



How To Earn Your CSP[®]



A GUIDE FOR
NATIONAL SPEAKERS
ASSOCIATION
CERTIFIED SPEAKING
PROFESSIONAL[™]

APPLICANTS 2023





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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation issued by the National Speakers Association (NSA) of the United States.

This Guide provides the application timelines and deadlines for applying for the CSP and outlines the application process, including the requirements needed to advance through each Phase of the selection process.

The CSP designation affirms the detailed, thorough, and comprehensive certification process with external and internal reviews for the speaking profession. It also ensures competency as a certified professional as a speaker, trainer, facilitator, consultant, or coach.

Note that the CSP credential is a significant designation, and as such, it is difficult to obtain. The requirements are stringent and must be precisely adhered to. Please read this Guide thoroughly to ensure a smooth application process.





Who We Are and Why We Earn the CSP

Who We Are

National Speakers Association (NSA) Mission: Empowering Professional Speakers to Thrive and Influence. We elevate excellence, share expertise, and challenge one another to improve.

NSA confers the CSP Designation. With this designation, meeting professionals looking to work with the best speakers will see your commitment to the professional and know you have top-notch speaking abilities with a track record of professionalism and success.

The Value of Earning the CSP® Credential

- The CSP credential offers skill validation from clients, peers, meeting professionals, and other CSPs (Certified Speaking Professionals)
- It adds opportunities to command greater fees, develop new and sustainable connections, and open the door to CSP/CPAE-exclusive educational sessions
- It also allows you to stand out from the crowd as much as on the platform, in the training room, or the virtual studio
- The process of contacting clients while applying for the CSP can result in an unexpected increase in speaking contracts through repeat business and referrals.
- The detailed application and review process raises applicant awareness of opportunities for improvement of their craft and business practices.
- Attainment of the CSP opens the door to further education and networking with fellow achievers.
- CSP-only events and social media platforms offer enriching experiences that are targeted toward further business growth for those at the top of the speaking field.
- The CSP has gained global recognition as an indicator of one's dedication to excellence in the field of speaking.

The CSP designation is the speaking profession's highest earned international measure of professional platform competence. Less than 17% of NSA members worldwide have achieved the CSP designation.

With support from NSA's CSP Committee, the CSP is conferred by the NSA Board of Directors upon those who meet the requirements.

The CSP Committee ensures the integrity and brand value of the CSP designation, sets policies and application requirements, provides guidance to those individuals who evaluate candidate's video submissions by showing them effective scoring benchmarks, and develops renewal guidelines.



Global Distinction. Our goal is to keep the CSP requirements equivalent and consistent worldwide. This goal will add to the brand and market value of the CSP in the international community.

In addition to NSA being a conferring body of the CSP designation, the Professional Speakers Australia (PSA) also confers the CSP designation. NSA and PSA are both members of the Global Speakers Federation (GSF), which is currently comprised of 17 professional speaking associations from around the world.

The Professional Speakers Association (PSA) of the United Kingdom and Ireland bestows upon its members the Fellowship of the Professional Speakers Association (FPSA), which is accepted by the GSF as equivalent to the CSP to apply for the Global Speaking Fellow designation.

The CSP and the FPSA require considerable evidence that the individual is a professional speaker. In addition, earning the CSP or the FPSA designation is a prerequisite for achieving the international designation of Global Speaking Fellow, which member associations confer.

The Global Speaking Fellow (no acronym used) designation certifies a speaker's ability to maintain a speaking business spanning countries, continents, economies, and cultures.

Harmonization. NSA is part of a task force to harmonize or equalize the CSP standards and expectations with Professional Speakers Australia (Australia). Again, by elevating the brand globally, we strive to enhance its value in the global marketplace.

