



ICF Credentialing Handbook

*Helpful Tips, Tools, and Resources to
Navigate the Credentialing Process*



Dear Coach,

We created this handbook with you in mind. The credentialing process can be overwhelming. Our goal in creating this handbook is to help you navigate the ICF Credentialing process with great ease, no matter the credentialing level you are hoping to achieve. We've included tips, tools and resources for every step of the application process.

You don't have to do this alone! There are many skilled and experienced coaches who have gone through the credentialing process and are more than happy to assist you. We recommend that you find a buddy to support and encourage you along the way. This can be both a daunting and an exciting process and we hope our handbook will support you along the way.

Wishing you success and enjoyment in your journey!

The ICF NYC Chapter Board

Disclaimer:

For the most up to date Credentialing Process and Requirements, go to <https://coachfederation.org/icf-credential> And, choose from the list of resources and support available to you!

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ICF Credentialing Information

Purpose of the Handbook:

- Make the ICF Credentialing Process clearer and easier to understand
- Provide you with tools, tips, and resources

ICF Credential Benefits:

- ICF research reports several reasons coaches benefit from holding an ICF credential:
 - *Can make a difference in your business.*
 - **Coaches** who hold a professional credential report **higher earnings** than their non-credentialed peers.
 - **Clients** with credentialed coaches are **more satisfied** with the coaching partnership and more likely to recommend coaching to others.
 - Members with an ICF Credential enjoy an **ICF Credentialed Coach Finder** ([CredentialedCoachfinder.com](https://credentialedcoachfinder.com)) free listing. The CCF can help you connect with individuals and organizations seeking coaching services.

ICF Program Approval:

- Three ICF program approval types:
 - *Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP)*
 - *Approved Coach Specific Training Hours (ACSTH)*
 - *Continuing Coach Education (CCE)*

Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP):

- An “all-inclusive” coach-training program
- Minimum of 125 hours of coach-specific training
- 10 hours of Mentor Coaching
- Observed coaching sessions with instructor feedback
- Comprehensive final exam that evaluates a student’s coaching competency

Approved Coach Specific Training Hours (ACSTH):

- An “a la carte” coach training program
- Minimum of 30 hours of coach-specific training
- Observed coaching sessions with instructor feedback

Continuing Coach Education (CCE):

- For coaches with ICF Credentials or who have completed basic coach training
- May include:
 - **Core Competencies** - *Advanced coach training that directly relates to or expands upon the ICF Core Competencies.*
 - **Resource Development** - *Training in skills that contribute to the coach’s professional development (personal development, coaching assessments or tools, business building, or others outside of the ICF Core Competencies.)*

Non-ICF Approved Training - Portfolio Path:

- ❑ **Training specifically marketed as teaching:**
 - *Coaching skills*
 - *How to apply technical skills in a coach-like manner*
 - *Coaching skills in accordance with the ICF Core Competencies and Code of Ethics*
- ❑ **Non-accepted training:**
 - *Teaching other skills, even though the skills can be used by a coach in some manner*
 - *Personal development courses*
 - *Education in areas such as psychology, counseling, NLP, etc., unless it was taught as coach training and from an ICF Core Competencies' perspective*

THREE CREDENTIALS, THREE PATHS

1) Associate Certified Coach (ACC)

ACC ACTP Path

ACC ACSTH Path

ACC Portfolio Path

To see requirements of each, visit <https://coachfederation.org/icf-credential/acc-paths>.

2) Professional Certified Coach (PCC)

PCC ACTP Path

PCC ACSTH Path

PCC Portfolio Path

To see requirements of each, visit <https://coachfederation.org/icf-credential/pcc-paths>.

3) Master Certified Coach (MCC)

MCC Path

To see requirements of the MCC Path, visit <https://coachfederation.org/icf-credential/mcc-path>.

