

2025 AIA Compensation Survey - Position Descriptions

Management

CEO/President

Licensed architect who manages and directs organization toward its objectives, establishes direction and long-range plans, plans/directs mergers and acquisitions, serves as face of organization. Has primary responsibility for the firm's profitability and growth by managing and directing the organization toward its primary objectives. Establishes the firm's direction, long-range plans, strategy, and policy. Dispenses advice, guidance, direction, and authorization to carry out major plans, standards, and procedures.

Oversees the adequacy and soundness of the organization's financial structure. Reviews the organization's operating results, compares these with established objectives, and takes steps to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to correct unsatisfactory results. Plans and directs all investigations and negotiations pertaining to mergers, joint ventures, acquisition of businesses, or sale of major assets. Establishes and maintains an effective system of communications throughout the organization. Represents the organization with major customers, shareholders, the financial community, and the public.

Managing Principal

Licensed architect or other licensed design professional with direct oversight for a market sector, discipline, department, or office, who establishes and implements goals and objectives, develops and promotes the firm's values and long-range plans, positions the firm for growth, and ensures profitability. Responsible for establishing overall goals and objectives and coordinating implementation plans. In conjunction with other senior leaders, is responsible for realization of profits compatible with interests of clients and the firm. Develops and promotes the firm's vision, mission, core values, and long-range plans. Oversees and controls operations and activities to promote achievement of the firm's objectives. Implements policies established by the board. Participates in creating and positioning the firm to take advantage of opportunities for growth and marketplace expansion. Ensures profitability, quality enhancement, and professional development. May be responsible for some of the tasks of the Director of Human Resources at small to midsize firms.

Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Responsible for the company's day-to-day operating activities, including revenue and sales growth; expense, cost, and margin control; and monthly, quarterly, and annual financial goal management. Generally, an MBA or a licensed professional with significant experience in operations.

Director of Operations

Licensure preferred but not required; develops and monitors quality and production standards for projects. Directs and monitors project team members and ensures high productivity. May be responsible for some of the tasks of the Director of Human Resources (see description below) at small to midsize firms. Responsible for developing uniformly high production standards and monitoring projects to ensure that quality and production standards are met for all design and contract documents. Must be thoroughly familiar with entire architectural process and should possess managerial capability to lead and direct activities of all project-team personnel while monitoring technical production on all projects to ensure adherence to quality standards at high productivity.

Director of Design

Licensed architect with a thorough knowledge of architecture practice who develops design standards and may supervise design department. Responsible for developing firm-wide design standards; may also administer and supervise the design department. Oversees design presentations, monitors project design development, and provides design direction and support to ensure consistent and high-quality design firm-wide. Must possess a thorough knowledge of architecture practice with emphasis on design, building materials, construction methods, integration of engineering disciplines, and building costs/codes.

Director of Finance (CFO)

Oversees and coordinates all firm-wide financial operations, ensures financial operations function efficiently, and provides direction to managers responsible for financial activities. Responsible for overseeing and coordinating the full firm-wide range of financial operations by ensuring that they function effectively and efficiently and according to policies established by the board and under the direction of the CEO. Directs the firm's treasury, budgeting, audit, tax, accounting, purchasing, real estate, benefit programs, and insurance activities. Supports the CEO and the firm's continued success by ensuring that all financial operations function effectively and efficiently. Provides financial leadership, vision, and direction to managers responsible for financial activities within the firm.

Director of Human Resources (CHRO)

Most senior position on the HR team. Responsible for leading the team of day-to-day HR practitioners, including but not limited to recruitment, compensation, benefits, and employee relations. Ensures that HR policies and practices are adhered to and aligned with firm values and organizational objectives.

Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)

Responsible for business development strategy, marketing, branding, communications, and public relations infrastructure, positioning the firm for growth and profitability.

Architects/Designers/Emerging Professionals**Senior Project Designer**

Ten or more years of professional experience, licensure preferred but not required, professional degree in architecture from an accredited program.

