

Registered Interior Designer Assessment (RIDA)[™]

*A Fair and Equitable Path to Qualification
as an Interior Designer in Ontario*

This report details the development of RIDA[™] through ARIDO's Examination Alternative Project – a transformative initiative to create a new option for candidates to demonstrate that they possess the competencies necessary to meet the final qualification requirement and begin to practice unsupervised as an Interior Designer in Ontario.

Independent Consultant's Report by

Daniel Zanth

Prepared for

ARIDO

Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario

July 28, 2025

equity-focused
human-centered
competency-based
Interior Designers
remove barriers to qualification
fair pathway
Accessible
relevant
Bilingual
Canadian
practitioner-led

Acknowledgments

The **Registered Interior Designer Assessment (RIDA)**[™] stands as a testament to the collective wisdom of Canada's interior design community – a shared intelligence forged through diverse experiences, professional insights, and thoughtful dialogue about the profession's future.

The author gratefully acknowledges:

- The **project working group participants (100)** whose wisdom shaped every phase of this project as advisors, working group members, content developers, assessors, mock candidate, and pilot testers. Your professional truths – distilled from practice across sectors and regions - became the foundation for this competency-based assessment. While confidentiality prevents individual recognition, your collective voice remains RIDA's most vital resource.
- **ARIDO's Board of Management** for its wisdom in championing equitable credentialing and sustaining this complex multi-year initiative.
- The **Association professionnelle des designers d'intérieur du Québec (APDIQ)**, for sharing jurisdictional wisdom that ensures national relevance.
- **ARIDO Staff** for their patience as we navigated the inevitable changes this ambitious project required.
- **Dr. Fatima Samji**, our EDI Consultant, for her expertise in identifying systemic barriers in assessment design, conducting "live audits" to guide critical improvements during working sessions, and championing equity-focused solutions to transform conventional approaches.

Acknowledgments - continued

- **Educators and Industry Leaders** who contributed wisdom to inform important considerations about the path to registration.
- An **engaged community of stakeholders**, including practitioners, students, interns, retired members, and provincial bodies for interior design, who asked probing questions and offered feedback along the way, including practitioners across Canada (505) who participated in the examination requirement feedback survey at the beginning of the project.

Author's Profile and Mitigation of Potential Biases

Author's Profile

Daniel Zanth, an independent consultant with over two decades of experience in adult learning, accreditation, and competency assessment, is the author of this report. He has worked with numerous organizations to design, develop, and implement competency-based assessments within professional credentialing programs.

Daniel has maintained a long-standing association with ARIDO, including co-chairing the **Alternative Pathways Task Force** in 2014. He authored a report recommending a shift to competency-based assessment, along with the adoption of fair access principles. Daniel led the development of both the **Intern Competencies Review System (ICRS)**[™] and the **Interior Design Experience Requirement (IDER)**[™]. He led the Examination Alternative Project that resulted in the development of ARIDO's **Registered Interior Designer Assessment (RIDA)**[™], which will serve as a new option to satisfy the final qualification requirement to become a Registered Interior Designer in Ontario.

Mitigation of Potential Biases

With over two decades in the professional credentialing field, Daniel is well-versed in designing, developing, and implementing competency assessments within professional credentialing programs. He acknowledges the potential for biases, such as confirmation bias, ownership bias, authority bias, and status quo bias, which may stem from his long-standing involvement in the field.

Author's Profile and Mitigation of Potential Biases - continued

To mitigate these potential biases and ensure objectivity, Daniel:

- Seeks diverse feedback and consults multiple sources of information to counter confirmation bias.
- Regularly evaluates his assumptions and decisions to minimize ownership bias and attachment to pre-existing ideas.
- Remains open to new ideas, approaches, and perspectives, and actively challenges his preconceptions.
- Transparently documents his decision-making process and rationale.

Daniel continuously engages in professional development to stay informed of the latest trends and best practices in the field. He is committed to fairness, equity, and transparency, ensuring that his reviews and recommendations are evidence-based and unbiased.

Recommendations for Sharing This Report

This public report contains key findings and recommendations, while additional proprietary materials support ARIDO's internal governance processes. The author recommends making the following components accessible to stakeholders:

1. Public Report (*Available via ARIDO's website and official channels.*)

- Executive Summary
- Complete Report (Sections I-V)

2. Internal Reference Materials (*Available for audit, compliance, and Board review*)

ARIDO maintains detailed documentation to ensure governance integrity, including:

- Development methods and procedures
- Assessment tools and ratings scoring tool
- Audit documentation

3. Community Engagement & Feedback

- Gather and review any comments on public materials.
- Post-pilot feedback survey for stakeholders. [Click to access survey.](#)
- Stakeholder presentations (upon request).

All feedback will be reviewed by ARIDO's Oversight Committee.

This structure supports ARIDO's commitment to transparency while protecting intellectual property and assessment integrity.

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Letter to the President and Executive Director of ARIDO

Dear President Jeremy Cheff and Executive Director Sharon Portelli of ARIDO,

I am pleased to submit the final report for the **Examination Alternative Project** (January 2023-March 2025) which has successfully developed the **Registered Interior Designer Assessment (RIDA)™** – a new pathway to meet ARIDO’s final registration requirement.

Key Features of RIDA™:

- **Fair & Equitable** – Mitigates bias and recognizes diverse pathways to qualification.
- **Community-informed** – Addresses barriers to qualifying identified by stakeholders.
- **Competency-based** – Assesses practice readiness through a practical body of work.

RIDA™ was a **practitioner-led initiative** that brought together the diverse expertise of Interior Designers committed to equitable access to the profession. It reflects the collective insights of:

- **505 survey respondents** who answered our feedback survey in 2023.
- **100+ working group participants** from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- **24 individual commentators** during the **Comment Period**.
- **Stakeholders across Canada** who contributed through ongoing consultations.

This report covers the development approach and outcomes, how stakeholder feedback informed **RIDA™**, key recommendations to keep **RIDA™** current and relevant. I’ve prioritized transparency throughout the development work, and this report builds on the publicly available materials on the project website. I encourage its wide distribution to promote **RIDA™** as a fair and equitable pathway to qualification as an Interior Designer in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Daniel Zanth

July 28, 2025

Executive Summary

This final report documents the **Examination Alternative Project (2023-2025)** and its outcome: the **Registered Interior Designer Assessment (RIDA)™** – ARIDO’s new option for candidates to demonstrate that they have acquired the competencies necessary to perform unsupervised in order to meet the Examination requirement for Interior Designers in Ontario.

Why This Matters

Developed by and for Canadian Interior Designers, RIDA™ represents a significant advancement in enabling fair access to the interior design profession through an assessment process that is:

- **Human-centered** – Prioritizes fairness, accessibility, and real-world competency in an assessment process tailored to the needs, experiences, and diversity of candidates.
- **Equity-focused** – Reduces barriers to qualification, recognizes diverse career pathways alongside conventional routes, and actively mitigates biases in decision-making.
- **Competency-based assessment** – Ensures practice readiness through competency-based evaluation of a candidate's body of work (practical assignments, practice plan, and oral test).
- **A Complete Competency Framework** – Seamlessly integrates with ARIDO’s existing ICRS (education) and IDER (experience) systems to create a unified competency framework for the qualification pathway.
- **An Accessible Option** – Provides a practical option for competent professionals who excel in real-world practice but may face challenges with traditional exam formats.

Executive Summary - Implementation Status

The result is a made-in-Canada, practitioner-developed solution that:

- Strengthens the profession through greater diversity and proven competency.
- Protects Ontario's public through competency-based assessment of qualifications.
- Delivers on ARIDO's commitment to fair and equitable access to the profession.

Implementation Status

RIDA™ development has successfully completed:

- Practitioner-led development with stakeholder input at key milestones.
- Pilot Testing under close monitoring with 7 Candidates and 5 Assessors.
- Final refinements and handover to ARIDO for staff training and Field Testing.

Executive Summary - The Solution Developed

The Solution Developed

RIDA™ is a two-part assessment process that focuses on practical application and advanced analysis & problem-solving across eight (8) competency areas of interior design practice. To ensure candidates possess the minimum level of competency required to practice without supervision and to protect the public interest, they must meet the following passing standards:

➤ **Program Completion Standards for Part 1: Practice Readiness Program**

To advance to the next stage and be eligible for the Entrance Interview, candidates must:

- Complete all content modules.
- Achieve a passing score of 80% on all quizzes.
- Submit all assignments.
- Submit a Practice Plan.

➤ **Competency Assessment Standards for Part 2: Entrance Interview**

To be considered "practice-ready," candidates must:

- Participate in a 45-minute panel interview with one Chair and two Assessors.
- **30 minutes:** Competency-based questions focused on Part 1 assignments.
- **15 minutes:** Candidate presentation and discussion of their Practice Plan.
- Receive "practice-ready" ratings for **all required competencies across eight competency areas** from at least two Assessors.

Executive Summary - Next Steps

This report provides:

- A transparent record of RIDA's development.
- A detailed description of RIDA™ and pilot testing results.
- Field Testing Recommendations for Initial Implementation.

This report is structured as follows:

- Section I – Background
- Section II – Project Overview
- Section III – Key Project Work
- Section IV – The Solution Developed
- Section V – Summary of Recommendations

Next Steps – Field Testing

ARIDO will apply these quality assurance measures during the initial implementation:

- Controlled small-scale rollout with select candidates for quality control.
- Close monitoring to ensure assessment integrity.
- Continued use of assessors trained during the pilot who are committed to:
 - ◆ Apply bias mitigation protocols
 - ◆ Maintain consistent rating of competency standards
 - ◆ Uphold fair access principles
 - ◆ Participate in ongoing training
- Continuous process refinement based on feedback (candidates, assessors, staff).

Executive Summary - A Note about Comparability

A Note about Comparability

ARIDO independently developed RIDA™ as a new competency-based assessment, aligning it with its education and experience requirements. This development did not include a review of the current NCIDQ exams (which remain an option to meet the examination requirement).

Now that our development work is completed, any future review processes should evaluate the NCIDQ exams against ARIDO's requirements, including:

- **Competency Alignment** - Complete Coverage of Competency Areas, Competencies, Tasks
- **Fair Access Principles** - Adherence to Fair Access and Equity-focused Principles
- **Performance Standards** - Consistency with the Performance Standards Validated through this Initiative

ARIDO's implementation of RIDA™ will continue applying the human-centered, equity-focused principles that shaped its development, ensuring lasting relevance for Ontario's interior design profession.

Section I - Background

Under the ARIDO/OAA Direct Regulation Model, ARIDO will be responsible for:

- Assessing whether individuals meet the registration requirements needed to qualify as an Interior Designer in Ontario, and
- Maintaining accountability to:
 - Provincial government,
 - Ontario Association of Architects (OAA)
 - Ontario Fairness Commissioner.

ARIDO's key responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the validity, reliability, and fairness of all assessments used to satisfy registration requirements.
- Retaining authority to modify requirements in the interest of fair access.

In order to ensure fair access for all applicants to the Interior Design profession in Ontario, the three E's on the path to registration (Education, Experience, Examination) need to assess qualifications based on competencies.

Section I - Background - continued

Between 2014 and 2020, ARIDO completed key foundational work that saw the development of a competency framework for interior design qualification in Ontario and the adoption of competency-based assessment for the education and experience requirements:

Year	Requirement	Initiative	Key Details
2014	Registration Requirements	Alternative Pathways Task Force	Voluntary review of registration requirements & practices to recommend changes for fair access.
2015 - 2016	Education	Intern Competencies Review System (ICRS) TM	Development of a competency-based assessment for applicants who haven't completed a CIDA-accredited education program.
2019 - 2020	Experience	Interior Design Experience Requirement (IDER) TM	Development of an evidence-based self-report assessment for Interns that confirms successful completion of mandatory tasks under supervision.

The examination requirement remained the only requirement that had not been recently reviewed, relying on third-party exams without ARIDO oversight. Reviewing and confirming the purpose of the examination requirement is also a priority that was recommended during the development of the ARIDO/OAA Direct Regulation Model by the Joint Task Force. Once a review of the examination requirement had been completed, ARIDO and the OAA also agreed that an alternative to the current exams needed to be developed as a Canadian option. In addition, among the various provincial regulatory bodies for interior design in Canada, ARIDO had committed to taking the lead on the design and development of an alternative to the current exams.

Section I - Background - Project Objectives

Project Objectives

The Examination Alternative Project began in January 2023 with the following objectives:

- To review the purpose, appropriateness, and relevance of the current examination requirement.
- To design and develop a Canadian alternative to the current NCIDQ exams that can determine if applicants have acquired the competencies necessary to perform unsupervised in order to meet the examination requirement for Interior Designers in Ontario.
- To engage a fair representation of Interiors Designers in all working groups and ensure a fair and equitable path to qualification that aligns with the assessments developed by ARIDO for Education (ICRS) and Experience (IDER) requirements.

