

# ICF Chapter Leader Ethical Guidelines

Guiding principles for all those who serve as an ICF Chapter Leader.

## Overview

ICF has created guidelines to assist our Chapter Leaders in the performance of their duties. Our exposure to successful models has allowed us the opportunity to outline areas for success that have proven to be the bedrock for successful Chapter Leader interactions. While different approaches and standards of behavior may exist across the global community, some basic expectations are universal as an ICF coach and Volunteer leader.

## So what does this actually mean?

ICF holds certain expectations for behavior as a Chapter Leader. You are representing the organization and the coaching profession as a whole, so to better assist with this we've created some helpful guidelines.

*\*As a Chapter Leader, you will be held to these standards upon completion of this course, these guidelines should be reviewed periodically.*

## Chapter Leader Ethical Guidelines

ICF Chapter Leaders are defined as any coach acting in an elected or appointed, voluntary role for an ICF Chapter or sub-chapter and may include any chapter or sub-chapter officer, board member or committee leader. ICF aspires to have its Chapter Leaders serve as best-practice role models, exemplifying ICF's ethics, standards, policies, and brand.

Therefore, ICF has created guidelines to assist our Chapter Leaders in the performance of their duties. Our exposure to successful models has allowed us the opportunity to outline areas for success that have proven to be the bedrock for successful Chapter Leader interactions. While different approaches and standards of behavior may exist across the global community, some basic expectations are universal as an ICF coach and leader.

### Ethics:

1. It is imperative that all ICF Chapter Leaders conduct themselves in accordance with the ICF [Code of Ethics](#), [Vision and Core Values](#). These principles are the very foundation of ICF and the integrity we bring to the coaching industry. It is important that ICF Chapter Leaders familiarize themselves with each of these documents and conduct active conversations with other ICF Chapter Leaders and members around these topics.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will conduct myself in accordance with the ICF Code of Ethics, Vision and Core Values.*

2. It can be challenging to accurately determine instances of conflicts of interest. Perception plays a role in successful chapter relations, so make sure you consider how a potential decision will be perceived by chapter members and members of the public. As a leader, your actions don't just impact your reputation: They have the potential to shape the public's perception of your chapter, the ICF, and the coaching industry.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will be mindful of potential conflicts of interest in my local chapter and actively advocate against the perception of such.*

3. Ongoing conversations in ethics allow members latitude for continued ethical maturity, which is imperative for successful coaching relationships. Some chapters have encouraged visibility of good coaching ethics with mini-ethics moments (during meetings) and annual discussions regarding ethics.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will encourage ongoing ethics conversations within our chapters to promote ethical maturity and support members in their professional growth.*

## **Standards:**

1. Chapter bylaws and policies are the cornerstones of successful chapter interactions. It is imperative that these bylaws be relied upon as a framework in all ICF Chapter Leader activities. Bylaws ensure due process is adhered to when challenging situations arise. They also serve as a set of guidelines and/or policies so the ethos of the chapter is consistent and all member relations are productive and meaningful.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will become familiar with, and adhere to, my chapter's bylaws and other chapter and ICF Global policy documents.*

2. As role models, ambassadors of ICF, and representatives of the coaching industry, ICF Chapter Leaders should look for ways that their chapters can align with and support the vision, mission and values and strategic plan of the ICF to allow continuity in our pursuit of the global advancement of the coaching profession. (The current ICF Strategic Plan can be found [here](#).) It is also advisable that each chapter have a clear protocol for identifying the chapter's spokesperson in any given situation.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will seek to align chapter activities with the current ICF Strategic Plan.*

3. Due to the volunteer nature of chapter leadership positions, an established protocol for leadership transition is encouraged (in the chapter bylaws); this ensures an amicable transfer of responsibilities. The specifics should be outlined and clearly conveyed so all parties are privy to the process, ensuring no miscommunications. Further, upon leaving office, it is vitally important that the outgoing leader works with the incoming leader to ease the transition by explaining ongoing efforts, procedures, etc.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will ensure an amicable transfer of responsibilities when my tenure has concluded.*

