

Review and Update of a Coaching Competency Model



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Abstract

This report presents findings from a 2024–2025 job analysis of coaching competencies, conducted as a follow-up to a 2017–2019 study that informed the 2019 update of the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Core Competencies. The 2025 study examined how technological change and professional developments over the past six years have influenced coaching practice, providing the basis for an updated competency model.

A mixed-methods approach engaged approximately 2,800 coaches worldwide. Data sources included a literature review, semi-structured focus groups, a large-scale survey, and several workshops with Subject Matter

Experts. Participants were recruited through ICF’s membership and credentialing database as well as an open survey distribution. The 2019 ICF Core Competencies, with associated task and KAO (Knowledge, Abilities, and Other Characteristics) lists, served as the foundation for analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Data collection occurred from April 2024 to April 2025.

Findings confirmed the continued validity of the 2019 ICF Core Competencies. No core competencies were removed or added; however, one definition was revised, 11 sub-competencies updated, and five new sub-competencies introduced. Most revisions occurred within Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset, emphasizing coach self-care, self-awareness, ongoing professional development, and responsiveness to technological change. Other updates underscored the importance of between-session activities, communicating the coach’s philosophy during contracting, being judicious when offering or sharing domain knowledge, and reinforcing presence, curiosity, and awareness.

Overall, the updated model preserves the strengths of the 2019 ICF Core Competencies while enhancing its emphasis on mindset, adaptability, and integration of emerging practices and technologies. It provides an evidence-based foundation for guiding coach development, assessment, and credentialing in an evolving professional landscape.

Keywords: coaching competencies, coaching skills, job analysis, AI coaching, blended coaching, coach development, coach self-awareness, coach self-care

Introduction

Coaching is a collaborative process grounded in consistent principles, such as presence, active listening, and powerful questioning, where even small shifts in language, focus, or perspective can create meaningful change for clients. These foundations remain steady over time, yet the ways they are expressed in practice can be influenced by shifts in client priorities, the introduction of new tools and technologies, and developments within society, business, culture, and the profession. To ensure coaching competencies continue to reflect both enduring principles and current realities, they require periodic review and refinement informed by the experiences of a diverse, global community of practitioners.

Job Analysis and Competency Models

Understanding the dynamics and approaches that contribute to effective coaching requires a structured, evidence-based methodology. One of the most established tools in industrial and organizational psychology for this purpose is job analysis (Wilson, 2007). This systematic process identifies the tasks, knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics (KAOs) necessary to effectively carry out a specific job or role (Brannick et al., 2007; Sackett & Laczko, 2003; Schippmann, 2010).

Job analysis can be used to develop different types of frameworks or models. For example, KAO models emphasize the attributes of the individual performing the work, whereas competency models, defined by Schippmann (2010) as “the measurable, organizationally relevant, and behaviorally based capabilities of people” (p. 198), focus on demonstrated behaviors and capabilities. In coaching, competency models have become the preferred approach due to their clarity, applicability, and ease of integration into training, assessment, and credentialing processes. They differ from broader practice models (Hoffart & Woods, 1996), which encompass activities beyond the coaching session, such as marketing or scheduling.

Coaching competency models developed by organizations such as the Association for Coaching (2012), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (2024), the International Coaching Federation (2019), and the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (2022) share common elements: ethics, contracting, client assessment, relationship building, communication, and facilitation of client learning and results. While these models have provided stability for over two decades (Auerbach, 2005), there is ongoing discussion about whether internal capabilities, those not always directly observable, should receive greater emphasis (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015). While these capabilities are often difficult to measure and operationalize, recent work has nonetheless highlighted their value in predicting coaching outcomes (Boyatzis et al., 2023; Carden et al., 2023). This study focuses primarily on competencies demonstrated within the coaching session itself, as well as internal capabilities such as self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

Competency model development in coaching often draws on large-scale surveys (Auerbach, 2005; Bono et al., 2009; Newsom & Dent, 2011; Vandaveer et al., 2016) and is frequently supplemented by qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups to capture nuance (Lune & Berg, 2017). Coaching approaches vary widely, from structured, cognitive-behavioral methods (Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016) to client-led, Rogerian approaches (Rogers,

1951), and the ways coaches apply competencies often evolve with experience (Hullinger & DiGirolamo, 2020). Recent studies also highlight the influence of cultural context, virtual coaching environments, and AI-enabled tools on coaching behaviors and client outcomes (Jelodari et al., 2023; Passmore, 2021; Passmore & Woodward, 2023). This diversity underscores the need for competency models that are adaptable while still providing a clear, evidence-based model for the profession.

This Study

This study set out to answer two questions: What comprehensive set of competencies is required for effective coaching today? and How have these competencies changed since the ICF's 2019 job analysis? The 2019 study, published as *Development of a Coaching Competency Framework* (DiGirolamo, Tkach, et al., 2024), informed the most recent update to the ICF Core Competencies. Guided by ICF's definition of coaching, "Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential" (International Coaching Federation, 2024), the present investigation focused on client-centered, non-prescriptive approaches distinct from mentoring and consulting. In light of developments since 2019, including advances in technology, shifts in workplace culture, heightened attention to coach well-being, and evolving client expectations, the 2025 job analysis aimed to both validate the existing model and make targeted updates to ensure it reflects the current realities of professional coaching practice.

