

# AIA NEI 2026 Service Award Categories

## A. Firm Categories

1. **Distinguished Firm Award – Small Firm / Sole Proprietor** (1–19 employees)
2. **Distinguished Firm Award – Mid-Size Firm** (20 – 49 employees)
3. **Distinguished Firm Award – Large Firm** (50+employees)

## B. Individual – Architects/Non-Licensed Professional

### 1. Mentor Award

*Recognizing the leadership, dedication, and talent of a licensed architect in training the next generation of architectural professionals.*

### 2. Distinguished Architect Award

*Recognizing the leadership, dedication, and talent of an architect who has been licensed for more than 10 years.*

### 3. Young Architect Award

*Recognizing the leadership, dedication, and talent of an architect who has been licensed 10 years or less. **This award comes with a free year of membership.***

### 4. Emerging Professional Award

*Recognizing the leadership, dedication, and talent of a non-licensed architectural professional.*

## C. Individual – Architects/Non-Licensed Professional OR Allied professionals

### 1. Project Leadership Award

*For architects or non-architects who manage projects, whether on the production side or through the management of owner expectations.*

### 2. Practice Technology Award

*For architects or non-architects who function as AI, CAD, or BIM managers and contribute to the technological side of practice.*

### 3. Backbone of the Practice Award

*For individuals who function as an office or practice manager, ensuring that the business runs smoothly.*

## **D. Individual – Allied professionals only**

### **1. Champion Award**

*Recognizes a non-architect who has shown dedication to the principles of quality design and lifts up the architectural profession. This aligns with the AIA Illinois Richard Nickel Award, now known as the Champion Award for Non-Architects.*

### **2. Distinguished Affiliate Award**

*For non-architect members of the AEC industry who contribute in supporting the future of the profession.*

### **3. Partnership in Design Award**

*For individuals or firms whose engineering or construction services provide valuable support to architectural and design professionals.*

## **E. Education**

### **1. Educational Achievement Award**

*For contributions in teaching the next generation of architects.*

### **2. Student Excellence Award**

*Recognizing the dedication and talent of an architecture student.*