Section I - Background - Scope

Scope

Included in Project Scope	Out of Project Scope
<p>Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Periodic Reviews of ICRS and IDER ➤ Identification of Competencies ➤ Competency Attainment Standards <p>Assessment Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assessment Blueprint ➤ Content Development <p>Validation & Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stakeholder Communication ➤ Public Comment Period ➤ Pilot Testing ➤ Project White Paper <p>Support Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assessor Guideline ➤ Competency Ratings Scoresheet ➤ Candidate Guide ➤ Coordinator Guide 	<p>Implementation & Maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ IT systems selection/implementation ➤ Pan-Canadian adoption/implementation ➤ Post-implementation maintenance or ongoing analysis ➤ Ongoing staff/assessor training ➤ French language translation or localization services <p>Localization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ French Language Translation Services ➤ Other Provincial Jurisdictional Localization for Codes and Regulations Module <p>Long-Term Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Post-implementation maintenance <p>Third-Party Exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of the current NCIDQ exams that are accepted in meeting ARIDO's examination requirement.

Section II - Project Overview - Project Approach

Project Approach

The project employed a robust approach that combined standard Project Management methodologies with best practices in Credentialing Program Management to ensure deliverables are well-supported and sustainable. A core principle of our work was the active participation of Interior Designers and a commitment to gathering comprehensive and diverse data.

Key features of our approach included:

- **Multi-Method Data Collection:** Utilizing both qualitative (open-ended surveys, interviews, observations) and quantitative (closed-ended surveys) methods to gather a rich understanding of perspectives.
- **Triangulation of Data:** Collecting data from multiple sources (candidates, assessors, administration staff) to ensure the convergence and validation of findings.
- **Direct Observation of Mock and Pilot Candidates:** Observing assessment performance with both mock and pilot testing candidates in real-world scenarios to identify practical challenges and gather candidate experiences.
- **Structured Feedback and Consensus Building:** Employing a two-stage debrief feedback process (individual and working groups) with structured protocols to ensure thorough feedback and collaborative consensus among participants.
- **Facilitated Group Discussions for Equal Contribution:** Implementing procedures to ensure equitable participation and mitigate bias during working group discussions, informed by individual feedback.

Section II - Project Overview - Fair Representation of Practitioners

Fair Representation of Practitioners

To ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach, the project engaged a diverse range of practitioners throughout all phases. Participants included:

- **Senior-level interior design practitioners**, currently practicing and holding ARIDO membership (or dual ARIDO & OAA membership), or possessing equivalent professional competencies.
- **Individuals with varied educational backgrounds**, including those who:
 - Completed interior design education other than a CIDA-accredited degree.
 - Were foreign-trained or internationally educated, or
 - Hold membership in other Canadian provincial interior design associations.
- **Registered Educators** with experience in interior design education.

This composition ensured balanced representation across working groups, incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise.

Section II - Project Overview - Key Participation Guidelines

Key Participation Guidelines

1. **No Conflicts of Interest:**
 - a) Participants underwent a multi-level screening process to ensure that no conflicts of interest, real or perceived, were present that could compromise the integrity of project work.
 - b) Individuals who have been involved with the Council for Interior Design Qualification, Inc. (CIDQ) related to the NCIDQ exams in the past five years or currently, including holding positions, participating in task forces, or serving as committee members, and who have signed and are bound by CIDQ confidentiality and conflict of interest agreements, were not eligible to participate in the Examination Alternative Project.
2. **Exclusive Working Group Involvement:** Participants could only join one working group.
3. **Eligibility for Canadian Practitioners:** Current practitioners who are members of other provincial interior design associations were eligible to contribute.

Section II - Project Overview - COI Safeguards for Project Integrity

Conflict of Interest Safeguards for Project Integrity

Conflict of interest (COI) guidelines were implemented to ensure impartiality, credibility, and independence throughout the project. By excluding individuals with active or recent ties to CIDQ or the NCIDQ examination system, the project mitigated risks of undue influence, bias, or perceived favoritism.

Those bound by CIDQ confidentiality agreements could inadvertently—or intentionally—replicate existing exam structures, limiting innovation. Similarly, their prior commitments might restrict their ability to act on feedback objectively or propose transformative solutions aligned solely with ARIDO's goals.

ARIDO's multi-tiered screening process preserved the project's integrity by guaranteeing that participants' contributions were rooted in fresh perspectives, free from external constraints. This approach fostered trust among stakeholders, ensured compliance with regulatory standards, and upheld the project's mission: to create a fair and equitable pathway to qualification for interior design professionals.

Section II - Project Overview - COI Safeguards - continued

Key Points:

- **Why COI Guidelines matter:** Avoids bias, protects innovation, and ensures independence.
- **CIDQ Affiliations excluded:** Prevents unintentional replication of existing systems and protects confidential information.
- **Screening benefits:** Ensures unbiased feedback implementation and stakeholder confidence.

Key Measures:

To effectively mitigate these potential conflicts, the project implemented several key measures, including:

- **Disclosure Policies:** Required disclosure of potential conflicts.
- **Recusal Procedures:** An established process to recuse oneself from conflicted decisions.
- **Screening & Agreements:** Implemented screening and required agreements to meet ethical standards.
- **Independent Review:** Implemented mechanisms for oversight to identify and address potential conflicts.
- **COI Policies:** Clear guidelines for identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts.
- **Transparency Measures:** Disclosure of potential conflicts to stakeholders.
- **Codes of Conduct:** Ethical principles and expectations, including COI avoidance.

Section II - Project Overview - Working Groups Composition

Working Groups Composition

The project's success relied on structured collaboration across specialized working groups, each tasked with distinct responsibilities to develop, refine, and validate key aspects of the assessment. To ensure comprehensive development and implementation, the project engaged seven specialized groups, each with defined roles and participant criteria:

Project Core Team <i>(monthly virtual meetings, January 2023 to March 2025)</i>	Role: Oversight and Quality Management. <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Project Sponsor✓ Project Manager / Competency Assessment Consultant✓ Project Advisor (ARIDO Board Member)
Development Group <i>(6 in-person working sessions, March 2023 to March 2025)</i>	Role: Propose a new assessment model, identify a set of competencies, finalize specifications, and set passing standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Senior-level practitioners✓ Experienced educators✓ Foreign-trained and internationally educated individuals
Review Group – (Pre-testing) <i>(1-on-1 Interviews, October 2023)</i>	Role: Validate assessment specifications through participation in a cognitive interview to ensure clarity and alignment with interpretations. <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Senior-level practitioners.

Section II - Project Overview - Working Groups Composition - continued

<p>Review Group – (Online Survey)</p> <p><i>(Remote, October to December 2023)</i></p>	<p>Role: Review the proposed solution, rate competencies, and provide feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Individuals who completed interior design education other than a CIDA-accredited degree ✓ Foreign trained/internationally-educated ✓ Individuals who have gone through ARIDO's current foreign review process ✓ Recent graduates from a CIDA-accredited degree
<p>Content Contributors</p> <p><i>(Remote, April 2024 to March 2025)</i></p>	<p>Role: Develop and review content for the proposed solution.</p> <p>ARIDO Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Senior-level practitioners of interior design who are ARIDO members, including dual ARIDO & OAA members and those who completed interior design education other than a CIDA-accredited degree or are foreign-trained and internationally-educated. <p>Other Association Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Existing members of other Canadian provincial interior design associations are also eligible to participate.
<p>Assessors</p> <p><i>(Virtual, October 2024 to January 2025)</i></p>	<p>Role: Provide key input on the development of interview guidelines, review candidates' submitted work, participate in Entrance Interviews, and rate competencies to confirm practice readiness.</p> <p>ARIDO Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Senior-level practitioners who are ARIDO Registered members, including dual ARIDO & OAA members. OAA members must be a Licensed Architect in good standing. <p>Other Association Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Registered or qualified Members of other Canadian provincial interior design associations in good standing. ✓ Registered membership in good standing, with ARIDO or a provincial regulatory body for interior design.

Section II - Project Overview - Working Groups Composition - continued

In addition to the working groups that developed the new assessment, we engaged a registered interior designer as a mock candidate to simulate the assessment process during the pilot testing phases. We then recruited pilot testing candidates to be the first group of individuals to meet their examination requirement using the solution developed.

<p>Pilot Testing</p> <p><i>(Remote via candidate website, October 2024 to January 2025)</i></p>	<p>Role: <i>Mock Candidate: Simulate the assessment process, participate in an Entrance Interview, to refine procedures and identify potential issues, not to meet their own examination requirement.</i></p> <p>Pilot Testing Candidates: <i>Use the solution developed under close monitoring to assess if they meet the examination requirement. Provide feedback on their assessment experience to help make refinements for field testing.</i></p> <p>Candidates who need to meet the examination requirement and who have successfully completed the following ARIDO requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Education Requirement (CIDA-accredited program or ICRS), and (2) Experience Requirement (IDER or previous hours-based system) <p>Representation across the various potential users of the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ foreign-trained/internationally-educated ✓ graduates of non-CIDA degrees in interior design ✓ graduates of related professions ✓ experienced practitioners
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Section II - Project Overview - Participant Profile Overview

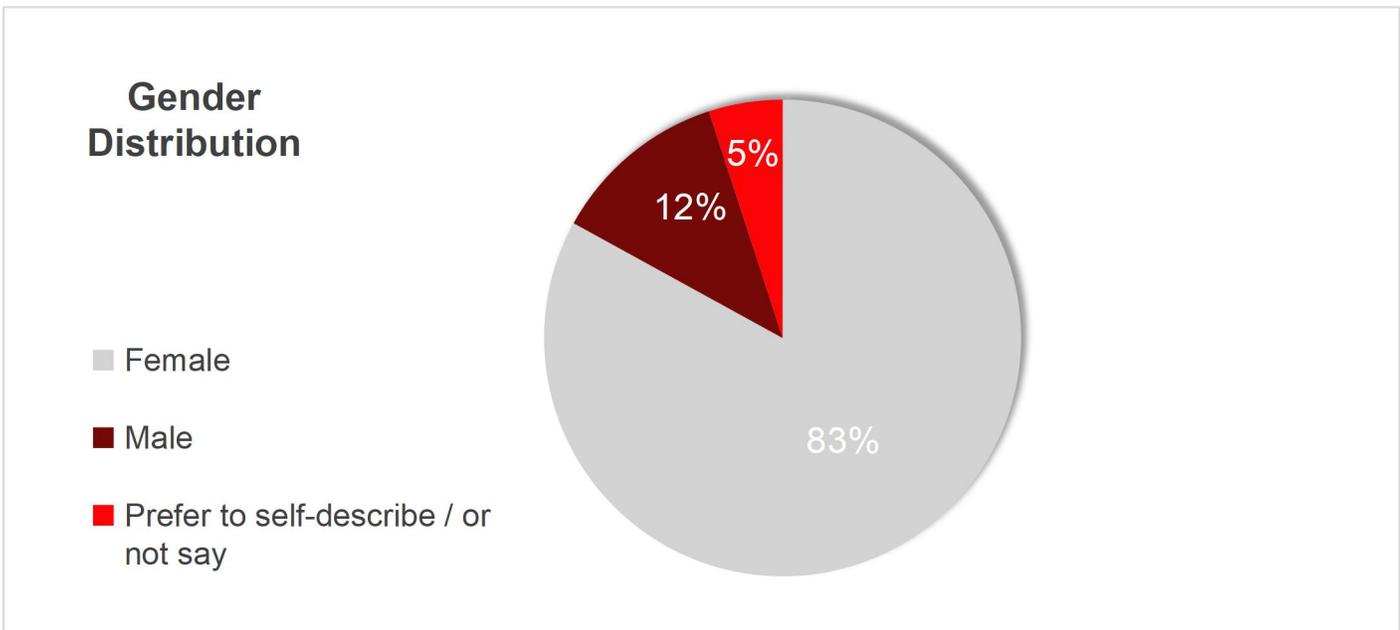
Participant Profile Overview

The project engaged 100 participants across its working groups. All contributors completed detailed profiles, and the data below provides a consolidated overview of their:

- Demographics
- Professional backgrounds
- Key motivations

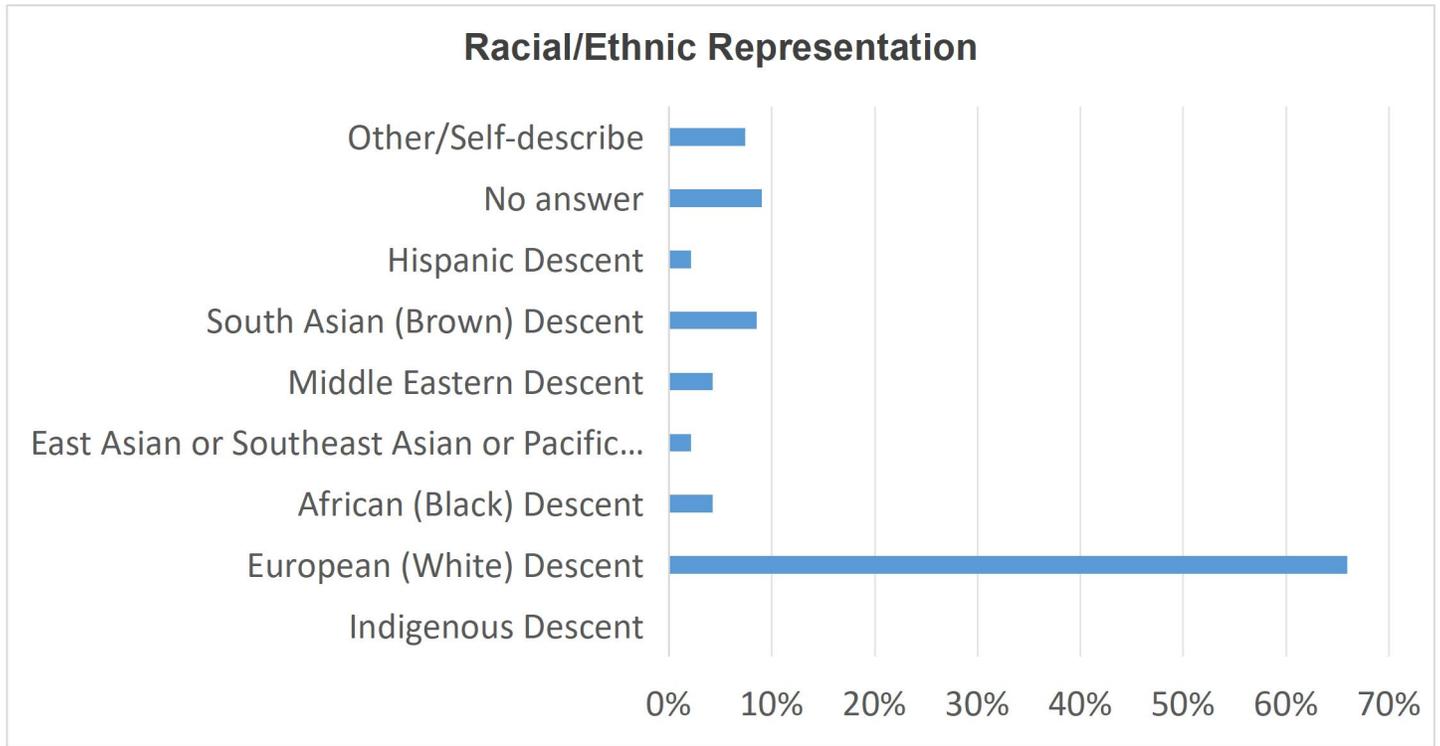
Data represents all participants collectively, as individuals contributed to only one group or phase.

1. Demographics A. Gender Distribution

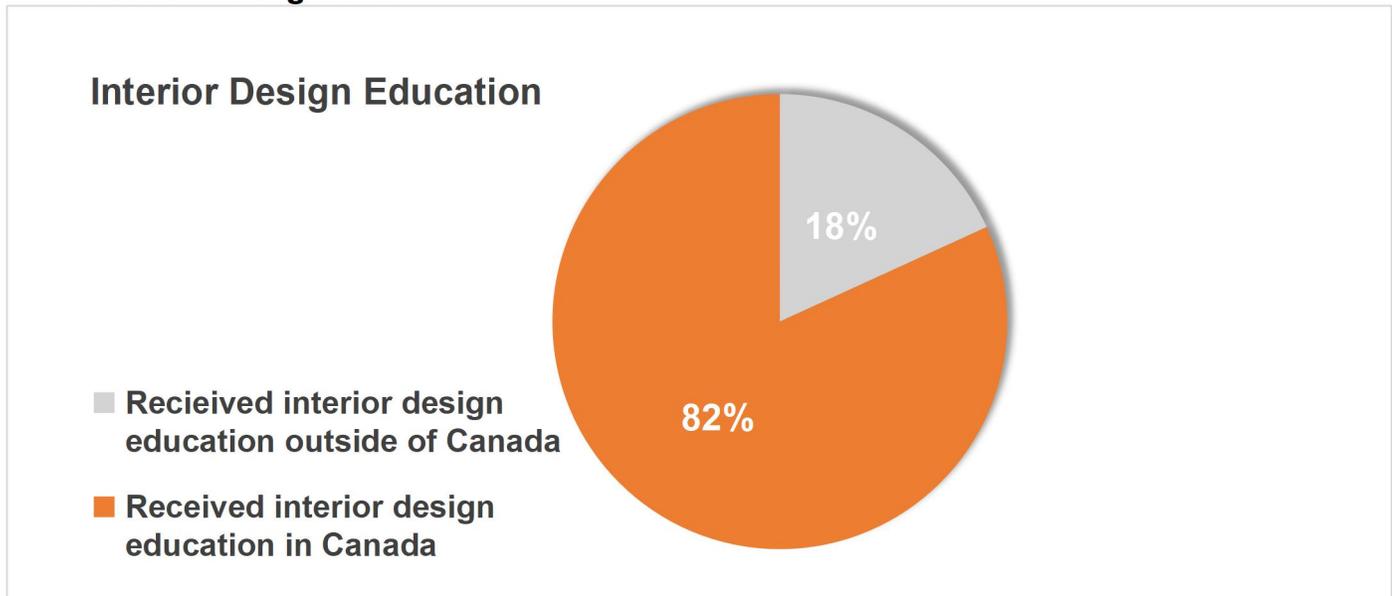


Section II - Project Overview - Participant Profile Overview - continued

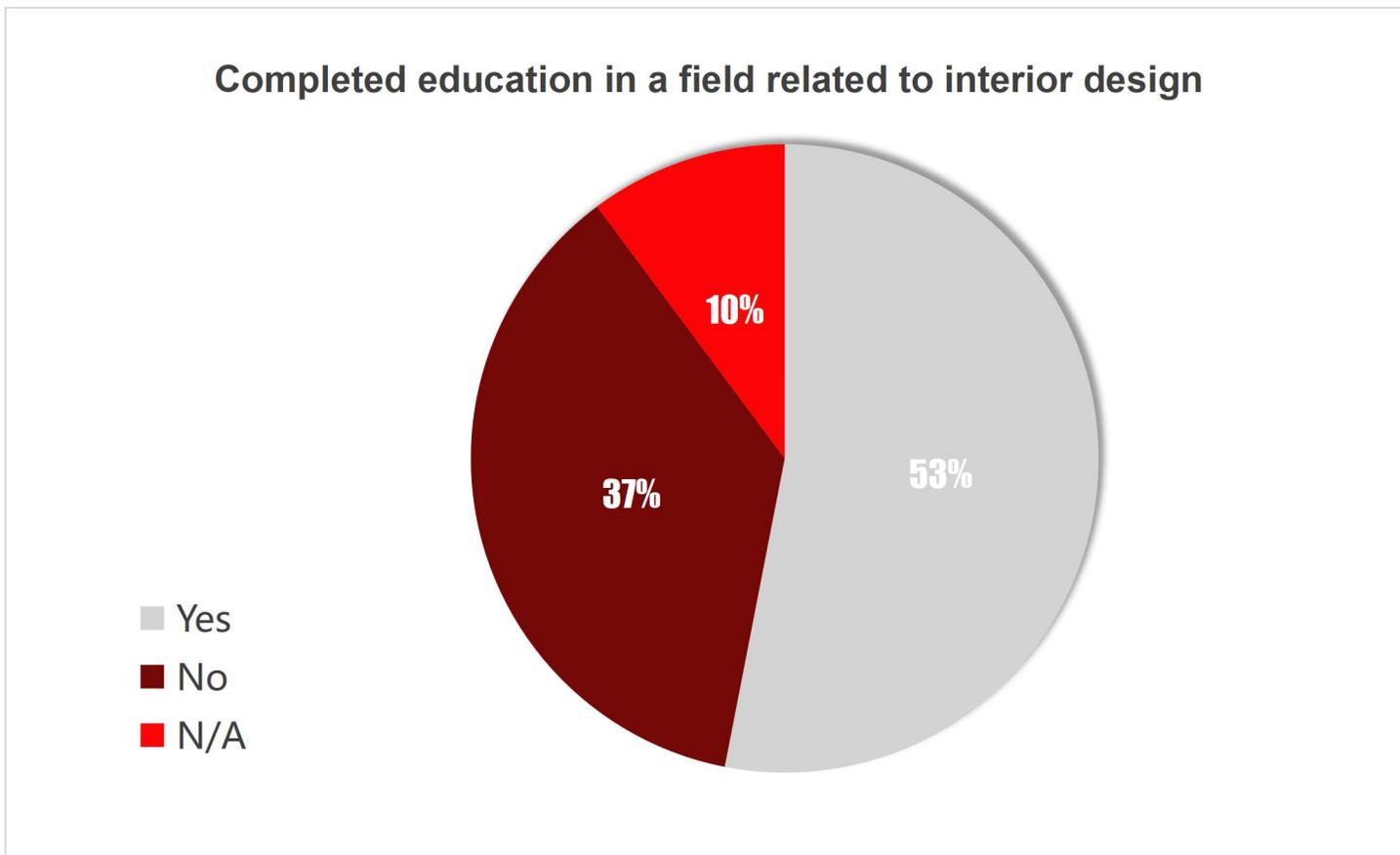
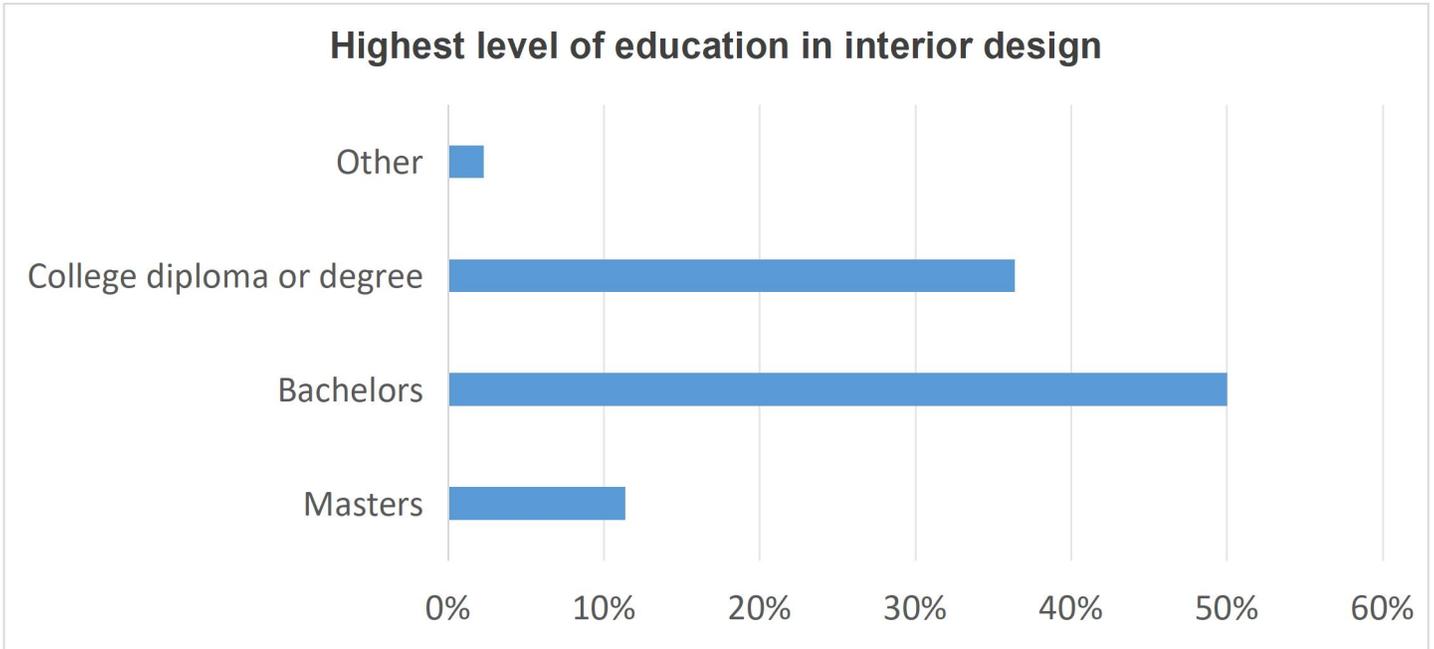
B. Racial/Ethnic Representation



