



HQ Task Force Recommendations

January 2024

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Introduction

Project Background

AIA Oregon has completed an 18-month visioning, outreach and engagement process focused on determining how to serve members better. What started as a conversation about creating one or multiple new headquarters spaces has evolved into a recommendation to focus the organization's resources on engagement, programming, and capacity building. This conclusion was the result of many conversations with AIA Oregon members through multiple touch points throughout 2023.

The HQ effort kicked off in the midst of significant changes for AIA Oregon and the state's architecture community. Several factors contributed to the need for a pivot:

- **Transition to a statewide chapter.** In 2019, AIA Oregon transformed from four separate chapters to a statewide chapter with five sections. The effort to create a united culture and to shore up the operation of the five sections remains ongoing.
- **Loss of Portland's Center for Architecture and Eugene's "Octagon" space.** Due to factors outside of AIA Oregon's control, two spaces that served as the headquarters for two sections were no longer available. This freed up resources and provided an opportunity to create something new to serve the needs of today's architecture community.
- **Impacts of COVID-19.** The pandemic affected the AIA Oregon community in many ways. On the plus side, members got used to engaging online, supporting the transition to a more unified state chapter. More challenging, face-to-face meetups were no longer the norm, and returning to in-person gathering or a physical workplace were not a given.
- **Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.** The last few years have put a spotlight on the need for active, thoughtful work that supports justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. For this initiative, that means supporting these values – and AIA Oregon's work to uplift them – by emphasizing welcoming and inspiring meaningful change within the architecture profession. In the case of physical space, it also means focusing on access, universal design and hiring professionals who understand these nuances.
- **Climate change and resiliency.** Architects have a role to play in preventing the worst impacts of climate change and raising awareness around the connection between the built environment and a warming planet. The AIA Oregon community is committed to being a part of the solution.

Project Goal

The original goal of this initiative was to engage AIA Oregon members in co-creating a vision for a new statewide headquarters.

Initial Assumptions

Transparency is critical. We do not want to rush this. For members to feel heard and included, it's important to allow time for people to understand the project and their role and to provide multiple opportunities for everyone to contribute.

Be clear where and how you want input. Before asking members to contribute to the HQ decision, it's important to decide what is open for feedback and what is not. For example, AIA Oregon may want members to help pick the city for the new HQ but may not want input on cost. We should determine these parameters before starting the engagement process to maximize creativity.

A task force will lead this process. This will be a core, diverse group of members who are particularly interested in the HQ decision and involved in more in-depth, ongoing input. These members could represent the greater membership on questions where input is important but a deeper understanding of the full picture is preferred.

The headquarters cannot and will not be everything to everybody. AIA Oregon's values will be our guide throughout the process, providing clarity about decision-making roles and criteria throughout. While a collective decision is the ultimate goal, there may not always be a consensus across membership and leadership.

Values

Community and Reciprocity. At every step we will prioritize building relationships and strengthening bonds among AIA Oregon's members and partners. We will do our best to facilitate a member-driven process – to ensure members are heard and understood, so they will ultimately feel like they belong and were part of co-creating the new headquarters.

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. We will center BIPOC and historically marginalized voices so they have equitable consideration. Decision-making opportunities and roles will be transparent and communicated broadly and clearly. We will seek out and include a diversity of perspectives and decision makers. We will provide frequent and varied opportunities for involvement that are accessible to all.

Leadership and Resiliency. We will look to the future, creating a headquarters that reflects the future we envision and want to support our community to build. Our vision is one of climate resiliency, an inclusive profession and an impactful architectural community, and the design of the new HQ will reflect these ideals.

Desired Outcomes

Our primary desired outcome was to meaningfully engage as many members as possible in the co-creation of the new AIA Oregon headquarters.

We intended to measure success through:

- Task force participation
- Survey engagement
- Social media engagement
- Event participation (online and in person)
- Diverse representation across sections, identities and professional experience

We defined success as co-creating an HQ solution that:

- Prioritizes member engagement and is welcoming to all members
- Acknowledges and meets the diverse needs of sections across Oregon
- Is right-sized for the needs of members and sections

Methodology

Setting the Foundation

We began by establishing goals, expectations, values, and roles. A consultant team – hired to guide the process and provide expertise, capacity and an external perspective – developed a project brief (see Appendix A) in partnership with AIA Oregon’s EVP/CEO Heather Wilson and key staff and members. This document served as the guiding light for the initiative.

