



ICF Mentor Coach Handbook:

A Guide for Mentor Coach Practitioners

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Mentor Coaching Definition, Competencies, and Traits

Mentor coaching serves several important functions for ICF coaches. Mentor coaching provides critical support to coaches in the development of their coaching skills to meet the professional standards required across levels of coaching practice. This growth takes place over time and is supported by regular observation and feedback in both individual and group mentor coaching settings. For this reason, mentor coaching is a requirement for ICF credentials and is an important element of a coach's education.

Mentor coaching is also an important part of a coach's ongoing professional development. Not only does mentor coaching help develop the coach's competence and capabilities, but it also serves to develop a coach's unique coaching style and approach.

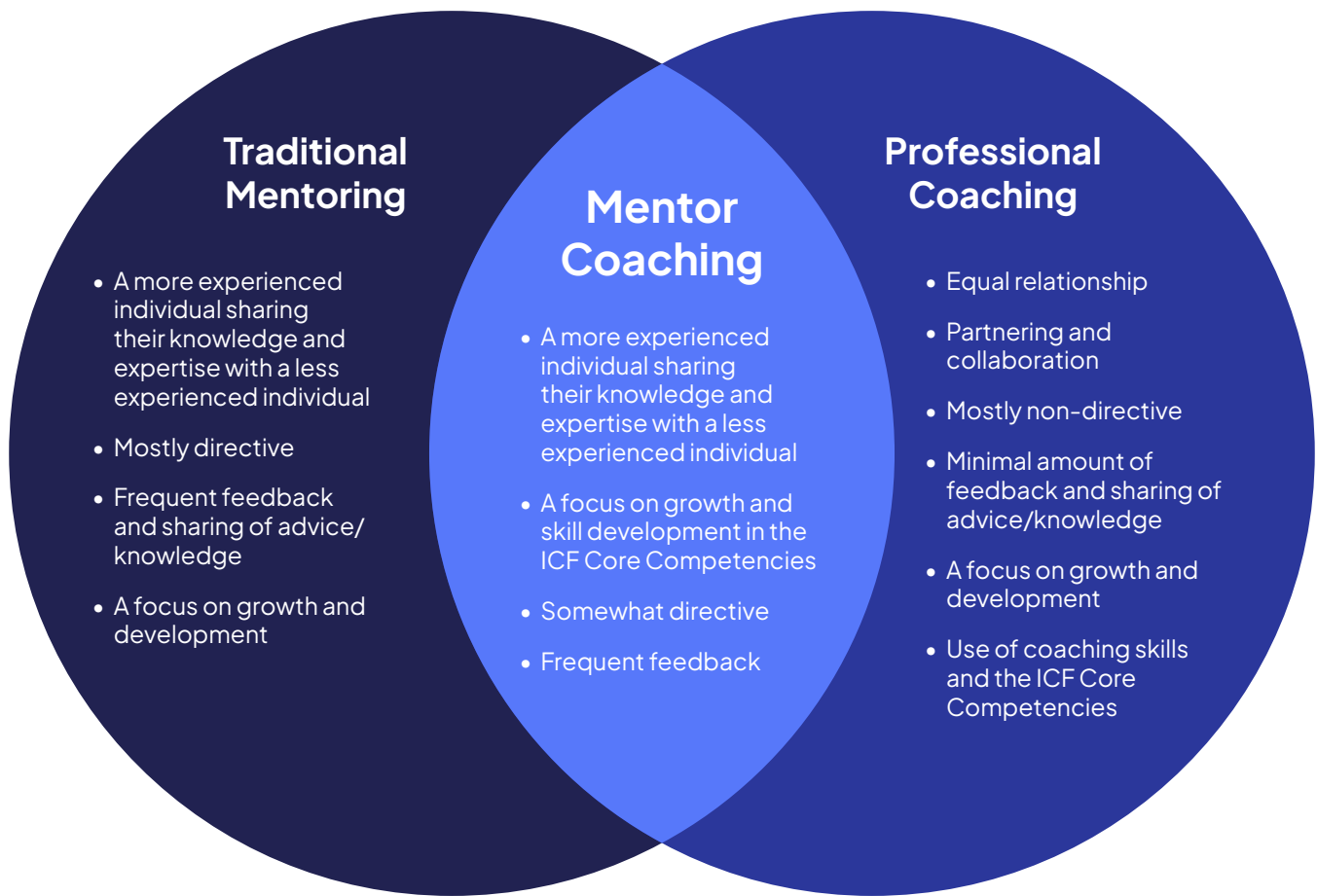
ICF Definition of Mentor Coaching

ICF defines mentor coaching as a collaborative learning process through which coaches receive feedback based on observed or recorded sessions to support them in further developing their unique coaching style and coaching skills in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies. Mentor coaching supports a client to develop specifically in their coaching skills, rather than on practice building, life balance, or other topics beyond the development of coaching skills.

Understanding Mentor Coaching

One way that mentor coaching can be understood is the integration of professional coaching and traditional mentoring. The following Venn diagram illustrates the areas of overlap and difference between the two roles.





ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies

The [ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies](#) serve as a foundational guide for mentor coaches, offering a structured framework to enhance their effectiveness and impact. Developed in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies, these competencies define the essential skills and knowledge mentor coaches need to support other coaches in refining their abilities and elevating their professional standards.

This framework is organized into four key domains: foundation, process management, client development, and group mentor coaching. Within these domains, six core competencies outline the expectations for mentor coaches, ensuring they provide accurate evaluation of coaching behaviors, offer meaningful, high-quality feedback, and foster learning and skill development. By following these guidelines, mentor coaches can create an environment where coaches feel supported in their continuous learning journey.

Beyond skill enhancement, the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies help establish consistency and excellence across the coaching profession. Developed through a robust research study informed by mentor coaching practitioners and clients from around the world, the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies are designed to clarify the purpose and future of mentor coaching, as well as the specific knowledge, skills, and tasks that are essential for effective practice. The Mentor Coaching Competencies help ensure that mentor coaches have the guidance needed to uphold ethical guidelines, apply evidence-based coaching methodologies, and cultivate a growth-oriented relationship with their mentor coaching clients.