4. As a role model, an ICF Chapter Leader must establish clearly defined and appropriate boundaries between personal and ICF-related business. It is imperative not to place one's personal or business interests above that of ICF or the chapter (or even appear to do so) because it could be perceived as a conflict of interest. This undermines the legitimacy of the local chapter and ICF as an organization and leads to a diminished trust in the chapter's leadership and in the coaching industry.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will be mindful of my personal or business interests in relation to that of ICF or the ICF Chapter while in a leadership capacity.*

5. ICF Chapters consistently rate transparency as a top priority and an integral facet of successful interactions. Consequently, transparency should be incorporated into chapter decision models to promote effective internal and external chapter relationships.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will be mindful of and encourage the incorporation of measures that promote transparency in our chapter activities.*

6. When nominating potential leadership candidates, establish the required competencies for the position (e.g., strong moral compass, business acumen, financial literacy, etc). This is integral to the realization of a high-performing chapter and ensures a successful term and continuity during transitions.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will be mindful of the required competencies for leadership roles when assisting in the selection of the most qualified candidate.*

7. When working with a third party, vendor or anyone providing services to the chapter, it's important to make it clear that the relationship is with the chapter and the board of directors as a whole and not with any one individual or leader. This will allow for a smoother transition between the parties and will allow for an equitable resolution if a disagreement arises.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will ensure that outside parties working with the chapter understand that they are contracted by the chapter and the board of directors and not any one person.*

## **Brand:**

1. Chapters are encouraged to establish ethical marketing strategies and procedures. Establishing protocols to convey impartiality when it comes to third-party advertisements is a crucial element in the success of chapter public relations. An example would be requiring clear and legible disclaimers on all relevant communications (paid promotional material) which provides the members context in which to gauge the relevance of a chapter communication (i.e., a disclaimer on the all of the chapter's paid advertisements, such as, "This is a paid promotion and does not represent ICF's endorsement of a particular training program.")

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will not use my ICF Chapter Leadership role to endorse any specific programs or activities, regardless of ICF accreditation or approval.*

2. Creating appropriate channels in which to advertise (i.e., gain revenue) is another aspect to consider when communicating with the chapter membership. Again, establishing a protocol to convey impartiality when it comes to advertisements is a crucial element in the success of chapter public relations. For example, paid advertisement communications should originate from a shared chapter email (e.g., marketing@icfchapter.org), as opposed to a personal business or leadership email address (e.g., president@icfchapter.org) to ensure efficient communications to members without perceived impropriety.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will not use my role to imply ICF support for a specific program, tool or approach.*

3. In most chapters, chapter websites, social media, and other communication methods are the means of outreach to members and the public face of the chapter. With that in mind, it is crucial that the board establish protocol and designate a framework for access for and administration by the appropriate person(s) to any communication outlet.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will encourage communication policies that facilitate access as outlined in a framework determined by the board, to ensure no conflicts of interest arise.*

4. Consider culturally competent guidelines that regulate communications sent by chapter leadership. Parameters may include items such as priority level, frequency, and length of messaging sent and minimum professional standards accepted for publication. This sets a high level of integrity and ensures chapter communications are professional and not burdensome to members.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will take these factors into consideration when crafting or reviewing chapter communications.*

5. Establishing preventive measures that promote data protection can be a useful precaution considering current trends throughout the world. Successful measures include having a spam policy in place, compartmentalization (information security), and maintaining open lines of communication with individuals who have access to the member lists, financial documents, etc.

*Therefore, as an ICF Chapter Leader, I will be aware of our members' and stakeholders' privacy and not violate policies regarding data privacy set by ICF and my chapter bylaws.*

**A PDF of the ICF Chapter Leader Guidelines can be found [here](#).**

## **Dispute Resolution**

As an addendum to this document, ICF created a template to resolve ethical governance issues if your chapter does not have one. It's basic but should give you a defensible process in which to resolve internal issues.

**Chapter Guidelines are for governance issues within chapters that are to be heard by a Chapter's Ethics Committee. Individual ethics issues pertaining to the ICF Code of Ethics are to be heard by the Independent Review Board (IRB) at ICF Global.**

*For more information and templates, please refer to the ICF website and Chapter Leader Resource Library.*

**A PDF of the ICF Chapter Leader Dispute Resolution can be found [here](#).**