



AIA OHIO EARLY PROFESSIONAL FRIENDLY FIRM DESIGNATION PROGRAM

EARLY PROFESSIONAL FRIENDLY FIRM DESIGNATION PROGRAM GOAL

The goal of this program is to celebrate firms who offer exceptional support and opportunities for their early professionals. Additionally, the program seeks to foster a dialogue within firms across the state with the objective of creating new policies and practices that promote innovation, development, and progressive workplaces for the future members of the design profession.

EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEFINITION: An early professional is defined as someone who is part of the architectural staff and fills one of the following roles: architectural students, recent graduates, unlicensed emerging professionals within 10 years of graduation, or architects licensed within the last 10 years. Early Professionals may be referred to as “EPs” in this program.

DESIGNATIONS: There are two designations possible for a firm or local office to receive. The Early Professional Friendly Firm Designation and the Early Professional Friendly Firm Plus+ Designation.

- EP Friendly Firm Designation is earned by receiving a passing score of 70% (75 points) or above through the EP Firm Friendly questionnaire
- EP Friendly Firm Plus+ Designation is earned by receiving a score of 80% (86 points) or above.

QUESTIONNAIRE: The questionnaire consists of 53 questions across six categories. These questions cover an array of areas critical to developing EP Friendly Firms.

ELIGIBILITY: All architecture firms that have an office in the state of Ohio meeting the requirements outlined below are eligible to apply. Firms with more than one Ohio location shall apply for each office location separately.

- A majority (more than 50%) of the principals in the firm or local office submitting are members of the AIA.
- A percentage (more than 33%) of the Early Professionals, as defined above, in the firm or local office submitting are members of the AIA. If no individual meeting the early professional criteria is currently employed the firm is still allowed to apply.
- The firm is current with AIA Ohio supplemental dues requirements.
- The firm does not utilize any unpaid labor as defined in the AIA Ohio Unpaid Labor Policy.

Each submission shall be signed by an AIA member principal regularly located at or assigned to the office. The submission shall also be signed by 33% of the early professionals or 5 early professionals if the firm or local office has greater than 15 early professionals who are regularly located at or assigned to the office. If no individual meeting the early professional criteria is employed by the firm, the firm shall indicate none.

DURATION: Applications for the EP Friendly Firm designation will be accepted from February 1 to March 15 annually. Applications will be scored and firms notified by March 31 each year. The EP Friendly Firm designation is a one-year designation, with the option to renew the designation annually. Firms are expected to maintain the policies and practices they have implemented at the time of submission throughout the designation period. The designation may also be rescinded by AIA Ohio should the firm fail to maintain the eligibility requirements at any time during the period of recognition.

EP FRIENDLY FIRM QUESTIONNAIRE:

The application consists of a survey broken into the following categories listed below:

1. Licensing Process
2. Leadership
3. Professional Development
4. Support and Compensation
5. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
6. Firm Culture

Signatures and Open Feedback

All answers should reflect the firm's current policies and practices. Questions within the survey that allow for long-form text answers are for data and information collection only and do not affect a firm's score or chance at receiving a designation. There are 54 total questions for 107 total possible points.

Category 01 Licensing Process: (9 questions, 18 points possible)

1. The firm verifies the early professionals in the firm who are licensure eligible have established an NCARB record and are registered with the Architectural Experience Program (AXP).
 - a. 100% of early professionals- 3 points
 - b. 75% of early professionals - 2 points
 - c. 51% of early professionals - 1 point
 - d. 0% of early professionals - 0 points

2. The firm provides an AXP supervisor to help with the AXP process and offers encouragement.
 - a. Yes - 1 point
 - b. No - 0 points

3. The firm's AXP supervisors and mentors have knowledge of current AXP Guidelines and stay up to date with the requirements for registration in the jurisdiction.
 - a. Yes - 1 point
 - b. No - 0 points

4. The firm's AXP supervisors and mentors verify each submitted record is accurate prior to signing the early professional's experience report.
 - a. Yes - 1 point
 - b. No - 0 points

5. The firm provides opportunities for licensure candidates to earn AXP experience hours in the following required areas. (1 Point for every 2 answers selected for a max. of 3 points; may select more than one)
 - a. Practice Management - PcM
 - b. Project Management - PjM
 - c. Programming & Analysis - PA
 - d. Project Planning & Design - PPD
 - e. Project Development & Documentation - PDD
 - f. Construction & Evaluation - CE

6. The firm's leadership confirms bi-annually at a minimum (outside of annual reviews) licensing requirements and AXP hours are being addressed adequately.

