

2025 AIA Canada Student Design Awards – [Guidelines](#) (Updated: April 11, 2025)

Award Program Objective

The AIA Canada Student Design Awards Program recognizes outstanding students who demonstrate excellence in architectural design, a strong understanding of technical solutions, and the integration of sustainable and inclusive design concepts. This program provides students with an opportunity to showcase their skills on a national stage while gaining industry recognition.

Award Program Schedule

- **Submissions Due (5:00 PM ET):** April 30, 2025
- **Jury Deliberations:** May 15, 2025
- **Awards Announcement:** May 30, 2025

Download:

[Entry Form](#)

[AIA Framework for Design Excellence](#)

SUBMIT ENTRY via email at rommy@aiacanadasociety.org

Please review the following guidelines carefully to ensure your submission is eligible for adjudication. Project submissions can be continuously revised/updated until the submission deadline of 5pm April 30th.

Eligibility

The competition is open to all students currently enrolled in a post-secondary architectural or architectural technology program in Canada. Projects must be part of the school curriculum.

Instructions

1. Submissions can be individual or team projects. If submitting a team project, list the names of all students involved.
2. Students can only submit ONE project as an individual, and ONE project as a team, for a potential of TWO submissions.

3. Students are encouraged to review the [AIA Framework for Design Excellence](#) as guidance during their submission process. Late or incomplete submissions will not be accepted. AIA Canada reserves the right to disqualify any entries that do not meet the requirements.

Anonymity

- All submitted documents (except for the Entry Form) must remain anonymous.
- No references to the student's name or educational institution should appear in the submission materials (with the exception of the Entry Form).

Submission Package

Each submission package must include the following to be considered complete:

1. **Entry Form:**

Must be completed and submitted separately.

2. **Project Description Brief:**

Maximum two (2) A4 pages (minimum 10 pt. font size). Should include a combination of text and images to describe the course assignment (if applicable), development of design goals, key concepts, and solutions.

3. **Visuals:** There is no set limit on visual materials.

- Include a minimum of five (5) .jpg images that best highlight the project.
- You may include additional material such as architectural drawings, images, text, and/or videos showcasing the design and technical aspects of the project.
- Presentation booklets are welcome.

Image Specifications:

- Images must be submitted as **.jpeg** files with dimensions of **3200 pixels wide by 1800 pixels tall** and a **minimum resolution of 72 dpi**.
- Image file names should reflect the project name (e.g., *123_Main_Street_1.jpeg*).
- Images that do not meet these specifications will not be displayed.
- **Image #1 will be used for announcements and publicity.**

Submission Process

Submissions to be sent via email to Rommy Rodriguez at rommy@aiacanadasociety.org

by the deadline date: April 30, 2025 (5:00 PM ET)

Judging Criteria and Process

All submissions will be reviewed for compliance with submission requirements before evaluation by a jury of industry professionals. The evaluation criteria are as follows:

Judging Criteria:

- **Design Excellence (75%)**

This is the most heavily weighted category, reflecting the importance of thoughtful, innovative, and contextually responsive design.

- Quality of design and technical solutions as demonstrated in the project description, drawings, images, and/or videos.
- Comprehension of construction technology and code compliance.
- Integration of sustainable design solutions.
- Considerations for equitable and inclusive community design.
- Creativity in addressing the design problem or assignment.

- **Overall Presentation (20%)**

This category evaluates how effectively the student communicates their design ideas through written and visual means.

- Competency in written and graphic communication.
- Technical skills related to the media used for the presentation.
- Overall composition and clarity of the visuals.

- **Project Description Brief (5%)**

This section focuses on how clearly and concisely the project is introduced and framed in a short narrative.

- Demonstrated understanding of the design problem or assignment.
- Technical competency in written and graphic communication.

Judging Process Overview:

- The jury will evaluate each entry based on how successfully the project meets the outlined criteria.
- Entries will also be assessed relative to the [AIA Framework for Design Excellence](#). Projects are encouraged (but not required) to address multiple framework measures.
- Jurors will review submissions individually before convening collectively to discuss and select finalists and award recipients.

Prizes & Recognition

The AIA Canada Student Design Awards are made possible through a joint scholarship program between **AIA Canada Society** and the **American Institute of Architects**.

Student Scholarship Award Prizes:

- **One-Year AIA Canada Society Membership**
 - Awarded to winners and activated upon graduation for one year.
- **Monetary Prizes:**
 - **First Place:** CAN \$3,500
 - **Second Place:** CAN \$2,250
 - **Third Place:** CAN \$1000
 - *Note: Group project prizes will be equally divided among team members.*

Additional Recognition:

- Winning entries will be featured in the **AIA Canada Journal**, within the pages of **Canadian Architect Magazine**, and on the **AIA Canada website**.
- Winners will be invited to present their projects in an **AIA Canada Society webinar**.

For further inquiries, please contact **AIA Canada Society** at info@aiacandasociety.org.

See last page for AIA Framework for Design Excellence Outline.

