

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR CONVERSATION WITH ACTO:**

The Board considered various scenarios for enhancing the program and has taken action intended to develop a credentialing program that will truly hold global credibility and provide permanent value; be a cutting edge, competitive and robust system capable of handling a growing demand; and operate utilizing globally recognized standards for objectivity, validity, reliability, and security.

The move towards a single professional credential that meets ISO standards along with additional specialty credentials places the ICF on the path to creating a credentialing program that:

- Has a clear purpose for all offered credentials
- Supports and advances the ICF brand throughout the world
- Establishes and administers minimum standards for credentialing professional coaches.
- Assures the public that participating coaches meet or exceed established standards.
- Makes use of legally defensible assessment processes that accurately measure competence thereby instilling confidence in the public regarding the skills of credential holders.
- Clearly differentiates Coaching as a profession that is distinct from other professions and that has processes in place that guide and regulate practitioners.

### **Number of credentials**

The first issue deals with the **number of credentials** that the ICF offers. The following points are relevant to this issue:

- The ISO 17024 standard makes clear that the purpose of credentialing programs should be based on efforts to improve the profession and/or to protect the public and that the specific purpose of the credential offered should be clear.
- Advice from others working in the credentialing industry focus on the importance of having a credential that objectively identifies competent professionals working in the field based on a body of knowledge.
- In many cases, organizations and professions offer one foundational or benchmark credential.
- Organizations that offer additional credentials base them on an existing body of knowledge as well as specific tasks and skills that are significantly unique from the foundational knowledge of a benchmark credential.

At present the ICF offers three individual credentials, the ACC, PCC, and MCC. Analysis of our limited body of knowledge as identified in the Role Delineation Study indicates that there may be insufficient differentiation between the knowledge, task and skills among these credentials to justify existence of three levels of credentials. (Support for this conclusion comes from the work of the Test Specifications Task Force which developed three test specifications – one for each existing ICF credential - which are nearly identical. Further support comes in this regard is evident in the three Minimum Skills Requirements documents published by the ICF which attempt to explain the differences between the three credentials. A thorough review of these documents reveals any number of similarities that make it very difficult to differentiate and identify distinct differences in the existing body of knowledge that would justify multiple credentials.)

Based on advice and counsel from Prometric, as well as other credentialing and testing experts, the general consensus is that the ICF has a body of knowledge sufficient to support one professional credential. However, additional credentials could be justified if a clear purpose and standards for multiple credentials could be determined.

- Some organizations offer advanced or senior level credentials based on demonstrated quality performance over time. Generally, these credentials are awarded to those who hold the foundational credential of the organization and demonstrate their senior status through submission and review of work samples and case studies. Others have separate bodies of knowledge or standards that relate to advanced credentials which are updated and revised on a three to five year cycle. In many cases these can only be pursued after the foundational credential has been first attained.

The Board was asked to delineate, from the perspective of the purposes behind the existing credentials and the limited knowledge base that has been identified, the clear differences between the ICF credentials in order to justify the actual number of credentials that ICF should support and offer. The BOD agreed the following:

- To direct staff to design a system of ICF offering two credentials:
- **A professional coach credential that would meet the 17024 standard; and**
- A senior credential or distinction that would recognize a skill in either application or specialty skills of coaching. This credential may adopt different methodology and may or may not be ISO-compliant.

## **PROPOSAL PRESENTED TO THE BOD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2009 ICF Proposal for Changes to Current Credentialing Program; Transition Issues and Timeline**

### **Recommendations**

#### ***Credentialing Schemas:***

Following careful consideration of these points and additional research, the ICF Staff is recommending the following three schemas for the future of the ICF Credentialing Program:

- 1. Offer a single foundational credential that meets ISO 17024 standards. The temporary working title of this credential is the ICF ISO Coach Credential.**

The draft purpose of this credential is as follows:

“The ICF ISO Coach Credential identifies coaches who have successfully completed an extensive review and testing process including oral and written performance examinations. This review and testing process serves to assure that the credential holder has high professional standards, adheres to a strong code of ethics, possesses high knowledge and skill levels, and has accumulated extensive experience.”

**Detailed recommendations regarding the components of this credential are included in the attached spreadsheet.** These recommendations should be considered as drafts with final agreement on these components to be discussed and approved by the ICF Board of Directors during their July 2009 meeting.

