

The Experienced Interior Designer Pathway (EIDP) (alternative pathway to becoming a Licensed Interior Designer (LID)) closes on June 30th, 2024. A group of LID's comprised of successful EIDP candidates and those who have taken the conventional pathway, have put together the following Questions and Answers to address concerns we have heard as to why some qualified interior designers may be reluctant to pursue this path. We understand this can be an intimidating process. We have all confronted challenges and have achieved success regardless of the pathway followed. The Alberta Association of Architects (AAA) has created this opportunity to support your journey to becoming a Licensed Interior Designer. The AAA will be your partner every step along the way to help you achieve it. The AAA wants you to achieve this major milestone in your career path. We urge you to take advantage of this opportunity while it is available. We all reflected on this process and see how it has benefited us tremendously in our professional growth, and we have all realized that much of our initial trepidation about the process was unfounded.

### **Why should I become a Licensed Interior Designer?**

We all became LIDs to complete our professional designation as other professionals do, and most importantly to future-proof our options! One never knows after years in the business or taking a break for a variety of reasons, what opportunities may arise. Becoming an LID leaves ALL options open.

The LID credential shows clients and the industry that a professional has advanced to the highest level of qualification possible in Alberta. The perception that the only reason someone needs to be licensed, is if they have their own firm and/or if they need/want to stamp drawings, is unfounded. Regardless of how you choose to practice (working for a firm or for yourself, or even for allied organizations such as developers and suppliers) the LID credential sets a high bar for the professionalism and capabilities of interior designers.

Becoming an LID gives you credibility and connects you with a professional organization who is there to support and guide you as needed in your work. Alberta is the only province within Canada with LIDs who are permitted such a wide scope without architectural involvement and whose title and scope are protected under the [Architects Act](#) (the Act). The more LIDs we have, the greater the voice for interior designers within the organization.

This is a unique opportunity for experienced professionals who meet the requirements to be recognized for their expertise without having to start as an intern and complete a logbook – a process that typically requires 3-5 years of supervised work experience. However, the pathway is not a substitute for internship.

### **What are the actual steps of the EIDP to become licensed?**

You can break down the entire process into five steps:

- 1) Making the initial application to the AAA for acceptance into the EID pathway - this is a multi-part step which includes filling out the following three forms:
  - a) The [Application for Assessment](#) (outlines proof of CIDA education, NCIDQ certification, and the declaration of having necessary work experience from employer(s)). The candidate must have worked in the industry for a minimum of 18,500 hours of which 5,500 hours was under the direct supervision of an LID or Registered Architect (RA).

- b) Fill out "[Project Sheets](#)" for 5-10 selected projects of yours that demonstrate the most complete scope of responsibility and comprehensive practice. It is important to demonstrate what "you" have done and illustrate your understanding of the technical requirements (i.e., the Act, NBC- AE). The Task Force is less concerned with impressive design work and is more interested in your understanding of relevant legislation, how to properly engage with a prime consultant, and your understanding of the risks and obligations of an LID.
  - c) Fill out "[Competency Self-Assessment Worksheets](#)" which demonstrate your clear understanding of each of the steps in the project process.
- 2) The AAA administration do a cursory review of the submission to determine whether the application is complete. They may also review the information and provide guidance for revision prior to the application being forwarded to the Task Force. This is done to assist the candidate in achieving the best possible outcome.
  - 3) The AAA administration then sends the information to the Assessment Task Force who reviews the application and determines whether the candidate meets the threshold (Phase I-document review and assessment), and advises you if your experience meets the requirements. If it is determined that you do meet the threshold, they recommend that you move forward to Phase II, which is the oral interview. Once approved, AAA notifies you and coordinates the oral interview. You will also be given a list of materials to help you prepare for this. This "Guideline for Oral Review" checklist includes recommendations to review items like the [AAA Practice Bulletins](#), the National Building Code - Alberta Edition, and CCDC standard documents - but it also requires you to complete the online Act Course (and submit proof) in advance of your interview. Candidates are strongly urged also to complete a building code course. You will also be required to put together a project package (minimum 2 projects) to be submitted to the AAA before your interview. This content allows the interviewers to assess your experience and competency fully and provides the framework for the Q&A portion of the oral interview.
  - 4) The oral interview is conducted virtually by two panel members and takes about 60 to 90 minutes. The interviewers ask you to provide a brief verbal background of your experience in the profession and then they ask specific questions about your project submissions to evaluate your competency levels. Generally, within two weeks of the interview, you will be notified whether you have been recommended for registration as a Licensed Interior Designer.
  - 5) Following notification of acceptance, you then formally submit your application for registration as a Licensed Interior Designer, which may include an application for your firm or corporation. If you are self-employed, you will need to go through the necessary steps to revise letterhead, business cards, corporate structure, etc. that are required by the association to comply with legislation.

**How much time does the EIDP process take (i.e. how much time should we allow for this process?) - with respect to fitting this into our daily lives?**

You should be prepared for the process to take 6-12 months. The AAA depends on volunteers who comprise the Assessment Task Force and the Interview sub-committee. A couple of months between submission steps is very typical. If you are already working full-time, you will likely need a month to complete the initial application forms, and you will probably need a month to prepare for the oral interview itself. Following final acceptance into the AAA as an LID, a couple more months are generally required to work through the corporate revisions necessary for membership - and to finally receive your license and stamp to practice.

Previous candidates have noted that preparation of the submission package generally takes the most time, because it involves sorting back through memories and files to summarize the details of past projects – depending on how complete your records/timesheets are, you should assume it will take at least 5 hours to complete for each project. You may choose to designate a few days together or set a time every week that is dedicated to completing the forms. Think of it like studying for a professional exam – be disciplined about setting aside time to chip away at the task. The Task Force has found that using the same projects in the Self-Assessment and the Project Sheets is helpful as is outreaching to successful EID pathway LIDs for their input.

