



# ***More Than a Credential: My Life as a CFRE and Ambassador***

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Early in my career, a mentor offered me a piece of advice that would ultimately redefine my professional trajectory: pursue the Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) credential. At the time, I viewed it as a challenging but necessary milestone for career advancement. However, as I embarked on the journey, I realized that obtaining my CFRE was far more than just a strategic move for my resume. It allowed me to fulfill a deeply held personal goal for professional development, providing me with a meaningful asset during job searches and granting me entry into a robust network of dedicated fundraisers across the nation.



The process of preparing for the CFRE was unexpectedly transformative. I often describe it as the moment when the varying puzzle pieces of my professional knowledge and daily experiences finally aligned to create a larger, clearer picture. It offered profound insight into how various fundraising functions—from annual giving to major gifts—work in concert to build sustainable organizations. More importantly, the preparation process solidified a donor-centric philosophy that now serves as the foundation for how I interact with every donor and volunteer. It moved my practice beyond the transactional, focusing instead on how to help others have a truly meaningful experience with the causes they are most passionate about.

My commitment to this standard of excellence only grew as I approached my recent reaccreditation. During that time, I discovered the opportunity to serve as a CFRE Ambassador. This role allows me to give back to the fundraising community by serving as a knowledgeable point of contact for those navigating the certification process. I recognized that many talented professionals feel a sense of trepidation when considering the CFRE, but it is not a process to be feared when you have a peer to share what success looks like. As an Ambassador, I strive to demystify the requirements and provide the encouragement necessary for others to take that next step in their careers.

For those currently considering the CFRE, my strongest recommendation is to seek out a community of practice. While independent study is necessary, joining a study group made a pivotal difference in my own journey. Having a group to talk through complex scenarios and quiz one another on core competencies transforms the preparation from a daunting task into a collaborative learning experience. Speaking with someone who has already been through the process can provide the perspective needed to realize that the credential is well within reach.

This level of dedication is exactly why more employers are listing the CFRE as a preferred, if not required, qualification for new hires. When an employer reviews an applicant with this designation, they are seeing more than just a certification; they are seeing a verified commitment to the profession and a sophisticated level of expertise. It signals that the candidate possesses the discipline to meet rigorous global standards and the ethical framework required to lead a development program with integrity. Ultimately, the CFRE is a testament to a fundraiser's dedication to their craft and their passion for connecting donors with the missions that change the world.