PROMISING PRACTICE:
DELIVERING EFFECTIVE REMOTE CULTURAL ORIENTATION

OVERVIEW

Cultural Orientation (CO) is usually an in-person learning experience. However, there are occasions when in-person delivery is not possible due to distance, health, or other constricting circumstances. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated an unprecedented move to remote delivery for the safety of participants and service providers.

Remote CO is administered either by telephone, virtually, or through a combination of these two methods. Virtual CO is when a CO provider facilitates CO using a web-based digital platform, such as Bluejeans, Google Hangouts, WebEx, or Zoom, which allows for screen sharing and video consultation. While CORE has existing resources on **How to Deliver Remote CO**, the following promising practice provides additional in-depth guidance and tips.

APPLICATION
GOAL OF PROMISING PRACTICE

When delivering remote CO, you will be able to:

- Provide vital CO messages to participants in cases where in-person CO is not possible
- Create interactive remote CO that draws on **adult learning principles, student-centered learning**, and **management of cognitive load**
- Enhance participant learning and engagement by integrating digital technology for the development of digital skills relevant to the refugee resettlement process.

WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU BEGIN

WHO IS INVOLVED

To implement remote CO, you will start by engaging organizational leadership and, if appropriate, your designated CO Coordinator or CO Focal Point. In addition to leadership, information technology staff and interpreters also play vital roles in facilitating remote CO. For information on working with interpreters, complete **CORE's online course on the topic**. For guidance on using volunteers in CO, access **CORE's Promising Practice: Using Volunteers for Cultural Orientation**.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES NEEDED

The precise materials and resources needed for remote CO will vary based on your decision to use telephonic or virtual CO, or a combination of these two methods. Decisions on design and delivery should account for digital access and the abilities of you, other involved staff or volunteers, and the participants. For details on how to make these decisions, review **CORE's How to Deliver Remote CO**. Those delivering telephonic CO can use **CORE's Telephonic CO Guidance and Curriculum**. For virtual CO, you can adapt many of the resources and materials used for in-person or telephonic CO. This includes using refugee-facing resources from the **Settle In website** and the **Settle In app**, in addition to the **Welcome Guide**, and, as appropriate, activities and images from the *Making Your Way Curriculum*.

TIMING

The time involved in designing and implementing remote CO programs will vary. Factors that will influence time include your experience as a CO provider using technology and applying adult learning principles, the method selected to deliver remote CO (telephonic vs. virtual), training required for interpreters, and the needs and abilities of the participants. During COVID-19, some CO providers have mobilized quickly to deliver remote CO by telephone only, while others have used an iterative process to deliver remote CO using both telephonic and virtual methods.

PRACTICE IN ACTION
Developing CO Protocols in Georgia

*The International Rescue Committee Atlanta spent two weeks establishing protocols with interpretation and adapting in-person CO content for remote delivery. The resettlement agency is using an adaptive approach that focuses on participants' needs and abilities. When scheduling CO sessions, participants answer questions on their availability and digital abilities, particularly their experience with Zoom. Interpreters call participants the day before CO sessions to walk through the process of joining the remote CO session, either by telephone, using a secure phone conference service or Zoom. The office has also made additional instructional videos in other languages using an app called **Loom**.*

PRACTICE IN ACTION
Pre-Departure CO Models

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs) had experience in delivering pre-departure remote CO, often telephonically or using Skype or Microsoft Teams. With continued movement restrictions due to COVID-19, each RSC is actively adapting and building on existing remote CO practices, in addition to adjusting key messages to include information on COVID-19. Many of the RSCs that participated in CORE's recent Virtual Practicum: Facilitating Remote CO, identified how to transition realia and process-based activities in a virtual space using visuals and props. For example, they used video to show objects in their review of what to pack for travel to U.S. RSC Eurasia and RSC Asia have also incorporated game elements into their remote CO with tic-tac-toe and external online quiz tools. In addition to maintaining a high level of interactivity, RSCs are sensitive to safety and security for the participants. Several RSCs are testing WebEx and Bluejeans and conducting CO one-on-one or with multiple families at the same time.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

