Key Decisions and Considerations for Remote ESOL Program Design and Implementation

This resource is Appendix B in The Transformation of Adult ESOL Learning: A Policy and Practice Brief

Key Decisions	Action Steps/Tasks	Related Considerations
Create or transition to a remote adult ESOL program in the face of COVID-19 and/or for the long term.	▶ Consult/engage with board members, teachers, staff, and students. ▶ Assess the environment and feasibility of options. ▶ Assess staffing and other requirements and associated resources. ▶ Determine adequacy of available resources (notably, digital access for both teachers and learners) and identify sources of additional funds. ▶ Develop and implement a transition plan, with planning and implementation timelines.	▶ Program goals and principles or values that should drive decisions based on factors such as continuity of service/participation, persistence, community-building, learner engagement, internet access, affordability of devices and data plans, accountability, staff and student ownership/ empowerment.
Determine who to engage and how. Engage learners, instructors and staff in planning and instruction.	▶ Expect, facilitate, and support cross-organizational collaboration of the academic, operational, and technology staff teams. ▶ Conduct focus groups or surveys of students and instructors to assess needs and assets.	▶ Students' digital/ technology readiness (internet, data plans, etc.); and ▶ Teachers' digital readiness.

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Determine the cost of a remote program and decide between different options. Consider whether there would be savings from some in-person activities that could be redirected to the remote program. Raise additional funds from existing or new sources or identify and leverage sources of funds to support learners/families.	▶ Identify funding sources and deploy resources for curriculum development, LMS, devices, software, apps, tech-support, and case management. ▶ Identify funding sources and deploy resources for addressing students' non-academic needs, including food and childcare.	▶ Availability of funds from current sources; ▶ Availability of in-kind resources through partnerships or from within the host institution; and ▶ Funder prospects specifically for remote/distance learning.
Assign/re-assign existing staff or hire or contract additional staff/teachers needed for the short or long term, as funding permits.	▶ Engage development/fund-raising staff. ▶ Engage technology personnel. ▶ Engage case managers, advisors, career navigators, and other support staff. ▶ Engage instructional designers and teachers with the ability to leverage technology.	▶ Rethink the role of instructor in the program; if staff have traditionally been divided as those who support distance and blended learning and those who do not, consider raising expectations for use of edtech and blended models to create more opportunities for personalization and flexibility for *all* learners.
Select and finance technology infrastructure and tools.	▶ Purchase or secure devices, internet connectivity, data plans, and apps. ▶ Prepare for delivery of devices ready for immediate use. ▶ Develop a loan agreement protocol for device loan programs. ▶ Decide whether to have/use an LMS or not. ▶ Purchase or secure web-conferencing technology/applications and licenses.	▶ Leverage devices students possess or supply all students with (ideally the same type of devices. ▶ Standardization of technology; ▶ Device Operating System capacity to facilitate desired delivery; ▶ Internet subscriptions and data plan requirements; and ▶ User-friendliness of existing institutional LMS solution and whether it needs to be modified for English learners.

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Modify communication and collaboration processes, tools, and structures to ensure remote learning is optimized.	▸ Select and activate messaging/communication systems/apps to support student participation and persistence, and communication among instructors and staff.	▸ Student familiarity with existing apps; and ▸ Cost. (For example, many programs opted to use the free version of Remind texting solution or the always-free WhatsApp.)
Review and select available curricula or design and develop curriculum and materials for remote learning.	▸ Create instructor and staff teams to design, develop, and test the curriculum and materials. ▸ Identify, evaluate, organize, and sharelink relevant OERs in LMS or another platform. ▸ Assign staff to specifically support, educate, research, promote digital literacy and equity strategies.	▸ Off-the-shelf curriculum or develop own or both; if the latter, consider how they can be best integrated; and ▸ Professional development on how to design "classes" and learning experiences for remote learning, build community, evaluate OER, and assess and engage students.
Modify data collection and assessment/testing policies and procedures to capture enrollment, attendance, persistence, learning gains, and other measurable outcomes.	▸ Determine how attendance, completions, and support services will be tracked. ▸ Develop a work plan and schedule for virtual/remote proctoring of tests and classroom-based assessments. ▸ Consider designing, developing or acquiring an online assessment model to assess learning gains for programs that are not WIOA–funded and don't have access to state-approved remote assessments.	▸ LMS capacity to track attendance/engagement; and ▸ Capacity to manage and track support services.

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Create incentives for participation and attendance.	▶ Offer flexibility to attend multiple classes/sessions at various times or for completing independent asynchronous distance learning activities.	▶ Flexible scheduling to maximize participation and attendance; ▶ Consider feasibility of providing devices, internet access, and data plans free of charge for remote students; and ▶ Nudge engagement with independent asynchronous distance learning curricula.
Provide professional development for staff.	▶ Identify instructional leaders for remote learning and engage them to create a structured, ongoing, and collaborative intensive professional development program for instructors and staff.	▶ Consider both technology and methodology/pedagogy/andragogy; and ▶ Create a community feel to and allow time for professional learning, where teachers are encouraged to collaborate, share ideas, and offer mutual support.
Define necessary digital literacy content, offer instruction during onboarding, and embed in instructional phases.	▶ Document foundational digital literacy needs based on student input, existing digital skills frameworks and curricula, as well as remote program design. ▶ Determine how digital skills will be taught and assessed. ▶ Assess gains in students' digital skills.	▶ Offer foundational digital literacy as part of onboarding or front-end bootcamp. ▶ Foster ongoing development of digital capabilities through curriculum integration or stand-alone complementary course. ▶ Create opportunities for learners to set their own digital literacy goals. ▶ Provide supports (to students and their instructors) to help learners reach those goals.

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Finalize remote program design.	▸ Specify all components. ▸ Orient students, teachers, and staff.	▸ Visual representations of components and processes; and ▸ Be open to revisions based on feedback from staff.
Support persistence and basic needs through remote academic and non-academic integrated support services.	▸ Determine how technology and people will be used to support students. ▸ Revise Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and leverage apps to facilitate students' academic/persistence supports and provide supports with basic non-academic needs.	▸ Tracking of needs and services provided; and ▸ Apps based on behavioral economics.
Pilot remote learning options, materials, and support.	▸ Facilitate a trial run where program is launched and tested for a specified period.	▸ Decide whose feedback will be solicited, and when, how, and by whom.
Iterate and continuously improve remote learning delivery.	▸ Schedule and hold frequent check-ins with students, instructors, and staff to review how program is functioning and identify needs for improvement. ▸ Conduct end-of-course evaluations and follow-up surveys.	▸ Consider piloting components of the remote ESOL program incrementally, focusing on one element at a time; and ▸ Have an experimental mindset — be open to changes.