Identifying Gaps, Needs, Objectives, and Results

What is a practice gap?
A professional practice gap is the difference between **<u>actual</u>** and **<u>ideal</u>** performance.
Professional practice gaps are measured in terms of:
- **Knowledge:** being aware of what to do
- **Competence:** being able to apply knowledge, skills, and judgment in practice (knowing how to do something)
- **Performance:** having the ability to implement the strategy or skill (what one actually does)

How are gaps identified?
- A needs assessment looks at the gaps from a variety of angles and perspectives and is a tool for planning the activity.
- The needs assessment helps determine the current situation, state of skills, knowledge, abilities, and/or performance (what should be vs. what is, ideal vs. real, where we are vs. where we want to be).

What is the difference between a gap and a need?
Gaps are the difference between ACTUAL (what is) and IDEAL (what should be) in regards to performance and/or patient outcomes. **Educational needs** are defined as "the need for education on a specific topic identified by a gap in professional practice."

How do I formulate learning objectives?
After looking at the practice gaps and educational needs, what do you want the learner to be able to accomplish after the activity?
- Learning objectives are the take-home messages that bridge the gap between the identified need/gap and the desired result.
- Note: learning objectives should be measurable and should begin with a verb than can be measured ("understand" should not be used as one's understanding cannot be readily measured). **<u>See "educational objectives" guide sheet for more information.</u>**

What is a desired result?
Desired results are what you expect the learner to do in his/her practice setting. How will the information presented impact the clinical practice and/or behavior of the learner? Is the activity designed to:
- Give participants new abilities/strategies (change competence)?
- Help participants modify their practice (change performance)?
- Help improve patient outcomes?