



Learning Outcomes

Facilitation

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 Facilitation 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

Facilitation Core

Tomorrow-Ready organizations need people who can bring groups together to think clearly, decide wisely, and act with shared commitment. That capacity doesn't happen by accident; it requires skilled engagement and facilitation. Facilitation is the practice of designing and holding group processes that help people with different perspectives think clearly and act together productively. This is an 8 hours Core Credential for anyone who leads meetings, workshops, or collaborative work sessions, regardless of role or industry.

1. Foundation of Facilitation

1.1 Role and Scope of Facilitation

Facilitation helps people with different perspectives think, decide, and act together productively.

Establish a clear definition of facilitation, its boundaries, and when a facilitated approach is appropriate. A facilitator holds the process, not the content or the outcome, which is a boundary people new to the role often blur. For example, a facilitated approach is especially valuable when a group needs to surface competing views before a decision, when no single person has (or should use) authority to just decide for the room, or when the conversation itself is likely to get contentious enough that someone needs to hold the process separately from having a stake in the outcome.

1.2 Facilitator Mindset, Presence, and Stance

How a facilitator shows up affects what becomes possible for the group. Mindset, presence, tone, attention, and beliefs about voice, power, and group capability can influence the process as much as tools or techniques.

Develop the mindset, presence, and stance that support inclusive, adaptive, and effective facilitation. Help learners get past the idea that facilitation is mainly a toolkit of techniques and agendas. A facilitator who runs a flawless process but secretly believes some voices matter more than others, or who projects visible impatience when a group goes quiet, shapes the room just as much as any technique would. For example, a core belief like "the group holds the answer, not the facilitator" changes how someone responds to silence. A presence practice like consciously slowing down their own pace of speech can change whether a group feels rushed or genuinely heard.

1.3 Neutrality, Impartiality, and Stake

Facilitators are expected to avoid taking sides on content, but complete neutrality is not always possible. This becomes especially important when the facilitator has a stake in the outcome, such as a manager facilitating their own team.

Build learners' judgment about neutrality, impartiality, psychological safety, and how to facilitate responsibly when they hold a stake in the outcome. For example, a manager facilitating their own team might explicitly hand decision authority on a specific point to the group rather than themselves.

2. Setting Up for Success

2.1 Purpose, Roles, and Facilitation Mandate

Effective facilitation begins before the session. Clear purpose, success criteria, participant roles, and facilitator mandate help protect the integrity of the process.

Develop learners' ability to clarify session intent, participant roles, success criteria, facilitator boundaries, and sponsor expectations before the session. This should also include the facilitator's mandate, such as what the facilitator will not do. For example, this might mean confirming with a sponsor beforehand whether the group is deciding or just advising, or clarifying that a specific participant's role is subject-matter input rather than decision-making.

2.2 Session Management Structures

Visible structure helps groups trust the process and focus on the work.

Build learners' ability to select structural tools that support the purpose, flow, and needs of a specific group. Agendas, group agreements, deferred-item practices, and physical or virtual setup reduce uncertainty about how the session will operate.

3. Designing the Session

3.1 Session Flow and Group Context

A strong session flow helps a group move purposefully from opening to close.

Develop learners' ability to design a session flow that aligns activities, timing, participation, and contingencies with the intended outcome. Effective design requires deliberate choices about sequencing, pacing, energy, participation modes, and how divergent and convergent thinking are balanced.

3.2 Equitable and Inclusive Participation

Equitable participation requires more than giving everyone a turn. People participate more honestly when they feel safe to speak, question, and disagree.

Develop learners' ability to design participation structures that increase inclusion, surface diverse perspectives, and reduce dominance effects. Psychological safety is shaped by power, identity, group history, design choices, and the facilitator's behavior during the session. In addition, communication style, language, cognitive diversity, and structural inequities can amplify some voices while limiting others.

4. Facilitating in the Room

4.1 Reading and Responding to Group Dynamics

Groups rarely behave exactly as planned. Skilled facilitators notice verbal and non-verbal signals, treat their interpretation as a hypothesis rather than a fact, check it with the group, and adapt the process without losing neutrality.

