



Learning Outcomes

Organizational Design

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 Organizational Design 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

Organizational Design Core

Organizational Design is an 8-hour Core Credential for professionals who need to diagnose, design, and improve how organizations structure work, allocate decision rights, and align systems to deliver on strategy. Every organization is designed, whether or not anyone chooses it deliberately: the way work is grouped, decisions are made, and people are rewarded either reinforces the results the organization needs or quietly works against them. This course treats organizational design as a discipline any practitioner can learn, not a specialty reserved for a small group of internal consultants.

1. Understanding Organizations as Designed Systems

1.1 Organizational Design and Strategic Execution

How work is grouped and coordinated shapes which strategies can be executed effectively. Organizational design is therefore a strategic lever, not only an administrative concern.

Build learners' understanding that organizational structure is a primary driver of what strategic outcomes are possible. Structure shapes who talks to whom, what gets measured, how decisions get made, what incentives drive behavior. Structures designed for stability, while efficient in stable conditions, limit strategic options in dynamic or changing environments.

1.2 Structural Symptoms and Root Causes

Organizations often respond to performance problems with a reorganization or reporting-line change. These fixes may address visible symptoms while leaving underlying issues in decision rights, incentives, processes, or accountability unchanged.

Build learners' ability to distinguish structural symptoms from root causes using recognized diagnostic models. Cover the distinction between the symptoms (high turnover, missed deadlines) and the root causes (insufficient staffing, unclear priorities) and recognize that the same symptom may have multiple root causes depending on context.

1.3 Organizational Design Alignment

Strategy, structure, and how work actually happens can drift apart over time. Looking at all three together helps reveal misalignment before it becomes a larger performance problem.

Develop learners' ability to assess alignment among strategy, structure, and actual working practices using a recognized organizational design framework. Cover how workarounds that people build within existing organization designs can be used to inform future designs.

2. Choosing and Evaluating Structural Options

2.1 Organizational Structure Types and Trade-offs

Functional, divisional, matrix, and network structures solve different coordination problems and create different trade-offs.

Build learners' understanding that organizational structure is fundamentally about trade-offs. Every structure solves specific coordination problems but creates new ones. Teach common structures, the problems they solve, and the challenges (constraints, coordination problems, bottlenecks) they create. Build learners' ability to compare structural trade-offs and match design choices to the coordination needs of a specific strategic context.

2.2 Impact of Organizational Layers

Organizational depth directly affects decision speed, but many organizations don't know how many layers they have or what each layer actually checks for. Layers that don't add value just slow decisions and frustrate people.

Build learners' ability to assess organizational hierarchy and see how organizational layers affect decision velocity. Teach that layers aren't inherently bad and that each layer should add something such as alignment check, risk oversight, quality review, or authority confirmation.

3. Aligning Systems Around Structure

3.1 Processes, Incentives, and People Practices

Structure implementation requires designing the entire system not just the reporting lines, but the processes, incentives, and practices that reinforce it.

Develop learners' ability to align processes, incentives, and people practices with the intended structural design. Cover how supporting systems actively reinforce or undermine structure.

3.2 Structure and Supporting Systems

A new structure does not change behaviour on its own. When incentives, processes and people practices stay as they were, people keep working in old ways inside the new structure.

Build learners' ability to diagnose where a structure and its supporting systems work against each other, using recurring friction as the evidence, and to recognise why a structural fix alone will not resolve it. For example teams given decision authority but measured in ways that discourage using it, or collaboration structures without time to collaborate.

4. Implementing and Sustaining Organizational Redesign

4.1 Iterative Structural Change

The larger the redesign, the more it changes at once, and the more unintended consequences emerge because people adapt to a new structure in ways the design did not anticipate. Smaller changes make those consequences visible earlier and at lower cost.

Build learners' understanding that major organizational changes often fail because they try to change everything at once. Develop learners' ability to make a structural change small enough to learn from, coordinating the structure, system and communication elements within it, and to decide what the result must show before more is committed.

4.2 Monitoring and Adjusting the Design

An organizational design that is reviewed only when problems become visible is reviewed after the cost has been incurred, and the response is often another redesign. Monitoring a small number of indicators continuously allows adjustment while it is still limited in scope.

Build learners' ability to monitor an organizational design continuously rather than periodically, so that adjustment can occur before problems require redesign. Cover which indicators are worth monitoring, at what frequency, and what indicates the design is no longer delivering its intended outcomes.

