



# Preparing for the ICF Credentialing Assessment -- Reference Document 2022

<b>ICF Credentialing Assessment</b>	
<p>The ICF Credentialing Assessment, previously known as: Coach Knowledge Assessment (CKA), is a tool that can be used to measure coaches' understanding of the knowledge and skills important in the practice of coaching. The exam tests coaches on their understanding of the body of knowledge that includes the ICF definition of coaching, Core Competencies and Code of Ethics.</p>	
<b>ICF Definition of Coaching</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The ICF defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.</b></p>
<b>ICF Code Of Ethics</b>	<p>The ICF Code of Ethics is composed of five Main Parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. INTRODUCTION</li> <li>2. KEY DEFINITIONS</li> <li>3. ICF CORE VALUES AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES</li> <li>4. ETHICAL STANDARDS</li> <li>5. PLEDGE</li> </ol> <p><b>1. INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p>The ICF Code of Ethics describes the core values of the International Coach Federation (ICF Core Values), and ethical principles and ethical standards of behavior for all ICF Professionals (see definitions). Meeting these ICF ethical standards of behavior is the first of the ICF core coaching competencies (ICF Core Competencies). That is <i>ethical practice: understands and consistently applies coaching ethics and standards.</i></p> <p>The ICF Code of Ethics serves to uphold the integrity of ICF and the global coaching profession by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting standards of conduct consistent with ICF core values and ethical principles.</li> <li>• Guiding ethical reflection, education, and decision-making</li> <li>• Adjudicating and preserving ICF coach standards through the ICF Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) process</li> <li>• Providing the basis for ICF ethics training in ICF-accredited programs</li> </ul> <p>The ICF Code of Ethics applies when ICF Professionals represent themselves as such, in any kind of coaching-related interaction. This is regardless of whether a coaching Relationship (see definitions) has been established. This Code articulates the ethical obligations of ICF Professionals who are acting in their different roles as coach, coach supervisor,</p>

mentor coach, trainer or student coach-in-training, or serving in an ICF Leadership role, as well as Support Personnel (see definitions).

Although the Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) process is only applicable to ICF Professionals, as is the Pledge, the ICF Staff are also committed to ethical conduct and the Core Values and Ethical Principles that underpin this ICF code of ethics.

The challenge of working ethically means that members will inevitably encounter situations that require responses to unexpected issues, resolution of dilemmas and solutions to problems. This Code of Ethics is intended to assist those persons subject to the Code by directing them to the variety of ethical factors that may need to be taken into consideration and helping to identify alternative ways of approaching ethical behavior.

ICF Professionals who accept the Code of Ethics strive to be ethical, even when doing so involves making difficult decisions or acting courageously.

## **2. KEY DEFINITIONS**

- “Client: - the individual or team/group being coached, the coach being mentored or supervised, or the coach or the student coach being trained.
- “Coaching” - partnering with Clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.
- “Coaching Relationship” – a relationship that is established by the ICF Professional and the Client(s)/Sponsor(s) under an agreement or a contract that defines the responsibilities and expectations of each party.
- “Code” – ICF Code of Ethics
- “Confidentiality” – protection of any information obtained around the coaching engagement unless consent to release is given.
- “Conflict of Interest” – a situation in which an ICF Professional is involved in multiple interests where serving one interest could work against or be in conflict with another. This could be financial, personal or otherwise.
- “Equality” – a situation in which all people experience inclusion, access to resources and opportunity, regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, immigration status, mental or physical disability, and other areas of human difference.
- “ICF Professional” – individuals who represent themselves as an ICF Member or ICF Credential-holder, in roles including but not limited to Coach, Coach Supervisor, Mentor Coach, Coach Trainer, and Student of Coaching
- “ICF Staff” - the ICF support personnel who are contracted by the managing company that provides professional management and administrative services on behalf of ICF.
- “Internal Coach” - an individual who is employed within an organization and coaches either part-time or full-time the employees of that organization.

- “Sponsor” – the entity (including its representatives) paying for and/or arranging or defining the coaching services to be provided.
- “Support Personnel” – the people who work for ICF Professionals in support of their Clients.
- “Systemic equality” – gender equality, race equality and other forms of equality that are institutionalized in the ethics, core values, policies, structures, and cultures of communities, organizations, nations and society.