Develop learners' ability to read group dynamics, validate interpretations with the group, and adapt facilitation in real time. For example, noticing that energy has dropped or that one person keeps checking their phone is an interpretation, not a diagnosis, and a facilitator who acts on it as though it's confirmed truth risks steering the group based on a guess. A verbal signal like a participant suddenly going quiet after actively contributing might prompt a facilitator to check in directly ("I noticed you've stepped back. What's coming up for you?") rather than assume disengagement, while a non-verbal signal like arms crossing across several participants at once might prompt a pause to name the shift and ask the group what's happening, rather than pushing through the agenda regardless.

4.2 Facilitation Practice and Continuous Improvement

Facilitation skill develops through practice, feedback, and reflection. Effective practice depends on presence, listening, and adaptation, not only following a plan, and improvement continues beyond a single successful session.

Give learners practical facilitation experience and build reflective habits that support continuous improvement over time.

SPECIALIZED CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Visual Facilitation Introduction

Visual Facilitation Introduction is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to make group thinking visible in real time. At its core, visual facilitation is an act of listening, synthesizing, and adapting, not simply drawing.

1.1 Why Visual Facilitation Works

Visual facilitation makes group thinking visible through images, text, and spatial organization. Its value depends on listening for key ideas first, then representing them in ways that support shared understanding and alignment.

Build learners' understanding of why visual facilitation works and how listening for key ideas distinguishes it from note-taking or presentation. For example, a facilitator sketching a simple diagram that clusters what three different speakers just said into one shared theme does something a transcript or a pre-made slide can't: it lets the group see their own thinking reflected back and correct it in real time. The value of that image depends entirely on the facilitator actually listening for the key idea first.

2.1 Building a Visual Vocabulary

Visual facilitation does not require advanced artistic skill. A small set of visual elements can help facilitators synthesize ideas, create hierarchy, and make meaning clearer without transcribing every word.

Develop a practical visual vocabulary focused on synthesis, hierarchy, emphasis, clarity, and usefulness rather than artistic quality. For example, a box around an idea signals "this is a distinct concept," an arrow shows a relationship or flow between two ideas, and simply varying size or adding an underline creates a hierarchy that tells the group at a glance which point matters most. The real skill being practiced isn't drawing, it's listening and synthesizing.

3.1 Adaptive Visual Facilitation Design

Visuals support a session best when they are intentionally connected to purpose, timing, and participant needs. They also need to evolve as the group's thinking changes rather than treating an early visual as final.

Develop learners' ability to design visual support that aligns with session outcomes and adapts as new information emerges. For example, a simple sticky-note cluster might suit an early divergent thinking phase where the goal is capturing lots of raw input. While a more structured matrix might suit a later phase where the group needs to compare and prioritize options. Using the wrong one at the wrong point can actually slow the group down rather than help it. This also means resisting the temptation to treat the first version of a visual as finished.

4.1 Visual Facilitation in Practice

Visual facilitation improves through practice and reflection. Effective evaluation considers how well the facilitator listened, synthesized, and adapted in real time, not only how the final visual looked.

Build learners' ability to practice and evaluate visual facilitation based on its contribution to group thinking and outcomes. Redirect self-evaluation away from the question "does my visual look good?" toward the question that actually matters: did it help the group think together?

Facilitating Conflict

Facilitating Conflict is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to hold group processes productively when conflict is present. This course focuses specifically on the facilitator's role in navigating conflict within group settings, and is distinct from mediation, personal conflict resolution, or therapeutic approaches.

1.1 Conflict in Facilitated Group Work

Conflict is an inevitable part of group work when people care about outcomes or hold different perspectives. Approaching it with curiosity can surface useful tension, while suppressing it can drive concerns underground.

Build learners' understanding of conflict as a potentially productive group dynamic and help them distinguish different sources of tension before responding. For example, two participants openly disagreeing about which approach best serves a shared goal is productive conflict. A skilled facilitator can use this to surface information the group needs, while the same disagreement expressed as personal attacks or repeated interruption has crossed into unproductive territory that needs a different response.

2.1 Reading Conflict in the Room

Different conflicts require different responses, and conflict can change during a session. Facilitators must also distinguish conflict from harm: harassment, discrimination, or bullying requires appropriate organizational reporting rather than facilitation techniques.

