



CHAPTER START-UP:

PROCEDURE FOR CREATING A PROFESSIONAL NOMA CHAPTER

MISSION

NOMA's mission is to champion diversity within the design professions by promoting the excellence, community engagement, and professional development of its members.

HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Twelve African-American architects from different parts of the country met, some for the first time, during the AIA National Convention in Detroit in 1971. What these professionals recognized was the desperate need for an organization dedicated to the development and advancement of minority architects.

Present at the creation were William Brown, Leroy Campbell, Wendell Campbell, John S. Chase, D. Dodd, Kenneth B. Groggs, Nelson Harris, Jeh Johnson, E.H. McDowell, Robert J. Nash, Harold Williams, and Robert Wilson. These African American architects wanted minority design professionals to work together to fight discriminatory policies that limit or bar minority architects from participating in design and constructions programs.

That was the beginning of the National Organization of Minority Architects, an increasing influential voice, promoting the quality and excellence of minority design professionals. There are NOMA Chapters in all parts of the country, increasing recognition on colleges and university campuses and providing greater access to government policy makers.

AIMS + OBJECTIVES

The National Organization of Minority Architects has been organized to:

- ❖ Foster communications and fellowship among minority architects;
- ❖ Form a federation of existing and proposed local minority architectural groups;
- ❖ Fight Discrimination and other selection policies being used by public and private sector clients to unfairly restrict minority architects' participation in design and construction;
- ❖ Act as a clearing house for information and maintain a roster on practitioners;
- ❖ Promote the design and development of living, working, and recreational environments of the highest quality;
- ❖ Create and maintain relationships with other professionals and technicians whose work affects the physical and social environment;
- ❖ Encourage the establishment of coalitions of member firms and individuals to form associate and joint venture relationships;
- ❖ Speak with a common voice on public policy;
- ❖ Work with local, state, and national governments on issues affecting the physical development of neighborhoods and communities;
- ❖ Be an effective source of motivation and inspiration for minority youth

CHAPTER CHECKLIST

This sheet should be used as a quick reference to make sure you are thinking about all the right things as you work towards chartering a new chapter.

- ❖ Get to know NOMA
Start to familiarize yourself with the way the organization operates and the goals and objectives it has set for itself.

- ❖ **Get Acquainted**
Reach out to the appropriate contacts within the organization. It would also be wise to introduce yourself to other chapters in your region to get a feel for what they are doing and how your chapter will function.
- ❖ **Become a Member**
If you are not already a member, join today. Becoming a member of NOMA is simple. You can simply fill out the online application at [National Organization of Minority Architects \(noma.net\)](http://National Organization of Minority Architects (noma.net)) and pay your national dues.
- ❖ **Get Others Involved**
There is strength in numbers! The more people you get involved in the initiative to charter a new chapter the better. Having enough manpower to handle the many responsibilities and tasks involved with maintaining a chapter will greatly accelerate the process.
- ❖ **Writing Bylaws**
The bylaws of the chapter are the set of rules and regulations which all members must adhere to. Forming the bylaws is one of the milestones of establishing a chapter. A chapter template is available for your use and can be tailored to suit the needs of your chapter. It is imperative that the chapter first review the national by laws (which can be found on-line at ([NOMA-Bylaws Amended-and-Restated 10.13.23.pdf](#))) to confirm that any revisions are not in conflict with the national by-laws.
- ❖ **Become Official**
Establish a bank account and a chapter address. It is important that this information remains consistent as the leadership of the chapter changes. Consider registering your organization as a non-profit with the Secretary of State. Most state offices have on-line access to organization registration.
- ❖ **Get Organized**
Determine the activities your chapter will participate in and develop a chapter calendar of events. Establish a chapter budget and communicate with the national treasurer about fiduciary responsibility and how to be financially successful. Contacting other chapters, your regional VP, the membership chair and national treasurer will assist you in not having to reinvent the wheel.
- ❖ **Communicate and Remain Active**
Make sure your chapter is actively communicating with the national body. Elect a membership committee representative to participate in the national membership committee. It is important that the leadership of the organization be in tune with the national body and its initiatives. Always attend the national conference!

GETTING STARTED

The National Organization of Minority Architects would like to thank you for your interest in starting a chapter in your area. The expansion of NOMA, and the realization of its goals, is largely due to the enthusiastic pursuits of its membership. The journey towards becoming chartered will undoubtedly benefit all those parties involved.

Establishing contact with the board is imperative to your journey toward chartering a new professional chapter of NOMA. Inquiries regarding the establishment of a chapter should be directed toward the Vice President for your Region or the National Membership Chair. Visit the organization section of the website at [Professional Chapters - NOMA](#) to determine what region your chapter would be in and who to contact for more information.

Any group of five (5) or more individuals (including at least one Licensed Professional Member) who desires to form a professional membership chapter of NOMA, may apply to NOMA for a charter to be known as a NOMA chapter. All local members must be recognized members of the national organization.

To join NOMA, log on to [National Organization of Minority Architects \(noma.net\)](http://National Organization of Minority Architects (noma.net)). *Individuals must join by selecting "At Large" or the closest existing local chapter. The new chapter will be assigned to the member's profile when the chapter is officially established.*

Once the chapter membership is established, you will need to submit the following to your Regional VP for consideration:

- ❖ Official Chapter Name
- ❖ Chapter Membership Roster
- ❖ Proposed Chapter by-laws

- ❖ List of Officers and board members in accordance with your chapter by-laws
- ❖ Local Chapter membership fee structure, [2025-NOMA-Membership-Application-Local-Fee-Structure-Rev-080825-1.pdf](#).

