



ICF Core Competency Updates: Webinar Conversations with Coach Training Providers

Since October 2017, ICF has engaged in rigorous job analysis research. From start to finish, more than 1,300 coaches—both ICF Members and non-members—from around the globe have participated in this process. These coaches represented a diverse range of coaching disciplines, training backgrounds, coaching styles, and experience and credentialing levels. The outcome of this important research was the November 2019 announcement and release of **updated ICF Core Competencies**, which will go into effect in January 2021.

ICF held a series of webinars for ICF Accredited coach training providers to share the updated Core Competencies and to answer training providers' question. Following is a summary of the questions and accompanying responses from these webinar sessions.

Q: Will there be ACC and MCC Markers? When? Will they include the updated Core Competencies and the updated Code of Ethics?

Response: *The next phase of our work will be the development of updated assessments aligned with the updated Core Competencies, including performance assessment. This will be explored as part of this important work.*

Q: Who should I contact if I have questions about how to understand the updated Core Competencies?

Response: *Questions about the updated Core Competencies can be sent to Support@coachfederation.org.*

Q: When will the updated Core Competencies replace the current model?

Response: *The ICF updated Core Competencies will go into effect in 2021.*

Q: When will the updated Core Competencies be announced to the public?

Response: *The ICF updated Core Competencies were announced publicly and released on the ICF website on Nov. 14, 2019. Information about the updated Core Competencies, including the updated model, is available at: <https://coachfederation.org/credential-updates>.*

Q: Can we cite the updated Core Competencies in publications? If so, how do I cite them?

Response: *Yes! Please cite the updated Core Competencies using APA format: International Coach Federation (ICF). (n.d.). Core Competencies. Retrieved [enter DATE] from <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>.*

Q: Will the Coach Knowledge Assessment (CKA) change? If so, who will have to take it and when will it be released?

Response: *A new version of the CKA is under development with an expected launch in early 2021. This new version of the exam will align with the updated Core Competencies. Those who hold an ICF Credential will not be required to complete this new version of the exam. However, individuals who choose to pursue a new ICF Credential may be required to take a new version of the exam.*

Q: Will coaches who have already received a credential have to pass another assessment?

Response: *Individuals who hold an active ICF Credential and wish to renew that credential will not be required to pass a new assessment reflecting the updated Core Competencies. Any ICF Credential holder who allows their credential to expire, or a Credential holder who wishes to upgrade to a higher level credential, will be required to pass a new credentialing assessment.*

Q: How will the updated Core Competencies be integrated into coach training program curricula? What is the timeline for this?

Response: *Training programs that hold an ICF Accredited Coach Training Program designation will be required to integrate the updated Core Competencies into their training curricula by 2021, and will document any changes to curricula to integrate new content through the incremental renewal process. Training programs that are applying for a new ICF accreditation will be required to reflect the updated ICF Core Competencies in training curricula beginning January 2021.*

Q: Will we have to pay for new audits to ensure the updated Core Competencies have been integrated into our training?

Response: *No. The documentation that an ICF accredited training program has integrated the updated Core Competencies into training curricula will be documented as part of the regular incremental renewal process. No additional audit fees will be required.*

Q: Is Coaching Supervision considered a type of reflective practice?

Response: *Reflective practice can certainly be a significant part of coaching supervision, however not all supervision is reflective practice.*

Q: How is updated Competency 2 (Embodies a Coaching Mindset) to be demonstrated during credentialing?

Response: *This will be explored as we develop new assessments to align with the updated Core Competencies. Admittedly, this may be an area that is difficult to assess using our current performance evaluation process, but may be easier to test as part of a knowledge exam. The data we collected from coaches, however, clearly showed that a coaching mindset was an important element that needed to be included in the updated Core Competencies.*

Q: How is updated Competency 2 (Embodies a Coaching Mindset) to be demonstrated in training content?

Response: *Coach training programs are able to deliver training on individual competencies in a number of ways, and each training program may have a unique way to deliver specific elements. In general, when reviewing curricula on the updated Core Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset, ICF will ensure content is included that explores the dynamics between a coach and client and acknowledges the importance of equality between the two; explores the influence of culture and identity in a coaching relationship and ways to manage bias; addresses the ways in which coaches can best prepare mentally and emotionally for sessions; and explores reflective practices and approaches to support self regulation.*

Q: Could you explain some of the changes to the Coaching Agreement competency?

Response: *The updated Core Competencies expanded the idea of Coaching Agreements to potentially include agreements with organizations, agreements for the overall client engagement, and agreements for each coaching session. Additionally, the word "maintains" was added to the name of this competency to acknowledge the importance of revisiting and reconfirming agreements throughout the coaching engagement.*

Q: Will you be publishing a comparison chart between the current and updated Core Competencies?

