



Inclusive Framing Language for Program Communications

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Purpose of this resource

As part of AIA's broader risk mitigation and inclusion strategy, this resource was developed to help staff, components, and partners communicate our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in a mission-aligned and legally sound way. It provides sample framing language to support inclusive and opportunity-based messaging for scholarships, grants, volunteer recruitment, and similar opportunities—emphasizing holistic review while avoiding identity-based or exclusionary language. This guidance aligns with AIA's public equity commitments and complements existing resources such as the *Guides for Equitable Practice*.

Key features include

- Holistic, opportunity-based framing
- Alignment with AIA's public equity, diversity, and inclusion commitments
- Sample language and before/after comparisons
- Guidance on pivoting language to avoid identity-based selection concerns

Keys to effective pivot language

- Focus on mission, opportunity, and purpose
- Use neutral, clear eligibility criteria
- Avoid quotas or exclusionary phrasing
- Invite underrepresented individuals without making identity the sole basis for selection

Sample Framing Language

General statement

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive profession by removing barriers and broadening access to opportunities in architecture. We actively promote equity across race, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, and sexual orientation.

Volunteer recruitment

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds and career stages to help shape the future of the profession. We seek individuals whose perspectives, lived experiences, and expertise reflect the diverse communities we serve and help expand access and representation within the field. We especially encourage participation from those historically underrepresented in architecture, including diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, geography, age, ability, and both traditional and non-traditional career paths.

Scholarship or grants

This program supports emerging professionals by expanding access and reducing barriers to participation in educational and career opportunities. We welcome all eligible applicants and encourage those whose backgrounds and experiences bring valuable perspectives to the field. Applicants are invited to share how their skills, leadership, or lived experience contribute to a more inclusive and equitable profession. A more diverse pipeline strengthens architecture and better serves our communities.

Framing for selection processes

In alignment with our commitment to expanding access to the architecture profession, this program supports broad participation by recognizing the value of diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and talented individuals whose contributions strengthen the profession and foster a more inclusive, responsive built environment. Selection is based on a holistic review of qualifications and alignment with program goals, including educational background, professional experience, geographic diversity, and demonstrated commitment to advancing in the field.

Our selection processes include a holistic review to recognize the value of lived experiences, diverse backgrounds, and perspectives that reflect the communities we serve and support architecture’s continued evolution into a more inclusive and equitable field.

Spotting & applying pivot opportunities

While the purpose and focus of each program may vary—whether a scholarship, grant, or volunteer role—language should consistently reflect fairness, transparency, inclusion, and access to opportunity. The table below offers examples of how to apply pivot language to uphold these principles while avoiding identity-based selection language.

Before (Needs Revision)	After (Pivoted Language)
We are seeking candidates who identify as BIPOC and women to improve diversity in our profession.	We are seeking candidates whose lived experience and perspectives reflect the communities we serve, and who are committed to advancing equity in the profession.
Preference to women, ethnic minorities, and younger members, currently underrepresented.	Women, ethnic minorities, and younger members are strongly encouraged to apply.
Preference to volunteers who help achieve a diversity of firm size, age, structure, and service area/project types.	We welcome volunteers with a range of firm sizes, structures, and practice types to help reflect the breadth of experiences across the profession and ensure broad representation of architectural perspectives.
This scholarship seeks to support the advancement of emerging professionals from underrepresented backgrounds.	This scholarship supports emerging professionals whose experiences bring valuable perspectives to the field. Applicants are encouraged to share how their skills or leadership growth support a more inclusive and equitable profession.

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