4.3 Who Absorbs the Change

When a structure cannot absorb the stress of change, the people inside it do. They take on the stress to cover the handoffs that do not work, chase the decisions that will not come, and hold together what the design does not.

Develop learners' ability to recognise where an organization design is passing the cost of change onto the people inside it, and to treat that transfer as a design fault rather than a resilience problem. Introduce compensation patterns such as extra meetings to coordinate work, informal escalation processes, key people becoming bottlenecks, or constant rework.

SPECIALIZED CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Operating Model Design

Operating Model Design is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to translate strategy into the practical choices that make execution possible: value streams, capabilities, structures, processes, roles, decision rights, data, technology, locations, sourcing, measures, and governance. The credential reflects current demand for operating models that can support digital and AI-enabled work, ecosystem delivery, customer-centric value creation, and rapid strategic reprioritization.

1.1 Connecting Strategy to an Operating Model

Strategy doesn't specify how to operate. Organizations that deliberately design operating model choices execute better than those that let these decisions happen by accident or default.

Clarify the distinction between strategy, business model, structure, and operating model so learners can identify the operating choices still required. Operating models make choices about capabilities, processes, technology, accountability, location, and governance explicit. Cover the emerging choices needed in an AI-augmented workforce such as where human judgement and quality control sit in a process.

2.1 Operating Model Alignment

Strategy fails more often because operations can't support it than because the strategy itself is wrong. Learning to trace actual work flow and identify where operations diverge from strategy is how to fix execution before it derails.

Build learners' ability to see the operating model as a complete system and trace how work actually flows end-to-end. Cover how to connect execution problems to operating-model causes such as challenges across value streams, capabilities, processes, roles, data, technology, or governance.

3.1 Target Operating Model Options

Operating model design is about strategic choices, not universal best practices. Learning to identify which dimensions matter most for a defined strategy helps allocate transformation effort and resources effectively.

Develop learners' ability to create coherent operating model options that fit strategy and constraints, while prioritizing the dimensions most relevant to the context. Cover dimensions such as value streams, capabilities, structure, process, roles, decision rights, data, technology, location or sourcing, and measures.

4.1 Testing Readiness and Planning the Transition

Operating model designs fail not because they're bad designs, but because organizations implement them without readiness or dependencies in place. Learning to evaluate implementation readiness before committing to change prevents costly rollouts that collapse when reality hits.

Build learners' ability to assess whether an organization is actually ready to implement a proposed operating model testing both readiness and dependencies. Distinguish between a good operating model design and an organization capable of executing it. Consider factors such as required capabilities, data, technology, leadership capacity, workforce skills, investment, or change capacity. Build learners' ability to assess operating model feasibility and determine how implementation should be sequenced, piloted, or adapted.

Team and Network Design

Team and Network Design is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to design how teams collaborate across formal boundaries in hybrid, distributed, product, platform, and ecosystem-based organizations. Formal structure defines primary accountability, but complex work is increasingly delivered through cross-functional teams, communities, informal networks, and external partners. The course develops the ability to diagnose real collaboration patterns, select proportionate lateral mechanisms, and protect network health without creating unnecessary meetings or matrix complexity.

1.1 Formal Structure and Cross-Boundary Coordination

Organizations have formal structure but lack the lateral connections that enable work across organizational boundaries.

Build learners' understanding that formal structure (reporting lines, departments, hierarchies) handles routine work within clear boundaries. Complex work often crosses functions, locations, and organizational boundaries. This cross-boundary work requires coordination across those boundaries and formal structure doesn't inherently create those connections. Introduce lateral mechanisms such as peer-to-peer coordination, cross-functional teams with shared accountability, shared metrics that span boundaries, information systems that make data visible across silos, communities of practice that connect people doing similar work across boundaries, liaison roles that own the boundary, and regular cross-boundary forums.

2.1 Organizational Networks and Collaboration Flow

Important work often depends on informal connectors, specialist communities, and boundary-spanning relationships. These networks can improve flow but may also create overload, exclusion, bottlenecks, or resilience risks.

Build learners' ability to see how work actually flows through the organization versus the formal org chart that shows structure. Teach that collaboration networks show connections such as who talks to whom regularly, where information flows across boundaries, who acts as a bridge between silos, where critical decisions require multiple people's input, or who's a bottleneck because everyone depends on them. Build learners' ability to make informal collaboration networks visible using organizational network analysis and assess where they support or constrain performance.

