

Needs Assessment and Learning Objectives

Every continuing medical education activity will have documented **needs assessment** data to justify the interests of the intended audience.

Needs assessment data are used to identify and analyze the continuing medical education needs of the identified target audience. Educational needs provide the reason for offering a specific CME activity. This might imply a physician practice gap, a gap in patient care, a deficit in knowledge, skills, and/or behavior of the target audience.

Documentation of needs data includes, but is not limited to –

- Evaluation summaries from previous CME activities
- Recent research articles describing changes in a field and/or the need to update practicing physicians
- Opinions and advice summaries from recognized experts
- New techniques, protocols, and clinical guidelines
- Written faculty perceptions and recommendations
- Physician survey summaries
- Medical audits and reviews
- Literature reviews or annotated bibliography of articles that indicate need for change or practice management
- Consensus reports from workshops and committees
- Self-assessments, noting how the information was collected and tabulated
- QI data

Every continuing medical education activity must have measurable **learning objectives** derived from the needs assessment. Learning objectives must indicate how the activity will increase the audience's medical knowledge and skills and, ultimately, improve patient care.

Use action verbs when writing educational objectives. Refer to the suggested list in this document.

Developing Learning Objectives

Example of Learning Objectives

Presentation: “Endovascular Thoracic Aortic Aneurysm Repair”

At the end of this conference, participants will be able to –

1. Evaluate patients with thoracic aortic aneurysms.
2. Determine the appropriate candidates for endovascular repair.
3. Summarize the latest developments in endovascular repair of thoracic aortic aneurysms.

Action Verbs for Writing Educational Objectives

*Verbs to **avoid** when writing learning objectives*

appreciate	have faith in	learn
believe	know	understand

Verbs that communicate application

apply	develop	locate	predict	restate	treat
choose	examine	operate	prescribe	review	use
demonstrate	illustrate	practice	report	select	utilize

Verbs that imply analysis

analyze	contrast	debate	differentiate	infer	question
appraise	criticize	detect	distinguish	measure	summarize

Verbs used to evaluate

assess	compare	decide	estimate	measure	recommend
choose	critique	determine	evaluate	rate	select

Verbs that impart skills

demonstrate	integrate	operate
diagnose	measure	record

Verbs that inform

cite	identify	name	quote	summarize
define	indicate	recognize	select	update
describe	list	record	state	write

Verbs that convey comprehension

assess	compare	describe	distinguish	express	predict
associate	contrast	differentiate	estimate	interpret	report
classify	demonstrate	discuss	Explain	locate	review