resulting in greater equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels of your firm? · Do you evaluate how successful mentors and sponsors are in supporting employees whose identities are different from theirs? · Do you know why employees leave?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

### FIND MENTORS AND SPONSORS

Seeking out mentors and sponsors requires motivation and readiness. Look for individuals with the qualities that will help support these relationships.

- **Determine what type of mentoring to participate in.** There are different kinds of mentoring relationships. Some schools, firms, or professional societies offer formal mentoring programs. Informal or formal mentoring within firms can provide insights into the politics of the company. External mentoring (formal or informal) takes place with someone outside of the firm and can either be a one-on-one relationship or a part of group mentoring.
- **Stand out.** Sponsors seek protégés. Do consistently excellent work and make yourself visible.<sup>58</sup> Take on challenging projects and carry out a project that benefits your firm; work with others to frame the issues and create effective solutions that will draw the attention of a potential sponsor.
- **Seek out mentors and sponsors.** Become comfortable asking mentors and prospective sponsors for help. Look for relationship chemistry and consider the mentor or sponsor's knowledge, network, and availability. Don't just look at your current connections—seek out sponsors and mentors beyond your circle. Consider who makes pay, promotion, or project decisions that affect you, which senior leaders could benefit from your advancement, and which senior leaders have a platform most equipped to help you advance.<sup>59</sup>
- **Have more than one mentor and sponsor.** You can build your own personal board of directors, which, collectively, covers all the areas about which you need information and guidance.
- **Find the right mentor match.** Depending on your needs and the stage of your career, mentors who share your identity or ones who differ from you (e.g., different age, gender, ethnicity, area of expertise) can both be valuable.
- **Choose a mentor who fits your needs.** Diverse mentor matches can build awareness of the dynamics of workplace inequities and open the door to a larger professional network.<sup>60</sup> Alternatively, mentors who are more similar to you can provide a safe space for feedback and advice on difficult relationships or situations at work. Mentors may not always be willing or able to take on new mentees. Consider how to make the appropriate request at the appropriate time.<sup>61</sup>
- **Consider where you are in your career.** As you prepare for the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE), seek out recently licensed architects to advise you on preparation and test taking. When you approach other pinch points, call on mentors who have navigated them successfully to advise you.
- **Look beyond your firm and your discipline.** Consider mentors from other parts of the building industry, including clients. This is especially effective for advancing your expertise in emerging areas with a scarcity of prospective mentors and sponsors.

### BE A GOOD MENTEE OR PROTÉGÉ

There are a number of ways you can make the most of the relationship.

- **Recognize that mentors and mentoring can take many forms.** A mentor may range from someone you confer with informally or only occasionally regarding specific issues to a person with whom you schedule regular check-ins with identified goals.
- **Cultivate the qualities of a good mentee.** Self-awareness and reflection are important for an effective mentor and mentee relationship. Be open to feedback. Ask questions, listen to the mentor's advice, and incorporate the insights into your own career as appropriate.<sup>62</sup>
- **Make an agreement.** Create a mentorship agreement together and revisit it from time to time. This agreement should lay out shared expectations, ground rules, confidentiality or privacy policy, goals, and timeframe. You will also want to think

about what conflicts of interest could arise and how they should be addressed.<sup>63</sup> Revisit the agreement as your relationship evolves. Some start with a formal program set up by a school and continue until well after the mentee graduates. Needs and circumstances change and the agreement should evolve.

- **Encourage reciprocity, but do not overburden yourself.** Recognize that more senior professionals may be less knowledgeable about your area of expertise and culture (e.g., less comfortable with technology, discussions of racism, emerging identity issues, or gender-pronoun preferences). Consider whether you have the energy to educate them about cultural differences and experiences. Be straightforward about your needs and boundaries. If you do wish to educate, help them understand and acknowledge that it takes time to learn and change behaviors. Be open to reciprocal mentoring that lets both of you gain from this experience. Approach one another in the spirit of mutual learning.

## BE A MENTOR

Being a mentor requires dedicating time and energy to support another person's career and personal growth.

- **Develop the qualities and skills of a mentor.** Being a mentor means giving support and advice and acting as a role model and champion while listening and keeping the mentee at the center. Mentors skilled at intercultural bridging are more effective, especially if a mentor does not share the same identity as the mentee. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) Effective mentoring involves asking questions, reformulating statements, summarizing, listening reflectively, and tailoring how you “teach” to the needs and preferences of your mentee.<sup>64</sup> Good mentors share knowledge and insights based on their own experiences, think about what they wish they had learned, and provide opportunities for professional networking and participation in visible professional activities. Mentors also help mentees gain perspective on current challenges and conflicts, provide candid feedback, and recognize success. Also, understand that being a mentor has certain limits. Mentors should regard mentees as colleagues. Always respect your mentee's need for confidentiality (see the Compliance section of this guide), acknowledge that you do not always have all the answers, and recognize that in successful mentoring, your mentee may eventually attain or surpass your rank or status.<sup>65</sup>
- **Communicate expectations.** Being a good mentor means being able to establish clear mutual expectations within structured relationships, clearly articulate the roles, goals, objectives, and outcomes for all parties in the relationship, and highlight the agreement regarding confidentiality. Consider the time commitment you both can make, and set boundaries around time expectations. Make an agreement together and revisit it from time to time.
- **Determine tools and processes.** To achieve positive outcomes, even informal mentoring may need processes and tools, such as agreement templates, check-ins, reflections, feedback forms, and discussion guides.<sup>66</sup>
- **Mentor people who are different from you.** Mentor-mentee relationships across the boundaries of identity can help the parties exchange ideas, experiences, and perspectives. For those with target identities, a mentor with an agent identity may help provide access to opportunities and networks that have traditionally been difficult to open. For mentors with agent identities, a mentee with a target identity may help illuminate inequities in the workplace and result in behavioral and systemic changes.<sup>67</sup> Regardless, mentors should understand how implicit bias may manifest in their relationships and try to mitigate these biases when possible. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) Learn how to mentor employees with life experiences different from your own.<sup>68</sup> Listen, encourage open communication, and create a safe space to disagree.
- **Explain firm dynamics.** Understanding a firm's internal dynamics helps mentees grasp firm culture, interpersonal nuances, unwritten rules, and performance expectations.
- **Support mentee careers.** Being a mentor means helping mentees prepare for stretch projects and promotions. If possible, provide your mentees with opportunities to showcase their work and to meet influential people within and outside of the firm.
- **Be open to reciprocal mentoring.** At their best, mentoring relationships reward both the mentee and mentor. For example, some mentors find language nuances around gender fluidity challenging or may inadvertently use terms for race or gender that others find offensive. Mentees can serve as safe places for mentors to discuss evolving social norms and cultural shifts, as long as your mentee has affirmed that these discussions are welcome and not a burden. Another potential gain for mentors is learning how to use and manage new technologies.
- **Volunteer to mentor K–12 students.** The profession suffers from the underrepresentation of people of color entering and staying with architecture

in undergraduate and graduate programs. Early exposure helps establish the motivation to pursue architecture, especially for students of color and first-generation college students. (See the *Engaging Community* guide.)

### BE A SPONSOR

Being a sponsor means being willing to advance another employee's career and providing your protégé with the political protection and opportunities needed to succeed.

- **Recognize talented employees.** Look beyond the “usual suspects,” and recognize the talents and potential among all employees. Consider what implicit biases may be affecting your choices of protégés. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) For instance, implicit bias may often lead us to judge men based on their potential and women based on their accomplishments.
- **Support your protégé's efforts to advance.** Encourage your protégés, and use your political capital on their behalf to protect them when they are taking risks to improve their careers. Keep an eye out for career-building stretch projects and job openings, and actively advocate for your protégés.
- **Know what you know, and be open to what you don't know.** As a sponsor, you have a lot of experience and knowledge to pass on to the next generation. However, remember that the building industry changes rapidly and that your experiences may not always relate to or benefit people early in their careers. Allow your protégé to listen to your advice and implement it in the way that the protégé feels is the most beneficial.

### WORK TOGETHER

Some mutual steps and qualities contribute to effective mentoring and sponsoring relationships.

- **Be explicit in your aims and agreements.** Identify the goals, learning priorities, measures of success, milestones, and levels of competence you want to attain. Define expectations and establish protocols. Agree on your process, timing, check-ins, and work plan if you are engaging in more structured feedback and learning.
- **Attend to the relationship.** Pay attention to the quality of your relationship, and examine how it may evolve or adapt to social cultural shifts, which may be experienced very differently. Be willing to learn, trust, be honest, experiment, and work beyond your comfort zone. Engage in “assumption hunting”: name and explore the assumptions you have made about each other, especially intercultural

and intergenerational ones. Examine and adjust your communication styles as needed. Continue to consider how you are engaging reciprocally—how are you both benefiting?

- **Know when the relationship is at an end.** Be willing to recognize when your mentee or protégé no longer needs you. Be open about this transition, and have a closing conversation together in a way that honors both parties and the relationship you built together.

### FIRMS

Firms known for strong mentorship and sponsorship have a competitive advantage. Be willing to devote the time, attention, and patience to provide emerging professionals with the experience and guidance they need. At the same time, acknowledge and learn from their own expertise and experience.

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“My mentor likes to point out that literally there is no door on his office. Yet some people are intimidated because his name is the name of the firm. A few years ago, I received an offer to move to the Middle East for a large, influential project. I went to him and asked, ‘Do you think this is a good idea?’ He said, ‘No, you just got married. It’s not a good place for white American women to work. You’d have to move there for two years.’ That advice led to me working on a different project. I can’t go to him for daily mentoring, but I can for the big things.”

Senior Associate Principal, White, Male,  
No Left Arm/Partial Right Arm, 39

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## CREATE AND ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP

Creating and encouraging a workplace culture that supports mentorship and sponsorship will let your employees know that their professional growth matters to the company and will help them feel that they belong.

- **Know how implicit bias affects mentor and sponsor relationships.** Implicit bias tends to lead to behaviors that make some people invisible while promoting “people like us.” Understand and seek training in how implicit bias affects mentorship and sponsorship, be aware of the power dynamics involved in these relationships across different identities (e.g., gender, race, sexuality, class, economic status), and strive to mitigate biases.
- **Recognize and reward mentoring.** Mentoring requires that employees make a personal and time commitment to support another person’s career. Demonstrate the value that you place on mentoring, and encourage employees to be mentors.
- **Be aware that mentors from underrepresented groups may have greater-than-usual demands on their time and attention.** While neither mentees nor mentors absolutely require relationships with people who share their identities, they may desire them. Employees from underrepresented groups, especially “onlys” (the only member of their group), may be in demand as mentors and in many roles beyond mentorship, such as on task forces and committees and in extra projects. Employers need to be sensitive to how overextended these employees may be and realize that they should have the prerogative to say no to some responsibilities and to have time for developing other career-building skills and connections for themselves.
- **Be receptive to sponsors.** Give credence to sponsors’ recommendations by bringing protégés to the attention of leaders. Firm leaders need to demonstrate that they approve of their colleagues’ expenditure of political capital on behalf of protégés.
- **Support mentorship and sponsorship with related actions.** For example, encourage firm leaders to sponsor and mentor employees from underrepresented groups; create an on-ramp program for employees returning from extended family leave for child- or eldercare; or foster licensing-exam study groups with recently licensed and seasoned mentors.

## → Provide a framework for informal mentoring.

If your firm does not have a formal mentoring program, then set up a general framework that supports informal mentoring and suggests expectations of both parties. These informal arrangements should provide, for example, possible venues and times for mentoring, mentoring guidelines, training, informal networking events between junior and senior employees, and a supportive culture. For small firms, informal mentoring strategies can include ensuring that firm leaders develop mentoring skills, make mentoring a part of their scope, and introduce employees to potential mentors outside of the firm.

## INVEST IN A FORMAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

For larger firms, instituting a formal mentorship program can help create a mentoring culture. While there are different types of mentorship programs, all successful programs require a link to business strategy, leadership commitment, adequate resources, a supportive culture, a clear structure, and clear participant expectations.<sup>69</sup>

- **Determine what type of mentorship program to create.** Program types include one-on-one, quad, circle, reverse, or reciprocal mentoring and development networks. The type of program you choose should fit your firm’s culture and program objectives and should consider the time and resources needed to establish and maintain it.<sup>70</sup>
- **Align mentoring with your business goals.** Your mentoring program should link to your business strategy. What are your firm’s objectives and plans? How would mentoring help achieve these goals?<sup>71</sup> The answers to these questions will help you determine what type of mentoring will suit your firm. When the connection between mentoring and the business is done well, every mentor-mentee relationship advances the overall business goal, and the participants understand that the impact of their relationship goes well beyond them.
- **Articulate the program’s goals and objectives.** Successful mentoring programs have clearly articulated goals and objectives. Program design may address the target population, mentees’ developmental needs, and participation incentives. For example, “retaining talent” or “developing greater diversity and inclusiveness in firm leadership” could be program goals.<sup>72</sup> Other goals could include improving the transition for people returning to work (e.g., mothers, fathers, caregivers). Ensure that participants know what to expect if they participate.<sup>73</sup>



- **Allocate adequate resources and tools.** Formal mentoring programs require dedication of staffing, time, and money. Designate a staff member who will implement and oversee the mentoring program. You may also need to develop tools, such as worksheets and methods of measuring success.<sup>74</sup>
- **Ensure leadership commitment.** Senior staff needs to support the program and be involved in the program as much as possible. You can help motivate senior leadership by formally recognizing their mentor-program participation in annual performance reviews.<sup>75</sup>
- **Recruit prospective mentors.** Recruit prospective mentors with their interpersonal qualities in mind; provide a directory of volunteer mentors, possibly including prospects beyond your office or field. To help establish a thorough mentoring culture, offer training.
- **Give participants time and flexibility.** Mentors and mentees will be at different stages in their personal and work life. Allow time for emerging professionals to connect with recently licensed architects to receive advice and mentoring on preparing for the ARE®. Especially in formal programs, make it acceptable to change mentors and mentees if the pairing proves unproductive or incompatible.
- **Track goals to determine successful program outcomes.** You can track and measure the success of your program through qualitative and quantitative measures. Use surveys, interviews, or focus groups to find out about participants' perceptions, the program's diversity and inclusivity, and the impact on the employees. Quantitative measurements can help the firm assess the numbers of mentoring matches and program completions. Both types of assessments are useful in determining whether the program is a success and where changes should be made.<sup>76</sup> (See the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

#### PROFESSION

Architecture has a predominant culture of competition and critique that is not always a natural fit with mentorship and sponsorship.

- **Connect people with others outside of their own firms or fields.** Small firm employees, sole practitioners, and professionals from underrepresented groups will especially benefit from access to a broader professional network. Some areas of expertise are highly concentrated or scarce. For onlys from underrepresented groups, finding a cohort is not possible without the flexibility to mentor in other firms and outside fields.

- **Create professional mentoring programs.** Professional organizations can help support mentorship and sponsorship by creating their own mentoring programs and providing them as a membership benefit.<sup>77</sup> These programs can be especially beneficial to underrepresented groups that often have fewer role models and potential mentors and sponsors.<sup>78</sup>
- **Convey the value of mentorship and sponsorship in our profession.** In a profession that tends toward introversion and small-sized firms, it can be challenging for some to find mentors and sponsors and for the work of mentoring and sponsoring to be consistent and effective. Not everyone chooses to be a mentor. Recognize and reward those who serve as sponsors and mentors, especially those from underrepresented groups who may be in greater demand and, therefore, be spread thin. Encourage their firms to reward them as well.

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“This one firm has a really amazing mentorship program. Twice a year they provide one-to-one mentors for our students, and during the relationship they reflect with each other about how they’re doing, what their goals are. I’ve seen the difference it’s made for our students.

They also have a one-year office-assistant position that is great for letting young, inexperienced students into the environment of practice. The firm includes it in the mentorship process, so at the end of the year, the student will realize what they could do better, or move onto a project, or no longer continue with the firm.”

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Educator and Director, Business Owner, Sole Practitioner, White, Female, 38

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# Consider

## **SUPPORTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS**

I had an amazing mentor. She was at the firm I interned at during college. At the start of my fifth year in school, she and another person broke off and started their own firm. I had the opportunity to go back to the old firm. Since she wasn't there, and it wasn't an amazing culture, I opted to take a waitressing job. Since my mentor had only opened her firm ten months prior, it didn't seem appropriate to ask her for an internship. My mentor and her business partner asked me to work for them eventually, and I ended up staying there for seven years. She was incredibly thoughtful and very inclusive; it was really helpful to me. She was part of AIA's elected leadership and brought me to monthly chapter events even though I was an intern. She allowed me to participate in everything in a way that was unusual for a person of my age. She was really helpful and supportive.

I think a lot of times early in your career, you might be only responsible for doing things like redlining drawings, fixing things on the computer, doing repetitive tasks. But I generally got to work with her on projects from start to finish: from initial measuring, through interior elevation details, to helping pick out drawer pulls and cabinets. I really got to see the breadth of what we could do, and she made sure I had at least small opportunities to try to do things on my own. Whether or not my proposal was something she even showed to the client, she sometimes gave me the opportunity to try a design or try to offer my own design ideas, and then we would talk about them, and

I would get feedback. She was always receptive and thoughtful about how she gave criticism and feedback; I never felt like I was wrong. I think she was really supportive in that way.

— Associate, White, Female, Hearing Impaired, Xennial (30s)



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DISCUSS:

- What activities did the mentor include this person in? How did these activities provide opportunities that may have benefited this person's career? In what ways was this mentor also acting as a sponsor?
- What qualities are important for a positive mentoring relationship? What qualities did this mentor have that created a supportive environment? What qualities would you look for in a mentor or mentee?
- In what ways could this type of mentorship help support your own career?
- What were the benefits of this relationship to the mentor? Was there any cost to the mentor to include her mentee?

# Consider

## THE POWER OF SPONSORSHIP

I was with [my sponsor] a long time. I moved to a different city and continued to work from afar for him and his firm. I went on my own, then merged my small company with another small firm for about five years. But we stayed in touch. I remember he said to me, “Are you happy doing what you’re doing?” to see if I was ready, willing, and able to come back to the firm’s office. But I have a long family history in this city, and I really liked it here. We had several conversations over weeks, and I told him, “Look, I could come back, and I have no doubt I’d be a valuable employee, but you have lots of valuable employees there. Having run my own office here and having family here, my value to you is greater here than it would be in your office. I can still be a valuable employee but open a new market for you.” Looking back, that was a bit of a stretch, but at the time I thought it was true, and it wasn’t that long after that he said, “I have a new project not far from you. Why don’t you run it? Borrow a desk from a friendly engineer and let’s see how it goes.”

My first reaction: “Fantastic!” And then, “Uh oh, now I’ve got to *do* this.”

This was a person who risked his own reputation not only outside of the four walls of the firm for me, but also amongst his partners. “I believe in this guy, and I think he can do what he says he can do.” So we started small, and I ran the project, then another couple of small projects in my own city, and then increasingly more significant projects, and finally a project of great national

and international visibility. I go back to that initial conversation where he's putting me in a position to establish and run a new office; he's risking his own political capital inside and outside, and risking money, too, that this can work. It did, and it worked spectacularly. I'm no fool. Were it not for his decision to put his reputation on the line like that, I wouldn't be where I am today.

— Architect/Designer, African American, Male, 50s

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DISCUSS:

- What are some of the important qualities that this person's sponsor exhibited? Have you ever had someone risk their political capital for you? Was it offered or did you request it? Have you ever used your own political capital for another person? Did you consider it to be a risk?
- Do you think that sponsorship is fair? Why or why not?
- How could a sponsor help you at your current career stage? What can you do to be "sponsorable"?
- Are you in a place in your career where you could sponsor a protégé? Why or why not? If so, what type of qualities would you look for in a protégé? How would you identify potential protégés? How might you watch for implicit biases that could slant your impressions? How would you approach a potential protégé?

# Consider

## A MENTOR LIKE ME

I have looked for mentors. My local chapter has a mentorship program. It feels very specific in nature, in terms of who is available to mentor: they're all the same type of person doing the same type of work, from the same type of background. The program doesn't have what I'm looking for. There was one woman mentor in it when I looked into the program recently, and the type of practice she works in is far outside of what I'm interested in. I haven't found any good opportunities outside of my firm and people I know: I get most of my mentorship either from the people above me at my firm or peers I went to school with. There's a lot to be said for having a mentor who's ahead of you but not at your firm and who doesn't have oversight over you. I haven't found people with the right identity and experience—that thing I'm looking for in mentorship. I would love to be able to find someone LGBT who is doing well in the field, has more experience than me, and has that specific experience. I'm looking for people who are like me and have experience and wisdom to pass down. I don't know where to find those people.

— Architect, White, Lesbian, Early 30s

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### DISCUSS:

- What are some reasons why this person is looking for a mentor similar to herself? Does it matter to you if your mentor shares your identity? What do you see as the benefits and challenges to mentors with shared and with different identities?
- What are the benefits of having a mentor who has a career path similar to your own? What would be the benefits of having a mentor with a different career path or different building-industry discipline?
- How might geography affect who is available as a mentor? How could professional organizations support mentoring in specific regions? How could professional organizations that already have mentoring programs improve them?

# Consider

## CROSS-IDENTITY MENTORING

One of the most important things I experienced personally was the power of a mentor. When I moved to San Francisco I was twenty-seven, young, white, female. I was moved to a site office in a quad-wide trailer with subcontractors and inspectors, and I had one other person working with me as a representative from the architecture firm. He was an amazing manager, a true mentor. He shared every meeting; there was nothing I was too unimportant to be part of. Through the course of my time there, I was expected to be a decision-maker, and I was given a seat at the table. It was a life-changing moment for me. After two years he took a position with a firm in the Midwest, and I felt emboldened enough to make the case for taking his place, even though I was not the typical on-site project architect. I would certainly not have otherwise. I'd be a completely different person were it not for that deep level of mentoring and sharing of power and information.

— Business Owner, Sole Practitioner, and Educator, White, Female, 38

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### DISCUSS:

- What benefits did this person gain from cross-identity mentoring?
- What other benefits can one gain from cross-identity mentoring? What benefits could you gain from being a mentor or mentee with someone who does not share your identity?
- How can a mentor and mentee share power and information? What experiences have you had in which you have shared power and information with a mentor or mentee? If this were a situation with a sponsor instead, how would expectations be different?



# Consider

## MENTORING IN EDUCATION

I went to architecture school twenty-five years ago. I hope a lot of the experiences I had are not still true today. I try not to project my experiences from 1993 to now or the future. At that time, my undergraduate program admitted 120 students intending to only graduate about 45. It had built-in attrition. Having been educated in diverse northern magnet schools, the transition to a more racially monolithic educational community was difficult for me. I was surprised there weren't a lot of Black students in the program. One guy said openly, "I've never met a Black person except for the woman who works for my grandmother." It felt very strange and unsettling because my race wasn't a primary defining characteristic for me, but it was clear that this was a significant way in which others perceived my identity. I hadn't been looked at in this way before. It was mostly from students but also translated in the way some of the faculty related to the Black students. There were faculty members who didn't know how to critique me. We—some of the Black students—were seated together for a while, and I noticed that the faculty wasn't spending as much time in our area of the studio.

My challenges were related more to my race than my gender, and persisted during my first couple of years in architecture school. The faculty expected me to fail. It motivated me: "You don't know me, and I'm going to show you." First year, we had a pinup of the whole studio, and afterward large groups of students were encouraged to drop. I was among them. I thought, "How dare

you tell me to think about doing something else? You don't know me!" I didn't know what I was doing, but then I found a mentor in the graduate program—an African American male—and I said I needed help. I took it on myself to find people who would help me succeed because there were fundamental things I didn't know, and I was being written off as someone who couldn't learn. I would hope that kind of weeding out, or attempted weeding out, doesn't still exist in our programs, but sadly it was not a very supportive environment.

— Professor, Administrator, and Architect, Black, Female, 40s

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DISCUSS:

- Are the challenges that this person faced when studying architecture still present in schools? How were these challenges affected by her race or gender? What parallels do you see between her school experience and office culture?
- What kind of mentoring can help a student navigate a school or office where selectivity or attrition affect morale? How can mentoring or sponsorship provide encouragement or support learning and advancement?
- What aspects of an employee's school experience are relevant for offices to know? How can these topics be broached?
- How could professional organizations help support mentoring students? Have you mentored students through challenging situations they faced at school?

# Resources

## SUPPORTING EQUITY

**Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks: The Power and Value of Professional Connections – Center for Women and Business at Bentley University (2017)**  
<https://www.bentley.edu/centers/center-for-women-and-business/mentorship-sponsorship-research-report-request>

Establishes the benefits of mentorship, particularly for diversity recruitment and retention, and provides an overview of the various types of mentorship, sponsorship, and networks; also gives strategies for organizations in creating mentorship programs and for individuals on building mentorship relationships and leveraging networks.

**Reverse Mentoring: What Is It and Why It Is Beneficial – Lisa Quast – Forbes (2011)**  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2011/01/03/reverse-mentoring-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-beneficial/#5642817a21cc>

Discusses the mutually beneficial relationship of mentoring, including the advantages of mentoring relationships with people who are different from you.

**Sponsoring Women to Success – Catalyst – Heather Foust-Cummings, Sarah Dinolfo, and Jennifer Kohler (2011)**  
[https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/sponsoring\\_women\\_to\\_success.pdf](https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/sponsoring_women_to_success.pdf)

Study of executives and high performers outlines the benefits and characteristics of sponsorship from the standpoint of the sponsor, protégé, and organization.

**Why You Need a Sponsor – Not a Mentor – To Fast-Track your Career – Jenna Goudreau – Business Insider (2013)**  
<https://www.businessinsider.com.au/you-need-a-sponsor-to-fast-track-your-career-2013-9>

Explains the difference between mentorship and sponsorship and the importance of having a sponsor for career advancement. Lists tips for finding sponsors and being your own advocate.

## GUIDES FOR SUCCESS

**Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization's Guide – Lois J. Zachary – John Wiley and Sons (2005)**  
 Resource for designing and implementing mentorship that is embedded throughout an organization.

**Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor: The New Way to Fast-Track Your Career – Sylvia Ann Hewlett – Harvard Business School Publishing (2013)**  
 Comprehensive, seven-step road map to finding and succeeding in a sponsor relationship.

**Making Mentoring Work – Sarah Dinolfo and Julie S. Nugent – Catalyst (2010)**  
[https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Making\\_Mentoring\\_Work.pdf](https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Making_Mentoring_Work.pdf)

Guide to what makes an effective mentoring program and how a formalized program can address barriers to mentorship for women and people of color.

**The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You – Lois J. Zachary – John Wiley and Sons (2009)**  
 Principles and exercises to help prospective and current mentees make the most of relationships with mentors.

**The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Working Relationships – Lois J. Zachary – John Wiley and Sons (2012)**  
 Practical guide for mentors to help them help mentees maximize their learning and growth.

**The Sponsor Effect: How to Be a Better Leader by Investing in Others – Sylvia Ann Hewlett – Harvard Business Review Press (2019)**  
 Counterpart to *Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor* outlines the benefits and steps to being a successful sponsor.

## TOOLS AND TOOL KITS

### **Creating Successful Mentoring Programs: A Catalyst Guide (2002)**

[https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/creating\\_successful\\_mentoring\\_programs\\_a\\_catalyst\\_guide.pdf](https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/creating_successful_mentoring_programs_a_catalyst_guide.pdf)

Step-by-step guidance for developing a formal mentoring program. Appropriate for larger firms and for AIA chapters and components to help design mentoring programs useful for smaller firms, sole practitioners, and architecture professionals working in other fields.

### **Women's Leadership Edge**

<http://www.womensleadershipedge.org/>

Wide array of tools to help organizations support, advance, and retain women, with parallels in engineering and law. Available to AIA members.

# Notes

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63. Lois J. Zachary, *The Mentor’s Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012).
64. Ibid.
65. Catalyst, *Creating Successful Mentoring Programs*.
66. Zachary, *The Mentor’s Guide*.
67. For an example of how this can benefit mentor-mentee relationships between women and men, see Catalyst, *Creating Successful Mentoring Programs*.
68. Catalyst, *Creating Successful Mentoring Programs*.
69. Center for Women and Business, *Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks*.
70. Catalyst, *Creating Successful Mentoring Programs*.
71. “Mentoring,” *Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice*.
72. Center for Women and Business, *Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks*.
73. “Mentoring,” *Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice*.
74. Dinolfo and Nugent, *Making Mentoring Work*.
75. “Mentoring,” *Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice*.
76. Center for Women and Business, *Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks*.
77. “Mentoring,” *Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice*.
78. Ibid.

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# Advancing Careers

## KEY TOPICS

accommodation  
alternative careers/paths  
burnout  
caregiving  
flextime  
fulfillment  
job crafting  
job sharing  
labyrinth  
lattice  
leaves  
meaningful work  
microaggressions  
networking  
off-ramp/on-ramp  
pinch points  
resilience  
work-life conflict  
work-life integration

SECOND EDITION  
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The cultures of offices, the profession, and society influence career paths. Leaders can recognize and remove current and historical impediments, especially for members of underrepresented groups.

This guide offers employers and organizations ways to support the development of all employees, with an eye toward equity and inclusiveness, and calls attention to critical junctures commonly found in architectural careers.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What Is Advancing Careers About?

Responsibility for advancing careers does not only fall on employees. For employers, supporting career development helps increase retention and reduce turnover costs and, when done equitably, can contribute to firm diversity. At times, architecture professionals face choices with unclear implications, such as taking a small part on a large project or a large part in a small project. Career progression can be slow, in part due to the complexity of the discipline and the long route to licensure and professional maturity, and it can be hard to determine whether it is persistence or change that is needed to achieve goals. For managers and firm leaders, it can be challenging to ascertain how to provide systematic support while also tailoring that support to meet individual needs equitably.

In the architecture profession, there is a perception that all work is predominantly design based, yet even those whose roles are primarily in design are responsible for a variety of tasks. A broader definition of design would encompass the numerous ways in which architects use design thinking to consider multiple and sometimes-contradictory options simultaneously. In this framework, any activity that an architect engages in can be a part of a career path: from communication and technical detailing to planning, specification, or construction administration, both within traditional practices and other types of employment in the building industry.

Typically, career development is thought to be the responsibility of the individual. However, as the other guides in this series illustrate, workplace factors that are controlled by profession and firm leaders and managers, rather than individual employees, play a significant part in who progresses, what paths they take, and whether they stay in the profession. In addition, individuals' plans and choices

are subject to social, cultural, historical, and economic forces and patterns that may steer them toward or away from certain pathways. Equitable and inclusive leaders and workplaces help employees navigate these challenges and also support the development and advancement of all employees impartially. These actions, in turn, lead to greater choice, flexibility, and growth in individual career paths and greater retention and diversity in the profession.

## FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND CAREER MOTIVATION

Most architects have in common the desire for meaningful work and the belief that architecture as a profession has intrinsic value since it can make a positive difference in the world. The 2018 Equity by Design (EQxD) survey of 14,360 architecture professionals found that “meaningful work” (defined by researchers as developing the inner self, unity with others, service to others, and expressing full potential) was a major factor in both satisfaction and retention in architecture.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of how strongly motivated many people are to stay in the profession, there are equity issues that affect professional growth and contribute to work-life conflict (the imbalance that occurs when workplace demands interfere with personal responsibilities and interests) and that ultimately affect retention and diversity.<sup>2</sup> These issues can stall or even end the careers of individuals with identities underrepresented in the industry.

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“I wanted to work on a smaller project so I could test my skills, expand my knowledge, and contribute to a project. I was told, ‘There are other people in front of you; you need to wait, but be patient.’ How long are you supposed to be patient when you’re almost forty? How long do I just sit on the bench and wait?”

Architect, Black, Female, 30–40

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## EQUITY AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Researchers have found that race and gender factor into the speed at which one moves along one's career pathway.<sup>3</sup> In the AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey, a significant percentage of people of color and white women said that they are less likely to be promoted and believed that existing resources and efforts were not sufficiently supportive. When asked the reasons for their dissatisfaction with their careers, people of color more often cited slower professional growth and lack of recognition for their work. Men of color also leave architecture careers more often than white men because they are more likely to perceive their salaries as not commensurate with the workload and that their pay is not equal to that of others in their position.<sup>4</sup>

Research on career trajectories in the general working population corroborates these perceptions. One study showed that white professionals were more likely to be placed on a fast track to middle management and to the executive level, while professionals of color spent longer times in entry-level positions before being moved to middle management.<sup>5</sup> People of color in managerial positions also contended with more frequent job changes within a company and were given “fix-it” roles that provided no opportunity to develop new skills.<sup>6</sup> In the 2018 EQxD study, white respondents were found to be much more likely than their peers of color to move out of production roles into project architect positions in their first seven years in the profession.<sup>7</sup>

Gender also plays a significant role in professional career trajectories and opportunities. Women have less access to “hot jobs,” or mission-critical roles that can move careers forward, and are also often viewed as less creative and innovative than men.<sup>8</sup> In a recent study of creativity and gender stereotypes, research participants evaluated the creativity of fictitious architects based on a set of images of work supposedly created by them. When participants were told the work was by a male architect, they evaluated the designer as being more creative than when told that the same work was by a woman.<sup>9</sup> Using the same methodology, researchers found, on the other hand, that gender did not influence perceptions of creativity when the field of expertise was fashion design, a profession that has been traditionally seen as feminine. In the same vein, more women than men who responded to the 2016 AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey reported that they were not likely to receive equal pay in comparable positions and were often encouraged to pursue interior design and other design fields rather than architecture.<sup>10</sup> When architectural design is considered the pinnacle of architectural practice, unconscious bias and perceptions of inferior creativity can pose an obstacle to career advancement.

Finally, workplace harassment and discrimination, as well as relentless microaggressions that target race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, visible or invisible disabilities, or gender identity or expression, can further hamper career trajectories.<sup>11</sup> (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.) For example, a U.K. survey found that almost 60% of LGBTQ architects had heard offensive comments related to sexuality in the twelve months preceding the survey, and only one in five said they sensed support from senior leaders.<sup>12</sup> The effects of workplace discrimination also impact transgender people. In a 2011 survey on transgender discrimination in the general working population, 90% of respondents indicated having experienced harassment or mistreatment at work or took actions to avoid it in their workplace.<sup>13</sup> Almost half of the respondents also reported having experienced job outcomes that hurt their career progression (e.g., being fired, not hired, or denied a promotion). The effects of discrimination are even higher for transgender employees of color.<sup>14</sup>

## EQUITY AND WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

The desired relationship between work and life outside of work (also known as work-life flexibility, integration, or balance) varies by individual. For one employee, long hours can be satisfying, while for others, they can be burdensome. While the EQxD survey shows that architects care about finding a desirable balance between work and life, women reported greater challenges in achieving that balance and felt they had less time to pursue interests outside of work.<sup>15</sup>

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“When I transitioned, the reaction I was getting from my clients was, we don’t care what you look like, we’re hiring you for what’s between your ears and for your skills. But again, I had an already-established reputation and my Fellowship. It was different than when a younger person, in her late twenties, early in her career, licensed, came out at another firm. After she came out, they wouldn’t allow her to see clients anymore.”

