

NCARB 2018 Re-Think Tank Summary

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In January of 2018, NCARB established a Re-Think Tank committee to meet and discuss elements of the licensure process. More specifically, the charges set forth for the committee include discussions around firm and NCARB support through licensure, the ARE 4.0 to 5.0 transition, and the meaning of the “competent practice of architecture”. The Re-Think Tank consists of 12 recently licensed architects who are chosen through an application process. The second group of Re-Think Tank members was selected in October of 2018 with 11 states represented, including Tennessee.

I became involved with the Re-Think Tank because I want to share my path to licensure, especially to encourage others to get excited about the profession. I received my license less than two years after graduating with my Bachelor of Architecture degree. I feel as though my young age has allowed me to bring a new perspective to the discussion about architecture, specifically in this region. Therefore, I believe that recent graduates like myself should obtain licensure to allow our strengths in new ideas and technologies to further guide the profession.

The Re-Think Tank met at the NCARB Committee Summit in Atlanta at the end of November to conduct short sessions with other NCARB committees including the Think Tank, Education Committee, Experience Advisory Committee, Examination Committee, Policy Advisory Committee, the Model Law Task Force and the NCARB Board of Directors. Some recurring topics of interest in committee discussions include competency, the ARE 4.0/ARE 5.0 transition, and the Model Law.

The discussion surrounding the “meaning of the competent practice of architecture” involves several committees as well as NAAB and ACSA. This topic is simple yet multifaceted. Do newly licensed architects possess the minimum competency required to practice architecture? In order to answer this, the baseline competency first must be defined. Even then, not every architect gets their license at the same point in their careers, with the same experience and knowledge. Because of these and many other considerations, the discussion regarding competency is extensive throughout NCARB committees.

Some of NCARB’s committees are reviewing the ARE 4.0/ARE 5.0 transition. They are especially interested in communications and knowledge of the transition. NCARB is interested in the perceived level of NCARB support through the transition and through the licensure process as a whole; how does NCARB get information out to young professionals and communicate effectively? This discussion includes thoughts regarding NCARB’s transparency in the licensure process so that professionals understand the role of NCARB as opposed to the state board and know when it is better fitting to talk to the state board with specific issues.

In addressing the state boards, the Model Law also is a large topic of discussion. The Model Law Task Force has been working for 3 years on updating and reorganizing the Model Law to assist states in modifying and reforming state laws. This Model Law separates many regulations out from statutes and would ultimately help each jurisdiction control the governing regulations more efficiently, without having to go to legislators to open the law, should the state choose to adopt pieces of the Model Law. This includes discussions regarding the differences between state requirements specifically for licensure. At this time, the only consistency in all 55 member jurisdictions is the acceptance of the ARE as the licensing exam. NCARB serves to support the state boards by providing a Model Law that can assist the states in achieving consistency for architects across jurisdictions.

I personally ran into some issues with the differences in state requirements for licensure. I began the licensure process in Arkansas but moved to Tennessee when I was in the process of completing my AXP hours. Once I completed the process, I looked to change my jurisdiction to Tennessee but discovered I was not able to get my license here because of the requirement to have 3 years of experience in addition to AXP hours. I had 2.5 years of experience at the time that I had completed all the ARE exams and AXP hours. Arkansas, however, has no duration requirement so I was able to keep Arkansas as my jurisdiction and get my license there. This is important to the discussions of competency because NCARB establishes the baseline competency for licensure to ensure the safety and well-being of the public. While I don't have the same experience as a professional who practiced for 10 years before achieving licensure, I do believe that recent graduates, like myself who are able to meet the NCARB requirements for licensure, know the limits of their experiential knowledge and are competent to practice architecture with a license. I believe the duration requirement can discourage recent graduates from starting the licensure process right out of school and further think that continuity between jurisdictions would make the process easier to understand and follow for candidates looking to start the licensure process.

The Re-Think Tank will meet again in January and March to continue these discussions.