



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

# COACHING



## *Coaching Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) As of 8 Nov 2022*

Q1: What is coaching?

A1: Coaching is defined as “partnering with client(s) in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential (International Coaching Federation).” It is an experiential development process, which facilitates change and growth in both individuals and groups. Through structured dialogue, coaches assist their clients to see new perspectives and achieve greater clarity about their own thoughts, emotions and actions, and about the people and situations around them. The client gives power to the relationship, drives the coaching agenda, and is ultimately responsible for the outcome of the coaching engagement. Coaches apply specific techniques and skills, approaches, and methodologies that enable clients to develop their goals and design actions to achieve them.

Coaching is one of the most valuable developmental resources the Department offers the workforce and has been linked to positive outcomes, such as increased productivity, retention, and engagement. A successful coaching engagement promotes and sustains professional growth and competence. Coaching topics and goals in the DoD setting should relate directly or indirectly to the DoD’s mission.

**The Coach’s Role:** The coach’s role is to support the client’s professional development by asking powerful questions, assigning developmental tasks, and challenging the client to stretch to reach greater heights. The coach:

- a. Provides objective assessment and observations that foster self-awareness and awareness of others;
- b. Listens closely to fully understand the circumstances;
- c. Serves as a sounding board to explore possibilities and implement thoughtful planning and decision-making;
- d. Champions opportunities and potential, encouraging the client to reach out and challenge situations commensurate with strengths and aspirations;
- e. Fosters shifts in thinking that reveal fresh perspectives;
- f. Challenges blind spots to illuminate new possibilities and support creation of alternative scenarios; and
- g. Maintains professional boundaries in the coaching relationship, including confidentiality, and the adherence to the coaching profession’s code of ethics.



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**The Client's Role:** A client is ready for coaching when they are willing to devote the time and energy to make real changes in their actions and behaviors. The client:

- a. Determines the coaching goals, topics, and agenda;
- b. Is willing to explore possibilities, new ideas and fresh perspectives;
- c. Takes courageous action in alignment with personal goals and aspirations;
- d. Engages in big-picture thinking; and
- e. Utilizes the tools, concepts, models, and principles provided by the coach.

Q2: What is the difference between coaching and mentoring?

A2: Mentoring is a development activity that is distinct from coaching. Mentors impart their personal experience, subject matter expertise, learning, and advice to those who have less experience in that field or career path. Mentors will identify goals and recommended actions. Like mentoring, coaching is a developmental activity. However, coaches refrain from identifying client goals or providing advice. Coaching is a facilitative approach intended to support clients to achieve their goals by questioning to facilitate awareness and self-directed learning. The coach does not require any knowledge, skills, or experience in the client's profession. Furthermore, formal coaching is always predicated on a signed agreement between coach and client, stating the ethical standards of confidentiality, voluntariness, and self-determination, including the duration of the coaching agreement and the expectations of both parties. It is important to understand the distinctions between these roles to ensure the appropriate use in the workplace.

Q3: What is formal coaching?

A3: Employees can work with an internal coach within or external to your Component, or an external coach that is provided by their Component. Participants (clients) enter the coaching relationship coaching agreement that describes the roles and responsibilities of the coach and the client. There are no requirements for the length of a coaching meeting, the number of meetings, or the duration of the engagement. The coach and client should work to establish the overall goal for the engagement and establish a goal for each coaching meeting.

Coaching sessions may be performed in person or virtually. Clients meet with coaches based on the client's goals for coaching. E.g., An engagement can be for a one-hour session every two to three weeks while working towards their desired goal.

All records created to support the coaching engagement do not need to be maintained beyond the coaching engagement and must be destroyed at the termination of the coaching engagement.



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Q4: Who can formally coach in the DoD?

A4: The following individuals can formally coach:

**Certified Professional Coaches (CPC):** individuals that offer support through an ongoing partnership designed to help clients maximize their potential in their personal and professional lives. CPCs have completed a minimum of 60 training hours from a coach training program that is approved by a coach credentialing body (e.g., International Coach Federation).

a. **Internal Coach:** a CPC who is employed within the DoD or another Federal agency and provides coaching services, typically part-time, to other DoD employees.

b. **External Coach:** a professional coach, who is either self-employed or partners with other professional coaches to form a coaching business.

**Leaders using coaching skills:** a supervisor, manager, or executive who leverages coaching knowledge, approaches, and techniques in working with his or her employees to build awareness and support positive behavior change. Use of coach skills in the workplace is considered informal coaching versus the formal coaching done by a professional [internal or external coach] who has a certification and/or credentials.

Q5: What are some common issues tackled during a coaching engagement?

