

**To: ICF Global Board Members
Gary E. Boyler, ICF Executive Director**

Date: August 18, 2009

From: Association of Coach Training Organizations

Thank you for the invitation to collaborate with you as we move forward with strengthening the ICF professional coaching credential process. ICF and ACTO share common goals in supporting the development of outstanding training of coaches and a professional credentialing process.

We appreciate the opportunity to preview ICF's proposal for credentialing changes, and offer here a summary of our response to the proposal points. Our comments are organized into the two general areas of consideration identified by Magda Mook in our joint meeting on August 3:

- Specifics of the new ISO credential
- Transition to the new ISO credential

Specifics of the New ISO Credential

ACTO supports ICF in strengthening the credential process based on high professional coaching standards. We endorse the specific criteria described in the document approved by the ICF Board, with the exception of the following areas of concern:

- We strongly recommend that hours of coach specific training remain at the current level of 125 hours, not the proposed 180 hours. ICF has taken a stand for evidence based decision making, and ACTPs' 10-year track record of successfully preparing coaches for credentialing at the PCC level is clear evidence that 125 hours is reasonable and sufficient. (If ICF sees 180 hours as attractive in order to align with academic standards, we would suggest that the additional 55 hours might be appropriate to achieve an advanced or specialty distinction.)
- We strongly recommend that the hours of coach specific training be specifically defined as sequential and developmental, designed as an integrated program to move students to increasing levels of proficiency.
- We endorse the increase in mentoring hours to 20, with the understanding that those hours may be included as part of the 125 hours of coach specific training. Our understanding is that these 20 hours may be a combination of both individual and small group mentor coaching.

We are prepared to fully support our common goals of outstanding training of coaches and a legally defensible professional credentialing process through the following actions:

1. ACTP programs will continue to administer the "oral exam – performance event" as a prerequisite to sitting for the final ICF written exam.
2. Continue to deliver the proven ACTP coach training programs with:
 - a. 125-hour minimum coach specific training hours
 - b. sequential coach specific training hours proceeding from basic to more advanced training

- c. coach mentoring - in an individual &/or small group format
3. Co-creating with the ICF Board Members and staff the requirements for the designations of Registered Education Providers (REPs) and Registered Test Providers (RTPs), and how they correlate with the current ACTP/ACSTH designations.

We are also prepared to change and/or implement further coach training best practices by:

4. Co-creating a “Mentor Coach” distinction collaboratively between ICF and ACTO by establishing:
 - a. Prerequisites to be considered for the distinction of a “Mentor Coach”
 - b. Competencies of a “Mentor Coach”
 - c. Credentialing process to be recognized as a “Mentor Coach”
 - d. Continuing education requirements for a “Mentor Coach”
5. Co-creating a “Coach Assessor” distinction collaboratively between ICF and ACTO by establishing:
 - a. Prerequisites to be considered for the distinction of a “Coach Assessor”
 - b. Competencies of a “Coach Assessor”
 - c. Credentialing process to be recognized as a “Coach Assessor”
 - d. Continuing education requirements for a “Coach Assessor”

Transition to the New ISO Credential

ICF and ACTO share a common concern in supporting the interests of current ICF credential holders, prospective credential holders, and prospective ICF members, i.e., the students who have invested in training with ICF Accredited Coach Training Programs. Accordingly we support the statement made on page 8 of the edition of Coaching World’s story entitled, July ICF Global Board Meeting Overview:

“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.”

ACTO is supportive of the intentions of each of ICF’s proposed changes. However, the cumulative impact of all of these significant changes to the credentialing (and accreditation) process will dramatically impact all members, students and training organizations with regards to their financial and time investments.

ACTO estimates several thousand members/students over the past 8 years that have ICF certification expectations. As approved and accredited coach training organizations we have supported and encouraged our students to work toward their ICF credentials. We all have been extremely successful in creating the expectations of what is required for an ICF certification.

We are concerned that it is a breach of trust and fiduciary duty to advance a change with insufficient time for stakeholders to adjust course, and to provide for a smooth transition. A great number of ICF’s

proposed change points require much more discussion and design, and therefore are not ready to be implemented by the ICF or ACTO within ICF's proposed timeline.

The proposed ICF cutoff of April 2010 for the original credentials, and July 2010 to implement all of the proposed changes is unacceptable to ACTO members and the students whom we support toward an ICF certification.

We are prepared to fully support our common goals through the following revised process and timeline:

6. ACTP, ACSTH and other registered education providers would supply information to their students and let them choose to participate in a registry or not. For those who choose to be in the registry, a privacy policy stating that ICF will not use that registry for marketing purposes is important to include. Dates for those in the registry would be extended to:
 - a. The cutoff date to apply for an ACC is April 2011.
 - b. The cutoff date to apply for a PCC or MCC is April 2013.
7. Sun-setting of the PCC and MCC credential to be three 3-year renewal periods or 2019, whichever comes first, and the ACC to be one 3-year renewal period or 2013, whichever comes first. This assumes the ICF board approves and announces certification requirement changes to its members prior to Jan 1, 2010.
8. Beginning January 1, 2012, all coaches must have completed an ICF registered education program (specifically ACTP in regions where available) to apply for an ICF credential. ACTO would like more information from ICF about the definition of "registered education programs," how these programs interface with ACTPs, and ACTO requests ICF affirm the importance of coach training programs obtaining the ACTP designation by providing clear benefits to the student who graduates from an ACTP.

We understand that ICF will want to minimize the number of "original" credentials that they award &/or renew, and we suggest that is best managed through incentives that make early application for the new credential more attractive, rather than applying aggressive deadlines.

ACTO wholeheartedly supports a drive toward higher standards for the coaching profession. The credentialing requirements and process for a coach to be ICF certified and for coach training organizations to be ICF accredited is multifaceted and complex.

ACTO has consistently voiced the need for a 3 year transition for any one major change to the current credentialing requirements or processes. And ACTO's proposed 3 year transition for those already in process would be from the time that the ICF officially announces the clear change to its members. We suggest that the 3-year phase in timeline be preceded by a 4-month stake-holders comment period.

Both our organizations are facing not one change, but numerous changes. The magnitude and range of changes include:

1. Moving to one "ISO ICF" certification level
2. Sun-setting all current ICF certification levels

3. Proposed increased training hour requirements to 180 hours (if not changed per ACTO recommendation). Such a change would require considerable time and financial investments from training organizations for curriculum design and faculty training, as well as modifications of all marketing materials, etc., additional unplanned/unbudgeted training for applicants, as well as substantial investments of ICF resources for program approvals.
4. Defining competencies, training and approving/credentialing a "Mentor Coach". This will require considerable time and financial investments from training organizations for faculty training and certification, as well as modifications of materials and infrastructure, as well as substantial investments of ICF resources for program development and implementation.
5. Defining competencies, training and approving/credentialing an "Assessor Coach". This will require considerable time and financial investments from training organizations for faculty training and certification, as well as modifications of materials and infrastructure, as well as substantial investments of ICF resources for program development and implementation.
6. Changing the exam process for an ICF certification
7. Changing mentor hours and actual client coaching hour experience

Such extensive changes require respect for the time and complexity of the transition process for individuals and organizations alike.

We greatly appreciate this opportunity to be full collaborators with the ICF Global Board and staff as we jointly foster higher standards in the coach training and coach credentialing worlds.

We request a meeting as soon as feasible with ICF board members and ICF staff to resolve how and when credentialing changes can be professionally implemented.

Respectfully,

The Board of Directors of ACTO (Association of Coach Training Organizations)
Patrick Williams (Institute for Life Coach Training), ACTO President
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