

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

CONNECT WITH OTHERS THROUGH SHARED GOALS, COMMON INTERESTS, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP MEANINGFUL, LONG-TERM FRIENDSHIPS AND EXPERIENCE MUTUAL TRANSFORMATION



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CONTENTS

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Thank You

What is a CLE?

The Value of Mutual Transformation

APPLICATION PROCESS

Initial Steps

Training

Time Commitment

JOINING A CLE

Program Phases

CLE Participant

Communication

Volunteer Toolkit

Logging Volunteer Time

Next Steps Options

BEING A FRIENDSHIP PARTNER

FP Plan and Agreement

Ideas and Suggestions

Check-ins and Follow-ups

Next Steps Options

LEADING A CLE

CLE Plan and Agreement

CLE Co-Leaders

Ideas and Suggestions

Communication

Tracking Attendance

Next Steps Options

APPENDIX

Preparing for your CLE Experience

CLE Attendance Log

CLE Plan and Agreement

FP Plan and Agreement

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH THE VULNERABLE

Refugees and other immigrant populations from around the world have been arriving and settling in the Triad area for over 30 years. Through the support of World Relief staff and volunteers, many of these people have become self-sufficient and independent, in terms of basic needs and access to resources. They are no longer in “crisis mode” and they have passed through the stages of relief and rehabilitation. But many still long for community. Many have dreams and goals beyond their current circumstances and want support to know how best to attain these goals. Many have skills and knowledge that they gained before they came to America and are looking for opportunities to share those for the benefit of others.

WHAT IS A COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?

Cooperative Learning Environments are small group opportunities for World Relief volunteers and clients to meet together around common interests, to learn from each other and share experiences for mutual benefit and transformation.

Whether someone has recently arrived in America from another home country, or has lived in North Carolina for a few years, or was born and raised in the Triad area, the need for relational connection and community integration is a vital and ongoing part of all of our lives. We all have stories to tell, insights and wisdom to share, and abilities and strengths that we can use to encourage and challenge each other to learn and grow. CLEs offer times and locations where this kind of information can be exchanged in group settings and where true relationships can develop naturally.

All participants have practical roles to play in the groups, but they are also encouraged to be pro-active to make personal connections with other group members and extend friendships beyond the group setting into homes and other places where real life can happen together.

THE VALUE OF MUTUAL TRANSFORMATION

Mutual transformation is when we recognize that every person has needs and assets that can interconnect through relationships. We all have some brokenness and vulnerability, we all need to learn and grow, we all need to receive assistance and support. We also all have talents and skills, we all find joy and fulfillment in different things, and we can all offer insight from our unique experiences and perspectives. When we seek out and validate the strengths we see through relationship with others, we will be transformed. This focus on and exchange of strengths promotes dignity and empowerment to those who have felt helpless and inadequate in the past. Mutual transformation means that we pour into each other and help each other take steps forward; it means that we are better together.

APPLICATION PROCESS

INITIAL STEPS

In order to join a Cooperative Learning Environment, start by doing the following:

1. Fill out and submit an Individual Volunteer Interest Form:
<https://www.volgistics.com/ex/portal.dll/ap?ap=630624908>
2. Watch the World Relief orientation videos: <https://worldrelieftriad.org/volunteer-orientation-101>
3. Meet with a Volunteer Program staff member to discuss interest and availability
4. Sign up to attend a Volunteer Training Session:
<https://www.trackitforward.com/site/68790/events>
5. Complete, submit, and pass a Criminal Background/Motor Vehicle Report Check:
<https://ows01.hireright.com/ofkin.html?kiosk=81C2C184E87C6719D47D6DAE0145B9E8>

TRAINING

Before you invest as a volunteer in a CLE, World Relief wants to first invest in you.

Volunteer Training is a 2-hour training facilitated by World Relief staff on a monthly basis. Volunteers can view times, locations and sign up for training on World Relief's website at <https://www.trackitforward.com/site/68790/events>.

