



Core Member Services requirements

Version 3.0

Overview

AIA Core Member Services (CMS) lay the groundwork for component excellence by ensuring that all members receive a consistent level of service and that each component thrives as a nonprofit corporate entity. This is the third iteration of the CMS (also known as CMS 3.0) since it launched in 2015. Revisions keep pace with the evolution of our components, AIA, and accepted nonprofit practices. Those consulted include the Core Member Services Work Group and a cross-section of component staff, AIA members, and AIA staff. The CMS 3.0 highlights themes of collaboration, financial and data security, further integration of international components in the network, and a streamlined reporting process.

Most CMS 3.0 requirements are already widely adopted in the component network, although some requirements are new, revised, or clarified. Components will have almost a full year to satisfy the requirements. AIA staff are committed to providing all components with resources, training, and coaching to successfully deliver these services. Components will be examined on service delivery via the component accreditation process, which concludes in January 2023. Components completing the process will receive accredited status for 2023–2025.

At its March 2021 meeting, the AIA Board of Directors approved adjusting the accreditation program to establish an annual accreditation “checkup” on a select short list of requirements critical to nonprofit business operations and to ensure access to continuing education. The board also approved flexibility to encourage collaboration among components on continuing education. Those changes are incorporated into this document and were also integrated into the 2021 component accreditation checkup process.

At its October 2021 meeting, the board approved other material changes. Those include:

General

- Incorporation of international component requirements into the main document.
- Simplification of documentation requirements to reduce the reporting burden.
- Clarification of requirements on activities and specific documentation requested.
- Listing of all insurance coverage, besides those policies already required.
- Providing a copy of the business continuity plan.
- Providing a copy of the financial reserve policy.

Advocacy

- Removal of the requirement to engage with state procurement agencies.
- International component coordination with the primary architecture association in their host country prior to undertaking advocacy efforts.
- Appointment of an independent review committee to examine financial records annually.
- Attendance at data security training provided by AIA.

Communications & outreach (formerly two sections, now combined into one)

- Encouragement of collaborative efforts on public outreach among components in one’s state.

Finance & operations

- Affirmation that state, provincial, and local tax returns required by one’s jurisdiction are filed.

Governance

- Removal of the requirement to supply a copy of board minutes, as compliance is nearly universal.
- Adoption of AIA’s Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Statement.
- Delivery of board orientation annually.

General information

Information

- The application seeks information on the component's activities in 2022.
- When deciding what to submit with this application, keep in mind that the reviewers are looking for something that shows that the component is successfully delivering a service. Some questions are very specific as to what will suffice, while others leave the documentation to the applicant's discretion.
- When a document is requested, please provide it in PDF form.
- Some questions provide space to submit a text response instead of a document.
- Still other questions do not require components to submit documentation because AIA can check its data to find the answer.
- If the question does not specify how many items to submit, one will be sufficient.
- If the question does not specify when the activity needed to occur (for example, within the past year or quarter), simply provide the most recent example of that activity.

Accreditation timeline & process

2022	Jan–Aug	Coaching, training, webinars
	Sept 15	Accreditation portal opens
2023	Jan 15	Accreditation portal closes
	Feb–Mar	Grace period (to correct issues with applications)
	Mar	Applications reviewed
	Apr	Appeal period
	May	Accreditations renewed (for 2023–2025)

FAQs

What are “Core Member Services?”

Core Member Services are basic deliverables—categorized into six topics—that all members have a right to expect from the AIA component network. AIA national, state, and local components all have a role to play in delivering specific services designed to advocate for the profession, communicate with members and the public, provide educational opportunities, maintain membership, and manage component operations, finances, and governance.

Who exactly delivers the Core Member Services?

Components determine who, within the boundaries of their states, will deliver each Core Member Service. They record these determinations in a statewide agreement. Many components already deliver all these services and more, whereas others need to partner with other components in their state to do so.

Why does each chapter have to offer 18 CES credits a year?

AIA Architect members must obtain 18 CES credits per year, with 12 of those credits being health/safety/welfare (HSW) content, to maintain membership eligibility. AIA members consistently rank the AIA CES programs they receive as the most important member benefit. For both reasons, each chapter should make that many credits available to their members.

Chapters should curate (which means directly creating, facilitating, or customizing) at least 4 of their 18 annual hours of CES content for members. Why do chapters have to do that, and how is that accomplished?

One of the best ways for components to engage members and stay relevant is to provide quality continuing education targeted to their members' needs. Courses that the component creates and delivers using its own CES provider account will qualify. (A good way to do this is to encourage members at the component to create and/or present courses when feasible.)

