

Being a great coach, and a winning player

Being a Great Coach. Below are some useful actions a volunteer Coach can take to stimulate a productive coaching discussion. See the video *Being a Great Coach* for illustrations at icma.org/coaching.

Ask “What are your hopes?” Start your relationship by understanding what’s important to the person you are coaching and, most importantly, why. Help them look a little deeper for what truly interests them.

Serve as a generous listener. A generous listener demonstrates curiosity, a suspension of judgment and evaluation, and a desire to understand the meaning and the motivation of the Player.

Identify concerns and tap their experiences. What stands between them and where they want to be? What issues or obstacles need attention? Use reflective listening (paraphrasing what you hear from them) to help them surface underlying concerns. Listening thoughtfully is a big gift. Then, explore how they have addressed similar challenges before.

Encourage growth and resources. How will they need to grow? What resources do they have? Resources and choices encourage and empower people.

Offer stories and experiences...with permission. If you have insights to add to the Player’s own thinking, ask for permission. Rather than telling people what to do, offer stories about what you’ve seen or experienced that may be relevant to them. Stories help people understand the messages more deeply and integrate them into their own thinking.

Invite a stretch. Sometimes people hold themselves back in their careers. They make too many assumptions about what they think can and can’t happen. Tell the person you are coaching what you want for them. Encourage them to consider a big leap.

Target action. Ask them who could help them achieve their objectives and what actions they’d like to take. Most people need a nudge to take flight and really soar. “Would you like to consider [whatever action seems appropriate]?” You’re not telling them what to do, but you are giving them something concrete to which they can react. Always leave the choice to them. Don’t become attached to your own suggestions.

Celebrate the results!

Being a Winning Player. Your self-motivation provides the energy for your success. A Coach can be helpful as a catalyst to stimulate your thinking, but it's your talent story to write. Below are actions you can take to get the most from coaching. See the video *Being a Winning Player* for illustrations at icma.org/coaching.

Select a topic of interest. What will be useful to you now? Instead of “just in case” learning, coaching is “just in time” support. Some of the topics coaching might address include: advancing in your career, how to handle a difficult situation, grappling with a technical issue, and many more.

Reach out to a coach. Although volunteer coaches are busy people, they want to support talent development in the profession. Here are some ways you can connect with them:

- Take advantage of *Speed Coaching* and other networking events to meet informally with Coaches and see who might fit.
- Mine your relationships or someone in your ICMA State Association to suggest a Coach.
- Search for a volunteer Coach in *CoachConnect* at icma.org/coaching.
- Connect with the ICMA Senior Advisors in a state of interest to you to help you find a match and perhaps offer a warm introduction for you to a Coach. You can find them through the state association websites.

Turn your intentions into results. How will you fulfill the actions you intend to take? What has worked well for you in the past to get things done successfully?

Find more resources including a template for a **Talent Catalyst coaching conversation**, and more on on the Talent Development page of icma.org/coaching.

Clarify confidentiality. Are you concerned about confidentiality? Would you like this to be a confidential conversation? How does that fit with the other roles the Coach plays (as your boss, outside advisor, etc.)?

Provide some brief background about yourself. How would you succinctly describe what's relevant for the Coach to know about you and the topic you've selected. Remember, coaching is about writing the next chapter of your talent story (not rehashing the past).

Express your hopes. Coaches need to know what your hopes are about the topic you've chosen and why they are important to you. This anchors the discussion in what will be fulfilling for you not someone else.

Enjoy the discussion – let the Coach do the coaching and you the playing. One of the great joys of coaching for a Player is that you don't need to have all the answers. It's not a quiz. You can be engaged and yet be relaxed to see what new insights and opportunities arise for you.

Thank your coach for the insights and support. How did the discussion help you clarify your thoughts or galvanize you into action? What did the Coach do that served you especially well?

Handout created by Don Maruska, MBA, JD, Master Certified Coach

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Making Coaching Work: Some Do's for Coaches



Being a Great Coach can be easy with a little self-reflection and preparation. There are many different ways to coach. What works with one coachee may not work with the next. Also, what works in one situation may not work in the next. After a while, you will develop your own coaching style.

- Do keep the information exchanged within the coaching relationship confidential.
- Do listen. Being a coach requires building a positive relationship. Listening is the key.
- Do ask questions. Clarifying, thought - provoking, and challenging questions can help both parties.
- Do make time for your coachee.
- Do be open and honest about your firsthand experiences.
- Do be yourself.
- Do enjoy the relationship

Other Suggestions: The following suggestions are just that—suggestions. You will need to determine which, if any, are appropriate for the coaching situation at hand. Your style, the style of your coachee, and the objectives the two of you are addressing need to be considered.