Creates project designs and plans for all phases of projects and coordinates building design consultants while monitoring drawings. Develops solutions and creates project designs and plans. Initiates and creates project designs and plans of all phases of one or more projects and has responsibility for preparing presentation and design drawings. Coordinates all trades and agencies related to building design while monitoring drawings. Typically has 10 or more years of experience in all phases of architecture and engineering, including substantial and varied experience in project planning.

Project Designer

Five to 10 years of professional experience, licensure preferred but not required, professional degree in architecture from an accredited program.

Coordinates project design, develops creative-design concepts for projects, and prepares presentation and design drawings. Works independently on architectural design projects and often coordinates project design efforts. Develops planning and creative-design concepts for projects. Prepares presentation and design drawings and details. Requires substantial experience, five to 10 years in developing details, and providing planning and design support in the preparation of design development.

Senior Project Manager

Ten or more years of professional experience, professional degree in architecture from an accredited program, licensure preferred but not required.

Coordinates all project efforts in order to ensure effective execution, prepares strategic plans, and serves as primary client liaison. Estimates scope of work and oversees less experienced project managers. Handles the most complex projects of the largest magnitude. Responsible for coordination of all project efforts, administrative and technical, to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective execution of assigned projects. Prepares strategic plans for project success. Serves as primary liaison contact with clients to complete projects on schedule, within budget, and with maximum client satisfaction. Actively manages client budgets, schedules, and programs; budget and schedule; project communications and documentation; office administrative tasks; and project team assignments. Estimates fees, determines scope of work, and prepares proposals and contracts on the most complex projects. Provides oversight and monitoring of work of less experienced project managers. May act in a team leader capacity in the absence of the manager.

Project Manager

Eight or more years of professional experience, professional degree in architecture from an accredited program, licensure preferred but not required.

Manages multiple small/medium projects, coordinates all aspects of assigned projects, and estimates scope of work. Has full responsibility for managing all aspects of multiple small to midsize projects. Prepares strategic plans for project success. Responsible for the coordination of all project efforts, administrative and technical, to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective execution of assigned projects. Serves as the primary client liaison to bring the schedule, budgets, and scope of work to completion and to the client's satisfaction. Actively manages client budgets, schedules, and programs; project communications and documentation; office administrative tasks; and project team assignments. Estimates fees, determines scope of work, and prepares proposals and contracts.

Senior Architect

Over 10 years of professional experience. Certification as licensed professional required.

Professional degree in architecture, plus 10 years minimum of related experience. Can be relied upon to present directly to the client on technical and design solutions. Works closely with the Project Manager to execute project plans. Coordinates with Project Manager to directly supervise the teams' design and technical delivery.

Senior Architectural Staff (Non-licensed)

Over 10 years of professional experience.

Professional degree in architecture, plus a minimum of 10 years of related experience. Can be relied upon to present directly to the client on technical and design solutions. Works closely with the Project Manager to execute project plans. Coordinates with Project Manager to directly supervise the teams' design and technical delivery.

Medical Planner

At least 5 years of professional experience. Licensure preferred but not required.

Responsible for leading the medical planning effort toward the successful completion of complex healthcare facilities; provide overall programming, master planning, design and medical planning; communicate with clients/user groups to understand project requirements. Assists in developing project scope, plan, and services and during the contract process. Translates planning concepts into comprehensible terms for clients, designers, and project team members.

Architect Level III

Eight or more years of professional experience. Certification as licensed professional is required.

Professional degree in architecture, plus at least eight years of related experience. Participates in the conceptual design and provides full support through the entire project. Serves as a SME on specialized systems. Liaises with Project Management, other architects and consultants. Develops and represents lead technical viewpoint on projects. Coordinates with Director and Department Head on appropriate technical solutions and product strategies. Project size differentiates this position from the senior level.

Architectural Staff Level III (Non-licensed)

Eight or more years of professional experience.

Professional degree in architecture, plus at least eight years of related experience. Participates in the conceptual design and provides full support through the entire project. Serves as a SME on specialized systems. Liaises with Project Management, other architects/architectural staff, and consultants. Develops and represents lead technical viewpoint on projects. Coordinates with Director and Department Head on appropriate technical solutions and product strategies. Project size differentiates this position from the senior level.

Architect Level II

Six or more years of professional experience. Certification as licensed professional is required.

