

# Questions to Ask a Financial Advisor

The CFP® board provides 10 important questions that you should ask a financial advisor before hiring them. Make sure you get their answers in writing, as HIGHLAND Financial Advisors has provided below.

- 1. What experience do you have?** Ask for a brief description of the financial planner's work experience and how it relates to their current practice. CFP® professionals must have a minimum of three years planning experience.  
**A:** *Our wealth advisors have a combined 36+ years of financial planning experience. This experience includes all the same services we offer today.*
- 2. What are your qualifications?** Ask about the credentials your planner holds and how the planner stays up to date with current changes and developments in their field. CFP® professionals expand their knowledge and stay up-to-date through mandatory continuing education courses.  
**A:** *Our wealth advisors all have their CFP® certification. Other qualifications our advisors and team members may hold are AIF®, RLP®, and MBA. Our advisors stay on top of our industry's best practices and meet the yearly standards of the CFP® continuing education requirements. All of our advisors have been featured as a thought leader in publications such as The Wall Street Journal, NY Times, CNBC, Investment News, The Star Ledger, and The Nightly Business Report on PBS.*
- 3. What financial planning services do you offer?** Credentials, licenses and areas of expertise are all factors that determine the services a financial planner can offer. Generally, financial planners cannot sell insurance or securities products such as mutual funds or stocks, without proper licenses. And they cannot give investment advice unless registered with state or federal authorities.  
**A:** *We are a registered investment advisor under the securities and exchange commission. We offer comprehensive financial planning and objective, discretionary investment advisor services. These services may include retirement planning, tax planning, estate planning, insurance planning, investment management, and financial life planning. We are Fiduciary Advisors.*
- 4. What is your approach to financial planning?** Make sure the planner's investing philosophy isn't too cautious or overly aggressive for your needs. Learn how the planner will carry out recommendations or refer tasks to others.  
**A:** *We work with clients to explore their unique goals and objectives, and build a financial plan to help them achieve those goals. We use an evidence-based investment approach to achieve your long-term investment goals.*
- 5. What types of clients do you typically work with?** Some financial planners prefer to work with clients whose assets fall within a particular range, so it's important to make sure the planner is a good fit for your individual financial situation. Keep in mind that some planners require you to have a certain net worth before offering services.  
**A:** *We work with individuals and families who typically have an investable net worth of \$1,000,000 or more. Our clients are typically looking for an advisor to help with all aspects of their financial lives, not just investment advice.*
- 6. Will you be the only financial planner working with me?** Some financial planners work with their clients directly, and others have a team of people that work with them. Ask who will handle your account, meet them, and ask whether the planner works with professionals outside their own practice, such as attorneys, insurance agents or tax specialists. If they do, get a list of their names to check on their backgrounds.  
**A:** *Your primary contact will be your advisor, although our entire team will be working on your financial plan. Your team will include your lead wealth advisor, support financial planner, portfolio analyst, and administrative staff. We work with tax, legal, and insurance professionals outside of our firm when necessary to meet client needs.*
- 7. How will I pay for your financial planning services?** Planners can be paid in several ways: through fees, commissions, or a combination of both. As part of your written agreement, your financial planner should make it clear how they will be paid for the services provided.  
**A:** *We are paid by you, the client. We are not compensated in any other way, period. That means we do not receive any commissions or revenue based on our recommendations.*
- 8. How much do you typically charge?** Although what you pay will depend on your particular needs, the planner should be able to provide you with an estimate of possible costs based on the work to be performed. Costs should include the planner's hourly rates or flat fees, or the percentage of commission received on products you may purchase.  
**A:** *We are fee-only, and our fee is a percentage of the amount of assets we manage for you. The fees range from 0.35% to 1.00% of assets under management.*
- 9. Do others stand to gain from the financial advice you give me?** Ask the planner to provide you with a description of their conflicts of interest in writing. For example, financial planners who sell insurance policies, securities or mutual funds will have a business relationship with the companies that provide these financial products. CFP® professionals agree to abide by a strict code of professional conduct and have an ethical obligation to put your needs above their own.  
**A:** *No, we are compensated solely by our clients' fees. We do not have a conflict of interest with any product or service we provide. We do not have an employment relationship or sales agreement with any Wall Street firm or insurance company. If we recommend a product, we do not receive any compensation from any third party. There may be a conflict of interest in that our compensation is based on the amount of investable net worth you have under our management.*
- 10. Have you ever been publicly disciplined for any unlawful or unethical actions in your career?** The CFP Board, FINRA, and your state insurance and securities departments each keep records on the disciplinary history of financial planners and advisors. Ask which organizations the planner is regulated by and contact these groups to conduct a background check.  
**A:** *We have not had any disciplinary actions. We are a Registered Investment Adviser with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and our advisors all adhere to the CFP® Board Code of Ethics.*