Methods

The study followed a mixed-methods design led by two consultants from the independent Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) and six ICF staff. Three members of the research team held ICF coaching credentials, and another had prior coaching experience.

As outlined in Brannick et al. (2007), job analysis can draw on a range of data collection methods, including individual interviews, group interviews, and questionnaires. In this study, we used both focus groups and a workshop (a form of group interview) to create space for interactive discussion, exploration, and clarification. These sessions generated rich qualitative insights. A large-scale validation survey provided robust empirical evidence for the tasks, knowledge areas, abilities, and other characteristics identified earlier in the process.

The research unfolded in the following phases:

- I. Review of published coaching literature
- II. Semi-structured focus groups exploring changes in coaching since the 2019 job analysis
- III. Development of coaching tasks, KAOs, and knowledge domains
- IV. Subject Matter Expert (SME) review of coaching tasks, KAOs, and knowledge domains
- V. Comprehensive online survey of the coaching tasks, KAOs, and knowledge domains
- VI. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of survey data
- VII. SME review of survey results and competency model development workshops
- VIII. Draft revisions to the competency model
- IX. SME review of the draft competency model
- X. Finalization of the updated competency model

Literature Review

The job analysis began with a targeted review of 17 publications from 2020 to 2024, spanning peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, working papers, and professional reports. This phase of the study was designed to capture recently documented trends and shifts in coaching practice that have a clear connection to what coaches do in their work, both the knowledge they apply and the skills they demonstrate, so that the updated ICF Core Competencies would be aligned to current day practice.

The review emphasized recent and relevant material, with attention to topics such as well-being coaching (Crabtree et al., 2024; Crabtree & Swainston, 2023; Jarosz, 2021), blended coaching (the use of coaching skills with the sharing of domain knowledge, i.e., coaching “blended” with mentoring or consulting) (DiGirolamo, Barney, et al., 2024), specialized coaching niches (DiGirolamo, Barney, et al., 2024), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Irving, 2021; Passmore et al., 2023; Terblanche, 2022; van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2021), and the use of technology and artificial intelligence in coaching (Jelodari et al., 2023; Passmore & Woodward, 2023).

Each publication was examined for evidence of emerging challenges, changes in delivery formats (including online coaching), regional differences, new professional development opportunities, evolving or overlapping

competencies, and shifts in terminology or descriptions of knowledge, skills, and other characteristics required for effective practice.

Insights from the literature informed the design of subsequent research phases, guiding the topics of focus group discussions, survey content, and the development of early drafts of competency model revisions.

Semi-Structured Focus Groups

To capture diverse perspectives on changes in coaching practice since the 2019 job analysis, four virtual focus group sessions were conducted in June 2024. Eleven Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) participated, representing nine countries across multiple continents. Participants ranged in age from early forties to early seventies, with an average of 12 years of coaching experience. The group included both newer and more experienced practitioners, with representation from all three ICF credential levels (ACC, PCC, MCC) and a majority holding the PCC designation. Selection criteria emphasized diversity in geography, gender, professional background, and coaching approach, including some coaches whose training fell outside ICF-affiliated programs.

Each three-hour session, facilitated by HumRRO staff via the Teams platform, began with a review of the study's objectives and the role of focus groups within the broader job analysis. Most of the time was spent in guided small-group discussions exploring topics such as emerging challenges in the profession, the impact of technology on coaching, evolving client needs, distinctions between coaching and related development modalities, and potential refinements to the ICF Core Competencies. Example prompts included: "How has your approach to coaching changed over the past five to seven years?", "In what ways has the use of technology influenced your practice?", and "What personal qualities are most essential for effective coaching today, and how has this changed?" Participants also considered how coaching might evolve over the next decade and the factors likely to drive that evolution.

Detailed notes from each session were reviewed independently by two researchers to identify recurring themes. Any personally identifiable information was removed before further processing. The cleaned qualitative data were analyzed using RRObot, HumRRO's secure large language model (LLM) platform, which conducted text preprocessing, tagging, and extraction of salient phrases. This AI-assisted analysis was validated against human researcher analysis and served as a cross-check, ensuring the final thematic summary accurately reflected the most significant insights from the

discussions.

Development of Coaching Tasks, KAOs, and Knowledge Domains

Following the literature review and semi-structured focus groups, the research team worked collaboratively to update the task and KAO (knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics) lists originally developed in the 2019 job analysis. This process began with a systematic review of all existing task and KAO statements to ensure alignment with current coaching practices and terminology, as well as to capture new elements identified in earlier study phases. Both lists were reviewed to ensure they were clear, relevant, and comprehensive. Particular attention was given to keeping a clear separation between tasks, which are the specific, observable actions coaches perform, and KAOs, which are the knowledge, abilities, and other personal attributes that support those actions.

The update process included evaluating whether each statement remained pertinent, whether it should be revised to reflect contemporary practice, or whether new statements were needed to address emerging areas. The designations of “core” and “non-core,” established in 2019 based on frequency and importance ratings, were also revisited. The intent was to create comprehensive, precise, and up-to-date lists that would serve as the foundation for subsequent phases of the research.

SME Review of Coaching Tasks, KAOs, and Knowledge Domains

To refine the updated task and KAO lists, a workshop was convened in Frankfurt, Germany in October 2024. SME selection criteria were designed to maximize variation in coaching experience, geographic representation, gender, and training pathways. The group included both seasoned and less experienced practitioners, with five holding the MCC credential (45.5%), three holding the PCC credential (27.3%), two holding the ACC credential (18.2%) and one with training outside ICF-affiliated programs (9.1%). Participants represented countries across multiple regions, including Germany, Australia, England, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. The group consisted of six females (54.5%) and five males (45.5%).

