INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION ACTIVITY APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

VTL Center for Professional Development (VTL Center for PD) is accredited as an approver of **nursing continuing professional development (NCPD)** by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (ANCC COA). The ANCC NCPD Accreditation Program supports the lifelong learning needs of professional registered nurses by ensuring that educational activities are designed using criteria that are evidence-based and that are independent from influence by ineligible companies/organizations. Using the criteria defined by ANCC, VTL Center for Professional Development provides this application process for organizations seeking approval to award NCPD credit in the form of contact hours for an individual educational activity.

This document – the VTL Individual Education Activity (IEA) Application Instructions – is based on the current ANCC NCPD criteria. It explains the requirements and criteria for planning an NCPD activity, describes the application process, and provides guidance in completing the VTL Center for Professional Development IEA Application and related forms. **Please read all instructions prior to completing the application**. Organizations intending to apply for approval of an educational activity through VTL Center for Professional Development are strongly encouraged to review the IEA Application and Instructions documents **early in the planning process** to better ensure the activity is planned in accordance with the ANCC criteria and that all submitted documentation will meet the guidelines. **All ANCC criteria must be met and appropriate supporting documentation submitted prior to approval.** VTL Center for Professional Development approval for an individual education activity is granted for a two-year period, during which the activity can be repeated multiple times as long as the presenter is the same and the educational content of the activity does not change/remains current.

The VTL Center for PD Individual Education Activity Application, all related forms referred to in this document, and examples of some completed forms, are available on the VTL Center for PD's website at www.centerforpd.org. Note that many of the forms provided are recommended to be utilized and included as part of the application.

Please email questions about the application criteria or the application submission and review process, to questions@vtls.org or call the VTL Center for PD office at 573-636-4623, ext. 102.

APPLICATION TIPS

Approval decisions are determined on the basis of compliance with the ANCC criteria. In order to validate compliance, it is essential that the VTL Center for Professional Development review team receive a comprehensive, well-organized Individual Education Activity Application package, including responses for each criterion, supporting documents demonstrating compliance and supplemental evidence as required or requested.

Read the entire IEA Application and instructions documents before beginning to formulate responses. Contact the VTL Center for Professional Development office if there are any questions regarding the criteria and/or the application process at questions@vtls.org or 573.636.4623 ext. 102.

Individual Education Activity Application DOs and DON'Ts	
DO utilize the current IEA Application and Application Instructions documents on the VTL Center for PD website.	**DON'T** leave any criterion blank. Incomplete applications will not be processed.
DO review the eligibility requirements to ensure you are able to submit an IEA application for review.	**DON'T** provide extraneous materials including presenter handouts or sign in sheets. Submit only the

	required components listed on the VTL Center for PD Individual Education Activity application.
DO ensure consistency throughout the document – listing of contact hours, delivery format, title and date of activity, etc.	**DON'T** provide the slide presentation for the entire educational activity or for each session of a multi-session educational activity.
DO complete each section of the application and attach all additional materials requested. Ensure there is a response for each criterion in the application prior to submission.	**DON'T** submit multiple, non-collated documents, individual Word documents rather than a PDF, or a document that is missing components.
DO type the entire application, including supporting documents.	**DON'T** submit an application with criterion not fully addressed. All educational design criteria must be met before approval can be issued.
DO number all pages of the PDF file sequentially, including appendices. The PDF file **must** contain a table of contents or be incorporated with PDF bookmarks to facilitate the review process.	**DON'T** delay submitting payment for the application review fee. Payment must be received before a final decision is made on an application.

Other things to consider when preparing the Individual Education Activity Application:

- The completed application and supporting documentation must be collated into **one (1) Word or Adobe .pdf file** and the file should not exceed 10MB in size.
- Applications must be submitted to the VTL Center for PD office by email at least 45 calendar days prior to the educational activity start date.
  - **Email** – one (1) collated Word or Adobe .pdf file to EducationActivities@vtls.org
- Contact the VTL Center for PD office if you are unable to meet the deadline. An expedited application process is available under certain circumstances, with prior approval from the VTL Center for PD office, and for an additional fee.
- Policies and procedures of the VTL Center for Professional Development ensure confidentiality of all applications and records. One copy of the application packet is kept on file at the VTL Center for PD office. All other copies used by VTL Center for PD Nurse Peer Reviewers during their review are destroyed.
- VTL Center for Professional Development Nurse Peer Reviewers reserve the right to participate, without charge, in any VTL Center for PD approved nursing continuing professional development activity for the purpose of monitoring compliance with ANCC criteria. When requested, participation/access information must be provided prior to the activity start date.

Application Submission Deadlines & Review Fees

- The application must be received at the VTL Center for PD office **at least 45 calendar days prior** to the educational activity start date. Contact the VTL Center for PD staff if unable to meet the deadline.
- Applications received **outside** the application submission deadline **will not be reviewed** and will be destroyed. The application review fee will be returned minus a $50 processing fee.
- The application review fee is based on the **total number of contact hours** being offered/reviewed for approval, including all concurrent sessions, rather than the number of contact hours an individual participant may earn.
  - 0.25-5 contact hours $250.00
  - 5.1 – 20.0 contact hours $250.00 plus $20/contact hour
  - 20.1 or more contact hours $400.00 plus $20/contact hour

- Application review fees may be paid by check or with credit card online. Visit the VTL Center for PD website for details. Invoices are generated through the online system when the organization indicates they wish to pay by check. When providing payment by check, please make checks payable to VTL Solutions and mail them to the address provided on the invoice.
- Application review fees are not eligible for a full or partial refund once the review process has been initiated.
- Application review fees must be paid in full prior to a final decision is made on the application.

Application Review Process

- Upon submission of the application, applicants will receive a confirmation email indicating the application and review fee were received at the VTL Center for PD office.
- VTL Center for Professional Development staff conducts a quantitative review of the application prior to the initiation of the peer review process, scanning the application for completeness and identifying any missing information. An email will be sent to the applicant requesting missing information.
- The application and supporting materials are then sent to a VTL Center for PD Nurse Peer Reviewer Team. Each team member independently reviews the application utilizing the ANCC criteria for approval. Each response to the criteria is thoroughly reviewed and rated. Review sheets are sent by the Nurse Peer Reviewers to the Nurse Peer Review Team Leader who summarizes the team's decision and forwards the team's decision to the VTL Center for PD office.
- When the review team's decision is received by the VTL Center for PD office, an email is sent to the applicant, including the review team's decision and requests for revisions. Applicants are given a period of time to respond and provide additional information to show adherence to the criteria.
  - Please note: All ANCC criteria must be met for approval to be issued.
- If members of the VTL Center for Professional Development team request revisions or ask for clarification regarding the application, it's important for additional materials to be submitted within the time specified. If materials are not received within the specified time frame, the application review will be completed without the requested revisions and subsequently denied since all criteria were not met. It is strongly suggested that you factor in the time to complete requested revisions in the planning and implementation schedule for the activity.
- After revisions are received, the Accredited Approver Program Director (AAPD) conducts a final review of the materials and makes the final decision on the application. The final decision is then shared with the applicant.
- **Retroactive approval is not authorized by VTL Center for PD**. All application criteria must be met, application review fee received, and approval issued prior to the activity start date.

Please feel free to contact the VTL Center for PD office for any questions about the application submission and/or peer review process.

Application Decisions

APPROVED

Applicants that demonstrate compliance with the ANCC NCPD criteria will be awarded individual education activity approval. VTL Center for Professional Development approval for an individual education activity is granted for a two-year period beginning the date of the first offering, during which the activity can be repeated multiple times as long as the presenter is the same and the educational content of the activity does not change/remains current. VTL Center for Professional Development Nurse Peer Reviewers reserve the right to participate, without charge, in any VTL Center for PD approved nursing continuing professional development activity for the purpose of monitoring compliance with ANCC criteria. When requested, participation/ access information must be provided prior to the activity start date.

DENIED/NOT APPROVED

If there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with the ANCC criteria, or if the content of the application does not meet the definition of nursing continuing professional development, the application will be denied. The application review fee is non-refundable. If an application is denied, the applicant may choose to resubmit if they have addressed the deficiencies noted and provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with ANCC criteria within the new individual education activity application submitted.

- Re-Submission: If approval is not granted, the organization may submit a revised application **within thirty (30) calendar days** of notification of denial and at least two (2) weeks prior to the start date of the educational activity. Payment of the applicable application review fee must accompany the revised application. Only one (1) resubmission is allowed per application.

VOLUNTARY TERMINATION & REVOCATION OF APPROVAL

Organizations that voluntarily terminate their activity approval must submit notification to VTL Center for Professional Development (VTL Center for PD), in writing, at least 30 calendar days in advance, and complete a few transition of services tasks in order to remain in good standing with VTL Center for PD.

The written notice of voluntary termination must contain the following information:

- Effective date of voluntary termination *(must be at least 30 calendar days after the date that appears on the written notice)*
- Reason for voluntary termination
- Transition Plan for ending services – including but not limited to (1) how you will cease operations – discontinue and removal of all advertisements for programs approved by VTL Center for PD (formerly Midwest MSD), stop using the activity approval statement, update enduring materials to remove all references to VTL Center for PD, etc., (2) how you will notify your target audience of the change in approved status, (3) how participants will obtain records after the expiration date and the length of time records will be available.

Activity Providers in good standing with VTL Center for PD that voluntarily terminate their activity approval may reapply at any time. Appropriate application review fees will apply. An organization is considered in good standing when:

- It has met its financial obligations (all invoices and fees paid in full),
- Its provider approval has not been suspended or revoked; and
- It is adhering to ANCC NCPD Accreditation criteria

The ANCC NCPD Accreditation program does not permit the transfer of approval from one organization to another. VTL Center for PD approval is not a commodity; therefore, it cannot be bought, sold, or transferred.

An organization's activity approval may be revoked as a result of any of the following:

- Violation of any federal, state or local laws or regulations that affect the organization's ability to adhere to ANCC criteria or ethical standards
- Failure to maintain compliance with ANCC criteria or requirements
- COA-NCPD or VTL Center for PD investigation and verification of written complaints or charges by consumers or others
- Refusal to comply with a COA-NCPD or VTL Center for PD investigation
- Misrepresentation
- Misuse of the VTL Center for PD and/or ANCC accreditation statement

- Misuse of VTL Center for PD and/or ANCC intellectual property, including but not limited to trademarks, trade names and logos

Activity approval and contact hours will be revoked if there is evidence that the criteria for approval were not adhered to as described in the application. Revocation applies to the organization as a whole, including all activities the organization has submitted for approval. Notice of revocation of approval is sent to the organization by the VTL Center for PD office within two weeks of the revocation decision. The organization is responsible for notifying all participants of the revocation of contact hours as soon as possible, but not later than 30 calendar days following notification of revocation.

