

Identifying Needs, Desired Results, Learning Objectives, and Outcomes

Effective Continuing Medical Education (CME) at the Fertitta College of Medicine begins with a systematic approach to identifying educational needs, defining desired results, formulating learning objectives, and evaluating outcomes. This structured process ensures that CME activities are relevant, impactful, and aligned with our mission to serve the underserved and enhance health care through education.

Step 1: Identify Educational Needs

Begin by conducting a thorough needs assessment to uncover gaps in knowledge, competence, or performance among the target audience of health care professionals. Sources for identifying these needs may include:

- Clinical performance data
- Quality improvement initiatives
- Patient safety reports
- Peer-reviewed literature
- Feedback from previous CME activities
- Surveys of target audiences

Document each identified need clearly, providing evidence to support its relevance and urgency.

Step 2: Define Desired Results

For each identified need, articulate the desired results that the CME activity aims to achieve. Desired results are to be specific, measurable, and focused on improving patient care and patient outcomes:

- Knowledge (e.g., understanding of new clinical guidelines)
- Competence (e.g., ability to apply evidence-based practices)
- Performance (e.g., adherence to clinical protocols)
- Patient outcomes (e.g., reduced readmission rates)

These results will guide the development of the overall learning objectives for the activity and inform the evaluation strategy.

Step 3: Formulate Learning Objectives

Develop clear and concise learning objectives that align with the identified needs and desired results. Each objective is to:

- Be learner-centered
- Use action verbs to describe expected behaviors
- Be measurable and achievable within the scope of the activity

Examples:

- "Participants will be able to **describe** the latest advancements in diabetes management."
- "Attendees will be able to **apply** new surgical techniques in clinical practice."
- "Learners will be able to **evaluate** patient cases using updated diagnostic criteria."

Refer to the *Approved Terminology for Learning Objectives* for a selection of appropriate action verbs.

Step 4: Evaluate Outcomes

Post-activity evaluations are essential to determine the effectiveness of the CME activity. Assess whether the learning objectives were met and if the desired results were achieved. Evaluation methods may include:

- Pre- and post-tests
- Participant feedback surveys
- Follow-up assessments to measure changes in practice
- Analysis of clinical performance metrics.

Key Point: Use the evaluation data to inform future CME planning and to demonstrate the impact of educational activities on professional practice and patient care – this is required for ACCME reaccreditation.

For assistance with needs assessment, learning objective formulation, or outcome evaluation, please contact the Office of Continuing Medical Education at comcme@central.uh.edu.