



Architectural Experience Program[®] (AXP[®]) Support

APRIL 2024

Building on Belonging: AXP Support

Overview

In September 2023, NCARB and NOMA released an action plan to address disparities on the path to licensure, following several years of research through our joint [Baseline on Belonging](#) study. The action plan includes efforts to support candidates and supervisors through the Architectural Experience Program® (AXP®) —a key part of the path to licensure—and address disparities in gaining experience at firms.

To better inform our work, NCARB conducted a brief survey exploring the types of AXP support candidates received from their firms and supervisors and how this impacted their ability to meet the experience requirements.

The survey findings demonstrate two related issues that impacted AXP candidates:

1. Many candidates indicated their firm was not fully supportive of their completion of the AXP and did not always offer important resources, such as documented expectations for AXP supervisors.
2. Supervisor relationships also varied, with candidates of color—especially Black or African American candidates—indicating they were less likely to receive mentorship opportunities, have regular check-ins, and have access to a range of experience opportunities.

NCARB is in the middle of a multi-year effort to re-envision the process of becoming an architect. Over the next several years, our expert volunteers will explore how best to measure and assess competency on the path to licensure—including opportunities to improve how candidates earn experience and make the pathways to satisfying the core licensure requirements more flexible. The findings from this survey will help inform their work.

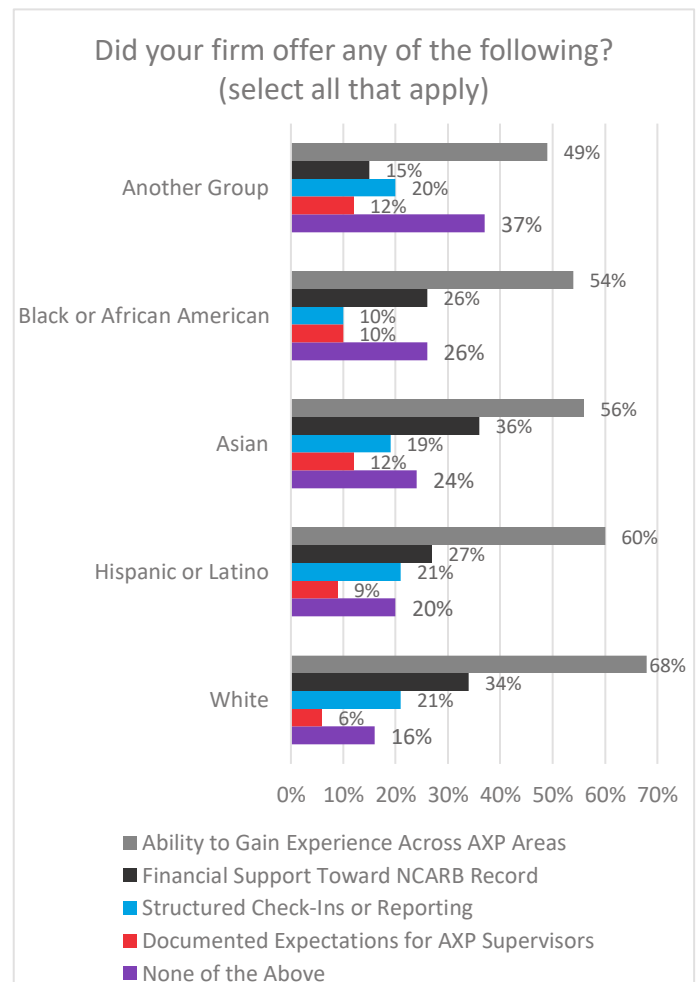
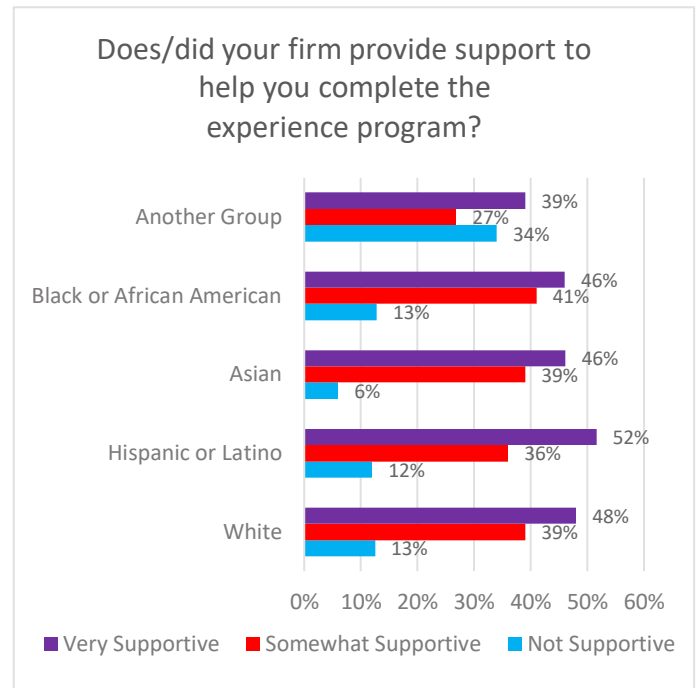
Survey Findings: Types of AXP Support

