

**LEADING YOU FORWARD** 

# Becoming a CFP: A Comprehensive Guide





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CFP® certification signifies expertise in key areas of financial planning, including:

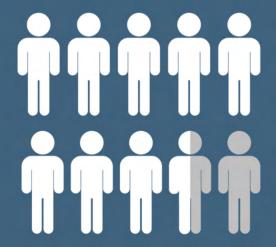
- Investment Management
- Retirement Planning
- Tax Planning
- Estate Planning
- Insurance & Risk Management
- Financial Planning Principles
- Education Planning
- Cash Flow & Debt Management
- Business Planning

The Certified Financial
Planner (CFP®)
designation is widely
recognized as the gold
standard in the financial
planning industry. It
signifies that an individual
has met rigorous
education, examination,
and experience
requirements while
upholding a strict code
of ethics.

# WHY GET CFP CERTIFIED?

89%

of CFP professionals reported being satisfied with their decision to earn their CFP certification.\*



Earning your CFP® certification is a career gamechanger, positioning you as a top-tier financial
expert with enhanced credibility, higher earning
potential, and access to more prestigious
opportunities. Employers and clients value the
expertise that comes with CFP® certification, giving
you a competitive edge in the industry. It also
equips you with advanced knowledge, rigorous
training, and real-world experience—allowing you
to provide comprehensive, personalized financial
guidance. Whether you aspire to manage high-networth clients, lead a financial planning team, or
build a thriving practice, CFP® certification opens
doors to career growth while enabling you to make
a meaningful impact on people's financial futures.

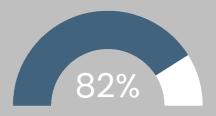
## THE DATA

87%

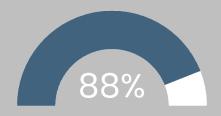
of CFP professionals report being satisfied with their career choice.

85%

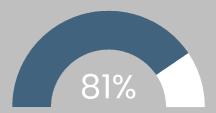
of CFP professionals report experiencing personal fulfillment in their careers.



CFPs who rated their job high in work/life balance



CFPs who rated their job stability as "good" or "excellent"



CFPs who reported their certification gives them a competitive edge

CFP® professionals consistently earn top-tier incomes, with many studies reporting median annual earnings between \$210,000 and \$250,000.

Experienced advisors see even greater financial success—according to an AITE Group study, solo CFP® practitioners with 12+ years in the field generated a median annual revenue of \$450,000, while those in team-based practices averaged \$650,000.



Beyond income, a wellestablished financial planning practice becomes a valuable asset. As client relationships grow, so does the business's equity—creating long-term wealth and the potential for a lucrative sale in the future.



### Steps to CFP Certification

### Did you know?

You don't need a bachelor's degree to take the CFP exam, but you will need one to become certified. Your degree can be in any field, so long as it is from an accredited institution.

#### **EDUCATION**

Complete a series of financial planning courses through a program registered with the CFP® board. Certificants are also required to hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

#### **EXAM**

Pass a rigorous, comprehensive exam designed to assess both technical knowledge and real-world application of financial planning concepts. The exam includes case studies and scenario-based questions across a broad range of financial planning areas.

#### **EXPERIENCE**

Candidates must gain real-world experience applying financial planning principles. This can be fulfilled through 6,000 hours of professional work or 4,000 hours in a structured, supervised apprenticeship. Experience may be completed before or after the exam, as long as it meets certification standards.

#### ETHICS

Candidates must submit an ethics declaration, pass a background check, and agree to adhere to the CFP® Board's Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct. They also commit to acting as a fiduciary at all times—putting their clients' interests first. These ethical obligations must be continuously upheld to maintain certification.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **01.** How is a CFP different from a non-certified financial planner?

The CFP® designation signals a higher level of credibility, backed by rigorous education, a comprehensive exam, real-world experience, and a strict code of ethics. This sets CFP® professionals apart as trusted experts in the field—recognized for their depth of knowledge and fiduciary duty to put clients first. Earning the CFP® mark gives you a competitive advantage, unlocking better career opportunities, leadership potential, and higher income. CFPs make, on average, 10% more than non-certified financial planners.

#### **02.** How long does it take to get your CFP certification?

The CFP Board estimates that, for most candidates, the journey to certification takes about 18 to 24 months from start to finish. This period allows you to complete coursework, prepare for and pass a comprehensive exam, and gain the necessary real-world experience. However, timelines can vary based on your schedule, chosen program, and whether you've already earned a bachelor's degree—an essential requirement for certification.

#### **03.** Is it hard to get your CFP certification?

Earning your CFP® certification requires real effort and dedication—but that's exactly what makes it so respected. The process is designed to ensure you're well-qualified, with the knowledge, experience, and ethical grounding to guide clients with confidence. With the right mindset and support, it's a rewarding achievement that can elevate your career for years to come.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **04.** What is the CFP Exam like?

The CFP® exam includes 170 multiple-choice questions that evaluate how well you can apply financial planning concepts to practical, real-world scenarios. You'll have 6 hours to complete the exam, broken up into two 3-hour sessions split by a scheduled break.

#### **05.** What topics are covered on the CFP Exam?

The Certified Financial Planner (CFP®) exam evaluates candidates' proficiency across several key financial planning domains, including Professional Conduct and Regulation, General Principles of Financial Planning, Risk Management and Insurance Planning, Investment Planning, Tax Planning, Retirement Savings and Income Planning, Estate Planning, and the Psychology of Financial Planning. These topics encompass a comprehensive range of financial planning areas, ensuring that certified professionals are well-equipped to address diverse client needs effectively.

#### 06. How long does CFP certification last?

CFP certification requires annual renewal. To stay certified, you must also complete 30 hours of continuing education every two years, including 2 hours focused on CFP® Board-approved ethics content. In addition, you must continue to follow the CFP® Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct and may be subject to periodic background checks to confirm your ongoing eligibility.

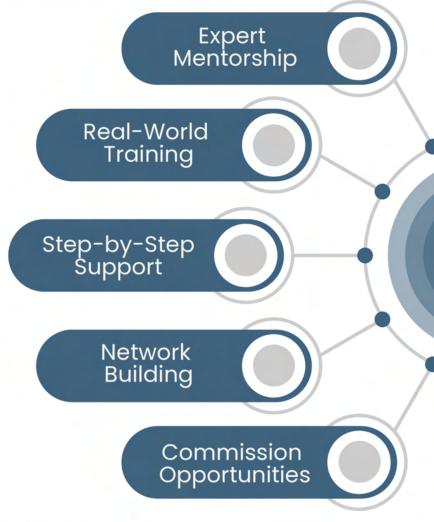
# How Cornerstone Supports CFP Learning





### **Professional Advisor Training Hub**

Cornerstone Financial
Network is committed to
developing and
empowering quality
financial professionals.
Our one-of-a-kind PATH
program provides the
essential training,
resources, and
structured guidance
needed to navigate the
CFP® certification
process with confidence
and efficiency.



#### Relentlessly Training Toward Perfection



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