

Competency

STANDARD FOR ARCHITECTS

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| The Competencies | 3 |
| Competencies Explained | 4 |
| Design & Documentation Domain..... | 4 |
| Construction Administration Domain..... | 7 |
| Practice & Project Management Domain..... | 8 |

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INTRODUCTION

The NCARB *Competency Standard for Architects* defines the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors required for entry into the practice of architecture across NCARB's member jurisdictions. Together, the 16 competencies in this standard describe the capabilities necessary for an individual to effectively protect the public's health, safety, and welfare while practicing as an architect in collaboration with other design and construction-related professionals. This standard establishes the level of proficiency needed in each of the 16 competencies to qualify an individual for initial licensure, as assessed by NCARB's programs.

THE COMPETENCIES

The competencies are organized into three domains. Candidates for licensure must demonstrate their capabilities in each independent competency to earn a license in the jurisdiction(s) in which they practice. After becoming licensed, architects must ensure they maintain the capabilities described to remain competent. In addition, architects should strive to continually grow their competency in these and other areas to provide quality service and public protection.

Design & Documentation Domain

1. Assess regulatory design requirements.
2. Evaluate existing project conditions.
3. Develop a program that establishes project criteria.
4. Create design solutions that support public and environmental well-being.
5. Integrate socio-demographic considerations and universal design principles.
6. Create design solutions that address project requirements.
7. Create deliverables that convey a design solution.
8. Coordinate the integration of building systems into a project design.

Construction Administration Domain

9. Prepare and administer documentation of the construction phase.
10. Evaluate the progress of construction for conformance with contract documents and design intent.

Practice & Project Management Domain

11. Execute contracts for professional services.
12. Implement a work plan according to a project's scope, schedule, and budget.
13. Organize and coordinate an interdisciplinary project team.
14. Understand statutes and regulations that govern architectural practice within U.S. jurisdictions to provide services legally.
15. Understand ethical and professional standards that govern architectural practice.
16. Understand foundational business principles to operate a practice.

On the following pages, you can find more detailed descriptions of the 16 competencies. The descriptions serve to illustrate some of the core knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that an individual must be able to demonstrate to prove their qualification to practice as an architect. These descriptions are not exhaustive in their establishing of the criteria necessary to obtain a license to practice architecture in an NCARB member jurisdiction.

COMPETENCIES EXPLAINED

Design & Documentation Domain

This domain encompasses the intelligent, creative, iterative, and culturally and environmentally responsive design processes. The design process involves research, analysis, and exploration of approaches, ideas, and alternative solutions that lead to a final design proposal. The final design must be cohesive, integrated, adequately described, and coordinated to achieve value objectives, cost objectives, and compliance with planning controls and construction codes.



1. Competency: Assess regulatory design requirements.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Identify local, state, and federal authorities having jurisdiction over a project.
- Understand the regulatory and jurisdictional approval process applicable to a project in order to obtain the necessary approvals.
- Determine the specific regulations, codes, and rules (e.g., zoning rules, building and environmental codes, historic preservation requirements, design covenants, etc.) that apply to a project.



2. Competency: Evaluate existing project conditions.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Assess existing site and building conditions.
- Evaluate project feasibility based on budget, schedule, constraints, and risks.
- Assess how a proposed project aligns with planning and zoning policies in place and impacts the broader context (e.g., neighborhood, community, environmental, etc.).



3. Competency: Develop a program that establishes project criteria.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Translate client vision and goals into requirements (e.g., spatial, planning, material, technical, etc.) that outline the specific objectives and design criteria for a project, and that meet the project feasibility requirements.
- Review precedents relevant to the history, function, organization, and technical requirements of related projects and integrate findings into a building program.
- Evaluate and integrate collected feedback and input from users, the community, and any other stakeholders.



4. Competency: Create design solutions that support public and environmental well-being.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Implement design strategies that minimize environmental impact, safeguard environmental sustainability, ensure longevity and durability of projects, and adapt to evolving environmental and societal conditions.
- Implement design strategies that support the health, safety, and welfare of building occupants and the neighboring community.
- Advise clients and consultants regarding the sustainability and resiliency of design options in accordance with relevant codes, regulations, ratings, industry standards, and technical information.



5. Competency: Integrate socio-demographic considerations and universal design principles.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Implement design strategies that address diverse cultural, social, and functional considerations, ensuring built environments are inclusive, accessible, and adaptive.
- Understand how diversity, equity, inclusivity, and justice principles impact architectural projects and practice.
- Utilize meaningful engagement processes that incorporate diverse perspectives into design solutions.



