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E-learning Course

Module 2: e-courses for Microcredentials

Part 2.2 Analysis - identifying gaps and defining goals

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Analysis – identifying gaps and defining goals

Duration: 1 hour

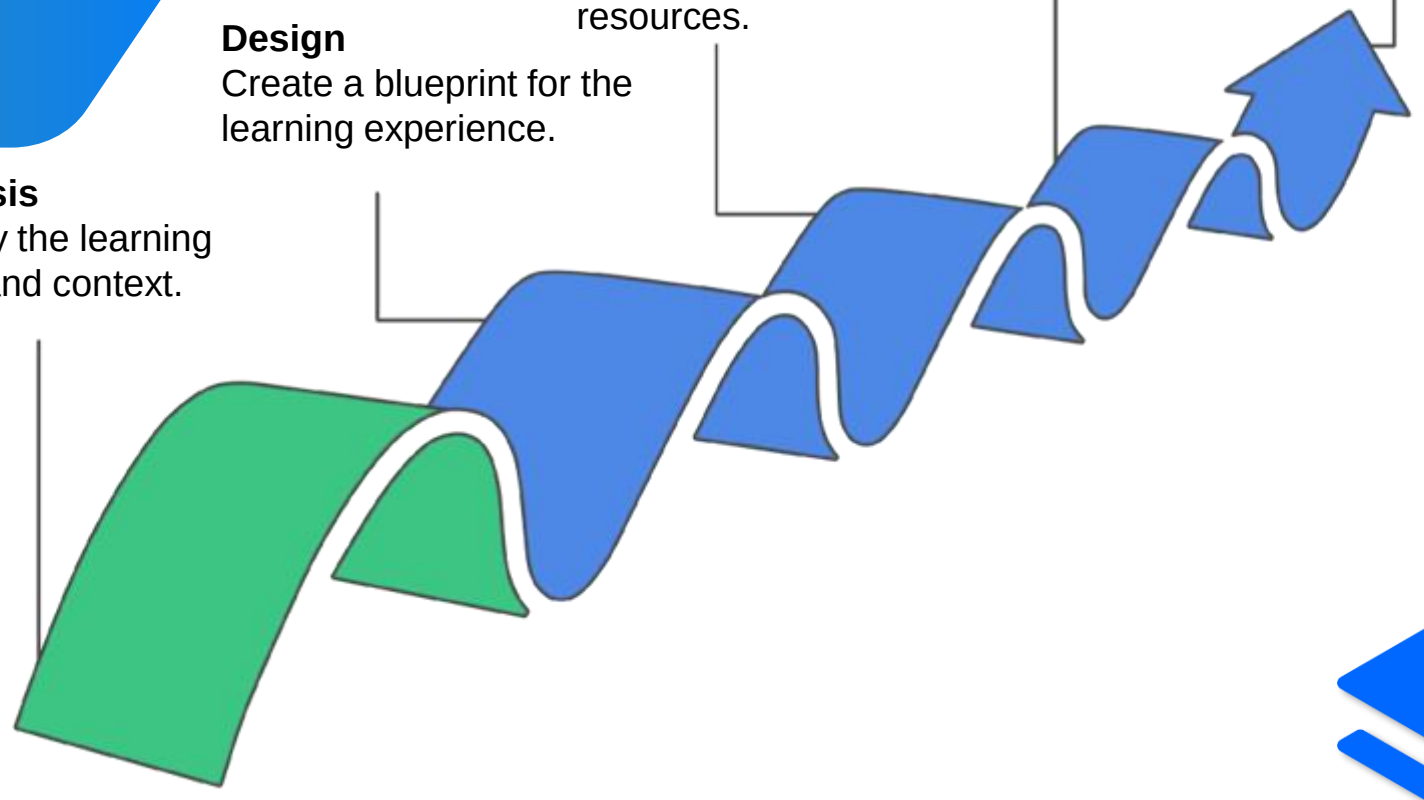
Evaluation
Assess the effectiveness of the learning experience.

Implementation
Deliver the learning experience to learners.

Development
Build the learning materials and resources.

Design
Create a blueprint for the learning experience.

Analysis
Identify the learning need and context.



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Needs analysis in instructional design

This Needs Analysis module is the first part of the ADDIE model, as it is applied to training courses and microcredential courses. It allows you to articulate what you want your learners to know and to ensure their microcredential is specific, measurable, and relevant. You will discover how to identify performance gaps, who your intended learners are, and design objectives aligned to industry or work competencies. Let's get started creating groundwork to design skill-based, effective learning experiences.

