



Women are one of the most influential segments in the AEC industry, yet when looking at leadership roles in these industries we still ask: Where are they?

Women's Leadership Summit, founded by AIA, is a premier event that brings together the industry's largest network of diverse women who are breaking down barriers, making themselves visible, and manifesting the careers they want—while making a difference in the world.

Through our Call for Proposals, we invite leaders from across the industry to contribute their expertise through an educational session delivered live at WLS.

- **What happens at WLS is unique.**
- **It connects you with a diverse community that wants to support you and help you achieve your goals.**
- **It shares pathbreaking ideas to tackle challenges, uncover potential, and lead change.**
- **It celebrates women leaders at every career stage, empowering all of us to change the future.**

And it's these differentiators that form the framework of our educational program each year.

2024 Theme: Building Resilience

What does relevant leadership look like in 2024? Questions like this can be hard to ask and even harder to answer authentically when there's so much instability in our workplaces and the world around us. In an environment like this, it's hard not to be chronically stressed or feel safe.

That's why we're designing this year's Women's Leadership Summit around the theme of building resilience—the ability to adapt to an ever-changing landscape, recover from setbacks, and persevere through difficult times.

This theme asks: How do we protect the health, safety, and welfare of our society when we're struggling individually? Where does our power reside? Are we challenging ourselves to find our own blind spots and biases in an all-female room? How do we create equity using our personal social capital? Is the concept of safe space a myth? How does the lens of intersectionality help us uncover the skills needed for impactful change?

Women's Leadership Summit has always been a conference that pushes boundaries, challenges traditional thinking, and explores new ways of thinking and doing to create change. Join us and lean in.

Implementing Intersectionality as a Lens

Since its launch in 2009, WLS has been a destination that welcomes diverse women from all backgrounds. But as the landscape of the world and society has changed significantly in the last 15 years, we aim to explore opportunities for the WLS movement to build resilience and grow impact.

To that end, we will implement intersectionality as a lens throughout this year's content and education sessions. Intersectionality, as coined and defined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, lawyer, professor, and civil rights advocate, is the interconnected nature of more than one social identity such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and more, as applied to an individual or a group. With intersecting identities, individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. To understand intersectionality, is to recognize that multiple layers of inequality exist and that experiences differ among individuals based on their intersecting identities.

Ultimately, the female experience is not a monolith, and with intersectionality as a lens we can better understand the many dimensions of identity and how intersectionality can be used as a social and legal framework in navigating best practices in the women's movement, our workplaces, and within the industry.

What makes a good proposal?

Proposers are encouraged to showcase innovative trends and best practices in equitable business strategies, design & climate action, and civic engagement. Your session proposal should be specific, demonstrate impact, and provide active, engaging, and valuable learning opportunities. AIA is looking for submissions with content that attendees can't get elsewhere, and sessions that are valuable for various levels of knowledge and career goals. Please note that sessions may accommodate 150 – 200 attendees.

A strong proposal needs to demonstrate one or more of the following:

1. Unique approaches to thriving and succeeding as a woman professional.
2. Clear learning objectives and a description that tells prospective attendees what the session is about and what they will gain from attending, regardless of session type.
3. For wellness tours: well-organized logistics and scheduling information detailing a tour's format, capacity, and duration.
4. Content and creative solutions around any of the following priority tracks and topics.

Track Options

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice and the Workplace

Track: Tools and insights to understand intersectionality and advance equity for all in the building industry and within the profession. How can we address barriers and obstacles to success in the workplace, and in what ways can greater diversity contribute to business prosperity and a more resilient workforce?

Topics:

- **Intersectionality and intersectional feminism:** Explore the many dimensions of identity and understanding the role of intersectionality as a legal and social framework in the workplace.
- **Intercultural competency:** Diverse workplaces require healthy communication and strategies that promote plurality to ensure psychological safety.
- **Talent recruitment, retention, and management:** Promote best practices in recruitment and managing a resilient and diverse workforce.
- **Accessibility, belonging, and inclusion in practice:** Promote best practices in creating and maintaining an accessible and inclusive workplace.

