

Walter Lee Davis, Jr. &  
Leonard H. Neiman

# Council of Excellence Award



## COUNCIL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD INFORMATION

### INTRODUCTION



The National Association of Estate Planners & Councils Council of Excellence Award recognizes councils affiliated with the NAEPC that are positioned toward success. The program criteria were carefully developed with all council sizes in mind by a task force of council leaders, past presidents of NAEPC, and current board members.

We are excited that your council is interested in applying for this honor and look forward to receiving your application on or before **May 19, 2023**. Should you have questions during the process, please contact us at [admin@naepc.org](mailto:admin@naepc.org) or 866-226-2224.

The Council of Excellence Award is named for two individuals who sought to strengthen the bond between NAEPC and its affiliated councils during their terms on the board. Walter Lee Davis, Jr. served as president of the association in 2008 and was instrumental in forming the [Council Relations Committee](#), a group of volunteer members charged with being a liaison between affiliates and the national association. Leonard H. Neiman served the association as a board member for over fifteen years. He worked tirelessly to organize information about affiliated and unaffiliated councils around the country, and to contact their leadership to explain the benefit of membership.



### AWARD

Awards are offered within the following council sizes:

Extra Small/Small (1-100 members)  
Medium (101 – 250 members)

Large (251 – 400 members)  
Extra Large (401 members or more)

Each application will be assessed in the following areas: Membership, Programming & Communication; Leadership, Council Operations & Financial Health; General Information; and Involvement with NAEPC. Please consider only the council's activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023 when completing the application.

The award ceremony is currently planned to take place at the [Annual Estate Planning Strategies Conference during Council Leadership Day](#). Each winning council will be entitled to:

- Complimentary registration for two board members to attend the Annual Estate Planning Strategies Conference the year in which the honor is awarded
- Complimentary group webinars for an entire year (one feed that can be viewed by a group of members in a single location)
- The option of utilizing the “No-charge Speaker Program” with NAEPC covering reasonable travel and lodging expenses to do so
- An announcement of the award in the NAEPC newsletters and on [www.NAEPc.org](http://www.NAEPc.org)

## ADDITIONAL AWARDS

The committee may also bestow the “5 Star Council” award, an honor presented to a select group of councils that exhibit strong qualities and employ best practices. 5 Star Councils can take advantage of an entire year of complimentary group webinars (one feed that can be viewed by a group of members in a single location or on a virtual call).



At its discretion, the committee may also bestow the “Emerging Council” award, an honor presented to those councils that have demonstrated significant accomplishment, but have not qualified for the Council of Excellence or 5 Star award.



As our thank you, all applying councils will receive two complimentary group webinars (one feed that can be viewed by a group of members in a single location or on a virtual call) and all applicants will be invited to a special breakfast at the annual conference.

## PROCESS & TIMELINE

Councils that wish to apply for the Council of Excellence Award should complete the enclosed application and return it to NAEPC on or before **May 19, 2023**.



Councils chosen to receive an award are expected to be notified via email during August. All councils that were not chosen year will receive a letter from our national office, postmarked during August.

## GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING & SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Councils that have previously been awarded Council of Excellence, 5 Star Council, or Emerging Council status are permitted to apply again in 2023. *This policy is subject to change in future years.*

A PowerPoint presentation, “Achieving Council Excellence, Wise Ways to Exceed Member Expectations and Score Higher on the Council of Excellence Award” can be downloaded [HERE](#).

This application is designed for simplicity and is quick and easy to complete. It’s important to note that the application changes slightly from year-to-year. Please take special care to review each section when completing it.

Those serving on the NAEPC Council Relations Committee or its Council of Excellence Sub-Committee are prohibited from completing the application.



The final submission should not exceed 25 pages; a single PDF file is preferred. Please ensure that all pages of the application are legible and prepared with an appropriately-sized font. For consistency of review, documents other than those specifically requested will be disregarded (examples: financial statements, meeting outlines, bylaws, etc.).

Please contact the NAEPC office if your file is larger than 10MB in size to arrange for an alternative delivery email address. You will receive an email confirmation that your application has been received.

## ERRORS / OMISSIONS / INCONSISTENT INFORMATION

Occasionally, errors or incorrect/inconsistent information is found during the committee’s review of the application. If NAEPC informs a council of same, the council must respond as requested by the date provided by NAEPC in the follow up notification. Councils that fail to respond or respond after the date requested may be disqualified. Councils that fail to submit information properly and as explained in the application may also be disqualified.

## TELL US YOUR STORY

The remainder of the application is where you have an opportunity to tell us your story; what makes your council shine. Please check the boxes in each section as appropriate and include narrative for each section. Don't be shy! Although we've given guidance for what you might want to include in each narrative, you are free to include any information you feel fits with the topic of that particular section.

***When completing this application, please consider only your council's activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023.***

*A Word about the Importance of Narrative* - The narrative you provide is important and helps us gain an understanding of the council and its style and member service, and assists the review committee in its evaluation. Although not required, we recommend including hyperlinks to specific areas of the council website or outside websites that contain information specific to your application, when applicable. Narrative should not duplicate items that have been addressed within the application's check boxes, but may be used to provide clarification of why a particular box may not have been checked.



