

IIDA Advocacy Action Plan for Non-Legislative Chapters

states not currently pursuing legislation

Establish Relationships with Professional Organizations*

The first organization your chapter should reach out to is the state organization of building officials. This organization can have a variety of names like the Ohio Building Officials Association, California Building Officials Association (CALBO), and the Colorado Chapter of the International Code Council (other organizations are listed in the appendix). These associations are incredibly important, especially if your state already has a law. This is how most interior designers, who wish to submit their own work for permits, interact with the government. It's important that they know who interior designers are and what they are capable of.

Since your state likely does not have a lobbyist, reach out to IIDA Headquarters to see if they can connect you with someone in the state. If not, the best option is to ask your board and city center leaders if they know anyone at these organizations. It's possible that a designer who regularly submits plans may know someone who is a code official or a local IIDA leader involved in a local women's business organization.

If you find that your chapter does not have any member connections with the organization, the best thing to do is to look them up on their website and contact their chapter leadership and/or chapter administrator. You can find a sample email in the appendix. Ask to attend a chapter meeting or conference so that you may present to the organization what commercial interior design is and how it connects to and/or touches their organization. For example, if you were presenting to the building officials, it would be important to focus on that aspect of permitting and a designer's understanding of the code. If you were presenting to a women's business organization, it might be more important to focus on the demographics and opportunities within the interior design industry.

Educate Construction and Building Industries

Once the chapter builds those relationships with the building officials and other groups within the construction and building industry, it will be vitally important to educate these groups on what interior designers do, what the current law does (if applicable), and if you're available to be a resource for them. Over time, it will be vital that they understand what a designer can and cannot do under the current law. More importantly, they should feel comfortable with how interior designers are trained and educated. This can be done through lunch and learns, presentations at their state or local conferences, presentations at their board meetings, or inviting them to your events. This will be a slow process that will happen over months, if not years. The key is to build a relationship over the long term. To prevent burnout, invite different board members to give the presentations once they've been trained on it.

**This would not include the American Institute of Architects or American Society of Interior Designers.*

Develop an Advocacy Fundraiser

Like most chapter activities, advocacy needs funding to achieve success. Depending on the goals of the chapter, the fundraising can be a part of or supplemental to existing fundraising efforts. IIDA Headquarters recommends reserving approximately 1-5% of your budget for advocacy.

- The New England Chapter rolled out the “**One Bill at a Time**” campaign to both honor previous successful legislative efforts in Massachusetts and to add a dollar surcharge to each ticket for every event. This minimal extra cost built into the ticket price helps to fund their lobbyist.
- Starting in October 2020, all members have the opportunity to make an Advocacy Contribution to their chapter. On member renewal invoices, there is an optional line item for a base-line contribution of \$10 to advocacy. If members renew online, they can add the \$10 Advocacy Contribution as an additional item under Contribution Opportunities and choose to increase that amount in increments of \$10. All contributions made by a member will be automatically designated to that member’s chapter.
- Many chapters have found that the best way to either kick-start or to establish a very stable financial base for their advocacy efforts is to establish a **signature advocacy event**, whose proceeds are specifically earmarked for advocacy. For more ideas on event types, please refer to IIDA’s Advocacy Event Guide.

Develop a Multi-Year Advocacy Strategic Plan

If your chapter is not actively pursuing legislation, now is the perfect time to develop a long-term advocacy strategic plan. Headquarters is more than happy to assist a chapter in its strategic planning initiatives and provide information as needed. The goal of the plan is to provide the chapter with a loose framework for advocacy as the board members transition each year.

Establish Goals for the Next 3-5 years

Below are several suggested goals for chapters that are not actively pursuing legislation. Chapters are encouraged to tailor the goals to meet their needs and ambitions:

Increase the number of registered interior designers in the state: This is important because it shows the industry’s commitment to the state law and the value to individual designers. Additionally, if the chapter ever wants to improve the law in their state, one of the first things legislators will look at will be the number of registered interior designers in the state.

