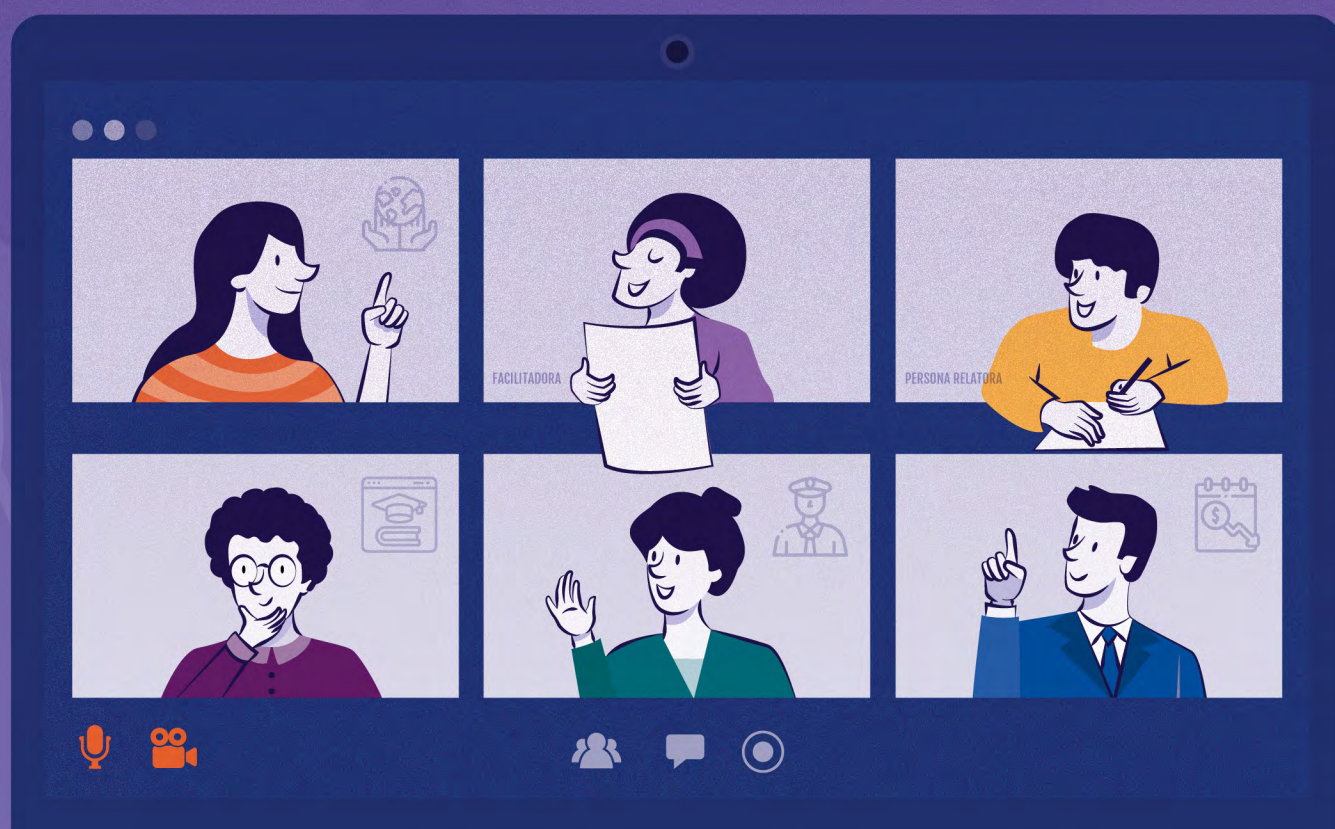


REMOTE ACTION PLAN GUIDELINES

HOW TO REMOTELY DEVELOP THEMATIC AND PARTICIPATORY ROUNDTABLES



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REMOTE ACTION PLAN GUIDELINES

HOW TO REMOTELY DEVELOP THEMATIC AND PARTICIPATORY ROUNDTABLES



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I. Presentation

The purpose of this document is to set operating criteria that may allow, in a remote context, the creation of **Action Plans with Open Government Commitments** aimed at solving public issues that affect the population.

