

10 HIGHEST PAYING CERTIFICATIONS IN NATIONAL SECURITY

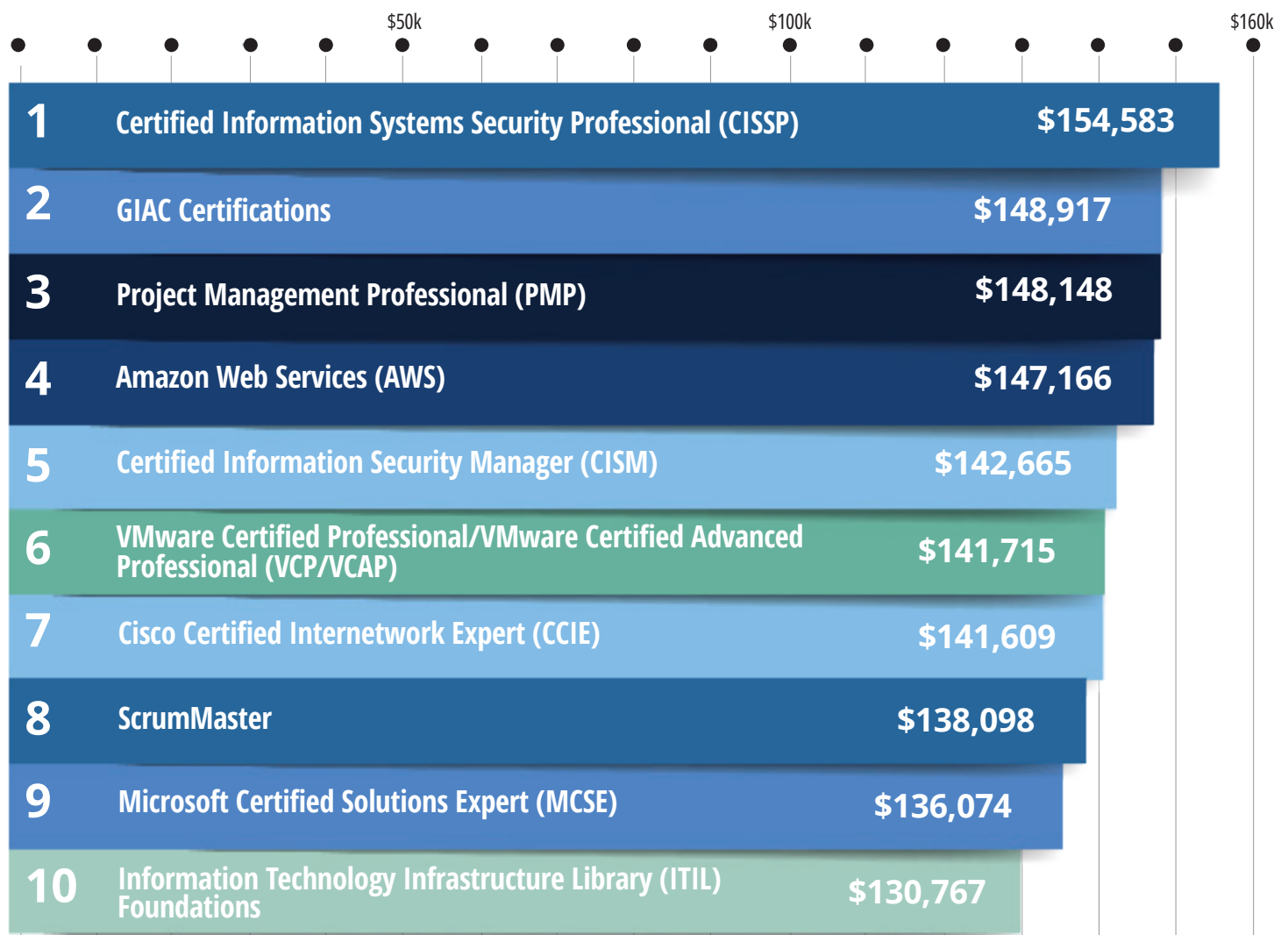


TOP 10 CERTIFICATIONS FOR CLEARED PROFESSIONALS

Whether you're on the hunt for a remarkable candidate or aiming to become one, certifications elevate you from ordinary to outstanding. According to the 2024 Security Clearance Compensation Report, the average total compensation for clearance holders stands at \$114,956. Over half of the respondents (54%) reported holding at least one certification, a 5% rise from 2020. Possessing at least one certification boosts compensation by at least \$7,000, making a substantial difference in earnings compared to the overall average.

