



**Certified Remodeling Designer  
(CRD)  
Program Manual**

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Applicable as of December 1, 2024. All policies, procedures, and fees are subject to change.





The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) has established the Certified Remodeling Designer (CRD) designation to promote the highest standards of remodeling design through credentialing of remodeling design professionals. By choosing to review this handbook, you have taken the first step toward joining those who will distinguish themselves by earning the CRD designation.

This handbook summarizes key aspects of the CRD program and is intended to help you understand the process of certification and recertification. The handbook is a useful reference as you:

- Make your decision whether to pursue the CRD
- Develop your course of study to meet the eligibility requirements of the CRD
- Complete the CRD application
- Seek to maintain (or provide yourself another opportunity to earn) the CRD

The Certified Remodeling Designer program reflects the current state of the industry and strives to be current with the existing Building Code (IRC and IBC), accepted business practices, and standard building practices. No single printed document can address every potential question, process, policy detail, or future change. You are encouraged to use this handbook as a supplement to the program information provided in the CRD Study Guide as well as information provided by NARI's certification staff, who may be contacted at (847) 298-9200 or [certification@nari.org](mailto:certification@nari.org).

### **The NARI Certification Board**

The NARI Certification Board, the certifying agency of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, is responsible for the governance of the CRD program, and all policy and standards related to the CRD designation. This program is administered by the NARI staff, which implements the policies. This structure allows the NARI Certification Board to maintain integrity concerning policy matters related to certification.

The NARI Certification Board issues certifications to individuals who successfully meet its standards. These individuals may present themselves to the public as Certified Remodeling Designers (CRD).



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## What is the purpose of the CRD designation?

The purpose of the CRD certification program is to:

- Establish the body of knowledge for Certified Remodeling Designers
- Assess the level of knowledge demonstrated by Certified Remodeling Designers in a valid and reliable manner
- Encourage professional growth in the field of remodeling and design
- Formally recognize individuals who meet the requirements set by the NARI Certification Board
- Serve the public by encouraging quality remodeling and design practices

The NARI Certification Board, with assistance and advice from professionals in relevant fields, has developed a credential that will recognize an accepted level of expertise in the profession with the goal of improving professional standards in remodeling design; however, no certification program can guarantee professional competence. In addition, given the frequent changes in recommended practice and technology, the NARI Certification Board cannot warrant that the test materials will at all times reflect the most current state of the art. The NARI Certification Board welcomes constructive comments and suggestions from the public and profession.

## What are the benefits of certification?

<p>The benefits of certification for Certified Remodeling Designers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verification of your knowledge by an independent organization</li> <li>• Professional growth and development</li> <li>• Improved skill set in remodeling design</li> <li>• Enhanced job opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>The benefits of certification for employers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased productivity</li> <li>• Less training time needed to bring employees “up to speed”</li> <li>• Competitive advantage in promoting services to clients</li> </ul>
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## Certification Renewal

Upon passing the examination and becoming certified, the certified professional must maintain and renew the certification on an annual basis (within 12 months of the initial certification date or current expiration date). An annual renewal fee applies.

In addition to submitting a renewal application along with the renewal fee annually, the certified professional must also submit 10 hours of remodeling or design related continuing education which has taken place within the preceding 12 months.



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### PREPARING FOR THE TEST

#### Who can take the test?

You are eligible to sit for the CRD exam if you meet the following requirements:

- Are employed by or own a firm primarily engaged in remodeling
- Adhere to NARI's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics
- Have a minimum of two years continuous experience in the remodeling and construction industry as a designer
- Completed 16 hours of continuing education or registered to attend the Certified Remodeling Designer preparatory course
- Successfully completed a comprehensive application that details your background and experience
- Submit all required application materials and fees

\*All experience and coursework must be completed at the time the application is submitted.

#### How much does it cost?

Program fees can be found at [www.nari.org](http://www.nari.org). The CRD application documents your qualifying experience, technical competence, professional development activities, and attestation to uphold NARI's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. All experience and coursework must be completed prior to the exam.

#### How do I apply?

You must complete the current Certified Remodeling Designer application available at [www.nari.org](http://www.nari.org). Applications received less than 30 days before your scheduled exam will be rejected.

