



Learning Outcomes

Change Management

Core & Specialized Credentials

International Certification Alliance

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LICENSING INFORMATION

The work in this document was facilitated by the International Certification Alliance (ICA) and done through the contributions of various experts and practitioners. These learning objectives are intended to help the growing Tomorrow-Ready™ community worldwide.

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HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines the learning outcomes that accredited member organizations must address to offer ICA's Change Management certification. To achieve the certification, a learner must complete the core credential plus at least two specialized credentials.

Each learning outcome (LO) follows a particular pattern, described below.

O.O Learning Outcome Name

Additional Context, describing why this Learning Outcome is important or what it is intended to impart.

The learning outcome's purpose further describes what is expected to be imparted to the learner (e.g., a key point, framework, model, approach, technique, or skill).

CORE CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Change Management Core

Change Management is an 8-hour Core Credential for anyone who supports, enables, leads, or participates in organizational change, regardless of role, industry, or level of prior experience. It frames change as a human, systemic, and outcome-oriented discipline, one that succeeds not by following a methodology, but by helping people understand the purpose of the change, make sense of what it means for them, and build confidence in new ways of working.

1. Change Management as a Discipline

1.1 Change Management as a Discipline

Change management is often confused with project management, training, or communications. It focuses on helping people, systems, and ways of working move from the current state toward new intended outcomes.

Build the ability to distinguish change management as its own discipline, separate from adjacent fields such as project management, training, or communications. Cover the core focus areas that make it distinct such as building readiness, addressing resistance, and designing for adoption. Help learners understand it as the discipline responsible for the human and systemic side of a transition, not just the plan or the messaging around it.

2. Foundation Change Management Skills

2.1 Change Framing

Change work needs a clear starting point: what is changing, why it matters, who is affected, and what outcomes are intended. Practitioners also need clarity about their role, authority, access, and sponsor expectations.

Build the ability to frame the change with the essentials such as running a scoping conversation with a sponsor before change work begins, using a structured tool such as a change charter or one-page change brief to capture the essentials. Cover why skipping this step can cause challenges such as authority questioned or their work redirected midstream, after effort has already been spent.

2.2 Impact, Readiness, and Capacity

Change can affect roles, processes, structures, skills, technology, governance, incentives, culture, and workload. Early diagnosis helps reveal disruption, dependencies, risks, and capacity constraints before adoption is expected.

Give learners a way to spot where a change will have an impact on roles, workflows, systems, incentives, and the informal culture. A team can look "ready" on paper while quietly lacking the bandwidth, skills, or motivation to absorb what's coming, and that gap tends to surface as resistance or failure only after rollout has already started.

2.3 Stakeholder Engagement and Sense-Making

Stakeholders experience change differently based on impact, influence, role, power, trust, and proximity to the work. Effective engagement supports listening, participation, feedback, and shared meaning rather than broadcast communication alone.

Move learners past a one-size-fits-all communication plan and toward engagement that actually fits who a stakeholder is. For example, someone with high influence but low trust needs a different approach than someone with low power but deep hands-on knowledge of the work. The goal is engagement that creates real two-way sense-making, not just a broadcast schedule dressed up as "stakeholder management."

2.4 Ownership and Sustainment

Sustained change depends on visible sponsorship, local ownership, manager support, reinforcement, and continued attention after launch. It cannot remain dependent on one change practitioner.

Develop learners ability to address the point where most change efforts actually fail: not at launch, but in the months after. Learners need to design for change to survive without them such as sponsors who keep showing up visibly, managers who reinforce the new behavior day to day, and checkpoints that catch backsliding before it becomes the new normal. The test isn't whether change happens at go-live; it's whether it's still holding six months later when no one's actively pushing it anymore.

3. Designing Change Initiatives

3.1 Fit-for-Context Change Journey

Change initiatives differ in complexity, urgency, risk, readiness, and need for participation. A generic checklist can create unnecessary structure or miss the experimentation and learning the situation requires.

Develop learners' ability to create a coherent change journey suited to the specific context.