Firm Owner, White, Transgender Female, 60s

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Time is often the source of work-life conflict with respect to both the number of hours worked and how work time is scheduled. Regardless, being able to rely on when time off will occur and being able to fully disconnect during that time are the two factors that most positively influence control of work and life for employees.<sup>16</sup> Inflexible hours can lead to mental-health stress and burnout; mental wellness is found to be best supported through flexible hours, job redesign, addressing negative workplace dynamics, and supportive and confidential communication with management.<sup>17</sup>

There are also pinch points—career milestones or especially demanding stages—when challenges may arise and cause work-life conflict or even burnout. (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide for more on pinch points.) Architecture has five: education, “paying dues,” licensure, working caregivers, and the glass ceiling.<sup>18</sup> Across occupations, pinch points especially affect caregivers, often women, such as parents or those taking care of older family members.<sup>19</sup> For example, in the general working population, mothers incur a wage penalty averaging 5%.<sup>20</sup> For women under thirty-five, the pay gap between mothers and nonmothers is even larger than the gap between women and men.<sup>21</sup> In architecture, likewise, pinch points affect women more than men. The 2016 EQxD survey found that in the first five years of work, women were more likely than men to pay dues through time spent on office-management tasks and were ten times more likely than men to be the primary caregivers for their children.<sup>22</sup> These challenges have a direct impact on professional growth and achieving leadership roles in a firm.<sup>23</sup>

Employers have tried to support employees who are navigating these career milestones by offering flextime, which allows one to choose (to varying degrees) how many hours one works and when. However, despite flextime policies having become somewhat common in high-intensity professions, workplaces may penalize employees who deviate from traditional work hours and prevailing attitudes.<sup>24</sup> For example, employees who use flextime may be seen as less dedicated and less motivated and may experience slower wage growth, or may have their managers override or expand their established work hours.<sup>25</sup> In addition, multiple studies have shown that women who request flexible arrangements are more likely to be judged as less committed than men who make similar requests.<sup>26</sup> One result of this difference, often anecdotally reported, is receiving less responsibility or even being demoted when returning from maternity leave, despite such action being prohibited by law. Employers can improve retention and help employees maintain or even upgrade their skills during leaves with intentional off-ramping and on-ramping.<sup>27</sup>

Architecture firms are not unique in the challenges of implementing work-life benefits, such as flextime practices, job sharing, and remote work, but some aspects of the work of architecture create specific hurdles. Projects are often complex and long in duration, and the traditional way in which the profession has managed such projects has created expectations that do not readily accommodate flextime or part-time work. Because of the unpredictable nature of architectural work, flextime requires negotiation. (See the *Negotiation* guide.) It may be seen as adding difficulty to a project and potentially compromising project quality. Furthermore, architectural technology changes rapidly, and workers who pause their careers or reduce their hours can lose ground in their professional advancement if they do not or cannot keep up with those changes.<sup>28</sup>

Even with all of the aforementioned in mind, the cost of inflexibility to both firms and employees is high. If flexibility is perceived as a mere aspiration rather than a consistent, core business commitment, it could damage workplace culture. For example, flexibility could have negative consequences if it results in an undesired reduction in scope or level of responsibility for the employee, creates resentment in other employees, or expands beyond the agreed-upon hours as time-sensitive decisions need to be made quickly.<sup>29</sup>

The 2016 and 2018 EQxD surveys provide a detailed picture of the perceived impacts of using work-life benefits, such as flextime, in-house daycare, and remote work. The 2018 survey found that a great majority of men and women believed that the use of work-life benefits would have a negative impact on their chances for promotion.<sup>30</sup> Most respondents to the 2016 survey did not perceive adverse effects from taking advantage of certain specific benefits, such as alternative scheduling (e.g., compressed schedule, telecommuting, working part time, and job sharing), but those who did identify negative effects were people of color and white women.<sup>31</sup> In addition, these same groups reported having less real access to those benefits when they were offered to them.<sup>32</sup>

The cultural impact of these challenges to work-life benefits is reflected in the 2016 AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey. The majority of architects surveyed felt that managing work-life balance is more difficult for them compared with other professionals and that they desired greater job flexibility. More than white men, men of color surveyed said that they left the profession because of an inability to achieve a work-life balance.<sup>33</sup> Respondents (64% of women, 37% of men) also believed that women were not receiving meaningful opportunities when returning to work after leaving to start a family.<sup>34</sup> Given the choice of either having a family or making trade-offs in salary, some women choose to give up their profession altogether.

Finally, if a two-salary, professional, heterosexual couple has a child, and the woman is an architect, and therefore more likely to be the lower paid of the two, there is a strong economic argument, fortified by cultural norms, for her to become the primary caregiver, regardless of her preference.<sup>35</sup>

According to the 2016 AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey, both men and women in the field believe there are fundamental strategies that directly address work-life conflict issues and that could attract and retain more women:

- promoting a change in office culture that allows better work-life harmony (84% of women, 63% of men).
- increasing job flexibility, including the option to work remotely, job share, or work flexible hours (81% of women, 58% of men).<sup>36</sup>

Research has been done on interventions aimed at changing the structure and culture of workplaces to improve work and personal lives by providing preset, reliable time off and by focusing on results rather than hours.<sup>37</sup> Workplaces that actively focus on results lead in the implementation of strategies akin to the lattice approach described below, in which flexible time is more often the norm than the exception. However, researchers have also found that without an intentional separation between personal and professional lives, flexible work can lead to feeling constantly plugged in, with no delineation between work and life.<sup>38</sup>

Because the specific needs of identity groups and the individuals within them can differ significantly, programs that aim to benefit one group may be detrimental to another. For example, in one workplace study, training managers to promote a family-friendly culture had a positive impact on employees with high work-life conflict (e.g., parents of young children) but a negative impact on those with low work-life conflict (e.g., people who do not have children).<sup>39</sup> It is possible that those with low work-life conflict perceive measures intended to support families as unfair; or it may be that supervisors spend more support time with employees who have high work-life conflict.

## SUPPORTING CAREER PATHWAYS EQUITABLY

It is crucial to realize that responsibility for career advancement goes beyond the individual and must be addressed with systems, policies, and a workplace culture that serve everyone well, upheld by firm leaders and managers who understand how to customize while considering the need to be equitable across the firm. Supervisors would do well to be “hard on the process and easy on the people” by examining systems and processes that may be obstacles for a particular person’s career pathway instead of focusing on what that person needs to change. Employees’ perceptions of fairness and effective organizational support for development can be measured and are highly predictive of employee retention and productivity.<sup>40</sup> (See the *Measuring Progress* guide.) Since individual goals and paths can vary significantly, it can be challenging for offices to support everyone effectively. There are a number of ways that both architecture firms and institutions can help support career advancement equitably.

## CLARIFYING CRITERIA FOR PROMOTION

In the AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey, people of color and white women indicated that they are less likely to be promoted to senior positions—a perception that accords with the relatively slow changes in demographics of senior leaders, who continue to be predominantly white and male, even as schools have been graduating a high proportion of white women, although not Black, Indigenous, or other people of color, for over thirty years.<sup>41</sup> In the 2018 EQxD survey, 35% of respondents did not know the criteria for promotion in their firm, and there was substantial variation among firm leaders regarding which criteria were most significant.<sup>42</sup> Better supporting the advancement of the careers of people of color and women requires providing clear promotion criteria. The AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey reported that when asked about the top ways to promote diversity, respondents said providing clear, written criteria for promotion was essential. These criteria were even more important for people of color than white people (59% vs. 43%).<sup>43</sup>

## SUPPORTING NETWORKS

Networking, like mentoring and sponsoring, can have a strong, positive effect on recruitment, retention, and career progression. While networks benefit all working professionals, women and people of color have less access to networks due to biases or lack of peer representation. (See the *Mentorship and Sponsorship* guide.) As in other professions, increasing access to diverse networks of mentors, sponsors, and peer groups supports the advancement of currently underrepresented individuals or groups working in architecture.



Most people believe that their networks directly help them get jobs, key assignments, and promotions; networking is particularly relevant to advancing a career since over 80% of jobs are filled by word of mouth.<sup>44</sup> While having mentors and sponsors in one's network has clear, important advantages for career growth, peer networks are equally important for learning about personal experiences and obtaining advice and social support.<sup>45</sup> (See the *Mentorship and Sponsorship* guide.)

Having assistance in building networks is especially important for people of color. Research by David Thomas on career progression within U.S. corporations found that a racially diverse network of sponsors and corporate mentors with varied business roles is key to people of color achieving the highest levels of success.<sup>46</sup> Successful executives of color tended to have far more diverse networks than managers of color: while networks of managers of color were composed of either all or nearly all of a single race, the networks of executives of color were diverse in various ways, including race, age, gender, cultures, and role (mentors, sponsors, role models, peers).<sup>47</sup>

How people use their networks matters as well. Executives and leaders establish and use their networks for more strategic, future-oriented purposes rather than to simply address current needs. Employers and managers can support the advancement of diverse employees by helping them develop a strategic mindset more than a purely operational one. And for people with target identities based on race, age, or other characteristics, networks can be outlets for venting frustration or receiving support in responding to discrimination, microaggressions, and external events.

### CHANGE WORKPLACE CULTURE FROM CAREER LADDER TO CAREER LATTICE

One way to meet concerns over work-life conflict, increase the potential for both individuals' and firms' successes, and maintain and support a more diverse workforce is to shift the profession away from the image of the career path as a ladder to that of a lattice.<sup>48</sup> A ladder system relies on traditional conceptions of hierarchy and power, in which the individual must follow a singular career path, moving upward within a system that has been determined by the leaders. A ladder requires the employee to prioritize work over life outside of work and assumes that needs remain constant over a long period. In contrast, a lattice route is developed by the individual and firm together and is based on the premise that there can be multiple pathways to a successful career.<sup>49</sup> Navigating the lattice offers the ability to move fast or slow during one's career or even to change direction, allowing for adjustments as a worker's life and goals change.<sup>50</sup>

One example of a lattice system is the Mass Career Customization (MCC) framework, which was originated at Deloitte, a professional services firm. The MCC framework is a holistic approach to careers that will change course over time and in which regular adjustments are expected.<sup>51</sup> This framework assumes that the future workforce will continue to experience increasingly varied family structures (e.g., single parents, delayed childbirth, dual-career families), shifting expectations of men at work and at home, and changing norms about the importance of life outside of work—norms influenced by the high expectations that Generation X and Y (and potentially Gen Z, as well) have for their personal and work lives.<sup>52</sup>

Mass career customization is different from flexible work arrangements, which are used primarily to meet the needs of childcare and other caregiving and family obligations. The flexible-work-arrangement approach implies that such arrangements are accommodations, exceptions to the normal way of working. These exceptions tend to cast those who take advantage of them in a negative light.<sup>53</sup> The MCC framework, in contrast, is based on the premise that every individual should have a customized career path created between employer and employee. It goes well beyond simply looking at hours worked to holistically address variations in four key work-related dimensions: work pace (how quickly an employee progresses in responsibility and authority); workload; location (in office or remote) and schedule of work; and the role of the employee (job position, description, and responsibilities).<sup>54</sup> Over the course of a career, the employee's profile in these four dimensions will change, even yearly, allowing them to successfully decelerate or accelerate their pace of advancement while also providing clear expectations between the employee and employer. A framework such as MCC and a mindset based on a lattice rather than

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“Everything is cyclical and ebb and flow. One year you might want to be gunning for a promotion and the next year [you want to] focus on other things in your life. Leaders should recognize that and not dock points from people who want to take a temporary step back.”

Associate at Large, Government Firm, Indo-American, Female, 31

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a ladder could be helpful for firms and the profession at large to support the careers and quality of life of architecture professionals and to help retain more diverse employees as their personal needs evolve.

Two additional metaphors have been invoked regarding the challenges of career progression: the labyrinth and the glass cliff. To advance, white women and women and men of color have had to negotiate barriers, dead ends, out-of-the-way alternate routes, and detours; the labyrinth still has a path to the center but requires more complex navigational skills. And research has found that white women and women and men of color are more likely to be promoted to CEO of firms that are underperforming, placing them in high-risk situations in which they can then be blamed if turnaround fails to happen quickly. Even if they have “broken the glass ceiling,” they now have reached the “glass cliff.”<sup>55</sup>

### ACCESS TO TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities for development include training for specific skills, receiving coaching, job shadowing, and attending or presenting at workshops and conferences. Having clear, transparent criteria for training supports equity goals by limiting the effects of implicit bias. Although there may be specific circumstances in which access to training is based on age, tenure, or experience, typically, interest or lack of interest in participating in training cannot be assumed. Legal precedents have reinforced that when training can be linked to gaining experiences or skills that lead to promotion, unequal access to training by those in protected classes (gender, race, age, etc.) may be considered an adverse employment action.<sup>56</sup>

Researchers have paid particular attention to career on-ramping for women returning to the workforce after time away. While there is value in skill building for those reentering, especially in technical changes that might have occurred during their absence, the focus of this research has been on the systems and structures that prevent an easy transition. Employers and the profession play powerful roles in establishing cultures in which careers can advance in nonlinear and nonsequential ways. Researchers have found that the most effective form of support occurs when the employer takes the primary responsibility for providing what the employee needs, eliminating the idea that difficulty in returning to work means that the employee, rather than the system, needs to be fixed.<sup>57</sup>

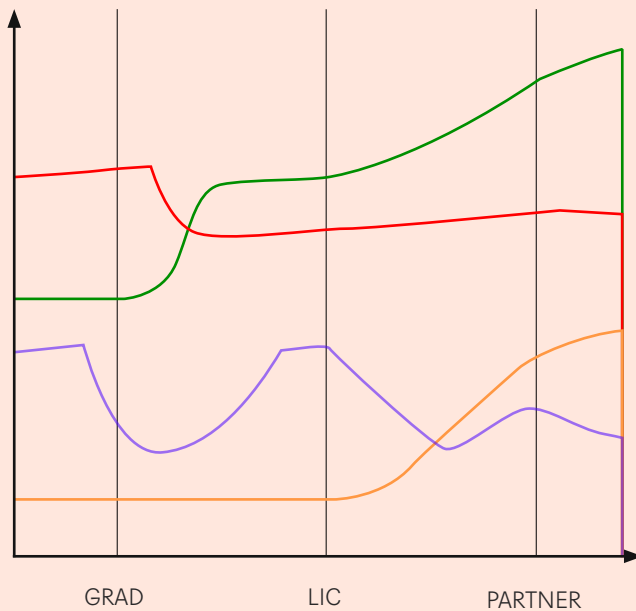
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“Architects aren’t taught to think from a business standpoint. I know there are a handful of mothers who’ve left the profession. They didn’t intend to leave, but it’s brutal to come back once you have left. When people decide to leave to be with their kids...we’re not taught about the loss of future benefits. They don’t play out the scenario of staying in, advancing in their career, and being more comfortable later in life, but instead they think very much in the present day: ‘I can make only as much money as I need to pay for childcare, so I’m going to stay home instead.’ I don’t think there are enough people talking about the whole picture.”

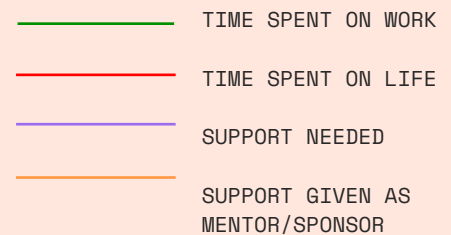
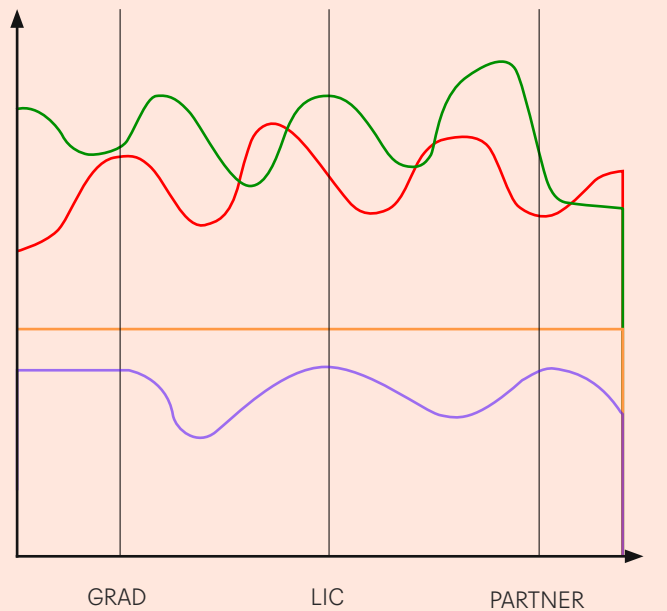
Workplace Strategist, Asian, Female, 39

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### ANTICIPATED CAREER PATH TRADITIONAL MODEL



### INTEGRATED CAREER PATH LATTICE MODEL



Comparison of career paths in the traditional model (left) and the lattice model (right).

The traditional model expects that architects will have more time to spend on their personal lives as their careers advance. Flexibility is assumed to be only a temporary exception to the norm. The lattice model acknowledges that the demands of work and life fluctuate, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict. In this model, pace, workload, location, and role are treated as four distinct elements that can be adjusted independently as needed to create a holistic path that works for the individual and the workplace.

The traditional model also suggests that support from mentors and sponsors is most needed at career milestones, such as graduations or licensure. The integrated, lattice career path assumes that support is needed throughout. It also promotes the idea that one can serve as a mentor at any time, as a peer or reverse mentor early in one's career, or as a mentor or sponsor later on.

# Why Does Advancing Careers Matter?

Since people are at the heart of any architectural practice, successful and fulfilling career navigation is of paramount importance for everyone, from individuals to firms and the profession as a whole. Managing and supporting career development is challenging as firms experience economic pressure to operate efficiently while acknowledging that the perception of conflict between work and life is generally increasing.<sup>58</sup> Yet supporting careers and employee growth within a business also contributes to lower turnover and associated costs. Valuable support for career development can come in the form of programs or policies in addition to mentorship and sponsorship, robust workplace cultures, and transparent promotion criteria. Studies show that paid family leave, for example, has a neutral impact on profitability.<sup>59</sup> Although programs designed for greater flexibility can be expensive, they can also result in cost savings, increased employee productivity, and decreased turnover.<sup>60</sup>

People become architects by choice. However, their career progressions are also influenced by social, cultural, historical, and economic forces that affect different identity groups in different ways, causing some to be steered into positions and pathways that they may not have intentionally chosen.<sup>61</sup>

## INDIVIDUALS

**Health** · Having greater flexibility, more predictable and reliable schedules, and available and accessible paid leave can help avoid burnout and lead to healthier outcomes for employees and their families.<sup>62</sup>

**Happiness** · Resilience helps employees meet obstacles head on and bounce back from challenges quickly. Having meaningful work will increase happiness and improve resilience. Employees can also build resilience by building stronger relationships with others, taking leave when needed, and building the skills needed to recognize stress.

**Career choice** · Individuals' plans and choices are subject to forces that may steer them toward or away from certain pathways. Supportive, equitable workplaces help to alleviate barriers to advancement and provide individuals with a broader range of career choices.

**Meaning** · Job satisfaction is tied to work that is meaningful, impactful, and recognized.<sup>63</sup>

**Networks** · Different kinds of networks (organizational, personal, and strategic) can play different roles and are developed in different ways. Generating and sustaining these networks are key factors in professional growth.

**Trajectory** · Needs for support vary depending on career phase. In architecture, there are several stages during which individuals could benefit from additional support. These include the pinch points identified by EQxD and other milestones, such as the time after becoming licensed, the transition to senior leadership, and the transition out of leadership.<sup>64</sup>

**Planning** · Short-, medium-, and long-term plans are invaluable for an employee to proactively lay the groundwork for job crafting and a lattice approach to career progression. At the same time, employer support for those plans is essential.

**Respect boundaries** · Different employees will feel differently about how much to share with managers or coworkers about activities outside of work or the impact of social or political events and change on their lives. For some, it may be helpful to share or listen; for others, it can feel intrusive. As much as you can, signal to others your preferences, and don't make assumptions about what others may prefer.

#### MANAGERS

**Career development** · When managers provide workplace support, such as flextime, training, or paid leave, they give workers the ability to meet their individual needs and help them shape their careers, leading to greater health and retention of all employees.

**Planning** · Working with employees to develop short-, medium-, and long-term goals, keeping in mind that different individuals and groups may have different values and aspirations, provides extra support and security.

**Awareness** · Discrimination, harassment, and microaggression have played a role in the pace of advancement and career outcomes of underrepresented people, whether based on gender, race, sexual orientation, class, disability, education, etc.<sup>65</sup> Neutralizing unconscious biases in perceptions, interactions, and reviews can help retain and support the progress of a diverse staff.

**Feedback** · Younger workers (millennials and Gen Z) seek more frequent feedback.<sup>66</sup> Managers who understand how to offer substantive observations constructively help employees develop more rapidly and also increase their satisfaction with their progress.

**Results orientation** · Focusing on results instead of hours spent in the office has been shown to make flexible time the norm rather than the exception.<sup>67</sup>

**Predictability** · The ability to plan time off in advance, and depend on it, makes flextime more valuable to employees and more viable for project managers.

**Role modeling** · In offices that are adept at treating all employees equitably, seeing managers use work-life benefits without penalty encourages junior staff and members of underrepresented groups to do the same.

**Context** · Some employees may be more deeply affected than others by world events. Create opportunities for your employees to let you know what they are going through outside of work, and use your intercultural competence to be empathetic and supportive. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

#### FIRMS

**Reduced turnover** · Supporting individual career development increases mental wellness and retention and reduces the cost of replacing valued employees, especially midcareer professionals.

**Responsiveness** · During the past few decades, significantly larger numbers of people have assumed caregiver roles in addition to paid work, resulting in heightened tension between work and personal responsibilities. Supporting employees and providing the time and leave arrangements needed for caregiving are investments that will help attract and retain talent.

**Connection** · Current events can have profound impact on some employees while affecting others minimally. Firms with strong communication pathways and established intercultural competence are more likely to understand the range of responses and find ways to support all their employees. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

**Productivity** · A supportive workplace culture means employees will be more productive and engaged.

**Return on investment** · The cost of leave and flexible work programs is not as high as is believed—such programs result in savings from greater productivity and reduced turnover.<sup>68</sup>

#### PROFESSION

**Cultural change** · Shifting the professional culture to focus on results and outcomes—not hours and commodity services—will help the profession meet the individual needs of architects from different backgrounds and at different stages of their careers without sacrificing profitability (and potentially increasing it).<sup>69</sup>

**Leadership demographics** · With continued, concerted support for equitable career development and transitions at all career stages, the profession will become more diverse at every level.

# We more easily advance architecture careers equitably when...

## SUPPORT

employees perceive that the support and training they need is there, when they need it

employees receive regular feedback on performance and goals, along with support in reviewing and revising their professional-development plans

criteria for pay and promotion are clear, broadly understood, and based on performance, not time in service

employees feel able to talk about how they are affected by outside events

what “meaningful work” means to different people is discussed and supported

## EQUITY

evidence of implicit bias in response to requests for flexible schedules is recognized and corrected

regardless of identity or schedule, employees have substantive assignments, roles, and duties

flexibility is understood as variable pace, workload, location, and schedule

time away from the office is based on stated policy and is supported for everyone

policies take into account that work-life conflict varies by person and circumstance

## LABYRINTH

the wide ranges of architectural career paths and areas of expertise are known and supported

there is agreement that each individual has different needs at different times

when an individual runs into obstacles, workplace leaders focus on fixing the system, not the person

project teams and work are structured to allow for the changing needs of the employee

demographics of the firm represent the population at every level, and there is room for employees to advance



# Compliance

This section is intended to introduce you to legal information and ethical considerations related to mentorship and sponsorship and describes the mere minimum requirements. It is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

Federal, state, and local employment laws are designed to ensure that employment practices (including hiring, promotion, and conditions of employment, covered in the *Workplace Culture*, *Compensation*, and *Recruitment and Retention* guides) are carried out fairly and without discrimination. It is unlawful to base employment decisions on an employee's legally protected characteristics. These characteristics include race, religion, nation of origin, age, disability, and pregnancy; in a number of jurisdictions, they may also include sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, personal appearance, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, and genetic information, among others.

Employment decisions bearing on work-life balance may be unlawful if they discriminate on the basis of a protected characteristic. Thus, employers must be mindful not to make decisions based on an employee's flexible work schedule, remote working arrangements, alternative career paths, or anything that appears to discriminate on the basis of a protected characteristic. For example, when considering requests for flexible work hours, employers should avoid asking questions such as, "Do you plan to have children?"

Work-life balance issues may arise in other contexts. For example, the law requires that an employer provide reasonable accommodation to an employee with a disability and to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious beliefs or practices, unless doing so would cause undue difficulty or expense for the employer. Reasonable adjustments may include allowing an employee to voluntarily swap shifts to attend a religious service.

Certain subjects that are generally off-limits may become open to inquiry in limited circumstances. For example, employers should avoid health questions that may appear to discriminate on the basis of disability. If an employee seeks reasonable accommodation based on disability, however, the employer may request documentation to establish what accommodations would be appropriate. Similarly, an employee requesting leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act may be required to provide reasonable documentation for the request. A further consideration is that, in some jurisdictions, it may be unlawful to ask an employee certain questions of a private nature, such as about an employee's health condition. Moreover, such questions are plainly unlawful if they discriminate on the basis of a protected characteristic. This would be the case, for example, if a female employee were to be asked if she intended to become pregnant.

The AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct does not address work-life balance explicitly. It does provide, however, that "members should provide their colleagues and employees with a fair and equitable working environment, compensate them fairly, and facilitate their professional development." In addition, a disciplinary rule in the Code of Ethics states: "Members shall treat their colleagues with mutual respect, and provide an equitable working environment."

Access to training or other learning experiences that are tied to promotion in certain, very limited, situations may be offered based on tenure or age, but limiting access based on assumptions of interest of those in protected classes may be considered an adverse employment action.

For more information on federal law governing employment discrimination, visit the website of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/index.cfm>. For information on the AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, go to <https://www.aia.org/pages/3296-aia-code-of-ethics-and-professional-conduct>.

# Assess

## PERCEPTION

**Do employees perceive the organization as fair in how it supports career growth?** · Do employees' perceptions of the implementation of organizational policies and decision-making match what the firm's leaders think the firm offers?

**Do employees articulate and share their goals?** · Does your employer know what employees consider to be meaningful about their work? · Do managers actively support employees' professional-development plans? · Do employees of color perceive the organization as actively supporting their growth and development?

## EQUITY

**How has your firm checked for bias in its responses to work-life benefit requests, such as flextime?** · How was bias investigated and addressed?

**Are duties of employees on flexible schedules substantive?** · Do they contribute to career development? · Is flexible time considered with a focus on results instead of hours? · Do employees have reliable time to unplug? · Is it granted equitably?

**Do employers support employees' dedication to advancing justice?** · Do they value the extra obligations some employees assume outside of work to contribute to social justice and other causes that advance EDI, such as the Black Lives Matter protests?

## LATTICE

**Does your firm recognize and support an array of architectural skills and areas of expertise?** · Do you acknowledge the validity of many kinds of careers in architecture, such as working for clients, public agencies, or contractors?

**Do employees have the opportunity to do meaningful work regardless of their identity and full-time or part-time status?** · Does your firm appreciate that individuals or groups have different needs at different times, and has it structured ways to accommodate them? · Do you have ways of continuing to involve employees who are on leave and on-ramping them when they return?

## SUPPORT

**How does your firm evaluate an employee's readiness for promotion?** · What voice do employees have in their advancement, next projects, and next roles?

**What are your firm's criteria for employee advancement?** · Are these criteria known and well understood by others? · What is the role of mentors and sponsors in employee development and advancement?

**Do managers recognize the signs of burnout and know how to address it?** · How do you view emotional exhaustion and burnout related to causes, such as immigration justice and #MeToo, in employees with target identities? · Does your firm offer training and development in technical and interpersonal skills, strategy, and leadership?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

For individuals, it can be helpful to consider the pattern of one's career as a lattice instead of a ladder.<sup>70</sup> You can advocate for yourself and others to help advance careers and increase equity and diversity in the profession.

- **Design your own path through the lattice**, knowing that your goals and needs will likely evolve over time. For architects, milestones, such as licensure or transitions to or from leadership positions, are points at which you may benefit from greater support.
- **Achieve clarity**. To advance, it is important to understand your options. Assess what resources and support are available, and know the criteria for promotion.
- **Take stock regularly, and know what resources you need**. Consider creating a development plan with one-, five-, ten-, and twenty-five-year goals and what you need to reach them, such as technology skills, leadership training, broader strategic perspective, or greater interpersonal or intercultural competence.
- **Craft your job by determining the parts that you would like to amplify or diminish**. Actively work with your employer to define your role and responsibilities and outline any further training or development you need.<sup>71</sup> Find ways to align employee goals with employer business needs.
- **Build your resilience**. Resilience will help you meet obstacles head on and bounce back from challenges quickly. Take proactive steps to support your physical and mental health, including letting others know when you are under stress from events inside and outside of work, taking leaves and seeking out assistance when needed.
- **Create your networking plan, and build your network of mentors, sponsors, and peers**. The most powerful networks are those a person nurtures and continuously expands through a variety of efforts—formal networking events, recreational

activities, volunteer work, and engagement—and that provide two-way professional value.<sup>72</sup> Try to build networks that are demographically diverse and that represent a range of work roles and work locations. Be aware that different kinds of networks can advance different goals.

- **Act as an ally and teammate**. When you see others who need support in their careers, advocate for them. When others need flexibility, be as generous as you can, and remember that there will be times in your career when you will need their help and amenability as well.

## MANAGERS

- **Watch for bias** when considering requests for training, leave, or flexible work arrangements.<sup>73</sup> Understand the value of work time that is preset, flexible, and reliable and that allows employees to disconnect and refresh.<sup>74</sup> Check your assumptions about the level of interest that any individual might have in special projects or training.
- **Be aware of the role of gender, race, and other characteristics in the pace of an individuals' career advancement**.<sup>75</sup> Check that your unconscious biases are not affecting your perceptions or your performance evaluations.
- **Intentionally encourage and promote diverse team members to take on new challenges**. People who don't "look like us" tend to be overlooked. Men are also often promoted—and promote themselves—on the basis of potential, while women are promoted on the basis of accomplishments, which slows women's career progress and widens achievement and pay gaps.<sup>76</sup> In addition to receiving less encouragement, women are less likely to feel confident or believe they are given the same opportunities.<sup>77</sup>

- **Have team discussions to plan the best pathways for providing time off** and ensuring that time off is distributed in an equitable way.<sup>78</sup>
- **Make work meaningful to employees.** To treat your team members equitably, explore what meaningful work means to each individual employee, and tailor your direction and communication accordingly.
- **Spot burnout** and find ways to alleviate it. An employee showing a change in demeanor—exhaustion, cynicism, or inefficacy—may be experiencing burnout. During times of social crisis, such as a pandemic or protests over climate action or racial justice, check in with employees who might be particularly stressed. Regardless of the source of stress—inside or outside of the office—you can help by talking with your employee. You can suggest work-related measures to alleviate stress: clearer expectations, more resources to do the job, greater control, more harmonious working relationships, or a change in workload.<sup>79</sup> Encourage time off.
- **Model the behaviors that bolster equity and retention,** and be mindful not to penalize employees who do follow your lead in taking time off and attending to personal and family needs.<sup>80</sup>

#### FIRMS

- **Ensure that work opportunities are being provided equitably** and that underrepresented groups in your office are not being overlooked.
- **Learn from employees,** individually and collectively, as well as from affinity groups, surveys, and conversations, how satisfied they are with their roles, development, and advancement.
- **Provide confidential support and accommodations to those with mental-wellness needs.** Mental-health stigmas in our society deter people from seeking help. Ensure that your firm is committed to the mental well-being of your employees and that this commitment is known and demonstrated across the firm. Watch for signs of burnout, and implement strategies to create a healthy work environment, ensure confidentiality, and avoid mental-health risks (e.g., providing low-level or no support for employees).<sup>81</sup> If someone with a mental-health disorder approaches you requesting accommodation, avoid stigmatizing, keep their information confidential, and work together to determine accommodations.<sup>82</sup>
- **Provide accommodations to people with disabilities and medical conditions, both chronic and acute.** Depending on the needs of the individual, accommodations can mean many different things, whether access to specific types of equipment or services (e.g., an American Sign Language interpreter, Computer Assisted Real-Time Translation services, or visual access to colleagues' faces during meetings). Ensure that your firm understands workplace requirements for people with disabilities, and learn more about job accommodations and the American Disabilities Act through resources, such as the Job Accommodation Network (<https://askjan.org/>). Build a workplace culture in which employees feel welcome to request support and accommodations for their particular needs.
- **Be mindful of onlys at various stages of their careers,** and provide extra support and opportunities for collective growth. (See the *Recruitment and Retention* guide.)
- **Support and expand employee networks,** particularly for people of color, people with disabilities/different abilities, LGBTQIA+ and non-gender-binary people, and women, who often have less access to leadership networks of mentors and sponsors. (See the *Mentorship and Sponsorship* guide.)
- **Don't penalize requests for accommodations,** such as flexible schedules. If your office provides flextime, support all employees in using it. Be aware of implicit biases that may lead to negative judgments of the person making the request.<sup>83</sup>

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“Small firms are embracing technology—they’re moving much faster, with less policy. The way architects work is changing—it’s much more about getting the work done and less about the number of hours in seats.”

Partner and Founder, White, Male, 48

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- **Provide supportive programs that address workplace issues at the systems level**, such as changes in job structures and firm culture, to become more equitable, help resolve demographic imbalances, and attract and retain talent.<sup>84</sup>
- **Listen to those most directly affected by social issues.** For example, when the Black Lives Matter protests began, firms that made the most concrete, credible statements did so based on input by their Black employees, clients, and community partners. Similarly, having direct input from disabled and transgender people helps create informed recommendations regarding, for example, bathroom design legislation.

#### PROFESSION

- **Change the value proposition from hours to outcomes.** As you shift your requirements of individuals from hours worked to performance and work products, also consider the broader shift to basing client fees on project performance instead of hours.
- **Expect flexibility to be the new norm.** The future workforce has changing expectations and values around work and family time. Increasingly, changes in family structures and a new generation of workers are altering the wider culture in which the profession of architecture operates. Expect these cultural changes, and push for industry-wide culture change and strategies to provide greater flexibility to employees.
- **Provide opportunities for networking and mentorship** beyond the scale of individual firms.
- **Continue commitments to EDI.** The journey to equity and justice may feel slow, frustrating, and uneven. Continued investments by the profession as a whole will yield results and strengthen the profession.

# Consider

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AT THE TABLE

I think it's really important, first, to have representation from diverse groups within leadership in the business. For example, we did our round of evaluations and discussions of promotions a couple of weeks ago. As an associate, I was given a seat at that table, but when we were discussing a woman who was pregnant and who was up for a promotion, I was the only person there to say, "We're talking about giving her a promotion next year, but you're really talking about two years because you have to give her a year for maternity and then you're going to expect her to come back and perform for a year before you consider her for a promotion. If you don't give it to her this year, you're delaying her career by two years." So having anybody at that table who can speak up in that capacity is important.

— Associate at Large International Practice, Indo-American, Female, 31

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### DISCUSS:

- What equity issues underlie the speaker's argument for considering a promotion for an employee prior to the employee taking maternity leave? How can having diverse representation in leadership help support equitable career advancement?
- Does your firm have diverse representation among its leadership? If not, what strategies or policies does your firm's leaders employ, or could they develop, to ensure that there is equity in career advancement? What can you do to promote equity in career advancement in your own firm?
- What other mechanisms can be used to ensure a voice if a place at the table can't be offered?
- Does your firm offer multiple ways of gathering input from those whose identities are not mirrored by decision-makers?



# Consider

## THE LATTICE AND THE ON-RAMP

I was speaking with the director of diversity at quite a large firm. I did my short spiel—coming back as a working parent, after having stepped away for a number of years—and I asked if they had any active policies or any systems in place, like a shadowing program or externship that welcomes people caring for an aging parent or who took a couple years off on sabbatical, to reenter the profession. She looked at me and said, “Honey, I don’t know how you did it.” It was completely dismissive and was the extent of our conversation. Another woman standing next to us said, “Oh, are you coming back as a drafter?” I was so thrown by the experience of unchecked bias and lack of representation. I would love to see something for this missing population of folks who want to come back but don’t know how to—because reentry is one of the hardest things to do.

And it’s not always a linear path. I started working for an architecture firm after school and then had an opportunity to work for an international firm in landscape architecture that did some really exciting stuff. That was a strategic decision. I knew that there would be a trade-off. Later, I had to fulfill a significant amount of my internship hours, which delayed my licensure. In the interim, I had kids and realized after a few years that my passion for the profession was still there, while quite a lot of my classmates and friends my age left the profession altogether. For me, there was an opportunity that allowed me to step back in. I was lucky because I was with a firm

that accommodated an eight-hour week to start and then, over six years, I managed to get to a leadership position. I'm in the middle of taking my exams—I have two more left. It's an incredible time suck, and trying to figure out how to divide my twenty-four hours a day is near impossible, with the demands of work and raising a young family. I became an associate principal three years ago, working thirty-two hours per week, and now I'm full-time. Our office has morphed, both in terms of what the younger staff's priorities are and how they want to balance their time. It has refocused us—in a really great way—as project managers, as leads, to ask how we plan for ourselves. In the last couple of years, there have been lots of discussions about what everybody's work life looks like. I say to project managers: “You're the captain of your ship; you are able to drive your project. At this predesign stage, at a very conceptual level, what do you think your project is going to look like at the end of construction?” Having a work plan lets us be proactive and respectful of everyone's priorities, so the team is less likely to need to work overtime. So I keep about forty hours, maybe some weeks forty-five, but it's pretty reasonable.

