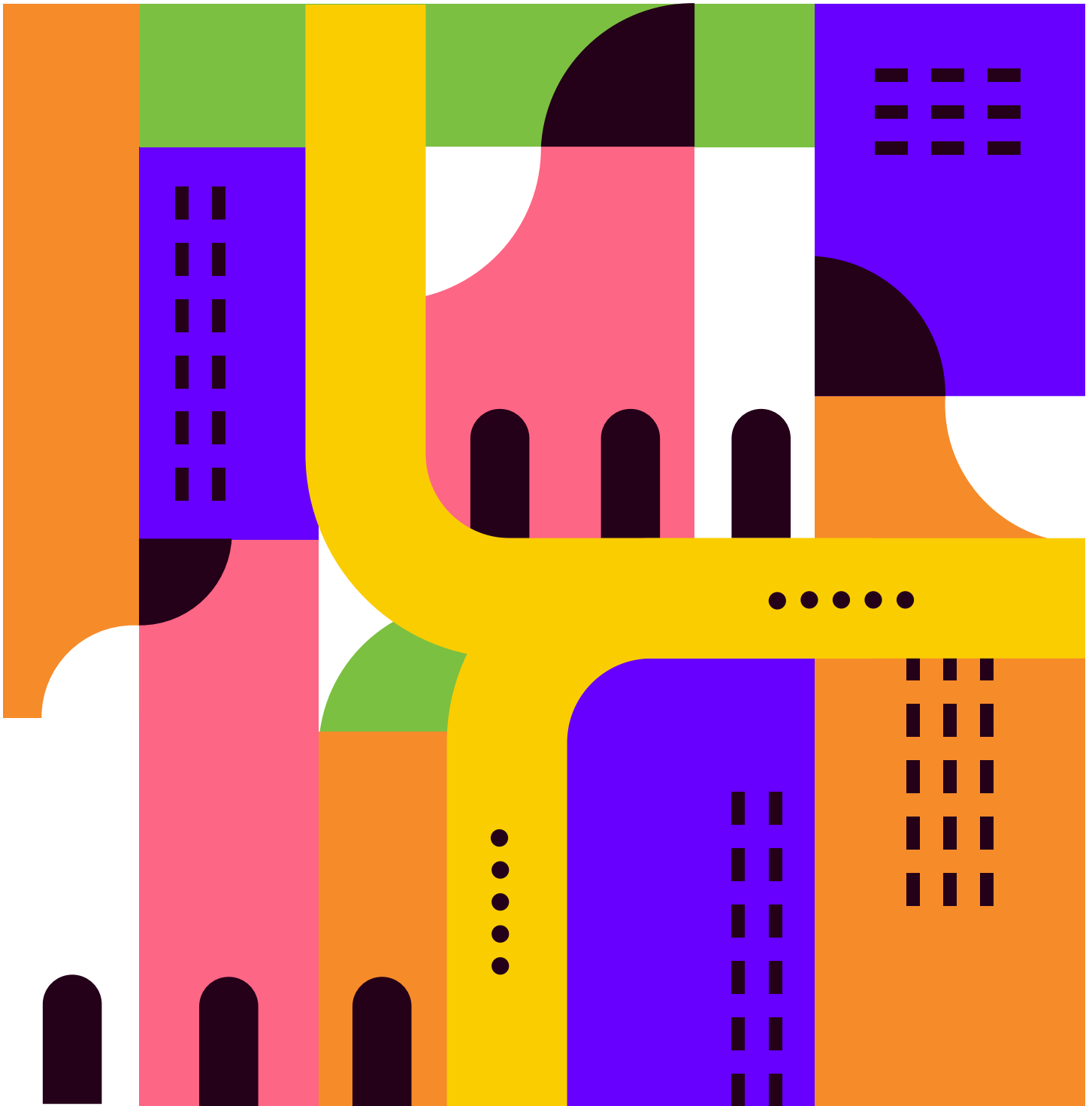


Equity. Diversity. Inclusion



**BSA** BOSTON SOCIETY  
OF ARCHITECTS/AIA

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# Equity in Practice Resource Guide

# BSA Equity in Practice Resource Guide 08.19.2020

As architects, we must understand the role we play in perpetuating systems of oppression and commit ourselves and our firms to practicing, designing, and building for racial justice and equity. Understanding where past biases and motivations stem from before taking new actions will help us to shape future policies and create structural changes in our profession, our communities, and our society.

This document is a resource of shared information for architects and architecture firms to help create a more equitable profession. It provides information and links for our membership to consider in an effort to help shape firm discussions, actions, and decision-making about equity within their firms, in their work, and in their communities. It is not, however, intended to provide guidance as to how architects and architecture firms should resolve these issues, as those decisions may need to be made in consultation with legal consultants and other professionals, and based upon a multitude of factors.

The BSA Equity in Practice Resource Guide is based on a summary of the AIA's Equitable Guides for Practice and is an evolving resource. It will be updated and revised as new information arises. It is organized into chapters including information on intercultural competence, workplace culture, compensation, recruitment and retention, negotiation, mentorship & sponsorship, advancing careers, engaging community, and measuring progress. It concludes with an appendix of additional resources.

We hope the resources and shared information in the BSA Equity in Practice Resource Guide is helpful to architects and their firms as a first step in creating a more equitable profession.

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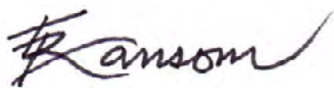
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# RESOURCES

## 01 **AIA Guides for Equitable Practice**

These guides were created to provide a framework for ensuring that your organization meets career development, professional environment, and cultural awareness expectations. There are nine sections of the guide, each focusing on a different topic related to equity in practice. The format of each guide includes an overview of relevant topics related to employment and personnel issues about equity, diversity and inclusion.

Each chapter includes real-world-derived best practices, relevant research, and other tools to help you address a variety of employment and personnel issues about equity, diversity, and inclusion followed by opportunities to address these topics at the individual, manager, firm and profession spheres. Each guide also includes a section placing the topics in context with employment law and professional ethics, suggestions on actionable opportunities within the individual, manager, firm and professional spheres, testimonials from individuals within the profession, and finally a list of resources for further exploration on these topics.

[VISIT](#)

## 02 **BSA Knowledge Community: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Network**

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Network is a place for individuals in the design industry to engage in meaningful conversations; support, promote, and build awareness; and to share best practices related to issues of EDI within the profession.

[VISIT](#)

## 03 **BSA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Resources Page**

The BSA's EDI Resources page is a regularly updated to provide access to equity, diversity and inclusion-related practice guides, reading materials, exhibitions, groups to follow and support, statements on justice, links to the BSA's Race and Architecture series, a calendar of BSA events, and a video archive of BSA programming.

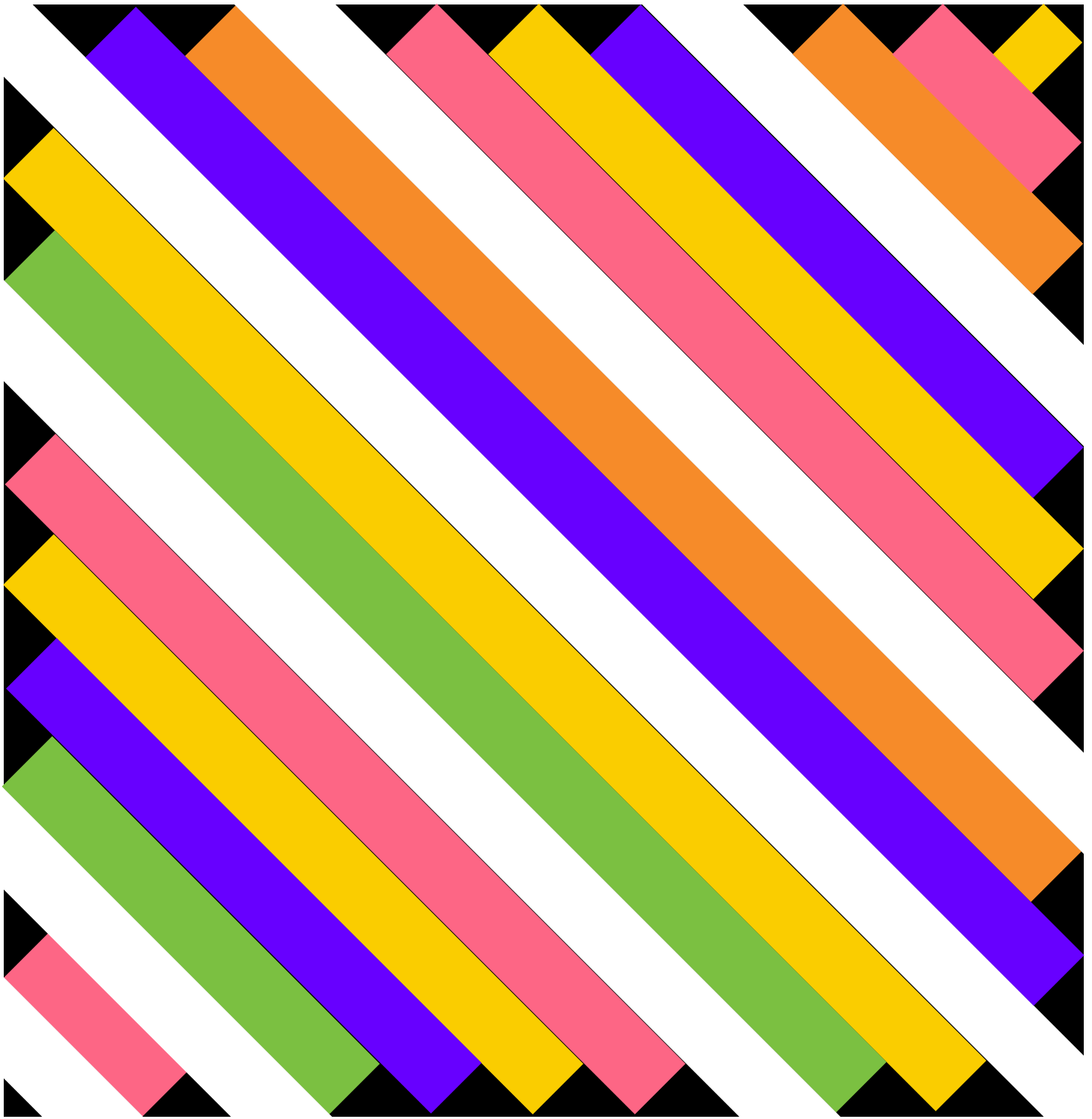
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\*The chapters in this guide include excerpts from and summaries of the content of the AIA's Guide for Equitable Practice, presented as an entry point for BSA members or member firms seeking resources.