3.2 Adoption Interventions and Feedback Loops

Adoption requires interventions that address behavioral barriers, capability gaps, and system constraints. Feedback loops help practitioners learn whether those interventions are working without duplicating a full change-measurement framework.

Develop learners' ability to go past the assumption that training or a good communications plan is enough to get people to actually change their behavior. Real barriers are often skill gaps ("I don't know how"), system constraints ("the tool doesn't let me"), or motivation ("I don't see why I should"), and each calls for a different fix. Instead of assuming an intervention worked because it was delivered, learners build a lightweight way to find out so they can course-correct early.

SPECIALIZED CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Change Sponsorship

Change Sponsorship is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for practitioners and leaders who want to enable and sustain effective executive sponsorship during organizational change.

1.1 Active Change Sponsorship

Executive sponsorship is more than approval or endorsement. Effective sponsors give change legitimacy, connect it to strategy, authorize resources, remove barriers, model commitment, and reinforce adoption.

Build learners' understanding of the behaviors that distinguish active sponsorship from passive support. The real work of sponsorship shows up after approval signature: publicly connecting the change to strategic priorities, freeing up budget or people when the effort stalls, personally clearing organizational roadblocks a practitioner can't remove alone, and visibly behaving differently themselves rather than just endorsing others doing so. Learners should come away able to spot the gap between a sponsor who said yes and a sponsor who's actually still engaged three months later.

2.1 Sponsor Alignment and Coalition Health

Sponsors may appear aligned publicly while differing on purpose, trade-offs, decision rights, resources, or success measures. Employees notice these inconsistencies, which can reduce trust and adoption.

Develop learners' ability to recognize sponsor alignment gaps and coalition risks that could undermine change. Surface the gap between sponsors looking unified in a meeting and actually agreeing on what matters such as when two executives both say "yes, let's do this" while quietly disagreeing on why they're doing it, what they're willing to trade off, who gets to make the final call, or what success even looks like.

3.1 Sponsorship Through Resistance and Fatigue

Resistance, uncertainty, and change fatigue require sponsors to listen, acknowledge concerns, and communicate transparently.

Develop learners' ability to support sponsor responses that build trust and forward movement during resistance or fatigue. Address traps sponsors commonly fall into such as treating resistance as an obstacle to overcome with more persuasion, when for people who are already overloaded or uncertain, another confident pitch can read as tone-deaf and actually deepen mistrust. What resistance and fatigue usually call for instead is a sponsor who genuinely listens, acknowledges the concern as legitimate rather than an objection to be neutralized, and communicates honestly about what is and isn't known yet.

4.1 Sponsor Communication, Action, and Reinforcement

Sponsors communicate through both words and actions. Meaning-making, role modeling, consistent decisions, reinforcement, and continued visibility after launch all shape whether employees believe the change remains important.

Develop learners' ability to translate sponsorship into coordinated communication, visible action, and reinforcement. Get learners to treat a sponsor's actions as a communication channel in their own right such as employees interpreting a sponsor's daily decisions, what they choose to spend time on, and whether their behavior actually matches the change they're endorsing, and any gap between the two undercuts the message faster than words can repair it.

Navigating Resistance

Navigating Resistance is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for practitioners who want to recognize and respond to resistance and conflict as meaningful signals during organizational change.

1.1 Resistance as Meaningful Information

Resistance may reflect fear, loss, fatigue, mistrust, power dynamics, or flaws in the change itself. Treating it only as defiance can hide useful information about the system and human experience.

Build learners' understanding of resistance as data about the change, the system, and stakeholder experience. Reframe resistance from something to overcome into something to be curious about. For example, a team pushing back might be flagging a genuine flaw in the change itself (a timeline that ignores a real dependency, a process that breaks under actual workload) rather than simply resisting for its own sake.

2.1 Drivers of Resistance

Resistance can reflect fear, confusion, workload, loss of control, low trust, unclear benefits, or legitimate concerns. People experience these differently based on role, power, experience and impact.

