



ICF Team Coaching Competencies: Moving Beyond One-to-One Coaching

Introduction

Due to the desire for teams to perform well, consistently and over a long period of time, ongoing team development is necessary. As a result, team coaching is growing rapidly. Team coaching is an experience that allows a team to work towards sustainable results and ongoing development. It is becoming an increasingly important intervention in corporate environments as high team performance requires aligning toward goals, remaining innovative, and adapting quickly to internal and external changes. Team coaching exists under this umbrella of team development, along with the following modalities: team building, team training, team consulting, team mentoring, team facilitation, and team coaching. These modalities are further compared in Figure 1.

To develop a set of team coaching competencies, ICF designed a rigorous, evidence-based research project. The aim of this study was to determine which Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics (KSAO) team coaches use in addition to the ICF Core Competencies. The following activities were undertaken:

- A comprehensive literature review,
- Development of team coaching critical incidents,
- Task, and KSAO virtual workshops to garner an understanding of the experience of team coaching and how it differs from one-to-one coaching,
- Semi-structured interviews to understand how team coaches experience coaching engagements and what team coaching means to them as a profession,
- A global survey to determine the importance of specific team coaching tasks and KAOs and their relationship to facilitation, and
- Competency model workshops to review all of the job analysis data.

Caution should be applied when considering integrating team coaching with team training, consulting, or mentoring. These three modalities are quite directive and therefore distinct from team coaching. Some team coaches feel that these three modalities should not be undertaken by the team coach, since doing so may cause confusion with the team and inhibit the coach's ability to function well as a coach. Nevertheless, from the data, it is clear that team coaches frequently wander into facilitation mode in order to promote dialogue amongst the team members. Facilitation is about enhancing communication and achieving clarity; the work remains on the surface and does not delve into an analysis of the team dynamics. Team coaching goes deeper than facilitation—exploring the subsurface dynamics of individual team member personalities, sub-groups, and how they might affect team performance. There may not be a crisp distinction between team coaching and facilitation. Rather, there may be a continuum between facilitation and coaching, and a good team coach may work seamlessly anywhere along this continuum.

Because team coaching is multi-faceted, team coaches must also have a significantly broader knowledge base when working with teams than with individuals. They need to have an understanding of how to identify and resolve conflict, recognize power dynamics within the team, understand what is required for high performing teams, know how to build team cohesion, develop rules and norms, encourage participation and contribution by all, and promote team autonomy and sustainability. In individual, one-to-one coaching, coaches are frequently careful when shifting to a modality other than coaching. In team coaching, that distinction between the various modalities may not be so apparent. It is up to the individual coach to decide how much information to share regarding the different modalities with the client. Due to the complexity of team dynamics and factors that affect their performance, team coaches often must be more directive than when working with clients one-to-one. Supervision is also more important for team coaches due to the complexity of the work and ease with which a team coach can get mired in internal team dynamics.

Figure 1. Team development modalities

Team Development						
Longer term, involves many modalities, many topics						
	Team Building	Team Training	Team Consulting	Team Mentoring	Team Facilitation	Team Coaching
Time Frame	Short, 1-5 days	Short, 1-5 days	Widely variable	Staccato, hours over a long period of time	Short, 1-5 days	Longer term, months
Process	Exercises	Work with the team through a curriculum of material	Consultant shares expertise	Mentor shares	Facilitate dialog	Team and coach partner
Growth Area	Enhanced relationships	New knowledge or skill	Additional insights	New knowledge	Clarity	Achieved goals; Team sustainability
Team Dynamics; Conflict Resolution	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal, advisory	Minimal	Minimal	Integral
Expert; Ownership	Instructor	Trainer	Consultant	Mentor	Facilitator and team	Team

Team coaches may use additional modalities beyond coaching when necessary. This may be done overtly or discreetly.

ICF Team Coaching Competencies: Extending the Core Competencies Framework

This document provides the additional knowledge and skills a professional coach must have to effectively engage in team coaching practice, which ICF defines as partnering in a co-creative and reflective process with a team and its dynamics and relationships in a way that inspires them to maximize their abilities and potential in order to reach their common purpose and shared goals.

The ICF Team Coaching Competencies support a team coach practitioner in understanding the distinct knowledge, skills, and tasks required for working with teams. At the core of this practice, however, remains the ICF Core Competencies, which provide the foundation for all coaching practice.

