

FUTURE

**CFP PRO**<sup>TM</sup>  
CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER<sup>®</sup>



# STUDENT GUIDE TO FINANCIAL PLANNING CAREERS



**CFP BOARD**

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# Vanguard<sup>®</sup>

Since our founding in 1975, Vanguard has remained dedicated to taking a stand for the over 50 million clients we serve.

We're built on the belief that people deserve financial guidance they can trust — and that those who provide it should be empowered to act with purpose, integrity, and a commitment to doing what's right.

We know financial planning plays a meaningful role in helping individuals and families make confident decisions about their futures. As students, you're preparing to take your next academic or professional step. You're launching into a field where your skills, curiosity, and desire to help others can create a real and lasting impact.

Vanguard is proud to support the next generation of professionals who will shape the future of the financial planning ecosystem. We believe in continuous learning and growth — principles that can help you build lasting skills and discover the many ways you can contribute to this field.

As you explore careers in financial planning, we hope this guide offers clarity, inspiration, and a strong foundation for the journey ahead.

# What is Financial Planning?

Financial planning is more than just managing money — it's about helping clients achieve their goals while building a lucrative and rewarding career for yourself in a variety of workstyles and environments. As a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professional, you'll guide clients through life's milestones, offering expert advice tailored to their unique goals.



## The Role of a Financial Planner

Financial planning involves looking at a client's entire financial picture and advising them on how to achieve their short- and long-term financial goals. A personal financial planner establishes a one-on-one relationship with each of their clients, and it is quite possibly the perfect job for those who enjoy helping people.

## The Future Is Bright

### *A Career in High Demand*

Demand for personal financial advisors is expected to grow significantly, at a rate of 10% through 2034, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. One reason is that the U.S. is on the cusp of an immense transfer of wealth, with an estimated \$30 trillion expected to pass from baby boomers to their heirs over the coming decades. And, according to [McKinsey and Co.](#), the profession is projected to be short by up to 100,000 advisors by 2034.

With the demand for financial planners quickly outpacing the supply, it's a great time to join the profession.

CFP® certification is *the standard* in personal financial planning and can benefit your career, instilling confidence in those you work with about your professional knowledge and commitment to ethical standards.

**Financial Advisor ranked**

**#2**

**Best Business Jobs**

&

**#13**

**Best 100 Jobs**

by

**U.S. News & WORLD REPORT**  
**2025**

# Why Choose Financial Planning?

## *It's Quite Possibly The Perfect Job*

Financial planners have the privilege of helping their clients achieve their life goals while building a rewarding career, making it quite possibly the perfect job. Discover the advantages of a career that offers personal satisfaction, purpose and the ability to make a great living.



### **Purpose & Impact**

Financial planning is a *helping* profession. Clients will look to you to help reach their financial goals, from buying their first home to funding their children's education and achieving their dream retirement. Many financial planners build lifelong relationships with their clients and become trusted advisors for managing life's ups and downs.



### **Work-Life Balance**

Many financial planners enjoy the flexibility that the profession offers, giving them time to manage their career and personal goals without sacrificing either. And for the more entrepreneurial, self-employed planners often make their own schedules.



### **High Earnings Potential**

It's no secret that financial planning can be a lucrative career path — recent research shows that financial planners have a median compensation of \$185,000 per year, with CFP® professionals earning 13% more than non-certified financial advisors.

## **Become a CFP® Professional**

### Why get certified?

CFP® professionals are highly sought at wealth management and investment firms, wirehouses, banks, insurance agencies and other organizations. If you have an entrepreneurial spirit, CFP® certification can provide added credibility to start your own firm.

# How Do I Become a CFP® Professional?

The “4 E’s” of CFP® certification (Education, Exam, Experience and Ethics) are your road map to certification. These milestones equip you to provide holistic advice to your clients, so you can help them achieve financial confidence and peace of mind. Learn more about the certification process by visiting [CFP.net/certification-process](https://www.CFP.net/certification-process).