AIA Oregon Staff

- Heather Wilson, Executive Vice President / CEO
- Kathy Wendland, Director of Operations and Member Services
- Colleen Bastendorff, Director of Development and Strategic Partnerships

Consultants

- Erin Halasz
- Annie Ozols
- Jo Wollschlaeger

Creation of the HQ Task Force

To drive decisions and membership engagement for the HQ process, AIA Oregon convened an HQ Task Force. This advisory body included a diverse group of members who were representative of the greater membership and could be involved on a deeper level in exploring ideas, engaging members and sharing updates with membership. AIA Oregon staff and consultants cast a wide net for Task Force participants, inviting interested members with varied experience and expertise. Task Force members met monthly to guide the HQ process.

The Task Force included AIA Oregon members from across Oregon:

- Elisa Ahn, co-chair, AIA -- Portland
- Sara Bergby, Young Architect -- Bend
- Mohamed Fakhry, Associate AIA -- Portland
- John Flynn, AIA -- Portland
- Matt Jacoby, AIA -- Portland
- Abraham Rodriguez Guzman, Young Architect -- Portland
- Ian Schmidt, Young Architect -- Bend
- Alan Scott, co-chair, FAIA -- Portland
- Bill Seider, FAIA -- Eugene
- Samuel Uccello, AIA -- Southern Oregon

An Agile Approach

Recognizing that responding to our community was central to our success, we conducted outreach and engagement with an agile approach. That meant designing each phase after assessing what we learned from the previous one. We went into the initiative with an understanding of who we were trying to reach and a bank of ideas on how we might reach them.

The specific strategies for each phase emerged as we looked deeply at what we had already learned and determined which questions we needed to ask next. For example, after assessing the results from a baseline survey, we determined that our next phase of engagement should happen at face-to-face events and allow participants to share their ideas in response to prompts about ownership models, local opportunities, and partnerships.

Who Gave Input

It was important for the process to include varied perspectives and multiple opportunities to contribute. The people engaged and perspectives shared at each phase built a rich and layered set of recommendations:

- **AIA Oregon Staff:** Staff shared their understanding of the nuances in each AIA Oregon section, as well as their deep experience guiding strategy and logistics for existing programming, including what works well and what could be improved.
- **AIA Oregon Board and Executive Committee:** The HQ Task Force and AIA Oregon staff consulted the board on key decisions throughout the project, including presentations at two board meetings. The board ensured alignment with the organization's values, consistency with input from members, financial feasibility, and adherence to organizational rules.
- **AIA Oregon Members:** Members provided guiding input at key decision points through the project via surveys, events, meetings, social media, and email. This input was at the heart of the process.
- **AIA Oregon Section Steering Committees:** The HQ Task Force, staff, and consultants met with steering committees in each section throughout the process to vet and clarify input from members. These perspectives provided a more in-depth local lens on challenges and opportunities in each section.
- **Former AIA Oregon Executives:** To ensure that recommendations built on past successes and lessons learned, consultants and staff spoke with former AIA Oregon executives.

- **Other AIA Executives:** AIA Oregon is not the only AIA chapter going through a shift in structure or considering what a modern-day HQ/Center for Architecture model could look like. The Task Force engaged with AIA executives from Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and North Carolina who provided input via a panel. Additional CACE members provided input via a survey.

Our Engagement Process



The project commenced in May 2022, with AIA Oregon member outreach happening throughout 2023. Approximately 550 people participated in outreach opportunities, with some overlap, and our communications reached a mix of members and allied professionals through direct outreach, regular newsletters (2,642 subscribers, 50% open rate), LinkedIn (921 followers), Instagram (2036 followers), and Facebook (562 followers).

Task Force Announcement and Recruitment: (August-October 2022) The HQ Task Force was recruited via a range of communications including newsletter announcements, social media, online events, and word-of-mouth invitations. People who were interested in joining filled out a brief questionnaire sharing why they wanted to join and what they would bring to the discussion. An emphasis was placed on diversity and on recruiting at least one member representing each of the five sections.

HQ Task Force Meetings: (ongoing) The HQ Task Force met monthly with AIA Oregon staff and consultants on Zoom to plan and steward the community engagement process,

share what they were hearing from members, hear from others who have been through similar processes, and brainstorm approaches and recommendations.

Communications Planning Meetings: (ongoing) A core group including AIA Oregon staff, consultants, President Elect John Flynn and HQ Task Force Co-Chairs Alan Scott and Elisa Ahn met regularly to plan deliverables, meeting agendas and member communications and to talk through strategies and challenges. These meetings were held as needed, either weekly or biweekly depending on how much was happening.

