

Professional Gap Analysis

Professional Practice Gap | Underlining Education Need | Evidence | Objectives

Professional Practice Gap

The process of planning begins with identifying when an educational intervention might be a desired intervention to address a change that has been made to a standard of care, a problem that exist in practice, or an opportunity for improvement. Professional practice gaps are not limited to clinical practice and may also exist in areas of professional work such as administration, education, and research.

The difference between the current state and the desired state of practice is the identified practice gap.



Problem: Difference between current state and desired state or opportunity for improvement.

The description summarizing the professional practice gap(s) should address what the problem is and why it is a problem. The problem is validated by the evidence.

[Who is affected and Where] + [What is happening to them and When] + [Why is this an issue]

Current State: Professional gap(s) of the healthcare team/members that the activity is based.

What are the healthcare team/members **currently doing or not doing** that is contributing to the problem?

Desired State: What the CE activity was designed to change in terms of learners' skills/strategy or performance of the healthcare team or patient outcomes.

Describe what the healthcare team **should be doing in practice** that would make improvement, reduce the gap, and/or help resolve the problem.

Description of the Gap, Current State, and Desired State *should not* include description of the education activity itself, the educational topics, or the speakers. The focus is on the analyzing the Professional Practice Gap.

Underlying Educational Need

A needs assessment is the process of determining what underlying education needs (knowledge, competency, or performance) are contributing to the professional practice gap. These needs should be targeted by the education.

When the professional practice gap has been identified, a needs assessment is conducted to determine the underlying educational needs of the target audience or healthcare team. A learning need is related to a deficit that would make an improvement, reduce the gap, and/or help resolve the problem.

Underlying educational need-what does the target audience not know, or what the target audience is not doing that is contributing to the professional practice gap.

Knowledge: the learner doesn't know something
(understanding)

Competency (skills/strategy): the learner does not know how to do something
(understanding + strategy about how to implement in practice)

Performance: the learner isn't doing something
(understanding + strategy + implementation in practice)



Underlying Education Need: A learning need is related to a deficit that would make an improvement, reduce the gap, and/or help resolve the problem. Learning needs can encompass one, two, or all three of these areas.

The identified needs should be targeted by the education.

Knowledge: understanding

What knowledge is the healthcare team/members are lacking that is contributing to the practice gap?

Competence (skills/strategy): understanding + strategy about how to implement in practice

What competencies are the healthcare team/members are lacking that is contributing to the practice gap?

Performance: understanding + strategy about how to implement in practice + implementation in practice

What is the healthcare team/members not doing in practice that is contributing to the practice gap?

Evidence

The analysis of the evidence forms the basis of a professional practice gap or the difference between the current state of practice and the desired state of practice.

Start by analyzing data that *validates* the educational activity. Data may be derived from:

Documented Evidence

- Survey results
- Documented input from stakeholders
- Outcomes of quality studies or performance improvement projects
- Evaluation feedback from previous activities
- Quality improvement data
- Other data

Evidence-based References

- Information available from the following organization/website such as AHRQ, CDC, NIH (organization/website must use current available evidence within past 2 years) *Include date retrieved.*
- Information available through peer-reviewed journal-resource.
- Clinical guidelines (example www.guidelines.gov)
- Expert Resource (Individual, Organization, Educational Institution, Book, Article, Website) *Identify resource. If individual, include credentials.*
- Textbook Reference
- Other

Evidence: Validates the practice-based problem.

Evidence should be from the last two years. As applicable, include date retrieved.

Objectives

Every program offering continuing education credits must have predetermined learning objectives. Rather than describe the topics to be covered, learning objectives should clearly define what the learners will know or be able to do as a result of participating in the educational activity. The objectives should address the underlying educational needs (knowledge, competency (skills/strategy), performance) that contribute to the professional practice gap.

When writing objectives:

- Focus on overarching or general knowledge and/or skills rather than details.
- Create statements that are learner focused rather than faculty/presenter focused.
- Focus on the learning that *results* from the course rather than describing the content.

Objectives should be observable, measurable, and use Bloom's Taxonomy. The taxonomy provides sample verbs for use in writing intended learning objectives. The 'knowledge' level deals with the most basic form of cognition-facts and information. 'Comprehension' challenges the learner to use the facts, and for 'application', the learner uses facts at a deeper level. The higher levels of the taxonomy includes 'analysis', 'synthesis', and 'evaluation'. It is those higher levels that are appropriate for educating licensed professionals and should be the goal in providing continuing education. When selecting a verb, consider its meaning in its application to what learners are to achieve by the educational activity.

Avoid using verbs that represent actions or concepts that are difficult to measure such as appreciate, be familiar with, comprehend, know, learn, and understand.

Don't use words like...	Use words like...
Know	List
Understand	Describe, Explain
Appreciate	Identify
Be aware of...	Design
Have a good grasp of...	Explain
Have a knowledge of...	Select
Realize the significance of...	Distinguish

Objectives: What should learners be able to do after the educational activity?

Objectives should address the underlying education need to close the gap between the current state and the desired state.

When determining the number of learning objectives that are appropriate for the educational activity, the following guidelines should be used:

- 2-3 learning objectives for 1-3 hours
- 3-4 learning objectives for 4-6 hours
- 5-6 learning objectives for 7-8 hours

Check the quality of learning objectives:

1. Do the learning objectives reflect appropriately all the intended outcomes?
2. Are they observable, measurable, and clearly defined?
3. Are they attainable by the learners and in the time available?
4. Do they reflect the educational activity?