

# **Why the ICF Core Competencies are Essential Building Blocks to Enable True Collaboration**

**Liz Barron, PCC and Anne Tannam, ACC**

Since 2009, we've been collaborating regularly; running coaching and training programs, presenting webinars and of course, co-writing blogs—though we sometimes fight over who gets to hold the pen. We've experienced firsthand that coaching skills and competencies are fundamental to any successful collaboration requiring teamwork, partnership and cohesion.

## **Why Collaboration?**

What is it that makes collaboration more than simply cooperation? According to Andrea Britt, Ph.D., in her book *Wired To Connect*, collaboration is “the mutual engagement of a group of two or more in a co-creative effort that achieves a shared goal or vision...and the result is changed by the input of all the contributors.” From personal experience, we also believe that all involved are transformed by the act of collaboration, just like both coach and client are through the coaching process.

## **Why are the ICF Core Competencies Important?**

As we become familiar with the updated ICF Core Competencies, we can see how they are more relevant than ever in our increasingly virtual space and against a backdrop of rising global challenges. Intentionally partnering with others to create collaborative solutions is in all our best interests.

Let's take a simple business example that many who work with partnerships and teams will recognize.

## **Are All Their Ducks in a Row?**

Siblings and founding partners Sarah and Brian are ready to launch a new business. They've crunched the numbers, developed a business plan, invested in market research

and are planning to bring together a small team to work with them. Everything seems to be in place.

So caught up in the business itself, Sarah and Brian have given no thought to how they'll manage their business relationship and ensure that everyone on their future team can work together collaboratively, both online and offline. What would it look like if Brian and Sarah took the time to build a solid framework for their working collaboration, based on the Core Competencies?

## **The Updated ICF Core Competencies in Action**

### **Demonstrates Ethical Practice**

If their business collaboration is to succeed, Sarah and Brian will need to act with integrity, guided by the principles of ethical and professional business practice. Joining membership organizations relevant to their sector will provide them with trustworthy credentials that will demonstrate this.

### **Establishes and Maintains Agreements**

To avoid unnecessary misunderstandings later on, Sarah and Brian should recognize the boundaries and expectations of their distinct relationship as siblings and business partners. This will allow them the freedom of knowing “what goes on at work, stays at work” and vice versa. As the partnership expands into a wider team, this agreement establishes the foundation on which the team will collaborate, forming the basis of the partnership culture, or “how we do things around here.”

### **Embodies a Coaching Mindset, Maintains Presence, Listens Actively, and Cultivates Trust and Safety**

True collaboration requires us to really “see” each other—to move beyond the designated roles or tasks allocated and focus on each member of the partnership or team as an autonomous person. For Sarah and Brian, this means learning to consciously lead their team not just by their actions, but also by how present they are

with each other and their team. This can be achieved in simple ways. For example, they can carve out time in the work week for reflection and feedback on how the team is doing and their experience of working together. The siblings should actively listen and act with integrity on what's being communicated.

### **Maintains Presence, Evokes Awareness, and Cultivates Trust and Safety**

A key to good collaboration is curiosity and questioning with the intent to understand more about other's point of view. It is the exploration of a different mindset that allows us to synergize our thoughts and ideas and build on others' contributions. Sarah and Brian can raise their awareness of what's really going on for them as leaders and as a team by asking open questions as well as noticing and reflecting back their own and others' responses to work situations.

### **Embodies a Coaching Mindset, Evokes Awareness, and Facilitates Client Growth**

If Brian and Sarah's collaborative business venture is to succeed and their personal and professional relationships are to thrive, they will need to cultivate a growth mindset. Imagine what kind of working environment and bottom line results could be achieved if mistakes were learned from, everyone's unique contribution was valued, and successes were celebrated.

### **Better Together**

For all those engaged in coaching and collaborative practice, it's very exciting to realize just how relevant and powerful the Core Competencies are. They enable professional and personal partnerships and teams to move beyond basic cooperation and coordination and into generative work that creates something more than the sum of its parts—allowing us all to innovate and problem solve in a transformative way.

This article was originally published on [ICF Coaching World](https://coachfederation.org/blog/core-competencies-enable-collaboration) - <https://coachfederation.org/blog/core-competencies-enable-collaboration>

## **Author Bio**

**Liz Barron, PCC and Anne Tannam, ACC** run their own successful coaching practices, but since training together in 2009, have pooled their collective strengths to work on many projects. Working as a team and with clients, they've developed practical experience of the conditions required for collaboration, and how it contributes not just to innovation, creative thinking and problem solving, but to happier, more productive teams who are focused on a shared purpose and vision. They love working together and their collaboration gives them both the support and challenge needed to move beyond what they are capable of separately. And there's a lot more laughing too! To connect with Anne & Liz visit [www.coachingcollaboration.ie](http://www.coachingcollaboration.ie)