

The Owner-Architect Agreement

Owner-architect agreements spell out what you and your architect bring to the professional relationship and what you can expect from it. The formal agreement is an opportunity to ensure that you both envision the same project, requirements and expectations. Use the five steps below to identify key points of the agreement.

1. Determine project requirements. Discuss what is to be built, and where. Review schedule and budget requirements and anticipated team members.
2. Describe project tasks and assign responsibilities. Identify the administrative, design, construction and facility operation tasks involved, and who will be responsible for each.
3. Identify schedule requirements. Develop a timeline for completion of tasks, and determine your target completion date.
4. Is this realistic? Have you allowed enough review and decision making time? Carefully re-examine the schedule and adjust if necessary.
5. Establish architect's compensation. Based on the results of the previous four steps, ask your architect for a compensation proposal.

The AIA Document B141, Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect, covers a range of situations, from the typical to the highly specialized. It guides up-front discussion to set your project's parameters, and helps improve communication and prevent misunderstandings.