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Why conduct a needs analysis?

Microcredentials are precise, relevant, and outcome-oriented. Needs analysis makes it possible for you to be certain your course is delivering real-world skills that industry and learners value. It makes it possible for your design not to be generic but aim at specific gaps in knowledge or performance. Breaking down what is needed makes it possible for you to create useful, recognized, and result-driven courses, in effect making your microcredential more credible, focused, and successful both from a learner and industry perspective.



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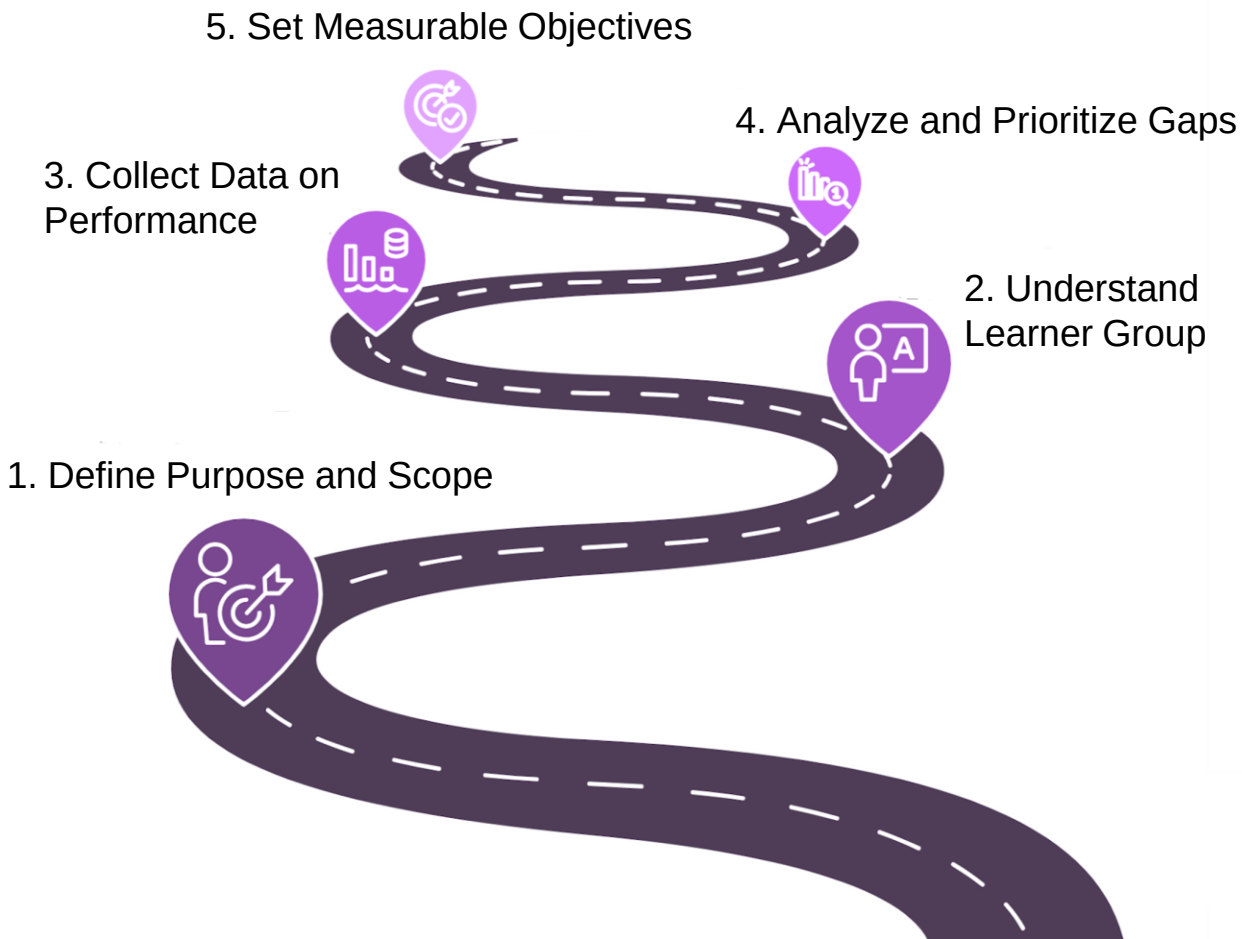
Five key steps in needs analysis

