Guidance for Writing Learning Outcomes

What is a learning outcome?

A learning outcome is the measurable outcome that you want the learner to be able to know, show and/or do as a result of the activity.

Why use the term learning outcomes?

- Clearly communicates the expectations for learning during the activity
- Improves alignment between assessments, instruction, and desired goal
- Outcomes lend themselves to assessment. You can test whether a learner has achieved an outcome and can demonstrate mastery of content or skills.

How are learning outcomes and learning objectives related?
- Outcomes are learner focused (What will the learner learn today?) vs. instructor focused (What will I teach today?)
- An objective is something you are trying to achieve. An outcome is something you have achieved.
- Imagine a wheel. Objectives are specific learning pieces (spokes) that lead the learner to an ultimate goal/purpose of the activity -- the learning outcome (wheel).

When do you establish/write a learning outcome?

A learning outcome is established early in the planning stages of an educational activity because it sets the strategy for instruction and assessment.

How many learning outcomes are required for an activity?

There is no required number of learning outcomes for an educational activity. A single learning outcome may be sufficient for shorter activities (e.g., a one-hour webinar). A larger event like a conference may have more learning outcomes.

How do you write learning outcomes?

Ask yourself:

- What is the measurable goal or outcome that this activity set out to achieve?
- What will be measured when the learner completes the activity?

The learning outcome statement needs to be written in measurable terms and should include the outcome and the metric that the outcome is measured by.

The learning outcome must tie to the professional practice gap and the underlying educational need. If the underlying need is knowledge, the outcome should be related to measuring a change in the learner's knowledge, etc.

Example- "80% of participants will identify at least one expected change or enhancement in practice in their professional role based on information learned in this workshop."

Additional guidance/tips for writing learning outcomes

- An outcome statement **can be one sentence and should be specific, measurable, and attainable.**
- Although, not required, the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound) format may be helpful when writing learning outcomes.
- Action verbs can be selected from Bloom's Taxonomy (see subtext in the rectangles below.
- ***Avoid using terms that are vague or cannot be measured such as: Know, Comprehend, Remember, Think, Understand***

Bloom's Taxonomy

create
Produce new or original work
Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

evaluate
Justify a stand or decision
appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

analyze
Draw connections among ideas
differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

apply
Use information in new situations
execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

understand
Explain ideas or concepts
classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

remember
Recall facts and basic concepts
define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state