- 2. Offer a formal distinction for those trained to serve as ICF Mentor Coaches. The title of this offering is the ICF Mentor Distinction.**

The draft purpose of this offering is as follows:

“The ICF Mentor Coach Distinction identifies coaches who have completed a training process and acquired experience that provides a foundation of skills and best practices to be used when providing mentoring services to other coaches. Coaches holding this distinction demonstrate a high level of skill, strong ethics, accountability, and a commitment to ongoing learning and improvement.”

Note that this offering is defined as a “Distinction” as opposed to a credential. However, it could potentially be developed into a senior/specialty credential as, over time, a unique body of knowledge, skills and tasks are fully developed, documented, and verified.

The creation of a Mentor Distinction acknowledges that the work of a Mentor coach employs knowledge and skills that are distinct and in addition to those of coaches who hold the foundational credential. This distinction would allow the ICF to standardize the Mentoring process around research based best practices and would also provide a desirable and attractive career path for coaches who have earned the foundational credential. Coaches who hold this distinction would be authorized to serve as Mentor coaches to those seeking the foundational credential.

**3. Offer a formal distinction for those trained to serve as ICF Assessors. The title of this offering is the ICF Assessor Distinction.**

The draft purpose of this offering is as follows:

“The ICF Assessor Distinction identifies coaches who have undergone training and have demonstrated competency in their ability to accurately and fairly assess the coaching skills of others. Coaches holding this distinction demonstrate a high level of skill, strong ethics, accountability, and a commitment to ongoing learning and improvement. “

As with the previous item, the Assessor Distinction is not at this time considered to be a credential, but could, over time, be developed as one. This distinction serves to formally identify and recognize those that possess the skills required to accurately assess coaching performance. Again, this distinction would provide a desirable and attractive career path for those that hold the foundational credential. This distinction would be a requirement for anyone wishing to serve as an oral exam Assessor working with authorized test providers to assess students as they pursue the foundational credential.

As with the previous two items, this recommendation should be considered as a draft with final agreement to be discussed and approved by the ICF Board of Directors during their July 2009 meeting.

As mentioned before, ICF first embarked on the journey to develop the new credentialing schema in 2007, with the decision to pursue ISO-compliant credential made in June 2007. With lots of decisions currently in place, the transition plan and the timeline will have to be developed. In order to do that, several significant questions have to be addressed. Some of these questions were brought up by ACTO in their attached letter. They include:

- What should be an approach to individuals currently holding the ACC, PCC and MCC credentials?
- Especially – how to encourage the current ACC holders to progress towards the one professional credential?
- In absence of the ACC credential, how to honor and recognize those of ICF members who pursue coach-specific training and are on the patch to obtaining a credential?
- Should ICF move towards offering the new credential when all elements of the approved scheme are fully developed and in place (including designations of mentor coaches and assessors, and the fully implemented REP model, written exam available in multiple languages) or should the transition happen in stages?
- How much of a lead time should be provided between discontinuing the current schema and offering a new one?
- Should there be a process to replace a current “portfolio” process?

***These questions and many other will be formally discussed by the Board during their Strategic Planning Meeting in Chicago as we together will create the framework for the***

***transition plan. Below are some bullets representing current thinking of the staff, which may be relevant for the BOD's decision-making process.***