When designing a microcredential, your needs analysis should encompass these five stages:

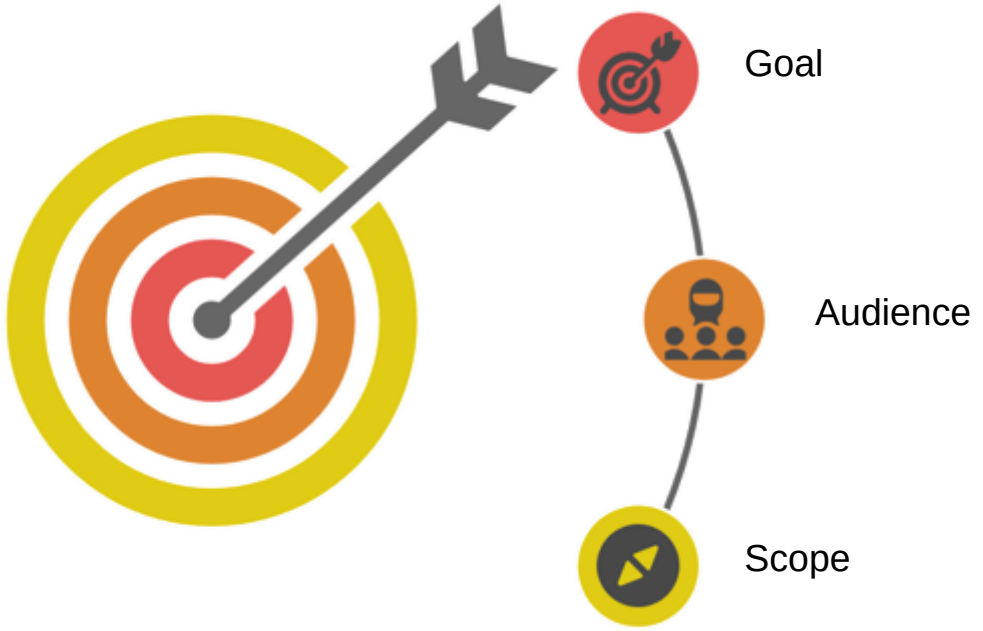


Every step makes your microcredential relevant for learners and credentialing requirements. Let's examine each step further so that you can design skill-specific, recognized microcredentials.

Step 1 – Define purpose and scope

Start by clarifying the purpose of the microcredential. What skill or competency should it validate? Who is the intended audience? What are its boundaries in terms of content? For example, a microcredential for “Basic Data Visualization in Excel” does not cover generic data science.

Having a compact, focused scope makes possible a successful conclusion in a brief, competency-based learning experience, a feature of high-quality microcredentials.



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Step 2 – Know your target learners

There are effective microcredentials to meet one specific learner profile. Consider their background:

- Are they career-upskillers, learners, or career-switchers?
- What is their previous knowledge or credentials?
- What is it for—advancement, hiring, or certification?

Knowing characteristics about your learners works to define course challenge, tone, and design. Microcredentials will be contextualized to them to be accessible, engaging, and immediately transferable to their personal or career development.

