

The FPA Competency Model™

Financial Planning Association® (FPA)

The Financial Planning Association® is the premier membership organization for CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professionals and those committed to elevating the profession of financial planning. FPA supports the professional fulfillment of its members through advocacy, learning, practice support, and community.

As the leading voice for the profession, FPA is proud to present the FPA Competency Model™—a landmark initiative to define and promote the behavioral competencies that shape exceptional financial planners. This model reflects FPA's ongoing commitment to equipping professionals not only with technical knowledge, but with the human skills that drive connection, trust, and transformation in financial planning.

Developed by the profession, for the profession, the model reflects years of collaboration, research, and member engagement to support the evolving needs of professionals at every stage—from students to seasoned practitioners.

Acknowledgments

The FPA Competency Model™ is the result of a thoughtful, collaborative effort shaped by the insights and expertise of professionals across the financial planning community.

This work was guided by a dedicated task force composed of practitioners, educators, and association leaders who brought diverse perspectives and deep commitment to the project. Their work was supported by external consultants who provided structure, facilitation, and research expertise throughout the development process.

We are especially grateful to the many FPA members who participated in interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Their honest reflections and professional experiences brought clarity and meaning to each competency outlined in this model. Support from FPA's Board of Directors and volunteer leadership was essential in championing the vision, prioritizing this initiative, and providing the foundation for its success.

This model is a shared achievement—one that embodies the collective effort to define excellence, support professional development, and elevate the financial planning profession for the benefit of all.

A Framework for Professional Growth

The FPA Competency Model™ was developed with two goals in mind:

- To establish the behavioral standards that support the credibility and maturity of the financial planning profession.
- To provide a clear, accessible path to professional mastery—not just through technical expertise, but through the interpersonal, ethical, and leadership competencies that define exceptional practice.

This model is not a static checklist. It's a flexible, practical roadmap—designed to meet you where you are, whether you're a student, a career-changer, a firm owner, or a seasoned CFP® professional. Your path will shift over time, and this model adapts with you.

The Competency Model in Practice

What makes this model powerful is its versatility. It can help you recognize your current strengths and clarify where you want to grow next. It's designed to reflect how you actually work, learn, and serve.

- Employers can use it to train and support high-performing teams.
- Academic institutions can use it to shape more applied, human-centered curricula.
- Mentors and mentees can use it to spark deeper conversations about growth and development.
- Veteran planners can use it to extend their influence through leadership and mentorship.
- Aspiring professionals can use it to chart a purposeful path—regardless of title or designation.

While credentials mark critical milestones, they're only part of the story. To truly elevate the profession, we must cultivate the skills that help financial planners show up with clarity, empathy, curiosity, and care.

This is how we move financial planning forward—by recognizing and supporting the behavioral competencies that matter most in everyday client work.

What's Next

This model was co-created with the financial planning community. We invite you to explore it, challenge it, and make it part of your journey.

Let it shape your continuing education—not as a requirement to fulfill, but as a lifelong path to mastery. This model is designed to enhance your professional impact, support career advancement, strengthen your firm, and—collectively—contribute to the continued evolution of the financial planning profession.



Competency: Interpersonal Impact

Includes a collection of knowledge, skills and behaviors for cultivating effective relationships with influence and positive impact on others.

Sub-Competencies

Cultural
Effectiveness

Emotional
Intelligence

Conveys
Mature
Confidence

Inspires Trust

Networks and
Collaborates

Competency: Interpersonal Impact

Sub-Competency: Cultural Effectiveness

Pursues insights to understand and encourage gender, cultural, religious, educational, racial, ethnic, socio-economic and other forms of diversity, equity and inclusion for the mutual benefit of clients, colleagues and the financial planning practice