The respondents that reported at least one certification had an average total compensation of \$122,420, while their uncertified counterparts earned an average of \$106,669. Amid an unpredictable economy and widespread discussions of layoffs, the salary gap for clearance holders with at least one certification compared to those without is significant—over \$15,000.

AVERAGE COMPENSATION BY CERTIFICATION



THE TOP 10 CERTIFICATIONS

1



Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)

\$154,583

Understanding a client's cybersecurity needs is now a non-negotiable demand from the government, not just a contractor's aspiration. The CISSP certification remains a powerful testament to a candidate's skills in cybersecurity design, implementation, and management. Whether for network architects, IT directors, or budding cybersecurity professionals, this certification has firmly maintained its position as the second most valued for another consecutive year.

2



GIAC Certification

\$148,917

As cyber threats escalate and attacks become more sophisticated, GIAC certifications set certain candidates apart by developing and validating specialized skills beyond general infosec knowledge. These rigorous certifications assure the government and military of a candidate's high competency, positioning them above their peers in the ever-expanding field of cybersecurity.

3



Project Management Professional (PMP)

\$148,148

The aging workforce impacts project managers more than other roles, particularly as younger talent enters and adjusts compensation dynamics. While certifications add value, it's the depth of experience that truly enhances pay. Managing a project from inception to completion, staying within scope and budget, requires seasoned expertise. For large-scale projects, a manager with a PMP certification from the Project Management Institute (PMI) is ideal. Winning future work always depends on successful project completion.

4



Amazon Web Services (AWS)

\$147,166

As the federal government and many industries shift towards cloud solutions, certifications in key cloud platforms have become essential for candidates. Amazon Web Services leads as the largest certification provider, offering popular services like Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2), Glacier, and Simple Storage Service (S3), which are gaining widespread adoption. Among their certifications, AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner, AWS Certified Solutions Architect (Associate), and AWS Certified Solutions Architect (Professional) stand out as crucial for professionals navigating this evolving landscape.

5



Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)

\$142,665

For experienced professionals, earning a CISM (Certified Information Security Manager) certification can significantly enhance their career, particularly for those in oversight and design roles in information security. The CISM curriculum deepens understanding of information security governance, risk management, program development, and incident management. Acquiring this certification can distinguish a candidate who already has several years of experience, positioning them as a standout in their field.

6



VMware Certified Professional/VMware Certified Advanced Professional (VCP/VCAP)

\$141,715

Candidates who earn them highly noteworthy. The certification includes a live exam setting, testing candidates' ability to prepare thoroughly and perform under pressure. The VMware Certified Professional (VCP) credential demonstrates that a candidate can tackle real-world IT challenges effectively and on-the-spot. It also verifies that the candidate possesses the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver a scalable and reliable virtualization platform.

7



Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert (CCIE)

\$141,609

Respondents holding a CCIE (Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert) certification outearn their uncertified peers by nearly \$35,000. This expert-level Cisco certification is crucial as it addresses the converging needs of software, networking, and infrastructure. Possessing a CCIE signals advanced skills and knowledge, making candidates highly valuable, and companies are willing to pay a premium for this expertise.

8



Scrum Master

\$138,098

A Scrum Master certification marks a candidate as a problem-solver, an invaluable trait given the complex challenges facing government operations. This certification distinguishes leaders from their peers, making them notably more competitive. While not suitable for everyone, it adds significant value for certain leaders within a company. If fostering innovation and driving organizational change are priorities, hiring a Scrum Master-certified professional could be a strategic move.