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01

# Intercultural Competence

To grow the value of diversity in our profession, we must develop inclusive, equitable workplaces in which unbiased, culturally aware thoughts and actions guide our practice.

# Valuing differences as strengths within the workplace

Increasingly, organizations are seeing the value of workplaces where differences are recognized as strengths that contribute to reaching common goals. This inclusiveness is important for how all individuals within a firm work together, and it also matters for how a firm and its employees connect with individuals and groups outside the firm. Questions we must ask ourselves while striving for increased equity, diversity and inclusion include:

- How can we best support diverse teams to work well together and thus improve results?
- How do we build an inclusive environment where differences have a positive impact?

Intercultural competence is the capacity to shift perspective and behavior so as to bridge cultural differences in order to reach identified goals. It is a skill that is developed over time with practice, by anyone who chooses to make the effort, and encompasses understanding culture (shared patterns in a social group that determine appropriate behavior and help us make meaning of our environment), identity (expressed or internalized categorization into social groups), and bias (explicit or implicit prejudices and attitudes towards a certain group).

## Why is intercultural competence important?

### Individuals

Assumptions and biases of all kinds, both overt and subtle, affect the behavior of individuals and those around them and will undermine other behaviors. By focusing on understanding the impact of bias and cultural awareness in the workplace, individuals can have an impact on expanding the breadth of lens related to decision making, power dynamics between dominant and non-

dominant groups, emotional health and wellness of employees, performance in intercultural contexts, and developing broad and effective networks.

### Firms

Intercultural competence has shown to be effective in meeting diversity and inclusion goals in recruiting and staffing while building strong teams exhibiting high levels of cooperation within and beyond their group. Diverse groups create more relevant and valuable solutions through their ability to incorporate a greater range of perspectives and ideas and work with a broader range of clients and markets. This builds capacity of individuals and groups to adapt and shift perspectives to drive towards shared goals.

### Profession

The ability of our profession to include the cultural needs, values, and practices of diverse groups in the practice of architecture is a key factor in improving the built environment for people across race, gender, class, abilities, etc.

## Our workplace increases intercultural competence when:

### Awareness

Everyone identifies and takes responsibility for their attitudes and biases, individuals actively listen to each other and acknowledge differences, and identity groups openly communicate how they are misunderstood and made to feel accepted.

### Development

Supported by firms, cultural self-awareness is explored to notice, address, and mitigate biases. Teams and leaders should set goals for increasing their capacity to navigate cross-culturally and firms may offer intercultural learning opportunities and reconnection opportunities for marginalized employees.

## Compliance

Unlawful discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and business practices are regularly analyzed for discrimination.

## Influence

Communication patterns and discussions reflect multiple cultural perspectives, including creating a variety of approaches to resolve challenges, adapting strategies to bridge cultural differences, and the creation of diverse team, mentorship, and advocacy groups.

## How do you ensure compliance?

Federal, state, and local employment laws are designed to ensure that employment practices are carried out fairly and without discrimination. All forms of discrimination—whether or not they meet legal standards of discrimination— have serious, negative consequences for individuals and firms, and undermine the ethical standards and ideals of our profession. Employers should be aware of laws prohibiting discrimination of protected classes and prohibiting retaliation against employees who have engaged in seeking resolution for discriminatory action. Careful examination of policies, practices and protocols are critical to ensuring compliance.

## How can you act?

### Individuals

Awareness of cultural patterns that result in the reinforcement of a hierarchy of human value is the first step toward interrupting those patterns and acting in alignment with your values. Steps to take include increasing your cultural self-awareness, learning how bias works, building diverse relationships, becoming an attuned listener and actively considering multiple perspectives, and learning how to correct and interrupt your own and others' biased thinking and actions.

## Managers

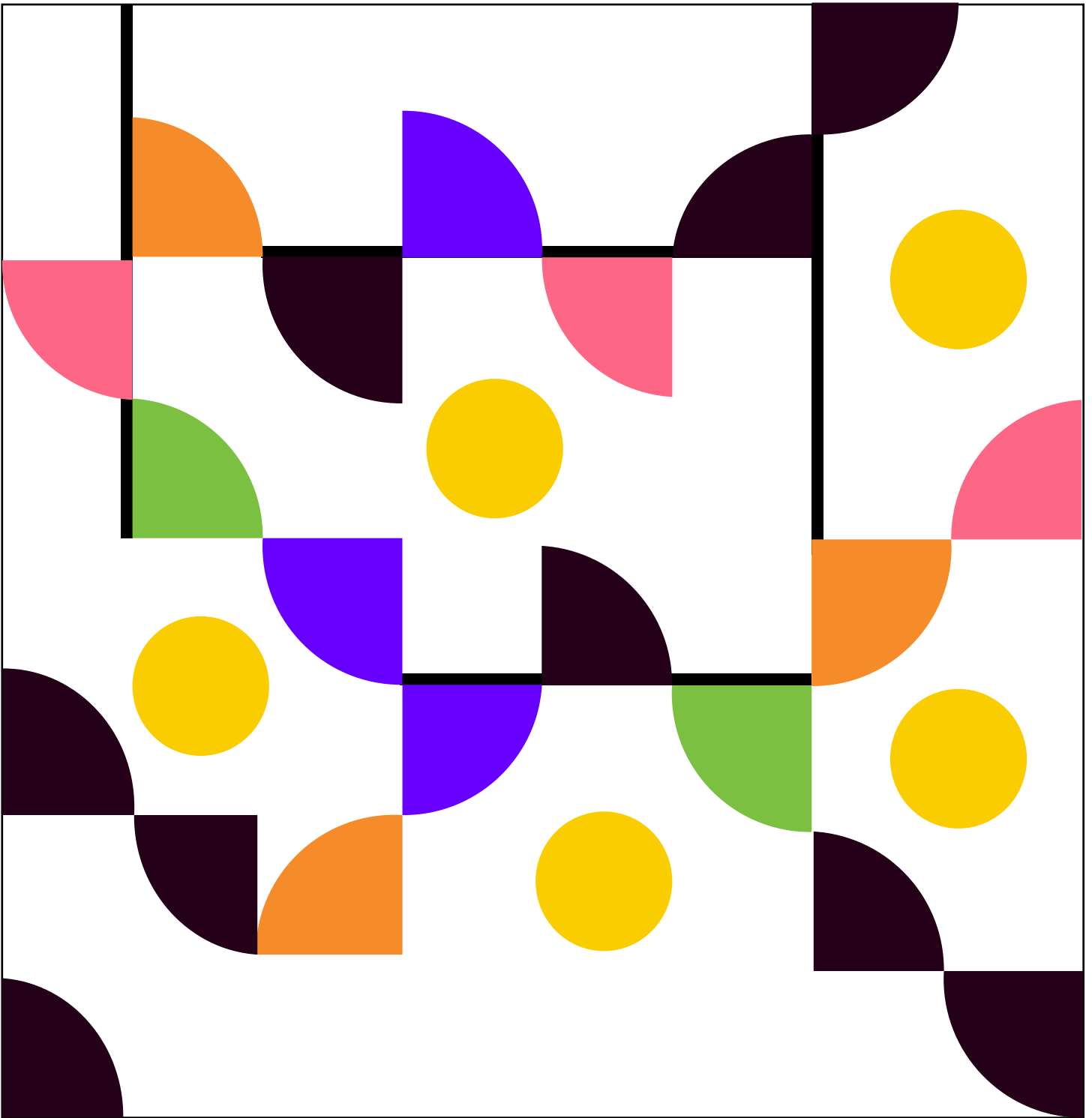
Cultivate protocols and patterns for staff to build practices of individually and collectively navigating discomfort, foster multicultural teams to understand, incorporate and leverage their differences, learn to seek and interrupt bias, and ensure that everyone receives the same level and quality of staff support.

## Firms

Understand your intercultural capacity and biases by taking a detailed inventory of your organization's patterns and practices. Communicate your firm's equitable culture by cultivating a shared understanding of the organization's mission and core values to increase the feeling of social belonging within the firm. Lead your culture by increasing the representation of non-dominant groups and developing the capacity of individual managers to listen and lead.

## Profession

Know what is happening by staying aware of issues and research in bias and intercultural competence. Assemble best practices for reducing bias and develop concrete strategies for catching and interrupting identity-driven bias, discrimination, harassment, and violence. Recognize and publicly highlight employers and individuals for building intercultural capacity and supporting diversity in the profession.



## 02

# Workplace Culture

Workplace culture is fundamental to an organization and must be understood for a business and its employees to thrive. Everyday issues and opportunities related to diversity, equity, and inclusion can be linked to specific aspects of an organization. A firm's structure, values, physical artifacts, means of communication, and modelled behaviors generally lead to actions that are aligned and consistent with company values.