Each element of the ICF Team Coaching Competency model is organized in alignment with the structure of the ICF Core Competencies. Reference is made to the ICF Core Competency or sub-competency, along with guidance on any contextual nuances, dynamics, or additions necessary for team coaching practice. While no new competencies are required for team coaching beyond the eight ICF Core Competencies, several new sub-competencies are necessary to be effective team coach practitioners. The following table provides the additions for team coaching, those required beyond the ICF Core Competency Model.

A critical distinction between the ICF Core Competencies and the ICF Team Coaching Competencies is the nature of the client. While the use of the term “client” in the ICF Core Competencies often represents an individual, the client in a team coaching context is a team as a single entity, comprising multiple individuals. When applied alongside the Team Coaching Competencies in a team coaching context, however, the term “client” in the Core Competencies represents the team, rather than an individual.

The following pages will break down each of the Team Coaching Competencies as they relate to the ICF Core Competencies—first by sharing the background of each competency, and second by showing a visual representation of how the two competency models work together.

Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

Definition: Understands and consistently applies coaching ethics and standards of coaching.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Coaches the client team as a single entity	The client for a team coach is the team as a single entity. A team is made up of individual team members and each one must be heard and play an integral role in team discussions. Further, the team coach must remain objective in all interactions with team members, sponsors, and relevant stakeholders. The team coach should not be perceived as taking sides with any subgroups or individual members of the team, should remain open to what is emerging in the sessions, and should be completely honest in all dealings with the team. Discussions with individual team members will need to remain confidential to the team coach and team member unless the team member allows disclosure of information to others and as per the team coaching agreement.
+ Maintains the distinction between team coaching, team building, team training, team consulting, team mentoring, team facilitation, and other team development modalities	Team development can involve many modalities, including team coaching, team building, team training, team consulting, team mentoring, and team facilitation. The team coach should partner with other experts when the demands of a specific team coaching engagement warrant or when specific knowledge and skill levels are required. While the distinction between these modalities may not always need to be highlighted, caution must be applied if interventions beyond coaching are undertaken. Team coaches may need to refer clients to many types of professionals and also receive assistance from a co-coach, a supervisor, or other team development professionals.
+ Demonstrates the knowledge and skill needed to practice the specific blend of team development modalities that are being offered	A team coach is sufficiently skilled to competently practice all of the team development modalities that the team coach is offering as part of a team coaching engagement.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Adopts more directive team development modalities only when needed to help the team achieve their goals	In general, there are more times when a team coach will need to be directive than when working with a client on a one-to-one basis. These instances, however, should remain limited to those opportunities that require a directive approach to bring awareness to growth areas for the team and to help them understand the team coaching process. They may be critical moments in team coaching sessions, pointing out positive and negative team dynamics, and introducing ways to move forward. These moments of being directive should broaden, rather than narrow, the team’s perspective on their current situation.
+ Maintains trust, transparency, and clarity when fulfilling multiple roles related to team coaching	In the event that a team coach offers multiple team development modalities, the coach must be clear about these different roles and how one role may affect another.

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Demonstrates Ethical Practice



Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

Definition: Develops and maintains a mindset that is open, curious, flexible and client-centered.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Engages in coaching supervision for support, development, and accountability when needed	It could be easy for a team coach to become entangled in the team dynamics and become unaware of issues that should be addressed. Because of this, team coaches should be working with a coaching supervisor. Team coaching can be much more intense than one-to-one coaching given the input from many team members at once. Supervision uses reflection on past events, awareness of the coach's part in those past moments or the present moment, and the effect it has on the coach's behavior. A supervisor is an excellent resource for a team coach as an impartial observer and aid to the reflective practice and its part in the team coaching process.
+ Remains objective and aware of team dynamics and patterns	Teams are made up of individuals who have unique personalities, knowledge, skills, and motivations. The combination of these individuals working together will bring about many dynamics of power, control, expertise, and disparate goals. The team coach must be aware of and alert to how these dynamics might play out in team interactions, the team's agenda, internal disputes, beliefs, alliances, and must remain objective at all times.