Volunteer Training includes:

- World Relief: History and mission overview.
- Cultural Differences and Cross Cultural Communication: Navigation of cultural differences and skills for communication with people of varying English language ability.
- Helping Without Hurting: Concepts on how to love and serve refugees in a way that is empowering, protects from burnout and opens opportunity for meaningful relationship building.
- Volunteer Guidelines and Tips: Social media use, communication, and best practices.

TIME COMMITMENT

CLEs will gather once a week for 1-3 hours, depending on the topic or activity. We ask for a three-month commitment with regular attendance and participation in an existing CLE. If you want to lead or participate in a new CLE, we ask for an additional three-month commitment.

Most Cooperative Learning Environments will last for three months (10-12 weeks) and may repeat or shift on a quarterly basis. The CLEs are open for new participants to join at any time. We ask that new participants join existing CLEs for *at least* six weeks before initiating and leading a new CLE. It is important for you to take this time to observe, listen, and ask questions – learn from and about the people in the group and seek out your common interests. You may already have ideas for a CLE topic you want to lead; this learning time will help you know if it is relevant or of interest to others, who to invite to co-lead or participate, and how best to work out the logistics.

Our hope is that as you make connections with others in the group, you will invest some time outside of the group in getting to know each other better. This could develop into 1-3 additional hours/week.

If you decide to lead a new CLE, please be sure that you can commit to it for 10-12 weeks. We know that life happens and there will be reasons why you cannot be present at every gathering, so it is good to plan on co-leadership, to share that responsibility. As a leader, your time commitment extends beyond the gathering time, to weekly planning and coordinating for the gathering – this could take an additional 1-2 hours/week.

JOINING A CLE

PROGRAM PHASES

WORLD RELIEF STAFF PROVIDE THOROUGH TRAINING AS WELL AS ONGOING SUPPORT FOR EACH COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, AS WE LIVE OUT OUR MISSION OF EMPOWERING THE LOCAL CHURCH TO SERVE THE MOST VULNERABLE. TEAMS WORK WITH WORLD RELIEF STAFF TO LEARN HOW TO BEST COMMUNICATE AND CONNECT ACROSS CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS.

1. Choosing and visiting an existing CLE. Each group will have a set time, location, and topic. Choose one that works best with your schedule and/or interests you the most. Tell your World Relief staff contact which CLE you plan to visit, at least two days before you attend. That way staff can inform the leader(s) of the CLE so they can expect you and welcome you. While you may be invited to participate in some activities, you are not expected to take a highly active or leadership role in the group during your first visit. Rather, take that opportunity to listen and observe, and decide if it is a good fit for you.

2. Debriefing and Committing. After your first visit, take a few minutes to connect with the leader(s). Ask them questions you might have about the CLE and give them your initial thoughts on being involved. They may ask if you plan to return the following week, and if you are willing to provide transportation or childcare, if those are current needs. Be honest with them if you need more time to decide on your level of commitment.

3. Learning and Connecting. When you decide which CLE to join, attend as regularly as possible, participate, and look for ways you can add to the group. This could mean providing snacks or a game on occasion, leading a discussion or activity, providing transportation or childcare, or planning a special event. Be sure to work together with the other members of the group, communicating your ideas with them before acting on them. That way, others have the opportunity to give feedback or offer assistance, too. Be intentional in getting to know the other members of the group. See if there are one or two people that you especially “click” with, that you could potentially have deeper friendship with outside of the group setting.

4. Initiating communal/relational interaction. As you make more personal connections with people in the group, invite them to do things outside of the scheduled CLE time with you. This could mean inviting them to your home or a community event, getting your families together for a meal, or doing an activity that you both enjoy.

VOLUNTEER TOOLKIT

The online volunteer toolkit is full of helpful information and instruction manuals. For example, CLE participants can use the toolkit to find materials for teaching English and Life Skills. The toolkit also contains helpful information about diverse cultures and cross-cultural communication. The toolkit should serve as CLE participants' first stop for information and instruction.