9



Microsoft Certified Solutions Expert (MCSE)

\$136,074

Despite being retired, Microsoft's MCSE certification still ranks among the top 10 highest-paying certifications for cleared professionals, underscoring its lasting impact on achieving six-figure salaries in IT. Formerly a key component of Microsoft's cloud certification lineup, the MCSE validated IT experts' capabilities in cloud migration and data security enhancement. It also serves as a foundational step for professionals aiming to acquire further role-based Microsoft certifications, continuing its role in career development.

10



Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Foundations

\$130,767

The ITIL certification offers a structured ladder with five levels, accommodating candidates across varying degrees of knowledge and experience. This certification lays out a robust framework for managing IT service delivery, addressing common challenges like maintaining control and staying within budget. ITIL helps combat scope creep and mismanagement effectively. Beginners can start with the Foundations level and progressively advance through the ranks as they grow in their careers.

SIX-FIGURE SALARIES FOR OTHER CERTIFICATIONS

Other popular certifications also provide six figure salaries - even if they don't make it into the top 10. Experience and education play an important role, as well. However, as the federal government works towards skills-based hiring decisions, certifications will grow in value.

Certification	Total Compensation
COMPTIA CLOUD+	\$130,343
Certified Federal Contract Manager (CFCM)	\$127,366
Certified Professional Contract Manager (CPCM)	\$126,594
Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)	\$126,305
Microsoft Certified: Azure Administrator Associate	\$123,339
Six Sigma	\$122,680
COMPTIA SECURITY+	\$119,862
COMPTIA NETWORK+	\$119,140
Google Certified Professional (GCP)	\$115,236
Cisco Certified Design Expert (CCDE)	\$111,225

CERTIFICATIONS ARE A KEY RECRUITING AND RETENTION STRATEGY

In today's market, credibility is key. As candidates increasingly ghost recruiters and disinformation clouds the news, certifications stand out as essential validations of skill, crucial for fulfilling contract obligations. These certifications not only demonstrate a candidate's commitment to professional growth but are also vital in adapting to technological advancements.

On both sides of the recruitment process, certifications boost confidence. Candidates show their readiness to invest in their futures, while employers often absorb the costs, viewing it as an investment in quality. For recruiters, having certified professionals on hand not only increases the likelihood of contract wins but also enhances revenue potential.

Additionally, earning new certifications often indicates a candidate's readiness for advancement, leading competitive employers to offer bonuses for certifications in their compensation packages. While certifications form just one aspect of overall compensation, their value in distinguishing candidates and winning contracts is undeniable.

Important information about our survey

This report focuses on the findings for the 2023 compensation survey. In 2023, there were 33,045 survey participants. After excluding survey respondents not having security clearance, those who were unemployed, active-duty military, students, those whose compensation was below \$18,000 or above \$350,000, and finally incomplete or duplicate questionnaires, there remained 14,251 usable responses in 2023.

By definition, all respondents included in this analysis have an active or current security clearance issued by the U.S. federal government, are not active-duty military, are employed, and reported compensation figures between \$18,000 and \$350,000.



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Cyber: Service offerings focused on an information environment that includes assets such as networks, technology, infrastructure and data.

Intelligence: Service offerings focused on all-source intelligence, space/counterspace, geospatial, counterintelligence and counter-terrorism.



A MODERN MARKETPLACE FOR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN NATIONAL SECURITY

ClearanceJobs is your all-in-one recruiting solution. Much like a CRM, our unique system lets you target top candidate leads, converting cool passives to active candidates ready to make a move—to your company.

END-TO-END CLEARED HIRING SOLUTIONS



RECRUITMENT SOLUTION [↗](#)

- Search, directly engage, and easily work cleared candidates through a pipeline.
- Convert passives to active potential hires.



CAREER EVENTS [↗](#)

- Reduce your cost per hire with real-time conversations.
- Choose from in-person or virtual, public or private events.



SOURCING SERVICES [↗](#)

- Save time and free up bandwidth while we fill your pipeline.
- All that's left for you to do is interview and hire.



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- Amplify your hiring messages using targeted messaging, site advertising and sponsored content.

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