Response: *Yes, the ICF intends to provide a variety of documents that compare the current model to the updated version. During the webinars, a high-level crosswalk document was shown and more detailed versions of this will be provided.*

Q: What is the definition of a "critical incident"? Could you give an example?

Response: *Collection of critical incidents is a tool used in job analyses to find key moments and worker behaviors for successful performance of a given job. In the recent ICF job analysis, we asked coaches to provide the context of each incident, the mental processes they were using, the actions of the coach, outcomes, an effectiveness rating of the incident, what was learned, and the modality used (face-face, telephone, video connection, etc.).*

Q: Why is direct communication not in the updated Core Competencies? Is it seen as less important now?

Response: *Very little evidence for direct communication as a separate competency emerged in the job analysis. The concept of direct communication remains, however, in the updated Core Competencies, especially in Competency 6, Listens Actively, and Competency 7, Evokes Awareness.*

Q: What does "KAO" stand for? Can you give some examples?

Response: *Knowledge, Ability, and Other characteristics. An example of knowledge is an understanding of how a client might perceive a coach as being present. Knowing that looking the client in the eye and remaining quiet while the client is speaking are important elements of coaching. Being able to communicate well is an ability. This could include careful choice of words along with appropriate tone and emotion. Acting ethically could be considered an "other characteristic."*

Q: Will the Minimum Requirements document be updated based on the updated ICF Core Competencies? If so, when?

Response: *As part of the next phase of work in assessment development, ICF will update the Minimum Skills Requirements for each credentialing level, which will provide guidance on the specific skills and behaviors that should be demonstrated for each competency.*

Q: How do you define "grounded"?

Response: *Calm and present in the moment for the client.*

Q: There are a lot of similarities between the current and updated Core Competencies. How would we know that we are really developing the Body of Knowledge of Coaching rather than just redefining the wording of what already has been set, taught, learned and diffused?

Response: *We were intentional from the start to ensure we would hear from coaches who were not previously involved with ICF and to also include as many voices as possible in the survey. This is a very important philosophical question and one at the forefront of many conversations we had internally and with many coaches. At the heart of this question is the nature of coaching. We hope that we have held true to the construct that most individuals understand as coaching.*

Q: What do you mean by sub-competency?

Response: *The updated model contains eight unique competencies. These competencies are supported by sub-competencies that further describe what is contained in each of the competencies.*

Q: Why were the words "tools and techniques" used instead of "methods, practices, and/or processes"?

Response: *The words tools and techniques imply the use of such to perform a given task or reach a desired goal. These are the words we hear most frequently in the domain of coaching.*

Q: What are the PCC Markers?

Response: *The PCC markers are descriptive, behavioral indicators that should be exhibited in a coaching conversation at the Professional Certified Coach (PCC) level. These markers support a performance evaluation process that is fair, consistent, valid, reliable, repeatable and defensible. The PCC Markers are available on the ICF website at <https://coachfederation.org/pcc-markers>.*

Q: How can I be trained in assessing the PCC Markers?

Response: *To be eligible to participate in the PCC Markers training, individuals must hold a PCC or MCC in good standing. Priority placement is provided to faculty members of ACTP and ACSTH coach training programs and those who speak languages other than English.*

To apply to participate in one of our upcoming PCC Markers training cohorts, please complete a brief online application available at the following link: <https://form.jotform.com/81695860614970>.

Q: Will there be updates to the PCC Markers? Will the PCC assessors have to undergo new training? What is the timeline for all of this?

Response: *Yes, ICF will be updating the PCC Markers to ensure alignment with the structure of the updated Core Competencies. We anticipate completing this work mid-2020 and will offer additional training to individuals who have already completed the PCC Marker training program.*

Q: Will the same ICF assessors continue doing the assessments for ICF or will new assessors come on board with the adoption of the updated Core Competencies?

Response: *ICF will offer training to existing ICF Portfolio assessors on the updated Core Competencies in preparation for the integration of the updated Core Competencies into the assessment process.*

Q: How can I volunteer my expertise and be more involved with ICF?

Response: *If you are interested in future volunteer opportunities within the ICF ecosystem, please complete a brief form here at <https://coachfederation.org/leading-the-future-of-coaching>. A member of the ICF staff team will contact you if we identify a volunteer opportunity that aligns with your interests and skills.*

Q: What changes will be made to the performance evaluation? When will the updated Core Competencies be integrated into the new performance assessments for Credentialing? Will the current Core Competencies be used in the meantime?

