

DELIVERING ON OUR DEVELOPMENT GOALS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

[Our organization's] top priority is the health and safety of our employees worldwide. In all our offices, we are asking leadership to create contingency plans in the event that a COVID-19 outbreak requires us to ask our employees to work from home. The following information is general and must be targeted to each project's context and client. To determine whether your project should advise or require remote working, please see the COVID-19 Preparedness Annex.

Follow guidance from your local government or ministry:

While COVID-19 is a pandemic, its impacts are highly localized. Follow the guidance of the local government and/or health ministry. In advance, seek out any information on national labor or specific COVID-19 response laws to remain in compliance with local laws. For example, some countries may direct national office closures with fully paid leave.

Prioritize information sharing and staff care:

Provide staff with information on COVID-19 from the WHO, CDC, and local ministries. Provide them with verified information on the virus and how to prevent or deal with once contracted. In large-scale remote WAH situations, it is important for supervisors and colleagues to make a concerted effort to check in on the well-being of staff frequently as the changes in processes combined with anxieties about an outbreak can significantly elevate the stress of individuals and teams. Rally the flag as often as appropriate and encourage all staff to reach out for advice and guidance when necessary. Operations or human resources staff on your project should prepare and disseminate information about benefits and related policies to staff.

Project office remote work considerations:

- **Consider how you manage new and recent hires:** Think of alternative means to ensure all new staff receive a comprehensive orientation to the project, assigned equipment, and necessary job training.
- **Ensure staff can get paid:** If you do not have direct deposit, make contingency plans for issuing wire transfers or paying staff in cash.
- **Ensure employees have the equipment and office supplies they need to work remotely:** Staff should be prepared for any decisions to be made relatively quickly, so each one should have ready access now to any laptops, cords, cameras, and other equipment needed to work away from the office. Do not wait until a decision has been made to ensure you have the necessary supplies.
- **Discuss expectations of staff and supervisors of working remotely:** Clarify that a regular day of work is expected, including regular work product and meeting attendance. Supervisors must set clear goals for

employees and maintain appropriate communication with their teams. If you have questions about staff who have difficulties working remotely, contact your home office backstop.

- **Determine your communication platform needs (IT, phones, etc.) during a WAH office closure:** Consider how you will maintain the project's IT and communications platform. You may need to pivot to online tools like Microsoft Teams, Skype4Business, or WhatsApp. This may require issuing extra phone cards if needed. Determine how to keep project servers and systems active. Determine which employees have the accessibility to work at home. Make contingency plans for employees who have limited internet access. Ensure supervisors and staff have updated contact information.
- **Make plans for required signatures:** Instead of hard-copy signatures, consider alternate means to sign documents (email approvals, DocuSign, PDFs, etc.). Only consider using drivers to transport documents if this is deemed safe for them. Grant delegations of authority as needed—record any changes carefully.
- **Think about security:** If employees take equipment home, ensure you are using consistent sign-out procedures. Work with your country security staff to determine how best to secure your office, materials, and information resources. Make plans for project money management and ensure project cash is secure. Determine how the office closure may affect the wire transfers, budgeting, subcontractor and procurement payments and make appropriate alternate arrangements.
- **Plan on decontaminating the office due to suspected presence of COVID 19:** Office closures could result from guidance to avoid gathering, but they can also result from possible contamination from the virus. Identify a firm who can decontaminate your office, estimate costs, and document for later reference.

Helpful resources:

Collaborating remotely

- [Virtual Meetings Overview, How to set up a Remote Meeting, How to Run a Remote Meeting, Tips for Attending Meetings Remotely](#)
- [Working Across Time Zones](#)

Using collaboration tools

- [Skype for Business](#)
- [Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Microsoft Planner](#)

How to effectively work from home

- [Managing People at a Distance Course \(supervisor\)](#)
- [Determine Ground Rules \(supervisee\)](#)
- [Manage Interruptions](#)
- Temporary [succession planning](#) in the event of illness

[Clarifying client expectations and guidance during periods of change](#)

Considerations for continued project programming:

This situation varies widely by country and region, and [our organization] will follow all local laws and collaborate with our clients on our responses. In addition to business continuity, we also encourage projects to think about how to continue delivering on our development impact promises to clients and beneficiaries while being aware and responsive to the local context. Based on [our organization's] past experience and conversations with chiefs of party, below are some considerations for continuing programming in the event of restrictions.

- **Follow the guidance of your local government or ministry:** Your local government or health ministry will have the most relevant and updated information for your context. Follow all guidance about recommended limits on gathering sizes, closures, or travel restrictions.

- **Review calendar year work plan and get creative about achieving goals:**
 - Arrange large group events for June and July before August vacations (if applicable).
 - If planned STTAs are impacted by travel restrictions, consider whether the assignment can be reconfigured so that: the consultant works remotely from their home country in consultation with your staff where your staff carry out the in-country data gathering, interviews, etc. Or, have the consultant conduct interviews with in-country stakeholders required for the work via Skype or telephone. If that is not possible, be proactive about rescheduling as soon as possible to secure consultant time. Consider securing additional human resources to handle any surge that the new plan requires to carry out. Try to do this through subcontracts with firms or local STTA.
 - Think creatively about meetings if you have restrictions on larger gatherings: Can you conduct meetings with subcontractors or stakeholders remotely? Can your consultants deliver their services remotely? If you can't conduct community outreach in person, can you use video or social media to reach your beneficiaries? Determine if any public workshops, conferences, etc. can be conducted via webinar.
 - In addition to ensuring that your staff have the means to connect to the internet at the best possible speed from home, determine if any of them are from regions where the project carries out work (and have family there with whom they can stay). Is it effective/possible for them to return "home" and be able to carry out project work, thus avoiding the need for travel? If staff travel to central location where office is located, can they be clustered in areas of the city whereby the project could rent temporary space (apartments, houses, small hotels, etc.) to set up a hub and spoke model with the central office location? Have staff review planned leave through calendar year after exercise and approve/reapprove/adjust as necessary to meet new work requirements.
 - Consider conducting procurements now that were planned for later during the calendar year and storing them in-country in a warehouse in case supply chains are disrupted. This includes all purchases related to grants under contracts.
- **Work closely with your client on any changes to your workplan:** Depending on your local context, you may have to adjust your project programming. If that becomes necessary, collaborate closely with your client. To reduce the possibility of misunderstanding, make certain all changes to regular activities are documented in writing. Socialize all plans with your client, including your project's specific crisis response plan for COVID-19 and the possibility of office closure and business continuity via a WAH practice. Determine what the client's action plan is and how this affects the project. Gauge their support for an office closure/WAH and their expectations regarding billing, possible changes in the deliverables schedule, communications with USAID etc.
- **Consider your consultants, subcontractors, and local partners:** Talk to your consultants and partners in advance to agree upon contingency plans. If consultants encounter delays, either arriving in country or returning home, they should notify [our organization] immediately. budget.