Increase stamp usage: If your state has a stamp, promote usage of the stamp within the scope of the current law. If designers are currently using the stamp, collect stories from these designers about how it works, how it could be improved, and which jurisdictions accept it.

Appoint new interior design representative to a state board or commission: If your state has an interior design board or a board that includes interior designers, ensure that those board positions are filled. Board members can have experience, geographical, or other requirements in addition to requiring state registration. There are other local and state boards and commissions that could benefit from the insight of an interior designer. Reach out to your state's lobbyists, if applicable, or IIDA Headquarters for suggestions of commissions or where to begin your search for boards.

Increase number of advocates in phone2action: One of the best ways to reach out to advocates when you need their support is through the phone2action system. By encouraging members to sign up by link, or texting IIDA to 52886, you will not only be able to contact them when necessary, but you'll also be able to see which legislative districts your advocates are in.

Improve state registration law's regulations: Many states with existing laws have existing regulations that are governed by a state board or a state agency. These regulations should be reviewed and updated regularly. For example, the cost of registration may be too high and not necessary to cover the board's costs, or the state may be able to put the process online or streamline it without changing the law.

Establish a Budget

A sufficient advocacy budget is necessary to meet your chapter's advocacy and legislative goals. If a chapter is not pursuing legislation, approximately 1-5% of the budget should be spent on advocacy efforts. This includes sending two board members to the advocacy symposium, covering the costs of fundraising events, etc. If the advocacy committee does not use all of their funds, they should be earmarked for future lobbying efforts. The average lobbyist for IIDA costs between \$2,000-\$10,000 a month. IIDA Headquarters expects chapters to contribute to the costs of the contract. It is strongly suggested that the chapter fundraise just for advocacy.

Outline an Advocacy Communications Plan

If your chapter has not already established them, develop in-chapter protocols for sharing advocacy news, updates, and information. How is information from the IIDA Headquarters advocacy calls relayed to the rest of the board? Is there an opportunity for the advocacy VP to give an update at each meeting? How productive are those updates? Who should be on advocacy calls to keep folks updated, but not overwhelmed?

In order to ensure everyone on the board has a basic understanding of advocacy, Headquarters highly recommends showing the Advocacy 101 webinar to the entire board during a retreat. At each board meeting, the VP of Advocacy should be prepared to give an informative update to the board. This could be an update on the advocacy fundraiser, planned advocacy trainings or site visits, or information from the advocacy symposium. This is the time to relay any information from Headquarters about grants, news, or initiatives. Additionally, the VP of Advocacy should provide any pertinent updates for the members to the VP of Communications, especially if they need to be sent out via eblast, social media, or newsletter.

Please refer to the IIDA advocacy communication guide for more information.

Create an Advocacy Committee

Even if your state does not have any active legislative efforts, an advocacy committee can be an important part of delegating the work and ensuring as many people are involved as possible. This helps for succession planning, but also gives a wide array of possible people to be involved in a legislative effort. The advocacy committee should be geographically diverse, if possible. It should also represent the industry in the state—business owners, emerging professionals, students, professionals, designers at big/small firms, etc.

The best way to start building an advocacy committee is to start with the city centers. Each city center should have an advocacy chair as one of the board positions. An advocacy city chair is responsible for educating the city center board on any updates from the chapter board and/or Headquarters. They should provide updates from the VP of Advocacy about upcoming initiatives, events, or programs. Additionally, they should report back to the VP of Advocacy any city issues. For example, there may be issues with permit acceptance or perhaps the membership has advocacy ideas. The advocacy chair also plans local advocacy events with the events chair.

Once you've assembled your advocacy committee, it's important to keep them engaged in advocacy. Don't wait months on end without checking in with them or having a meeting. The committee should be actively working on a fundraiser or an event or how to better educate the membership and other industries.

Educate the Membership

One of the primary things that the advocacy committee can do if there is no pending legislation is ensuring the membership is educated on all things advocacy. This includes students and professors. Please refer to the appendix for ideas on how to engage professors and students.