C. Education Background

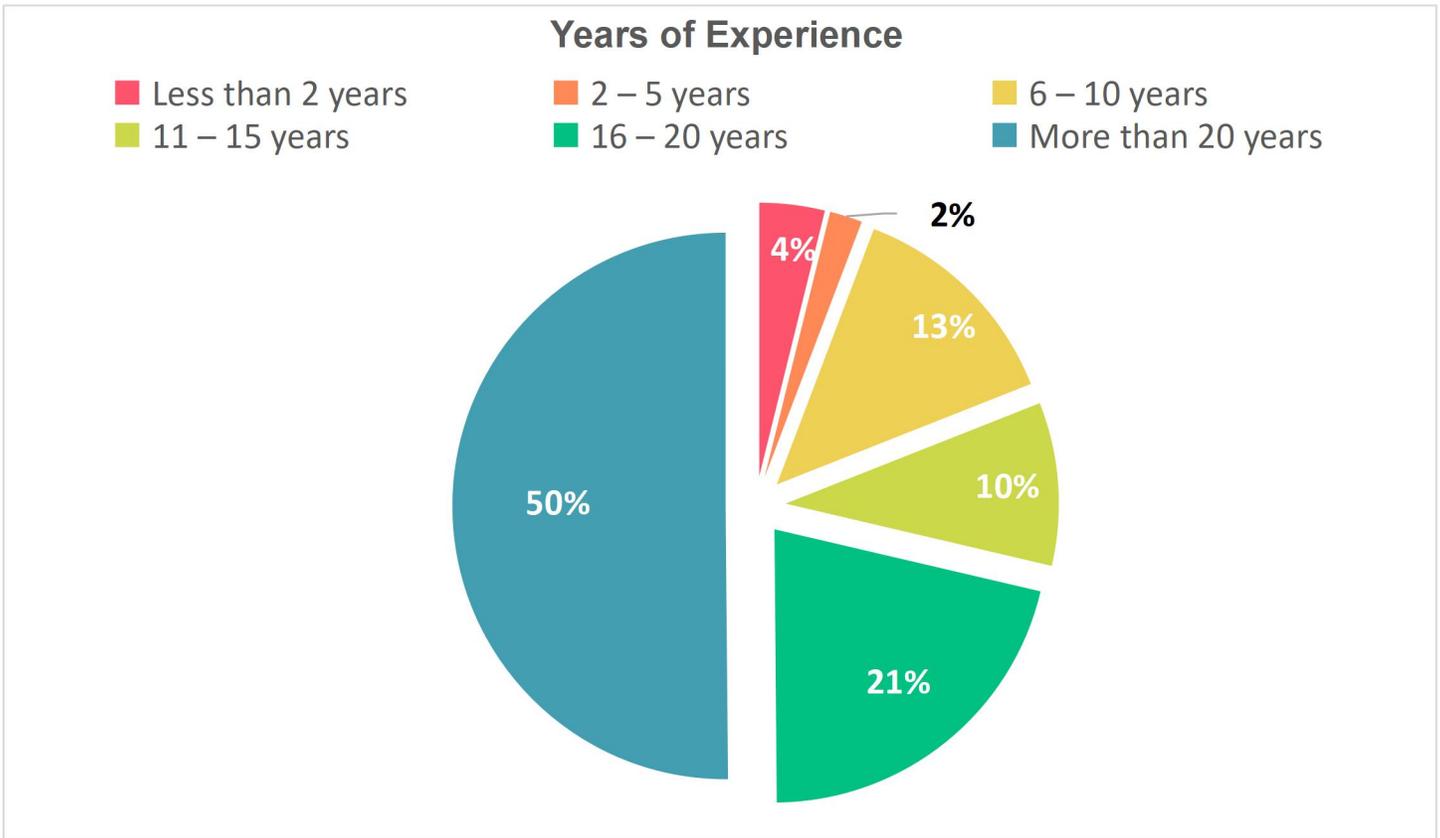


Section II - Project Overview - Participant Profile Overview - continued



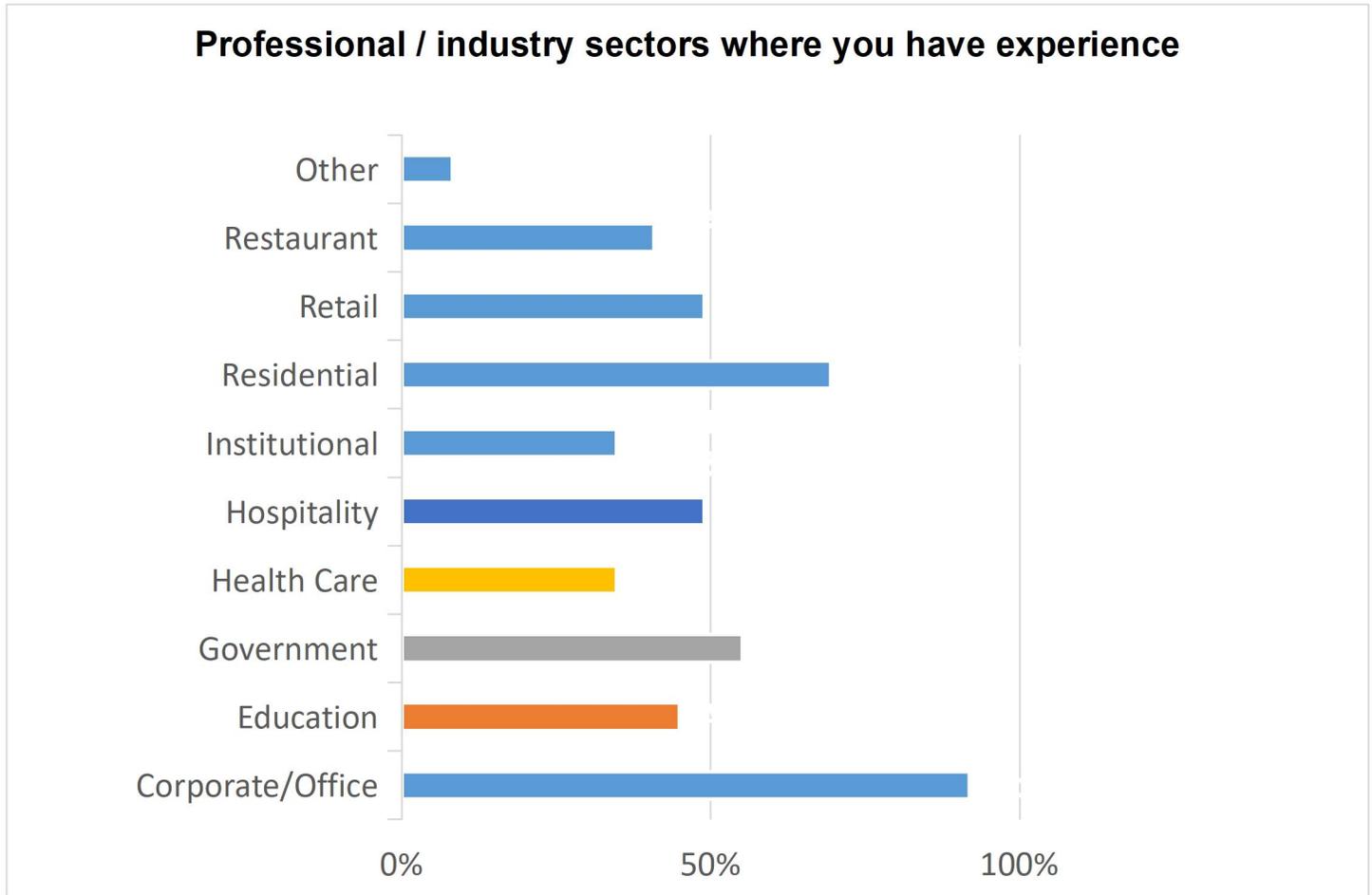
Section II - Project Overview - Participant Profile Overview - continued

2. Professional Experience A. Years of Experience



Section II - Project Overview - Participant Profile Overview - continued

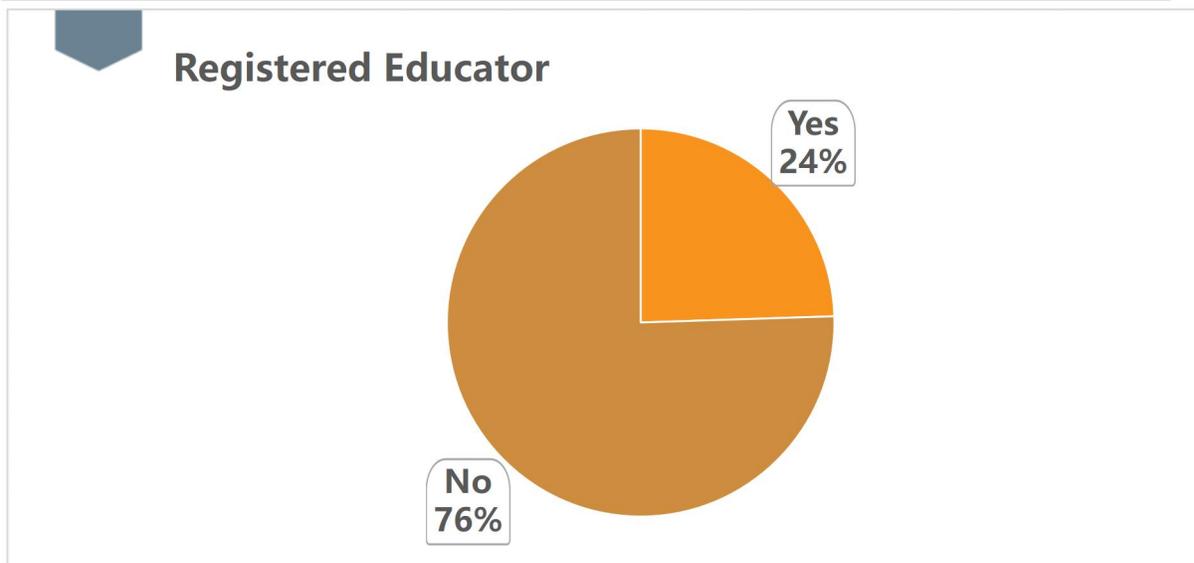
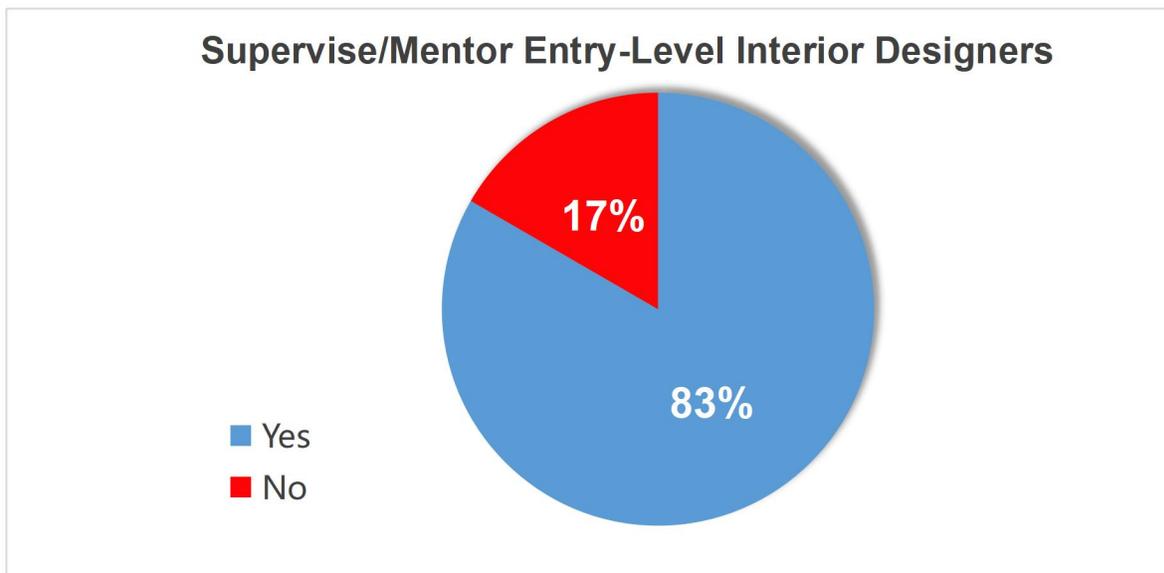
B. Industry Sectors



Section II - Project Overview - Participant Profile Overview - continued

C. Mentorship & Registration Status

All participants were ARIDO members or members of another Provincial Regulatory Body. Of those, a strong majority also supervised the work of entry-level interior designers, and roughly a quarter were Registered Educator Members.