# Understanding and managing the social order of an organization

This guide describes components of healthy workplace culture, details some dominant patterns in the field of architecture, and introduces the profession's 'cultural iceberg', made up of things easy to observe as well as cultural norms that exist below the surface. Central to the guide are examples of how workplace culture affects individuals, firms, and the profession. Also covered are some of the legal aspects of harassment. The guide concludes with concepts for assessment and improvement.

## What is workplace culture?

### Culture

The unspoken social order of an organization, the shared patterns that determine what is viewed as appropriate behavior of individuals and the group, and other signs that help us make meaning out of our surroundings.

### Strength and Health

Ideally everyone in the office can articulate the culture. A healthy workplace depends on the engagement of people, which deepens as diverse needs and thoughts are included in decision making.

### The Cultural Iceberg

There are patterns or assumptions that are objective, composed of things you can see or point to, like how people dress and the artifacts of the office. There are also subjective unseen attitudes (e.g. body language, gender roles, assumptions around education) and expectations that may pervade the workplace. Some elements of the cultural iceberg may be limiting for

individuals or groups.

## Why is workplace culture important?

### Individuals

Engagement is key to a healthy culture. A lack of engagement can signal problems within the workplace. Culture aligned with business goals, can lead to high engagement and employees gaining a sense of trust and belonging. It is important to determine fit without perpetuating bias and exclusion.

### Firms

Firm leaders can make positive and intentional changes to a culture by ensuring interdependence between structure and culture. Explicit and implicit messaging should be aligned with intentions and considered for perception as they can be unintentionally exclusionary. Strategic planning, risk, and marketing must also be considered in terms of values and bias. Clients will bring their own culturally informed beliefs; employees with greater intercultural awareness have greater capacity to bridge potential cultural differences between client and firm.

### Profession

It is crucial to actively manage culture and how it is perceived internally and externally. An organization known for equitable inclusion is better positioned to attract and retain talent to fulfill the needs of the building industry.

### A strong and healthy workplace culture exists when there is

- Clarity
- Compliance
- Alignment
- Trust
- Engagement

# Harassment

The second section of the document introduces legal information regarding harassment. Culturally, there is an increasing expectation from all forms of workplace that sexual and other forms of harassment are prohibited. Creating and maintaining a workplace culture in which employees are empowered to speak up about issues of concern helps prevent harassment.

## Understand the Law

Federal Law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone based on sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or military service. Most states have additional laws prohibiting discrimination in the workplace.

## Have prevention measures supported by policy

Written policy outlining definitions and consequences is essential to help guide employee and manager actions and safeguard firms against harassment liability.

## Respond to violations

If possible, individuals should respond to harassment immediately, making it clear that the behavior is unacceptable and must stop. Write down the incident, time/day, and names of those present. Report the incident to your manager, supervisor, and/or HR. If the behavior continues, write a letter stating the facts, objections, and what should change.

Managers must take all complaints seriously, suspend judgement and remain neutral. Immediately report incidents to HR and/or firm leaders. Take action to make the complainant's workplace safe and prevent retaliation.

Human Resources/Firm Leader must advise the complainant and respondent of the situation's seriousness. Police should be notified if there is criminal activity, with possible need to have a formal investigation and report made to company officials.

Both complainant and respondent should be notified of actions to be taken.

# Tools for Assessment and Action

The concluding section of the guide poses questions to help individuals articulate and understand their workplace culture. Testimonials are included for consideration and well as a resource guide for further reading.

## Individuals and firms should

- Know and articulate their workplace culture
- Be proactive
- Communicate and lead
- Encourage diverse leadership
- Focus on engagement

Local, regional, and national professional organizations are vehicles for understanding, communicating, and advocating for positive workplace cultures. The profession must stay up to date on thoughts and research. Individuals and organizations should look for perspectives that differ from one's own experience. Looking beyond architecture will expose what is occurring in other professional and what might be relevant for improving the current norms and future of the profession.



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03

# Compensation

Compensation issues exist throughout our profession arising from inequitable opportunities, valuation of work, and pay practices. Removing compensation gaps supports the influx, development, and retention of talent and the economic stability and growth of individual, firms, and the profession.

# Establishing parity in tangible and intangible compensation components

This guide advocates for both parity and equity of pay, transparency of policy and practice surrounding compensation, and suggests guidance for approaching equitable compensation. Compensation signals the value an individual brings to the workplace, the values of a business, and the value of work within society. It is a mechanism by which the workforce makes choices and businesses operate. The soundness of this mechanism is compromised when compensation decisions are based on irrelevant characteristics rather than bona fide business factors—the relationship between value given by an employee and value returned by an employer becomes inequitable, and both parties are impacted negatively.

## What is compensation?

Compensation is the sum of all tangible and intangible values provided by employers to employees in exchange for work. Employers use compensation to attract, recognize, and retain employees.

### Direct financial compensation:

Money paid directly to employees: hourly pay, salary, overtime, bonuses.

### Indirect financial compensation:

Has financial value but is not paid monetarily: paid time off, paid family and medical leave, health insurance, disability insurance, life insurance, retirement contributions, pension, stock options, profit sharing, relocation expenses, travel expenses, registration costs, educational benefits, employee services, and employee perks.

### Nonfinancial compensation:

Nonmonetary for career building and increasing job satisfaction: opportunities such as project

assignments, promotions, increased decision-making and leadership responsibilities, mentorship and sponsorship, training; recognition through praise and awards, time with leaders, networking introductions, recommendations; quality of experience through workspace upgrades, more desirable tasks, flexibility, and positive social exchange.

## Pay parity and equity:

### Pay Parity:

Equal pay for equal work; compensation packages of equal value between two comparable employees who do the same work.

### Pay Equity:

Equal pay for work of equal value; compensation packages of equal value between two employees who do different work of equal value.

## Assess:

### Transparency

- Do all employees understand the compensation system and their placement within?
- Are job descriptions clear? Are criteria clear for pay ranges, performance pay, advancement?
- Is pay adjusted through regular audits?
- Do leaders openly share how the compensation program relates to the business?
- Does the compensation system align with the values and goals of the business?

### Fairness

- Do you value performance over hours and determine fee structures accordingly?
- Do you have a process for determining wages that is free from bias?
- Is your firm's performance review process objective and fairly administered?
- Are employees assessed on the value of their work, not necessarily hours in seats?
- Do all employees have equitable opportunity for high-profile assignments, networks, clients?

- Are benefits, including leaves and flextime, distributed equitably?

### Power

- Who determines compensation in your workplace?
- Is there consensus in leadership on how compensation practices relate to the organization's business goals?
- Who benefits from the compensation system and who suffers?
- Do the firm's and employee's values around compensation align?

### Connections

- Do economic pressures (such as to lower fees to secure work or to provide employee benefits) have a disparate impact on compensation of certain employees?
- Are your pay and other benefits perceived as fair when employees compare them to those of other similar organizations, and is this helping or hurting your equity goals?

### Compliance

- Do you comply with pay equity laws?
- Does the firm comply with legal requirements in compensating interns?
- Does the firm respect personal privacy when discussing pay?
- Is discrimination prevented and remediated without retaliation?

## Act:

### Individuals

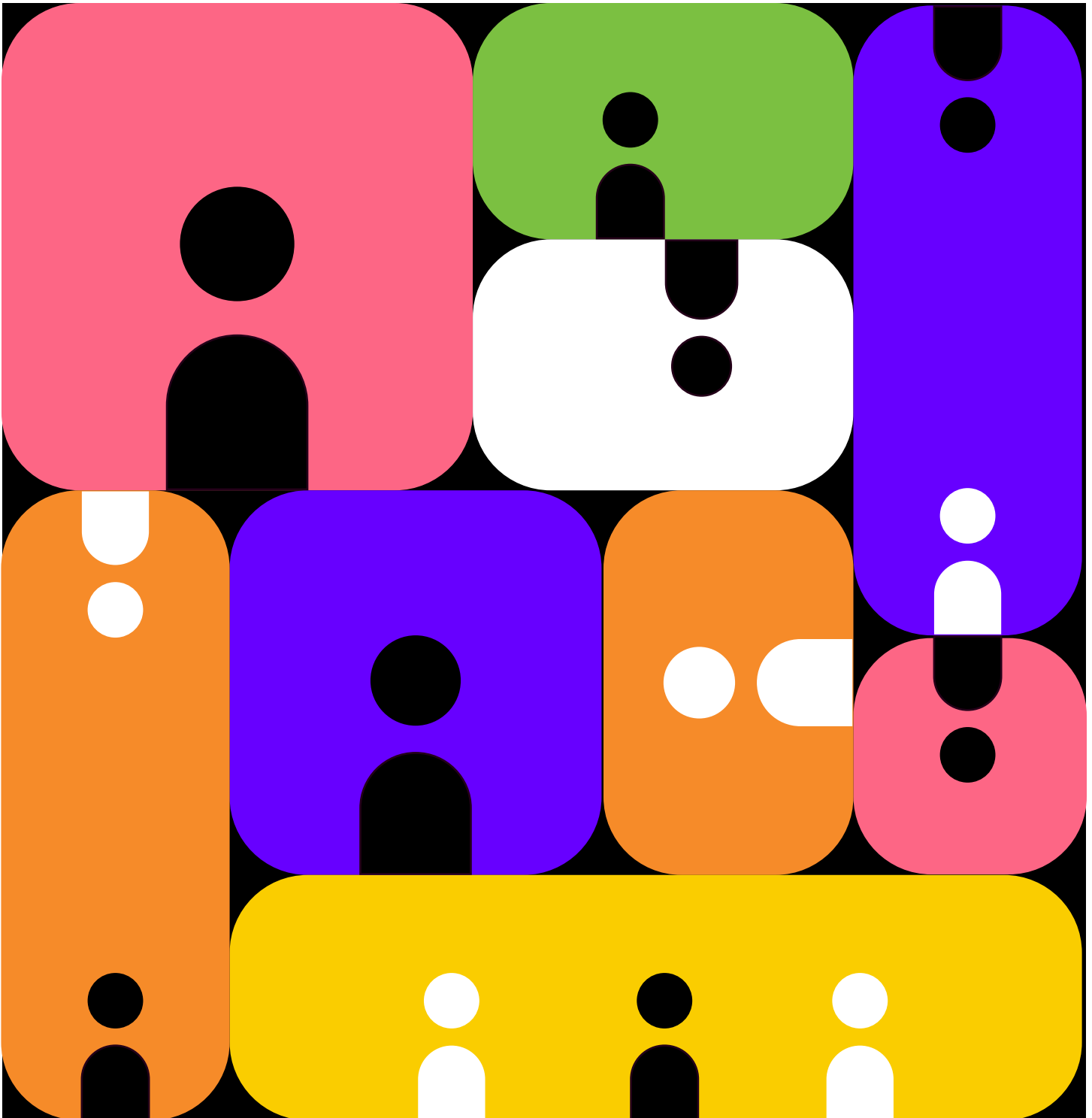
Learn about the broad and complex issues in compensation. Know the range of pay expected for an employee at your level, size of firm, and location. Track your own performance and development. Learn to pinpoint and articulate your value relative to your organization's goals.