The ICF Mentor Coaching Competency Framework

A. Foundation

1. Models and Promotes Ethical Practice

Definition: Models ethical standards and encourages the mentor coaching client to do the same.

1. Abides by current ICF Code of Ethics, ICF Core Competencies, and ICF performance standards.
2. Is sensitive to the mentor coaching client's identity, experiences, context, culture, values, and beliefs.
3. Upholds and clarifies the distinctions and similarities of coaching, mentor coaching, coaching supervision, coaching performance assessment, therapy, and other roles.
4. Refers the mentor coaching client to other support professionals, as needed, including support to resolve ethical issues that are observed in the mentor coaching client's coaching.
5. Encourages the mentor coaching client to understand and uphold the legal and professional requirements for their practice.
6. Ensures mentor coaching recordings and sensitive coaching client data are securely stored in compliance with the ICF Code of Ethics and local data protection regulations.
7. Engages in ongoing learning and development, including maintaining an ongoing reflective practice to enhance one's coaching and mentor coaching.
8. Seeks guidance, support, and development from other sources when necessary to support the mentor coaching client.

2. Establishes and Maintains Mentor Coaching Agreements

Definition: Partners with the mentor coaching client to create clear agreements about the mentor coaching relationship, process, plans, and goals. Establishes agreements for the overall mentor coaching engagement as well as those for each mentor coaching session.

1. Reaches agreement on the guidelines and specific parameters of the mentor coaching relationship such as logistics, fees, scheduling, duration, termination, and confidentiality.
2. Clarifies expectations regarding achievement of a particular credential level, the mentor coaching relationship, including what is and is not appropriate, and the responsibilities of both parties.
3. Partners with the mentor coaching client to develop an overall plan for the mentor coaching engagement that explores developmental needs, goals, and measures of success for coaching skill development, including how to meet the desired ICF credentialing standards.
4. Partners with the mentor coaching client to identify the goals and focus of the mentor coaching session.

B. Process Management

3. Manages the Mentor Coaching Process

Definition: Co-creates the learning environment, process, and development plans to facilitate the mentor coaching process.

1. Partners with the mentor coaching client to create a respectful, supportive, and inclusive learning environment.
2. Allows space for the mentor coaching client to reflect.
3. Co-creates a development plan tailored to the mentor coaching client's needs, learning style, and aspirations.
4. Checks in periodically to reconfirm the mentor coaching process is meeting the client's needs.
5. Partners with the mentor coaching client to ensure they have enough time for practice and skill integration between mentor coaching sessions.

C. Client Development

4. Conducts Formative Appraisals

Definition: Evaluates the degree to which the mentor coaching client's coaching aligns with ICF Core Competencies or the skill level required for a specific credential level.

1. Clarifies the specific skill level required for each credential level using relevant ICF resources.
2. Employs critical listening skills to identify coaching skill demonstration in live or recorded coaching sessions.
3. Identifies where specific competencies are reflected in the mentor coaching client's recorded or live sessions.
4. Partners with the mentor coaching client to reflect on their strengths and identify growth opportunities in the coaching session being evaluated.
5. Identifies trends in the mentor coaching client's behaviors and competence across sessions to determine skill development.

5. Facilitates Client's Skill Development

Definition: Supports the mentor coaching client's development of coaching skills, and unique coaching style.

1. Partners to uncover the mentor coaching client's values and preferred styles of coaching.
2. Models ICF Core Competencies to help the mentor coaching client better understand the required skill level for a specific credential level.
3. Offers feedback and observations to help the mentor coaching client identify coaching strengths and areas for development.
4. Acknowledges the mentor coaching client's strengths, insights, and work in the mentor coaching process to foster confidence and growth.

5. Shares observations with the mentor coaching client in a non-judgmental style to foster learning and growth.
6. Offers guidance on how the mentor coaching client can improve their demonstrated coaching skills.
7. Supports the mentor coaching client to integrate new learning with their unique coaching style.
8. Partners with the mentor coaching client to explore resources, opportunities, and peer networks that may enhance the mentor coaching client's coaching skills.

D. Group Mentor Coaching

6. Manages Group Mentor Coaching

Definition: Effectively manages the group mentor coaching process. **Note:** Relevant for mentor coaches who offer group mentor coaching services.

1. Creates a respectful, collaborative, and inclusive group learning experience.
2. Facilitates live group sessions where mentor coaching clients can practice and demonstrate their skills.
3. Manages group dynamics that are impacting the effectiveness of the mentor coaching process.
4. Encourages all group members to participate in the mentor coaching process.



Role Clarity: Mentor Coach vs. Other Roles

Understanding the role of the mentor coach within the broader ecosystem of the coaching profession is essential for ensuring clarity, effectiveness, and ethical alignment. While mentor coaching plays a central role in supporting a coach's skill development and refinement, it exists alongside other roles — such as coach educator, coach assessors, professional coach and coaching supervisor — that share certain similarities yet serve distinct purposes. Each role contributes uniquely to a coach's growth and appreciating their distinctions helps prevent confusion and strengthens the development experience for coaches.

The **mentor coach** specifically focuses on validating and enhancing a coach's demonstration of the ICF Core Competencies through observation, formative feedback, and dialogue over time. This developmental emphasis differentiates mentor coaching from roles like the:

- Coach educator, who teaches coaching skills through a structured curriculum.
- Coach assessor, who evaluates a coach's skills as part of a summative assessment
- Coach supervisor, who supports a coach's reflective practice and well-being.

While overlaps naturally exist — such as shared attention to growth, professional standards, and competency development — the mentor coach's commitment to ongoing, competency-focused development places the role at the heart of a coach's evolution.

By clarifying how the mentor coach role relates to and differs from these other roles, this section provides a foundation for deeper understanding and helps ensure that mentor coaching engagements are conducted with integrity, intentionality, and alignment with ICF expectations.