Professional degree in architecture, plus at least six years of related experience. Responsible for specific technical design aspects of an assigned major project, including investigation, evaluation, and recommendation of design solutions that best meets the client's needs. Provides professional architectural consultation in the planning, design, and coordination of large complex projects. Independently applies advanced architectural concepts and designs. Carries out complex or novel assignments requiring the development of new or improved techniques and procedures. May provide technical guidance to less experienced architects.

Architectural Staff Level II (Non-licensed)

Six or more years of professional experience.

Professional degree in architecture, plus at least six years of related experience. Responsible for specific technical design aspects of an assigned major project, including investigation, evaluation, and recommendation of design solutions that best meets the client's needs. Provides professional architectural consultation in the planning, design, and coordination of large complex projects. Independently applies advanced architectural concepts and designs. Carries out complex or novel assignments requiring the development of new or improved techniques and procedures. May provide technical guidance to less experienced architects/architectural staff.

Architect Level I

Three to 5 years of professional experience. Certification as licensed professional is required.

Professional degree in architecture, plus three to five years of related experience. Fully competent architect in all conventional aspects of architecture. Independently performs a variety of assignments requiring skills in all conventional aspects of architectural designs for projects of moderate size and complexity. Performs analyses of design, planning and occupancy studies, and limited design layouts. Prepares project specifications, compiling and analyzing relevant data. Writes reports and specifications. Reviews completed reports, plans, estimates, and calculations.

Architectural Staff Level I (Non-licensed)

Three to 5 years of professional experience.

Professional degree in architecture, plus three to five years of related experience. Fully competent in all conventional aspects of architecture. Independently performs a variety of assignments requiring skills in all conventional aspects of architectural designs for projects of moderate size and complexity. Performs analyses of design, planning and occupancy studies, and limited design layouts. Prepares project specifications, compiling and analyzing relevant data. Writes reports and specifications. Reviews completed reports, plans, estimates, and calculations.

Architectural Associate (Non-licensed)

Zero to 3 years of professional experience.

Professional degree in architecture. Full-time, entry-level professional performing basic architectural assignments, working under the direct supervision of an architect. Undertakes a variety of assignments requiring the application of standard architectural techniques for small projects or selected segments of a larger project. Performs design layouts and features, which require researching, compiling, and recording information for assigned project work.

Other Design Professionals**Director of Sustainability**

Ten or more years of professional experience. Licensure preferred but not required.

A thorough knowledge of sustainable design and architecture practice; responsible for developing firm-wide sustainable design standards and initiatives. Oversees presentations, monitors project design development, and provides sustainable design direction and support to ensure consistent and high-quality sustainability integration firm wide. Must possess a thorough knowledge of sustainable design knowledge and practice with emphasis on integrated design, green building rating systems, building materials, energy and carbon, integration of all disciplines, and building costs/codes.

Sustainability Manager

Five to 10 years of professional experience.

Leads or assists with firmwide sustainability efforts and initiatives; advises project teams on integration of sustainable design strategies. Manages and coordinates third-party green building rating systems certification efforts such as LEED, WELL, Fitwel, Living Building Challenge, etc. Assists in energy performance data reporting of projects.

Senior Interior Designer

Over 10 years of professional experience.

Ten or more years of experience, bachelor's degree in interior design recommended. Certification as licensed professional is preferred but not required. Manages projects and leads team, performs schematic design work, participates in design control of projects, and is responsible for project budget management. Manages projects of all sizes and levels of complexity and provides project team leadership. Responsible for schematic design work. Participates in the design control of projects in the design development, construction document, and supervision phases. Provides direction to lower-level interior designers. Responsible for project budget management and cost control.

Interior Designer Level III

Eight or more years of professional experience.

Bachelor's degree in interior design, plus eight or more years of related experience. Certification as a licensed professional is preferred but not required. Participates in the conceptual design and provides full support through the entire project. Liaises with Project Manager, Architects and consultants. Develops and represents lead technical viewpoint on projects. Coordinates with Director and Department Head on appropriate technical solutions and product strategies. Project size differentiates this position from the senior level.