What kind of activity counts as “curated” hours?

If the component created the course, shaped the content, or adapted existing content to the component members' needs, that counts.

If a chapter does not offer 4 curated hours on its own CES provider account, what should they do?

A component may co-curate courses with other AIA components (all of whom are CES providers). All components that work together on creating course content may receive curation credit for the course. Such partnerships should be documented on the CES Provider Form, found on Component Connect under Education. Meaningful collaboration on content is required. That means that simply advertising or hosting another component's program will not count toward the 4 hours of curation credit. Each component must contribute in a meaningful way.

Beyond the 4 curated hours, if a chapter doesn't offer the other 14 hours now, what should it do?

A chapter may partner with another chapter, AIAU, or another CES provider to make that provider's course available to its members. Such a course would be documented on the CES Provider Form, found on Component Connect under Education.

How do you know that Core Member Services are being delivered?

An accreditation process verifies that Core Member Services are being delivered. Each of the six service areas has at least one way to demonstrate success in that area, and the documentation that should be submitted is specified in the application.

How does the accreditation application work? Is there a template available?

The online accreditation application portal opens September 15, 2022, and closes January 15, 2023. AIA uses the OpenWater platform for the application. This is the same platform that was used in the 2018–2019 application process. When the 2022–2023 portal is ready, training will be provided on how to use it. Until then, components should make sure they are delivering all the core services and start gathering their documentation.

Who reviews accreditation applications?

Accreditation review teams, comprised of a diverse group of experienced volunteer leaders, component staff, and AIA staff, jointly review each application.

Who should file the application?

Each component should identify a person who will be responsible for the chapter's accreditation application and will follow the process through. A collaborator may help with the application, but the primary applicant who started the application must be the one to submit the final application.

What if a component cannot demonstrate that it provides the Core Member Services to its members?

That component will not be awarded accreditation.

May components appeal if denied accreditation?

A component that is denied accreditation will have 30 days to appeal to the AIA secretary. The secretary will review the file and invite input from the component. The secretary will specify any areas of the Core Member Services that have not yet been met. The secretary's decision is final.

What happens to components if they are denied accreditation on appeal?

Those components will need to explore an alternative governance structure that enables the component's members to successfully receive all Core Member Services. There are a variety of ways to do this, from becoming a voluntary section of a chapter to engaging the services of another chapter to deliver services. The AIA secretary will direct the component to begin transitioning into an alternate structure and engage with a partner component within their state to ensure Core Member Services are delivered to their members. Members will be reassigned by the secretary accordingly.

How does accreditation affect components that use association management companies (AMCs) to staff their operations?

In fairness to all members, components using AMCs must provide the same services as other components. If any Core Member Service is not part of the current AMC scope of work, the applicable agreement or contract should be revised to cover all Core Member Services. Or a component using an AMC may partner with another component in their state to deliver

one or more Core Member Services and record this plan in the statewide member service agreement.

How long does accreditation last?

Components that meet Core Member Services are accredited for three years, for 2023–2025.

What happens in the years between accreditations?

Components complete an accreditation checkup, which includes five Core Member Services that are examined every year: 1) federal tax filing, 2) insurance, 3) state corporate record, 4) officer rosters, and 5) continuing education.

Who should we contact with other questions?

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Requirements for accreditation

Advocacy

REQUIREMENT**1. State components only: Plan and conduct advocacy efforts at the state level.**

- Develop a state legislative agenda that is aligned with the AIA Public Policies and Position Statements. Share that agenda and critical legislation with AIA and with local components around the state.
- Engage with the state's legislature and other officials on issues of importance to the architectural community.

Documentation:

- Provide a copy of the state component's legislative agenda, which should address any key legislative issues that affect the architecture profession in the state. Also provide a summary of efforts made in the most recent legislative session to advance the state legislative agenda and results produced by those activities. Use the advocacy action template provided.
- Provide a summary of engagement with the state licensing board.

REQUIREMENT**2. Local components only: Engage with local government agencies, decision makers, and building officials on issues of importance to the local architectural community.**

Documentation:

- Provide a summary of the local component's engagement with local government officials and staff. (Examples may include engagement with the permitting office or zoning board, discussions about regulatory or legislative concerns, invitations to chapter events, and partnerships with other industry organizations and local business networks.)

REQUIREMENT**3. International components only: If appropriate within the political framework of the component's host country, the component should engage with local government agencies, decision makers, and building officials on issues of importance to the architectural community. The component should coordinate any such efforts with the primary architecture association in the host country.**

Documentation:

- Provide a summary of these engagement activities, including interactions with local government officials and staff; for example, discussions about regulatory or legislative concerns, invitations to chapter events, and partnerships with local business networks.