Education is a key part of becoming a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professional. Financial planners guide their clients through a variety of financial opportunities and challenges with holistic planning. Ethical, competent CFP® professionals support millions of American households by developing subject expertise in the following:



Basics of  
Financial Planning



Retirement Savings &  
Income Planning



Risk Management &  
Insurance Planning



Investment  
Planning



Tax & Estate  
Planning



Psychology of  
Financial Planning

# Education Requirement

The first step toward becoming a CFP® professional is the [education requirement](#). This includes completing relevant financial planning coursework and obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution.

Whether you are still exploring college majors, pursuing a degree in another field or a few years post-graduation, there's a clear path to CFP® certification that meets you where you are. Check out these examples of how you can earn CFP® certification.

When I graduated high school, I knew that I wanted to become a CFP® professional. I applied and was accepted to one of the undergraduate CFP Board Registered Programs, and I simultaneously received a bachelor's degree in financial planning while completing my required CFP Board coursework. Now that I've graduated, I can sit for the CFP® exam and pursue the career I have always wanted!

**Karl**

I earned a degree in biology but later realized that path wasn't the right fit for me. So, I decided to pursue a career as a CFP® professional. I enrolled in a certificate program, and since I already hold a bachelor's degree, I'll be eligible to sit for the CFP® exam once I complete the Capstone Course. I'm excited to begin this new chapter and build a career that aligns with my goals and values!

**Sarah**



# Ways to Explore the Career and Enhance Your Resume

In the early stages of your career, you'll need real-world experience to beef up your resume and learn practical work skills. CFP Board offers plenty of resources to make sure you get a running start to your career. Check out these six ways to get started.

## 1. See Real Client Meetings With Financial Planning Discovery Courses

This series of three free courses is ideal for those considering financial planning careers and who want to learn more before making a commitment. [Learn more.](#)



## 2. Complete The Externship

The Externship is an eight-week virtual summer training program offered by Amplified Planning and led by a CFP® professional. In the program, students will learn how to build financial plans based on real client meetings, while earning eMoney certification and experience hours toward CFP® certification. [Learn more.](#)



## 3. Serving in The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

Participating in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program builds your resume while making a difference. VITA provides free training to volunteers and opportunities to assist low- to moderate-income individuals in preparing their tax returns. You may also earn experience hours toward CFP® certification. Use the [VITA lookup tool](#) to find a site near you.



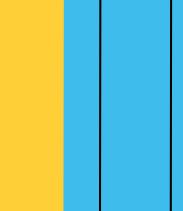
## 4. Join Measure Twice Planners

This online platform lets you network, learn and collaborate with peers in the financial planning profession. Measure Twice Planners connects hundreds of aspiring and experienced financial planners in a supportive community. [Learn more.](#)



## 5. Become a Peer Financial Coach

See whether your university's financial aid office, financial wellness program or financial planning program needs peer financial coaches to work with fellow students. These programs will often train you to teach other students how to achieve financial success and may count toward experience hours for certification.



## 6. Find an Internship & Look for Entry Level Jobs

The [CFP Board Career Center](#) is continually updated with internships and early career job opportunities. You can search for openings by company name, title and years of experience needed.

# Meet the Students

## Why Your Peers Are Pursuing Financial Planning Careers



### Elijah

Delaware State University senior Elijah Taylor believes through social media he can reach young people who need financial literacy and might not otherwise get it. Coming from the inner city of Wilmington, Del., Elijah, a first-generation college student, believes financial planning and wealth management is the key to shaping his future and that of so many in his community.

[Watch his video here ›](#)

### Magdalena

This University of Colorado Boulder graduate pivoted from premed to financial planning because she wanted to be a part of a helping profession. As a first-generation college student and native Polish speaker, Magdalena Latek reflects fondly on coming home and teaching her father about Roth IRAs, and realizing how important this career was for students like herself.

[Watch her video here ›](#)

### Bennett

This University of Georgia alumnus found his passion for helping others through his school's financial planning program. After reconnecting with a high school acquaintance, Bennett Colbert joined the financial planning program and quickly got involved, founding the Athens Student Investors Club to educate students of all majors about investing and joining the Student Financial Planning Association, where he built the connection that led to his full-time role in Atlanta.