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively build increased awareness and understanding of different cultures and marginalized groups• Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking• Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to diverse environments• Articulate one's own differences and similarities with others• Seek and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to take inclusive and equity-minded actions• Identify the needs of diverse people who may benefit from financial planning• Facilitate dialogue effectively among disparate audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify system barriers to equality and inclusiveness and then advocate for and implement means of dismantling them.• Engage in hiring and promotion practices that are fair, inclusive, proactive and nondiscriminatory• Integrate cultural knowledge within specific and relevant cultural financial planning issues• Provide multicultural training that expands the cultural knowledge of one's team• Apply advocacy skills to assist in the development of a multicultural profession• Supervise, challenge and educate other professionals around issues of diversity, inclusion and social justice concepts• Provide opportunities for diverse interactions with professionals in financial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support collective learning of the challenges faced, and opportunities presented by different groups underrepresented or marginalized in the workplace and marketplace• Advocate for fair treatment of people who are overlooked or undervalued due to a aspect of their identity• Put practices in place that aid learning how colleagues and clients experience inclusion in your work together for improvements• Pursue training and team implementation to understand and avoid bias in client interactions, service and engagement

Competency: Interpersonal Impact

Sub-Competency: Emotional Intelligence

Recognizes personal emotions and potential biases to self-manage and listen effectively, and demonstrates care, empathy and understanding of others' emotions, needs, perspectives, and interests to build stronger rapport and relationship.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply self-awareness and tactics to regulate one's own emotions for optimal quality of thinking and interactions with others• Recognize the emotions of others with verbal and nonverbal interactions• Communicate what you need, how you work best and how others can work effectively with you	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create calm across situations and under stress maintaining constructive communication and de-escalation when appropriate• Check-in with others using observation, active listening, and empathy to understand their experiences and perspectives while staying out of judgment• Understand how your emotions impact your interactions with others and your overall performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build resilience in self and others in response to challenge, change and uncertainty• Communicate with empathy to seek other's needs and perspectives and discuss their emotions in relation to the situation and collaborative planning work• Regulate personal emotions to more effectively create a healthier working culture and achieve goals and targets

Competency: Interpersonal Impact

Sub-Competency: Conveys Confidence

Projects authenticity, poise, and well-grounded self-assurance that builds others' confidence through communication and interactions.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project confidence and optimism in the value of financial planning services, your value, and your organization• Listen without interruption and with openness to feedback, criticism, and different perspectives• Acknowledge own mistakes and limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publicly and privately express confidence and support for others in your collaborative work• Apply humor and humility in stressful situations• Share information, responsibility, and decision-authority with others conveying confidence in their abilities and choices• Seek and accept constructive criticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create an environment that encourages feedback and learning from mistakes• Ask the tough questions and make the tough decisions that support client and business goals• Display reassuring confidence when clients express strong emotions in conversation

Competency: Interpersonal Impact

Sub-Competency: Inspires Trust

Aligns words and actions with consistency while demonstrating fairness, respect and integrity and recognizing any ethical dilemmas that require appropriate action and communication.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrive present and prepared with dependability and consistency• Show dedication, discipline and accountability to deliver on assigned tasks• Listen closely to others to understand, clarify, and seek alignment on collaborative work• Ensure consistency with words and actions and follow-through on commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish open and candid, trusting relationships with others• Convey clear expectations, intentions and agenda with others checking in to ensure understanding• Maintain values and standards under pressure seeking to restore trust when shaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure policies, checkpoints, reviews and approvals bring value to work outcomes or otherwise are eliminated• Work with others to establish clear boundaries on authority, autonomy and mutual expectations that support hand-offs• Address mistakes or misaligned priorities and expectations with candor and understanding of others' interests to resolve approach• Protect others' interests who are not present or will be impacted by decisions

Competency: Interpersonal Impact

Sub-Competency: Networks and Collaborates

Cultivates wide and diverse relationships and increased mutual benefits through working together on common goals, sharing expertise, resources, and support.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify roles, responsibilities, and shared goals for collaborative work• Build professional network and community to learn from and support others• Convey respect, sincere interest and gratitude through interpersonal communication and collaboration• Pursue networking and collaboration with others who hold different values and experiences• Ensure consistency with words and actions and follow-through on commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surround yourself with competent colleagues and draw on their talents to strengthen collaborative outcomes• Expand network of trusted relationships to include a wider circle of expertise, cultures perspectives, and experience to call on and support• Recognize and praise others' contributions and generosity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively break down barriers and address competing interests that prevent collaborative work• Cultivate an increasingly diverse network to exchange ideas, support and valuable information• Provide access to others adapting interpersonal style to meet the needs of others and strengthen relationships• Support collective learning of the challenges faced and opportunities presented by different groups underrepresented or marginalized in the workplace



Competency: Professionalism

Includes a collection of knowledge, skills and behaviors needed for maximizing productivity, maintaining ethical practice, and responding resourcefully to new, ambiguous and challenging situations in service to clients. It includes being organized, timely, adaptable, embracing optimal digital solutions and promoting integrity and accountability with continuous learning.