Develop learners' ability to diagnose what may be driving resistance before choosing a response. For example, a senior stakeholder protecting their authority and a frontline employee overwhelmed by workload can look like the same "resistance" while needing completely different responses. The same change can land as a minor adjustment for one group and a genuine threat for another, depending on their role, power, and how directly it touches their day-to-day work.

3.1 Human-Centered Conversations in the Moment

Diagnosing why someone is resistant is only half the job. Practitioners also have to hold the actual conversation, often in real time and under pressure, without a script to fall back on.

Develop learners' ability to facilitate human-centered change conversations and choose responses matched to the underlying concern. Change conversations help people make sense of uncertainty, surface concerns, weigh options, and take constructive next steps, which calls for listening, empathy, clarity, and adaptation in the moment. When resistance surfaces, different concerns call for different responses, such as clarification, involvement, support, adaptation, or escalation. Practitioners need practice both holding these conversations and matching their response to the underlying concern under realistic conversational pressure.

4.1 Patterns of Resistance

Resistance that shows up repeatedly across multiple people or groups is often a pattern worth acting on, not just a series of individual conversations to get through. Practitioners who only respond one conversation at a time miss the chance to address the root of the resistance itself before the same objection resurfaces everywhere.

Build the ability to look across individual instances of resistance for recurring themes that point to a real gap in the change plan such as a rollout sequence that consistently frustrates one team, a benefit that never quite lands regardless of how it's explained, etc. Rather than treating each conversation as an isolated problem to close out, learners should be able to incorporate what the resistance reveals back into the change design, timeline, or approach itself to minimize or avoid the pattern altogether.

Change Communication

Change Communication is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for practitioners who want to design and deliver communication that helps people make sense of change rather than simply receive information about it. Learners examine why broadcast communication fails during change, explore how to design for meaning-making and two-way dialogue, practice adapting messages to different stakeholder needs and transition stages, and build feedback-informed communication approaches that support adoption.

Learners will explore why change communication differs from broadcast, designing for meaning and dialogue, adapting communication across the change journey, and evaluating communication effectiveness.

1.1 Why Change Communication Is Different

Change communication often focuses on announcing what is changing and why. Information alone does not help people fully interpret what the change means for their work, identity, relationships, or choices.

Build learners' knowledge of the difference between information transfer and communication that supports sense-making. Push past the assumption that clearly explaining a change is the same as helping people understand it. For example, a well-written announcement can accurately convey what's changing and why, and someone can read every word of it and still be left wondering what it actually means for their job, their team, or the choices they'll need to make. Sense-making communication does the work that a broadcast alone can't: connecting the change to what specifically shifts for that person's day-to-day reality.

2.1 Designing for Meaning and Dialogue

Effective change communication requires deliberate choices about channel, timing, tone, participation, and feedback. These choices need to vary by stakeholder group and stage of transition.

Develop learners' ability to design communication that creates dialogue and supports meaning-making rather than compliance messaging. For example a tone that works for leadership won't necessarily work for a frontline team.

3.1 Communication Across Transition Stages

People need different information and support as they move through a change. Early messages often focus on meaning, while later communication may emphasize capability, feedback, reinforcement, and continued adaptation.

Develop learners' ability to adapt change communication to stakeholder needs at different transition stages. Address a common failure mode where practitioners write one strong announcement and then let communication trail off, treating the launch message as the finish line rather than the starting point of an ongoing conversation. What people need to hear shifts as they move through the transition, such as someone just learning about a change needs to understand why it matters, while someone six weeks into living with it needs practical help, an acknowledgment of what's still hard, and evidence that the change is sticking.

4.1 Evaluating Communication Effectiveness

A communication plan executed is not the same as communication that lands. Assessing whether people actually understand, feel heard, support and implement the change is what determines whether it sticks.

Develop learners' ability to assess whether change communication is creating understanding, dialogue, and adoption support. Challenge the assumption that a communication plan is working just because it's being executed on schedule/. For example, a practitioner can hit every planned touchpoint while people remain quietly confused, concerns go unspoken because no one's actually checking, and adoption metrics slide without anyone connecting the dots back to how the change was communicated.