- a. Yes - 2 points
- b. No - 0 points

7. The firm provides assistance for ARE candidates through: (1 point for 2 answers, 2 points for 4 answers, 3 points for 6 answers, 5 points for 8+ answers; may select more than one)

- a. Paying for passed exams
- b. Paying for all exam attempts (Pass or Fail)
- c. Offering a paid day off (in addition to regular PTO/ vacation hours) to take the exam
- d. Offering a paid day off (in addition to regular PTO/ vacation hours) prior to the exam to study
- e. Providing physical study curriculums to use
- f. Providing physical NCARB suggested resource books to study
- g. Providing subscriptions to digital study subscriptions (Black Spectacles, Amber Book, ARE Questions, etc.)
- h. Paying for ARE prep classes (beyond a subscription service)
- i. Offering a stipend for purchasing any study materials

8. The firm provides licensure candidates with the computer equipment matching the NCARB required specifications to run the remote proctoring software for the ARE 5.1 remote proctored examination (including the external webcam).

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

9. The firm provides licensure candidates with a clean and clear space matching NCARB required specifications for the ARE 5.1 remote proctored examination.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

Category 02 Leadership: (8 Questions, 8 points possible)

1. The firm provides a general office mentor (office buddy, partner, pod leader) to each early professional.

- a. Yes - 1 points
- b. No - 0 points

2. The firm has allotted time and resources for supervisors to appropriately manage, review reports, and communicate with licensure candidates.

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

3. The firm supports early professionals seeking mentorship in addition to what the firm offers to gain a broader insight.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

4. The firm has an established and accessible organizational structure of employees that clearly indicates to early professionals where they can direct specific questions and concerns in the office. (For example, who handles human resource concerns and who can help with code questions.)

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

5. The firm gives each early professional a clear path to leadership which gives a voice to early professionals.

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

6. The firm leadership is willing and works with early professionals to discuss issues, project goals, tasks goals, and the early professionals' futures in the firm.

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

7. The firm encourages early professionals to develop and lead new programs or committees within the firm.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

7.1. Short explanation of programs or committees established from such an effort. (This question is not scored, for data collection.)

8. The firm leadership is willing to listen and implement items based on topics or areas where the early professionals have more expertise (ie. software, cultural shifts, current thought taught in schools).

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

Category 03 Professional Development: (7 Questions, 20 points possible)

1. The firm provides opportunities for continuing education requirements for state licenses and AIA requirements through: (May select more than one)

- a. HSW opportunities within working hours or over lunches organized by the firm to fulfill the Ohio HSW requirement (12 hours). – 1 point
- b. HSW/CE opportunities within working hours or over lunches organized by the firm to fulfill the AIA requirements (18 hours). – 1 point
- c. The firm offers paid time off for employees to attend opportunities for HSW/CE outside of the firm during working hours. – 1 point

2. The firm provides early professionals with comprehensive reviews.

- a. Annual - 1 point
- b. 2 or more a year - 2 points
- c. Less than once per year - 0 points

3. The firm intentionally provides opportunities with participation for varied experiences through activities in addition to standard work assignments an early professional would have in their routine day. (Point for each; may select more than one)

- a. Business development
- b. Code review
- c. Consultant coordination
- d. Client meetings
- e. Presentations
- f. Site visits
- g. Design

4. The firm's early professionals are involved with committees and initiatives within the firm in the following ways: (may select more than one)

- a. Early professionals actively participate in firm committees or initiatives. – 1 point
- b. An early professional is represented on each committee in the firm - 1 point
- c. There are committees or initiatives lead by early professionals – 1 point

5. The firm supports community engagement and encourages early professionals to volunteer and be involved with committees, boards, and organizations outside of the firm.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. Yes and provides monetary resources or offers paid time off to do so - 2 points
- c. No - 0 points

6. The firm celebrates early professionals' accomplishments through written announcement, social media announcement, verbal meeting announcement, or party upon successful completion of: (may select more than one):

- a. ARE and fulfillment of state requirements to become licensed. - 1 point
- b. Other certifications or promotions. - 1 point

7. The firm has an implemented practice on how they guide early professionals interested in pursuing additional certifications or qualifications beyond licensure.