1 ASSESS NEED

The first step in implementing remote CO requires conducting a needs assessment. The needs assessment includes examining your organization's capacity in terms of time and resources to deliver telephonic or virtual CO, staff abilities in delivering remote CO, and asking key questions about the participants' digital abilities and access to technology. Again, for more guidance, review **CORE's How to Deliver Remote CO**. As a part of the needs assessment, you will want to consider what devices (phones, tablets, or computers), and as applicable, what digital platforms (Bluejeans, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, Zoom) to use for remote CO delivery. ***There is no one-size-fits-all digital platform that will work for every participant.*** In fact, you may use multiple digital platforms to deliver remote CO, such as combining WhatsApp with Zoom. When choosing and using any digital platforms, you should also develop and follow necessary protocols to protect personal identifiable information of participants.

PRACTICE IN ACTION
Language-Based Groups in Iowa

At the USCRI affiliate in Des Moines, Iowa, delivering remote CO has involved flexibility. Normally, the resettlement agency delivers CO to multiple language groups at the same time, during normal working hours, with childcare provided. In transitioning to remote CO, the site first separated CO by language and scheduled sessions for the evenings, due to work schedules. Next, they assessed the participants' digital abilities and worked with participants on how to balance childcare with attending CO. The original intention was to use WhatsApp for the sessions, because of the video aspect, but due to technical issues, the CO provider transitioned to telephonic delivery. To maintain engagement, the CO provider used a combination of questions throughout the process, provided a CO packet before the session with additional visuals, and as possible, shared Settle In videos via email and text message to reinforce learning.

2 DETERMINE METHOD AND STRUCTURE

Once you have assessed needs, you can determine what method of remote CO will work best for your organization, you, and your participants. You can select from either telephonic, virtual, or a combination of the two. While there are benefits to virtual CO, it may not always be the best or most feasible option. For example, participants may lack access to digital devices or stable WiFi. After selecting the method, consider the structure for delivery, in terms of length, number of sessions, and number of participants in a session. ***When determining the structure, be mindful of preventing cognitive overload by conducting multiple shorter sessions or building in breaks for sessions longer than an hour.***

PRACTICE IN ACTION
Transition to Remote CO for New York

The International Rescue Committee New York began delivering remote CO in early March, after the entire resettlement agency moved to remote work. In response, the CO structure shifted from a six- to seven-hour in-person workshop format to three separate two- to three-hour sessions, plus a separate session to conduct the CO assessment with participants. Based on the participants' digital literacy and access, the organization either uses the telephone, WhatsApp, or Google Hangouts. Other changes in delivery included building in additional time to discuss COVID-19 and adapting in-person activities to be remote-friendly. For example, previous CO session would involve an activity identifying city landmarks and transportation with a paper map, but in remote CO, participants used the public transit subway map online.

3 **ANALYZE AND ADAPT CURRICULA AND RESOURCES**

You can apply much of what you know about delivering effective CO, such as applying adult-learning principles and student-centered learning, to remote CO delivery. For telephonic CO, **CORE's Telephonic CO Guidance and Curriculum** provides detailed instructions on how to draw on participants existing experiences and use questions and scenarios. If video capabilities are available as a part of telephonic CO, you can also incorporate activities using realia (objects and materials as teaching aids, i.e. luggage for travel to the U.S.) or ask participants to demonstrate skills, such as proper practices related to safety, housing, or hygiene. For virtual CO, you can analyze and adapt existing resources using web-based digital platforms that allow for share screens, annotation, and video. You can conduct role plays, play games, use scenarios and images for discussions, or incorporate videos and podcasts. Note that for planning purposes, virtual activities can take more time to implement. ***For additional resources and activities on remote CO, see the Breakout Box, "Resources and Tools to Keep Remote CO Engaging."***