Newsletter, Web and Social Media Communications: (ongoing) AIA Oregon's communication channels were utilized regularly to share updates and opportunities with members. In addition, a web page was created to give a look at the current project status, promote upcoming engagement opportunities and highlight recent progress.

Baseline Member Survey: (January/February 2023) Membership engagement kicked off with a survey (see Appendix B) that was designed to understand AIA Oregon members' preferences and vision for the new HQ. The survey focused on two main topics: the location(s) of the HQ and its main uses. Questions about demographics allowed the Task Force to delve into the differences between the five sections and various professional levels. AIA Oregon promoted the survey through email, social, the Thursdays @ Three newsletter and a Thursday Roundtable virtual event. In total, 220 responses were received, a 13% member response rate.

CACE Survey: (February 2023) AIA Oregon EVP/CEO Heather Wilson crafted a survey for AIA's Council of Architectural Component Executives (CACE) members regarding current and future HQ/Center for Architecture solutions in their chapters. The survey (see Appendix C) asked about programming considerations, financing models, EDI/access, and other big picture considerations. Thirty CACE members responded to the survey – six with comparable membership sizes to AIA Oregon.

Section Programming Discussions: (May–July 2023) Consultants and AIA Oregon staff worked with steering committees in each section to document and discuss existing programs and events as well as programming aspirations in each section. Each section filled out a matrix including details about event/program frequency, locations, format and attendance as well as an assessment of how well each event was serving membership in each section. Steering committee volunteers completed the matrix and AIA Oregon consultants and staff followed up with them via Zoom to get a more in-depth understanding of each section.

Summer Events: (June–August 2023) AIA Oregon participated in eight events over the course of the summer in every section across the state, reaching 300+ members and

partners. This in-person engagement opportunity centered on interactive boards that allowed members to share their ideas and feedback on HQ ownership models, local strengths and opportunities, and partnerships. Task force members led the engagement efforts, sharing a status update about the process, the importance of members’ participation and a clear message that the only decision made so far is that investment will be distributed among the sections. This collaborative effort relied on the whole team for success. AIA Oregon staff led logistical efforts, consultants created the boards and the Task Force carried the message and engaged members at each event.

Recommendations Brainstorms: (October–November 2023) After the summer events revealed that members were more interested in a capacity building and member engagement solution than investing in HQ spaces, consultants facilitated 12 sessions to develop and hone specific strategies to meet this need. The sessions were held with small groups and covered a range of key topics:

Group	Number of Sessions	Topic(s)
HQ Task Force	3	Member engagement, public engagement and advocacy, use of space
Section Steering Committees	5 (one per section)	Section-specific strengths, opportunities and needs
Current and Past AIA Oregon EVP/CEOs	1	Organizational structure, programming and engagement opportunities, creating a unified culture
AIA Oregon Staff	1	Staff vs. member roles, staffing needs, programming
Other AIA/CACE Professionals	2	Design considerations, programming, public engagement

Key Findings

Statewide Findings

Our understanding of what members wanted evolved as we listened, assessed and asked new questions. Importantly, the feedback received at the summer events shifted our understanding of members' priorities. Rather than multiple physical locations, we began to focus on programming and capacity building.

These findings represent our current understanding based on the survey, summer events, section steering committee conversations, and recommendations brainstorms. For interim findings from each phase, please see Appendices B, C, and D.

Across sections, members said AIA Oregon's approach should:

- **(Re)build community and foster connection.** COVID-19 arrived on the heels of AIA Oregon's new statewide structure, significantly interrupting local and regional activities and creating a barrier for in-person engagement. While online events are appreciated and should be central to AIA Oregon's offerings, people see the HQ process as an opportunity to foster more in-person connection, networking, and sharing—both locally and statewide, and with a strong emphasis on diversity, inclusion and creating a welcoming organization.
- **Prioritize agile, reliable and engaging programs.** Rather than a fixed, AIA Oregon-operated space, members are looking for programs that get them involved, engaged in their profession, and connecting with each other. Section-based Lunch and Learns are of particular interest. One exception to the desire for programs over space is that emerging professionals likely need a location to access study materials. Members also want the reliability of regular, scheduled events, even if those events change locations or formats.
- **Elevate and celebrate existing spaces.** Members see “pop-up” and shared space models as agile, responsive and capable of reaching more members. These options also create opportunities for members to be inspired by more architectural spaces, compared with fixed-space, AIA-owned or -operated options.
- **Create public visibility and impact.** Members want to demonstrate the value of architects in the world and have a positive impact in their communities. They say programming should prioritize public engagement, outreach, and interaction. Salem is emerging as a location for legislative advocacy as well as a potential geographic center.
- **Invest resources wisely.** Financial feasibility remains a top priority. Members recognize that owning or renting a permanent space is expensive — especially when including the costs of programming and staffing. Members want to strategically use the organization's resources to achieve the broadest and highest impact for professionals in the field and their communities.