— Associate Principal, Mid-ARE®, Asian, Female, Married with Children, 41

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DISCUSS:

- What is the speaker's firm doing differently from the firms she describes at the beginning of the story? What assumptions and historical practices did their comments reflect?
- What was unusual about the speaker's career path? Would you say she is on a ladder or a lattice path? What advantages and disadvantages do you think she experienced? In what ways do you think her firm may have supported her as she advanced to become an associate principal?
- What ideas do you have for ways to help employees slow down or take the off-ramp and be able to return successfully?
- When do you think is the best time to pursue licensure? What helps to pursue it when timing is not ideal?
- How do you think the speaker's experience has informed how she treats project managers and younger staff? If you were in her shoes, how might you inspire other leaders in your firm to consider their employees' work-life integration or balance?

# Consider

## THE VIEW FROM INSIDE THE LABYRINTH

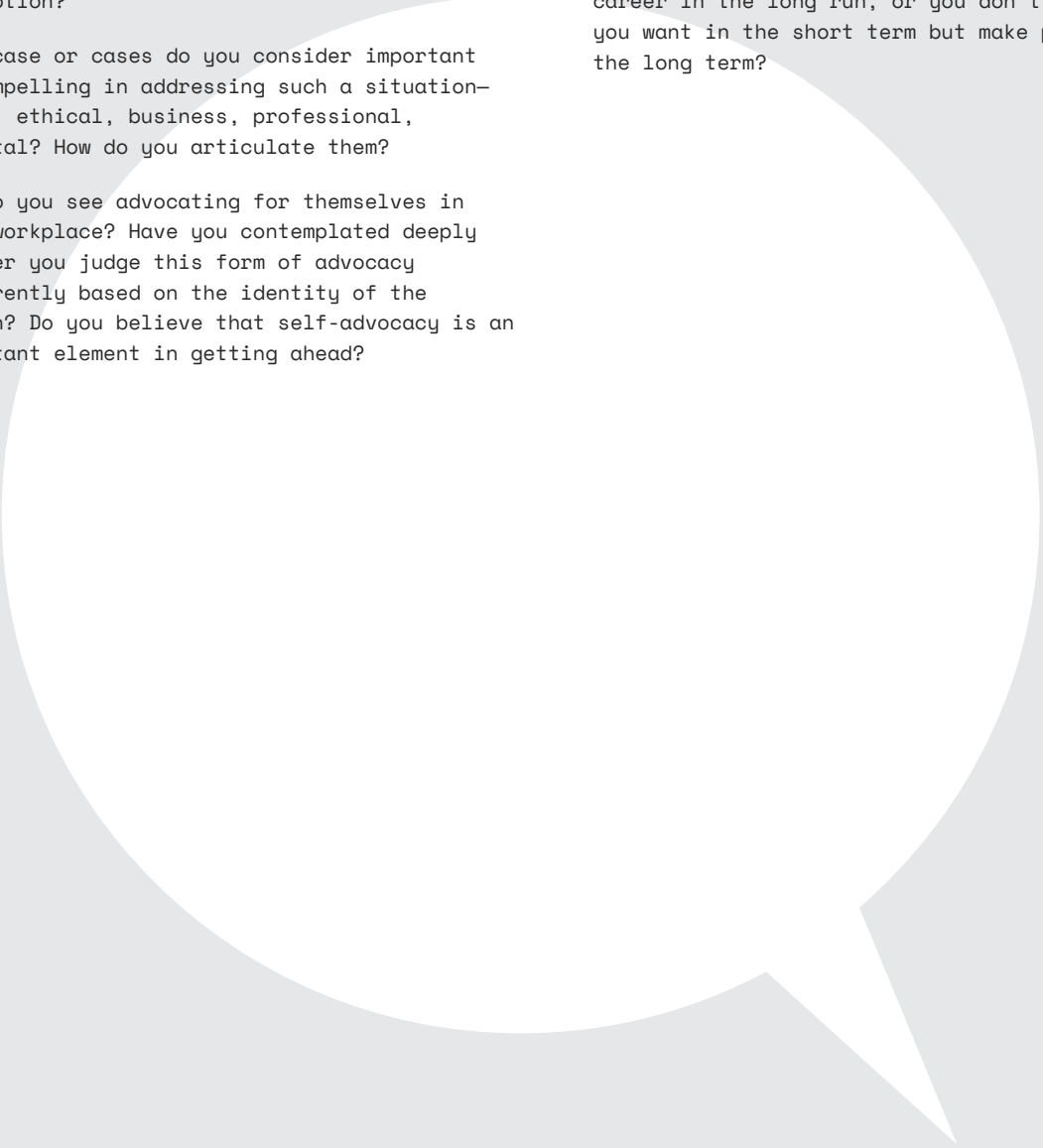
The entire time I've been practicing, I have been wanting more—contributing more, and aiming for more, trying to do more, and trying to learn more—and have constantly come up against walls and obstacles that turn around and say, “It's you, you're the problem, you're not enough, or you're not the right fit.” I've found a recent road to enlightenment, understanding that it's not about me as much as there is a systemic issue.

You're doing everything they're advising you to do. You're making a good case for yourself, helping yourself advance. You might be seeing some improvements, but if people don't show up for you, sometimes it doesn't matter how much you show up for yourself. Because advocates and allies, mentors and sponsors, they do make a huge difference, but if systemically the issue is perception and other people's belief systems that are untold tales of time, there's not a difference that I can make. And because I'm an outspoken person and I contribute to a dialogue and flipped my introvert ways to have a voice so I can contribute to change, I'm seen not as a rebel but as someone who really advocates for myself. Someone actually said that to me: “You really do advocate for yourself.” What am I supposed to do if I don't advocate for me? It was like a dagger. At the time they were a peer, and they've now moved up to an associate position. They've always been about themselves. They're not a person I consider an advocate for anyone but themselves.

— Architect, Black, Late 30s

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DISCUSS:

- When is it an individual issue and when is it a system issue? How do you know? Does it make a difference in how you approach creating a solution?
  - Has the Black Lives Matter movement changed how you see situations like this one? How has it changed your awareness, knowledge, or emotion?
  - What case or cases do you consider important or compelling in addressing such a situation—moral, ethical, business, professional, societal? How do you articulate them?
  - Who do you see advocating for themselves in your workplace? Have you contemplated deeply whether you judge this form of advocacy differently based on the identity of the person? Do you believe that self-advocacy is an important element in getting ahead?
  - Have you ever needed to advocate for yourself? Was it comfortable? Were you effective? Are there times when it is more appropriate or less so? Are there situations in which it might backfire?
  - Are there situations in which you get what you want in the short term but undermine your career in the long run, or you don't get what you want in the short term but make progress in the long term?
- 

# Consider


## WHAT'S MISSING?

I've found really interesting relationships between my own uncertainty about my path and AIA and the workplace. I've used AIA as my support group, my leadership training, for everything I haven't gotten in the workplaces I've been in. If I hadn't found it, I probably would have left the profession already. As good as that is for the AIA, it really sucked when I actually realized what that means for my experience in my workplaces. Right now, I work in a firm with all men. The men are great, and that is fine, but I do all these things—it just never feels like I'm doing enough. There are people with much less experience than I have who are getting many more opportunities. When people talk about diversity, inclusion, well, that's everything to me right now. I feel like there's just so much missing. I don't know what to do next. I don't know who to talk to about it other than my AIA people. I know I could move to a different firm, with different resources, but there will always be things that I will hope that my firm is getting up to speed on or that I'll need to make them aware of. I'm getting a little tired of feeling like there's so much missing and that I need to work to bring it in. I just want to show up and work like a lot of people do. I feel like I have to bring more and be more aware, and I'm getting tired of all of that.

— Rising Leader at Small Firm, Hispanic, Female, 30s

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DISCUSS:

- What do you think the speaker means when she says, "There's so much missing?" What are some possible explanations for why the speaker feels she has to do more and isn't getting more opportunities? How do you think her being the only may be affecting her own experience and her colleagues' behaviors toward her?
  - What might you ask or say to the other members of the speaker's firm if you were having a conversation with them about their firm culture and their career-development practices? What would you suggest this speaker do, ask, or say?
  - Do you think the firm is at risk of this person leaving? Do you think she is at risk of burning out? What can professional organizations, like the AIA, do especially to help support and advance the careers of members in small firms?
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# Consider

## ARE WE LOOKING FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE OR FULFILLMENT?

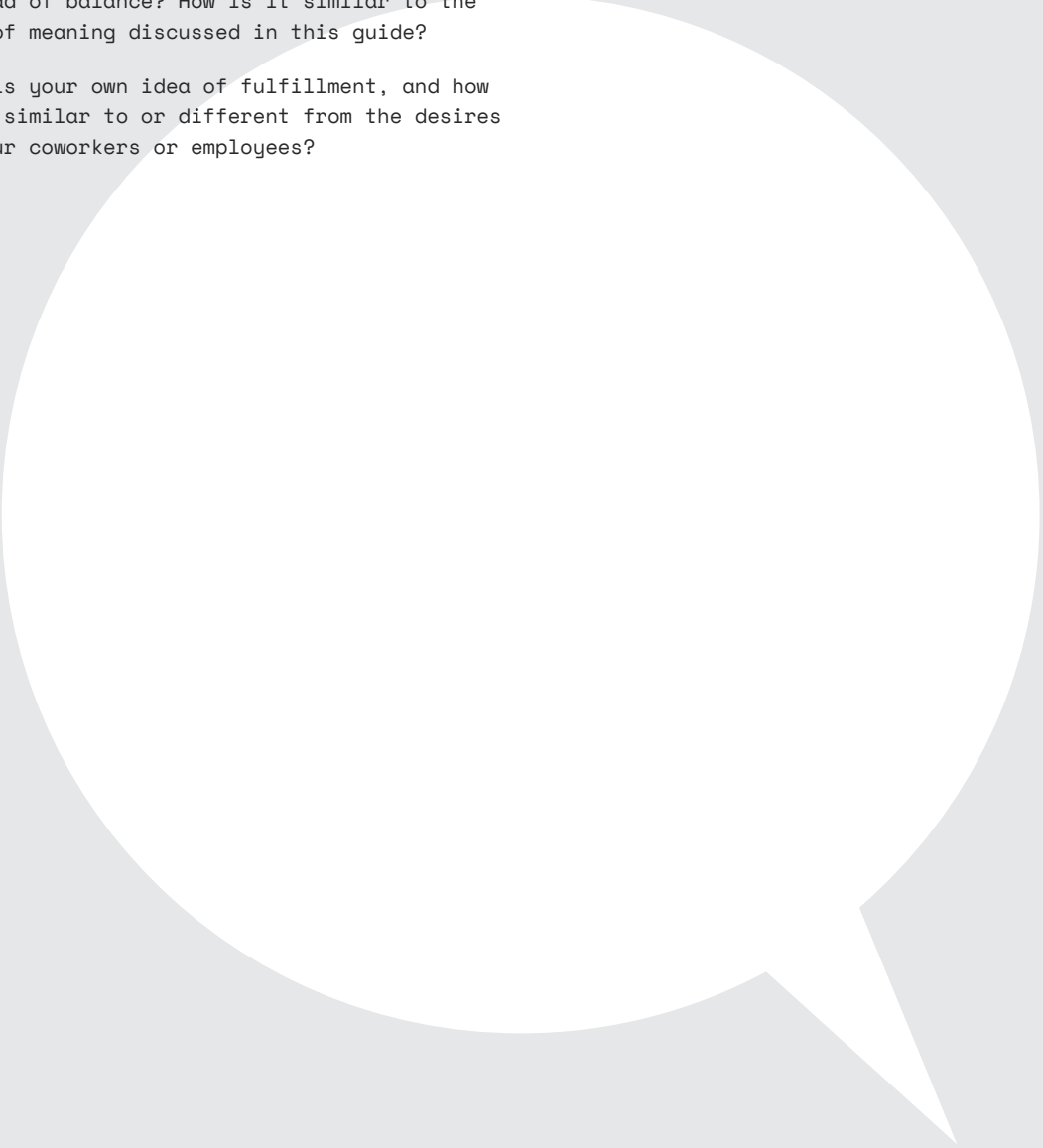
I think that there's a whole class of architects who believe that their work is their life, and to them, that's balance. What creates situations of imbalance in offices is when not everybody feels that way. You can have these very dedicated practices where nobody has any work-life balance, but they all believe their life is their work, and they're happy as clams. And that goes to the issue of culture: what is the culture of the office? I share a space right now with a woman architect who has won countless design awards. She's got them stacked up in the corner because she's got so many, and you kind of trip over them. She's one of those people for whom her work is her life, and she finds that completely satisfying and totally fulfilling.

We're trying to shift the conversation to the notion of fulfillment instead of work-life balance. When people talk about work-life balance, it suggests to many people for whom their work is their life that there's something wrong with that. But there's no magical balance that is achievable by everybody collectively. I think it's a question of learning how to assess the situation that you're in and learning how to communicate in such a way that you can get your work aligned with your own personal sense of how much you want to do—how much you want to go kayaking or skiing or how many design awards you want to win.

— Executive Director, Licensed, White, Female, 60s

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DISCUSS:

- What is your experience of people in an office having different ideas of what work-life balance looks like? What kinds of challenges do these differences pose, and in what ways have you seen these challenges handled in your own workplace?
  - What do you think of this idea of fulfillment instead of balance? How is it similar to the idea of meaning discussed in this guide?
  - What is your own idea of fulfillment, and how is it similar to or different from the desires of your coworkers or employees?
  - What is the employer's responsibility and what is the employee's in getting work schedules and conditions aligned with one's personal idea of fulfillment? How does your firm attend to individuals' priorities and aspirations?
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# Consider

## CLEAR AS MUD

During my second annual review, I said, “I’ve been here for two years. I really like the people, love the work. I get so much out of it, but I feel like I’m getting stuck. How do I make the next steps, to take on more leadership roles and move up into management?” And the answer was as clear as really thick, dark mud. All they said was: “There’s no set, defined path. It kind of happens when it happens. We can’t have this prescriptive path to leadership because if we do, there are these negatives.” Everything else about this firm is so positive and aligns with what I want to do except for the “where do I want to go” aspect. That was something that was just so frustrating because it shouldn’t be that unclear. I can understand that reasoning to an extent, but I was so disheartened when I heard that. This conversation made me question whether or not I had a future at this firm.

— Architect, Production Staff, White, Female, 31

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### DISCUSS:

- Should there be a defined path to leadership?  
What might the negatives be that the managers refer to? Do you agree with them?
- What alternatives to a set path might there be?  
What should the firm managers do differently?  
Could this person design a development plan and negotiate some milestones and concrete steps with her managers? What might you do if you were in this situation?

# Consider


## I STILL HAVE A CAREER

I came out and transitioned pretty late in my career, about three or four years ago. Fortunately, what I feared originally wasn't how it turned out. My practice focus is in the arts, basically a very progressive, open-minded client space. I initially came out at a theater conference about the bathroom-gender issue. I had to rethink. I realized that I'd jumped the gun there a bit because I hadn't come out to all my family—but to three hundred peers! The initial coming out—everybody was accepting. “You're so brave. This is wonderful. You can be yourself”—those sorts of comments, all reassuring and welcoming. I thought, “Ok, I didn't shoot myself in the foot, and I'll still have a career.” Cause you get to that point—it's not bravery, it's that the alternative is not good. The suicide rate among transgenders is pretty high. A lot of us were at that point where you've just got to move forward. And then to go through that and find out that it's not as bad as I thought; I do have a modest career. There were some changes, and certain friends—you find out who your true friends are, right? And everybody says they're here for you, but after six months or a year, certain people stop calling, so there was that. But more people did call, so it sort of balanced out.

— Firm Owner, White, Transgender Female, 60s

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DISCUSS:

- What difference does it make to an LGBTQIA+ person to be able to be open at work about their identity? What is the impact of not being able to be transparent?
  - How might colleagues be supportive when someone comes out or transitions at work? What are some ways your organization's leadership and HR department help to ensure that LGBTQIA+ colleagues are safe, supported, and able to be their truest self at work?
  - Do you think there are situations in which it might not be wise to be open about one's gender identity or sexuality? What might you or a firm's leaders do to change these types of situations?
- 

# Consider

## HOW REAL IS FLEXIBLE WORK?

Flexibility to me has always felt like a trick. I always hear this nice word *flexibility*, usually in an interview as a selling point. And then I've always felt, pretty immediately once I'm there, that flexibility is for—it's a seniority thing, or how brave are you to ask, and then you'd better wait a while before you ask again. It's not inherent. You better go and ask the right person at the right time, hope they are in the right mood to say yes. If you're lucky, they won't make you feel guilty about asking. But then there's this unwritten waiting period before you can even think about asking again. That has never felt real to me. It's always been like a carrot, dangling in front of my eyes.

— Architect, Production Staff, White, Female, 31


I notice a lot of younger folks in my firm, especially the women, who never take the implied flexibility because they feel they want to impress higher-ups. Often times, ironically, they're looked at as not taking that initiative...so we're not going to consider you for a promotion. You're just following the norm, not going above and beyond. It works against them.

— Emerging Professional Architect, Asian, Male, 32



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DISCUSS:

- What are the stigmas against flexibility expressed in these two accounts? How are the speakers' perceptions different, and how are they similar?
  - How might employees be penalized for asking for flexible schedules, and what might be the penalties for not asking?
  - What is the impact on employees—and on a firm—when needs for flexibility are not accommodated?
  - Are there obstacles employers face when considering special accommodations for their employees? As an employee, how can you consider your employer's point of view if/when you request flexibility?
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# Consider

## **FLEXIBILITY IS...FLEXIBLE**

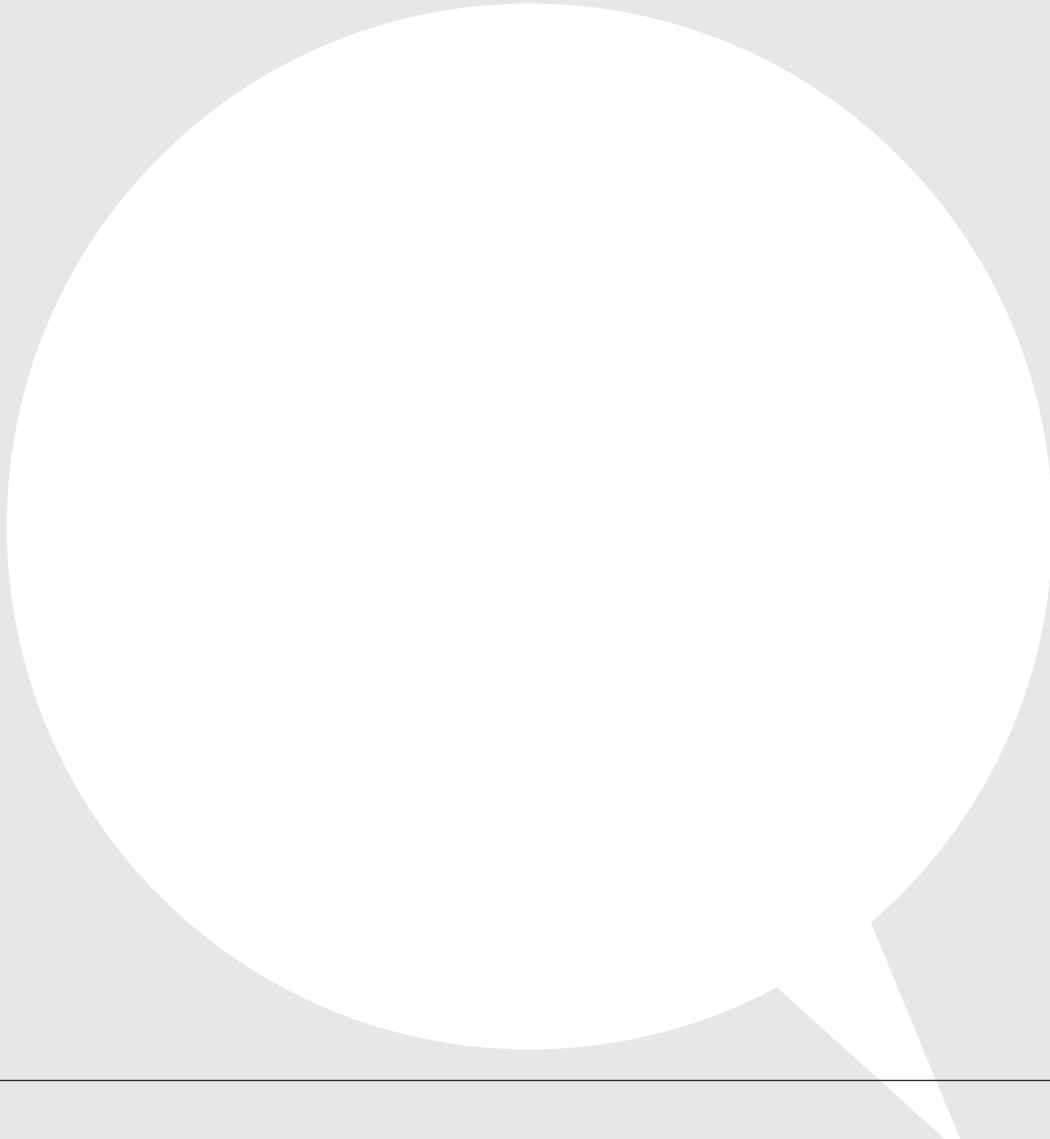
One thing I would encourage people to talk about is how the many versions of flexibility—hours, time, how you progress in your career, all these different things—can serve different people in the organization. The earlier thinking was that it was appropriate to make these concessions for mothers, but the more it's seen as just for mothers, the easier it is to hold it against them. When we talk about flexibility, we have people who are students, teachers—curating at the AIA gallery, volunteering—people who are parents or who are taking care of a parent. Flexibility becomes a workplace-culture example of universal design. People can benefit from these things in different ways if you allow the measurement to be about performance, not motherhood. Butt-in-seat isn't an indicator of doing good work. The hours people work borders on irrelevant. More important is that teams set norms of collaboration: Is this working? Could we mix it up differently, like work a day from home or have core hours? Come with a solution and foster dialogue.

We have people who request flexibility for different things; it's the norm here. Other firms worry that it'll turn into a free-for-all, but you need to trust people to be adults and manage around things. It's created a lot of commitment to the firm because you allow people to take care of their lives outside of work.

It's all about us all being professionals and adults, and lives are complicated. It is harder to set expectations when you can't see people. We have some

people who do that really well; we're talking about how to continue to evolve that because in the future it will be required of everyone. It will be harder and harder to retain people if we expect them to be all together all the time.

— CEO and Owner, White, Female, 59



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DISCUSS:

- What does the speaker mean by “the more it’s seen as just for mothers, the easier it is to hold it against them”? And how is flexibility an example of universal design?
- How do you think work is different when everyone isn’t together all the time? Are there advantages? How might you address the challenges?
- What flexible work arrangements have you tried in your team or firm? What has worked? What hasn’t worked?
- What ideas regarding flexible arrangements would you like to bring to your team?

# Resources

## FLEXIBILITY

### **Flex Works – Catalyst (2013)**

[subscription required]

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/flex-works/>

Addresses common misconceptions related to workplace flexibility and establishes several best practices for creating flexible workplace policies.

### **The Value of Workplace Flex: Options, Benefits, and Success Stories – Bentley University Center for Women and Business (2018)**

<https://www.bentley.edu/centers/center-for-women-and-business/workplace-flex-research-report-request>

Reviews why workplace flexibility is important, different types of flexibility, what does not work for flexible work arrangements, and strategies for implementing flexibility policies. Also includes recommendations for individuals who are looking for flexible options.

## LIFE AND CAREER BALANCE

### **Raising Kids and Running a Household: How Working Parents Share the Load – Pew Research Center (2015)**

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/>

Data related to gender differences in perceptions of work-life balance, division of labor, and career progression for two-parent households in which both parents work.

### **Revisiting the Social Construction of Family in the Context of Work – T. Alexandra Beauregard, Mustafa Ozbilgin, and Myrtle P. Bell – Journal of Managerial Psychology (2009)**

<https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/02683940910922537>

Identifies ways in which traditional policy definitions of family limit work-life-balance accommodations for people with families; examines situations that don't fit these definitions; and proposes actions to ensure that work-life-balance accommodations are provided to all.

## CAREER PROGRESSION

### **Diversity in the Profession of Architecture: Executive Summary – AIA (2016)**

<http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-05/Diversity-DiversityinArchitecture.pdf>

Key findings include reasons why women and people of color are underrepresented in the profession and perceived challenges to career advancement, retention, and job satisfaction.

### **Good Intentions, Imperfect Execution? Women Get Fewer of the “Hot Jobs” Needed to Advance – Christine Silva, Nancy M. Carter, and Anna Beninger – Catalyst (2012)**

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/good-intentions-imperfect-execution-women-get-fewer-of-the-hot-jobs-needed-to-advance/>

Examines the types of experiences required for women to advance into leadership roles and reveals that women are less likely to be given those types of assignments. Lists ways to assess how assignments are given to close the gender gap for the experience needed to advance.

### **Mass Career Customization – Cathleen Benko and Anne Weisberg – Harvard Business Review Press (2007)**

Based on work introduced at Deloitte, advocates a lattice approach to career progression and outlines why and how to introduce a personalized system.

### **The Myth of the Ideal Worker: Does Doing All the Right Things Really Get Women Ahead? – Nancy M. Carter and Christine Silva (2011)**

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/the-myth-of-the-ideal-worker-does-doing-all-the-right-things-really-get-women-ahead/>

Looks at the tactics used by men and women to seek career advancement and summarizes what is successful for each gender. Advises individuals on which strategies are most successful and organizations on how to set up structures that ensure a level playing field for advancement.

**Race Matters – David A. Thomas – Harvard Business Review (2001)**

[https://hbr.org/2001/04/race-matters?referral=03759&cm\\_vc=rr\\_item\\_page.bottom](https://hbr.org/2001/04/race-matters?referral=03759&cm_vc=rr_item_page.bottom)

Compares career progression for white people and people of color to help people understand differences and better mentor professionals of color. Also lists common challenges people of color face that their white peers might not and how to address them.

**LICENSURE****NCARB by the Numbers: Navigating the Path – NCARB (2018)**

<https://www.ncarb.org/nbtn2018/navigating-the-path>

Provides an overview of changes in gender and racial attrition rates for licensure candidates over time.

**LEADERSHIP****Charting the Course: Getting Women to the Top – Melissa Artabane, Julie Coffman, and Darci Darnell – Bain & Company (2017)**

<https://www.bain.com/insights/charting-the-course-women-on-the-top>

Looks at the challenges women typically face in advancing to leadership roles and provides managers with strategies for supporting women in these areas.

**Leadership in Your Midst: Tapping the Hidden Strengths of Minority Executives – Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Carolyn Buck Luce, and Cornel West – Harvard Business Review (2005)**

<https://hbr.org/2005/11/leadership-in-your-midst-tapping-the-hidden-strengths-of-minority-executives>

Offers suggestions to better understand and support employees' pursuits outside of the workplace, recognizing the value in outside work-leadership opportunities. Also provides suggestions for rethinking inclusion in benefits and ways to support minority talent in advancing to leadership.

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# Engaging Community

## KEY TOPICS

accessibility  
activism  
advocacy  
authenticity/honesty  
design justice  
design thinking  
environmental justice  
facilitation  
gentrification  
human-centered design  
inequality  
listening  
participation  
partnership  
policy  
public interest  
architecture  
resilience  
social justice  
social responsibility  
structural racism  
tokenism  
trust  
voices

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As community needs encompass broad concerns, such as social justice and resiliency, architects will do well to learn, build trust, and adopt solutions created in partnership with those communities. By practicing greater equity, the profession increases its value to society as well as its visibility among potential partners and future practitioners.

This guide explains the fundamental principles and attributes of community engagement and proposes specific methods and guidance for involving community members in equitable, inclusive, and just design processes, decision-making, and outcomes.



The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What is community engagement?

The essence of community engagement is the inclusion of divergent voices—professionals, stakeholders, and end users—to arrive at consensus about project goals and characteristics, with a positive outcome for all.<sup>1</sup> A wide body of research in multiple fields, including higher education, the social sciences, and public health, can help inform architecture professionals about the outcomes and methods of constructive community engagement.<sup>2</sup>

The work of architects almost always has an impact on communities, especially when *community* is defined broadly—not only as neighborhoods but also as any group that occupies or experiences the end product, from a family to an entire city. Client goals may sometimes align with those of the community and at other times they may conflict, for example, when the architect is representing a private client whose project objectives are at odds with those of the neighborhood or of other constituents. Since the work produced by architects affects communities of different kinds and scales, it becomes important to imagine the design with all stakeholders—client and community—in mind as each project progresses. Knowing how to engage with communities respectfully and with a disposition toward learning is essential to ensure successful end results.

Architects may be effective in several different roles: learner, facilitator, mediator, advocate, or implementer. In most cases, the architect is an outsider and, therefore, is responsible for building trust and understanding the community as part of a project's foundational work. In any case, the architect's primary contractual responsibility is toward the client; the extent to which community engagement is a part of the project depends on the negotiated scope of the project and can be influenced by the architect. Typically the primary conduit between the community and the client or funder, the architect is well-positioned to mediate differences in agendas and priorities. For example, a developer may

be seeking the “highest and best use” of the land, usually driven by the economic value of resale or by new income sources, which can result in gentrification. On the other hand, the community's idea of highest and best use may include broad social benefits such as strengthening cultural hubs, supporting intergenerational interaction, revitalizing locally owned businesses, or reversing environmental damage. If differences occur, they may lead to miscommunication, confusion, or outright conflict. An architect has the potential to use intercultural skills to create productive dialogue and solutions. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

Because of their significant impact on communities, architects need intercultural competence and fluency in engagement. In addition to using skills such as creating and implementing effective processes and eliciting and communicating information about their work, architects engage more deeply and authentically when they understand the historic and systemic context in which the profession is viewed. For example, while designers generally intend to contribute to society in addition to serving clients, the impact on social systems, communities, or neighborhoods are not always perceived as positive by the very communities (end users) who experience the architect's designs. When a community's experience is negative, the work of architects can be seen as an example of what is described by researchers and advocates as “white savior complex.” This term refers to a white person trying to help people of color in ways that are actually self-serving or, more broadly, when dominant group “experts” impose a solution that they believe is for the benefit of a less-powerful group.

Regardless of an architect's intent or identity, knowing how to discuss crucial issues, such as affordability, resident displacement, and gentrification (discussed below), is key to connecting authentically in any engagement process. While it may feel risky, using principles of equitable practice outlined in this and previous guides will provide a foundation for aligning good intent with good outcomes and strengthening the architect's awareness of the community's vision and aspirations, which may differ from the original project brief.



## CURRENT PRACTICES

This guide will address three forms of community engagement, from individual to societal: how individual architects can engage in their communities as informed and involved citizens; how an architect can lead or facilitate engagement as a professional; and how architects can model engaged and equitable practices as they consider their impact on society.

## ENGAGING AS CITIZENS

First, in addition to each person's own efforts to be a thoughtful and informed citizen, the work of a publicly-involved architect is a form of civic engagement and public participation, in situations in which people collaborate and communicate together toward a common goal.<sup>3</sup> For architects, who often describe themselves as solo actors, the role of publicly-involved architect may be a stretch. Ways that individuals or groups of members can participate and contribute include:

- volunteering for nonprofit and public organizations in general (e.g., youth groups, public schools, social services, cultural institutions) and in community planning
- appearing at public events and being identified as an architecture professional
- running for public office
- helping shape public policy
- becoming activists at the local community level on neighborhood-development issues, such as traffic control or historic preservation
- contacting your local, state, and federal agencies and legislators to voice concerns about building codes, zoning issues, and environmental issues.

These activities also benefit the profession as they enhance awareness of architecture as a career, build appreciation for what architects do, and involve architecture professionals more deeply as members of their own communities. For example, in the 2016 AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey, 57% of architects of color believe that having little knowledge of architecture as a career option impedes diversity.<sup>4</sup> For people currently underrepresented in the field of architecture, meeting or seeing architects in positive public roles and learning about what architects do may help to diversify the profession in the long run. These interactions may connect more powerfully if the architect has identities or background in common with community members they interact with, but any architect who participates in a public role is building awareness about the profession.

This type of engagement can also include participation in outreach organizations that increase public awareness of and interest in architecture. For example, the

Architecture Foundation of Oregon conducts programs to “connect communities to the power of design” and to work “with community partners to share design’s role in shaping our future.”<sup>5</sup> Programs such as Architecture in Schools expose youth and adolescents to architectural design. These programs seek to attract prospective architecture students and increase awareness of design’s importance. Similarly, the ACE Mentor Program connects mentors from architecture, construction, and engineering with high school students and provides scholarships and grants to help students pursue careers in the building industry. NOMA’s Project Pipeline is a well-regarded summer program that focuses on STEM, arts, and architecture, teaching community-based participatory research. The nonprofit organization Canstruction® sponsors competitions for designs and sculptures made of canned goods as a means of collecting food for food banks across the United States. More generally, AIA chapters create opportunities for members to volunteer for projects such as clean-up days and neighborhood markets.

Activism, or “activist-architecture,” is another form of public involvement, through which architects participate in organizations that advocate for political and social change. For example, Public Architecture launched the One Percent campaign that called on architects to donate 1% of their time to pro bono work.<sup>6</sup> Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) engages in human rights advocacy and conducted a prison-design boycott campaign requesting designers to refuse to design prisons or jails.<sup>7</sup> Advocacy during AIA’s annual Grassroots conference connects architects with legislators and their staff members to address issues related to the built environment nationally, regionally, and in their districts. Activist architects might also participate in political- or civic-engagement campaigns, such as AIA’s climate action campaign, Blueprint for Better, and encourage their colleagues to conduct pro bono work or advocate for human rights (taking into consideration the potential financial and reputational consequences).<sup>8</sup> Millennials, in particular, are seeking socially responsible employers, and offering pro bono opportunities can be a recruitment tool.<sup>9</sup>

## ENGAGING AS A PROFESSIONAL

Second, architects engage with communities in their professional capacity by facilitating community participation and voice. Many government entities—federal, state, or local—such as the General Services Administration, require community engagement during the design process for public projects or private projects that receive government funding or financing. (See the Compliance section of this guide.) Regardless of the project type and client orientation, architects can propose and help design the form of local-community involvement during the design stages—how to structure it and who should be involved—to ensure that the members



and end users have input and that their knowledge, assets, values, history, culture, needs, and priorities are reflected in the final result. In addition to these roles, architects are well equipped to help participants design solutions to governmental and regulatory constraints or suggest changes to building codes or zoning that may be outdated.

The architect may be serving as a neutral facilitator or as an advocate with a standpoint and should make that difference clear from the outset. One of the greatest positive impacts the architect can have is by ensuring that a true cross section of those affected by the project is represented, not just those who are most vocal or have the most political influence or access. Inclusion often requires allocating more time for the engagement process, holding gatherings at a variety of locations and times of day, offering incentives, and creating different formats that recognize varying communication preferences and comfort levels among participants.

As professionals, architects serve society broadly and their clients specifically. They are more effective when they understand the structural inequities their clients experience that may be magnified by the places and spaces clients and end users occupy and that architects are designing or redesigning.

### ENGAGING AS A FIRM

Finally, firms and institutions can model community engagement and equity and enhance the positive impact of architecture on society by offering services intended to advance equity.<sup>10</sup> Such organizations include: for-profit firms that explicitly include community-engagement work in their business model, deliver pro bono projects, or create nonprofit arms; nonprofit design firms dedicated to community-related projects; and university-based design centers and studios that connect students and practitioners to local community networks and needs.<sup>11</sup> Many of the architects involved with these projects consider equity to include social justice and offer opportunities to amplify voices that have historically been excluded from decision processes affecting their environments.<sup>12</sup>

### DESIGN METHODOLOGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Collaboratively developed processes, sometimes characterized as socially responsive design, emphasize community engagement, community needs, equity issues, and the relationship between the designer and the public.<sup>13</sup> For example, equity-centered design involves design through community cocreation, addressing power dynamics, and making equity concerns central to the design process.<sup>14</sup> Other processes have evolved from design thinking, an approach intended to lead to design ideas that allow for the designer's creative expression and provide meaning and function for the user.<sup>15</sup> Human-centered design is a design-thinking model in which users

are cocreators, even if not necessarily experts in design.<sup>16</sup> In human-centered design, the user is at the heart of the design process, especially in the inspiration phase and in ideation and implementation. Human-centered designers call upon characteristics and qualities such as creative confidence, learning from failure, empathy, optimism, embracing ambiguity, and iteration as part and parcel of the design process and key to making the user's needs and values a focus of the design.<sup>17</sup>

The human-centered approach can be particularly powerful for users whose identities are underrepresented in architecture, guaranteeing that their unique and nuanced points of view influence the design. For example, people using wheelchairs and those using strollers may both benefit from accessible design features yet differ in what is most useful to them. Quality of life can be greatly enhanced for people with visible and invisible disabilities when designers take time to understand the challenges they face and try out solutions with them. Simply meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) misses opportunities for designs that could be more effective for everyone. Accessible design only addresses mandated accessibility while universal design considers the experience of a broad range of users.

