



Learning Outcomes

Power & Responsibility

Core & Specialized Credentials

International Certification Alliance

Version 1.0 —August 2026



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 Power & Responsibility 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

Power & Responsibility Core

Power is present in every professional interaction, whether or not it is named. It shapes whose ideas get heard, whose requests get prioritized, who can act, and who is expected to accommodate whom. Tomorrow-Ready professionals need to understand how power works, recognize the power available to them regardless of title, and develop the agency to act on that power with judgment. This is an 8-hour Core Credential within the Influence & Interpersonal Dynamics Skill Area, for anyone who works within an organization, regardless of role or seniority.

1. Understanding What Power Actually Is

1.1 Sources of Professional Power

Power comes from more than formal authority. Expertise, relationships, information, credibility, access to resources, and positional authority each create influence, and each carries different strengths, limits, and risks.

Build learners' understanding of the main sources of professional power and how different sources create different forms of influence. Explore how power can come from role, expertise, information, relationships, credibility, access, or control of resources, and why relying on one source alone can create blind spots.

1.2 Formal and Informal Power

Formal structures show reporting lines and assigned authority, but they do not fully reveal who shapes decisions, controls access, or creates dependencies. Informal power often determines how work actually moves.

Develop learners' ability to distinguish formal authority from informal influence and to notice the relationships, dependencies, access, and credibility that shape power in practice. Include both internal and external stakeholders where relevant.

1.3 Personal Sources of Power

Professionals often underestimate the power available to them when they do not hold a senior title. Expertise, relationships, information, credibility, and proximity to the work can still create meaningful influence.

Help learners develop an accurate view of the power available in their current role rather than equating power only with hierarchy. Explore how underestimating one's power can lead to unnecessary deference or inaction.

2. Agency: Acting on the Power You Have

2.1 Understanding Agency

Having power means having some ability to affect what happens, but that ability is often confused with formal authority or complete control. People can have meaningful agency even when they cannot make the final decision.

Develop a practical understanding of agency as the capacity to take meaningful action within a situation. Clarify its relationship to authority, control, influence, responsibility, accountability, and ownership without treating those terms as interchangeable or requiring one universal definition.

2.2 Recognizing the Boundaries of Your Agency

Agency is neither unlimited freedom nor helplessness. In most situations, some things can be controlled directly, some can be influenced, some can be initiated or challenged, and some require escalation or another person's authority.

Develop learners' ability to accurately locate their agency in a situation. Explore the difference between what they can decide, influence, initiate, question, or escalate, and where a genuine boundary of authority exists.

2.3 Acting With Agency

People sometimes surrender legitimate agency by waiting for permission, deferring automatically to hierarchy, or focusing on what they cannot control. Others overstep by acting as if influence gives them authority they do not have.

Build learners' judgment and confidence to act where they have legitimate agency while respecting real boundaries. Explore responsible initiative, speaking up, challenging assumptions, proposing action, taking ownership of follow-through, and escalating without simply handing the problem away.

3. Exercising Power Responsibly

3.1 Accountability, Learning, and Consequences

When outcomes go poorly, accountability is often treated either as assigning blame or as imposing consequences. Both can miss its more useful purpose: making commitments and outcomes visible enough to learn from them, adjust behavior, and improve future action. Accountability also weakens when explanation becomes deflection and people focus only on what others did.

Develop learners' understanding of accountability as being answerable for commitments, choices, and consequences in a way that supports both responsibility and learning. Distinguish accountability from blame or punishment, while recognizing that consequences may still be appropriate. Explore how effective accountability examines what was controlled, what could be influenced, what was genuinely outside someone's reach, what can be learned, and what should change next.

3.2 Intent, Impact, and Responsibility

People often judge themselves by their intent while others experience the impact of their actions. Good intentions can explain a choice, but they do not erase its effects, especially when power differences amplify the consequences for others.

Develop learners' ability to distinguish intent from impact and to respond responsibly when the effect of an action differs from what was intended. Explore foreseeability, listening to affected parties, acknowledging impact without abandoning context, and choosing repair or adjustment when appropriate.