3.1 Lateral Coordination Mechanisms

Different coordination problems require different mechanisms. Good organizational design uses the minimal coordination mechanism needed to make work flow.

Build learners' understanding that coordination mechanisms are tools and heavier mechanisms (dedicated teams, formal governance) cost more in time, resources, and complexity. The goal is solving the coordination problem with the lightest mechanism that actually works, not defaulting to heavy structures. Introduce a spectrum of coordination mechanisms such as product or mission teams, platforms, liaison roles, integrator roles, communities of practice, and shared forums.

4.1 Network Health, Flow, and Resilience

Collaboration networks can weaken as organizations grow or change. Overloaded connectors, excessive meetings, isolated teams, poor knowledge flow, or dependence on a few individuals can reduce both performance and inclusion.

Build learners' ability to assess network health and determine where collaboration mechanisms need reinforcement, simplification, or redesign. Cover the importance of indicators (such as flow, dependency, meeting, collaboration, inclusion, or resilience indicators) to show when the network health degrades.

Span of Control and Organizational Layering

Span of Control and Organizational Layering is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to make deliberate, evidence-based choices about how many people report to each manager and how many layers separate frontline work from senior leadership. Spans and layers are often inherited rather than designed, growing through years of individual hiring decisions rather than a deliberate choice about how the organization should be shaped.

1.1 Why Spans and Layers Matter More Than They Appear To

Span of control and layers aren't one-size-fits-all. They're design choices that should fit the work and the strategy.

Build learners' understanding that span of control and layering are often treated as defaults rather than deliberate choices. Help them see these as strategic organizational design decisions shaped by factors such as the complexity of work, cognitive load on the manager, required decision speed, and oversight needed.

2.1 Misalignment in Spans and Layers

Spans and layers that once fit the organization may become misaligned as work and teams change.

Build learners' ability to diagnose misalignment between organizational structure and the work that needs managing. Help them see that misalignment shows up as either wasted management capacity (too much oversight for routine work) or insufficient oversight (too little management for complex work).

3.1 Matching Spans and Layers to the Work

Standardized work can often support wider spans than complex, judgment-heavy work because it creates less cognitive load per report. Manager capability and available support also influence the appropriate design.

Develop learners' ability to design spans and layers based on work complexity, cognitive load, and available management capacity rather than fixed benchmarks. Cover the complexity of people reporting into more than one manager and approaches to manage this such as splitting capability leadership from delivery leadership.

4.1 Impact of Span and Layer Changes

A span or layering change can look successful on an organization chart while creating manager overload or slower decisions in practice. Evaluating the actual impact is necessary to know whether the change worked.

Build learners' ability to evaluate span and layering changes against intended outcomes such as decision speed, cost, and manager capacity. Help them understand that span and layering changes always have intended and unintended effects.

Designing for Organizational Agility

Designing for Organizational Agility is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to create organizations that can shift priorities, reallocate resources, form new teams, and respond to changing customer, technology, regulatory, and market conditions without repeated disruptive reorganizations. The course distinguishes organizational agility from simply using agile methods and examines modular structures, dynamic resource allocation, adaptive governance, skills-based deployment, sensing mechanisms, and scenario testing.

1.1 Organizational Agility as a Design Capability

Agile delivery practices alone do not make an organization agile. Budgets, governance, reporting lines, workforce allocation, and technology dependencies must also support timely sensing, decisions, and reconfiguration.

Build learners' understanding that organizational agility is a capability of the whole operating system to sense, decide, and reconfigure rather than a label attached to project methods. Expand on the need for sensing (detecting changes and signals early), deciding (making decisions quickly about how to respond), and reconfiguring (actually changing how the organization works). Organizational design either enables or constrains each of these.

2.1 Sources of Organizational Rigidity

Organizational rigidity isn't just an efficiency problem. It's a business problem with real consequences for strategy execution, customer outcomes, and competitive position.

Build learners' ability to see organizational rigidity not as abstract problems but as concrete constraints with measurable business consequences. Help them understand that rigidity appears when priorities change but people, funding, governance, capabilities, mindsets, or technology cannot adjust. Build learners' ability to identify specific sources of rigidity and make their cost visible.