REQUIREMENT**4. State components only: Appoint and maintain contact with the volunteer AIA state disaster coordinator to interface with emergency management officials and help components around the state prepare for potential natural or other disasters.**

Documentation:

- Provide the name and contact information for the AIA state disaster coordinator.

Communications & outreach

REQUIREMENT

- 1. Maintain a component website and post at least one upcoming event on the component's website at all times. To ensure members and the public can engage easily and directly with the component, provide a dedicated point of contact.**

Documentation:

- Reviewers will examine the website for upcoming events and the point of contact.
 - » Provide a link to the web page where upcoming component events are posted.
 - » Provide a link to the web page showing how to reach the component's point of contact.

REQUIREMENT

- 2. Follow AIA brand guidelines consistently across all the component's electronic and print media to ensure that members experience AIA as a unified organization.**

Documentation:

- Reviewers will examine the website to observe brand usage.
 - » Provide the component website's URL.
 - » Provide a weblink to a recent digital newsletter, if produced.
- If the component produces a print publication (magazine or newsletter), provide a PDF of the page showing usage of the component branding.

REQUIREMENT

- 3. Provide regular, readily visible promotion of specific AIA products—AIA Contract Documents, AIA Career Center, AIA Conference on Architecture, and AIAU—in the component's electronic and print communications.**

Documentation:

- Reviewers will examine the URL provided above to review how AIA Contract Documents, the AIA Career Center, and AIAU are promoted on the component website. (AIA-hosted component websites include this promotion automatically.)
- Reviewers will examine the URL provided above to review how the AIA Conference on Architecture is promoted. If there is not a year-round link to the conference on the component's website, provide a PDF showing how the prior conference was promoted on the site.
- If the component produces a print publication, provide a PDF showing how the products have been promoted in print.

REQUIREMENT **4. Recognize and publicize outstanding architecture projects by members. Options for highlighting outstanding projects may include a design awards program, tours, public displays, featured placement in communications, or a combination of options. (If offered, design awards need not be held annually. Design awards may be held jointly with other components.)**

Documentation:

- If the component offers a design awards program, provide a copy of the most recent call for entries. If not, please show or describe how the component highlights outstanding member work.

REQUIREMENT **5. Raise awareness about the value of design and the role of architects using messaging and programs aimed at a public audience.**

Documentation:

- Describe at least one key public awareness activity and the target audience. Provide at least one example of a public outreach communication or press release. Components should use or adapt AIA's public outreach resources or develop their own. Components may submit collaborative efforts among components in one's state.

Education

REQUIREMENT**1. Deliver continuing education to members:**

- Deliver at least 18 LU course hours per year, of which at least 12 are health/safety/welfare (HSW) hours. Up to 14 of these 18 hours may be part of a collaborative education plan with any other CES provider.
- Of the 18 course hours mentioned above, deliver at least 4 credit hours of LU or HSW content by curating (which means directly creating, facilitating or customizing) that content to foster high-quality, relevant courses. These 4 credit hours are to be created and managed in the component's own CES provider account.
- If a component does not curate 4 LUs on its own but actively works with another AIA component to co-create educational content for members, it may satisfy the above 4 credit hour requirement by demonstrating how it meaningfully contributed to creating that co-created content. If more than two components worked together to co-curate a course, they may each add the course to their partner form in this manner.

(NOTE: These educational items are among the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation "checkup.")

Documentation:

- AIA will verify component CES provider course records.
- AIA will verify that at least 4 credit hours were filed using the component's own CES provider account.
- Components with fewer than 18 AIA LU course hours total, 12 of which are HSW, on their provider account will provide a CES partnership form. This form shows how the component partnered with another CES provider to create educational courses.
- Components that worked with other components to co-curate their 4 hours of content will also describe on the CES partnership form specifically how they played a meaningful role in curating that content, even though it resides on another component's account.

REQUIREMENT**2. Comply with requirements outlined in the CES Provider Toolkit to assure a basic level of quality and member service.****Documentation:**

- AIA will verify that key requirements in the CES Provider Toolkit are being observed, specifically, submitting courses and updating member transcripts in a timely manner.