Interior Designer Level II

Six or more years of professional experience.

Bachelor's degree in interior design, plus six or more years of related experience. Certification as a licensed professional is preferred but not required. Generates all architectural concepts for interiors projects, including full responsibility for interpreting, organizing, executing, and coordinating interior design assignments. Plans and designs interior aspects of large or multiple projects by developing appropriate concepts and approaches. Provides subject matter expertise on specific components of interior design.

Interior Designer Level I

Three or more years of professional experience.

Bachelor's degree in interior design, plus three to five years of related experience. Certification as a licensed professional is preferred but not required. Generates architectural concepts for interiors projects, such as furniture and equipment planning, special design concepts and requirements, floor plan analysis, condition of building site, personal property, integrated structural components, mechanical and electrical and visual design concepts, including material. Responsible to carry out these design assignments requiring the development of new or improved techniques or design. Normally works through the project to middle point of construction work, then required to follow up with construction team. Works with a senior-level designer on more complex projects.

Entry-Level Interior Design Associate

Less than 3 years of professional experience.

Assists senior designers with development of design solutions, researches and selects colors/finishes/materials, performs site surveys, maintains resource materials. Works under the direction of mid- to senior-level interior designers. Researches interiors products. Applies established interior design standards. Assists senior-level designers in the development of design solutions for review. Performs routine checking and/or verification tasks. Researches and selects colors/finishes/materials. Supports business development activities through assistance with aids such as finish boards or PowerPoint presentations. Performs site survey and documentation. Maintains resource materials. Is learning computer-aided drawing, presentation tools, and basic office software. Has exposure to interior design specifications, calculations, and industry standards.

Senior Landscape Architect

Ten or more years of professional experience.

Licensed landscape architect responsible for complex project delivery, leads teams, provides mentorship and training, and may manage client relationships. Performs landscape design on projects, establishes general requirements, assesses site potential, and performs environmental impact studies. Responsible for the landscape design of one or more projects. Provides the design and delivery on a variety of projects. Establishes general landscape requirements. Conducts preliminary site studies. Assesses sites' potential to meet client specifications. Carries out environmental impact studies.

Landscape Architect

Five to 10 years of professional experience.

Licensed landscape architect who performs landscape design on projects, establishes general requirements, assesses site potential, and performs environmental impact studies. Responsible for the landscape design of one or more projects. Provides the design and delivery on a variety of projects. Establishes general landscape requirements. Conducts preliminary site studies. Assesses sites' potential to meet client specifications. Carries out environmental impact studies.

Senior Planner

Ten or more years of professional experience.

Manages client relationship and multidisciplinary teams, may supervise staff, provide training and mentoring. Performs urban design and site planning, provides technical assistance on topics related to planning/zoning/environmental concerns, attends planning commission meetings, and regularly meets with government publications. Responsible for urban design, site planning, and other planning studies and programs. Provides technical assistance in areas regarding planning, zoning, environmental concerns, and other matters that relate to overall planning.

Planner

Five to 10 years of professional experience.

Performs urban design and site planning, provides technical assistance on topics related to planning/zoning/environmental concerns, attends planning commission meetings, and regularly meets with government publications. Responsible for urban design, site planning, and other planning studies and programs. Provides technical assistance in areas regarding planning, zoning, environmental concerns, and other matters that relate to overall planning.

Specifications Writer

Five to 10 years of professional experience. Licensed architect preferred.

Reviews drawings and other project information to write and edit project specifications. Uses thorough understanding of project design requirements to translate project needs for specific materials, equipment, installation, certifications, testing, and methods applicable to the project. Performs product research, assists in material selection, develops and maintains relationships with vendors, performs quality management reviews, and provides technical advice to project teams.

Design Technology Manager

Coordinates all BIM/digital design logistics (e.g., contracts, emails, file sharing). Creates and maintains models for project-specific requirements. Receives and manages multiple subcontractor models. Communicates conflicts in models, both real and potential. Professional degree in architecture, engineering, or construction disciplines is preferred but not required.

Design Technology Specialist II

Eight or more years of professional experience.