Coach Educator vs. Mentor Coach

Coach Educator Definition: An individual who supports an individual to learn coaching skills based on a set curriculum. During the coaching education process, coach educators function as coaches, instructors, and facilitators. They not only provide guidance and instruction but also play a pivotal role in facilitating the development of coaching skills.

For more information, please review the [ICF Coach Educator Competencies](#).

Similarities

- Both roles are aimed at developing an individual's proficiency and skill in coaching.
- Both roles include a more experienced coach sharing their expertise, often with a less experienced coach.

Differences

- A mentor coach does not use a set curriculum whereas a coach educator does.
- Coach educators are generally more directive than mentor coaches.
- Mentor coaches review a mentor coaching (MC) client's live or recorded coaching sessions.
- Mentor coaches provide feedback to the MC client about their strengths and development opportunities.

Coaching Observer vs. Mentor Coach

Coaching Observer Definition: An individual who uses an instructional and skill-focused approach in the observation of a learner's coaching behaviors in the context of a coaching education program. The observer may pause, highlight, or directly name specific behaviors and techniques in service of learning. Feedback is often practical, directive, and targeted toward developing individual competencies or coaching skills in real time or shortly after the observation.

Similarities

- Both roles are aimed at developing an individual's proficiency in demonstrating coaching skills and competencies through observed coaching.
- Both roles include a more experienced coach sharing their expertise, often with a less experienced coach.

Differences

- Mentor coaching must be delivered by a specialized mentor coach practitioner, while coaching observers can be a coach educator or instructor.
- Coaching observers often observe experiential practice between learners in the context of an educational program, while mentor coaches observe coaching between a coach and an actual client.
- Mentor coaches review a mentor coaching (MC) client's live or recorded coaching sessions in full, while coaching observers may observe only a portion of a coaching conversation.
- Coaching observers often provide less formal feedback with learners, which may or may not be tied to minimum skills for a specific credential level.

Coach Assessor vs. Mentor Coach

Coach Assessor Definition: An individual who evaluates a coach's ability to demonstrate the ICF Core Competencies in alignment with the minimum standards of a credential level as part of a summative assessment.

Similarities

- Both roles include evaluating the skill level of the coach.
- Both roles identify areas of strength and development in the coach's coaching.

Differences

- Coach assessors are not focused on the development of the coach.
- Coach assessors are strictly focused on evaluating observable behaviors (i.e., the Minimum Skills Requirements) whereas mentor coaches focus on development of Core Competencies, including both observable and non-observable behaviors through formative evaluation of the coach's skill demonstration over a period of time.
- Coach assessors only assess a snapshot of the coach's skill level based upon a single coaching session.

Traditional Mentor vs. Mentor Coach

Traditional Mentor Definition: Provides guidance to a less experienced individual (the mentee) based upon the mentor's own experience in a specific area of career development.

Similarities

- Both roles are focused on growth and development.
- Both roles involve a more experienced individual sharing their expertise with a less experienced individual.

Differences

- Traditional mentors are more directive than mentor coaches.
- Traditional mentors, in general, do not use coaching skills.
- Traditional mentors can focus on many different areas of development, both personal and professional.

Professional Coach vs. Mentor Coach

Professional Coach Definition: An individual who works with one or more coaching clients on a one-to-one basis, or with groups or teams, to provide coaching. The coach partners with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to recognize and maximize their personal and professional potential.

Similarities

- Both roles focus on growth and development.
- Both roles include partnering and collaboration.
- Both roles use the ICF Core Competencies and coaching skills in their work.

Differences

- Professional coaches avoid offering advice, while mentor coaches provide guidance and share their knowledge and expertise in coaching and the ICF Core Competencies with less experienced coaches.
- Professional coaches are less directive than mentor coaches in their work with clients.
- Mentor coaches provide much more feedback than professional coaches.
- While professional coaches support the client's agenda, the purpose of a mentor coach is more specific — to support the mentor coaching client in the development of coaching skills, in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies.

Coaching Supervisor vs. Mentor Coach

Coaching Supervisor: An experienced coach who engages in reflective dialogue and a collaborative process with a coach (or group of coaches) for personal, professional, and ethical development and learning.

While mentor coaching focuses on refining technical skills in the ICF Core Competencies, coaching supervision takes a more holistic approach. It focuses not only on the skills a coach demonstrates competently, but who they are as a person and how they show up in their practice.

Similarities

- Both roles are focused on growth and development.
- Both roles involve a more experienced individual sharing their expertise with a less experienced individual.

Differences

- Coaching supervision takes a more holistic, reflective approach, emphasizing their presence, ethical maturity, and impact.
- Coaching supervision goes beyond skill refinement, while mentor coaching focuses on skills related to the ICF Core Competencies.

The 3 Functions of Coaching Supervision

Several coaching supervision researchers have explored the functions of coaching supervision. One of the most popular frameworks for coaching supervision functions was proposed by Peter Hawkins and Nick Smith.

Hawkins and Smith outlined three functions of coaching supervision: developmental, resourcing, and qualitative. These three functions were adapted from similar functions developed for social work by Alfred Kadushin in 1976.

Developmental

Focuses on coaching skill development.

The Developmental function focuses on developing the skills of the coach, usually by providing feedback and direction to the coaching supervision client.

Resourcing

Focuses on supporting the coach mentally and emotionally (e.g., when the coaching supervision client is having doubts or insecurities about their coaching abilities).

The Resourcing function is concerned with the coaching supervisor providing mental and emotional support to the coaching supervision (CS) client — for example, when the client is having doubts or insecurities about their coaching abilities.

Qualitative

Provides quality control for organizations, sponsors, clients, and the coaching profession.

The last coaching supervision function is the Qualitative function. This function serves as a type of “quality control” for those who work closely with the CS client, such as organizations, sponsors, or clients that hire the client for coaching services. This, in turn, provides a type of quality control for the entire coaching profession as well by promoting higher quality coaching.

For more information, please review the [ICF Coaching Supervision Competencies](#).