Revoked organizations must immediately cease:

- Offering contact hours
- Referring to the activities they provide in any way as approved by the ANCC or VTL Center for PD
- Using the VTL Center for PD activity approval statement
- Using VTL Center for PD and/or ANCC intellectual property, including but not limited to trademarks, trade names, and logos

Types of Activities

Live/Provider-directed, provider-paced: An educational activity in which the provider controls all aspects of the learning activity (time, pace, and place of content delivery). The provider determines the learning outcomes based on a needs assessment, and chooses the content of the learning activity, the method by which it is presented, and evaluation methods. (*Examples include live activities and live webinars*)

Enduring/Provider-directed, learner-paced: An educational activity in which the provider controls the content of the learning activity, including the learning outcomes based on needs assessment, gap analysis, content of the learning activity, including the learning outcomes based on a needs assessment, and chooses the content of the learning activity, the method by which it is presented, and the evaluation methods. Learners determines the pace at which they engage in the activity. The provider controls the time, pace, and place of content delivery. (*Examples include on-demand/computer-based courses, print articles, e-books, printed/online case study review, and self-study modules/independent studies*)

Blended: An educational activity that is a combination of provider-directed, provider-paced (live in-person and live, virtual) and provider-directed, learner-paced (face-to-face and web-based/online instruction) components. The ratio may vary according to the learning outcomes. (*Examples include online educational module prerequisites to a live classroom session and independent reading assignments to be discussed in class*)

Educational activities must meet the following guidelines in order to be eligible for awarding of continuing education credit (contact hours):

- Content must enable the learner to acquire or improve knowledge or skills **beyond basic knowledge**
- Content must enhance professional development or performance of the nurse

Content must be:

- Evidence-based or based on the best-available evidence
- Presented without promotion or bias

An educational activity may include content that is eligible for continuing education credit and content that is not eligible for continuing education credit. In that circumstance, continuing education credit may be awarded for the content that is eligible.

Eligibility Requirements

The following ANCC criteria must be met in order to apply for approval of an educational activity to award nursing contact hours:

- A registered nurse who holds a current, unrestricted nursing license and a baccalaureate degree or higher in nursing must serve in the role of the Nurse Planner for the activity. The Nurse Planner:
    - Must be competent in applying the evidence-based educational design process to independently plan, implement, and evaluate NCPD activities for the activity applicant organization
    - Is NOT an employee or representative of an ineligible company/organization
    - Was **actively** involved in all aspects of planning, and will continue to be actively involved in the implementation, and evaluation of this educational activity
    - Is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations that affect the organization's ability to meet ANCC criteria.
- The applicant organization must be in compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations that affect the organization's ability to meet ANCC criteria.
- The applicant organization must be geographically located in the United States in order to seek approval.
- The applicant organization must not be an 'ineligible company/organization' as defined by ANCC – "*one whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients*". Exceptions are made for nonprofit or government organizations, non-healthcare-related companies, and healthcare facilities.
- The planned learning activity must meet the ANCC definition of Continuing Education/Nursing Continuing Professional Development – "*Learning activities intended to build upon the educational and experiential bases of the professional RN for the enhancement of practice, education, administration, research or theory development, to the end of improving the health of the public and RNs' pursuit of their professional career goals"* (ANCC, 2015b, p. 44).
- Any organization serving as a joint provider of the educational activity (working with the provider organization to plan, implement, and evaluate the nursing continuing professional development activity) must not be an ineligible company/organization.

Please complete all four steps within 'Eligibility Requirements' to ensure your organization is eligible to apply before proceeding.

Educational Design Criteria

The following sections provide an overview of the educational design process for nursing continuing professional development activities incorporating the ANCC criteria for approval. It is arranged to follow the order of the VTL Center for Professional Development Individual Education Activity Application and offers instruction in completing selected sections.

When submitting electronically, applicants must submit one collated Word or Adobe.pdf file, including the application and supporting documentation, not to exceed 10MB in size. The application file must be typed, page-numbered and collated in a logical order following the application. The PDF file must also contain a table of contents or be incorporated with PDF bookmarks.

We expect the application to be carefully reviewed before submission and every effort made to submit an application free from misspelled words, incorrect use of grammar, and incomplete sentences.

For ease of review, follow the order of the guidelines/criteria when preparing an application. This will facilitate a faster review process!

Activity Planning

NCPD activities are developed in response to, and with consideration for, the unique educational needs of the target audience of registered nurses, including advanced practice and specialty nurses.

High-quality educational design focuses on the following principles: addressing a professional practice gap, analyzing educational needs of RNs and/or healthcare team members, identifying competencies that align with the professional practice gap and underlying need, identifying learning outcomes, assessing achievement of learning outcomes and ensuring educational activities adhere to the *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited CE*.

Professional Practice Gap(s)

The process of planning begins with identifying when NCPD might be a desired intervention to address a change that has been made to a standard of care, a problem that exists in practice, or an opportunity for improvement. The Nurse Planner starts by analyzing data to validate the need for the educational activity. This analysis forms the basis of a professional practice gap, or the difference between the current state of practice and the desired state of practice.

Each educational activity is based on a needs assessment that may be conducted using a variety of methods, including survey data from stakeholders, target audience members, subject matter experts, supervisory personnel, or others; input from learners, managers, or healthcare team members; review of quality improvement studies; evaluation data from previous education activities; review of literature for trends or issues; changes in standards or laws which might require education; or through direct observation. Sources of supporting evidence (documentation) of needs assessment data may include survey data, literature review, summary of past activity evaluations, documentation of requests (typed summary of a conversation, meeting minutes, printed email, etc.), or outcome data.

Criterion 2 provides the reviewers with a summary of the evidence and sources of that evidence to demonstrate the need for this activity in one paragraph. Explain how **all** of these elements combine to validate that the activity being planned is **needed** by the target audience. The needs assessment data are used to identify and validate a gap in knowledge, skills, or practice the educational activity is designed to improve or meet. The planning committee uses information from the needs assessment to identify the current level of knowledge, skill or practice of the target audience. They then determine the difference between the prospective participant's current level of knowledge, skill or practice and where it should be; this difference is the 'problem in practice' or 'professional practice gap.' If the identified gap can be closed by education, the educational activity is designed to address the "missing" knowledge, skill or practice.

- A 'Gap Analysis Worksheet' is available on the VTL Center for PD website and is recommended for use in this process. If utilized, a copy may be submitted with the application.

The Gap Analysis Worksheet documents:

- The professional practice gap
- A summary of the evidence to validates the professional practice gap(s)
- The educational need that underlies the professional practice gap
- The professional competency/ies and source, and
- The desired learning outcome(s) to close the professional practice gap

Questions to ask: What is the measurable goal or outcome that this activity set out to achieve? What will be measured when the learner completes the activity?

The response for Criterion 2 should include*:

- What data (quantitative, qualitative, anecdotal) supports the need for this educational activity or intervention?
- Nurse Planner's/planning committee's analysis of the data, not just the data sources.
- How is the evidence (e.g., data, trends in literature) revealing that a professional practice gap exists for the target audience?

* Stating that there is a "need" or a "request" for the activity or that the education is "mandated" is not an adequate response.

Data can come from a number of sources, including but not limited to:

- Survey data from stakeholders, target audience members, subject matter experts or similar
- Input from stakeholders such as learners, managers, healthcare team or subject matter experts
- Evidence from quality studies and/or performance improvement data to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Evaluation data from previous education activities
- Trends in literature
- Direct observation

Please review the **Completing the Gap Analysis Worksheet** resource available under the Additional Resources tab on the VTL Center for PD website.

Educational Need(s)

The Nurse Planner and planning committee assess the root cause(s) of the gap, or why the gap exists. If the gap is related to a lack of knowledge, skills, and/or practices of registered nurses, an educational intervention is appropriate. The gap may exist for other reasons; alternative, non-educational strategies may need to be considered.

It is important to note that a professional practice gap may exist for registered nurses or health care teams regardless of the practice setting. Professional practice gaps are not limited to clinical practice and may also exist in areas of professional work such as administration, advocacy, education and research. Analyzing the professional practice gap and the evidence to support the PPG should help to determine the target audience.

When the professional practice gap has been identified, the Nurse Planner and Planning Committee conduct an analysis to determine the underlying educational needs of registered nurses or members of the healthcare team who contribute to the gap. The underlying educational need should align with the PPG and desired learning outcomes. Reflecting on these questions will guide the Nurse Planner/planning committee to choose the applicable underlying need(s):

- Why do learners need this education?
- What do the learners not know (knowledge)?
- What do the learners not know how to do (skill)?
- What are the learners unable to implement or integrate into their practice setting (practice)?

The American Nurses Credentialing Center NCPD Accreditation program defines **competence** as "the foundational abilities required for nursing practice in a given context," and **competency** as "the ability to apply knowledge, skills, and/or abilities, including intellectual behaviors that are required to meet performance and outcomes in professional nursing practice in a given context" (Dodge, Bushway, & Long, 2018, p.1).

Established Professional Competency/ies & Professional Source

Once the educational need(s) are determined, an organization should identify key competencies that align with these needs and are reflective of the desired goals for the program's target audience. Professional competencies reflect both clinical skills, such as patient management, and nonclinical skills, like communication and leadership. They establish a clear purpose for educational activities and serve as a planning and instructional design framework. Identifying these competencies early ensures that every aspect of the educational strategy aligns to deliver targeted learning (Graebe & Roy, 2025).

Ultimately, the goal of selecting competencies is to ensure that educational content is relevant, actionable, and forward-looking. These efforts empower nurses to maintain and enhance their competence while adapting to the dynamic demands of healthcare systems. Competencies and learning outcomes must be clearly defined, measurable, and achievable for educational activities aimed at demonstrating impact or improvements in knowledge, skills, and practice.

Professional competencies should be noted verbatim from the professional source that developed the competencies (i.e., a specialty organization, ANA scope and standards, a state practice act). The source of the competency must be included. Competencies can apply to multiple topics within an activity.

See the **Professional Competency Resources – IEA** document for IEA applicants on the VTL Center for PD website.

Desired Learning Outcome(s)

Learning outcomes are written statements that reflect what the learner has gained as a result of participating in the educational activity. Learning outcomes must be quantifiable, measurable and align with how the outcome will be evaluated. Learning outcomes address the educational needs (knowledge, skills, and/or practices) that contribute to the professional practice gap and achieving the learning outcome should result in narrowing or closing the gap. A separate outcome must be identified to address each underlying educational need. Learning outcomes for the educational activity are developed by the planning committee and must include a process for measuring the outcome. The learning outcome statement should be written in measurable terms and should include the outcome and the metric that the outcome is measured by. Answers the question "What will the learner know or was able to demonstrate during or after the activity?" Reflecting on these questions will guide the NP/planning committee to choose the applicable learning outcome(s):

- What is the measurable goal or outcome that this activity sets out to achieve?
- What should the learner(s) know, show, and/or do at the end of the activity? (underlying educational need)
- What will be measured when the learner completes the activity?

Things to consider:

- The desired learning outcome is NOT a list of objectives. Objectives are no longer a part of nursing continuing professional development and will not be accepted. Verbs like "list, discuss, describe" are not measurable unless the learner actually makes a list, joins a discussion group in class or describes something on the evaluation or as part of an activity exercise. Objectives using this type of verb are asking learners to guess about what they could do in the future, not measuring knowledge gained.
- The learning outcome must align with the professional practice gap, underlying educational need(s), and identified competencies.
- The learning outcome(s) should relate to the measurable change that occurs at the end of the educational activity. A long-term change may be the ultimate goal of the activity (e.g., decrease in falls) but it is not measured until weeks, months or years later.
- The identified gap(s) in knowledge, skills and/or practice will determine the number of learning outcomes for

each activity.