Adoption Design

Adoption Design is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for practitioners who want to design interventions that help people move from awareness of a change to genuine adoption of new behaviors and ways of working.

1.1 Conditions for Sustained Adoption

Awareness and training do not guarantee adoption. Sustained behavior change also depends on motivation, opportunity, capability, reinforcement, and removal of barriers that make old behaviors easier to continue.

Build learners' understanding of adoption as a distinct design challenge beyond communication and training. In practice, someone can fully understand a new process and still slide back into the old one because it's simply easier, faster, or more familiar under pressure, especially if nothing in the environment reinforces the new way or removes the path back to the old one.

2.1 Diagnosing Adoption Barriers

Adoption can be blocked by incentives, skills, habits, unclear roles, inadequate tools, leadership inconsistency, workload, or cultural norms. Effective intervention begins with identifying the actual barrier.

Develop learners' ability to distinguish root adoption barriers from visible symptoms. A team might resist a new process because their incentive structure still rewards the old behavior, or because leadership models one thing while saying another, and neither of those is solved by explaining the change more clearly.

3.1 Designing Adoption Interventions

Change initiatives fail because adoption support is generic or missing. Designing adoption interventions tailored to actual barriers and reinforced over time is what makes new behaviors lasting.

Develop learners' ability to design and sequence adoption interventions that reinforce new behavior over time. Adoption interventions may include practice, manager reinforcement, workflow changes, incentives, job aids, modeling, accountability, and feedback. The right mix should reflect the specific barriers diagnosed.

4.1 Measuring Adoption

Training completion or tool access does not prove that people are working differently. Adoption measures need to show whether new behavior is occurring, continuing, and contributing to intended outcomes.

Develop learners' ability to distinguish genuine behavior change from surface compliance using meaningful indicators. Learners should be able to tell the difference between a metric that shows people did what was required and one that shows the new behavior is actually happening, sticking, and moving the needle on the outcome the change was meant to produce in the first place.

Measuring Change

Measuring Change is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for practitioners who want to define, track, and communicate the outcomes and value of organizational change.

1.1 Measure What Matters

Change measurement often defaults to training counts, communications, events, or milestones. These activities do not show whether people are adopting new ways of working or if the intended outcomes are being realized.

Build learners' understanding of how what is measured is what becomes the focus of the change initiative. Cover the difference between measuring activity vs measuring evidence of change outcomes. For example, reporting that 500 people attended training or that all planned milestones were hit says something happened, but nothing about whether the change happened.

2.1 Defining Meaningful Change Outcomes

Change success includes more than delivery completion. It can involve behavior change, business value, human impact, and preservation of the organization's capacity to adapt again.

Develop learners' ability to define meaningful human and business outcomes before selecting measures. For example, a change can hit every delivery date and still fail if the intended behavior never takes root, if it damages trust or morale in ways that outlast the project, or if it leaves the organization more exhausted and resistant to the next change than before. Introduce success measures that go beyond delivery completion such as whether people are actually behaving differently, whether real business value showed up, or whether the organization is still capable of adapting again afterward.

3.1 Leading and Lagging Change Indicators

Leading indicators provide early signals during change, while lagging indicators show sustained behavior or value after implementation. Using both helps practitioners adapt before problems become expensive.

Develop learners' ability to create a practical measurement approach that combines early and late signals with outcome evidence. A metric like meeting attendance or early usage rates can flag trouble, while there's still room to adjust. Whereas something like sustained productivity gains only shows up long after the moment to course-correct cheaply has passed.

4.1 Using Evidence to Adapt the Change Approach

Measurement creates value only when it influences decisions. Practitioners need to interpret evidence and use it to adjust the change approach rather than collect data for reporting alone.

Develop learners' ability to use evidence as an active learning and adaptation tool for helping change be successful. For example, a dashboard full of change adoption metrics is worthless if it just gets reported upward and filed away without changing what the practitioner does next. Learners should be able to look at what the evidence is actually showing, whether that's an adoption dip in one team or a metric that never moved, and identify the specific adjustment to the change approach that the data actually supports.

