



AIA Philadelphia

FELLOWSHIP

Architects who have made significant contributions to the profession and society and who exemplify architectural excellence can be recognized with the AIA's highest membership honor, that of being named a Fellow and becoming a member of the AIA College of Fellows. Only 3% of AIA members have this distinction.

OVERALL PROCESS

The process for becoming a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects consists of two parts – the nomination process and the application process – each requiring a large amount of work:

PART 1 – NOMINATION PROCESS

Each candidate must have a total of at least 10 years of membership (it need not be continuous – check with AIA National if in doubt) in good standing in the AIA and each candidate must be nominated by one of the following methods:

- Nomination by Chapter or State organization, i.e., AIA Philadelphia or AIA Pennsylvania
- Nomination by a Petition of five AIA Fellows
- Nomination by a Petition of ten AIA members

NOMINATION BY THE CHAPTER

In Philadelphia, most candidates choose to be nominated by the AIA Philadelphia Chapter. Candidates pursuing nomination by the Chapter work through the Fellows Committee, which submits its recommendations for nomination to the Chapter board, usually in early summer of each year. The Committee is charged with nominating and supporting members on their path to fellowship. This includes encouraging interest in fellowship, identifying potential applicants, and providing helpful information and advice based on the Chapter's history of past successful applications.

If you are interested in fellowship and would like to be nominated by the Chapter, you should reach out to the AIA Philadelphia Fellows Committee for information and advice. Members who have decided to apply are asked for the information explained below, which touches preliminarily on each of the requirements of the final application. This preliminary information enables the Committee to advise potential candidates whether their qualifications are likely to result in a successful application. If the preliminary information indicates that the candidate has sufficient accomplishments for a successful application, the applicant is recommended to the Chapter for nomination. ***A candidate's interest in fellowship and all information provided to the Committee will be kept confidential.*** Preliminary information requested includes:

- Tentative Object. Fellowship is awarded by category, known as the Object (see Part 2 below). Provide the Object that you believe will be the basis for your nomination, together with a brief explanation of your accomplishments supporting this choice. If you are undecided about the most appropriate Object, provide a second choice of Object with an explanation for that option. ***Note that this is a national award, so it is expected that accomplishments will demonstrate at least some professional influence and/or interest beyond the local.***
- Career Accomplishments. Provide a current curriculum vitae, making sure to highlight significant relevant information about your accomplishments to support your application along with any other notable accomplishments such as AIA, academic, or civic honors or awards.
- Draft Portfolio. Provide a simple portfolio of the projects and/or activities (volunteer work, writing and publications, speaking engagements, etc.) that you think you would use to support your nomination. It is not necessary to create a special presentation at this time; off-the-shelf materials are acceptable.
- Potential References. Provide the names of at least five, but preferably ten, potential references and the name of a possible sponsor. Explain how each would support your nomination. Ideally, several of the references will be Fellows.

PART 2 – APPLICATION TO THE NATIONAL JURY OF FELLOWS

After the Fellows Committee has recommended the qualified candidate to the Chapter Board for nomination, and the Board has nominated the candidate to the National AIA, the nominee can begin to prepare the detailed and lengthy application to be submitted directly to the national body. From this point forward, applicants work directly with their sponsor and the AIA National although the Committee is happy to provide advice if requested. The application to AIA National for fellowship consists of the following four tasks:

A. OBJECT

Decide on the single appropriate “Object of Nomination”; from the six options defined by AIA National. The 2024 Objects of Nomination are:

Object One: To promote the aesthetic, scientific, and practical efficiency of the profession. *Sub-objects:* Design, Urban Design, Preservation Fellowship in this object is granted to architects who have produced extensive bodies of distinguished work that has been broadly recognized for its design excellence through design, urban design, or preservation. This may be accomplished through individual or organizational effort. Works submitted may be of any size, for any client, of any scope, and reflecting any type of architectural design service.

Object Two: To advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of practice. *Sub-objects:* *Practice management, Practice Technical Advancement.* Fellowship in this object is granted to architects who have made notable contributions through their work in the practice of architecture. Practice management includes firm management, administration, and project management. Practice technical advancement includes specific building types, and technical expertise. For example, practice technical advancement of preservation projects might be based on the architect’s strong commitment to historical research, implementation of unique preservation technique, and coupled with their strong focus on the actual construction implementation to enhance our physical heritage.

Object Three: To coordinate the building industry, and the profession of architecture. *Sub-objects:* *Led the Institute, Led a Related Organization.* Fellowship in this object is granted to architects who have actively, efficiently, and cooperatively led the Institute or a related professional organization over a sustained period of time and have gained widespread recognition for the results of their work.