3.1 Reconfigurable Organizational Elements

Agile organizations combine stable foundations with flexible elements that can change as priorities shift. Flexible elements allow reconfiguration without constant reorganization.

Develop learners' ability to design reconfigurable organizational elements that balance flexibility with stability and accountability. Cover common reconfigurable elements such as cross-functional teams with shared accountability, matrix accountability, rotating leadership or project ownership, flexible team membership, dynamic funding or adaptive governance.

4.1 Stress-Testing Organizational Agility

Claims of agility are meaningful only when tested against realistic change. Scenario-based evaluation shows whether an organization can sense, decide, move capacity, coordinate dependencies, and learn quickly enough under pressure.

Build learners' ability to test organizational designs against realistic scenarios. Help them understand that designs that look good on paper might fail when change happens. Can this organization sense the change, make decisions quickly, and reallocate resources to respond.

Strategy Execution and Prioritization

Strategy Execution and Prioritization is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to translate a strategic choice into a prioritized set of initiatives and resource commitments that an organization can actually deliver. Most organizations have more strategic initiatives in motion than they have the capacity to execute well, and a strategy that is not translated into explicit priorities tends to be diluted across too many competing efforts.

1.1 Why Strategies Fail to Translate into Action

Every organization is vulnerable to common strategy execution failure patterns.

Build learners' ability to recognize execution failure patterns and see how organizational characteristics create vulnerability to specific ones. Teach common patterns such as too many competing priorities, declared priorities do not receive matching resources, or misunderstanding of the strategic goals.

2.1 Initiative Portfolio and Strategic Alignment

Organizations accumulate initiatives over time, including work tied to previous strategies or opportunistic additions. The result can be a portfolio that no longer reflects the current strategic choice.

Develop learners' ability to identify initiatives that no longer support the stated strategy. Cover why an initiative might no longer align with strategy such as strategy shifts but initiatives keep running, an initiative that was strategic becomes maintenance work, or market changes make an initiative less relevant.

3.1 Prioritizing Strategic Initiatives

Prioritization requires more than ranking initiatives. Genuine priorities receive explicit commitments of budget, people, and leadership attention, while other work is intentionally deprioritized.

Develop learners' ability to connect strategic priority choices with concrete resource commitments. Cover that strategic execution requires discipline on two fronts: choosing what to do and not doing what you're stopping, as well as committing realistic resources to make the top priorities succeed.

4.1 Strategic Execution and Intended Outcomes

Execution can look busy without producing the outcomes strategy was meant to achieve. Comparing results with intended outcomes helps identify drift before initiatives continue simply because they are already underway.

Develop learners' ability to assess execution against strategic outcomes rather than activity alone.

Designing for Delivery Team Effectiveness

Designing for Delivery Team Effectiveness is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to build and sustain the structural and environmental conditions that enable delivery teams to perform consistently. High-performing delivery teams do not emerge by accident. They require deliberate attention to team structure, clarity of purpose and accountability, feedback mechanisms, and the removal of systemic obstacles that inhibit flow. This credential focuses on the delivery leader's role in creating those conditions rather than on interpersonal team dynamics.

1.1 Team Structure for Delivery Performance

Team composition, size, location, interfaces, and work flow directly affect delivery speed, quality, and adaptability. Team structure is therefore a delivery design choice, not only an HR concern.

Build learners' understanding of how structural team choices influence delivery performance. For example, team size affects communication overhead, since coordination cost grows faster than headcount as a team gets larger; distributed location affects the speed of informal problem-solving, since quick clarifications that happen in passing in person require more deliberate effort across time zones; and unclear interfaces between teams affect handoff speed, since work can sit waiting at a boundary no one owns.

2.1 Team Purpose and Clarity

Teams underperform when a shared purpose and success criteria are unclear. These clarity gaps create friction even when skill is strong.

Develop learners' ability to diagnose clarity gaps that constrain delivery team performance. A shared purpose gives a team a common basis for making the countless small trade-off decisions delivery requires. Without a shared purpose that's explicit and agreed upon, individuals default to their own reasonable but conflicting assumptions, and delivery suffers from friction that looks like a people problem but is really a clarity problem.

3.1 Misaligned Incentives

An organization can genuinely want cross-team collaboration or shared ownership of outcomes while its reward structure quietly tells individuals the opposite.