APPLYING FOR YOUR CERTIFICATION

ICF ACC Application:

- Go to application on ICF's website...
- <https://coachfederation.org/credential-path-survey> NOTE: Google Search (ICF ACC Portfolio Application)

Application Components:

- Coach Specific Training
- Coach Knowledge Assessment – CKA
- Mentor Coaching
- Recorded Sessions
- Coaching Hours

ICF Coach Knowledge Assessment (CKA):

- After application is reviewed, you will be sent the link to complete the CKA
 - The CKA is completed just one time in a three-hour time limit
 - Questions based on the ICF coaching definition, ICF Core Competencies, and ICF Code of Ethics.
 - Question difficulty levels vary
 - Assess concept or skill awareness
 - Present a scenario that requires deeper understanding
- <https://coachfederation.org/coach-knowledge-assessment>

CKA Format:

- 155 multiple-choice test items
- Four possible responses for each question
- Only one correct response for each question
- Passing grade is 70%

CKA SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

Domain: Setting the foundation

The client is a high-energy manager with a generally positive outlook. Just before coming to the coaching session, the client was told that their responsibilities are about to drastically change and will no longer be doing the work they are passionate about. The client has come to the session in a particularly negative mood and has expressed the desire to address this situation during today's session. What is the BEST way for the coach to proceed?

- A- Ask the client about all of the potential positive outcomes from this situation.
- B- Remind the client that the agenda for this session was set at the end of the last session.
- C- Explore the outcomes for the session and ensure that the client and coach are both clear on them.
- D- Point out to the client how extremely important it is to be passionate about the work we do.

Answer: C

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Domain: Co-Creating the Relationship

A client is explaining a situation to a coach, who senses that there is more that the client is not sharing. How should the coach approach the situation?

- A- *Interrupt the client and ask for greater disclosure.*
- B- *Give the client the "bottom-line" read on the situation.*
- C- *Ask the client's permission to probe a little deeper.*
- D- *Give the client feedback on the importance of honesty in coaching.*

Answer: C

Domain: Communicating Effectively:

When dealing with a client who brings many issues to the table, it is best for the coach to pick the option

- A- *where the coach has the most expertise.*
- B- *asking what the client would like to start with.*
- C- *that looks most likely to be handled in the time available.*
- D- *that the coach thinks can do the most good for the client.*

Answer: B

Domain: Facilitating Learning and Results

An appropriate role for a coach in goal setting, planning, and prioritizing with a client is

- A- *critiquing and embellishing a client's goals.*
- B- *letting the client self-determine the need for goals.*
- C- *taking charge of the process to ensure it is completed accurately.*
- D- *facilitating a process around the client's goal setting, planning, and prioritizing.*

Answer: D

Domain: Coaching Foundations and Knowledge Base

Every coaching conversation should include

- A- *an action plan.*
- B- *an agenda identified by the client.*
- C- *review of fieldwork.*
- D- *a summary by the coach of the client's progress.*

Answer: B

Mentor Coaching:

“Provides professional services to develop the required coaching skills for an ICF Credential. This consists of coaching and feedback in a collaborative, appreciative and dialogued process based on observation of live or recorded coaching sessions, to increase the coach’s capability and consistent application of ICF Core Competencies in their coaching practice.”

- Focuses on developing coaching skills in the ICF Core Competencies
- The Mentor Coach:
 - *Helps the applicant develop the required coaching skills needed to obtain an ICF Credential.*
 - *Provides coaching and feedback in a collaborative, appreciative and dialogued process.*

- *Observes coaching or listens to recorded coaching to increase the coach’s capability in coaching, in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies.*
- *Does not focus on exploring coaching practice challenges, such as building a business or achieving work/life balance.*

Mentor Coaching Requirements (ACSTH, Portfolio and MCC Only):

- The Mentor Coach is credentialed at the same or higher level as the applicant (ACCs must complete at least one full cycle of their credential, with renewal, before they’re eligible to serve as a Mentor Coach for ACC credentialing or credential renewal).
- Find a Mentor Coach through the ICF Mentor Coach Registry:
<https://coachfederation.org/find-a-mentor-coach>
- Search the ICF Find a Coach site - ICF-NYC.ORG website –
<https://www.icfnycchapter.org/Find-a-Coach>
- Find a Coach – Specialty - Mentor

Recorded Coaching Sessions:

- ACC ACSTH** and **ACC Portfolio**: one audio recording and transcription
- PCC Portfolio** and **PCC ACSTH**: two audio recordings and transcriptions
- MCC**: two audio recordings and transcriptions

