



# Governance Recommendations

## Executive Summary

The Governance Task Force (GTF) was established by the AIA Board of Directors to evaluate and strengthen the Institute's governance framework, ensuring it is effective, transparent, and representative of the membership it serves. Building on the work of the *2023 Members' Voice Task Force (MVTF)*, the Governance Task Force was charged with determining whether AIA's structure continues to support agile, accountable, and inclusive leadership across the organization.

Over the past year, the Task Force has engaged stakeholders, including, but not limited to, current and former Board members, Strategic Councilors, former Presidents, representatives from the Knowledge Communities, and component executives, to assess AIA's governance model through the lenses of clarity, communication, and accountability. The review confirmed that while AIA's existing structure provides a solid foundation, there are significant opportunities to strengthen the alignment between volunteer leadership, organizational priorities, and member engagement.

Four consistent themes emerged across the Institute:

- **Communication:** Information flow among governance bodies is inconsistent, limiting understanding and engagement.
- **Trust and Transparency:** Members and leaders seek greater insight into decision-making and rationale.
- **Role Clarity:** Overlapping responsibilities among the Board, Strategic Council, and staff create inefficiencies.
- **Representation:** The member voice must be actively and authentically connected to AIA's leadership processes.

Guided by these findings, the Task Force has developed preliminary recommendations to refine AIA's governance structure, ensuring it remains responsive, efficient, and inclusive. As a result, the proposed governance structure includes four interdependent bodies:

1. **Board of Directors** – Serves as AIA's fiduciary and strategic steward, focused on organizational health, accountability, and alignment with the Institute's mission and strategic plan.
2. **Council** – Reconstitutes the Council as a representative body, including state-based and constituency-based individuals, charged with strengthening the conduit between members, components, and national leadership.
3. **Knowledge Advisory Forum (KAF)** – Provides expert, data-driven insight to the Board and Council on practice, policy, and emerging issues.
4. **Board-level Committees** – *Support the Board with fiduciary expertise and support leadership development.*



## Proposed Governance Structure

The proposed governance structure for the American Institute of Architects (AIA) aims to modernize the governance structure, organized around five key principles: clear authority, direct member voice, strengthened leadership pathways, improved transparency, and non-duplicative, efficient processes. The proposed model comprises four interdependent governance bodies: the Board of Directors, the Council, the Knowledge Advisory Forum (KAF), and Board-level Committees. These structural changes are accompanied by enhancements to decision-making processes, strategic planning, communication, and accountability. Collectively, the recommendations position AIA for a more strategic, cohesive, and member-responsive future.

## Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

The Governance Task Force recommends the following phased approach to finalize, approve, and implement the updated governance structure. These steps ensure broad engagement, transparent communication, and coordinated change management across the Institute.

- 1. Stakeholder Engagement and Refinement – Winter to Spring 2026**
  - Continue targeted outreach to components, Knowledge Communities, past leaders, member groups, and staff.
  - Host structured listening sessions and town halls to gather input on proposed changes.
  - Provide opportunities for written comments through AIA.org and component networks.
  - Incorporate feedback into refined recommendations for Board review.
  - Maintain a visible feedback log summarizing themes and adjustments made.
  
- 2. Board Review and Refinement – Spring 2026**
  - Present updated recommendations to the Board for discussion and refinement.
  - Conduct detailed briefings with Officers and committee chairs.
  - Confirm decision-making thresholds, implementation phasing, and interim processes.
  - Finalize the governance model and transition framework for delegate consideration.
  
- 3. Delegate Engagement and Preparation – Summer 2026**
  - Communicate proposed changes to delegates in advance of the Annual Business Meeting.
  - Provide briefing materials, FAQs, governance diagrams, and before/after comparisons.
  - Hold dedicated delegate briefings and open Q&A forums.
  - Collect and address questions to support informed decision-making.
  
- 4. Presentation to Delegates and Decision – Annual Business Meeting, June 2026**



- Present final recommendations to the Delegate Assembly.
- Share clear rationale, expected benefits, and transition plans.
- Immediately publish outcomes and next steps following meeting.

## 5. Phased Implementation

Implementation of the governance recommendations will follow a multi-year, phased approach informed by Board guidance and stakeholder feedback gathered through member and leadership engagement. This approach is intentional—allowing AIA to strengthen governance structures while maintaining organizational stability, supporting leadership transitions, and incorporating input before action.

Early phases focus on establishing foundational structures and clarifying roles and authority. Subsequent phases activate improved planning, decision-making, communication, and leadership development processes. Later phases reinforce a culture of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement.

Beginning in 2027, AIA will monitor implementation progress through annual governance reviews, regular feedback loops with components and advisory bodies, and a yearly report to the Board of Directors that assesses outcomes and recommends adjustments. This iterative, multi-year approach ensures the governance model remains responsive, inclusive, and aligned with the evolving needs of AIA members and the profession.

**Draft for public review and comment: AIA Governance Recommendations**

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