



## What Those ICF Assessors Listen for in Your ACC Recording

Like every SeattleCoach, you arrived at coach training and development already having spent years becoming the best in town at something else. Now, as you’ve learned to “do the craft and be the coach,” you’ll likely be hired by people and companies who want a professional coach but who also place value on your other notable subject matter expertise (SME). So it’s not uncommon for our most successful coaches to build practices that reflect both their past professional SME and their new coaching SME.

But here’s the deal: Coaching SME is the ONLY SME ICF assessors care about. And on August 1, 2018, the ICF began asking ACC applicants to submit a recording and transcript of a coaching session of at least twenty minutes. The recording must reflect your understanding of the Core Competencies. Here are three practical requests as you build your Coaching SME:

1. Learn to do thirty minutes of pure coaching before you give advice or direction using your other SME. Gamble on coaching first. People will surprise you with the wisdom and resources they didn’t know they had.
2. In your self-management pay attention to what you long to teach coachees. You’ll do better if you are chosen and deliberate (instead of automatic) about using that stuff.
3. And when you decide that it’s in your coachee’s best interest to offer an idea or bit of expertise, proceed with caution. Then invite their evaluation.

And of course, remember how the co-creative coaching partnership—a great and trusting alliance--produces the “arc”:

- ***A beginning:*** *What do you want to work on? How will we know we’re on track/getting what you came for? Why does this matter? Who else is in your thinking as we begin—and what might they like us to be talking about?*
- ***A middle:*** The partnership explores, marks potential next steps.
- ***A collaborated close:*** The partnership identifies experiments and a plan for following up on what results.

*Explore*

*Find the Experiment(s)*



You know that the arc is never perfectly linear: You clarify the agenda at the beginning and then check in mid-way through. You mark potential next steps as you explore, and then return to them at the close.

In the interest of pure coaching (and submitting an ICF-worthy recording), here are a few questions about each Core Competency to ask yourself as you evaluate your work:

1. *Remember, the first Core Competency, “**Demonstrates ethical practice**” is assumed and you’ll need to know it well for the Coach Knowledge Assessment, but it’s not usually evaluated by assessors (unless, when your agreement is to coach, you spend the whole session giving advice).*
2. *“**Embodies a coaching mindset.**”*
3. *“**Establishes and maintains agreements.**” Does the coachee choose the focus? Do you clarify and explore it?*
4. *“**Cultivates trust and safety.**” We know you’re trying to be a really good coach--it’s natural to focus on your own behavior and performance. But here’s the paradox, when that’s your focus, what happens to trust? And here’s a second question: Given who you are, how do you personally foster good-enough psychological safety? What is your personal way of acknowledging a coachee’s brave and consistent work?*
5. *“**Maintains presence.**” When you focus on what you want to teach or offer or fix, or on a favorite approach or tool, or how you’re performing, what do you miss? It’s probably what the coachee offers. Sometimes you miss a “breadcrumb.” Remember, your presence and curiosity usually beats your content.*
6. *“**Listens actively.**” What happens when you are fully focused on and responsive to the coachee’s language, emotion, behavior and energy? Listening with your eyes? To what the coachee wants to achieve? I.e. When you are working at level 3 vs. performing and demonstrating? How are you doing with silences?*
7. *“**Evokes awareness.**” Are you helping your coachee to explore beyond their current thinking about themselves and their situations? (vs. Your view, expertise, direction, and, as our coaches at Microsoft say, “que-gestions.”) Are you responding with the clearest, simplest, fewest words? Are you using your coachee’s language and co-creating the right pace for the moment? Again, how are you doing with silences? Is your coachee doing most of the talking? Are you solving or are you connecting the dots, staying curious about how your coachee will integrate new ideas and hunches? Remember, awareness is quick and contagious and energy follows awareness. Ask, “What are you taking away from this conversation?”*
8. *“**Facilitates client growth.**” Is there a complete partnership as you notice and co-create (vs. assign homework)? Can you explain the purpose of any tools or exercises that you suggest? How do experiments and next steps relate to your coachee’s agenda, strengths and stage of change? How does the partnership explore and evaluate progress? Who (besides you) will know about their progress and experiments? How do you stay aware of your coachee’s meta-agenda and pace? Is there a persistent connection to it, and clarification as it evolves? Can you partner even in the closing of a session?*

Did you notice how every single one of these competencies assumes both a differentiated (“*grace and truth*”) coach and a great and trusting alliance—a deeply respectful and co-creative partnership?