Develop learners' ability to read conflict type, intensity, stage, and signals, while recognizing harm that falls outside the facilitator's role. Help learners practice tracking source (what and who are involved), type (task escalating into relational), intensity (rising over time), and stage (emerging → escalating → entrenched) within a single scenario, and correctly identify the point at which it stops being theirs to facilitate.

3.1 Facilitator Responses to Conflict

After reading the conflict, the facilitator must choose how to respond without becoming the mediator, manager, or therapist. The role is to hold the group's process and judge when to explore, contain, redirect, or de-escalate tension.

Build learners' judgment in selecting facilitation responses that match the type and intensity of the conflict while maintaining clear role boundaries. Cover types of responses to facilitating conflict such as whether to explore, contain, redirect, or de-escalate the conflict. For each type of response, introduce facilitation techniques that can be used in the moment. For example, when a disagreement seems to hold useful information, the facilitator might choose to explore it by asking each side to say more about what's underneath their position; when it's derailing the session's actual purpose, the facilitator might choose to contain it by naming the tension and parking it for a dedicated conversation later; and when emotion is running too hot for productive dialogue, the facilitator might choose to de-escalate by slowing the pace or calling a short break.

4.1 Reflection on Conflict Facilitation

Conflict facilitation depends on adaptive judgment developed through reflection on experience. Learners need to examine what they read accurately, what they missed, how they responded, and how their own triggers affected the process.

Develop reflective practice that strengthens conflict judgment, self-awareness, and future facilitation choices. Focus this reflection on items such as the quality of the facilitator's reading of the situation and response, the impact of their own emotional and behavioral reactions, and specific adjustments that would improve effectiveness in future conflict situations.

Large Group Facilitation

Large Group Facilitation is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to design and hold productive group processes when scale introduces complexity that small group approaches cannot adequately address. The course applies across in-person, virtual, and hybrid contexts.

1.1 Distinctive Demands of Large Group Facilitation

Large group facilitation changes more than headcount. Scale reduces individual visibility and increases complexity, requiring facilitators to trust structure, work with subgroup dynamics, and shift their mindset from managing individuals to holding a larger system.

Build learners' understanding of how scale changes facilitation demands and the facilitator mindset needed across in-person, virtual, and hybrid settings. For example, in a small group a facilitator might notice one participant disengaging and check in with them personally, but in a large group that same facilitator has to trust a structure, like small breakout tables with their own reporting mechanism, to surface that same kind of signal without the facilitator personally catching it.

2.1 Reading the Large Group Context

Large groups contain subgroups with different interests, histories, cultures, and levels of power. Size, purpose, composition, safety, and context influence both session design and what the facilitator needs to notice in real time.

Develop learners' ability to read large-group purpose, composition, culture, power, safety, and complexity before and during the session, including when co-facilitation may help. For example, knowing in advance that one subgroup holds significantly more organizational power than another should shape design choices like using anonymous input methods so quieter subgroups aren't drowned out, and during the session that same power dynamic should make the facilitator specifically watch whether the lower-power subgroup's ideas are actually surfacing or quietly getting talked over.

3.1 Participation at Scale

Large groups need deliberate participation architecture so many people can contribute without chaos or domination. Group configuration, sequencing, and connections between small- and large-group work shape inclusion and coherence.

Develop learners' ability to design and test participation architecture that supports diverse contribution and collective understanding at scale. For example, a well-sequenced architecture might start with individual silent reflection so people form their own thinking without social pressure, move into small-group conversation where that thinking gets tested and refined with a few others, and only then bring ideas to the large group, where a subgroup reports out a synthesized point rather than every individual competing for airtime.

4.1 Evaluating Large Group Facilitation

A large group session can appear successful while still excluding important voices or missing its purpose. Facilitators need to assess effectiveness and equity during the session so they can adapt while it still matters.

Build learners' ability to evaluate purpose, participation equity, and live signals that indicate when a large-group approach needs adjustment. For example, a facilitator might notice midway through that report-outs are consistently coming from the same two tables while others stay quiet, and use that as an in-the-moment signal to adjust; perhaps by explicitly rotating which table reports next, or checking in directly with a table that's gone silent.

Facilitating Decision-Making

Facilitating Decision-Making is a 2-4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to support groups in reaching decisions that are clear, well-reasoned, and genuinely owned by those who will carry them out. Decision-making is one of the most common and most mismanaged activities in organizational life: groups confuse discussion with commitment, conflate consensus with consent, and produce outcomes that are agreed in the room and undermined outside it.

