Tips for Writing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives identify what the learner should know or be able to do <u>at the end</u> of the session. They help focus the facilitator on what they are to help their learners learn, and help focus the learner on what they are supposed to be getting out of a learning activity. To be most effective, they should:

- Reflect the knowledge or ability to be gained
- Begin with an action verb that is measurable, and not contain any other verbs
- Follow the verb with a noun that is the object of the verb (e.g.: prepare documentation)
- Be concisely stated

Common issues to avoid in writing learning objectives:

- Describing what is taught (what the faculty member will do) rather than what is to be learned (what the trainee is learning)
- Describing the process (identify symptoms, interpret tests, generate a differential, construct a treatment plan) instead of the outcome (formulate a treatment plan)
- Selecting objectives at a higher level than learners will be able to perform at the end of the session (Too High: "Manage a patient presenting with anti-NMDA encephalitis" for a two-hour symposium covering typical features of six different etiologies of altered mental status. Better: "Recognize common presenting symptoms of anti-NMDA encephalitis")
- Selecting objectives at a lower level than learners will be able to perform at the end of the session (Too Low: "List three effective negotiation strategies for junior faculty" in a negotiation skills workshop that includes role plays and feedback. Better: "Employ effective negotiation strategies")
- Excessive verbiage, especially about how something is to be done
- Use of verbs that are not measurable, especially words like "understand" or "develop"

Some suggested action verbs by level of complexity:

<u>Knowledge:</u> Define, list, record, repeat

<u>Comprehension:</u> Describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, recognize, restate, translate

<u>Application:</u> Apply, demonstrate, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, perform, sketch, use

<u>Analysis:</u> Analyze, compare, contrast, criticize, debate, distinguish, experiment, question, relate, test

<u>Synthesis:</u> Arrange, compose, construct, create, design, formulate, organize, manage, prepare, propose

<u>Evaluation:</u> Appraise, assess, choose, evaluate, judge, measure, rate, revise, score, select, value