- An outcome must be identified to address each underlying educational need. If the underlying need is knowledge, the outcome should be related to measuring a change in the learner's knowledge, etc.
- Learning outcomes are placed on the Educational Planning Form **prior to sending the form to presenters for completion**, in order for presenters to be familiar with the outcome(s) to be met by their content.
- For an educational activity lasting 7 hours or less, with a single focus, 2 or 3 learning outcomes are appropriate. A learner would typically be required to attend or view the entire activity in order to achieve the outcomes and be awarded contact hours.
- For an activity lasting more than a day, or multiple days, or any activity with multiple "tracks" or concurrent sessions, two options are available:
    - Broadly written, overarching learning outcomes that apply to the entire activity. This approach works best when the entire activity has a single focus in topic or subject matter. A single Educational Planning Form may be utilized for activities of five contact hours or less.
    - Outcomes written that are specific to each track or topic focus. This approach works best when outcome measures will vary depending on the educational level or practice setting of nurses attending e.g., "advanced" tracks, or when participants can attend concurrent sessions so that some outcomes will apply, and others will not, depending on which sessions are attended. Each session or track should be documented on a separate Educational Planning Form.

  Learners could be awarded contact hours based on attendance at individual sessions, the completion of an entire track, or attendance at the entire activity, depending on what the planning committee felt was necessary for learners to achieve the learning outcomes of the activity.

Let's look at examples of each type of learning outcome. A planning committee from "St. Elsewhere Nursing Association" is planning an all-day cardiac conference, with multiple sessions (4 are planned) on the latest in cardiac care and procedures from multiple presenters. The planning committee is in the beginning stages of developing learning outcomes based on the identified learning gaps of their target audience nurses. They have the choice of **overarching** outcomes or **focused** ones.

For a conference such as this, either type of outcome can be utilized. The planners could develop one outcome for each of the four sessions and measure those with observational exercises or evaluation questions, such as:

- Learners will self-report an increase in knowledge about new medications for atrial fib and atrial flutter
- Learners will self-report an increase in confidence when caring for the post-CABG patient with arm vein harvest
- 80% of learners will self-report an increase in knowledge about strategies to avoid copyright infringement when selecting and using content for patient education
- Learners will participate in the small group exercise on approaches to depression in the cardiac patient
- 90% of learners will self-report an increase in knowledge on diagnostic advances in cardiac catheterization

or they could use 1 or 2 overarching types, such as:

- Learners will self-report an increase in knowledge about current trends in cardiac care, and
- Learners will list at least one knowledge point or concept learned as a result of this activity that they will incorporate into their current practice on the evaluation tool utilized

For the focused outcomes, the evaluation questions are self-evident – planners should ask about the specific learning point described in the outcome itself. For overarching outcomes, the committee will need to develop questions that drill down to the specific learning expected, based on the key points of each presentation. Planners cannot simply put

only one question on the evaluation like "*I have an increased knowledge about current trends in cardiac care*" yes/no/if no, why not - because responses would not be specific enough for the committee to determine whether the identified learning gaps in knowledge, skill or practice have been narrowed or closed.

Best practice is for assessment/evaluation questions to be detailed and focused, regardless of which type of learning outcome – overarching or focused - that you choose to use.

Please note that learning outcomes are not the same as objectives. Learning objectives are probably more familiar to planners and presenters than learning outcomes, but the terms are not interchangeable. The use of learning objectives was transitioned to learning outcomes in 2016. Objectives were content driven and indicated what a planner or presenter hoped the learner would be able to do or know; learning outcomes are learner driven and reflect what the planners expect will be the end result of the educational activity. Objectives should NOT appear on Educational Planning Forms submitted as part of the application. If a presenter utilizes objectives when providing content or when completing the Educational Planning Form, the Nurse Planner should collaborate with the presenter to ensure that the identified learning outcomes are used and addressed in the presenter's content. Some accrediting bodies for professions other than nursing still utilize objectives. When seeking continuing education credits for these professions, objectives may be used on promotional/marketing materials only.

Learning outcomes **must be measured** at the time of the activity or via a long-term evaluation method after the activity. Additional sample learning outcomes:

- Participants will self-report an increase in knowledge regarding the healthcare needs of school-age children (measured by questions on the evaluation form)
- Learners will participate in a small group discussion on setting professional boundaries (measured by observing the participants during the discussion period and documenting participation in the activity file)
- At least 95% of learners will self-report an increase in confidence in their ability to provide care to patients with complications of AIDS (measured by questions on the evaluation form)
- Participants will complete a posttest on current treatments for hemorrhagic stroke (measured with a brief 2-3 question posttest either during the presentation or on the evaluation form – both can be neighbor-graded)
- Learners will practice conversations dealing with difficult people in a role-playing exercise (measured by observing the participants during the role-playing exercise and documenting participation in the activity file)

Remember that learning outcomes and their associated assessment/evaluation questions should never ask about what a learner 'can do', 'will be able to' or 'could do' in the future, such as "Learners can discuss the difference between emphysema and bronchitis". This is merely adding a word to an objective ("can") to make it look like an outcome. Learning outcomes and evaluation questions should focus on measuring the learning that has just taken place – what has the participant gained, learned, demonstrated or changed **right now**?

Developing learning outcomes is a vital part of activity planning, as the outcomes chosen will influence content, learner engagement strategies, and evaluation methods. Communication with the presenter(s) is also vital, both to ensure that they understand the difference between objectives (no longer needed from them) and outcomes (determined by the planners to close the identified gap) and to discuss the need for interactive content. Presenters should be strongly discouraged from presenting content in a strict lecture format, without input and active participation from attendees. Research has established that **interactive** exercises or activities within the content results in more meaningful and memorable experiences for participants.

The **VTL Center for PD Educational Planning Form** may be used to document the educational design process, including the desired learning outcomes, outline of content, presenter(s)/faculty/author(s) for each session/presentation, active learning strategies and the references/resources used in the development of the content, or the application

requirements may be outlined in a narrative and/or list format within the application itself. Though presenters/faculty/authors participate in the development of content and engagement strategies, the Nurse Planner is responsible for ensuring proper completion of the Educational Planning Form(s) and assuring that outcomes are measurable, there is content to support each outcome, and engagement strategies are appropriate to achieve the outcomes.

- For the majority of activities each presenter should assist in completing an individual Educational Planning Form that includes their references/resources used to develop their content.
- For educational activities five contact hours or less, with one or two presenters, and a single focus, one Educational Planning Form may be utilized to document all requirements.
- For educational activities over five contact hours, with multi-tracks or concurrent sessions/ multiple topics/ multiple presenters or provided over multiple days, it is recommended that each session/track should be documented on a separate Educational Planning Form.

ASSESSMENT METHOD(S)

A clearly defined method, which includes learner input, must be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational activity and determine whether learning outcomes were met. The Nurse Planner and planning committee determine the **assessment method(s)** that will be used to evaluate the desired learning outcome(s) of the educational activity. The assessment method should specifically measure the achievement of the desired learning outcome(s). What data will be collected to determine whether the learners achieved the desired outcome? Assessments may be formative and integrated within the educational activity. Assessments are also summative at the conclusion of the educational activity. Assessment methods need to align with the outcome and underlying educational need. If the underlying educational need is skill, the evaluation method should demonstrate a change or impact in skill. Change in knowledge, skills, and/or practice may or may not occur based on a variety of factors; but evaluation should assess for impact or change. Evaluation may also include collecting data that reflects barriers to learner change. **NOTE: A statement, description or attestation about the intent to change practice is not an acceptable short-term or long-term assessment method for measuring impact or change in practice**.

Assessments may include, but are not limited to, both short-term and long-term methods, such as those identified below:

ASSESSMENT METHODS		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILL**	**PRACTICE**
• Self-report • Verbal response • Polling • Multiple Choice • True or false • Written tests	• Case study • Role play • Simulation • Return demonstration • Computer-based simulation scenarios • Essay demonstrating application of knowledge and skill	• Long-term report of actual change in practice • Change in hard data e.g. quality outcome measure • Observation of performance in practice

A variety of evaluation methods can be utilized: written evaluation forms, electronic/online evaluations, in-activity discussions, show-of-hands questions or other polling methods, performance checklists, or normed tests such as national achievement tests. Most often, provider-developed written and electronic/online evaluation forms are used. The description of the evaluation method in the application should discuss how the evaluation data is obtained and analyzed and should clearly describe the data being collected. A copy of the evaluation method used may be submitted with the application in lieu of providing a detailed description. If the evaluation will be completed online, provide a screen shot, or PDF version of the entire evaluation as it will appear to learners.

The planning committee should determine which questions would provide the most meaningful data and/or learning outcomes measure while ensuring that evaluation tools are short enough to encourage thoughtful answers from participants. Applicants should not simply indicate that an evaluation form will be completed in the application, they should provide detail on what types of questions are being asked on the evaluation form, or submit a copy of the evaluation form to be used. **Sample evaluation formats are available on the VTL Center for PD website.**

Potential elements for evaluation tools:

1. Questions measuring identified learning outcomes – *required*
2. Intention to integrate learned content or skills into practice
3. Quality of Instruction by Presenters/Faculty/Authors – *knowledge, organization, clarity*
4. Effectiveness of teaching methods
5. Effectiveness of learning format
6. Suggestions for improvement
7. Perceptions of bias
8. identification of further resources needed for success
9. Suggestions for future educational activities for problems in practice or opportunities to improve

Evaluation questions should be tailored to the learning outcomes and gap analysis done for each activity. The sample evaluation tools from VTL Center for Professional Development can (and should) be revised by the planning committee to make it optimally effective for that activity. In addition, the instructional text (in italics and/or red text) on the sample tool should be removed prior to final printing/publication.

At the conclusion of the educational activity, the Nurse Planner should ensure the evaluation data is aggregated for sharing with the planning committee, presenters/faculty/authors, and others as appropriate. A summative evaluation is not merely the results of evaluation questions in a collated form.

The summative evaluation contains two components:

- A summary of the aggregate assessment/evaluation data that highlights whether or not the activity was effective in closing or narrowing the gap and achieving the desired educational activity learning outcome(s).
- An analysis of what was learned from the assessment/evaluation data and what can be applied to future activities. This analysis should include, but not be limited to the following:
    - Lessons learned that can be applied to future activities provided
    - Revisions to ongoing repeat activities
    - Which stakeholders were evaluation results shared with i.e., planning committee, presenters/faculty/ authors, administration/QI staff, participants.

The summative evaluation does not simply include the data collected from the evaluations, i.e., a data dump. There should be a clear narrative analysis of the data from the Nurse Planner and planning committee documented.

If alternative methods of evaluation were utilized, the observations by the Nurse Planner or other planner during the activity must also be a part of the summary evaluation data. The summative evaluation document must be retained in the activity file; individual response forms may be destroyed. Data should be used to evaluate the activity's effectiveness, ensure that learning outcomes have been measured and guide the development of future offerings. Upon completion of the activity, the Nurse Planner must submit key conclusions drawn by the planning committee from the evaluation summary to the VTL Center for PD office with the required post activity documentation.

Please note: The VTL Center for PD office must be notified of and approve any proposed changes to the activity before they are implemented (*i.e., change in presenter, content or time scheduled for the activity*).

Active Learning Strategy/ies

As part of the educational design process, the Nurse Planner and the planning committee in collaboration with the presenter(s) develop ways to actively engage learners in the learning process. Evolving beyond engagement strategies, active learning strategies encourage learners to participate actively in acquiring knowledge, developing skills, and practicing competencies. Please keep in mind adult learning principles in designing NCPD; active participation is encouraged. Active learning encourages conversation and debate, while passive learning discourages active listening and paying attention to detail. These principles apply to learner engagement and occasionally to teaching methods. Examples of active learning strategies include analyzing case studies or peer review, simulations, providing opportunities for problem-based learning, discussion/problem solving, tabletop exercises, think-pair-share exercises, jigsaw discussions, pausing for guided reflection during lectures, and virtual strategies may include audience response, polling, virtual blackboard, etc. **NOTE: Lecture/PowerPoint presentations, Q&A, posttests, and videos are not considered active learning strategies**.