6. Competency: Create design solutions that address project requirements.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Apply design principles, applicable codes and regulations, and knowledge of materials, systems, and constructability to achieve programmatic requirements and goals for the site and building.
- Evaluate design for conformance with a project's program, including the client's objectives and regulatory requirements.
- Analyze cost estimates for conformance with proposed design solution and project budget in order to advise clients about alternatives for managing initial and long-term project costs.



7. Competency: Create deliverables that convey a design solution.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Communicate the proposed design to clients and other stakeholders using appropriate and responsive methods (e.g., written, verbal, graphic, modeling techniques, etc.).
- Develop comprehensive and coordinated Instruments of Service (e.g., plans, sections, elevations and/or details, models, etc.) that convey design intent and project requirements, can be used to obtain approvals and permits, and guide the construction of a project.
- Develop specifications that describe the materials, qualitative requirements, and execution.



8. Competency: Coordinate the integration of building systems into a project design.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Understand and integrate appropriate building and engineering systems utilizing project consultants and specialists (e.g., acoustic, structural, civil, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, etc.).
- Coordinate selected systems into the building design and identify and resolve conflicts.

Construction Administration Domain

This domain encompasses the services that support the process of project procurement and management of design delivery, review, and observation through construction. This may occur through a variety of building procurement methods and construction contracts.



9. Competency: Prepare and administer documentation of the construction phase.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Advise clients on the impact (e.g., process, cost, time, quality control, etc.) of a selected procurement method on the delivery of the project.
- Assist in bidding and negotiation for selected procurement method.
- Apply appropriate systems for record-keeping, document control, and revision status.
- Provide appropriate responses for questions from the client, authority-having jurisdiction, contractors, and suppliers (e.g., requests for information, substitution requests, change order requests, etc.).
- Review and act on a contractor's application for payment.
- Perform closeout activities and deliver final documents to client and other parties as required.



10. Competency: Evaluate the progress of construction for conformance with contract documents and design intent.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Complete site visits and participate in meetings at appropriate intervals to observe construction progress and assist in interpreting the construction documents.
- Evaluate the work performed in relation to the construction schedule; if they are not in alignment, coordinate with the client and contractor in the development of a solution.
- Review, evaluate, and take appropriate action on shop drawings, submittals, testing and inspection reports, and samples.
- Advise and assist the client with project closeout procedures (e.g., substantial and final completion, review and preparation of close-out materials, etc.).
- Evaluate the performance of a project after completion compared to the design intent.

Practice & Project Management Domain

This domain encompasses an understanding of the profession and business of architecture, with the objective of providing value to clients, consultants, employees, and the public through timely and effective professional services in accordance with ethical and legal responsibilities.



11. Competency: Execute contracts for professional services.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Explain basic types of contracts between various project parties (e.g., Owner-Architect, Architect-Consultant, Owner-Contractor, etc.) and how to establish scope, schedule, and fees for services.
- Understand the appropriateness of different agreements in relation to scale and type of project, including alternatives for partial services.
- Understand basic risk implications of common contract terms and conditions for the various contract parties.



12. Competency: Implement a work plan according to a project's scope, schedule, and budget.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Collaborate with the client and consultants to align expectations for design scope, schedule, and budget.
- Monitor work plan throughout a project and report on progress.
- Organize tasks and resources to deliver a project according to contractual requirements.
- Facilitate the appropriate approval processes throughout design and documentation efforts.



13. Competency: Organize and coordinate an interdisciplinary project team.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Identify qualified consultants and team members for a project based on project requirements.
- Facilitate communication and collaboration of consultants, clients, and relevant stakeholders throughout a project.
- Implement processes to assess the quality of work throughout a project.



14. Competency: Understand statutes and regulations that govern architectural practice within U.S. jurisdictions to provide services legally.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Comply with the laws and rules of architectural practice in the jurisdiction(s) in which they practice.
- Solicit services in compliance with professional and legal practice requirements.
- Understand the regulatory requirements for continuing professional development.



15. Competency: Understand ethical and professional standards that govern architectural practice.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Understand the role of the architect in society and the duties and responsibilities to clients, building occupants, co-professionals, and the public.
- Understand regulatory and professional ethical standards and how to adhere to applicable ethical standards.
- Provide services that they, in collaboration with consultants, can effectively deliver.
- Identify and manage risks arising from conflicts of interest.



16. Competency: Understand foundational business principles to operate a practice.

At the point of initial licensure, architects with this competency can ...

- Monitor the financial health of the business to ensure a proper level of service can be provided throughout a project.
- Assess and mitigate business risks (e.g., professional liability insurance).
- Allocate firm resources and staff to ensure adequate delivery of services to clients.