When your application has been reviewed and accepted, you will receive an acknowledgement and your name will be entered on the roster of eligible candidates. Successful applicants are qualified to take the exam during the next 24 months. If unsuccessful on the first attempt, subsequent examinations taken within this 24-month window are subject to a retest fee of \$50 per test. You may take the exam a total of two more times in the same 24-month window if you are not successful on your first attempt. If you are not successful at passing the exam within 24 months of your application date and wish to sit for the exam, you will be required to resubmit a new application and required certification fee at the time of reapplication.

#### When and where is the test given?

Exams are delivered entirely online. A live proctor will connect with you via your telephone camera and will observe you for the entire duration of the exam.

Exam periods are scheduled at regular intervals throughout any particular year. NARI offers three exam periods per year. You can review the most current year's exam period schedule [here](#).

**How are special testing arrangements made?**

The NARI Certification Board will make reasonable efforts to accommodate eligible candidates who require special arrangements to take the exam. Candidates who request special accommodations must make their request in writing at least 60 days in advance of the test date. Documentation should be in the form of a letter on the official letterhead of a licensed or certified professional qualified to diagnose and treat special conditions. A description of the special accommodation(s) requested should be included. Your request, with the supporting documentation, will be reviewed to determine if the accommodation will be granted. If approved, you and your exam proctor will be notified. The special accommodations and auxiliary aids and services must not present an undue burden to the NARI Certification Board and must not fundamentally alter the measurement of the knowledge the exam is intended to test.

**What is the format for the test?**

The exam is offered in a single, 3 - hour session. The test will have 140 multiple-choice questions. The test is closed book. Calculators are allowed but programmable devices, cell phones, and laptops are not permitted. Each question will have four options or choices, only **one** of which is the correct or best answer. You will be asked to select the correct or best answer from these options.

**What do I need to know for the test?**

A consensus-based development process has guided the composition of the CRD exam which focuses on job tasks performed and knowledge needed by remodeling designers.

The knowledge in the following areas was determined to be an indicator for success:

- Understanding the Role of the Remodeling Designer
- Programming
- Layout
- Materials/Selections
- Production Support

### **The CRD exam content outline**

The exam will evaluate your level of knowledge in the five knowledge/skill domains listed. The following pages list the knowledge domains and learning objectives and the approximate percentage of the exam devoted to each one.

The following texts are recommended to provide the knowledge base needed to pass the certification exam. These resources do not represent an exhaustive list of all literature which can aid you in passing the exam or advancing your remodeling design skill set.

1. Kitchen & Bath Planning Guidelines With Support Spaces and Accessibility – Fourth Edition by National Kitchen and Bath Association, Bethlehem, PA, 2023.
2. 2021 International Residential Code (IRC) by International Code Council, Inc., ICC Publications, Country Club Hills, IL
3. Certified Remodeling Designer Study Guide by NARI, Wheeling, IL (The Certified Remodeler Study Guide is provided electronically upon approval of the certification application.)

## **Design Certification Domains**

### **Domain 1**

#### **Role of the Remodeling Designer 12%**

- A. Business of Design
  - a. Define the different types of business models and what role the designer plays in each.
  - b. Understand how the designer can act as a leader and guide the client by setting design and process expectations.
  - c. Understand basic project and business financials and how they are critical to good design
  - d. Understand how design for remodeling differs from traditional design training and requires expertise in multiple disciplines.
  - e. List the different resources available to designers and how to utilize them.
  - f. Understand how to interface with other contractors hired by the owner to achieve a cohesive design and manage risk.
- B. Selling Through Design
  - a. List and understand the different stages of sales.

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- b. Understand how design can be used as a profit center and a client qualifier.
  - c. Understand the consultative selling process and how it can position you as a trusted expert vs. a traditional salesperson.
  - d. Understand how being thorough in the sales process will impact your project budget and assure you can satisfy client objectives.
  - e. Understand the various presentation tools and techniques and how to use them to finalize the sale of a construction project.
  - f. Understand how to walk the client through the logical steps of the design process to set expectations and finalize the sale.
  - g. Understand how reinforcing client engagement can help you shorten the sales process and close more sales.
  - h. Understand potential objections and roadblocks you may encounter and how to successfully overcome them.