Standards for Integrity and Independence

The *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education* (the Standards) were established by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through a collaborative, two-year effort involving open dialogue and consensus-building with the health professions' continuing education (CE) community, including the ANCC. They have been endorsed and adopted by the ANCC along with eight other accrediting bodies from multiple health professions. The Standards serve as a foundational framework to ensure that accredited continuing education activities maintain the highest level of ethical and educational quality. The Standards are designed to safeguard the integrity of educational content, promote independence from commercial interests, and prioritize the needs of learners and the public. Applicants should review the Standards to ensure that they understand the expectations and align processes accordingly. Individual Activity Applicants are required to adhere to these standards at all times. **Please note** – While the standards use the term "accredited," it is important to note that the education offered as an Individual Activity Applicant is categorized as "approved," not "accredited."

Use of the **VTL Educational Planning Form** is highly recommended to document the educational content, evidence-based references/resources and active learning strategies for each session/presentation awarding contact hours during the educational activity. But the information may also be outlined in narrative and/or list format in the space provided below. Programs with multiple topics/sessions/tracks should be documented on separate Educational Planning Forms. If there are sessions that are not eligible for nursing contact hours, please ensure this is clearly indicated on the working agenda submitted with the application as well as communicated to learners.

Criteria 8-13 in the IEA Application relate directly to elements/standards outlined in the ACCME *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited CE*.

Evidence-Based Content and References/Resources

Content for the educational activity may be chosen by the Nurse Planner and planning committee, in collaboration with the presenter(s). Communication with each presenter on what the knowledge gaps are can help the presenter develop content that helps to close those gaps. Once the planning committee has determined the learning outcomes for the activity, **the Educational Planning Form with those learning outcomes listed should then be sent to the presenter(s) for completion of the balance of the form.** Alternatively, the learning outcomes should be clearly communicated to presenters prior to content development. While the planning committee is able to edit and/or enhance information on the Educational Planning Form as needed, the presenter is the best source for the content outline, active learning strategies and especially references/resources used as they develop content. Use of the VTL

Educational Planning Form is highly recommended to document the educational content, evidence-based references/resources and active learning strategies for each session/presentation awarding contact hours during the educational activity. The information may also be outlined in narrative and/or list format on the application form.

Content documented on the Educational Planning Form or in narrative/outline form within the application must be congruent with the learning outcomes but **not be a restatement of the outcomes**. Content should be written in **outline** format, listing specific content areas to be presented to assist the learner in achieving the outcome(s). Content should be numbered consistently with the related outcome and be based on the best available evidence. If active learner engagement strategies are utilized, they should be included in the content outline. It is possible that content not directly related to an outcome but supporting or leading to a participant achieving the identified outcome will be included on the Educational Planning Form, and this is acceptable. Please note: The content description must be detailed enough for the VTL Center for PD Nurse Peer Reviewers to determine consistency with learning outcomes and selected learner engagement strategies. Use of objectives or restatement of learning outcomes do not meet the criteria.

It is the responsibility of the Nurse Planner and planning committee to ensure that content is based on the most current evidence, which may include, but is not limited to, evidence-based practice, literature/peer-reviewed journals, clinical guidelines, best practices, and content experts' opinion. If there is concern that content selected is not based on best available evidence or may be biased within the educational activity, the Nurse Planner and planning committee may choose to engage a **Content Reviewer**. The purpose of the Content Reviewer is to provide independent and expert evaluation of content to ensure best available evidence is presented, content is balanced, and content is not promotional or biased. Please note that a Content Reviewer is not a requirement; they should be utilized only if there is a potential for bias or outdated resources/references used by the presenter.

References: Content is selected based on the most current available evidence. References are resources used by presenters to develop the presentation content within the activity. Examples include, but are not limited to, evidence-based practice, literature/peer-reviewed journals, and clinical guidelines. Industry standard is that references and resources have been developed and/or published within the last 5 years.

Website, journal article and book references should be fully cited (not just "cms.org") to show the internal web pages and data used by the presenter to develop their content. References provided by presenters, in the form of PowerPoint slides or separate page listings, are acceptable but must also be included on the Educational Planning Form, not as separate attachments. It is not required that references be provided in APA format, however references should include adequate detail to ensure the information referenced can be located (i.e. page number, date, standard number, URL). Providing an external link/URL as the only resource for any reference is not acceptable. Provide the text title, or page/section title as well as the date the information was accessed. Please note that having an expert speaker is not sufficient to support evidence-based content. Published references must also be present. References that are incomplete, written for laypersons, not current or not fully cited will be returned for revisions.

Examples of Supporting evidence-based references or resources:

- Information available from organization/website: (organization/website must use current available evidence within the last 5 years as resource for readers; may be published or unpublished content. Provide full web page citations for material referenced, not "CDC.org".) Example – Sharp, A. (2024, August 23). CIWA-AR assessment for alcohol withdrawal. American Addiction Centers. Retrieved on 12/10/25 from: https://americanaddictioncenters.org/alcohol/rehab-treatment/ciwaar-alcohol-assessment

- Information available through peer-reviewed journal/resource: Example – Adams, J.L., Kangarloo, T., Tracey, B. et al. Using a smartwatch and smartphone to assess early Parkinson's disease in the WATCHPD study. npj Parkinsons Dis. 9, 64 (2023). Retrieved on 9=8/18/25 from: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41531-023-00497-x
- Clinical guidelines: Example – 2025 ACC/AHA/ACEP/NAEMSP/SCAI Guideline for the Management of Patients With Acute Coronary Syndromes
- Textbook reference – include edition number, page/chapter numbers, publication year and publisher name

Activity providers must ensure that the content delivered is evidence-based and that the activity is planned independently from the influence of ineligible companies.

Commercial Bias

Per the ACCME *Standards*, specifically Standard 2, accredited continuing education must protect learners from commercial bias and marketing and adhere to all three elements below:

- The Activity Provider must ensure that all decisions related to the planning, faculty selection, delivery, and evaluation of accredited education are made without any influence or involvement from the owners and employees of an ineligible company.
- Accredited education must be free of marketing or sales of products or services. Faculty must not actively promote or sell products or services that serve their professional or financial interests during accredited education.
- The Activity Provider must not share the names or contact information of learners with any ineligible company or its agents without the explicit consent of the individual learner.

Applicants are required to attest within the IEA application that the activity submitted meets the expectations of all three elements of ACCME Standard 2 related to commercial bias outlined above.

Individual Education Activity applicants must provide evidence of operationalizing the Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education by completing the following steps when planning individual educational activity that is clinical in nature. Using a stepwise approach to managing relevant financial relationships for planners and presenters allows the Nurse Planner to ensure that all relationships are identified, mitigated and disclosed appropriately.

Clinical Topic Assessment

The first step in the process is to determine if the content of the educational activity is non-clinical or if it has a clinical focus or clinical subject matter, such as anatomy/physiology of any body system, a pathological disease or condition, or diagnosis/treatment/management of any patient in any setting. The Nurse Planner must address this within the Individual Education Activity application. If the content of the activity is **non-clinical** (e.g., leadership, preceptor development, communications skills) it is not necessary to identify, mitigate, or disclose relevant financial relationships for the activity. When the educational session content does or may have a clinical focus or clinical subject matter, the Nurse Planner is responsible for obtaining a completed IEA Financial Relationship Form or alternate form/spreadsheet/table from each individual with the ability to control content and evaluating relevant relationships. For **clinical** topics, the following steps should be taken:

- Identify name and credentials of all **individuals** in a position to control/influence the content of the activity.
- Complete the table within the IEA application, providing the name and credentials for each individual in a position to control the content of the activity.

- Collect information about financial relationships from all individuals in a position to control content (planners, presenters, content reviewers, if applicable, and others), using the **IEA Nurse Planner and IEA Planner Faculty Financial Relationship Forms** (see website) or alternate method.
  - ✓ The Nurse Planner must complete the IEA Nurse Planner Financial Relationship Form.
  - ✓ The Nurse Planner cannot review and assess their own financial relationships noted on his/her own Financial Relationship Reporting Form and must assign this task to another member of the planning committee.
  - ✓ The Nurse Planner must review all relationships declared on the IEA Planner Faculty Financial Relationship Form or alternate form, tool or mechanism, and **exclude owners and employees of ineligible companies/organizations** from participating as planners, presenters, content reviewers, or other roles unless the educational activity meets one of the allowable exceptions.
  - ✓ The Nurse Planner should document their assessment of financial relationships identified using Section 5 of the **IEA Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form** (see website).
  - ✓ The Nurse Planner must determine which financial relationships are **relevant** to the content of the nursing continuing professional development activity, **mitigate** those relevant financial relationships to prevent commercial bias, and then **disclose** the presence or absence of all relevant financial relationships and that mitigation has taken place to learners prior to the activity.
- The Nurse Planner must determine **relevant** financial relationships for all who will be in control of educational content. Review the information collected from prospective planners, presenters, faculty and others, not excluded and determine whether each person's financial relationships with ineligible companies are relevant to the content of the education being planned.
- If a relevant financial relationship is determined, the Nurse Planner will document steps taken to **mitigate** the undue influence in planning and/or providing the activity. Mitigation strategies should be noted in Section 5 of the IEA Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form and included on the table in the IEA application form.
- **Disclose** to learners, prior to the beginning of the activity, the presence or absence of relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies.

Collection of Financial Relationship Information

Identification of Planning Team Members and Faculty

The **planning committee** must include one **Nurse Planner** (NP). The Nurse Planner is expected to meet minimum education/experience requirements, be knowledgeable of the NCPD process and is responsible for adherence to the ANCC criteria. The NP is responsible for completion of the VTL Center for Professional Development Individual Education Activity Application and related forms to document adherence and is most often the individual that VTL Center for PD staff and/or Nurse Peer Reviewers contact with questions regarding the activity application. **Only one Nurse Planner may be appointed for an activity.** Other nurses may serve on the planning committee but should be identified as planning committee members only and complete the Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form.

The planning committee is responsible for selecting **Presenters/Faculty/Authors** to address the learning outcomes of the activity based on identified needed qualifications such as content expertise, comfort with a particular teaching methodology (e.g., Web-based), presentation skills, and familiarity with the target audience. The planning committee should first identify the necessary qualifications of a presenter/faculty/author on the topic(s) being presented during the activity, including how the necessary qualifications of the presenters/faculty/authors were identified, and then

select faculty to meet those identified qualifications. Please note that pre-licensure nursing students – students in traditional nursing programs who have not yet demonstrated education, experience or expertise by the achievement of a license in nursing – are not eligible to present to an audience of licensed nurses or other healthcare professionals in sessions awarding nursing contact hours.

Presenters/Faculty/Authors should have qualifications that demonstrate their education and/or experience in the content area; qualifications may be documented on the Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form. Qualifications should address how the individual is knowledgeable about the topic and how the individual gained expertise. Expertise in subject matter may be evaluated based on education, professional achievements and credentials, work experiences, honors, awards, professional publications, or similar. Please note that pre-licensure nursing students – students in traditional nursing programs who have not yet demonstrated education, experience or expertise by the achievement of a license in nursing – are not eligible to present to an audience of licensed nurses or other healthcare professionals in sessions awarding nursing contact hours.

