

PCC Minimum Skills Requirements



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The purpose of the PCC Minimum Skills Requirements is to outline the essential skills needed to demonstrate competency at the PCC level. The document follows the ICF Core Competencies and in each competency you will come across the following sections: Key Skills, Behaviors Consistent With ICF Standards, and Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Standards.

Key Skills.

These are based on the ICF Core Competencies and represent the foundational coaching abilities relevant to each competency area, applicable across all credential levels.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Standards.

These sections describe the observable actions coaches should demonstrate that reflect effective coaching practice at the PCC level.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Standards.

These lists point to actions that may disrupt the coaching process or reduce the quality of the coaching experience, and that do not meet the standards for expected coaching skills at the PCC level. These are included to support coach development and alignment with ICF's professional standards.

Tip: For a deeper understanding, compare the PCC Minimum Skills Requirements alongside the ICF Core Competencies — seeing them side by side will give you valuable insights into how they align and help you elevate your coaching practice.

Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

Familiarity with the ICF Code of Ethics and its application is required for all levels of coaching. You must demonstrate a strong understanding of ethical coaching practice to earn any level of ICF credential.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- Demonstrate a strong understanding and alignment with the ICF Code of Ethics.
- Consistently stay in the role of the coach, demonstrating knowledge of how to structure a coaching conversation and stay focused on future and present issues.
- Use key coaching skills such as trust, presence, active listening, and evoking awareness to facilitate the client's own insights.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach is in clear violation of the ICF Code of Ethics.
- The coach's focus is primarily on telling the client what to do or how to do it (consulting mode). Or if the conversation is based primarily on the past, particularly the emotional past (therapeutic mode).
- The coach primarily gives advice or tells the client what to do throughout the session.

Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

Embodying a coaching mindset — a mindset that is open, curious, flexible, and client-centered — is a process that requires ongoing personal and professional learning and development as a coach. These elements take place over the course of a coach's professional journey and cannot be fully captured in a single moment in time.

Your understanding of this competency is primarily evaluated in the ICF Credentialing Exam.

However, certain elements of this competency can be reflected through the demonstration of other competencies in a coaching conversation. These particular behaviors are articulated and assessed through the following PCC Markers:

- Coach acknowledges and respects the client's unique talents, insights and work in the coaching process.
- Coach acknowledges and supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs or suggestions.
- 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.
- Coach acts in response to the whole person of the client (the who).
- Coach acts in response to what the client wants to accomplish throughout this session (the what).
- Coach partners with the client by supporting the client to choose what happens in this session.
- Coach demonstrates curiosity to learn more about the client.
- Coach's questions and observations are customized by using what the coach has learned about who the client is or the client's situation.
- Coach inquires about or explores how the client currently perceives themselves or their world.
- Coach asks questions about the client, such as their current way of thinking, feeling, values, needs, wants, beliefs or behavior.
- Coach shares — with no attachment — observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts or feelings, and invites the client's exploration through verbal or tonal invitation.

Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements are:

- The coach co-creates an agreement for the session.
- The coach partners with the client to define the components of the agreement.
- The coach continues in the direction of the client's desired outcome, unless the client indicates otherwise.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the PCC level under Competency 3 are outlined in the behavioral marker statements below:

- Coach partners with the client to identify or reconfirm what the client wants to accomplish in this session.
- Coach partners with the client to define or reconfirm measure(s) of success for what the client wants to accomplish in this session.
- Coach inquires about or explores what is important or meaningful to the client about what they want to accomplish in this session.
- Coach partners with the client to define what the client believes they need to address to achieve what they want to accomplish in this session.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach chooses the topic of the session.
- The coach does not verbally confirm what the client wants to accomplish as a session outcome.
- The coach does not explicitly partner to clarify the components of the coaching session agreement, such as session success measure(s), the meaning or importance to the client, or what needs to be explored to move toward the desired session outcome.
- The coach does not coach around the topic the client has chosen.
- If the conversation shifts away from the chosen agenda during the session, the coach does not notice or explore with the client what direction they would like to take for the rest of the session.

Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety are:

- The coach partners with the client to create a safe, supportive environment that encourages the client to share freely.
- The coach demonstrates trust in and respect for the client's unique ways of processing and creating.
- The coach is open and transparent to foster mutual trust.
- The coach acknowledges the client's unique contributions in the coaching process.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the PCC level under Competency 4 are outlined in the behavioral marker statement below:

- Coach acknowledges and respects the client's unique talents, insights, and work in the coaching process.
- Coach shows support, empathy, or concern for the client.
- Coach acknowledges and supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs, or suggestions.
- 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.

Behaviors Inconsistent with ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach influences the client by imposing their own knowledge, point of view, or interpretation of the client's situation.
- The coach communicates a lack of confidence in the client's capabilities.
- The coach is unsupportive, dismissive, judgmental, or disrespectful toward the client.
- The coach misses opportunities to acknowledge the client's work, talents, or insights in a timely manner during the session.

Competency 5: Maintains Presence

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 5: Maintains Presence are:

- The coach remains engaged and responsive to the client throughout the session.
- The coach remains curious and observant of the client.
- The coach intentionally provides space for reflection.
- The coach remains present through both conversation and silence.
- The coach partners with the client throughout the session.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the PCC level under Competency 5 are outlined in the behavioral marker statements below:

- Coach acts in response to the whole person of the client (the who).
- Coach acts in response to what the client wants to accomplish throughout this session (the what).
- Coach partners with the client by supporting the client to choose what happens in this session.
- Coach demonstrates curiosity to learn more about the client.
- Coach allows for silence, pause, or reflection.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach imposes their own thinking and processing methods instead of being curious about and using the client's methods of thinking and processing.
- The coach consistently does not respond to information the client is sharing about themselves, including their identity, culture, perceptions, feelings, and use of specific words and concepts.
- The coach is focused only on the "what" (client issue, situation, problem, challenges) and does not also explore the client's "who" (context, environment, experiences, beliefs, values, strengths).
- The coach is coaching to their own agenda, or changes the stated session focus without explicit client input and choice about the direction.
- The coach interferes with the client's process by directing, interrupting, or filling silence.