Over two days, HumRRO facilitators guided SMEs through a structured review process. The first day focused on the task list, with the second day dedicated to the KAO statements and any additional considerations for the competency model update. The workshop began with an overview of the study’s progress to date, followed by a reflective discussion on recent changes in the profession,

current challenges, and shifts in the qualities needed for effective coaching. SMEs were provided with a review guide containing the updated lists, definitions distinguishing tasks from KAOs, the current ICF Core Competencies, and a set of structured prompts. These prompts invited SMEs to consider whether each statement should be retained as-is, revised for clarity or alignment, removed if no longer relevant, or supplemented with new content.

Facilitators ensured that discussions were thorough and that proposed changes were documented for later synthesis. This review process provided a final pre-survey version of the task and KAO lists, ready for large-scale validation in the next phase of the study.

Comprehensive online survey

A large-scale survey was conducted to validate the updated task and KAO lists. Invitations were sent to over 79,000 coaches worldwide, including both ICF credentialed coaches and non-ICF credentialed coaches, and an open link was also shared through professional networks and LinkedIn.

The survey included 126 task statements and 113 KAOs. Tasks were rated on two scales: frequency – “In general, in what percentage of coaching sessions do you engage in this behavior?” (1 = 0%, 2 = 1–20%, 3 = 21–40%, 4 = 41–60%, 5 = 61–80%, 6 = 81–99%, 7 = 100%) and importance – “How important is it to your work as a coach” (1 = Unimportant, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very important, 5 = Extremely important, 6 = Essential). If a respondent indicated 0% frequency, the importance rating was skipped automatically. KAOs were rated for importance using the same six-point scale. Two open-ended items invited respondents to suggest additional tasks or KAOs and to provide general comments.

A pilot survey with ten MCC-credentialed coaches confirmed survey clarity before launch. The full survey ran from January 27 to February 23, 2025, with reminder emails sent partway through and near the closing of the survey.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of survey data

After data cleaning, usable task rating data were available from 2,855 coaches and usable KAO rating data from 2,739 coaches. Only participants who completed at least 90% of a given section were included in each analysis. Participants represented a broad and diverse profile of the coaching community. About 80% of respondents were ICF members, and nearly two-

thirds identified as women (65.64%). Coaches spanned a wide range of experience, with over one-third (35.83%) reporting more than 10 years of practice. In terms of professional role, nearly two-thirds worked as external coach practitioners (63.89%), and executive or leadership coaching was the most common specialty (77.93%). Coaching delivery was largely virtual, with over 70% conducting sessions online (71.70%). Credential distribution was as follows: Professional Certified Coach (PCC, 41.72%) was most common, followed by Associate Certified Coach (ACC, 36.71%) and Master Certified Coach (MCC, 9.63%).

Geographically, the sample reflected a global reach. The largest proportion of respondents resided in North America (33.27%), followed by Western Europe (28.16%), Asia (11.91%), Middle East and Africa (6.44%), Eastern Europe (6.37%), Latin America and the Caribbean (4.41%), and Oceania (2.42%).

Interrater reliability, the degree to which people agree on their ratings of survey questions, calculated using intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC), was high. The ICC for task frequency and importance = .98 and ICC for KAO importance = .97. Mean importance ratings were used to determine core tasks and KAOs using distribution cutoffs (~4.30 for tasks; ~4.20 for KAOs), 98 tasks (78%) and 67 KAOs (59%) met the criteria to be considered “core”, with the final list of core items provided in Appendix A.

Subgroup analyses were conducted to explore whether results varied by respondent characteristics, including region of residence, gender, education, years of experience, and credential level. Many subgroup comparisons were statistically significant. For example, female respondents tended to rate tasks and KAOs as slightly more important than male respondents, and MCC-credentialed coaches often rated certain items higher than ACC- or PCC-credentialed coaches. Regional variations were also observed, with some differences between North American and Latin American respondents, among others. However, these differences were small in magnitude and are largely attributed to the large sample size where small effects can be statistically significant. Consequently, none of these subgroup patterns altered the overall findings or the identification of core tasks and KAOs.

The survey also included two open-ended questions, inviting participants to suggest missing tasks or KAOs and to share additional comments. Responses were reviewed and coded thematically. Many affirmed that the updated task and KAO lists captured a broad and relevant range of coaching practices, while others emphasized areas that could be strengthened. Three common themes emerged, including:

- Holistic approaches such as:
 - Mind-body-spirit integration
 - Energy awareness
 - Somatic techniques
- Advanced relational skills like:
 - Creating psychological safety
 - Holding silence
 - Demonstrating compassion
- Professional development practices, including:
 - Coaching Supervision
 - Reflective practice
 - Continuous self-development

Other themes pointed to specialized knowledge areas such as trauma-informed practice, neurodiversity, systems thinking, and cultural and linguistic diversity. Respondents also highlighted the importance of business acumen, including marketing and sustainable practice development, and noted the increasing role of technology in coaching—particularly artificial intelligence, digital tools, virtual coaching platforms, and secure note-taking systems. While these comments did not alter the designation of core tasks or KAOs, they offered valuable insights into emerging expectations and underscored the need for coaches to remain adaptable, ethically grounded, and engaged in ongoing development.