AI-Enabled Change

AI-Enabled Change is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for practitioners who want to support organizations through the human side of AI adoption.

Note: This credential focuses on the human and organizational dimensions of AI adoption. It does not address technical AI implementation, AI tool selection, or how to use AI in change management practice.

1.1 What Makes AI-Driven Change Different

AI adoption can change both tasks and how people understand the value of their expertise. This creates identity and role disruption alongside the practical demands of technology adoption.

Build learners' understanding of what makes AI adoption a distinctive organizational change challenge. For example, unlike most technology rollouts, which reach a stable end-state once implemented, AI systems keep changing after go-live. The tool itself gets updated, retrained, or improved on an ongoing basis. This means practitioners can't treat AI adoption as a one-time transition with a clear finish line.

2.1 The Human Experience of AI Adoption

AI adoption can raise concerns about professional identity, future expertise, fairness, transparency, and job security. Different stakeholder groups may experience these questions in very different ways.

Develop learners' ability to recognize how AI adoption affects identity, role meaning, and psychological safety across stakeholder groups. For example, swapping one piece of software for another rarely makes someone question whether their expertise still matters, but AI can, when it starts doing part of what a person's professional identity was built on, like judgment, analysis, or craft.

3.1 Engaging Through AI Transitions

With AI, the answers themselves are often still being worked out what the tool can reliably do. Because the technology keeps evolving, engagement can't be a one-time occurrence.

Build the ability to design engagement that continues alongside AI's evolution. Cover why revisiting communication, policies, and boundaries is what keeps engagement credible. Cover the importance of continuous learning throughout AI transitions such as what the tool can reliably do, which decisions it will handle versus a person, and what guardrails or policies will govern the use of AI.

4.1 Managing Uncertainty and Risk in AI-Enabled Change

AI-enabled change introduces uncertainties you can't fully predict or control. Building resilience into the change requires anticipating what you don't know and designing systems that can adapt when things go wrong.

Build the ability to recognize that AI-enabled change is inherently more uncertain than traditional change. Cover specific risks such as AI behaves unpredictably, unintended consequences emerge, safeguards fail, algorithmic bias, automation creating new problems, or AI overriding human judgment inappropriately. Introduce resilience practices such as monitoring and feedback loops to surface problems early, contingency plans for when AI doesn't work as expected, maintaining human oversight, and designing for reversibility.

Leading in an AI-Augmented Organization

Leading in an AI-Augmented Organization is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals in leadership, management, and change roles who want to develop their ability to build the organizational conditions that enable teams to work with AI responsibly, effectively, and sustainably. AI adoption in organizations is often driven by tools and technology decisions made faster than the human and organizational capabilities needed to use them well. Leaders who do not address the cultural, structural, and accountability conditions surrounding AI, and who do not follow through with the workflow changes and training investment that responsible adoption requires, leave their teams to navigate complexity alone.

1.1 Leadership Practices in an AI-Augmented Organization

AI does not change the purpose of leadership, but it increases the importance of modeling critical AI use, creating safety for concerns, and making accountability explicit.

Establish what effective leadership looks like when AI becomes embedded in everyday work.

2.1 Psychological Safety Around AI

Teams make poorer decisions when people feel pressure to accept AI outputs, hide uncertainty, or avoid raising concerns. Psychological safety supports more honest human–AI collaboration.

Help leaders recognize the psychological safety conditions that shape AI use and the leadership response needed to strengthen them. For example, the impact of how AI can be framed as either added capacity or as reduced headcount.

3.1 Accountability for AI-Assisted Decisions

When accountability is unclear, problems caused by AI-assisted decisions can be blamed on the tool, the data, or whoever happened to be involved. Clear responsibility supports safer use.

Develop leaders' ability to establish minimum–viable accountability for verification and outcomes before problems occur.

4.1 Culture of Responsible AI Adoption

AI adoption culture is shaped by what leaders model, what behaviors are rewarded, whether concerns are heard, and whether workflows and training evolve alongside the technology.