[Watch his video here ›](#)

### Amira

While on her path to certification, Amira Garwood applied for and received the CFP Board Women's Initiative (WIN) Endowed Scholarship at the end of 2024, which awards women like Amira up to \$5,000 to pursue CFP® certification. Amira has since graduated from Purdue University's CFP Board Registered Program. She now works full-time as a financial services representative and has passed her Series 7, the Securities Industry Essentials Exam and Series 66, and she plans to take the CFP® exam.

[Watch her video here ›](#)



## Alondra

This University of Georgia (UGA) graduate was originally a math major who wanted to be a teacher. Alondra's whole outlook for her career changed when she overheard two students studying for their capstone in financial planning in her school's library. After that, she knew she had to change majors. Alondra Gonzalez gained hands-on experience in her school's financial planning program by volunteering for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program her junior and senior year. She also volunteered at her school's Love and Money Center, where she developed personal relationships to help clients reach their wealth goals. She interned with Homrich Berg, where she went on to receive a full-time offer. In July 2025, she passed the CFP® exam and is well on her way to meeting the experience requirement.



## Vincent

[Read her full story here ›](#)

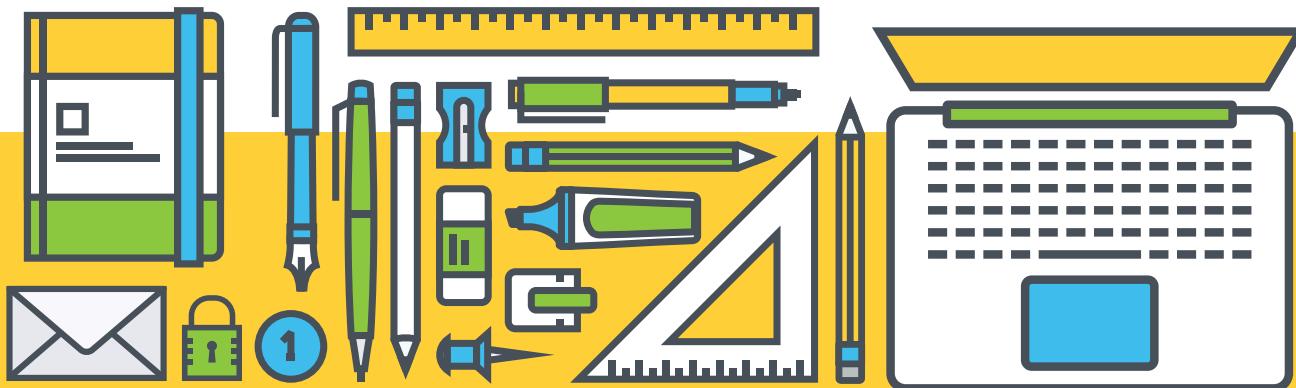
A senior at the University of Houston (UH), Vincent Nguyen is double majoring in finance and accounting with a concentration in personal financial planning, and he plans to graduate in the spring of 2026. He spends his days listening to podcasts and reading blogs like *Nerds Eye View*. He studies current and past cases from FPA's Annual Financial Planning Challenge, an annual competition for undergraduate degree programs registered with CFP Board that showcases the talent and skills of the next generation of financial planners.



