



Best Practices: IOM's Migrant Training / Pre-departure Orientation Programs

IOM recognizes that the following best practices can contribute to an effective and well-conceived pre-departure migrant training program.

Program Design & Management

1. Develop curricula and supporting activities with destination country

Key priority messages need to be identified in close consultation with receiving countries, and must take into consideration the cultural, linguistic and socio-economic challenges which specific groups may encounter upon arrival.

2. Link pre-departure and post-arrival activities, recognize the transitional continuum

Whenever possible, training activities that take place before a migrant departs for his or her country of destination (pre-departure) should be linked with those that are provided post-arrival. This means that information needs to be shared through the most effective means with all stakeholders involved in the training process, so as to ensure that all parties are aware of both training content and methodology, as well as potential challenges identified pre-departure which may need additional attention and follow-up post-arrival.

3. Make use of cross-cultural or bi-cultural trainers

Trainers who share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds as those of the migrants they work with are often considered more effective than those who do not share their language and have a less complete understanding of the migrants' culture. A further advantage of cross-cultural trainers is their keen understanding of the culture of the destination country, which gives them a unique perspective and enables them to effectively address potential challenges the migrants may have as they navigate the complexities of the receiving society. Straddling both cultures becomes an asset, which enables them to gain the trust of the participants and increases overall credibility.

4. Maximize training accessibility

When planning and budgeting for trainings attention must be given to the various needs of the clients, taking into account their age, education, literacy and/or language level, history of persecution, exposure to modern living, etc. Programs may provide child-care and/or a travel cost reimbursement to refugees and others who otherwise would not be able to attend the training.

5. Consider the timing of pre-departure orientation

Schedule orientation sessions as close to departure as possible, without interfering with the departure process itself, maximizes retention of new information and ensures that the new information is as relevant as possible.



Migrant Training Approach & Methodology

6. Develop trainings that are participatory and learner-centric

Migrants learn best, and the lessons learned are more meaningful, when the pre-departure training methodology is highly experiential and participatory. Our goal is not to merely ‘cover’ the training material, but rather to provide the participants with opportunities to interact with the ideas and information in ways that make a difference in how they approach their migration experience. To accomplish this, IOM’s training methodology employs an interactive, learner-centric approach that takes into account participants’ different learning styles and provides ample opportunity for learners to express themselves as part of their learning process.

7. Address not only factual content, but skills and attitudes

While factual information about the country of destination is extremely relevant, IOM believes that, in the long run, it is at least equally important to foster the right attitudes for successful adaptation. It is also critical to provide opportunities within the orientation sessions for migrants to gain (and practice) the necessary skills needed to facilitate their integration. Helpful attitudes include pro-activity, self-sufficiency, and resourcefulness (knowing how to find the information they are seeking); skills include knowing how to conduct oneself in a job interview, time management and goal-setting, as well as being able to navigate complex new systems including banking, social, health and emergency services, transportation and more.

8. Help migrants teach each other

One of the most effective ways to learn something is to teach it to others. IOM migrant training looks for ways to help participants learn different facets of a training topic, then teach each other in order to fill in the information gaps. This approach not only helps migrants learn their own part of the topic particularly well, but also helps them to develop self-confidence from being teachers of important information, instead of always being the recipients.

9. Proceed from the known to the unknown

An effective teaching approach is one whereby the trainer first identifies what the learner already knows and then moves to what they want or need to learn. This can be done by drawing on examples from what migrants already know – whether about public transportation, housing, health and social services, education, laws, or cultural adaptation – and extrapolating or bridging from that existing knowledge to new information.

10. Train in migrants’ native language

Whenever possible, any training delivered to migrants, especially vulnerable, preliterate and/or camp-based populations, should be carried out in the learners’ native language. Furthermore, trainers familiar with the migrant’s culture and traditional norms as well as those of the receiving or destination country should be a priority when hiring.



Psychosocial Aspects of Migrant Training

11. Address psychosocial issues in pre-departure training

Migrant training goes beyond simply dispensing facts and information; it also addresses the psychosocial well-being of participants. A psychosocial approach is one which takes into consideration the interrelationship between the social, the anthropological, the cultural and the psychological aspects of migration. This approach, seen as an integral part of every IOM migrant training program, aims at assisting migrants during periods of transition with compassion and respect, with the aim towards raising migrants' self-esteem and reducing their levels of anxiety.

12. Create a risk-free, non-threatening learning environment

Creating a welcoming training atmosphere of inclusion --in which all participants are shown respect --fosters a greater sense of belonging and encourages learning. Many of our migrant participants have little or no formal education, and therefore it is critical that trainers consider both the educational and cultural backgrounds of their participants. Migrant learners are far more likely to participate in and take ownership of their own learning if they are treated with respect, and feel that they are in an environment that values and promotes trust.

13. Develop pre-departure training that is holistic and addresses the family unit

It is critical to address the needs of not only the individual migrant, but also those of the entire family. Whether or not the migrant's family remains behind or accompanies them, there are myriad issues that need to be addressed during the course of any orientation. Among some of the more popular topics include communication, cultural adaptation, changing family dynamics, cross-generational issues, money management, financial literacy and more.

14. Promote gender equality in migrant training

It is equally important to provide an open and secure learning environment in which gender equality is promoted. This not only sends an important message that the destination country values the role that both men and women play, but also paves the way for future social interaction and learning opportunities whereby women's participation is not only encouraged but expected. Trainers are particularly attentive to female migrants' needs, and, if necessary, will create opportunities in which to address issues that may warrant separate discussions from those held with male participants. If possible, training sessions addressing sensitive culture-specific issues (FGM, bride prices, sexual exploitation and abuse, and polygamy) should be carried out for BOTH men and women.

15. Recognize the inherent strengths and resources of migrants

Trainers are encouraged to draw on the extensive experience, strengths and resiliency which migrants bring with them when designing, conducting and evaluating training programs. These social resources should be factored into the delivery of any migrant training program.



16. Reaffirm the dignity and positive contributions of every migrant

IOM's logo refers to "migration for the benefit of all." IOM strives to uphold the pledge of "migration with dignity." Migrants should be made to feel valued for their rich cultural background and the experiences they bring with them; conversely, receiving communities should be reminded of the positive contributions that migrants can bring, including their social, economic and cultural contributions.

For more information on IOM Migrant Training Programs

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