
Council Policy

Policy Name	Creation of New OAA Awards
Issue Date	December 10, 2021
Revision Dates	N/A

OAA Awards Program Background

The OAA Awards program runs on a two-year cycle. It alternates between the [Design Excellence Awards, Best Emerging Practice, and career achievement awards](#) with the aspirational [SHIFT Challenge program](#)—an opportunity to show the public and the profession how architectural thinking offers innovative and creative approaches to societal issues.

The award cycle and the specific awards available are the result of a 2016 consultation that provided findings and recommendations on how the OAA could better adapt its program to opt for quality over quantity when it came to recognizing the achievements of the architecture profession. Amendments to the jury process at the time included bringing the review process online, revising the selection, and instituting a conflict of interest policy.

Given the extensive work to streamline the awards program, and taking into account ongoing work by the Communications Committee to ensure transparency, fairness, equity, and inclusion in the process, the decision to add additional awards should not be taken lightly. Any new award must be about recognizing a quality or achievement that is not currently celebrated and/or about improving the equity and diversity of those eligible.

Process for Creating a New Award

Whether internal to the OAA or external to the profession, any individual or group that wishes to suggest the creation of a new award should submit the idea to the [OAA Communications Committee](#), via an email to the [Communications Manager staff liaison](#), for consideration at its next available meeting.

Should the Committee feel the proposed award meets the various criteria outlined in this policy, it will, through the Vice President Communications, share the information as a memo for Council's consideration. While the Committee will make suggestions based on its evaluation of the proposal, ultimately the decision to move forward with a new award falls to OAA Council, which will also need to take into account existing staff and financial resources to ensure the sustained maintenance of an additional award.

Considerations for a New Award

Any new award must align with the objects of the Association (as determined by the *Architects Act*). The OAA's principal object is to regulate the practice of architecture and to govern its members in accordance with the Act, the regulations, and the bylaws so the public interest may be served and protected. Additional objects involve standards of knowledge, skill, and professional ethics, as well as promoting public appreciation of architecture and the allied arts and sciences.

A proposed award would need to meet new objectives, either in recognition or in eligibility, that are not currently being met by an existing award. It might address design issues and objectives as well as the evolving knowledge that fuels the profession that is not already possible among the existing award slate.

Further, new awards must be self-sustaining. Even those that do not come with a monetary prize require physical awards, invitations to recognition events, staff administration, etc. Council would need to take this into account for future budgeting. Entrance fees for a new award will consider the cost-benefit for applicants (Design Excellence currently has a fee, while SHIFT does not).

In some instances, a proposed award may be accompanied with financial donations. Such a contribution would need to be weighed against OAA values to ensure value-alignment. Additionally, only the OAA must be able to name its awards. Sponsored awards, regardless if by an individual, an estate, or an organization, can be risky for objectivity and reputation—especially if their name reflects a particular person or group. As such, funding donations may be more effective when added to a central pool for the entire awards program.

All these factors will be considered by the Committee when determining the need for a new award and whether to bring the information forward to Council.

Should Council agree to The OAA would retain control of the terms of any new awards, not the donor—this means only the OAA can set eligibility criteria. Similarly, award juries must remain impartial, so donors or champions for new awards cannot sit as jurors.