Section II - Project Overview - Participant Profile Overview - continued

3. Key Motivations for Participation

Below is a summary of the key themes emerging from participants' reasons for joining the initiative.

Canadian-Focused Exam Development (Top Priority)

- Aligning exams with Canadian codes, language (French/English), and professional standards.

Fairness for All & Maintaining Professional Standards (Close Second)

- Demand for equitable testing and high competency benchmarks.

Collaboration & Professional Advocacy (Strong Theme)

- Desire to unify the profession and give back through reforms.

Personal Experiences (Contextual Depth)

- Immigrant designers, educators, and practitioners shared unique perspectives on barriers and solutions.

Section II - Project Overview - Quality Criteria

The Project Core Group ensured ARIDO's Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity & Accessibility mandate was upheld through rigorous application of the following quality criteria:

Standards Alignment

1. Qualifications assessments reflect the standards set by the ARIDO Board and are consistent with ARIDO's definition for interior design and its scope of practice.
2. Acceptable alternatives for qualifications assessments will be identified and discussed with stakeholders in order to determine an examination alternative that is appropriate for ARIDO's purposes and that aligns with the Education and Experience requirements and competency-based assessments already developed by ARIDO.

Equitable Access

3. Solutions ensure the removal of entry barriers for individuals who are internationally educated, experienced interior designers working in the field, and other related professionals seeking to have a fair way to prove they meet the competencies for the interior design profession in Ontario.
4. Work will be guided by the four principles of the Office of the Fairness Commissioner for Ontario (OFC): objectivity, impartiality, transparency, and fairness. And the OFC will also be consulted for input at various key project phases.

Section II - Project Overview - Quality Criteria - continued

Inclusive Development

5. Solutions will be interior designer-led and collaborative, engaging stakeholders and including individuals who currently practice interior design and are members of other Canadian provincial interior design bodies.
6. All proposed work requires a fair representation of interior designers, awareness of bias, and engagement of stakeholders to ensure confidence in the final solution.

Assessment Integrity

7. Assessments are set at the appropriate level of mastery.
8. Assessments are scored in a reliable way.
9. Plain language will be used throughout the project and solution.

Continuous Improvement

10. Best practices for professional credentialing programs will be used in the development and maintenance of existing qualifications assessments.
11. Solutions will be pilot and field tested to gain real world feedback from all system users on their experience, ensure proper functioning, and make informed adjustments, if necessary.

By embedding these criteria throughout development, ARIDO establishes a clear standard for its qualification assessments — advancing fairness and equity in the registration path while protecting the public interest.

Section II - Project Overview - Quality Criteria - continued

Key Benefits of This Approach

- **Public Protection** – Maintains competency standards
- **Systemic Equity** – Actively addresses barriers to qualification

Professional Trust – Transparent, designer-led process

Section II - Project Overview - Idea and Consensus-Generating

To create an equitable and sustainable qualification solution through structured consensus-building that values diverse perspectives and collaborative decision-making, specific procedures were designed for each working group to address specific session requirements.

Key Principles

- **Inclusivity:** Prioritize collective agreement over individual viewpoints.
- **Participation:** Ensure participants meet preconditions for expertise, communication skills, and commitment to the project's goals.
- **Bias Awareness & Mitigation:** Proactively address cognitive and group dynamics biases.
- **Conflict-Free Participation:** Confirm the absence of conflicts of interest among participants.

Preconditions for Success

Certain preconditions are needed to ensure the idea and consensus-generating method and procedure are effective in widening the range of the working group's knowledge and experience for producing ideas and consensus that represent the group's collective wisdom.

Participant Qualifications:

1. Education/experience in interior design.
2. Understanding of qualification challenges.
3. Strong communication and collaboration skills.
4. Motivation to develop a Canadian solution.

Section II - Project Overview - Idea and Consensus-Generating - continued

Process Requirements:

5. An in-depth understanding of the content under discussion.
6. A good understanding of fellow participants' ideas and perspectives.
7. Opportunities for open dialogue.
8. Equal contribution without implicit or overt coercion from fellow participants.
9. Be insulated from biases/political influences.
10. Multiple opportunities to refine ideas iteratively.

General Method

The following structured method guided each working group's development process, combining phased consensus-building with continuous bias safeguards to create a valid, reliable, and fair assessment. This general method ensured all critical perspectives informed RIDA™'s development through three key stages:

A. Preparation

1. Participant Vetting

- a) Verify backgrounds meet preconditions 1-4 (qualifications, understanding of issues, communication skills, motivation)
- b) Confirm the absence of Conflicts of Interest (COI) (multi-tiered process of checks)
- c) Recusal Protocols.

Section II - Project Overview - Idea and Consensus-Generating - continued

2. **Bias Mitigation Training**

- a) Distribute handout on group biases:
 - i. Perspective bias (favoring confirming evidence)
 - ii. Deference bias (over-relying on others' views)
 - iii. Satisficing (minimal-effort contributions)
 - iv. Domination (controlling discussions)
- b) Conduct guided discussion with participant Q&A
- c) Assign observers with bias rating forms

3. **Content Briefing**

- a) Ensure shared understanding of target content under discussion

B. Implementation

1. **Idea Generation** → 2. Shared Discussion → 3. Discrepancy Analysis
2. **Solution Development** → 5. Consensus Building → 6. Collective Review → 7. Finalization

C. Post-Implementation Validation

1. **Participant Feedback**

- a) Anonymous exit surveys
- b) Individual session debriefs

Section II - Project Overview - Idea and Consensus-Generating - continued

2. Process Review

- a) Structured group debriefs to: • Identify procedural strengths/gaps, Document bias incidents (if any), Recommend refinements for future sessions.

3. Outcome Verification

- a) Cross-check consensus outcomes against session requirements and goals

Section II - Project Overview - Bias Awareness & Mitigation

Since conscious and unconscious biases can influence our perceptions, decisions, and actions, throughout the development phases, we provided participants with tailored guides and resources for bias awareness during discussions. Furthermore, we implemented a "live audit" process under the guidance of Dr. Fatima Samji (EDI Consultant), during development group sessions, specifically focused on EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) considerations in our discussions and decision-making. In addition, we created additional protocols for training assessors and empowering them to both perform a bias check discussion during their decision-making process and conduct a post-interview debrief.

Recognizing and addressing bias is crucial to ensuring a fair and objective assessment process for all applicants. Our guides aimed to raise awareness about common biases and provide practical strategies for identifying and mitigating them during group discussions and the Entrance Interviews. Our ultimate goal with RIDA™ is to uphold the high standards of the interior design profession by ensuring a fair and equitable assessment process for all candidates.

1. **Become familiar with the common types of bias** - from Confirmation Bias to Nonverbal Bias.
2. **Take steps in identifying your own bias, including:**
 - a) Self-Reflection
 - b) Seek Diverse Perspectives
 - c) Question Assumptions
 - d) Examine Emotional Responses

Section II - Project Overview - Bias Awareness & Mitigation - continued

3. Use strategies to mitigate bias:

- a) Focus on Evidence
- b) Consider Multiple Viewpoints
- c) Challenge Biased Language

By proactively addressing bias, we can ensure a fair and equitable assessment process for all aspiring interior designers. This commitment to self-reflection and critical thinking upholds fairness and equity within the assessment process, fostering trust and integrity.

Section II - Project Overview - Decision-making

Decision-making followed a tiered review process to ensure a comprehensive review and sign-off process that aligned with project goals and stakeholder feedback. Group sizes reflect balanced representation:

- **Core Team (3):** Strategic oversight
- **Development Group (4):** Solution design
- **Review Group (30):** Broad stakeholder validation
- **Assessors (5):** Practical relevancy checks

Within each project phase, decision-making was consistently handled in the following way:

Stage	Decision-makers
Initial drafts	Project Core Team (3)
Proposed Solution or Adjustments	Development Group (4)
Feedback	Review Group (30) Assessors (5)
Refinements and Final draft	Development Group (4)
Final QA Check	Project Core Team (3)

Key Benefit:

- Clear escalation path with quality gates between phases.

Section III - Key Project Work

Between January and August 2023, we conducted periodic reviews to evaluate the real-world performance of ARIDO-developed competency systems used in the registration path, gathering feedback from all system users. A key focus was ensuring alignment with industry needs through early-stage reviews. Additionally, since ARIDO has developed and field-tested assessments using its competency framework since ICRS launched in 2016, this phase provided an opportunity to:

- Review all prior user feedback
- Make any informed adjustments, if required
- Formally conclude ICRS field testing

You can access copies of the Periodic Review Reports on ARIDO/s project website:

- [Final Review of the Intern Competencies Review System](#)
- [Progress Review of the Interior Design Experience Requirement](#)
- [Preliminary Review of the Canadian Alternative](#)

We also performed a preliminary review of the early development work being undertaken for the examination requirement, including a feedback survey to guide development efforts. The anonymous survey was conducted between **April 13, 2023**, and **May 26, 2023**, with the following components:

- **Ontario survey:** Open from April 13 to May 26, 2023
- **Bilingual survey** (other provinces): Open from May 3 to May 24, 2023

Section III - Key Project Work

505 respondents (including 38 from other provinces) pursuing registration as interior designers in Ontario identified significant barriers to qualification under ARIDO's current requirement, including:

- Cost of the exam
- Exam content and structure
- Language and accessibility issues (including exam logistics)
- Lack of study materials (particularly French resources)
- Perceived lack of support from professional associations

The key recommendations resulting from the feedback were used to guide our development efforts for a new Canadian option to meet the examination requirement:

- Must be relevant to Canadian practice
- Should promote inclusivity
- Needs to be transparent and consistent

Strategic Value of the Feedback Survey

This initial survey served three critical purposes:

- Identifying systemic barriers faced by candidates.
- Establishing clear priorities for the development process.
- Ensuring solutions directly address stakeholder concerns.

The stakeholder feedback gathered has become an essential foundation for developing a new option to meet the examination requirement that truly meets the needs of Ontario's interior designers.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Overview

Development Group Overview

Between 2023 and April 2025, the Development Group convened for six structured working sessions, and one check-in meeting, to design and refine the assessment model and framework. These sessions followed a rigorous, equity-focused methodology to ensure a fair and comprehensive evaluation system.

Session Timeline & Key Focus:

- **Session #1 (May 31, 2023):** EDI Crash Course, Review of Feedback Survey Findings, Defining the Purpose of the Assessment
- **Session #2 (August 23, 2023):** Finalize the purpose statement, confirm definitions for competency areas, identify competencies, and determine evidence. Discuss initial specification setting.
- **Check-in (October 18, 2023):** Progress review and planning for the next phases.
- **Session #3 (March 6, 2024):** Completed the competency framework and developed equitable assessment approaches.
- **Session #4 (Date):** Previewed the proposed assessment model/system.
- **Session #5 (September 18, 2024):** Established passing standards.
- **Session #6 (February 14, 2025):** Conducted the final review of informed adjustments from pilot testing phases and formal signoff.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Overview

Consistent Session Structure:

- **Pre-Meeting Review:** Participants received materials for review in advance.
- **Nominal Group Technique (NGT):** Used during the sessions, this allowed participants to systematically generate and prioritize ideas, minimizing dominance and surfacing nuanced input.
- **Debias Priming Techniques:** Applied throughout the sessions to counteract unconscious biases, such as anonymized idea submission and observation of group dynamics.
- **EDI Live Audit:** Embedded EDI researcher/consultant to help identify and immediately address biases in real-time.
- **Post-Meeting Feedback:** An anonymous exit survey was conducted after each session to capture reflections on process effectiveness and identify areas for refinement.

The following section provides detailed summaries of each Development Group working session's discussions and outcomes.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #1

Summary of Development Group Session #1 (May 31, 2023)

The inaugural session of the Development Group marked a critical foundation for the RIDA™ assessment framework, combining equity-focused training with structured consensus-building to define core competencies and assessment parameters.

To prepare the development group for the key work ahead by providing essential background knowledge, exploring tools and a frame of reference for our work as it relates to EDI, identifying the purpose of the assessment to be developed as a new option for the examination requirement, and expressing it in the words of practitioners.

Key Session Components:

- Planning and preparation for the identification of competencies
- Understanding EDI and its relevance to our work.
- Establishing a shared understanding of our roles and project goals.
- Review and discuss the feedback from the examination requirement survey.
- Evaluate and express the purpose of the examination requirement.
- Confirm key terminology and definitions.
- Begin the process of identifying competencies for the examination requirement

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #1 - continued

The session began with an EDI Crash Course led by Dr. Fatima Samji, establishing a shared foundational understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles among all participants.

A "Live Audit" process was integrated into this and all subsequent sessions. During discussions, participants raised real-time concerns or flags to examine issues through an EDI lens. This approach helped identify potential biases in language, structural design, or decision-making outcomes.