Leadership and Community Resilience

Track: Tools and insights for developing leadership skills, maintaining professional growth, ensuring an open path to success within the profession, and overcoming major challenges. How do we build a resilient profession that can weather turbulent times and withstand our most pressing social issues?

Topics:

- **Leadership and professional development:** Build fundamental leadership skills and maintaining professional growth to contribute to the success of the profession.
- **Improving pipelines into leadership:** Apply best practices in developing a strong leadership pipeline and improving representation across the board.
- **Mentorship, sponsorship, and networking:** Promote the benefits of mentorship, sponsorship, and networking and applying best practices in program implementation.
- **Transition and succession planning:** Apply best practices in transition and succession planning for business continuity.

- **Managing and leading through adversity and turbulence:** Apply best practices in overcoming challenges, adapting to change, and paving the way for resilience.

Business and Organizational Operations and Systems

Track: Tools and insights for achieving operational success and implementing equity and inclusion in business practices. How do our systems and businesses move towards common goals that will yield the greatest impact for ourselves and the communities we serve?

Topics:

- **Organizational behavior and culture:** Understand how individuals, groups, and organizations interact and influence one another, from an equity lens.
- **Strategic planning and business prosperity:** Apply best practices in strategic planning to ensure business continuity and innovations that secure the future.
- **Business fundamentals and financial management:** Promote the fundamentals of business and how bottom-line prosperity can also benefit employees.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Taking steps towards establishing a firm and seeking out resources for small businesses, women's business enterprise, disadvantaged business enterprise, and/or minority business enterprise.
- **Equity-driven business models:** Promote best practices in establishing business models that lead to equitable outcomes for employees and the communities we serve.

Design Excellence and Equity in the Built Environment

Track: Share stories about project work and showcase exemplary design strategies; architectural responses to environmental challenges, emphasizing sustainable and energy-efficient practices; and design principles that prioritize equity, inclusivity, well-being, and community-engaged needs. How do we leverage design to address our most pressing challenges and position women as leaders that will usher our industry into the future?

Topics:

- **Innovation in design:** Showcase projects with innovative design strategies balancing aesthetics, function, and societal impact.
- **Project delivery:** Showcase or discuss the lifecycle or phases of a project, including initiation, planning, design, execution, and performance.
- **Climate action and resilience:** Showcase projects addressing the risks of aging infrastructure, natural disasters, and climate change.

- **Equitable design and community engagement:** Showcase design strategies that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Gender equity in design:** Showcase design thoughts beyond the binary that expands thinking about safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for all.

Personal, Professional, and Social Resilience in Practice

Track: Tools and insights for tackling tough conversations around personal health, community building, career management, self-empowerment and real-world issues impacting the workplace and the profession.

Topics:

- **Personal health and well-being:** Explore challenges and best practices in optimizing physical and mental health at work and outside of the workplace.
- **Managing personal and professional lives:** Explore challenges and best practices in aligning professional ambition with personal joy & fulfillment.
- **Restorative and communal practices for resiliency:** Exploring ways to be part of a supportive community and engage in restorative practices that promote resiliency and nurture a sense of belonging.
- **Career management and self-empowerment:** Exploring challenges and best practices in navigating and mapping career paths and making conscious decisions about our future.

Audiences

Address which one of these target career stages your session is geared for. Allied professionals (such as interior designers, engineers, construction managers, landscape architects) will also be in attendance.

- **Students and Early-Career Professionals:** Students are defined as individuals registered in a college or university setting and who have not yet completed their current degree track. They can be undergraduate or graduate level. At this phase in their journey, they are still exploring their passions, considering various career paths, considering various licensure and certification opportunities, and learning the technical and soft skills they need to succeed. Early-career professionals have a college or university degree and have been in the workforce for 0–4 years.
- **Early Mid-Career Professionals:** At this phase in their careers, individuals have strong technical knowledge and skills needed to execute project work and support teams. They are narrowing in or have already determined their own direction and starting to articulate how their job should align with their passions. These individuals can be in management or non-management roles, licensed or unlicensed, design-track or non-design track. These individuals have been in the workforce for 5–9 years.
- **Late Mid-Career Professionals:** At this phase in their careers, they have mastered the technical aspects of their field, have been through the full life cycle of several design and construction projects, and have started to mentor and train others. These individuals may be looking to pivot

their career to a new role, tackle workplace conflict head-on, and move into more advanced opportunities. These are individuals with 10–19 years of experience. They can be in management or non-management roles, licensed or unlicensed, design-track or non-design track.

