

## **ACTO Position Paper on Credentialing**

The purpose of this paper is to outline ACTO's thinking and requests related to the ICF move toward an ISO-based credentialing process.

### **1. ACTO SUPPORTS THE ICF'S MOVE TOWARD AN ISO-BASED CREDENTIALING PROCESS**

The Association of Coach Training Organizations (ACTO) supports the ICF and wishes to continue to build on the partnership that has been created between the two organizations. Like the ICF, ACTO believes that the maturation of the coaching profession and its ongoing credibility in the world calls for an independently validated and legally defensible credentialing process. ACTO wishes to partner with the ICF in the transition to the new ISO based processes to ensure that the adoption of these processes is smooth for the ICF, all coach training organizations, ICF members, and students. ACTO's goal is to ensure that all potential ramifications and consequences of moving to an ISO-based credentialing process have been anticipated, and that they are dealt with so that changes proceed thoughtfully, smoothly, and efficiently, and at minimum cost and impact to all concerned.

### **2. POTENTIAL IMPACT ON STUDENTS/ICF MEMBERS**

We foresee that changes to the credentialing process could impact our students and ICF members at numerous stages of their development, as follows:

- Enrollment commitments to training programs
- Beginning the training process
- Mid-process
- Near completion
- Have completed parts of a training program and plan to continue "some time" in the future
- Have completed a "portfolio" of coach training but have not yet applied for an ICF credential
- Have received their school credential but have not yet applied for an ICF credential
- Already holding a credential of one kind or another for some time

People at each stage of development will have unique issues that need to be addressed. ACTO is best positioned to understand the particular concerns of students, coaches and coach training organizations at all these junctures, and to help ICF anticipate and navigate the resultant issues. It will be essential for ICF and ACTO to be in close and consistent dialogue during the decision making process in order to address and avoid problems in a timely manner.

**We propose that ACTO collaborates with the ICF such that together we co-create an implementation plan that ensures a smooth transition for all stakeholders.**

### 3. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPACT

Because we want to help the ICF Board to make a fully informed decision in July, ACTO would like to outline the potential financial and administrative impact of a new ISO exam process on all ICF accredited programs. These areas of impact include the following, which could result in considerable cost – both in time and in finances – to coach training institutions:

- Updating marketing materials--brochures, web sites, flyers, registration forms, cancellation policies, student enrollment agreements, etc.
- Revamping testing processes and related forms
- Changing course content, approach, and material
- Re-training of course leaders, Supervisors, Mentors and Assessors
- Re-training of office staff who talk to customers on the phone
- Restructuring programs' financial plans/P&L statements and marketing strategy due to increased costs for these changes
- Changing ACTP and ACSTH accreditation renewal process
- Reviewing/changing CCEU requirements for standing annual applications
- Managing impact on student expectations, payments, etc. for those already enrolled in programs

For these reasons also, **we request close and consistent dialogue during the decision making process in order to address and avoid problems in a timely manner.**

### 4. ORAL PERFORMANCE SEGMENT

**ACTO proposes that ACTP organizations offer the greatest collective experience and most efficient available structure for providing assessment of the oral performance segment of the credentialing process**

ACTO makes the distinction that the coach training organizations are the coaching educators, and the ICF is the organization that upholds coaching standards. ACTO thus proposes that the ICF administer the written exam, and that ACTP coach training organizations assess the oral exam/performance event. While there is plenty of research that oral examinations have poor inter-rater reliability, and do not make for a legally defensible assessment of a coach's ability, we do believe that all ACTP coach training organizations are well qualified to administer an oral event that is a reasonably valid measure of candidate competency, as measured against ICF's defined competencies, according to assessment standards developed collaboratively by ICF and ACTO. This, in conjunction with a written exam administered by the ICF, would ensure that the ICF coaching competencies/standards are promoted and upheld by all.

### 5. ASSESSOR TRAINING AND COMPETENCIES

ACTO and the ICF are working collaboratively on the development of assessor competencies and best practices and thus **ACTO proposes a continued collaboration with the ICF to develop and deliver effective assessing. As educators we propose ACTO would assume the responsibility for assessor training**, and that this training is based on ICF standards and competencies.

ACTO sees the need for compensation for assessors to ensure professionalism, attract the best assessors, and boost retention of assessors over time.

## 6. PORTFOLIO APPLICATION

ACTO believes the Portfolio credentialing process undermines the credibility and quality of the profession.

When coaching first evolved, the portfolio option was a reasonable response to the needs of the profession. However, there are now 60+ ACTP coach training organizations around the globe. With virtual training anyone with a telephone and computer has access to a credible, accredited coach training program for building skills and competencies aligned with the profession's maturing standards.

Portfolio applicants are likely to have many beginning classes cobbled together without a sequentially developed understanding of the advancement of learning. This diminishes a student's ability to develop to their fullest capacity, and thus lowers standards, credibility, the image and expectations for the profession.

**ACTO recommends a proactive process for partnering together with the ICF to phase out the portfolio route at a defined point in the future.**

Deep and rigorous thought needs to be given to the impact this proposed change on ACSTH's and CCE providers and their students.

## 7. CERTIFICATION STANDARDS FOR COACHES

### Competency based credentials

ACTO proposes that **ICF certification be competency based instead of a reflection of the number of coaching hours a coach accumulates over time.** We have all experienced many instances of coaches demonstrating competencies that would not be indicated by their hours of experience, often to their credit and in some cases not. Some candidates attain a high level of competency quickly, with limited experience. Others document many hours of practice without internalizing the required competencies. Competency-based standards would better reflect the realities of coaches' level of learning, effectiveness and mastery.

### Renewable ACC

ACTO takes the position the renewable ACC credential diminishes and marginalizes the profession. The renewable ACC does not represent an appropriately professional level of performance, and encourages coaches to rest on their laurels rather than grow their skills to an increasingly competent, true professional standard. The message is that it is “okay” to remain at an ACC level. ACTO believes that the ACC level is not a viable long-term place for the coach to remain, either for the coach or for the industry.

Coaching consumers (organizations and individuals) do not typically know and understand the distinctions between ACC, PCC and MCC. This puts them at risk of not receiving what they need and expect when they hire a certified coach who is an ACC and there is no distinction for them between the levels. This undermines the credibility of the profession as a whole as the ACC may or may not have the experience they are seeking.

**ACTO recommends phasing out the ACC credential and giving the current ACC’s time to achieve the PCC credential.**

ACTO strongly advocates for putting a stake in the ground for PCC as the minimum professional credential for coaching.

**ACTO is excited about this timely opportunity to strengthen our partnership with the ICF in evolving the profession and enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of coaching.**