Section 3

Advocacy
03. Advocacy

Government and political advocacy is the process of turning our organization’s core values into reality by mobilizing members to engage with their local, state, and federal policymakers. When we identify emerging issues and move forward as one, we make a difference. Our collective voice matters.

GOALS FOR ACCREDITATION

1. Advance AIA’s legislative priorities
2. Engage regulatory entities on issues of importance to architects
3. Empower members to advocate for themselves and their profession
GOAL 1

**Advance AIA’s legislative priorities**

GOAL 2

**Engage regulatory entities on issues of importance to architects**

The activities associated with advancing legislative and regulatory policies are similar, and the following plays apply to both requirements.

**PLAY 1: DEVELOP A STATEWIDE POLICY AGENCY AND ADVOCACY STRATEGY**

**REQUIREMENT:**

Components must develop a statewide policy agenda and advocacy strategy that is aligned with the AIA Public Policies and Positions. Share the agenda and critical legislation with the Institute and with local components around the state.

To do this, establish a government affairs or legislative committee that takes charge of developing your state government policy agenda and strategy, which should guide all your component’s advocacy activities at the state level. The government affairs committee typically receives policy direction from the component’s board, based on AIA’s public policy and position statements, and after an evaluation of the major policy opportunities and threats the profession faces. The committee should comprise a diverse group that represents the interests of all AIA members—including local components and members throughout the state.

Follow these key steps when developing your agenda and strategy:

- Establish criteria for deciding which issues to prioritize and align them with AIA public policies and positions statements.
- Ensure your board of directors and the components represented find consensus on the policy goals.
- Determine who speaks publicly for your component.
- Develop clear messages and talking points about your agenda.
- Develop a communications plan to inform members and the public where you stand.
- Prepare issue briefs and other materials to support your agenda.
- Share the statewide agenda and advocacy strategies (see Play 3) with AIA and with components around the state.

**ONLINE RESOURCES:**

How to Develop a Statewide Agenda and Advocacy Strategy >

Examples of state component legislative agendas:

- AIA Wisconsin
- AIA Virginia
- AIA Tennessee
- AIA Pennsylvania
- AIA Illinois
PLAY 2: COMPLY WITH AIA POLICIES & POSITIONS

AIA’s board of Directors adopts public policies and position statements—which are binding for all components—on architecture’s most pressing issues. Public policies are statements of belief to policymakers, the public, and the construction industry on policy issues affecting membership, the profession of architecture, or AIA. Position statements elaborate on public policies and apply to specific contexts. Your component must comply with AIA public policies and position statements.

Download a directory of these policies and statements

PLAY 3: ADVANCE THE POLICY AGENDA

Building a campaign to advance a policy issue requires research, a winning message, reliable allies, knowledge of the legislative and political landscape, teamwork, and a strong organizational strategy.

When organizing for legislative and political advocacy work:

- Ensure your advocacy strategies are both clearly articulated and broad enough to allow for flexibility.
- Include advocacy strategies in your component’s strategic plan.
- Develop the necessary skills and training needed to work effectively and legally.

No matter what your policy goals are, using the following elements will help you achieve success:

- Legislative strategy: Verify who holds the decision-making and financial power and how you can gain access to them.
- Message development and communications: Decide how you will make your case to achieve your goals.
- Community and coalitions: Determine how you will work with others who share similar views.
- Elections and PACs: Research how using the campaign process can help you achieve your goal.
- Organizational growth: Examine how the campaign will help grow and strengthen your component and AIA.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

Five Elements of a Legislative Campaign

PLAY 4: LOBBY ACCORDING TO APPLICABLE LAWS & REGULATIONS

In most states, there are specific laws and rules pertaining to lobbying—and you should carefully research them before taking action.

For some components, the executive director acts as the lobbyist; many components hire a professional lobbyist. Before hiring a professional lobbyist, perform a conflicts check to ensure that the lobbyist doesn’t represent a group that may oppose your component’s key issues. You should also be aware of the different rules each state has for creating and operating political action committees (PACs).

Consult with your state elections or secretary of state’s office for rules, regulations, and reporting requirements. AIA also highly recommends that you engage a qualified election lawyer in your state for additional guidance.
PLAY 5: ENGAGE AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS

Understanding your state and local political landscape—including demographics and economic conditions—and how architecture fits in is critical to advancing your advocacy strategy. You should strategically build relationships to identify state and local champions of architecture and allies for your causes.

REQUIREMENT FOR STATE COMPONENTS:
State components should engage with the state’s legislature, licensing boards, procurement agencies, and other officials on issues of importance to the architectural community.

REQUIREMENT FOR LOCAL COMPONENTS:
Local components should engage with local government agencies, decision makers, and building officials on issues of importance to the architectural community.

Participating in city council, planning commission, business association, or school board meetings, for example, can help you identify key issues and provide a line of communication to advance your component’s advocacy strategy.

Once you have identified key issues within your community, keep your members informed through your component website and newsletter. Be sure to determine who and how your component will speak about the state and local advocacy strategy.