- REQUIREMENT**
- 3. Provide career information and mentoring opportunities for emerging professionals to engage members early in their careers. Provide ARE preparation support to those on the path to licensure.**
- Documentation:
- Provide documentation (such as a member communication or event notice) for at least one of the component’s AXP-related activities, ARE preparation activities, career support, or mentoring activities. Such ARE preparation support may be provided in collaboration with other components in the state. (Such documentation might include a member communication, event notice, or designated webpage URL.)
- REQUIREMENT**
- 4. State components only: Appoint a state architect licensing advisor, who serves as a resource to AXP participants. Inform all components in the state and AXP participants about how to reach the licensing advisor in their state.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a link to the component webpage showing how AXP participants may reach the state architect licensing advisor.

Finance & operations

REQUIREMENT

- 1. State and local components only: File an IRS 990, 990EZ, or 990N (postcard) tax return annually. Doing so protects the component's 501(c) tax-exempt status and avoids enforcement actions and penalties.**

(NOTE: This is one of the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation "checkup.")

Documentation:

- Provide a copy of the component's most recent IRS 990, 990EZ, or 990N return.

REQUIREMENT

- 2. State and local components only: Annually submit all tax returns and reporting required by the component's state and local jurisdictions. Doing so protects against enforcement actions and penalties.**

(NOTE: This is one of the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation "checkup.")

Documentation:

- Affirm that all tax returns that are applicable to the component have been filed, including W-2, 1099, 941, property tax, and sales tax.

REQUIREMENT

- 3. International components only: File all tax returns required by the host country and local jurisdiction (if applicable).**

(NOTE: This is one of the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation "checkup.")

Documentation:

- Provide a copy of the component's most recent tax return filed with the host country and filed with the local jurisdiction (if applicable).

REQUIREMENT

- 4. Maintain both directors and officers and general liability insurance policies for the component to protect volunteer leaders and the component from risk.**

(NOTE: This is one of the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation "checkup.")

Documentation:

- Provide either 1) a declarations page from the insurance policy or 2) a certificate of insurance, detailing the type of insurance coverage and the dates and limits of coverage.

- REQUIREMENT** **5. Describe all other forms of insurance that the component carries (such as workers' compensation for staff or meeting cancellation insurance for conferences).**
- Documentation:
- List the other forms of insurance carried, with the date the current policy expires.
- REQUIREMENT** **6. Adopt a business continuity plan to prepare the component in case of a disaster or crisis.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a PDF of the component's current business continuity plan. Such a plan should address contingencies such as natural disasters, accidents, criminal or civil attacks on the component, loss of key leaders or staff, financial or cybersecurity breaches, and public health emergencies.
- REQUIREMENT** **7. Provide financial reports to the board at least quarterly. Doing so enables board members and executives to uphold and execute their fiduciary responsibilities.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a copy of a meeting agenda that shows financial reports are being delivered to the board of directors.
- REQUIREMENT** **8. Adopt and adhere to a financial management policy that assigns authority to certain staff or leader positions for these financial actions and decisions: approving expenditure of funds, signing checks, approving payroll (if applicable), entering into contracts, and maintaining accurate financial records.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a copy of the component's financial management policy.
- REQUIREMENT** **9. Adopt and adhere to a financial reserve policy.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a copy of the component's financial reserve policy.
- REQUIREMENT** **10. Adopt and adhere to a policy that governs independent financial audits or reviews by an accounting firm, unless not feasible due to resource constraints. Regardless of whether an independent financial audit or review is conducted, component boards must appoint an independent financial review committee to examine the year's financial records.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a copy of the component's financial policy concerning audits or reviews (as applicable to the component) and the financial review committee.

REQUIREMENT **11. Ensure that financial data and transactions are secure for the protection of both customers and the component. Ensure that component staff, treasurers, and others who access financial or other sensitive data have received data security training. If the component takes credit cards, ensure that the card processor complies with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).**

Documentation:

- Provide a copy of the component's current policy or procedures concerning the handling of funds and member financial data and efforts taken to reduce bank fraud.
- Affirm that the component's credit card processor complies with PCI DSS.

REQUIREMENT **12. Report dues rates to AIA Member & Component Support as required by AIA's schedule (currently September 15) to ensure that dues revenues reach the component without delay.**

Documentation:

- None needed. AIA will confirm. (Components that miss the September 15 deadline will have their members invoiced at the current year's dues rates without change.)

REQUIREMENT **13. To ensure components have access to crucial leadership resources, send at least one elected leader to Grassroots at least once every three years. Send executive directors who work at least 30 hours per week to Grassroots at least once every three years.**

Documentation:

- None needed. AIA will verify attendance.

REQUIREMENT **14. To ensure component executives have access to crucial management resources, send executive directors who work at least 30 hours per week to the CACE Annual Meeting at least once every three years.**

Documentation:

- None needed. AIA will verify attendance.