Competency 6: Listens Actively

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 6: Listens Actively are:

- The coach hears what the client is and is not communicating in relation to their agenda.
- The coach integrates the client's unique use of words into their questions and observations.
- The coach notices and inquires about the client's non-verbal cues and body language.
- The coach offers what they see, hear, feel, or sense and accepts the client's response.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the PCC level under Competency 6 are outlined in the behavioral marker statements below:

- Coach's questions and observations are customized by using what the coach has learned about who the client is or the client's situation.
- Coach inquires about or explores the words the client uses.
- Coach inquires about or explores the client's emotions.
- Coach explores the client's energy shifts, nonverbal cues, or other behaviors.
- Coach inquires about or explores how the client currently perceives themselves or their world.
- Coach allows the client to complete speaking without interrupting unless there is a stated coaching purpose to do so.
- Coach succinctly reflects or summarizes what the client communicated to ensure the client's clarity and understanding.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not use information presented by the client verbally or non-verbally to structure questions and observations.
- The coach mainly uses general questions and observations, rather than incorporating the client's specific words and concepts to formulate questions and share observations.
- The coach makes assumptions about the client's words and concepts, without inquiring into the client's definition or meaning.
- The coach dismisses, verbally or non-verbally, how the client is feeling.
- The coach does not invite the client to respond to the coach's succinct summaries or paraphrasing to ensure accuracy or shared understanding.

Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 7: Evokes Awareness are:

- The coach uses questions, observations, silence, and other techniques to support the client in gaining insight into themselves and their topic.
- The coach shares personal responses — such as comments or intuition — without attachment or direction, in ways that may support the client’s insights or learning.
- The coach explores the client’s emotions, needs, underlying beliefs, and ways of thinking, creating, and learning.
- The coach invites the client to identify influences on their current and future thinking, behavior, or emotions.
- The coach adapts their approach to the client’s needs and style.
- The coach intentionally allows space for the client to fully respond.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the PCC level under Competency 7 are outlined in the behavioral marker statements below:

- Coach asks questions about the client, such as their current way of thinking, feeling, values, needs, wants, beliefs, or behavior.
- Coach asks questions to help the client explore beyond the client’s current thinking or feeling to new or expanded ways of thinking or feeling about themselves (the who).
- Coach asks questions to help the client explore beyond the client’s current thinking or feeling to new or expanded ways of thinking or feeling about their situation (the what).
- Coach asks questions to help the client explore beyond current thinking, feeling, or behaving toward the outcome the client desires.
- Coach shares — with no attachment — observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts, or feelings, and invites the client’s exploration through verbal or tonal invitation.
- Coach asks clear, direct, primarily open-ended questions, one at a time, at a pace that allows for thinking, feeling, or reflection by the client.
- Coach uses language that is generally clear and concise.
- Coach allows the client to do most of the talking.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not ask open-ended questions that allow the client to explore or reconfirm their own thinking, feelings, values, needs, wants, beliefs, or behaviors.
- The coach asks questions that lead the client toward the coach's perspective, rather than the client's own way of thinking, feeling, or sensing.
- The coach seems focused on demonstrating their knowledge about the client or their situation, and provides definitive observations without checking in with the client.
- The coach shares their perceptions of the client's situation without allowing the client to respond freely. This includes allowing the client to disagree with the coach's perspective.
- The coach's way of speaking is overly wordy, complex, or confusing to the client.
- The coach does not allow sufficient space for the client to respond to questions or observations.

Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth are:

- The coach partners with the client to explore their session progress and learning.
- The coach supports the client in considering how to integrate new awareness into their worldview and behaviors.
- The coach partners with the client to design actions that reflect new learning.
- The coach supports the client in identifying what they need to follow through with their designed actions.
- The coach partners with the client to close the session.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the PCC level under Competency 8 are outlined in the behavioral marker statement below:

- Coach invites or allows the client to explore progress toward what the client wanted to accomplish in this session.
- Coach invites the client to state or explore the client's learning in this session about themselves (the who).
- Coach invites the client to state or explore the client's learning in this session about their situation (the what).
- Coach invites the client to consider how they will use new learning from this coaching session.
- Coach partners with the client to design post-session thinking, reflection, or action.
- Coach partners with the client to consider how to move forward, including resources, support, or potential barriers.
- Coach partners with the client to design the best methods of accountability for themselves.
- Coach celebrates the client's progress and learning.
- Coach partners with the client on how they want to complete this session.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not support the client in identifying their session progress, learning, or how to apply new insights after the session.
- The coach states the progress that the client made towards their session outcome(s) or measure(s) of success, without asking or inviting the client's input.

- The coach directs the client to carry out specific actions prescribed by the coach, rather than allowing the client to design their own actions.
- The coach does not ask follow-up questions that support the client in designing actions that help them follow through on their action plan.
- The coach asks the client to identify the growth and change they believe should be acknowledged, instead of directly acknowledging the client's growth based on what the coach has observed and heard.
- The coach chooses the timing, or method, of closing the session.



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