DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A CO LEARNING ASSESSMENT

In the following pages, a six-step process for the design and implementation of a pre-departure CO learning assessment is provided. Each RSC should adapt the following step-by-step guidance to fit the context and needs of the refugees they work with as well as their organizational capacity. This guide focuses on learning assessments, which may be only one part of a larger monitoring and evaluation plan for a CO program.

1 DETERMINE YOUR ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Determining an assessment approach starts with selecting what type of learning assessment(s) to use. There are different techniques and tools that can be used to measure whether learners have obtained and retained the information of pre-departure CO in alignment with content objectives and learning indicators. These tools and techniques generally apply to both informal and formal assessments.

For example, an RSC may deliver the CO lesson on The Role of the Resettlement Agency, and then ask participants to conduct a role play where they explain the role of the Resettlement Agency to a newly arrived refugee to demonstrate their understanding. This represents a type of informal assessment (also known as formative evaluation). Informal assessments or formative evaluations are important, but only represent one technique to determine knowledge acquisition. Often informal assessments are paired with formal assessments (also known as summative evaluations) that are given at the end of a program, typically in a test format. In some cases, programs may also measure changes in knowledge acquisition through the use of pre-testing. While the use of informal assessment is important, this particular toolkit will focus more on formal assessments in the development of an approach.

This toolkit contains the Designing Your Assessment Approach Worksheets which can facilitate a staff discussion on the assessment approach. Engaging CO staff in the assessment design process offers an opportunity to tap team knowledge and experience while also preparing staff for implementation.

2 DEVELOP ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Once an assessment approach is established, the RSC can then develop the specific assessment tools that will be used in alignment with the approach. When writing assessment tools, RSC CO program managers will want to consider the factors outlined on the next page. To assist with the development of formal assessment tools, this toolkit also features a Question Bank, which has questions that can be used for formal assessments by CO topic, along with Sample Assessments.

CO OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

Be sure to refer to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program Overseas Cultural Orientation Objectives and Indicators when designing assessment tools. Please note that this does not mean that a formal assessment must have questions for every learning indicator. Rather, RSCs should strive to have an assessment approach that balances the use of both informal and formal assessments to assess learning across all content objectives and learning indicators.

LEARNERS

Any assessment tool should consider the learners, including key questions around literacy, language, and prior experience with education and testing, as well as factors such as age, gender, and physical and mental abilities. While an assessment should strive to meet the needs of most learners, the RSC should prepare modified assessments as appropriate for the range of learners they may work with during CO. Considering learners will greatly impact the way assessments are administered and the format of the assessment, including the instructions for how to complete assessments, and the types and wording of questions within assessments. It may even influence which CO topics are emphasized, taking into account cultural norms and the experiences of learners.

TIMING

When developing assessments, consider when they may occur, how much time will be needed to administer and complete them, and also time for input and analysis of assessment results. While assessments are valuable for measuring student knowledge acquisition, CO providers should balance the time needed for participants to learn the material with the time needed to conduct an assessment.

ENVIRONMENT

Assess the physical learning environment where CO and the assessments will be delivered and ensure they are conducive to your proposed approach and tools. For example, if participants are to complete a formal assessment on paper at the end of training, will the classroom set-up support this type of independent work?

Don't forget ...

- Consider how the instructions for assessment(s) will be given.
- If creating a written assessment, keep in mind how the assessment looks visually in order to maximize understanding.

Informal Assessments

Also known as formative evaluation, an informal assessment is any task or activity that offers learners the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills, or attitudes, typically on a specific topic or objective. These assessments are conducted, but are not documented formally. Informal assessments are usually used throughout a training. A few examples are role plays, presentations, or teach-backs (learners teach others information they learned).

Formal Assessments

Also known as summative evaluation, a formal assessment is typically provided at the end of a program and requires learners to demonstrate what knowledge, skills, or attitudes they have developed over the course of an entire program. The most common formal assessments are tests, which are evaluated and scored.

Pre-testing

RSCs may also explore pre-testing as a part of their assessment approach. Pre-testing can assist CO providers in understanding what learners may or may not know or be able to do before CO. Pre-testing also allows a CO program to track the knowledge of learners over time. Pre-testing can be done through an informal assessment (like a needs assessment-based activity) or a formal assessment. If using pre-testing as a formal assessment, the tools for the pre- and post-test should be the same.

RESOURCES

In addition to time and environment, take into account available resources needed to design and implement the assessment approach and tools. This includes both staff (capacity and time) and materials (consider not only supplies to administer the assessment, but also translation and/or interpretation).