Sub-Competencies

Organization
and Time-
Management

Ethical
Practice

Digital
Fluency

Adaptability

Continuous
Learning

Competency: Professionalism

Sub-Competency: Organization and Time-Management

Considers how best to allocate time, energy and resources according to goals and priorities.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize and complete tasks to timely accomplish team and client goals• Effectively navigate a fast-paced environment• Use technology to increase efficiency, productivity and quality of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify ways to effectively approach tasks and create efficiencies• Build a feedback and learning network that aids critique of one's workstyle for practice improvements• Develop practical habits that increase productivity, efficiency and value for clients• Recommend systems to increase team productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convey a clear sense of personal goals, values and business priorities• Manage time and resources according to values and changing priorities• Systematize practical habits throughout practice and team that increase productivity, efficiency and value for clients

Competency: Professionalism

Sub-Competency: Ethical Practice

Maintains personal and professional integrity, recognizing potential ethical dilemmas for taking appropriate action and promoting integrity and accountability throughout practice.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act with integrity and accountability to self, clients, the organization, and colleagues• Demonstrate fair treatment to all individuals• Develop trusted resources to serve as sounding board for ethical issues encountered• Abide by the FPA Code of Ethics and the CFP® Board Ethical Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model and coach integrity and accountability to self, clients, the organization, and colleagues• Encourage colleagues to share concerns and question practices they cannot support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create systems to ensure integrity and accountability to self, clients, the organization, and colleagues• Establish forums and support options for discussing ethical concerns or questions• Provide advice and solutions• Create ethical standards and procedures for emerging ethical dilemmas

Competency: Professionalism

Sub-Competency: Digital Fluency

The ability to recognize, select, and use the appropriate digital tools and technologies optimal to achieve a particular goal or client experience and outcome.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify appropriate digital solutions to accomplish different tasks• Adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discover opportunities to digitize a better client experience and/or team collaboration in serving clients• Help others adopt digital tools and solutions for improved outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quickly and efficiently adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies• Implement digital tools and solutions that improve team, client and business outcomes• Encourage and reward team adoption of digital tools and solutions that improve outcomes

Competency: Professionalism

Sub-Competency: Adaptability

Keeps an open and constructive mindset when working under stress, facing ambiguity or challenging situations and responds resourcefully to changing work and client requirements.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to a variety of work environments, conditions, tasks, and personalities• Navigate ambiguity with focus on the right activity at right time• Shows willingness to learn new methods, procedures, or techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond resourcefully to new demands and challenges• Maintain calm with a constructive outlook even when plans are thwarted• Looks for ways to make change work rather than only identifying why change will not work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipate new demands, challenges, and obstacles for the business, clients, your team and self to choose effective response• Create a culture for adaptability with a focus on business value, skills and behaviors, and developing team resiliency

Competency: Professionalism

Sub-Competency: Continuous Learning

Creates clear sense of personal financial planning career goals and direction aligning with life goals, while pursuing continuous learning and self-development plans, activities and support.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Display curiosity and self-reflection, seeking opportunities and advice regarding diverse new knowledge, skills and experience• Invite and embrace feedback, mentoring, and continued growth and development• Build awareness of strengths, development needs and preferred career direction with growth plans• Value commitment to lifelong learning and professional service including active participation in professional organizations• Use continuous learning resources to identify areas of weakness and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep development goals current with pursuit of ongoing assessment and learning that fulfills self-development and learning needs• Exchange candid feedback that supports mutual learning and growth• Make personal, career, and organizational development goals compatible with each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model effective feedback exchange and application• Cultivate new and diverse knowledge and skills relevant to clients, technological, ethical, financial, and business issues, trends and advancements• Transfer your learning with support and participation such as mentoring, coaching, teaching, and community learning



Competency: Leadership

Includes a collection of knowledge, skills and behaviors for advancing financial planning practice goals and pursuits, while working through and developing others and bringing relevancy and value to the market and financial planning profession.

