NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

DEADLINE TO APPLY: FEBRUARY 12, 2027

Step 1: Review Award Criteria and Build Portfolio.

- The award criteria is organized into “Required Evidence” and “Additional Evidence.” Student councils must meet all “Required Evidence” in order to apply each year. Student councils pursuing the NCOE Gold level must also meet a minimum number of “Additional Evidence” indicators.
- Gather documentation, meeting notes, samples, and other evidence of your student council meeting the award criteria.
- Organize a portfolio of evidence, whether electronic or printed copies, which can be presented to your school principal. NASC will not collect or review your portfolio at any point, so its format is at the discretion of each student council and principal.

Step 2: Present the Portfolio to the Principal.

- The council adviser and student members meet with the principal to present and review the completed portfolio, along with how the evidence meets award criteria. Be prepared to explain and respond to any questions from the principal.
- As part of the online application, your school principal will be asked to complete a form providing an affirmation and a recommendation for your council, based on the information presented during this meeting.

Step 3: Complete and Submit the Online Application.

- Designate one adviser or student to complete the application on behalf of the student council. Once started, the application can only be accessed and submitted by the user who started it.
- Sign into the online application portal using the same login credentials as for the NASC website.
- In the application, identify which award criteria you have met and share two or three examples of projects or activities led by the student council.
- The adviser and principal each provide a recommendation and affirmation that the student council has met the criteria to earn NCOE or NCOE Gold.
- After all components have been completed, log back into the application portal to submit before the deadline.

Questions? Contact us at:
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Required Evidence for High School Student Councils

I. Governance

Governing Documents

- ❑ 1. A constitution and/or set of bylaws exist and are used to govern the council.
- ❑ 2. Each council member receives a copy of the constitution/bylaws, and a copy is available on the web or in the school's media center where others may review the documents.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of student-led activities and meetings.

Elections

- ❑ 1. Evidence of elections that include activities or features found in civic elections.
- ❑ 2. Written election rules and/or campaign procedures.
- ❑ 3. There is a written process for ballot counting and announcing election results.

Meetings

- ❑ 1. Copy of student council meeting calendar or list of meeting dates.
- ❑ 2. Evidence that Parliamentary Procedures are regularly used during meetings.

II. Service

Participation in Service

- ❑ 1. Evidence of a service project that addresses a school or local need.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of a council-sponsored service project that promotes full student body participation.

Serving the Community

- ❑ 1. Evidence of a community service project.

III. General Activities and Operations

Spirit and Social Activities

- ❑ 1. Examples of two spirit or social activities.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity that highlights the diversity in the student body, or evidence of an activity that appeals to different student audiences.

Council Operations

- ❑ 1. Copy of student council budget.
- ❑ 2. Example of council role or member participation report.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of in-person or virtual meetings with the principal or designee.
- ❑ 4. Evidence of student council participation on a school-level committee, or evidence of student council participation on a district-level committee or school board.

Leadership Training

- ❑ 1. Evidence of participation in two or more in-person or virtual leadership training sessions by all council members. (These can include adviser-led lessons or those led by a guest facilitator.)

Communications

- ❑ 1. Example of a student council memo, announcement, or video broadcast.

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IV. Civic Engagement and Student Voice

Civic-Based Activities

- ❑ 1. Sample of council materials explaining an activity or project's civic connection, or evidence of an in-person or virtual presentation explaining the civic connections of council activities.

Student Voice

- ❑ 1. Evidence of student council activities that provide a forum or other in-person or virtual means for student opinions and ideas to be expressed and collected.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of at-large student participation on student council committees.

Additional Evidence for High School Student Councils

To be eligible for National Gold Council of Excellence recognition, student councils must meet at least 26 of the additional evidence indicators listed below. Each indicator must be in your council's portfolio and reviewed by your principal. For each section, check all boxes that apply and then write down the total number of additional evidence indicators met at the end of this section.

I. Governance

Governing Documents

- ❑ 1. Evidence of review, changes, or updates to the constitution or bylaws, or minutes from a meeting of the officers or a constitution/bylaws committee.

Elections

- ❑ 1. Involvement or contribution by local Board of Elections officials through information resources, presentations, or direct assistance.
- ❑ 2. Use of voting machines or online voting for school elections.
- ❑ 3. Student council elections include voter registration, voting precincts, or other characteristics of local/state elections.

Meetings

- ❑ 1. Samples of two meeting agendas and a description of how they are shared with the student body and faculty.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of at-large student participation on student council committees or in other supportive roles.