In public interest design, designers use their skills to improve the quality of life of communities that generally cannot afford their services, in particular by addressing systemic problems that occur in the built environment.<sup>18</sup> For example, the AIA's Center for Communities by Design takes a public-interest-design approach through their design assistance work that focuses on community resiliency and sustainability. (See Resources section of this guide.) Environmental and socially sustainable design adopts sustainability frameworks, such as LEED and the Living Building Challenge, and accords equal importance to principles of equity as to the other framework elements.<sup>19</sup> In general, these processes emphasize designing for communities through the creation of common spaces and friendly environments and by fostering human health and comfort and environmental regeneration. There are numerous efforts to integrate and elevate goals of environmental sustainability with goals of equity and justice.<sup>20</sup>

Fundamentally, whatever the process, community engagement is a cooperative approach that ideally provides the user or community with self-determination and promotes mutual care and concern between designers and the community as well as toward the project. A helpful rule for designers and project owners is to respect that community groups and individuals want "nothing about us without us," a slogan reflecting their experiences when well-intended past efforts did not lead to positive outcomes.<sup>21</sup> For instance, in the Oakland Slow Streets Program, surveys showed that a large majority of people were in favor of closing streets;

however, upon a closer look at the data, the leaders realized the respondents were disproportionately white and high income, not reflecting the demographics of the community.<sup>22</sup>

### TOWARD EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Architects have a pivotal role to play in the creation of thriving communities at all scales, and they can begin addressing a host of historic, institutionalized practices and policies through empathy, trust-building, and intercultural competence and fluency. Such trust has been impeded by a history of inequitable practices in architecture, urban planning, and public policy that are widely known to have affected African American communities but also many other identity groups. These practices include, for example, redlining, housing discrimination, failed housing projects, and the urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 1960s and have been largely due to historic, structural racism—the interaction of systems, ideologies, processes, and social and cultural influences that create, promote, and maintain inequities among racial and ethnic groups. Even today, one's zip code is the strongest predictor of health outcomes and social mobility, indicating that space and place play a significant role in people's life prospects.<sup>23</sup> Although architects and the profession are only one part of this complex system, it is essential for practitioners to acknowledge the role the profession has played in perpetuating inequity in the built environment and to commit to overcoming it by deeply incorporating equity into practice.

In the built environment, one of the most tangible and widespread examples of structural inequity is racism as expressed through redlining and subsequent resident displacement. The policy of redlining in housing is de facto segregation through the denial of mortgages and other services to, most often, African Americans. In the 1930s, Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), a federal agency intended to increase homeownership, created maps of major cities, color coded to designate mortgage-lending risks. Areas considered high risk were colored in red and consisted of urban areas with large African American populations or other communities of color. In addition, some neighborhoods also drew up restrictive covenants that controlled who could own a home there and further excluded people of color and, often, Jews. When the Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, it became possible, in theory, for anyone to buy a home anywhere; however, the history of redlining and neighborhood covenants meant that the homes of many people of color had appreciated in value far more slowly, rendering the non-redlined homes beyond the reach of those whose equity had not increased as much.<sup>24</sup> In a different but related vein, urban historian Dolores Hayden has made the case that urban and suburban planning and architectural design have long contributed to the narrowing of women's sphere primarily to domestic life

through suburbanization and consequent isolation.<sup>25</sup>

Both examples illustrate how exclusion from design and decision-making have contributed to a built environment that advantages some over others.

Redlining further resulted in the devaluation of the housing and physical assets (e.g., public parks, civic amenities) of underserved and low-income communities and thereby opened the door to gentrification, during which undervalued assets become attractive to outsiders who target the community for reinvestment.<sup>26</sup> Revaluing then results in the displacement of the original community; rents, housing prices, and property taxes increase and wealthier and more powerful newcomers buy up older buildings and the land. The influx of money leads to improvements to housing and the urban environment—improvements that the prior residents may have wanted or fought for but lacked the political and financial power to attain.

Neighborhood and building improvements have advantages, and residents who remain have been shown to benefit in some ways.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, when community residents leave, a neighborhood's cultural and social history is lost. While local governments may help fund through tax breaks and other means, they generally do not provide significant assistance or public resources to help previous residents remain in their community or reestablish themselves elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Architects who are unaware of the complex and varied perspectives of community members may be caught off guard when controversies arise around seemingly uncontroversial topics. For example, local residents may see the addition of bike lanes as a harbinger of gentrification or a way of deflecting attention from deeper infrastructure problems, such as lead pipes under the very roads that bicyclists ride over without a thought.

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“It’s important to reflect the demographics of your client, but it’s not the reason you should have a diverse team. The way we look at it, it’s really about the richness of the work. Internally, people are more comfortable talking about it this way too. It gets to the issue of genuineness.”

President/CEO, White, 61 years old

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Architects, who historically have mostly been white and whose dominant cultural paradigm has been that of the “designer as authority,” have been in the position to make choices on behalf of lower-power or less visible groups, especially communities of color (particularly Black and Indigenous people and recent immigrants) and low-income communities.<sup>29</sup> Teams that reflect the identities found in the community may find it easier to connect, but regardless of team demographics, attending to implicit and explicit bias and how they reinforce inequitable power structures is essential to building the trust required for authentic community engagement. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) Limiting the impact of bias can also keep the focus on inclusion and avoid the perception of tokenism—a situation in which a single person from a target identity may perceive themselves or be perceived by others as included primarily to get the commission or deter criticism. Recruiting “cultural brokers” (individuals and groups familiar with the communities being served) can help achieve genuine communication when their roles are clear.

In addition, the culture of architecture, with its own visual and verbal language, is not always easy to understand, especially by those in communities that have had little exposure to architects; therefore, bridging with common language can be an asset. How designers connect, who they listen to, and how they gather information can all affect trust, communication, and success of the end product. Architects who understand how their own language and culture are perceived by others and who also have the skills to bridge intercultural differences are most likely to be effective, especially when individuals and groups in the community lack experience with architects or are suspicious of architects and the building industry due to historic and current policies, a history of being ignored, and/or economic pressure to leave their neighborhoods. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) To engage local communities and users during projects, architects can foreground the local expertise of community members, leaders, and organizations by structuring equitable design processes during which designers and the community share power in idea generation and decision-making to uncover context-specific solutions.

Successful context-specific design comes from familiarity with local history and policy in relation to equity. For example, asking about demographic changes can yield increased awareness of gender and racial differences in how public space is experienced and can expand attention to the needs of people with disabilities or aging populations. Through this discovery process, architects increase both their sensitivity and their technical knowledge and skills. Reading about these issues and reaching out to organizations that represent different groups can help architects build empathy and understand the community or individuals not present or apparent in the lives of some architects. In this context any activity

(a potluck, documentary, or school visit) that helps architects understand difference as well as appreciate similarities through the experiences of others can be useful. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide for more on appreciating difference.)

Architecture professionals can engage communities and users more equitably with a framework that focuses on quality of life and that reduces racial, gender, and other disparities by processing and countering the forces that have sustained those disparities. For architects, working within an equitable development framework can include engaging local-community experts as partners during project design, encouraging developers and other outside investors to better understand community members and their values and concerns, recognizing histories and policies that have produced inequities, and—in an assertive advocacy role as distinct from a facilitative one—being involved in local policy making that allows for advancing economic opportunities for the community, promoting affordable housing, and implementing other anti-displacement measures.<sup>30</sup>

Regardless of the cultural characteristics, designers who have sustained interactions with communities rather than superficial, brief interchanges are more likely to be successful.<sup>31</sup> Effectiveness depends on the values and perspectives of the specific community and how well one can meld the required outcomes of the project and the needs of the community. Keeping in mind that having a positive purpose does not necessarily translate to effectiveness or a good outcome, architects who have the capacity and flexibility to attend to both relationship building and project design and outcomes will have the greatest positive impact.

**WHAT DOES AUTHENTICITY LOOK LIKE?**

What does it mean to engage authentically? How do we know we are achieving authentic communication and not just checking the box?

“Authentic engagement is built on an honest relationship with the community. As professionals, architects are often outsiders, but this is no limitation. Approaching the table as a citizen first and as a respectful guest gives the community the freedom to share their needs and experiences.

In this space, the reality of the community experience and knowledge is more valuable than the architect's education or perceived status. Connecting with the community at this level allows an architect to lead from an informed position of trust and yields mutual benefit for all involved.”

Associate AIA, African American, Female, 32

“We have to start to think anew. We have to approach community engagement as ‘proactive social scientists’ who, first and foremost, do not ignore the fact that we live in a country with increasing, ever-changing diversity and that some of the communities we serve are not monolithic but dynamic and hyperdiverse and continue to diversify. Researching and collecting data on the end users is the key to authentically connecting and proving our sincerity to serve instead of offering off-the-shelf, recycled solutions that may not necessarily fit or completely solve the task we are faced with.”

Senior Architect/Project Manager, African American, Male, 49

“Being authentic in a community means to effectively share information that invites people's participation, welcomes their input, and inspires confidence in my ability to create design solutions that make space for them and that they can see themselves reflected in. My goal is to successfully curate a meaningful conversation about a relevant topic that demonstrates an understanding of their lived experiences and can help improve the quality of their lives.”

Managing Partner/Firm Owner,  
Black, Male, 46

“Authentic means staying engaged in the discussion until the issue is settled, testifying at public meetings to express your opinion, and being secure in the knowledge that you have truly been fully engaged in offering your opinion yet respectful of the final decision whether it is in your favor or not.”

Vice President/Business Development,  
White/Hispanic, 69

“For me, it means not just interacting once. Sometimes there's a desire to check the box ‘I did that, and you'll never hear from us again.’ But in my experience, not only did we go to meet with the community members, we asked questions in advance, asked questions while we were there. We wrote the responses in our reports, connected again. It wasn't just something we put on the record so we could say later: ‘We met with this group.’ We had meaningful conversations.”

Architect/Designer, African American,  
Male, 50s

“It takes research and active engagement to authentically connect with a community. We often schedule outreach engagements during community gatherings, such as street fairs and community events, so we can reach out to a wider demographic. This environment also allows us to socialize, meet, and chat with our target audience in a more relaxing and engaging manner.”

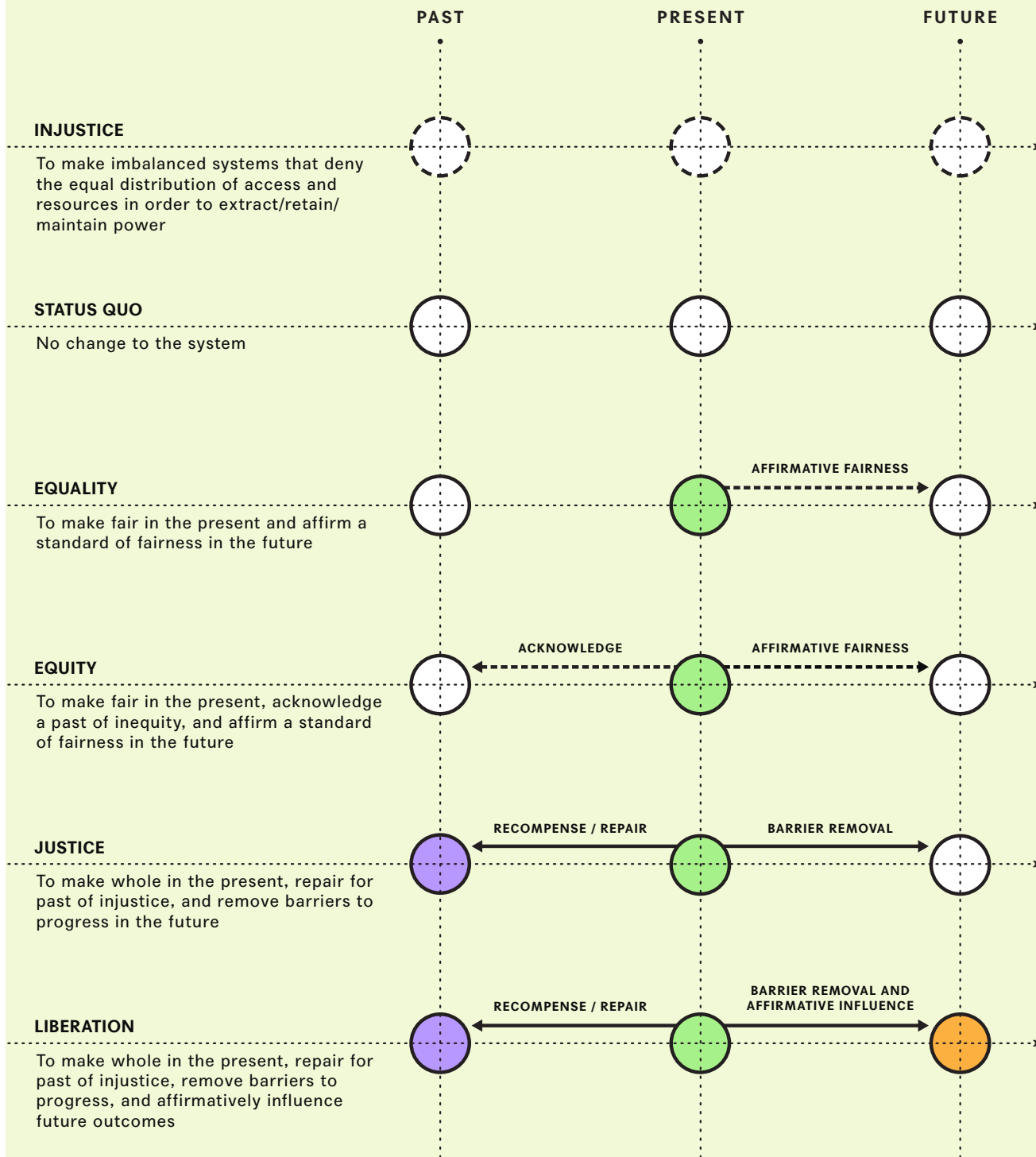
Architect/Public Sector,  
Asian American, Female, 49

“Authentically connecting to the community must include establishing a deeper professional and/or personal relationship with people in the community. This can be accomplished by the people on the team living, working, volunteering, or playing within the community. This has the potential to lead to deeper and more meaningful (i.e., authentic) relationships and therefore authentic connections. Maybe you go to a social or religious event in the community; maybe you shop, go to the park, and attend community sporting events—and through those activities it is evident that it is way more than checking the box.”

Principal, White, Male, 60



## FROM INJUSTICE TO LIBERATION



Bryan Lee, Jr., of Colloqate, states that “for nearly every injustice there is an architecture, a plan, a design, to sustain it.” This diagram is based on his illustration showing how architectural designers practicing design justice can repair past injustices, remove barriers, and enable positive future outcomes.

AIA Large Firm Roundtable. (2020, June 26). Virtual Conversation with Bryan Lee, Jr. [GoToMeeting]

# Why does equitable community engagement matter?

As underscored in the AIA Code of Ethics, architects have a responsibility to people and the planet. In a survey about public interest design, a vast majority of architecture professionals indicated that their profession has an ethical basis.<sup>33</sup> Seventy-five percent of respondents believed that architects should advocate for often-unheard members of the community, build inclusive designs that engage communities in idea generation and decision-making, promote social equality and equitable growth, help build local capacity, create environmentally sustainable design, and engage in environmental justice.<sup>34</sup> Yet Equity by Design (EQxD) survey respondents were far less likely to say their work benefits society or communities than they were to say that their work benefits their client or firm, and only ten percent said that their work has a positive impact on underrepresented communities.<sup>35</sup>

At the same time that architects express the belief that architecture can have a positive impact, the building industry, market forces, and policy makers have contributed to a world with extreme income inequality, increasing urban populations, and limited or decreasing public funding for housing, all of which have led to a housing crisis in many urban centers.<sup>36</sup> Housing is unfortunately not the only crisis; environmental injustices lead to communities of color being disproportionately affected by air pollution and toxins. Architects and other design professionals can help meet these crises by designing buildings and advocating for communities that are affordable as well as environmentally sustainable.<sup>37</sup> They can bring their expertise in design while acknowledging areas where they need other

perspectives. Finding ways to thoughtfully engage with communities, municipalities, policy makers, and developers ensures that different perspectives and ways of knowing and working inform the design. To do so means breaking the dominant cultural paradigm of the architect and architecture team as the authority on design, moving toward a model in which the team includes community groups and individuals.

Equitable and inclusive community engagement builds trust between designers and community members, sustains communities, and helps create functional, affordable, safe spaces.<sup>38</sup> When architects engage in the public sphere as community volunteers and activists, they can also influence public policies related to the built environment that promote the need of stable housing for all community members.<sup>39</sup> In addition, architects can use projects to benefit communities by hiring local consultants, contractors, and subcontractors.

There is also a relationship between equity, inclusiveness, and environmental performance—often defined as resilience. Metrics are beginning to emerge that measure performance in the areas of place, water, energy, materials, beauty, health and happiness, and equity. Equity can be assessed based on access to nature, community services, and neighborhood civic and communal spaces; developer investment; and the involvement of organizations. When economic measures, such as “worst first” or “highest and best use,” are the primary drivers of evaluation by developers or insurance companies, so-called high-value properties are more likely to garner investment. A more holistic view could shift investment by aiming to improve social determinants of health such as poverty, life expectancy, education level, and accessibility to outdoor space.<sup>40</sup>

When community engagement is intentional and strategic and when it focuses on values of equity, inclusiveness, and justice, the community and architects alike reap the benefits. Project outcomes improve as the design responds to the needs of all stakeholders, including those from the wider community affected by the project. When architects participate in outreach organizations or offer equity-centered services, the profession also becomes more visible, potentially attracting a new generation of architects and thereby enhancing diversity in the profession in the long term.



## INDIVIDUALS

**Empowerment** · Community engagement bridges the gap between designers and communities.

**Responsive design** · When architects listen to communities, they can make more effective design decisions that lead to structures that are safe, healthy, sustainable, and more resilient and that enhance the quality of life for a greater number of people.

**Relationships** · Engaging in your own community as a citizen and an architect helps build relationships with people outside of your usual circles and helps you understand the challenges and needs of those living in your own community and how your expertise can help meet these challenges.

**Community health** · Community engagement contributes to designs that are affordable and place appropriate, helping its members lead healthier, happier lives individually and together.<sup>41</sup>

## FIRMS

**Engagement** · Firms can support and reward employees who participate in larger causes. Those who feel that they make a positive impact on others through their work are more likely to be engaged in their work and more likely to plan to stay in their current job. (See the *Advancing Careers* guide regarding burnout.)

**Reputation** · Strong community engagement with clients or those living in the future area of a built project will help design more sustainable, responsive buildings and build a firm's reputation in design and in the community.

**Trust** · Engaging in your local communities will help build trust between your firm and the communities you work in, paving the path for increasing community participation in design and stronger relationships for future projects.

**Networks** · Community engagement increases your networks of users and local contractors, subcontractors, and vendors.

**Capacity** · Firms with diverse employees who have high intercultural competence will be more successful in community engagement and will have the capacity to meet future challenges with a still-broader range of clients.

**Project outcomes** · Community engagement ideally produces buildings that meet the needs of all stakeholders while reflecting and respecting community values. It can also lead to sustainable and innovative designs.<sup>42</sup>

## PROFESSION

**Visibility** · Through community engagement, more people can become familiar with architecture.

**Recruitment pipeline** · Community engagement with groups that are underrepresented in architecture leads to many different communities seeing and understanding architects and learning about architecture as a profession. This exposure can lead to an increase in recruitment from a wider array of communities.

**Relevance** · Today's youth are engaged in their communities and politically passionate. When they witness architects engaging deeply with their local communities and placing equity at the forefront of their engagement work, architecture will be better positioned to attract a new generation into the field.<sup>43</sup>

**Capacity for change** · Instead of the traditional top-down model for solving social and environmental problems, such as affordable, safe, and healthy housing and efficient and sustainable buildings, community engagement helps formerly underrepresented people increase their agency by expanding their roles as decision-makers and designers of how their communities look and function. The profession can continue to work with developers, municipalities, and policy makers to promote substantial and equitable engagement.

**Responsibility** · Built environments have great capacity to help or harm society. Almost every form of institutional racism, sexism, ableism or other discrimination has some aspect that is enabled by architecture. Through the design of spaces and places, the profession sends messages about societal norms and practices. Every architect has the responsibility to be aware and then to change the story.

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“A lot of things I do pro bono actually have a lot of value not just within the community but also for the firm. I saw an article about media exposure that put a dollar amount on the value of social media. It made me wonder if we could quantify the value of what we do in the community too.”

Rising Firm Leader, First-Generation Mexican American, Male, 30s

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# We are successful in community engagement when...

## CONNECTION

the project process and result fully engage the intended users

there is mutual learning, growth, and respect between the architect and the community

architects listen to the visions of the community and use their expertise to give them shape

communities are fully invested in and take ownership of the process and project

past and present inequities are corrected by planning and designing future spaces and places

## TRUST

the architect and the community respect each other's knowledge

the architect is brought into the community for advice

there are project team members from the same culture as the community, and their cultural expertise is valued

architects act as listeners, as well as presenters and facilitators, during community events

## ALIGNMENT

the resulting project accommodates and is accessible and safe for all in the community

the architect genuinely understands the users' needs and wants and reflects them in the ultimate design

the community appreciates and maintains the resulting facilities

equity is a key factor in decision-making, leading to the best-use, best-value, and high-quality end product

## POWER

design teams seek out and listen to many voices in the community, especially those with less power and privilege

architects work to make their expertise and information meaningful and understandable

power, responsibility, and accountability are shared

architects are sensitive to and incorporate design elements and symbols offered by the community, not those solely based on their own interpretation, which may not be as fully informed

the power of space and place is used to challenge discrimination and promote equity in all forms

# Compliance

This section is intended to introduce you to legal information and ethical considerations related to mentorship and sponsorship and describes the mere minimum requirements. It is not a substitute for legal advice. For such advice, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney.

Projects in which community engagement is a critical factor may raise unique challenges for architects and other design professionals. Challenging areas include potential or perceived conflict of interest, high expectations of professionals who may be working for a low or no fee, and understanding that requirements for engagement can vary depending on the location, project type and client, and the type of engagement.

For example, a number of jurisdictions now expressly or implicitly require community engagement in design reviews.<sup>44</sup> In these instances, a lack of awareness of and failure to comply with federal, state, or local requirements for community involvement may have serious legal consequences. This lapse could lead to:

- A court or administrative challenge, potentially putting a project in jeopardy.
- A violation of an AIA Code of Ethics disciplinary rule stating that members “shall not, in the conduct of their professional practice, knowingly violate the law.”
- A violation of an AIA disciplinary rule stating that “members shall not counsel or assist a client in conduct that the architect knows, or should know, is fraudulent or illegal.”

Potential liability for professional negligence may raise special concerns in this context. The standard of care requires the architect to do what a reasonably competent architect would do in the same community and in the same time frame, given the same or similar facts and circumstances. Failure to meet this standard may result in civil liability. It is important to note that the standard of care continues to apply even if the architect is providing services pro bono or at a reduced fee.

Many states have laws protecting architects from liability in emergency-response situations. In those states, immunity covers architects working as volunteers for a certain amount of time after a disaster.<sup>45</sup>

In non-emergency situations, when acting not as an architect but as a volunteer doing non-architecture related activities, it is less likely that an architect would be held to the architect’s professional standard of care and more likely to the general “reasonable person” standard.

In community-based projects, architects sometimes take a relaxed view about memorializing the terms of their agreements in written contracts, a stance that almost invariably leads to problems. However, it is not uncommon for projects with highly engaged participants and/or public funding to evolve over extended periods with the potential for scope changes due to budget, changed circumstances, or program needs. In even the most informal settings, it is prudent to have a written contract that sets forth the scope of work, financial terms (even if services are provided at reduced rates or for free), limitations on liability, and other key terms of engagement. A contract may also help to clarify that the architect is not offering guarantees of success or assurances of specific social results beyond what is required by the standard of care. As in all projects, the architect is well advised to confirm that the appropriate insurance is in place and covers the services and activities involved in a community-based project.

Especially with a community organization or other groups that have not had extensive experience in working with design professionals, an architect may have particular challenges in managing client expectations. An AIA member may even face discipline under the Code of Ethics for “intentionally or recklessly” misleading an existing or prospective client about the results that can be achieved through the use of the member’s services. Moreover, even if done with the intent to respond to feedback from project stakeholders, a member may violate the Code of Ethics if found to have materially altered the scope of work without the client’s consent. Where this type of issue arises, a written contract can again prove to be invaluable.

In some cases, an architect may also be a community advocate as well as a member of a community organization that requires or requests design services. In these cases, the AIA Code of Ethics applies to prevent potential conflicts of interest.

- Architects who advocate for a community organization in their private capacity and are also paid for services by the organization may face special challenges. The AIA Code of Ethics requires that members making public statements on architectural issues must disclose when they are being compensated for making such statements or when they have an economic interest in the issues.
- When architects play multiple roles in a relationship with an organization, they must be particularly attentive to potential and perceived conflicts of interest. Under the AIA Code of Ethics, a member may not render professional services if the member's professional judgment could be affected by responsibilities to another project or person—or by one's own interests—unless all those who rely on the member's judgment give their consent after full disclosure.

# Assess

## SKILL

**Are you developing your competence to effectively engage the diverse communities you seek to serve?** · Are you able to bridge and build upon cultural commonalities and differences that could help engage communities and achieve your desired outcomes? · Does your firm have employees with these skills?

**What skills and behaviors do you need to successfully engage with a community?** · Does your firm provide the training and support employees need to connect with a variety of people and communities, particularly those who are traditionally underserved? · If not, how could your firm help improve employees' community-engagement skills?

**Do you understand well the social messages, past and present, that architects and architecture send to communities?** · Who in your firm has the communication skills to change the message? · Do you have the skills to alter the message in your own work? · Do you recognize who else is needed to change the story?

## QUALITY

**Does your firm have a culture of—and a strategy for—community engagement?** · Do your firm's leaders emphasize the importance of the community's involvement during design? · Do they encourage employees to volunteer outside of work?

**When working with the community during design, how do you ensure that you are hearing from a diverse range of community members?** · When and how often do you hold design-review meetings? How do you reach out and get feedback? · Who in the community participates in design decision-making? · Whose voices are missing and why?

**Are you an advocate for affordable housing, environmental quality, and sustainability policies?** · Have you or members of your firm attended public meetings on policies related to the built environment? · Do you seek to understand the points of view that traditionally underserved communities bring to the table?

## POWER

**Do you understand and advocate for the community's definition of justice?** · Have you found ways to integrate the community's ideas of "highest and best use" with that of funders or clients?

**When engaging with underserved communities, are you aware of the power dynamics?** · How do you establish stronger relationships with community members in light of these power dynamics? · How do you interact with your own team members in meetings with the public?

**How effective are you at showing the value of engaging community to developers, policy makers, and municipalities?**

## TRUST

**How do you help build mutual trust?** · What do trust, respect, listening, and engagement look like to the community you are working with? · Do you listen carefully to the ideas and concerns of community members? · If so, what are you learning? · How will you share what you have learned with the community? With your client?

**Can you build trust within your firm to support a strategy for engagement?** · What about with your clients? · What are the risks to the firm, or to the project, if the client does not wish to engage, the engagement does not go as planned, or something happens that you did not expect?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

Effective community engagement is systematic and strategic. The work of architecture professionals in their own communities, their participation in advocacy and public-interest-design organizations, and how they connect with the public and community groups all influence future relationships between communities, firms, and the profession. Therefore, it is essential for architects to work with communities and individuals as project collaborators, understand their needs and values, and prioritize equitable outcomes.

### ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS PARTNERS

Successful projects are built not only on an understanding of and solutions to the project requirements and constraints but also on personal relationships. Developing these relationships, even moreso with an outside community than in a diverse project team, requires thoughtful intention, sensitivity, and time.

- **Understand the unique communication styles of communities and their members.** The communities and individuals you engage with may have predominant or preferred communication styles that differ from yours. In some communities, silence may indicate assent, while in others it may mean people need more information. Vary your methods and experiment to see what works. Facilitate large-group, small-group, paired, and individual input and idea generation; create verbal and non-verbal exercises. Be willing to be vulnerable, admit aloud when you're not sure what you're experiencing, and ask how to understand what you're observing.
- **Demonstrate your curiosity, respect, and appreciation for the community by doing your homework.** Start your relationships with community members from an informed and receptive standpoint. Listen and learn more about the communities you are working with through research, interviews, informal conversations, and requests to local libraries and organizations for resources on their community history and culture. If your identity is different than the majority of the community, anticipate that your learning process may be long and at times challenging or uncomfortable.

- **Practice cultural or intercultural competence to understand and appreciate what communities need and value.** There may be many instances in which communities place greater importance on relationships rather than outcomes, and even if the outcome is "good for the community," they may not see it in that light given the lack of trust, historically or currently.
- **View community-group clients not as passive or as providers of input but as cocreators.** Listen to and take seriously their practical needs and their values when developing designs. Identify and listen to what is working well in their community, which institutions have been effective, and what has worked in the past. Share your knowledge and ask users and community members to share their expertise and experience in return.<sup>46</sup> This adjustment will lead to shared decision-making in design.<sup>47</sup>
- **Make your expertise intelligible.** Architects' communication styles, ways of representing design, and vocabulary can often be inaccessible to the public. Help the community understand your expertise and make it meaningful to them through clear language and visuals, such as the use of physical models rather than section drawings.

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"We have this one white guy on our team. He was really nervous, and when he gets nervous, he gets talkative. He was presenting to a group of sixty- to seventy-year-old Black elders. I'll be honest, I was scared for him. But he was honest, and he had good information. It was clear he was there for a purpose. And they trusted him."

Associate AIA, African American, Female, 32

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- **Admit mistakes and be humble.** Be vulnerable when you engage a community; learn from mistakes. Be willing to discuss difficult issues with community members.<sup>48</sup> Observe how apologies are made and adapt accordingly.
- **Be comfortable with conflict.** Many marginalized communities have histories of being excluded and have reason to distrust outside experts. Listen and believe their history and experience while forging a mutual way forward. Stay attuned to the impact of what you say, no matter what your intent, and make amends when necessary.
- **Build consensus.** As a design professional, you can help build consensus. Explain design options and share and elicit from the community the potential impacts of those design options.<sup>49</sup>

### UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY IDEAS, ASSETS, NEEDS, CONCERNS, AND VALUES

Community engagement in any form requires listening, understanding, expressing empathy, and seeking out as many varied community voices as possible to build trusting, mutually beneficial relationships.<sup>50</sup>

- **Have empathy.** See the world through the lenses of others.<sup>51</sup> Listen to what their needs and concerns are rather than what you think they would be based on your own personal experiences. Be the one to adjust your expectations and accommodate accordingly.
- **Be a listener.** Whether you are engaging the community as a local volunteer, an activist, or a designer, listen more and talk less.
- **Seek out and listen to diverse perspectives.** Approach the process with an open mind. Sometimes, the loudest voices are the only ones heard. Think about who is the assumed or purported community representative and whose voices are silent: who gets to speak at meetings, who is choosing to speak, and who hasn't spoken. Notice people from groups that are often marginalized, such as people of color or people in wheelchairs. If they haven't spoken, create ways to encourage them to express their thoughts.<sup>52</sup>
- **Do your research.** Learn about the community's needs and values: call, send postcards, visit social media forums, have a table at local events. Conduct surveys, interviews, and focus groups with community members and leaders.<sup>53</sup> Contact the local library, regional planning agency, university departments, or historical societies to learn community history. Use community-based participatory research methods to understand what the community believes is important. (See the Resources section of this guide for community engagement and planning tools.)

- **Include perspectives that are frequently overlooked.** For example, ADA requirements only partially improve the quality of life for people with disabilities; inviting their day-to-day experience to inform the design can enhance their lives and enrich the community as well. Similarly, a building, street, or neighborhood that a dominant group may define as "safe" may have characteristics that make it feel unsafe to another group, such as people of color, women, older people, or people with disabilities.
- **See the big picture.** Communities of color are more often subject to environmental injustice by the placement of infrastructure that creates noise, pollution, or toxins, like power lines, landfills, and highways, and by underinvestment in improvements like lead pipe replacement or new transit line stops. Projects of any size have the potential to call attention to inequity and actively remediate damage.

### PROMOTE AND PRIORITIZE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

Advocate for equity on your design projects. As much as possible, support community members and end users in building their own capacity for agency.

- **Link your project to the community economy if possible.** Look for opportunities for your project to advance community economic goals, take advantage of incentive programs, and/or create long-term economic opportunities.
- **Help communities build their own capabilities and agency.** Offer your project as an opportunity to help empower communities; help ensure that the same or greater level of agency, involvement, and leadership can be supported and generated on future projects.
- **Engage in codesign practices** that put the relationship between the designer and the user or community front and center for the benefit of the project. These practices include human-centered design, public interest design, equity-centered design and environmentally and socially sustainable design practices.
- **Understand the history** of the community. In some communities, there is an inherent distrust of architecture and urban-planning professionals due to histories of disenfranchisement, such as redlining and resident displacement. Knowing the history of the community will help shape how you engage.
- **Consider how others may perceive you and the profession,** such as through your identity and role, their experiences with previous architects, and community history.
- **Practice cultural appreciation;** avoid cultural appropriation and misappropriation. Cultural appropriation takes place when a member of a dominant cultural group adopts a custom, practice,

or idea of another's culture inappropriately or without acknowledgment. If you wish to incorporate design elements from a community's culture or history, work with the community to ensure that you are using them appropriately and meaningfully.

- **Stay in touch post-occupancy.** Learn about the outcomes of your project. Has it met the community's needs? Where is there room for improvement in the process and the design of future projects?

## BE AN ACTIVE COMMUNITY MEMBER OUTSIDE OF WORK

Community engagement does not end once you leave work. Many opportunities exist for architects to engage with local communities that not only help improve the visibility and reputation of the profession but also help improve their own architecture practice. Find ways to represent yourself as an architect in your community beyond your professional work, within the bounds of work-life harmony.

- **Volunteer in the community.** Join neighborhood boards, local advocacy groups, or other outside organizations to become more familiar with your community's people, characteristics, and concerns. Doing so will help build mutual respect and trust and improve how your community views architects and the profession. Be aware of how your volunteer work can inform and improve your project work while you also declare and resolve any potential or perceived conflicts of interest. (See the Compliance section of this guide.)
- **Volunteer for local architecture-related outreach organizations and activities,** such as mentoring K-12 students or joining a local competition that creates designs for the public.
- **Provide your professional expertise to local community organizations.** When possible, provide pro bono services for local work.<sup>54</sup> Remember that no- or low-fee work is held to the same professional standard of care as full-fee work. (See the Compliance section of this guide.)
- **Engage with civic leaders.** Seek an invitation to the table where civic decisions are made. You can become a trusted advisor on public issues, such as environmental sustainability and affordable housing, and demonstrate the value that architects can bring to their communities.<sup>55</sup> (See the Resources section for AIA guidance on this topic)
- **Take care of yourself.** Architects tend to be generous with their time and expertise; however, it is possible to burn out from extra work, especially if you are part of a group for whom the performance bar is set high or on whom there are extra demands for mentoring and identity-group meeting and

support. Take breaks to rest and recharge. Give yourself permission to have some space away from community outreach and activism. While it is important to say "yes" to opportunities to engage, learning to say "no" and "not now" supports your ability to remain active and engaged in the long run.

## FIRMS

Firms have the power to improve relationships with civic and nonprofit organizations and community groups and can make community engagement a part of their workplace culture.

## ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY AS A PROJECT PARTNER

Architects are most effective when they partner with the community. While the final responsibility and authority for design decisions rest with them, more informed decisions will likely lead to more equitable outcomes. Solutions to community concerns that begin to be incorporated during the early design stages are less likely to be seen as easily removable later in the process. Engaging with the community as a project partner means developing clear roles and scopes of responsibility, building trusting relationships, and engaging the community throughout the project. The architect may make the final decision on aspects of the project design, but the process of getting there calls for the valued input of the community.

- **Bring the local community into the design process.**<sup>56</sup> Make sure to have community members front and center, including a broad cross section of individuals as well as community-based programs, institutions, and businesses. Use a variety of facilitation techniques to elicit input and ideas from all participants.
- **Include people on the design team who genuinely understand a community's history and attitudes.** If it is possible to have one or more people on your team who are representative of the community you are serving, be sure to bring them in as active participants in the design process.
- **Turn to the community to name who belongs and who should be consulted.** Rather than having the architect dictate who belongs in the process, ask a variety of community members who should be involved. Once identified, engage with them directly to help design the engagement process and to explore their ideas.
- **Establish relationships before discussing project specifics.** When engaging with a community during design, it may be tempting to jump into specific design solutions and decisions before getting to know community members. The time investment at the beginning stages will bear fruit in later stages.

- **Increase community member input on a project.** Attend local events where you can connect with people. Work with community members to offer incentives for people to attend meetings or to engage in other ways. Improve meeting attendance by bringing food or providing trustworthy childcare at no cost. Try to find which people are not showing up to meetings, and ascertain the best way to engage with them. Consider holding events at different times and days to include people who may have work, families, or other responsibilities.
- **Build time into the project schedule.** As you convey to your client the value of community and user involvement in the end product, advocate for time in the schedule for connecting and reconnecting, even if it causes the project schedule to be compressed later on. The early investment of time will make the later stages smoother.
- **Consider engaging a moderator or facilitator who is trusted** or can gain the trust of all parties (communities, users, developers, architects, etc.). This may be an outside facilitator, a mutually respected leader, a member of a stakeholder group, or a subject-matter expert. The key is to either develop a process with the time needed for a moderator or facilitator to gain the trust of all parties or enlist someone who is trusted by all parties and can help bridge differences.
- **Make community engagement activities accessible** to people of diverse backgrounds, ages, abilities, and schedules.
- **Establish shared ground rules together.** Develop clearly articulated and agreed-upon ground rules for communication and decision-making during meetings and community events. Pay attention to and help enhance mutual respect, empathy, and trust in keeping with the cultural norms of the community.
- **Listen before designing.** Most codesign processes involve end users in hands-on design work early on. Learn from the community prior to developing and presenting a design. Ask community members how to make the project better.
- **Conduct post-occupancy evaluations.** Community engagement does not end after a project is completed. Conduct post-occupancy evaluations to ensure user needs have been met and to evaluate the degree to which equitable design goals have been achieved.<sup>57</sup>
- **Know the needs of the community or public organization.** Just as with individual architects, firms that understand the priorities of a local community or public organization with which they will be interacting regularly will be well positioned for success.<sup>58</sup>
- **Educate clients about the value of community engagement,** demonstrating that it will not necessarily slow down or compromise the project. Teach clients why community input can improve design and may result in an overall faster or more effective project path in the end. While community engagement takes time and energy, the input may influence the design and/or inform the stakeholders in ways that prevent costly changes, negative press, protests, or lawsuits as a result of a design outcome that is not broadly supported. The participation of extant communities is particularly important in the context of gentrification. Valuing their perspectives and ideas in the process helps gain support among remaining members of the community.
- **Expose community members to what architects do.** Take part in or promote community events and outreach opportunities that make architects and architecture visible in the community.
- **Engage with contractors, vendors, and local businesses led by target identity groups.** This will help to build trust in the community as well as support diversity in the building industry. If a supplier is not from a local community or is led by someone from an agent identity group working with a client from a target identity group, make sure that the supplier's workers demonstrate intercultural competence to build a positive relationship with the client; guide suppliers on how they can work well with the community.

### IMPROVE COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Firms can improve community relationships through partnerships and other forms of engagement with community groups, public organizations, and nonprofits.

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“When I was an up-and-comer, I knew I was sent to interviews because I was a woman. Some clients said, ‘We want to see your EEOC policies.’ The partners were surprised. Now our clients are asking harder questions earlier, especially the nonprofits, academic, health, state-institution clients—the more public ones that get more scrutiny.”

CEO and Owner, White, Female, 59

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- **Learn the workings and organizational culture of a nonprofit or civic-partner organization.** Be flexible and seek to adapt if they have business models, practices, and norms that are different from what you are used to.<sup>59</sup>
- **Be philanthropic.** Providing gifts, such as funding for a specific community need, benefits not only your community but also your own sense of purpose and your employees' respect for the firm.<sup>60</sup> Your philanthropy can be tangible evidence of your values.

### MAKE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT A PART OF YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE AND STRATEGIC PLAN

For community engagement to be a priority in the workplace, it has to be central in your workplace culture. Taking up the cause of social responsibility will help affirm to your employees that their engagement and connection to the public and working on public concerns matters.

- **Advocate for equity.** Pay attention to the social, economic, political, and environmental impacts of your projects.<sup>61</sup> Promote public-interest-design values through public events and communication tools, such as social media. Advance equitable design solutions to problems in the built and natural environments.
- **Make time for community engagement, including some level of paid time if at all possible.** Be willing to invest in community-engagement activities and to incorporate community engagement into your design practices, including supporting employees through paid time for activities that benefit the community and that increase recognition of the value the firm places on community engagement.<sup>62</sup>
- **Value community engagement at the leadership level.** Staff members need to see firm leaders making community engagement a priority in the workplace and in projects. Have a public calendar in the office with a listing of community events and opportunities.
- **Value and promote community engagement among staff.** Staff involved in their communities may wish to keep that engagement separate from the workplace—especially people of color and mothers, who may be concerned about bias in the perception of how their time is spent. Studies have shown that minority executives' social experiences outside the office are richer than those of their white counterparts: they are two to three times more likely to be involved with social outreach, community programs, or care responsibilities but are less likely to let employers know because they anticipate bias.<sup>63</sup> When employees know that their community engagement is valued in the workplace and are willing to communicate their involvement to others, there is potential intellectual and social capital gain for the firm. If staff members have connections in a community where the firm's project is located, their knowledge can be particularly

valuable and may result in relevant project team assignments. Encourage your staff to engage with the community, and make it clear that they are welcome to bring that part of their lives to the office if they want.

- **Understand the role of geography.** Firms that seek opportunities for engagement in geographic areas where they do not have a home base can seek local partners or find ways to connect without face-to-face meetings.
- **Be aware of evolving equity metrics** in programs promoting a range of resilient design strategies.<sup>64</sup> Increasingly, metrics are directly and indirectly linking equity with sustainability. Architects play a role in helping drive these standards and promoting their underlying values to clients and communities.
- **Do pro bono work.** If you have the means, conduct pro bono work in a community that has limited funding. Become a part of a network of engaged practitioners through organizations like the AIA and Public Architecture. (See the Resources section of this guide.)
- **Seek funding for community projects.**<sup>65</sup> Finding the funds to enable pro bono projects can be challenging. However, funding may be available through federal- and state-government programs, community foundations, local nonprofit organizations, and private contributions.

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“Community engagement is about going to the community, and with different faces. It’s making sure that the communities understand what architects do and that they’re accessible to them. And not just have a diverse group of people presenting in front of those communities, but do so way before gentrification happens, way before we’re actively doing projects, so that there is a familiarity with our profession. That’s really important.”

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Immigrant from Iran (Iranian American), 47

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**PROFESSION**

Professional organizations can facilitate, foster, and expand dialogue around equity and community. Promoting authentic discussions means having discussions that may not always be comfortable but, when framed with clear intentions, will advance the profession's positive impact on society.

- **Educate about public-interest work.** Teach architecture students effective methodologies for engagement. Celebrate the innovations that have made it possible for firms to do the work. Promote and support internships and fellowship opportunities for students that connect architects with nonprofit organizations. Publicly recognize practitioners and projects that prioritize community engagement and equity.<sup>66</sup>
- **Host active discussions about civic policies that support local communities.** Professional organizations can nurture thoughtful discussions about policies that affect built environments and the community.
- **Foster synergies.** Support dialogue exploring connections between established sustainable design goals and emerging goals of equity, resilience, and environmental justice.<sup>67</sup>
- **Acknowledge** the negative role architects and architecture have played—and continue to play—in perpetuating inequality in our neighborhoods and communities. Commit to change.
- **Promote the role and power of design in improving community health, well-being, and prosperity.** Advocate for design excellence while making the case for equitable access to resources, such as housing, transit, green spaces, healthcare, and financing.
- **Speak out on issues related to justice and equity** and take concrete actions that will not only improve equity within the profession, but also equity and justice in the world at large.

# Consider

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

I consider the concept of authenticity as part of the art of communication. In architecture school, I remember listening to my professors pontificate in archi-speak—the arcane and obscure words that are used to wield power over “regular folks” by imposing monologue where public discourse requires dialogue—which reinforces our perceived status as “experts” at the expense of alienating the masses. I come from the masses of regular folks who take pride in plain talk and see truth as power. Early in my career, I would attend public meetings about important community issues and translate the archi-speak of the experts into plain talk for my neighbors. Often, after these meetings, regular folks would huddle around me to ask questions that they were too uncomfortable to ask publicly—either due to the language barrier erected by the experts and/or because they were inherently suspicious of the answers.

When I engage with a community as a design professional, I make a conscious attempt to use as little archi-speak as possible in favor of plain talk that promotes empowerment through comprehension and promotes dialogue over monologue. I am able to effectively communicate with many different people in the way they speak in their own homes and deploy language in service of expanding conversations. Maintaining a multicultural, multilingual staff is a core value of our firm. To further deepen understanding, I employ artists and engage in visual communication whenever possible—



preferring diagramming, collage, and physical study models over more abstract architectural-representation techniques (e.g., plans, sections, elevations). In my experience, regular folks feel more comfortable and respond most enthusiastically when information is presented in this way.

I always begin my work from the premise that community stakeholders are the ultimate experts on their own lived experiences, hopes, dreams, and aspirations. It is my task as a design professional to formulate and ask specific questions that will ignite the conversations that lead toward a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities around which a successful design solution can be crafted.

— Managing Partner and Firm Owner, Black, Male, 46

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DISCUSS:

- How might the idea of community stakeholders as the experts challenge the traditional definition of the architect as the expert? What response does this idea evoke in you?
- What communication challenges have you encountered when participating in community-engagement activities? What visual communication tools have you found to be successful?
- How do this person's communication skills benefit his practice? What types of communication skills would you like to improve to better engage users and other project stakeholders?
- What questions could you ask that would ignite these kinds of open conversations?
- How might architecture faculty better address the divide between archi-speak and plain talk?

# Consider

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITY AGENCY

In my city, there are a lot of areas that are in bad shape—blighted areas. But what we've been able to do is actually help the community organize itself by giving them the information that we know about how to organize. Together, we came up with a guidebook that went to the organizations within the communities. They use it on their own to get funding for projects that they feel are important. We help identify opportunities. We're listening, and we're doing what we do anyway—getting people together to collaborate. After that, they can identify people they trust to come into the community, instead of us just imposing on them. The neighborhoods have a history of being taken advantage of; that's where the distrust comes from. So we're just being agents to help them be in control. It has had mixed results—sometimes there are too many organizations to move forward—but we've also had a lot of success.

— Associate AIA, African American, Female, 32

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### DISCUSS:

- What type of community engagement is this person describing? How might this form of engagement build stronger relationships with community members? How do you think this form of engagement empowers communities?
- In what ways may the building industry have participated in “taking advantage” of communities? What can an architecture firm do to counterbalance this history? How can you generate trust between yourself, your firm, and such communities?
- This person described her strategy as having had mixed results. Why would the involvement of too many organizations complicate the process for a firm? What would success look like?
- How comfortable do you think architects generally would be with the role of helping communities organize themselves, which falls outside of the traditional definition of practice? What might be done to help architects broaden their capacity for community agency?

# Consider


## **DETERMINING THE NEEDS OF USERS WITH DISABILITIES**

When doing a project with the general community, like a new community library, it's important to reach out to organizations or individuals that represent people with disabilities and ask them: What would you like to see? What are the barriers you face with your experience with libraries, and what are good things you've seen? What is on your wish list? You'll learn a lot of things from the users. You may find out what really matters to them is independence. Or you might find what they care about is efficiency. "I don't want to wander around everywhere for a type of book. Is there an accessible directory?" You'll find that most of the time people don't have extravagant wishes—you might find things that may not always be obvious to the general public but are obvious to people with disabilities. You might find that the disabilities you are looking to accommodate could include mobility, visibility, hearing loss, mental health. Often, laws focus on mobility, and (as someone who is mobility challenged) that's an important part of this community, but if you ask people, you learn a lot. Public engagement happens a lot with community buildings, but I don't always know if they engage with the disability community. The other thing you do is hire specialized consultants to engage with the disability community.

— Principal, Firm Owner, White, Female, Baby Boomer, Wheelchair User

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DISCUSS:

- What types of accommodations do you consider when working on a project's design?
  - How often do you consult people with disabilities and their organizations on your projects? What have you learned? How has this knowledge changed your designs?
  - Have you used the methods described? Have they revealed something to you that was obvious to a building user but not previously recognized by the designers?
  - Are there times when you have hired a consultant to engage with a specific community or type of user? Was it effective? Did you learn enough to engage that type of user on your own in the future or would you continue to use a consultant?
- 

# Consider

## OUT OF OFFICE ACTIVITIES

There is a woman in our Detroit office who coaches inner-city kids at hockey in the wintertime and soccer in the summertime. In the neighborhoods where she coaches, they absolutely trust her. And she doesn't think anything of it because she was an athlete. That's what she does. The goodwill engendered there—it's spectacular to watch. It's really, really cool. So while it's the lofty things that are important, I think everybody can do something. It doesn't have to be a big thing.

— Vice President/Business Development, White/Hispanic, 69

I've been engaged with our community in a lot of volunteer work: I was on an AIA board, ACE, and taking on leadership positions in community impact at my firm. I was doing all these things in my free time. But as you progress in your career, you start feeling the weight—you have more energy when you're starting out. After about five years you start to slow down, or you amp up more on your project work. There was a while then when I felt I was having a hard time managing all the things I was involved with. It was all fun, but not all part of my job description. One day, I made a list of all my commitments and how much time they were taking. I went to my studio director and said, "I've had a great time at this firm, I love what I'm doing, but I'm struggling to do it all. I wonder if I could have some time to build some of these community efforts, because community impact is what we believe in, and it gets our name out. Could I have a few hours?" They were receptive, seeing

that list of all the things I was doing and the time I was spending outside of my regular forty hours. So they let me bill a maximum of four hours a week to these initiatives.

— Rising Firm Leader, First Generation Mexican-American, Male, 30s

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DISCUSS:

- What are some of the ways that you could help support your community? How would these activities improve relationships between architects and local community organizations and individuals? Have you considered offering one or two days a year, or more, for volunteer work?
- In your firm, how acceptable is it to know about an employee's out-of-office activities? Would you prefer to have your out-of-office activities be private? Why or why not?
- When is it acceptable to use an employee's relationships outside of work to enhance a firm's network, and when is it not?
- The second speaker describes taking on a significant amount of community work within and outside of their firm. How do these forms of community engagement help the firm? How could you demonstrate the value of doing individual community work for your own firm? What are some things that firms can do to promote employees to engage in their communities?
- What are some ways to avoid burnout in yourself or your employees?
- How can firms ensure that community engagement is not the responsibility of just one person? What are ways that firms could get leaders and employees to share in these types of responsibilities and activities? How do you accommodate employees' differing duties outside of work, and their differing degrees of interest in civic engagement?



# Consider

## LISTENING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

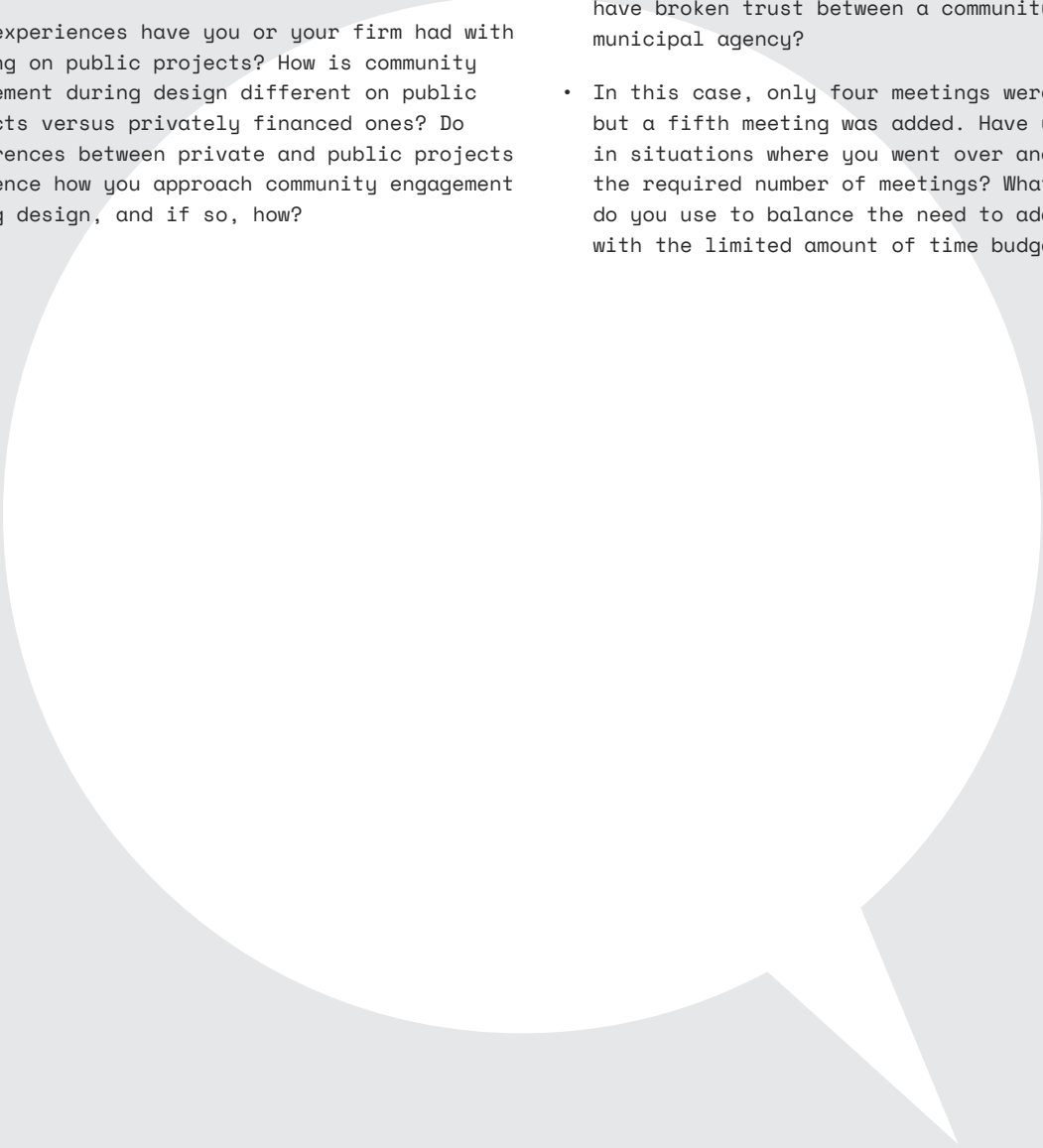
The city had hired a firm and had to let them go, so the project went on hold as a result. They had already torn down the old building, so the community was upset. When we were brought on board, the community had some distrust with the city government. And since they didn't know us, we had to earn their trust. We were required to hold three or four community-engagement sessions. The community came with some suspicion. We had a listening session, and boy, they had a lot to say.

We came back after a few weeks with some initial designs, and I thought for sure there would be some healthy back-and-forth about the design. We presented, and the reaction was to complain about what the city had done previously. They were still focused on the fact that they didn't have a building for their community. We came back for a third meeting, with some advanced designs, and, again, the significant part of the conversation was about how the city had done the community wrong. It took me a while to realize that the community simply needed to vent, to get it out of their system. By the fourth meeting, they started to see that we were representing their interests. It was pointed out to me that we architects need to know what the community is looking for. We even added a fifth meeting, so they could interact with us. That was a critical moment, when you could feel the trust building between us and the community. As a result, the project turned out to be that much better because of the community's input.

— Architect/Designer, African American, Male, 50s

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DISCUSS:

- How was this person able to build a relationship with the community? What time and resources were needed to build this trust? In this story, how did listening play a role in building trust? How do you balance the time it takes to listen to venting and the need to get decisions made to move the design forward? Are there times where going slow to go fast works?
  - What experiences have you or your firm had with working on public projects? How is community engagement during design different on public projects versus privately financed ones? Do differences between private and public projects influence how you approach community engagement during design, and if so, how?
  - In this story, how did the history of the community with public planning and past architects skew the community's expectations about the building process? How much are architects responsible for solving problems created many years ago, and what can they do to solve these problems? How can designers be effective in situations in which past events have broken trust between a community and a municipal agency?
  - In this case, only four meetings were required but a fifth meeting was added. Have you been in situations where you went over and above the required number of meetings? What criteria do you use to balance the need to add meetings with the limited amount of time budgeted?
- 

# Consider

## MEANINGFUL WORK

I think our firm does different work. I wasn't going to be an architect after finishing undergrad. I got a job doing marketing at an engineering firm, doing graphic design type stuff, and wasn't inspired by any of the work they were doing. I got really depressed doing that, and I didn't know what else to do, so I went to grad school. The only place I applied was the firm I'm at now, because they don't focus on building one big pretty building. They do a lot of neighborhood work, focused on people, a lot of urban design. It's about making space for people. So that work, the work that we do most of the time, what I get out of it, is I feel like I contribute to my community. I get to work with and for people that need something, and I provide something. There are other projects that are just projects on the side, they help pay the bills. I get to do stuff that matters to my community. I get to drive down the street and say, "We did that," just buildings in the neighborhood.

— Architect, White, Female, Lesbian, Early 30s

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### DISCUSS:

- What types of community projects inspire you and help you feel fulfilled at work?
- What types of community projects does your firm take on?
- Who are the people in your firm who advocate for inclusion and community engagement?
- In what ways do you see the profession "making space for people," as the speaker puts it, differently than in the past? Do you see a change in how students and emerging professionals view their work and what they want to focus on?

# Consider

## ENGAGEMENT LEADS TO NEW IDEAS

In my experience, community engagement, which in the 1960s was a radical idea, always makes a project better, mostly because the community takes ownership in the process of planning and design. A lot of what I try to do for communities and clients is to share what an architect does, how we come to our decisions, our process, and all the things that we don't generally share. We tend to share the outcomes, the presentation drawings, but not the process. When we demystify what we do, it adds to our value as architects and brings understanding to our process. With a collaborative process, when someone has a suggestion or question, we can say, "We've taken a look at that." I still draw on buff and have stacks of trace paper that is a record of my steps—I keep it as evidence to show my work.

We did a community-care skilled-nursing facility. We got them to really think about their identity. They thought they knew what their shared identity was, but they had never written anything down, and it turned out they weren't all in agreement. We helped them and their stakeholders figure it out.

The neighborhood around the site we wanted was reluctant to have any development as it was going to bring more traffic, and they were worried about parking. I was meeting with the client and stakeholders very regularly, and one person brought up an idea for intergenerational childcare to make the project a dual-use program. We got excited about it and proposed it to the neighborhood, and they really thought it met a need. Also, more people

saw themselves in the project now: they had grandparents or wanted their kids to have a grandparent figure in their lives.

— Community Architect, African American, Baby Boomer

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DISCUSS:

- How did this speaker foster community ownership for the decisions about site and program? Does it change the architect's role when the community/client comes up with a new program idea?
- What does "sharing the process" mean to you? What do you think of the idea of sharing the process? What are some steps you might take to do so? What parts of the process would you be reluctant or unlikely to share?
- How does the speaker document the process over time, and what is the value of this documentation? What ideas do you have for keeping track of ideas and goals that emerge from community engagement?
- What are some ways to help new ideas emerge that were not considered before, like intergenerational childcare?
- What additional advice would you offer based on your own experience with community engagement?

# Consider

## USING ENGAGEMENT TO REVEAL COMMUNITY NEEDS

We were engaged to renovate what was originally built as a temporary undergraduate dorm, to make it into a permanent dormitory for one of the graduate schools. We were asked to facelift the dorm and make the suites look like market-rate apartments, to be more attractive to graduate students. We did an initial concept study, in line with the initial budget the school had imagined. Meanwhile, the school said, “We need a couple more seminar rooms, maybe a media lab. And we probably need a facelift in the student lounge.” In schematic design we said, “We need to do a deep dive on program to be sure we’re providing you with everything you want: this is the first addition to the school’s campus in a hundred years, and we should be thinking about what your needs are in the next twenty-five to fifty years.”

We interviewed alumni, students, faculty, administration, and staff of the school. Out of those interviews, we found the school needed many more teaching spaces than they thought, and that the type of space they needed had to change because class sizes had grown, and that they could no longer accommodate some classes in the school’s original building. So we said, “Yes, the classrooms are necessary, but unless the school’s center of gravity shifts to include this building in the life of the school, no one is going to want to go to these fantastic new classrooms because this building will always feel like an annex.” And so we also started looking at the cultural integration of the new building. Even more programming came out, that had to do with the



health and well-being of the students—mental, spiritual, physical needs—a place where they could let loose in a high-pressure academic environment. All of this led to an increase in scope and budget. The argument was that if we don't make this new building an integral part of the school, the millions of dollars spent on the dorm facelift would be thrown away.

Engaging all of the community members and really taking a deep dive into the experiences that were most important to them gave us insights we wouldn't have had otherwise. The fondest memory of many alumni was being able to walk to class in socks, because the original building had included dorm rooms along with the academic spaces. If we hadn't done that exploration with them, we wouldn't have known those fundamental cultural and relationship elements, and we wouldn't have been able to create a balance in programming that would shift the center of gravity for the school. And because we did all of this with the leadership group of the school, they got it—and they came up with the byline for the project: “Two buildings, one school.”

Communities aren't just physical neighborhoods, they also include the lived experience of those who come together in that place. In defining a community, it's not only a zip code or street boundaries or the university, it's the common experience among this group of users that relates them as a community. Our approach of really diving into the users' experiences in the built environment tells us the information we need to create places that help them do what they do, better.

That's why the definition of community is so important. We sometimes don't pay enough attention to what our words mean. If we break it down, it's a “common unity,” it's some unifying force that brings them together in

experience. That's the fuel that we as facilitators of the built environment can use to make environments that are more meaningful. It's not just that they function well and keep people safe, or that they're beautiful, but that they're meaningful to the users. That level of meaning that we help them infuse into their place then empowers them in their place because they know the story of its making. They know why there are thirty-person classrooms, or why the materials are stretched from floor to ceiling, or why there are patterns of birds and fish in the pavement, because that's an interpretation of their aspirations in built form. So they relate to it. It's their story told in concrete, literally and figuratively.

— Community Member, Facilitator, Firm Principal, Teacher, Female, 50s

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DISCUSS:

- How did the architects change the nature and scope of the program? How did culture become part of the program? Should cultural considerations be part of any project?
- How did the architects influence the client? How might you apply this experience in instances when the budget, schedule, or scope of work isn't flexible?
- What do you think was effective about questioning the original scope of the project? Were there risks involved in questioning it? Would there have been risks if the architect had not questioned it?
- How was community defined by the client? By the speaker? How do you define community?

# Resources

## COMMUNITY-FOCUSED DESIGN PRACTICES

**Wisdom from the Field: Public Interest Architecture in Practice – Roberta M. Feldman, Sergio Palleroni, David Perkes, and Bryan Bell (2013)**

<https://designcorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/PUBLIC-INTEREST-PRACTICES-IN-ARCHITECTURE.pdf>

Overview of the state of public interest design in architecture, including benefits of public interest design, its interaction with communities, different ways firms are incorporating public interest design into their business practices, effective strategies, and suggestions to support and grow public interest design in architecture.

## ARCHITECTURE AND OUTREACH

**Centers for Communities by Design - AIA**

<https://www.aia.org/pages/2891-center-for-communities-by-design>

This AIA Center assembles design assistance teams to partner with local communities in solving planning and design issues.

**Housing as Intervention – Karen Kubey (2018)**

Series of articles and essays on how architects are meeting the global challenges of the housing crisis. The essays explain how housing projects and design can act as interventions to improve equity around the world.

**Open-Architecture Collaborative**

<http://openarchcollab.org/>

U.S. nonprofit organization with multiple national and global chapters that develops educational programs for architects to become change makers and leaders “while simultaneously producing place-making programs with community developers and associations to inspire ownership and civic engagement in traditionally marginalized communities.”

**Public Architecture**

<https://www.publicarchitecture.org/#p2>

Public Architecture connects nonprofits with pro bono design services and advocates for socially meaningful design. The firm is a leader in the “pro bono design movement by asking design firms to formalize their commitment to give back professionally.”

## DATABASES

Visual representations of data related to race, geography and social indicators of health.

→ **National Equity Atlas**

<https://nationalequityatlas.org>

→ **The Racial Dot Map – Demographics Research Group**

<https://demographics.coopercenter.org/racial-dot-map>

→ **Quick Maps of Heart Disease, Stroke, and Socioeconomic Conditions – CDC**

<https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/maps/quick-maps/index.htm>

## GUIDES AND TOOL KITS

**21st Century Development (21CD) – AIA Minnesota/ Center for Sustainable Building Research**

<https://www.21stcenturydevelopment.org/>

Framework for neighborhood development that uses building-performance areas related to sustainability and equity. This framework was designed for the purpose of creating resilient, regenerative communities that are healthy for people and the environment.

**Citizen Architect Handbook - AIA**

<https://www.aia.org/resources/194196-citizen-architect-handbook>

Offers strategies for civic engagement at local, state, and national levels.

**Community Engagement Toolkit – Futurewise, Interim CDA, OneAmerica, El Centro de la Raza (2014)**

<http://www.futurewise.org/assets/reports/CET.pdf>

Guidance and resources for engaging community in government planning. Includes tools to inform and consult with the community, promote community collaboration, and empower community members.

**Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement – Community Places (2014)**

<https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf>

A guide for planning community engagement. Includes methods and techniques for engagement and assesses their strengths and weaknesses.

**A Model for Getting Started: How Do We Begin Taking Action in the Community? – Community Tool Box, University of Kansas**

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/get-started>

General model for getting involved in your community, with links to resources for every step: Assess, Plan, Act, Evaluate, and Sustain.

**Create a Plan for Your Community – 11th Street Bridge Park**

<https://vimeo.com/346942267>

Video highlighting the seven-step process used on the 11th Street Bridge Park's Equitable Development Plan project. Also see *Our Community. Our Process. Our Plan*, <https://vimeo.com/334716089>, for more about the experiences of those who worked on the project.

**EngageforEquity.org**

This website provides a framework and tools for conducting community-based participatory research (CBPR). The CBPR Conceptual Model has four domains that guide engaged research: context, partnership processes, interventions and research, and range of outcomes. This model can be adapted to multiple different community-engagement contexts, including architecture.

**Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity – Government Alliance on Race and Equity**

<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GARE-Equitable-Development.pdf>

Report detailing the framework for equitable development. Has examples of equitable-development projects in multiple locations in the United States.

**The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design – IDEO (2015)**

<https://www.designkit.org/resources/1>

Guide to a process for human-centered design to allow deep engagement with the community being designed for. Process is structured into three phases: inspiration, ideation, and implementation, with a variety of strategies and tools for each phase.

**Getting Beyond Green: A Baseline of Equity Approaches in Sustainable Building Standards – NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice Program (2019)**

Overview and assessment of green building programs and their equity approaches. Provides recommendations on how to center equity issues in green building programs.

**A Guide to Engaging with Civic Leaders – AIA**

Tool guide on how architects can engage with civic leaders to address local issues and develop better community partnerships with architecture professionals.

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# Measuring Progress

## KEY TOPICS

agent identity  
assessment  
awards  
baseline  
benchmarks  
causation  
correlation  
data  
demographics  
EDI  
exit interviews  
goals  
hypotheses  
Ladder of Competence  
metrics  
net promoter score (NPS)  
pipeline  
qualitative measurement  
quantitative measurement  
return on investment (ROI)  
surveys  
workplace climate

SECOND EDITION

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It is said that if you can measure it, you can manage it. To advance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), set goals, build strategies, and measure progress from a baseline. Keep in mind that not everything of value can be quantified.

This guide outlines ways of determining what issues underlie the use of metrics and how to measure progress toward the resulting goals.



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The University of Washington for the American  
Institute of Architects Equity and the Future of  
Architecture Committee

# What is measuring progress about?

To truly advance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) requires being able to evaluate progress resulting from the strategies an individual, a firm, or the profession has chosen. These strategies have been discussed in previous guides and may include EDI programs and training, mentorship and sponsorship, workplace culture and flexibility initiatives, recruitment and retention practices, equity in compensation, and community-engagement methods.

Gathering and analyzing data—qualitative and quantitative—is a crucial first step, followed by identifying areas of focus, setting goals, designing strategies, and measuring changes. Metrics can help inform the development of initiatives and establish baselines; subsequent, regular measurement can help track the impact of those initiatives over time to allow progress to be acknowledged, programs and activities modified, and new goals set.<sup>1</sup> Remember that process or quality goals can be equally measurable as outcomes.

Basic demographic measures related to diversity in recruitment and retention are a starting point. (See the Resources section of this guide.) Nonetheless, demographic metrics should not take the place of more extensive and meaningful information that can be more difficult to measure but that provides greater insight into the degree to which employees are experiencing equity and inclusion. What is examined will vary by firm, depending on the desired goals, but these goals could include:

- increased commitment of leaders to equitable practices
- improved climate and culture
- increased evidence that employees feel that their workplace is equitable and inclusive
- greater job satisfaction

- improved employee engagement, well-being, and sense of belonging
- increased retention
- more favorable exit interviews
- fewer grievances (due to improvement in climate, not suppression)
- elimination of occurrences of overt discrimination
- less evidence of unconscious bias
- eliminated patterns of interpersonal aggression and subtle acts of exclusion or microaggressions
- decrease in pay disparities
- improvement in diverse hiring, promotion, and retention at every level of the organization
- more diverse clients and consultants
- more contracts awarded to women- and minority-owned businesses<sup>2</sup>

Starting from a baseline and committing to progress will help increase employee engagement and psychological safety, raise transparency, and improve accountability in the workplace and support retention in the profession. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.) These improvements are also likely to have an impact on firm reputation, productivity, growth, and profit, and ultimately help the profession and the wider community through, for example, deeper engagement with communities and the use of consultants from diverse backgrounds.

Metrics are most effective when they have the full commitment of workplace leaders, are discussed transparently, and are updated and refined over time. For firms that truly integrate equitable practices into their business model, self-reflection and equity metrics will be as commonly discussed as the firm's financial results, design awards, or sustainability efforts.

Indicators of progress can be quantitative (e.g., how many...? what rating?) or qualitative (e.g., why do people leave?). Quantitative and qualitative data answer different types of questions but have complementary benefits. Quantitative measures, when standardized and tracked consistently over time, can indicate progress or

allow comparison with benchmarks and profession-wide data. Qualitative data, with their richer responses about perceptions and stories of experiences, provide context for the quantitative data and contribute hypotheses and ideas for action. Both kinds of data can be explored using a variety of methods, including regular climate surveys, focus groups, and exit interviews (when they are structured to yield honest feedback); payroll, work-hour, vacation, and turnover statistics; client surveys; direct observation; and formal or informal conversations. Firms most often rely on informal methods to explore human-resource issues. However, those who conduct more extensive and formal research may be less inclined to misinterpret or dismiss either qualitative or quantitative findings.

When identifying areas to improve, determining what strategies to employ, and assessing whether these strategies are effective, it is important to recognize several things. First, neither quantitative nor qualitative data are objective. The questions we ask, how we ask them and of whom, and how we interpret results are all subject to bias and preconceptions. Including people with a variety of perspectives and experiences into every phase helps address this tendency.