Session Recording Suggestions:

- Study the ICF Core Competencies** and observe them in your coaching.
- Get feedback** from your Mentor Coach on how your coaching demonstrates each of the Competencies, and which you might need to practice. **The ICF Competencies Comparison Table** provides information about what assessors are listening for when they conduct your performance evaluation.
- Record several** coaching sessions; select the session that demonstrates use of a wide variety of the Core Competencies.
- Provide a clear, audible recording with only first names used during the session. The **recording device quality** and proximity is important. Inaudible recordings will result in lower scores and delay the review process.
- Using services such as Skype are not recommended for recordings due to possible disconnections during the session.

Performance Evaluation File Guidelines:

- Session Length** - A complete coaching session (not edited) between 20 and 60 minutes. Those exceeding 60-minutes will not be scored.
- Client** - An actual coaching session between you and a paid or pro-bono client (not part of coach training). The client may not be a coach unless they are a regular client.
- One File** - Multiple files for one coaching session will not be reviewed.
- Format** - In MP3 or WMA formats. Video files and other formats will not be accepted; 95 megabytes or less. Use a lower bit rate to decrease file size, if needed.
- Upload with the online credential application URLs to download or stream audio recordings will not be accepted.

- Label** - your name and a number, i.e., JoeSmith1.mp3 and JoeSmith2.mp3.

Transcript:

- Upload a session transcription
- Services available such as www.transcribeme.com
- Sample:*

COACH 06:48	So it sounds like it's something you enjoy and see the benefit of. What is it like as you're coaching someone through that time in that moment, and then also as you finish it?
CLIENT 07:04	I think it's energizing. I think it's something that I see coming together, I see when I'm coaching someone. If it's face-to-face, I can see their eyes, I can see some lights coming on as questions are asked that get to the things they're thinking and having a difficulty of expressing. When we get to the end, and they have come up with some takeaways and made some commitment to take next steps, I'm very encouraged by that. So I'm encouraged by other people's success, always. If I could have some role in it, just walking alongside of them and asking the right questions or encouraging them.
COACH 08:01	If you could put words in their mouths, what do you think they take away?

Client Hours Requirements:

- ACC – 100** hours (75 paid); minimum of eight (8) clients and client coaching experience hours following the start of coach-specific training. At least 25 hours must occur within the 18 months prior to submitting the credential application.
- PCC – 500** hours (450 paid); minimum of 25 clients following the start of coach-specific training. At least 50 hours must occur within the 18 months prior to submitting the credential application.
- MCC – 2,500** hours (2,250 paid) following the start of coach-specific training; minimum of 35 clients.

ICF Coaching Log:

Coaches are required to complete an attestation of coaching experience included in the ICF Credential application. This will replace the submission of a coaching log and is intended to help protect the policy of coaching clients.

To ensure the integrity of this updated process, ICF will conduct periodic audits to verify applicants' coaching experience. This means that coaches should continue to obtain and document clients' consent to store their information, have a policy on how that information will be protected and maintained, and have a system in place for tracking relevant data.

You must obtain consent from each client to list his or her information on a client coaching log. The consent should be documented in compliance with all relevant laws. Individuals who do not consent to have their names listed must be left off the log, except in internal or third-party coaching arrangements with organizations that have a confidentiality policy. In those cases, you should obtain a reference letter from the organization verifying the number of coaching hours provided.

1. Client Name
2. Contact Info
3. Individual/Group
4. # in Group
5. Start Date
6. End Date
7. Paid Hours
8. Pro-bono Hours

EXAMPLE OF COACHING LOG

 ICF Client Coaching Log								
Client Name	Contact Information	Individual/Group	Number in Group	Start Date	End Date	Paid hours	Pro-bono hours	

Renewal Requirements :

- Submit renewal application with required documentation
 - 40 hours of Continuing Coach Education (CCE), minimum 24 hours in Core Competencies (3 hours must be in coaching ethics) <https://coachfederation.org/icf-credential/professional-development>. 10 Mentor Coaching hours and/or 10 Supervision Coaching hours can be counted toward CCEs in Core Competencies. The 16 remaining hours can be in Resource Development.
 - For ACC renewals only, an additional 10 hours of Mentor Coaching above those hours required for initial credential or since your last credential renewal. The 10 hours of Mentor Coaching required of ACC renewal applicants can be applied toward the 40 hours of Continuing Coach Education (CCE) in Core Competencies. <https://coachfederation.org/mentor-coaching>

