



Mentorship Framework

May, 2026

AIA approach

AIA recognizes that mentorship takes many forms across its global membership, with firms, chapters, committees, and external organizations all contributing to supportive professional networks. This framework is designed to help AIA chapters, firms, committees, and affiliated groups plan, implement, and evaluate inclusive mentorship programs aligned with professional and organizational goals.

AIA is best positioned to strengthen and connect these existing efforts while encouraging the growth of new networks and programs, which may be accessed and updated via the mentor webpage. By developing shared resources, facilitating collaboration among chapters, and elevating both emerging and established initiatives, AIA aims to promote intentional, inclusive mentoring practices that amplify impact across the association and the profession.

Value of mentorship

Mentorship is a powerful driver of career success: supporting professional growth, mental well-being, and long-term retention while fostering a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Across member surveys, equity studies, and research on workforce culture, mentorship consistently emerges as both a core reason members engage with AIA and a persistent gap, particularly for Associates, Emerging Professionals, and underrepresented groups. The findings are consistent: mentoring benefits individuals, organizations, and the profession as a whole by advancing careers for both mentors and mentees, strengthening recruitment outcomes, and improving retention at every level.

For Individuals: Mentoring is transformative. Mentors guide growth, build skills, expand networks, and help mentees navigate challenges, leaving them more confident, capable, and satisfied in their careers.

For Firms: Organizations with mentoring programs see stronger teams, higher retention, and a pipeline of future leaders. Knowledge is shared, collaboration thrives, and employees feel invested in, benefiting the organization overall.

For the Profession: Mentorship helps the architecture field remain vibrant. By passing on expertise, championing diversity, and fostering innovation and lifelong learning, mentorship ensures the profession continues to evolve and thrive.

Five critical elements

The AIA Mentorship Framework outlines five critical elements that should be considered when developing or reviewing a mentorship program. All of which can be adapted to meet the needs of your specific audience:

1. Goals and objectives
2. Staffing / leadership
3. Program structure (type, location, format, schedule)
4. Recruitment and requirements
5. Participant evaluation

For chapters, firms, or committees who are interested in starting a program you will find a planning template, Mentorship Program Quick Start Guide, and numerous resources listed in the Appendix.

1. Goals and objectives—clarity and intentionality is foundational to future success

Goals should align participant expectations, support accountability, and ensure that mentoring contributes meaningfully to professional growth, equity, and organizational impact. Strong mentorship goals are specific, achievable, and tied to clear outcomes. Avoid aspirational language that cannot be measured or supported with resources. Best practices emphasize shared goal-setting, flexibility, and alignment with both individual aspirations and broader professional contexts. Being able to succinctly answer the following questions are key to securing support and resources.

- What are the goals of the program, and how will success be measured?
- How does this program support the goals of your chapter or firm?
- How are those goals related to the broader AIA or profession?

2. Staffing plan—prevent enthusiasm from turning into burnout

Mentorship programs do not need large teams to succeed, but they do require intentional coordination. While one individual should be designated as the primary point of contact to ensure oversight of logistics, communication and volunteers, responsibility should be shared across a small group to prevent burnout and ensure continuity if leadership changes. Responsibilities like recruitment, onboarding, matching, evaluation, and logistics can often be shared.

- Who will serve as the coordinator or primary point of contact?
- Are there additional volunteers or committees that can help to ensure responsiveness, program operations, and develop content and events?
- What level of staff or volunteer time is realistically available to sustain the program?

3. Program structure—*informed by established goals and objective*

Clear structure helps participants understand expectations and allows organizers to plan appropriately for administrative, logistical, and financial needs. Consider the relationship type, duration, meeting frequency, location, and scheduling should reflect participant availability, geographic distribution, and accessibility. Thoughtful scheduling that considers discrepancies between mentor and mentee availability is important. Hybrid, early-evening meetings often accommodate the broadest range of participants.

- Are there unintended discrepancies between your goals and planned structure?
- What resources and budget are available today, are there any gaps?
- How the might format, schedule, or length meet the different needs of mentors or mentees?
- What life context needs to be in place for people to participate (i.e., transportation, childcare, a supportive boss, etc)?

4. Recruitment and requirements—*inclusive and transparent practices*

Clearly communicate program purpose, expectations, time commitment, and available support. Leverage existing networks—including allied chapters such as NOMA, NOMAS, and AIAS—along with targeted outreach to encourage diverse participation across experience levels, backgrounds, and professional contexts.

