

COMMON APP FAQ

The AIA Framework for Design Excellence, and the corresponding Common App for Design Excellence, is a critical set of principles and methods for AIA chapters to review submissions for their Design Awards program. Comprised of ten measures accompanied by narrative and searching questions, the Framework seeks to inform progress toward a zero-carbon, equitable, resilient, and healthy built environment. The Framework and Common App are intended to be accessible and relevant for every architect, every client, and every project, regardless of size, typology, or aspiration.

The BSA recognizes that some of the Framework's measures may be less relevant to a specific project, and that metrics may be difficult or impossible to acquire. A submission will not be penalized if the project's scope simply does not address a certain measure or if the design team and/or submitting personnel lack performance metrics. However, a submission may be viewed critically if the jury believes that a measure or question that should have been addressed was skipped. In other words, if the jury is assessing a project and believes that its design was or should have been impacted by a measure that was ignored in the Design Awards submission, they may negatively rate the submission.

We strongly encourage all submitters to review the Common App with the design teams responsible for the project prior to drafting their Design Awards submission and assess which of the ten measures are relevant to the project.

The output pages of the Common App will be a key element that the Technical Jury will see for every submission.

What is the purpose of the Common App?

The Common App is the embodiment of the Framework for Design Excellence's values in the AIA Design Awards process. Since 2019, the AIA—at the national, state, and local levels—has started to integrate the Common App into Design Awards programming.

What role does the Common App play during jury evaluation, deliberation, and recognition of award-worthy submissions?

The Common App is a key element that the Technical Jury (second round of reviews) will see when evaluating every submission. It is a critical companion document that the Technical jury will use to assess the design's intent and outcomes.

Is the Common App required for every submission?

The Common App is required for every Built Design Excellence submission and is optional for Small Firms submissions. Submitters should complete the Common App and upload a saved worksheet. Please take this opportunity to fully describe your project and process.

Common App is not required for Unbuilt Planning & Design submissions.

Do I have to answer every question and/or address all ten measures?

Not all 10 measures are required! The two (2) that are required are: Design for Integration, Design for Equitable Communities, in alignment with the BSA's mission. In addition to the two, you should only answer questions/respond to measures that are relevant to your project. It is important to demonstrate how the project performs above and beyond performance goals. If you do not have data to share, do not leave fields blank. Mark "NA" in the fields as needed. At least 2 out of 10 measures are to be addressed in narratives portion – we recommend using the 2 required sections.

How do I know if a specific measure in the Common App is relevant to my project?

If you and the design team can't answer that question, it probably isn't relevant to your project. [Watch at this webinar](#), which discusses implementing the AIA Framework for Design Excellence.

What is the advantage of addressing additional Common App measures?

The Common App is the first element the jury will see. Measures that the jury feels should have been addressed in your submission that were overlooked will likely reflect poorly in the jury's assessment.

How can I learn more about filling out the Common App?

The links embedded in the Common App are a good starting point. The BSA will be adding more resources for assistance.

What else should I know about the Common App and how else could it be useful for my submission?

The Common App is a great document to begin a project, even more so at summarizing one after completion. We encourage you to share it with currently active design teams in preparation for future submissions.

The Common App could also be used as a template for structuring your PDF submission.

[Download the Common App here.](#)