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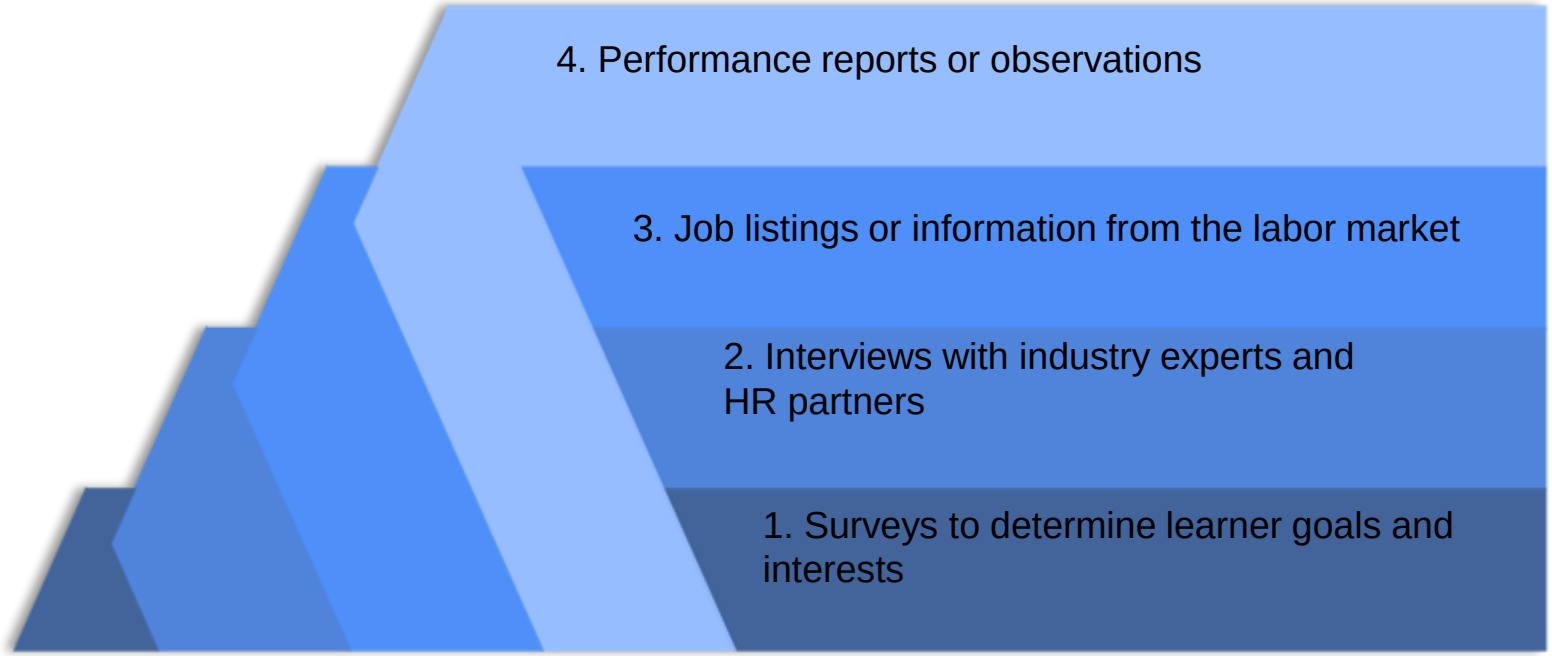
Step 3 – Collect data from the field

To ensure that your microcredential fills real needs, obtain evidence from multiple sources:



Microcredentials will be driven by in-demand skills. Real-world data from workplaces will help you to verify that information you will be producing will be necessary, reliable, and will have clear-value in careers or education paths.

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Effective data collection questions

Ask questions that connect to job tasks and learner aspirations:

- What tasks do you struggle with in your current role?
- What competencies would help you advance?
- Which tools or platforms do you use regularly?
- What certifications are valued in your field?

Framing your questions in terms of performance and opportunity ensures you design a microcredential that directly enhances employability, aligns with workplace expectations, and builds practical, demonstrable skills.

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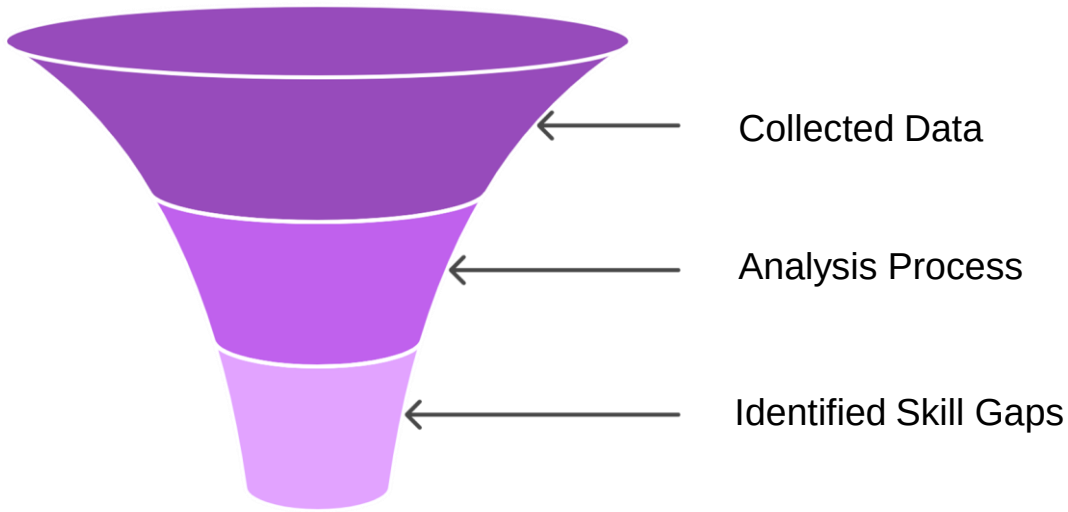
Step 4 – Analyze data for skill gaps

Once you've collected data, analyze it. Determine where specific skills are under-developed, where specific activities aren't performed well, and where trainees wish to perform better. Cross this data against competencies or job requirements. You're after specific, trainable needs. Microcredentials should address an explicit need “learners can't yet X” and this analysis should unpack exactly what that X is, and why it matters.