A5: Individuals may engage in coaching for a variety of reasons related to maximizing performance. Examples of potential coaching objectives include the following:

- a. Develop leadership skills of technical experts interested in supervisory positions;
- b. Facilitate professional transitions (e.g., transition from non-supervisory to supervisory roles, transition into higher level leadership roles);
- c. Organize and prioritize professional responsibilities;
- d. Clarify vision, create meaningful goals, and develop achievable action steps;
- e. Facilitate change management;
- f. Achieve professional career goals;
- g. Streamline or identify functional efficiencies;
- h. Solve individual leadership and workplace-related challenges;
- i. Excel in self-awareness and self-management;
- j. Identify core strengths and recognize how best to leverage them;
- k. Gain clarity in purpose and decision-making; and
- l. Strengthen leadership competencies.



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Q6: Are coaching sessions confidential?

A6: All information discussed during a coaching engagement is confidential to the extent expressed in the coaching agreement. At a minimum, coaching agreements must provide for the following limits on confidentiality:

- a. The client gives explicit permission to the coach to share information;
- b. An allegation of conduct that violates law or regulation;
- c. The threat of harm to self or others;
- d. A request to disclose information compelled by an official investigation (e.g. discrimination complaint, grievance, inspector general inquiry), or court order.

Q7: How can a DoD employee find a coach?

A7: Each agency has a coaching Point of Contact, the Component Coaching Program Manager, typically in the Chief Learning Office or Training and Development Office. Employees should work with their Agency POC to find a suitable coach.

Q8: What additional resources currently exist to help DoD employees find a coach?

A8: Federal Coaching Database: An inventory of current internal Federal coaches, whose services are normally shared across agencies at no cost. The database is located on OMB's MAX.gov portal and is accessible only to designated points of contact within each agency. Points of contact are responsible for matching coaches from the database with employees who have expressed an interest in receiving coaching. Colleagues developed the database in an effort to help Federal agencies enhance their development efforts while minimizing costs and maximizing impact. Each agency has a coaching Point of Contact, typically in the Chief Learning Office or Training and Development Office. Employees should work with their Agency POC to find a suitable coach through the database. The DoD Coaching Program Manager is located in DCPAS' Talent Development Directorate.

Q9: What ethical standards are DoD coaches expected to follow for coaching in the DoD?

A9: DoD internal coaches are bound to uphold the basic obligation for public service and the standards for ethical conduct for DoD employees found in 5 Code of Federal Regulations Part 2635. These standards supersede all coach-specific code of ethics and must be addressed appropriately in the Coaching Agreement, specifically the limits of confidentiality. DoD internal coaches conducting formal coaching are also bound to uphold the code of ethics associated with the coaching credentialing organization that approves or accredits the coaching program where they received their coach training. For example, anyone who completes the Federal Internal Coaching Training Program (FICTP) follows the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Code of Ethics because ICF approves the FICTP.



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Q10: Are there restrictions to offering formal coaching services?

A10: DoD internal coaches should refrain from formal coaching relationships with clients in the same chain-of-command. Internal coaches providing formal coaching services should be wary of real or perceived conflicts of interest. Using the POC for the Federal Coaching Database can aid in accessing coaching services across Federal agencies to help minimize the risk of conflicting interests. Supervisory approval is required for all coaching engagements.

Q11: What record-keeping is required for coaching engagements?

A11: Coaching in any capacity is considered professional development as long as the goal of the engagement relates to an organization-related outcome. As with any other authorized development activity, time spent in professional coaching, either as an internal Federal coach or client, must include the supervisor approval with consideration for organizational priorities. Component coaching program must develop a method for documenting coaching hours delivered by formal coaches.

Q12: What resources currently exist for those interested in becoming coaches in the Federal government?

A12: A variety of resources provide support, including:

a. Some agency Coaching Program Managers. For a list of available POCs, please visit the DoD Coaching Website.

b. Federal Internal Coach Training Program (FICTP): Federal employees who want to become a coach might consider competing for selection into this coach training program. The FICTP is designated by ICF as Approved Coach Specific Training Hours (ACSTH). Successful graduates of this program can leverage the program to obtain ICF credentialing. Successful graduates may also seek certification through other certifying organizations.

c. Federal Coaching Network Site: This site is a collaborative interagency space used to promote the sharing of information and services related to coaching. Coaching program managers tasked with planning, development, and implementation of coaching programs can use the Federal Coaching Network site, on MAX.gov (an individual account is required to access this site through MAX.gov), to find a repository of information to help develop and manage coaching programs. The site includes:

(1) Guidelines, samples, and best practices for planners and developers of coaching programs;

(2) Documents and plans for implementation of individual Agency coach training programs; and

(3) Research and best practices on the ROI of coaching.