The chapter should be educating interior designers on what the law says; essentially, what can a registered interior designer do and what can they NOT do? Education should also include how to get NCIDQ certified and state registered. IIDA has a series of webinars available free of charge to members about the value of advocacy, how to explain what you do, and more. The chapter should also be educating the membership about how to talk about what they do. This is not only an important skill for talking to legislators but also is helpful for talking to clients and other construction industry partners. Feel free to brainstorm unique and creative ideas as well, whether it's about sustainability advocacy or women leadership in business.

IIDA Headquarters highly encourages chapters to find ways to weave advocacy education at least partially into other portions of existing programming. If the chapter already offers NCIDQ prep courses, add information about getting state registered to that course, for example.

The VP of Advocacy has access to all of these via the IIDA Advocacy Dropbox.

CIDQ and IIDA both have additional resources available about the value of certification and registration. Contact CIDQ at inquiries@cidq.org or IIDA at advocacy@iida.org.

Plan Advocacy Initiatives

Even though your chapter is not actively pursuing legislation, it can still be on the forefront of advocacy. Below are several ideas of ways to engage your membership.

Tell Your Story Workshops: this type of event teaches members through a series of activities how to better explain what interior design is and what it means to be an interior designer. Via the Northern Pacific Chapter, IIDA Headquarters has a prototype for this type of event it will share with any chapter.

Lunch and Learns (registration/NCIDQ/laws in the state): Lunch and learns are a great opportunity to bring advocacy to designers and not make designers work to advocate. These lunch-and-learns can be about how to get NCIDQ certified, how to get state-registered, what the state laws and regulations are, and how they apply. IIDA Headquarters can also help set up webinars to reach as many advocates as possible. Invite the state's lobbyists to participate in these webinars. Depending on the chapter's budget, the chapter could provide lunch.

Community outreach: This is a unique way to show the community the value of design by showing it. Several chapters have engaged in rehabilitating spaces in non-profits to better utilize the space. They raise resources from in-kind design services to material donations to financial contributions to complete the project in a 6-12-month timeline. The unveiling is an opportunity to invite local leaders and state elected officials to show the value of design and the organization in the community.

Get Out the Vote/Get Registered: These are programs that are only good in election years, however, they provide a civic service to the membership, increases voter registration, and increases voter participation, which are all positives. These drives can be as simple as referring members to the state voter registration site and reminding them of important voter registration dates. Most states have a deadline for registration for voting and also have a deadline for things like requests for a mail-in ballots. It's an important service of the chapter to ensure their membership is engaged in the civic process in the most basic way even if there is not pending legislation.

Middle/High School career fairs (information from CIDQ/CIDA to guidance counselors, esp.): Advocacy does not necessarily have to revolve around legislation. School career fairs are a great opportunity to expose a new generation to the world of commercial interior design, which many do not know even exists. If the chapter does not have the time resources to dedicate to career fairs, providing information about local interior design college programs and the profession to local guidance counselors is another way to help expose students to the profession.

Industry Advocacy Roundtables: An industry advocacy roundtable is similar to a principals roundtable or an industry roundtable, but the questions are more focused on advocacy in a general context. What does the interior design leadership in your state think about the laws about tax, ownership, registration? What can't they do that they want to do? What problems exist at the state or local level? How is the industry perceived in the building and construction industries and how can it be improved?

Appendix A: Organizations to Contact

Green: Government

Blue: A&D Industry

Purple: Other

State Association of Code Officials

State Department of Commerce
under the Governor

Any state job or economic development
commission or initiative

State University Interior Design Programs
and Departments

State Architects Board or joint board

League of Cities/Municipal League

Architectural & Design Firm Principals and
Leaders

American Council of Engineering
Companies (ACEC)

Women in the Economy Commission/State
Women's Coalition

National Association of Women Business
Owners (NAWBO)

State-based think tanks like Badger Institute,
Buckeye Institute, and Platte Institute

Associated Builders and Contractors
(commercial contractor)

Chamber of Commerce: State, Regional,
and City

Department of professions or occupations
or labor

Disability Law Center and Advocates

State Restaurant Association

National Federation of Independent
Business (NFIB)

Home Builders Association: State and Local

State and Local Realtors Association

State Apartment Association

Affiliated Construction Trades
(plumbers, electricians, etc.)

