

## ARE Success Teams

Excerpted and adapted from a 2006 Component Excellence Award-winning entry.

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### SUMMARY

In 2005 the Boston Society of Architects/AIA launched a program to assist candidates with the Architect Registration Examination (ARE). Over the past 18 months, the component has helped 77 interns start the registration exam process.

### THE GOAL

The Boston Society of Architects/AIA (BSA) decided to proactively support professionals considering licensure.

The task of passing all nine divisions of the Architect Registration Examination (ARE) can be a daunting task for designers seeking licensure. ARE candidates face many challenges in preparing for and passing the exam:

- Coping with the high cost of study materials and preparatory seminars
- Finding time to study while working
- Maintaining the focus and energy required to pass all nine divisions in a timely manner
- Feeling isolated by the process because the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards allows year-round testing

The BSA began ARE success teams, to help future architects overcome these challenges through a supportive group setting. Its goal was to supply free access to a variety of study materials, meeting space, administrative support, and subsidized preparatory workshops—providing candidates with the tools and support they need to make the ARE manageable and affordable.

### THE PROCESS

In January 2005 a group of six unlicensed designers launched the first BSA success team. Their goal was to complete all nine divisions in seven months by taking the tests in a common order and pledging to stay in touch until all team members passed the exam.

The trial run was deemed a success and from there the BSA developed a larger ARE success team program. Teams are composed of four to nine ARE candidates. Kick-off meetings for the teams are held in January, June, and September. Team members initially sign an agreement promising that each person will take the exams in the same order and on the same schedule as the other group members. They also agree to meet at least once prior to each exam to share tips, exchange information, offer support, and commiserate with understanding colleagues. Each group selects a team leader who is responsible for organizing meetings, acting as a liaison with the BSA, and checking in with the team members regarding their progress.

The BSA provides teams with meeting space, access to study materials, and administrative support. Groups are free to meet in the BSA's conference rooms and BSA staff members assist in scheduling these study sessions. The free materials available to program participants include

- Complete 2005 and 2006 editions of Kaplan ARE Learning Systems
- *Archi-flash* flashcards
- Norman Dorf's *ARE Solutions Book*
- Professional Publication's *Architecture Exam Review*

Participants have enough materials to “check-out” their own copy of any or all of the materials for a given division. Participants are also entitled to preferential access to preparatory workshops, including Norman Dorf's graphic divisions seminar. The BSA subsidizes registration fees for these workshops and covers all costs relating to the venue, meals, and administrative services.

### OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

After 18 months, there are 77 active participants in the Success Teams program representing 14 teams, and, at last count, there are seven confirmed graduates of the program who have achieved licensure.

The ARE Success Teams Web site, [www.architects.org/are\\_success](http://www.architects.org/are_success), offers participants and prospective participants general information on the program, as well as an FAQ with tips on scheduling and taking the exams and organizing and running group meetings. Interest continues to grow and the BSA expects more robust kick-off meetings in 2007.

### **IMPORTANCE TO PROFESSION**

The ARE represents a long and difficult process and interns often feel isolated and unsure of exactly how to study for the exams. It is crucial to the vitality and diversity of the profession that young designers become licensed architects. The time-consuming and potentially expensive nature of studying for all nine divisions leaves many interns wondering where to begin and others needing a boost in order to keep pushing forward. This program helps ensure that every intern architect has an opportunity to pass the exam and advance his or her career. By offering free materials, study space, a group structure, and affordable workshops, the BSA assists interns and firms in overcoming the often-daunting demands on time, energy, and money.

### **RESOURCES**

#### **More Best Practices**

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 21.03.12 One New York State
- 21.01.05 Communication Plan of AIA Louisiana
- 22.06.02 Kansas City: River Crown Plaza Forums

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#### **Keywords**

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components