Credential Renewal Timing:

- Valid for the three-year period following the initial approval or latest renewal
- There is a 2-month grace period from your credential’s expiration date to get your credential renewal submitted without needing any additional CCEs. If you submit more than 2 months following your expiration date, you can still renew your credential but need additional CCEs depending on the month you renew. More info on this page: <https://coachfederation.org/icf-credential/renew-credential>.

Helpful Hints:

- Purchase the right application
- Download a hard copy of the application for the credentialing level and path that’s

appropriate for you.

- Career coaching client session may not be best to use for recordings
- Ensure Client coaching log meets the requirements
- Study for the Coach Knowledge Assessment (CKA)
- Ensure Client log and recordings meet requirements
- Coaching session transcripts –Transcribeme.com
- Create a folder on your computer called “Credentialing” and create the following subfolders:
 - Recordings and transcripts
 - Permission evidence from client(s) for the recording(s)- scans and uploads as necessary.
 - Coaching logs (Coaching hours, mentor hours, training log
 - Documentation to support your training program for Portfolio Path- non-ICF accredited programs
 - Miscellaneous attachments based on application

Resources:

- ICF Core Competencies and Comparison Table:**
Core Competencies <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>
ICF Core Competencies Rating Levels
<https://coachfederation.org/app/uploads/2017/12/ICFCompetenciesLevelsTable.pdf>

COMPETENCY	ACC Level	PCC Level	MCC Level
1. Ethics and Standards Applicant will NOT pass this competency if applicant: Focuses primarily on telling	Not directly assessed during performance evaluation—see first column.	Not directly assessed during performance evaluation—see first column.	Not directly assessed during performance evaluation—see first column.

- PCC Markers:**
PCC Markers <https://coachfederation.org/pcc-markers>

Why ICF

ICF Credential

Find a Coach

Research

Accredit a Program

EN

PCC Markers

Assessment markers are the indicators that an assessor is trained to listen for to determine which ICF Core Competencies are in evidence in a recorded coaching conversation, and to what extent. The following markers are the behaviors that should be exhibited in a coaching conversation at the Professional Certified Coach (PCC) level. These markers support a performance evaluation process that is fair, consistent, valid, reliable, repeatable and defensible. Please note these markers are not a tool for coaching, and should not be used as a checklist or formula for passing the performance evaluation.

- Coaching session transcripts – Member discount at Transcribeme.com

Appendix:

- ICF Credentialing: Schedule for Studying (Appendix 1)
- Checklist for completing the credentialing process: Customize as necessary (Appendix 2)
- Release Sample letter for Coaching Log (Appendix 3)
- Jenny Rogers book – 14 questions (Appendix 4)

Questions about credentialing:

Credentialing Department Contact Information:

1.888.423.3131

support@coachfederation.org

Appendix: 1:

ICF Credentialing: Schedule for Studying:

Week	Core Competency	Code of Ethics		Notes
Week 1	Go through application process: 1. All documentation 2. Application process 3. Recorded session and transcription 4. Releases 5. Checklist			
Week 2	A. Setting the foundation	Part One and Part Two		
	1. <u>Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards</u> - understanding of coaching ethics and standards and ability to apply them appropriately in all coaching situations.	Section 1. Definitions		
	2. <u>Establishing the coaching agreement</u> - Ability to understand what is required in the specific coaching interaction and to come to an agreement with the prospective and new client about the coaching process and relationship.	Part Two: The ICF Standard of Ethical Conduct Section1: Professional Conduct At large		
		Section 2: Conflicts of Interest		
Week 3	B. Co-Creating the relationship	Part Two: The ICF Standard of Ethical Conduct		
	3. <u>Establishing trust and intimacy with the client</u> - ability to create a safe, supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust.	Section 3: Professional Conduct with Clients		
	4. <u>Coaching presence</u> - ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident.	Section 4: Confidentiality/Privacy		
Week 4	C. Communicating effectively	Part Three: The ICF Pledge of Ethics		
	5. <u>Active Listening</u> - ability to focus completely on what the client is saying and is not saying, to understand the meaning of what is said in the context of the client's desires, and to support client self-expression.			
	6. <u>Powerful questioning</u> - ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit to the coaching			

