



AIA Business Academy

“What’s in it for me?” Toolkit

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About the program

The AIA Business Academy is a premier professional development program that equips architecture and design firm leaders with essential business, strategy, and leadership skills to drive firm prosperity. This seven-month, cohort-based program combines in-person and virtual learning, taught by leading business educators and tailored to the architecture profession. Participants commit to four immersive sessions with time dedicated to applied learning between meetings and can earn up to 22.75 LUs. Below are key details and resources to support your case for participation.

Key benefits to you and your firm

- **Strategic Growth Planning for the Firm:** Participants will shape their firm's long-term vision and create a strategic roadmap through sessions on value, strategy, and business model design—yielding actionable insights for sustainable growth.
- **Improved Business Development & Competitive Edge:** The Academy focuses on relationship-building as a key differentiator, offering strategies to become a trusted advisor while strengthening client partnerships and expanding market reach through negotiation, persuasion, and diversification.
- **Enhanced Leadership & Accountability:** Participants will receive leadership training to strengthen firm decision-making and succession planning through clear business objectives and talent development.
- **Innovative Financial & Operational Strategies:** The program covers business models, integration, mergers & acquisitions, and strategic alliances to equip participants with tools for financial sustainability and long-term profitability.
- **Practical, Actionable Takeaways for Immediate Impact:** The cohort-based program features hands-on exercises and case studies for immediate firm application, while fostering peer learning groups that continue beyond program completion.

Investment

- **Package A (Basic Program):** \$5,799 (Member) | \$7,539 (Non-Member)
- **Package B (Program Plus):** \$6,499 (Member) | \$8,449 (Non-Member)
 - o Includes an AIA25 Conference on Architecture & Design Full Pass, private consultation with expert business coaches (\$400 value), and three business focused AIAU courses (\$170 value)

Program Schedule & Learning Modules

Pre-Course Info Sessions with Instructors

(Virtual and Recorded, December 11, January 26, & February 22)

Program Orientation & Success Session

(Virtual, May 28)

- This is your guided launch into the AIA Business Academy. We'll walk through the syllabus, introduce key tools and platforms, highlight strategies for getting the most value from the program, and answer all logistical questions—setting you up for a confident, successful start.

Session 1: Designing Your Firm's Strategy & Setting a Clear Direction

(In-Person at AIA26, San Diego, June 9, 2026)

- Revisit your firm's purpose, differentiators, and ideal clients while using visual strategy tools (positioning maps, value-proposition canvas, competitive matrices) to analyze where your firm stands and where it can win.
- Draft the first version of a strategic blueprint—a living document that captures key insights and sets the foundation for your firm's growth throughout the program

Session 2: Culture & Collaboration to Support Strategic Growth

(Virtual, July 30, 2026)

- Assess how your firm's existing culture shapes collaboration, accountability, and execution while identifying leadership behaviors and communication habits that strengthen trust and strategic alignment.
- Learn from real-world examples of firms that evolved their cultures to support new ambitions and extract actionable methods to align people, values, and strategy.

Session 3: Effective Decision-Making to Boost Accountability & Profit

(Virtual, November 13, 2026)

- Apply structured decision-making frameworks to client selection, pricing, and project scope while evaluating how culture, incentives, and biases influence choices.
- Use key financial and performance metrics—profitability per client, utilization, pipeline mix—to inform decisions and design accountability systems that support consistent, strategic implementation.

Session 4: From Vision to Roadmap

(In-Person at AIA HQ, Washington, October 27, 2026)

- Build and refine a clear growth roadmap with strategic priorities, initiatives, owners, and KPIs, ensuring alignment across services, client types, and revenue streams.
- Apply structured methods to keep plans current with market conditions and commit to specific next steps supported by accountability mechanisms to drive execution

How to make the case to your employer

Step 1: Align with your firm's goals

- Explain how this program directly supports your firm's objectives, whether in business development, client relations, profitability, or operational efficiency.

Step 2: Emphasize Return on Investment (ROI)

- The program provides actionable strategies that will directly enhance your firm's financial and operational success.
- The included resources, private consultations, and conference ticket offer additional value beyond the course.

Step 3: Highlight Knowledge Transfer

- Commit to sharing insights with your team through presentations, training sessions, or process improvements upon your return.
- Demonstrate how attending will contribute to firm-wide strategic growth.

Step 4: Provide Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Break down the cost of attendance versus the potential business impact.
- Show how the program's insights can drive firm-wide efficiencies, improved client relationships, and increased revenue.

Step 5: Articulate the Key Benefits

- As outlined on page 3 of this document, describe the key benefits the firm will realize by you being upskilled in these areas.

Next steps

1. Write a short proposal to your employer that includes major benefits and expected investment.
2. Secure your spot. Enrollment is limited. Visit [AIA Business Academy | The American Institute of Architects](#) to purchase your package.
3. Need more information? Contact Senior Director, Professional Practice Programs, Rachel Gresham, AIA at Rachelgresham@aia.org.

Example proposal letter:

[Your Name]
[Your Title]
[Your Firm Name]
[Your Email]
[Date]

[Supervisor's Name]
[Supervisor's Title]
[Firm Name]
[Firm Address]

Subject: Request for Approval to Participate in the AIA Business Academy

Dear [Supervisor's Name],

I am writing to request approval to participate in the AIA Business Academy, a professional development program designed to equip participants with essential business, strategy, and leadership skills to drive firm prosperity. The Academy spans seven months and combines in-person and virtual learning by means of four immersive sessions with time dedicated to applied learning between meetings. This cohort-based program will be taught by leading business educators and tailored to the architecture profession. Attending this program will enable me to bring back valuable frameworks, negotiation strategies, and leadership techniques to drive our firm's success.

I believe the following investment would be required for my participation:

- Program Fee (Select Package A or Package B): \$6,499
- Travel & Accommodation (for two in-person sessions): \$2,000 (estimate)
- Meals & Incidentals: \$500
- Total Estimated Cost: \$9,000

This investment will provide access to MBA-level content that is appropriate and applicable to architecture, a one-hour private consultation with business experts, a complimentary ticket to the AIA26 Conference on Architecture & Design in San Diego, and access to business acumen courses on AIAU. Additionally, I will share key insights with our team upon my return to maximize the firm-wide impact of my participation.

I appreciate your consideration of this request and welcome the opportunity to discuss how this program aligns with our firm's strategic goals. Please let me know a convenient time to discuss further.

Thank you for your support.
Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Position]