

# How to Earn Your CSP®

A GUIDE FOR NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION  
CERTIFIED SPEAKING PROFESSIONAL™ APPLICANTS 2019



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## INTRODUCTION

This handout was created as a guide for participants at the National Speakers Association's Influence 2018 *How to Earn Your CSP*<sup>®</sup> session to help professional speakers apply for the CSP designation. If you share your “expertise and inspiration with an audience through the spoken word, either face to face or virtually,”<sup>1</sup> you are in the speaking profession and this handout is for you.

We hope to see you on NSA's CSP stage!

### 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 Founder Cavett Robert, CSP, CPAE, believed everyone gets a piece of an ever-growing pie if we work together. Speakers who demonstrate generous character and respect for NSA colleagues grow the speaking industry in reputation and brand value.

By striving to be a Certified Speaking Professional, you, too, will improve the CSP brand globally. By helping other speakers, you will strengthen the value of NSA membership.

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<sup>1</sup> Kristin Arnold, MBA, CPF, CMC, CSP 2010-11 President, National Speakers Association from *The Professional Speakers Imperative White Paper*. <https://www.nsaspeaker.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The-Professional-Speakers-Imperative-White-Paper.pdf>

## Why Earn the CSP Designation?

Stand out from the crowd on paper as much as on the platform, the training room, or the virtual studio. The CSP credential offers skill validation from clients, peers, meeting professionals, and other CSPs. It adds gravitas and opportunities to command higher fees and develop new connections, and it opens the door to CSP/CPAE-exclusive education sessions.

The CSP designation communicates that speaking is a profession with a certification. It raises the bar of expectations for excellence, adding credibility that helps clients choose to hire you as a speaker, trainer, consultant, or coach. Mary Kelly, PhD, CDR, CSP, US Navy (Ret.) notes that booking a speaker is risky and fraught with things that *will* go wrong. Bureaus and clients know CSPs have proven themselves over time. This lessens that risk.

## What Is a CSP®?

The CSP®, Certified Speaking Professional™, is the speaking profession's highest earned designation in the United States. Approximately 17 percent of National Speakers Association members hold the CSP.

With support from NSA's CSP Committee, the CSP is conferred by the Board of Directors of the National Speakers Association upon qualifying members of NSA and the 14 other Global Speakers Federation (GSF) member associations. Professional Speakers Australia (PSA) also confers the CSP designation.

The CSP Committee ensures the integrity and brand value of the CSP designation, sets policies and application requirements, provides guidance to volunteer CSP Video Review Panelists on effective scoring benchmarks and considerations, and develops renewal guidelines.

## Global Distinction

A global harmonization process is being crafted to keep CSP requirements consistent worldwide. This 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, Professional Speakers Australia (PSA) also confers the CSP designation. The Professional Speakers Association (PSA) of the United Kingdom and Ireland bestows on their members the Fellowship of the Professional Speakers Association (FPSA), accepted by the GSF as equivalent to the CSP. Both the CSP and the FPSA require considerable evidence that the individual is a professional speaker.

Earning the CSP designation or the FPSA is a requirement for earning the prestigious international designation of Global Speaking Fellow conferred by the Global Speakers Federation. The Global Speaking Fellow (no acronym used) designation certifies a speaker's ability to maintain a speaking business spanning countries, continents, economies, and cultures.

## Professional Competencies

The CSP designation is earned through certified competence in four professional categories. NSA Immediate Past President, John Molidor, PhD, CSP, defines a professional speaker as “someone who brings expertise in an eloquent fashion as part of an enterprise or business in an ethical manner.”

The competencies for professional speakers are known as the Four Es.

1. **Eloquence.** Eloquent speakers are masters of the art of speaking. They are persuasive and impactful. They connect people to ideas with clarity and imagination.
2. **Expertise.** Speakers impart knowledge, skill, and experience in their chosen field in a way that educates, inspires, and/or entertains.
3. **Enterprise.** Enterprising speakers have the business savvy to build and grow a successful speaking business.
4. **Ethics.** Ethics are the foundation of any credible speaker. Members of the 15 member associations of the GSF demonstrate professional conduct in all they do.

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

Two ethical breaches would result in the denial of a CSP application.