Presenters are not required to be in the field of nursing, but when non-nurses such as physicians, social workers, other health professionals or experts in other fields are asked to present, it is important to ensure there is a mechanism for relating the content to nursing practice. For example, an RN-member of the planning committee can be assigned to work with the non-nurse presenter to ensure a relationship between the content being presented and the role of the RN, or at the activity, an RN-moderator or session leader can tie together the content with the role of the RN.

The planning committee may also identify the need for additional individuals to function as **Content Reviewers**. The purpose of a Content Reviewer is to evaluate an educational activity during the planning process for quality of content, potential bias, and any other aspects of the activity that may require evaluation.

If the educational topic(s) selected dictates that financial relationship reporting is applicable, providers should include the IEA Nurse Planner Financial Relationship Reporting Form and IEA Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Forms for all planners and presenters documenting all required elements in the activity file. Please note that employees or representatives of an ineligible company/organization are permitted to serve as planners, speakers, presenters, authors and/or Content Reviewers ONLY if the content of the educational activity is NOT related to the products of an ineligible company/organization.

The Nurse Planner is responsible for ensuring a **Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form** or alternate form, tool, or mechanism, is completed by each planning committee member, each presenter/faculty/author, and each Content Reviewer when the subject matter is clinical in nature. Please remember the following elements related to the financial relationship form:

- The Nurse Planner is responsible for **reviewing each** Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form to ensure proper completion and appropriate qualifications. The Nurse Planner is also responsible for evaluating actual or potential relevant financial relationships to impart bias. This review is documented by the Nurse Planner signing each form.
- Another planning committee member reviews the Nurse Planner Financial Relationship Form to ensure completion and appropriate qualifications of the Nurse Planner. This individual also evaluates for actual or potential relevant financial relationships to impart bias in planning. This review is documented by signing off on the Nurse Planner Financial Relationship Form. **It is not acceptable for the Nurse Planner to sign AND co-sign their own Financial Relationship Form**.
- Please note that it is the responsibility of the Nurse Planner to ensure that all financial relationship forms are completed in their entirety before submitting an application for review.

Required for Submission: Applicants are required to collect and keep on file Nurse Planner and Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Forms or the alternative form/tool/mechanism (that contains all criteria elements) used to collect information from all individuals involved in the educational activity. However, **each individual form is not required to be submitted with the application** unless you choose to do so. The information collected should be transposed onto the table in the IEA application, listing each person on the planning committee and all presenters/faculty/ authors including name and credentials, role, financial relationships (if applicable), if those relationships were relevant to the content and mitigation strategies implemented that relate to their role in the event.

Please Note: **VTL Center for PD reserves the right to request Financial Relationship Forms for planners and presenters/faculty/authors involved in the activity as needed for review.**

The Nurse Planner is responsible for ensuring that all individuals who have the ability to control or influence the clinical content of an educational activity report all **financial relationships** with any ineligible company/organization, including but not limited to members of the planning committee, presenters/faculty/authors, and/or Content Reviewers. Relevant financial relationships must be disclosed to the learners during the time when the relationship is in effect and for 24 months afterward. Identification of relevant financial relationships may be accomplished through completion of the Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form.

All planners and faculty completing the Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form, or alternative form/tool/ mechanism (that contains all criteria elements), must disclose (1) whether they are the owner/employee or representative of an ineligible company/organization, and (2) any financial relationships with ineligible companies/organizations within the last 24 months. Any individual refusing to disclose relationships with ineligible companies/organizations may not participate in any part of the educational activity. If the Nurse Planner or other planning committee member is aware of a relationship with an ineligible company/organization on the part of the individual that may be relevant but was not reported, the Nurse Planner must follow up with the individual, updating the reporting form as appropriate. All information disclosed must be shared with the participants/learners prior to the start of the educational activity.

A relevant financial relationship exists when an individual is in a position to control or influence the content of an educational activity and has a financial relationship with an ineligible company/organization, the products or services of which are pertinent or relevant to the content of the educational activity. A potential conflict based on a financial relationship with an ineligible company/organization may occur because that relationship might bias a person's ability to objectively participate in planning or implementing a learning activity.

RELEVANT FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP(S)

Nurse Planner Financial Relationship Assessment – Relevant Financial Relationships

The Nurse Planner is responsible for **evaluating** whether any reported relationship is in fact a 'relevant financial relationship', which would indicate a potential conflict on the part of that individual. **Relevant relationships**, as defined by ANCC, are "relationships that are expected to result in financial benefit from an ineligible company/organization, the products or services of which are related to the content of the educational activity".

The Nurse Planner reviews the information collected on the IEA Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form from prospective planners, presenters, faculty and others, not excluded, and determines whether each person's financial relationships with ineligible companies are relevant to the content of the educational activity being planned.

The Nurse Planner must determine whether:

- A financial relationship, in any amount, exists between the person in control of content and an ineligible company/organization
- The financial relationship existed during the past 24 months
- The content of the education is related to the products of an ineligible company/organization with whom the person has a financial relationship.

It may be necessary to obtain more information from the individual reporting the relationship, or from other planners and presenters/faculty/authors about the proposed content that the individual would plan or present, to form a decision.

Evidence of a relevant financial relationship with an ineligible company/organization may include but is not limited to receiving a salary, royalty, intellectual property rights, consulting fee, honoraria, ownership interest (stock and stock options, excluding diversified mutual funds), grants, contracts, or other financial benefit directly or indirectly from the ineligible company/organization. Financial benefits may be associated with employment, management positions, stockholder, independent contractor relationships or other contractual relationships, consulting, speaking, teaching, membership on an advisory committee or review panel, board membership, and other activities from which remuneration is received or expected from the ineligible company/organization. Relevant financial relationships can also include 'contracted research' where the institution receives a grant and manages the grant funds and the individual is the principal or a named investigator on the grant.

The following questions should be considered:

1. Is the relationship with an organization that meets the ANCC definition of 'an ineligible company/ organization'?
2. Does the relationship have the potential to result in financial benefit for the individual?
3. Are the products or services of the ineligible company/organization relevant to the educational content the individual will be involved with planning, presenting, or authoring?

It is irrelevant whether the presenter plans to reference any products or services, just that such a potential exists. For example, the planners may ask an expert presenter to speak about heart failure, and the presenter reports he is on the speaker's bureau for a pharmaceutical company that makes medications that can be used to treat heart failure. This is a relevant financial relationship even if no mention of those drugs or the company is made during the presentation. This does not automatically eliminate the presenter from speaking, but mitigation of the relevant financial relationship is required (see below).

Employees/Representatives of ineligible companies/organizations are permitted to serve as planners, speakers, presenters, authors and/or Content Reviewers ONLY if:

- the content of the educational activity is **not related** to the business lines or products of their employer/ company. *Please note*, if the products of the presenter's company pertain to the subject matter, regardless of whether they are mentioned in the educational materials, the relationship is considered to be relevant and must be mitigated and disclosed, OR
- the content of the NCPD activity is limited to basic science research, such as pre-clinical research or the methodologies of research, and they do not make care recommendations, OR
- they are participating as technicians/instructors to teach the safe and proper use of medical devices, and **do not recommend whether or when a device is used**.

The provider may use the services of planners and presenters/faculty/authors that have a financial relationship with an ineligible company/organization, but the Nurse Planner must address the relevant financial relationship and describe how it was mitigated.

The outcome of this review process (*No relationships with an ineligible company/organization exists; Relationships disclosed found not to be relevant; or relevant financial relationship exists*) and any pertinent information leading to the decision must be documented in the Nurse Planner review box in Section 5 of the Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form.

If the Nurse Planner has a relevant relationship, they have the option to either divest themselves from the relationship or recuse themselves from the Nurse Planner role for this activity, and a new Nurse Planner must be found. The former Nurse Planner may be able to serve on the planning committee or as a presenter/author if measures appropriate to their new role are taken to mitigate the relationship, prior to assuming that role.

If the Nurse Planner determines that a presenter/speaker/author has a relevant financial relationship, they could choose to not award contact hours for that presenter's presentation, or assign a planning committee member to 1) review the educational materials the presenter develops for evidence of integrity/absence of bias or 2) review the educational materials the presenter develops to ensure that clinical recommendations are evidence-based and free from commercial bias. The Nurse Planner could also reach out to the presenter/speaker/author and let them know they have the option to divest themselves from the relationship.

Evidence of Mitigation of Relevant Financial Relationship(s)

If a relevant financial relationship is identified, actions must be taken to **mitigate** the relevant financial relationship prior to presenting/providing the educational activity to learners. Such actions must be documented, and the documentation must demonstrate (1) the identified relationship and (2) a statement that the relationship was mitigated. Actions may include but are not limited to the following:

- Undertaking review of the educational activity by a planner or Content Reviewer to evaluate for potential bias, balance in presentation, evidence-based content or other indicators of integrity, and absence of bias, IN ADDITION to one of the following:
    - monitoring the educational activity to evaluate for commercial bias in the presentation
      OR
    - reviewing participant feedback to evaluate for commercial bias in the activity by means of a question on the evaluation tool
- Not awarding nursing contact hours for a portion or all of the educational activity.
- Revising the role of the individual with financial relationships so that the relationship is no longer relevant to the educational activity. This applies to members of the planning committee only.
- Peer review of planning decisions by persons without relevant financial relationships.
- Divesting the individual's financial relationship with the ineligible company.
- Removing the individual with relevant financial relationships from participating in all parts of the educational activity.
- Attesting clinical recommendations are evidence-based and free of commercial bias (adequate references and resources must be included)

Mitigation strategy(ies) utilized by the Nurse Planner for each person with a relevant financial relationship should be documented on the table within the IEA Application and in Section 5 of the IEA Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form. Multiple strategies may be selected, but they must be appropriate to the role(s) that each person has with the

activity. The Nurse Planner may engage the individual with the identified relevant financial relationship to participate in the mitigation process, but the Nurse Planner is ultimately accountable for compliance. More information on identifying and mitigating relevant financial relationships can be found in the *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education* available on the VTL Center for PD website.

The presence or absence of relevant financial relationships for planners, presenters/faculty/authors, and Content Reviewers must be disclosed to learners in writing prior to the start of the activity. The disclosure must include the name of the individual involved, name of the ineligible company/organization, nature of the financial relationship with the ineligible company/organization, and a statement that all relevant financial relationships have been mitigated. **Note that every relevant financial relationship must be disclosed to learners, even if the relationship was successfully mitigated.** Examples of appropriate wording for the presence or absence of relevant financial relationships are available on the VTL Center for PD website.

Potential for Bias: Bias is defined as the tendency or inclination to cause partiality, favoritism, or influence. This may be demonstrated by promoting one particular brand of product over others, using the name of one service provider to the exclusion of other comparable services, or giving only one point of view on a subject where there are multiple, sometimes conflicting, points of view. Note that bias can occur even when a presenter does not have any relationships with ineligible companies/organizations. NCPD activities are to be planned and presented based on the best available evidence, taking steps to avoid bias and assessing and monitoring for content integrity.

Providers must be proactive and take precautions to prevent bias in the presentation of educational activities, and to protect learners from commercial messages. Some examples of precautions are:

- Physically separate the area where learners check in and receive educational materials, and the areas where they may choose or not choose to pick up commercial handouts and "goodies"- tote bags, pens, key chains, etc. with commercial product names and advertisements.
- Arrange space so learners are not required to walk through an exhibit area to find the educational session/s; if refreshments are provided in the same room as the educational activity, and an ineligible company/organization is providing them, the organization's name and product advertisements may not be placed in the room. The ineligible company/organization can be acknowledged in the brochure, participant materials, by verbal announcement, and/or through other signage outside of the activity room.
- Presenters/faculty/authors are not permitted to use handouts that include commercial logos or advertisements, or to have such logos on their slides.
- Classrooms and other spaces where learning content is being presented may not be utilized for social or other types of events hosted by or sponsored by ineligible companies/organizations within 30 minutes of the learning portion of the activity.
- Educational sessions that cannot provide contact hours because they are presented by employees or owners of ineligible companies/organizations that do not meet the exceptions noted above, must be separated by 30 minutes before and after sessions that are part of the contact hour award.