The Volunteer Toolkit can be found at www.worldrelieftriad.org/toolkit.

LOGGING VOLUNTEER TIME

By tracking the time you spend at a CLE, you're helping World Relief convey the impact that volunteers have on clients. Also, the grants supporting World Relief look to see proof of community involvement. In fact, the future and/or expansion of some grants are actually dependent upon this proof. Finally, World Relief can see which CLEs are most popular among volunteers and clients, so we can plan for future CLEs.

Here's how to log your volunteer hours, mileage, and donations. First, you'll need to access our tracking tool, called Track It Forward:

1. Select your local World Relief office on Track It Forward, (<http://www.trackitforward.com/site/world-relief-high-point?type=register>).
2. Create an account by selecting "Sign Up" and providing basic information.
3. Once in the portal, you can begin logging* hours, donations, etc.
4. The app for smart phones is called OURVOLTS. You can download and access it once you have registered online.

When logging, please complete the following fields:

1. **Date Volunteered**
2. **Activity:** In general, CLE participants can select "community orientation," unless you see another option that is more specific and appropriate. Ex: ESL tutor, health literacy
3. **Hours:** i.e., how much time you spent volunteering
4. **Mileage:** Please note, mileage is only to be logged for the act of volunteering—not the drive to and from your home, unless the client is with you.
5. **Notes:** Details on what you did during the time listed.

*Always include the name of the CLE that you participate in.

NEXT STEPS OPTIONS

Being a Friendship Partner. The main goal in joining a CLE is to meet some new friends. As you actively seek relationship through conversation, activities, and common interests, invite your new friend(s) to do some things outside of the group time. Offer to assist them with something – language practice, public transportation, childcare, gardening, etc. Invite them to your home to meet your family or go to a ball game or a movie. At the end of the three-month CLE, we hope you've made a friend that you can continue to spend time with. Talk to your Volunteer Program contact person about who you want to be a friendship partner with and set some basic goals for things you'd like to do, experience, or accomplish together in the next three months.

Forming a new CLE. Quarterly (March, June, September, December) World Relief would like to see new CLEs form. If you and your new friend(s) find that you have a common interest that you want to enjoy, explore, or share with others, you can be co-leaders of a new CLE. The three main things you need to decide on are a weekly scheduled time, location, and topic/theme. Please let your Volunteer Program contact person know of your idea, and they can assist with logistics and advertising.

BEING A FRIENDSHIP PARTNER

FP PLAN AND AGREEMENT

- CLE participants who are interested in being a friendship partner will communicate with the World Relief Volunteer Program staff at the end of the CLE quarter.
- Once both Friendship Partners and World Relief staff have agreed, both parties will review and complete an agreement. The agreement includes basic contact information of the partners and some goals that they both hope to accomplish in three months.
- We treat the agreement as a tool to facilitate clear communication and establish responsibility for both the Friendship Partners and World Relief staff.
- **Please see the appendix for the Friendship Partner agreement.**

IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

Here are some ideas and suggestions for ways you can interact as Friendship Partners:

- Language practice – learn how to understand and communicate
- Community orientation – provide transportation or assist with public transportation to get familiar with the community
- Family care – be involved in supporting the whole family
- Life skills – develop new skills
- Networking – go places together where they can meet people who could be relevant in their lives

CHECK-INS AND FOLLOW-UPS

Volunteer program staff will want to hear about how you are doing. There are two specific times when we will reach out to you, and we greatly appreciate your responses. If you have questions or need anything throughout your volunteer experience, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail your volunteer program staff contact at any time. We are here to support you however we can!

They will send a short email survey after six weeks, to give feedback. At this time, they will remind you to log the hours that you spend with the client, as well as any donations that are given. Finally, they will ask if you want or need any support or resources to improve your experience.