When asked if their firm provided support toward the experience program, nearly half of survey respondents (48%) indicated their firm was very supportive of their AXP progress.

Compared to those currently working toward the AXP, individuals who were AXP-complete at the time of the survey were more likely to say their firm was very supportive. Of all racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic or Latino respondents were the most likely to indicate their firm was very supportive (52%), while respondents who identified as another group were most likely to say their firm provided no support (34%). There was little variation across gender.

Next, candidates were asked to select the types of support their firm offered to help them complete the experience program. Overall, the ability to gain experience across all practice areas was the most frequently selected type of support, followed by financial support toward their NCARB Record. However, when viewed by race and ethnicity, Black or African American respondents and respondents who identify as another racial or ethnic group were less likely to receive these types of support than their peers. Respondents who were already licensed architects at the time of the survey were also more likely to say they received financial support from their firm than those currently working to earn their license. **This disparity suggests that those who receive financial support from their firm may be more likely to complete the licensure path compared to their peers.**

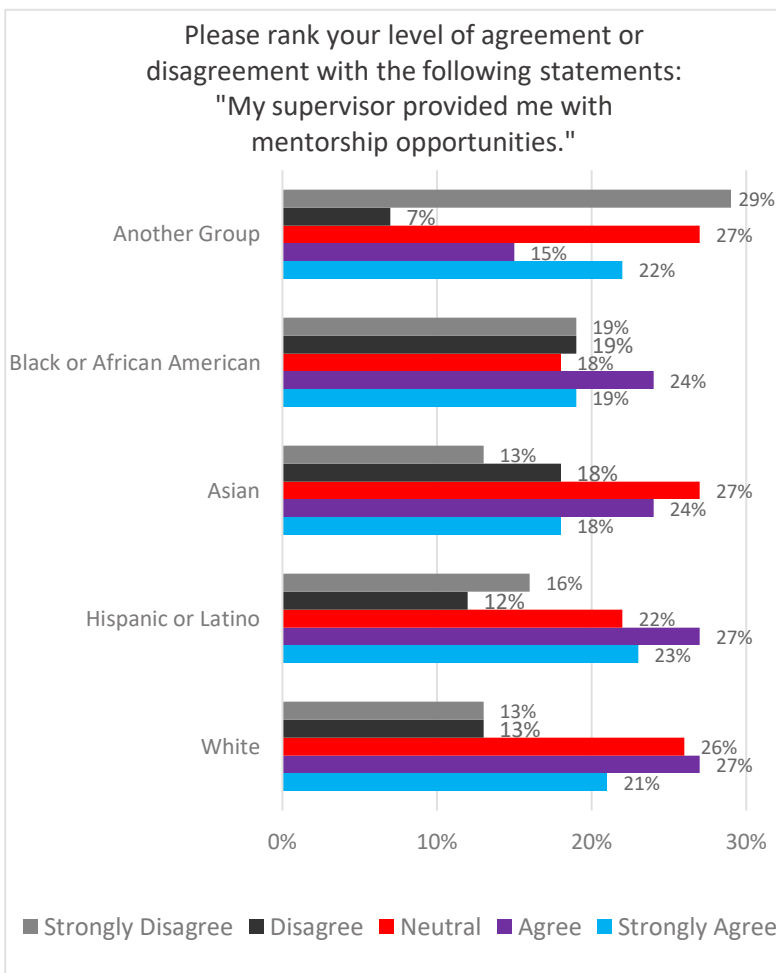
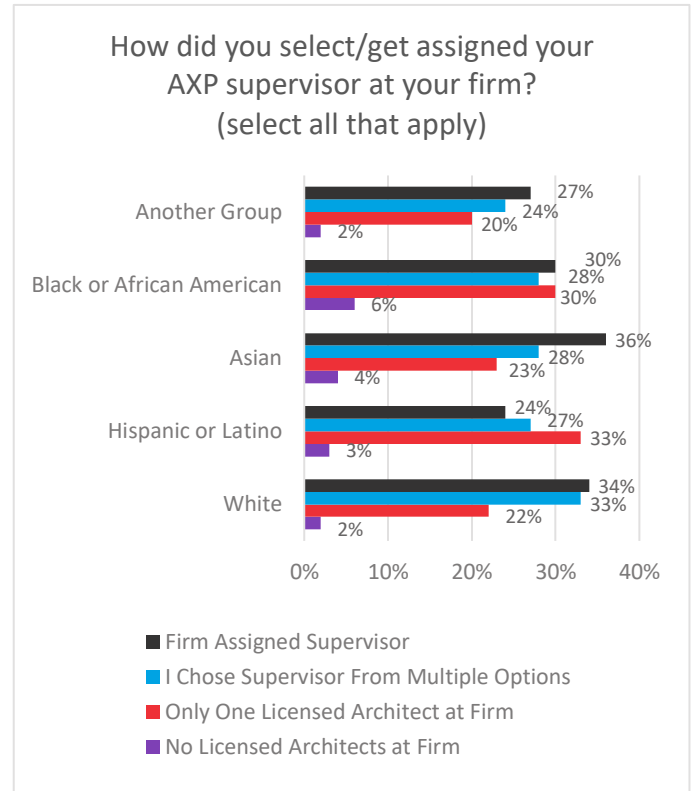
Notably, only one out of every five respondents said their firm offered structured check-ins or AXP reporting, with Black or African American respondents about half as likely as their peers to select this option. People of color—especially those who identified as another group—were



also more likely to say their firm offered “none of the above.” Men and women showed little variation across the types of support.

Survey Findings: Supervisor Relationships

When asked how they selected their AXP supervisor, nearly a third of respondents said their firm assigned them a supervisor. Fewer respondents indicated that they were able to choose their supervisor from multiple options, with people of color on average 5-9 percentage points less likely than white respondents to indicate having a choice in supervisor. Apart from those who identified as another group, people of color were also more likely than their white peers to say there was only one licensed architect at their firm. There was little variation across gender. Several respondents (around 10%) also chose to write in responses:



- “No formal process—you had to advocate for yourself at every step of the way”
- “I asked different architects at different times; the firm was not involved”
- “I had to ask around to different licensed professionals”

When asked if their supervisor provided them with mentorship opportunities, 29% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, and a quarter of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Black or African American respondents were most likely to disagree or strongly disagree with this statement at 38%—12 percentage points more than white respondents. Men were also slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree than women.

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement “My supervisor and I had check-ins at least once a month.” More than half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, with women and Black or African American respondents the most likely to disagree or strongly disagree.

Lastly, respondents were asked to indicate if they shared any demographic characteristic with their supervisor. Besides race, men were much more likely than women to share any given demographic characteristic—including gender and sexual orientation—with their supervisor. Besides gender, white respondents were also more likely to share any given demographic characteristic with their supervisor. 70% of white respondents said they have or had the same race as their supervisor, compared to 12% of Black or African American respondents, 18% of Asian respondents, 22% of Hispanic or Latino respondents, and 10% of respondents who identified as another group.

When asked if they had experienced discrimination from their supervisor, a relatively small proportion of respondents (3%) said yes. Of those who said they experienced discrimination, 70% said that it impacted their ability to complete the AXP. People of color—especially Black or African American respondents—were more likely than their white peers to say they experienced discrimination and much more likely to say it impacted their ability to complete the AXP.