	relationship and the client.			
	7. <u>Direct communication</u> - ability to communicate effectively during coaching sessions, and to use language that has the greatest positive impact on the client.			
Week 5	D. Facilitating learning and results			
	8. <u>Creating awareness</u> - ability to integrate and accurately evaluate multiple sources of information, and to make interpretations that help the client gain awareness and thereby achieve agreed-upon results.			
	9. <u>Designing actions</u> - ability to create with the client opportunities for ongoing learning, during coaching and in work/life situations, and for taking new actions that will most effectively lead to agreed-upon coaching results.			
	10. <u>Planning and goal setting</u> - ability to develop and maintain an effective coaching plan with the client.			
	11. <u>Manage progress and accountability</u> - ability to hold attention on what is important for the client, and to leave responsibility with the client to take action.			

Appendix: 2

Checklist for completing the credentialing process: Customize as necessary

Task	<input type="checkbox"/>	Notes
Print hardcopy of appropriate application	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Identify what is needed for the application	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Review Code of Ethics		
Review ICF Core Competencies		
Release of confidentiality information- for the recorded session		
Letter to clients about coaching log		
Completed at least 60 hours of training program		
Work with mentor (10 hours)		
Complete Client coaching log		
Complete training log		
Complete mentor log		
Create an ICF folder that includes all documentation needed to complete the application: Log, Coach training graduation letter, training log, etc.		
Performance evaluation- recorded session(s) and transcript(s)		
Send recordings and transcription to mentor for review		
Complete the application and submit		
Complete Coach Knowledge Assessment		
Celebrate		

Appendix 3: Release Sample letter for Coaching Log

Dear

I hope the beginning of summer finds you well.

As part of my ongoing commitment to the field of professional coaching, and in addition to my previous credentials earned at New York University, I am now working to become certified by the International Coaching Federation (ICF). In short, this is a certification that acknowledges I have met specific professional and ethical guidelines that are considered the industry standard.

The ICF requires that I submit the number of coaching hours I have accumulated to date. I am asking your permission to provide your name and the number of hours we have worked together as part of this process. Please be assured that this is 100% confidential and no content or any conversation or other record of our sessions is shared with them or any outside source. This is merely to confirm that I have in fact, completed the necessary coaching hours that the certification warrants.

Please let me know if I have your permission to share your name and the number of our coaching hours together. If you grant me this permission, you may be contacted by the ICF in order to confirm our engagement.

If you choose not to provide permission, I completely understand and respect your decision. In that instance, your name will not be included in my application.

I enjoyed working with you and would love to hear how things are going. And, you know, if the need arises, I'm here for you!

All My Best,

Amy Bloustine
Certified Personal Coach, New York University
Certified Career Coach, Five O'Clock Club
www.amybloustinecoaching.com
abloustine@gmail.com
646-491-3619

Appendix 4:

Jenny Rogers: Questions

The easiest way to understand the difference between effective and less effective questions in coaching is to look at some actual examples. When I was relatively new to coaching, I was fortunate to get sent by my then boss to a course on organizational consulting run by Columbia University. There I encountered a set of questions, which were so obviously special in their impact on people that I immediately adapted them to my coaching work. There is an equivalent in therapy – so-called ‘magic questions’ – from which these questions had probably sprung. Whatever their origin,

I attached a crib sheet to my diary and shamelessly kept it open during coaching sessions. I would explain that I needed the prompt and that the client would be the beneficiary.

This list, much adapted, has proved its worth time and time again as an outline script, not just to me but to the many hundreds of other coaches we have now trained. It will work in almost any situation, regardless of the setting or the issue.

There are several points to note about it:

- The questions are content-free.
- They are short.
- They do not include the word ‘I’.
- They work elegantly as a natural progression, starting with asking the client to state the problem, going on to restating the problem as a goal, then to naming options and finally to first steps to action.