Resources and Tools to Keep Remote CO Engaging

The following are some additional resources to help inspire engaging CO sessions. *As a general rule, you should design any remote session to adhere to a rule that prompts engagement from participants every five minutes.*

- CORE's online course **Integrating Digital Technology in CO**
- **CORE's Activity Bank** with activities specific for virtual CO
- **Personality Matters When Teaching Online**
- **From Instructor to Effective Online Facilitator**
- **Radically Remote: Facilitation Toolkit**
- **Top 18 Online Quiz Makers for Teachers and Educators**
- **How to Convert PowerPoint Into Interactive eLearning Module**
- **Learning Engagement in a Time of Zoom Fatigue**

4 **TRAIN AND PREPARE**

Once you have established the method and structure, and determined the curriculum and resources for remote CO, ***you need to train and prepare yourself, your interpreter, and your participants.*** Starting with yourself, as appropriate, take time to practice using your selected digital platform. Become familiar and comfortable with using a digital platform's features and being able to explain to others how to use them. Similar to in-person CO, set aside time and share proper instructions and materials with interpreters involved. Finally, prepare, train, and set expectations with participants prior to the first session. This may include providing detailed instructions or conducting a pre-CO orientation call on how to use the selected digital platform for the session. Information and supporting materials should account for participants' literacy, digital abilities, and language needs. You may also want to create a CO packet with materials and resources for participants and provide it ahead of the session either by dropping off or mailing physical materials or emailing soft copies.

5 DELIVERY AND TROUBLESHOOTING

After proper training and preparation, it's time to deliver remote CO. At the beginning of the session, you should invite participants to contribute immediately through an interactive activity or discussion. Done correctly, such an activity can help set expectations of engagement, establish trust, and build a sense of confidence and community. Since you are operating in a virtual environment, voice and tone will be even more important than in an in-person space. It is also useful to acknowledge and discuss with the participants the challenges and opportunities of using technology during the session.

During delivery, you may run into challenges with technology and maintaining participant engagement. As such, before the session, identify back up plans and options. Ask yourself: What will you do if participants cannot connect to audio? If a video doesn't play? If the WiFi connection is not stable? Despite thorough planning, you may still encounter difficulties, and it's important to be patient, flexible, and communicate clearly with your participants. *For recommendations on troubleshooting, see Breakout Box, "Recommendations to Troubleshoot Remote CO."*

Recommendations to Troubleshoot Remote CO

- Use web-based digital platforms and their features with careful consideration for participants' abilities to promote confidence; the technology should not distract from learning
- Practice and develop confidence in the digital devices (smartphones, tablets, computer) and digital platforms (Bluejeans, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, WebEx, Zoom) that you will be using for CO, including all the available features
- Conduct a needs assessment with the participants before CO to determine scheduling, digital abilities, and topics of interest
- Spend time preparing interpreters on expectations, content, and how to navigate technology during the session
- Hold a pre-CO orientation session to practice using selected technology with participants and provide any additional relevant materials and resources to participants before the session
- Take steps to create a safe space that promotes engagement by asking how participants prefer to learn, what they enjoy doing in a class, and discussing the importance of CO
- Use a variety of methods to encourage engagement, including asking a combination of open- and close-ended questions, conducting short energizers, and using different types of multimedia

PRACTICE IN ACTION

One-on-One Remote CO in Indiana

At Catholic Charities of Indianapolis, Indiana, with lower arrivals, they have been providing remote one-on-one CO. After assessing digital abilities and access, they provided CO over two and half weeks with an hour session each day using a limited Zoom account. Even without screen sharing, the CO provider generated conversation and discussion using videos (played independently by the participant) and the guidance in CORE's Telephonic CO Curriculum. In between sessions, the participant received homework using resources from settleinus.org, which the CO provider revisited in the following session.

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