- **Intellectual Property.** The most common violations include the use of 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.
- **Representation and Business Practices.** Asking a client or colleague to pay you to speak, and 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.

## 2019 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

**Membership.** Twelve months of continuous membership (between January 14, 2018, and January 14, 2019) in the National Speakers Association or one of the Global Speakers Federation's member associations is required.

It is frustrating to have your application denied due to administrative oversights and lack of compliance. Common administrative errors such as the ones discussed below result in CSP application denial.

- **Lapsed NSA/GSF Membership.** The CSP is a distinction that can be earned only by members. No membership, no CSP. Even a one-day lapse is a lapse. Renewal dates are listed on each member's login page at [www.NSAspeaker.org](http://www.NSAspeaker.org). As a courtesy, NSA staff send out renewal reminders. Whether these reminders are received or not, it is your obligation to renew your NSA membership in a timely manner.
- **Professional Education.** Like most professionals, speakers have continuing education requirements. These are essential to personal growth and industry trend awareness. In-person attendance at one live NSA or GSF national event is an application requirement.

Applicants must also attend or listen to the audio recordings of the three required CSP educational sessions: *How to Earn Your CSP*, *Professional Competencies*, and *Business Ethics* presented by CSP Committee members. These sessions can be attended live at an Influence meeting or virtually. Listening to the audio recording of the most recent audio versions of the CSP Tract sessions satisfies this requirement if proof of purchase is included in your application.

**Application and Fee.** The application form and fee must be submitted online at [www.NSAspeaker.org/Certification](http://www.NSAspeaker.org/Certification). The 2019 non-refundable application fee is \$375. The resubmission fee is \$100.

### Application Documents

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Completed supporting documents must be emailed to NSA. Required documents are explained in this section:

- Presentation Spreadsheet/Client Listing Form
- Employer Verification Letter (if needed)
- Proof of Educational Recordings (if needed)

## Presentation Spreadsheet

Applicants may download the presentation spreadsheet template at [www.NSASpeaker.org/Certification](http://www.NSASpeaker.org/Certification). The following data is required:

- Date
- Client organization name
- Client contact name
- Client contact email and phone
- Topic/title of presentation
- Notation if audience size is 3-14 people
- Notation if live presentation is virtual
- Fee paid or same-day sales income
- Total income (fee paid + same day sales)
- Contact information for a minimum of 20 clients

## Qualifying Presentations

**Paid Presentation Count.** 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 from 2009–2018 may be used. Years do not have to be consecutive. Presentation spreadsheets must show:

- Income of \$50,000 per year for at least five of the eligible years (not an average)
- Presentations must be at least 30 minutes in length.
- At least 75 percent of content must be your own spoken word.
- At least 75 percent of presentations must be given to audiences of 15 or more; the other 25 percent may be to audiences of a minimum of 3 people.
- At least 75 percent of presentations must be given to live, in-person audiences; 25 percent may be live, virtual presentations.

- Podcasts, webinars, teleconferences, videoconferences, and/or hologram sessions qualify if the number of live viewers is known and documentable.

### **Non-Qualifying Presentations**

No matter how entertaining, effective, or innovative, “professional speaking” has its limitations as it pertains to qualifying for a CSP. The following do not count as paid presentations:

- Emceeing
- Coaching
- Radio or TV broadcasting
- Board and manager meetings
- Vistage Chair facilitation
- More than 25 percent of the time is spent entertaining, i.e. singing, dancing, juggling, auctioneering, etc.
- Recorded presentations

### **Client Listing**

On the presentation spreadsheet, indicate a minimum of 20 clients willing to complete an online Client Evaluation Form 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.
- Applicants are encouraged to include more than 20 clients to ensure 20 completed evaluation forms are received by the due date.
- Applicants should have all clients’ consent to list them as an evaluator.

Clients are more likely to complete your Client Evaluation form if you call or email them. Explain you are applying for a prestigious international certification of speaking excellence. Let them know they will be emailed an online six-question survey about your presentation that should take about five minutes to complete. Many speakers have been surprised to find that this call, followed by a thank you email or note, has resulted in new contracts.