Here are the questions:

1. What’s the issue? This asks the client to state the problem. It can often usefully cut through a client’s lengthy account by asking them to summarize what the problem actually is.

2. What makes it an issue now? Issues that clients bring to coaching have typically been around in the client’s life for a long time. But often there is some immediate provocation or development, even if this is in the form of anger or worry. This emotion will provide energy for change and resolution. That is why it is worth naming and surfacing it.

3. Who owns this issue/problem? If the client does not own it, there is no point in discussing it. You can only coach the problem owner. Some clients come to coaching in order to find out how to change someone else whereas the basic assumption of coaching is that you can only change yourself. This question puts the onus back onto clients to own whichever bit of the issue is theirs.

4. How important is it on a 1–10 scale? If the problem is not important then why are you and the client wasting time discussing it? Importance captures the idea of issues with potential for major impact on a client’s life. Anything the client scores at less than 5 should be set aside.

5. How much energy do you have for a solution on a 1–10 scale? This question often draws an interesting response. The client may have told you the problem has an importance of 9, but then

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tells you that their energy for a solution is only 3 or 4. If so, you will want to ask a follow-up question such as ‘What would need to happen to increase the energy to 8 or 9?’

6. Implications: what are the implications of doing nothing (or of letting things carry on as they are)? This question builds the pain created by contemplating staying stuck. When we are in the client role many of us like to imagine that the default scenario can continue forever, whereas inside we know perfectly well that it cannot and that we are ignoring the discomfort the problem is creating. Naming out loud the likely consequences of inactivity paradoxically builds energy for change. You might want to follow this question with a further probe: . . . and what would be the implications if that happened?

7. What have you already tried? This question stops you offering pointless advice which the client has already tried or considered, and it also lets you in early on the client’s thinking. Most coaching problems have already been the focus of a great deal of energy and thought on the client’s part. You need to know what this energy and thought has produced. If the client has not tried anything yet, that will also provoke an interesting discussion.

8. Imagine this problem’s been solved. What would you see, hear and feel? Up until now, the client has been deep in the problem. You will typically see this reflected in the way the client has been sitting and talking – often slumped or despairing. By asking this question you tap into their resourcefulness. Clients will sit up straighter, stop frowning and will look generally lighter. Note that the answer to this question reveals the real goal (see also Chapter 5). Asking the question at this stage prevents you coaching on the symptoms rather than on the underlying causes.

9. What’s standing in the way of that ideal outcome? This question broadens out the client’s thinking. Expect new insights to occur from this point on.

10. What’s your own responsibility for what’s been happening? An essential question. The client is always part of the problem as well as part of the solution. This question makes that assumption explicit and encourages clients to see how they have, maybe at an unconscious level, been sustaining the problem through their own behavior.

11. What early signs are there that things might be getting better/going all right? However dreadful the situation, there is always something that is working. Identifying and building on it is part of the process of change and improvement.

12. Imagine you’re at your most resourceful. What do you say to yourself about this issue? This question assumes that underneath all our typical confusion, at some level we do know what we should do. Another version of this question: ‘If I could give you a pill which contained all the courage and insight you needed, what would you do?’ I have yet to find a client who could not find an instant reply to this one.

13. What are the options for action here? Now that the question has been looked at from several angles, the client can begin to consider the options for change.

14. What criteria will you use to judge the options? Options are even more useful when you have criteria against which to judge them. Typical criteria might be: practicality, cost, fit with the client's values, time – and so on.

15. Which option seems the best one against those criteria? At this point you are narrowing down again towards action – including, of course, just pondering.

16. So what's the next/first step? The answer may be to do some more research, to have a conversation, or to make a big life decision.

17. When will you take it? Asking for a commitment to when makes it more likely that the client will actually do something different as a result of the coaching.

I have seen this format, adapted of course to individual vocabulary and preferences, work time and time again. Not only does the format work; it also works at speed because there are few diversions. If you are new to coaching, I recommend a practice with a willing guinea pig to see how it goes. On our training courses, we ask participants to coach each other using this list, asking these questions and no others. Both coach and client are usually amazed at how well the format works.