1.1 Dynamics of Group Decision-Making

Group decisions are shaped by social pressure, status, unclear authority, and confusion between discussion, agreement, and commitment. A group can agree in the room without genuine ownership of what happens next.

Build learners' understanding of the cognitive, social, and structural dynamics of group decision-making, including the difference between agreement and commitment.

2.1 Designing for Group Dynamics in Decision-Making

Different decisions require different processes. Good facilitation begins by clarifying what is being decided, its scope, constraints, success criteria, and who holds decision authority before choosing an appropriate decision approach. Without deliberately designing for group dynamics, decisions can be skewed, misaligned, or stalled.

Build learners' ability to design against predictable failure modes before they show up in the room, rather than reacting to them after a decision has already gone sideways. For example, if a group is prone to deadlock between two entrenched positions, a facilitator might build in a structured process like weighted voting or a decider role to break the tie rather than letting debate circle indefinitely; if a group is prone to groupthink, where people quietly agree just to avoid conflict, a facilitator might require anonymous written input before any discussion starts so a dissenting view can surface without social pressure to conform.

3.1 Decision Quality and Ownership

A smooth decision process can still produce a weak decision or low ownership. Facilitators need to evaluate both decision quality and participant commitment.

Build learners' judgment about decision quality, ownership, and neutrality needed to support a well-facilitated decision. Cover facilitation design factors that impact decision quality such as skipping straight to decision-making, failure to surface key dissent, only hearing the loudest participants, leaving people feeling overridden, or the facilitator taking ownership of the decision.

4.1 Facilitating Group Decision-Making

Designing a decision process on paper is different from actually running it with real people in the room. A facilitator can plan a perfectly reasonable approach, and still fumble it live if the group tries to skip a step to save time.

Build learners' ability to turn decision-design into practiced action. Cover how to recognize when the decision-design is falling apart, what is causing the challenge, and techniques on how to adapt in the moment that strengthen the outcome of the decision-making.

Journey Mapping Facilitation

Journey Mapping Facilitation is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to plan and facilitate journey-mapping sessions that create shared understanding, customer insight, and action across functions. The value of journey mapping is not the diagram itself; it is the facilitated process of bringing the right people and evidence together, surfacing different perspectives and assumptions, building a shared view of the customer's experience, and converting that understanding into prioritized action.

1.1 Journey Mapping Session Design

Journey-mapping quality is shaped before the session begins. If the purpose, customer, journey boundaries, evidence, participants, or desired output are unclear, even strong facilitation can produce a map that is too broad, assumption-heavy, or disconnected from a real decision.

Develop learners' ability to design a journey-mapping session strategically before facilitating it. Explore how to define the purpose and decision the session should support, choose the customer or actor and journey boundaries, determine whether the work is current-state, future-state, or both, distinguish evidence-based mapping from hypothesis mapping, select the right participants, prepare relevant customer evidence, and clarify the output or action expected after the session.

2.1 Stakeholder Dynamics in Journey Mapping

Journey mapping often brings together people from different functions who hold different pieces of the customer experience, different incentives, and different beliefs about what is happening. Hierarchy, defensiveness, dominant voices, or premature solutioning can distort the conversation and turn the workshop into an internal process debate.

Develop learners' ability to facilitate the social process of building a shared view of the customer journey. Explore how to balance participation, surface disagreement without forcing consensus, separate evidence from opinion, manage hierarchy and functional defensiveness, prevent premature solutioning, and use techniques such as silent generation, small-group work, or structured comparison to make multiple perspectives visible.

3.1 Customer–Evidence–Centered Facilitation

Journey mapping can easily drift from the customer's journey into the organization's process or assumptions about what customers think and feel. A confident internal opinion can fill gaps in the map even when the organization does not actually have customer evidence.

Develop learners' ability to keep the workshop grounded in the customer's experience and available evidence. Explore how to distinguish evidence, interpretation, assumption, and unknown; use customer quotes, behavioral data, Voice of the Customer input, observation, or other research appropriately; challenge unsupported claims; and treat evidence gaps as legitimate outputs that may require further research rather than invented certainty.

