

*Professional Practice Gap Analysis Tool for Planning Continuing Professional Development*

A gap analysis is an important tool during the beginning of an educational plan to take you from “I think I know what the problem is” to planning relevant professional development activities targeted to specifically address a clearly established professional practice gap, resulting in measurable outcomes. Analyzing a professional practice gap determines the gap between a current and desired state, underlying educational need(s), and activities needed to close the identified gap.

- 1st. Determine the **Desired State**, the best practice, or where you want to be. The desired state is the level that activity planners would like the learners to achieve due to the educational activity.
- 2nd. Describe the **Current State**, which is the current level of practice of the target audience.
- 3rd. Summarize the **Data that Validates the Professional Practice Gap**, or the difference between the current and desired state. Planners should use evidence to validate and support the need for an educational activity. This may include surveying stakeholders, reviewing quality data, direct observation, evaluations of other activities, trends in healthcare or literature, change in practice, etc. There should be analysis and not just data sources nor solely stating there is a “need” or “request” for the activity.
  - o Now ask: What is underlying reason causing the gap? Is knowledge missing? Is a skill not being performed correctly? Is there a practice issue? What pieces are missing in the target audience?
- 4th. The missing piece is the **Underlying Educational Need** to bridge between the current and desired state. Why do the learners need the education? The underlying need could be due to knowledge (don’t know), skill (don’t know how to do), and/or practice (not able to show or do in practice). This should align with the professional practice gap, evidence, and outcome measure(s).
- 5th. Develop an **Outcome Measure** that is specific, measurable, and attainable, written as a quantitative statement. What should the learner know, show, and/or be able to do at the end of the activity? This should be aligned to the current state, underlying educational need, and evaluation method. For instance, if the underlying need is knowledge, the outcome should be related to measuring a change in the learner’s knowledge.
- 6th. Describe the **Evaluation Method**, or how the activity’s outcome will be measured, including how evaluation data will be obtained and analyzed. This should be aligned with the professional practice gap, underlying need, and outcome measure(s). This can include short-term and/or long-term methods. For instance, you can use post-tests or discussion to assess knowledge; return demonstrations or case study analysis can assess skill; and simulation, observation in practice, or quality measure tracking can assess practice.

**EXAMPLE**

<b>Desired State</b> (or best practice)	<b>Current State</b> (current practice, target audience)	<b>Data that Validates Professional Practice Gap and Current State</b> (gap is difference between desired and current state)	<b>Underlying Educational Need</b> (knowledge, skills, and/or practice)	<b>Outcome Measure(s)</b> (specific, attainable, quantitative statement as to how the outcome will be measured)	<b>Evaluation Method(s)</b> (aligned with Professional Practice Gap, underlying need, and outcome)
At least 50% of perioperative nurses in health system will hold a recognized specialty certification by passing exam	30% of the perioperative nurses have obtained a recognized specialty certification.	Survey of perioperative nurses both with certification and without identified that >75% of nurses state they are unprepared to sit for and pass the certification exam (knowledge) and 60% state they lack test taking skills. Current literature trends show that employer-supported preparation programs increase passage rates.	Lack of knowledge and skills to pass a perioperative specialty certification exam.	Within 12 months, the number of perioperative nurses with a specialty certification will increase by at least 10%.	Knowledge and skill will be evaluated during the learning activity through active participation in discussion, case study analysis, and polling (short-term, formative evaluation) and through completing the specialty certification exam (long-term, summative evaluation).

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