## Joseph

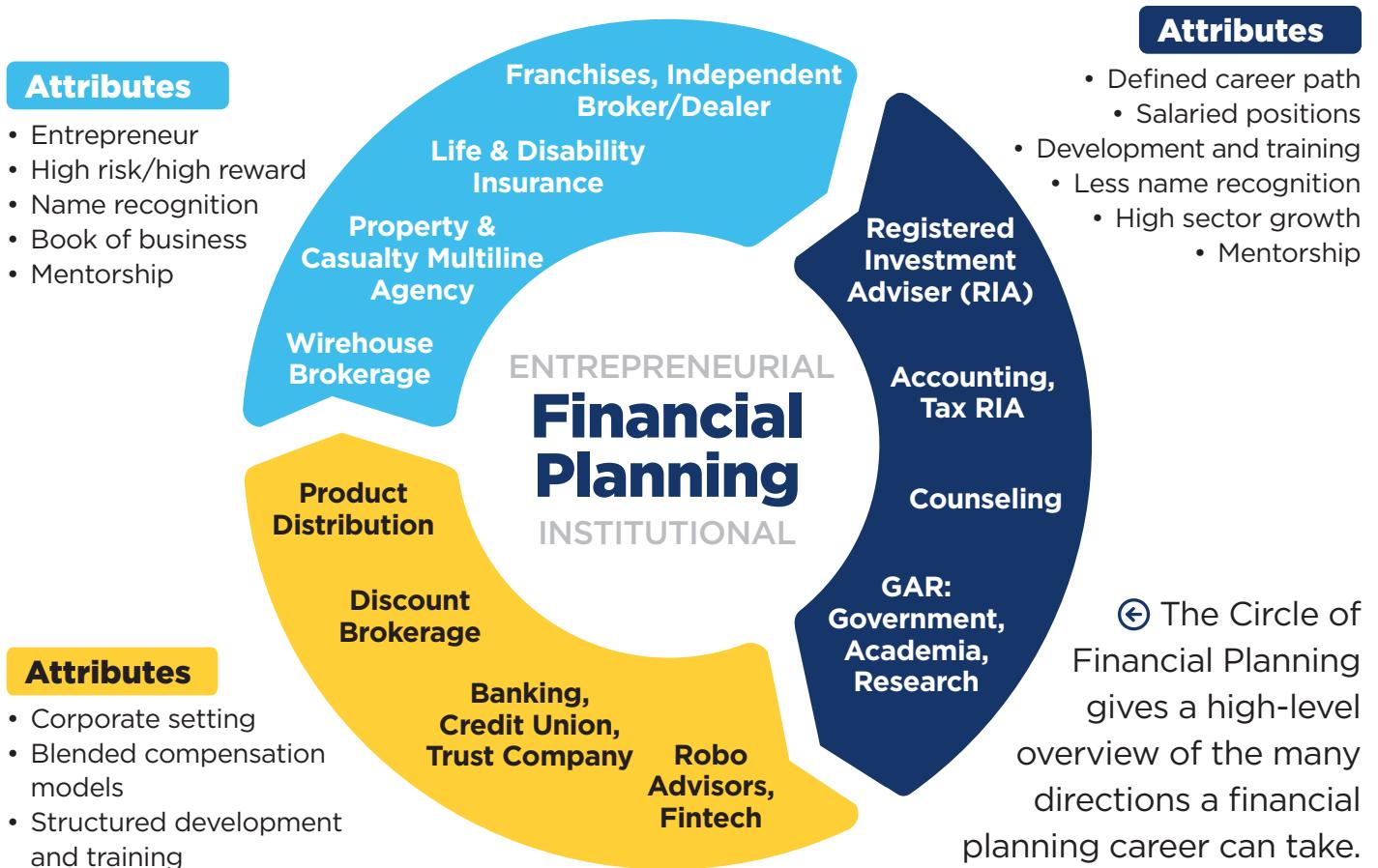
[Read his full story here ›](#)

After graduating from the University of Arizona, Joseph Heck landed his first full-time job as an advisor analyst with Redwood Investment Management in Scottsdale, Ariz. In his role, Joseph works with financial advisors and planners at Registered Investment Adviser firms (RIAs) and investment firms, providing investment strategies for them to use with clients. His job is to know everything about a financial planner to help them provide value to their clients.

[Read his full story here ›](#)

# CFP® Certification Opens Doors

Achieving CFP® certification opens the doors to a variety of careers across the financial industry, offering a range of career paths, structures and compensation models. Choosing the right channel will shape your day-to-day experience as a professional in the financial sector. Use the guide below to learn about some of the different channels available to you.



## Major Industry Channels

The table below provides a closer look at some of the major industry channels — what they are, how they operate and what kind of experience new advisors can expect in each one. 