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

1. Acknowledges that clients are responsible for their own choices
2. Engages in ongoing learning and development as a coach
3. Develops an ongoing reflective practice to enhance one's coaching
4. Remains aware of and open to the influence of context and culture on self and others
5. Uses awareness of self and one's intuition to benefit clients
6. Develops and maintains the ability to regulate one's emotions
7. Mentally and emotionally prepares for sessions
8. Seeks help from outside sources when necessary

- + Engages in coaching supervision for support, development, and accountability when needed
- + Remains objective and aware of team dynamics and patterns

Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements

Definition: Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to create clear agreements about the coaching relationship, process, plans and goals. Establishes agreements for the overall coaching engagement as well as those for each coaching session.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
<p>+ Explains what team coaching is and is not, including how it differs from other team development modalities</p>	<p>It is important for the team coach to highlight the difference between team coaching and other team development modalities. Given the unique nature of individuals' personalities, teams may need to be very intentional about the process to determine team and team coach compatibility.</p>
<p>+ Partners with all relevant parties, including the team leader, team members, stakeholders, and any co-coaches to collaboratively create clear agreements about the coaching relationship, processes, plans, development modalities, and goals</p>	<p>The team coaching agreement must be agreeable to all parties, including the individual team members and the co-coach, when working with one, as well as sponsors, as appropriate. Confidentiality regarding what takes place in team coaching sessions should be addressed, as well as private discussions between the team coach and individual team members. It is also important to consider the role and extent to which the organization's culture, mission, and overall context influences the team coaching engagement.</p>
<p>+ Partners with the team leader to determine how ownership of the coaching process will be shared among the coach, leader, and team</p>	<p>One of the purposes of team coaching is to help build a sustainable team that does not require the presence of the coach to maintain forward momentum. While the team coaching process may initially be directed by the coach, agreement should be reached as to how the ownership is gradually turned over to the team leader and the team as a collective.</p>

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Establishes and Maintains Agreements

1. Explains what coaching is and is not and describes the process to the client and relevant stakeholders
2. Reaches agreement about what is and is not appropriate in the relationship, what is and is not being offered, and the responsibilities of the client and relevant stakeholders
3. Reaches agreement about the guidelines and specific parameters of the coaching relationship such as logistics, fees, scheduling, duration, termination, confidentiality and inclusion of others
4. Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to establish an overall coaching plan and goals
5. Partners with the client to determine client-coach compatibility
6. Partners with the client to identify or reconfirm what they want to accomplish in the session
7. Partners with the client to define what the client believes they need to address or resolve to achieve what they want to accomplish in the session
8. Partners with the client to define or reconfirm measures of success for what the client wants to accomplish in the coaching engagement or individual session
9. Partners with the client to manage the time and focus of the session
10. Continues coaching in the direction of the client's desired outcome unless the client indicates otherwise
11. Partners with the client to end the coaching relationship in a way that honors the experience

- + Explains what team coaching is and is not, including how it differs from other team development modalities
- + Partners with all relevant parties, including the team leader, team members, stakeholders, and any co-coaches to collaboratively create clear agreements about the coaching relationship, processes, plans, development modalities, and goals
- + Partners with the team leader to determine how ownership of the coaching process will be shared among the coach, leader, and team