Remember, applications must be received by May 19, 2023 and should not be more than 25 total pages in length. **A SINGLE PDF FILE IS PREFERRED.**

Please contact the NAEPC office at (866) 226-2224 or email [admin@naepc.org](mailto:admin@naepc.org) with questions.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Application Date \_\_\_\_\_

Council Name \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact for Application\* \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Your position within the council (indicate one)      Council Executive      Board Member      Officer

Our council would like to be considered in the following category:

Extra Small/Small (1-100 members)

Large (251 – 400 members)

Medium (101 – 250 members)

Extra Large (401 members or more)

Length of Application (25 page limit) \_\_\_\_\_

## STATISTICS & ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Date of Formation \_\_\_\_\_

Current Membership # \_\_\_\_\_ Final Membership # / Most Recently-Closed Fiscal or Calendar Yr \_\_\_\_\_

Discipline Representation/Most Recently-Closed Fiscal or Calendar Yr (percent of total membership)

Attorney

Financial Planning

Philanthropy

Accountant

Insurance/Financial

Trust

Insurance

Planning (if combined)

Other (please explain)

Explanation for Other Disciplines

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Number and Percent of [Accredited Estate Planner®](#) (AEP®) Designees within Membership

Total Number

Total Percent

With the global pandemic nearly behind us, please share how your council changed its operations, programming, or member services on a *semi-permanent* or *permanent* basis as a result and how these changes impact the member experience.

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# THE APPLICATION

## MEMBERSHIP, PROGRAMMING & COMMUNICATION

*Approximate Percent of Total Score: 45%*

Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023, making sure to include additional information where requested. **The narrative requested with certain checkboxes must be complete or points may be deducted.**

The core value of NAEPC and its affiliated councils is a belief in the team concept of estate planning. As a result, membership should be reflective of the team. Please tell us more about your council's membership here:

- Our board adopts a retention and growth goal each year and reviews reports related to the progress of both, along with our total membership number.
- We have an active membership committee that is an entirely separate body from the board of directors.
- Our council has a guest registration policy that permits non-member attendance at our events.
- Guests are approached by board members or other volunteers tasked with welcoming duties at every meeting and encouraged to explore membership.
- Our council recognizes guests at all meetings.
- We have conducted a general membership survey in the last year and are responsive to the feedback provided.
- We have an annual member-to-member recruitment campaign.
- Members are encouraged to serve on committees or to participate in task force work.
- Our council has collaborated with another Estate Planning Council by hosting a joint meeting or event.

### *Questions with Required Narrative*

- We have joint meetings with allied professional organizations. Please describe these events and share which organization(s) your council is cooperating with here:

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- Our board has a process by which we regularly review the disciplines accepted for membership and make changes when indicated. Please explain your review process here:

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- We have alternative membership categories (junior, student, associate, etc.). Please describe:

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- We have a young member initiative. Please share a description of the initiative here:

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- We recognize new members. Please share how here:

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- We acknowledge member milestones. Please explain how here:

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Estate planning councils are often praised for two of their strongest qualities – providing an excellent networking opportunity that allows members to cultivate a network of professionals and offering outstanding professional education. Please tell us more about your council’s programming here:

- Throughout our programming year or season, we diversify the schedule so that all disciplines invited to membership are represented by topics within.
- We host non-educational events (socials, meet ups, volunteering events) to appeal to a larger cross-section of members and prospective members.

*Questions with Required Narrative*

- We offer relevant and timely programs and events that support the multi-disciplinary concept of estate planning and are responsive to current issues in the estate planning profession. Please describe how your programming calendar is created here:

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- We focus on ensuring that at least 25% of our members attend one or more programs each year. How is this monitored?

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Communication with members and within the larger professional community is important to membership growth and retention. Please tell us more about your council’s communication plan here:

- Our website is reviewed at least once per year, updated regularly, promotes our activities, is a resource for members and visitors, and the content within is current.
- Meetings and events are scheduled to avoid overlap with related professional organizations and are observant of all holidays.
- Our announcements are thorough and include all pertinent information: speaker, title, creative write-up/description, topic, location, how to register, etc.
- Meeting and event announcements are sent a minimum of one month in advance and at least one reminder is sent until the event takes place.
- Electronic payments are accepted for dues and/or meetings.
- A membership directory is easily accessible to consumers and other professionals who may be looking for a referral (examples: online member listing, electronic or hard copy directory, etc.)

*Questions with Required Narrative*

- A full and complete schedule of events is disseminated early in the year at the beginning of our fiscal or calendar year so members can reserve them on their calendars. Please tell us when your council distributes its calendar in relation to your programming calendar here:

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## MEMBERSHIP, PROGRAMMING & COMMUNICATION NARRATIVE

Please use this narrative section to share information about your council related to membership, programming & communication that has *not been addressed in the questions above*. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- recruitment campaigns
- awards bestowed upon your membership
- recruitment initiatives
- social media
- statistics on member engagement
- stories of innovative events or approaches to programming
- continuing education credit

As with the remainder of the application, please consider and report on the council's activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023.