### **3. ICF CORE VALUES AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

The ICF Code of Ethics is based on the ICF Core Values and the actions that flow from them. All values are equally important and support one another. These values are aspirational and should be used as a way to understand and interpret the standards. All ICF Professionals are expected to showcase and propagate these Values in all their interactions.

### **4. ETHICAL STANDARDS**

The following ethical standards are applied to the professional activities of ICF Professionals:

#### **Section I - Responsibility to clients**

As an ICF Professional, I:

1. Explain and ensure that, prior to or at the initial meeting, my coaching Client(s) and Sponsor(s) understand the nature and potential value of coaching, the nature and limits of confidentiality, financial arrangements, and any other terms of the coaching agreement.
2. Create an agreement/contract regarding the roles, responsibilities and rights of all parties involved with my Client(s) and Sponsor(s) prior to the commencement of services.
3. Maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality with all parties as agreed upon. I am aware of and agree to comply with all applicable laws that pertain to personal data and communications.
4. Have a clear understanding about how information is exchanged among all parties involved during all coaching interactions.
5. Have a clear understanding with both Clients and Sponsors or interested parties about the conditions under which information will not be kept confidential (e.g., illegal activity, if required by law, pursuant to valid court order or subpoena; imminent or likely risk of danger to self or to others; etc.). Where I reasonably believe one of the above circumstances is applicable, I may need to inform appropriate authorities.
6. When working as an Internal Coach, manage conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest with my coaching Clients and Sponsor(s) through coaching agreement(s) and ongoing dialogue. This should include addressing organizational roles, responsibilities, relationships, records, confidentiality and other reporting requirements.
7. Maintain, store and dispose of any records, including electronic files and communications, created during my professional interactions in a manner that promotes confidentiality, security and privacy and complies with any applicable laws and agreements. Furthermore, I seek to make proper use of emerging and growing

technological developments that are being used in coaching services (technology assisted coaching services) and be aware how various ethical standards apply to them.

8. Remain alert to indications that there might be a shift in the value received from the coaching relationship. If so, make a change in the relationship or encourage the Client(s)/Sponsor(s) to seek another coach, seek another professional or use a different resource.
9. Respect all during the coaching process subject to the provisions of the agreement.
10. Am sensitive to the implications of having multiple contracts and relationships with the same Client(s) and Sponsor(s) at the same time in order to avoid conflict of interest situations.
11. Am aware of and actively manage any power or status difference between the Client and me that may be caused by cultural, relational, psychological or contextual issues.
12. Disclose to my Clients the potential receipt of compensation, and other benefits I may receive for referring my Clients to third parties.
13. Assure consistent quality of coaching regardless of the amount or form of agreed compensation in any relationship.

#### **Section II - Responsibility to practice and performance**

As an ICF Professional, I:

14. Adhere to the ICF Code of Ethics in all my interactions. When I become aware of a possible breach of the Code by myself or I recognize unethical behavior in another ICF Professional, I respectfully raise the matter with those involved. If this does not resolve the matter, I refer it to a formal authority (e.g., ICF Global) for resolution.
15. Require adherence to the ICF Code of Ethics by all Support Personnel.
16. Commit to excellence through continued personal, professional and ethical development.
17. Recognize my personal limitations or circumstances that may impair, conflict with or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional coaching relationships. I will reach out for support to determine the action to be taken and, if necessary, promptly seek relevant professional guidance. This may include suspending or terminating my coaching relationship(s).
18. Resolve any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest by working through the issue with relevant parties, seeking professional assistance, or suspending temporarily or ending the professional relationship.
19. Maintain the privacy of ICF Members and use the ICF Member contact information (email addresses, telephone numbers, and so on) only as authorized by ICF or the ICF Member.

#### **Section III Responsibility to professionalism**

As an ICF Professional, I:

20. Identify accurately my coaching qualifications, my level of coaching competency, expertise, experience, training, certifications and ICF Credentials.

21. Make verbal and written statements that are true and accurate about what I offer as an ICF Professional, what is offered by ICF, the coaching profession, and the potential value of coaching.
22. Communicate and create awareness with those who need to be informed of the ethical responsibilities established by this Code.
23. Hold responsibility for being aware of and setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern interactions, physical or otherwise.
24. Do not participate in any sexual or romantic engagement with Client(s) or Sponsor(s). I will be ever mindful of the level of intimacy appropriate for the relationship. I take the appropriate action to address the issue or cancel the engagement.