**Note: The following “markers” map to the old Core Competencies (n=11). The markers for the new version (n=8) will be produced later in 2020.**

The template below is © The International Coach Federation. It puts the markers that you’ve been studying in *“Hacking the Core Competencies”* into a score sheet. In addition to the key questions on page 2, try using it to score your recording and transcript before you submit your application. Remember, Core Competence #1, *“Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards,”* will be assumed rather than scored by your assessors as they listen to your recording.

- 2. Creating the coaching agreement

	Observed?	Evidence
2.1. Coach helps the client identify, or reconfirm, what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.		
2.2. Coach helps the client to define or reconfirm measures of success for what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.		
2.3. Coach explores what is important or meaningful to the client about what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.		
2.4. Coach helps the client define what the client believes they need to address or resolve in order to achieve what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.		
2.5. Coach continues conversation in direction of client's desired outcome unless the client indicates otherwise.		

- 3. Creating trust and intimacy

	Observed?	Evidence
3.1. Coach acknowledges and respects the client’s work in the coaching process.		
3.2. Coach expresses support for the client.		
3.3. Coach encourages and allows the client to fully express him/herself.		

- 4. Coaching presence

	Observed?	Evidence
4.1. Coach acts in response to both the whole person of the client and what the client wants to accomplish in the session.		
4.2. Coach is observant, empathetic and responsive.		
4.3. Coach notices and explores energy shifts in the client.		
4.4. Coach exhibits curiosity with the intent to learn more.		
4.5. Coach partners with the client by supporting the client to choose what happens in the session.		

4.6. Coach partners with the client by inviting the client to respond in any way to the coach's contributions and accepts the client's response.		
4.7. Coach partners with the client by playing back the client's expressed possibilities for the client to choose from.		
4.8. Coach partners with the client by encouraging the client to formulate his or her own learning.		

- 5. Active listening

	Observed?	Evidence
5.1. Coach's questions and observations are customized by using what the coach has learned about who the client is and the client's situation.		
5.2. Coach inquires about or explores the client's use of language.		
5.3. Coach inquires about or explores the client's emotions.		
5.4. Coach inquires about or explores the client's tone of voice, pace of speech or inflection as appropriate.		
5.5. Coach inquires about or explores the client's behaviors.		
5.6. Coach inquires about or explores how the client perceives his/her world.		
5.7. When appropriate, coach is quiet and gives client time to think.		

- 6. Powerful questioning

	Observed?	Evidence
6.1. Coach asks questions about the client; his/her way of thinking, assumptions, beliefs, values, needs, wants, etc.		
6.2. Coach's questions help the client explore beyond his/her current thinking to new or expanded ways of thinking about himself/herself.		
6.3. Coach's questions help the client explore beyond his/her current thinking to new or expanded ways of thinking about his/her situation.		
6.4. Coach's questions help the client explore beyond current thinking towards the outcome s/he desires.		
6.5. Coach asks clear, direct, primarily open-ended questions, one at a time, at a pace that allows for thinking and reflection by the client.		
6.6. Coach's questions use the client's language and elements of the client's learning style and frame of reference.		
6.7. Coach's questions are not leading, i.e. do not contain a conclusion or direction.		

- 7. Direct communication

	Observed?	Evidence
7.1. Coach shares observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts and feelings to serve the client's learning or forward movement.		

7.2. Coach shares observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts and feelings without any attachment to them being right.		
7.3. Coach uses the client’s language or language that reflects the client’s way of speaking.		
7.4. Coach’s language is generally clear and concise.		
7.5. The coach allows the client to do most of the talking.		
7.6. Coach allows the client to complete speaking without interrupting unless there is a stated coaching purpose to do so.		

- 8. Creating awareness

	Observed?	Evidence
8.1. Coach invites client to state and/or explore his/her learning in the session about her/his situation (what).		
8.2. Coach invites client to state and/or explore his/her learning in the session about her-/himself (who).		
8.3. Coach shares what s/he is noticing about the client and /or the client’s situation, and seeks the client’s input or exploration.		
8.4. Coach invites client to consider how s/he will use new learning from the coaching.		
8.5. Coach’s questions, intuitions and observations have the potential to create new learning for the client.		

- 9. Designing actions, 10. Planning & goal setting, 11. Managing progress & accountability

	Observed?	Evidence
9.1. Coach invites or allows client to explore progress towards what s/he want to accomplish in the session.		
9.2. Coach assists the client to design what actions/thinking client will do after the session in order for the client to continue moving toward the client's desired outcomes.		
9.3. Coach invites or allows client to consider her/his path forward, including, as appropriate, support mechanisms, resources and potential barriers.		
9.4. Coach assists the client to design the best methods of accountability for her/himself.		
9.5. Coach partners with the client to close the session.		
9.6. Coach notices and reflects client’s progress.		