The Nurse Planner review box on the **Planner/Faculty Financial Relationship Form** asks the Nurse Planner to list any additional concern for potential bias beyond the financial relationships disclosed by the individual and how it was mitigated. For example, a planner may know that a potential presenter is the author of a book or created an assessment tool related to the content of the activity or is a consultant for a company that manufactures pharmaceuticals or equipment used in surgery. In rare cases, there may even be reason for the Nurse Planner to suspect that a planner or presenter has misunderstood the instructions and not reported a relevant financial relationship, such as noting that the presenter's email is a business one (i.e., "Pfizer.com"). Participation of employees

or representatives of ineligible companies/organizations in planning and implementation of activities is extremely limited (see Relevant Financial Relationships section below).

Steps to protect against bias might include reviewing the presenter's slides, checking for balance in references and resources, having an impartial Content Reviewer evaluate the presenter's/faculty/author's content, having the presenter/faculty/author sign an agreement to present information fairly and impartially, monitoring the presentation to validate content integrity, and/or asking participants to evaluate the presence or absence of bias. Any observed bias is to be documented in the activity file and should be used in future planning of NCPD activities.

COMMERCIAL SUPPORT

Continuing education should be free of all influence or bias, effective in improving practice, based on valid content, and independent of the influence of an ineligible company/organization (ANCC, ACCME). The ANCC criteria are summarized below, but the Nurse Planner is responsible for ensuring adherence to all standards outlined in the *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education* at all times, including ensuring content integrity in the presence of commercial support or vendors/exhibitors.

An **ineligible company/organization**, as defined by ANCC, is any entity whose primary business is producing, marketing, reselling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients, or an entity that is owned or controlled by an entity that produces, markets, resells, or distributes healthcare products consumed by or used on patients. Exceptions are made for nonprofit or government organizations, non-healthcare-related companies and healthcare facilities.

Commercial support is financial, or in-kind, contributions given by an ineligible company/organization used to pay all or part of the costs of an NCPD activity. **Financial support** is money supplied by an ineligible company to be used by an Activity Provider for expenses related to the educational activity. Financial support may be provided as an unrestricted grant, educational grant, donation, or scholarship. **In-kind support** is materials, space or other nonmonetary resources or services used by an Activity Provider to conduct an educational activity, which may include but are not limited to human resources, marketing services, physical space, equipment such as audiovisual components, and teaching tools (for example, anatomic models). (ACCME, 2020)

Activity Providers that choose to accept **commercial support** are responsible for ensuring that the education remains independent of the ineligible company and that the support does not result in commercial bias or commercial influence in the education. The support does not establish a financial relationship between the ineligible company and planners, faculty, and others in control of content of the education.

Please refer to the detailed definition in the *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education* or contact the VTL Center for PD office with questions regarding whether an organization providing support for the activity is an ineligible company/organization.

Applicants must also take precautions to prevent commercial bias in or commercial influence on the educational activity Content integrity of the educational activity must be maintained in the presence of commercial support. The provider developing the educational activity is responsible for ensuring content integrity. Providers that accept outside support should develop written policies and/or procedures for managing commercial support.

Applicants must have a signed, written commercial support agreement outlining the terms of acceptance when commercial support is received. The commercial support agreement must align with the requirements outlined in ACCME Standard 4. If a signed commercial support agreement is not available at the time of application, applicants must provide a sample copy of the agreement that will be used. Copies of signed agreements not available at the time of application must be submitted prior to the activity start date. If anything changes, such as new supporters, change in the amount of support provided, etc. following the application submission, signed agreements must be submitted

to VTL Center for PD prior to the activity start date. Organizations providing commercial support may **not** provide or jointly provide educational activities. A sample Commercial Support agreement is available on the VTL Center for PD website.

Providers accepting commercial support for an NCPD activity are required to:

1. Obtain a completed and signed agreement from each ineligible company/organization providing support. This agreement should contain:
    - Amount of commercial support and/or description of in-kind donation
    - Description of how commercial support was/will be used by the provider (unrestricted vs. restricted use of funds)
    - Statement of understanding that the provider and ineligible company/organization must comply with the *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education*
    - Statement that the ineligible company/organization will not participate in planning, developing, implementing or evaluating the educational activity
    - Statement that the ineligible company/organization will not recruit learners from the educational activity for any purpose
    - Statement of understanding that commercial support will be disclosed to participants of the educational activity
    - Name and signature of the individuals legally authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the activity provider and the ineligible company/organization
    - Date the agreement was signed

    In addition, the following strategies/precautions should be taken to prevent commercial bias or commercial influence during the educational activity and should also be outlined in the commercial support agreement:
    - For live, in-person events, the exhibit/commercial promotion area will be physically separated from area where educational content will be delivered, and attendance is optional
    - For live, virtual events, exhibits or any other commercial promotion will be in a breakout room or area separate from where the educational content will be delivered, and attendance is optional
    - Marketing/advertising will not be included within educational content (slides, handouts, etc.)
    - Commercial supporter(s) will not be referenced during the activity except for required disclosure
    - 'Giveaways' will be kept separate from educational materials/delivery.
2. Make all decisions regarding the receipt and disbursement of the commercial support funds in adherence with ANCC criteria.
    - In the event that the activity will be jointly provided, the 'provider' organization is responsible for managing commercial support funds in adherence with the ANCC criteria.
    - Ineligible companies may not pay directly for any of the expenses related to the education or learners. All payments must be made by the provider, not the ineligible company/organization.
    - The provider must keep a record of the amount or kind of commercial support received and how it was used for the educational activity and be able to produce that accounting upon request.
3. Disclose to learners the name(s) of the ineligible company(ies) that provided the commercial support and the nature of the support received. This disclosure must not include the ineligible companies' corporate/product logos, product images, trade names or product group messages.

A **sponsor** is identified as an organization that does not meet the definition of an ineligible company/organization. **Sponsorship** is defined as financial, or in-kind, contributions given by an entity that is not an ineligible company/organization, which is used to pay all or part of the costs of an NCPD activity. For example, a local hospital may allow the provider to use a hospital classroom for an educational activity, or a national non-profit organization may provide a speaker.

Organizations identified as 'sponsors' are not involved in planning the activity. If an eligible company/organization has been involved with the planning **and** will be providing financial or in-kind support, the organization should be recognized as a 'joint provider', and a Joint Provider Agreement should be completed.

1. Applicants accepting sponsorship for a NCPD activity are not required to submit documentation about the contributions received with the activity application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to keep full and detailed records regarding monies or contributions received and how disbursal was handled.
2. Disclosures to learners that sponsorship was received for the activity is not required but usually done as a courtesy and recognition to the sponsor(s). This recognition can be done via the promotional materials or by utilizing signage at the activity.

Vendors or **Exhibitors** are people from a company, school or agency etc. that display information about their company, products, goods and/or services at a fair, show, or competition. Instead of offering commercial support or sponsorship, the exhibitors/vendors financial arrangements with the educational activity provider are simply to purchase the use of exhibit space rather than to contribute directly to support the educational activity. Vendors/Exhibitors do not participate in planning, implementation, or evaluation of the educational activity. Exhibits, promotion, and sales must be separated from the educational activity, regardless of the format.

Vendors/Exhibitors are not considered commercial supporters or sponsors, and no written agreement is required. However, the provider must take precautions to prevent bias:

- Exhibiting, promoting and selling products may not take place during an educational activity.
- Marketing or advertisement for exhibits, promotions, or sales may not be included within educational activity content (e.g., slides, handouts, enduring materials).
- Marketing or advertisement for exhibits, promotions, or sales must take place in a location physically separated from the area where educational content is delivered (not just in a different area of the same room) for live, in-person events and in a breakout room or area separate from where the educational content will be delivered for live, virtual events. In either instance, attendance should be optional.

Giveaways are donated items such as cups, bags, sticky notes, etc. not related to the provision of the educational activity and not considered to be 'in-kind' sponsorship or commercial support. Ineligible companies/organizations may provide giveaways for learners as long as there is physical separation between accessing the 'giveaway' and learner engagement in the educational activity. Educational materials may not be packaged in 'giveaways' (folder, binder, bag, thumb/flash drive) bearing logos/trademarks of an ineligible company/organization.

Ancillary Activities

Individual Activity Applicants are responsible for ensuring that education is separate from marketing by ineligible companies—including advertising, sales, exhibits, and promotion—and from nonaccredited education offered in conjunction with accredited (approved) continuing education.

- Per the ACCME *Standards*, Standard 5 applies only when there is marketing by ineligible companies or nonaccredited education associated with the accredited continuing education.

- Please note, marketing in this context refers to exhibit hall spaces, and advertising, sales, promotion, sponsored meals, or product promotion materials provided by ineligible companies prior to, during or after an educational activity.
- Logos or images of ineligible companies/organizations are not permitted on educational materials.

If the activity has ancillary activities, evidence should be included in the activity file to demonstrate adherence to Standard 5, which includes:

- Marketing materials associated with the activity in which advertising or marketing for or on behalf of ineligible companies (with or without logos).
- Evidence to demonstrate that the accredited education is separated in space and/or time from nonaccredited ancillary activities (i.e., exhibits or nonaccredited education), such as a diagram demonstrating the separation of exhibits and education (separated in space) or an agenda separating the contact hour eligible and non-contact hour education by 30 minutes (separated in time).

Operational Elements

Many operational/administrative criteria elements are addressed through completion of the first page of the Individual Education Activity Application.

Nursing continuing professional development (NCPD) activities are developed in response to, and with consideration for, the unique educational needs of the target audience. The Nurse Planner and planning committee determine the **target audience** for the educational activity. The target audience is defined as specific registered nurse learners and may include other healthcare team members the educational activity is intended to impact. At a minimum for NCPD activities the target audience must be registered nurses. Even when an interprofessional activity is not anticipated, the process of gap analysis may indicate that other disciplines should be included in the target audience. Planners should think about whose practice could be enhanced by attending this education.

Contact Hour Calculation and Agenda

Contact hours may be offered for activities of any length whose content meets the ANCC definition of nursing continuing professional development. Within a given activity, some sessions may be offered for contact hours while others are not. Nursing continuing professional development activities enable the learner to acquire or improve knowledge or skills beyond basic knowledge, enhance professional development or performance, must be evidence-based/based on best available evidence and presented without promotion or bias.

Contact hours must be determined in a logical and defensible manner and awarded to participants for those portions of the educational activity devoted to learning experience and assessment/evaluation. One contact hour = 60 minutes of content. After the first contact hour, fractions or portions of the 60-minute hour should be calculated. Contact hours can be awarded in the hundredths (i.e., two digits past the decimal point) and may be rounded up or down to the nearest ¼ (0.25) hour (i.e., if the calculation is 1.19 contact hours, it may be rounded up to 1.25 contact hours or down to 1.0). Educational activities may also be conducted "asynchronously" and contact hours awarded at the conclusion of the activities.