- **Expand partnerships.** More partnerships across the AEC community will provide opportunities for AIA Oregon to expand influence and engage new, potential members. Creating more connections to students and offering programs for emerging professionals is especially important. Partnerships beyond the AEC community could also enhance public visibility and create opportunities for community impact.

Section Findings

Each section brings its own unique strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Through focused conversations with steering committees, plus insights shared at summer events and through the survey, we were able to gain insight on the state of affairs and membership experience in each section. With a more nuanced understanding of each section, we honed in on local needs, opportunities for connection, and areas for local leadership.

BEND

Strengths:

- There is strong involvement from allied partners in the AEC community. Sixty percent of the attendees at events are NOT architects, but from partner branches of the industry. They are there because architects hire, consult, and collaborate with them.
- Another strong participating group are young professionals who want to spend time with other young professionals. Food and drink helps drive participation.
- Happy hours/Thirsty Third Thursdays are regularly held and well attended. They are hosted by local firms. Half of local firms in town are actively sending people to these events.
- The recently held event in collaboration with ASLA was very successful (25 attendees).
- Women in Construction and Design is kicking off soon and has gotten fantastic traction.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Bend is a new section, created just before the pandemic. More support is needed to bring members together in this section and create cohesion among architects.
- Trust and a sense of connection to the statewide organization is lacking among members in Bend. For example, many members have not been interested or engaged in the “HQ” conversation.

- Professionals see value in a national AIA membership, but not in AIA Oregon. There is an opportunity to make these benefits clearer to members.
- There is not enough volunteer capacity on the steering committee to follow through with programming ambitions. Volunteers need support from AIA Oregon staff with consistent communication and volunteer engagement, ideally from someone locally who understands the community, the spaces, and the people.
- Students and young professionals are looking for study groups, which could be hosted in local firms' offices to create connections to professionals in the field.
- The 2024 Oregon Design Conference will be held in Bend—a huge opportunity for architects from across the state to experience Bend.
- Local City Councilor Anthony Broadman is running for Oregon State Senate and could create a more local connection for advocacy conversations.

EUGENE

Strengths:

- Eugene has a strong core of dedicated volunteers.
- This section has existing relationships with AFO and AIAS. They hope to continue building these relationships, which often lead to Eugene's more successful engagements.
- Study materials are currently housed at Robertson Sherwood Architects. This model works well and could provide inspiration for other sections.
- The summer picnic is consistently well attended.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Eugene needs consistent spaces and cadence for regular (monthly) in-person events (like Lunch and Learns). These events should have food and drink and be held in consistent locations to build a foundation of engagement.
- Section participation needs to expand beyond the same 20 members who are very engaged. This will need to be done with a DEI lens and could take lessons learned from emerging professionals' engagement in Portland.
- In recent years, this section has had more resources in the budget than they are able to spend. In addition to getting support from AIA Oregon staff to manage logistics, they could also use an influx of programming ideas from members.
- Members here want to build stronger relationships with ASLA and CSI, which have strong potential for space sharing. Having AIA Oregon staff support this relationship building would be helpful.
- Eugene wants to foster a stronger relationship with the University of Oregon. AIA Oregon staff could provide support and additional capacity to strengthen this relationship. This could potentially start with activities like connecting University of

Oregon faculty to volunteer “reviewers” in the field, and creating some kind of formal connection to the Eugene section (like a non-voting steering committee member).

