

Get Certified!

Overview of the SDA Certification Program (CDFA)

Those who have been architectural/engineering/construction (A/E/C) administrators for some time regularly reflect on the changes in the profession over the years. The past two decades have brought astounding changes to the A/E/C industry; not only that minor technology shift into computerized design called AutoCad, but also Design-Build, Green Buildings, 401(k)s, Project Management and Profitability issues. With the multi-generational differences, A/E/C firms find themselves hiring employees with varying expectations of how the firms they work for are run from a business aspect. Firms have to make changes in how they manage people, and the A/E/C administrator has been at the forefront of those changes. It is up to the administrator to develop competency, demonstrate the capability, and seize the opportunity to come of age as a business leader and part of the management team.



Successful administrators have skills and knowledge that center on finance, communication, organization and management in general, as well as the ability to delegate and recognize the appropriate level for decision-making. Principal administrators must take charge and make things happen. This requires developing themselves in order to rise the next level. The Society for Design Administration (SDA) provides administrators opportunities to acquire and apply the necessary skills, and offers a large network geared toward the A/E/C industry.

As a result, SDA has reconfigured its original certification program (SDA/C) moving from a “recognition of achievement” to an “assurance of practice management proficiency.” This certification will inform and assure the A/E/C industry (employers and clients) of the expertise of certified individuals in the key areas of administration, finance, marketing, human resources, information technology and project administration/management.

What is CDFFA?

The Society for Design Administration, the recognized leader in education for best practices in the A/E/C industry, offers a credential that recognizes your achieved administrative and management expertise, the Certified Design Firm Administrator (CDFFA) designation. The CDFFA credential is a voluntary certification designed to elevate the professional standards in design firm management and administration and contribute to the firm’s organizational growth and maturity through better practices in firm management. The credential comprised by the SDA’s Certification Program distinguishes and supports the roles performed by the spectrum of administrators and managers in the A/E/C firm. Furthermore, enhanced marketability and increased earning potential are just two of the many benefits CDFFA certification provides.

CDFA certification recognizes an individual who has met a rigorous standard of experience and expertise in design firm management and administration and who has demonstrated their knowledge of the practice and related disciplines through a thorough examination of management and administrative competencies. This individual further adheres to the ethics and responsibilities of the profession as outlined in the SDA Code of Ethics.

Requirements for Certification

When you apply for the CDFA examination, you are taking your first step toward joining a distinguished group of professionals who have made a commitment to professional excellence, career advancement, and an ongoing pursuit of knowledge.

Eligibility requirements for this new certification process include:

1. Written exam
2. Formal education
3. Design firm experience
4. Adherence to a code of ethics



Successful accomplishment of these requirements will result in earning the Certified Design Firm Administrator (CDFA) credential.