### Firm

Review current, reputable salary survey data. Assess your firm's current compensation system: consider compensation structures (array of levels) and policies as connected to the array of things that constitute compensation in your organization. Evaluate wage gaps. Administer a survey that allows employees to share compensation concerns and asks how they perceive compensation fairness. Establish a compensation philosophy, structure, and policy; then develop a communication strategy to be transparent with employees. Focus not only on direct and indirect financial compensation, but also on employee development and career growth opportunities.

### Profession

Establish guidelines for equal value. Offer professional development and social events around topics related to compensation equity. Provide forums for discussion on compensation equity between employees and firms, and with other industries. Offer sole practitioners and small business resources to instill equitable compensation practices as they grow. Look at how revenue can be increased across the profession to enable firms to invest more in their employee's directly through compensation and indirectly by growing their businesses.



# 04

## Recruitment and Retention

Talent is the lifeblood of any practice, and attracting and retaining talent is essential for the health of the profession overall. Engaging all employees in equitable and inclusive practice will help to recruit and retain a diverse workforce and is an effective means to success for firms of all sizes and types.

# Attracting and maintaining a diverse workforce through equitable practices

This guide provides guidance on equitable and inclusive recruitment - attracting new talent - and retention - keeping people engaged in the workplace and ensuring they are set up for success. Challenges to increasing diversity begin at the entry point to the profession and are compounded by implicit and explicit biases in recruitment practices. Retention is affected by workplace flexibility, workload, control and autonomy, reward, community, fairness, and alignment of values. Employee engagement - “high involvement in and enthusiasm for their work and workplace” - has a significant impact on productivity, reduces turnover, and increases retention. When architecture firms establish strong cultures of employee engagement, they not only help to improve employee recruitment and retention (and hence the firm’s profit) but they also support the development of employees who align with the architecture discipline’s values of equity and societal benefit.

## Why are recruitment and retention important for equitable practice?

### Individuals

Strong employee engagement - feeling certain you belong, feeling psychologically and physically safe, having equitably distributed and accessible resources, and feeling valued - is highly correlated with productivity and company success. “Pinch points” - career phases when progress is likely to be hindered - are typically more extreme for women throughout their career as they take on care-giving roles and for people of color early in their career. Supporting employees during pinch points and ensuring

equitable access to career building opportunities can improve retention.

### Managers

The perception of management as effective and fair is a predictor of retention and supports a positive work culture. Managers can ensure that they are providing feedback (formal and informal, annual and ongoing) equitably among employees.

### Firms

Employee retention is fundamental to good business as long-term employees provide institutional memory and can build lasting client relationships. Strong employee engagement can attract a more diverse and talented applicant pool and equitable hiring and promotion practices will help increase diversity at each level. The cost of replacing an employee can be as much as five times an annual salary.

### Profession

Expensive education and a lengthy path to licensure, combined with, low, unstable or inequitable pay, and long hours are all deterrents for people choosing architecture. In particular, people of color and first and second generation college students are most affected by these barriers. Few students, especially those of lower socioeconomic status, are exposed to architecture as a career path early on and are therefore less likely to plan to pursue a career in architecture.

## We more easily recruit and retain employees when:

### Alignment

Firms recruit for diversity and then embrace difference. Members of underrepresented groups feel comfortable and supported when contributing to their firm’s collective intelligence.

## Compliance

Diversity characteristics are set as flexible but expected targets, not quotas. Hiring managers are trained in discrimination laws and interview practices.

## Engagement

All employees have equitable access to flexible policies and a psychologically and physically safe workplace. Management and employees engage in ongoing feedback. Firm and employee values are aligned.

## Influence

Firms reduce tokenism and work to mitigate and eliminate the experience of being the “only.” Processes for promotion are designed to interrupt bias.

consider how your office can work with others to grow pipelines for currently underrepresented groups.

If downsizing: be equitable and transparent about who is being laid off. Check that underrepresented groups will not be disproportionately affected.

## Profession

Make architecture a more visible and attractive career to younger and more diverse people. Continue to tackle the tough issues related to institutional racism that affect recruitment and retention. Identify barriers to equity. Involve representative groups in solving the challenges. Avoid overburdening members of underrepresented groups with responsibility for naming the problems or implementing the solutions.

# How can you act?

## Individuals

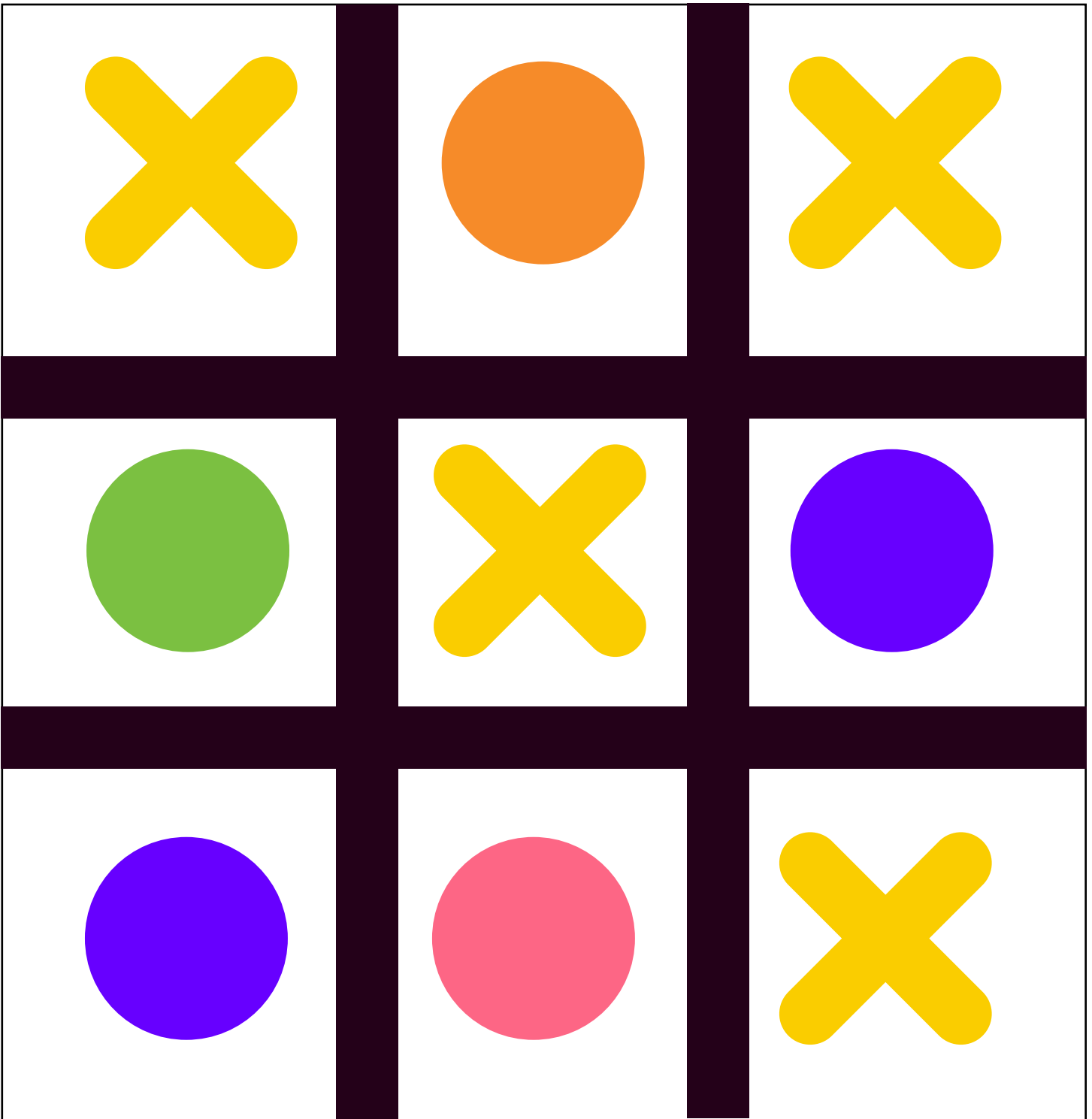
Know your values and priorities so you can find a firm that has the environment you need. Seek out support and mentorship from senior leaders. Neutralize bias when evaluating employees for promotion or retention. Recognize, understand, and counteract implicit bias. Know what motivates each employee and facilitate access to work that’s personally meaningful and rewarding.