Sub-Competencies

Builds Diverse
and Effective
Teams

Mentors and
Develops
Others

Personal
Brand
Development

Business
Development

Business
Model
Innovation

Competency: Leadership

Sub-Competency: Builds Diverse and Effective Teams

Assembles and directs teams whose diverse members have complementary experience and strengths for delivering excellent client experience and outcomes.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remain aware of and open to the influence of context and culture on self and others• Seek to clarify roles, expectations and accountability with others through collaborative work• Build professional trust with colleagues by being a cooperative, reliable, and value-add team member• Help colleagues bring their best self to the team by inviting different perspectives and respecting different cultures and identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pursue diverse candidate pools that mirror clients for selecting, developing, and promoting talented team members• Demonstrate sincere interest and support for team member inclusion, engagement, motivation and career goals• Help team members have clear roles, expectations, and accountability with meaningful connection to serving clients and the business• Leverage planner strengths and capabilities with process assignments such that team members are deployed to increase client value and efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review team processes to ensure fair and equitable talent practices and decisions• Set clear direction and purpose for team roles and collaboration with challenging performance goals and accountability• Ensure team accomplishments are celebrated and mistakes are constructively reviewed for helpful learning and growth• Instill confidence and motivation in team members through empowering words and actions

Competency: Leadership

Sub-Competency: Mentors and Develops Others

Helps other financial planners increase their capabilities and capacity by providing advice, perspective, coaching, and counsel in support of their growth goals and needs.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exchange helpful feedback, learning and development support with colleagues• Act as a connector helping others form supportive development relationships• Develop trusted resources to serve as sounding board for ethical issues encountered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide timely and regular feedback that helps others identify strengths, and areas for learning, performance improvement and professional growth• Ask open-ended questions and coach to help others develop valuable thinking, planning and relationship skills• Engage in role play practice, teaching, mentoring and modeling practitioner activities that support others' growth• Guide team members to understand career path options and requirements in support of growth and promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share information, mentoring support, advice and network introductions generously• Provide opportunities on the job that help team members develop new knowledge, skills and abilities for career growth• Create systems to coach, train, mentor, and develop team member in areas that bring value to clients and the business

Competency: Leadership

Sub-Competency: Personal Brand Development

Creates an authentic and compelling value proposition with branding that attracts and conveys value to clients.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articulate the value of financial planning to different stakeholders• Create a positive personal brand in alignment with the organization and personal career values, skills and core competencies• Explore finding a niche with right type/size of practice and segment of clients that maps to personal career goals and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to clarify values, goals, strengths and core capabilities to direct personal brand communication and career path pursuit• Conduct periodic review of practitioner and leadership activities and career direction to strengthen alignment with career goals• Further refine and develop practice niche with right type/size of practice and segment of clients to guide growth, development and career path	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect and identify any career goals for contributions to the team, organization, profession and/or practitioner community• Pursue opportunities that align to desired personal career goals and leadership contributions to the organization/profession• Continue to gain specialty and differentiating expertise that brings clients greater value

Competency: Leadership

Sub-Competency: Business Development

Applies skills and methods to aid acquiring and maintaining client relationships according to brand messaging and business plans.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build an online presence that aligns to core skills, values and type of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and develop specialty practitioner areas of knowledge, skills and expertise that bring differentiated value to clients• Strengthen online presence and professional referral network by being a connector• Spread core messages regarding the value of financial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop strategies that expand connections with centers of influence leading to direct and indirect business development• Treat referrals as clients with personal and caring relationships• Demonstrate follow-up and follow-through pacing according to client interest and motivation