Professional Competencies. The CSP designation is earned through certified competence in four professional categories. NSA Past President John B. Molidor, Ph.D., CSP, defines a professional speaker as *"Someone who brings expertise, in an eloquent fashion, as part of a business (enterprise), and does so in an ethical manner."*

The primary competencies for professional speakers are known as the Four Es; within each of these competencies, we include sub-competencies:

1. **Eloquence**, including *Platform Mechanics and Performance Mastery*: Eloquent speakers are experts in the art of speaking. They are persuasive and impactful. They connect people to ideas with clarity and imagination.
2. **Expertise**, including *Content Development and Environmental Trends & Impact*: Speakers impart knowledge, skill, and experience in their chosen field in a way that highlights their expertise.
3. **Enterprise**, including *Business Development, Strategic & Operational Business Management, and Product Development*: Enterprising speakers have the business savvy to build and grow a successful speaking business.



4. **Ethics**, including *Professionalism*: Ethics is the foundation of any credible speaker. Members of the 17-member associations of the GSF demonstrate professional conduct in all they do. **Therefore, an ethics statement will be a part of the application process.** The CSP selection process is designed to measure and assess these competencies at various times in each selection phase.

Code of Professional Ethics. A command of professional ethics for speakers is demonstrated in various direct and subtle ways. The Code of Professional Ethics for speakers includes eight principles: Representation, Professionalism, Research, Intellectual Property (I.P.), Respect and Collegiality, Confidentiality, Business Practices, and Diversity.

The following three ethical breaches will result in the denial of a CSP application:

- **Intellectual Property.** The most common violations include using others' stories, material, images, and videos without proper credit or permission. Professional speakers must know the legal and ethical requirements for using others' work. Being original serves speakers well. Using other speakers' materials does not serve you well.
- **Representation and Business Practices.** Asking a client or colleague to pay you to speak and then agreeing to return this fee is a tempting bit of fraud that has tripped up speakers seeking to pad their presentation count to qualify for the CSP. Honesty and integrity are measured in all we do, say, don't do, and don't say.
- **Requests for special consideration.** A request for special consideration, including submission date extensions, exceptions to video policies, and other infractions that could invalidate our process.





Application Timeline

The Timelines and Key Dates for the Class of 2023 are:

- **September 1, 2022.** Applications can be submitted beginning September 1, 2022, when the online application becomes available. Applications submitted before September 1, 2022, will not be considered.
- **January 10, 2023.** Applications are due no later than Tuesday, January 10, 2023, by Midnight PST.
 - **Please Note: A COMPLETE Application includes all documents and information requested in Phase One, including Video Submission(s).**

Applications received or incomplete after this deadline will not be considered.

Application Process (General Overview)

The CSP application process includes multiple assessments and evaluations in each of its four review Phases:

PHASE 1: This is the Enterprise/Administrative phase and includes a review of the following areas: completion of the requisite number of presentations during five of the last ten years, the necessary income levels derived from these presentations, and verification of your presentations. You will be required to submit **all** supporting documents; including but not limited to: Confirmation of Event Attendance within the past ten (10) years (NSA or GSF-affiliate events only); Presentation Video(s); Presentation/Salary spreadsheet; an Applicant Oath, and an employer-letter (salaried employees only).

PHASE 2: Involves gathering information and assessments from a minimum of 20 external reviewers/clients who will independently complete an online and standardized evaluation of your speaking presentations.

PHASE 3: Is the most challenging Phase where a confidential evaluation of your video submission(s) is completed by several internal reviewers who currently hold the CSP designation and who will independently complete an online and standardized evaluation of your video.

PHASE 4: The final decision and vote by the NSA Board of Directors.

To reach the final Phase, your application must pass each of the prior Phases. If you do not meet the requirements of a Phase, your application will not be advanced to the next Phase for consideration. However, you will be notified throughout the process to let you know if



you have advanced to the next Phase or if you did not meet the requirements to be advanced to the next Phase.

This review process typically takes months to complete, given the multiple assessments and evaluations that must be gathered and reviewed. Therefore, please be patient during this time. If additional information is needed, you will be contacted.

All relative documents and templates are located either in the Resource Center on the CSP webpage or in NSA's OnDemand portal.