Following this, the group reviewed feedback survey results from 505 respondents, highlighting systemic barriers to qualification (e.g., inconsistent preparation resources, cultural biases in existing evaluations). This data anchored discussions on the purpose of the assessment, aligning the group on core objectives: ensuring essential competency confirmation while mitigating inequities.

This session established both the technical and ethical groundwork for the assessment, blending participatory design with proactive bias mitigation.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #2

Summary of Development Group Session #2 - August 23, 2023

This working session advanced development work by refining key components through collaborative review. Participants finalized the examination framework's foundational elements:

- A validated purpose statement
- Eight defined competency areas
- Mapped evidence requirements
- Initial assessment specifications

Key Session Components:

1. EDI Foundations

- Opening check-in discussion facilitated by Dr. Fatima Samji
- Opportunity for participant questions and dialogue guidelines

2. Framework Development

- Purpose statement review and finalization
- Competency area identification and definitions
- Definitions refinement for examination alignment

3. Assessment Design

- Evaluation of 33 competency items (25 knowledge + 8 skills)
- Evidence mapping using ICRS/IDER benchmarks
- Draft specifications table development:
 - Competency areas
 - Evidence types
 - Assessment formats
 - Structural weightings

The session began with an EDI-focused dialogue led by Dr. Samji, ensuring all participants were prepared to actively contribute to the framework development process. Through this structured collaboration, the group established critical foundations for the new examination pathway.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Check-in

Development Group Check-in - October 18, 2023

This virtual check-in served as a critical alignment point, confirming consensus on the proposed assessment model while solidifying the 18-month implementation roadmap through structured milestone planning.

Key Session Components:

- Progress Update
- Reviewed proposed assessment model outcomes
- Confirmed iterative development approach and project roadmap
- Addressed participant anonymity protocols
- Outlined feedback integration process

Project Roadmap (Key Upcoming Milestones)

- Nov 2023: Review Group feedback analysis (EN/FR)
- Dec 2023: Model refinements
- Dec-Jan: Public comment period
- Feb-Aug 2024: Content development
- Sep 2024: Pass standard setting
- Oct-Dec 2024: Pilot testing
- Mar 2025: Full field testing launch

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #3

Development Group - Working Session #3 (Flipped Format) - September 27, 2023

This practitioner-led session employed an innovative "flipped" format where participants:

- Reviewed all reference materials in advance
- Co-created the meeting agenda
- Drove substantive decision-making during live discussions

Key Session Components:

- Pre-Work: Analysis of 5 key documents (ICRS/IDER frameworks, prior outcomes)
- EDI Integration: Three guided checkpoints with Dr. Samji
- Drafted equitable evaluation criteria
- Participant-Led Discussions: Competency mapping & assessment design
- Transition Planning: Developed feedback process for Review Group

This innovative format maximized engagement time for solution development while honoring participants' professional expertise.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #3 - continued

This working session also discussed the following underlying assumptions in our development work:

1. ARIDO Qualifications **Requirements are Necessary & Relevant** (Fairness Commissioner) to the practice of the profession.
 - a) **Necessary** means essential, needed, or vitally important. A registration requirement is necessary when, without it, a regulatory body could not be satisfied that a candidate can practise the profession or trade competently and safely at an entry level. Special requirements for internationally trained candidates are necessary when they are clearly justifiable.
 - b) **Relevant** means logically connected to the issue at hand. A registration requirement is relevant when it helps to make a well-founded assessment or registration decision or to verify an important fact. For example, a required qualification is relevant when there is a logical connection between the qualification and a person's competence to practise the profession or trade at an entry level.

2. **There is a dual focus on both Ontario-specific needs and broader applicability within Canada.** We recognize that there may be provincial variations that require adjustments. As we continue our work to determine what will be assessed in the Canadian Alternative and how it will be assessed, the development group will need to identify issues that may be Ontario-specific. And we'll also be asking the Review Group, which includes participants from other provinces, to help identify any potential province-specific modifications that might be needed to ensure that the assessment is suitable across different regions within the country.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #3 - continued

3. The Examination requirement:
 - a) is intended as a “final check” for all candidates seeking qualification, including those seeking reinstatement, occurs after other requirements have been satisfied
 - b) assesses those competencies most essential to practice as defined by ARIDO
 - c) is a demonstration of competency
 - d) requires a verification of identity of the applicant
 - e) will be administered in a secure and confidential manner
 - f) will be fair and impartial
 - g) will be valid and reliable, meaning that it accurately measures what it is intended to measure

Section III - Key Project Work - Review Group

Review Group - November 2023

In November 2023, we conducted structured consultations with 30 professionals through:

- Online Surveys (25 participants | 1 hour)
- In-Depth Interviews (5 participants | 1.5 hours)

Our objectives were as follows:

Online Survey Group:

1. Gather feedback on importance & completeness of competencies and tasks.
2. Review and comment on the suitability of the proposed solution.

1-on-1 Interview Group:

1. Gather the interviewees' thoughts on the clearness and thoroughness of the solution.
2. Confirm that interviewees share a common understanding of the proposed solution and verify the clearness of its steps.
3. Observe real-time feedback on:
 - Competency Area Definitions
 - Rating the Importance of Competencies and Tasks
 - Review the Proposed Solution

Section III - Key Project Work - Review Group - continued

Key Findings

1. Competency Area definitions

- a) Strong consensus across all definitions on their clearness and completeness.
- b) Minor suggestions for clearness in wording and terms proposed for two definitions.

2. Existing competencies (ICRS) and tasks (IDER)

- a) Strong consensus on the clearness and completeness of competencies and tasks.
- b) Broadly consistent ratings for the importance of competencies and tasks.

3. Proposed Solution - Practice Readiness Program & Entrance Interview

- a) Overall positivity and broad consensus around the initiative and its direction.
- b) Excitement at a Canadian option being available.
- c) Seen as being well thought out and interesting.
- d) Strong consensus that all policy areas have been addressed.

Review Group feedback revealed strong consensus on the proposed solution, highlighting both its value and the importance of diverse perspectives in shaping a Canadian examination alternative. The results also validated the effectiveness of our ICRS and IDER development processes, confirming their role as critical foundations for the new option.

Section III - Key Project Work - Comment Period

Comment Period - February 12 - March 29, 2024

Comment Periods serve to promote transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. During our development process, we hosted a Comment Period to offer stakeholders two primary opportunities:

- 1) Review the Proposed Solution, **and**
- 2) Provide Comment.

During the comment period we received comment from individuals, provincial bodies, and one other third party. We've separated the findings accordingly and noted exclusions.

All findings adhere to confidentiality protocols regarding individual respondents and respect the confidentiality of communications between provincial bodies for interior design.

Respondent Overview

- 24 qualified responses received from individuals completing the survey:
 - Provincial Regulatory Bodies for Interior Design: ARIDO (18), APDIQ (4), Other (2)
 - Member Categories: Registered (13), Educator Registered (3), Retired Life Member (2), Intern (4)
- 2 separate written submissions were received from Provincial Bodies for interior design
 - 2 bodies engaged during this process
 - 1 additional body was already actively engaged and did not provide any further comment

Section III - Key Project Work - Comment Period - continued

Comment Period Integrity Safeguards

Our development process prioritized allowing stakeholders to provide input in an environment insulated from external influence, ensuring their comments were based solely on their own considerations of the proposed solution. These safeguards ensure all considered feedback comes from parties without competing interests. To ensure unbiased feedback, ARIDO implemented strict conflict-of-interest protocols and documented objections to participation in our process:

Individual Exclusions

3 submissions were disqualified due to:

- Direct affiliation with the current examination provider.
- Commercial interests in exam preparation services.

Organizational Exclusions

CIDQ's public statement on alternative assessments (specifically addressing ARIDO's initiative) was excluded from consideration for the following reasons:

- **Conflict of interest:** As the current examination provider, CIDQ has a vested interest in the evaluation of alternative options.
- **Unsolicited outreach:** During our review process (February 29, 2024), CIDQ issued communications to Canadian provincial interior design bodies and the OAA, which could be perceived as an attempt to influence stakeholders.
- **Lack of neutrality:** Their position compromises an impartial review of alternatives.

Section III - Key Project Work - Comment Period - continued

Key Findings by Stakeholder Group

➤ **Individual Practitioners:**

- **Clarity:** 100% found components clear (5 sought more program details)
- **Readiness:** 63% confident (15/24), 46% wanted more details (11/24)
- **EDI:** 83% saw improved access (20/24)
- **Barriers:** 83% affirmed effectiveness in removing barriers to qualification (20/24)
- **Requests:** practical components, extended interview duration

➤ **Provincial Regulators:**

- **Concerns:** Focused on legal defensibility (2/2) and scope alignment
- **Requests:** Additional evidence for:
 - ◆ Assessment reliability
 - ◆ Jurisdictional equivalency
 - ◆ Public safety assurances

Section III - Key Project Work - Comment Period - continued

Key Observations:

➤ **No Unforeseen Issues:**

- All concerns expressed are already anticipated and addressed in the project's procedures.
- Our proactive approach ensures compliance with legislative obligations and best practices, including those outlined in relevant legislation and standards.
 - ◆ *Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006.*
 - ◆ *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, (AERA/APA/NCME)*

➤ **Expectation Alignment:**

- A disconnect exists between provincial regulatory bodies' expectations and the project's current phase, highlighting the need for clearer communication and education on key aspects such as fair access obligations, oral exam acceptance, assessment comparability, and defensibility.
- To bridge this gap, communication strategies must be refined to ensure clarity and engagement, particularly for stakeholders less familiar with competency-based assessment.
- Providing transparent documentation will be critical to correcting misperceptions and maintaining stakeholder trust.

Outcome:

- Proceed with content development plans for the Practice Readiness Program and Entrance Interview, adhering to established procedures and timelines.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #4

Development Group - Working Session #4 - March 6, 2024

This focused working session advanced the assessment development process through critical decision-making and feedback integration.

Key Session Components:

- Review Group Feedback
- Analyzed and incorporated suggested revisions to competency areas
- Addressed proposed recusal policy considerations
- Assessment Weightings Framework
- Finalized competency area weightings
- Established cognitive level weightings for content development
- Public Comment Insights
 - Reviewed stakeholder feedback from open comment period
 - Identified adjustments for implementation

Outcomes & Next Steps:

- Approved transition to Content Development phase

Section III - Key Project Work - Content Development and Review

Content Development and Review - March to September 2024

The Practice Readiness Program was developed through an accelerated six-phase methodology originally designed by Zanth Consulting for rapid deployment, achieving in six months what traditionally requires twelve. Two provincial content advisors (Ontario and Québec) guided the process alongside a deep contributor pool, with all work undergoing validation by at least three subject matter reviewers at each stage – from content creation (June-July) through French translation (August) to final platform integration (September).

Key Features of the Framework:

- **Strategic Oversight:** Ontario/Québec advisors ensured cross-jurisdictional alignment
- **Parallel Workflows:** Concurrent content development and review cycles
- **Quality Assurance:** Three-stage verification at all milestones

This approach balanced efficiency with exceptional standards, delivering a market-ready bilingual assessment tool for October's pilot launch. The methodology's structured review processes – applied consistently across English content, French translations, and user testing feedback – ensured robust outcomes while meeting ambitious timelines.

Section III - Key Project Work - Content Development and Review - continued

A Note about Localization for the Quebec Jurisdiction

During development, the project team implemented enhanced localization measures for Québec's unique regulatory framework. Key adaptations included:

- **Expert Validation Panel:** Three provincial subject matter experts independently reviewed and approved region-specific regulations, with all amendments tracked through version-controlled documentation.
- **Bilingual Alignment:** Special attention was given to ensuring precise French terminology matched Québec's professional standards.

These protocol adjustments during Phase 3 (Translation Preparation) and Phase 5 (Final Review) extended the timeline by approximately 12%—a strategic investment that eliminated compliance risks while maintaining the accelerated development schedule. The process successfully delivered a Québec-specific version that meets its provincial requirements and aligns with national standards.

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #5

Development Group - Working Session #5 - September 18, 2024

This session centered on finalizing equity-centered assessment components and preparing for pilot testing of the Practice Readiness Program.

Key Session Components:

Equity Foundations led by Dr. Fatima Samji

- Barrier identification & removal strategies
- Reviewed:
 - EDI conceptual framework
 - Reflective exercise materials

Practice Readiness Program Preview

- Demonstrated digital platform (web/mobile)
- Examined competency content structure
- Reviewed key tools:
 - Self-assessment activities
 - Practice planning templates
 - Entrance interview protocol

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #5 - continued

Assessment Standard Setting

- EAP methodology overview
- Established:
 - Rating scale parameters
 - Scoring model framework
 - Pass score assumptions

Outcomes & Action Items:

- Approved transition to pilot testing phase.