Citations

Hawkins, P. & Smith, N. (2013). *Coaching, mentoring and organizational consultancy: Supervision, skills, and development* (2nd edn) Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Kadushin, A. (1976). *Supervision in social work*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Similarities and Differences between the Functions of Coaching Supervision and Mentor Coaching

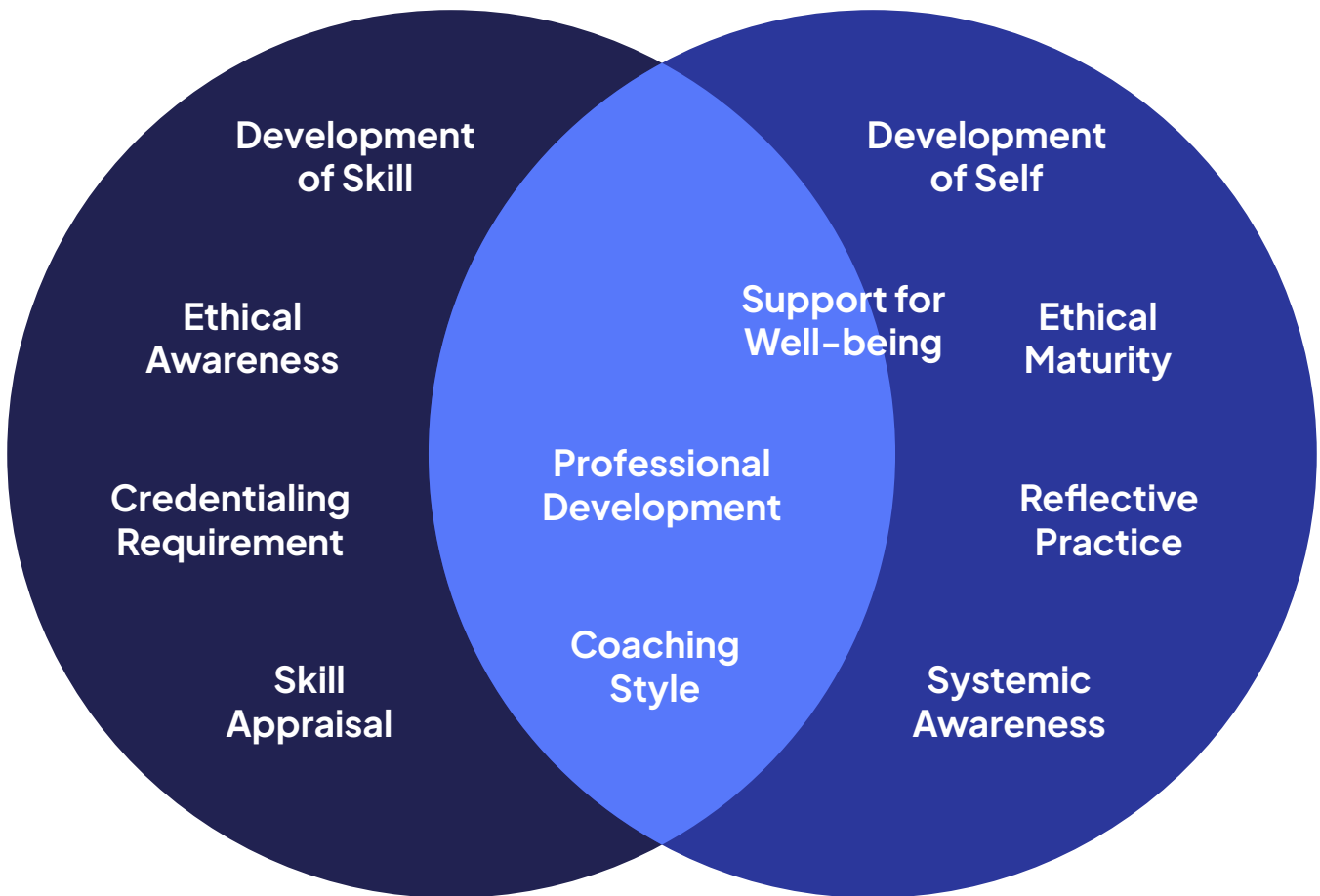
It is important to highlight the symbiotic relationship between coaching supervision and mentor coaching. Coaching supervision primarily focuses on the “self” of the coach, the quality and impact of their work, and how they relate to broader contexts and systems. Mentor coaching focuses primarily on the skill development of the coach. However, the skills of the coach and how they are used cannot be separated fully from the self of the coach and their way of being in their work and in the world.

The diagram on the following page reflects the areas of similarity and distinction between mentor coaching and coaching supervision.



Mentor Coaching

Coaching Supervision



Mentor coaching is central to developing competence at different coaching practice levels. Therefore, successful completion of mentor coaching is a requirement for each ICF credential: ACC, PCC, and MCC.

By contrast, coaching supervision is an important tool for a coach's continued development. For this reason, coaching supervision is encouraged as part of the credential renewal process. Up to 10 hours of coaching supervision — whether received or delivered or a combination of both — can be counted toward the Core Competency Continuing Coach Education (CCE) requirements for renewal of an ICF credential.

Research has shown that coaching supervision is important to support coaches as they navigate the complexities of team coaching and managing intense, challenging team dynamics. For this reason, coaching supervision is a requirement to earn the Advanced Certification in Team Coaching (ACTC).