## Firms

Remove professional bias in your hiring practices. Recast equitable hiring as a business issue, not as a “minority issue” or a “women’s issue.” Establish clear performance review policies and consider formalizing processes for providing ongoing feedback in an equitable manner. Track metrics on recruitment, retention and engagement outcomes and make evidence-based adjustments to problem areas. Create inclusive work spaces and ensure disability accommodations are made when appropriate. Designate people whom employees can turn to regarding sensitive or confidential matters and ensure privacy is maintained. Reach beyond your personal networks to identify potential job candidates and



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05

Negotiation supports equitable and inclusive practice when it is not viewed as a competition between adversaries but a collaborative process that seeks to create satisfying solutions for all parties, as well as ensuring equitable practices in the profession.

# Negotiation

# Collaborating to achieve fair and mutually satisfying solutions

This guide advocates for “equitable negotiation” or considering the interests of all parties in order to come to a mutually beneficial agreement. Equity issues, such as being a member of a non-dominant culture and biases, both implicit and explicit, often lead to power differentials that create barriers to fair negotiations. As a result of these social biases, women and people of color are judged more negatively when they advocate for themselves by negotiating their salaries. Firms can support the profession by explicitly learning about and addressing the impact of systemic racism and sexism and individual biases to remove them from the negotiation process.

## Why is negotiation important for equitable practice?

### Individuals

Negotiation is an important skill in gaining higher compensation and advancing one's career. The cost of not negotiating leads to an “accumulation of disadvantage”, or lower pay over the lifetime of employment. In addition, pay level is often used as a proxy for achievement and can lead to assumptions about a prospective employee's potential performance.

### Managers

Negotiations that are mutually satisfying increase engagement among employees, creating a stronger sense of value and increasing employee retention. Workplaces that value the needs of their employees as part of their policies and procedures can raise employee engagement and enhance workplace culture.

### Firms

Individuals who have engaged in successful role negotiations report that they are more likely to stay in their current job. Attrition among people of color often stems from dissatisfaction with professional growth and lack of recognition, while clear, written criteria for promotion can help them to negotiate from an even footing.

### Profession

Professionals who are collaborative, creative, and fair negotiators can establish and uphold the value of architectural services to clients, the industry, communities, and society.

## Negotiation capability and outcomes improve when:

### Trust

Firm Leaders and managers communicate the firm's position, policies, and compensation structure openly. Firms work to build bridges across cultural differences.

### Compliance

Employers are aware of and observe laws pertaining to compensation, including antitrust laws. Firms develop and advance their understanding of best practices.

### Alignment

In negotiations, people consider the context beyond their own priorities and immediate demands. Common goals are established and cultural considerations are researched to avoid reversion to cultural stereotyping.

### Fairness

Pay scales, benefits, and other forms of compensation are applied objectively and evenhandedly. Firm

leaders recognize the tendencies of different groups to be penalized for advocating on their own behalf. Decision makers understand and appreciate the role of power, culture, and equity in the negotiation process, and have the skills to negotiate in an equitable and inclusive manner.

## How can you act?

### Individuals

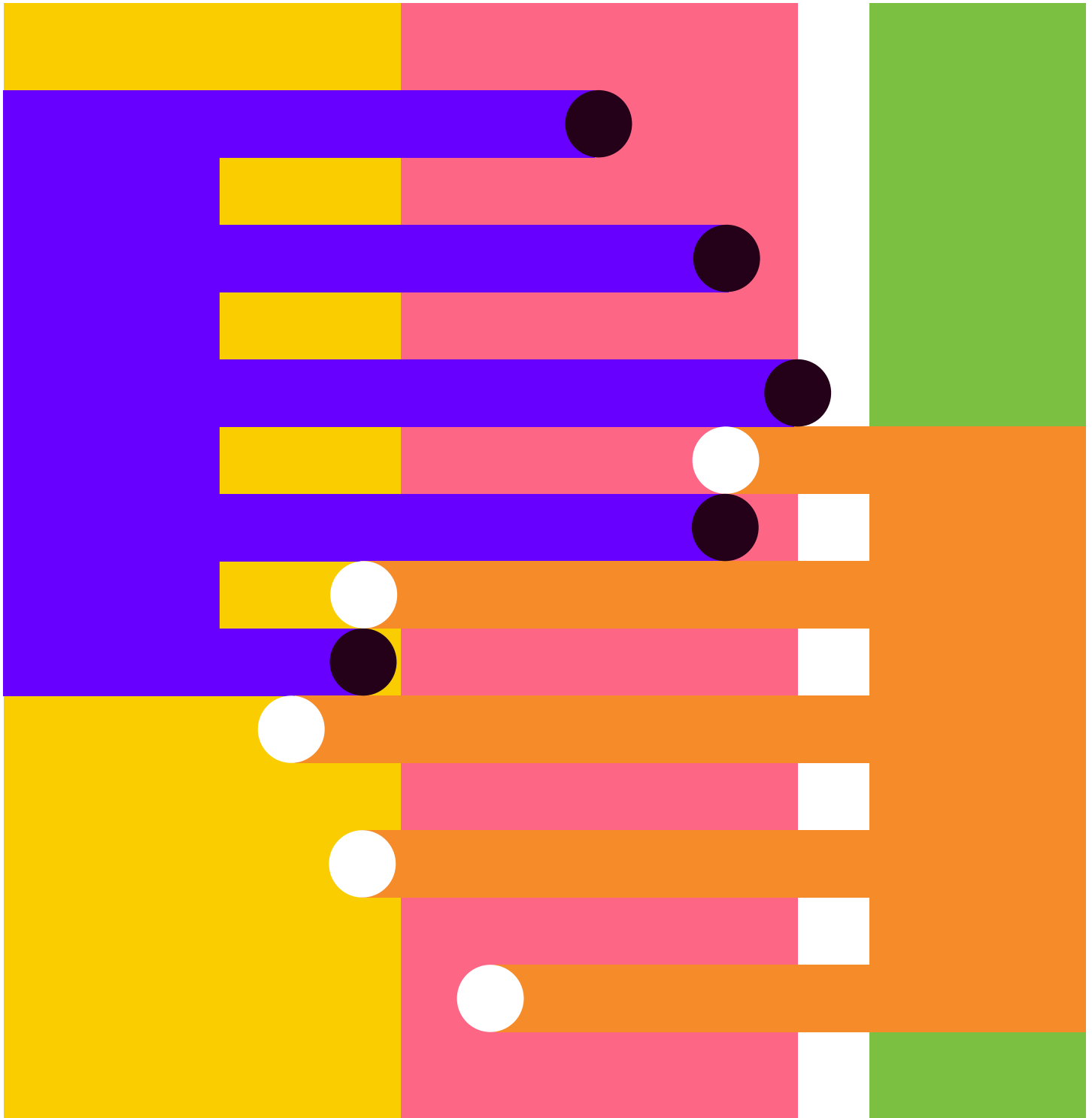
Bring attention to the systemic nature of issues relating to diversity and equity rather than treating them as stand-alone, personal “problems.” Link them to core institutional values and goals. Develop your social capital, build relationships with those who can make organizational changes, expand your network to include those who are a part of negotiations related to workplace culture, and identify opportunities to strengthen these relationships. Get training and practice in negotiation to improve your skills.

### Firms

Be transparent and equitable. Use transparent negotiation practices and policies to close wage gaps and to ensure that all job candidates know salary ranges and other available forms of compensation and benefits. Bring up salary ranges early in negotiations, and design compensation packages with guidance on which parts are flexible. Remove anchoring bias, which relies on applicant wage history, from the negotiation process as it reinforces bias against non-dominant cultures.

### Profession

Continue providing and referring to up-to-date salary data. Knowledge of salary levels in different geographic areas can help firms and employees alike in negotiating equitable, mutually agreeable compensation. Provide training in negotiation skills to advocate for pay parity and support diverse talent.



06

# Mentorship & Sponsorship

Mentorship and sponsorship are crucial for recruiting and retaining workers within firms and in the profession. If done equitably and well, these relationships will help retain diverse professionals and can help address achievement gaps.

# Advancing career opportunities through personal relationships and advocacy

This guide provides background and guidance on the value and practice of mentorship and sponsorship from the standpoint of individual mentors and mentees, sponsors and proteges, and firms and organizations that develop formal and informal programs. Mentorship and, increasingly, sponsorship (where personal capital is used to promote a protégé) are invaluable tools for advancing an individual's career; when used equitably, they can help diversify workplaces and build inclusiveness. Mentors are counselors and advisors to a professional person, typically in earlier career stages. While the role of mentor and sponsor can overlap, sponsors are advocates for a person's career, not merely mentors who are extra generous. Sponsors provide protection and support and take professional risks on behalf of their protégés, who are typically high-potential, high-performing, loyal employees. "Mentors give, whereas sponsors invest" -Sylvia Ann Hewlett

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## Why are mentorship and sponsorship important?

### Individuals

- Career Advancement - People of color, women, and other underrepresented groups advance in their careers at a more satisfactory pace if they have mentors or sponsors. They receive exposure to a wider network of professionals, particularly those at senior levels, and expand their individual skills. Research indicates that women and people of color with sponsors or mentors are more likely to seek out "stretch assignments" – high-stakes, visible projects that call for new skills, knowledge, and networks.