Section III - Key Project Work - Pilot Testing

Pilot Testing - October 2024 to January 2025

Between October 2024 and January 2025, we conducted pilot testing, a critical phase in the development of our new option. The purpose of the pilot testing is to:

- provide an initial group of candidates the opportunity to use a newly developed Canadian option to the current examination requirement to assess if they meet the final qualifications requirement for interior designers in Ontario, and
- to gather feedback from candidates regarding their experience with the new option, seeking suggestions for changes to improve instructions, supporting resources, and processes before its initial implementation.

Through wide outreach (April-August 2023), we engaged a small but diverse cohort including: internationally educated and trained designers, individuals who met the education requirement using ICRS, and those with a range of professional backgrounds and experience. All pilot participants completed agreements outlining pilot responsibilities, agreed to take the new option to meet their examination requirement, and confirmed no conflicts of interest.

From July to September 2024, ARIDO implemented a recruitment process for assessors, receiving strong interest from qualified professionals. To ensure quality and readiness, we adopted a staggered onboarding approach that prioritized:

- High-caliber assessor preparation for the pilot phase
- Depth of understanding and informed feedback at key decision-making protocols
- Readiness for scaled field testing implementation

Section III - Key Project Work - Pilot Testing - continued

The pilot featured four key components:

1. **Structured Participant Support**

- a) Comprehensive system onboarding
- b) Project Manager check-ins at critical stages:
 - i. Post-onboarding familiarization
 - ii. Mid-program progress validation
 - iii. Pre-interview preparation

2. **Two-Part Assessment Process**

- a) Practice Readiness Program completion
- b) Entrance Interview with 3-assessor panel:
 - i. Independent review of submissions
 - ii. "Practice-ready" rating required for all competencies
 - iii. Consensus-based decision-making with built-in bias check-in discussion

3. **Quality Assurance**

- a) Real-time activity monitoring and feedback mechanisms
- b) Adaptive support based on engagement metrics
- c) Standardized scoring

4. **System Validation**

- a) Mock candidate interview (October 2024)
- b) Assessor training through:
 - i. Protocol refinement sessions
 - ii. Interview simulations

Section III - Key Project Work - Pilot Testing - continued

This pilot involved a select group of candidates (7) in Ontario who participated in the new assessment process under close monitoring. Their feedback provided invaluable insights into their experience as they navigated the process. This pilot design achieved balanced participation while testing all system components under operational conditions, providing critical data for full implementation. The structured yet flexible approach allowed for both standardized evaluation and consideration of the candidates' experiences.

Feedback gathered from candidates, assessors, and staff was used to identify improvements to be made prior to field testing launch. The findings from this pilot have been instrumental in:

- Refining support tools to better assist candidates,
- Making instructions clearer and more user-friendly learning website layout, and
- Ensuring the assessment process is fair and effective.

The Development Group formally approved all adjustments to the system on February 14, 2025, confirming the solution met its purpose and aligned with EDI principles for equity-focused assessments that were agreed upon for development work. This phased approach allowed for iterative improvements before full implementation, ensuring both regulatory compliance and candidate-centric design. The pilot's success established a replicable model for future provincial rollouts. Section IV provides details of the system as it launches into field testing.

The Development Group reviewed and approved all proposed improvements on February 14, 2025.

Section III - Key Project Work - Pilot Testing - continued

A Note about Assessors and Mock Candidate

From July to September 2024, ARIDO implemented a recruitment process for assessors and a mock candidate, receiving strong interest from qualified professionals. To ensure quality and readiness, we adopted a staggered onboarding approach that prioritized:

- High-caliber assessor preparation for the pilot phase
- Depth of understanding and informed feedback at key decision-making protocols
- Readiness for scaled field testing implementation
- Real-time simulation of the candidate experience completing the system

A Note for the First French Cohort

The pilot tested candidates in English. While APDIQ candidates were eligible to participate during pilot testing, additional time was needed to localize the Codes and Regulations into French and adapt them for the Québec environment. These candidates will now join during field testing (fall 2025), which includes:

- Continuous monitoring and a structured assessment process with multiple opportunities to demonstrate competency
- Checks and balances at every stage, plus bias mitigation procedures
- Committee oversight to ensure equitable outcomes

Existing QA measures will address French translation nuances for the Québec context. Full recommendations are detailed later in the white paper (details on pp. 84-87).

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #6

Development Group - Working Session - February 14, 2025

This session marked a critical transition point in the assessment development process, focusing on three key priorities: validating pilot testing outcomes, finalizing field testing parameters, and establishing the program's identity. Through data-driven review of stakeholder feedback and collaborative decision-making, the group confirmed readiness to advance to full field testing while ensuring all refinements maintain the system's equity-focused foundation.

Key Session Components:

- Review pilot testing outcomes and feedback
- Finalize refinements for field testing
- Confirm system naming convention

Materials Reviewed:

- Refinements overview chart
- Examination candidate guide

Section III - Key Project Work - Development Group - Session #6 - continued

Key Discussion Points:

1. Project Foundations Review

- Revisited project purpose and initial barriers identified in stakeholder surveys

2. Pilot Testing Outcomes -

- Analyzed feedback from:
 - Assessors (evaluation processes)
 - Candidates (user experience)
- Key takeaways from exit surveys

3. Field Testing Preparations

- Approved refinements including:
 - Examination cost structure
 - Updated candidate guide
 - Assessment protocols
- Formal sign-off obtained to proceed to field testing

Outcomes & Next Steps:

- Approved transition to field testing phase.
- Finalized key assessment components.

Section IV - The Solution Developed

RIDA™, developed through this initiative, will enter field testing in 2025. This section provides a summary overview of the assessment. Complete details, including the Candidate Guide, will be available for download on ARIDO's website at launch.

The Solution Developed

The **Practice Readiness Program** and **Entrance Interview** ensures that all individuals applying to become a Registered Interior Designer in Ontario are provided a fair and equitable opportunity to demonstrate the competencies required to practice interior design while protecting the public interest. [ARIDO recognizes its accountability as a Regulatory Body to advance equity and diverse representation through actionable initiatives.](#)

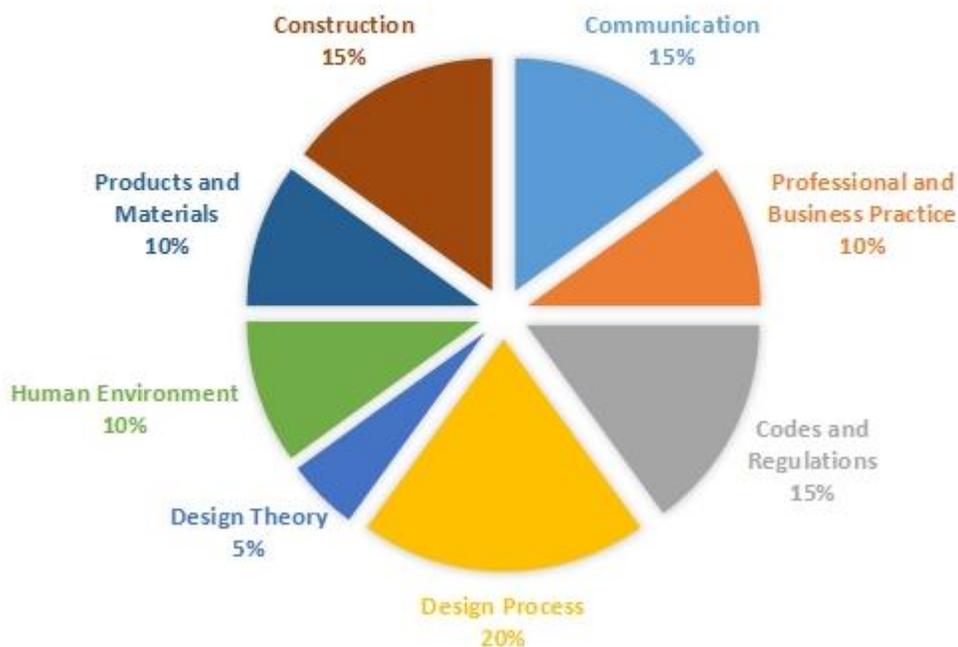
Individuals who have met ARIDO's education and experience requirements will be eligible to enrol.

The two-part assessment process focuses on practical application and advanced analysis & problem-solving across eight (8) competency areas of interior design practice:

Part 1: Practice Readiness Program
(30 contact hours flexible online program with self-paced learning)

+

Part 2: Entrance Interview
(45-minute oral test conducted virtually by one Chair and 2 Assessors)



Section IV - The Solution Developed - Passing Standards

Competency areas are weighted to reflect their relative importance in assessing overall practice readiness.

To ensure Candidates possess the minimum level of competency required to practice without supervision and to protect the public interest, they must meet the following passing standards:

- ◆ **Program Completion Standards for Part 1: Practice Readiness Program**
 - **To advance to the next stage and be eligible for the Entrance Interview, Candidates must:**
 - **Complete all content modules:** Ensure every module is marked as completed.
 - **Achieve a passing score on all quizzes:** A minimum score of **80%** is required on each quiz.
 - **Submit all assignments:** All assignments must be submitted according to the provided instructions.
 - **Submit a Practice Plan:** A detailed Practice Plan, using the provided template, must be submitted as part of the program requirements.

- ◆ **Competency Assessment Standards for Part 2: Entrance Interview**
 - **To be considered "practice-ready," Candidates must:**
 - Participate in a 45-minute panel interview with one Chair and two Assessors.
 - ◆ **30 minutes:** Competency-based questions focused on assignments completed in Part 1.
 - **15 minutes:** Candidate presentation and discussion of their Practice Plan.
 - Receive "practice-ready" ratings for **all required competencies across eight competency areas** from at least two Assessors.

Note: In case of disagreement among Assessors' ratings, the Chair's rating will serve as the deciding factor.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Competency Area Definitions and Explanations

Competency Area	Definition	Explanation
Communication	Ability to understand, define, and exchange information using a combination of visual, written, and verbal design methods, techniques and tools.	Gather client information visually, verbally and/or in writing. Manage information effectively, for a range of purposes and audiences, to reach agreement and present a design solution.
Professional and Business Practice	Ability to understand, communicate, and demonstrate ethical and fair business practices.	Act with integrity and in the best interest of the client and the profession by using sound judgement and accountability in applying fair business practices.
Codes and Regulations	Ability to understand, analyze, and apply relevant local codes and standards that protect the health, safety, and well-being of building occupants.	Research and apply relevant local codes, environmental requirements, laws, standards, and regulations.
Design Process	Ability to analyze and synthesize programmatic information to develop effective design solutions.	Create, integrate and prepare designs and specifications for implementation of the design solution.
Design Theory	Ability to apply an understanding of design history, precedent, and research.	Apply the principles and elements of design, design theories, and historical precedents to a design solution.
Human Environment	Ability to understand and integrate the principles of human behaviour and perception into the design solution.	Apply principles of comfort and well-being of occupants that supports the relationships between human needs, function, and the built environment.
Products and Materials	Ability to understand, analyze, and specify products and materials to meet the performance requirements and criteria of the design solution.	Apply knowledge of the various properties and qualities of products and materials to form part of the design solution.
Construction	Ability to apply knowledge of construction and building systems to administer the design solution.	Apply knowledge of the interrelationship of building systems within interior construction. Utilize contract documents to coordinate and convey design for budget, permit, and construction & administration to clients and other professionals.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Description of a Practice-Ready Candidate

A **practice-ready candidate** demonstrates the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to practice interior design without supervision while protecting the public. This is demonstrated through their submitted work, interview responses, and practice plan, ensuring they meet the required minimum level of competency in all areas. While performance may vary in specific tasks, their overall body of work confirms their readiness for practice as a Registered Interior Designer. A **practice-ready candidate** demonstrates:

- **Proficiency in all competency areas, with particular emphasis on:**
 - **Communication:** Ability to understand, define, and exchange information using a combination of visual, written, and verbal design methods, techniques and tools.
 - *Competency 1.2 - Knowledge of standard documents.*
 - *Competency 1.3 - Skill in visual, written, and verbal communication.*
 - **Professional and Business Practice:** Ability to understand, communicate, and demonstrate ethical and fair business practices.
 - *Competency 2.1 - Knowledge of fair business practices (e.g., conflict of interest, confidentiality, copyright/intellectual property, informed consent, disclosure).*
 - **Codes and Regulations:** Ability to understand, analyze, and apply relevant local codes and standards that protect the health, safety, and well-being of building occupants.
 - *Competency 3.1 - Knowledge of code requirements, laws, standards, and regulations.*
 - *Competency 3.2 - Skill in interpreting and applying code and regulations.*
 - **Design Process:** Ability to analyze and synthesize programmatic information to develop effective design solutions.
 - *Competency 4.2 - Skill in analyzing and synthesizing the programmatic information.*
 - *Competency 4.3 - Skill in developing a design concept.*
 - *Competency 4.4 - Skill in space planning.*
 - *Competency 4.5 - Skill in drafting and technical drawing conventions.*
 - **Design Theory:** Ability to apply an understanding of design history, precedent, and research.
 - **Human Environment:** Ability to understand and integrate the principles of human behaviour and perception into the design solution.
 - *Competency 6.3 - Knowledge of universal design principles (e.g., equitable use, low physical effort).*
 - **Products and Materials:** Ability to understand, analyze, and specify products and materials to meet the performance requirements and criteria of the design solution.
 - *Competency 7.2 - Skill in selecting products and materials to meet specific criteria (e.g., budget, quality, ergonomics, performance, environmental impact, longevity).*
 - **Construction:** Ability to apply knowledge of construction and building systems to administer the design solution.
 - *Competency 8.2 - Knowledge of construction drawings as contract documents.*
 - *Competency 8.3 - Knowledge of detailing and specifications of materials, products, and finishes (e.g., millwork).*

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Description of a Practice-Ready Candidate - continued

- **Essential Qualities**

- **Integration:** Demonstrates the ability to integrate competencies across all areas, recognizing their interdependencies and seeking additional support when needed.
- **Professionalism:** Demonstrates professionalism and ethical conduct, with a commitment to continuous professional development.
- **Public Protection:** Prioritizes public safety and well-being, adhering to legal and ethical guidelines and taking proactive steps to mitigate risks.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Decision Results

After the Entrance Interview, **within 2 business days**, Candidates will receive one of the following three decision results:

Ready:

- The Candidate **has met the minimum level of competency required in all competency areas.**
- They are eligible to apply for registration.