Each of the six questions is worth up to six points. In addition, at the client's discretion, up to two points may be added or subtracted if they provide a written explanation as to why they are adding or subtracting points. To pass, the speaker must receive a total average score of at least 30 points. These questions are the same ones posed to CSP Video Review Panelists.

## Video

Your video represents your best work. Stick to your lane. If you are a keynoter, submit a video of your keynote. If you are a trainer, submit a training session. Videos that do not successfully demonstrate platform skills, expertise, or ethics are the most frequent reason for application denial.

The biggest problem applicants run into with their videos is they do not show themselves in the best light. Choose a video that shows you engaging the audience with a point that supports key points of your presentation. Presentations read from prompters or slides and staged videos with a fake audience fall flat and do not represent your CSP-worthy speaking skills.

Videos can be rough and unedited. They must be 45 to 60 minutes in length, or an excerpt from a longer presentation. Long introductions of you as the speaker do not count toward this 45-minute minimum. It is essential that the CSP Video Review Panel can see and hear you speaking. The audio track must be easily understood.

Editing is not required and there are limits to the editing allowed. The audio track must be continuous with one exception: You may cut audience portions if you make a statement on the video, and note this in the description section when uploading your video to YouTube, that the camera and audio will be off while the audience engages in an exercise. For example, if you give directions to the audience, such as "Ten minutes of work time," then cut back in when you say, "It's been 10 minutes. Let's discuss your work." Making note of audio cuts avoids the chances of your video being disqualified and dispels any questions of possible ethics violations.

The visual portion may be shot using multiple camera angles to show the speaker, the audience, and the PowerPoint or other visual aids, as long as the audio is uninterrupted. Intros and outros may be added to your video clip, but are not required.

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

It is wise to ask a seasoned speaker or two to review your footage prior to submission, but beware of asking friends and new CSPs. The first can be too generous, the latter, too harsh. Choose seasoned Certified Speaking Professionals who can be direct and offer constructive feedback.

### **CSP Video Review Panel**

Each applicant video is reviewed and scored by four CSPs. Applicants have the option of indicating two preferred CSP reviewers. Availability of specific reviewers is not guaranteed. NSA provides the balance of required reviewers from a pool of peer volunteers to ensure four reviews are returned. Eligible picks must be current CSPs who are members in good standing of NSA or GSF Associations.

Get consent from your picks before you submit them. CSP Committee members are not eligible. Avoid choosing new CSPs and friends, so as not to suggest to the CSP Committee that you seek biased judges.

### **Video Scoring**

The questions for the four CSP Review Panelists are the same as those for your clients, but with one additional question:

- What feedback are you willing to share with the applicant?

As with the Client Evaluation form, reviewers may add or subtract up to two points with explanation. A CSP applicant must receive a total average score of at least 30 points to pass.

## **SPEAKER BUSINESS INCOME MODELS**

Speakers using various business models become CSPs. Guidelines are provided below to assist speakers with documenting income from various business models, such as entrepreneurs who put on their own events, as well as salaried and contracted speakers.

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

- **Documented Income.** An applicants' presentation spreadsheet must document income of \$50,000 per year for at least five years. These five years do not have to be consecutive. This income must be actual, earned income and 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. All 10 years used must be documented in terms of income.

### **Speaking for a Fee**

*"The speaker fee represents an economic relationship between speaker and client."*

—Tim Durkin, CSP

The words of Tim Durkin, CSP, speak 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 the money will be returned to them. Qualifying

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presentations show fees that are consistent or increasing as a sign of professional growth. Including low fees (e.g. less than \$100) 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/or same-day sales of products and services. Include print or digital promotional items such as flyers, screen shots, or brochures as supporting documentation. These materials must include the date of the event, your name as presenter, the topic of the presentation, and the cost to the attendee.

### **Same-Day Sales of Products and Services**

Regardless of the business income model adopted by a speaker, same-day sales of products and services as a result of speaking count toward the calculation of income for a presentation. This includes digital products, DVDs, coaching, books, or upcoming webinars. 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 per each of the qualifying years. For example, as a professor, if you have \$100,000 annual salary and spend 50 percent of your time on stage during the given year, \$50,000 can be applied toward your application. If during that year, you delivered 100 presentations, you would show each presentation had a "fee paid" or income earned of \$500.