- Healthy workplace - Connecting with a mentor outside of a supervisor relationship within a firm can provide a safe space for feedback and advice on performance and to learn about how to handle difficult situations at work. This can reduce workplace stress.
- Relationship building – Working with mentors and sponsors helps individuals develop interpersonal skills and connections that help them thrive in the workplace. Eighty-three percent of millennials in mentoring relationships reported that they were satisfied with their relationships.

### Firms

- Workforce diversity – Members of underrepresented groups benefit from mentorship, sponsorship, and access to key networks to help them remain and advance in firms. Advancing a more diverse pool of professionals can reduce the achievement and pay gap in architecture.
- Workplace culture – Individual mentoring and mentorship initiatives will thrive if there is a culture that demonstrates support for developing employees and that establishes the expectation that everyone is accountable for the success of mentorship programs. Improving the mentoring culture will improve the workplace culture at large. Firms show their commitment to all their employees when they take time to give opportunities and feedback to newer professionals. Mentor training can be an opportunity to increase intercultural competence in the firm.
- Performance and Profitability – Mentorship and sponsorship teach employees about the politics of their workplace so they can avoid political missteps down the road. Both types of relationships can also facilitate the transmission of company knowledge, history, and performance expectations. Mentoring is effective for increasing employee commitment to a firm, reducing turnover, and improving company performance, these benefits improve a firm's bottom line.

## Profession

- Industry skills – Younger members of the profession have a variety of things to share in addition to technology skills. Depending on their course of study and experience, they may have expertise in sustainable, resilient design; universal design or designing for equity; design for specific populations (e.g., children with autism) or applied research methods. Reciprocal and reverse mentoring helps senior professionals learn new skills and approaches as junior professionals familiarize themselves with more traditional skills and knowledge, such as building construction conventions or experience gained from working with clients over time.
- Diversity – Equitable forms of mentorship and sponsorship improve diversity in the profession by recognizing skills and contributions and actively countering bias.
- Innovation – Emerging areas of practice that require highly specialized knowledge can use mentorship and sponsorship to purposefully connect the few existing experts to a community of mentees or proteges, thereby increasing access to expertise.

# Mentorship and sponsorship are equitable and inclusive when:

## Alignment

Mentorship and Sponsorship relationships are understood as mutually beneficial. Mentorship programs align with business objectives and needs and when programs are implemented thoughtfully and tailored to promote equitable outcomes.

## Engagement

Programs are inventive and flexible to involve people from different offices and fields. All mentees

and proteges are provided with honest feedback. Mentees and proteges are welcomed at important firm activities and high-profile industry events.

## Support

Senior leader sponsors and mentors are trained to promote allyship and reduce inequalities. Underrepresented groups have at least equal access to mentoring and sponsorship. Mentors and mentees receive training and opportunities to offer feedback and adjust pairings.

## Parameters

Training is provided on mentoring between different identities. Participants acknowledge power dynamics in the relationship and work to balance them. Participants maintain confidentiality.

# How can you act?

## Individuals

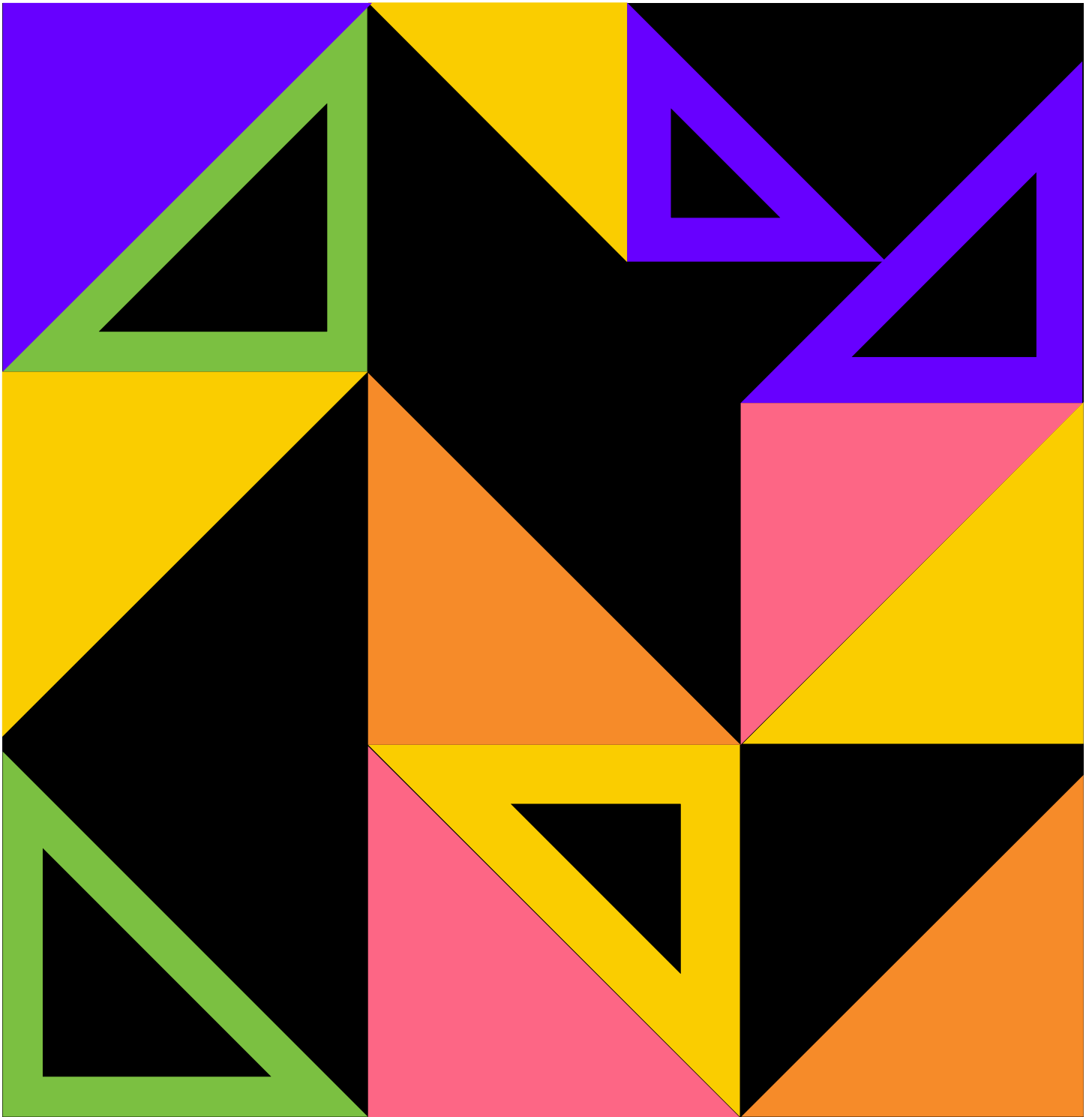
- Finding Mentors and Sponsors - Determine just what type of mentoring to participate in. Stand out. Seek out mentors and sponsors. Have more than one mentor and sponsor. Find the right mentor match. Consider where you are in your career. Look beyond your firm and your discipline.
- Be a good mentee or protégé – Recognize that mentors and mentoring can take many forms. Encourage reciprocity. Recognize that more senior professionals may be less knowledgeable about your area of expertise and cultural expectations. Help them understand.
- Be a mentor or sponsor – Being a mentor requires dedicating time and energy to support another person's career and personal growth. Being a sponsor means being willing to advance another employee's career and providing your protégé with the political protection and opportunities needed to succeed.

## **Firms**

Create and encourage a culture of mentorship and sponsorship. Creating and encouraging a workplace culture that supports mentorship and sponsorship will let your employees know that their professional growth matters to the company.

## **Profession**

Architecture has a predominant culture of competition and critique that is not always a natural fit with mentorship and sponsorship. Create professional mentoring programs. Connect people with others outside their own firms or fields.



# 07

## Advancing Careers

Individuals' career paths are highly influenced by the culture and systems of the office, the profession, and society. To successfully advance careers, particularly for members of underrepresented groups, leaders need to go easy on the people and hard on the process and actively recognize and remove structural impediments.



# Supporting career development through complex and critical career stages

Responsibility for advancing careers falls not only on employees. For employers, supporting career development helps increase retention and reduce turnover costs and, when done equitably, can contribute to firm diversity. Tactics to accomplish this include creating:

- A broader definition of design to encompass the numerous ways in which Architects use design thinking and recognizing multiple paths for advancement within practice
- Opportunities for employees to engage in purposeful and meaningful work
- Equitable access to growth-track positions, roles and pathways by clearly defining criteria for promotion
- Recognition that work-life balance is not similarly defined by everyone and flexibility is required at pinch points in career and personal milestones and that needs may evolve over the course of a career.

Equity. Diversity. Inclusion

## Why does advancing careers matter?

### Individuals

Having greater flexibility, more predictable and reliable schedules, and available and accessible paid leave can help avoid burnout and lead to healthier outcomes for employees and their families. Focusing on these topics around healthy employee outcomes can help employees build resilience, create a broader range of career choices, increase job satisfaction through engagement in meaningful work, support the creation of healthy networks, and create a forum for short, medium and long term planning for their career trajectory.

### Managers

When managers provide workplace support, such as flextime, training, or paid leave, they give workers the ability to meet their individual needs and help them shape their careers, leading to greater health and retention of all employees. This should be combined with focused attention to career planning, awareness of neutralizing unconscious biases and discriminatory perceptions, clear and regular performance feedback, predictable work schedules and recognition of the value of performance based results.

### Firms

A supportive workplace culture means employees will be more productive and engaged. This leads to increased employee retention and decreased turnover, especially during times when employees are called upon to assume caregiver roles in addition to paid work.