Response: *ICF is currently working with its research partners at HumRRO and subject matter expert (SME) volunteers to update the Credentialing assessments to integrate the updated Core Competencies. As part of this work, ICF will address updates to the performance evaluation, as well. Updated assessments are anticipated to be published in early 2021; in the meantime, the existing Credentialing assessments using the current Core Competencies will remain in use.*

Q: What is the definition of "reflective practice"?

Response: *Reflective practice involves taking time in the moment or considering interactions in the past to understand how the interactions played out or might be playing out in the moment. This practice will also provide an opportunity for the individual to accurately appraise their involvement in the interaction and choose appropriate behaviors. Further information can be found in the research paper here: <http://philosophyofcoaching.org/v4i2/02.pdf>*

Q: How can I get a copy of the study on reflective practice?

Response: *You can download it from here: <http://philosophyofcoaching.org/v4i2/02.pdf>*

Q: What exactly is the evidence that the updated Core Competencies work? Were the competencies measured in a more direct way to ensure their efficacy? Were there control groups?

Response: *Presumably all of the coaches who participated in the qualitative elements of the study (the workshops and interviews) were successful coaches and likely most of the coaches who took the quantitative survey were successful. We can use this as a proxy that the coaches are reporting competencies that work. The research to understand and validate coaching*

outcomes to competencies will be lengthy and difficult, however, we continue to work on this project. The first step, validated outcome measures, were presented at the Institute of Coaching Conference in October 2019.

Q: What was the approximate distribution of level of credential holder in the workshops and survey respondents? Did the analysis include coaches who are not affiliated with ICF or trained by ICF programs?

Response: *Workshops: MCC 17, PCC 11, ACC 3, no credential 8. Survey respondents: MCC 9%, PCC 34%, ACC 31%, no ICF Credential 26%. We intentionally included participants who were not previously involved with ICF in order to get a fresh perspective.*

Q: Often skills are also included in a KAO compilation. What was the thinking around not including skills in the job analysis?

Response: *An ability is a characteristic that an individual has innately. A skill is something that an individual learns. Consider interpersonal communication. Some people are born with a wonderful ability to do this, whereas others constantly struggle and work at this. Therefore, what is one person's ability is another's skill. Rather than venture into this topic, we just referred to all constructs as abilities.*

Q: Will a report of the research data be available?

Response: *We are in the process of revising an article on the updated Core Competency model for an academic journal and will make it available once it is published.*

Q: Where can I access the current and updated Core Competencies on the ICF website?

Response: *The ICF Core Competencies, including the current and updated models, along with more information about the process to update the Core Competencies, is available at <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>.*

Q: Are training providers or chapters able to use the comparison slides of the updated Core Competencies and the original Core Competencies when speaking with students and alumni about the updated model?

Response: *Yes, slides that include the current and updated Core Competencies are available for download at <https://coachfederation.org/credential-updates>.*

Q: When will translated versions of the Core Competencies be available?

Response: *Translations of the updated Core Competencies are in process and will be available in early 2020.*

Q: Can training providers adopt the update Core Competencies and have that recognized sooner than 2021?

Response: *Training providers may incorporate the updated ICF Core Competencies into training curriculum as soon as they would like, however, the ICF Accreditation Department will still evaluate curriculum and Incremental Renewal Surveys with the original Core Competencies until 2021.*

Q: If training organizations are free to implement the updated Core Competencies now and integrate them into curricula, how will that affect how people will be assessed using the current Core Competencies prior to 2021?

Response: *While there are some important revisions in the updated Core Competencies, virtually every concept included in the current Core Competencies remain in the updated model. Therefore, any student trained under the updated Core Competencies will be prepared to complete the assessment using the current Core Competencies.*

Q: Based on the information provided, there does not appear to be a strong South Eastern representation on these committees. Is there an effort to correct this in the future?

Response: *ICF remains committed to including a diverse representation of our global community in ICF Global initiatives. In this work, ICF was pleased to include subject matter experts from India, Malaysia and the Philippines. We are committed to continuing to include coaches representing our entire global community in our future work.*

Q: The updated Core Competencies seem to highlight multi-cultural aspect but do not highlight cultural sensitiveness. Will that be included in the updated Core Competencies?

Response: *In all phases of the updated Core Competency model development, ICF staff, research partners and volunteers discussed and worked to include cultural sensitivity in the updated model. It was our intent that sub-competencies 2.4, 4.1, and 6.1 cover this.*

Q: In the updated competency #3, why is there inclusion of items we are not measuring (agreements, processes, contracts etc.)? If it is not going to be measured, why does it have its own competency? Doesn't that create a gap?