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

Category 04 Support and Compensation: (11 Questions, 25 possible points)

1. The firm has a transparent compensation structure based on position or responsibilities within the firm that is distributed to employees.

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

2. The firm pays for AIA dues for early professionals interested in being a member.
 - a. Yes, 100% of dues - 2 points
 - b. Yes, 50% of dues - 1 point
 - c. No or less than 50% - 0 points

3. The firm pays for early professionals' NCARB fees:
 - a. Yes, while working on AREs and AXP, not after licensed - 1 point
 - b. No, while working on AREs and AXP, but Yes after licensed – 1 point
 - c. Yes, while working on AREs and AXP and after licensed - 2 points
 - d. No - 0 points

4. The firm provides paid time off to early professionals to attend conventions, conferences, or other continuing education.
 - a. Yes - 1 point
 - b. No - 0 points

5. The firm provides at least 50% financial support to early professionals to attend conventions, conferences, or other continuing education. (may select more than one)
 - a. Yes, conferences or conventions (i.e. a multi-day event) - 3 point
 - b. Yes, seminars or workshops (i.e. a single day event) - 2 points
 - c. Yes, continuing education (lunch and learns, hour long CE program, etc.) – 1 point
 - d. No – 0 points

6. The firm provides upon licensure: (may select more than one)
 - a. A bonus - 1 point
 - b. A salary increase - 2 points

7. The firm provides paid time off for early professionals to volunteer for AIA or industry related opportunities.
 - a. Yes - 1 point
 - b. No - 0 points

8. The firm provides funding for training or certifications beyond licensure based on the individual early professional's interest.
 - a. Yes - 2 points
 - b. No - 0 points

9. The firm offers insurance in one or more of the following ways to all employees including early professionals. (one point for each; up to three points possible):
 - a. Health insurance
 - b. Dental insurance
 - c. Vision insurance
 - d. A health savings account or flexible spending account
 - e. Short-term disability
 - f. Long-term disability

10. The firm offers other benefits to early professionals once eligible. (may select more than one)
- a. Life insurance – 1 point
 - b. IRA (Roth, 401k, etc) – 1 point

10.1. Short explanation of other support and compensation benefits not included above or elsewhere in this survey. (*This question is not scored, for data collection.*)

11. The firm offers the same written policy for compensation benefits to early professionals and higher-level design or professional staff (everyone has a right to achieve the benefits in the same way). (Paid time off, profit sharing, sick time, etc.)

- a. Yes - 2 points
- c. No - 0 points

Category 05 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: (12 Questions, 22 possible points)

1. The firm references, utilizes, and distributes the AIA Guide for Equitable Practice. (<https://www.aia.org/resources/6246433-guides-for-equitable-practice>)

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

2. The firm has women in the following roles (may choose more than one).

- a. Woman owned – 1 point
- b. Female principal (principal, director, or equivalent) consulted for day-to-day operations – 1 point
- c. Female project managers – 1 point
- d. Licensed female architects – 1 point
- e. Unlicensed female early professionals – 1 point

3. The firm has minorities in the following roles (may choose more than one).

- a. Minority owned – 1 point
- b. Minority principal (principal, director, or equivalent) consulted for day-to-day operations – 1 point
- c. Minority project managers – 1 point
- d. Licensed minority architects – 1 point
- e. Unlicensed minority early professionals – 1 point

4. The firm has active involvement with NOMA.

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

5. The firm has a goal towards intentional progress regarding diversity. (ie. tracking applicant pool, counting employees, tracking progress over years).