3.3 Effects of Power on Behavior and Judgment

Holding power can affect empathy, confidence, risk-taking, attention, and perspective without the power-holder noticing. People with more influence may also receive less candid feedback, making distorted judgment harder to detect.

Build learners' awareness of how power can influence behavior and judgment and why good intent alone does not prevent those effects. Explore common effects such as overconfidence, reduced perspective-taking, greater risk tolerance, or assuming silence means agreement.

3.4 Responsible Use and Misuse of Power

Power is often used well or poorly through ordinary choices rather than dramatic acts. Responsible use may require exercising authority clearly, declining to use available leverage, saying no upward, or avoiding actions that silence, coerce, or unfairly shift costs to others.

Develop learners' judgment for distinguishing responsible use, misuse, and appropriate restraint of power. Explore proportionality, transparency, legitimate purpose, the effect on lower-power parties, and situations where not using available power is the more responsible choice.

3.5 Practices That Keep Power Accountable

Understanding the risks of power does not automatically prevent them in the moment or over time. Under pressure people can default to hierarchy or certainty, while repeated success can gradually reduce challenge and outside perspective.

Develop learners' ability to use both immediate and ongoing practices that keep their use of power visible and correctable. For example, techniques such as pausing, seeking dissent, checking who is affected, inviting challenge, reflecting on intent versus impact, using outside perspective, and monitoring recurring patterns or blind spots.

3.6 Building and Sharing Power with Others

Responsible power is not only about restraint or self-control. It can also mean deliberately increasing another person's access, authority, visibility, information, expertise, or opportunity to influence decisions.

Extend learners' understanding of responsible power to include creating agency for others. Explore practices such as sharing information and credit, opening access to decision forums, sponsoring others, delegating meaningful authority, and creating space for lower-power voices.

SPECIALIZED CREDENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

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.

Leading Without Authority

Leading Without Authority is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who need to guide, influence, or mobilize people who do not report to them—cross-functional partners, matrixed teams, peers, external collaborators, or people with more seniority. As organizations become more networked and interdependent, leadership increasingly depends on voluntary cooperation rather than positional control.

1.1 What Earns Cooperation without Formal Authority

Without formal authority, people cannot rely on compliance. Cooperation depends on whether others see value in contributing, trust the person asking, and believe the work connects to something that matters to them.

Establish what creates voluntary cooperation when positional authority is absent. Explore the difference between compliance and commitment, and help learners understand the other person's motivations, interests, priorities, and perceived value—essentially, what makes participation worthwhile from their perspective.

2.1 Building and Sustaining Credibility and Relationship Capital

Influence without authority depends heavily on the quality of the relationships around the work. Expertise and reliability build credibility, while reciprocity and social capital develop through repeated exchanges of help, access, information, trust, and follow-through. Those assets can also erode through inconsistency, overreach, poor follow-through, or perceived self-interest.

Develop learners' ability to build and consciously maintain the relational foundation that makes informal influence possible. Explore credibility through expertise, reliability, integrity, and follow-through; reciprocity as the give-and-take that sustains working relationships; and social capital as the trust, access, goodwill, and connections that can be mobilized across a network. Include reflection on why a person's informal influence is currently working or not working, and what behaviors are strengthening or eroding it.

3.1 Adapting Influence to People and Context

People respond to different forms of influence depending on what they care about, the relationship, the situation, and the decision being shaped. A single influence style is unlikely to work equally well across stakeholders.

Develop learners' ability to choose an influence approach based on the stakeholder, context, desired outcome, and what the other person values. Explore approaches such as framing, evidence, values, reciprocity, social proof, and relationship-based influence while distinguishing ethical persuasion from manipulation.

4.1 Mobilizing Work You Do Not Control

Leading across functions or organizational boundaries requires more than persuading one person. People with different priorities, reporting lines, and dependencies need enough shared clarity and commitment to move together without a common boss directing the work.

Develop learners' ability to mobilize coordinated action across boundaries. Build on the original coordination focus by covering shared outcomes, ownership, commitments, dependencies, decision clarity, coalition-building, and lightweight coordination practices that support progress without taking authority away from others.

