

# I want to earn a designation. Where do I start?

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In the dynamic field of B2B credit management, establishing your credibility and showcasing your expertise is essential. One of the most recognized ways to achieve this is by earning a [Professional Designation](#) from the National Association of Credit Management (NACM). However, the journey to certification can feel daunting, with numerous paths and options available.

**Why it matters:** These designations are industry-recognized benchmarks of proficiency, commitment and ethical standards in credit management. They not only validate your knowledge and skills but also significantly boost your credibility with employers, clients and peers. An NACM designation can open doors to career advancement, higher earning potential and increased job security.

Before embarking on the journey to earn an NACM designation, it's key to understand your motivations. Knowing your "why" provides a foundation for your efforts and keeps you focused during the process.

## Know your why

- **Career Advancement:** Achieving a designation can lead to promotions, raises and new job opportunities.
- **Professional Credibility:** A designation is a mark of expertise and commitment, enhancing your reputation in the industry.
- **Personal Development:** The process of earning a designation involves learning and growth, which can be personally fulfilling and build confidence.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Joining a community of NACM-certified professionals can open doors to valuable connections and resources.

Reflect on your personal motivations and how an NACM designation aligns with your career goals. This clarity will guide you through the challenges and help you stay committed.

Joining an association like NACM introduces credit managers to resources, knowledge and professional development needed to earn certifications. "Once I joined NACM, I knew I wanted to start working towards my designations," said Robbin Windham, [CBA](#), manager, credit and collections at WESCO Distribution, Inc. (Little Rock, AR). "I was so impressed talking with others who had completed their designation, I thought to myself, 'I want what they have.'"

## Choose your path

Deciding where to start depends on your current experience and career goals. NACM's [Career Roadmap](#) outlines the different journeys to a designation that are available. Points are awarded for both formal and continuing education, work experience, participation with both the Affiliated Associated and National levels, as well as special activities in which you may be involved. "Once I completed the class, the Career Roadmap requirements and the CBF application, I was able to sit for the CBF exam at Credit

Congress in Las Vegas,” said Rachel Daughrity, CBF, collections analyst at Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (La Vergne, TN).

NACM offers six designations tailored to various stages of a credit manager’s career. It is important to understand the differences of each. Here are some examples of paths you may take:

**1. Credit Business Associate (CBA)**

Ideal for: Entry-level credit professionals.

Focus: Basic financial statement analysis, business credit principles, and accounting.

Requirements: Completion of three core courses: Basic Financial Accounting, Financial Statement Analysis I and Business Credit Principles, followed by passing the CBA exam.

**2. Certified Credit Risk Analyst (CCRA)**

Ideal for: Any level credit professional holding a CBA designation.

Focus: Advanced financial analysis and risk skills.

Requirements: The CBA designation courses plus Intermediate Financial Statement Analysis.

**3. Credit Business Fellow (CBF)**

Ideal for: Mid-level credit professionals with a CBA designation.

Focus: Competence in business and credit law.

Requirements: Hold a CBA designation, complete two additional courses: Business Law and Credit Law, accumulate 75 Roadmap points and pass the CBF exam.

**4. Certified Credit Executive (CCE)**

Ideal for: Senior-level credit managers and executives.

Focus: High-level credit management, leadership and risk analysis.

Requirements: Hold a CBF designation or degree plus 10 years of experience in credit management, plus 125 Roadmap points and pass the rigorous CCE exam. OR bypass the 10 years of experience by completing the [Graduate School of Credit and Financial Management](#) and passing the CCE exam.

**The bottom line:** While the process of earning a Professional Certification may seem overwhelming at first, breaking it down into manageable steps can make it more approachable.