Guidelines for Developing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are statements that communicate the most important student outcomes of the instructional material. They also help participants choose appropriate educational offerings to meet their training needs or interests.

Learning objectives should describe the intended behavior to be attained by the conclusion of the program. In general, they contain three elements:

1. An action verb describing a behavior which demonstrates the participant’s learning
2. Information about the context (if any)
3. The level at which the outcome will be demonstrated (if applicable)

Verbs should illustrate learning objectives (what the participant will receive as an outcome of the learning experience), not teaching objectives (the process by which they will be taught).

At least three learning objectives are requested for all presentations. Not only are they required by the continuing education agency, but they also help us maintain a high-quality educational program.

They should be specific, clear, capable of being measured, concise and realistic for the learning time and level.

Example: At the completion of this program the participants will be able to

1. articulate the changing nature of potentially violent campus protests,
2. develop a “playbook” for preparation, response, and recovery from potentially violent campus protests, and
3. list the applicable policies and procedures that need review or to developed as soon as possible at your agency/organization.

When formulating educational objectives, do not use verbs that are open to multiple interpretations such as learn, know, tell, understand, enjoy, appreciate, believe and perceive. The following list of verbs will help you write observable, active, measurable behaviors when formulating educational objectives.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>adapt</th>
<th>analyze</th>
<th>apply</th>
<th>choose</th>
<th>classify</th>
<th>compare</th>
<th>compute</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>construct</td>
<td>contrast</td>
<td>create</td>
<td>critique</td>
<td>define</td>
<td>describe</td>
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<td>develop</td>
<td>discuss</td>
<td>distinguish</td>
<td>document</td>
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<td>examine</td>
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<td>generalize</td>
<td>implement</td>
<td>integrate</td>
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<td>prepare</td>
<td>prescribe</td>
<td>recommend</td>
<td>recognize</td>
<td>specify</td>
<td>summarize</td>
<td>utilize</td>
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*Adapted from the Higher Education Suicide Prevention Coalition (HESPC).