Develop learners' ability to recognize when a team's behavior isn't a mindset or culture problem but a predictable response to how success is measured and rewarded. For example, individual bonus targets tied to personal ticket count can quietly discourage someone from pairing with a struggling teammate, since time spent helping doesn't count toward their own number, even if the organization's stated value is collaboration.

4.1 Systemic Obstacles to Team Performance

Persistent delivery problems often come from a systemic obstacle rather than individual effort. Systemic obstacles require structural responses.

Develop learners' ability to diagnose systematic obstacles, such as delayed approvals, competing priorities, weak tools, or organizational policies that constrain delivery team performance. For example, a slow, multi-layered approval process might call for delegating decision authority down to the team level for lower-risk changes, or a weak shared tool everyone depends on might call for securing budget to replace it rather than asking each team to build individual workarounds.

Governance Design and Decision Rights

Governance Design and Decision Rights is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to design clear, practical governance structures that distribute accountability and enable faster, better decisions. Many organizations operate with governance that evolved informally over time, producing unclear ownership, inconsistent escalation, and decisions made at the wrong level.

1.1 Governance Failure Patterns

Governance fails in predictable patterns. Recognizing these patterns helps distinguish between governance that's serving its purpose and governance that's just creating bureaucracy around yesterday's problems.

Build learners' ability to recognize governance failure patterns by understanding their symptoms and what structurally caused them. Cover governance failure patterns such as when it is too loose, too rigid, or outdated. Introduce symptoms of governance failure such as decision latency, handoffs, approval gates, bypassing governance, and compliance activities.

2.1 Decision Authority

There is no universally correct level for decision authority. The best fit depends on information, reversibility, coordination needs, speed, and organizational context.

Develop learners' ability to reason through trade-offs in where decision authority should sit. Cover the difference between reversible and irreversible decisions and how they should be treated differently.

3.1 Building the Governance Framework

A useful governance framework makes decision authority, accountability, input requirements, and escalation conditions explicit enough for teams to use in real situations, while being flexible enough to utilize the lightest control reasonable for the risk associated with each use.

Develop learners' ability to translate governance principles into a practical and flexible framework that can be tested in use. Cover the need for different types of controls (such as guidelines, guardrails, safeguards, and approval gates) within the framework to manage different levels of risk.

4.1 Governance Suitability and Context Fit

Governance frameworks need to be suitable to the risk they control against. A five-hundred-dollar purchase and a five-million-dollar purchase travelling the same path is not consistent, it is a lazy design that breaks the organization.

Develop learners' ability to judge whether a governance design is appropriate to the decisions it governs and flexible enough to handle the cases it did not anticipate. High-risk, irreversible decisions need more process and authority while low-risk, reversible decisions should move quickly with minimal oversight.

Governance for Agile Delivery

Governance for Agile Delivery is a 2-4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to design and sustain governance that works alongside agile, iterative, and continuously evolving ways of working. Traditional governance structures built on annual cycles, fixed approval gates, and hierarchical sign-offs conflict with the pace and rhythm of adaptive work, creating friction that slows delivery and undermines team ownership.

1.1 Governance Friction in Agile Ways of Working

Governance and agile ways of working can collide through approval delays, unclear ownership, or accountability structures that do not match iterative delivery. Precise diagnosis is needed before redesign.

Build learners' ability to identify specific governance practices that create friction with adaptive work. Highlight that governance friction has real consequences for how fast the organization can move, who makes decisions, and whether people are held accountable.

Understanding the specific governance practice and its impact is the first step to making change.

2.1 Governance Trade-offs

Governance does not need to be slow to be rigorous. Continuous, lightweight mechanisms can maintain oversight while operating at the pace of agile delivery.

Develop learners' ability to adapt governance structures for agile delivery without weakening accountability. Highlight that traditional governance models and agile delivery have fundamentally different needs and the trade-offs needed to adapt governance for agile delivery.

3.1 Adaptive Governance Approach

Governance needs to fit the context, not the other way around. Designing adaptive governance means knowing when to lighten process for speed and what safeguards you absolutely cannot compromise on.

Develop learners' ability to create an adaptive governance approach that preserves accountability and alignment without excessive bureaucracy, such as by replacing an approval gate with a decision made at the work edge and subsequently validated. Cover the primary factors that create excessive bureaucracy such as decision latency, handoffs, approval gates, and compliance activities.