### Profession

This focus on equity in career advancement signals a shift in our professional culture to focus on results and outcomes over hours and commodity services. This in turn will lead to a more diverse profession at every level and career stage.

## We more easily advance architecture careers equitably when:

### Support

Employees perceive that the support and training they need is there when they need it and have the tools, infrastructure and resources that they need to receive regular feedback, clear promotional criteria based on performance, the assurance that non-dominant identities are openly welcomed, and the acknowledgement that “meaningful work” is defined differently by individuals.

### Equity

Employers create environments where flexibility is understood, valued, and taken into account while establishing opportunities for all employees to engage in substantive assignments, roles and duties in support of work-life conflict and any evidence of implicit bias with regard to requests for flexible schedules is recognized and corrected.

### Labyrinth

There is recognition and agreement that each individual has different needs at different times in support of a wide range of architectural career paths which is supported through workplace policies, structures, and demographics.

### Perception

Employees recognize and perceive that their organization is fair in its support of career growth, including implementation of organizational policies and decision making and articulation of shared values and goals.

## How do you ensure compliance?

Federal, state, and local employment laws are designed to ensure that employment practices are carried out fairly and without discrimination. Thus, employers must be mindful not to make decisions based on an employee's flexible work schedule, remote working arrangements, alternative career paths, or anything that appears to discriminate on the basis of a protected characteristic, while making reasonable accommodations for employees as required to provide an equitable work environment.

## How can you act?

### Individuals

To advance, it is important to understand your options, assess what resources and support are available, and know the criteria for promotion within your organization. This will allow you to

set and regularly review your career goals while designing your own path for advancement. Create a networking plan, and build your own network of mentors, sponsors and peers while acting as an ally and teammate for others in need of support in their careers.

### Managers

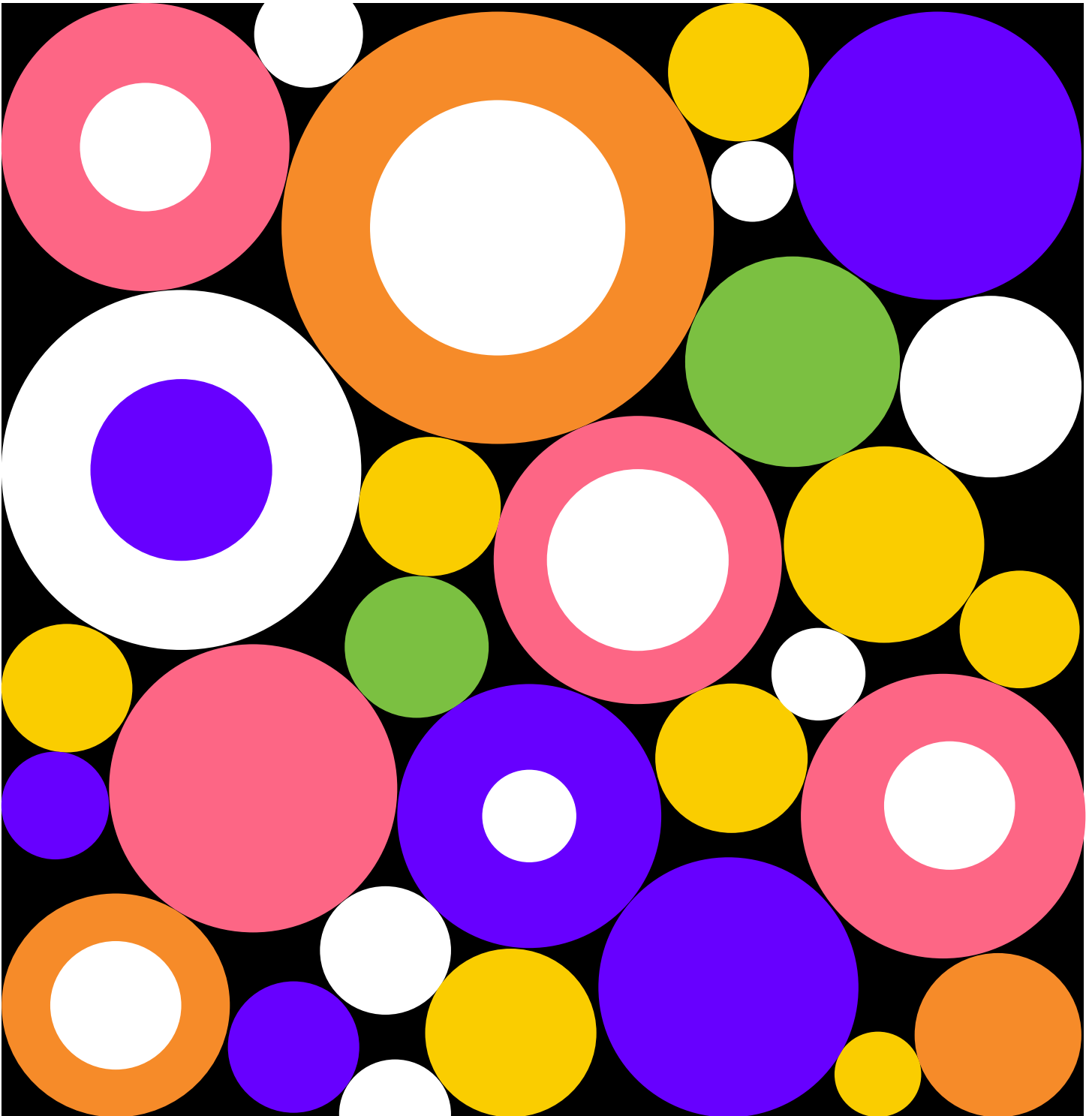
Intentionally encourage and promote diverse team members to take on new challenges, understand and regularly check for bias in yourself and your organization. Explore what meaningful work means to each individual employee and learn to spot burnout and find ways to alleviate it. Model the behaviors that bolster equity and retention for your employees.

### Firms

Ensure that work opportunities are being provided equitably in your firm through your policies and practices, and provide confidential support, accommodations, and flexibility for those with needs without penalization or implicit bias.

### Profession

Expect flexibility to be the new norm and push for industry-wide culture change and strategies to provide greater flexibility to employees by changing the value proposition from hours to outcomes while providing opportunities for networking and mentorship beyond the scale of individual firms.



08

# Engaging Community

Equitable and inclusive practices involve not only the workplace but also the communities and end users that the profession serves. By practicing greater equity, the profession increases its value to society as well as its visibility among potential partners and future practitioners.

# Encouraging the inclusion of diverse voices in design processes and decision making

This guide advocates for community engagement by promoting the inclusion of divergent voices to arrive at a consensus about project goals and characteristics, with a positive outcome for all. An architect's primary contractual obligation is toward the client, but the extent to which community engagement is part of the project depends on the negotiated scope and can be influenced by the architect. Architectural work has a significant impact on communities, so it's important that architects be fluent in engagement. Architects can align good intent with good outcomes by knowing how to discuss hot-button issues to connect authentically in any engagement process.

## Why does equitable community engagement matter?

### Individuals

Community engagement is essential to bridging the gap between designers and communities. This connection leads to more responsive design and leads to an enhanced quality of life for a greater number of people. By engaging with your community as an architect, you can build relationships with people outside of your usual circles and understand how your expertise can help meet the needs of your own community.

### Firms

Community engagement builds trust between firms and the communities they work in, and produces buildings that meet the needs of all stakeholders while respecting the community values. It can also

contribute to higher retention rates because when employees feel they are making a positive impact they are more likely to be engaged in their work and stay at their current job. Firms with a more diverse staff who have high levels of intercultural competence will be more successful in community engagement.

### Profession

Community engagement will help increase visibility of the architectural profession. This exposure can lead to an increase in recruitment from a wider array of communities and attract a new generation into the field. Community engagement helps formerly underrepresented people increase their agency by expanding their roles as designers of how their communities look and function

## We are successful in community engagement when:

### Connection

The project process and result fully engage the intended users. The architect listens to the visions of the community and uses their expertise to give them shape.

### Trust

The architect and the community respect each other's knowledge, and the architect acts as a listener, presenter and facilitator during community events. There are project team members from the same culture as the community and their expertise is valued.

### Alignment

The architect genuinely understands the users' needs and wants and reflects them in the ultimate design. The resulting project accommodates and is accessible and safe for all in the community. The community appreciates and maintains the resulting facilities

## Power

Design teams seek out and listen to many voices in the community and are sensitive to and incorporate design elements and symbols offered by the community. Power, responsibility, and accountability are all shared.

## How can you assess?

### Skill

Develop your competence to effectively engage the diverse communities you seek to serve; bridge cultural commonalities and differences that could help engage communities and achieve your desired outcomes. Provide employees of your firm with the training and support needed to connect with a variety of people and communities, particularly those who are traditionally underserved.

### Quality

Firm leadership should emphasize the importance of the community's involvement during design and establish a culture of – and strategy for – community engagement. Employees should be encouraged to volunteer outside of work. When working with the community during design, ensure that you are hearing from a diverse range of community members for feedback. Architects should be advocates for affordable housing, environmental quality, and sustainability policies.

### Power

When engaging with underserved communities, be aware of the power dynamics between you and community members. Be aware of how you interact with your own team members in public meetings. Work to effectively show and communicate the value of engaging community to developers, policy makers, and municipalities.

### Trust

Consider how mutual trust is built, and what trust, respect, listening and engagement look like to the community you are working with. Listen carefully

to the ideas and concerns of community members and learn from them. Share what you have learned from them with your client. Build trust within your firm and with your clients to support strategies for engagement. Consider the risks to the firm if the client does not wish to engage, the engagement does not go as planned or something unexpected happens.

