



Certified Emcee Professional™

Official Applicant Handbook

2027

NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION

APPLICATION WINDOW

November 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027

Deadline: 11:59 PM PST on January 31, 2027

Questions? Contact CEPAdmin@nsaspeaker.org

This handbook outlines the eligibility standards, competency framework, application materials, evaluation process, and renewal requirements for the Certified Emcee Professional (CEP) designation. The CEP credential recognizes professional excellence in event hosting, facilitation, and audience engagement within the meetings and events industry.

Program Vision

To redefine and elevate the role of the professional emcee as a critical driver of event success, audience connection, and conference culture. This certification program will establish industry-recognized standards for excellence in event hosting and facilitation while positioning emceeing as a distinct professional discipline requiring advanced communication, leadership, adaptability, and strategic presence.

The program will champion the value of skilled emcees not only as presenters, but as leaders who manage event challenges in real time, sustain audience energy, create meaningful engagement, and influence outcomes far beyond logistics. By challenging outdated assumptions that event hosting can simply be assigned to executives, board members, or internal stakeholders, the certification will advocate for investing in professional emcees with the same intentionality organizations bring to keynote speakers and other event talent.

Through professional standards, development, and recognition, the program will elevate the visibility, credibility, and impact of emcees across the meetings and events industry while strengthening the overall experience and success of conferences, meetings, and live events.

Certification Objectives

- Recognize professional excellence in emceeing through a nationally respected credential that validates advanced event leadership, audience engagement, facilitation expertise, and the ability to guide successful event experiences.
- Support continued professional development through structured learning, best practices, and industry standards that prepare emcees to lead dynamic, high-impact meetings, conferences, and live events.
- Increase the credibility and marketability of certified emcees by elevating awareness of the profession's strategic value within the events industry. The program will help shift industry perception by reinforcing that a skilled emcee is not simply a logistical moderator, but a critical contributor to audience experience, energy management, adaptability, event continuity, and overall event success.
- Promote greater representation and visibility within the emceeing profession by recognizing and elevating diverse voices, perspectives, styles, and leadership approaches. This certification should broaden the landscape of who is seen as a professional emcee and signal that excellence exists across diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities.
- Promote ethical standards, professionalism, and accountability that reflect the values and expectations of trusted event leaders.
- Strengthen a collaborative professional community aligned with NSA values, fostering connection, mentorship, innovation, and advocacy for the emceeing profession.
- Encourage organizations, associations, and event planners to invest intentionally in professional emcees with the same level of consideration given to keynote speakers and other event talent.

Two Pathways to Earn Your CEP™

There are two ways to qualify for the Certified Emcee Professional designation. Both pathways require the same application materials and are evaluated against the same Five E's framework. Choose the pathway that best reflects your professional experience.

	1 Volume & Consistency	2 Market Excellence
Engagements	Pathway 1 50+ in past 5 years	Pathway 2 30+ in past 5 years
Annual Income	\$50,000+ in 3 of last 5 years	\$80,000+ in 3 of last 5 years
Experience	5+ years professional	5+ years professional
Audience Size	50+ attendees	50+ attendees
NSA/GSF Event	1 event in last 10 years	1 event in last 10 years
Ethics	No violations in past 10 years	No violations in past 10 years

Applicants who meet the criteria for either pathway are equally eligible. Both are full pathways to the CEP designation — there is no hierarchy between them.

Eligibility Requirements

All applicants must meet the following baseline requirements in addition to qualifying under one of the two pathways above.

- A minimum of five (5) years of professional experience in event hosting, facilitation, or program leadership.
- **Pathway 1:** A minimum of 50 professional event engagements (within the past 5 years) serving in roles such as Emcee, Host, Facilitator, Entertainer as Emcee, or Moderator.
- **Pathway 2:** A minimum of 30 professional event engagements (within the past 5 years) serving in the same eligible roles.
- **Pathway 1:** Demonstrated income of at least \$50,000 per year derived from emceeing or hosting services in at least three (3) of the past five (5) years.
- **Pathway 2:** Demonstrated income of at least \$80,000 per year derived from emceeing or hosting services in at least three (3) of the past five (5) years.
- Audience size must be 50 attendees or more per engagement.
- Participation in NSA programming or equivalent professional development activities.
- Must have attended at least one NSA or GSF equivalent event in the last 10 years.
- No ethics violations within the past ten (10) years and maintenance of professional standing.

Counting Your Engagements

You are able to break down your engagement events by day. For example, if you work a three-day conference, each day may be counted as one entry on your experience spreadsheet. Depending on the event structure and your role, you may qualify for more than one line item per engagement. Document each separately with the relevant event details.

Event Context: Qualifying engagements should be in a professional, corporate, association, or public program context. Private events — including galas, fundraisers, award ceremonies, and corporate functions — may qualify when they include a structured program agenda and the applicant's primary responsibility is guiding participants through the event. Events where the dominant purpose is social entertainment and emcee duties are incidental to a DJ or performance role do not qualify.

Eligible Professional Titles

Applicants may hold any of the following professional roles. Engagements must reflect sustained, skilled leadership of event flow and audience engagement — not a single announcement or brief welcome.

Emcee Core Role

The throughline of the entire program. An Emcee opens the show, introduces speakers and segments, manages transitions and pacing, reads and engages the live audience, handles the unexpected, and closes the event. Their skill and presence are felt from start to finish. This is the core role the CEP designation recognizes.

Host

Represents an organization or venue, creates a welcoming environment, and may deliver a brief welcome or single introduction. Unlike an Emcee, an Event Host does not typically serve as the connective tissue between all program elements. A one-time welcome address or a single speaker introduction alone does not constitute an emcee engagement.

