



2021 Dues Adjustment/Waiver Information

The American Institute of Architects Bylaws – Regarding Dues Waivers

3.12 Hardship Dues Reduction by the Component:

The component, in exceptional circumstances and after consultation with the Institute Secretary and other assigned components, may waive all or any part of the dues or fees in equal proportions across all components owed by a member at any level of membership in the AIA.

The American Institute of Architects Rules of the Board – Regarding Dues Waivers

3.021 Waiver and Deferral of Institute Dues Payments:

The Secretary may waive or defer payment of the Institute dues of any member for up to one year upon written presentation of satisfactory evidence of financial hardship, medical disability, sabbatical, family leave, unemployment or partial employment or such other hardship as may reasonably justify waiver or deferral. A minimum annual payment may be required in all cases to cover the costs of mailings. A waiver for any of the reasons stated above is annual and renewable upon written request for up to a total of three consecutive years; no waivers will be granted beyond that three-year period except in those instances in which compelling and extraordinary reasons are demonstrated for doing so.

FAQ's

What will a member need to demonstrate eligibility for an adjustment/waiver request?

A member who meets one or more of the qualifications below may request a waiver of his/her membership dues:

- Financial Hardship
- Medical Disability
- Sabbatical
- Family Leave
- Unemployment/partial employment
- Other exceptional circumstances (*A member must complete the 2021 Exceptional Circumstances Dues Adjustment Request Form under this category*)

What is the waiver process?

1. Member should complete the 2021 waiver form or submit other written request for waiver/reduction to local chapter.
2. Local Component will approve or deny.
3. State Component will approve or deny. (This applies only where a member is assigned both to a Local Component and to a separate State Component.)
4. Where the member is assigned both to a Local Component and a separate State Component, either Component may submit the waiver on behalf of the member. However the originating Component in that case must certify that it has consulted with the member's other assigned Component regarding the Membership Dues Adjustment/Waiver before submitting to the Institute for processing.
5. National Membership Strategy and Services department will forward the request to the Secretary of the Institute for final approval or denial (upon receipt of completed waiver form with the member's written request).
6. Member will receive a letter from the Institute informing him/her of the outcome of the request.

May a member qualify for consecutive adjustment/waiver requests?

The Rules of the Board permit a waiver to be granted on an annual basis in up to three consecutive years. Any request for a waiver in the fourth consecutive year or beyond must be an exceptional circumstance and the appropriate form must be completed (2021 exceptional dues waiver adjustment form). Members requesting consecutive waivers must still meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Financial Hardship
- Unemployment/partial employment
- Medical Disability
- Sabbatical
- Family Leave
- Other exceptional circumstances (*A member must complete the 2021 Exceptional Circumstances Dues Adjustment Request Form under this category*)

May a member who receives an adjustment/waiver enroll in the Dues Installment Program?

Yes. Renewing members receiving an adjusted dues waiver will be eligible to enroll in the dues installment program after receiving an approval notification from the Secretary of the Institute. The member will then be able to enroll in the Dues Installment Program online, given they do so within the time constraints of the program. More information on the dues installment program can be found on aia.org under member incentives.

Does a member who receives an adjustment/waiver have to continue to pay for his/her subscription to *ARCHITECT Magazine*?

No. Members are no longer required to pay their subscription fee for the National publication.

What role does the Component play in considering a member's adjustment/waiver request?

The Component has the initial responsibility in the waiver approval process. If the Component approves a waiver request, it consults with any other Component to which the member may be assigned and then forwards the request for review by the Secretary of the Institute.

May a member request a partial payment plan in the waiver process?

If a member is interested in pursuing this possibility, the member may enroll into the Dues Installment Program once the adjustment/waiver has been approved and they receive notification from the Secretary of the Institute. Members who wish to pay in installments outside of the program will be left inactive until the full amount is received.

Additional guidance:

The following FAQ's are guidance and not requirements for components. Decisions around hardship dues adjustments start at the component-level and some of the suggestions below may or may not be useful for your chapter. Each situation will be unique.

As always, components should review their bylaws to see what requirements are in place surrounding dues adjustments and follow them accordingly.

Should my component have an 'official' hardship dues adjustment policy?

There is a trade-off in creating 'official' policies for hardship adjustments. Having policies in place can create a structure that facilitates faster, more decisive, and potentially more equitable action when members request hardship adjustments. For example, you might decide to provide a 75% reduction to those on family leave and 100% reduction for those who have been laid off. This policy will allow you to quickly assess incoming requests and give similar requests the same treatment. Of course, policies can make it challenging to facilitate the different nuances with hardship requests, each of which will be unique. Many requests do not easily fall into a single category.

We suggest to at the very least create informal policies for internal use. Having the informal policy will allow you to act quickly on these requests while giving your component the flexibility to deal with complex or unique situations. Unless the policy is fixed and there is a reason to do so, you should not publicize it.

Should we require a minimum member payment (i.e. do not waive 100% of dues)?

Many components feel that members paying for their dues creates a stake for them in their membership. Having some minimum is a good idea, with the caveat that some members may truly need the 100% waiver to maintain their membership

Should we require members who receive waivers to participate in the component (i.e. require volunteer hours, serve on a committee, etc.)?

Components may find this to be a useful tool to engage their members, ensure the individual has a stake in their membership, and even provide much needed support to the component. However, individuals who are requesting an adjustment may be in no position to participate in component activities, especially in a component that covers a wide geographic area. Before a component considers this, they should ensure that they have enough volunteer activities for members and that it will not be an additional burden for the member.

How should my component facilitate the hardship process?

When conducting outreach, you should not start by advertising the dues adjustment option. However, please include some language that encourages the member to reach out to discuss options if they are experiencing hardship.

While it is not always possible, speaking directly with the member is an important way to determine their level of need, provide solutions outside or in addition to hardship adjustments, and help the member feel connected to their AIA community.

Always look on the member's record to get the exact amount of dues they owe.

Should my board or a committee review incoming hardship requests?

While a committee can be useful to discuss requests, keep in mind that your members are colleagues or even competitors of one another. Hardship requests often include sensitive, personal information about the health of businesses or individuals. We recommend minimizing the individuals who have access to information on your members.

When members ask about value of membership while discussing a reduction, how do I respond?

If a member is asking for a hardship adjustment to maintain their membership, they see value. If they did not, they would simply allow their membership to lapse. The value discussion should stem from both how they are currently using their membership to how they can engage more with any of the tiers of membership. Survey research has found that most members see the majority of their value being delivered at the local level, so focus on engaging activities your specific chapter has.

How can I leverage my relationship with firms to support the member?

Members' firms often support AIA membership through reimbursing dues in part or total. By strengthening your relationship with principals in your area and reaching out to them on the value of membership, you can ensure renewals of several members at a time who may otherwise not be able to afford membership.

What should I do for the member after the hardship waiver is approved?

The hardship adjustment is just the first step to supporting the member. For members who were recently laid off, you can circulate their resume to firms hiring in the area. Mentorship programs are a useful tool for recent graduates who may be struggling to find employment.

What percentage reduction should my component provide?

The percentage reduction you choose to use should take into account rules you make for the process, whether your component believes there should be a minimum payment, how many reductions are being requested and how it might impact your finances, and what the member indicates they can pay. Having a conversation with the member can help you gauge their true need and find an amount that works for both the member and the chapter.