#### **Section IV - Responsibility to society**

As an ICF Professional, I:

25. Avoid discrimination by maintaining fairness and equality in all activities and operations, while respecting local rules and cultural practices. This includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the basis of age, race, gender expression, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability or military status.
26. Recognize and honor the contributions and intellectual property of others, only claiming ownership of my own material. I understand that a breach of this standard may subject me to legal remedy by a third party.
27. Am honest and work within recognized scientific standards, applicable subject guidelines and boundaries of my competence when conducting and reporting research.
28. Am aware of my and my clients impact on society. I adhere to the philosophy of "doing good," versus "avoiding bad."

#### **5. THE PLEDGE OF ETHICS OF THE ICF PROFESSIONAL:**

As an ICF Professional, in accordance with the Standards of the ICF Code of Ethics, I acknowledge and agree to fulfill my ethical and legal obligations to my coaching Client(s), Sponsor(s), colleagues and to the public at large.

If I breach any part of the ICF Code of Ethics, I agree that the ICF in its sole discretion may hold me accountable for so doing. I further agree that my accountability to the ICF for any breach may include sanctions, such as mandatory additional coach training or other education or loss of my ICF Membership and/or my ICF Credentials.

*Adopted by the ICF Global Board of Directors September 2019*

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## Core Competencies

The following **eight core coaching competencies were developed and released in 2021** to support greater understanding about the skills and approaches used within today’s coaching profession as defined by the International Coach Federation. They will also support you in calibrating the level of alignment between the coach-specific training expected and the training you have experienced.

Finally, these competencies and the ICF definition were used as the foundation for the ICF Credentialing Assessment. The ICF defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The Core Competencies are grouped into four clusters according to those that fit together logically based on common ways of looking at the competencies in each group. The groupings and individual competencies are not weighted—they do not represent any kind of priority in that they are all core or critical for any competent coach to demonstrate.

The ICF Competency	International Coaching Federation Core Competency Definitions
A. Foundation	
<b>1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice</b>	<p><b>Definition: Understands and consistently applies coaching ethics and standards of coaching.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrates personal integrity and honesty in interactions with clients, sponsors and relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>2. Is sensitive to clients' identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs.</li> <li>3. Uses language appropriate and respectful to clients, sponsors and relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>4. Abides by the ICF Code of Ethics and upholds the Core Values.</li> <li>5. Maintains confidentiality with client information per stakeholder agreements and pertinent laws.</li> <li>6. Maintains the distinctions between coaching, consulting, psychotherapy and other support professions.</li> <li>7. Refers clients to other support professionals, as appropriate.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset</b>	<p><b>Definition: Develops and maintains a mindset that is open, curious, flexible and client-centered.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acknowledges that clients are responsible for their own choices.</li> <li>2. Engages in ongoing learning and development as a coach.</li> <li>3. Develops an ongoing reflective practice to enhance one's coaching.</li> <li>4. Remains aware of and open to the influence of context and culture on self and others.</li> <li>5. Uses awareness of self and one's intuition to benefit clients.</li> <li>6. Develops and maintains the ability to regulate one's emotions.</li> <li>7. Mentally and emotionally prepares for sessions.</li> <li>8. Seeks help from outside sources when necessary.</li> </ol>
B. Co-Creating the Relationship	