They will also want to schedule a phone or in-person follow-up at the end of three months. At this time they will ask if you have any stories from your experience that you want to share, as well as any concerns or suggestions you have for future friendship partner opportunities. We value your feedback so we can promote and foster more meaningful and positive experiences for volunteers and clients in the future.

NEXT STEPS OPTIONS

Continuing as a Friendship Partner. You are welcome to continue to build friendship and invest in the client you already connected with. We love to see long-term relationships develop! You do not need to continue to log volunteer hours at this point, but we would love for you to let us know if things happen and stories arise that could encourage and inspire others. Volunteer program staff may occasionally check in with you to see if you need any support or resources, or to hear about your experience.

Join a new CLE. If you want to meet some new friends and build more community, you can join a new CLE every quarter. Volunteer program staff can let you know what the current CLE opportunities are. As a “veteran” CLE member, you can go into the group with more confidence to offer assistance, initiate connection, foster community, and provide leadership.

Forming a new CLE. Quarterly (March, June, September, December) World Relief would like to see new CLEs form. If you and your new friend(s) find that you have a common interest that you want to enjoy, explore, or share with others, you can be co-leaders of a new CLE. The three main things you need to decide on are a weekly scheduled time, location, and topic/theme. Please let your Volunteer Program contact person know of your idea, and they can assist with logistics and advertising.

LEADING A NEW CLE

CLE PLAN AND AGREEMENT

- CLE participants who are interested in leading a new CLE will communicate their proposal to World Relief Volunteer Program staff before the beginning of a new quarter.
- Once the leader(s) and World Relief staff have agreed upon a new CLE, both parties will review and complete an agreement. The agreement includes basic contact information of the leader(s), the topic, location, timeframe, and duration. It will also list primary goals and objectives for the CLE to move toward.
- We treat the agreement as a tool to facilitate clear communication and establish responsibility for both the CLE leaders and World Relief staff.
- **Please see the appendix for the Cooperative Learning Environment agreement.**

CLE CO-LEADERS

A strong, committed leader is essential to a successful Cooperative Learning Environment. A leader values—and excels at—communication, coordination, and delegation. Since CLEs are about learning from and working together, we encourage all leaders to seek out a good co-leader from a different culture. This will help to ensure that the group remains focused on cross-cultural sharing, learning, and communicating.

Team leader responsibilities include:

- Proposing a topic/theme
- Scheduling and arranging a weekly time and location
- Serving as a liaison between the CLE and World Relief
- Communicating with active participants regularly
- Coordinating the weekly plan for the CLE gathering
- Facilitating intentional opportunities for connecting and relationship building among participants

IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

Here are some ideas and suggestions for potential CLEs:

- Art Therapy – learning and expressing through visual art
- Language/Culture Exchange – choose topics to share similarities and differences
- Financial Advice and Planning – setting goals and budgets and making plans
- Sports and Recreation – playing soccer, board games, or video games
- Workshop – mechanical or carpentry projects
- Handicrafts – quilting, knitting, jewelry making, or scrapbooking
- Cooking/Eating Exchange – make and eat favorite foods together
- Pop Culture – enjoy movies, music, TV

This is not an exhaustive list; it just helps you see that you can form a group around any common interest that you have!

COMMUNICATION

Regular and open communication between World Relief and the Cooperative Learning Environment is essential and remains a priority for World Relief as we support and empower you throughout your experience.

1. Making a Plan: Our Volunteer Program Staff will lead you through the initial process of creating a plan for your CLE, recruiting participants, and providing helpful resources and advice. The Volunteer Program staff can be reached at TriadVC@wr.org.

2. Preparing a Place: Choose a central location that is big enough for a group of 10-15 participants. Take time to consider and find a setting that is welcoming and conducive to interaction and relationship-building. If the space requires permission, reservation, or rental, be sure to secure the location before the start date.

3. Advertising: World Relief staff will promote your CLE for the quarter to current clients and volunteers. However, the leaders are also responsible to promote it in their communities, being intentional to invite diverse people who share the common interest of the CLE.

