

**Westchester Academy of Medicine**

**Practice Gaps, Educational Needs and Learning Objectives**

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) requires that all educational activities be based on an identified gap in practice. A gap represents the difference between a Best Practice and Current Practice (the difference between a desirable or achievable state of practice and what currently exits). This is the method by which the learning objectives will be defined and measured. When you develop an educational activity for CME credit, you should look to describe:

* The overall reason for developing your activity, which should be presented as a professional gap that your activity will seek to close
* The educational needs that underlie the gap, which will determine the components of your activity
* The changes you expect to see in the learners’ knowledge/competence, performance or patient outcomes as a result of your activity (the learning objectives).

**Steps In Creating Your Gap**

1. **State the best practice** A best practice may be from a national guideline or consensus statement from a credible organization, peer-reviewed medical literature, or from the considered opinion of the expert-planner in the case when no published guideline exists. This becomes the end-goal for the activity.
2. **State the source used** that provided you with the best practice (i.e. article from peer reviewed journal, consensus statement or clinical guideline, etc.)
3. **State the current practice** of group of leaners to which your educational activity is targeted. You can determine this based on interviews (formal or informal) with members of the target audience, a published article that reports on findings from learners, a questionnaire or survey.
4. **State the source used** that provided you with current practice
5. **State the gap** to move your target audience from current practice to best practice. The gap should inform you of the type of results that are appropriate for the activity.

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| **Definitions**  **Competence**: Ability to apply knowledge to a practice-based situation, the degree to which participants show in an educational setting how to do what the CME activity intended them to be able to do  **Performance**: Skills, ability and strategies, learned during the activity, that is subsequently implemented in practice; the degree to which participants have implemented changes to their professional practice that resulted (in whole or in part) from the CME activity  **Patient**  **Outcomes:** A measured change in patient outcomes associated with the implementation of the knowledge and skills learned during the activity; the degree to which the health status of patients improves due to changes in the practice behavior of participants. |

1. **Prepare a learning objective** which will form the outline of the content of your activity and link the learner gap to the content. Learning objectives inform the learners of the result they can expect as participants in the activity.

**Types of Needs Assessment (Source)**

* **Inferred needs:**
  + New methods of diagnosis or treatment
  + Availability of new medication(s) or indications(s)
  + Development of new technology
  + Input from experts regarding advances in medical knowledge
  + Acquisition of new facilities or equipment
  + Legislative, regulatory or organization changes effecting patient care
* **Verbalized needs and interests**:
  + Requests submitted on participants activity evaluation forms
  + Formal surveys of potential participants
  + Informal comments
  + Patient problem inventories compiled by potential participants
  + Consensus of faculty members within a department or service area
* **Proven Needs (External Data Sources)**
  + Epidemiological data
  + Quality assurance/audit data
  + Re-credential review
  + Morbidity/Mortality
  + Statistics on infection control data
  + Surgical procedures statistics
  + National Guidelines, Best Practices
  + Professional society requirements
  + Journal articles/literature citations
  + New Media