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b No – 0 points

5.1. Short explanation of the firm's goals for diversity if answered yes. (*This question is not scored, for data collection.*)

6. The firm actively structures project teams to promote a diverse and representative cross-section of its local design community.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

7. The firm hires new employees with a range of educational backgrounds to diversify the baseline represented within the firm through (may choose more than one):

- a. Range of degree types (assoc., bachelor, masters, etc.) – 1 point
- d. Range of schools – 1 point
- e. Range of majors – 1 point

8. The firm provides diversity training or similar programming for all firm staff including firm management and early professionals.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

8.1. Short explanation of types of training or programming. (*This question is not scored, for data collection.*)

9. The firm has a written family leave policy.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

9.1. Short explanation of the policy. (*This question is not scored, for data collection.*)

10. The firm offers accommodations to those with needs related to their culture or religion.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

11. The firm provides private spaces (offering visual and acoustic privacy) in the office that are made available to employees for private matters.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

12. The firm supports individuals' gender identity and expression. (i.e. respecting use of pronouns, dress code is not gender specific, etc.)

- a. Yes – 1 point
- b. No – 0 points

Category 06 Firm Culture: (6 Questions, 14 possible points)

1. The firm holds regular social events and activities within the firm.

- a. Yes - 1 point
- b. No - 0 points

2. The firm supports work-life balance by: (may select more than one)
 - a. Sticking to a strict 40 hour work week (answer relating to number of hours, not period of hours worked)- 1 point
 - b. Compensating for overtime for hourly and salaried staff who are non-equity. – 1 point
 - c. Allowing staff to work remotely to fit their personal schedule - 1 point
 - d. Offering floating holidays to use as needed – 1 point
 - e. Allowing alternate work schedules (outside of traditional work week work hours, ie. late nights or weekends) – 1 point
 - f. Offering a work schedule under 40 hours, but paid full time salary – 1 point

3. The firm has a written remote work policy that is equally available to early professionals as it is to senior staff members.
 - a. Yes – 1 point
 - b. No – 0 points

4. The firm offers the flexibility of work hours within each pay period, to all employees including early professionals. (For example, working late to make up for a personal appointment or closing out the week early after a deadline that caused overtime.)
 - a. Yes - 2 points
 - b. No - 0 points

5. The firm works with local architectural college programs to support the students though: (may select more than one)
 - a. Monetarily sponsors scholarships and college fundraisers - 1 point
 - b. Hosts/attends student-focused events or attends project reviews as a jury member - 1 point
 - c. Has staff that teaches at the college(s) or volunteers as an advisor for the college's AIAS chapter- 1 point

6. The firm works with local K-12 schools or other youth organizations (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Library Programs, etc.) to bring architecture exposure and programing to young people.
 - a. Yes – 1 point
 - b. No – 0 points

Signatures and Open Feedback:

The firm does not utilize any unpaid labor as defined in the AIA Ohio Unpaid Labor Policy.
Any additional feedback you wish to share about your firm/offices Early Professional practices:
Any additional feedback you wish to share about this Early Professional Firm Friendly Designation Program and questionnaire:

Principal

1. Name:
2. Years/Months with firm:
3. AIA Number:
4. I agree the answers submitted in this questionnaire are truthful and accurately represent my firm/office.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

*If there are currently no early professionals on staff at this time, the following signatures are not required.
If the early professional does not have an AIA number they can list student or N/A.*

Early Professional #1

1. Name:
2. Years/Months with firm:
3. AIA Number:
4. I agree the answers submitted in this questionnaire are truthful and accurately represent my firm/office.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Early Professional #2

1. Name:
2. Years/Months with firm:
3. AIA Number:
4. I agree the answers submitted in this questionnaire are truthful and accurately represent my firm/office.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Early Professional #3

1. Name:
2. Years/Months with firm:
3. AIA Number:
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4. I agree the answers submitted in this questionnaire are truthful and accurately represent my firm/office.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Early Professional #4

1. Name:
2. Years/Months with firm:
3. AIA Number:
4. I agree the answers submitted in this questionnaire are truthful and accurately represent my firm/office.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Early Professional #5

1. Name:
2. Years/Months with firm:
3. AIA Number:
4. I agree the answers submitted in this questionnaire are truthful and accurately represent my firm/office.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No