**C. Communication**

- a. Understand the importance of setting expectations for communication during the design process.
- b. List the four elements of effective communication.
- c. Describe the various components that make up non-verbal communication.
- d. List the typical roadblocks to good listening skills and describe the keys to effective listening.
- e. Understand the importance of speaking the client's language vs industry lingo.
- f. Understand the communication tools available to the designer and remodeling team.
- g. Describe the methods for conflict resolution.

**Domain 2**

**Programming 25%**

**A. Client Priorities**

- a. Understand the importance of collecting information about the clients' lifestyle and how they use the space and how that information can drive design and impact scope, timeline, and budget.
- b. Understand how to develop the concept for the space in collaboration with the client.
- c. Describe how to develop an aesthetic for the design.
- d. Understand how to set expectations for the design and project timeline.

**B. Existing Conditions**

- a. Understand how different conditions in the home can impact the measurements you have to take and the viability of the design.



- b. Describe the proper way to take measurements and how the scope of work impacts what you measure.
- c. Understand when there is a need to bring in trade experts to evaluate existing conditions which may trigger design workarounds.
- d. Understand the different tools and technologies which can aid in measuring, visualizing the space, and uncovering unseen conditions.
- e. Understand how HOA, zoning, permitting, structural, architectural review, historic considerations, etc. can impact the design.
- f. Describe how regional considerations (FEMA, Elevation Certificates, Floodplain, etc.) can impact the design.

**C. Solutions**

- a. Understand the sequence of decision making and how it can drive appropriate solutions.
- b. Identify the different team members / trade partners and understand how to incorporate them into the project.
- c. Understand how alterations can have an escalated effect on construction and therefore scope and budget.
- d. Understand how Universal Design considerations can have an escalated effect on construction and therefore scope and budget.
- e. Describe how the designer should take a consultative approach to anticipate and propose design solutions unfamiliar to the client.

**Domain 3**

**Layout 30%**

**A. Plan Development**

- a. Define the different types of drawings and plans used for remodeling.
- b. Understand the importance of setting company drafting and plan standards.
- c. Discuss the different symbols used in project drawings and be able to identify them.
- d. List and explain the information that must be on a complete set of plans.
- e. Define CAD and explain how it is used in remodeling.

**B. Kitchen Layout**

- a. Describe the minimum dimensions necessary for good kitchen space planning, according to the NKBA and the IRC code
- b. Define the different types of kitchen layouts and discuss them in detail
- c. Define what a work center is and list the major work centers of the kitchen according to NKBA standards
- d. Explain the recommended dimensions and requirements for a work center
- e. Understand the appropriate dimensions of a work triangle

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- f. Explain seating area dimensions
  - g. Discuss the storage items necessary to improve the accessibility and functionality of a kitchen
  - h. Explain the considerations for safety in a kitchen
  - i. Describe the considerations when planning for appliance installation
  - j. Describe the considerations when planning for plumbing fixtures
  - k. Describe the considerations when planning for electrical receptacles, controls, and lighting
  - l. Describe the HVAC considerations in kitchens
- C. Bathroom Layout
- a. Describe the minimum dimensions necessary for good bathroom space planning, according to the NKBA and the IRC code
  - b. Explain the requirements and considerations for making the bathroom safe
  - c. Discuss different ways to make the bathroom comfortable and convenient
  - d. Describe the different cabinetry solutions and how they relate to bathroom layout
  - e. Describe the HVAC considerations in bathrooms
  - f. Describe the different considerations when planning for plumbing fixtures
  - g. Describe the different considerations when planning for electrical receptacles, controls, and lighting
  - h. Understand the considerations when designing a custom shower
- D. Laundry and Mudroom Layout
- a. Explain the requirements and considerations for making the laundry and mudrooms safe
  - b. Discuss different dimensions and considerations when planning for appliance selection and installation to make the laundry and mudroom comfortable and convenient
  - c. Describe the HVAC considerations in laundry rooms
  - d. Describe the different considerations when planning for plumbing fixtures
  - e. Describe the different considerations when planning for electrical receptacles, controls, and lighting
  - f. Understand how laundry rooms may have wet space considerations similar to bathrooms
- E. Basement and Attic Layout
- a. Understand the egress requirements for attic and basement spaces which are converted to living space
  - b. Understand the HVAC considerations in basements and attics
  - c. Understand the environmental considerations in the basement which impact the health of the home
  - d. Understand the requirements for clearance and access to mechanical, electrical, plumbing systems, and furnishings in basements and attics.
  - e. Understand the structural considerations for attic spaces