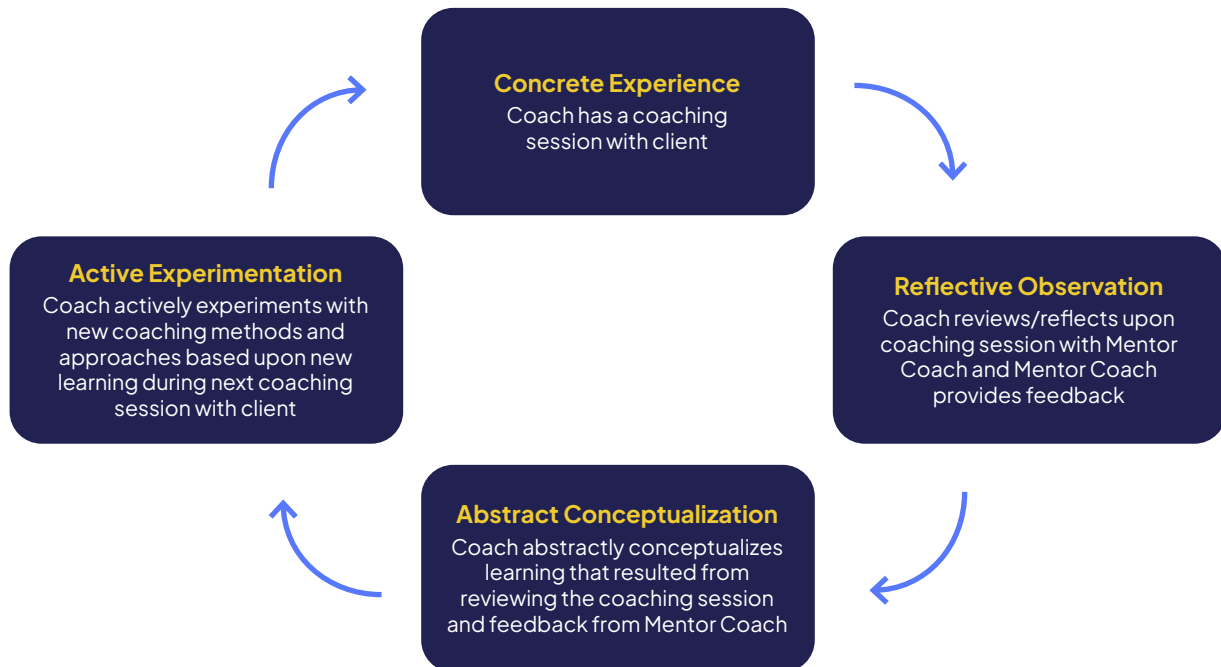
Important Learning Principles and Feedback Guidelines

This section provides an overview of important adult learning principles, their application in mentor coaching contexts, and how to support MC clients through objective feedback.

The purpose of high-quality feedback in mentor coaching is to offer clients with clear, evidence-based observations of a coach’s skills along with guidance that can support their continued growth and development, all aligned with the ICF Core Competencies and skills required for each credential level. Mentor coaches should aim to provide thought-provoking observations that can help coaches with future performance and support their ongoing skill development.

Experiential Learning in Mentor Coaching

The model presented here is an adaptation of the Kolb Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) based upon the experiential learning that occurs during the mentor coaching process.



Starting at the top, the coach has a session with their client. This is the “Concrete Experience” phase of learning.

The next phase is “Reflective Observation.” Here, the coach has a session with their mentor coach. During the mentor coaching session, the coach and the mentor coach reflect upon the coaching session from the previous phase — specifically, the coaching skills and competencies demonstrated by the coach in the session. The mentor coach also provides strength and development feedback at the Core Competency level.

Reflecting upon the coaching session and the mentor coach’s feedback help the coach to conceptualize how to improve their demonstration of the ICF Core Competencies in their coaching. This is the “Abstract Conceptualization” phase of the learning cycle. Here the learning is only cognitive, abstract concepts.

To solidify the learning, the coach must move to the next phase of learning: “Active Experimentation.” Here, the coach uses the cognitive, abstract learning they gained during the previous learning phase through actively experimenting with new coaching methods and approaches in subsequent coaching sessions with clients.

This active experimentation then provides a new concrete experience to learn from, and the learning cycle repeats itself.

Using this model as a framework, the mentor coaching client needs to have time to apply their learning through active implementation.

To be used for ICF Credentialing purposes, ICF requires that mentor coaching take place over a minimum time span of three months. It is best practice to separate mentor coaching sessions by at least two weeks apart to allow for this cycle of reflection, learning, and practice. This allows the mentor coaching client time to apply and fully solidify what they learned during the mentor coaching process by actively experimenting with new coaching methods and approaches across several different coaching sessions with several different clients before the next mentor coaching session.

Citations

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.

Adapting Your Mentor Coaching to Your Mentor Coaching Client

Another important learning principle to consider is how to adapt your mentor coaching to the unique needs of each mentor coaching client, including the following.

Skill Level

You should consider the current skill of your mentor coaching client on a particular competency and determine the level of learning they are ready for. For example, providing feedback at an MCC level of coaching would not be appropriate if your mentor coaching client is working to achieve coaching competence at an ACC level. Using the relevant minimum skill requirements as benchmarks to guide your client’s learning and development can support them to make meaningful progress through the engagement.

Readiness of Learning

Present the learning at an appropriate pace for the mentor coaching client. Find a balance between stretching them to learn without overwhelming them with unrealistic expectations.

Sensitivity

Consider their personality and sensitivity level when providing feedback. Some mentor coaching clients may require a more sensitive approach than others.

Coaching Style

Lastly, consider and honor their coaching style throughout the mentor coaching process. Try to encourage them to develop their skills in a way that builds upon their own unique style, strengths, and approach. This will not only encourage the development of their own unique talents but will make it easier for them to integrate new learning into their coaching.

Managing Bias in the Mentor Coaching Process

At its heart, mentor coaching is designed to provide support and guidance to clients on how they can develop their coaching skills in alignment with professional standards of practice. However, it is important to note that coaches can demonstrate quality coaching skills in a variety of ways, based on their context, culture, coaching philosophy or style, or other factors. Therefore, the ability of a mentor coach to recognize and manage bias in the mentor coaching process is essential to providing clients with fair, objective feedback on their coaching skills.

A bias is a difference in the perception, interpretation, or judgment — shaped by internalized beliefs, values, preferences, and cultural assumptions. Biases can be negative or positive, innate, or learned. It is important to note that in coaching skill evaluation, bias is not simply a personal flaw, but rather an inevitable result of human cognition and social conditioning, where mentor coaches bring their own identities, histories, and experiences into the process.

Being able to identify a personal bias in the mentor coaching process and manage it so as not to advantage or disadvantage the mentor coaching client is an important skill for mentor coaches to hone.

The ICF Bias Awareness Guide provides additional guidance and information about bias, its implication for evaluating coaching skills, and approaches that mentor coaches and evaluators can take to mitigate the impact of bias when working with clients. It can be found in the evaluation trainings.