Second, our dominant cultural pattern is to trust things that can be measured quantitatively, or even qualitatively, over things that are more difficult to measure, such as the quality of relationships, the process (rather than the product), feelings, how conflict is resolved, and power sharing in decision-making.<sup>3</sup>

Third, there is a difference between causation and correlation. Causation indicates that one change directly and conclusively causes something else to occur. Correlation indicates that there is a relationship between two variables but does not suggest that one definitively causes the other. Causation is, therefore, more difficult to determine. For example, gathering information on employee experiences and perceived impacts of one recently implemented program to improve equity can help determine whether that program may have directly led to, i.e., caused, an improved equitable atmosphere. By contrast, implementing six different strategies for recruiting and noting that your demographic numbers change may indicate a relationship (i.e., correlation) between the strategies and the result, but it will not be possible to know which, if any, of the strategies made the difference. In either case, it is also necessary to take a broader look at what else was happening at the same time—perhaps a new project manager is assigning tasks more equitably, or the general office atmosphere has improved because of a new project—before absolutely assuming either causation or correlation.

Existing assessment instruments can provide detailed data and insight into discrete goal areas. For example, one of the most robust measures of the development of intercultural competence is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI, as discussed in the *Intercultural Competence* guide), which can be useful for individuals, teams, or organizations. (See the Resources section of this guide.) Some local and state AIA components have used IDI-based training for intercultural leadership specific to architecture.<sup>4</sup>

In the United States, the architecture profession currently has a number of sources of profession-specific data, including the biennial AIA Firm Survey, the AIA Compensation Survey, and the Equity in Architecture Survey conducted by Equity by Design (EQxD), the 2015 AIA Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey, and NCARB by the Numbers. (See the Resources section of this guide.) These data sources can offer ideas for lines of questioning and provide context and benchmarks for evaluating one's own firm and individual situation. The surveys contain various kinds of demographic information about people of color and women in architecture, as well as their self-reported attitudes, perceptions, and experiences in the profession. The AIA Firm Survey offers demographic data, including firm sizes, sectors, and market trends; the AIA Compensation Survey offers data on workplace culture through benefit-related questions; the AIA Diversity survey focuses on perceptions of support and opportunity; and EQxD complements these efforts with deep dives into career pinch points, work-life conflicts, gender, sexuality, and race.

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“There’s no short-term fix for a problem that has existed for many years. If there’s that long-term commitment, and it’s been measured, then you can see that progress. It helps everybody stay committed to being able to arrive at that ultimate goal.”

Senior Architect/Project Manager, African American, Male, 49

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Again, demographic data is only a starting point and may not lead to what is most important for your goals. Diving into the more difficult areas to measure will yield more information and insights and invite you to reexamine assumptions and adopt more far-reaching strategies for change.

The AIA Center for Practice is coordinating the effort to generate reliable benchmarks for firm success and display progress toward larger goals across several firm metrics related to clients, the community, the profession, and workplace culture. For example, the AIA's 2030 Commitment has helped rally firms around energy reduction. The accompanying tool, the Design Data Exchange, provides a method for tracking progress both at the firm level and in overall program evaluation.

One potential model for embedding equity into cross-organization benchmarking is the COTE Top Ten framework adopted in 2019 by the AIA Board of Directors as the AIA Design Excellence Framework. The Top Ten criteria include community measures that could be defined more specifically in relation to equity, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Critical to the success of such programs is the collection of diverse responses and the disaggregation and analysis of that data. New tools and existing ones, like the AIA Small Firm Exchange (SFx) Business Models for Small Architecture Firms dashboard and the AIA Salary Calculator, also have the potential to be used to advance equity goals if additional, equity-related questions are asked. In addition, the AIA's partnership with Women's Leadership Edge (WLE) led to a 2019 survey that enables a comparison of architecture with other professional fields.

Ratings and awards programs can also provide incentives for sharing information. Programs that promote energy performance in buildings, including LEED and the Living Building Challenge, are used as models for creating equity metrics, such as JUST. Some AIA components require reporting on energy goals for honor-award entries, which allows for tracking at the regional level; similarly, programs and award entries could call for reporting on equity goals.

Most importantly, not everything of value can be quantified, and data-based decisions should take into account crucial information that may not exist in numerical form. It can be tempting to allocate resources toward gathering information that can be measured and/or documented or to overly value those results. The realization that important information comes in a variety of forms may lead to more diverse investments of time and effort.



# Why is measuring important?

Measuring the current state of EDI, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is essential to leading change, regardless of the current baseline levels of awareness or knowledge. Data can make the strengths, challenges, and weaknesses within a system apparent to allow these factors to be acknowledged and potential solutions designed. Effective strategic plans often include metrics to clarify the connection between strategy, measurement, and achievement, and any firm that sincerely intends to make strides in equity needs to incorporate equity metrics into its fundamental planning. Metrics can be a helpful lagging indicator of what is working or not, or they can be a leading indicator of likely success. They can serve as a reflection of the firm at a point in time, and they can actively drive behavior and result in change.

In “knowledge work,” such as architecture, organizational self-awareness is a first step toward understanding what kinds of work most drive value in a firm, enabling the work to be structured and employees guided toward what is most constructive. To understand what employees are doing—or could be doing differently—requires more than typical quarterly, monthly, or even weekly financial and operating metrics. When work, processes, and teams are structured in a way to give all workers access to the context, tools, and support they need—including elements presented in the other guides, such as a positive workplace culture, intercultural competence, appropriate and equitable compensation, flexibility, and access to mentors and sponsors—they can focus their individual and collective energies on the most effective drivers of personal and professional fulfillment and business value.<sup>5</sup>

Individuals also benefit from the practice of measuring, not only as a way of tracking their own progress and development but also because of the broader changes that can result from their employers’ ongoing data collection, assessments, and goal setting. Firm-wide changes inspired by data can lead to healthier workplaces, greater satisfaction and meaning in work, and opportunities for career growth. When a firm gathers data sensitively and confidentially about the more challenging aspects of EDI and firm culture, such as harassment, interpersonal aggressions, or other evidence of bias, and acknowledges and addresses these aspects with its employees, employees will feel greater comfort in bringing forward concerns about biased behavior and instances of harassment, discrimination, or abuse. If these concerns are attended to in ways that meet employee expectations, the results will likely be visible in employee-satisfaction measurements and can contribute to a greater sense of belonging.

EDI metrics and the resulting strategies can also help highlight ways in which the profession as a whole is reaching (or failing to reach) potential clients, user groups, and aspiring architects; improving relationships with project stakeholders; and increasing the recruitment pipeline. Perceptions of diversity by external stakeholders are becoming increasingly important. For many years, the federal government has required reporting the number of minority- and women-owned businesses working on federal projects. Publicly funded projects or those for nonprofit clients sometimes use diversity as a criterion for evaluation. Large corporations that hire consultants, such as Microsoft and 3M, have recently been requiring diversity demographics to be included in proposals.<sup>6</sup> And in general, broadcasting progress can help enhance public awareness and understanding of the profession.

When done in an intercultural competent manner, taking stock of where an organization stands initially with respect to EDI, implementing strategies for improvement, and tracking progress over time can have a number of results for individuals, firms, and the profession.



## INDIVIDUALS

**Workplace culture** · Measuring for equity and inclusion can indicate which strategies are working and which ones need to be improved. When metrics drive positive change, they produce happier and healthier workplaces, stronger engagement, and greater work satisfaction and sense of belonging for all employees.

**Career development** · Firm and profession-wide data help employers and organizations set goals and develop strategies that improve retention and promotion, thereby creating greater opportunities for members of currently underrepresented groups.

**Employment decision-making** · Individuals make employment decisions, in part, on the basis of information provided to them by prospective employers. Knowing the EDI metrics of a firm gives prospective employees the opportunity to ask additional questions and encourages transparency on the part of the firm.

**Necessary conversations** · Data are helpful as a catalyst for hard conversations. They remove from individuals the onus of proving that issues are part of a larger pattern and therefore need to be addressed systematically.

## MANAGERS

**Reduction of bias** · Well-designed assessment tools reduce the influence of bias in the EDI discussion and allow a more objective study of the issues and the design of practical solutions based on evidence rather than conjecture.

**Clarity** · Results can provide clarity to a supervisee about where to focus attention for the greatest positive effect.

**Assessment** · When supported by data and goals, a firm-wide commitment to advancing equity and inclusion can be translated into concrete goals for managers.

## FIRMS

**Awareness** · Regularly measuring for EDI indicates when pressing issues need to be solved, keeps EDI on firm leaders' radar, and highlights the potential and ongoing value of initiatives.

**Problem identification** · Metrics pinpoint problems and barriers experienced by various groups or individuals in the organization.

**Commitment** · Concrete metrics can provide the evidence leaders need to become committed to change.

When metrics, goals, actions, and results are conveyed to employees, and especially when employees take part in the process of identifying data needs and designing solutions in the first place, that commitment then becomes believable.

**Change management** · Assessments reveal organizational strengths that can be leveraged in the process of change.

**Reputation** · Transparency about results enhances credibility and firm reputation, especially when less-than-positive data is published without rationalizations.

**Accountability** · A firm-wide EDI program that is grounded in data can be translated into expectations of individuals and teams and can become the basis of evaluation, compensation, and promotion.

## PROFESSION

**Leadership decisions** · Aggregated, profession-wide data help inform the entire profession about current EDI challenges in firms and focus attention and resources on areas in the industry with the greatest need for change.

**Visibility** · Metrics can help set benchmarks for improving equity and inclusion and building greater diversity in the profession. As equitable practice becomes more common, architects will increasingly be seen as effective professionals. And as diversity increases and with strong role models, architecture and architects will become more visible to underrepresented groups as a potential career option.

**Public perception** · Measuring EDI, being publicly transparent about results, and developing strategies for improvement can build a more favorable impression of the profession and its commitment to change.

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“If you’re not measuring, you’re just talking;  
and if you are measuring, do something  
with it.”

Architect/Large Firm Practice Leader,  
White, Female, 40s

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# Measurement is more effective when...

## KNOWLEDGE

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firms and the profession at large know the baseline state of EDI

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firm leaders are open-minded about metrics, even if the findings contradict their perceptions

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quantitative and qualitative metrics are understood and valued while taking into consideration their limitations and potential for bias

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equity goals take priority over diversity statistics and are connected to firm-level values and plans

## INVESTMENT

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leaders make a long-term commitment of time and energy to track metrics regularly and consistently

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data are used to determine needs, develop strategies, set goals, and track progress

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metrics do not distract from noticing other things that matter

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leaders consider the benefit and cost of measurement strategies to both firms and employees

## SENSITIVITY

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steps are taken to protect individual identities, especially if a firm is small

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employees understand the value of data but can opt out of participating and do not have to share information they consider private

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intended use of data is clear to all survey participants

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sensitivity is not used as a justification for ignoring or not sharing data

# Compliance

The information that follows is intended only to provide general guidance as to the considerations the authors believe are important, with respect to collecting, storing, and sharing demographic information. However, it is equally important to take into account your own business practices and operations, as well as the applicable local laws, regulations, and best practices in your jurisdiction and area of practice. As with all things pertaining to your business, you should consult your own experts and legal advisors as to your specific and unique set of circumstances.

The collection, storage, and sharing of demographic information about employees are critical to furthering EDI within firms and across the architecture profession. These practices, however, can raise legal, ethical, and prudential concerns.

## COLLECTING AND STORING DATA

Collecting and storing demographic data pertaining to your employees can yield many benefits, including when shared with your greater professional and business community. However, the same demographic data can be—and has been—used improperly by companies. How employers collect and retain such information should, therefore, be considered carefully because it can lead to unwanted legal exposure and risk and damage to organizational reputation. Employers would be well advised to proceed carefully in this area, and only after having consulted with their legal counsel. The following is intended for general guidance only.

- An employer may generally obtain certain types of information (such as gender and date of birth) from an employee to be maintained on a confidential basis in that individual's personnel record for employment-related purposes. Such purposes may include, but are not limited to, identification and verification, tax and withholdings, and payroll.
- Certain government agencies may encourage, or even require, the collection of certain data. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) voluntary EEO-1 Survey (which certain employers must file with the EEOC annually) is one guide about how the federal government seeks voluntary demographic data (i.e., gender and race) of

employees. For an introduction to the EEO-1 Survey, go to <https://www.eeoc.gov/employers/eeo1survey/about.cfm>.

- If an employer collects sensitive data (on factors such as gender, race, and age) in other contexts, the employer should first check the applicable laws and regulations in its jurisdiction and consult with their attorney and experts to ensure compliance. As a general rule, following that verification and assuming it makes sense to proceed:
  - An employer should ensure that an employee's participation in collecting such data is completely voluntary. The employer should make clear that there will be no retribution if an employee opts out or refuses to share information.
  - An employer should provide a clear, published statement of the intended use of the data to their employees. Once the information is collected, it should not be used in any manner that is inconsistent with the statement.
  - There should be a clear, published statement of who will have access to the data. The statement should make plain that the information will not be shared with the employee's manager or with anyone with decision-making authority over the employee.
  - The data should be stored in a manner that ensures that only authorized individuals may obtain access.

**SHARING DATA**

If an employer collects demographic data and wishes to share such data, again, it is important to check with their attorneys to determine applicable laws and regulations. As a general rule, assuming such verification has been done:

- A basic starting principle is that such data should be aggregated and should not include information that is identifiable to a specific individual.
- Some employers are required, or may choose, to share certain demographic information with federal, state, or local government agencies or with authorities outside the United States. An example of this is discussed in the EEO-1 Survey, which is referenced above.
- Aggregated, demographic information is sometimes shared with an industry reporting organization or by an industry or professional group, such as the AIA. As mentioned above, such data should not be attributable to specific individuals.
- Be aware that antitrust issues may arise if the data has commercial implications and could be used for anticompetitive purposes. This might happen, for example, if a limited number of small firms shared information on pay and benefits for certain categories of employees. The U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission guidelines provide that compensation-/benefits-type surveys be conducted by a third party, that the data be at least ninety days old at the time of reporting, that at least five firms report the data, and that the data be aggregated so that no individual firm data can be identified and no one firm's data set constitutes more than 25% of the reported figures.<sup>7</sup> (The AIA's compensation survey data adheres to these standards and is the only compensation data report on the architecture profession used by the U.S. Department of Labor.)

# Assess

## AWARENESS

**What do you currently measure, and how does it align with your equity initiatives?** · How and with whom do you share your metrics? · What is important outside of the dominant culture and difficult to measure but of great value?

**Is the connection between metrics, goals, and firm-level strategies and plans clear?** · Are your firm leaders willing to accept data that might contradict their perceptions?

**Are you using qualitative and quantitative methods appropriately for the knowledge you seek?** · Are you distinguishing between correlation and causation? · Do you use already-existing surveys and other instruments to help ensure the validity of your measurements?

**Where is your firm on various measurement scales mentioned in this guide?** (See the Act section below.) · Where are you individually? · Which metrics are most important to you in supporting your progress?

## INVESTMENT

**Are you willing to make a permanent, continuous commitment to advancing EDI?**

**What resources do you have—time, money, capabilities—to engage in initial and ongoing measuring?** · How are available resources being prioritized? · Who will lead the process, and who will participate? · Who is accountable for the results? · Will you reduce other investments to free up resources for measuring EDI factors? · Are you overly emphasizing some data simply because it is easily measured and available?

**What is your process for initial discovery of challenges, needs, and opportunities?** · What systems do you have for monitoring progress and evaluating impact? · How have you embedded targets into firm goals, and are managers on board with the goals? · How will you preserve anonymity and confidentiality?

**If training is a part of your EDI efforts, are you intentional about integrating one-time events into a long-term plan?**

## IMPACT

**Have you determined how you will communicate targets, strategies, and results?** · Do you share results, both positive and negative, transparently within your organization? · Do you share information with others interested in equity in the profession—leading by example to help advance the field at large?

**Do your EDI efforts have tangible, positive results for your employees, your workplace, and stakeholders outside of your firm?** · Do you adjust your EDI program in response to ongoing metrics?

**How do you define success for your firm?** · What equity and inclusion metrics would indicate success? · How can you acknowledge and be accountable if there are negative results?

# Act

## INDIVIDUALS

Everyone is a part of the effort to measure and make change, whether as a participant or leader. Effective participation comes from those who know the goals, understand what is being measured, and anticipate how it will affect their firm or their role.

- **If you can, be an activist at your firm.** Armed with the knowledge that employees with target identities may be better positioned to take on this role if they have strong allies, bring EDI concerns to management and leaders and push for making real change and measuring that change. Organize coworkers to help give voice to these issues with you. Recognize that there can be risks to speaking up, and use concrete data—quantitative and/or qualitative—and other resources, such as these guides, as the basis of your discussion.
- **Be effective making the case.** Firms with a stated commitment to increasing equity may not see the connection between those goals and the need for measurement and transparency. The more accurately you can understand both the goals and what the obstacles may be to full transparency about metrics, the more effectively you can advocate for measuring and sharing.
- **Exert your autonomy.** If the purpose of the measurement is not clear to you, ask for more information. If it remains unclear or if you prefer not to share information you consider private, consider opting out.
- **Take stock of your own competence and have empathy for others.** This can help you choose how to frame your conversation about potentially sensitive matters. (See diagram on page 9.12.)

## MANAGERS

- **Make data meaningful and actionable.** Managers have the opportunity not only to collect data but also to make the findings meaningful to leadership in ways that lead to clear actions for change. Think through how to present the data and ascertain where the data suggest that the greatest improvements could be made.
- **Be open to different attitudes around sharing information.** If your firm has not routinely shared information within or beyond its borders, sharing can make your firm feel vulnerable. Making progress on equity in the profession will call for many firms being prepared to contribute to benchmarking and goal setting. Managers are key partners in knowing which metrics are meaningful and feasible.
- **Keep the process simple for employees.** Care should be taken not to overburden individual employees with the responsibility of providing data. Make the process of gathering and measuring data as simple as possible, without requiring additional tracking of information by an already-busy workforce.

## FIRMS

Measurement becomes meaningful when it aligns with strategic goals and links clearly to actions. To become a diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization requires building a culture of listening and observing, in which learning from data is a value and concrete data of all kinds are gathered and used to inform decisions, establish priorities, and modify activities and programs. Keep in mind that emphasis on diversity without equity and intercultural competence can be counterproductive. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.) Firms can benefit from data and should collect it in ways that are consistent with the firm culture and are respectful to employees.

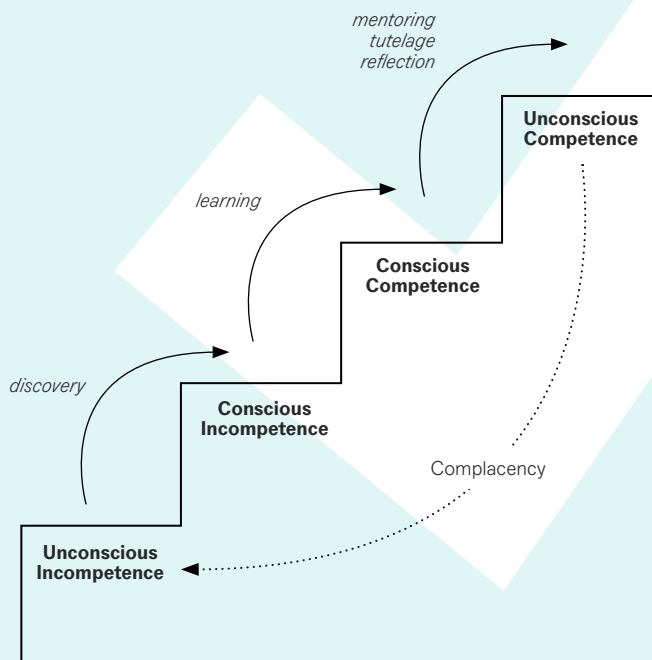


## ESTABLISH YOUR BASELINE, AND DON'T STOP THERE

Progress is measured relative to your starting point. Wherever you are, there is always room for improvement. In some ways, progress may occur more quickly for those just starting out than for firms that have already embarked on long-term efforts.

### → Determine your firm's baseline knowledge.

Creating an EDI program begins with determining the level of baseline knowledge. One example of an informal tool is the Ladder of Competence, which can help appraise the “rung” of an individual, team, leader, firm, or a profession, from unconscious incompetence (not being aware of problems related to lack of diversity, exclusion, or inequity and being ineffective at addressing them) up the ladder to unconscious competence (knowledge and action are so honed as to be natural—or perhaps complacent). Some members of a firm may be farther along than others and can help others learn. For instance, employees who notice and recognize when their colleagues are experiencing inequities, subtle acts of exclusion, or microaggressions can act as allies and educate firm leaders, who may have matured in a homogeneous system and who may be unconsciously incompetent in matters of EDI. (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)



### THE LADDER OF COMPETENCE

The Ladder of Competence is a simple tool for identifying degrees of awareness and capability and can help individuals and firms recognize where they stand, where they need to develop, and how they might frame their persuasive arguments to address EDI needs.<sup>8</sup>

Understanding the starting point helps those who wish to initiate EDI conversations and efforts frame their case appropriately. Other frameworks for evaluating your organization's knowledge and level of action and initiating EDI conversations include IDI, Harvard's Project Implicit, the Antiracist Transformation Continuum, and the APTMetrics Stages of D&I Evolution.<sup>9</sup>

### → Track demographic data to measure and advance diversity, but commit to equity and inclusion.

Tracking race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability and their representation in applications, hiring, retention, and promotions is only the most elementary step toward determining whether EDI goals are being achieved. By paying attention to more than just numbers, you send the message that individuals matter and that you want to understand employees and where you need to improve on equity and inclusion.

### → Getting at the reasons behind any lags is then the more holistic, meaningful, and complex route to creating an inclusive and equitable workplace. And in every case, it is crucial to demonstrate willingness to act on the results of your research, no matter what you find.

### → Gather qualitative data to learn what the most significant issues are, and for whom. Use focus groups, exit interviews that are as direct and honest as possible, and nonjudgmental conversations with employees to help you build hypotheses about where the greatest needs for change are, which you can then explore further.<sup>10</sup> If you can ensure anonymity, follow up with employee pulse surveys (also known as workplace culture, climate, or employee-satisfaction surveys) to understand the environment for different demographic groups and areas of practice. Learn from clients and consultants as well. Keep in mind that measuring diversity simply tells you “how many” and by itself does nothing to advance your equity goals. To achieve equity, raise your sights beyond counting numbers to see if you are managing your diversity in such a way that your “differences make a difference.”<sup>11</sup> (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

### → Use historical data to analyze representation and turnover. Also go beyond “how many?” and explore not only who is being recruited, hired, and promoted but also who is leaving and why. Use employee engagement surveys and exit interviews or surveys, or consider hiring an outsider if your firm is small to learn how employees feel about their work environment. Do they feel included? Do they believe they can fulfill their personal goals and ambitions?

Do they feel heard and valued? Are members of target groups leaving sooner than others?<sup>12</sup> (See the *Intercultural Competence* guide.)

- **Do your best to ensure that you are hearing real answers, and listen without filtering.**<sup>13</sup> Both current and departing employees may be reluctant to be completely open. Think carefully about who can ask the questions most effectively. A general culture of openness and trust will help employees be direct. Recognize that firm leaders and employees may have very different perceptions of how things are and what is working. Leaders need to be willing to listen; at the same time, some employers who are willing to listen can feel frustrated when employees are not candid.
- **Once you have listened and have evaluated your findings, choose only one or a few issues to address first,** and design strategies and interventions to tackle them over time. Spend time with your employees to fill in the answers to “if we measure, track, and address nothing else, it should be \_\_\_\_.” The answers will be different at each firm. When you have your list of what to measure, figure out what metrics will deliver the information you need to track progress. Especially where resources are limited, it makes sense to choose just a few meaningful metrics and create strategies to tackle them.<sup>14</sup>
- **Engage diverse leaders, managers, and employees at all levels in developing strategies and solutions,** as perceptions of what is needed and what will work may vary significantly depending on perspective.

#### USE EQUITABLE AND SOUND DATA PRACTICES

Equitable, inclusive, and transparent discussions about gathering data, setting measurement standards, and determining best methods for analysis can assuage anxiety. Ensuring that your efforts follow best data and privacy practices is key to your credibility and the usefulness of the information. When considering why and how to ask questions, refer to the Compliance section of this guide to understand how to handle sensitive information.

- **Be precise about the goals you are setting and who and what you are measuring.** Rather than merely stating “we need to be more diverse” because you have counted diversity metrics, you might learn, for example, by exploring further, that you need to increase the feeling of belonging for and the expectation of high-visibility projects by midcareer professionals of color. Delve deeply to determine one or two root causes for the sense of exclusion and try out strategies that address those causes.

- **Be clear about how data will be used,** and allow participants to opt out if they do not wish to respond.

- **Communicate your intent, goals, and strategies often and throughout the organization.** Hold leaders and managers accountable for results: this is a key step that is sometimes overlooked. One way to establish accountability is to build goals and strategies into the work plans and evaluations of leaders and managers (e.g., employees’ ratings or evaluations of managers’ inclusiveness), and link results to compensation and promotion.
- **Keep responses anonymous if possible.** In larger firms, well-facilitated and safe focus groups and authentic exit interviews (in some cases, more effectively conducted by a trusted peer or neutral third party) can reveal problems and root causes. These issues can be explored further in anonymous surveys. These methods may reveal employee perceptions and experiences, with the data organized by demographic groups to determine what may be contributing to, for example, greater attrition among underrepresented groups. (See Tools, Checklists, and Examples in the Resources section of this guide for examples of surveys and questions.)
- **Maintain confidentiality, especially if anonymity is not possible.** In small firms, anonymity is difficult to attain; leaders can establish an atmosphere of trust and honesty to encourage employees to feel that they can be open. (See the *Workplace Culture* guide.) Demonstrating vulnerability and a willingness to listen without disputing or countering employees’ perceptions will help ensure genuine responses. One-on-one conversations must be confidential to maintain trust (with the exception of certain situations that must be reported, as described in the Compliance section of the *Workplace Culture* guide). In some cases, when feasible, it may be preferable to engage a neutral party—internal or external—to hold conversations with employees, individually or as a group, to explore the positives and negatives of a firm’s culture.
- **When analyzing data, disaggregate it** to understand differences between subgroups and the larger population, if your survey group is large enough. This level of analysis will help you pinpoint areas of need.

- **Use interest groups to aggregate data and preserve privacy.** For example, several small firms or organizations could amass their survey data together, protecting anonymity while also generating valuable information that they can use to create clusters of data for study and comparison.

### INVEST IN SUSTAINED EFFORTS

The work required to make lasting change demands long-term commitment and is evolutionary. Select key metrics and continue to measure the same ones to evaluate progress over time, only revising them when making major strategic shifts or when seeking greater depth.<sup>15</sup>

- **Talk about your equity goals as often as you discuss your profitability.** Make them a central topic. Reinforce the link between your business goals and equity goals by regularly discussing and refining the connection.
- **Recognize that EDI is much more than just accommodations** for specific groups. Equity is a benefit to all firm members and stakeholders that enriches everyone's experience.
- **When you make policy and program changes that are components of your overall EDI efforts** (e.g., flexible work schedules, leaves, disability accommodations), track how many and which staff members have made use of these policies and programs and to what extent. Measure the impact on workplace climate, employee satisfaction, and job performance.
- **If you offer skills training as part of your EDI plan,** track how many people take the trainings and how they evaluate the outcomes over time. Among people in managerial positions, measure what difference training makes in their hiring processes and management skills.
- **Starting with baseline measurements, set targets with timelines** to allow progress to be measured over time. Integrate targets and strategies with your strategic and operating plans. Ensure that your targets are realistic and achievable and that the people responsible for tracking or achieving them have the resources and control they need. Create interim goals with smaller steps to help build momentum and support.
- **Consider reporting in goal ranges, showing whether your progress is slow, moderate, or significant.** The ranges for each metric will help pinpoint the areas that require greater attention or adjustment.<sup>16</sup>

- **Measure progress at regular intervals, share results widely, and celebrate gains.** Transparency will help employees recognize management's intentions and help them engage in assessing alignment between intentions and impacts.

- **Adjust strategies as goals are met—or as they are not.**<sup>17</sup>

### PROFESSION

The profession has many goals that can be facilitated and accelerated with data that improve the understanding of what matters to diverse prospective and current professionals and what needs to change. While the efforts have been ongoing for many years, gaps remain.

- **Know who is keeping track and what they are finding.** Support national and international efforts to gather data on equity in architecture and the building industry. Work toward sufficient information to allow comparison between architects and other professionals, knowledge workers, and designers to see how architecture is trending in relation to similar professional fields (e.g., the AIA's partnership with Women's Leadership Edge).
- **Share data, goals, and best practices.** Architecture is not alone in measuring progress toward equitable goals. Professions can learn from one another and help everyone advance.
- **Inspire owners to follow the example of the public sector in seeking greater participation by minority- and women-owned businesses in their projects.** Federal, state, and local governments have led the way in many instances by requiring or encouraging certain levels of participation by women- and minority-owned business in projects they fund. The AIA could encourage private owners to do the same.
- **Include EDI standards among the criteria for awards and recognition.** Awards programs, such as the AIA COTE Top Ten and the Architect Magazine Top 50, recognize factors that the profession values. Expanding those to include metrics relevant to EDI could offer positive steps toward creating awards for the greatest impact or improvement in diversity and equity. The AIA's ongoing efforts to develop firm benchmarks will be invaluable in advancing these goals.

# Consider

## INTENTION AND IMPACT

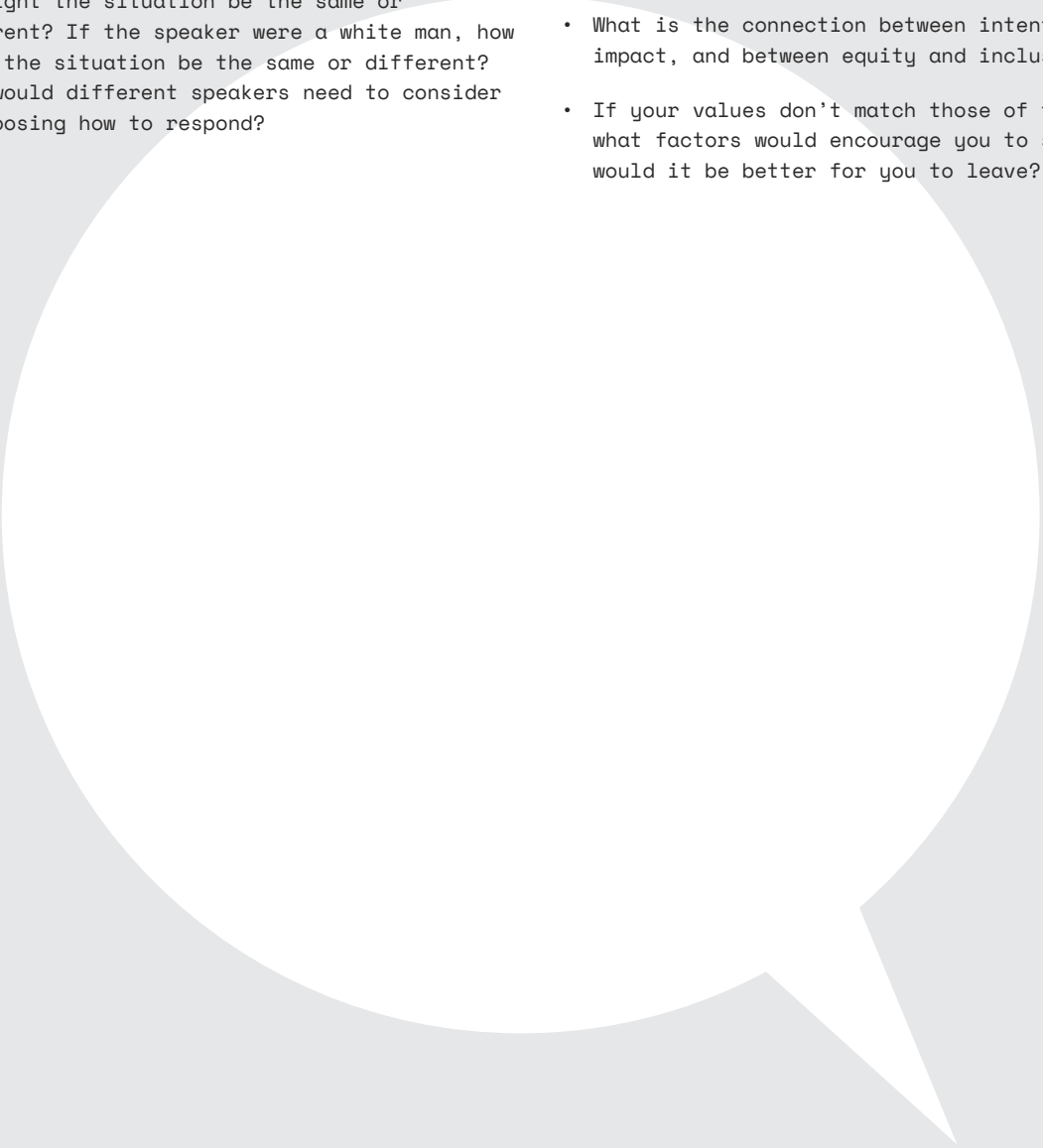
I find out there's an unannounced meeting happening off-site, and I'm very curious: what is going on here? I look at the sign-out log, and I see the names of about twelve middle-aged white men. After a little research, I realize that the firm is secretly rewriting its mission, vision, and values. And there's not a single woman included. Later, in the office of one of the principals, I asked, "Did red flags not go up when you sat down, looked across the table, and saw that everybody looked just like you?" He looked at me, and said, "It wasn't intentional." I said, "Well, it's time to get intentional."

You get to the point in your career when you're just so angry that you're still talking about this and having to suggest that firms be more inclusive. It's the feeling like you're treading water and that you're never going to reach the shore. I couldn't take it anymore. I did what I could to get the firm to study the problem, then told them I had to move on. I've since learned that they've been making progress. In retrospect, should I have stuck around to see it through?

— Senior Design Architect, White, Female

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DISCUSS:

- In what situations would the speaker's response to the firm leader who said "it wasn't intentional" be effective? As an employee speaking to a firm leader, would you feel comfortable saying this? What results would you expect in the moment and later?
  - If the speaker had any other target identity, how might the situation be the same or different? If the speaker were a white man, how might the situation be the same or different? What would different speakers need to consider in choosing how to respond?
  - Would you read the situation differently if the meeting were openly announced? Do you think the principals were trying to keep the meeting secret, or were they unaware of the potential impact of their meeting on others in the firm?
  - How could this firm have used metrics to study and improve its processes?
  - What is the connection between intention and impact, and between equity and inclusion?
  - If your values don't match those of the firm, what factors would encourage you to stay? When would it be better for you to leave?
- 

# Consider

## THINKING BEYOND THE NUMBERS

We have lost jobs because, as we used to think of it, we didn't have "one of those." At the time, we just thought about the numbers. But the way we look at it now is so much more. It's not about the numbers in terms of percentage of this and percentage of that, it's really about the richness of the work. And that seems to work better in conversation, both internally and externally. People are more comfortable talking about the richness of the work than about percentages. I think it goes back to the whole genuineness question. For us anyway, thinking about the richness of the work that way has made the firm a lot better than when we were just thinking about numbers.

— President/CEO, White, Male, 61

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### DISCUSS:

- What is your reaction to the phrase "one of those"? What kind of progress do you see indicated in this story, if any? How would you measure it?
- What do you think the speaker meant by "richness" and by the "genuineness question"? Why do you think he says it is more genuine to focus on richness instead of numbers? In what ways do you imagine his firm may be better now than when they were just thinking about numbers? How might thinking about the richness of the work lead to greater inclusiveness in a firm? In what ways could your firm advance the internal conversation from diversity demographics to equity and inclusion matters?
- What are the limitations of only measuring demographics and diversity? What connections do you see between demographic measures of diversity and richness of work? Will more diverse demographics automatically produce better work?
- Are there any risks when thinking in terms of the richness of the work rather than the numbers? Does diversity of thinking styles among an otherwise homogeneous group provide adequately diverse perspectives?
- Do you think that some clients are looking for "one of those"? What is your reaction to this idea? If there are such clients, how could architects help them recognize the value of including diverse backgrounds and perspectives?



# Consider

## HONEST STORYTELLING

What I'm finding is that people don't want to be honest and tell a bad story. People want to say, "Hey, look how great we're doing; we're really making progress." That progress might be very small, very incremental, but they always want to talk about the progress versus saying, "Look how far behind we are." As soon as we can get comfortable with the bad story, we can rewrite it. We just have to be honest with ourselves—inside the corporate communications, websites, whatever it is. That includes anything from pay equality to race and gender—to everything. We just have to tell a better story, and we have to be honest about what that story is. That's what we struggle with as an organization.