<p><b>3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements</b></p>	<p><i>Definition: Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to create clear agreements about the coaching relationship, process, plans and goals. Establishes agreements for the overall coaching engagement as well as those for each coaching session.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explains what coaching is and is not and describes the process to the client and relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>2. Reaches agreement about what is and is not appropriate in the relationship, what is and is not being offered, and the responsibilities of the client and relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>3. Reaches agreement about the guidelines and specific parameters of the coaching relationship such as logistics, fees, scheduling, duration, termination, confidentiality and inclusion of others.</li> <li>4. Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to establish an overall coaching plan and goals.</li> <li>5. Partners with the client to determine client-coach compatibility.</li> <li>6. Partners with the client to identify or reconfirm what they want to accomplish in the session.</li> <li>7. Partners with the client to define what the client believes they need to address or resolve to achieve what they want to accomplish in the session.</li> <li>8. Partners with the client to define or reconfirm measures of success for what the client wants to accomplish in the coaching engagement or individual session.</li> <li>9. Partners with the client to manage the time and focus of the session.</li> <li>10. Continues coaching in the direction of the client's desired outcome unless the client indicates otherwise.</li> <li>11. Partners with the client to end the coaching relationship in a way that honors the experience.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4. Cultivates Trust and Safety</b></p>	<p><i>Definition: Partners with the client to create a safe, supportive environment that allows the client to share freely. Maintains a relationship of mutual respect and trust.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seeks to understand the client within their context which may include their identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs.</li> <li>2. Demonstrates respect for the client's identity, perceptions, style and language and adapts one's coaching to the client.</li> <li>3. Acknowledges and respects the client's unique talents, insights and work in the coaching process.</li> <li>4. Shows support, empathy and concern for the client.</li> <li>5. Acknowledges and supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs and suggestions.</li> <li>6. Demonstrates openness and transparency as a way to display vulnerability and build trust with the client.</li> </ol>
<p><b>5. Maintains Presence</b></p>	<p><i>Definition: Is fully conscious and present with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, grounded and confident.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remains focused, observant, empathetic and responsive to the client.</li> <li>2. Demonstrates curiosity during the coaching process.</li> <li>3. Manages one's emotions to stay present with the client.</li> <li>4. Demonstrates confidence in working with strong client emotions during the coaching process.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Is comfortable working in a space of not knowing.</li> <li>6. Creates or allows space for silence, pause or reflection.</li> </ol>
<b>C. Communicating Effectively</b>	
<b>6. Listens Actively</b>	<p><i>Definition: Focuses on what the client is and is not saying to fully understand what is being communicated in the context of the client systems and to support client self-expression.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Considers the client’s context, identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs to enhance understanding of what the client is communicating.</li> <li>2. Reflects or summarizes what the client communicated to ensure clarity and understanding.</li> <li>3. Recognizes and inquires when there is more to what the client is communicating.</li> <li>4. Notices, acknowledges and explores the client's emotions, energy shifts, non-verbal cues or other behaviors.</li> <li>5. Integrates the client's words, tone of voice and body language to determine the full meaning of what is being communicated.</li> <li>6. Notices trends in the client's behaviors and emotions across sessions to discern themes and patterns.</li> </ol>
<b>7. Evokes Awareness</b>	<p><i>Definition: Facilitates client insight and learning by using tools and techniques such as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor or analogy.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Considers client experience when deciding what might be most useful.</li> <li>2. Challenges the client as a way to evoke awareness or insight.</li> <li>3. Asks questions about the client, such as their way of thinking, values, needs, wants and beliefs.</li> <li>4. Asks questions that help the client explore beyond current thinking.</li> <li>5. Invites the client to share more about their experience in the moment.</li> <li>6. Notices what is working to enhance client progress.</li> <li>7. Adjusts the coaching approach in response to the client's needs.</li> <li>8. Helps the client identify factors that influence current and future patterns of behavior, thinking or emotion.</li> <li>9. Invites the client to generate ideas about how they can move forward and what they are willing or able to do.</li> <li>10. Supports the client in reframing perspectives.</li> <li>11. Shares observations, insights and feelings, without attachment, that have the potential to create new learning for the client.</li> </ol>
<b>D. Cultivating Learning and Growth</b>	
<b>8. Facilitates Client Growth</b>	<p><i>Definition: Partners with the client to transform learning and insight into action. Promotes client autonomy in the coaching process.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Works with the client to integrate new awareness, insight or learning into their worldview and behaviors.</li> <li>2. Partners with the client to design goals, actions and accountability measures that integrate and expand new learning.</li> <li>3. Acknowledges and supports client autonomy in the design of goals, actions and methods of accountability.</li> </ol>



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|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Supports the client in identifying potential results or learning from identified action steps.</li><li>5. Invites the client to consider how to move forward, including resources, support and potential barriers.</li><li>6. Partners with the client to summarize learning and insight within or between sessions.</li><li>7. Celebrates the client's progress and successes.</li><li>8. Partners with the client to close the session.</li></ol> |
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