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Define the performance gap

A performance gap is the difference between what learners can currently do and what they are expected to do in a specific context. For example, learners may know basic Excel but cannot visualize trends with charts. That's a clear training opportunity. Only gaps that are skill- or knowledge-based and solvable through short, focused training should become microcredential content. This makes the credential practical and ensures measurable improvement in learner capability.



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Prioritize the right needs

Microcredentials, being short, will not be comprehensive so select carefully. Focus on needs that:

- Are industry standard or in line with specific job roles
- Have immediate application
- Are in great demand or popular among trainees
- Can be demonstrated in performance

Do not overwhelm content. Select 1–3 prioritized competencies. Focusing will enable you to deliver a focused learning experience and a credential that exhibits demonstrated, workplace-ready competencies to professionals or colleges.

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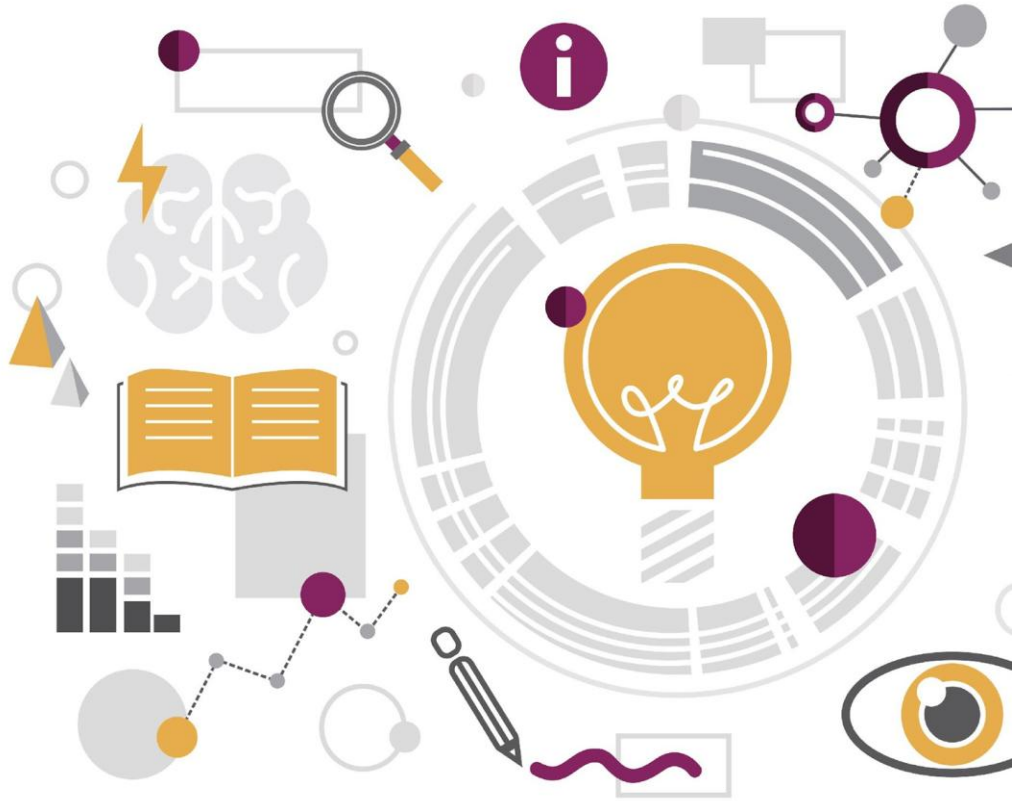
Step 5 – Define learning objectives

Convert priorities to explicit learning objectives. These include what trainees will be able to do once they acquire the microcredential. Use active verbs like create, apply, analyze, or design. Example: “Apply the VLOOKUP function in Excel to automate data searches”.

Objectives guide content, help you organize modules, and become the foundation upon which you create criteria for assessment, so your credential becomes competency-based and measurable.