Help leaders assess AI adoption culture and focus leadership attention on changes that make responsible use easier to sustain. Cover indicators of a healthy culture such as whether concerns about AI outputs are raised openly or whether people disclose AI use.

Systemic Intervention Design

Systemic Intervention Design is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to design interventions in complex systems that hold up over time instead of producing new problems elsewhere.

1.1 Why Interventions Backfire

Interventions can fail in recurring ways: fixing symptoms while causes worsen, solving one group's problem by creating another's, or succeeding briefly before the system adapts around them.

Develop learners' ability to use common backfire patterns to anticipate how a proposed intervention could produce unintended consequences.

2.1 Structural Resistance to Intervention

Systems resist change through structural forces and through human and emotional resistance. Recognizing both early improves intervention design.

Develop learners' ability to identify both structural (such as competing goals, informal incentives, and dynamics that pull behavior back toward an existing pattern) and human or emotional sources of resistance (such as fear, loss of status, or fatigue) before designing an intervention.

3.1 High–Leverage Intervention Design

An intervention placed at the right point can still fail. Systems push back through the competing goals, incentives, and habits that made the current pattern stable. A design that does not anticipate that push will need constant reinforcement to stay in place.

Develop learners' ability to design interventions that account for the resistance the system will produce and can hold without continuous effort. Cover what makes a design durable: whether it changes the structure generating the behaviour, whether it survives the loss of its sponsor, and what it costs to maintain.

4.1 Durability of Systemic Change

Durability needs to be assessed over time rather than at one moment.

Develop learners' ability to determine whether an intervention produced durable change or if the system reverted to old habits, workarounds, or conditions. Introduce techniques such as before-and-after comparison, drift detection, or outcome-versus-activity review.

Resistance & Conflict

This 2–4 hour Specialized Credential equips practitioners with a deeper understanding of resistance as a meaningful signal rather than obstacle, and builds capacity to engage conflict and pushback in high–stakes, group, or change–related contexts.

1.1 Resistance as Meaningful Information

Resistance is usually treated as something to push through, but it often carries real information about a concern, risk, or condition that hasn't been addressed yet, and dismissing it outright means missing that signal.

Build the ability to read resistance as information before deciding how to respond to it. For example, the same pushback in a meeting could mean "this person doesn't want to lose control" or "this person sees a real flaw I haven't addressed," and those two readings call for completely different responses.

2.1 Drivers of Resistance

Resistance rarely comes from a single cause. It often reflects individual concerns, group dynamics, and structural conditions all at once, and responding only to the visible behavior can leave the real cause untouched.

Build the ability to trace resistance back to what's actually driving it, at the individual, relational, and systemic level. For example, the same behavior might be partly a personal fear of looking incompetent, partly a team norm that punishes anyone who stands out by adapting first, and partly a structural issue like a performance metric that still rewards the old way of working. Responding to only the loudest or most visible layer, usually the individual complaint, leaves the relational and systemic drivers fully intact and free to keep generating the same resistance in someone else.

3.1 Constructive Responses to Resistance

Understanding why resistance is happening doesn't help if it never turns into action, and a response chosen without rehearsal is harder to execute once real pressure hits.

Build the ability to choose and rehearse a response to resistance that fits its actual cause and context. A strategy that looks sound on paper can fall apart the moment the other person pushes back harder than expected or brings up something unaddressed, so learners need to practice delivering a response under real conversational pressure, not just design one in the abstract.

4. Effectiveness and Impact of Conflict Responses

Confusing "the conflict ended" with "the response worked" is an easy mistake to make. Without stepping back to genuinely evaluate a response, practitioners keep reaching for the same approach out of habit, never learning whether it's actually effective or just familiar.

Build the ability to evaluate how well a past response to resistance or conflict actually worked, beyond how it felt in the moment. For example, in the moment, emotion can make it hard to judge whether a response to resistance or conflict actually worked, and without deliberate review, the same approach tends to repeat regardless of its results. Or a response that felt like it went well, may have only suppressed the concern rather than resolved it.

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