Navigating Competing Interests

Navigating Competing Interests is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who need to make progress when stakeholders have different goals, incentives, constraints, and levels of influence. Formal structures and decision processes rarely tell the whole story: outcomes are also shaped by informal relationships, unwritten rules, dependencies, alliances, and interests that may form well before a formal meeting or approval point. As organizations become more networked, cross-functional, and interdependent, Tomorrow-Ready professionals need to understand how work and decisions actually move through the organization without becoming politically naive or manipulative.

1.1 Reading the Informal Landscape

Formal roles and decision processes rarely show the full picture of how work actually gets done. Informal relationships, access, credibility, unwritten norms, prior commitments, and informal vetoes can shape an outcome before the formal decision point.

Develop learners' ability to read the informal organizational landscape around an initiative or decision. Explore how to distinguish the formal process from the way influence actually moves, including who matters, who has access, what unwritten rules shape behavior, and where support or resistance may form.

2.1 Understanding Competing Interests and Dependencies

Stakeholders can support the same organizational goal while still facing different incentives, risks, timelines, or dependencies. When these differences are treated simply as resistance or misalignment, the real source of tension is often missed.

Build learners' ability to look beneath stated positions and identify the interests, incentives, constraints, and dependencies shaping stakeholder behavior. Explore why competing interests can be legitimate, how control of resources or information creates leverage, and how one group's choices can constrain another group's options.

3.1 Alliances, Sequencing and Decision Pathways

Support for an initiative is often built before the formal decision point. Who is engaged, in what sequence, and when concerns are surfaced can materially affect whether an issue gains momentum, stalls, or arrives at a decision meeting already decided in practice.

Develop learners' ability to build support and deliberately shape how an issue moves through the organization. Cover purposeful alliances, coalition-building, stakeholder sequencing, pre-wiring, timing, surfacing opposition early, and understanding when the formal meeting is only one part of the real decision process.

4.1 Ethical Navigation of Competing Interests

Skillfully navigating organizational interests does not require manipulation, but it does require judgment about trade-offs, transparency, advocacy, and whose costs or priorities are being pushed aside. Political skill can serve shared goals or narrow self-interest.

Develop learners' ability to navigate competing interests effectively while maintaining clear ethical boundaries. Explore legitimate advocacy versus manipulation, transparency and selective disclosure, reciprocity, pressure, trade-offs, and how to test whether an approach is serving the organization rather than only personal advantage.

The Ethical Use of Power

The Ethical Use of Power is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to go deeper into what it actually takes to hold power responsibly, whether that power comes from title, expertise, relationships, or information. This course extends the Core's introduction to the psychological effects of power into a sustained practice of ethical self-scrutiny, examining the specific ways power can be misused, often without the power-holder recognizing it, and what structural and personal practices guard against it.

1.1 Patterns of Power Misuse

Power misuse often appears through repeated everyday behaviors rather than one dramatic event. Taking credit, withholding information, silencing challenge, favoritism, retaliation, or shifting costs to lower-power people can create significant cumulative harm.

Build learners' ability to recognize both obvious and subtle patterns of power misuse in professional settings. Explore how misuse can occur through direct action, omission, process, control of information, exploitation of dependency, or the use of status to suppress challenge.

2.1 Firm and Abusive Uses of Power

Firm decisions, boundaries, refusals, or performance expectations can be legitimate uses of power even when others dislike the outcome. Ethical use of power does not require avoiding discomfort or making every decision consensual.

Develop learners' judgment for distinguishing legitimate firmness from abusive or coercive use of power. Explore factors such as legitimate purpose, proportionality, transparency, process fairness, appropriate voice, the use of leverage, and impact on lower-power parties. Emphasize that power can be exercised decisively and still remain ethical.

3.1 Accountability Practices for Ethical Power

Self-monitoring is not always enough because power can reduce access to candid feedback and make one's own choices feel increasingly justified. Stronger safeguards make the use of power more visible, challengeable, and correctable.

Develop learners' ability to create accountability practices around their own use of power. Explore safe challenges, dissenting perspectives, transparent decision criteria, outside review, feedback from lower-power stakeholders, relevant ethical or professional standards, and other mechanisms that reduce the risk of unchecked judgment.