- Relate an incident in your own development that applies to the objectives of your coachee. Personal stories are powerful and thought - provoking and, because they require sharing something personal, they help strengthen the coach/coachee relationship.
- Discuss your failures openly and honestly. Concentrate on what you learned, how you recovered and the thought process that helped you bounce back.
- Discuss your successes and how your successes helped you achieve and learn.
- Include your coping mechanisms for weathering the low points.
- Give your perspective of your career choices and accidents and the strategies that helped you get prepared along the way.

Great Coaches use these strategies and suggestions to help make their experience and the experience of those they are coaching meaningful and productive. Some previous coaches reflect on their experience with coaching:

“Through the ICMA Coaching Program, I have met wonderful local government professionals who have been interested in getting advice on different issues and/or aspects of their careers. A wonderful benefit is staying in touch with these individuals and getting to watch them grow in their careers.”

~Tamara Letourneau, City Manager, City of Laguna Niguel, CA

“I met with a young professional through the ICMA Coaching Program. His visit reminded me why I find the profession rewarding and gratifying. I believe I may have benefited more from the visit as his energy was contagious! And that is what the Coaching Program is about – professionals helping professionals”

~Hugh Walker, Deputy City Manager, City of Bryan, TX

“I have found the coaching experience to be personally rewarding in that I can share some of the things that I have learned with others to help them navigate through their career choices and challenges.”

~Kim Payne ICMA-CM, retired City Manager

Adapted from C. Standiford, “How to be a Great Coach for the Next Generation”



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Find a volunteer coach through the ICMA network of coaches who are helping prepare our nation's local government professionals.

Whether you are an emerging professional or seasoned manager, everyone at any stage of their career might want coaching. Seek career guidance and gain new perspectives by reaching out to ICMA coaches ready and eager to help you.

Players find coaches by department, subject expertise, or by scope of general workplace navigation, such as work/life balance, breaking into local government, veteran background, or career advancement.

Members and non-members of ICMA at any stage of their career can find a coach to help them with their career, a second opinion on a

community issue or project concern, or the work-life balance challenges of the profession. Connect online. It's that easy.

Visit **CoachConnect** to get started:

- Create an online profile so coaches can get to know you better.
- Search by subject expertise, or by scope of work to discuss challenges specific to things like community engagement, public safety, or overcoming bias.
- Work with your coach to establish how and when to meet, and the length of your coaching relationship.

Need help getting started? Go to [icma.org/1-1-coaching](https://www.icma.org/1-1-coaching) to review *Being a Great Coach and a Winning Player* and additional resources, or contact coaching@icma.org for assistance.



ABC's of *One-to-One Coaching*

One-to-One Coaching provides opportunities for persons in, or interested in, the local government profession (“Players” or “Learners”) to gain advice and insights from volunteer professionals (“Coaches”).

What is One-to-One Coaching?

It's open-ended and informal. The Player sets the agenda. How would you like to benefit? Maybe, you're looking for general career advice. Or, perhaps, you face some decisions and would value another perspective. Or, you may simply want to expand your network and get some better insights into the opportunities and challenges local government offers. Think about the ways in which you'd like to benefit. A volunteer Coach isn't expected to have all the answers. Rather, he or she will help you find the answers that are right for you.

What are some guidelines to help the coaching discussions be productive? You can have a very productive coaching session in an hour or less. See the section of this handbook called “Being a Great Coach and a Winning Player.”

What commitment is involved?

It's up to the Player/ Learner and the volunteer Coach. We recommend that you have a clear understanding about your relationship so that it's mutually rewarding. The draft “Statement of Mutual Understanding” on the next page offers some

items to discuss (confidentiality, topics of interest, availability, etc.) once you've found a match and decided that the chemistry is right to continue.

How do I find a match?

Register as a coach or learner at *CoachConnect* at icma.org/coaching. Do you want someone in your area to meet with in person or are you interested in someone outside the area and plan to communicate by phone and email? Choose a prospective Coach. The system will allow Learners to connect with Coaches and schedule appointments with them. Schedule your first appointment to explore the fit or begin your session.

What do we do when it's time to change the relationship?

The coaching arrangements are voluntary and either the volunteer Coach or the Player can change or end the relationship. We simply ask that you inform one another of the change in circumstances and give thanks for whatever you have gained together

Find more resources for you and your agency at icma.org/coaching.