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Writing SMART objectives



SMART objectives are:

- **Specific:** Focused on one skill or task
- **Measurable:** Observable or assessable
- **Achievable:** Realistic for your audience
- **Relevant:** Linked to the identified performance gap
- **Time-bound:** Can be completed within the microcredential timeline

Example: "*Within 2 hours, learners will create a bar chart in Excel from a given dataset and interpret the results*". This clarity keeps the learning focused and actionable.

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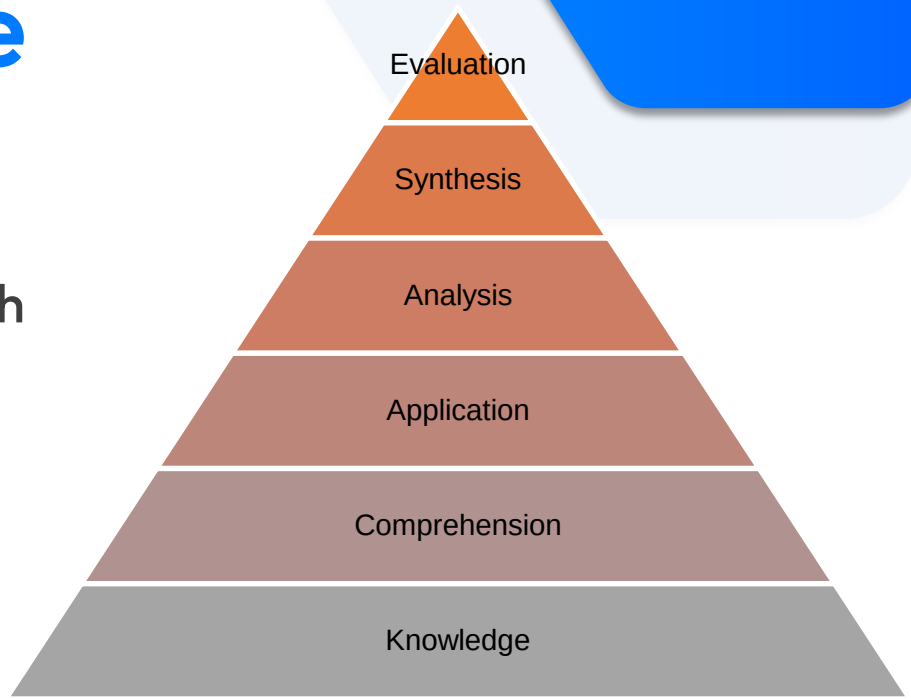
Use Bloom's Taxonomy to guide objectives



Use Bloom's Taxonomy to determine at which skill level you wish learners to be:

- Basic levels: Remember, Understand
- Mid levels: Apply, Analyze
- Higher levels: Evaluate, Generate

Microcredentials often target Apply and Analyze levels. Using Bloom's verbs like "compare," "demonstrate," or "design" ensures your objectives lead to observable performance, suitable for issuing a digital badge or microcredential.

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Summary – A strong start for strong credentials

Needs analysis ensures that your microcredential is specific, skill-oriented, and pertinent. In audience definition, data gathering in natural settings, definition of performance gap, and definition of SMART, Bloom-aware goals, you prepare the ground for a course that offers measurable value. This process step ensures that your microcredential is not just a course, but documentation of proficiency in action.

Let's move to the next process step, Design, where your ideas take tangible shape in an aligned learning plan.

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Additional Resources

Part	Title	Type	Duration	Link	Description
1	Mayer's 12 Principles of Multimedia Learning	website	30'	https://www.digitallearninginstitute.com/blog/mayers-principles-multimedia-learning	Mayer's 12 Principles of Multimedia Learning
2	Content for eLearning	Online video	30'	https://e-trainingcentre.gr/mod/page/view.php?id=2374	Content creation guidance
3	Content for eLearning	Online video	30'	https://e-trainingcentre.gr/mod/page/view.php?id=2376	Content creation guidance
4	Content for eLearning	Online video	30'	https://e-trainingcentre.gr/mod/page/view.php?id=2378	Content creation guidance
5	Principles on designing content for eLearning	Online video	30'	https://e-trainingcentre.gr/mod/page/view.php?id=2381	Content design guidance
6	Principles on designing content for eLearning	Online video	30'	https://e-trainingcentre.gr/mod/page/view.php?id=2382	Content design guidance
7	Authoring tools for eLearning	Online video	30'	https://e-trainingcentre.gr/mod/page/view.php?id=2384	Available authoring tools
8	Guidance for blended and online education programmes	Online manual	30'	https://e-xcellencelabel.eadtu.eu/e-xcellence-review/manual	This manual is to provide a set of benchmarks, quality criteria and notes for guidance against which blended and online education programmes