4.1 Responding to Power Misuse

Responding to another person's misuse of power can involve personal risk, incomplete information, unequal status, unclear channels, and uncertainty about consequences. Responsible action needs to account for both the harm and the real constraints.

Build learners' ability to determine a responsible response when they observe or become aware of power misuse. Explore options such as direct challenge, supporting the affected person, documenting concerns, seeking advice, escalating, or using formal channels, while considering evidence, proportionality, safety, and the limits of personal intervention.

Negotiation and Influence

Negotiation and Influence is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who need to reach workable agreements, shape decisions, and move people toward action in contexts where they may have limited formal authority. Negotiation and influence are not the preserve of sales professionals or senior leaders: they are everyday professional capabilities required any time someone needs to align stakeholders, secure resources, navigate competing interests, or advocate effectively for a position or a person.

1.1 Negotiation Preparation

Negotiations often go poorly before the conversation even begins because the parties have not clarified what they need, what the other side may value, what alternatives exist, or where their real leverage comes from.

Develop learners' ability to prepare deliberately for a negotiation rather than relying on improvisation. Explore positions and underlying interests, desired outcomes, BATNA—the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement—walk-away conditions, sources of leverage, relevant information, stakeholders, and the process or sequence that may shape the negotiation.

2.1 Creating and Claiming Value

Negotiation is not only about splitting the difference. Some situations create opportunities for win-win outcomes by expanding the value available through different priorities, trades, or options, while other situations require protecting one's own interests and deciding how value will be divided.

Develop learners' ability to distinguish creating value from claiming value and to use both appropriately. Explore how win-win outcomes differ from simple compromise, how to uncover differences in priorities, generate options, package issues, make trade-offs, protect important interests, use concessions deliberately, and recognize when a more collaborative or competitive approach fits the situation.

3.1 Negotiation–Specific Ethical Influence

A sound “win-win” proposal does not influence people on its own. How an issue is framed, what questions are asked, what evidence or objective criteria are used, and how options and concessions are presented can materially affect how the negotiation unfolds. These choices are also expressions of power because they can shape what others perceive as possible, valuable, or reasonable.

Develop learners' ability to use influence deliberately and responsibly within a negotiation without turning this credential into a general persuasion class. Explore framing, purposeful questions, objective criteria, persuasive rationale, anchoring where appropriate, proposal sequencing, packaging, concessions, and adapting to the counterpart's responses. Connect these practices to Power & Responsibility by examining the ethical use of leverage and the difference between influence that preserves genuine choice and influence that becomes manipulative or coercive.

4.1 Agreement Quality, Commitment and Relationship Impact

A negotiation is not successful simply because someone says yes. Agreements can fail when commitments are unclear, implementation support is weak, trust has been damaged, or one party agreed only because of pressure in the moment.

Develop learners' ability to evaluate and strengthen negotiated outcomes for agreement quality, clarity of commitments, implementation viability, relationship impact, and ethical process. Explore the difference between genuine agreement and surface compliance, what should be documented or clarified, whether value was unnecessarily left on the table, and when revisiting the conversation is better than claiming a short-term win.

EQ for People Managers

EQ for People Managers is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who hold formal responsibility for the performance and development of others. Learners develop the ability to recognize how managerial authority changes the emotional weight of their behavior, understand how their reactions influence team climate and psychological safety, use EQ effectively in high-stakes manager–employee interactions, and respond constructively when employees raise concerns, disagree, admit mistakes, or take other interpersonal risks. The credential emphasizes using empathy and emotional awareness without losing clarity, accountability, or managerial responsibility.

1.1 Emotional Demands of People Management

Formal authority changes the emotional and relational dynamics of work. A manager's words, reactions, attention, and decisions often carry more weight because they can affect opportunity, performance, workload, recognition, and belonging.

Develop learners' understanding of how formal authority changes the emotional demands of professional relationships. Consider how employees may interpret manager behavior differently because of the power differential, how managers' own expectations and reactions can influence their behavior, and how managers can remain aware of both their own emotional experience and the greater impact their behavior may have on others.