Mentors and mentees are expected to commit to regular engagement, participate in onboarding, and uphold professionalism, respect, and inclusion. Use intake processes to support effective matching, but avoid requesting unnecessary personal information.

- What opportunities and connections can be used to recruit mentors and mentees?
- How can we expand beyond our immediate networks to ensure a broad pool?
- How can we set requirements that are essential to meeting program goals while accommodating emergencies and providing flexibility?

5. Evaluation—*essential to inform improvements and confirm effectiveness and value*

Track progress toward program goals, participant satisfaction, relationship quality, and outcomes such as skill development, career growth, and engagement. These insights can support resource requests, recruitment efforts, and the long-term health of the program.

Use a combination of methods— including anonymous surveys, check-ins, and participant reflections that can be used for real-time adjustments and post program reflection. Findings should be shared with participants and used to refine program design and support continuous improvement.

- What questions will reveal whether you are meeting your program goals?
- Are you asking for feedback on logistics that you are willing to change?
- Is there an opportunity to collect testimonials that can be used for evaluation summaries as well as recruitment and outreach efforts?

Appendix

1. Mentorship Framework Planning Template
2. Mentorship Program Quick Start Guide
3. Additional resources

I. Mentorship Framework Planning Template

If you have considered the questions in sections 1-5 you have most of the information you need to develop a program plan. This can be used as a training document for volunteers, a reference for leadership inquiries, and a guide for reporting.

Program overview

Program name:

Chapter/Organization:

Goals of the program:

Alignment with chapter or firm goals:

Alignment with AIA Strategic Plan:

Primary point of contact or coordinator:

Additional committees, volunteers, or staff support:

Program design

Mentor profile (career stage, experiences, specializations, any requirements):

Mentee profile (career stage, aspirations, any requirements):

Outline how the mentorship experience will be organized.

- Program format (virtual vs. in person)
- Schedule (Frequency, duration)
- Relationship structure (1:1, group, rotations)
- Location

Available resources and budget:

Known gaps or constraints:

Potential barriers to participation:

Mitigation strategies:

Recruitment channels and outreach strategies

- Mentors
- Mentees

Steps taken to broaden participation beyond immediate network:

Core participation expectations or requirements (time commitment, engagement, communication):

- Mentors
- Mentees

Evaluation cycle:

- Program goals to be evaluated:
- Logistics to be evaluated:
- Evaluation timing, review, and reporting:

2. Mentorship Program Quick Start Guide

Developed by Carl Sergio, AIA

What you need

- 2–4 committed organizers (4–5 is ideal)
- A clearly defined participant pool
- 3–6 month program timeline
- Consistent meeting cadence
- Simple application and matching process

Five key decisions

1. Who is the program for?
2. What format will you use? (1:1, group, or ladder-ship)
3. How long will the program run?
4. How often will participants meet?
5. How will mentors and mentees be matched?

What success looks like

- Engaged and committed mentors
- Proactive, prepared mentees
- Consistent attendance
- Structure that supports but does not restrict
- Relationships that continue beyond the program

Leadership foundations

- Start with clear goals
- Clarify the outcomes you want
- Secure leaders to manage planning, operations, and outreach
- Expect a few hours per month of commitment per leader

Designing your program

<i>Duration:</i>	<i>Cadence:</i>	<i>Notes:</i>
3 months	Weekly/Biweekly	Intensive
4-5 months	Every 3 weeks	Balanced
6 months	Monthly	Most common
9-12 months	Monthly	Requires strong structure

Running sessions

- *Begin with social or connection time*
- *Include an optional presentation or topic introduction*
- *Prioritize open discussion and dialogue*
- *Close with reflection or a clear wrap-up*

Mentorship Program Quick Start Guide

Enhancing the experience

- *Site visits or tours*
- *Volunteer or service events*
- *Informal gatherings (coffee chats, mixers)*
- *Opportunities for peer-to-peer relationship building*

Closing & evaluation

- *Host a closing or celebration event*
- *Gather participant feedback and insights*
- *Identify future mentors and program leaders*
- *Encourage and support continued mentor-mentee relationships*

3. Linked resources

1. AIA Guides for Equitable Practice: Intercultural Competence
2. AIA Guides for Equitable Practice: Mentorship and Sponsorship
3. Young Architects Forum, How to Create and Facilitate a Mentorship Program
4. AIAU Course: Becoming an Inclusive Mentor in Architecture
5. Mentorship at AIA
6. RIBA Mentoring Programme Guidance: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

