



# AIA Pennsylvania

The American Institute  
of Architects

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## **PASAE Laurel Awards 2017 Submission**

Association Budget Size | **Large Associations (\$500,001 - \$1 Million)**

Laurel Awards Category | **Overall - Governance**

Project Name | **Redesigning the AIA Pennsylvania Governance Structure for Optimal Diversity, Inclusivity and Performance**

### **Brief Synopsis of the Project**

AIA Pennsylvania (AIA PA) is part of a tripartite system that includes both national and local components.

The AIA PA Board of Directors functions much like a typical state association board existing to set policy, oversee financial health, and advise the Executive Director on association matters. The board meets four times per year in person with one additional conference call meeting. Copious amounts of coffee and sugar are provided to keep everyone alert as we pour over committee reports and financial statements for hours.

In addition to the struggle to keep board members engaged, we faced other serious dilemmas. For example, we needed to find ways to address issues of diversity and inclusivity not just with race and gender, but with firm size, practice area and expertise. We could not just fix on our own. Due to constraints with by-laws and the autonomy of the local boards, representative state board members are sent to the state board. While desiring to address this problem, the state board did not want to diminish the say important to the local chapters. Therefore, creative and workable solutions needed to come from our state board leadership.

We began with the following challenge question - “What *could* our governance structure look like and what *could* we accomplish if we did things differently?” The book [Race to Relevance](#) quickly became required reading and our board, led by our President and president-elect implemented a series of “Design Thinking” workshops during which our members were tasked with reimagining a governance structure where board meetings were fun, people wanted to participate, we had more diversity, were more inclusive, and where “blue sky thinking” took up the majority of time all while providing and maintaining oversight of core association functions.



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The board implemented a restored board meeting agenda consisting of consent agenda items to replace the tedious reading of committee reports. This move freed up valuable time to strategically plan for a new governance model.

All of the results are not fully realized, but many benchmarks have been met and we are well on our way to completion of our redesign.