Segmented vs. Holistic Approach to Mentor Coaching

While focusing on individual competency areas is important, don't forget to consider the entire coaching session when reviewing session feedback with your mentor coaching client.

Ask yourself and your mentor coach client the following:

- Did the coach respond to what their client offered throughout the session?
- Did the coach demonstrate competency in the ICF Core Competencies and the coaching skills relevant to the credential level?
- Overall, what could the coach improve to make the session more successful?

Feedback Guidelines

Providing clear, evidence-based, and supportive feedback is one of the most important duties a mentor coach performs during the mentor coaching process. Feedback should be designed to reinforce coaching competencies and skills, expand a coach's strengths, identify opportunities for development, and provide clear, actionable areas for growth.

As a mentor coach, you have a responsibility to deliver feedback that is fair, consistent, and grounded in observable coaching behaviors — ultimately helping coaches embody the principles of effective, ethical, and transformative coaching.

Please refer to the Evaluation Feedback Guide for more information on how to meet ICF guidelines. It can be found in the evaluation trainings.

Mentor Coaching Engagement and Session Structure

This section of the handbook covers detailed information about the mentor coaching process including guidelines for structuring mentor coaching sessions, reviewing live or recorded coaching sessions, and providing quality feedback.

Overall Engagement Structure

Below is an overview of the typical structure of a mentor coaching engagement.

- Establishing the mentor coaching engagement agreements
- Intake/Discovery session
- Mentor coaching sessions
- Closing/Review/Progress session

Establishing and Maintaining Mentor Coaching Agreements

The initial steps for establishing a mentor coaching relationship are similar to the initial steps for establishing a professional coaching relationship. In fact, Competency 3 in the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies mirrors the ICF Core Competency, Establishes and Maintains Agreements.

This competency includes the following key elements:

- Reach agreement on the guidelines and specific parameters of the mentor coaching relationship such as logistics, fees, scheduling, duration, termination, and confidentiality.
- Clarify expectations regarding achievement of a particular credential level; the mentor coaching relationship, including what is and is not appropriate; and the responsibilities of both parties.
- Partner with the mentor coaching client to develop an overall plan for the mentor coaching engagement that explores developmental needs, goals, and measures of success for coaching skill development, including how to meet the desired ICF credentialing standards.
- Partner with the mentor coaching client to identify the goals and focus of the mentor coaching session.

Mentor Coaching Intake Session

In the mentor coaching intake session, the mentor coach and MC client partner to establish agreements about the nature and structure of the mentor coaching process, like the client's goals and desired outcomes, and any other considerations that may help frame and facilitate the mentor coaching engagement. In other words, the mentor coaching intake session is a continuation of Establishing and Maintaining the Mentor Coaching Agreements at a more detailed level.

In summary, the mentor coach and MC client partner to establish agreements about the:

- Purpose and structure of the mentor coaching process.
- Mentor coaching client's goals and desired outcomes.
- Structure, logistics, and other important considerations for the engagement.

One-to-One Mentor Coaching Session Prep Work

Candidates for an ICF credential and ACC credential renewal are required to complete at least three (3) hours of individual, one-to-one work with a specialized mentor coach. The remaining seven (7) hours may be conducted one-to-one with a specialized mentor coach or in group mentor coaching settings.

There are several things mentor coaches and clients must do to prepare for one-to-one mentor coaching sessions. A summary of this prep work is outlined below.

Mentor Coaching Client Prep Work

1. Request and receive **written permission** from one of their current coaching clients to either record a coaching session and share it with their mentor coach, or to allow the mentor coach to observe a live coaching session with the MC client.
2. After receiving permission, the MC client must coordinate a session with their coaching client. If it is recorded, the MC client must send the recording to their mentor coach or schedule a date and time for a live observed coaching session.

Mentor Coach Prep Work

1. Review the recording or observed coaching session.
2. Identify areas of strength and development, with specific examples or evidence from the coaching session.
3. Complete a Session Observation form, including written feedback in alignment with the ICF Core Coaching Competencies and minimum skills requirements at the appropriate level for the client.

Note: All prep work should be completed before the live, one-to-one mentor coaching session with the MC client. Consider reviewing the recording and your Session Observation form within a timeframe that allows the details to be easily recalled for your upcoming session.

Time spent reviewing the recording and/or taking notes does not count towards the mentor coaching hours/requirements for credential candidates.

One-to-One Mentor Coaching Session Structure

One-to-one mentor coaching session structure can vary. However, it should always include the following elements based on the completed Session Observation Form:

- A discussion of strengths and development for the session overall.
- Verbal and written feedback from the mentor coach about the client's strengths and development areas in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies and the relevant minimum skills requirements.
- Reflection from the MC client on their demonstrated coaching skills and areas for further growth.
- Partnering to create a plan to address development areas and further leverage areas of strength.

Group Mentor Coaching: Session Structures and Approaches

As noted above, up to seven (7) hours of mentor coaching for an ICF credential may be completed in a group setting with a specialized mentor coach. Below are some requirements for group mentor coaching that must be met for these hours to qualify for ICF credentialing purposes. Optional group mentor coaching approaches are also provided.

Group Mentor Coaching Requirements

- For ICF credentialing purposes, group mentor coaching sessions must be structured, so there is a ratio of at least one specialized mentor coach to every 10 mentor coaching clients.
- Group mentor coaching sessions must focus on developing the coaching skills of the mentor coaching clients in the group, in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies.

Optional Approaches

- A group discussion of a group member's areas of strength and development in a shared recorded coaching session.
- Feedback from the mentor coach on a group member's areas of strength and development after the entire group listens to a recording of the group member's coaching session.
- Peer coaching between members of the group while other group members observe, followed by a debrief session where the mentor coach provides feedback.
- Peer coaching between members of the group while other group members observe, followed by a group discussion of the coach's areas of strength and development.

Final Mentor Coaching Engagement Session

Similar to professional coaching engagements, as a mentor coaching relationship comes to an end, it is important to hold a final closing session.