2.1 Manager EQ and Team Climate

Employees learn what is safe, valued, and risky by watching how managers respond to questions, disagreement, mistakes, uncertainty, and emotion. Repeated manager behavior can shape the emotional climate of the team.

Develop learners' ability to recognize the ripple effects of manager EQ on team climate. Examine how consistency, reactivity, curiosity, emotional attunement, defensiveness, and responses to challenge can amplify or stabilize emotional dynamics and influence whether people speak honestly, ask for help, raise concerns, or withdraw. Reinforce that managers do not control team climate alone; their authority nonetheless gives their behavior disproportionate influence.

3.1 EQ in High–Stakes Manager Interactions

Performance concerns, accountability, change, conflict, and disappointing decisions can create emotional pressure for both managers and employees. Formal authority raises the stakes because the manager may need to maintain clarity and responsibility while responding to strong emotion.

Develop learners' ability to use EQ when managerial responsibility and emotional intensity are both high. Explore ways to notice and regulate their own reactions, acknowledge the employee's experience without losing clarity or accountability, distinguish empathy from agreement or avoidance, and make deliberate choices about when to listen, clarify, set a boundary, make a decision, or continue the conversation later.

4.1 Manager Responses and Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is shaped by what happens when someone takes an interpersonal risk such as raising a concern, admitting a mistake, disagreeing, asking for help, or challenging an idea. A manager's response can make similar behavior more or less likely in the future.

Develop learners' ability to respond constructively when employees take interpersonal risks. Examine how emotional regulation, curiosity, acknowledgment, defensiveness, punishment, dismissal, or overreaction can shape future candor; distinguish psychological safety from comfort or lack of accountability; and practice responses that keep it possible to speak honestly while still addressing performance, standards, or consequences when needed.

Peer and Reverse Mentoring

Peer and Reverse Mentoring is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to create mentoring relationships in which learning and value flow in more than one direction. Learners explore the distinct dynamics of peer and reverse mentoring, including how differences in experience, role, identity, and organizational power can shape participation and learning. They develop judgment about whether value, responsibility, and learning are genuinely shared; establish clear agreements that support voluntary participation, confidentiality, and psychological safety; and practice peer and reverse mentoring in ways that preserve mutual ownership and agency.

1.1 Peer and Reverse Mentoring

Developmental value does not have to flow from a more senior person to a more junior one. Peer and reverse mentoring can create mutual learning across differences in experience, role, generation, identity, or perspective. While both can be reciprocal, reverse mentoring may involve more pronounced differences in organizational power.

Develop learners' understanding of peer and reverse mentoring as distinct approaches that can create reciprocal development rather than simply reversing traditional advice-giving. Build learners' capacity to recognize how both participants can contribute knowledge, perspective, challenge, access, and learning; distinguish peer mentoring from reverse mentoring and both from traditional hierarchical mentoring; and preserve shared responsibility for the relationship without assuming that participants bring the same kind of power or experience.

2.1 Mutual Value and Shared Responsibility

Reverse mentoring can become tokenizing or extractive when one participant is expected to represent a group, educate a more powerful colleague, or carry most of the learning burden without meaningful development in return.

Develop learners' ability to assess whether peer and reverse mentoring relationships create meaningful development for both participants without assuming equal or identical contributions. Build learners' capacity to examine what each participant hopes to learn or contribute; who is expected to do the emotional, educational, or relational work; whether one person is being treated as a representative of an identity or group; and whether the relationship supports mutual learning without making one person responsible for another's awareness or development.

3.1 Psychological Safety and Confidentiality

Peer and reverse mentoring can involve unusual or uneven power dynamics, particularly when a reverse mentor has less organizational power than the person they are mentoring. Clear expectations about purpose, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and boundaries help both participants contribute honestly and make informed choices about the relationship.

Develop learners' ability to establish peer and reverse mentoring relationships that support candor, psychological safety, and shared ownership. Build learners' capacity to clarify purpose, mutual expectations, confidentiality and its limits, voluntary participation, how differences in organizational power will be handled, what each person is and is not responsible for teaching, and how either participant can raise concerns, change the relationship, or step away without undue consequence.