## Employer Verification Letter

Salaried or contracted speakers must provide an Employer Verification letter from an immediate supervisor on company letterhead that verifies the applicant's:

- Position with the company
- Years of employment for each of the qualifying years included in the Presentation Spreadsheet
- Gross salary for each of the qualifying years included in the Presentation Spreadsheet
- Percentage of the employee's time dedicated to *live* presenting in front of *live* audience. Research, travel, and other preparation time do not count toward this percentage.

## International Applicants

The income requirement for GSF applicants is based on your home country's income equivalent to U.S. \$50,000 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.

## 2019 Application Timeline

- **September 3, 2018.** Applications can be submitted beginning September 3, 2018, when the online application becomes available.
- **January 14, 2019.** 2019 CSP Applications are due no later than Monday, January 14, 2019, by 11:59 p.m. PST. No exceptions will be granted.

## Three Phases of Review

Your application must pass three distinct phases of review to ensure you have met the requirements. Phases I and II are external reviews. Phase III is an internal review.

**Phase I Initial Review** is administrative. It ensures the applicant is in good standing with NSA, membership has been continuous, professional education requirements have been met, and documentation on the presentation spreadsheet satisfies the presentation count and income requirements.

**Phase II Client Evaluations** gathers performance feedback from the applicant's clients.

**Phase III Video Review** ensures speaking excellence. Your video is reviewed by four CSPs.

### Phase I Initial Review

- **Initial Board Approval of CSP Applicants.** You must be in good standing to apply for and maintain a CSP. The NSA Board of Directors reviews the applicant list to rule out speakers facing ethics violations.
- **Application Review.** NSA will notify you when your documentation has been received. The application is then reviewed to ensure application requirements are satisfied.
- **Clarification.** NSA emails you if there are questions regarding the application.
- **Verification.** Randomly selected clients are emailed or called to verify presentation data.

### Phase II Client Evaluations

- **External Client Evaluation.** The applicant sends evaluation requests (template provided with embedded link) to the clients they selected to provide evaluations, as indicated on their presentation spreadsheet.

- **Client Evaluation Progress Updates.** You will be provided with a deadline by which your application must move to Phase III Video Review. Two weeks prior to that deadline you will be given a follow-up template you can send to your clients and a status report stating the number of client reviews received so far. The first 20 reviews received must satisfy the minimum score requirement to move your application forward.
- **Completed Evaluations Notification.** NSA will notify you when your application has progressed to Phase III Video Review.

### **Phase III Video Review**

- **Internal Video Evaluations.** The four-member CSP Video Review Panelists are emailed the applicant's video, evaluation form, and guidelines for consistent scoring.
- **Final Board Approval.** The decision to award the CSP to each applicant is reached by a vote of the CSP Committee and approval of the NSA Board.
- **The Appeal Process.** This is embedded in the application review process, making all decisions final.

## Outcome Notification

### Outcome 1: No Pass at Phase I Initial Review or Phase II Client Evaluation

- **Not approved.** Applicants are notified by the CSP Committee.
- They are encouraged to resubmit the following year.

### Outcome 2: No Pass at Phase III Video Review

- **Not approved.** Applicants with a video score below passing are notified by the CSP Committee.
- They are encouraged to resubmit the following year.

### Outcome 3: Pass!

- **Approved.** Applicants are called and congratulated by a CSP Committee member.
- Applicants are notified by NSA once all applicants have been advised of their status, thus allowing them to share the news.
- New CSPs are contacted with the logistics of the CSP ceremony and sent guidance about brand messaging.

# CSP RENEWAL

## CSP Renewal

Earning the CSP designation is a demanding process. Keeping your CSP designation is much easier than re-applying.

- Renew every five years.
- Earn 24 NSA/GSF education credits in each five-year renewal period.
- Pay a \$200 administrative fee.
- Membership in NSA/GSF member associations must be continuous.

**Lifetime CSP Status** is available for speakers age 60 and older who have renewed their CSP designation at least once **and** continue to maintain NSA/GSF membership without interruption.

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

There are many benefits of earning your CSP, including:

- 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.
- The CSP has gained global recognition as an indicator of dedication to excellence in the field of speaking.
- 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, targeted toward further business growth for those at the top of the speaking field.