ONLINE RESOURCES:
- How to Create & Use a Local Advocacy Tracker
- Developing a Public Policy Board

GOAL 3

Empower members to advocate for themselves & their profession

PLAY 1: USE AIA NATIONAL’S TOOLS TO ADVANCE YOUR ADVOCACY AGENDA

TOOL: LEGISLATIVE ACTION NETWORK (LAN)

Launched in 2016, LAN is a grassroots legislative and political advocacy network that enables members to find out how events in Washington affect them—and how they can speak up for the profession.

Join LAN to give your members access to tools and information that help them make an immediate impact on key state-level issues. Email govaffs@aia.org for more information.

TOOL: CISION

Cision is software that enables AIA and state components to send action alerts to members and engage them on pressing issues. You can use Cision to inform members and encourage them to contact their elected officials. Cision connects AIA members with their federal and state legislative districts, so members can easily send messages directly to their representatives. Email govaffs@aia.org for more information.
PLAY 2: GET MEMBERS INVOLVED IN SPEAKUP, AIA’S ADVOCACY TRAINING EVENT

SpeakUp is AIA’s premier advocacy training event featuring three days of hands-on workshops and interactions with federal and state policy experts. SpeakUp is perfect for members of advocacy or PAC committees, super activists looking to advance to the next level, or emerging professionals who want to build power for the profession and learn new skills. Components should send at least one representative to the meeting each year. For more information about SpeakUp, email govaffs@aia.org.

PLAY 3: CULTIVATE CITIZEN ARCHITECTS

Citizen Architects engage at the local, state, and federal levels, using their insights, talents, training, and experience to improve lives and communities. They also advocate for the broader benefits of architecture through civic activism, publishing, service on boards and commissions, and elective office.

Encouraging your members to become Citizen Architects strengthens your component, your communities, and the profession as a whole. For more information on the Citizen Architect program, visit aia.org/citizenarchitect.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

Resources for Citizen Architects
The AIA Center for Civic Leadership

PLAY 4: LEVERAGE THE STATE GOVERNMENT NETWORK

The AIA State Government Network (SGN) enables state components and AIA national to share best practices, trends, and tools for advocating at the state government level. Your component leaders and/or members should utilize the SGN resource library, participate in monthly policy calls and webinars, and participate in the discussion group/listserv to find out what’s happening in other states on any given issue.

REQUIREMENT:

Your component should attend the annual SGN meeting once every three years on a provided stipend by AIA to discuss the latest issues and policy trends, network, share best practices, and learn how to more effectively advocate.

For more information on SGN, email govaffs@aia.org.

Use Stateside monitoring services

AIA uses Stateside legislative monitoring services to monitor specific issues trending nationally. State components have access to these monitoring services, which are performed by legislative associates who have previously worked in state legislatures across the country.

Here’s how the monitoring service works:

• Legislative associates read all newly introduced or amended measures to identify legislation relevant to AIA’s interests and provide updates on monitored legislation at every step in the legislative process.

• They send updates and email alerts on monitored legislation, and simultaneously update AIA’s client portal, which serves as the repository for all monitored measures.
• They also continuously gather political intelligence about measures through an extensive list of state contacts including chamber clerks, legislative aides, committee staff, bill sponsors, committee staff, chamber leadership, and staff in Governors’ offices.

Components have access to Stateside staff through AIA for nearly unlimited follow-up on activities occurring at the state level related to the specific issues they are monitoring on behalf of AIA. Contact govaffs@aia.org for more information.

**PLAY 5: APPOINT A VOLUNTEER AIA STATE DISASTER COORDINATOR**

Members can use their building knowledge to help their communities both before and after a disaster.

**REQUIREMENT:**

State components must appoint a volunteer AIA state disaster coordinator to interface with emergency management officials, to help components around the state prepare for potential natural or other disasters.

AIA’s disaster assistance program supports components and equips architects with the knowledge and skills to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster.

**ONLINE RESOURCES:**

Disaster Assistance Handbook  
Disaster Assistance Program

**PLAY 6: IMPROVE COMMUNITIES THROUGH AIA RESOURCES**

**TOOL: CENTER FOR COMMUNITIES BY DESIGN**

The Center for Communities by Design helps members understand urban issues and make communities better places to live. For more than 50 years, the Center for Communities by Design has profoundly impacted some of America’s most prominent places, sending multidisciplinary teams to partner with local communities in need. Whether it’s rebuilding after a disaster or helping a community envision its future, AIA brings the resources of a customized team of multidisciplinary experts to partner with and transform communities. AIA members who participate in the Center for Communities by Design find it to be an enriching and educational experience. If you or any of your members have questions about the program, email communitiesbydesign@aia.org.

**TOOL: DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM PROGRAMS**

The Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program helps transform communities by developing a citizen-led vision for a better future. The Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) program helps communities develop a vision for a sustainable future and a realistic, attainable roadmap to get there. The Design and Resiliency Teams (DART) program works in partnership with the Urban Sustainability Director’s Network to help develop customized resilience strategies for local communities.

Contact Joel Mills at joelmills@aia.org for more information on these programs.