Competency: Leadership

Sub-Competency: Business Model Innovation

Takes a long view of the market to challenge status quo, identify potential threats and opportunities, and create new paradigms for delivering financial planning value to clients.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop understanding of scenario planning and risk mitigation to create new business models that provide scalable profit• Approach innovation and strategy from different angles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review practice processes and systems for continuous improvement and new business opportunities• Learn from other helping service professions to explore methods for improving business model and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Message the value of financial planning to underserved segments with new outreach and business models• Develop and launch innovations at the right scale in the relevant markets



Competency: Critical Thinking

Includes a collection of knowledge, skills and behaviors for taking charge of one's thinking, monitoring, and improving it in order to help clients solve problems and make decisions with sound judgment for achieving their goals.

Sub-Competencies

Expands
Perspective

Resourceful
Data Review

Monitors
Quality of
Thinking

Develops
Helpful
Thinking Habits

Client-
Centered
Analysis

Provides Sound
Judgment

Competency: Critical Thinking

Sub-Competency: Expands Perspective

Integrates different ideas, data, experience and perspectives and applies information, knowledge and expertise to deliver optional advice and solutions to best serve the client's needs.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand an issue• Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and different ways of thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop understanding of relevant applied psychology concepts including mindsets, biases, values and belief systems• Advance learning on various investment strategies and cash flow solutions• Choose purposes and goals that are fair-minded, considering the relevant needs and rights of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to expand base of knowledge and experience with exposure to new ideas and advanced thinking beyond usual topics• Demonstrate advanced understanding and application of strategic planning (i.e., inquiry-driven styles, legacy planning, family dynamics)• Increase exposure and consideration of diverse perspectives (i.e., data-informed, client-based, varied expert-informed)

Competency: Critical Thinking

Sub-Competency: Resourceful Data Review

Digs deeply to collect and review the relevant and necessary data for aiding clients in making decisions and acting to achieve their financial planning goals.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize and label all client information (i.e., family names, assets, policies)• Recognize applicable tax laws and implications for client planning scenarios• List all client life goals and values (i.e., what is fulfillment)• Demonstrate understanding of client information (i.e., how asset is registered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify data pointing to critical conversations with clients for clarifying historic and future decision-making• Assemble data to clearly illustrate alternative scenarios for client planning• Demonstrate advanced data review and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build a career track program for associates to develop skills to advance in data review and analysis• Design and apply system for assessing client progress, reevaluation, and improvement• Provide opportunities for staff sharing and discussing information to identify helpful meta-themes and patterns for specific clients and/or across clients and the business

Competency: Critical Thinking

Sub-Competency: Monitors Quality of Thinking

Recognizes assumptions, inferences, biases and points of view entering a client engagement and directly assesses the quality and appropriateness of the thinking for the client's situation.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurately summarize and interpret data with recognition of personal biases that may impact outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply process and checklists to perform critical stress-test analysis of plan scenarios across all plan areas• Relate to how clients prioritize and hold money beliefs, investment styles, and life values• Create and institute processes with checklist to minimize bias and errors in planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pursue learning that challenges personal biases and assumptions in technical areas and values• Compare and contrast your process and planning style with other firms to improve practices• When change is planned, identify and plan for impact on others

Competency: Critical Thinking

Sub-Competency: Develops Helpful Thinking Habits

Aims to improve the quality and appropriateness of one's thinking for client engagements with intention by practicing thinking habits and routines to address risks and weaknesses in thinking.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect data to goals and values to envision and construct the plan• Develop a checklist and timeline for repeated processes• Anticipate needs and prioritize action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test different theories that oppose or differ from your beliefs• Build space and process to enter client work and meetings with a fresh and open mindset• Creatively integrate different ideas and perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design strategy for continual service model for client lifetime• Build relationships with early career planners to provide fresh perspective on planning views and techniques• Link goals, issues, and underlying values and motivations to identify strategic direction