PORTLAND

Strengths:

- The emerging professional community is vibrant in Portland with regular happy hour events that are well attended and volunteers who are engaged.
- There is ample support for partnerships and spaces with proven success working with partners to rent and get donated space for events. Firms are happy to share space and it is not typically a difficult ask.
- Portland has a broad set of firms and projects to partner with and highlight because it is home to the largest concentration of AIA Oregon members.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- It is difficult to connect across sections or find a reason to go to other sections. Travel is a barrier, but members may be willing for the right event or opportunity.
- Advanced awareness of events could be better and help boost attendance. In the past, for the EP happy hours, AIA Oregon would put an entire year together so people knew what to expect. Those events were very well attended.
- There is an opportunity to build on the success of the EP happy hours to appeal to the broader membership. This could include adding a quarterly happy hour event with an appealing speaker, or simply opening up EP happy hours to all members at larger venues.
- Existing, engaged volunteer members are over capacity and often involved in multiple organizations at one time. Portland cannot expand events without considering an expanded set of engaged members and additional staff capacity to support logistics.
- Explore the potential of hybrid events at firms that have the technology to host online and in-person. This has the potential to reach statewide as well as locally.

SALEM

Strengths:

- Salem is a logical geographic center for advocacy efforts. There is a huge opportunity to identify partners who could co-occupy space that AIA Oregon members could use for advocacy purposes. This could be Willamette University or other nonprofits who are looking to be in a downtown office space.

- Salem is the most accessible, geographically, to all other sections. The airport is also expanding, which makes it ideal as a travel hub.
- Hill days are gaining traction, especially with young architects under the direction of John Webster, AIA (Eugene Section) There is an opportunity to expand this model.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Engagement is fairly low in this section. It's challenging to draw people out.
- People with families are particularly hard to engage. Lunch and Learn events could be "the sweet spot" where people have child care and may be able to participate more easily.
- Allied nonprofits also want space and might be able to provide a person who is in that space for a portion of the week.
- There is an opportunity for a facilitated partnership with Willamette University to share space, co-promote speakers and lectures, etc. Salem will need additional capacity and support from AIA Oregon staff to facilitate this partnership.

SOUTHERN OREGON

Strengths:

- Southern Oregon is a scenic destination that is home to many of the state's cultural assets including the Shakespeare Festival, Art 'n' Bloom and Makers' Faire.
- AIA Southern Oregon has a decent existing relationship with Oregon Energy Trust.
- Southern Oregon University and Rogue Community College are local assets for architecture and design with potential to expand speakers and lectures.
- Members in Southern Oregon are more likely to be generalists, with flexibility to take on many different types of projects in different settings.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Member participation is low, with more or less the same members engaging over the last four years. Membership is evolving and there are new people who haven't yet had a chance to engage or may not know how.
- Travel is a barrier to participation in events held outside of the region, especially Portland. Southern Oregon largely feels isolated from events happening in Eugene, Salem, Bend and Portland.
- In-person Lunch and Learns were well attended in the past and could be a good opportunity to rekindle these events with food and speakers.
- Having a location for study materials is important. ORW Architecture (Medford) is acting as a library now. Funding is also needed to afford online resources. Local libraries could potentially offer study spaces and materials.

- Members haven't felt included in larger statewide recognition opportunities and would like more ways to engage with statewide leadership. Quarterly meetings with AIA Oregon leadership presence would be ideal.
- The Phoenix Civic Center is opening soon which could be a good potential space to rent out once per month for regular events.
- Continuing education credits offered statewide need to be relevant to more generalist professionals in Southern Oregon.

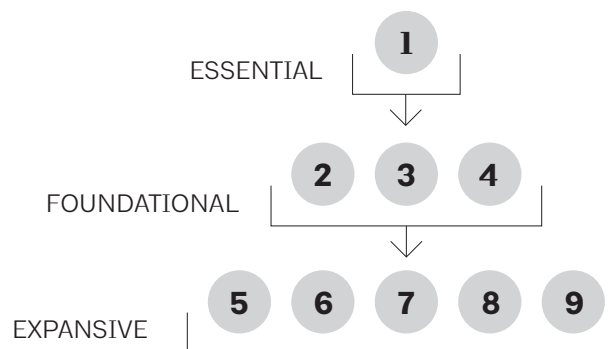
Recommendations

Recommendations

These recommendations are designed to address challenges, create opportunities and respond to members’ priorities and concerns. They apply across sections and are listed roughly in priority order.

We recommend implementing them in the order listed. They build on each other: It would be very difficult to implement the later recommendations without the foundation established by the top priorities, in particular recommendations one through four.

Some recommendations will be implemented in custom ways in different sections to address each section’s unique opportunities, goals, and challenges. Budgets will be developed by the AIA Oregon Board in partnership with staff and the Task Force.



Statewide Recommendations

Recommendation #1: AIA Oregon should not pursue ownership or long-term leases of spaces for use by staff or members.