Time frames must match and support the contact hour calculation for live activities. Time allowed for registration, introductions, opening announcements, breaks, meals, business meetings and viewing of/interaction with vendors/ exhibits should be clearly delineated and **not included** in the calculation of contact hours or the total contact hours awarded. Contact hours may not be awarded retroactively except in the case of a pilot study. Participants in a pilot study help determine the number of contact hours to award by reporting the time required for completing an educational activity. Those participants may be awarded contact hours once the number is determined.

Presenters/speakers cannot earn contact hours for sessions they present. If they are presenting one or more sessions at a conference, but are also attending other sessions at that conference, they can earn contact hours only for those sessions they attend as learners. Planning committee members may earn contact hours if they fully participate in the activity as learners. Planning committee members may earn contact hours if they have met the successful completion requirements of learners. It should be noted on the roster/participant listing when a presenter received a reduced contact hour award.

For provider-paced (**live**) activities, contact hour calculation is based on time devoted to presentation of the content. This includes time for evaluation, case studies, posttests, return demonstrations and other types of teaching/learning strategies. **Contact hours are not awarded for welcome/introductions, breaks, meals, or viewing vendor displays.**

For learner-paced (**enduring material**) activities and blended activities, a logical and defensible method must be used to determine the number of contact hours to award. A pilot study can be used to determine the average amount of time needed for a group of learners who are representative of the target audience to complete the activity, including evaluation. (*Note that learners participating in a pilot study may be awarded contact hours once the VTL Individual Education Activity Application has been approved*). Historical data and word counts are other methods of determining contact hours. A popular word count method is Mergener's formula, which can be found at http://touchcalc.com/calculators/mergener. The website will automatically calculate this formula once the data, such as number of words, number of questions, difficulty of material, etc. is entered.

It is important to remember the unit of measure for nursing continuing professional development is the contact hour (CH), not CEU. The two units of measure are calculated very differently and are not interchangeable. A CEU is a specific credit designation used by organizations accredited by International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET). The conversion of 1 CEU into hours (time) is different than a contact hour. For example, one CEU equals 10 nursing contact hours. Use correct contact hour terminology on all marketing, certificates, and learning materials; do not use "ANCC contact hours" or "VTL Center for PD contact hours", just "contact hours" or "nursing contact hours". Please note that the use of 'CNE' or 'NCPD' is not appropriate when referring to the awarding of contact hours. 'CNE' and 'NCPD' refers to the type of education, not the award for attending such education.

In the application, applicants will list the maximum number of contact hours a participant could earn for this activity and the method of calculation. If the activity offers concurrent sessions, the maximum number of contact hours a learner could receive will not be the same as the total number of sessions/contact hours under review. Please note, the VTL Center for Professional Development application review fee is based on the total number of contact hours under review.

In addition, applicants must submit a full agenda/schedule for each educational activity that is more than three hours in length with their application. The agenda/schedule should include all elements from registration to closing, including any breaks or meal times. **The agenda/schedule must indicate to the reviewers how the contact hour calculation was made.** In some cases, the full agenda/schedule will list more sessions than those for which nursing contact hours may be awarded, but it should be clear on the agenda/schedule which educational sessions/presentations will award nursing contact hours. Pre-work, or homework assigned during a blended activity, can be included in the calculation of contact hours, and should be listed on the working agenda. This agenda can be the agenda published in marketing materials or given to participants as a handout the day of the event, but only if the agenda includes the contact hour calculations as noted above. More commonly, a 'working' agenda is used by the planning committee that shows the contact hours for each session or section of the activity. Ensure that the contact hour award is consistent across all documentation. The working agenda should be included in the activity application along with any agenda published or

distributed to potential or actual participants. Sample agendas/schedules are available on the VTL Center for PD website.

Pharmacology Hours for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses: If the activity is designed specifically for advanced practice nurses and the content addresses or includes content about pharmacotherapeutics, the Nurse Planner may delineate the amount of time spent on pharmacotherapeutic content on the Educational Planning Form via a notes in the Content column. This may also be documented on a working agenda. The documentation of completion/certificate would then include the total number of contact hours the participant received and the appropriate number of pharmacology hours i.e., Sally Smith received 8 contact hours (2 of which were in the area of pharmacology). To qualify, the content area on the Educational Planning Form or the description of the content must clearly indicate that the subject matter is wholly regarding an aspect of pharmacotherapeutics (drug selection, prescribing, dosing, patient teaching, expected results, management of side effects).

Criteria for Awarding Contact Hours: A learner must demonstrate 'successful completion' of the NCPD activity before contact hours are awarded. The planning committee determines what the learner must do or achieve to receive contact hours for the activity. The criteria for awarding contact hours should be realistic, practical, and appropriate for the underlying educational need, format of the educational activity, while aligning meaningfully with the learning outcomes. Criteria for successful completion may include, but are not limited to, attendance at/completion of the entire live event (in-person or virtual) or enduring activity or a specified portion of the activity (no less than 90%), attendance of a required number of sessions of a multi-session/multi-track activity with breakouts or concurrent sessions, completion of required online modules, video, assigned reading/assignments or self-study packet, small group work/exercises, completion/submission of an evaluation, attestation of sessions attended/presentations viewed or completion of enduring materials by participants, participation in self-evaluation, participating in or achieving a specified passing score on a posttest, return demonstration of a skill, participation in case study analysis, online polling or Q&A, participation in small group activities or audience response system exercises, etc. It is necessary that a method be developed to ensure requirements for successful completion are met before contact hours are awarded.

Note:

- If one of the criteria for awarding contact hours is completion of a posttest, then a copy of the test (or script if done verbally with an audience response system or electronic polling) should be include in the activity file, along with an answer key.
- All criteria for awarding contact hours must be met and validated before a learner receives a certificate of completion and is awarded contact hours.

Verification of Participation: The planning committee must determine how learner participation will be verified. The verification method(s) used should complement the activity delivery method. Methods of verification include, but are not limited to, pre-registration with check-in, sign-in sheets/registration forms, sign-in/check-in entering an online platform, roll call, ID scanning, computer log, submission of completed posttest with passing score, submission of required assignments and signed attestation statements by participants verifying completion. Note that each type of activity format (live, blended and enduring) has different options to verify participation by learners.

DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETION/CERTIFICATE

A **documentation of completion/certificate** must be provided to learners when they have met all of the criteria for successful completion determined by the planning committee. The format of the certificate (or other document such as a letter or email) can vary depending on the criteria required for successful completion, i.e., was attendance at the entire activity required or could participants attend portions of the activity or individual sessions for credit.

Applicants should prepare and submit a sample certificate of completion, as it would appear ***following*** approval, including the final activity approval statement and any signature or signature stamp. The approval statement communicates to participants, employers, and certifying groups that the provider of the educational activity has demonstrated adherence to professional standards.

The certificate/document must include, at a minimum:

1. Title and date (or learner's completion date for enduring activities) of the educational activity
2. Participant name (or space/line designated for participant name)
3. Name and address of the provider of the educational activity (*Web or email address is acceptable*)
4. Number of contact hours the learner was awarded/or received
5. VTL Center for PD final activity approval statement:
   This nursing continuing professional development activity was approved by VTL Center for Professional Development, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

While not required, it is suggested that the certificate include the VTL Center for PD approval number issued and the signature of the Nurse Planner responsible for the educational activity to demonstrate credibility and authenticity.

The approval statement above cannot be added to, altered or changed in any way and must read verbatim on the certificate. Do not include abbreviations nor follow with additional numbers, codes, etc. **A sample certificate of completion is available on the VTL Center for PD website.**

Applicants should have a process for issuing certificates to learners that supports their requirements for awarding contact hours and verification of participation. 'Recordkeeping' criteria require that the activity provider (applicant) keep a list of participant names and the number of contact hours earned by each in the activity file. This list will verify the total number of participants awarded contact hours for successful completion of the educational activity. The Nurse Planner is responsible for submitting this information to the VTL Center for PD office upon completion of the educational activity within the post activity documentation.

Providers may not share learner contact information without written permission from the learner. If you wish to provide learners, vendors or sponsors with a list of attendee names and contact information, consider adding a question on the registration form asking for permission to do so – do not include the names of those attendees who 'opt out'.

DISCLOSURES TO LEARNERS

All required disclosures and any other applicable disclosures must be provided to learners *prior to the start* of an educational activity. Required information may not occur or be located at the end of the educational activity.

For *live* activities (in-person or virtual), disclosures must be made to the learner prior to initiation of the educational content. For *enduring* activities (print, electronic, or web-based activities), disclosures must be visible to the learner prior to the start of the educational content. Evidence of disclosures to learners must be submitted with the application and documentation of how required disclosures will be delivered to learners must be retained in the activity file.

Disclosures should be delivered to learners 'in writing' (e.g., promotional materials, participant handout, disclosure slide, sign at check in, within an event app, etc.). Some providers include "Administrative Information" or a "General Information Form" in participant packets/handouts which may include the required disclosures. **It is strongly recommended to include all disclosures in one place, even if some appear again elsewhere such as in marketing**

materials. Organizations that utilize an event app to deliver disclosures to learners should provide access/login information to the VTL Center for PD review team.

Whatever the method used, the participant should be informed of the disclosures either prior to or at the start of the educational activity. Disclosures may not occur or be located at the end of an educational activity.

Disclosures **always** required include:

- **VTL Center for Professional Development individual activity approval statement**

  The approval statement must be displayed clearly to the learner and be written exactly as indicated by VTL Center for Professional Development. When referring to contact hours, the term "accredited contact hours" should **never** be used. An IEA applicant organization is seeking "approval" to award contact hours.

  ALL marketing/advertising/promotional materials and other documents that refer to the organization's approval status **must** contain **one** of the following statements:

  - **If advertising is released prior to approval AND after an application has been submitted to the VTL Center for PD for review, the following statement should be used**:

    This activity has been submitted to VTL Center for Professional Development for approval to award contact hours. VTL Center for Professional Development is accredited as an approver of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

    Note: this preliminary submitted-for-approval statement does **not** meet the requirement for disclosure of the activity approval statement. Please use the following final activity approval statement when developing final disclosures to learners.

  - **If advertising will be released after approval, the following statement should be used**:
    This nursing continuing professional development activity was approved by VTL Center for Professional Development, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

  Neither statement can be added to or altered in any way and must read verbatim in all materials.

  Marketing/Advertising/Promotional methods may include flyers, brochures, email notifications or postings on websites or intranet sites, among other methods. Copies of all methods used to communicate information about the activity to consumers should be retained in the activity file.

- **Criteria for awarding contact hours**

  The criteria for successful completion must be disclosed to learners prior to the start of the learning activity, clearly outlining what is expected of the learners in order to earn contact hours, including any specific requirements for a percentage correct on a posttest, passing grade on assignments, or skill demonstration. It is the responsibility of the Nurse Planner to ensure that a process is in place to verify that participants have met the identified successful completion requirements before a certificate of completion is issued.

Disclosures **required, if applicable to the educational activity,** include:

- **Presence or absence of relevant financial relationship identification and mitigation statement as outlined in Standard 3:**

If the activity subject matter **does not** include any clinical content, no disclosure for the presence or absence of relevant financial relationships is required.

For Non-Clinical Activities:

- If the identification of relevant financial relationships was not required, due to non-clinical content, no disclosure to learners is required.