- The staff would recommend that, at a date to be determined, the ICF stop offering the ACC, PCC, or MCC credentials to any new applicants. However, it is also important to continue to acknowledge and support those that have earned these credentials in the past. **With this in mind staff would recommend that those that hold the ACC, PCC, or MCC continue to be recognized as credentialed coaches, allowed ongoing opportunities to renew their credentials, and be extended the current benefits that they possess as Credentialed Members of ICF.**
- Currently ACC credential holders make up approximately 58% of all ICF Credentialed Coaches. As explained above, these ACC's will be allowed to continue their use of the ACC credential. However, current ACCs form a group that would most likely be interested in moving to the new ICF ISO Coach Credential, and indeed should be encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Active encouragement and incentives for this group to move to the new credential should be considered as the Board discusses the transition. Incentives could include a discount for applications that are submitted within a certain period of time.
- Depending on the eligibility criteria approved by the BOD, it may take a while for individuals to receive required training and collect required hours of experience. In order to better inform the public and encourage individuals to pursue their credential, the ICF may wish to consider creating a "Registry" of those individuals that have started their coach training by completing 60 hours of training from an ICF approved/accredited training program. This registry is not a replacement for the ACC, but serves as a form of acknowledgement and a member benefit for those that have started their coach training. Names and contact information for those members that have completed 60 hours of training could be listed on the ICF web site and would provide the public a listing of those that are on the path to the credential. This registry would also help to further develop the partnership between the ICF and the approved/accredited training programs as information regarding students that have completed training would need to be shared.
- While discussing the specific timing of launching a new credential, one has to take into consideration the following elements:
  - Time required to develop and implement Mentor Coach Distinction
  - Time required to develop and implement Assessor Coach Distinction
  - Time required to develop and implement written exam in multiple languages
  - Full implementation and transition of existing coach-specific training providers to the REP model
  - If the launch was to happen before all the elements are in place, what kind of consequences we would have to face (such as: not all holders of new credential would go through the same process, creating yet again different "types" of the same credential; confusion with too many changes to the process; possible difficulties with appropriate branding of the new credential; need to re-train staff and training schools and applicants to mention just a few).
- As you will see in the ACTO position letter, they suggest discontinuation of the portfolio process. The arguments for such a move are well presented there and if the proposed

process for new credential, staff also recommended that the applicants would have to receive training from the approved providers. While discussing this issue, one has to be aware of the following:

- It may limit the ability of individuals from non-English speaking countries to apply for a credential, at least in the short run;
  - May be considered “exclusionary” and discriminatory and potentially diminish the global nature of the credential
  - Would require a process for keeping the current assessors involved otherwise (i.e. via the new distinction of Assessor Coach)
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- While the specifics of this set of proposals have not yet been shared with coach training providers, the Association of Coach Training Organizations (ACTO) has submitted to ICF a position paper that is very much in alignment with many elements of this proposal. This position paper is attached for information.
  
  - Additional input will be needed to ensure a smooth transition and could be solicited from stakeholders by offering a period of time for comment before finalizing the transition plan. The staff would recommend a structured comment period of no more than 60 days to receive feedback from various stakeholder groups.

## **RESULTS OF THE ICF BOD JULY 2009 MEETING**

### **Report regarding the actions of the ICF Board of Directors (Confidential)**

The ICF Board of Directors met July 16 through 18 in a face-to-face meeting for the purposes of conducting strategic planning and to take a variety of formal actions. As a part of their meeting, the Board was presented with a schema for an ISO compliant individual credentialing system, and questions regarding possible transition and implementation plans. After careful review and discussion, the Board approved the schema for the purpose of testing on key stakeholder focus groups and directed staff to further research and develop transition and implementation plans based on their responses to several questions.

The approved actions of the Board are listed below as items E1 through E5. **Please note that these actions are not yet finalized and should only be considered as possible options.**

The ICF Staff is charged with the creation of a communication plan that will include a 60 day comment period that will allow various groups and interested individuals to provide input into the proposed changes to the credentialing program. Once this comment period has ended the Board will consider finalizing these actions.

***The following actions (labeled E1 through E5) were approved by the ICF Board of Directors during their July 18, 2009 meeting:***

#### **ICF Credentialing Program**

It is the intent to share this information with the full membership, and allow for feedback, after initial testing has been completed and comments have been reviewed and considered. The final transition and implementation plans will certainly take into consideration coaches currently on the pathway to an ICF Credential and/or current ICF Credential holders as it is the intention of the ICF to assist coaches through this evolution of the ICF Credentialing program.