## How can you act?

### Individuals

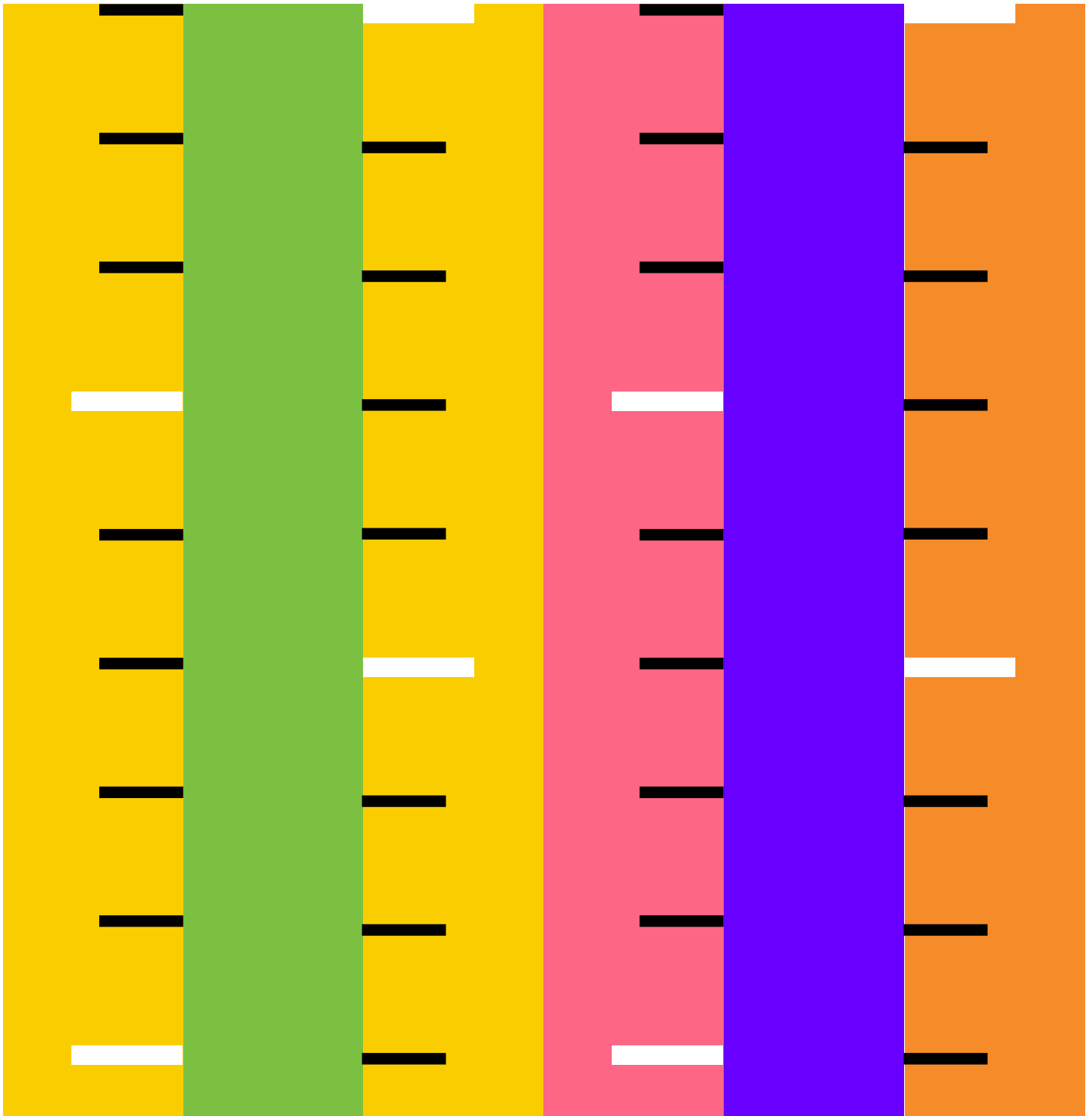
Learn about the communities you are working with through research, one-on-one conversations, and resources on their community culture and history. Practice cultural or intercultural competence to understand and appreciate what communities need and value. Look for opportunities for your project to advance community economic goals and help communities build their own capabilities and agency. Be an active community member outside of work by volunteering in the community in architecture-related and non-architecture related outreach and by engaging with civic leaders.

### Firms

Engage the community as a project partner by increasing community member input on a project. Consider engaging a trusted moderator or facilitator to help bridge difference. Improve community relationships by partnerships and other forms of engagement with community groups, public organizations, and nonprofits. Make community engagement a part of your workplace culture by valuing community engagement at all levels in the firm.

### Profession

Educate about public-interest work and teach architecture students about public-interest work. Promote and support internships and fellowship opportunities for students that connect architects with nonprofit organizations. Host active discussions about civic policies that support local communities. Support dialogue between established sustainable design goals and emerging goals of equity, resilience and environmental justice..



09

# Measuring Progress

It is said that if you can measure it, you can manage it. Identifying actions an individual employee, a firm, or the profession can take that will most move the needle starts with establishing goals, strategies for meeting them, and the metrics to help evaluate progress and adjust course. Using a metrics framework helps keep leaders and employees engaged and the profession achieve its goals.

# Creating metrics and tools to evaluate progress against goals

Measuring progress is critical step in advancing issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, allowing firms to establish baselines, set benchmarks, and evaluate impacts of EDI policy changes. While demographic information is a good starting point, more extensive information can give greater insight into the degree to which employees are experiencing equity and inclusion. Measurement goals will vary by firm, but can include employee engagement and retention, experiences of discrimination or bias, and level of commitment to equitable practice from firm leaders. Regular measurement to evaluate progress of these goals will help increase employee engagement and psychological safety, raise transparency, and improve accountability in the workplace. These improvements are also likely to have an impact on firm reputation, productivity, growth, and profit.

## Why is measuring important?

### Individuals

When metrics surrounding equity and inclusion drive positive change, they produce happier and healthier workplaces and enhance workplace culture. Using these measuring tools allows firms to improve retention and promotion, and create opportunities for underrepresented groups. These metrics are not only useful to current employees, but also to prospective employees, allowing applicants to better understand firm culture and priorities.

### Managers

Well-designed assessment tools can help to reduce the influence of bias in the EDI discussion, and allow more evidence based study of the issues. Results can provide clarity on how to focus efforts for the greatest positive effect.

### Firms

Measuring for EDI indicates where pressing issues need to be solved and creates awareness on the part of firm leadership. Initiatives based on these metrics are especially effective when employees take part in the process of designing solutions. Transparency about results enhances credibility and firm reputation, especially when results are presented without defensiveness around shortcomings.

### Profession

Aggregated, profession-wide data helps to inform the entire profession about current EDI challenges in firms and focus attention and resources on areas in the industry with the greatest need. Metrics can help set benchmarks for EDI issues and increase diversity in the profession, leading to more visibility of architectural careers for underrepresented groups.

## Measurement is more effective when:

### Knowledge

Firms and the profession at large know the baseline state of EDI, and firm leaders are open-minded about their findings even if they contradict their perceptions. Qualitative and quantitative metrics are understood and valued, and these metrics are used to establish firm-level values and goals.

### Investment

Leaders make a long term commitment of time and energy to track metrics regularly and consistently. This date is used to determine needs, set goals, and track progress.

### Sensitivity

Steps are taken to protect individual privacy, especially in a small firm setting. Employers communicate the intended use of data clearly, and employees have the option to opt out of providing information they consider private.

# How can you act?

## Individuals

If you can, be an activist at your firm. Bring EDI concerns to management and leaders and push for making real change and measuring that change. Use concrete data to make the case for increasing equity within your firm, and advocate for transparency surrounding EDI metrics. Take stock of your own competence and have empathy for others.

## Managers

Make data meaningful and actionable. Managers have the opportunity not only to collect data but also to make the findings meaningful to leadership in ways that lead to clear actions for change. Be open to sharing information outside of your firm to contribute to the larger conversation around making equity a priority in the profession.

## Firms

Build a “measurement culture” at your firm in which data is used to drive decisions, establish priorities, and modify activities and programs. Start by establishing your firm's baseline knowledge, understanding this starting point can help give the tools to those who wish to engage in the EDI conversation. Offer skills training to help bridge the knowledge gap. Go beyond counting demographic numbers and gather quantitative data on equity and employee experiences. Choose one or two issues to address first, and continue to evaluate metrics to track progress towards your goals. Communicate your intent, goals, and strategies often throughout your organization, and share goals and best practices with industry partners.

## Profession

Support national and international efforts to gather data on equity in architecture, and know who is tracking data and what they are finding. Share this data along with goals and best practices which support equity. Encourage owners to create greater participation by women and minority owned business in their projects. Include EDI standards among the criteria for industry awards and recognition.



# Want to Learn More?

The BSA EDI Network will be hosting a monthly series on each of the AIA Guides for Equitable Practice, including sharing resources for policies, practices, and protocols that BSA member firms have developed as examples of how to turn ideas into action.

## Monthly Series

14

Intercultural Competence  
**WATCH**

**JUL 2020**

20

Mentorship and Sponsorship

**JAN 2021**

16

Workplace Culture

**SEPT 2020**

17

Advancing Careers

**FEB 2021**

21

Compensation

**OCT 2020**

17

Engaging Community

**MAR 2021**

18

Recruitment and Retention

**NOV 2020**

21

Measuring Progress

**APR 2021**

16

Negotiation

**DEC 2020**

\*Dates are subject to change. Please visit the [BSA EDI Network Event calendar](#) for the most current information.