Securing capital to build out a new “HQ” or multiple “HQs” is not the solution the chapter needs at this moment. Members and staff said clearly that leasing or owning space was unnecessary for the success of the chapter and likely to be cost-prohibitive in the current economy. Similarly, because the pandemic has normalized working remotely, AIA Oregon staff do not require central or section-based office space to be effective in their roles. Finally, permanent public-facing storefronts or gallery spaces are not essential for engaging local communities and demonstrating public impact – priorities for many members. Instead of AIA Oregon-owned or -operated spaces, staff, and members should focus on:

- Expanding partnerships and shoring up a rotating library of donated or rented spaces for in-person events, as needed.
- Reassessing staff benefits to support working remotely.

- Exploring tools for digital community building.
- Investing in community-based space activation to reach members of the public, achieve a broad impact, and create meaningful opportunities for AIA Oregon members to take action in their own communities.

Action Steps:

- Build organizational capacity by hiring new staff per recommendation #2
- Work with local sections to map local space assets and potential partnerships to support additional access to spaces per recommendation #4
- Encourage advocacy and civic involvement by elevating these priorities at the Board level and launching a mini-grant program that supports architectural innovation within communities (Recommendations #6 and #7).
- Determine any accommodations necessary for staff to continue working remotely (stipends, WeWork memberships, utilities, and equipment, etc.)
- Research and examine digital tools to support community building statewide.

Recommendation #2: Create 2-3 new AIA Oregon staff positions to support membership engagement and provide logistical support to local sections.

One of the clearest needs that came out of this process was the urgency to build capacity for programming, member engagement, advocacy, and partnership development across sections. New AIA Oregon staff would provide immense value, including increasing member engagement, providing logistical support for existing programming, expanding programming offerings and deepening relationships with firm leaders and allied partners – particularly in smaller sections where volunteer capacity is strained. Being clear about staff roles and having a clear decision-making process would help improve efficiency and productivity in support of the chapter.

Action Steps:

- Analyze workload of existing staff, including decision-making processes
- Determine geographic focus of new staff, if any
- Assess financial feasibility and FTE recommendations
- Vet with board and section steering committees
- Write and post job descriptions for new positions

Recommendation #3: Develop a set of toolkits (one statewide, and one for each section) that support programming logistics in each section.

In addition to acknowledging the capacity crunch, engaged members also said they were unclear about what kind of support they can and should be asking from AIA Oregon staff. They also want to know what resources and relationships exist in their section to support

existing and new programming. The toolkits would provide much-needed clarity for AIA Oregon member volunteers about roles and responsibilities and create more consistency across sections. These would be living documents that are updated annually as part of a debrief process with AIA Oregon staff and section steering committees to assess learnings and identify needs.

Toolkit content could include:

- Elements for a successful event or program:
 - Ideas for relevant and interesting content
 - Cool spaces to see and gather at
 - Opportunities for networking and connection
 - Appropriate event format (in person, hybrid or online)
 - DEI considerations and creating an inclusive welcome
 - Consistent and proactive communications
 - Food, beverage
- Everyone's role
 - AIA Oregon staff roles and responsibilities
 - AIA Oregon member volunteer roles and responsibilities
 - Section steering committee roles and responsibilities
- Existing/recommended programs and events in each section (recommended cadence and format – hybrid, in-person or online events)
- Gathering spaces in each section (elevate existing spaces)
- Study material spaces
- Existing and potential partners in each section
- Case studies of successful programs and engagement (Portland Emerging Professionals, Bend Happy Hours, etc.)

Action Steps:

- Determine sequence of toolkit development in relationship to hiring of new staff
- Determine AIA Oregon staff/consultants responsible for leading toolkit development in collaboration with section steering committees
- Offer training to section steering committees on how to use the toolkit and work with staff to fulfill section ambitions
- Develop toolkits and update them annually

Recommendation #4: Craft a consistent welcome for new members and re-engage existing members.

When new members join AIA Oregon, they aren't always clear about the breadth and depth of opportunities and benefits available. From networking events to CE and

leadership opportunities, new members from all backgrounds, all sections and at every stage of their career need to clearly understand how they can engage with AIA Oregon to get the most out of their membership right from the start. By crafting a welcome strategy that consists of clear communication tools paired with personal outreach, AIA Oregon can ensure that every member is engaged in a way that helps advance their individual career and the profession at large. This means making it clear how opportunities are connected and how someone can grow their volunteer leadership with AIA Oregon over time. This strategy should also include an invitation to existing members to re-engage with AIA Oregon, clarifying for them the opportunities they have to get involved in all of AIA Oregon's new priorities resulting from the "HQ" process as well as existing, tried-and-true programming.