Once submitted, your by-laws will be sent to the national parliamentarian for review and your membership roster will be cross referenced with the national database to confirm membership. Once all is approved, you will be notified and a charter will be sent to the chapter address provided.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

With these preliminary measures accomplished, structuring and organizing the chapter is the next imperative arena of discourse to be addressed. Prior to brainstorming the manner in which this upcoming chapter is best suited to operate, it is necessary to understand the precedent that exists for the structuring and organization of such an enterprise. Become familiar with the *Roberts Rules of Order*, the handbook to parliamentary procedure, the standard adopted by NOMA. An online version can be found at <http://www.rulesonline.com/index.html> and the official website can be found at <http://www.robertsrules.com/>.

With this background knowledge absorbed, the best way for the new chapter to operate in your city can be decided upon, hopefully amongst a group of core members who have displayed a commitment to the chapter's growth and success. The governing body of the organization can follow a particular parliamentary model, or it may adopt a modification of one such model, under the mandate that the 'basic requirements' are continually maintained.

The chapter may choose to operate under the designation of an executive board containing several elected officers, it may choose to operate using a 'Committee-Based' model in which the delegation of tasks is distributed amongst committees rather than officers, or it may choose to innovate a new means of governance that best serves the particular needs of the chapter.

Your structure should be laid out in your bylaws and should be used as a guide for how your chapter will operate. You are encouraged to contact other chapter presidents to discuss which method may be most appropriate for your chapter.

MEETINGS

General Membership Meetings should be held periodically and should be open to all members. Board of Directors Meetings should be held more frequently and should focus on the overall direction and activities of the organization. The Board should be in tune with national initiatives and endeavor to support those initiatives on the local level whenever possible.

DUES STRUCTURE

All members of NOMA must pay National NOMA membership dues. Local Chapter dues fee structures are up to the discretion of the local board of directors but must be submitted for approval and for local on-line payment options.

MEMBERSHIP

An updated record should be kept of all the chapters members. The chapter should also seek to raise its membership through local membership drives and membership invitations. It is through local activities that the membership of NOMA will grow.

COMMUNICATION

Prepare web presence to let your membership and others know the chapter is active and how it makes a difference. Engage your members on <https://connect.NOMA.net> and use your chapter's file and discussion groups to stay in touch. On NOMA Connect, a local chapter Group will be established for you where your chapter calendar and contacts can always be available.

FINANCIAL

Establish an annual chapter budget. Track expenses and income regularly and report to the local membership. Develop events that raise monies for the chapters operating costs.

- ❖ Social Fund-raisers
- ❖ Contributions
- ❖ Sponsorships
- ❖ Holiday Parties
- ❖ Summer Picnic
- ❖ Networking Social

COMMITTEES

Establish committees that can address the needs of the chapter and the interests of your membership.

- ❖ Finance/Fund Raising
- ❖ Membership
- ❖ Professional Development
- ❖ Education & Research
- ❖ Public Relations/Visibility
- ❖ Planning

MARKETING/VISIBILITY/GROWTH/PUBLIC RELATIONS

Establish programs that will help expose the chapter, grow your local membership and support the mission of NOMA.

- ❖ Awards Program/Banquet
- ❖ Contests/Competition
- ❖ Speak at Schools
- ❖ Oversee School Chapters
- ❖ Tour Trip
- ❖ Historical Exhibit
- ❖ Education Exhibit Sponsorship
- ❖ Summer Camp Programs

Be aware that a significant component of any organizational hierarchy is the bylaws. The operation and success of the chapter may be highly dependent on this set of regulations. This is precisely why it is highly recommended that you coordinate this task with other interested members as well as with other chapter presidents and your regional VP. With the collective dedication and experience of the group, a promising and sturdy foundation to this new chapter can be laid. As an added bonus, this endeavor will allow you to become active and engaged with other members of the organization. One of the organizations strongest assets is networking and it should be taken full advantage of at every opportunity.

NOMA CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION

The NOMA Conference and Exposition is the best networking opportunity NOMA has to offer. The National Conference is a chance to get to know the many people involved in the organization from every corner of the country. While it is a lot of fun it also comes with a lot of work. Immediately upon initiating your chapters efforts, steps should be taken to plan out how the chapter will get to the conference. Some chapters choose to begin a committee especially to serve that purpose.

Each chapter is encouraged to include in its budget the conference registration costs for the president, treasurer and membership committee representative. All will be requested to attend meetings at the conference. It is important, as a means to stay connected with all the chapters and the national Board of Directors, that all are available to attend.

Providing the means for these officers and any other members of the local chapter to attend the conference should be a priority for the chapter.

CONCLUSION

Starting a chapter is a commendable undertaking and as previously mentioned it is one which serves the best interests of all constituents involved. It is for this reason that NOMA and its resources enthusiastically support your efforts and hope to provide you with all the tools you may need to successfully expand the reach of the organization.

Chartering a chapter requires outreach which is highly encouraged by NOMA. Learning from other chapters' experiences will elevate your position as a charter member. The organization is meant to operate collectively, coming to each other's aid and fueling the progression of the organization to become a better and stronger, unified entity.

It is our hope that you will not hesitate to reach out to those contacts outlined within the guide to facilitate the chartering of a new chapter. This is your single most pressing task – reach out. Use the experience and valuable resources at your disposal to make the establishment of a new professional chapter a reality. NOMA looks forward to your success!