4. Peer and Reverse Mentoring in Practice

Effective peer and reverse mentoring require more than good intentions. Participants need to listen and inquire across differences, contribute perspective without dominating the exchange, and notice how power affects who speaks, challenges, teaches, or defers.

Develop learners' ability to engage effectively in peer and reverse mentoring conversations that create mutual learning and preserve agency. Build learners' capacity to listen and inquire across differences, contribute relevant perspectives without dominating the exchange, notice how power affects participation, share responsibility for learning, and preserve each participant's ability to challenge assumptions, set boundaries, and choose what they take from the conversation.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic Leadership is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for people managers who want to lead with greater clarity, integrity, and consistency. Learners clarify the values and purpose that guide their leadership, examine how their intentions are experienced by others, identify gaps between stated values and actual behavior, and make deliberate leadership choices that balance personal principles, context, and responsibilities to others. The credential reinforces that authentic leadership is not about leading one fixed way, but about adapting appropriately while remaining grounded in what matters.

1.1 Leadership Values and Purpose

Authentic leadership begins with clarity about what matters and what guides leadership choices. Without that clarity, leaders can default to habit, organizational pressure, or others' expectations without recognizing the trade-offs they are making.

Develop learners' ability to clarify the values and sense of purpose that guide how they want to lead. Distinguish meaningful leadership values from aspirational labels, explore how values influence priorities and choices, and recognize that values can come into tension with one another or with organizational expectations.

2.1 Leadership Intent and Impact

Leaders often judge themselves by intention, while others experience their words, decisions, priorities, and repeated behavior. Gaps between intent and impact can weaken trust and credibility even when intentions are positive.

Develop learners' ability to examine how leadership values and intentions become visible through behavior and how those behaviors may be experienced by others. Consider the signals created by decisions, communication, follow-through, use of authority, and responses under pressure; distinguish intention from impact; and use feedback or other evidence to test assumptions about how they are showing up.

3.1 Values–Behavior Alignment

Leadership credibility is strengthened when behavior consistently reflects stated values and weakened when repeated choices contradict them. Alignment becomes especially difficult when pressure, competing priorities, or organizational expectations create real trade-offs.

Develop learners' ability to recognize alignment and misalignment between stated leadership values and actual behavior. Examine moments where pressure, incentives, conflict, competing responsibilities, or fear may pull behavior away from stated values; consider the consequences of that gap for others; and distinguish authentic leadership from simply acting on personal preference.

4.1 Values–Aligned Leadership Choices

Authentic leadership is demonstrated through choices, particularly when values, relationships, performance needs, and organizational pressures compete. Alignment does not mean choosing the easiest or most personally comfortable option.

Develop learners' ability to translate leadership values into deliberate action in complex situations. Consider competing values and responsibilities, identify where adaptation is appropriate without abandoning what matters, make a leadership choice that is consistent with their principles and role obligations, and explain how they would communicate or act on that choice with integrity.

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.

Decision-Making Delegation

Decision-Making Delegation is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to develop their ability to determine who should make a decision, at what level of authority, and how to communicate that delegation clearly.

1.1 Delegation Foundations

Understanding the context and factors of a decision determines if the decision can or should be delegated.

Build learners' understanding of delegation as a deliberate choice about who decides, when, and how, and of what goes wrong when delegation is left implicit. Explore the elements of a decision, such as the stakes, reversibility, and complexity, that impact delegation.

2.1 Understand Delegation Readiness

A delegate needs the context to understand why the decision matters, the skill to reason it through, and the information to act on. Where one of those is missing, delegation is still possible with appropriate support.

Develop learners' ability to analyze a decision's elements alongside a delegate's readiness, so the delegation decision itself is evidence-based rather than assumed. Cover how delegation often breaks down because the decision's stakes, reversibility, or complexity were never weighed against the delegate's skill or experience. A high-stakes, low-reversibility decision handed to an under-prepared delegate, or a low-stakes decision over-controlled by the delegator both signal a fit problem, not a communication problem.

3.1 Engaging to Support Delegation

Delegating a decision does not mean disengaging from it. Stepping back risks the decision drifting from its intent, while staying too close takes the authority back.