4.1 Journey Mapping Readiness for Action

A journey map has limited value if it ends as a visual artifact. Effective facilitation helps the group identify what matters most, distinguish isolated pain points from systemic issues, decide what still needs investigation, and create enough ownership, prioritization and clarity for action to continue after the session.

Develop learners' ability to close a journey–mapping process in a way that converts shared insight into movement. Explore identifying friction and moments that matter, clustering and prioritizing opportunities, distinguishing quick wins from systemic issues, identifying evidence gaps and dependencies, clarifying ownership and next steps, and connecting journey insights to the decision forums or improvement work that will carry them forward.

Group Communication

Group Communication is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for practitioners who regularly lead, participate in, or design group interactions, meetings, workshops, team discussions, and collaborative decision-making sessions.

1.1 Why Group Communication Is Different

Group settings introduce dynamics that do not exist in one-to-one communication.

Develop learners' ability to build an understanding of what makes group communication genuinely different from one-to-one conversation. Talking in a group adds pressures that may be amplified compared to one-to-one such as competing voices, uneven airtime, and the challenge of building understanding that the whole group actually shares,

2.1 Adapting Communication

A technique that works for a 5-person huddle can fall apart in a 30-person room, and a discussion that flows easily in person can lose nuance or momentum online. Group communication needs different handling as scale and format change.

Develop learners' ability to adjust communication approach based on group size, setting and energy (small vs. large, in-person vs. remote/hybrid). Cover ways to make shifts based on a group's collective energy and engagement.

3.1 Synthesis and Shared Meaning

A group can generate a lot of ideas and still leave the room without a shared sense of where it landed.

Develop learners' ability to pull together what a group has said into a clear picture the group can check and confirm. More talking doesn't automatically produce agreement.

4.1 Facilitating Group Dynamics

Without intentional facilitation, groups converge quickly on false agreement, missing perspectives and making weaker decisions. Prepared facilitation surfaces real thinking and builds decisions people actually own.

Cover the challenges that exist in group communication such as group think, lack of engagement, or dominant participation. Introduce techniques to facilitate group conversation in response to these dynamics in a psychologically safe way.

Listening and Inquiry

Listening and Inquiry is a 2–4 hours Specialized Credential that builds on the foundations introduced in the Communication Core Credential. This course is for practitioners who want to develop the quality of their attention and their use of questions as tools for deepening understanding, generating insight, and moving thinking forward. Effective listening and purposeful inquiry are among the highest-leverage communication skills in professional life, yet they are rarely taught with the depth and intentionality they deserve.

1.1 What Deep Listening Actually Requires

Hearing someone's words isn't the same as listening to what they mean, and everyone listens through personal filters and biases that quietly shape what they notice and miss.

Build the ability to distinguish deep listening from simply hearing words. Cover how personal filters and biases quietly shape what a listener notices and misses, so learners can recognize their own patterns and listen more deliberately. Skilled listeners pay attention not only to what is being said but also to emotions, values, intentions, and what remains unsaid. Developing this capability strengthens empathy and improves the quality of professional dialogue.

2.1 The Architecture of Purposeful Questions

Questions are among the most powerful tools available, yet most people use a narrow repertoire by default asking closed, leading, or rhetorical questions without recognizing the effect this has on the conversation

Build the ability to recognize and distinguish between different question types such as open vs. closed, leading, or stacked/compound questions. Understand how different question types shape and steer a conversation. Build awareness of the learner's default questioning patterns and the contexts in which those patterns serve or limit effective inquiry.

3.1 Balancing Listening and Inquiry

Listening and inquiry do not operate the same way across all professional contexts. The approach that serves a one-to-one coaching conversation differs from what is needed in a group problem-solving session, a stakeholder alignment meeting, or a difficult feedback exchange.

Build the ability to read a conversation for which mode it actually calls for at a given moment, rather than defaulting to a single habitual style. Cover how to balance listening and inquiry by appropriately shifting between asking questions, listening deeply, and contributing perspectives based on the needs of the conversation.

4.1 Reflective Listening and Inquiry Practice

Listening and inquiry are skills that develop over time through deliberate practice and honest reflection.

Build the habit of evaluating your own listening and inquiry practice, rather than repeating it unexamined. Assess depth of attention, quality of presence, and the actual impact of inquiry on the people and conversations involved. Explore the risk of not evaluating your listening and inquiry practices.

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