Together, the quantitative analyses confirmed the reliability and centrality of the updated task and KAO lists, while the qualitative input provided nuance and highlighted opportunities to capture new or emerging practices.

[SME review of survey results and competency model development workshops](#)

After the survey analyses were completed, ICF and HumRRO convened SMEs to review the findings and translate them into recommendations for updating the ICF Core Competencies. The central event was a two-day, in-person Core Competency Review workshop held in Paris, France, in April 2025.

SME selection emphasized diversity in professional background, credential level, geography, and demographics. The group included 11 credentialed coaches and one stakeholder with extensive experience as a coaching client. Of the 11 coaches, the majority held the MCC credential (72.7%), while the remainder held the PCC credential (27.3%). Participants represented countries

across multiple regions, including, Brazil, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. The group was evenly split by gender (six women and six men).

Over two days, the SMEs engaged in both small-group and whole-group discussions. The first day focused on reviewing the task and KAO lists and their core designations derived from the survey, while the second day emphasized how these findings should inform updates to the competency model. Guiding questions invited participants to consider trends in the data, potential gaps in the current model, competencies needing clarification, and whether any elements should be added or removed.

The discussions generated seven major themes relevant to competency model revision. These included:

- Clarifying boundaries between coaching and other helping professions
- Addressing the role of emerging technologies and AI
- Highlighting coach self-care and self-awareness
- Considering the coach's values and humanity
- Strengthening co-creation, partnering, and systemic perspectives
- Expanding attention to pre- and post-session activities
- Reinforcing contracting and coaching from a systems view

Specific recommendations included refining definitions, consolidating similar sub-competencies, and adding language to strengthen generalizability and cultural applicability.

SMEs were not tasked with rewriting the competencies directly but rather with providing evidence-based recommendations for how the model could be updated. Their input, together with survey results and prior research phases, informed subsequent drafting of revisions to the competency model.

Draft revisions to the competency model

After the analysis of survey findings and the Core Competency Review workshop, HumRRO researchers prepared recommendations on how the 2019 ICF Core Competencies might be updated. These recommendations were delivered to ICF staff, who reviewed them alongside the broader job analysis data. The goal was to identify revisions that were both evidence-based and practical for integration into the model. ICF staff then drafted proposed revisions to the competency model, drawing directly on validated tasks, KAOs, and the thematic input from SMEs.

SME review of the draft competency model

Once a draft version of the revised competency model was prepared, ICF engaged three SMEs to conduct a targeted review. These reviewers were selected to provide both practitioner and educator perspectives, and all had extensive experience in coaching and training. The review process involved a close reading of the draft competencies, sub-competencies, and definitions, with a particular focus on clarity, alignment with current coaching practices, and applicability across credentialing levels. Feedback was collected in writing and through follow-up discussions with the ICF research team.

Finalization of the updated competency model

The final stage of the process involved incorporating SME feedback into the draft model. ICF staff systematically reviewed all comments and mapped them back to the job analysis evidence base to determine which changes were warranted. The revision process was collaborative, iterative, and data-driven, ensuring that final adjustments reflected both empirical findings and expert consensus. This phase produced the finalized 2025 ICF Core Competencies, ready for dissemination to the coaching community.

Results

The 2025 job analysis affirmed the continued relevance of the 2019 competency model, which was validated using survey data, subgroup analyses, and expert review. Coaches confirmed its applicability across geographical regions, credential levels, and practice settings. Most elements required no change, underscoring the durability of the 2019 model. While no new main competencies were added, several refinements were introduced to better align with current professional practice. In total, one competency definition was revised, 11 sub-competencies were updated, and 5 new sub-competencies were added. The fully updated competency model can be found in Appendix B. The following summarizes the key outcomes by competency area.

Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

This competency was validated without substantive change. It continues to emphasize integrity, honesty, confidentiality, and the maintenance of professional boundaries, including appropriate referrals when needed.

Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

This area underwent the most substantial updates. The definition was revised to highlight the role of coaching supervision and mentor coaching in ongoing development, as well as the importance of maintaining emotional, physical, and mental well-being before, during, and after sessions. Four new sub-competencies were added to emphasize continuous learning, openness, curiosity, and awareness of how a coach's thoughts and behaviors influence others. Collectively, these changes elevate the expectation that coaches actively care for their own growth, resilience, and presence, while remaining attuned to technological advances shaping the profession.

Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements

Revisions strengthened the contracting process. Coaches are now expected to clearly describe their coaching philosophy and define what coaching is and is not for potential clients and stakeholders. Language was also added to ensure that ending a coaching relationship prioritizes the client's experience. A new sub-competency emphasizes the importance of revisiting agreements over the course of the engagement to ensure continued alignment with the client's needs.

Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety

This competency remained unchanged. It continues to highlight the importance of respect, empathy, openness, and creating a safe space for clients to explore their perspectives.

Competency 5: Maintains Presence

Updates reinforce the active quality of coaching presence. A new sub-competency emphasizes awareness of what is emerging for both coach and client in the present moment. Together with existing elements, these updates strengthen the portrayal of presence as grounded curiosity and flexible responsiveness.

Competency 6: Listens Actively

No substantive revisions were made. This competency continues to center on

integrating what is spoken and unspoken, considering the client’s full context, and noticing patterns across sessions.

Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

This competency was revised to further clarify the coach’s role. Sub-competency 7.11 was updated to shift from “sharing insights” to offering observations, knowledge, and feelings in ways that may help clients generate their own insights. This adjustment reinforces the client’s central role in meaning-making and self-discovery.

Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

The final competency was expanded to reflect continuity across sessions. A new sub-competency (8.07) emphasizes partnering with the client to sustain learning and progress throughout the engagement. In addition, closure was reframed to focus on partnering with the client to close sessions in a way that honors progress and autonomy. These changes strengthen the focus on accountability and long-term growth beyond individual sessions.

Discussion

Key updates to the model include a heightened focus on the coach’s mindset and well-being. Revisions to Competency 2 highlight self-care, coaching supervision, and ongoing development, reinforcing the idea that a coach’s personal state directly affects their ability to serve clients effectively. The findings highlight the increasing importance of integrating new technologies thoughtfully, supporting coaches in remaining flexible as AI and other digital tools become part of professional coaching practice.

Other revisions strengthen the model’s attention to contracting and closure (Competency 3), present-moment awareness (Competency 5), and client-centered approaches to insight (Competency 7). The addition of new sub-competencies in Competency 8 reinforces the importance of sustaining learning between sessions and across the full coaching engagement.

Limitations

As with any large-scale research effort, this study had certain limitations. Although participants represented diverse geographical regions, credential

levels, and professional backgrounds, the sample was drawn primarily from coaches connected to ICF, either through membership, credentialing, or professional networks. This may limit the perspectives of coaches working outside ICF-affiliated contexts.

In addition, while the study identified tasks, knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics that coaches rated as critical, the research design did not include direct measures of coaching effectiveness. As in 2019, the analysis could not differentiate between tasks and characteristics demonstrated in high-efficacy versus low-efficacy coaching. Finally, because the study was anchored in the 2019 model, the update process focused on refining and extending an existing model rather than considering more radical departures that might emerge under a different starting point.

Conclusion

By validating the enduring relevance of the eight core competencies while introducing targeted changes, this study ensures that the ICF Core Competencies remain a globally applicable, future-focused model. It provides a strong foundation for coach development, training, credentialing, and professional practice, equipping coaches to meet the evolving needs of clients and organizations in a dynamic environment.

Future Research and Implications

Future research will be needed to explore how key changes to the model develop in practice. For example, the role of AI-enabled tools and digital platforms in coaching is still emerging, and their long-term impact on coaching presence, contracting, and client outcomes remains uncertain. Similarly, while coaching supervision and mentor coaching were strengthened in the 2025 model, further study could clarify how these practices best support coach growth and effectiveness across cultures and contexts.

The updated competencies will have implications for coaching education, credentialing, and professional development. Coaching Education programs may incorporate greater attention to coach self-care, reflective practice, and adaptability in a technology-driven environment. Credentialing processes may also evolve to assess how coaches demonstrate these qualities in their work.

By continuing to build on empirical data and global perspectives, ICF can ensure that the ICF Core Competencies remains a living model, one that

balances stability with responsiveness, and provides clear, evidence-based standards to guide the profession into the future.

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Appendix A: Core Tasks and KAOs

Tasks

1. Work with potential clients and other stakeholders to make a professional decision that ensures coaching is an appropriate approach.
2. Explore the potential client's motivation, commitment, goals, and readiness to determine how much they could benefit from coaching.
3. Describe your coaching philosophy and approaches, including what coaching is and is not, to potential clients and other stakeholders.
4. Explore the alignment between your coaching philosophy and approaches and the client's needs and goals.
5. Offer potential coaching approaches to the client appropriate to their background, experience with coaching, expectations, needs, and goals.
6. Invite the client to share their understanding of coaching, how it differs from other helping modalities, and the roles of the coach and the client.
7. Establish administrative guidelines for coaching agreements with clients and other stakeholders; including logistics, use of technology, fees, timing, coaching modalities and methods.
8. Establish professional guidelines for coaching agreements with clients and other stakeholders; including the roles and responsibilities of the coach, client, and stakeholders as well as what remains confidential to whom.

9. Work with the client to establish the interpersonal guidelines, including the boundaries and behavioral expectations of the coaching relationship with the client and other stakeholders.
10. Partner with the potential client to identify an optimal coaching modality (e.g., in-person face-to-face coaching, online coaching, or both).
11. Establish the initial objectives for coaching engagements, including their meaning for the client.
12. Determine the agreement between a sponsor's coaching objectives and the client's specific goals.
13. Uphold confidentiality as defined by the ICF Code of Ethics and outlined in the agreement.
14. Partner with the client to identify any stakeholders who need to be engaged in the coaching agreement.
15. Determine when and how relevant stakeholders will be involved in the coaching process.
16. Regularly revisit coaching agreements and revise as needed.
17. Regularly review the coaching engagement and session objectives.
18. Address situations where clients are distracted during coaching sessions.
19. Identify and discuss any issues and challenges clients are experiencing that may go beyond your scope of practice.
20. Collaborate with the client to adjust the pacing and/or objectives to ensure optimal use of session time.
21. Partner with the client to end the coaching relationship in a way that honors and celebrates the experience.
22. Partner with clients to summarize coaching progress and discuss how to share progress and outcomes with other stakeholders if applicable.
23. Close coaching sessions by inviting the client to summarize what they learned and explore next steps.
24. Use questions or observations to bring clients back to the coaching objectives.
25. Demonstrate openness, transparency, and vulnerability to build trust with clients.
26. Partner to explore the client's interests and background to identify the appropriate coaching approach.
27. Acknowledge and encourage clients so they can take actions to meet a goal or challenge.
28. Adapt your coaching approach to meet the client's unique and changing needs.
29. Offer the client the option to decline responding to a question, opinion, or observation.
30. Prepare for coaching sessions by reviewing notes, information, and insights to refresh your memory.