Competency: Critical Thinking

Sub-Competency: Client-Centered Analysis

Applies understanding of the client's financials, life goals, challenges and priorities beyond the numbers as a central focus for plan analysis and recommendations.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek client insights including perspectives, values, goals, and experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate the financials with goals and values to aid telling a compelling story for client understanding of current state and future• Compare and contrast scenarios to create awareness and understanding of potential challenges (i.e., health, financial, life change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify areas of planning weakness and for growth to address through continuous learning resources• Model effective feedback exchange and application• Cultivate new knowledge and skills relevant to clients, technological, ethical, financial and business issues, trends and advancements• Transfer your learning with support and participation such as mentoring, coaching, teaching, and community learning

Competency: Critical Thinking

Sub-Competency: Provides Sound Judgment

Applies broad knowledge and expertise when addressing client questions and plan priorities, clearly defining topic and taking critical data into account for offering pragmatic options and recommendations that will best serve client's interests.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply knowledge and experience to determine available options and solutions for the issue at hand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply broad knowledge and seasoned experience to address complex/critical issues• Evaluates sources of information, ideas, techniques for relevance and reliability• Determine the extent to which possible additional information might strengthen or weaken an issue at hand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply broad knowledge and seasoned experience to address increasingly complex issues• Examine current and recurring challenges to better understand the situation, relationship, and dynamics at play for best path forward• Make tough, pragmatic decisions when necessary



Competency: Client Communication and Care

Includes a collection of knowledge, skills and behaviors that aids the financial planner in building a collaborative client relationship and integrating their technical and client knowledge so that the client builds trust and gains optimal value from a financial planning experience.

Sub-Competencies

High Impact
Communication

Client
Experience

Prioritization

Drive for Client
Success

Financial
Coaching

Integrates
Behavioral
Finance

Financial
Counseling

Competency: Client Care and Communication

Sub-Competency: High Impact Communication

Seeks to learn the client beyond the numbers, sets clear process expectations and delivers well-framed messages and plan presentations aimed to meet client needs and fuel action.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on the client as a person using engaging questions to build connection and rapport• Deliver clear, organized and succinct messages tailored for your audience• Increase the use of nonverbal cues to clarify intent such as interest, confidence, listening, understanding, care and concern• Respond honestly when you cannot answer a question and follow through to supply answers and helpful information• Listens attentively to understand client	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use vivid language, examples and illustrations to convey information in a language client understands• Leverage a variety of methods to meaningfully connect with client (i.e., appreciative inquiry, empathetic listening, and motivational interviewing)• Demonstrate candor, poise, care and empathy in discussing potentially sensitive topics with clients• Read client verbal and nonverbal actions to gain insight and adjust communication as needed• Convey client understanding by painting a picture of client goals, values and how the plan supports them with actions and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culminate and integrate personal knowledge of client in communication to reinforce interest, care and concern• Handle questions with poise and careful consideration, answering concisely and encouraging follow-up• Reinforce the client's values and goals repeatedly throughout client engagement with verbal and written communication• Develop client communication plans in CRM for team to follow with action plan prompts for clients• Teach and mentor others regarding communication styles and framing information for varied purposes, personalities, and situation

Competency: Client Care and Communication

Sub-Competency: Client Experience

Orchestrates a methodical process and pace of delivering client service while ensuring a quality client experience and driving continuous improvement in processes and products.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear structure with roles, expectations, timeline and potential outcomes for client engagement • Interview the client to conduct meaningful conversations and valuable data collection • Collaborate with client to capture, clarify and confirm goals and values • Implement a client communication cadence keeping client informed and engaged in planning process • Bring focus to each moment with clients, mentally preparing for each conversation and meeting and eliminating distractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a communication plan that builds client clarity and confidence in the process from beginning to end • Construct conversations to aid client in defining and differentiating critical needs, wants and expectations • Test initial plan design direction with client using visioning and storytelling for client input to confirm or modify final plan design • Ensure optimal client service with every touchpoint and interaction through seeking feedback • Study and stay current on clients' lives, families and businesses as relevant to client relationship, engagement and success • Convey continued commitment to understanding and doing what's best for client value and success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage digital client solutions to enhance client's ease and experience with scheduling, communication, reviewing their finances, making choices and taking action toward their goals • Apply data insights and client feedback to continuously improve the client experience • Support team role-playing practice and involvement to improve client experience • Provide strategic value to clients as trusted advisor and connector with expert referrals and guidance from professional network on critical matters beyond financial plan • Where practical, integrate business processes and practices with those of clients • Benchmark your client practices and processes against other respected practitioners to stimulate learning and improvements