- **Firm Leader, Business Executive, or Firm Owner:** These individuals are entrepreneurial in spirit and focus predominately on design, leadership, business, marketing, and operations-related issues. They are looking to achieve greater business prosperity. These individuals can be sole proprietors, small business owners, principals/directors who oversee a large studio, senior technical staff members, or large firm management. These are individuals with 20+ years of experience or people who are in firm-ownership/senior positions.
- **Bonus Segment:** Is there an audience track that you believe does not fit in the categories above? Submit for consideration. One audience not adequately covered here is non-traditional career folks, those who work in government, facility management, construction.

Knowledge Type

Indicate which type of knowledge content your session is geared for:

- **Explicit Knowledge Content:** Logical, objective, specific and procedural content that can typically be codified or recorded. Content type examples: established processes, practices, standards, procedures, or systems; how-to steps or “the nuts and bolts;” documented research; expertise and subject matter knowledge and application.
- **Tacit Knowledge Content:** Intuitive and experiential knowledge gained from personal experience, acquired skills or leadership experience, and/or rooted in personal or community values. Content type examples: personal stories and lived experiences, types of knowledge and skills in a particular field acquired over time to get to a particular point in one’s career and sharing advice or best practices, subjective experiences, insights, and observations.

Tips

- Clear, concise, short titles work best.
- Be specific about educational takeaways and be sure that all elements of your proposal are well aligned with each other.
- No passive lectures or recycled presentation from other events. Highly participatory and engaging sessions are encouraged.
- Sessions may not promote specific products, vendors, or services.
- Check for grammar. Submission quality and attention to detail is critical and will be viewed as a reflection of your presentation/session capabilities. Note that if accepted, your submission text will be made public on the Summit agenda page.

Review Process

All proposals will be blind peer reviewed. Omit any identifying information (individual names and company) from the session title, descriptive text, and the optional images before submitting for the blind review process. We expect the submission process will be highly competitive and there are a limited number of sessions. As a result, many excellent proposals will not be accepted into the program. You will be notified if not selected for this specific opportunity, however, we hope you will look for other venues for your session, at a local or national level.

TIMELINE

Note: Dates are subject to change

Task	Deadline
Call for Proposals opens	May 6, 2024
Call for Proposals closes	June 14, 2024
Peer review by jury	June 14–July 12, 2024
Decision	Mid-July
Speaker confirmations	July 20, 2024
2024 Women’s Leadership Summit dates in Chicago	October 8–10, 2024

Evaluation Criteria

Given their role in helping establish the program, the jury panel is comprised of professionals from the AIA Women’s Leadership Summit Advisory Group. The jury evaluates submissions and selects the sessions based on:

- demonstration that the session promotes the advancement of women and equity in business (30%)
- innovative concepts that are forward thinking and push the industry into the future (25%)
- strength of projected outcomes and useful solutions for attendees related to the theme(s) (20%)
- learning objectives align with needs of the specified target audience (15%)
- evidence of EDI focused content and diverse speakers; Check out the [Guides for Equitable Practice for inspiration](#) (10%)

Submission process and required fields

SESSION TITLE

Clear, direct, short titles work best. (Max 10 words)

SESSION DESCRIPTION

Session descriptions will appear in the online schedule. Make yours interesting! It should sell attendees on what they'll learn and what the value in attending is for them. (Max 300 words)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

What will attendees know or be able to do after attending your session? Provide a minimum of four learning objectives. To qualify for HSW (health, safety, welfare) credits, ensure that 3 out of 4 of the LO's are HSW themed. Please use active verbs and words that are clear and measurable. Check out the [Continuing Education Standards](#) guide for more information. Watch this [training video](#) to learn more about HSW's and drafting an HSW justification.