Develop learners' ability to design ongoing engagement practices, such as reporting, validation, and escalation. These practices keep the delegator appropriately informed without eroding the delegate's authority. Cover the risk of not checking in and how decisions can drift from intent or the risk of over-monitoring and undermining the authority they granted.

4.1 Delegation Review Approach

Reviewing a delegated decision only by whether the outcome was favorable can hide unclear authority, scope creep, or a delegation level that didn't match the situation. Process review supports better delegation decisions in the future.

Develop learners' ability to assess the quality of a delegation process independently of the outcome of the decision it produced. Explain the risks of reviewing only the outcome of the decision. Cover how reviewing the process of the delegation (decision elements, delegate readiness, and delegation support) build the decision delegation skill.

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.

Cross-Boundary Collaboration

Collaboration becomes structurally harder when the people involved come from different functions or parts of the organization. They may have different mandates, definitions of success, incentives, and no shared authority to resolve tensions that arise.

1.1 Challenges of Cross-Boundary Collaboration

Cross-boundary collaboration faces structural challenges that are predictable and patterned. Understanding these structural challenges, rather than attributing them to personality or lack of effort, is essential for recognizing what cross-boundary collaboration actually requires.

Build an understanding of the specific structural demands that cross-boundary collaboration places on people such as no shared manager to resolve disputes, incentives pulling both sides away from the same outcome, competing priorities, and little to no informal hallway context and connections.

2.1 Cross-Boundary Alignment

Cross-boundary collaboration requires deliberate upfront work to build shared understanding: translating how each side defines success and priorities, aligning stakeholders across the boundary, and establishing explicit agreements about what the collaboration aims to accomplish and how you'll work together.

Build learners' ability to construct working agreements that address the structural demands of cross-boundary collaboration. Teach that effective cross-boundary working agreements surface and address items such as coordinating for cross-boundary interdependence, norms for competing priorities, addressing different risk tolerances, identifying cross-boundary communication channels and key stakeholders, balancing cross-boundary power dynamics, and how each party actually sees the purpose.

3.1 Joint Ownership in Cross-Boundary Collaboration

Cross-boundary work can produce a set of separate contributions that were never actually integrated, leaving no one with real ownership of the whole. When this happens, results are harder to sustain or adapt because the commitment was to a task, not a shared outcome.

Build the ability to distinguish genuine joint ownership from distributed task completion, and to assess what shaped the result in a cross-boundary effort. Help learners with the ability to tell the difference between a set of parallel deliverables and genuine joint ownership, and identify what in a given effort actually pushed toward one outcome or the other.

4.1 Sustaining Cross-Boundary Collaboration

Cross-boundary collaboration is not a state that, once achieved, maintains itself. Organizational priorities shift, team membership changes, and the pressures that pull teams back toward siloed working are constant.

Build learners' capacity to evaluate the health of an ongoing cross-boundary collaboration using structural and relational criteria, distinguishing surface-level functioning from the deeper conditions that determine sustainability. Consider factors such as measures of shared outcomes, coordination effectiveness, and organizational value created.

Inclusion & Belonging

Inclusion and Belonging is a 2–4 hour Specialized Credential for professionals who want to build working environments where every person can contribute fully, be seen accurately, and experience genuine belonging, not as a benefit extended by those with privilege, but as a structural and cultural condition that organizations create deliberately.

1.1 What Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Mean

Diversity, inclusion, and belonging get used interchangeably, but having a diverse team doesn't guarantee anyone actually feels able to contribute.

Build an understanding of how diversity, inclusion, and belonging differ, and what actually makes belonging possible. For example, a team can be demographically diverse on paper but that doesn't mean all of the various viewpoints and experience is being heard and included. But even when that is desired, full benefits depend on psychological safety, the sense that it's safe to speak up and take an interpersonal risk.

2.1 Everyday Exclusion and Bias

Everyday exclusion and bias erodes collaboration quietly, the cost shows up as disengagement and withheld ideas long before it shows up as an open conflict.