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- f. Understand the code requirements for attic and basement spaces
  - F. Addition Layout
    - a. Understand how to aesthetically incorporate the addition with the existing home
    - b. Understand the structural and mechanical considerations of incorporating an addition into an existing home
    - c. Understand the unique considerations for:
      - a) over-the-garage living spaces
      - b) garage conversions
      - c) second story and floor additions
      - d) detached garages and accessory dwelling units
  - G. Other Living Area Layouts
    - a. Understand how to incorporate usable storage into the layout
    - b. Understand the code requirements for fireplaces
    - c. Understand the requirements and constraints for stair design
  - H. Outdoor Living Space Layout
    - a. Understand the requirements for access to electrical, plumbing, and venting systems
    - b. Understand how natural light and weather considerations can impact placement of design elements and shading
    - c. Understand the different types of lighting used in outdoor spaces
    - d. Understand how to incorporate usable storage into the layout
    - e. Understand the code requirements for fireplaces
    - f. Understand outdoor material and appliance ratings and installation methods
    - g. Describe the options for heating and cooling outdoor spaces
    - h. Understand regional considerations that may impact outdoor spaces
    - i. Understand the transition options for integrating indoor and outdoor spaces
  - I. Universal Design
    - a. Define Universal Design and discuss its impact on remodeling
    - b. Explain the common definitions of terms used in Universal Design discussions
    - c. Define and discuss Accessible, Adaptable, Barrier Free, and Intergenerational or Lifespan Design
    - d. Describe the key components of a client interview required to determine the appropriate Universal Design applications in remodeling
    - e. Identify the experts who can assist you with incorporating Universal Design applications into a project

**Domain 4**

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**Materials/Selections 25%**

- A. Selections decision pathway
  - a. Understand how to set an order of importance for materials selection and how to lead the client to a decision-making position
  - b. Explain how client priorities can influence selection sequence
  - c. Understand the importance of educating the client to make appropriate selections
  - d. Understand how material selections can impact the final project cost
  - e. Understand why your company may have preferred vendors and materials and how to communicate this to the client
  - f. Understand how product availability and lead times can impact the design and affect the production schedule.
- B. Materials
  - a. Understand the functional, aesthetic, performance, maintenance, safety, suitability, and installation considerations when choosing:
    - a) Cabinetry
    - b) Appliances
    - c) Flooring
    - d) Counter surfaces
    - e) Shower walls and backsplashes
    - f) Plumbing fixtures
    - g) Electrical fixtures, lighting, and devices
    - h) Glass and mirrors
    - i) Windows and exterior doors
    - j) Moldings and millwork
    - k) Accessories
    - l) Insulation
    - m) Wall substrates and finishes
    - n) Paint, stain, and wall coverings
    - o) Exterior materials
    - p) HVAC and Mechanical Equipment

**Domain 5**

**Production Support 8%**

- A. Handoff to Production
  - a. Discuss the various Production Team structures and responsibilities

- b. Understand the designer’s responsibility in communicating all essential information to the Production Team prior to construction
  - c. Discuss the designer’s role in providing essential information to the production team, as it pertains to the project’s scheduling needs.
  - d. Understand the designer’s role in the pre-construction meeting with the client.
  - e. Understand the designer’s role in submitting for permit
  - f. Discuss the designer’s role in initiating Purchase Orders
- B. Active Production**
- a. Discuss the Designer’s role in the project during active production
  - b. Discuss the designer’s role in continued client support during production
  - c. Understand the various types of Change Orders that can be required during production and the associated costs
  - d. Understand how the project schedule can be impacted by the designer during production
- C. Post Production**
- a. Discuss the designer’s role during project wrap up
  - b. Understand the information discussed in the internal project debrief and how the information is used to improve future project processes
  - c. Understand the designer’s role in using the project for marketing purposes