Object Four: To ensure the advancement of the living standards of people through their improved environment. *Sub-objects:* *Public service, Government, Industry organizations.* Fellowship in this object is granted to architects who have made notable contributions in public service or work in government or industry organizations through leadership in the development of civic improvements and needed governmental projects, including such elements a conservation, beautification, land-use regulation, transportation, or the removal of blighted areas, or who have clearly raised the standards of professional performance in these areas by advancing the administration of professional affairs in their fields.

Object Five: To make the profession of ever-increasing service to society. *Sub-objects:* *Alternative career, Service to Society. Volunteer work with organizations not directly connected with the built environment.* Fellowship in this object is granted to architects who have made notable contributions to one of the following: an alternative career related to architecture that illustrates outstanding achievements that support the architectural profession; extensive volunteer work with organizations not directly connected with the built environment; or service that transcends the customary architectural practice that has wide reaching impacts that serve as a national model.

Object Six: To advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education and training. *Sub-objects:* Education, Research, Literature. Fellowship in this object is granted to architects who have made notable contributions through their work in education, research, or literature. Work in education may be teaching, research, administration, or writing and should have a lasting impact, be widely recognized, and provide inspiration to others in the field and the profession. Research areas may include building codes and standards, specifications, new material applications, or inventions.

The Ripple Effect: Candidates’ applications are expected to demonstrate the “ripple effect” they have had on the profession. This is shorthand for your impact beyond the day-to-day work of your practice or outside your community. Ripple effect could be demonstrated by speaking, publications, mentoring, service to the profession, geographic impact, or legacy through others.

B. SPONSOR

Choose a sponsor. The sponsor must be an AIA or FAIA member in good standing. The Committee recommends selecting a Fellow as sponsor. The sponsor, by means of the letter that is included in the application, serves as the nominee's chief advocate to AIA National. Generally, the sponsor also functions as the nominee's primary advisor during the application process although the Committee is always available to provide additional support and advice, or others may serve this role.

C. REFERENCES

Choose seven references, of which a minimum of five must be AIA members in good standing. The Committee recommends a national distribution of reference writers, weighted towards Fellows. Select sponsors who can speak to at least one essential aspect of your application.

D. APPLICATION

Prepare a highly structured digital portfolio supporting the case for fellowship and submit it directly to the national Jury of Fellows (which changes annually), using the template provided and required by AIA National. The Committee emphasizes that this must be a clearly worded, thoroughly edited, and precisely crafted document, beginning with a compelling summary statement. As can be seen from the examples of past submissions provided by AIA National on-line, the standards for a successful application are exceptionally high. Additionally, precise compliance with application requirements and format is required; applications that do not comply will be rejected without appeal, so attention to detail and careful review is imperative.

ADDITIONAL USEFUL INFORMATION

THE JURY OF FELLOWS

The requirements for fellowship are determined by AIA National and the national Jury of Fellows is the sole authority in the naming of Fellows. The jury is taken from the broadest geographic reach. The candidate's entire application is usually due in October of each year. Applicants should check the College of Fellows website for the exact deadline. The jury meets early in the following year to make and notify candidates of their success or failure to achieve fellowship before the list is made public in late winter. New fellows are elevated at the Investiture Ceremony and celebrated at a formal dinner at the AIA National Conference in the spring of each year. Philadelphia fellows are honored locally by Philadelphia Fellows at the annual Fellows Picnic and at other AIA Philadelphia events.

ROLE OF THE FELLOWS COMMITTEE

The Philadelphia Chapter is proud of its many outstanding members and the Philadelphia Fellows Committee seeks to identify new candidates annually who exemplify excellence in their work and achievements. The Committee is proactive in seeking out and inviting members to submit preliminary materials for consideration and invites requests from members for their own consideration or from members on behalf of other members. The Committee strives to orient prospective candidates to the rigors and nuances of the process through counsel offered by individual Committee members, providing practical advice for successful applications. Due to the sensitivity of this process, the Committee's work is confidential.

While the Committee is primarily concerned with promoting the recognition of our members by facilitating the nomination process, the decision to recommend members to the Chapter for approval is taken with strong consideration of the likelihood of the candidate's success in fulfilling AIA National's demanding requirements. This is a process that is collectively well understood by the Committee since members of the Committee have served as references and sponsors, and occasionally a committee member has served on the national jury.

RESOURCES

The National AIA and the College of Fellows publish useful information that can be found on-line. The best specific information can be found in three spots on the College of Fellows website: the FAQ section, notes within the on-line application, and from past examples of exceptional, successful applications. It sometimes takes a few readings of all this information to get an overall picture of this lengthy and time-consuming application.