SESSION TYPE

- 1. 60-minute presentation:** A presentation that incorporates active learning and participation to facilitate learning. Sessions in this category may have 150-200 attendees.
 - Length: 60 minutes
 - Presenters: Maximum of one or two
 - Learning objectives: Must include at least four
 - Themes: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice and the Workplace; Leadership and Community Resilience; Business and Organizational Operations and Systems; Design Excellence and Equity in the Built Environment; Personal, Professional, and Social Resilience in Practice
- 2. 60- minute panel presentation and/or discussion:** A diverse, lively, engaging, and advanced-level presentation and discussion on a specific topic. Include details on how you will structure the discussion/presentation and facilitate learning interactions. Sessions in this category may have 150-200 attendees.
 - Length: 60 minutes
 - Presenters/facilitators: Maximum of four (e.g., three panelists, one moderator)
 - Learning objectives: Must include at least four
 - Themes: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice and the Workplace; Leadership and Community Resilience; Business and Organizational Operations and Systems; Design Excellence and Equity in the Built Environment; Personal, Professional, and Social Resilience in Practice

3. Guided local wellness tour: Wellness is a critical thread throughout the WLS experience. Support attendees' health and well-being by designing an engaging and guided journey around downtown Chicago. Wellness comes in many forms, and we are accepting proposals for activities like walking, running, biking, periodic stretching, etc. Submissions may include tours of local architecture and/or community projects, public art, and other spaces. Include details on how the tour will be structured to facilitate wellness and learning. Tours should accommodate up to 50 attendees and will be delivered rain or shine. Attendees will be charged a nominal fee for tours. Priority will be given to tours that do not require transportation to destinations.

- Length: Must not exceed 120 minutes (about 2 hours).
- Guides/facilitators: One to two (e.g., organizer and leader)
- Learning objectives: Must include at least four

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Describe the challenge, issue, or topic your session will address and how knowledge and/or application of your solution will benefit professionals and the building industry. Problem statements are not visible by the public. (Max 200 words)

TRACK

Select the primary priority track your proposed session will address.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Select the primary career level your proposed session is geared toward.

TARGET KNOWLEDGE CONTENT TYPE

Select the primary knowledge content type your proposed session is geared toward.

SESSION HISTORY

Let us know if this is a new session or if it has been delivered previously. We will prioritize those that have not been submitted previously.

POST-SUMMIT VALUE

Describe the impact your session will have on attendees' future as an individual citizen of the world, as a working professional, and/or as a leader in a business. Be sure this is well aligned with the learning outcomes.

EDI+B STATEMENT

AIA is committed to advancing equity in the building industry. Share how your submission incorporates equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging vis-à-vis the makeup of the presenter(s) or facilitators, learning objectives, and post-summit value. Consider how the audience, business, and the broader community may benefit from an equity-driven proposal. For more information on EDI+B, check out AIA's [Guides for Equitable Practice](#).

SPEAKERS AND TOUR ORGANIZERS

All session speakers must be secured at the time of your submission. Please do not use "TBD." Changes in speakers for accepted programs must be approved by WLS staff. Include company, job title, credentials, and demographic information per speaker. Speaker credentials are subject to revision to meet AIA brand style guidelines. Speaker-identifying fields will not be visible to reviewers.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

You may upload optional supporting materials (max 5 pages) to help the review committee better understand your proposed session including a sample presentation deck, white paper, supporting photos or images, etc. Do not use this upload area to submit additional speakers, CVs, or portfolios. Reviewers will see this field, do not reveal information about your business or speaker(s) identity.

Other important information

SPEAKER BENEFITS

Confirmed WLS 2024 speakers are eligible to receive a 25% discount off the standard registration rate. All confirmed speakers are required to register at the speaker rate and attend WLS in Chicago. AIA does not provide travel support or cover any expenses.

POLICIES

- If your proposal is accepted, it may be edited to fit within AIA style guidelines.
- AIA educational sessions are noncommercial. Sessions may not promote specific products, vendors, or services.
- If your proposal is accepted, you retain the copyright and all rights attendant to such copyright in your materials; however, you grant AIA permission to use your presentation and the materials you use in your presentation solely for purposes of making your presentation (in part or in whole or in different formats) available as part of AIA's conference materials and/or in other AIA educational offerings, consistent with AIA's mission and purpose. Sessions will not be recorded.