4.1 Sustaining Governance as Organizations Evolve

Governance that fits an early-stage team may become restrictive as maturity and trust increase. More mature organizations need governance that evolves with capability rather than remaining fixed.

Develop learners' ability to assess governance fit as organizational maturity and ways of working evolve.

Systems Mapping

Systems Mapping is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to visually represent a system's structure and use that map to diagnose where recurring problems actually come from.

1.1 Impact of Visual System Mapping

Narrative descriptions can hide relationships, loops, delays, and dependencies by turning a system into a sequence of events or list of actors. Mapping makes those structures explicit.

Build learners' understanding of the impact mapping has as a distinct step in systems analysis rather than only an illustration.

2.1 System Elements, Relationships, and Feedback

Useful system maps depend on identifying the actors, conditions, relationships, and feedback loops that actually shape behavior. Missing an important relationship can distort the whole map.

Develop learners' ability to identify the structural elements that belong in a system map.

3.1 Building a System Map Design

Creating a usable map requires invisible assumptions to be made explicit. Decisions about scope, level of detail, delays, handoffs, collaboration, and feedback loops. The result needs to be clear enough for someone other than the author to follow.

Develop learners' ability to produce a system map that is both diagnostically useful and understandable to others. Cover the scoping and detail decisions that determine whether a map is usable, and how to test it against a reader rather than against the author's own understanding.

4.1 Diagnosing from the Map

A map becomes useful when it helps explain why a problem keeps recurring or where the system structure is producing the visible symptom.

Develop learners' ability to use a system map as a diagnostic tool rather than a static artifact.

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.

Power, Incentives, and Organizational Design

Power, Incentives, and Organizational Design is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals, often in leadership, org design, or people functions, who are responsible for shaping the structures that determine how power and influence actually operate in an organization, not just working within them. This course goes deeper into the structural dimension of power introduced in the Power & Responsibility Credential: how incentive structures, power asymmetries, and formal design choices shape behavior in ways that individual good intentions cannot override. Learners will explore how to diagnose misaligned incentives, how to work with power asymmetries between individuals and teams, how to design organizational structures that distribute power responsibly, and how to evaluate whether a structural intervention actually changed how power operates.

1.1 Incentives and Power Dynamics

Incentives can unintentionally reward power-hoarding, competition, or protection of local interests even when leaders want collaboration. In these cases, the design of the incentive system may be the real source of the problem.

Develop learners' ability to recognize incentives as a structural source of power and behavior. Explore formal rewards, targets, metrics, recognition, and informal signals that can encourage people to protect resources, withhold information, or optimize for their own area.

2.1 Working With Power Asymmetries

Differences in budget, headcount, seniority, or strategic visibility can create unequal influence between people or teams. Ignoring these asymmetries can reinforce the very imbalances a design is meant to address.

Build learners' ability to identify power asymmetries and consider their effects on voice, trade-offs, and decision quality. Explore how design can unintentionally make one team's priorities easier to protect than another's.

3.1 Structural Mechanisms and Their Effects on Power

Power is shaped not only by individual behavior but by the structures and mechanisms people work within. Metrics, budgets, governance forums, reporting relationships, access to information, and other design choices can concentrate, distribute, check, or unintentionally distort power.

Develop learners' ability to understand how organizational structures and mechanisms shape the way power actually operates, and to design or assess those mechanisms deliberately. Explore how structural choices can reinforce healthy power distribution or create unintended consequences, and how to evaluate whether a structural intervention changed behavior and influence as intended.

4.1 Distributing Power through Decision Authority

Decision authority is one of the clearest ways organizational power is distributed. When it is unclear or consistently sits too high, decisions slow down, escalation increases, and authority becomes separated from the people with the most relevant information, expertise, or proximity to consequences. Moving authority closer to the work can improve responsiveness, but only when boundaries and accountability are clear.

Develop learners' ability to intentionally design decision rights as a mechanism for distributing power. Explore how to determine where decision authority should sit based on information, expertise, consequences, risk, and purpose, and how to surround that authority with appropriate guardrails such as boundaries, escalation conditions, transparency, and accountability. Introduce practical approaches such as RAPID, DACI, RACI where relevant, or other decision-rights frameworks, while allowing learners to adapt or create a lightweight approach that fits their context.

SPECIAL THANKS

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