Designed to be flexible and interactive, COG’s virtual training programs offer nuclear professionals a safe collaborative learning experience during the pandemic and could offer new delivery options beyond it.

CanUD Owners Group’s (COG) Learning and Development (L&D) team spent much of last year perfecting the use of virtual tools to keep members and participants connected, collaborating and learning, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tools like WebEx and Teams have shown great potential for use during and beyond the pandemic.

With functions and features like instant polling, breakout rooms and virtual whiteboards that make learning on these platforms interactive and engaging, there is reason to believe even when we can safely meet together in person, once again, many meetings and training programs will remain virtual.

As well, since virtual learning can happen no matter where a participant is located, the flexibility it offers to distance learners means it is sure to stick around for the long-term.

From spring 2020 onward, COG’s L&D team, led by Program Manager Mark Skuce, along with Laurie Fraser, Jilliane de la Cruz and Kelsey Rodger, has helped deliver virtual training offerings in areas ranging from the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES), supplier human performance (HU) and safety culture to regulatory affairs (RA). Demand and feedback from COG members and participants has been strong.

Some of these virtual training courses are highlighted below.

**Regulatory affairs training**

The virtual RA training course, which features online lectures and self-guided exercises, was adapted from COG’s in-class RA training program, launched in 2008.

COG’s RA training helps ensure member employees are familiar with the latest regulations, regulatory documents and their implications for plant safety and operations. The in-class RA training had been designed for on-site RA staff, along with health physicists and radiation protection staff and was previously delivered as a one-day session. The virtual RA training runs for four days. This is because the L&D team recognized the different requirements for virtual and in-class learners.

“We continue to look at ways to expand our virtual training to ensure safety of our participants and support their professional development.”
"We try to deliver a program that has the required RA information but is also flexible and engaging for participants who are mostly working from home," says Skuce. "We transformed how we share the course information with them. For example, we limit online sessions to 90 minutes and offer some on-demand learning resources. We use group break-out sessions and interactive polls to keep participants involved and focused."

Participants in the RA pilot training session included employees from Ontario Power Generation, Bruce Power, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and New Brunswick Power. Additional virtual sessions were held through fall and winter 2020, covering RA regulations among other issues.

**Supplier participant first line manager training**

COG’s Supplier Participant First Line Supervisor (SP FLS) Training program has also gone virtual. The leadership training, which traditionally runs as a three-and-a-half day course, focuses on building supply chain capacity, specifically, among supplier first-line managers.

The course covers topics from safety culture to human performance, coaching and motivation. A two-day virtual version of SP FLS, which highlighted the bigger course themes, was piloted in early September 2020 for employees at COG supplier participant, Kinectrics. Course participants were working on the Bruce Power MCR.

The virtual training was a refresher for the Kinectrics team on key leadership concepts they had learned at a COG-led in-person session held prior to the pandemic. Former COG Board Chair Paul Spekkens delivered a component on safety culture and human performance and Bruce Power’s Sheri White delivered the sections on observation, coaching and difficult conversations.

“As the pandemic continues, COG’s strength in virtual training will benefit members and participants,” says Skuce.

The Kinectrics virtual training session held in early September 2020 focused on building supply chain capacity.

“In terms of our technology, infrastructure and expertise, and based on the positive feedback we’ve received from our pilots, we continue to look at ways to expand our virtual training to ensure safety of our participants and support their professional development.”

This year, COG’s L&D team continues to have a busy schedule of virtual training planned in the areas of nuclear safety, supplier HU and regulatory issues.

A lineup of COG’s virtual training sessions can be found on COGonline.org or by clicking here.