Application Process (Detailed Overview)

Your application must pass each of the Phases to ensure you have met the requirements and to advance to the next Phase. Here is a detailed explanation of each of the Phases that are utilized in the CSP application and selection process:

PHASE 1. Phase One is the administrative Phase and ensures: the professional education requirements have been met, a description of your speaking business model has been received, and documentation of your Enterprise on the presentation spreadsheet (see below) satisfies the presentation count and income requirements.

During this Phase, the following occurs:

- **Initial Approval of Application** - You must meet the educational requirements (see above) to apply for and maintain a CSP. NSA reviews the applicant list to rule out speakers facing ethics violations.
- **Application Review** - NSA will notify you when your application has been received. The application is then reviewed to ensure that all prerequisites and requirements are satisfied.
- **Clarification** - NSA will email you if there are any questions regarding your application. However, your responsibility is to respond to all questions completely and promptly (*not to exceed 5 business days*). Failure to respond in a timely manner can result in the dismissal of your application.
- **Verification** - Randomly selected clients will be emailed or called to verify your presentation data.
- **Notification** - You will be notified whether your application is being put forward to the next Phase.

PHASE 2. Phase Two is external and ensures that your reviewers/clients independently complete an online and standardized evaluation of your speaking presentations. There is a minimum requirement of 20 external reviewers.

During this Phase, the following occurs:



- **External Reviewer/Client Evaluation** – Your responsibility is to send the required evaluation requests (the template will be provided with an embedded link) to the reviewers/clients you selected to provide evaluations, as indicated on your presentation spreadsheet.
- **Client Evaluation Progress Updates** - You will be given a deadline by which your external reviewers/clients must complete their online evaluation. At least ten (10) days before that deadline, you will receive a status report indicating the number of reviewer/client evaluations submitted and a follow-up template you can send to your clients who have not completed the online evaluation. **The first 20 online evaluations received must satisfy the minimum score requirement to move your application forward.**
- **Notification** - You will be notified whether your application is being put forward to the next Phase.

PHASE 3. Phase Three is internal and ensures that your video submission(s) is independently evaluated by several internal reviewers (who currently hold the CSP designation) by completing an online and standardized evaluation of your video. **They are instructed only to review your submission video; they will not browse the internet, your website, or your YouTube channel for other videos in the public domain.**

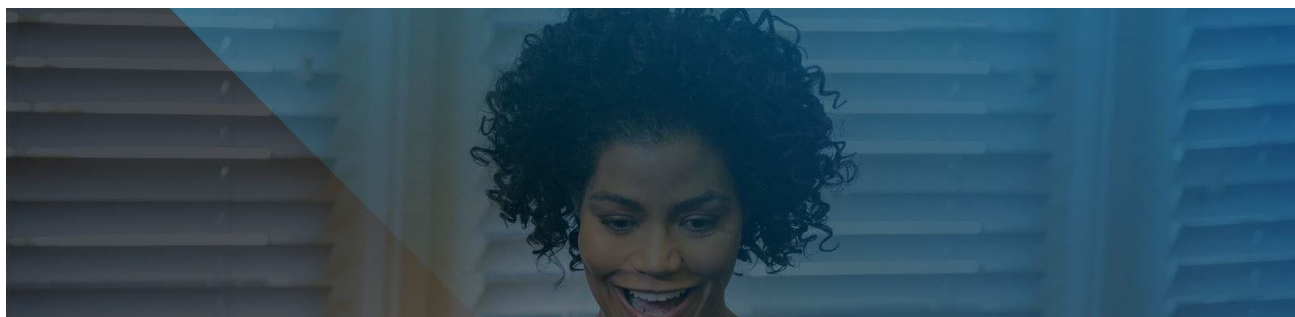
During this Phase, the following occurs:

- **Video Submission(s)** – Your submitted video(s) must meet the video requirements (see below).
- **Video Evaluations** - Your video will be reviewed and evaluated by several internal reviewers who currently hold the CSP designation. These reviewers will independently complete an online and standardized evaluation of your video submission using a format provided by the NSA. The online evaluations must satisfy a pre-set cutoff score to move your application forward.
- **Notification** - You will be notified whether your application is advancing to the next Phase.