II. Service

Serving the School

- ❑ 1. Evidence of promoting service to members and others.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of a service project that benefits the school.
- ❑ 3. List of school needs identified by the student council that were considered as possibilities for a service project.

Serving the Community

- ❑ 1. Evidence of a student generated list of community needs.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of involvement by community leaders or groups with a council-sponsored service or service-learning project.

Service Learning

- ❑ 1. Evidence of council support for a service-learning project in the school.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of service-learning features in a student council service project, including planning, action, reflection, and celebrating success.

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III. General Activities and Operations

Spirit and Social Activities

- ❑ 1. Evidence in activity advertisements, goals, or statement of purpose that demonstrates the promotion of positive social behaviors.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity that aids in the transition of younger students into the middle level grades.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of an activity designed to engage new students and welcome them to the student body.

Council Operations

- ❑ 1. Copy of student council budget.
- ❑ 2. Copy of treasurer's report or meeting minutes showing finance activities.
- ❑ 3. Copy of council membership roll.
- ❑ 4. Evidence of a scrapbook or similar historical record of council activities.
- ❑ 5. Evidence of student council participation on a school-level committee.
- ❑ 6. Evidence of student council participation on a district-level committee or school board.
- ❑ 7. Copy of a student survey given during the current or previous school year.
- ❑ 8. Copy of a project or activity evaluation used with the student body.
- ❑ 9. Evidence of active membership with a district, state, or regional student council organization.

Fundraising

- ❑ 1. Evidence of a council-sponsored fundraising project or a charitable collection project if fundraising is not allowed.
- ❑ 2. Copy of project revenues and contributions report.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of pre-project research on potential charities.
- ❑ 4. List of reputable charitable groups and organizations considered by the student council.

Leadership Training

- ❑ 1. Evidence of adviser participation in a professional development session on student council or leadership.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of attendance or participation in officer training.
- ❑ 3. Sample of a leadership lesson or skill-building activity.

Communications

- ❑ 1. Evidence of council members' writing or oral presentations.
- ❑ 2. Copy of student council submission for publication or presentation (print or electronic media).

Building a Positive School Climate

- ❑ 1. Evidence of an activity that contributes to the development of a positive school climate.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity that fosters positive relations between faculty/staff and students.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of engaging or collaborating with a parent group connected to the school, such as PTA, PTO, boosters, etc.

Responsible Social Media Use

- ❑ 1. Example of using social media in an effective and responsible manner to communicate with council members and the student body.

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Wellness

- ❑ 1. Evidence of a council-led or hosted activity focused on healthy habits (exercise, nutrition, sleep, staying hydrated, etc.).
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity or instruction specifically for council members that focuses on their mental health (managing stress, emotions, personal/ relaxation time, etc).
- ❑ 3. Evidence of an activity or instruction specifically for council members that focuses on the importance of student leaders' wellness through healthy habits. (exercise, social connectedness (relationships), nutrition, sleep, etc.).

IV. Civic Engagement and Student Voice

Civic-Based Activities

- ❑ 1. Evidence of involvement by community leaders or agencies in a council project or activity.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of a council officer presentation to a civic board or committee, such as the school board, city council, or county board/committee, or civic club.

V. Other Council Activities

Local and State Involvement

- ❑ 1. Evidence of introducing or applying skills, knowledge, or ideas that were learned while attending a local or state event.
- ❑ 2. Student council hosts or participates in a joint activity with another school.

Other Leadership Training

- ❑ 1. Evidence of regular leadership training activities for student council members.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of leadership training provided to other clubs or to the general population of the student body.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of council members sharing their leadership skills by leading a training session or activity with younger students.

Total Number of Additional Evidence Indicators: _____
(Minimum 26 for Gold NCOE)

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Project Submission Guidelines

- Student councils applying for NCOE must enter a minimum of two (2) projects into their NCOE online application, or three (3) projects for Gold-level recognition.
- Projects must take place between January 1 and December 31, 2026.
- Projects similar to those of a previous year (e.g., homecoming, prom, etc.) may be submitted by including the year date of the project (e.g., “Spirit Week 2026”).
- Include photos of council members engaged in projects and any related video and media links.
- The following types of activities should not be submitted as projects in the online application: elections, committee and council meetings, attendance at conferences or workshops, and school events or assemblies where council members have no significant roles or responsibilities.

In the online application, enter projects including the title, category, and start and end dates. Then, respond to three short answer questions:

- Why did your council choose to do this project and who benefited from it?
- Describe your projects, how it was organized and led, and one or two memorable highlights.
- Reflect on the outcome of the project and its impact on council members, as well as the reception and impact of those served by the project.

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