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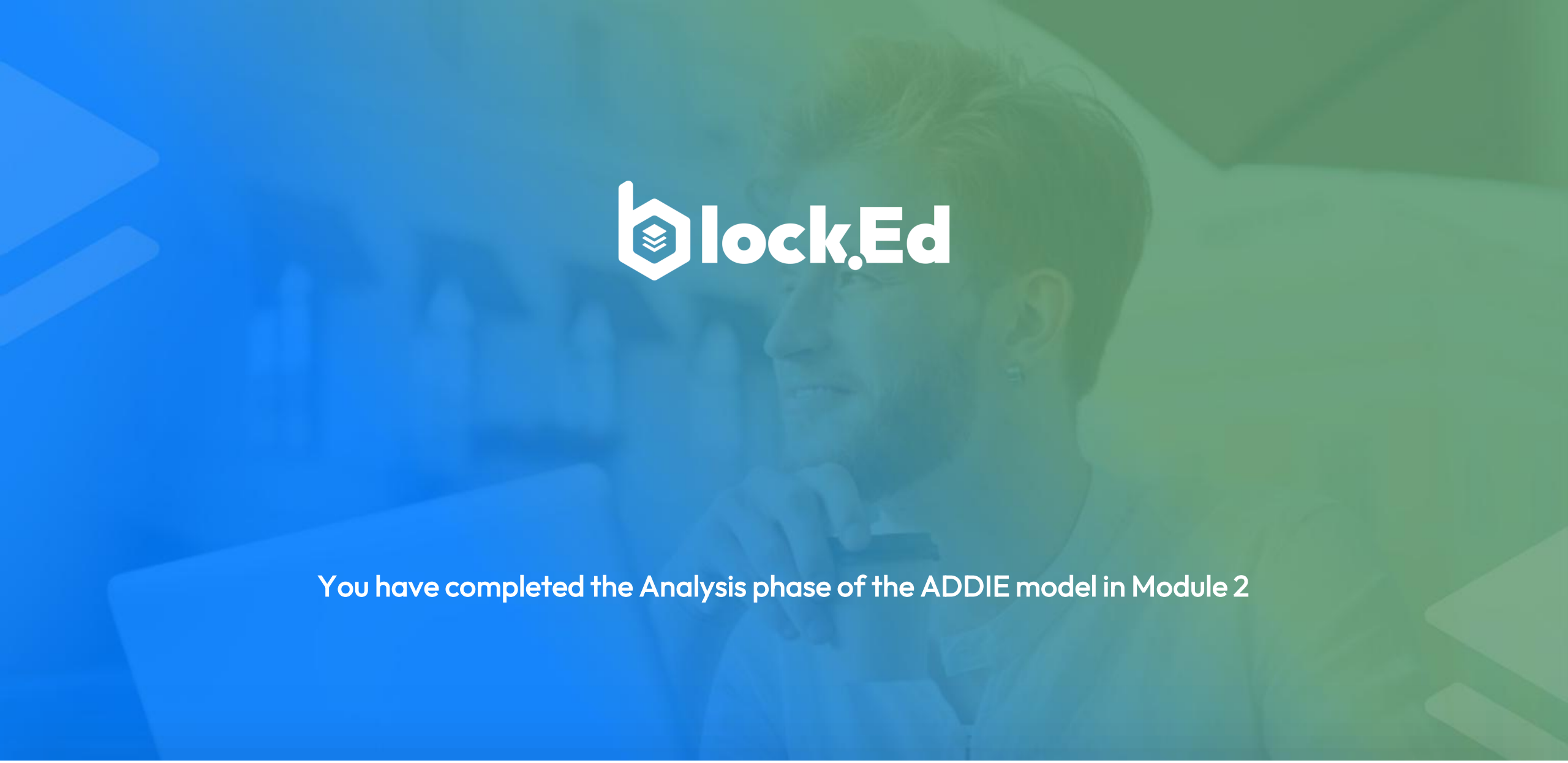

You have completed the Analysis phase of the ADDIE model in Module 2

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