Introduction and Purpose:

The portfolio's purpose is to present a collection of materials that showcase your trade show marketing abilities and your application of essential learning components gained through your attendance at Exhibitor sessions. This makes appropriate session references throughout the portfolio very important. Choose materials you have developed, adapted, or used that illustrate your success in managing key aspects of trade show marketing. Quality of materials is more important than quantity.

The design and presentation of the portfolio and the materials selected will vary from candidate to candidate depending upon company size, number of shows, marketing strategies, and the candidate's area of responsibility. For most, it is easiest to connect the criteria from section to section by focusing on the single show that best demonstrates your capabilities. If your focus is on event planning, it is possible to adapt the key sections to planning/strategies for events.

For those who are in industry supplier or consulting positions, you will need to focus on how you manage the key aspects of trade show marketing for a specific client or multiple clients.

You can start writing your portfolio before finishing all your classes. The sections about you and your company can be started sooner. However, once you have completed all your classes and are ready for an advisor to help, submit an online Candidate Portfolio Registration Form, including payment of the $245 non-refundable registration fee. The use of an advisor to assist you through the development process is required, and one will be assigned upon registration receipt. A registration form is online at https://www.exhibitoronline.com/ctsm/portfolioregistration-s.asp

Format of the Portfolio:

The portfolio is designed to have seven key sections, which should allow you to demonstrate your major tradeshow marketing activities. For a detailed list of each section's requirements, please refer to the Portfolio Checklist.

These sections should be in the following order:

- **VITAL STATISTICS** (Introduction to you and your company)
- **OVERVIEW/SHOW SCHEDULE** (Broad overview of your whole program)
- **SHOW/EVENT OF FOCUS + MEASURABLE SHOW OBJECTIVES**
  - The easiest way to be sure you have all the components is to build a table with the following headers:

Strategies	Tactics to accomplish	How to measure success (assessment methods)	Measurable goals (include numbers)

- **MANAGEMENT OF EXHIBIT DESIGN/PRODUCTION**
- **MANAGEMENT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS (IMC)**
  - The easiest and clearest way to demonstrate this is by setting up a table to show rationale, target audience, measurable goals, assessment method, and results for each method of communication you used. Also share your recommendations for future IMC improvements.

Communication Method	Rationale	Target audience	Measurable goal	Assessment method	Results	Recommendation for improving communication

- **CONCLUSION**

Additional formatting mechanics:
- Set up your portfolio to be standard letter size. The final submission will be in PDF or PowerPoint format.
- Begin with a cover page. Be sure to include your name, title, company, contact information, and the date. Though not required, we appreciate your photo on the cover also to better connect you with your story.
- Page two is your Table of Contents, using the Section Headers listed above.
- Number your pages and begin each section on a new page to make it easy to read and follow. Sections must be divided into Section Header pages. These are blank pages with just the Section number and title. This is important for the reviewer to know which section they are reading.
- Add explanatory narrative paragraphs in each section. The narrative explains your rationale for your trade show decisions and your choice of documents submitted. The narrative explains your processes and is the "glue" that connects the parts of your story.
- Include session references where appropriate in your narrative. When referencing your sessions, it's very important to add what you learned from each specific session and how you applied it to improve your program. Reference a minimum of 8 required courses and 2 elective sessions that had a special positive impact on your program management.
- Include captions for the various photos and scanned exhibit pieces submitted. Be sure that both visuals and captions are large enough to read easily.
- Conclude with a reference page listing all CTSM sessions referenced. (This comes before the appendix if you have one).
- An appendix is optional. If included, be sure to reference it by page number or tab when referring to it in your main portfolio copy. (NOTE: Overuse of an appendix has been a problem. Do not put details that are part of the criteria for each section into the appendix). The portfolio should be able to be approved with or without the reviewer reading the appendix, which is extra supplemental information.
- Publish your portfolio as a digital file in PDF or PowerPoint format. Be sure to name your document as follows: Last Name, First Name CTSM Portfolio (i.e. Stewart, Martha CTSM Portfolio)
- Once the portfolio is ready to be uploaded, email CTSM@exhibitorgroup.com. They will add the Portfolio section to your NIU profile.
- Using a login and password provided by CTSM, upload your portfolio to the NIU site. https://ctsm.niu.edu/
- A professional headshot of yourself is required. Photo submission requirements can be found at https://www.exhibitoronline.com/ctsm/PortfolioPhotoRequirements.pdf

Timeline for Completing Your Portfolio:
Preliminary planning for portfolio development may begin after taking sessions at your first Exhibitor conference. All sessions must be completed before registering for your portfolio since the portfolio's

purpose is to demonstrate the application of learning. Portfolios must be submitted within one year of your registration date. All requirements must be completed and approved before certification is granted. Submitting your portfolio during the summer and fall months will allow plenty of time for review and approval before the next EXHIBITOR*LIVE* conference, where public recognition of new program graduates takes place.

Procrastinating causes problems; Delaying causes disaster!

Evaluation of Your Portfolio:

Your portfolio will be evaluated by a review committee, made up of the CTSM Program Manager and CTSM Diamond Level Graduates. Each section will be judged based on "acceptable" or "revise/add." Receiving all "acceptable" comments results in portfolio approval. "Revise/add" comments mean that the section needs further development to be approved for certification. You will be asked to resubmit with further evidence of mastery in that category to meet the portfolio requirement for the CTSM program.

Use of an Advisor:

- When you register for your portfolio, a graduate advisor will be assigned to you.
- It is your responsibility to initiate communication, keep regular communication flowing between the two of you and commit to a time schedule for submitting portions of your portfolio for review.
- Most efficient method for review is to send individual sections to your advisor as you complete them.
- If something happens to delay your progress (ex: health, job loss, etc.), be sure to let your advisor and the CTSM executive advisor know.
- Your advisor should review your final document before it is submitted to the CTSM office.
- Note: Working with an advisor does not guarantee that your portfolio will be approved on the first submission. While the review team has approved hundreds of portfolios, advisors have various levels of review experience. They have their own experience to share and can steer you in the right direction, making sure you include all the criteria.