4. Welcoming new Participants: Leaders are asked to keep a weekly attendance log of participants, to track newcomers as well as regular attendees. When newcomers attend, whether volunteers or clients, leaders should make a point of welcoming them and having the whole group introduce themselves. It may be a good practice to plan an icebreaker activity each week for this purpose.

5. Six-Week Follow-Up: World Relief staff will check in with CLE leaders after six weeks, to see how things are going, hear any encouraging stories, and find out if any support or resources are needed. If leaders have questions, concerns, or needs before this follow-up, they are encouraged to reach out to their World Relief staff contact.

5. Three-Month Debrief: World Relief staff will meet with CLE leaders after the last week of the CLE, to debrief about the overall experience. At this time, leaders can discuss and decide on next steps as volunteers.

World Relief will provide regular follow-up and be available to help answer any questions that may arise. We ask that CLE leaders keep World Relief abreast of any changes or updates regarding the group participants or setting.

TRACKING ATTENDANCE

CLE leaders will track weekly attendance on a log and turn this into World Relief staff at the three-month debrief. Attendance information will help World Relief with reporting, program development, and forming new CLEs.

Please see the appendix for the Cooperative Learning Environment agreement.

NEXT STEPS OPTIONS

At the end of the designated time for your CLE, you have several options as a World Relief volunteer, including:

- Offering the same/similar CLE for another quarter, inviting new participants to come
- Forming a new CLE based on a new topic or mentoring other volunteers as they form and lead
- Becoming a Friendship Partner to someone that you connected with in the CLE
- Exploring other ways to volunteer at World Relief
- Taking a break from volunteering. If you need some time to do other things, please let your World Relief contact know. Also give us a time frame if you would like for staff to reach back out to you to re-engage.

APPENDIX

PREPARING FOR YOUR CLE EXPERIENCE

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

During CLE sessions, please make intentional attempts to connect with other participants. You may begin by introducing yourself, talking about your family, and asking questions to get similar information. There will be opportunities for you to interact through conversations, games, and activities, so be pro-active in participating and engaging with others. Your primary purpose in the group is to make new friends and build relationship!

Because of different personalities, interests, and stages in life, not everyone you meet will instantly be your best friend. You may connect well with only one or two people – that's OK! Focus on developing relationships that come naturally in this setting.

As you feel more comfortable in these friendships within the group, invite your new friend to do something outside of the group setting. Invite them to dinner at your house, or take your families to a park for an afternoon, or find another activity or event that you would both enjoy. If you agree on something to do, set a time, day, and place to meet, and exchange phone numbers. Always call/text them before the activity to remind or confirm that they will be there!

LEARNING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Your secondary purpose in participating in a CLE is to learn and share knowledge or skills. Try to make the exchange as equal as possible. For example, if you share some information about American culture, ask a related question about another person's culture. Plan ahead for the information you want to share; consider the simplest, most practical, most interactive way to present it, and come prepared with materials or activities. Again, balance the exchange by preparing questions and ways to engage with new information.

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS

Be careful not to assume that you know about one person based on a previous experience with another person who looked or sounded similar. People from other cultures are as unique and diverse as all of us. Ask questions to engage and learn, but be mindful that

your wording and tone do not indicate judgment, suspicion, or fear. Avoid yes/no questions or framing questions like, “So you’ve probably never been to school, right?” Rather, make questions more open-ended and conversational, such as, “Would you tell me about the education system in your home country, and who has access to it?” Come to the CLE with an open mind and a willingness to learn.