Interacts with external vendors, mentors and trains staff, provides proactive team support, including technology quality review, may manage staff and may be involved in research and development. Works as part of a digital design/BIM team to achieve consistent results. Provides support for project kick-off information and the creation of initial project setup with workflow documents. Supports daily model management administration and maintenance. Supports and contributes to the creation of content and supports the integration of digital design technology products with other applications. Contributes to the development and implementation of design technology systems. May also perform hardware testing.

Design Technology Specialist I

Three to 8 years of professional experience.

Works as part of a digital design/BIM team to achieve consistent results. Provides support for project kick-off information and the creation of initial project setup with workflow documents. Supports daily model management administration and maintenance. Supports and contributes to the creation of content and supports the integration of digital design technology products with other applications. Contributes to the development and implementation of design technology systems. May also perform hardware testing.

Financial, Administrative, and Technical

Business/Administrative Manager

Manages office administrative support activities and identifies solutions for process inefficiencies. May coordinate or do the accounting functions in smaller firms. May also provide some functions of the Human Resources Generalist (see description below) at small to midsize firms. Responsible for managing a variety of office administrative support activities (e.g., human resources, purchasing, facilities, maintenance, leasing, clerical support); may coordinate accounting functions in small firms. Serves as primary management liaison for administrative issues. Identifies department and office process inefficiencies and makes recommendations for solutions. In smaller firms, may also serve as accounting manager in coordinating or doing all accounting functions. May also fulfill some of the duties described in the Human Resources Generalist position at small to midsize firms.

Accountant

Compiles and analyzes financial information, posts and reviews account activity, maintains updated balance sheets and account reconciliations. May also perform the duties of a controller at small to midsize firms. Responsible for moderately complex analysis. Compiles, consolidates, and analyzes various accounting and finance information. Brings inconsistencies, problems, and recommendations to the manager's attention. Responsible for the timely completion of the weekly and monthly closing process. Posts and reviews account activity and determines what journal adjustments need to be recorded on a weekly/monthly/annual basis to ensure that the financial statements present fairly the results of operations in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Maintains updated balance sheets, account reconciliations, and an effective internal control environment. May also serve as the controller in small to midsize firms.

Marketing Manager

Manages marketing staff and functions in support of the firm's long-range goals; provides market research, business development, and public relations functions. Manages marketing functions and staff in support of the firm's long-range plans. Provides market research, marketing training, system and procedure development, business development support, public relations, and proposal development. Ensures that schedules are met, and various aspects of proposals are accurate and delivered in a timely manner.

Marketing Coordinator

Develops/maintains marketing systems and records, produces proposals, and assists with other sales/public relations materials. Develops and maintains marketing systems/records and coordinates the marketing team. Produces proposals by coordinating proposal/presentation preparation, including scheduling project milestones and reviews, and working with project managers to ensure that quality material is submitted and delivered. Edits, coordinates, and helps write proposals, brochures, and other sales/public relations material.

Business Development Manager

Directs business development efforts, develops and implements sales and other programs, cultivates potential business prospects. Directs and coordinates the firm's business development efforts. Develops, implements, and maintains effective sales and other programs that provide maximum exposure to new business prospects within the firm's established goals and objectives. Develops and implements promotional programs and plans; cultivates and develops potential business prospects; prepares proposals, presentations, and qualification packages.

Systems/Information Technology Manager

Develops and implements internal management information systems, establishes policies for systems use, and develops standards for document production.

Graphic Designer

Performs print/multimedia/web design, creates design and layout for various materials, creates project charts/graphs, and provides cost estimates for all printed graphics. Responsible for print, multimedia, web, and/or environmental graphic design. Creates design and layout, and coordinates production of various materials. Creates detailed project charts and graphs for clients. Provides detailed cost estimates for all printed graphics.

Human Resources Generalist

Bachelor's degree in human resources (HR) or business administration or related field recommended. Assists employees with all HR aspects, develops partnerships with key stakeholders in the business unit, analyzes HR data to identify trends, and reports findings to senior HR and business management. Provides HR consultative skills, and assists employees and management in all HR aspects, including employee relations, investigations, and interpreting company policies and practices. Develops positive working relationships and business partnerships with key stakeholders in the business unit.