31. Prepare for coaching sessions by engaging in activities to focus and center yourself.
32. Consider the client's personality, values, beliefs, and background when deciding what actions would best serve the client.
33. Consider what strategies or techniques work and do not work with a particular client when deciding what actions would best serve the client.
34. Integrate information for a clearer understanding of the client's personality, values, or typical behaviors.
35. Consider the client's readiness when deciding what actions would best serve the client.
36. Determine the appropriate moment to challenge clients or to use techniques to provoke awareness or insight.
37. Notice the client's energy and engagement level during coaching sessions.
38. Notice the client's verbal and non-verbal cues during coaching sessions.
39. Notice trends in the client's behaviors and emotions across sessions to identify themes and patterns.
40. Notice changes or contradictions in the client's stated coaching objectives.
41. Notice when there may be something deeper or more complex beyond what clients have shared that could benefit from being explored.
42. Notice what is working and not working to move clients forward.
43. Remain fully engaged with clients.
44. Consider the ideas and thoughts that come to your mind before acting upon them.
45. Be aware of your own thoughts and thought processes.
46. Be aware of your own physical and emotional reactions to things clients say or do.
47. Reflect on your coaching practice to identify areas for future improvement.
48. Reflect on your coaching approach to identify areas for growth and adaptation.
49. Acknowledge clients as individuals with unique talents, insights, and experiences.
50. Acknowledge that clients may respond differently to different coaching approaches.
51. Acknowledge changes in the client's engagement, emotions, or physical state.
52. Acknowledge client successes, growth, development, or progress toward goals.
53. Acknowledge when something is challenging for clients.
54. Acknowledge that clients are the ones responsible for their own choices.
55. Ask clients what goals they want to accomplish.

56. Explore client emotions, including their origins and what clients can learn from them.
57. Ask clients how an observation you made resonated with them or impacted them.
58. Ask clients to generate ideas about how they can move forward and what they are willing or able to do.
59. Ask clients if there is more that they would like to share about a specific topic or issue to generate clarity.
60. Ask clients what they notice about themselves or others.
61. Ask clients about their perceptions, emotions, and behaviors, including how these domains impact each other.
62. Ask clients about their interpretations of an event or what story they are telling themselves about it.
63. Ask clients about changes in their energy level or focus.
64. Ask clients to explore what might be preventing them from taking action.
65. Ask clients what options are available for taking action.
66. Ask clients what would lead to a successful session.
67. Ask clients to imagine how something might unfold or envision how something "could be."
68. Ask clients how they handled something in the past or what has worked before.
69. Ask clients what actions they are planning to take and what they hope will happen as a result.
70. Ask clients who or what resources might be able to help them reach their goals or support them in taking certain actions.
71. Ask clients what they learned after taking certain actions.
72. Ask clients to share feedback about the coaching process, including what has been useful to them or what is not working.
73. Summarize to clients the essence of what you heard them say.
74. Share your interpretations of situations or observations that arise in the coaching session.
75. Ask clients for permission before sharing interpretations, expertise, or insights.
76. Share observations about changes or patterns in the client's verbal and nonverbal behaviors or emotions.
77. Share spontaneous observations, insights, and intuitions.
78. Draw upon self-awareness and intuition to benefit clients during the coaching process.
79. Adapt your coaching approach when the current course of action is not working.
80. Recognize situations when it would be helpful to seek guidance from other sources, such as your mentors or supervisors.

81. Adapt the coaching approach to respect and incorporate cultural and interpersonal nuances to ensure sensitivity and inclusivity.
82. Maintain awareness of potential personal and cultural biases to minimize their influence on the coaching process.
83. Manage your emotions to best serve clients.
84. Explore with the client what is needed to reach their goals.
85. Work with clients to identify actions to take after the coaching session.
86. Work with clients to integrate accountability into the coaching process.
87. Partner with the client to set goals.
88. Reflect on the session learning with the client to generate action steps.
89. Invite clients to share more about a thought or a feeling they have expressed.
90. Create or allow space for silence, pauses, and reflection.
91. Offer objects or metaphors generated by you or the client to increase client insight and awareness.
92. Challenge the client's perspectives when they feel stuck.
93. Help clients identify the factors that lead to specific patterns of behavior, thinking, or emotion.
94. Support clients by helping them reframe perspectives.
95. Invite clients to share what has happened and what they have learned since the last session.
96. Use techniques with clients to generate awareness or new insights.
97. Partner with clients to integrate new awareness or insight into their worldview and interactions with others.
98. Offer clients tools, resources, or assessments to help them reach their intended outcomes or objectives.
99. Challenge clients to provoke awareness or insight.

KAOs

1. Knowledge of relevant professional ethics codes (e.g., ICF Code of Ethics, ethical codes from relevant professional associations).
2. Knowledge of how to contract with clients (e.g., key elements of a coaching agreement).
3. Knowledge of what constitutes a conflict of interest.
4. Knowledge of coaching competencies.
5. Knowledge of the ICF values and other values-based systems that inform coaching.
6. Knowledge of the definition of coaching.

