

2026 CALL FOR ENTRIES



YOU FOUND IT!!! Your passport to the ultimate architectural prominence! Okay...maybe it's not the “ultimate”, but if you win one of these awards, it will definitely change your...portfolio! In all seriousness, your contribution to this **Awards Program** will help transform **learning environments** for students nationwide and abroad!

As an industry-leader of innovative educational facilities planning, **A4LE** invites you to participate in the **8th annual Southern California Awards of Excellence Program**. It is a great opportunity to share your best planning experience or design of educational facilities with the rest of the community.

February 6th!

-  ~~January 30-~~ Application & Fees Due
-  ~~January 30-~~ Digital Submittals Due
-  February 12- Jury Review
-  March 10- Awards Ceremony

CATEGORIES

NEW CONSTRUCTION

NEW CONSTRUCTION
UNBUILT / IN-DESIGN

MODERNIZATION

TIGHT -BUDGET
TRANSFORMATION

INNOVATION

ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT
ENVIRONMENTS



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AWARDS CATEGORIES AND ELIGIBILITY

Each A4LE Awards Program Application Submittal (or submitted project) must address the following:

Designed for educational entities (TK-Higher Education) in California (preferably southern California)

Completed *after* January 1, 2021

Identifiable as a project in one of the six (6) Categories:

NEW CONSTRUCTION: a new project or addition

\$50M and greater (Higher Ed Only)

\$50M and greater (K-12 Only)

\$50M and under (K-12 & Higher Ed)

NEW CONSTRUCTION: unbuilt / in-design

\$50M and greater (Higher Ed Only)

\$50M and greater (K-12 Only)

\$50M and under (K-12 & Higher Ed)

MODERNIZATION : Project that illustrates transformational design and improved functionality of the learning space(s). “Before” and “After” photos are preferred.

\$50M and greater (Higher Ed Only)

\$50M and greater (K-12 Only)

\$50M and under (K-12 & Higher Ed)

TIGHT BUDGET TRANSFORMATION:

Built standalone projects with a budget under \$15,000,000 that greatly transformed a learning space completed in the past five years.

INNOVATION: Project that is “innovative” in educational delivery with a focus on technology, materials, green initiatives, and other “innovative” components that push the learning space experience.

ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTS:

Project can be municipal, K-14, private, or non-profit. The project must illustrate educational elements and how it serves students or the local community.

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APPLICATION MATERIALS AND CRITERIA

A distinguished panel of educational facility practitioners with expertise in education, planning and architecture will review all application materials. Multiple projects in each category may be recognized as an award winner. Each award-winner will be specially noted at the awards ceremony, distinguished in the exhibition, and included in the Southern California Chapter Newsletter press release. The jury considers how well the project satisfies its own design intent. The evaluation considers the written narrative and design response in the following four areas with the heaviest weight on the learning environment. The A4LE Awards Program Application Submittal is a two-step process and must address the criteria below:

To address the criteria and illustrate the successful story of your project, please assemble your submittal as follows:

- A PDF document in landscape format
- No more than 25-pages in length
- No larger than 15 MB
- Use either a black or white background color.
- Use a typeface that is easy to read on computer screens (8 point minimum, no serifs, no script or graphical typefaces.).
- This following list of basic drawings are recommended, but not limited to, the: Site plan, Floor plans, Exterior views, and Interior views.
- Firm name shall not be included in the description or anywhere in the submission, except where specifically indicated.
- DUE: January 30, 2026
- Email submissions to Stephanie Stewart at stephanie@a4le.org. Email Titled 2026 Awards of Excellence Program Submission
- Questions on submitting? Please contact Stephanie Stewart.



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Include as many photographs and/or images as necessary to illustrate and describe the process and overall project. Please avoid solicitation of any particular brand or firm involved in the project. The Submittal shall tell a compelling “Story” about the planning process and shall identify the following seven (7) chapters (tabs not required):

COVER PAGE (not required to be labeled as “Cover Page”)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—Describe the overall goals and outcomes of the project.

SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Describe the Community.
- Identify stakeholders.
- Name challenges.
- Describe available assets.
- Describe the value of process and project to community at large.

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

- Explain the educational vision and goals of the school.
- Describe and illustrate how the environment supports the curriculum.
- Describe and illustrate how the environment supports a variety of learning & teaching styles.
- Describe and illustrate how the environment is adaptable and flexible.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Describe and illustrate the physical attributes of the environment.
- Describe and illustrate how the facility fits within the larger context of the community.
- Describe and illustrate how the project inspires and motivates.
- Describe and demonstrate the role of high performance/sustainability in the planning and design of the project and the metrics used.

RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

- Explain how the project achieves educational goals and objectives.
- Explain how the project achieves school district goals.
- Explain how the project achieves community goals.
- Explain any unintended results and achievements of the process and project.

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ADDITIONAL SUBMITTAL SPECIFICATIONS

Confidential Data Sheet to be available following Registration.

Photo Release Form to be available following Registration. One (1) release per project.

Name your digital files as follows for the corresponding category submission.

- New Construction: **A4LE2026-NC**-[project name in 8 characters]
- Modernization: **A4LE2026-MOD**-[project name in 8 characters]
- Tight Budget Transformation: **A4LE2026-CON**-[project name in 8 characters]
- Innovation: **A4LE2026-INN**-[project name in 8 characters]
- Alternative Support Environments: **A4LE2026-ASE**-[project name in 8 characters]

Notes:

A4LE makes no representation that participation in the Call for Entries process will lead to a successful award.

A4LE shall in no event be responsible for the cost of preparing any submittal in response to this Call for Entries.

Entries must conform to the submittal requirements, or they will be subject to disqualification.

The awards selection is at the sole discretion of A4LE and the selected jury panel.

In order to protect the integrity of the award program A4LE may not award in every category.

Presentation Boards will be requested for display and the Awards ceremony of both applicants and award winners. Information to be provided at least 2 weeks prior to the Exhibition and Awards Ceremony.



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EVALUATION PROCESS

Step one: Independently, jurors will review and judge all electronic project entries Registration information and Application Submittal will be reviewed.

Step two: Jurors will convene as a group to discuss submissions and independent review results. Entries must conform to the submittal requirements, or they will be subject to disqualification. Projects will be evaluated according to the following scoring criteria:

- Cover Page – 2 points
- Executive Summary – 5 points
- Scope of Work and Budget – 3 points
- School & Community Engagement – 20 points
- Educational Environment – 20 points
- Physical Environment – 20 points
- Results of the Process & Project – 20 points
- The “Story” presentation (How well is the compelling story of the project’s “process” displayed via verbiage, drawings, graphics, etc. throughout the submittal? This is not intended to be additional pages or information.) – 10 points

Thank you for your time, submittal, and contribution to the innovative evolution of inspiring, as well as safe, learning environments.

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