REQUIREMENT **15. To ensure component executives are trained to access AIA resources, send new executive directors who work at least 30 hours per week to attend Institute Resource Training within two years of hiring.**

Documentation:

- None needed. AIA will verify attendance.

Governance

REQUIREMENT

- 1. Adopt and comply with written policies, including 1) whistleblower protection, 2) conflicts of interest, and 3) records retention and destruction. If applicable, adopt and comply with a written policy on reviewing the chief staff executive's compensation and benefits. (While not required by law, the IRS examines whether nonprofit corporations have such policies in place.)**

Documentation:

- Provide a copy of the component's policies on whistleblower protection, conflicts of interest, and records retention and destruction.
- If the component employs a chief staff executive as a direct hire, provide a copy of the component's policy on compensation and benefits reviews for the chief staff executive.
- Describe how all board members are provided access to these policies.

REQUIREMENT

- 2. International components only: Comply with applicable laws, regulations, and written policies on privacy in the component's host country and geographical region (e.g, the European Union).**

Documentation:

- Provide a privacy statement congruent with the privacy laws and regulations of the component's host country and region.
- Describe how the component educates its leadership and staff about the privacy statement and the applicable laws and regulations. If the component utilizes vendors, explain if vendors comply with privacy regulations.

REQUIREMENT

- 3. Comply with AIA's policies on antitrust and sexual harassment.**

Documentation:

- Describe how the component complies with and educates its leadership and members about policies on 1) antitrust compliance and 2) avoidance of sexual harassment.

REQUIREMENT

- 4. Adopt AIA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement.**

Documentation:

- Describe how the component upholds AIA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement.

REQUIREMENT

- 5. Review and update bylaws at least once every 10 years using the AIA Model Component Bylaws as a guide (although updating every five years is recommended). Submit bylaws to AIA's general counsel for review as they are created or amended.**

Documentation:

- Provide a copy of current bylaws, which must include the date they were last amended.

- REQUIREMENT** **6. Report names of the upcoming year’s officers to AIA Component Collaboration & Resources annually by December 31 to ensure that new officers receive leadership communications.**
- (NOTE: This is one of the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation “checkup.”)
- Documentation:
- None needed. AIA will verify that officer rosters have been submitted.
- REQUIREMENT** **7. Provide orientation for the board of directors annually to engage and initiate board members and improve the board’s effectiveness.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a PDF of the agenda (or provide a summary) from the last board orientation that outlines the component’s board orientation process and content.
- REQUIREMENT** **8. Conduct strategic planning at least every five years and align it with AIA’s strategic plan to provide focus and direction for the component’s activities.**
- Documentation:
- Provide a PDF of the component’s most recent strategic plan, which includes the date of adoption.
- REQUIREMENT** **9. State and local components only: Comply with all filing requirements for nonprofit organizations in the component’s state.**
- (NOTE: This is one of the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation “checkup.”)
- Documentation:
- Provide a PDF of the record showing the component is currently registered with its state as a nonprofit corporation.
- REQUIREMENT** **10. International components only: Comply with all filing requirements for nonprofit organizations in the component’s host country. (NOTE: This is one of the requirements that components will report in their annual accreditation “checkup.”)**
- Documentation:
- Provide a copy of the record showing the component has filed as a nonprofit corporation within its host country.

Membership

REQUIREMENT**1. Conduct retention and recruitment efforts annually to communicate the value of membership and to ensure a healthy membership base.**

Documentation:

- Describe the component's member recruitment and retention activities. Provide samples of materials used to reach out to members for this purpose (for example: outreach to prospect lists, outreach to lapsed or terminated members, visits to firms, and similar activities).

REQUIREMENT**2. Welcome all new members and engage with component members of all types to foster active participation in component activities.**

Documentation:

- Describe the component's activities to engage members at each stage represented among the component's membership: (1) Associates, (2) Architects, (3) International Associates, and (4) Fellows. Also describe activities to recognize and engage all new members and those who are newly licensed. Provide a description and examples of component communications or activities to specifically engage each of these categories of members.

REQUIREMENT**3. State and local components only: Seek member feedback through meetings, focus groups, surveys, or another assessment method at least once every three years. Components are encouraged to partner on this activity with other components in their state.**

Documentation:

- Provide a summary of member feedback received from these assessment activities, and state when the research was conducted.

REQUIREMENT**4. International components only: Seek member feedback through meetings, focus groups, surveys, or another assessment method at least once every three years.**

Documentation:

- Provide a summary of member feedback received from these assessment activities, and state when the research was conducted.



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2021