**Tips for Needs Assessment**

***The central question driving needs is “Why are we doing this activity?” Early in the planning process, it is important to determine the specific gaps in knowledge and/or practice that the certified activity will attempt to address***.

Robust needs assessment accomplishes the following:

• Helps establish clear rationale for the activity.

• Allows potential participants and leadership to provide their input in the design of the program thus ensuring program relevance and strengthening the likelihood of behavior change following the program.

• Utilizes a variety of different needs assessment approaches, including input from potential target participants (required for nursing), leadership perspectives, and other data sources.

• When multidisciplinary – the needs assessment must include data for each profession

The longer the CE activity, the more diverse and robust the needs assessment should be. After looking at a variety of needs assessment sources and types of data, identify the most significant two to four defined needs for the activity.

Guidance as to what to include in a Needs Assessment:

• Statement of unmet educational need, (i.e., what is the identified educational void?)

• Sources consulted to determine need. Cite actual references/sources.

Examples of ways to elicit potential target participant perspectives:

• E-Mail questions to a sample of target audience with response strongly requested.

• Brief phone interviews with a sample of the targeted participants.

• Discussion at peer group meetings.

• Review evaluation forms from past programs to identify what additional educational needs the participants identified.

Examples of useful Needs Assessment questions:

• What would you like to be able to do in your practice that is prevented by the absence of skills, information, or resources (barriers)?

• Which aspects of diagnosing and/or treating <insert topic> do you feel the most uncomfortable diagnosing or treating yourself (as opposed to referring)?

***Note: Asking what clinicians find challenging in their practice will yield more useful information than asking what topics they want addressed***

Examples of ways to elicit leadership and other perspectives:

• Interview or e-mail local, regional, and national experts.

• Review documents, organizational newsletters, etc.

Examples of data which highlight gaps in desired practice and actual practice.

• Quality goal data, prescribing data (e.g., IMS resources).

• Data that illustrate variation in practice between physicians/geographic locations.

• Data/documentation that suggest a particular practice is desired but has not yet been introduced.

• External requirements or forces that require performance change and evidence that the required change has not taken place.

Other useful needs assessment information:

• New best practices that have not been implemented consistently.

• Research findings.

• Legal information.

• Marketplace data.

• Committee activities and action plans.