The purpose of the closing session of a mentor coaching engagement is to:

- Review and honor the work the mentor coach and MC client have done over the course of the engagement.
- Review the client's cumulative demonstration of coaching skills across all observed coaching sessions completed through the engagement, along with written feedback, through the **Competency Review Form**.
- Reflect upon and acknowledge the progress and growth the MC client accomplished over the course of the engagement.
- Discuss the goals the mentor coach and MC client achieved and identify any remaining goals.
- Discuss any issues that remain unresolved in the mentor coaching relationship.
- Partner to close the mentor coaching relationship in a way that honors the experience.

Helpful Resources for Mentor Coaches

This section of the handbook focuses on helpful resources to support a mentor coach in their practice, including the evaluation of clients' coaching skills.

There are several helpful ICF resources available to use and reference when reviewing coaching sessions to identify areas of strength and development. These include:

- [The ICF Core Competencies](#)
- [The ACC Minimum Skills Requirements \(ACC Behavioral Statements\)](#)
- [The PCC Minimum Skills Requirements \(PCC Behavioral Markers\)](#)
- [The MCC Minimum Skills Requirements \(MCC Behavioral Statements\)](#)
- ACC BARS Resource Guide (located in ACC BARS Training)
- PCC Marker Resource Guide (located in PCC Marker Training)
- MCC BARS Resource Guide (located in MCC BARS Training)

ICF Core Competencies

The ICF Core Competencies represent the foundation of the coaching profession, designed to promote the highest standards of practice. These competencies describe the knowledge and skills expected of a professional coach at a broad level, designed to support and guide coaches regardless of their level or experience or practice.

For more information on the ICF Core Competencies, please visit 2025 [ICF Core Competencies](#).

ICF Credentialing Minimum Skills Requirements (MSRs)

While the ICF Core Competencies define standards of professional practice at a broad level, the ICF Minimum Skills Requirements for ACC, PCC, and MCC further define the skills and proficiency expected at each level. The more advanced the credential, the deeper level of coaching skill required.

The ICF Minimum Skills Requirements, or MSRs, are a set of guidelines which articulate the standards of coaching skill necessary at the ACC, PCC, and MCC levels. The Behaviors Consistent with ICF Coaching Standards in the MSR provide an understanding of what mentor coaches should evaluate in relation to each competency, and the Behaviors Inconsistent with ICF Coaching Standards display non-coaching behaviors that might prevent successful demonstration of the coaching skills.

The MSRs combined with the ACC, PCC, MCC evaluation resource guides and trainings are essential tools for quality, consistent mentor coaching services. By reviewing the standards and behaviors outlined in the MSRs and comparing these standards and behaviors to the coaching behaviors and skills demonstrated in a MC client's coaching, a mentor coach can more effectively and accurately identify areas of strength and development in the client's coaching and provide better guidance for their continued learning and growth.

ICF Resource Guides

The ICF Resource Guides for each credential level provide additional details and insight into how to evaluate a coach's skills when reviewing an observed coaching session. Use these in tandem with the accompanying training and MSR to support your MC client's development.

For more information on the Minimum Skills Requirements, please visit:

[Criteria for Assessing ACC Credential | Certification Guide](#)

[Criteria for Assessing PCC Credential | Certification Guide](#)

[Criteria for Assessing MCC Credential | Certification Guide](#)

Using the ICF Core Competencies and Minimum Skills Requirements in the Mentor Coaching Process

Below are some general guidelines for using the ICF Core Competencies and the Minimum Skills Requirements in the mentor coaching process.

Using the ICF Core Competencies in Mentor Coaching

The ICF Core Competencies should be the most important developmental tool and framework used in the Mentor Coaching process. They should be the primary focus of the Mentor Coaching feedback and the primary framework and focus of discussion.

Using the Minimum Skills Requirements and Resource Guides in Mentor Coaching

How to properly use these resources:

- Use these tools to evaluate MC clients' coaching sessions.
- Review the "Behaviors Consistent with ICF Coaching Standards" section, also known as the behavioral statements/markers, for the level of mentor coaching services provided. The resource guides provide additional details to help you with this portion of mentoring.
- Determine whether the mentor coach client is at that skill level for each ICF Core Competency area.
- Based upon this evaluation, identify areas of strength and development at the ICF Core Competency level.
- Provide written and verbal feedback to the MC client that outlines the areas of strength and development at the Core Competency level and using the Core Competency or minimum skills language.

These resources should **not** be used for the following purposes:

- As coaching competencies.
- As a checklist or formula for coaching.

Mentor Coaching and the ICF Credentialing Process

This section of the handbook covers important information about mentor coaching requirements for the ICF credentialing process, including new eligibility specializations for mentor coaches effective January 2027.

Requirements to Serve as an ICF Specialized Mentor Coach

Historically, to serve as an eligible mentor coach within ICF accredited coaching education programs or to provide mentor coaching to applicants for an ICF credential or credential renewal, mentor coaches were required to meet minimum credential requirements for each level of service.

Based on research in mentor coaching and the expertise and skills required to provide quality mentor coaching services, ICF is instituting new training requirements to serve as a specialized ICF mentor coach beginning January 2027. The ICF Mentor Coach Specialization will serve to increase consistency, quality, and integrity in mentor coaching practice, while creating greater transparency and quality assurance for mentor coaching clients.

ACC Mentor Coaching

Through December 2026: To provide mentor coaching to coaches applying for or renewing an ACC credential, the mentor coach must hold a PCC or MCC credential, or a **renewed** ACC credential, in good standing.

Beginning January 2027: To provide mentor coaching to coaches applying for or renewing an ACC credential, the mentor coach must hold an ICF Mentor Coach Specialization at the ACC level (MCS-ACC) or PCC level (MCS-PCC).

To earn the MCS–ACC Specialization through the standard path and provide mentor coaching services at the ACC level, the mentor coach must:

1. Hold an active PCC, MCC, or a renewed ACC credential in good standing.
2. Complete at least 41 hours of mentor coaching education aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies. Education **must include training on the ACC Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) for coaching skill evaluation.**

NOTE: Candidates pursuing or renewing the ACC credential may use either ACC level mentor coaching (with an MCS – ACC) or PCC level mentor coaching (with an MCS–PCC) to fulfill the mentor coaching requirement.

