

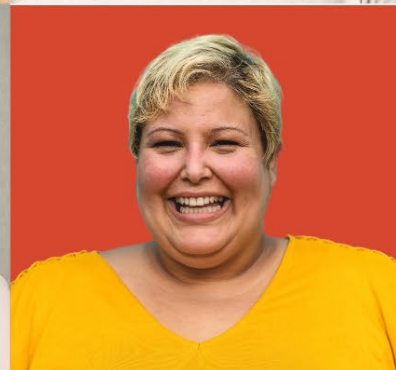
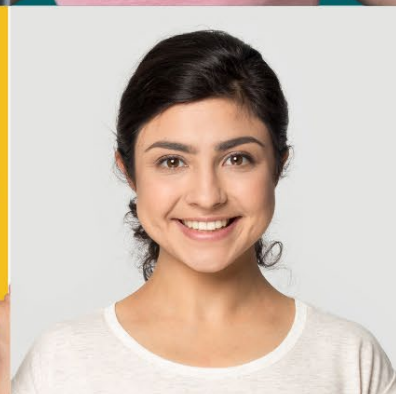


# Protégé Competition

**2025-2026**

PROGRAM MANUAL

**Your guide** to managing  
the CUxEL Protégé  
Competition



# 2025-2026 CUxEL Protégé Competition Manual

[Mission](#) | [Judging the Candidates](#) | [Rules & Guidelines](#) | [Awards & Prizes](#) | [Checklist](#)

## I. The Mission

Common concerns of increasing urgency to credit unions are the appeal to young people and development of promising individuals. Inspired by the Pennsylvania Credit Union Association's Youth Ambassador Program, the SC Credit Union League launched the Palmetto Protégé Competition in 2010 to address this growing concern.

Following the consolidation of the NC Credit Union League and SC Credit Union League, the Protégé program was rebranded and placed under the direction of the CUaware Leadership Council in 2014. It was again rebranded under the emerging leader initiative in 2023 as CUxEL Protégé.

Now the **CUxEL Protégé Competition**, the mission continues to: recognize the value and potential in rising professionals age 40 and under; enhance chapter programming and credit union interest; and support CUxEL and the League's investment in developing leadership.

Participation from the chapter system, elevates the visibility of credit union history, philosophy, and cooperation in a process that ultimately names a chapter representative to the competition finals, where the CUxEL Protégé is chosen. Participants gain greater credit union knowledge, networking experience, creative experience, and presentation skills.

## II. Judging the Candidates

### At the Chapter Level:

Judging at the chapter level and finals are based on the same criteria: Credit Union Knowledge – 25%; Ability to Communicate – 50%; and Personality – 25%.

Essay (CU Knowledge) — Credit union knowledge will be determined through a one-page essay, completed as part of the application process. The same general essay question will be asked of all candidates and the judges will assess the applicants grasp of the subject and writing skills.

Oral Presentation (Ability to Communicate) — Each chapter-level contestant will be asked to present a five-minute speech on a credit union subject selected from a League-provided list. PowerPoint is not required. Chapter winners have the option of presenting the same subject as their chapter-level presentation or choosing a new subject to share at the finals.

### At the Finals Level:

Exam (CU Knowledge) — The Carolinas Credit Union League will facilitate a proctored exam to all chapter winners at the finals. Finalists will have an hour to complete the multiple-choice test. Study materials will be provided to contestants well in advance of the finals. This portion of the competition should not be difficult for the candidate who is familiar with credit union operation, history, and philosophy.

Oral Presentation (Ability to Communicate) — Finalists will be asked to present their five-minute speeches on the topic they selected from the League-provided list. PowerPoint is not required.

### III. Rules and Regulations

1. Contestants must be at least 18 years of age and no more than 40 years of age by **February 10, 2026** prior to the finals, held in conjunction with the Carolinas Credit Union League's conference in February.
2. **Contestants must belong to a League-affiliated credit union** and must be sponsored by a chapter that has provided equal opportunity for all its member credit unions to participate in the competition. Equal opportunity includes advance written notice of the chapter competition simultaneously given to all credit unions in a chapter area.
3. Each participating credit union may be represented by only one (1) contestant. Each eligible chapter may be represented only by one (1) contestant in the finals. If more than one contestant exists, a winner must be decided. Credit unions that have branches in other chapter areas or are associate chapter members must have their nominee participate in either the contest of the chapter where the nominee works or in the chapter where the headquarters of the credit union is located.
4. **Chapter contests may be held between July 1, 2025, and December 5, 2025.** Chapters must submit a completed Chapter Participation Form to CCUL, prior to hosting their event, indicating that they plan to sponsor a contest. Chapters must inform every credit union in the chapter in writing that a contest will be held. CCUL will notify credit unions at the chapter's request.
5. Judging at the chapter-level and finals will be based on the following criteria:
  - a. Credit Union Knowledge 25%
  - b. Ability to Communicate 50%
  - c. Personality 25%
6. If they choose, individual credit unions and chapters may award prizes, cash or otherwise, to their Protégés and alternates at the end of a contest.
7. Each credit union will be responsible for its candidate's expenses in connection with the chapter competition.
8. Winners of any credit union competition automatically become eligible for a chapter competition, provided all rules have been properly observed and the chapter has agreed to host a competition. Chapter winners become eligible for the finals, provided all rules have been properly observed.
9. Each sponsoring chapter must provide to CCUL, no later than December 8, 2025:
  - a. A copy of the chapter winner's application/bio form
  - b. A copy of the winner's signed photo release form; and
  - c. A print-quality color photograph (digital 300 dpi, jpeg, or minimum size of 4" x 6") of your chapter protégé.
10. In the case of a candidate under 18 years of age when applying, a photo release form must be signed by the parent or guardian. Materials should be forwarded to:

**CUxEL Protégé Competition Coordinator**

Carolinas Credit Union League

Email: [development@carolinasleague.org](mailto:development@carolinasleague.org)

11. The chapter accepts primary responsibility for its winning candidate's expenses and may seek assistance from the winner's sponsoring credit union. Expenses for participation in the finals will include:
  - a. Conference registration;
  - b. Hotel accommodations; and
  - c. Meals and mileage/gas reimbursement (or stipend)
12. Accommodations at Finals: Finalists at the Carolinas Credit Union League's conference will be housed in the Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte Concord Golf Resort & Spa, 5400 John Q. Hammons Dr. NW, Concord, North Carolina, 28027. Chapter winners' respective credit unions should book their room and provide a copy of the receipt to their chapter for reimbursement.
13. Attendance at Finals: Finalists at the Carolinas Credit Union League's two-day conference are expected to be in attendance for all days of the competition program as the proctored exam will be disseminated on day one, and oral presentations on day two. Finalists are responsible for bringing their own laptop, tablet or smartphone device that will enable them to complete the online exam.
14. The winner of the finals will hold the title of CUxEL Protégé (unless revoked for cause) for one year, until a successor is selected at the following year's finals competition. Awards will be presented to the CUxEL Protégé, First Runner-Up and Second Runner-up.
15. Individuals receiving the title of the CUxEL Protégé become ineligible to re-enter future contests.
16. All participants in the finals, including the first and second runner-ups, may not compete during the immediate following year. After skipping one year, participants in the finals may compete again for the title, after repeating the process of being sponsored by a credit union and a chapter.
17. If for any reason the CUxEL Protégé should be unable to complete his or her one-year term, the title will be passed to the First Runner-up. In the event that the First Runner-up is unable to serve, the title will pass to the Second Runner-up.
18. Ineligible to participate at any level of the competition are employees and directors of the Carolinas Credit Union League and its affiliated organizations, and members of their immediate families. Staff members of the League are prohibited from serving as judges of any CUxEL Protégé Competition (including chapter contests) in North Carolina and South Carolina.

## IV. Awards & Prizes

All participants in the CUxEL Protégé competition gain enhanced credit union knowledge, positive reinforcement of their value to the movement, and networking via the process and membership in the CUxEL peer group. Program incentives are as follows.

### Chapter Protégé:

- Each chapter works with the finalist's sponsor credit union to support his/her participation in the CUxEL Protégé finals **February 10-11, 2026** including two nights lodging, mileage and some expenses (or a stipend). Estimated total value is \$500-600 (*estimation includes the cost of registration, hotel for two nights, meals, and gas reimbursement*).
- Chapter winners will also have the opportunity to sign up for the **CUxEL Mentor Program**, which pairs a protégé with a volunteer credit union leader for valuable cross-cultural impact and career development.

### CUXEL Protégé:

- The winner of the finals competition will have a position on the CUXEL Council. His or her responsibilities, coordinated by CUXEL, may include:
  - Presentations at various League chapter meetings on his or her background, experience, CUXEL, and the CUXEL Protégé programs;
  - Appearances at 1-2 premier League events during the year as a secondary presenter and CUXEL advocate; and/or
  - Assist in facilitating CUXEL events.
- Immediate benefit to the CUXEL Protégé and the two runners-up is a selection of the following developmental scholarships.
  - Southeast CUNA Management School – First year's registration **at current value** (requires commitment to three-year program)
  - CCUL Hike the Hill (Washington, DC) – Full participation including airfare and lodging, **valued up to \$1,500**
  - *TalentGuided* Professional Coaching Program – Eight counseling sessions, **valued at \$1,400**
  - Principles & Philosophy Conference + Webinar Voucher – Includes conference tuition, two nights lodging, meals, and a \$600 webinar voucher, **valued at \$1,300**.

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\*\*\*Recommended: Print Off Checklist on Last Page\*\*\*

## V. Checklist

- ☐ Inform all credit unions within your chapter about the CUXEL Protégé Competition at the same time.
- ☐ Distribute competition applications and promotional material to interested credit unions.
- ☐ Set a deadline for returned applications (including essays).
- ☐ Set a date and location for oral presentations.
- ☐ Score the results of the returned essays and oral presentations.
- ☐ Based on the results from judging the essay and oral presentation designate your Chapter Protégé.
- ☐ Send the results of your chapter winner to the Carolinas Credit Union League by **December 8, 2025** including bio, photo, and scoring results.
- ☐ Contact CCUL Professional Development ([development@carolinasleague.org](mailto:development@carolinasleague.org)) with any questions related to registering your chapter representative for the League's LAUNCH conference where finals will be held.