7. Knowledge of the coaching process and how it compares to other related helping and development professions such as therapy, counseling, mentoring, and consulting.
8. Knowledge of when and how to make appropriate referrals to mental health professionals.
9. Knowledge of when and how to make appropriate referrals to a variety of different professionals.
10. Knowledge of neurodiversity and different learning needs and approaches in coaching relationships.
11. Knowledge of communication principles.
12. Knowledge of diversity, inclusion as they relate to the coaching environment.
13. Knowledge of how social, societal, and cultural norms inform clients' values and behaviors.
14. Knowledge of goal-setting and motivation theories.
15. Knowledge of how the physical, mental, and emotional domains impact each other.
16. Knowledge of the signs of mental health conditions that may impact the coaching process.
17. Knowledge of the relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies and procedures around confidentiality (e.g., what would necessitate disclosing confidential information).
18. Knowledge of the relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies and procedures that may impact the coaching process.
19. Knowledge of a variety of coaching assessments, tools, and resources.
20. Knowledge of different coaching approaches.
21. Knowledge of mental health first aid.
22. Knowledge of stress management.
23. Knowledge of unconscious biases.
24. Knowledge of laws, regulations, and best ethical practices in data privacy, cybersecurity, and the use of digital technologies.
25. Ability to be open to change and compromise (Adaptability/Flexibility).
26. Ability to adapt your coaching approach to meet the current needs of the client.
27. Ability to adapt to and provide effective coaching across various modalities (e.g., in-person face-to-face, online, or both).
28. Ability to anticipate the possible impact of actions or decisions.
29. Ability to generalize trends, patterns, and outcomes to new situations.
30. Ability to consider the system in which a situation is occurring; awareness that a person is part of a system (Systems Thinking).
31. Ability to see connections among seemingly unrelated concepts.
32. Ability to express ideas verbally in a clear and succinct manner.

33. Ability to be open and transparent.
34. Ability to monitor and assess the client's behavior.
35. Ability to understand that others may react in different ways to a situation (Social Awareness).
36. Ability to gather information through observation and reflection.
37. Ability to manage your own time (Time Management).
38. Ability to concentrate on something over a period of time without being distracted (Selective Attention).
39. Ability to use logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems (Critical Thinking).
40. Ability to combine pieces of information to discern general rules or conclusions (Inductive Reasoning).
41. Ability to consider the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one (Judgment and Decision Making).
42. Ability to identify complex problems and review related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions (Problem Solving).
43. Ability to see the broader context of a situation and apply it to future scenarios (Strategic Thinking).
44. Ability to perceive your own emotions (Emotion Perception - Internal).
45. Ability to hold two or more opposing perspectives in mind at the same time.
46. Ability to perceive emotions in others as well as in objects, art, stories, music, and other stimuli (Emotion Perception - External).
47. Ability to interpret what emotions someone may be experiencing through their choice of words, tone of voice, and body language.
48. Ability to shift between broad and narrow perspectives.
49. Ability to understand and integrate emotional information.
50. Ability to access intuition.
51. Ability to give your full attention to what others are saying and not saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times (Active Listening).
52. Ability to be open to your own feelings and to modulate them in service of others (Managing Emotions).
53. Ability to set aside your judgments.
54. Ability to remain open to understanding others' experiences and points of view.
55. Ability to monitor and manage your behavior, emotions, and thoughts consistent with situational demands (Self-Regulation).
56. Ability to deal effectively and calmly with high stress situations (Stress Tolerance).
57. Ability to monitor and assess your own performance to make improvements or changes.

58. Ability to withhold sharing a potential solution with the client.
59. Ability to access and use emotion to communicate feelings or facilitate cognitive processes.
60. Ability to use the appropriate level of inquiry with a client to build their self-awareness (Self-Awareness - External).
61. Ability to adjust actions in relation to others' actions.
62. Self-care: deliberate care for your mental, emotional, and physical health.
63. Self-efficacy: belief in your coaching identity and abilities.
64. Client-centered curiosity.
65. Willingness to take risks for the benefit of the client (e.g., asking bold questions).
66. Empathy: concern for others.
67. Ethical: acting with integrity and honesty.
68. Learning Orientation: desire for continuous learning and development in your coaching practice.
69. Being Inclusive: noticing and honoring differences and commonalities.
70. Comfortable being in a space of not knowing.
71. Self-awareness: conscious and accurate appraisal of your own internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions.
72. Appreciation for complexity and ambiguity.
73. Openness to understanding multiple perspectives.
74. Being at ease with what is present, including discomfort.

Appendix B: Updated ICF Core Competencies and Sub-Competencies

A. Foundation

1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice

Definition: Understands and consistently applies coaching ethics and standards of coaching

- 1.01. Demonstrates personal integrity and honesty in interactions with clients, sponsors and relevant stakeholders
- 1.02. Is sensitive to clients' identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs
- 1.03. Uses language appropriate and respectful to clients, sponsors and relevant stakeholders
- 1.04. Abides by the ICF Code of Ethics and upholds the ICF Core Values
- 1.05. Maintains confidentiality with client information per stakeholder agreements and pertinent laws
- 1.06. Maintains the distinctions between coaching, consulting, psychotherapy and other support professions
- 1.07. Refers clients to other support professionals, as appropriate

2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset

Definition: Engages in ongoing personal and professional learning and development as a coach. Works with coaching supervisors or mentor coaches as needed. Develops and maintains a mindset that is open, curious, flexible and client-centered.