Partially Ready:

- The Candidate **has met the minimum level of competency in at least 6 competency areas.**
- They must address competency gaps before re-applying for an interview to demonstrate their competence and eligibility for registration.
- They will be provided with an **action plan template** to guide them through the process of updating their Practice Plan and addressing identified competency gaps.
- Once the gaps are addressed, they can apply for a follow-up Entrance Interview focused on demonstrating how they have addressed their competency gaps.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Decision Results - continued

Not Ready:

- The Candidate **has met the minimum level of competency in 5 or fewer competency areas.**
- They must address significant competency gaps before re-taking the program.
- They will be provided with an **action plan template** to guide them through the process of updating their Practice Plan and addressing identified competency gaps.
- Once they have re-taken the program, they can apply for an Entrance Interview.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Supporting Policies

The following key policies ensure fairness, transparency, and accessibility throughout the assessment process. Full policy details will be available on the ARIDO website at launch; this section provides a brief summary of each area:

- Decision Appeals
- Re-takes
- Accommodations
- Recusal
- EDI & Bias Training

Decision Appeals

For a decision of “Partially Ready” or “Not Ready” from the Entrance Interview, candidates may appeal the decision. To do so, submit a written appeal to the Registrar within **15 business days** of receiving the decision. The appeal must clearly state the grounds for the appeal and provide supporting evidence. Grounds for an appeal may include:

- Procedural irregularities during the assessment.
- Bias, conflict of interest, or technical issues during the interview.
- Errors in judgment or misinterpretation of assessment criteria.
- Discrimination based on protected characteristics, such as race, gender, religion, etc.

An independent Appeals Committee, with no involvement from the original Assessors, will review your appeal and provide a final decision within **10 business days** of receiving it. Full details of the appeals process will be provided with a decision letter and are available on our website.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Supporting Policies

Re-takes

For decisions of “Partially Ready” or “Not Ready” on the Entrance Interview, candidates may re-take the Practice Readiness Program and reapply for the Entrance Interview after addressing the identified competency gaps.

Key Steps:

- They will receive feedback outlining the specific competencies they need to improve.
- Action Plan: Complete an action plan to address the gaps, including reviewing materials, gaining experience, or seeking mentorship.
- Re-application: Submit the action plan to the Registrar for approval. Once approved, they can reapply for the Entrance Interview.

Timelines:

- Re-application decisions are made within **5 business days**.
- Re-take interviews are scheduled within **20 business days** of approval.

This process ensures that candidates will have the opportunity to address gaps and demonstrate their readiness for unsupervised practice.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Supporting Policies

Accommodations

Candidates requiring accommodations for the Practice Readiness Program or Entrance Interview may submit a written request to the Registrar at least **40 business days** before the scheduled interview date.

Key Steps:

Request Submission: Include a clear description of the accommodation needed (e.g., extra time, assistive technology) and any supporting documentation from a qualified professional.

Review Process: The Registrar will review the request and provide a decision within **20 business days**.

Implementation: Approved accommodations will be implemented for the program and/or interview.

All requests are handled confidentially, and ARIDO is committed to ensuring equal access and opportunity for all candidates.

Section IV - The Solution Developed - Supporting Policies

Recusal

To ensure fairness and impartiality in the assessment process, Assessors must disclose any personal or professional relationships with candidates **prior to reviewing materials and interviews**. If a conflict is identified, the Assessor will step aside, and alternative arrangements will be made to maintain an unbiased evaluation.

This policy ensures the integrity of the assessment process and guarantees that all candidates are evaluated fairly.

EDI & Bias Training

To ensure fair and unbiased evaluations, all Assessors are **required** to complete ongoing EDI and bias training, including modules on EDI principles, unconscious bias, and equitable assessment practices. They must also participate in regular discussions and renew their commitment annually, ensuring a consistent focus on fairness and inclusion in the assessment process.

Section V - Summary of Recommendations

To ensure the validity, reliability, and fairness of the Registered Interior Designer Assessment (RIDA)[™] prior to full implementation, a structured field-testing approach is being developed by ARIDO, informed by actionable recommendations in the following key focus areas, include:

Recommendation Area 1: Implement Managed Cohort Sizes with Quarterly Intake Cycles

Recommendations in this area focus on an implementation approach featuring controlled cohort sizes of 5-7 candidates with quarterly intake cycles. The structured enrollment system ensures manageable feedback volumes while maintaining rigorous quality standards through focused oversight. The phased approach creates natural evaluation points between cycles, allowing for continuous refinements while preserving assessment integrity. This measured implementation strategy balances comprehensive data collection with sustainable scaling, establishing a foundation for successful full deployment.

Recommendation Area 2: Establish Clear Candidate Eligibility Criteria & Feedback Protocols

Recommendations in this area focus on establishing rigorous candidate eligibility criteria requiring disclosure of any recent NCIDQ exam attempts or CIDQ involvement, along with signed agreements confirming no conflicts of interest. Enrollment will be limited to ensure quality monitoring, prioritizing the re-engagement of 64 previously interested Ontario candidates. Strict protocols mandate that participants must not be currently bound by NCIDQ agreements, scheduled for upcoming NCIDQ exams, or involved with CIDQ in any capacity within the past five years. These measures safeguard feedback integrity by eliminating potential biases while enabling continuous program improvement through controlled implementation and systematic data collection.

Section V - Summary of Recommendations - continued

Recommendation Area 3 - Implement Structured Feedback Collection from All Stakeholders

To maintain the pilot's rigorous feedback system, anonymous exit surveys should be distributed immediately after Entrance Interviews to capture candidate and assessor perspectives on content, experience, and potential biases. Standardized tools ensure consistent data collection, while a post-pilot stakeholder survey validates broader industry alignment. Special provisions for the APDIQ French-language cohort include translated surveys, comparative performance analysis with English cohorts, and voluntary debriefs to address linguistic and cultural considerations. This multi-source approach enables real-time refinements and long-term policy adjustments through dedicated feedback mechanisms for all participant groups, with bilingual oversight ensuring equitable implementation for Quebec candidates.

Recommendation Area 4 - Safeguard Assessment Integrity Through Senior-Led Assessor Management

To safeguard assessment integrity, senior leadership (Registrar or manager-level+) will oversee all assessor management processes. This includes recruiting qualified, unbiased assessors, conducting ongoing training to maintain consistent standards and mitigate bias, and implementing quality assurance through regular decision reviews and interview audits. The field testing will utilize pre-vetted assessors from the pilot phase, along with a second cohort of assessors selected during the initial recruitment of assessors. This senior-led approach ensures proper governance, accountability, and standardization while maintaining fairness through proactive monitoring. The structured assessor management system supports both immediate field testing needs and long-term assessment integrity through controlled onboarding and continuous quality control measures.

Section V - Summary of Recommendations - continued

Recommendation Area 5 - Learning Platform Infrastructure

To ensure reliable, scalable, and sustainable long-term assessment delivery, the recommendations in this area call for transitioning from the current hosting to a permanent solution that meets ARIDO's long-term requirements while providing scalable, professionally supported infrastructure. Key upgrades include implementing single sign-on (SSO) integration with its systems and enhancing data backups beyond the current retention lifecycle protocols. The shift to managed hosting for the core platform for the Practice Readiness Program website will improve the ability to handle more candidates consecutively while future-proofing capacity for growing assessment volumes. This addresses critical needs in continuity, data security, and user experience during high-use enrollment periods.

Recommendation Area 6 - Ensure Assessment Quality Control

To uphold assessment integrity, recommendations in this area include annual reviews to verify content alignment with competencies, industry relevance, and bias mitigation. Post-field testing, a comprehensive evaluation will analyze question/assignment validity, scoring reliability, and decision consistency. These processes ensure credible outcomes while maintaining alignment with evolving professional standards and regulations.

Section V - Summary of Recommendations - continued

Recommendation Area 7 - Form an Oversight Committee for Continuous Governance

The recommendations call for establishing a 3-member Oversight Committee comprising two former RIDA assessors and one current ARIDO board member to ensure both technical expertise and organizational alignment. This committee will be responsible for handling candidate inquiries, conducting annual program reviews, developing new assessment materials, and closely monitoring the French-language APDIQ cohort. The structure provides centralized accountability while maintaining content integrity through regular updates and security through annual assignment rotations. Implementation should begin during field testing, prioritizing bilingual assessors to properly oversee the French cohort, with the committee serving as both a quality control mechanism and a foundation for future program expansion.

Additional Considerations

For jurisdictions adopting RIDA™, it is strongly recommended to repeat the localization review process outlined for codes and regulations content in the Practice Readiness Program, as noted in Section III of this paper to:

- Ensure Regulatory Relevance
- Maintain Quality Standards
- Adapt to Regional Requirements

This proactive approach preserves the program's rigor while accommodating regional variations.

Section V - Summary of Recommendations - continued

The implementation of RIDA™ represents a transformative paradigm shift rather than a transactional update—it embodies our commitment to developing an equity-focused, human-centered assessment system that actively dismantles barriers to professional recognition. These recommendations provide more than just operational guidance; they create:

A Foundation for Equity

- Managed cohort sizes and quarterly cycles ensure a controlled, scalable rollout.
- Platform stability and SSO integration enhance the candidate experience.
- Defined candidate eligibility and feedback protocols safeguard data integrity.
- Close monitoring for the APDIQ French cohort addresses linguistic and jurisdictional needs.

A Living System That Evolves

- Annual content reviews and assignment rotations maintain relevance and security.
- Feedback loops center candidate experiences in continuous improvement.
- Data-driven refinements based on stakeholder feedback align RIDA with industry standards.

A Model for Inclusive Professional Governance

- Oversight Committee maintains accountability to equity goals.
- Senior-led assessor management and an Oversight Committee uphold consistency and accountability.
- Transparent eligibility criteria promote fair access.

Section V - Summary of Recommendations - continued

This structured yet adaptable approach—supported by secure infrastructure, annual content reviews, and phased system upgrades—enables evidence-based refinements that balance thorough validation with operational flexibility. By implementing these measures, ARIDO can confidently transition from field testing to full implementation, positioning RIDA™ as a credible, equitable pathway to registration that meets both current standards and future needs.

By implementing this framework, ARIDO isn't just maintaining a qualification system—we're redefining professional inclusion. RIDA™ stands as:

- A responsive system shaped by and for practitioners.
- An equitable pathway that recognizes diverse professional journeys.
- A benchmark for human-centered design in professional regulation.

Developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and meaningful pan-Canadian collaboration, RIDA™ represents the collective wisdom of Ontario's interior design community and its relevance to the broader Canadian context. It represents our shared commitment to protecting the public while creating more equitable access to the profession. As ARIDO moves forward, this system will continue to use a human-centered approach - actively listening, learning, and evolving to ensure RIDA™ remains responsive to the needs of both the profession and the public it serves. In transforming assessment from a barrier to a bridge, we're creating a more diverse, inclusive, and thriving interior design profession for all.

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