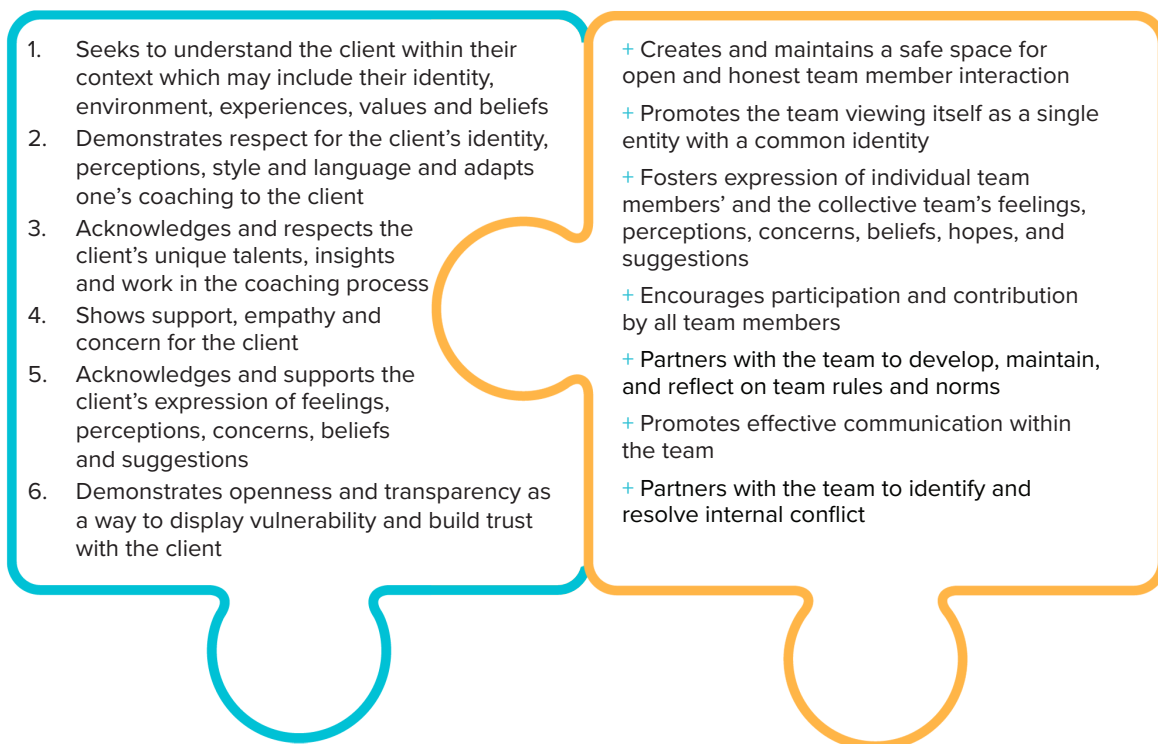
Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety

Definition: Partners with the client to create a safe, supportive environment that allows the client to share freely. Maintains a relationship of mutual respect and trust.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Creates and maintains a safe space for open and honest team member interaction	In order for each team member to participate freely and meaningfully, the team coach must build a safe space within which each team member feels free to disagree with teammates or raise sensitive topics. When working with an individual client, the coach is aware and respectful of the client's cultural context. In team coaching the team may have its own culture, which is a variant of the organization's culture and may add an additional layer of complexity to the engagement.
+ Promotes the team viewing itself as a single entity with a common identity	An element of team sustainability is the perspective of each member that the team is a single, high-performing unit. The team coach should consistently promote team identity and self-sufficiency.
+ Fosters expression of individual team members' and the collective team's feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs, hopes, and suggestions	The team coach may need to encourage team members to speak freely in team meetings to share their individual feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs, hopes, and suggestions. It is also important for the coach to understand and clarify the collective feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs, and hopes of the team.
+ Encourages participation and contribution by all team members	It is important to get the full benefit from the knowledge and skill of each team member.
+ Partners with the team to develop, maintain, and reflect on team rules and norms	Rules and norms can help teams to be more productive and perform at a higher level. Clarification and codification of these rules and norms can also help a team to be more self-sustainable.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Promotes effective communication within the team	Good communication amongst team members can often be challenging, however, a good flow of information is vital to team success. The team coach should ensure that communication from individual members of the team is directed to the team and consistently redirects communication within the team when it is directed to the coach.
+ Partners with the team to identify and resolve internal conflict	It is inevitable that there will be some conflict within every team. It is important to bring all conflict to the surface and deal with it in a constructive manner that promotes learning and growth.

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Cultivates Trust and Safety



Competency 5: Maintains Presence

Definition: Is fully conscious and present with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, grounded and confident.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Uses one's full range of sensory and perceptual abilities to focus on what is important to the coaching process	The team coach will often be overloaded with information, necessitating full sensory awareness and perception of what is happening in the room throughout the coaching engagement.
+ Uses a co-coach when agreed to by the team and sponsors and when doing so will allow the team coach to be more present in the team coaching session	Working with a co-coach can take pressure off the singular team coach, given the significant amount of information emerging during team coaching sessions. A co-coach can help to observe team dynamics, team and individual behavior patterns, provide alternative perspectives, and model team behavior.
+ Encourages team members to pause and reflect how they are interacting in team coaching sessions	Encouraging team members to pause and reflect begins the reflective practice work for a team. The team coach can then follow through with raising awareness of their own actions, subsequent behaviors, and potential improvements in the moment or in future team interactions.
+ Moves in and out of the team dialogue as appropriate	Since one of the objectives of team coaching is for the team to become self-sufficient, the team coach should enter into the dialogue only as necessary to enhance the team process and performance. The team coach should be present for the team as a whole and at the same time for each individual. This can be a challenge at moments of high intensity and when many team members are involved.