**How do I prepare for my oral interview? Do I need to memorize facts or just understand where to find them?**

The AAA provides a very comprehensive listing of review materials to prepare for the oral interview and you should be prepared to demonstrate a high level of familiarity with them. However, it is not required to memorize specific facts or provide exhaustive recitation of requirements. Questions will be asked of you that show you understand the concepts involved and where to source the information. In other words: you need to know the information exists (and its general methodology), but not necessarily the specifics.

Of particular importance to interviewers is that you can provide evidence of your thought process in relation to building code analysis, and a thorough understanding of the formal process of design and construction and construction administration, as well as how to engage a prime consultant. You will not be judged on the aesthetic quality of your designs but on your understanding of compliance, the thoroughness of your management and on how you address challenges as they arise.

**How should I best organize my documents to prepare for the interview?**

It is important to remember that the AAA relies on volunteer time to offer up this EIDP option, and you should put together your project documents in a way that allows the interviewers to move through them quickly. You should pull together enough documentation for each project that fully demonstrates your competency with each and every step of the project process. The interviewers will want to see your methodology for project start-up, design development, contract documentation, contract administration, and project close-out. Provide enough representative material (organized by step) to demonstrate this without being exhaustive. The Task Force has found that using the same projects in the Self-Assessment and the Project Sheets is helpful.

If possible, the best approach to preparing work samples is to select a minimum of five (5) projects on which you performed the most complete scope of work – this is much more effective than referencing several projects on which you completed limited portions of the work. The interviewers are looking for quality evidence of experience, not quantity of projects.

**What is the actual purpose of the oral interview? Does the interviewer have the final say in whether I become licensed or not?**

The primary purpose of the AAA is to protect the public. The AAA is the regulator for both RAs and LIDs. It is incumbent upon the AAA to thoroughly review entry-to-practice candidates and to be confident that they fully understand and are prepared to assume the responsibilities that go along with the unique title and scope of practice. The AAA does not seek to put up barriers to entry. In fact, the EIDP was created to encourage qualified candidates to become LIDs. However,

the pathway is not an alternative to internship and has minimum thresholds concerning education and experience which are not flexible.

The purpose of the interview is to instill a sense of confidence among the panel that the candidate understands the scope of practice, responsibilities and risks involved in achieving LID status. Candidates must unanimously pass the interview. There are two potential outcomes: (1) You are approved as an LID. (2) You are considered deficient in an area or areas, and will be given more specific instructions about how to resolve it. The Task Force will advise you on areas in which additional knowledge is required. The candidate may rebook the interview after three (3) months. In essence, the panel does determine whether a candidate moves forward for registration after the interview.

**I'm concerned that if I outline my experience to the AAA, I will get in trouble for the work I have done while not being licensed as an LID.**

The responsibility of the Assessment Task Force is to review the materials placed before them and to determine whether the candidate meets the requirements. It is not within their scope to identify potential areas of illegal practice. It is also not unusual for a candidate to discover, through the course of applying to the EIDP, that they may have unknowingly been misaligned with legislation. The expectation once the candidate becomes aware of any misalignment is to correct their activities. If the candidate acknowledges errors and corrects them, it is not held against them.

**How will becoming an LID affect my insurance?**

[Professional Liability Insurance](#) is mandatory for being an LID. It is important to note that becoming an LID does not necessarily enable you to “hang out your shingle.” You must have an associated practice arrangement that is registered with the AAA (compliant with legislation). What does that mean? You must either establish a firm<sup>1</sup> that complies with legislation or work for a firm or corporation that is registered with the AAA. The AAA Bylaws require that all firms carry Professional Liability Insurance, and the minimum coverage is on the [website](#). As LIDs have a unique standing in Alberta - protected scope, title and ability to stamp and seal drawings - coverage should be sufficient to protect expectations and risks that go along with that.

If you currently carry insurance through Interior Designers of Alberta or Interior Designers of Canada (ProLink), this will likely suffice, but it is incumbent on you to confirm. Be sure to review any changes in your corporate structure or scope of work offered with your insurance company to confirm that all coverage will be appropriate.

**How much does being an LID cost me on an ongoing basis?**

[Yearly fees](#) for registration include the individual licensing dues and the firm or corporation dues. To practice as an LID, you must register a practice arrangement (firm or corporation) or be employed by a registered practice arrangement. If you are stamping drawings electronically, [Notarius'](#) annual fee is about \$200.

**As an LID, do I need to do CEU's for both the AAA and the IDA?**

Being an LID requires 35 structured and 35 unstructured learning hours for professional development in every two-year cycle to comply with the AAA requirements. IDA members who are LIDs are permitted to submit their AAA professional development transcript to IDA – they do not need to enter their credits into two separate systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Firm in this case is either a firm, corporation, or sole proprietor.

**If I own my own business, what changes are required to the structure of the business?**

If you own your own business, you must submit an application for your "Corporation Permit to Practice" at the same time as you make your final "Alberta Licensed Interior Designer" application (the corporation requires its own registration and receives its own stamp/permit to practice from the AAA). The firm must always be majority owned (minimum 51%) by an LID, an Architect or group of LIDs/Architects.) The firm name must include the words Licensed Interior Design.

The form requires you to do the following:

- make specific revisions to your letterhead
- make specific revisions to your business card
- meet minimum ownership requirements regarding shareholder structure
- amend your articles of incorporation to include new clauses

The AAA outlines all requirements within the application. The AAA recommends engaging your lawyer to assemble the necessary documentation for submission. Following the AAA review and Council approval, you receive your formal corporation permit and stamp to practice.