EVANGELISM VS. PROSYLETISM

World Relief is an evangelical organization. We believe in evangelism (an open invitation to a personal relationship with Jesus) but we reject proselytism (a coercive effort to convert someone). Evangelism does not pressure; it should never qualify service, acceptance, or compassion based on anyone’s response to faith. Please remember this as you connect and build relationships.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PLAN & AGREEMENT

We are committed to form a Cooperative Learning Environment in order to connect diverse people through shared goals, common interests, and learning opportunities to develop meaningful, long-term friendships and experience mutual transformation. This form should be completed by the GNT representative and a World Relief staff member.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION			
Name of Organization			
Group Name			
Group Topic			
Location			
Weekly Day & Time			
Start Date		End Date	
CLE CO-LEADERS			
Group Co-Leader 1			
Phone			
E-mail			
Group Co-Leader 2			
Phone			
E-mail			
WORLD RELIEF CONTACTS			
		Connie Chandler	
		Volunteer Program Associate	
		cchandler@wr.org	
		(336) 392-9236	
FOLLOW UP MEETINGS			
Six-Week Follow-Up		Three-Month Follow-Up	

PRIMARY GOAL: _____

- LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1: *Participants will gain new knowledge about*

- LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2: *Participants will gain new skills/experience in*

- INTERACTIVE OBJECTIVE 1: *Participants will have opportunity to meet new people through*

- INTERACTIVE OBJECTIVE 2: *Participants will have opportunity to share their lives through*

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENT

We hereby commit to co-lead the CLE described above, striving toward our primary goal through our learning and interactive objectives. We understand that this is a voluntary and moral commitment only. We will agree to keep World Relief apprised of all changes relating to this group, and to maintain lines of open and regular communication with World Relief throughout the duration of this group.

CLE Co-Leader: _____
Signature *Date*

CLE Co-Leader: _____
Signature *Date*

World Relief Representative: _____
Signature *Date*

FRIENDSHIP VOLUNTEER PLAN & AGREEMENT

We are committed to assisting refugees, survivors, and immigrants, partnered with local Friendship Volunteers in order to ensure the best possible integration experience into their new communities. The commitment to become a Friendship Volunteer is a moral obligation to walk alongside our clients. This form should be completed by the Friendship Volunteer representative and a World Relief staff member.

FRIENDSHIP VOLUNTEER INFO	
Name	
Address	
Phone 1	
Phone 2	
E-mail	

CLIENT BIO	
Client Name	
Case #	
Nationality	
Language(s)	
Date Enrolled	
Housing Location	
Contact Phone #	

WORLD RELIEF CONTACTS	
Volunteer Support Staff	Client Manager

DATE OF FRIENDSHIP VOLUNTEER CHECK IN MEETINGS	
First Meeting (In person)	
6-Week Follow-Up (Email)	
3-Month Meeting (In person)	

Check mark who will provide each of the following services.

Task Category	TASK	FP
Language Practice	Fluency in conversational English (listening and speaking)	
	Vocabulary building (Oxford Picture Dictionary, real objects)	
	Community literacy (reading signs, directions, addresses, locations, symbols)	
	Personal literacy (phonics, alphabet, penmanship)	
	Studying for placement tests or classes	
Community Orientation	Learning public transportation/providing transportation	
	Providing support at appointments or meetings (doctor, school, soc service)	
	Enrolling in classes	
	Applying/Interviewing for jobs	
Family Care	Provide child care for parents to go to meetings, appointments, etc.	
	Afterschool tutoring for school-age children (in the home)	
Life Skills	Banking/Budgeting	
	House/Car Shopping	
	Getting driver's permit/license	
	Developing new skills	
Networking	Going places to connect with other community members	
Other		

FRIENDSHIP VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE COMMITMENT

I hereby commit to assist this World Relief client with the services indicated on the task list above. I will agree to keep World Relief apprised of all changes relating to this case, and to maintain lines of open and regular communication with World Relief throughout the initial case management period. I commit to do my due diligence in seeing that myself or/and my Friendship Volunteer group complete the World Relief volunteer process prior to volunteering, complete volunteer logs on a monthly basis (at least) and ensure completion of the above tasks to which the Friendship Volunteer has committed.

Friendship Volunteer: _____
Signature *Date*

World Relief Representative: _____
Signature *Date*