PHASE 4. Phase Four is the final review and decision by the NSA Board of Directors.

During this Phase, the following occurs:

- **Decision** - The decision to award the CSP is reached by a vote of the CSP Committee and by approval of the NSA Board.
- **Notification** - You will be notified via email of the final decision by the NSA CEO/President with a follow-up call from a member of the CSP Committee.





Application Requirements

The prerequisites and requirements to apply for the CSP designation as issued by NSA include:

Application and Fee. The current non-refundable application fee for NSA and GSF-affiliate Members is \$375 (U.S.). The current non-refundable application fee for non-member applicants in the United States is \$750. The current non-refundable application fee for non-member applicants outside the United States is determined by the United Nations' median salary survey for the country of residence. The fee for resubmission is \$100.

Continuing Education Credits. An application requirement is in-person attendance at one live NSA or GSF national event with the past ten (10) years. In addition, like most professionals, speakers have continuing education requirements. These are essential to personal and professional growth and industry trend awareness.

Required CSP Educational Sessions. Applicants must complete the CSP Application Coursework: *How to Earn Your CSP (September 2023 release)*, *Business Ethics*, and *Professional Competencies*, presented by panels of experts. The CSP Application Coursework is available in NSA's OnDemand portal and is integral to the application process. You will be required to validate your review of each video with a post-test before proceeding to the next video in the sequence. The individual post-tests must be completed for your application to proceed.

Speaker Business Income Model. Speakers may use various business models to qualify to become a CSP. Guidelines are provided below to assist applicants with documenting income from different business models, such as individuals who put on their own events, salaried speakers, and contracted speakers. For the Class of 2023, we ask you to describe your speaker's business income model on a single page or less.

**If your salary or compensation model is unique, submit a brief written description of your business model to NSA at CSPAdmin@nsaspeaker.org to request a review and a ruling by the CSP Committee before you apply to ensure the work that you do qualifies for purposes of the CSP application.*

Presentation Spreadsheet/Client Form. This completed and supporting form must be included with your CSP Application Form (Phase One). In addition, applicants may download the presentation/client spreadsheet template from our website or NSA's OnDemand portal.

The following data are required:

- Date
- Client organization name



- Client contact name, email, and phone number (*If your original client contact no longer works for the organization, please make note in the last column of the spreadsheet*)
- Topic/title of presentation
- Notation of audience size
- A notation if presentation is virtual
- The fee paid or same-day sales income
- Total income (fee paid + same-day sales)
- Contact information for a minimum of 20 clients
- Qualifying presentations that are paid will count toward your presentation numbers. Therefore, documenting a total of 250 paid presentations is critical for demonstrating professional competence. Unpaid or very low-paid presentations do not qualify.

Fees must be consistent with your usual fee. To meet the presentation count, a 10-year span of time may be used. **For the Class of 2023, the timeframe is 2013 – 2022.** *However, years do not have to be consecutive.*

Presentation/Salary spreadsheets must show:

- Income of \$50,000 **per year** for at least **five of the eligible years (not an average)** must be documented.
- Presentations must be at least 20 minutes in length.
- At least 75% of content must be your spoken word.
- Podcasts, webinars, teleconferences, videoconferences, and/or hologram sessions qualify if the number of live viewers is known and documentable.
- Virtual presentations: the pandemic created a challenge for many professional speakers; the years 2020-22 **may include hybrid or virtual presentations**. If these sessions meet the other criteria, they will be honored, i.e., the reviewer must see an audience and experience engagement (see above). Virtual presentations are limited to 25% of the total presentations.

On the Presentation/Salary Spreadsheet, please indicate a minimum of 20 clients willing to complete an online evaluation of your work. Clients should be familiar with your work and hold the decision-making authority to hire you for future presentations.

- Attendees of self-sponsored presentations or public seminars may be included if the attendee roster(s) from the event(s) is included when submitting one's application. The hiring authority must appear on the roster.
- Applicants are encouraged to include more than 20 clients to ensure that 20 completed evaluation forms are received by the due date.
- Applicants should have their clients' consent to list them as an evaluator.