**E. 1: Action required:** For the Board to approve the following schema for the single, ISO compliant individual credential:

**CAREFUL COMMUNICATION INCLUDING SPECIFIC REASONS AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHANGE WILL BE INCLUDED**

Component	Recommendations	Comments
<b>Purpose</b>	The ICF ISO Coach Credential identifies coaches who have successfully completed an <b>extensive</b> review and testing process including oral and written performance examinations. This review and testing process serves to assure that the credential holder has high professional standards, adheres to a strong code of ethics, possesses high knowledge and skill levels, and has accumulated <b>extensive</b> experience.	Add preamble regarding protection of public and professional growth.
<b>Name/Mark</b>	Temporary working title: <b>ICF ISO Coach Credential (ISO)</b>	To be further determined to reflect the ICF brand
<b>Commitments</b>	Agree to follow ICF Code of Ethics and apply the ICF Core Competencies.	
<b>Coach Specific Training</b>		
<i>Duration</i>	180 hours with 120 hours as synchronous. Training must occur over a minimum of 12 months.	
<i>Source</i>	Both ICF Approved and/or Accredited Programs (REPs) and non-REPS	
<i>Recency</i>	Training completed no more than 5 years of prior to application.	
<b>Mentoring</b>		
<i>Duration</i>	20 hours	
<i>Source</i>	ICF Approved Mentors	
<i>Recency</i>	Commence during training and continues and completed prior to application.	
<b>Coaching Experience</b>		
<i>Duration</i>	500 hours excluding reciprocal coaching.	
<i>Payment requirements</i>	Paid and/or Pro Bono hours with maximum of 15% of hours as pro bono.	

<i>Source</i>	Individuals, groups, within organizations
<i>Recency</i>	Acquired following completion of 60 hours of Coach Specific training
<i>Number of Clients</i>	Minimum 25
<b>Attestations (Client feedback)</b>	
<i>Number</i>	Submission by 25% of clients
<i>Evaluation</i>	Receipt only
<b>Oral Examination</b>	
<i>Source</i>	Delivered and scored by ICF Registered test provider using ICF approved assessors and testing processes. Includes recording of the examination.
<i>Scoring</i>	Must meet or exceed scores as established by the ICF
<b>Written Exam</b>	
<i>Source</i>	Computer Based Testing through test provider at proctored sites
<i>Scoring</i>	Pass based on established cut score
<b>Retake of Written</b>	Allow two retake opportunities
<b>Fees</b>	Application review fee that includes non-refundable charge for processing. Oral exam fee paid to Registered test provider. Written exam fee paid to ICF
<b>Renewal</b>	Renewable every three years on anniversary of award. Requires agreement to follow ICF Code of Ethics and Definition of Coaching, Core Coaching Competencies, and completion of required Continuing Coaching Education.

Ongoing professional development to include: training, mentoring, supervision, and a menu of other choices.

**E.2: Additional Distinctions:**

**Action required:** The BOD to approve in principle the development of the Assessor and the Mentor distinctions that may become “specialty” credentials. (See Draft specifications for these distinctions- attached)

**E.3 Approach towards current credentials:**

**Action required:** The BOD to approve:

- Developing a system of sun-setting the current ACC, PCC and MCC credential over the period of 6 to 10 years (the sun-setting may be staggered depending on the transition to a new credential by each the these groups)

- Developing a system to encourage the current ACCs to transition to the new credential as soon as possible (possible one renewal cycle allowed) with incentives;
- Developing a bridge for current PCC and MCC coaches to transition to the new credential and possibly obtaining the Assessor or Mentor designations;
- Developing a strong communication platform to all stakeholders (corporate clients and current holders of the credentials) exploring the reasoning of such a move
- Explore the feasibility of creating a system of responding to requests for and developing “specialty” credentials.

#### **E.4: Implementation:**

**Action required:** For the Board to approve:

- Setting the date for possible launch of the new credential (July 1, 2010)
- Determining the date for stopping accepting applications for current credentials (3 months prior to the launch)
- Developing a comprehensive project plan (with timelines), including identifying critical failure points;
- Developing clear message and reasoning for the change
- Testing the schema and timeline with key stakeholders (open comments period of 60 days)

#### **E.5. Registry**

**Action required:** The Board to approve the following:

In order to better inform the public and encourage individuals to pursue their credential, the ICF may wish to consider creating a “Registry” of those individuals that have started their coach training by completing 60 hours of training from an ICF approved/accredited training program. This registry is not a replacement for the ACC, but serves as a form of acknowledgement and a member benefit for those that have started their coach training. Names and contact information for those members that have completed 60 hours of training could be listed on the ICF web site and would provide the public a listing of those that are on the path to the credential. This registry would also help to further develop the partnership between the ICF and the approved/accredited training programs as information regarding students that have completed training would need to be shared. An administrative fee would be charged for the registry.