Scope of Work	Channel	What Is It?	Key Characteristics	New Advisor Recruiting
Search for and source new clients in a competitive environment with high-earnings potential and the backing of big-name firms.	Wirehouses <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank of America/ Merrill Lynch</li><li>• Morgan Stanley Wealth Management</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Large, traditional brokerage firms with a Wall Street investment banking and institutional presence.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National presence and institutional branding.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Centralized home office programs recruit and train rookie advisors.</li><li>• New advisors integrated into existing teams.</li></ul>

Scope of Work	Channel	What Is It?	Key Characteristics	New Advisor Recruiting
Search for and source new clients in a competitive environment with high-earnings potential and the backing of big-name firms.	<b>Insurance Broker-Dealers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northwestern Mutual</li> <li>NYLIFE Securities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full-service brokerages within insurance companies, ranging from traditional life insurers to firms offering robust investment platforms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brokerages housed within insurance companies; strong insurance and investment offerings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisors trained in both insurance and investment planning.</li> <li>Career paths tailored to risk or comprehensive planning.</li> </ul>
Benefit from the structure of a defined development and career path; salaried and non-traditional compensation models within the stability of a traditional corporate setting.	<b>National Regional Broker-Dealer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charles Schwab</li> <li>Edward Jones</li> <li>Fidelity Investments</li> <li>Vanguard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National and regional financial services companies with retail financial advisors; national broker-dealers targeting clients with moderate wealth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide range of firm sizes with strong regional and community ties.</li> <li>Varied institutional and investment banking services, depending on the firm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centralized home office programs for new advisor training.</li> </ul>
	<b>Hybrid RIA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAPTRUST</li> <li>Hightower Advisors</li> <li>Mariner Wealth Advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent practices with both a registered investment adviser and an affiliation with a broker-dealer.</li> <li>Owned and operated by the advisor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisors can custody assets with RIA custodians or through independent broker-dealers, many of which now offer RIA platforms to attract and retain larger practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rookie advisor recruitment is managed by individual practices, which can hire from both broker-dealer and RIA channels because of the dual registration model.</li> </ul>
	<b>Independent RIA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative Planning</li> <li>Moneta Group Investment Advisors</li> <li>Silvercrest Asset Management Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent practices with a registered investment adviser and no broker-dealer affiliation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent advisors operate with full autonomy, using third-party firms for trading, custody and recordkeeping, with wide variation and geographic dispersion across practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rookie advisor recruitment is managed by individual practices, which can hire from both broker-dealer and RIA channels because of the dual registration model.</li> </ul>
Follow a defined career path with the stability of salaried positions, mentorship, development and training.	<b>Retail Banks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Truist</li> <li>U.S. Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisors operating in retail bank branches. Excludes trust departments and private banks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banks vary in size from national banks to community banks and credit unions. Small banks, thrifts and credit unions often outsource broker-dealer functionality to third-party marketing firms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisor hiring is typically managed through the bank's centralized Human Resource process.</li> </ul>
	<b>Independent Broker-Dealer (IBD)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chase</li> <li>LPL Financial</li> <li>Raymond James</li> <li>Wells Fargo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisors own and operate independent businesses and affiliate with a broker-dealer as an independent contractor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consists of small branches of one to five advisors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment of both rookie and experienced advisors is managed at the individual practice level.</li> </ul>

# Meet the CFP Board Ambassadors

CFP Board Ambassadors have a passion for the profession and give voice to our mission to benefit the public. Watch the videos to hear how CFP Board Ambassadors got their start in financial planning, find tips for navigating CFP® certification and early career growth, and see what a typical day in the life of a financial planner is really like.



**Riley**

Riley Saunders, CFP® is a financial planner at Cassaday & Company. He plays a key role in client relationships, leading meetings and managing financial plans. With a background in the psychology of financial planning, Riley integrates behavioral finance principles into his practice to help clients navigate their financial lives with confidence.

[Watch his video here ›](#)



**Gloria**

Gloria García Cisneros, CFP® is a Wealth Manager in Los Angeles with LourdMurray. As a first-generation Mexican immigrant, she is passionate about empowering underserved communities through financial education. She specializes in complex financial planning for high-net-worth families and is committed to humanizing the financial services industry. Gloria believes that combining education with behavioral strategies lays the foundation for transformative, long-term results.