Statement of Mutual Understanding: One-to-One Coaching

We are voluntarily entering a coaching relationship which we hope will be of benefit to both of us and to our profession. We want this to be a rich, rewarding experience. The following elements outline how we intend to proceed.

Confidentiality (What information, if any, will you share with others about the details of your coaching relationship?)

Intended duration of the relationship (We suggest an initial term of 3 to 6 months.)

Frequency and form (in person, phone, email) of contact (We suggest connecting at least 1 time per month to maintain continuity and sustain momentum.)

Approximate amount of time to be invested by Coach

Requested role of the Coach (model, guide, observe and give feedback, recommend developmental activities, facilitate learning, suggest/provide resources, etc.)

Additional points

We agree to a *no-fault* conclusion of this relationship if, for any reason, it seems appropriate. We agree that the Player is responsible for his or her choices and actions throughout the One-to-One Coaching. The Coach and ICMA are not responsible for how the Player uses any advice or perspectives offered.

Coach

Date

Player

Date

For more information about One-to-One Coaching or other Coaching resources, visit icma.org/coaching

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Making Effective Requests

Making effective requests of others is the key to getting what we need. Unfortunately, many people hold back from making requests, especially huge requests, because it feels awkward to them. They worry that they may be imposing on other people. Others fear that people will reject their requests. Whatever the cause, we miss key opportunities to make things better.

Here are some key steps to make effective requests.

1. **Intention**—Before making your request, state clearly what you hope to accomplish and why it is of value. Create a bridge between what you want and something of interest to the other person. This lets people know what you seek to accomplish.

2. **Observation**—Be matter of fact and nonjudgmental. Most requests face rejection because we get into an ego clash—who's right and who's wrong. Make the observation your own with "I" statements. For example, "I notice..." Include just the facts, no editorial comments or judgments.

3. **Request**—Make a simple, direct statement of what you really want and ask if the person is willing to provide it. The key is brevity and directness. Otherwise, people feel crowded, pressured, or confused. Deliver the request and wait for the other person to respond. Give them permission to accept, reject, or modify the request to work for both of you.

4. **Confirmation**—Restate and confirm what you have agreed upon. Don't let differing understandings undermine positive relationships and results.

This process works because it is very personal and direct. People clearly know our intent, know what we've observed, and know exactly what we are requesting.

You'll enjoy success if you have no expectations about specific outcomes, or even if someone accepts a particular request. That's their choice. This perspective will free you to request what you really want.

Making Effective Requests – Worksheet

My request:

Person(s):

1. Intention:

2. Observation:

3. Request:

4. Confirmation:

*Handout created by Don Maruska, MBA, JD, Master
Certified Coach*

Career Guides

ICMA's **Career Stage Guide** ([icma.org/careerstages](https://www.icma.org/careerstages)) offers local government professionals a leadership and professional development roadmap of valuable educational opportunities.

- **Acting Manager's Handbook** ([icma.org/actingmgr](https://www.icma.org/actingmgr))
- **Breaking into Local Government** ([icma.org/breakingintolg](https://www.icma.org/breakingintolg))
- **Career Compass** ([icma.org/careercompass](https://www.icma.org/careercompass))
- **Careers in Local Government Management** ([icma.org/careersinlg](https://www.icma.org/careersinlg))
- **First Time Administrator's Handbook** ([icma.org/newmanager](https://www.icma.org/newmanager))
- **Job Hunting Handbook** ([icma.org/jobhandbook](https://www.icma.org/jobhandbook)) (Member Resource)
- **Making It Work: The Essentials of Council-Manager Relations** ([icma.org/councilrelations](https://www.icma.org/councilrelations))
- **Management Internships: A Guidebook for Local Governments** ([icma.org/internships](https://www.icma.org/internships))
- **Manager Evaluations Handbook** ([icma.org/evaluation](https://www.icma.org/evaluation)) (Member Resource)
- **Model Employment Agreement** ([icma.org/employmentagreement](https://www.icma.org/employmentagreement)) (Member Resource)
- **Preparing for an Interview** ([icma.org/interviewguide](https://www.icma.org/interviewguide))
- **Preparing the Next Generation Case Studies** ([icma.org/nextgencases](https://www.icma.org/nextgencases)) (Member Resource)
- **Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator**
([icma.org/recruitmentguidelines](https://www.icma.org/recruitmentguidelines))