Facilitator

Guides a group through a structured process, discussion, workshop, or learning experience. The Facilitator's goal is helping participants reach a shared outcome — their role is process-oriented (moving a group toward a conclusion) rather than performance-oriented (connecting an audience to a live program). Facilitation engagements may qualify when your responsibilities include managing the room's energy and flow and the audience threshold is met.

Moderator

Manages a panel, Q&A session, or structured discussion. A Moderator keeps conversation focused, ensures balanced participation among panelists, draws out key insights, and connects ideas for the audience. Moderating a panel at a conference, summit, or forum qualifies as an eligible engagement when the audience and income thresholds are met.

Entertainer as Emcee Updated Definition

Uses performance as part of an emcee role, with responsibility for guiding the audience through the broader event program. To qualify, the entertainer must provide continuity between distinct program segments, facilitate transitions involving other speakers, performers, or activities, and support the event's objectives beyond their own performance. Standalone performances, regardless of length or audience interaction, do not qualify. The qualifying factor is what the performer is responsible for — not how entertaining they are or how long they are onstage.

✗ Does Not Qualify

Making an Announcement: Stepping to a microphone to direct guests ("Dinner is served in the ballroom"), share logistics, or make a single announcement — even from a main stage — does not qualify as an emcee engagement, regardless of how the event organizer labeled your role on the contract. CEP eligibility requires sustained, skilled leadership of program flow for a substantial portion of the event.

Applicants may combine engagements across these titles provided the responsibilities reflect professional leadership of event flow, audience engagement, and program continuity.

Core Competency Framework: The Five E's

- **Eloquence** – Communication mastery, clarity of message, and stage presence.
- **Enterprise** – Business acumen, professional sustainability, and client relationship management.
- **Ethics** – Integrity, inclusion, professionalism, and accountability.
- **Expertise** – Event management, preparation, collaboration with event stakeholders, and adaptability.
- **Engagement** – Audience activation, energy stewardship, and facilitation of meaningful experiences.

Application Materials

All applicants must submit the following materials as part of a complete CEP application. Applications are accepted during the open window: **November 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027 (11:59 PM PST)**.

- Completed CEP application form.
- Professional video portfolio consisting of 5–7 clips totaling a minimum of 20 minutes of emcee performance. Video submissions must be no older than three years at the time of application submission. Video clips must be raw and unedited — we do not want to see a sizzle reel. You will submit each clip by entering individual links via Dropbox, Vimeo, YouTube, Google Drive, etc.
- A minimum of three examples of professional event documentation (e.g., run-of-show, scripts, briefing materials).
- 10–15 client evaluations verifying professionalism, preparation, and performance.
- **Pathway 1:** Demonstrated income of at least \$50,000 per year derived from emceeing or hosting services in at least three (3) of the past five (5) years.
- **Pathway 2:** Demonstrated income of at least \$80,000 per year derived from emceeing or hosting services in at least three (3) of the past five (5) years.
- Audience size must be 50 attendees or more per documented engagement.

Selecting Your Video Clips

When choosing which clips to submit, keep the Five E's in mind — Eloquence, Enterprise, Ethics, Expertise, and Engagement. These competencies form the rubric your video portfolio will be evaluated against. Choose clips that collectively demonstrate your range across all five areas, not just your strongest individual moments.

Application Fee

NSA MEMBERS

\$375

NON-MEMBERS

\$988

Includes complimentary access to the NSA Digital Vault for one year

Application fees are non-refundable.

After Your Application Fee Is Paid

Once your application fee has been received, NSA Staff will send you a welcome email with next steps and a SurveyMonkey link. You will use this link to invite your evaluators to complete the required client evaluations as part of your application submission. Please share the link promptly so evaluators have adequate time to respond before the submission deadline.

Assessment & Evaluation

Applications move through three distinct phases from submission to certification decision. Understanding these phases will help you prepare and set expectations for the process.

PHASE 1

Submit Your Application

Complete the application form, upload your video portfolio, supporting documents, client evaluations, and experience spreadsheet.

PHASE 2

Video Clip Review

Your submitted clips are reviewed by the CEP Review Panel against the Five E's rubric for stage presence, engagement, expertise, ethics, and enterprise.

PHASE 3

Board Review & Vote

The full NSA Board of Directors convenes for a final review and vote. Certification decisions are issued in March.

Applications are evaluated by a trained CEP Review Panel using a standardized evaluation rubric aligned with the Five E's competency framework. Reviewers assess demonstrated professional skill, stage leadership, event management capability, and audience engagement effectiveness.

Final certification decisions are typically issued in March, after the final board vote.

Certification Term & Renewal

- Certification is valid for three (3) years.
- 10 credits of approved Continuing Education required per cycle.
- Minimum 10 emcee engagements during the certification period.
- Reaffirmation of the NSA Code of Professional Ethics required at renewal.
- Renew every three (3) years.

Earn 10 NSA and/or Global Speakers Federation (GSF) education credits in each three-year renewal period:

5 credits — Influence/GSF Association Member Event

2 credits — LIFT

5 credits — CEP/CSP/CPAE Summit

2 credits — Activate

1 credit/year (max 3) — Local Chapter Membership

2 credits — Local Chapter Presentation (1 hr. or more)

1 credit/event (max 10/yr) — Local Chapter Meeting Attendance

- Complete CEP Renewal Form.
- Review and confirm.
- Pay the \$125 administrative fee for Members; \$275 for Non-Members.

Recognition & Professional Standing

Certified Emcee Professionals may use the CEP designation and official digital badge. Certificants may be included in the NSA Certified Host Directory and may be eligible for additional professional visibility opportunities through NSA programming and events.

Professional Commitment

By applying for and maintaining the Certified Emcee Professional designation, applicants affirm their commitment to excellence in event leadership, ethical professional conduct, continued learning, and service to the meetings and events industry.

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