Action Steps:

- Assess current membership welcome and create recommendations for improvement
- Investigate what motivates people to participate and use this understanding to inspire engagement and volunteering
- Build from successes of other chapters
- Create and implement a communications and engagement plan

Recommendation #5: Reimagine the steering committee structure to foster more engaged and robust section leadership.

The number of volunteers responsible for section activities is small, with only a handful of members engaged in the hands-on management of local programming and member engagement. In addition to building staff capacity to support the work of each section, AIA Oregon also needs to take a closer look at the section leadership model to ensure there is enough volunteer capacity to set and meet each section's ambitions. This, paired with new outreach strategies to re-engage existing members and welcome new members, will help to reinvigorate volunteer leadership across the organization and show members clear pathways to volunteer leadership positions.

Reimagining section steering committees could include:

- adding new leadership positions on each committee (such as Secretary, Treasurer and Programming Chair) while providing sections autonomy to identify the positions they need
- reinforcing sections' autonomy over their own budgets
- adjusting volunteer roles and responsibilities as more staff are hired
- offering training and orientation for new committee members

- investigating and offering incentives and perks for volunteers taking on leadership roles (such as stipends, reimbursements, food and drink, and discounts)
- requiring in-person section steering committee meetings at least quarterly as a networking and engagement opportunity for members

Action Steps:

- Convene section steering committee leaders to make action step recommendations
- Board: consider and approve new steering committee structure
- Work should happen in tandem with hiring of new staff and determining staff roles

Recommendation #6: Elevate advocacy and civic involvement as a critical part of the AIA Oregon ethos – from membership to the board.

AIA Oregon members know that great things happen when architects are a part of the conversation. From legislative advocacy to emergency planning with neighbors to accessible design, there are so many ways for architects to be a part of conversations happening in communities across Oregon. By encouraging and creating pathways for members to become more civically involved, AIA Oregon will make an investment in expanded community impact and a more inclusive future. To demonstrate a commitment to this critical priority, AIA Oregon will need new board positions focusing on statewide advocacy and civic involvement efforts and opportunities. Potential advocacy activities could include things like organizing advocacy days, developing talking points, training speakers, and sharing legislative priorities and successes with members. Potential activities for civic involvement could include things like civic involvement guides, recommendations for local organizations to get involved with, or sharing stories of AIA Oregon members who are making an impact.

Action Steps:

- Board: Consider and approve new positions: 1) Statewide Advocacy Director Board Member At Large (liaison to legislative affairs committee), 2) Statewide Civic Involvement Director Board Member At Large
- Recruit two new board members
- Consider local roles in section steering committees that could serve as liaisons to statewide leadership about local priorities
- Determine priority activities and messages for membership, emphasizing an EDI lens

Recommendation #7: Adopt a mini grant program to support architectural innovation with communities.

Public engagement and social impact were both clear priorities for members. Sections have adequate resources for member-focused activities and events, but there is a missing piece – sparking innovation and connection to communities to create an impact. AIA North Carolina’s ACTIVATE program is a mini-grant program designed “to help architects guide, listen, observe, advocate, connect, and envision with the public and their communities. The end goal is to inspire people to take action and shape the future for their communities around them.” Building on AIA North Carolina’s successes and lessons learned, AIA Oregon could adopt a similar mini-grant model to support partnerships with community-based organizations to drive creative thinking around projects that engage the public, support equitable and resilient communities, and demonstrate the good architects can do in communities across Oregon.

Action Steps:

- Meet with AIA North Carolina for guidance and lessons learned on structure and process
- Conduct financial assessment to determine granting frequency and amount (North Carolina allocates up to \$40k per year)
- Determine initiative values and, if needed, specific issue areas to focus on

Recommendation #8: Reimagine chapter-wide events with an eye toward creating unity, belonging and connection across the state.

AIA Oregon members are craving connection and want to experience the tangible benefits of having a statewide chapter with diverse perspectives and expertise. This creates an opportunity to strategically tap into the knowledge of membership to learn who members want to hear from, what’s inspiring them, and what exciting events are already happening in their regions. With this information, AIA Oregon can build out in-person and online events that elevate speakers and topics from across the state and bring members together to network and learn across sections. These events will encourage connection and spark inspiration, while helping members become more informed about work happening across the state and the region. The events could take the form of a speaker series, a statewide lunch and learn, field trips, site tours, or simply promotion of talks hosted by partners (like universities and colleges).