Build the ability to notice both obvious and easy-to-miss patterns of exclusion, including where bias plays a role. Exclusion usually shows up as small, repeated patterns such as who gets credit, whose voice gets airtime, or who does the invisible labor. Bias is only part of what drives it. Such as when the same person's idea gets credited to whoever restates it, or the same few people always ending up with the thankless coordination work nobody notices. Bias can drive some of these patterns, but not all of them; some come from habit, convenience, or structural defaults that have nothing to do with anyone's conscious or unconscious attitudes.

3.1 Inclusion Practices and Personal Commitment

Being aware that exclusion happens doesn't change anything on its own. It takes specific behaviors, including knowing how to respond when exclusion happens in front of you.

Build the ability to turn awareness of exclusion into practical action, both planned and in the moment. Most people can identify exclusion after the fact, but far fewer have a ready response for the moment someone gets talked over in a meeting. Introduce inclusion practices, personal commitments, and in the moment responses such as rotating who speaks first, checking in with quieter members before a decision is finalized, pausing before repeating an idea already voiced by someone else, or naming when exclusion is happening directly in the moment.

4.1 Inclusion Conditions and Lived Experience

An organization can believe its culture is inclusive while the people most at risk of exclusion experience something different. Good intent doesn't close that gap on its own.

Build the ability to assess inclusion by comparing what an organization says it values against what people actually experience. Help learners be able to diagnose where stated values and lived experience diverge and recommend both a structural change, such as revising how promotion decisions or credit for ideas get allocated, and a behavioral change, such as how meetings are run so quieter voices are actively drawn out rather than left to compete for airtime.

Conflict Across Difference

Standard conflict frameworks were largely developed from a single cultural vantage point and often assume a level playing field that does not exist in most organizations. When conflict crosses lines of identity, culture, or structural power, the dynamics change in ways that generic approaches do not account for. This 2–4 hour Specialized Credential equips practitioners to recognize and work constructively with those differences.

1.1 Culture, Identity, and Conflict Experience

Conflict is not a universal experience. Culture and social identity can shape how people experience conflict.

Build learners' understanding of how culture and identity shape conflict. Some examples of this context are how people perceive threat, express disagreement or concerns, interpret silence, and understand resolution. Help learners recognize how using a single conflict approach regardless of context risks misreading behavior, causing harm, and producing outcomes that feel fair to some parties and unjust to others.

2.1 Power Imbalance in Conflict

When parties have unequal organizational, social, or structural power, they may not have the same choices or risks in a conflict.

Teach learners to recognize power imbalances based on social identity, organizational role, or structural position and how they fundamentally change each party's perception of threat, available options, and how behavior is interpreted. Emphasize that neutral conflict approaches fail when power is unequal; direct engagement may be unsafe or inappropriate for the person with less power. Introduce practical alternatives such as documentation, seeking support, building safer conditions before engaging, or escalating when necessary.

3.1 Adapting Conflict Practice Across Difference

Awareness of difference is necessary but not sufficient. Awareness must lead to adapted practices.

Develop learners' ability to design conflict engagement approaches that are deliberately adapted to the identity, cultural, and power context of a specific situation rather than applying a standard framework uniformly. Examples of engagement approaches are adjusting how they listen, how they frame issues, how they create safety, and how they define a good outcome in ways that are genuinely responsive to the people in the room rather than performatively inclusive. Reinforce that approaches that assume equal voice can unintentionally reinforce the imbalance.

4.1 Equity and Effectiveness Across Difference

Engaging well across differences is not a skill that is mastered and set aside. It requires ongoing reflection on impact, willingness to receive feedback about how one's approach landed, and a commitment to adjusting practice when it causes harm, even unintentional harm.

Build learners' ability to evaluate conflict engagement for both effectiveness (did it produce a workable outcome that both parties can live with) and equity (did both parties have a genuine voice and agency in shaping the outcome). Introduce the need to remain open to feedback and adjust when an approach produces unintended inequity or harm.

SPECIAL THANKS

ICA would like to give special thanks to the contributors:

Kerri Sutey · Paulo Dias · Christina Hartikainen · Tricia
Broderick · Shane Hastie · Khalid Rabie · Mahmoud Ghaz