PCC Mentor Coaching

Through December 2026: To provide mentor coaching within an ICF accredited Level 2 program or to coaches applying for or renewing their PCC credential, the mentor coach must hold an active PCC or MCC credential in good standing.

Beginning January 2027: To provide mentor coaching to coaches applying for a PCC credential, the mentor coach must hold an ICF Mentor Coach Specialization at the PCC level (MCS–PCC).

To earn the MCS–PCC Specialization through the standard path and provide mentor coaching services at the PCC level, the mentor coach must:

1. Hold an active PCC or MCC credential in good standing.
2. Complete at least 41 hours of mentor coaching education aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies. Education **must include training on the PCC Markers for coaching skill evaluation.**

NOTE: Applicants for the PCC must complete PCC level mentor coaching (with an MCS–PCC) to meet the mentor coaching requirement. Candidates for PCC **renewal** may use either PCC level mentor coaching (with an MCS–PCC) or MCC level mentor coaching (with an MCS–MCC) to fulfill up to 10 hours of the 40 CCE credits required for renewal.

MCC Mentor Coaching

Through December 2026: To provide mentor coaching within an ICF accredited Level 3 program or to coaches applying for or renewing their MCC credential, the mentor coach must hold an MCC credential in good standing.

Beginning January 2027: To provide mentor coaching to coaches applying for an MCC credential or MCC renewal, the mentor coach must hold an ICF Mentor Coach Specialization at the MCC level (MCS–MCC).

To earn the MCS–MCC Specialization through the standard path and provide mentor coaching services at the MCC level, the mentor coach must:

1. Hold an active MCC credential in good standing.
2. Complete at least 41 hours of mentor coaching education aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies. Education **must include training on the MCC BARS for coaching skill evaluation.**

Using Mentor Coaching Hours for ICF Credentialing

A coach applying for an ICF credential at any level (ACC, PCC, MCC) and coaches renewing an ACC credential must complete 10 hours of mentor coaching to meet eligibility requirements. To use mentor coaching hours for ICF credentialing purposes, it is important that applicants and their mentor coaches are aware of the following key requirements.

- Mentor coaching sessions must focus on developing the MC client's coaching skills, in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies.
- Recipients of mentor coaching may only count the time spent in interactive dialogue and delivery of feedback with their mentor coach toward the 10 hours required for a credential. The time a mentor coach spends reviewing a recording and preparing feedback for a mentor coaching session may not be counted toward the 10-hour requirement for the recipient.
- The 10 hours of mentor coaching required for ICF credentialing purposes must occur over at least three months. In other words, 12 full weeks must pass between the first and final mentor coaching sessions.
- Of the 10 hours of mentor coaching required, at least three (3) must be one-to-one with the mentor coach. The remaining seven (7) hours can be either one-to-one mentor coaching or group mentor coaching hours.
- Group mentor coaching must be in groups with a ratio of at least one mentor coach to every 10 clients.
- The initial intake session and the closing session can be counted towards the 10 hours of mentor coaching required for ICF credentialing purposes.
- Session observation and Competency Review forms are not required for a credential renewal application but can be useful tools for development.

ICF Credentialing Pathways

Mentor coaching clients will inevitably have questions as they go through the ICF credentialing process. As an ICF mentor coach, it is important for you to have a basic understanding of the ICF credentialing requirements and process.

For each credential level, ICF offers two application pathways, designed to support coaches according to their educational backgrounds. For more information on the ICF credential pathways, please visit:

- ACC Pathways Information: [Associate Certified Coach \(ACC\) | ICF Certification Program](#)
- PCC Pathways Information: [Professional Certified Coach \(PCC\) | Certification Program](#)
- MCC Pathways Information: [Master Certified Coach \(MCC\) | ICF Certification Program](#)
- Credential Renewal Information (ACC, PCC, and MCC): [Renew Your ICF Credential | Stay Certified](#)

Appendix A: Links to Additional Resources

ICF Credentialing Pathways

For more information on the ICF Credentialing Pathways, please visit:

- ACC Pathways Information: [Associate Certified Coach \(ACC\) | ICF Certification Program](#)
- PCC Pathways Information: [Professional Certified Coach \(PCC\) | Certification Program](#)
- MCC Pathways Information: [Master Certified Coach \(MCC\) | ICF Certification Program](#)
- Credential Renewal Information (ACC, PCC, and MCC): [Renew Your ICF Credential | Stay Certified](#)

ICF Exams

For more information on the ICF exams, please visit:

For ACC candidates: [ICF ACC Credential Exam - Become a Associate Certified Coach](#)

For PCC and MCC candidates: [ICF PCC and MCC Credentialing Exam - Earning PCC and MCC Credential](#)

ICF Core Competencies

For more information on the ICF Core Competencies, please visit: [2025 ICF Core Competencies | International Coaching Federation](#)

For a PDF copy of the ICF Core Competencies, please visit: [Core Competencies | ICF Professional Coaching Standards](#)

ICF Code of Ethics

For more information on the ICF Code of Ethics, please visit: [ICF Ethical Standards: Upholding Coaching Ethics](#)

For a PDF copy of the ICF Code of Ethics, please visit: [ICF Code of Ethics | International Coaching Federation](#)

Minimum Skills Requirements (MSRs)

For more information on the Minimum Skills Requirements, please visit: <https://coachingfederation.org/msr>

[Criteria for Assessing ACC Credential | Certification Guide](#)

[Criteria for Assessing PCC Credential | Certification Guide](#)

[Criteria for Accessing MCC Credential | Certification Guide](#)

ICF Coaching Skill Evaluation Training Courses

ICF offers courses on the evaluation of coaching skills at each credential level. For more information and to enroll, please visit the [ICF Learning Portal](#).

[ICF ACC BARS Training Course](#)

[ICF PCC Markers Comprehensive Training Course](#)

[ICF PCC Follow Up Training Course](#)

[ICF MCC BARS Training Course](#)