Competency: Client Care and Communication

Sub-Competency: Prioritization

Collaborates with client to prioritize and sequence financial planning topics and needs for analysis and solutions such that the client is not overwhelmed and more likely to act on advice.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resource requirements• Use available resources to get more done with less; all without losing focus• Help client keep plan simple and targeted on top goals and values vs. overwhelming client with information to impress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide conversations to stay on track and focused on client's main goals and values• Negotiates adjustments in timelines when appropriate• Help client sequence goals and plan activities for client engagements• Determines sequence of activities and the resources needed to achieve goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orchestrate the prioritization, sequencing and pace of planning activities with client collaboration for increasingly complex client engagements• Focus on planning and relationship activities that will deliver high value and client success• Utilizes strategic plans daily

Competency: Client Care and Communication

Sub-Competency: Drive for Client Success

Conveys a commitment to understand and recommend what's best for the client while using client insights to pace the relationship, co-create goals and action steps, and motivate action according to client goals.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use expansive interview questions to increase client sharing of goals and values • Reflect to client what is heard for clarifying and confirming goals and needs • Maintain client confidence in plan and motivate client engagement and action • Maintain frequent communication cadence to convey commitment to relationship, plan progress, and client success • Perform role with initiative, discipline, drive and persistence to bring value to clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen for deeper insights and hidden issues to probe and address relevant to relationship and plan • Expand knowledge to collaborate with client creating more robust goals for planning • Develop motivation interview tools to capture expansive topics and issues that may impact plan direction and client willingness to act • Aid client in continual reviewing and connecting their actions to plan goals, progress indicators, and life goals and values • Display an appropriate response to client and encourage client to move forward on activities central to their goals and plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an internal process for team to encourage client sharing, identifying, and solving hurdles to progress, and creating momentum in the client engagement • Assess and communicate with client on unspoken barriers or reluctance to move forward with plan • Anticipate client needs for new information relevant to their values, goals, and situations • Display courage and diplomacy to disagree or challenge client's thinking as helpful without being disagreeable • Model commitment to excellence and creativity in solutions that will increase client value and likelihood to achieve goals

Competency: Client Care and Communication

Sub-Competency: Financial Coaching

Leverages coaching skills such as asking powerful questions and helping clients envision the future to change financial behaviors, adopt new habits, implement plans and achieve their life goals.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empower clients to take responsibility for their decisions• Create and maintain a mindset that is open, curious, flexible and client-centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reach agreement with client on what coaching is vs. is not, expectations, parameters, and success measures for financial coaching engagement• Partner with client to agree on what they want to achieve, resolve, and change with financial coaching relationship and process• Recognize, inquire and probe when there is more to what the client is communicating• Invite client to generate ideas for actions that will aid them in making progress toward their financial goals• Help the client celebrate establishing new financial habits, plan progress and success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use awareness of self, client, financial behavior, and intuition to benefit clients• Partner with client to cultivate a safe and supportive engagement allowing open sharing and mutual respect and trust• Notice patterns and shifts in the client's behaviors during and across conversations to discern and integrate insights to process and plan• Evoke client awareness to their beliefs, motivations and values behind their behaviors that support or limit their goals through inquiry, silence, metaphors and other coaching technique• Cultivate client's learning regarding barriers and supports to their financial plan progress and resources that will further support them• Be fully present in the moment with clients helping them feel they are the most important people in the room

