

Walter Lee Davis, Jr. &  
Leonard H. Neiman

# Council of Excellence Award

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# COUNCIL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD APPLICATION INFORMATION

## INTRODUCTION



Now in its seventh year, the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils Council of Excellence Award is designed to recognize 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 14, 2021**. Should you have questions during the process, please contact our national office.

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 make contact with their leadership to explain the benefit of membership.

## AWARD

Council of Excellence 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 Growth & Retention; Leadership & Council Management; Programming & Events; Communications; Financial Health; Involvement with NAEPC; Estate Planning Outreach; Successes, Challenges and What Makes Us Unique; and Response to COVID-19. Please consider the council's activities from May 2020 through the current time when completing the application.

The award ceremony will 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 2021 Council of Excellence Award should complete the enclosed application and return it to NAEPC on or before **May 14, 2021**.



Councils chosen to receive an award are expected to be notified via email by July 30, 2021. All councils that were not chosen year will receive a letter from our national office, postmarked no later than July 30, 2021.

It's not too early to plan your trip to the November 2 - 5, 2021 Annual NAEPC Advanced Estate Planning Strategies Conference, however. Registration opens on or near April 1<sup>st</sup> and all council representatives are encouraged to attend and to register early. Should your council be chosen as a Council of Excellence, any prepaid registration fee for someone entitled to a complimentary registration will be promptly refunded.

## GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING & SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

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.

The review committee prefers electronic submissions in a PDF format. Please contact the NAEPC office if your file is larger than 10MB in size to arrange for an alternative delivery address. You will receive an email confirmation that your application has been received. The application must include all required attachments, which are described on the next page.

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](#).

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



**The final application/application packet should not exceed 25 pages including the application, required attachments, and supplemental information.** You may include a one page cover letter and a one page general statement. 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.).

*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. It is recommended that the narrative include commentary on items not covered within the application's check boxes, or provide clarification of why a particular box may not have been checked.

## 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 have previously been awarded Council of Excellence or 5 Star Council status are permitted to apply again in 2021.** *This policy is subject to change in future years.*

## QUESTIONS

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

## COUNCIL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD APPLICATION FOR AWARDS IN 2021

### 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 is applying 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

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	_____ Accountant	_____ Insurance
_____ Financial Planning	_____ Insurance/Financial	_____ Planning (if combined)
_____ Philanthropy	_____ Trust	_____ Other (please explain)

Explanation for Other Disciplines

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Number      \_\_\_\_\_ Total Percent

## REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

- ☐ Complete programming schedule for two most recently completed fiscal or calendar years
- ☐ Three recent meeting announcements
- ☐ Other items you feel would be helpful for the review committee that fit within the guidelines for completing the application (see “Guidelines for Completing the Application” found on page two of this application packet)

Please complete the entire application and return it, along with the above-referenced required documents, to the NAEPC office by **May 14, 2021**. While electronic submissions to [admin@naepc.org](mailto:admin@naepc.org) are preferred, hard copy submissions will be accepted if postmarked by May 14, 2021.

National Association of Estate Planners & Councils  
1120 Chester Ave., Ste. 470  
Cleveland, OH 44114  
[admin@naepc.org](mailto:admin@naepc.org)



\*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 officers currently on record with NAEPC.

## 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 consider including 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 in that particular section and we recommend not duplicating items that you have already shared in the check boxes.

***When completing this application, please consider your council's activities from May 1, 2020 through the current date.***



Remember, applications must be received electronically or postmarked by May 14, 2021 and should not be more than 25 total pages in length.

## THE APPLICATION

### MEMBERSHIP GROWTH & RETENTION

*Approximate Percent of Total Score: 20%*

The core value of NAEPC and its affiliated councils is support of the team concept of estate planning. As a result, membership should be reflective of the team. Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021, making sure to include additional information on this page when requested rather than including it in the narrative section.

- ☐ Our board adopts a retention and growth goal each year and systematically monitors the progress of both, along with our total membership number.
  - ☐ We have an active membership committee.
  - ☐ 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:*
- 

- ☐ Our council has a guest registration policy that permits non-member attendance at our events; we recognize guests at all meetings; and, we ensure that guests are approached by or have access to board members or other volunteers tasked with welcoming duties.
  - ☐ We have alternative membership categories (junior, student, associate, etc.)
  - ☐ We have conducted a general membership survey in the last three years and are responsive to the feedback provided.
  - ☐ We have a young member initiative.  
*Please share a description of the initiative here:*
- 

- ☐ We recognize new members.  
*Please share how here:*
- 

- ☐ We have an annual member-to-member recruitment campaign.
- ☐ We celebrate member milestones.
- ☐ Members are encouraged to serve on committees or to participate in task force work.
- ☐ We have joint meetings with allied professional organizations.
- ☐ See the following narrative for more information about this section.  
*Examples of information to provide could include, but are not limited to: initiatives with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion, recent recruitment campaigns, awards bestowed upon your membership, new or innovative recruitment events, social media efforts that contributed to growth, etc.*

## NARRATIVE FOR MEMBERSHIP GROWTH & RETENTION

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## LEADERSHIP & COUNCIL MANAGEMENT

### *Approximate Percent of Total Score: 18%*

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 check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021, making sure to include additional information on this page when requested rather than including it in the narrative section.

- ☐ The council has a succession plan in place with regard to officers and prioritizes diversity within the board structure.

*Describe your efforts here:*

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- ☐ 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 current bylaws, follow them, and review them regularly.
- ☐ We have a council executive / paid staff member.

Our council has secured:

- ☐ (a) general liability insurance.
- ☐ (b) directors & officers insurance.