For Clinical Activities:

- When there are no relevant financial relationships, the absence of such relationships should be disclosed to learners.
  - For an activity with subject matter that **does** include clinical content, disclosure for individuals in a position to control content who ***do not have*** a relevant financial relationship with an ineligible company/organization, must inform learners that no relevant financial relationship exists. This should be specific to both the planners and the presenters, i.e., "No relevant financial relationships were identified for any member of the planning committee or presenter/author", not simply "No relevant relationships exist".
  - **Example**: No relevant financial relationships were identified for any member of the planning committee or any presenter/author of the program content.
- If relevant financial relationships were identified the following information must be provided to learners:
  - Name(s) of individuals with relevant financial relationships
  - Names of the ineligible companies with which they have a relevant financial relationship (Identify ineligible companies by their names only, do not include logos or trade names.)
  - The nature of the financial relationship(s)
  - A statement that all relevant financial relationships have been mitigated. The mitigation steps do not need to be outlined.
  - **Example**: Samantha Turner is on the speakers' bureau for ABC Pharmaceuticals. The relevant financial relationship has been mitigated. No other relevant financial relationships were identified for any member of the planning committee or presenter/author.

- **Expiration date statement for enduring activities or materials:**

  When educational activities are provided through an enduring format (*e.g., print, electronic, Web-based*), activity providers are required to disclose the expiration date to notify learners of the time period during which contact hours will be awarded. This date must be visible to the learner **prior to the start** of the educational content. The expiration date should be based on the content of the material but cannot exceed 2 years. Note this date refers to when the ability to receive contact hours expires, not when the content itself expires.

- **Commercial support from ineligible companies/organizations:**

  Learners must be informed if an ineligible company/organization provided financial or in-kind support for the educational activity. The activity provider must disclose the name(s) of the ineligible company(ies) that gave the commercial support and the nature of the support. Actual dollar amounts are not required to be disclosed. The disclosure to learners must not include ineligible companies' corporate or product logos or images, trade names, or product group messages.

- **Joint Providership statement:**

Learners must be informed of the provider of the educational activity and all other organizations that participated in the joint planning of the activity, when activities are jointly provided.

Joint Providership is defined as the collaborative planning, development and implementation of an educational activity by two or more organizations or agencies. The organization receiving approval for the NCPD activity through VTL Center for PD is referred to as the 'provider' of the activity and is responsible for ensuring adherence to the ANCC criteria. The other organization(s) are 'joint provider(s)'. The jointly providing organization **cannot** be an ineligible company/organization. The Nurse Planner identified in the application must be a representative of or affiliated with the 'provider' i.e. applicant organization. The 'provider' maintains responsibility for a) determining learning outcomes, outcome measures and content, b) selecting planners, faculty/presenters/authors and Content Reviewers, c) awarding of contact hours, d) developing evaluation methods, e) managing commercial support, f) recordkeeping procedures and g) ensuring the provider's name is prominently displayed on all marketing materials and certificates.

Joint providership occurs when two or more groups collaborate to develop an educational activity.

- If the activity is jointly provided, there should be a statement that demonstrates that two or more groups were involved in the planning and development of the activity. There is not a prescribed statement that must be used for disclosing joint providership.
- The applicant i.e., Activity Provider is responsible for ensuring adherence to ANCC criteria.
- The Activity Provider's name should be clear, and the individual activity approval statement as issued by VTL Center for PD must be on the certificate and disclosure.
- Materials associated with the educational activity, such as marketing materials, advertising, agendas, certificates of completion and disclosures, must clearly identify that the applicant i.e. Activity Provider is the entity providing contact hours and is responsible for adherence to the ANCC criteria.

While not required, a written Joint Provider Agreement ensures that the 'provider' maintains primary responsibility for the NCPD activity. Should you choose to document the responsibilities of both groups formally, a sample Joint Provider Agreement is available on the VTL Center for PD website.

Sample disclosure wording is available on the VTL Center for PD website.

Evidence of disclosures to the learner (e.g. relevant slide(s), screen shot(s), promotional materials, program schedules, presentation materials, announcements, emails/letters, etc.) must be retained in the activity file and included in the application submission.

RECORDKEEPING

Activity records or files must be kept by the provider for at least 6 years in a secure, confidential and retrievable manner. Learners must be able to contact the applicant organization if verification of attendance or a replacement certificate of completion is needed. The Nurse Planner is responsible for assuring that an adequate recordkeeping system is in place.

Each activity file must include evidence of the following in hardcopy or electronic format:

- Title of activity
- Location of activity
- Type of activity format: live, enduring or blended
- Nurse Planner name and credentials
- Date activity presented
    - Live: date live activity presented

    - Enduring: date first offered, expiration date of enduring materials and subsequent review dates
    - Blended: date of live portion and start and end dates of enduring materials
- Identification of the target audience
- Description of the professional practice gap(s)
- Evidence that validates the professional practice gap(s)
- Educational need(s) that underly the professional practice gap (knowledge, skill, and/or practice)
- The established professional competency(ies) and the professional source that developed the competency(ies)
- Desired learning outcome(s)
    - The Gap Analysis Worksheet addresses the professional practice gap(s), evidence to validate the professional practice gap(s), underlying educational need, professional competency/ies and source, and desired learning outcomes
- Description of the assessment method
- Active learning strategies used
- Description of evidence-based content
- References or resources used to support the evidence-based content
    - The Educational Planning Form addresses the educational content, evidence-based references/ resources and active learning strategies
- Attestation that the activity meets the expectations of all three elements of Standard 2
- Number of contact hours awarded for the activity, including method of calculation
    - If the activity is longer than 3 hours, an agenda/schedule must be provided for the entire activity – *from registration to closing, including breaks*
- Documentation of completion/Certificate including all required elements:
    - Title of the educational activity
    - Date of the educational activity (or the learner's completion date for enduring activities)
    - Name and address of provider of the educational activity (Web or email address acceptable)
    - Learner's name (or space/line designated for learner's name)
    - Number of contact hours awarded
    - VTL Center for PD Activity Approval Statement
- Demonstration of identification and mitigation of financial relationships with ineligible companies/ organizations for all individuals in a position to control content (planners, presenters, faculty, authors, and/or content reviewers) for an activity with clinical content
    - ***If applicable***, include:
        - Name of individual
        - Evidence that the individual was provided with the definition of an ineligible company
        - A list of financial relationships, within the past 24 months, in any amount that existed between the individual and the ineligible company (if any)
    - ***If not applicable***, due to the activity having no clinical content:
        - Include a statement in planning documentation that financial relationships were not identified and mitigated because the educational activity was exempt
        - Provide a list of the names and credentials of all individuals in position to control content
- Evidence of mitigation of relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies/organizations, *if applicable*
- Commercial Support Agreement with date, *if applicable*
    - Name of the Ineligible Company

- Name of the Provider
- Complete description of all the CS provided, including both financial and in-kind support
- Statement that the ineligible company will not participate in planning, developing, implementing or evaluating the educational activity
- Statement that the ineligible company will not recruit learners from the education activity for any purpose
- Description of how the CS must be used by the Provider (unrestricted use &/or restricted use)
- Signature of a duly authorized representative of the ineligible company with the authority to enter the binding contracts on behalf of the ineligible company
- Signature of a duly authorized representative of the Provider with the authority to enter the binding contracts on behalf of the Provider
- Date on which the written agreement was signed

- Evidence of appropriate management of ancillary activities in conjunction with activity, *if applicable*
- Evidence of disclosures to learners (include copies of all disclosure methods)

  Required:
  - VTL Center for PD activity approval statement
  - Criteria for awarding contact hours statement

  Required if applicable:
  - Presence or absence of relevant financial relationships for all individuals in a position to control content (if applicable)
  - Commercial support (if applicable)
  - Expiration date statement (if applicable, for enduring education only)
  - Joint Providership statement (if applicable)

<u>Post Activity</u>

- A copy of the aggregate evaluation data collected
- Summative evaluation consisting of:
  - A summary of the aggregate assessment/evaluation data that highlights whether or not the activity was effective in closing or narrowing the gap and achieving the desired educational activity learning outcome(s).
  - An analysis of what was learned from the assessment/evaluation data and what can be applied to future activities. This analysis should include, but not be limited to the following:
    1. Lessons learned that can be applied to future activities provided
    2. Revisions to ongoing repeat activities
    3. Which stakeholders were evaluation results shared with i.e., planning committee, presenters/faculty/authors, administration/QI staff, participants
- Participant Roster/Listing including all required elements
  - Participant first and last name
  - Number of contact hours awarded to each
  - Activity Provider/Organization name
  - Title of the educational activity
  - Date(s) the educational activity was provided

Applicants should develop a record keeping system that ensures confidentiality, safety, and consistency in record collection. This system should address:

- How records, including records of activities and participant records, are maintained in a secure, confidential and easily retrievable manner (electronic or hard copy), accessible to authorized personnel only for six years
- Identify who is responsible for ensuring records are complete
- Describe how and where records are stored and in what format
- Identify who is responsible for reporting post activity documentation and/or audit requests to VTL Center for PD
- Identify methods used to ensure record completeness
- Describe how confidentiality and security of records is maintained
- Identify who has access to records and how records can be retrieved for participants if needed

Post Activity Requirements

The applicant organization is responsible for maintaining documentation of the learners participating in each activity provided as well as the number of contact hours they received. The applicant organization is required to complete and submit a Post Activity Documentation Checklist and supporting documents requested to the VTL Center for PD office within 60 days of the activity completion date. Please visit the VTL Center for PD website at www.centerforpd.org for a copy of the **Post Activity Documentation Checklist**.

One component of the Post Activity Documentation Checklist is a roster/listing of participants that must include the following elements:

- Participant first and last name
- Number of contact hours awarded to each
- Activity Provider/Organization name
- Title of the educational activity
- Date(s) the educational activity was provided

In addition, the applicant organization is responsible for maintaining a summative evaluation and reporting key findings to VTL Center for PD as part of the post activity reporting.

The summative evaluation does not simply include the data collected from the evaluations. There should be a clear analysis of the data from the NP and planning committee documented.
There is no prescribed method for providing summative evaluation information. Common delivery methods include a narrative format, SBAR format, SOAP note, or table with analysis information.

The summative evaluation contains two components:

- A summary of the aggregate assessment/evaluation data that highlights whether or not the activity was effective in closing or narrowing the gap and achieving the desired educational activity learning outcome(s).
- An analysis of what was learned from the assessment/evaluation data and what can be applied to future activities. This analysis should include, but not be limited to the following:
    - Lessons learned that can be applied to future activities provided
    - Revisions to ongoing repeat activities
    - Which stakeholders were evaluation results shared with i.e., planning committee, presenters/faculty/authors, administration/QI staff, participants

Organizations providing activities that will be repeated may submit an initial Post Activity report within 60 days after the first activity date and then report information to the VTL Center for PD office on a quarterly basis.

Post activity documentation is reviewed by VTL Center for Professional Development to determine the quality of the educational activity and ensure ANCC criteria are met.

If unable to meet the post activity documentation deadline, please contact the VTL Center for PD office. Applicant organizations who do not submit this report may have approval suspended or revoked.

NOTES

VTL Center for Professional Development reserves the right to request any additional documentation as needed to validate compliance with ANCC criteria.

VTL Center for Professional Development reserves the right to audit live or virtual programs, which includes registering a Nurse Peer Reviewer as a participant in the activity at no cost. If the activity is chosen for audit, you will be notified by email.

Approved activities may be repeated multiple times during the approval period, as long as the presenter is the same and the educational content of the activity does not change/remains current. The VTL Center for PD office must be notified of and approve any proposed changes to the educational activity before they are implemented in a repeated subsequent offering. Additional charges may apply.

Adapted from:

Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education. (2020). *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education*. ACCME.

ANCC. (2025). NCPD accredited approver policy and operations manual: Version 1.0 (2nd Ed.). American Nurses Enterprise.