



# Common App For Design Excellence

v2023.0

## What is the Common App?

The Common App is an Excel based tool that has been adopted by state and local AIA Chapters across the country as part of their Design Awards process. Firms are asked to complete the Common App form as part of their submission. Juries use the Common App forms to evaluate the sustainability achievements of each design project. The Common App tool is based on the [AIA's Framework for Design Excellence](#) which represents the defining principles of good design in the 21st century. Comprised of 10 principles and accompanied by searching questions, the Framework seeks to inform progress toward a zero-carbon, equitable, resilient, and healthy built environment.

## How does the Common App work?

On the “Common Application” tab, applicants enter project information and answer qualitative and quantitative questions related to each of the 10 measures from the Framework for Design Excellence. The performance metrics are aggregated and automatically generate the spider chart at the top of the sheet. The spider chart is a visual representation of a project's performance, which can be used to quickly show project strengths and opportunities for growth or improvement. Higher performing measures will have longer spokes that reach the outermost concentric circles. The “Output” tab includes the spider graph and the narrative statements from the form.

## How can I support my chapter in adopting the Common App?

- [“Climate Action in Design Awards,”](#) Henry Siegel, AIA CA
- Common App Slide Deck

## How do I learn more about the Common App?

### *General Resources*

- [Video instructions](#) on how to complete the Common App.  
*Note:* This video references a previous version of the Common App used in CA; however, much of the content is the same and the approach to completing the form has not changed.

### *[Supporting Juries](#) with the Common App*

- Juror Selection Guidelines
- AIA PA Jury Instructions
- AIA CA Jury Instructions
- AIA CA Jury Rubric

### *Technical Reviews & the Common App*

- [“A Sure Vet: How the Technical Review Process Holds Designs to a Higher Standard”](#), Stephen Zachs, AIA NY