- 2.01. Acknowledges that clients are responsible for their own choices
- 2.02. Engages in ongoing learning and development as a coach, including remaining aware of current coaching best practices and use of technology
- 2.03. Develops an ongoing reflective practice to enhance one's coaching
- 2.04. Remains aware of and open to the influence of biases, context and culture on self and others

- 2.05. Uses awareness of self and one's intuition to benefit clients
- 2.06. Develops and maintains the ability to manage one's emotions
- 2.07. Maintains emotional, physical, and mental well-being in preparation for, throughout, and following each session.
- 2.08. Seeks help from outside sources when necessary
- 2.09. Nurtures openness and curiosity in oneself, the client, and the coaching process.
- 2.10. Remains aware of the influence of one's thoughts and behaviors on the client and others

B. Co-Creating the Relationship

3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements

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.

- 3.01. Describes one's coaching philosophy and clearly defines what coaching is and is not for potential clients and stakeholders
- 3.02. 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, including commitment to working toward coaching goals
- 3.03. Reaches agreement about the guidelines and specific parameters of the coaching relationship such as logistics, fees, scheduling, duration, termination, confidentiality and inclusion of others
- 3.04. Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to establish an overall coaching plan and goals
- 3.05. Partners with the client to determine client-coach compatibility
- 3.06. Partners with the client to identify or reconfirm what they want to accomplish in the session

- 3.07. 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
- 3.08. 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
- 3.09. Partners with the client to manage the time and focus of the session
- 3.10. Continues coaching in the direction of the client's desired outcome unless the client indicates otherwise
- 3.11. Partners with the client to close the coaching relationship in a way that respects the client and the coaching experience
- 3.12. Revisits the coaching agreement when necessary to ensure the coaching approach is meeting the client's needs

4. Cultivates Trust and Safety

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.

- 4.01. Seeks to understand the client within their context which may include their identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs
- 4.02. Demonstrates respect for the client's identity, perceptions, style and language and adapts one's coaching to the client
- 4.03. Acknowledges and respects the client's unique talents, insights and work in the coaching process
- 4.04. Shows support, empathy and concern for the client
- 4.05. Acknowledges and supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs and suggestions
- 4.06. Demonstrates openness and transparency as a way to display vulnerability and build trust with the client

5. Maintains Presence

Definition: Is fully conscious and present with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, grounded and confident

- 5.01. Remains focused, observant, empathetic and responsive to the client
- 5.02. Demonstrates curiosity during the coaching process
- 5.03. Remains aware of what is emerging for self and client in the present moment
- 5.04. Manages one's emotions to stay present with the client
- 5.05. Demonstrates confidence in working with strong client emotions during the coaching process
- 5.06. Is comfortable working in a space of not knowing
- 5.07. Creates or allows space for silence, pause or reflection

C. Communicating Effectively

6. Listens Actively

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

- 6.01. Considers the client's context, identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs to enhance understanding of what the client is communicating
- 6.02. Reflects or summarizes what the client is communicating to ensure clarity and understanding
- 6.03. Recognizes and inquires when there is more to what the client is communicating
- 6.04. Notices, acknowledges and explores the client's emotions, energy shifts, non-verbal cues or other behaviors
- 6.05. Integrates the client's words, tone of voice and body language to determine the full meaning of what the client is communicating
- 6.06. Notices trends in the client's behaviors and emotions across sessions to discern themes and patterns

7. Evokes Awareness

Definition: Facilitates client insight and learning by using tools and techniques such as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor or analogy

- 7.01. Considers client experience when deciding what might be most useful
- 7.02. Challenges the client as a way to evoke awareness or insight
- 7.03. Asks questions about the client, such as their way of thinking, values, needs, wants and beliefs
- 7.04. Asks questions that help the client explore beyond current thinking
- 7.05. Invites the client to share more about their experience in the moment
- 7.06. Notices what is working to enhance client progress
- 7.07. Adjusts the coaching approach in response to the client's needs
- 7.08. Helps the client identify factors that influence current and future patterns of behavior, thinking or emotion
- 7.09. Invites the client to generate ideas about how they can move forward and what they are willing or able to do
- 7.10. Supports the client in reframing perspectives
- 7.11. Shares observations, knowledge, and feelings, without attachment, that have the potential to create new insights for the client

D. Cultivating Learning and Growth

8. Facilitates Client Growth

Definition: Partners with the client to transform learning and insight into action. Promotes client autonomy in the coaching process.

- 8.01. Works with the client to integrate new awareness, insight or learning into their worldview and behaviors
- 8.02. Partners with the client to design goals, actions and accountability measures that integrate and expand new learning
- 8.03. Acknowledges and supports client autonomy in the design of goals, actions and methods of accountability

8.04. Supports the client in identifying potential results or learning from identified action steps

8.05. Invites the client to consider how to move forward, including resources, support and potential barriers

8.06. Partners with the client to summarize learning and insight within or between sessions

8.07. Partners with the client to integrate learning and sustain progress throughout the coaching engagement

8.08. Acknowledges the client's progress and successes

8.09. Partners with the client to close the session



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