- ☐ See the following narrative for more information about this section.

*Examples of information to provide could 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, etc.*

NARRATIVE FOR LEADERSHIP & COUNCIL MANAGEMENT  
500 word maximum / font not smaller than 10 point

## PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

### *Approximate Percent of Total Score: 18%*

Estate planning councils are often praised for two of their strongest qualities – providing an excellent networking opportunity and offering outstanding professional education. Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021, making sure to include additional information on this page when requested rather than including it in the narrative section.

- ☐ We offer relevant, timely, and interesting programs and events that support the multi-disciplinary team 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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- ☐ Throughout our programming year or season, all of the disciplines are represented within the programming schedule.
  - ☐ We focus on ensuring that at least 25% of our members attend one or more programs each year. *How is this monitored?*
- 

- ☐ We have implemented non-educational events in an effort to appeal to a larger cross-section of members and potential members.

See the following narrative for more information about this section.

- ☐ *Examples of information to provide could include, but are not limited to: statistics on member engagement/attendance, stories of exciting or innovative events or approaches to programming, availability of continuing education credit, etc.*

## NARRATIVE FOR PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

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## COMMUNICATIONS

### *Approximate Percent of Total Score: 12%*

Communication with members as well as within the larger professional community is important to membership growth and retention. Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021, making sure to include additional information on this page when requested rather than including it in the narrative section.

- ☐ Our website is reviewed, updated regularly, promotes our activities, is a resource for members and visitor, and the content within is current.
  - ☐ Regular 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.  
A full schedule of events is disseminated early in the 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:*
- 

- ☐ Specific 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 accessible to consumers and other professionals who may be looking for a referral (*examples: online member listing, electronic or hard copy directory, etc.*)
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- ☐ See the following narrative for more information about this section.  
*Examples of information to provide could include, but are not limited to: general social media efforts designed for member engagement, a refreshed look at meeting announcements, stories of substantive changes to the website, etc.*

## FINANCIAL HEALTH

### *Approximate Percent of Total Score: 7%*

A financially healthy council is a strong council. Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021, making sure to include additional information on this page when requested rather than including it in the narrative section.

- ☐ A budget is prepared yearly and monitored, our board receives a financial report from the treasurer no less than quarterly, and adjustments are implemented when necessary.
- ☐ We accept sponsors for meetings, our website, or other purposes.
- ☐ During the most recently closed calendar or fiscal year, our council has a positive net income.
- ☐ Our board maintains at least six months of operating expenses in reserve.
- ☐ See the following narrative for more information about this section.  
*Examples of information to provide could include, but are not limited to: significant growth in non-dues revenue, new or revamped sponsorship campaigns, plans to grow reserves, etc.*

## NARRATIVE FOR COMMUNICATIONS

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## NARRATIVE FOR FINANCIAL HEALTH

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## 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, 2020 through May 1, 2021, making sure to include additional information on this page when requested rather than including it in the narrative section.

- ☐ Our board contains a position that serves as a liaison to NAEPC and this person reports regularly at our board meetings.  
We have a website hosted through NAEPC or have a website hosted by another vendor that
  - ☐ contains ample 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.
  - ☐ Accredited Estate Planner® designees within our membership are recognized regularly.  
*Please explain how here:*
- 

- ☐ We have participated in the Council Nominated Accredited Estate Planner® designation program by nominating one or more members within the last three years.  
Our council sends at least one leader and/or our executive to Council Leadership Day at the Annual
  - ☐ Estate Planning Strategies Conference every year and we also participate in Regional Leadership Day when that program is in our geographic region.  
We distribute information about the Annual Estate Planning Strategies Conference to our
  - ☐ membership at meetings or 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:*
- 

- ☐ 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?*
- 

- ☐ We forward information provided by NAEPC about the webinars to our membership.  
We promote the [\*NAEPC Journal of Estate & Tax Planning\*](#) to our membership, inform them when a new issue is available, and encourage them to subscribe.
- ☐ See the following narrative for more information about this section.  
*Examples of information to provide could include, but are not limited to: how your council is integrating with NAEPC, whether someone within your leadership or membership is volunteering with NAEPC, whether you are using the programming or other resources offered by NAEPC, etc.*



## NARRATIVE FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH NAEPC

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## ESTATE PLANNING OUTREACH

### *Approximate Percent of Total Score: 5%*

NAEPC encourages councils to engage in consumer outreach and recommends doing so in conjunction with National Estate Planning Awareness Week. Please check all of the items below that apply to your council and its activities from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021.

- ☐ We host/co-host an Estate Planning Day in our community that provides consumer-focused estate planning-related information.
- ☐ We offer college outreach and/or award scholarship grants.
- ☐ See the following narrative for more information about this section.

*Examples of information to provide could include, but are not limited to: description of existing consumer programs or upcoming events, explanation of scholarship programs or initiatives reaching local college students with an interest in estate planning, supplements in local papers, etc.*

## NARRATIVE FOR ESTATE PLANNING OUTREACH

500 word maximum / font not smaller than 10 point

## SUCCESSIONS, CHALLENGES & WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE

*Approximate Percent of Total Score: 10%, including all narratives and discretionary points*

Each of the councils affiliated with NAEPC experience success, encounters challenges, and has programs or services in place that make them distinctive. Please use this important section to share items related to your council's activities from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021 not included in the previous narrative sections.

## OUR COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

*Approximate Percent of Total Score: 5%*

Every organization had to rethink operations due to COVID-19. Please tell us how your council changed its operations, programming, or member services in light of the pandemic and how these changes impacted the member experience.