Competency: Client Care and Communication

Sub-Competency: Integrates Behavioral Finance

Applies understanding of how human emotions, psychological traits, values, cognitive biases, and motivations relate to client financial beliefs, decisions and actions to help clients gain insights and take action that will serve their financial goals and well-being.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a basic understanding of the psychology behind why and how clients make their financial decisions• Identify client triggers that could restrict their ability to make sound financial choices and develop strategies to ensure your professional counsel is penetrating behavior firewalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop deep insights and skills with coursework and other learning to identify and address financial health behaviors and issues in client engagements• Observe and identify specific client behaviors supporting or limiting their financial health goals and values through client engagement• Leverage behavioral finance tools to review client observations of behaviors, biases, and money scripts to build a client map• Facilitate client conversations and other communication with financial behavior insights helping the client move planning forward toward financial health goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assist clients in integrating extended family into legacy planning with behavioral finance understanding, tools, skills and applications• Coach team in financial behavior principles, identifying client's behaviors and beliefs that limit their financial health, and assisting them in changing those behaviors based on their goals• Expand practitioner community understanding of financial behaviors that limit and support financial health goals and values

Competency: Client Care and Communication

Sub-Competency: Financial Counseling

Integrates counseling skills such as therapeutic interviews and techniques to aid clients who face financial planning challenges as individuals, couples and families.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify your own beliefs about money, including money scripts, money history, how money operated in your family of origin and how your view of money has progressed throughout life • Build a sense of financial wellness within yourself (Identify what financial wellness means for you) • Identify potential areas of abuse within the planner/client relationship • Identify different modalities of financial counseling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue learning, formal training and experience in financial therapy practices to understand the foundations of providing financial counseling • Incorporate a systematic process in providing client financial counseling services • Identify when to incorporate financial counseling into the standard planning process and be clear with your clients on your specific role in the relationship • Guide individuals, couples or family clients to become aware of their beliefs regarding their money history and how it impacts their current financial decisions • Identify and discuss with a supervisor and therapist your personal emotional responses and projections to client situations and their impact on client care and interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue advanced learning and direct client experience to increase financial counseling and therapy knowledge and skills • Develop team policies and procedures for client financial counseling services for optimal outcomes and reduction of liability in exceeding competency level • Incorporate best practices and ethical oversight for maintaining skills and delivering financial counseling • Teach, mentor and supervise others to practice skilled and ethical financial counseling in service to clients' financial wellbeing goals



Competency: Advance the Financial Planning Profession

Includes a collection of knowledge, skills and behaviors for expanding capability, capacity, reach and positive impact of the financial planning profession.

Sub-Competencies

Professional
Advocacy

Growing the
Financial Planning
Community

Pro Bono Service

Competency: Advance the Financial Planning Profession

Sub-Competency: Professional Advocacy

Participate in advocacy efforts at the state and national level, impacting the financial planning profession and other policy-related news and communications.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the strengths and resources of clients and peers and the factors that affect them• Understand the laws and regulations that impact the financial planning profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share resources and tools that are appropriate for expanding reach of the profession• Develop a plan of action and identify allies that can be used to alert the community• Use FPA's Policy Center to stay informed on potential federal legislation that could impact the financial planning professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry out a plan of action and reflect/evaluate effectiveness of advocacy efforts• Share research and professional expertise with clients and community members in appropriate ways• Collaboratively prepare and present materials and information to influence decision makers, legislators, and policy makers, ensuring that the financial planning profession's voice is central• Builds strategies to ensure sustained support for the implementation of equitable policies that positively impact the profession

Competency: Advance the Financial Planning Profession

Sub-Competency: Growing the Financial Planning Community

Provides a collaborative space for advisors to learn and grow alongside their peers, promoting accessibility, diversity, and inclusion.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage questions and share information about the financial planning profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Value commitment to professional service including active participation in professional organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboratively prepare and present materials and information to influence decision makers, legislators, and policy makers, ensuring that the financial planning profession's voice is central• Prepare convincing data and rationales for public awareness• Builds strategies to ensure sustained support for the implementation of equitable policies that positively impact the profession

Competency: Advance the Financial Planning Profession

Sub-Competency: Pro Bono Service

Improves the financial lives of individuals while expanding access to quality financial services.

FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify communities affected by lack of financial planning understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyzes a situation and identifies the legal and non-legal issues• Identifies the roles, interests, and objectives of key stakeholders• Collaborate with other experienced financial planners to build a strong reputation for the profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain open dialogue with communities and clients through providing information, support, and expertise• Think beyond one's own reputation to the reputation of the financial planning profession as a whole