Response: *The job analysis research was conducted to find out what tasks coaches perform in their work with clients, and also what knowledge, abilities, and other attributes were important. From the data collected we found that there were knowledge, abilities, and other attributes that may not be directly observable but were still critical in working with clients and therefore should be included in the Core Competencies. We will be exploring other ways of assessing these less observable aspects of coaching as we develop new assessments.*

Q: There is a concern that the competency of Powerful Questioning has been diluted by being combined into Evokes Awareness. How did the decision come about to take the emphasis off Powerful Questioning as a separate Core Competencies?

Response: *A significant amount of data from the job analysis showed that coaches use many techniques to evoke awareness, not just powerful questions. Therefore, it was important to reflect this in the updated Core Competencies.*

Q: Regarding CC2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset, what might serve as evidence for this competency?

Response: *As part of the next phase of work in assessment development, ICF will update the Minimum Skills Requirements for each credentialing level, which will provide guidance on the specific skills and behaviors that should be demonstrated for each competency.*

Q: In the updated Core Competencies CC1 part 4: ‘Abides by the ICF Code of Ethics and upholds the Core Values’. Does this mean that the core values are separate from the ICF Code of Ethics or are they the same?

Response: *The ICF Code of Ethics is based on the ICF Core Values (<https://coachfederation.org/about>) 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.*

Q: If you're applying for CCE's in 2020, which competencies should we be using?

Response: *Applications from programs seeking CCE accreditation in 2020 will be reviewed using the current Core Competencies.*

Q: How will Competency 3 (Establishes and Maintains Agreements) be evaluated?

Response: *The updated Core Competencies expanded the idea of coaching agreements to potentially include agreements with organizations, agreements for the overall client engagement, and agreements for each coaching session. Agreements that occur within a coaching session can be assessed using our current assessment process. As the ICF develops new assessments, we will explore how we might assess the broader agreements that take place outside of each coaching session.*

Q: How will Competency 7 (Evokes Awareness) be clarified in the markers to ensure the coach is not leading the client?

Response: *This will be explored as we develop new assessments to align with the updated Core Competencies as part of the next phase of work in assessment development, ICF will update the PCC Markers, which will provide guidance on the specific skills and behaviors that should be demonstrated for each competency at the PCC level, including under Evokes Awareness.*

Q: How will these changes impact those who are currently in the process of getting credentialed?

Response: *Those who are currently in the Credentialing application process or submit an application prior to 2021 will be assessed using current Credentialing assessments, which reflect the current Core Competencies.*

Q: Will the ICF definition of Coaching change?

Response: *ICF does not have plans to change the definition at this time. However, from time-to-time ICF may review the definition of coaching and could make a change if a compelling reason emerges.*

Q: How will this impact Mentor Coaches or Mentor Coaching?

Response: *Mentor Coaches have been informed about the updated Core Competencies and the timeline for implementation into the ICF Credentialing process. Mentor Coaches will need to be aware of the updated Core Competencies to help guide their mentees. Additional resources to support Mentor Coaches, as well as Accredited training programs, as they integrate the updated Core Competencies will be made available in the coming months.*

Q: Can you provide a single document with these summary points of the updated Core Competencies?

Response: *Yes, slides from this webinar, including the summary points of the updated Core Competencies, are available for download at <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>.*

Q: What do you mean by the word "identity"?

Response: *The unique characteristics and manner through which a person views their individual nature.*

Q: Is this moving ICF closer to a single credential standard?

Response: *The ICF remains committed to having multiple credentials that meet the needs of professional coaches. The Core Competencies (current and updated) serve as a foundation for all coaching. We recognize that coaches may demonstrate the use of these at varying levels of competence depending on where they are in their professional journey. As we develop new assessments, we will define how our assessment process will differentiate between these different levels of performance.*

Q: What is the ICF definition of "integrity"?

Response: *Decency, honesty, moral uprightness*

Q: Why do you call this a "model"?

Response: *In the domain of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, where this work frequently lies, a set of competencies are often called a model or framework. The words framework and model can be used interchangeably.*

Q: Will you be developing a glossary of terms to help define the language used in the updated model?

Response: *Yes, a glossary of terminology used in the competencies will be developed and shared.*

Q: Will ICF provide continuing education on the updated Core Competencies?

Response: *ICF will provide additional resources in the coming year to support training programs and credentialing candidates about the updated Core Competencies.*

Q: Are the updated Core Competencies final or could they be amended or changed before the initial release date of 2021?

Response: *The ICF Global Board of Directors has approved the updated Core Competencies for implementation. No additional changes are anticipated.*