State Contractors Association

House/Senate Republican Caucus

House/Senate Democratic Caucus

Americans for Prosperity (AFP)

Associated General Contractors

State Society of Professional Engineers

State Association of Building Inspectors

State Building & Construction
Trades Council

State chapter of the Building Owners
& Managers Association

State chapter of the American Society
of Home Inspectors

Urban Community Building Foundation
of Ohio or similar organizations

State chapter of National Kitchen
and Bath Association

State chapter of the Retail
Merchants Association

City and Regional Planning Commission

Appendix B: Sample Communication

Good afternoon,

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Abby Wilson, chapter president of the [STATE/AREA] Chapter of IIDA. We are the commercial interior design association with [NUMBER OF MEMBERS] members here in [STATE/AREA]. Our members are responsible for the design and construction management of interior buildouts of non-structural components in buildings.

Since your organization is also involved in the building and trades industry, we wanted to introduce ourselves and see if you were available for a quick chat; this would provide us the opportunity to learn more about your organization and gauge if there are any opportunities to work together.

Please respond at your earliest convenience.

Very best,

Abby

[Title]

Appendix C: Sample Elevator Speeches

Student:

Hi, I'm Abby and I'm an interior design student at the University of Arizona. I thought when I decided on my major, I wanted to be a residential designer. But as I progressed through my program, I realized I want to pursue a career in commercial interior design, hopefully in healthcare.

My courses, including _____ and _____, have really shown me the impact the design can have on so many people who come into a public space. If I designed a maternity ward, it could have a lasting impact on generations to come as I apply the newest best practices and understanding of materials and how humans interact with the space.

After I graduate in _____, I will be working to complete the NCIDQ exam, which I feel is vital to be competitive in this employment market. It shows employers and clients that I have the basic competency necessary to make these health and safety decisions in the interior environment.

Interior Designer:

Hi, I'm Abby and I'm a practicing NCIDQ-certified interior design here in the Phoenix area. I work primarily on restaurant and hospitality design, where I ensure projects meet all relevant national, state, and local building codes and regulations. I have a bachelor's degree in interior design from Arizona State University, where I studied with architecture students, as many design students do. I, like all designers who have NCIDQ after their names, completed a rigorous three-part exam over 15 hours, which included practicing my design skills and applying codes to a design.

I get that most folks think interior design is mostly about paint and color but my day-to-day involves determining fire-rating for walls in hotel rooms and how to get disabled people out of the back corner of a restaurant safely and quickly in case of an emergency. Interior designers make life and safety decisions every day by looking at paths of egress, material appropriateness, and knowing when to call in other experts.

Commercial interior design is a very new industry compared to architecture, which has been around since the ancient Egyptians. Our profession wasn't established until the post-war era, and as such, we're restricted by outdated and under-inclusive laws. Ideally, we'd like to be able to submit our own drawings, so we keep our intellectual property, instead of giving them to another design professional to stamp and take ownership of.

Industry:

As a member of the interior design industry in the [FLOORING/FURNITURE/ETC] sector, I understand the role an interior designer plays in the design and building process. For a project to be successful, we must work with individuals who truly understand how our products interact—not only with the building and its systems, but also with the humans who will use our projects. I have found that interior designers, particularly those that are NCIDQ-certified, fully understand those two things.

We know that many people think interior designers only have “good eyes,” but it takes so much more than that to be a successful design partner to us. We appreciate working with designers that have degrees specifically in interior design or interior architecture, and we want to work with designers that have taken the NCIDQ exam. It saves us time and headaches in the process.