

What is the Certified Wealth Strategist® Certification?

A CWS® designation holder has met stringent eligibility requirements, completed a rigorous training program, and passed comprehensive assessments to earn their certification.

Additionally, they must operate with a high level of professional integrity, adhere to the CWS® Ethics and Code of Conduct Standards, which include ongoing education requirements, and be in good standing with their regulatory authorities, who govern their fiduciary duties and disclosure requirements.

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WHO CONTROLS THE DESIGNATION?

Cannon Financial Institute, Inc. (Cannon), a Georgia-based for-profit company, owns and operates the Certified Wealth Strategist® designation.

Cannon was founded in 1961 for the purpose of educating professionals within the financial services industry, specifically trust services. Since its inception, the firm has broadened its services to include all aspects of wealth management education, consulting, and review while still maintaining exclusivity in financial services. Cannon subject matter experts are industry veterans, having served with distinction in their respective specialty.

Cannon programs prepare and advance professionals to maintain competency and develop their capacity to deliver expertise at the highest levels of their profession.

EDUCATION

The CWS® Study Program curriculum comprises four components: running a wealth management practice, technical knowledge of 12 core wealth issues, client engagement, and comprehensive assessments. The study program prepares Advisors to deeply understand a client's current situation and their aspirational goals, then craft wealth strategies to achieve them. Study Program graduates are prepared to provide sound advice and exceptional service throughout the Advisor/Client relationship. Value is delivered by addressing the natural changes to the client's circumstances caused by the inevitable life events of every client's life journey.

Principal Knowledge Topics

Investing	Banking and Credit
Taxation	Business Ownership
Retirement	Family Care
Estate Planning	Risk Management
Insurance	Charitable Giving
Education and Family Support	Executive Compensation

A CWS® Study Program participant must successfully pass numerous knowledge checks and complete multiple graded-application exercises to successfully move to the assessment phase of the program.

ASSESSMENTS

There are two assessments that must be successfully completed before finishing the CWS® Study Program and earning the designation. The first assessment is the 3-hour one-hundred and fifty-question CWS® Certification Exam. This exam covers the complete set of study material, including concepts, rules, definitions, and the application of that knowledge. The second assessment identifies and then establishes a plan for continuous growth and improved capability to deliver the value promise of the CWS® spectrum exam measures

the candidate's critical thinking and problem-solving ability, with less emphasis on factual recall or recognition. The exam does not test textbook theories; rather, it assesses the candidate's ability to apply financial planning knowledge in an integrated approach to real-life financial planning situations. To develop exams that reflect the current practice of financial planning, CFP Board conducts regular Job Task Analysis studies to identify the important tasks performed by planners and assess the knowledge and skills needed to perform these tasks.

EXPERIENCE

To be eligible to enroll in the CWS® Study Program and sit for the CWS® Certification Exam, a candidate must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and three years of financial services experience or have five years of financial services industry experience. On a case-by-case basis, exemptions may be approved under special circumstances that include mentorship and supervision

ETHICS

At enrollment in the study program, the candidate must agree to meet and uphold the CWS® Ethics and Code of Conduct Standards, which sets forth their obligations to the consumer, the Financial Services industry, and the CWS® Board of Standards. These standards focus on avoiding or disclosing conflicts of interest, the duty of loyalty to others, not self, compliance with laws and regulations, and conducting and representing one's professional activities with integrity. Upon earning the certification and meeting the continuing education requirements to maintain certification, the designee must attest to compliance with these standards and is in good standing with the regulatory authorities overseeing their licensure and activities or disclosing non-compliance. The CWS® Board of Standards accepts, investigates, and adjudicates any public complaint of a violation of the CWS® Ethics and Code of Conduct Standards made against an active designee

WHO IS THE CWS® BOARD OF STANDARDS AND WHAT IS THEIR ROLE?

The CWS® Board of Standards is responsible for the study program curriculum, delivering the training programs, creating the assessments, conferring the designation, recertification, public complaints, and the associated administrative activities for a certification body. The CWS® Board of Standards is a part of Cannon Financial Institute, which has six professional certifications offered to the Financial Securities Industry and the Regulators charged with oversight of financial services. The Institute's expertise and capability to provide certifications are based on sixty-plus years of preparing and developing financial services professionals in roles that span multiple lines of business and firm types. Our certifications cover the areas of Fiduciary investment management, financial advisors including Personal Trust Officers), corporate trust, securities operations, retirement plan administration, and fiduciary investment risk management, audit, and compliance. The combination of adult education professionals, subject matter experts, and faculty with practitioner experience means Advisors holding the CWS® certification don't just know what needs to be known but know how to deliver that knowledge in a way that addresses the unique needs of each client served, with the highest standards of integrity.

The CWS® Board is not a financial services regulator. Nor does it guarantee a designee's professional services or activity. Consumers should vet any advisor with or without a certification before selecting to do business with them. An excellent place to begin the vetting process is at the FINRA site using their Broker Check feature. The Board of Standards' objective is to create the standards and maintain the credibility of the certification and those who hold the designation. Stakeholders in financial services, including consumers, regulators, and industry colleagues, use certifications as an indication the designee is trustworthy and competent. However, the CWS® Board of Standards is not responsible for any designee's misconduct, intentional noncompliance, acts of harm, or fraud. Law enforcement and Regulatory Agencies have the authority to address civil and criminal legal complaints. The Board of Standards makes its best effort, so the certification and those authorized to represent themselves as designees are trusted by approving recertification and addressing grievances and violations of the Ethics and Code of Conduct Standards.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN WORKING WITH A CWS® PROFESSIONAL

CWS® designees deliver their professional services and are compensated in many different ways. The CWS® Board of Standards does not dictate the business model of your financial advisor or the product and service set they offer. As different business approaches can be successful for the Advisor and the client, it is important to find an appropriate match to your needs and expectations. To find the right Advisor, ask about their philosophy and approach to wealth management, their background and experience, any special capabilities or focus, the type and number of clients they currently serve, and how they are compensated. You and your Advisor will build a professionally intimate relationship over the years, so the effort to find a good match is well worth it when choosing an Advisor.

To verify that the CWS® Board of Standards authorizes your Advisor to use the CWS® certification marks visit www.cannonfinancial.com/findacws or call 706-353-3346.