Please note that clients are more likely to complete the online evaluation if you contact them directly. Explain that you are applying for certification of speaking excellence. Let them know they will be emailed an online survey about your presentation that should take about five minutes to complete.



1. The online survey typically asks for evaluations in the following areas:
2. Demonstrated eloquence when presenting or performing.
1. Displayed professionalism from the platform.
2. Conveyed the topic in a way that was believable and meaningful to the audience.
3. Demonstrated a unique perspective on their topic.
4. Reflected expertise and knowledge on the topic area.
5. Displayed an overall performance that would be enthusiastically recommended to others.

Documented Income. An applicant's presentation spreadsheet must report an income of \$50,000 annually for at least five years. These five years do not have to be consecutive. This income must be actual earned income, not an average of the total years documented. A speaker may meet the requirements of presentation count and income in five years. Some speakers may need to use up to 10 years to document presentation count and income.

“The speaker fee represents an economic relationship between speaker and client,” according to Tim Durkin, CSP. This speaks to the spirit of fee integrity. Fees are to be paid by the client and kept by the speaker.

Paying yourself for a presentation does not qualify, nor does asking someone to hire you with the agreement that the money will be returned to them. These are ethical violations. Qualifying presentations must show consistent or increasing fees as a sign of professional growth. Including low fees (e.g., less than \$500) calls into question a speaker's presentation count for purposes of the CSP application.

Self-Sponsored Presentations. To show income earned from self-sponsored presentations, use the total gross income from the presentation admission price and same-day sales of products and services. In addition, include print or digital promotional items such as flyers, screenshots, or brochures as supporting documentation. These materials must include the date of the event, your name as presenter, the presentation's topic, and the attendee's cost.

Same-Day Sales of Products and Services. Regardless of the business income model adopted by an applicant, same-day sales of products and services because of speaking count toward the calculation of income for a presentation. This includes digital products, DVDs, coaching, books, or upcoming webinars. In addition, income earned from any service or product purchased the day of the live presentation before midnight may be counted.

Salaried or Contracted Speakers. Speakers who are salaried or contracted employees must document fees by using the percentage of their gross annual salary dedicated to live presenting divided by the number of presentations given each qualifying year. For example, as a professor, if you have a \$100,000 annual salary and spend 50% of your time



on-stage or on-screen during the given year, \$50,000 can be applied toward your application. If you delivered 100 presentations during that year, you would show each presentation had a "fee paid" or income earned of \$500 (i.e., \$50,000 from speaking divided by 100 presentations=\$500 per presentation). Research, travel, and other preparation time do not count toward this percentage.

The CSP process clearly defines “professional speaking.” No matter how entertaining, effective, or innovative, non-qualifying presentations will not count toward your presentation numbers. The following ***DO NOT COUNT*** as paid professional speaking presentations:

- Board and Manager meetings
- Coaching
- Courtroom Testimony
- Emceeing (i.e., standard lectern/platform introductions)
- More than 25% of the time is spent entertaining (i.e., singing, dancing, juggling, auctioneering)
- Radio or T.V. Broadcasting
- Vistage or other Membership Group Chair Facilitation (Note: does not exclude Vistage speaking engagements)
- Any other presentation that does not demonstrate or include audience engagement/interaction

Video Submission. The video is the most crucial element of the CSP Application. Your paperwork can be great, but your video can disqualify you. Your video should represent your most current and best work. If you are a keynoter, submit a video of your keynote. If you are a trainer, submit a video of your training session. Videos that do not meet the set requirements, successfully demonstrate platform skills, expertise, or ethics, **or are accompanied by special requests**, are the most frequent reason for an application not being put forward to the next Phase. Note that the video does not have to be professionally recorded. You are responsible for ensuring that the video is well-lit, easy to hear, tracks your movements, and shows audience engagement.