## LEADERSHIP, COUNCIL OPERATIONS & FINANCIAL HEALTH

*Approximate Percent of Total Score: 40%*

Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023, making sure to include additional information where requested. **The narrative requested with certain checkboxes must be complete or points may be deducted.**

The key determinant in assuring the longevity of an estate planning council is an active and engaged board, chosen fairly from the membership at-large. Please share information about your council's leadership here:

- The council has a succession plan in place with regard to officers.
- We conduct a yearly self-assessment, whether using this application or other methods as a guide, and plan meetings and council activities based on the results.
- We have a copy of the most current bylaws, follow them, and review them regularly.
- We have a council executive / paid staff member.
- Our council has the following insurance policies currently in place:
  - (a) general liability insurance.
  - (b) directors & officers insurance.

### *Questions with Required Narrative*

- Our council prioritizes diversity within the board structure. Describe your efforts here:

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- We keep prior leaders engaged after their term is over. Please share how here:

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A financially healthy council is a strong council. Please share more about your council's financial health here:

- A budget is prepared yearly, and adjustments are implemented when necessary.
- Our board receives complete financial statements from the treasurer no less than quarterly.
- We accept sponsors for meetings, our website, or other purposes.
- Our council had a positive net income during the most recently closed calendar or fiscal year.
- Our board maintains at least six months of operating expenses in reserve.

## LEADERSHIP, COUNCIL OPERATIONS & FINANCIAL HEALTH NARRATIVE

Please use this narrative section to share information about your council related to leadership, council operations, and financial health *that has not been addressed in the questions above*. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- stories of re-invigorating a board of directors
- new approaches to choosing a board of directors
- recent bylaw changes and the reason(s) for doing so
- significant growth in non-dues revenue
- new or revamped sponsorship campaigns
- plans to grow reserves
- new efficiencies related to council operations or member service

As with the remainder of the application, please consider and report on the council's activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023.

## GENERAL NARRATIVE: SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE

*Approximate Percent of Total Score: 10%*

Please use this section of the application to share information about your council that has *not been included in other areas of the document or addressed in the questions*. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- how your council's work supports our shared value of "Collaboration · Education · Cultivation"
- consumer outreach
- the council's approach to National Estate Planning Awareness Week
- how the council works with "sister" organizations within the community
- efforts related to diversity, equity & inclusion
- scholarship programs
- what makes the council unique, different, or special

As with the remainder of the application, please consider and report on the council's activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023. You may add an additional page to this narrative if necessary.

## INVOLVEMENT WITH NAEPC

*Approximate Percent of Total Score: 5%*

Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023, making sure to include additional information where requested. **The narrative requested with certain checkboxes must be complete or points may be deducted.**

- Our board contains an NAEPC Liaison position, and this person reports at each board meeting.
- We have a website hosted through NAEPC or by another vendor that contains ample accurate and updated links to the NAEPC national website and the information contained within regarding member benefits, etc.
- We participate in the Every Council Campaign or distribute *NAEPC News* or contents from within via email and/or in print to our members.
- We have participated in the Council Nominated Accredited Estate Planner® designation program by nominating one or more members within the last twelve months.
- Our council participated in at least one event offered as part of the [Council Leader Education Series](#) within the last twelve months.
- We forward information provided by NAEPC about the webinars to our membership.
- We inform our council's members via email when a new issue of the [NAEPC Journal of Estate & Tax Planning](#) is available and encourage them to subscribe.

### *Questions with Required Narrative*

- Accredited Estate Planner® designees within our membership are recognized regularly. Please explain how here:

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- We distribute information about the Annual Estate Planning Strategies Conference to our membership at meetings and via email and encourage council members to attend while together at meetings and when other opportunities allow. Please tell us how you share these details here:

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- Our estate planning council leadership explains the relationship between our council and NAEPC, ensuring that our members understand what the council's membership in NAEPC provides by way of benefits. When and how is this relationship explained?

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## SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- Optional one-page cover letter
- Optional one-page general statement
- The application (only pages 4 - 12 of this packet need to be submitted)
- Complete programming schedule for two most recently completed fiscal or calendar years
- The three most recent meeting announcements (a copy and paste from your council's website or printed and scanned pages works well for this purpose)

Please complete the entire application and return it, along with the above-referenced required documents, to the NAEPC office by **May 19, 2023**. Electronic submissions to [admin@naepc.org](mailto:admin@naepc.org) are preferred.



\*NAEPC will communicate with the primary contact for any questions during application review and to inform the council of the outcome of the application. Follow up email for Council of Excellence, 5 Star Council, and Emerging Council awardees will be sent to all board members currently on record with NAEPC. If you feel that the data on record may be outdated, please submit a [board update](#) to NAEPC.

Remember, applications must be received by May 19, 2023 and should not be more than 25 total pages in length. **A SINGLE PDF FILE IS PREFERRED.**

National Association of Estate Planners & Councils  
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