— Principal, White, Male, 48

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### DISCUSS:

- What is the story of EDI at your firm? What forms of communication do your firm leaders use to tell this story? If your firm tracks EDI metrics, do you feel that the firm is transparent about the results? Do you feel that the story is honest? Where does it need to be more accurate or direct?
- Are there positive aspects to learning about or telling a negative story? Does there need to be a choice between celebrating wins and openly acknowledging how much farther you need to go?
- Has there been a time when your data—qualitative and quantitative—told a negative story? If so, what were the ensuing conversations like? If not, did it affirm what you knew or reveal new information?

# Consider

## WELCOMING REGARDLESS OF STATISTICS

A couple years ago, I got a call from a large firm looking to get me to join them, so I looked at the website and it had key people—seasoned professionals probably in their sixties. I didn’t feel welcome, just from looking at the website. When we talk about diversity and inclusion, gender, race, statistics are one thing, but if you walk into a room and you feel welcome, it doesn’t matter if their ratio is ninety to ten. If you feel welcome, you feel like you belong there. In the interview they told me: “Your resume is impeccable, we want you to come mentor younger staff here.”

After the interview I sent an email: “Can you tell me what you’re doing toward equity, diversity, and inclusion in your firm. What roles are people playing, and have you had any achievements over the last few years?” It took a few days or a week for them to get back to me, and when I got the response, it looked like they had done a copy and paste because they were not prepared for that question.

You can’t be a multinational firm and be waiting for the AIA or some focus groups to charge you with making EDI progress. You have to lead and create this change. There are some firms that do celebrate diversity on social media or on their website. Those firms have to keep celebrating those things for others to catch up and make it the norm.

— Senior Architect/Project Manager, African American, Male, 49

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DISCUSS:

- How well prepared is your firm to answer the questions asked in the speaker's post-interview email? How many people in your firm would be able to answer those questions? Is it important that their answers be consistent?
- How could this firm have used metrics to study and improve its workplace environment?
- Have you been in situations in which the demographics were not diverse but the sense of belonging for people from underrepresented groups was strong? What kinds of metrics would mask or reveal this apparent contradiction?



# Consider

## EFFECTIVENESS OF EXIT INTERVIEWS

It was noticeable across the staff that there was a tendency among male designers to really question women's work more than their own, sometimes to the point of tears. At some point, you realize that's not the way you want to practice, no matter how great the design is. No one wants to be in tears at the end of the day. That was why people left.

To me, the harassment was the first thing I didn't expect; I haven't encountered it as much as I did at that office. I think it was because they didn't have an HR department (which is not uncommon at a lot of architecture offices), and there weren't a lot of people to report to about it. Harassment felt like a culmination of how women were treated in design sessions; and in a small setting where you have that one-on-one interaction, there was the reinforcement that, "Well, I'm here, let me just pat you on the side and that will take care of it." It was an unfortunate dynamic.

They hired a consultant to debrief and interview the six of us, all women, who left in one year. I don't believe that the reason people left led to a high-level-leadership team conversation. I don't think they actually addressed the issue.

One of the senior leaders was vocal in saying that they needed an HR committee to which complaints could be reported. Architects tend to use committees, and they are trying an HR committee now, but it's not really working. Things changed, too, when one of the partners passed away: he

had been actively trying to get women in leadership there. The two main principals there now aren't quite as concerned.

— Architect, White, Female, 30s



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DISCUSS:

- When looking at who left a firm during a short period of time, whether women, men of color, or people of a certain age group or sexual orientation, for example, when do you consider the departures to be a series of individual events or a part of a pattern? Is there a threshold or percentage that triggers concern (for example, six women leaving a small firm versus a large firm)?
- Does your firm have a way to distinguish between correlation and causation in looking at the numbers of people who leave and their reasons for leaving?
- How could this firm have used metrics to study and improve its workplace environment?
- Was the debriefing by the consultant counterproductive? What is the exit interview process at your firm? Has your firm made any interventions or developed EDI programs based on exit interviews? If a firm conducts exit interviews, what message does it send when it does not appear that the answers make a difference?

# Consider

## CHECKING ASSUMPTIONS

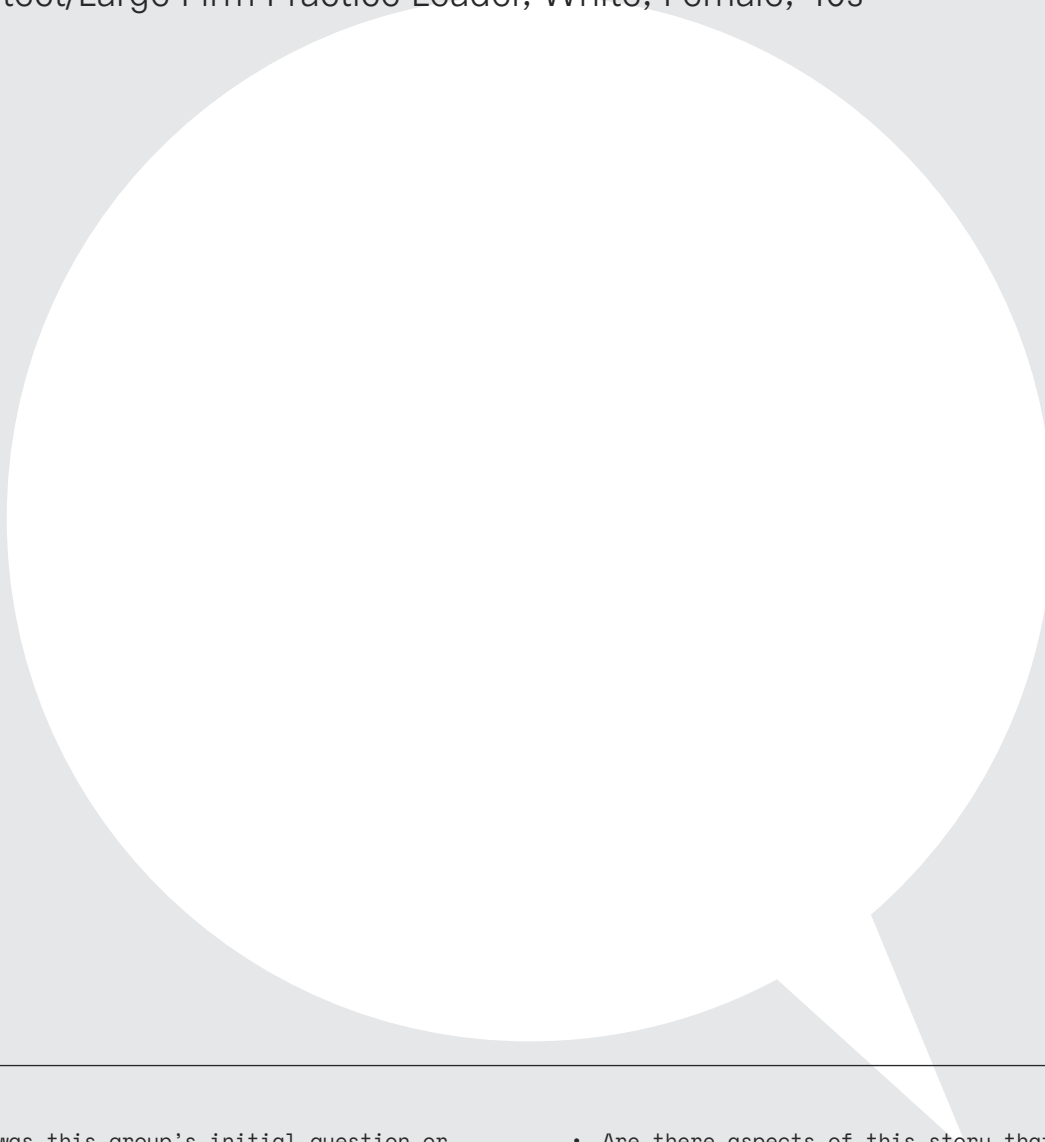
When I started at the firm, there were no active women partners. That was very discouraging and notable and was really the impetus for starting to question and act. A group of women sat at a bar complaining and then said, “What if we tried to do something constructive?” And we got a lot of support to act. We knew that a number of women had left, and we had no women partners or women in senior leadership positions. There was some assumption that this was inherently biological and that women were leaving to have babies, so we wondered where they went after leaving. We followed up with them and traced them to other firms. One works for a developer. All of them went on to competitive, demanding positions. They had taken family leave, and all of them went back to work. It was an example of assumptions versus actual.

One amazing thing is that when we did our research and found out what women were discontented with, we found they were not women-specific issues, like “I don’t get enough maternity leave” or “no lactation room.” We found they were human issues. In the past ten years, the firm has changed significantly. Now there’s a partner-led talent equity, diversity, and development committee that meets regularly and talks about all the issues that we found ten years ago, all those issues about transparency, about understanding who’s in charge, how promotions are made. We overhauled our entire evaluation process to make it more transparent, more legible. I



think that has had a huge impact on anybody who is perhaps marginalized. And it wasn't specifically gender issues but has had an impact on diversity of all kinds. All of that has permeated the firm. It's a larger cultural issue. Not that we're done, but the conversation has really changed.

— Architect/Large Firm Practice Leader, White, Female, 40s



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DISCUSS:

- What was this group's initial question or hypothesis? What kind of research did they do to explore it? In this case, what kinds of questions do you think were effective in eliciting results that disproved those assumptions? Are there assumptions in your office that may be preventing you from fully understanding a situation?
- Are there aspects of this story that can help you make the case for starting a focused inquiry that ends up benefiting a broad range of individuals and groups in your office?
- This story begins ten years ago and talks about how things are now. What do you imagine might have been some of the steps in between? What steps would you take in this situation?

# Resources

## DATA SOURCES

### AIA Compensation Survey – AIA (2019)

[www.aia.org/compensation](http://www.aia.org/compensation)

Reports salary and compensation trends, including data on forty-four architecture firm positions and details on benefits being offered at firms.

### AIA Firm Survey Report – AIA (2018)

<http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/2018-AIA-Firm-Survey-Overview.pdf>

Overview of general survey of architecture firms and industry trends.

### Diversity in the Profession of Architecture, Executive Summary – AIA (2016); Diversity in the Profession of Architecture, Key Findings – AIA (2015)

<http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2016-05/Diversity-DiversityinArchitecture.pdf>

<https://www.architecturalrecord.com/ext/resources/news/2016/03-Mar/AIA-Diversity-Survey/AIA-Diversity-Architecture-Survey-02.pdf>

Summary of perceptions of factors that affect the choice of architecture as a profession, job satisfaction, and retention.

### EQxD 2018 Survey Early Findings Report – EQxD (2018)

<http://eqxdesign.com/blog?category=Metrics>

Initial summary from Equity by Design of the largest survey regarding equity in the profession.

### EQxD 2016 Survey Overview – EQxD (2016)

<http://eqxdesign.com/research-topics/>

Findings from the 2016 survey.

### NCARB By the Numbers – NCARB (2019)

<https://www.ncarb.org/nbtn2019>

Demographic data and analysis of licensure and career stages.

### Women in the Workplace – Lean In and McKinsey (2018)

<https://womenintheworkplace.com/>

Survey of 279 companies and 64,000 individuals regarding the state of women in corporate America.

## GENERAL GUIDANCE

### “Assessing and Driving Change: Organizational Readiness and Success with Metrics” in The Diversity Executive: Tasks, Competencies, and Strategies for Effective Leadership – Michael L. Wheeler – The Conference Board (2001)

<http://michaelwheelerdiversity.com/spark/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Diversityexecutivereport-1.pdf>

Includes a useful diagram of the four stages of organizational readiness: exclusion, tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion.

### How Can You Measure Diversity and Inclusion Results? Millennials Have an Idea – Anna Johansson – Forbes (2017)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/annajohansson/2017/11/09/how-can-you-measure-diversity-and-inclusion-results-millennials-have-an-idea/#31c71ced2310>

Presents a simple case and techniques for going beyond mere demographic-diversity data.

### How to Measure “Inclusion” Qualitatively: Free Resources and Research Data for D&I Advocates – Michelle Kim – Awaken (2017)

<https://medium.com/awaken-blog/how-to-measure-inclusion-quantitatively-free-resources-and-research-data-for-d-i-advocates-47206a916005>

Discussion from an employee’s standpoint of how to evaluate and find inclusive company cultures. Links to additional data and resources.

### What Diversity Metrics are Best Used to Track and Improve Employee Diversity? – Roscoe Balter, Joy Chow, and Yin Jin (2014)

<https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1063&context=student>

Executive summary provides brief, practical guidance on a process for gathering and applying qualitative and quantitative data.

## TOOLS, CHECKLISTS, AND EXAMPLES

### An Antiracist Transformation Continuum for Organizations – The Episcopal Church (2011)

[https://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/antiracism\\_book-revise3.pdf](https://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/antiracism_book-revise3.pdf)

Resource includes a worksheet to help evaluate an organization's characteristics, practices, power position, and social-justice stance in relation to people of color.

### Demystifying D&I Metrics – Mary L. Martínéz of APTMetrics (2013)

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/6191267/>

Presentation from the SHRM Diversity & Inclusion Conference & Exposition. Slide 11 provides a table titled "Stage of D&I Evolution Should Impact What Is Measured." This table is a helpful source for connecting organizational objectives with the types of data that should be collected to measure progress.

### Diversity Down to the Letter – Linda S. Gravett – SHRM

[https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0604babcock\\_measuring.aspx](https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0604babcock_measuring.aspx)

Basic ten-item checklist to help evaluate your current EDI program.

### Diversity Metrics, Measurement, and Evaluation – Marc Brenman – Workforce Diversity Network (2013)

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c492eb85-9529-4eb9-bbe4-4154277bb917/downloads/Diversity%20Metrics%2C%20Measurement%2C%20and%20Evaluation.pdf?ver=1590076521941>

Comprehensive road map for making the case for and developing a qualitative and quantitative metrics program.

### Intercultural Development Inventory – Mitchell Hammer (2019)

<https://idiinventory.com>

Assessment of intercultural competence. Test evaluates mindsets on a scale from monocultural to intercultural: denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, adaptation.

### Inclusive Economy Metric Set – B Lab (2019)

<https://kb.bimimpactassessment.net/support/solutions/articles/43000477312-can-i-download-the-inclusive-economy-metric-set->

Detailed qualitative questionnaire dives into workplace culture and structure, especially with respect to equitable practices.

### Guide to Developing a Strategic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan – SHRM

[subscription required]

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/pages/guide-to-developing-a-strategic-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-plan.aspx>

Detailed guidance for action in sixteen components of inclusion and diversity.

### The Measurement of Work Engagement with a Short Questionnaire: A Cross-National Study (Appendix) – Wilmar B. Schaufeli, Arnold B. Bakker, and Marisa Salanova – Educational and Psychological Measurement (2006)

<http://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/publications/Schaufeli/251.pdf>

Presentation and analysis of a short questionnaire that measures work and well-being.

### Measuring Progress – Project Include

[https://projectinclude.org/measuring\\_progress#](https://projectinclude.org/measuring_progress#)

Important guidance regarding policy, transparency, and survey design and processes.

### Setting Targets – Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) (2018)

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/topics/setting-targets>

Detailed guidance on using data to help develop and monitor gender equity performance.

### Why (and How!) to Ask Survey Questions on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – Laura Wronski – SurveyMonkey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/ask-survey-questions-sexual-orientation-gender-identity/>

Specific guidance for writing survey questions.

### Women's Leadership Edge

<http://www.womensleadershipedge.org/>

Wide array of tools to help organizations support, advance, and retain women, with parallels in engineering and law. Accessible with AIA membership.

# Notes

1. Edward Hubbard, *The Diversity Scorecard: Evaluating the Impact of Diversity on Organizational Performance* (San Francisco: Elsevier, 2004).
  2. Marc Brenman, "Diversity Metrics, Measurement, and Evaluation," *Workforce Diversity Network*, last modified November 24, 2012, <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c492eb85-9529-4eb9-bbe4-4154277bb917/downloads/Diversity%20Metrics%2C%20Measurement%2C%20and%20Evaluation.pdf?ver=1590076521941>.
  3. Tema Okun, "White Supremacy Culture," dRworks, accessed August 2, 2020, [https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White\\_Supremacy\\_Culture\\_Okun.pdf](https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White_Supremacy_Culture_Okun.pdf).
  4. Intercultural Leadership Program was first developed by AIA Minnesota in 2019.
  5. Ryan Fuller, "The Paradox of Workplace Productivity," *Harvard Business Review*, April 19, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/04/the-paradox-of-workplace-productivity>.
  6. Lisa Kirby, "Legal Department (aka Clients) Efforts Designed to Drive Outside Counsel Diversity," Diversity Lab, last modified August 8, 2017, <https://www.diversitylab.com/knowledge-sharing/clients-push-for-diversity/>.
  7. For more information on the DOJ/FTC guidelines, see Statement 6 of <https://www.justice.gov/atr/page/file/1197731/download>,
  8. Simon Black, "Qualities of Effective Leadership in Higher Education," *Open Journal of Leadership* 4, no. 2 (2015), [https://www.scirp.org/html/2-2330076\\_57195.htm](https://www.scirp.org/html/2-2330076_57195.htm).
  9. The Episcopal Church, *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: The Antiracism Training Manual of the Episcopal Church, Diversity, Social, and Environmental Ministries Team Mission Department of the Episcopal Church*, 2011, [https://episcopalchurch.org/files/antiracism\\_book-revise3.pdf](https://episcopalchurch.org/files/antiracism_book-revise3.pdf); Bentley University Center for Women and Business, *Assessing Diversity Metrics and Women's Advancement*, 2017, <https://www.bentley.edu/centers/center-for-women-and-business/diversity-metrics-research-report-request#DownloadReport>; Mary L. Martínéz, "Demystifying D&I Metrics" (presentation, SHRM Diversity & Inclusion Conference & Exposition, San Francisco, CA, 2013), <https://slideplayer.com/slide/6191267>; Project Implicit, accessed October 26, 2019, <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>; and Mitchell Hammer, *Intercultural Development Inventory*, 2019, <https://idiinventory.com>.
  10. Camille Patrick and Dipak Sundaram, "The Real Value of Getting an Exit Interview Right," *Gallup*, June 14, 2018, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236051/real-value-getting-exit-interview-right.aspx>.
  11. Dennis Cass, "The Difference that Makes a Difference," Minnesota Council of Foundations, accessed August 23, 2019, <https://mcf.org/difference-makes-difference>.
  12. Some examples of other useful questions to explore:
    - Do employees feel valued by the firm, its leaders, and their managers?
    - Do they believe they are able to fully contribute their unique perspectives and skills?
    - Do they feel their differences are welcomed and respected?
    - Do they believe they have equal opportunities for advancement?
    - Do they feel heard?
    - Who is leaving, and why?
- From Lauren Leader-Chivée, "The Right Way to Measure Executive Diversity," *Harvard Business Review*, April 30, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/04/the-right-way-to-measure-executive-diversity>.
- Also:
- How do your employees currently perceive their careers? Are there differences in perceptions on the basis of personal identity, seniority, etc.?
  - How long do employees typically stay with your firm? Are there differences in tenure based on personal identity? What are the most common reasons that individuals leave the firm, and do these vary on the basis of personal identity?

No one metric can possibly capture the spectrum of information to be gathered about the state of EDI. One simple indicator that could be used as part of a selected array of metrics is the Net Promoter Score (NPS®), generally used to evaluate customer experiences but applicable to employees as well: “On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend (this firm) as a place to work?” The NPS can be taken as part of a larger survey annually or measured on its own quarterly or even monthly as one, but not the only, indicator of progress. “Net Promoter Score (NPS®) Calculation,” Survey Monkey, accessed July 19, 2019, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/net-promoter-score-calculation/>.

13. Patrick and Sundaram, “The Real Value of Getting an Exit Interview Right.”

14. Bentley University Center for Women and Business, *Assessing Diversity Metrics*.

15. Three useful sources for detailed guidance on using data to help develop and monitor an EDI program include “Measuring Progress” by Project Include, “Setting Targets” by Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), and “Inclusive Economy Metric Set” by B Impact Assessment. Additional guidance appears in the Resources section of this guide.

16. “Creating a Strategic Diversity Management Plan,” SHRM, May 22, 2012 [subscription required], [https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/strategicdiversitymanagementplan.aspx?\\_ga=2.131499655.924427241.1560207488-1139388716.1557859890](https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/strategicdiversitymanagementplan.aspx?_ga=2.131499655.924427241.1560207488-1139388716.1557859890).

17. “Setting Targets,” WGEA, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/topics/setting-targets>; and SHRM, “Creating a Strategic Diversity Management Plan.”

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# Glossary

The purpose of this glossary is to furnish a shared understanding of how the *Guides for Equitable Practice* define and use terms related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Some of these terms may be new to you; many of them are also used in other professions and communities and may have different uses and meanings in other contexts. Context and language evolve over time—some terms that have been used in the past are no longer in use, and some of the terms in this glossary will undoubtedly evolve, be replaced, or become obsolete. (See *Introduction* for a more complete discussion of language, acronyms, and terminology.)

The glossary is not intended to be exhaustive but, instead, is an important resource companion for the guides. You are encouraged to consult resources referred to in the guides as you continue to deepen your knowledge of EDI principles and practices. Many of the words and phrases in the glossary appear as keywords at the beginning of each guide; others appear in the text, often in more than one guide. Glossary entries appear in alphabetical order and explain how each word or phrase is defined and/or used in the guides or in other EDI contexts. The glossary draws from resources cited in the guides and endnotes and has also been peer reviewed by architecture professionals, AIA staff and legal counsel, and EDI specialists. Selected glossary terms are italicized and hyperlinked within the definitions for ease in cross referencing.



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## ABLEISM (see *-ism*)

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## ACCESSIBILITY/ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

Accessibility is the practice of making facilities, services, and products independently usable by people with any type or combination of *disabilities*. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that public facilities be fully accessible. *Universal design* broadens the concept of accessibility to encompass design without a need for adaptation, such as a separate doorway for a wheelchair user.

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## ACCOMMODATION

The ADA protects individuals with *disabilities* by requiring employers to make reasonable accommodations for them to perform their jobs. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, a reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done during the hiring process. These modifications enable an individual with a disability, including those with specific medical conditions or mental-wellness needs, to have an equal opportunity not only to apply for and get a job but also to successfully perform their job tasks to the same extent as people without disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

Reasonable accommodation also includes adjustments that provide a qualified individual with rights and privileges in employment equal to those of employees without disabilities.<sup>2</sup> It can be difficult to determine what is “reasonable”: accommodation is at times seen as a minimum standard for addressing needs in a workplace, while *accessibility* and *universal design* are higher standards. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, an independent federal agency, is the enforcing agency for the ADA’s employment provisions.

Accommodation may appear in other contexts as well. For example, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on religion: an employer may not refuse to accommodate sincerely held religious beliefs or practices unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship.<sup>3</sup>

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## ACCULTURATION/ASSIMILATION

Both terms are typically used to describe how members of a *nondominant* group relate to the culture of a *dominant* group. In the guides, acculturation refers to preserving important differences and assimilation to losing important differences. During acculturation, an individual or organization retains the norms and language of their culture of origin while adjusting to fit into a different culture and increasing their fluency in it. Acculturation is, therefore, a skill. These guides are neutral on the choice to develop it or not; however, acknowledging the time and energy required to adjust can be effective in supporting those who are becoming accustomed to a new culture.<sup>4</sup>

Assimilation occurs when one becomes absorbed into the dominant culture and, therefore, loses their own unique culture. Members of their own groups may perceive assimilation negatively, as masking or covering, or as abandoning their own social and cultural differences. This perception can exacerbate tension for the person who is becoming assimilated and lead to losing formerly supportive networks of family and friends.

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## ACTIVISM/ACTIVIST-ARCHITECTURE

Activism or activist-architecture is a form of public involvement through which architects participate in or lead movements, organizations, or groups that advocate for political and social change.

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## ADVOCACY (Interpersonal, Political)

Advocacy appears in two ways in the guides. First, interpersonal advocacy entails speaking up on behalf of oneself, for members of one’s own *identity groups*, or for others. In this sense, it is also a key part of negotiations in which mutual advocacy involves two or more individuals with multiple viewpoints working toward the same goal. (See *ally*.)

Second, the *Community Engagement* guide explains that architects may assume an advocacy role or participate in advocacy efforts, groups, and/or organizations to support community and professional interests and press for political and social change. This form of advocacy is consistent with the AIA's term "citizen architect."<sup>5</sup>

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## AFFINITY BIAS

Affinity bias, one of several forms of unconscious bias, is the tendency to favorably regard those who are most like ourselves. Awareness is the first step toward addressing affinity bias; once someone is aware, they can determine whether the bias is creating inequities or affecting outcomes or behavior and can correct accordingly. (See *bias*.)

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## AGENT IDENTITY

An agent identity endows someone with advantages by birth or acquisition, such as education or wealth; they knowingly or unknowingly receive benefits, power, or privileges over members of target groups.<sup>6</sup> The term is used in relation to *target identity*. (See *dominant culture/identities*, *nondominant culture/identities*, *identity groups*.)

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## ALLY

As used in the guides, an ally is typically a professional colleague with an *agent identity* and/or someone who is in a position of privilege or greater *power*—who uses their standing and credibility to support colleagues from *target identity* groups. An ally's actions could include spreading awareness among *dominant* groups and advocating for greater diversity and inclusion. It is important to note that genuine allies are those who are perceived as and accepted by members of those groups as being allies through their actions, not those who simply claim to be allies.

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## ANCHORING BIAS

Anchoring bias, one of several forms of unconscious bias, is the tendency for people's perceptions to overemphasize initial data without questioning it to understand its limitations. For example, when a recruiter learns the salary of an applicant, anchoring bias can lead to making an offer that is directly influenced by the previous salary rather than the applicant's skills or the requirements of the new job.<sup>7</sup> Like other unconscious biases, it can be acknowledged and mitigated, if one makes the effort. (See *bias*.)

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## ANTIRACISM/ANTIRACIST

Antiracism is active engagement in dismantling social and economic policies and structures that have created inequity and injustice for nondominant racial groups. At an individual and interpersonal level, an antiracist person acknowledges their advantages and privilege and is also conscious of racism in daily life and takes deliberate action to interrupt it. Antiracism is distinct from nonracism, which denotes a passive internal belief that one is not racist and a lack of engagement in racial justice issues.<sup>8</sup> (See *structural racism/systemic racism/structural racialization, -ism*.)

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## ASSESSMENT (see *organizational assessment*)

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## AUDIT

Part of an overall *organizational assessment*, an EDI audit often focuses on financial factors, such as checking for inequities in compensation, but may also include noncash elements (e.g., promotions, vacation time, flexible scheduling) and inspections of organizational messaging and decision-making to ensure that a firm's communications and activities are free of bias. Audits may be conducted internally within an organization or department or by a third party.

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## AUTHENTICITY/HONESTY

Authenticity can have different meanings to different people. In the *Community Engagement* guide, authentic engagement is understood to require—whether the architect is a member of the community or not—active, ongoing engagement, listening and hearing, dialogue, invitations to participate, and sharing information with the community, without claiming to know “what the community needs.” Honest communication entails being clear about the intentions of the engagement, with disclosure about the nature of the relationship and what the community can expect, clarity about who the project team members and the decision-makers are, and transparency about what each party stands to gain. The results of honesty and authenticity can be deeper relationships with community members and the preservation of the integrity of the engagement.

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## BASELINE

A baseline is the measurement of equity, diversity, and inclusivity used as a starting point from which a firm can set targets and timelines for measuring progress. Firms should establish their baseline of knowledge to appraise both individual and firm-wide *intercultural competence*. Determining baselines is an early step in *organizational assessment*.

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## BATNA

BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) is the most desirable backup option a party in a negotiation is willing to accept. Knowing one’s own BATNA can make one more effective in negotiation, whether for salary, a promotion, or a contract.

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## BENCHMARK

A benchmark is an external point of reference or standard to which metrics on equity, diversity, and inclusion can be compared. It can be used effectively in conjunction with *baselines*. AIA and Equity by Design surveys are sources of architecture-specific benchmarks.

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## BIAS

Bias is typically an unfair preference for or prejudice against a person or group. Biases stem from causes such as cultural conditioning, past experiences, and media portrayals that create stereotypes, and they manifest in inequitable treatment. Biases may be held by people who are harmed by them as well those who benefit from them. (See *affinity bias*, *anchoring bias*.)

- Implicit or unconscious biases are the attitudes or *stereotypes* that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner and are activated involuntarily without awareness or intent; they can be either positive or negative. Unconscious bias endures, but can be addressed with more awareness, direct learning, practice, and interventions.<sup>9</sup>
  - Conscious or explicit bias is overt, prejudiced thinking that is expressed to oneself or others with awareness and intent. It can take subtle or aggressive form, from microaggression to hate speech, harassment, and physical violence. Explicit biases often start as implicit biases and become revealed through assessment or training. Such biases can also be self-regulated and mitigated, especially when surrounding social norms oppose them or the negative impact is seen. Intergroup contact also helps reduce bias.<sup>10</sup>
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## BIPOC—BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOR (see *people of color*)

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## BRIDGING / BRIDGING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Bridging cultural differences is the process of deeply valuing, understanding, and adapting to cultural differences. Effectively bridging cultural differences can improve creativity, increase productivity, and foster inclusion.<sup>11</sup> In the AEC fields, cultural differences include race, gender, class, and other legally protected characteristics, as well as academic/professional discipline, industry sector, trade, and firm priorities. The goal of equity can best be achieved by everyone developing the skills to bridge differences, particularly those in the *dominant* and majority groups, since they usually have the most power and resources to make systemic change. Relying on the same people with high intercultural capacity to always be responsible for bridging can have negative results, such as resentment or *burnout*.

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## BURNOUT

Burnout is an emotional, physical, and mental state of exhaustion that results from prolonged workplace stress that has not been coped with successfully.<sup>12</sup> Warning signs of burnout include: lack of motivation, a sense of failure and self-doubt, increased cynicism and negativity, decreased satisfaction, reduced self-care and recovery time, frustration, increased interpersonal challenges at work and home, greater frequency of illnesses, overreaction, chronic low energy, and feeling isolated or disengaged.

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## CAUSATION

Causation indicates that one change directly and conclusively causes something else to occur. Causal factors meet a higher statistical standard than *correlation*.

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## CISGENDER

A cisgender person is someone whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth, in contrast with gender-fluid, transgender, and other gender identities. (See *pronouns*.)

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## CLIMATE

Distinct from *culture*, an organization's climate is its general atmosphere and the feeling people within it have about it—their collective perceptions and attitudes about their company in a particular time period.

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## CLIMATE SURVEY

One element of an *organizational assessment*, a climate survey measures how employees are experiencing the organization and its systems, structures, and culture(s) day-to-day and over time—for example, project management, staff roles, transparency, and quality of collaboration within teams and with consultants and clients. Information from climate surveys is useful for establishing *baselines* and goals and tracking progress at regular intervals, e.g., annually.

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## COACHING

Coaching is a method of professional development in which an individual—whether a professional coach or an internal supervisor—supports an employee's self-awareness, strength building, and career advancement. Professional coaching engagements typically consist of a contractual arrangement with specific, identified goals. Coaches may or may not have expertise related to the client's profession or belong to the same *identity group*.

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## COLONIZATION / DECOLONIZATION

Colonization occurs when one racial or national group establishes dominance over another based on racial classifications and stereotyping that are used to justify exploitation, dispossession, and subjugation. Decolonization is the process of resisting cultural, political, or social oppression.<sup>13</sup>

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## COMMITMENT / EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Employee commitment expresses the degree of one's dedication to their firm, their job, or a goal, such as completing a specific project or obtaining a promotion. In contrast with *employee engagement*, which is a feeling of emotional and intellectual enthusiasm, employee commitment manifests tangibly in the devotion of time and energy. Employee commitment can be one of the *baseline*-data metrics when performing an *organizational assessment*.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In the guides, “community” has a broad scope: not only neighborhoods but any group that occupies or experiences a project, from a family to an entire city and beyond. The guides suggest that architects can engage with communities in three major capacities: as individual citizens, as professionals, and in the type of work their firms choose to do. Whichever the capacity, effective community engagement incorporates diverse voices equitably, respectfully, and authentically in all phases of work, with special attention given to context, including such elements as history, culture, politics, power dynamics, and social fabric.

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## COMPENSATION PACKAGE

A compensation package is the total pay and benefits that an employee receives from an employer, including cash, noncash, and nonfinancial compensation. These can include base pay, bonuses, profit sharing, retirement-plan contributions, insurance, subsidies, and other benefits. It helps meet the specific needs and priorities of an employee and may also include fair and flexible working conditions, vacation time, and specific terms that help avoid *work-life conflict*.

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## COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY

A compensation philosophy is an organization's expression of how it values its employees, with the purpose of attracting, retaining, and motivating employees equitably. It provides overall direction for the firm's compensation decisions to obtain intended results.<sup>14</sup>

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## COMPENSATION POLICY

A compensation policy is intended to align with organizational *values* and *compensation philosophy*. It includes all forms of compensation and considers how they are weighted (valued) by individuals and by the organization. Compensation policies include those for all compensation-related decisions and procedures, as well as all pay actions, and establishes how to determine pay differences by factors such as job responsibilities, title, time in job and with the firm, part-time status, geographic location, site where work is performed, education, licensure, and prior experience. A clearly articulated and observed compensation policy can contribute to the equitable treatment of employees. (See *parity/pay parity, salary bands/pay bands*.)

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## COMPENSATION STRUCTURE

A compensation structure assigns pay grades and ranges to different jobs in a firm, often with explicit criteria for moving from one grade to another. When developed and communicated transparently, and aligned with *compensation policy*, a compensation structure reflects a company's *compensation philosophy*. (See *salary bands/pay bands*.)

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## COMPLIANCE

Compliance means being in conformity with laws, regulations, policies, and procedures established by legislatures, courts, and professional organizations, such as the AIA. Compliance is a minimum standard for ensuring an equitable and inclusive workplace, and compliance issues tend to be symptoms rather than root causes of inequitable treatment.

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## CORRELATION

Correlation signifies a relationship between two variables but does not definitively prove that one causes or has any effect on the other. A statistically significant cause-effect relationship is called *causation*.

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## CULTURAL APPROPRIATION / MISAPPROPRIATION VS. CULTURAL APPRECIATION

Cultural appropriation, or misappropriation, is the adoption of a selected element or elements of a *culture*—a practice, symbol, idea, language, tradition, artifacts, or expression, such as music, colloquialisms, hairstyles, or clothing—by a dominant group while ignoring or devaluing the original meaning or context. Cultural appropriation, regardless of intent, can demean the originating culture by reducing its important elements to a fashion, fetish, or caricature. Appropriation also implies that one is claiming the experience of racial oppression as one's own. Cultural appreciation, on the other hand, is the act of learning about another culture to build understanding and connection.

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## CULTURE

Culture refers to the shared values, rituals, stories, language, and rules of a social group. Every workgroup, office, or firm has a culture that forms its patterns, determines appropriate behavior, and helps its members understand and make meaning of their environment. Every group or organization has a *dominant culture* and, usually, subcultures. Some cultural aspects are visible or explicit (e.g., fashion, language, food), while other aspects are unseen or implicit (e.g., attitudes, gender roles, approach to *work-life integration*). Culture is distinct from but related to *climate*.

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## CULTURE CHANGE

Positive culture change is the process of changing shared ways of thinking and doing. One example is intentionally altering visible and invisible systems that have created advantage for some individuals and groups while disadvantaging others in order to improve culture for all. (See *privilege/white privilege/advantage*.)

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## DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics are a type of statistical data that indicate the number of specific *identity groups* within a population. Demographic data reveal the state of *diversity* in an organization but do not offer information on equity and inclusivity concerns. (See *quantitative measurement*.)

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## DESIGN THINKING

In the context of these guides, design thinking is an approach used to produce both physical and social design solutions that combine insights from users with a designer's creative expression, similar to *human-centered design*. Architects who use design thinking processes can share power in idea generation and decision-making with users, local communities, and other stakeholders. (See *community engagement*.)