One of the biggest hurdles in this application process is when an applicant's video does not show the candidate in context. Submit a video that shows you engaging the audience with a point that supports the fundamental concepts of your presentation. Presentations read from teleprompters or slides or handheld notes and staged videos with a fake audience fall flat and do not represent CSP-worthy speaking skills.

For the Class of 2023, there are two video options. For *Option 1*, submit **two 20-to-25-minute** videos. For *Option 2*, submit **one 40-to-45-minute video**. Videos can be raw footage, note that they must meet the 20 to 25-minute or 40 to 45-minute limits. Trim the submission to the specified time limits. *A reviewer will not watch a designated segment of your submission; it is **your** responsibility to share the content that (a) meets the criteria,



and (b) reflects most positively on you as a speaker. It is essential that the individuals reviewing your video can see and hear you speaking. The audio track must be easily understood.

The audio track must be continuous with one exception: You may cut audience portions if you make a statement on the video; note this editing in the description section when uploading your video, indicating that the camera and audio will be off while the audience engages in an exercise. For example, give directions to the audience, such as, "You have 10 minutes of work time," then cut back in when you say, "It's been 10 minutes. Let's discuss your work." Making a note of audio cuts avoids the chances of your video being disqualified and dispels any questions of ethics violations.

If the audio is uninterrupted, the visual portion may be shot using multiple camera angles to show the speaker, the audience, slide deck or other visual aids.

Non-English speakers must provide a written transcript in English of the audio track. Videos will be reviewed by speakers of your language whenever possible.

You may ask a seasoned speaker (or two) to review your footage before submission but beware of asking friends and new CSPs. The first can be too generous, and the latter can be too harsh. Instead, choose seasoned CSPs who can be direct and offer constructive feedback. Current CSP Committee members are not eligible for pre-submission video reviews.

Video Evaluation. Each video submission is independently evaluated by several internal reviewers who will complete an online and standardized evaluation of your video. Videos will be evaluated based on eloquence, including platform mechanics and performance proficiency. NSA selects reviewers from a pool of volunteers who hold the CSP and are members of NSA / GSF. All reviewers are required to sign a confidentiality statement. **Again, they will review only those videos that meet time requirements and are a part of your official application. After January 10, no video substitutions will be allowed.**

Video Scoring. The video score is based on the Professional Competencies of Expertise, Eloquence, and Ethics. An applicant must receive a total average video score greater than a pre-set cutoff score.





Employer Verification Letter. Salaried or contracted speakers must provide an Employer Verification letter from an immediate supervisor on company letterhead verifying the following:

- Applicant's position with the company
- Years of employment for each of the qualifying years included in the Presentation Spreadsheet/Client Listing
- Gross salary for each of the qualifying years included in the Presentation Spreadsheet/Client Listing

International Applicants. The income requirement for GSF applicants is based on your home country's income, equivalent to \$50,000 (U.S.) dollars. This calculation is based on the United Nations' median salary survey for each country. Income is not to be converted to U.S. dollars.



CSP Renewal. Earning the CSP designation is a demanding process. However, keeping your CSP designation is much easier than re-applying. So please keep the following in mind:

- Renew every five years.
- Earn 24 NSA / GSF education credits in each five-year renewal period.
- Complete NSA's CSP Application Coursework (NSA OnDemand)
- Review and Confirmation of the CSP Applicant Oath.
- Pay a \$200 administrative fee.

Lifetime CSP Status is available for speakers age 65 and older who have renewed their CSP designation at least once.



Spirit of NSA

“Don’t worry about how we divide up the pie; there is enough for everybody. Let’s just build a bigger pie!”

- Cavett Robert, CSP, CPAE, NSA Founder

Speakers everywhere do better when each of us shines. NSA’s Founder believed everyone can get a piece of an ever-growing pie if we work together. Speakers who demonstrate generous character and respect for their colleagues grow the speaking industry in reputation and brand value.



Authorship and Acknowledgements

On behalf of NSA’s CSP Committee and the CSP community, we thank the following for their contributions to the initial and updated versions of this document:

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Rev. June 6, 2022, Graphics by Kimb Williams