Website Link: <https://www.aia.org/design-excellence/aia-framework-design-excellence>

AIA Framework for Design Excellence

The world today is facing broad and complex challenges that threaten every aspect of our lives. The architect's call to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public has a new and broader meaning amid challenges such as increasing climate extremes and social inequity. Architects everywhere must recognize that our profession can harness the power of design to contribute to solutions addressing the most significant needs of our time. Every project can be used as a platform for addressing big problems and providing creative solutions. Every line drawn should be a source of good in the world.

The Framework for Design Excellence represents the defining principles of good design in the 21st century. Comprised of 10 principles and accompanied by searching questions, **the Framework seeks to inform progress toward a zero-carbon, equitable, resilient, and healthy built environment.** These are to be thoughtfully considered by designer and client at the initiation of every project and incorporated into the work as appropriate to the project scope. The Framework is intended to be accessible and relevant for every architect, every client, and every project, regardless of size, typology, or aspiration.

The Framework for Design Excellence challenges architects with a vision the profession strives to achieve.



Design for INTEGRATION

Good design elevates any project, no matter how small, with a thoughtful process that delivers both beauty and function in balance. It is the element that binds all the principles together with a big idea.

- What is the concept or purpose behind this project, and how will the priorities within the nine other principles inform the unique approach to this project?
- How will the project engage the senses and connect people to place?
- What makes the project one that people will fight to preserve?
- What design strategies can provide multiple benefits across the triple bottom line of social, economic, and environmental value?



Design for EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

Design solutions affect more than the client and current occupants. Good design positively impacts future occupants and the larger community.

- What is the project's greater reach?
- How could this project contribute to creating a diverse, accessible, walkable, just, human-scaled community?
- Who might this project be forgetting?
- How can the design process and outcome remove barriers and promote inclusion and social equity, particularly with respect to vulnerable communities?
- What opportunities exist in this project to include, engage, and promote human connection?
- How can the design support health and resilience for the community during times of need or during emergencies?



Design for ECOSYSTEMS

Good design mutually benefits human and nonhuman inhabitants. What we design has a direct impact to the ecosystems in and around the site. Understanding the site dynamics will allow us to be more conscious of our impacts.

- How can the design support the ecological health of its place over time?
- How can the design help users become more aware and connected with the project's place and regional ecosystem?
- How can the project support regional habitat restoration?
- How can the project support equitable access to nature?



Design for WATER

Good design conserves and improves the quality of water as a precious resource.

- How does the project use water wisely, addressing efficiency and consumption while matching water quality to appropriate use?
- How can the project's water systems maintain function during emergencies or disruptions?
- How does the project handle rainfall and stormwater responsibly?
- How does the project contribute to a healthy regional watershed?



Design for ECONOMY

Good design adds value for owners, occupants, community, and planet, regardless of project size and budget.

- How do we design robust projects that enhance economic, natural, intellectual, and experiential resources?
- How will the design choices balance cost with long-term value?
- How can the performance of this project be improved in ways that are cost and design neutral?



Design for ENERGY

Good design reduces energy use and eliminates dependence on fossil fuels while improving building performance, function, comfort, and enjoyment.

- How can passive design strategies contribute to the project's performance and form?
- How can the project exceed building code efficiency standards to approach net zero energy and net zero carbon?
- Can the project be powered by clean, renewable energy sources?
- How can the project provide for continuous performance improvements over its lifetime?



Design for WELL-BEING

Good design supports health and well-being for all people, considering physical, mental, and emotional effects on building occupants and wider surrounding community.

- How can the design encourage a healthy lifestyle?
- How can the project provide greater occupant comfort?
- How can the project be welcoming and inclusive for all?
- How can the project connect people with place and nature?
- How can material selection reduce hazards to occupants and communities throughout the supply chain?



Design for RESOURCES

Good design depends on informed material selection, balancing priorities to achieve durable, safe, and healthy projects with an equitable, sustainable supply chain to minimize possible negative impacts to the planet.

- What factors (priorities) will be considered in making material selection decisions?
- How are materials and products selected and designed to reduce embodied carbon and environmental impacts while enhancing building performance?
- How can material selection reduce hazards and support equitable labor practices in the supply chain?
- How does the project promote zero waste throughout its life cycle?
- How does the project celebrate local materials and craft?
- How long will the project last, and how does that affect your material?



Design for CHANGE

Adaptability, resilience, and reuse are essential to good design, which seeks to enhance usability, functionality, and value over time.

- How does the project address future risks and vulnerabilities from social, economic, and environmental change?
- How is the project designed for adaptation to anticipate future uses or changing markets?
- How does the project address passive survivability and/or livability?



Design for DISCOVERY

Every project presents a unique opportunity to apply lessons learned from previous projects and gather information to refine the design and construction process.

- How can the design process foster a long-term relationship between designers, users, and operators to ensure design intentions are realized and the building project performance can improve over time?
- How are performance data and experiential stories shared, even if the findings fall short of the vision?
- What strategies promote a sense of discovery and delight?