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## DISABILITY/DISABLED/PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES/DIFFERENTLY ABLED / DIVERSE ABILITIES

Disabilities are limitations that affect the basic activities of life, such as hearing, seeing, walking, breathing, cognition, and learning. Person-first language means using the term “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people,” while identity-first language—where one feels their disability to be an intrinsic part of their identity—calls for descriptions such as “deaf person” or “disabled.” “Differently abled,” “diverse abilities,” and “Diversability®” are also in use; however, according to the National Center on Disability and Journalism, differently abled can be seen as condescending or avoidant, and Diversability® is a proper name created by the advocacy organization mydiversability.com.

A general rule would be to ask what the person’s or organization’s preferred terminology is and, if that is not possible, to use people-first language and terms like “the disability community” or “disability activists.”<sup>15</sup> (See *accessibility/accessible design*.)

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## DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination results from actions, whether rooted in conscious or unconscious *bias*, that favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities.<sup>16</sup> In the U.S., federal law prohibits discrimination in certain contexts and against members of protected classes.

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## DIVERSITY (Social, Professional)

As used in the guides, diversity has two meanings. First, it refers to a mix of people with a wide range of visible and invisible personal and group characteristics, backgrounds, experiences, and preferences.<sup>17</sup> The term is also used in the guides to note the differences between building industry disciplines, the aims and agendas of firms, or roles on a project team.

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## DOMINANT CULTURE/IDENTITIES

Dominant culture consists of the values, beliefs, and practices that are the most common and influential within a society or group. The dominant culture is often seen as the norm, the preferred, or the “right” one in a society, organization, or institution.<sup>18</sup> Dominant identities are those that are seen as the norm in a particular cultural situation and generally benefit the most in that culture. (See *norms*.)

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## DOUBLE BIND

Double bind is a type of no-win situation in which one must choose between two undesirable outcomes, generally experienced by members of the *nondominant* group. Women, for instance, when navigating the line between likeability and respect, find that they are expected to achieve both but are often perceived as being unable to do so. In negotiation, a double bind refers to a situation in which a speaker’s communication style contradicts expectations based in conscious or unconscious *bias*. For example, Black job seekers can be affected by an unconscious expectation that they will be passive in a salary negotiation. If the Black applicant negotiates similarly to a white applicant, the Black applicant is therefore seen as aggressive and may be penalized in the negotiation; if they do not negotiate, they will not benefit—hence the double bind.

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## DOWNSIZING

Downsizing is the process of reducing the number of employees in a firm to alleviate financial pressure, improve its financial performance, or align with revised goals. Downsizing can be an equity issue when it disproportionately affects groups that are underrepresented in the office.

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## EDI

EDI is an acronym for *equity*, *diversity*, and *inclusion*. Variations include DEI, D&I, and JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion). (See *social justice*.)

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## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is the degree to which employees are “highly involved and enthusiastic in their work and workplace.”<sup>19</sup> It exists at a deeper level than what is commonly thought of as employee satisfaction or employee *commitment* and can involve a wide range of cognitive, behavioral, social, cultural, and organizational elements that can improve or hinder engagement in the workplace (e.g., workplace conditions, how employees perceive their relationship with their work, how employees view others’ relationships to their work).<sup>20</sup> It is key to a healthy workplace *culture* and has a significant impact on productivity, turnover, and retention.

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## EQUALITY

Equality is a form of fairness achieved by treating people with *dominant* and *nondominant* identities in the same manner, whatever the disparities may be at their starting points. Equal treatment, however well-intentioned, may sustain inequities. The term is often used in contrast with *equity*.

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## EQUITY

Equity is the state in which everyone is treated in a manner that results in equal opportunity and access, according to their individual needs. Equity in the workplace requires identifying and eliminating barriers that have disadvantaged *nondominant* identity groups to assure that all individuals receive equitable treatment, opportunity, and advancement regardless of identity; it also means that some individuals will need more support than others.

Equity differs from *equality* or *parity*. The guides focus on equity rather than equality because our society operates on an uneven playing field. Inherent power differentials have resulted in disparate treatment, usually based on identity. Given the profound structural disparities and vastly different starting points, focusing on equality by giving everyone the same support would not accomplish the goal of just outcomes.

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## EXIT INTERVIEWS

An exit interview is a method of gathering qualitative data about the factors that led to an employee’s departure and about their experience working in the firm. They can be conducted internally or by a third party. Information gained from exit interviews can help a firm determine the greatest needs for change to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion. (See *qualitative measurement*.)

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## EXTERNAL EQUITY

External equity occurs when a firm structures its compensation system based on the compensation structures of other comparable organizations they perceive as equitable.

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## FACILITATION/FACILITATOR

Facilitation is the act of guiding a conversation or process to an agreed-upon outcome. The architect can assume the role of facilitator to engage with communities and/or building users to elicit their input and solutions. A strong facilitator gains the trust of all parties and helps bridge differences. Facilitation practices may include large-group, small-group, paired, and individual input and idea generation; verbal and nonverbal exercises; and synchronous or asynchronous idea generating and consensus building.

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## FLEXIBILITY/FLEXIBLE WORK/FLEXTIME

Flexibility is the ability to manage how, where, and when work gets done and, in the longer term, how people navigate their careers.<sup>21</sup> Flexible work (or workplace flexibility) involves workplace arrangements with employees that allow for schedule and location flexibility. Types of flexible work can include flexible hours (or flextime), compressed workweeks, part-time work, *job sharing*, and working from home, in a satellite office, or on the move.<sup>22</sup> Flexibility can affect *employee engagement* and perceptions of fairness if the process for granting flexibility is unclear, unfair, or different in application than is outlined in policy.

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## FULFILLMENT

When employees feel they have achieved something valuable from their work, they experience work-related fulfillment. For some employees, fulfillment may be a more important goal than *work-life flexibility* or integration. It can be helpful for employers to know the relative importance of fulfillment compared to other aspects of work for each employee.

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## GENDER IDENTITY/GENDER EXPRESSION

As opposed to *sexual orientation*, which refers to who one is attracted to, gender identity refers to one's own deeply-held self-concept—female, male, both, or another—and may be the same as or different from the sex assigned at birth; it also may change over time. Gender identity is not necessarily visible to others; gender expression refers to how one chooses to manifest gender, whether, for example, in name, pronouns, dress, behavior, body, or voice. One should not make an assumption about another person's gender identity or expression, no matter how they are manifested. (See *cisgender*, *LGBTQIA+*.)

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## GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification takes place when historically undervalued properties become attractive to outsiders who then target a community for reinvestment. This revaluation of resources results in the displacement of at least some of the original community, if not all, as rents and housing prices increase. The influx of money leads to improvements to housing and the urban environment—improvements that the former residents may have wanted or fought for but lacked the political and financial power to attain. Gentrification may offer some benefits to the residents who remain, but it also often has detriments, such as the loss of a neighborhood's cultural and social history.

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## GROUPTHINK

Groupthink is the tendency for a group to draw conclusions or make decisions without sufficient critical thinking or questioning. Diversity and, especially, inclusiveness, can provide the multiple perspectives that result in more reasoned outcomes. Groupthink tends to suppress innovation and can result in risky or dangerous outcomes. In an often-cited example, “launch fever,” collective complacency, and disregard of dissent about a design flaw led to the fatal Challenger space shuttle explosion.<sup>23</sup>

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## HARASSMENT

Harassment consists of words or actions communicated with malice, overt or concealed, and with the conscious or unconscious purpose of attacking or intimidating another person. The act relies on a person's vulnerability, typically based on such factors as race, ethnicity, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, or disability (mental, physical, or sensory).<sup>24</sup> Workplace harassment interferes with an individual's work performance, career, and well-being, creates a hostile work environment, and undermines equity goals; it may put firms at legal risk and damages the profession's reputation. (See *sexual harassment*, *microaggressions*, *subtle acts of exclusion*.)

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## HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

Human-centered design is a *design thinking* practice that considers users to be cocreators in the design process, especially in the inspiration phase and in ideation and implementation. Human-centered designers call upon characteristics and qualities such as creative confidence, learning from failure, empathy, optimism, embracing ambiguity, and iteration as part and parcel of the design process and key to making the user's needs and values a focus of the design.

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## IDENTITY GROUPS

In the guides, “identity” refers to labels that categorize individuals' social identities, both visible and invisible, such as gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, age, national origin, immigration status, political leanings, and socioeconomic status. Everyone has multiple identities, and in different contexts, different categories will come to the fore or will be different from the *dominant* group's. In addition, what others perceive as a person's social identity group may not be an identity that the person chooses to claim, or it may be incorrect if based on assumptions drawn from, for example, physical features or language fluency. (See *intersectionality*, *stereotypes*, *target identity*, *agent identity*.)

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## IMPLICIT BIAS (see *bias*)

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## INCLUSION

Inclusion is manifested in an environment in which everyone feels welcomed, respected, supported, safe, and valued. In the workplace, inclusion generally results in everyone developing and contributing to the best of their ability. Inclusion is distinct from but related to *equity* and *diversity*.

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## INFORMATION ASYMMETRY

When one party has access to more or better information than another for decision-making, power is asymmetrical. In negotiation, for example, when employers have greater knowledge about the distribution of wages than workers, there is information asymmetry. This imbalance can potentially suppress wage increases by limiting a worker's ability and inclination to negotiate for higher pay.<sup>25</sup>

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## INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional racism refers to the practices and policies by social, economic, and political institutions that distribute power, resources, and access to opportunities in ways that chronically favor one racial group and disadvantage another. One significant example in the built environment is the practice of *redlining*. (See *structural racism/systemic racism/structural racialization*, *-ism*.)

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## INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE/INTERCULTURAL CAPACITY

In the guides, intercultural competence (or intercultural capacity) is the ability of individuals and groups to deeply understand and value cultural differences and to shift or adapt thinking and behaviors to achieve shared goals. Building intercultural competence is one of the most effective ways of achieving *equity* goals since it helps address conscious and unconscious biases as well as individual, group, and institutional practices that are barriers to equity and inclusion. Intercultural competence is different from cultural fluency or cultural competence, which emphasizes knowledge and understanding of other cultures. It is also different from *acculturation*, which refers specifically to nondominant people fitting into the dominant culture.

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## INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Intercultural development is the progress in stages toward cultural self-awareness and cultural other-awareness that helps to more effectively understand and bridge cultural differences; (See *bias*, *bridging/bridging cultural differences*, *mindset*.)

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## INTERSECTIONALITY

Every person possesses an array of identities and social categorizations, each with its own characteristics and each subject to *stereotypes* and *biases*. One individual may find certain of these identities more salient or may choose to identify with or highlight some more than others. They will likely manifest these identities differently than another person who has the same set of identities. In addition, people may respond to one category more than another in an individual, regardless of that person's own sense of identity. Until recently, the interplay of multiple factors, such as race and gender, gender and class, or race, class, and sexuality, was not generally recognized. However, these interconnections create overlapping and interconnected systems of attributes, with resultant degrees of power, advantages or disadvantages, and discrimination. This framework is "intersectionality." (See *target identity*, *agent identity*, *identity groups*.)

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## -ISM

Ism is a term for those societal systems that cause or perpetuate *discrimination* or oppression against a particular target group, e.g., racism, sexism, genderism, and ableism (discrimination against people with disabilities), classism, ageism (discrimination against people deemed too young or old), colorism (favoring lighter skin), nativeism, lookism, sizeism. (See *target identity*, *institutional racism*, *structural racism/systemic racism/structural racialization*, *gender identity/gender expression*.)

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## JOB CRAFTING

Job crafting is the process of redesigning or customizing one's own job in ways that engender satisfaction, engagement, career *resilience*, and thriving at work.<sup>26</sup> (See *lattice*.)

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## JOB SHARING

Job sharing is a type of flexible work arrangement in which two or more part-time employees within one firm share the responsibilities of one full-time position.<sup>27</sup>

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## JUSTICE/RACIAL JUSTICE/SOCIAL JUSTICE/DESIGN JUSTICE

Justice, or social justice, denotes the assurance of fair treatment; equal economic, political, and social rights; and equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It also encompasses a repairing of past wrongs, transformative justice, and accountability. For example, the call for racial justice in the U.S. includes a case for reparations (financial or nonfinancial) to those whose ancestors were enslaved and who continue to endure the legacy of slavery, segregation, racially-motivated violence, and discrimination.<sup>28</sup> Design justice advocates for the potential role of architects and architecture in redressing racial injustice and inequitable power structures, including through investment in repairing the infrastructure of neglected communities.<sup>29</sup>

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## LABYRINTH

The labyrinth is a metaphor for describing a career path that is not a ladder but more like a maze. A more diverse workforce generates larger variation in career paths—for instance, working mothers generally have disproportionate family-care responsibilities, and students from underserved populations often carry work, school, and other care responsibilities that result in résumés that diverge significantly from the traditional. (See *lattice*.)

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## LADDER OF COMPETENCE

The Ladder of Competence (or Conscious Competence Ladder) is a simple, self-administered tool for assessing degrees of awareness and capability. It can help individuals and firms recognize where they stand in terms of their current EDI knowledge or skill, where they need to develop, and how they might frame persuasive arguments to address EDI needs. (See the diagram in the *Measuring Progress* guide.)

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## LATTICE

The lattice metaphor describes a career pathway in which pace, workload, work location, and work times vary over the course of a career. Lattice systems are developed between the individual and firm and are based on the premise that there can be multiple pathways to a successful career. Navigating a lattice allows the employee to move faster or slower during their career or even to change direction as a worker's life and goals change over time.

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## LIBERATION

Liberation is the result of repairing past injustices and removing impediments to individual and collective growth so that everyone can exist and thrive. (See *justice/racial justice/social justice/design justice*.)

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## LGBT/ LGBTQ/ LGBTQIA+

As understanding of the variety of *sexual orientations* and *gender identities* has evolved, so has the vocabulary to express it. The acronym LGBTQ stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer,” although Q has sometimes been thought to mean “questioning.” Transgender (not “transgendered,” which is not an accepted word) refers to people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the sex they were originally assigned, as opposed to *cisgender*. Queer, originally a pejorative, has been reclaimed as a self-affirming term. When used by a heterosexual person, however, it may still be perceived as demeaning.

Recently, to be even more inclusive, the acronym now sometimes incorporates IA+, for intersex, asexual (or, less often, *ally*), and forms of gender and sexuality that do not yet have descriptions. Intersex refers to having biological sex characteristics—visible or invisible—that do not conform with typical ideas of what a male or female body includes.

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## MEANINGFUL WORK

Meaningful work is that which has significance to an employee and aligns with their values. Researchers have defined it as work involving the development of the inner self, unity with others, service to others, and the expression of one's full potential.<sup>30</sup> Having meaningful work increases employee happiness and resilience and plays a major role in employee satisfaction and retention.

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## MENTORSHIP

Mentorship is a relationship in which a more experienced person provides guidance, encouragement, feedback, and/or skills development to a less experienced person. Formal mentoring programs, usually managed by an HR professional or department or by a professional organization, create a pool of capable, highly skilled, promotable employees. Formal programs may include one-to-one (senior-junior), *reverse mentorship*, *reciprocal mentorship*, group mentorship, or a personal board of directors (a group of mentors who fulfill different needs). Informal mentorships are initiated by the mentor or mentee. Successful mentoring programs create a supportive culture, establish clear structures, and ensure accountability.<sup>31</sup> Having a formal program or a mentoring culture fosters a sense of inclusion and demonstrates to employees that the firm cares about their careers. (See *sponsorship*.)

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## MERIT

Merit is a quality that a culture deems to be good and worthy of praise or reward, such as a bonus or a pay increase. Within an organization, what counts as merit is often determined by the *dominant* culture, and therefore *bias* can taint seemingly objective determinations of what is good.

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## METRICS

Metrics, or measures of equity, diversity, and inclusion, help establish *baselines* and inform the development of EDI initiatives. Subsequent metrics can help track the impact of those initiatives over time to allow progress to be acknowledged, programs and activities modified, and new goals set.

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## MICROAGGRESSION

A microaggression is a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of discrimination against members of a nondominant group.<sup>32</sup> Microaggressions range from subtle to overt, all of which can affect the work environment. Especially when accumulated over time, microaggressions can cause feelings of insecurity, self-doubt, and anger and can lead to unwanted turnover. Examples of microaggression include unduly questioning the judgment of a man of color or a woman within their own area of expertise, requesting more evidence of their competence than from their culturally dominant counterparts, interrupting them, or taking credit for their contributions. These acts rise to the level of *harassment* if they are persistent and/or severe. (See *subtle acts of exclusion*.)

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## MINDSET

A mindset is the established attitudes or worldview, informed or formed by culture, held by an individual. In the context of the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC), a theory of how individuals and groups experience cultural differences, mindsets span from monocultural to intercultural. The IDC provides five developmental mindsets—denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation.

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## NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS)

The Net Promoter Score (NPS®) is an indicator generally used to evaluate customer experiences but applicable to employees as well. The NPS can be taken as part of a larger survey annually or measured on its own quarterly, or even monthly, as a measure of progress.<sup>33</sup>

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## NETWORKS / NETWORKING

Professional networks are built through the personal ties or relationships that an individual has and the people they interact with during their career.<sup>34</sup> Networking is the social process of initiating and building these relationships. Increasing access to diverse networks of mentors, sponsors, and peer groups can support the advancement of currently underrepresented individuals or groups.

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## NONDOMINANT CULTURE / IDENTITIES

Nondominant culture consists of the values, beliefs, and practices that are assumed to be different from the dominant culture within a given society. Nondominant identities are those that are seen as the “other” in any given cultural situation. (See *dominant culture/identities*, *agent identity*, *target identity*.)

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## NORMS

Norms are the cultural and social expectations and rules that guide behaviors. They are a key ingredient in culture as they shape how groups determine what is an appropriate action, including defining the “right” decisions.

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## OFFICE HOUSEWORK

Office housework consists of tasks that include literal housekeeping, administrative work, and emotional work.<sup>35</sup> Tasks may include scheduling, note-taking, social planning, managing documents, emotional comforting, etc. Research shows that office housework is assigned to, or assumed to be the responsibility of, women more often than men.

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## OFF-RAMP/ON-RAMP

The *Advancing Careers* guide uses the terms “off-ramp” and “on-ramp” to mean pathways for exiting and reentering the workplace for personal reasons.<sup>36</sup> Intentional off-ramping and on-ramping can help employers improve retention and help employees maintain or even upgrade skills while on leave and when they return.

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## ONBOARDING

Onboarding is a formal process used to introduce employees to a company and provide them with the tools and information they will need to succeed. Lacking a formal onboarding process can disadvantage the new employee, exacerbate inequality, and squander an opportunity to broaden firm culture through “culture add” rather than “culture fit.”

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## ONLY

An only is the sole member of a *target identity* group in a team or organization. They are sometimes unfairly expected by others to represent the opinions, beliefs, or behaviors of their entire identity group and, at the same time, to depart from them and conform to the norms of the agent identity group. Being the only adds extra pressure to perform and can lead to unwanted departure. (See *acculturation/assimilation*, *double bind*, *tokenism*.)

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## ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Organizational assessment is central to advancing a firm’s equity, diversity, and inclusion goals. It involves gathering data to examine an organization’s systems, policies, and practices, the results of which can then be translated into concrete individual-performance goals for managers and firm leaders. Ongoing, repeated use of assessment tools or instruments (e.g., surveys, interviews) provides data to analyze whether an organization’s goals are met and can reveal organizational strengths to direct changes. (See *baseline*, *benchmark*.)

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## PARITY/PAY PARITY

Parity refers to the state of being equal, equivalent, or in close correspondence in nature or quantity. Pay parity is equal pay for equal work, when two comparable employees do work that is substantially equal for the same compensation.<sup>37</sup> The term “parity” is often used interchangeably with *equality* but is used in these guides with a distinct focus on pay.

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## PEOPLE OF COLOR/BIPOC

BIPOC (usually pronounced “bye-pock”) stands for “Black, Indigenous, and people of color,” an expansion of POC (“P.O.C.”), or people of color. POC is in common use as a broad category to describe people who are not white, or not of European origin. (See *white/Caucasian*.) The term “people of color” can help create political solidarity among marginalized groups. However, using a single term to refer to an agglomeration of very diverse groups overlooks the fact that each racial group has distinct shared experiences, history, and perspectives. The limitations of using an overarching term such as POC became clear after the 2020 killing of George Floyd, followed by increased, intensified Black Lives Matter protests worldwide, which expanded public awareness of policing practices and police brutality and brought greater demands for justice and equity. The term BIPOC was seen as more accurately calling attention to the perspectives of and particular challenges faced by Black and Indigenous people; however, it has also been viewed as too reductive.<sup>38</sup> BIPOC is one of several new and ever-evolving acronyms and terms such as ALANA (Asian, Latinx, African, and Native American), Latinx, and womxn. See *Introduction* for more for more discussion on the debates surrounding language and acronyms.)

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## PERFORMANCE/PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Employee performance refers to how well an employee executes job-related duties. Performance reviews are a formal way for employees to receive feedback, making work expectations clear and providing pathways for advancement. Performance reviews can contribute or detract from equity since evaluations can be prone to *bias*. For example, research shows men are often evaluated on their potential while women are evaluated on accomplishments.<sup>39</sup>

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## PINCH POINTS

A term used in the Equity by Design (EQxD) survey analysis, pinch points are milestones or especially demanding career stages when challenges arise and cause *work-life conflict* or *burnout*. The EQxD surveys identified five pinch points: education, “paying dues,” licensure, working caregivers, and the glass ceiling.

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## PIPELINE

The pipeline, also called the recruitment pipeline in the guides, is the pool of potential talent or candidates who are ready to fill positions in architecture firms. Conscious efforts to expose diverse people to architecture and introduce the idea that architecture is a potential career path, beginning at school age, can increase diversity in the field.

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## POLITICAL CAPITAL

Political capital is the accumulated goodwill, resources, and leverage gained through relationships between professionals. As discussed in the guides, one of the distinguishing characteristics of a sponsor is someone who risks their own political capital to protect and/or advance a protégé. (See *sponsorship*.)

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## POWER/POWER DYNAMICS

Workplace power is the ability to influence or control another person. Sources of power in the workplace can be internal, such as having confidence (psychological power), or external, such as the power derived from one’s organizational position in a hierarchy, being a member of a *dominant culture*, or having an *agent identity*. Power dynamics appear as the relative levels of power within interactions or the power imbalances that occur in relationships between individuals or groups. (See *target identity*.)

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## PRIVILEGE / WHITE PRIVILEGE / ADVANTAGE

In the context of EDI, privilege—notably white privilege—refers to the unearned benefits that a *dominant* or agent group enjoys simply on the basis of its identity, and is often oblivious to. Many people in the profession of architecture are white and male, and therefore have an *agent identity*, whether or not they wish to. Having one or more agent identities does not mean that one knowingly or purposefully uses the power of one's identity unfairly over members of *target* groups, but such a person nonetheless benefits from the privilege of agency. Becoming aware of advantages is the first step in learning how to use identity to make positive change.<sup>40</sup>

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## PRODUCTIVITY/EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Employee productivity is a measure of how much value employees are creating relative to time worked (productivity = output/input). Unlike in manufacturing work, which produces quantitative data, the productivity of knowledge and creative work is difficult to measure. Generally, architecture employees who are engaged can be counted on to produce timely, high-quality work in the form of creative, useful ideas and decisions. An equitable workplace with supportive management, team-building efforts, a positive team culture, an inclusive work environment, autonomy, mutual goal setting, and fair and transparent pay structures all contribute to productivity.

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## PRONOUNS

Increasingly, with recognition of the fluidity and expansiveness of gender identity and, often, its independence from biological definitions of sex, people are choosing pronouns other than she, her, hers or he, him, his, such as they, them, theirs or ze, zir, zirs, as well as titles such as Mx. rather than Ms. or Mr. These are sometimes referred to as “preferred gender pronouns,” or PGPs.<sup>41</sup>

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## PROTECTED CLASS/PROTECTED GROUP/PROTECTED STATUS

In the U.S., nine classes, or groups (based on sex, race, age, disability, color, creed, national origin, religion, and genetic information), receive special protected status against employment discrimination (including *sexual harassment*) by federal law. Some states and jurisdictions give protected status to additional groups.

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## PROTÉGÉ

A protégé is an employee being nurtured and endorsed by a sponsor. Typically high-potential, high-performing, and exemplary, these employees receive the overt support of their sponsors in career advancement. In return, they justify their sponsor's esteem and make their sponsors look good in front of their colleagues. Protégés are generally discussed as a pair (sponsor/protégé) and in contrast to mentor/mentee. Sponsors need to be aware of the tendency to favor people who are similar to themselves. (See *affinity bias*, *sponsorship*.)

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## PUBLIC INTEREST ARCHITECTURE

Also known as “community design” and “public interest design,” public interest architecture is grounded in the belief shared by many architects that every person should be able to live in a socially, economically, and environmentally healthy community.<sup>42</sup> (See the *Community Engagement* guide.)

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## QUALITATIVE MEASUREMENT

Qualitative data are observable, non-numerical data. This type of data conveys perceptions and stories of employee experiences that contribute to hypotheses and ideas for action and reveal EDI progress over time. Qualitative data can be collected through climate surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, client surveys, direct observation, and formal or informal conversations. Although qualitative measurement is distinct from, but at least as valuable as, its quantitative counterpart, both require the strictest attention to confidentiality. (See *quantitative measurement*.)

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## QUANTITATIVE MEASUREMENT

Quantitative measurements are focused on numbers and indicate EDI progress from a *baseline* when standardized and tracked consistently over time. They can also be compared with *benchmarks* and profession-wide data. Quantitative data can be collected using climate surveys; payroll, work-hour, vacation, and turnover statistics; and client surveys. Both quantitative and qualitative data require strict attention to confidentiality. (See *qualitative measurement*.)

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## RECIPROCAL MENTORSHIP

Reciprocal mentorship is a type of two-way mentoring relationship between individuals in which each party offers advice and career assistance to the other in the spirit of mutual learning. Reciprocal mentorships are typically conceived to help senior professionals learn new skills and for junior professionals to familiarize themselves with more traditional skills and knowledge. They can have other benefits, such as revealing differences in career stages as they relate to social context, language, *mindsets*, and *culture*.

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## REDLINING

Redlining is a discriminatory practice of de facto segregation that excludes, most often, Black people from some neighborhoods by denial of mortgages and other services. When the Fair Housing Act passed in 1968, it became possible, in theory, for anyone to buy a home anywhere in the U.S.; however, the history of redlining and neighborhood covenants meant that the homes of many people of color had appreciated in value far more slowly than others, rendering nonredlined homes beyond the reach of those whose financial equity had not increased as much. Redlining is considered one of the clearest examples of *institutional racism* that has disadvantaged Black people and communities.

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## RESILIENCE (Community, Career)

In the guides, resilience has two meanings. In the *Community Engagement* guide, resilience concerns the ability to recover from natural and manmade crises, as well as the connection between equity, inclusiveness, and environmental performance within a community.

In the *Advancing Careers* guide, resilience refers to an employee's capacity to adapt and overcome stress and adversity, meet obstacles head on, and bounce back from challenges quickly.

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## RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Quantitative return on investment measures percentage gained or lost compared with the original amount invested. Part of the business case for EDI is built on objective measures of ROI, such as reduced turnover and increased productivity. Qualitative ROI studies measure factors such as time, quality of work, societal benefit, relationship building, and risk. As discussed in the *Measuring Progress* guide, qualitative metrics can be at least as valuable in assessing the effectiveness of interventions and programs, if the current and desired future states are clearly articulated. (See *qualitative measurement*, *quantitative measurement*.)

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## REVERSE MENTORSHIP

In reverse mentorship the more junior individual mentors the more senior person, giving the more senior mentee knowledge about recent professional developments, such as those related to technology, social changes, and generational differences. The junior mentor also provides perspectives from their earlier career stage.

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## SALARY BANDS/PAY BANDS

Salary bands, or pay bands, are a set of salary ranges for particular jobs, responsibilities, and skills. They provide objective salary information and criteria, which ensure that current (and possibly prospective) employees know what salary ranges to expect and can, ultimately, counter bias.

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## SALARY DATA

Knowledge of salary data, which includes information on salary levels in different geographic areas, firm types, disciplines, and jobs, can help firms and employees alike in negotiating equitable, mutually agreeable compensation. Firms, employees, and prospective employees should be aware of laws regarding the sharing of salary data. (See *wage transparency*.)

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## SALARY HISTORY

The history of an employee's salary over time, salary history has often been a determinant of future earnings. Knowing a prospective employee's salary history can lead an employer to demonstrate *anchoring bias* during negotiations, leading to *wage gaps* that increase over time. Therefore, some states' laws prohibit employers from asking candidates for their salary history prior to making an offer of employment.

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## SATISFACTION/EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Typically measured through surveys, employee satisfaction (also called job satisfaction and career satisfaction in the guides) is the degree to which employees feel satisfied with elements of their jobs, such as workload, management oversight, and working conditions. Employee satisfaction is related to but differs from *employee engagement*, although both are important elements of a healthy workplace and in employee retention—while satisfaction increases retention, engagement strengthens productivity.

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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that is offensive, intimidating, or threatening and is directed at an individual or group because of their sex or gender identity or expression. Sexual harassment appears in various forms, including “quid pro quo” (real or implied promises of preferential treatment for submitting to sexual conduct or threats of retribution for refusing to submit); and “hostile work environment” (interfering with someone's ability to do their job by directing unwelcome conduct of a threatening, offensive, or sexual nature at the individual). There are various measures of sexual harassment, including severity and persistence.<sup>43</sup> (See *harassment* and the Compliance section of the *Workplace Culture* guide for more detail.)

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## SEXUAL ORIENTATION/SEXUAL PREFERENCE

One's sexual orientation is their enduring attraction—romantic, emotional, or sexual—to people of certain sexual identities or genders. Sexual preference implies a mere partiality or fondness, and therefore a choice, rather than an essential part of one's identity; therefore, it can be considered a term of disrespect and should be avoided. Sexual orientation is different from *gender identity*, as illustrated in the aphorism: sexual orientation is who you go to bed with; gender identity is who you go to bed as. (See *pronouns*, *cisgender*.)

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## SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is grounded in the belief that all people deserve fair and equal treatment, rights, and protection with respect to physical and psychological safety and security, political access, and economic opportunity. It is achieved through social movements and public policy, and by the responses of institutions that act to distribute or redistribute resources (power, wealth, education, healthcare, etc.) equitably. Social justice also includes acknowledgment, apology, and reparations for past injustices. (See *EDI*.)

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## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social responsibility is the belief that individuals and/or organizations have an obligation to take actions that benefit society at large and also includes the practice of doing so.

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## SOCIOECONOMICS / SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS / BACKGROUND

Socioeconomics is the relationship between social and economic processes and factors. Socioeconomic status or background is the social and economic status or standing of an individual or group, often measured through a combination of factors, including income, education, and occupation.<sup>44</sup> Learning about and understanding socioeconomics and the socioeconomic status of different groups can help reveal inequities in access to resources, privilege, professional opportunities, and power in society.<sup>45</sup>

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## SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship takes the form of using one's political capital to advocate on behalf of a protégé. Sponsors are senior-level members of a firm who notice talent and potential in more junior professionals and take a vested interest in their advancement, making protégés more visible and championing for access to challenging opportunities and promotions. Compared with mentors, sponsors take greater risks, as their own reputations are on the line. (See *mentorship*.)

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## STEREOTYPE THREAT

Studies have found that being reminded of negative *stereotypes*—racial, ethnic, gender, cultural—tends to produce conformity with them and affects academic and workplace performance negatively. This effect can be countered with reminders that stereotypes are not predictive, and by encouraging a growth *mindset* (the state of believing that people can continue to develop through dedication to improvement).<sup>46</sup>

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## STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes are preconceived and oversimplified ideas about a group that attribute specific characteristics to all members of that group without acknowledging individual differences. They are distinct from generalizations emerging from research and are frequently negative, based on little information, and highly generalized.<sup>47</sup> (See *bias*.)

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## STRUCTURAL RACISM / SYSTEMIC RACISM / STRUCTURAL RACIALIZATION

Structural, or systemic, racism or racialization results from the interaction of systems, ideologies, processes, and social and cultural influences that create and maintain inequities among racial and ethnic groups. Members of *dominant* groups typically benefit from the *privileges* that structural racism offers them, and may consciously or unconsciously perpetuate these frameworks, regardless of any claim or denial of individual racism. Framing racism at a structural level invites examination of the interconnected structures, such as public education, housing, safety, physical environments, access to capital, and adequate employment, that combine to sustain privilege or disadvantages. (See *institutional racism*, *antiracism*, *-ism*.)<sup>48</sup>

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## SUBTLE ACTS OF EXCLUSION (SAE)

Coined as a more accessible term for *microaggressions*, SAEs are everyday, often momentary, actions and behaviors that reinforce a feeling of nonbelonging among people with *target identities*.<sup>49</sup>

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## TARGET IDENTITY

A target identity is a social-identity group that is discriminated against, marginalized, oppressed, or exploited by the dominant culture or dominant culture's institutions. Target identity coincides with but is distinct from minority or nondominant group. In any given situation, there are likely to be multiple agent and target identities, and the interrelationships, or intersections, may be complex. (See *agent identity*, *dominant culture/identities*, *nondominant culture/identities*, *intersectionality*.)

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## TOKENISM

Tokenism is the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to give the appearance of gender or racial equality within a workforce by recruiting only one or a few people from an underrepresented group.<sup>50</sup> It can be perceived as a cover-up for perpetuating bias if diversity has been accomplished without inclusion or equity. In architecture, tokenism is often seen in situations in which a single person from a *target identity* is seemingly present primarily to help a firm or project team get a commission or avoid criticism about a lack of diversity. (See *only*.)

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## TURNOVER

Turnover is the loss of employees who then need to be replaced. The cost of turnover can be more than three times an annual salary.<sup>51</sup>

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## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS (see *bias*)

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## UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Broader than *accessibility*, universal design calls for environments and products to be usable by anyone, without the need for separation, adaptation, or specialized design. Universal design includes innovations such as curb cuts or doors that open automatically when someone approaches, which allow equal access for people with strollers, wheelchairs users, or delivery people. Cocreating and testing with a variety of people helps target potential innovations and improvements.

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## VALUES

Values are principles that individuals or organizations consider to be essential: they guide and mold decisions and behavior. Values define what we consider to be right and wrong. They are subjective and develop early in life, shaped by our direct experiences and observation of the behaviors of those important to us, such as parents or friends, and how they treat others. Values can also be instilled through life experience, education, religion, etc. Because they are deeply rooted, values resist change.<sup>52</sup>

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## WAGE GAP

The wage gap is the difference in the average pay between two different groups of people. Wage gaps primarily result from pay inequity. Differences in identity roles and norms both respond to and cause wage gaps, creating a cycle that may perpetuate wage gaps unless interrupted. (See *salary bands/pay bands*.)

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## WAGE TRANSPARENCY

Wage transparency is the act of making a firm's salary information visible to employees. While some employers do not promote wage transparency and prefer that employees not share such information, some states have laws that protect workers from retaliation for sharing wage information. (See *salary data*.)

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## WHITE/CAUCASIAN

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, "white" refers to "people having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa."<sup>53</sup> In practice, it also refers to people primarily of European descent with light complexions. Because in the U.S. white has been the dominant racial category, it has received the least scrutiny as a term or as a cultural grouping by white people themselves. (See *people of color/BIPOC*.)

The term "Caucasian" stems from an 18th-century hierarchical view of race, in which people originating in the Caucasus region were deemed to be the ideal form of humanity, as opposed to other, "degenerate" races of humans. This system of racial classification was adopted in the U.S. to justify slavery and other forms of discrimination.<sup>54</sup> Because of this history, the guides only use the word "white."

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## WORK-LIFE CONFLICT

Work-life conflict is the imbalance that occurs when workplace demands impinge on personal responsibilities and interests.<sup>55</sup> Sources of work-life conflict can be the number of hours worked, how work time is scheduled, deadline pressure, and career pinch points, such as preparation for licensure, that create extra demands on employees. Not everyone wishes to have *work-life* integration or balance; some may prefer total separation between the two. "Reducing work-life conflict" describes most people's desired state.

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## WORK-LIFE FLEXIBILITY/INTEGRATION/FIT/BALANCE

Different employees have different ideals about the relationship between work and life outside, described as work-life flexibility, balance, integration, or fit. Most workers desire coordination between work and personal life, but their preferences and their ability to choose separation or integration of work and outside life, and how much of each they wish to have, vary. (See *fulfillment*.)

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