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Maintains Presence

1. Remains focused, observant, empathetic and responsive to the client
2. Demonstrates curiosity during the coaching process
3. Manages one's emotions to stay present with the client
4. Demonstrates confidence in working with strong client emotions during the coaching process
5. Is comfortable working in a space of not knowing
6. Creates or allows space for silence, pause or reflection

- + Uses one's full range of sensory and perceptual abilities to focus on what is important to the coaching process
- + Uses a co-coach when agreed to by the team and sponsors and when doing so will allow the team coach to be more present in the team coaching session
- + Encourages team members to pause and reflect how they are interacting in team coaching sessions
- + Moves in and out of the team dialogue as appropriate

Competency 6: Listens Actively

Definition: Focuses on what the client is and is not saying to fully understand what is being communicated in the context of the client systems and to support client self-expression.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Notices how the perspectives shared by each team member relate to other team members' views and the team dialogue	It is important for team members to listen and communicate well for shared understanding and subsequent high performance. Exploring below the surface of what is being said often allows a deeper meaning and understanding to emerge. This can help to resolve conflict and enhance innovation and problem-solving sessions.
+ Notices how each team member impacts the collective team energy, engagement, and focus	A team coach can greatly enhance team performance by bringing to light individual team member behaviors that add to and take away from team momentum, engagement, creativity, and focus.
+ Notices verbal and non-verbal communication patterns among team members to identify potential alliances, conflicts, and growth opportunities	Observing, understanding, and enhancing team dynamics may be significant factors in improving team performance. Team coaches must be able to observe the subtlety of team dynamics evident from verbal and non-verbal communication.
+ Models confident, effective communication and collaboration when working with a co-coach or other experts	Fluid communication amongst team members is essential for high performance. Team coaches can model this behavior when working with a co-coach and other experts.
+ Encourages the team to own the dialogue	Team members may tend to direct communication to the team coach, especially at the beginning of team coaching engagements. In order to enhance sustainability, team coaches should consistently turn the dialogue inward, back to the team. Making choices as a team can be complex. Data may need to come from many team members, bringing the elements of trust and expertise into play. The team must decide how to process data and how to make decisions. Although helping a team to work through such issues may be more aligned with team facilitation, the process of getting the team to become self-sufficient is a team coaching function.

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Listens Actively

1. Considers the client's context, identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs to enhance understanding of what the client is communicating
2. Reflects or summarizes what the client communicated to ensure clarity and understanding
3. Recognizes and inquires when there is more to what the client is communicating
4. Notices, acknowledges and explores the client's emotions, energy shifts, non-verbal cues or other behaviors
5. Integrates the client's words, tone of voice and body language to determine the full meaning of what is being communicated
6. Notices trends in the client's behaviors and emotions across sessions to discern themes and patterns

- + Notices how the perspectives shared by each team member relate to other team members' views and the team dialogue
- + Notices how each team member impacts the collective team energy, engagement, and focus
- + Notices verbal and non-verbal communication patterns among team members to identify potential alliances, conflicts, and growth opportunities
- + Models confident, effective communication and collaboration when working with a co-coach or other experts
- + Encourages the team to own the dialogue

Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

Definition: Facilitates client insight and learning by using tools and techniques such as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor or analogy.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Challenges the team’s assumptions, behaviors, and meaning-making processes to enhance their collective awareness or insight	A team composed of many individuals brings a multitude of assumptions, experiences, behaviors, and meaning-making processes to the collective effort. The diversity in these factors, if left unchecked, can lead to team dysfunction, but if harnessed properly, they can greatly enhance team performance.
+ Uses questions and other techniques to foster team development and facilitate the team’s ownership of their collective dialogue	Just as in one-to-one coaching, questions and other techniques should be used to enhance team development, but in team coaching the work should also foster internal team dialogue and processing.

