Learning Objectives for Continuing Education/Faculty Development

A learning objective defines the expected outcome after the teaching/learning activity. The outcome could be improved knowledge base, development of new skills, and/or change in attitude/beliefs).

The ACCME (Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education) requires that every CME activity must have one or more learning objectives.

As you begin to plan the teaching/learning activities, ask these questions:
- why is this activity being proposed?
- what are the important outcomes you want the learners/participants to achieve? (i.e., what do you want participants to learn? or learn to do? or how do you hope they will change?)

Before you submit the objectives, ask if they are:
- attainable give the teaching/learning activities
- realistic in the amount of time allotted to the activity

Importance of Words: Objectives define *actions* for the learner, so verbs are important.
Do you know about Bloom's Taxonomy?
In 1956, Benjamin Bloom, and a group of educational psychologists, developed a classification of levels of cognition important for learning. The group found that educators were most likely to test students with questions that required the lowest level - the recall of information. Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain. These levels, and verbs that represent each, are listed below.   When developing objectives, aim for the highest level you can.

Knowledge	Understanding	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
arrange	classify	apply	analyze	arrange	appraise
define	describe	choose	appraise	assemble	argue
duplicate	discuss	demonstrate	calculate	collect	assess
label	explain	dramatize	categorize	compose	choose
list	express	employ	compare	construct	compare
memorize	identify	illustrate	contrast	create	defend
name	indicate	interpret	differentiate	design	estimate
order	locate	operate	discriminate	formulate	evaluate
recall	recognize	practice	distinguish	manage	judge
recognize	report	sketch	examine	organize	predict
relate	restate	solve	experiment	plan	rate
repeat	review	use	question	prepare	score
state	select	write	test	propose	select
	translate			write	support

Verbs to avoid, because they do not define observable, measureable outcomes

Appreciate	Become	Increase	Learn
Grasp the significance of	Know	Improve	Understand

EXAMPLES:

At the end of the workshop participants will:

(Not so good)...appreciate the value of writing good objectives

(Good)...recognize higher order objectives

(Better)...construct learning objectives which target higher cognitive levels