3 ## OUTLINE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Once you have designed the assessment approach and corresponding assessment tools, the next step is to establish clear procedures for its administration. To create a robust administrative system, the RSC should take into account the questions provided in the Administering Assessments: Questions for Consideration document. This worksheet asks the RSC to consider when and how assessments will be delivered, and how the results will be analyzed and used. This list can also be used to review and revise your approach as necessary. These questions will also provide an opportunity to identify which staff members may be responsible for the tasks involved with the assessment. The administrative procedures created for the assessment should be clearly documented and revised as necessary.

4 ## IMPLEMENT THE ASSESSMENT(S)

Once the RSC has determined an assessment approach, designed accompanying tools, and finalized administrative procedures, the RSC can begin implementation. Implementation should align with the procedures outlined in the previous step, and include appropriate training for all staff and interpreters. Implementation will also consist of data input and analysis. RSCs should ensure that they are inputting data in a consistent manner which also respects data security. Ensuring the integrity of results, as well as the protection of learners, is important. After data has been collected, the next step will be to analyze and report the results, and determine how the information will be used. The implementation of assessments is not static and RSCs may find they need to adjust implementation plans.

> **Tips for Sharing and Using Information**
>
> - Plan to communicate findings to relevant staff within your RSC.
> - Ensure that your system for reporting, analyzing, and evaluating results is realistic and relevant to the program's needs and abilities.
> - Establish accountability; consider how the assessment will be implemented and how findings will be applied.
> - When considering recommendations, consider implementing changes incrementally or one at a time.
> - Remain grounded in the benefits and value of using learning assessments to successfully implement CO.

5 ## EVALUATION

Following the delivery of the assessment, the RSC will need to evaluate results. Evaluation should be completed in alignment with an established timeline and evaluative indicators as outlined under the administrative procedure (Step 3). Remember, the primary goal of your assessment approach is to determine if learners can demonstrate acquisition of the information taught during CO. However, evaluation of findings may reveal additional insights, such as the need to adjust certain CO lessons or the assessment approach. These outcomes, along with other results should be explored further in the next step.

> **Examples of Evaluative Indicators**
>
> #/% of participants that passed the formal assessment
>
> #/% of participants that demonstrated understanding of CO objective and indicators (disaggregate by objectives and indicators)

6 USE THE FINDINGS

After completing the evaluation, the final step is to determine how an RSC will use findings. As noted during the evaluation step, these findings might inform changes to curriculum, development of additional topics or specialized CO sessions, or changes to the assessment approach and/or assessment tools used, along with the administrative system itself. Establishing a clear process for applying findings will assist in demonstrating the value of using learning assessments, as both staff and learners are able to benefit from positive changes implemented from the findings.

ADJUSTMENTS TO CO CURRICULUM

The RSC may wish to make adjustments to the CO curriculum or specific lesson plans, if evaluation results show that some CO topics are better understood than others. If using pre-tests, the RSC may also discover participants consistently have a strong understanding of a certain topic. This could influence how much time is spent on that topic in future CO, allowing more time for other topics. If all learners are experiencing challenges on a particular topic, perhaps the curriculum needs adjustment.

ADJUSTMENTS TO ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The RSC may also discover that results could be impacted by the assessment tool itself. For example, the wording of a question in the formal assessment may be unclear. Therefore, the RSC should be critical when examining results, and be ready to consider that a particular tool may need adjustment, or that a step is missing in the administrative process, which negatively impacts the overall assessment approach.

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR CO LEARNING ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

1

Determine Your Assessment Approach

KEY QUESTIONS

- What type of assessments will be used?
- Will pre-testing be used?

2

Develop Your Assessment Tools

KEY QUESTIONS

- Do assessment tools address the CO objectives and indicators?
- Are assessment tools accessible for staff and learners?
- Have time, resources, and the environment been accounted for in the development of your assessment tools?

3

Outline Administrative Procedures

KEY QUESTIONS

- How will assessment tools be delivered?
- Are staff trained and prepared for implementation?
- How will the results be collected and analyzed?

4

Implement the Assessment

KEY QUESTIONS

- Does implementation align with administrative procedures?
- Is the assessment tool being implemented consistently?
- Are the data results being entered consistently and in a secure manner?

5

Evaluation

KEY QUESTIONS

- Is the data being analyzed in alignment with the monitoring system?
- What are the results?
- What are questions and recommendations coming out of evaluation?

6

Use the Findings

KEY QUESTIONS

- How can the findings be used to improve outcomes for learners?
- What are other findings that could be considered for implementation?
- If necessary, how will the assessment approach be adjusted? Assessment tool?

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