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Evokes Awareness

1. Considers client experience when deciding what might be most useful
2. Challenges the client as a way to evoke awareness or insight
3. Asks questions about the client, such as their way of thinking, values, needs, wants and beliefs
4. Asks questions that help the client explore beyond current thinking
5. Invites the client to share more about their experience in the moment
6. Notices what is working to enhance client progress
7. Adjusts the coaching approach in response to the client's needs
8. Helps the client identify factors that influence current and future patterns of behavior, thinking or emotion
9. Invites the client to generate ideas about how they can move forward and what they are willing or able to do
10. Supports the client in reframing perspectives
11. Shares observations, insights and feelings, without attachment, that have the potential to create new learning for the client

- + Challenges the team's assumptions, behaviors, and meaning-making processes to enhance their collective awareness or insight
- + Uses questions and other techniques to foster team development and facilitate the team's ownership of their collective dialogue

Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

Definition: Partners with the client to transform learning and insight into action. Promotes client autonomy in the coaching process.

ICF Team Coaching Competency Supplements to the ICF Core Competencies	Background
+ Encourages dialogue and reflection to help the team identify their goals and the steps to achieve those goals	Team dialogue and reflection is essential in order to take full advantage of all team members' knowledge and skills. Encouraging full participation helps to identify appropriate goals to maximize team performance.

Integrating the ICF Core and Team Coaching Competencies: Facilitates Client Growth

1. Remains focused, observant, empathetic Works with the client to integrate new awareness, insight or learning into their worldview and behaviors
2. Partners with the client to design goals, actions and accountability measures that integrate and expand new learning
3. Acknowledges and supports client autonomy in the design of goals, actions and methods of accountability
4. Supports the client in identifying potential results or learning from identified action steps
5. Invites the client to consider how to move forward, including resources, support and potential barriers
6. Partners with the client to summarize learning and insight within or between sessions
7. Celebrates the client's progress and successes
8. Partners with the client to close the session

+ Encourages dialogue and reflection to help the team identify their goals and the steps to achieve those goals



ICF Team Coaching Competencies: Moving Beyond One-to-One Coaching

Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

- + Coaches the client team as a single entity
- + Maintains the distinction between team coaching, team building, team training, team consulting, team mentoring, team facilitation, and other team development modalities
- + Demonstrates the knowledge and skill needed to practice the specific blend of team development modalities that are being offered
- + Adopts more directive team development modalities only when needed to help the team achieve their goals
- + Maintains trust, transparency, and clarity when fulfilling multiple roles related to team coaching

Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

- + Engages in coaching supervision for support, development, and accountability when needed
- + Remains objective and aware of team dynamics and patterns

Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements

- + Explains what team coaching is and is not, including how it differs from other team development modalities
- + Partners with all relevant parties, including the team leader, team members, stakeholders, and any co-coaches to collaboratively create clear agreements about the coaching relationship, processes, plans, development modalities, and goals
- + Partners with the team leader to determine how ownership of the coaching process will be shared among the coach, leader, and team

Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety

- + Creates and maintains a safe space for open and honest team member interaction
- + Promotes the team viewing itself as a single entity with a common identity
- + Fosters expression of individual team members' and the collective team's feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs, hopes, and suggestions
- + Encourages participation and contribution by all team members
- + Partners with the team to develop, maintain, and reflect on team rules and norms
- + Promotes effective communication within the team
- + Partners with the team to identify and resolve internal conflict

Competency 5: Maintains Presence

- + Uses one's full range of sensory and perceptual abilities to focus on what is important to the coaching process
- + Uses a co-coach when agreed to by the team and sponsors and when doing so will allow the team coach to be more present in the team coaching session
- + Encourages team members to pause and reflect how they are interacting in team coaching sessions
- + Moves in and out of the team dialogue as appropriate

Competency 6: Listens Actively

- + Notices how the perspectives shared by each team member relate to other team members' views and the team dialogue
- + Notices how each team member impacts the collective team energy, engagement, and focus
- + Notices verbal and non-verbal communication patterns among team members to identify potential alliances, conflicts, and growth opportunities
- + Models confident, effective communication and collaboration when working with a co-coach or other experts
- + Encourages the team to own the dialogue

Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

- + Challenges the team's assumptions, behaviors, and meaning-making processes to enhance their collective awareness or insight
- + Uses questions and other techniques to foster team development and facilitate the team's ownership of their collective dialogue

Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

- + Encourages dialogue and reflection to help the team identify their goals and the steps to achieve those goals