[Watch her video here ›](#)



**Cristian**

Cristian Mundy, CFP® is a bilingual Senior Wealth Manager at LifeLine Financial & Wealth Management Group, based in Beverly Hills, Calif., with over 17 years of experience in financial planning and wealth management. Originally from Chile, Cristian is a proud Latino and first-generation college graduate, holding a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Finance from The University of Arizona.

[Watch his video here ›](#)

# What could a career in Financial Planning look like for you?



**Akeiva**

CFP Board Ambassador Akeiva Ellis, CFP®, MSFP, CPA/PFS, ChSNC®, began her financial planning career in the Boston area as a wealth planning associate, looking to get started in a fee-only RIA. There, she learned a lot about financial planning while satisfying the experience requirement for CFP® certification. After three years, she realized the firm wasn't the right fit. By then, she and her husband had been sharing financial education content on YouTube. Her passion for content creating helped propel her to where she is today — working for a financial education company while running her own company with her husband.

[Read her full story here ›](#)



**Brenton**

CFP Board Ambassador Brenton Harrison, CFP® runs his own Nashville firm and hosts the podcast *New Money, New Problems*. Earning CFP® certification in 2021 advanced his expertise and credibility, especially as a minority advisor. He urges students to seek certifications that combine strong education with public recognition and to choose additional credentials that align with their target market.

[Read his full story here ›](#)



**Bridget**

CFP Board Ambassador Bridget Grimes, CFP® founded WealthChoice and Equita Financial Network to serve women who are primary earners. Inspired by her own divorce, she helps clients maximize income and benefits. Bridget values flexibility and encourages aspiring planners to gain experience first, noting that diverse careers, even outside finance, can strengthen skills and lead to success.

[Read her full story here ›](#)



**JJ**

JJ Burns, CFP®, the founder and CEO of JJ Burns & Company. JJ has over 30 years of experience developing and managing custom portfolios for individuals, families and small businesses. He emphasizes the importance of gaining broad experience early on. He encourages students to pursue multiple internships beginning sophomore year, and to use professional contacts strategically while exploring growth opportunities and developing relationship skills. JJ values candidates who overcome challenges, and he recommends critical thinking courses. He also notes financial planning offers diverse roles beyond client-facing work.

[Read his full story here ›](#)

# Funding CFP® Certification

Becoming a CFP® professional doesn't have to break the bank. Check out these resources that help offset the financial costs of CFP® certification.



## Explore Scholarship Opportunities

CFP Board Center for Financial Planning administers numerous scholarships that partially or fully cover the costs of undergraduate and certificate coursework, CFP® exam prep, and exam fees. You can learn more about these scholarships on our [scholarship page](#), which includes detailed Frequently Asked Questions, eligibility requirements and application deadlines, to empower you to stay organized and proactive.



## Leverage Employer Support Early

When seeking your first financial planning role, consider whether your future employer offers support for CFP® certification. Many companies provide substantial assistance toward the professional growth of new recruits. Some offer education reimbursement, exam prep resources or paid time off to study for the CFP® exam.



## Understand Licensing Requirements

In your first financial planning role, you will earn experience hours toward CFP® certification. However, your employer may also require that you obtain other licenses while you work toward becoming a CFP® professional.

The type of license(s) your employer requires will depend on how you interact with clients. As a new hire, expect your employer to closely guide you through the licensing process, as well as to defray the costs of exam fees, study materials and regulatory filing costs. Your employer becomes responsible for ensuring your compliance with federal and state regulations.



## Plan Ahead for Success

Pursuing CFP® certification is an investment in your future — and with scholarships, employer-sponsored programs and thoughtful planning — you can position yourself to achieve your goals. Start early, stay organized and seek out the guidance and support systems that will help you succeed in this dynamic profession.

## Download the Full Career Guide

CFP.net 

Whether you're a student in a CFP Board Registered Program aiming to advance toward certification or simply exploring financial planning as a career, we hope these resources, stories, and testimonials inspire and guide you. [Download the full career guide and create an account at CFP.net](#) to begin your pathway to certification today.



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