Action Steps:

- Develop communication and outreach plan for crowdsourcing possible speakers, event types and projects
- Analyze existing statewide events and look for opportunities to layer on a statewide connection
- Pilot one new statewide event series in 2024

Recommendation #9: Grow the Allied Professional membership to strengthen partnerships.

Allied Professionals are a vital part of the A/E/C community. AIA Oregon members already welcome these professionals to events and see these relationships as an opportunity for expanding partnerships and impact, especially in smaller sections. Promoting or reimagining the allied professionals' membership will support AIA Oregon's goals to boost membership, diversify the membership base, expand sponsorship options and increase opportunities for space and event collaborations. To be successful, architects and allied professionals will need to understand the benefits of allied professional memberships.

Action Steps:

- Revisit Allied Professional membership benefits and adjust, as needed
- Analyze existing Allied Professional membership base in each section to identify existing and new potential members
- Develop communications and outreach plan to promote membership opportunity in each section

Naming What's Next

Because we are prioritizing member engagement and capacity building in our recommendations instead of physical location(s) for a new headquarters or permanent office space for staff, "HQ" no longer appropriately captures the spirit of what we are doing.

By naming the new strategic efforts that will follow these recommendations, AIA Oregon members will be able to rally around the work ahead.

We need a name that:

- Looks toward a promising future
- Acknowledges our sturdy foundation
- Encapsulates the variety of efforts that are part of the recommendations
- Represents and celebrates the thoughtful changes happening over the next few years

Name recommendation: AIA Oregon Elevate

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

Go slow. We reached AIA Oregon members through multiple touchpoints in a variety of formats throughout 2023. This intentional pace allowed the conversation to evolve and gave the Task Force room to ask questions in a variety of ways. If we had rushed, we may have missed key nuances about the differences between sections – or gone ahead with a solution that did not address members’ actual needs.

Talk to a diverse base of people. The process engaged members from every section and with a wide range of personal and professional backgrounds. The emphasis on diversity allowed us to find both the common ground among members and the areas where we need to account for differences. Addressing these differences will continue to be crucial as we implement the recommendations, many of which have diversity, equity, inclusion, and regional variation at their core.

Have staff and consultants drive the work (or provide major incentive for volunteers).

This is mostly a matter of capacity. AIA Oregon understood that volunteers come to projects like this with limited time, but invaluable expertise. Volunteers provided critical insight into the organization, gave voice to the work and added a strategic lens, but the day-to-day work required the time commitment of hired consultants and staff with dedicated hours for this work each week.

Be thoughtful in how you ask questions and get feedback. We received better answers when we asked better questions. In general, interactive, in-person conversation and engagement opportunities provided more valuable feedback than written forms of engagement. When engaging people with written tools such as surveys, we learned to keep them short and to ensure both questions and answers are clear.

Make space for Task Force members to engage in a range of ways. Within the task force, interest and ability to participate varied. Capacity can ebb and flow, and people may be more intensely involved in different phases of the project. It’s important to make space for people to engage in whatever way they can, whether that’s consistently or with less regularity.

Understand the limits of engagement. Through this process, we confronted the reality of skepticism about AIA Oregon and what many members described as a history of unequal treatment among regions. We addressed this history during the engagement process, having hard conversations, listening to concerns, and pivoting to come up with solutions members said they truly want. But the engagement process is only part of the change; it’s what comes next that will really evolve things. Implementing the recommendations will demonstrate that AIA Oregon is serious about building a true statewide chapter.

Be nimble. Listen. Pivot. We took an agile approach, responding to feedback even if it wasn't what we expected. The biggest pivot was shifting from a facilities plan to a strategic plan, but we also made smaller pivots along the way. Our outreach ideas changed as we learned more about what members wanted and identified the gaps in our knowledge. We initially offered online sessions to update members about the initiative but pivoted away from that when interest seemed low. And we opted to do outreach directly to section leadership rather than asking for written input, resulting in a much deeper understanding of local needs. Changes like this allowed us to respond to what we were learning. Nimbleness was central to getting us where we are.

Appendices

Appendices

This appendix links to the primary documents sharing our approach and highlighting key learnings along the way.

APPENDIX A: [Project Brief](#)

APPENDIX B: [Baseline Member Survey Findings](#)

APPENDIX C: [CACE Survey Results](#) (for chapters of similar size)

APPENDIX D: [Summer 2023 Engagement Analysis](#)