From this perspective, it bears mentioning that this document should be understood as a tool to facilitate interactions between citizens and their authorities. The foregoing is based on the work dynamics that were affected due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, making it necessary to develop new forms of interaction.

The information contained herein may give guidance to those taking part in open government practices: authorities, citizens, NGOs, members of the Local Technical Secretariats, or anyone who wants to use virtual spaces to discuss potential solutions to various public issues.

The information provided in this document serves as a set of recommendations for the development of distinct processes, such as roundtables between authorities and citizens, so that they might collaborate to analyze and construct alternative solutions to be translated into public policy commitments (products).

The methodology described in this guidelines allows identifying the expected results for each stage, the information needed to develop the roundtables, inputs, key individuals and their expected role and work. In addition, this methodology seeks to provide recommendations regarding the minimum necessary materials needed to guarantee and promote citizen participation processes remotely.

II. Development of the Methodology

The following pages include information regarding two key aspects in the interaction processes between citizens and authorities. The steps are as follows:

1. Collecting and Processing Information on Key Public Issues
2. Promoting and Creating Spaces of Trust for the Development of Participatory Practices

This section details each of these steps, as well as a summary to facilitate its understanding.

Step 1: Collecting and Processing Information on Key Public Issues

One of the main challenges that members of the Local Technical Secretariats have faced regarding the “Open Government Strategy: Co-creation from the Local Level” (Estrategia Gobierno Abierto: Cocreación desde lo Local) lies in the opportunity to increase the representation of citizen demands. This results in the difficulty of preparing detailed analyses of public issues that may find, through the pillars of open government, an effective way for their resolution.¹

Also, the process of gathering information becomes more complex in unusual situations hindering the mobility of people and hence information exchange. Therefore, an alternative to solve this situation is to use information technologies, especially apps² that allow data to be gathered, which automation may facilitate processes. Some considerations and recommendations to achieve this systematization process are:

1. During the creation of open government action plans, one of the main tasks of the Local Technical Secretariat (or any formalized space for dialogue) is the diagnosis preparation or public issues description of greater relevance in the communities. To complete this task, the following actions are recommended:

A Form Designing. Forms are documents that have default sections that allow for uniformity and better organization when completing a specific activity. Thus, the Local Technical Secretariat (STL, in Spanish) shall conduct a participatory practice focusing on an open and

¹ Principles of open government suggest: citizen participation, transparency, accountability, and innovation.

² Technological tools or software that speed up the information systematization processes.

respectful dialogue between citizens and authorities based on accessible and understandable forms for citizens. For this purpose, here is an option to gather information:



Statistics: gender, age, place of residence.



Contact Information: name, email, telephone, etc. The importance of the safety and protection of personal data must be acknowledged. To do so, it is recommended to incorporate a personal data privacy notice. Any doubt or clarification in this matter may be solved by the local oversight bodies.



Primary Information: List of the main issues affecting citizens. In this step, it is relevant that people may express their opinion regarding the priority of different issues. For instance,

In the following list, please mark the issues you consider the less addressed ones by the current government:

Security



Poverty



Environment



Education



Other:

From the list above, which do you consider to be the most important issue, with 1 being the least priority and 5 being the highest?

Security



Poverty



Environment



Education



Other:

Today, technological tools facilitate the processes of analysis and systematization of information. Here are some of these tools:



Google Forms: <https://gsuite.google.com/signup/basic/welcome?hl=es-419>



Monkey Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>



Survio: <https://www.survio.com/>

B Determination of Public Policies (Substance over Form). Sometimes we waste time and effort on complex methodologies. A dialogue on priority or common interest topics should be preferred over strenuous methodological processes.

Note: Personal data privacy notices should be adapted to the design of each instrument chosen.

2. Once the information is available, the next task of the Local Technical Secretariat is the systematization and interpretation of the information gathered in the previous stage. The information interpreted in this step will be the input for deeper discussions that may, in turn, become open government commitments.



It is suggested that the interpretation of data is conducted by a multidisciplinary group which may be advised by experts in each selected issue. In many cases, during this process, a relevant role is attributed to both NGOs and academic staff. The task of the Local Technical Secretariat would be mapping key stakeholders³ so that they facilitate discussions on particular topics and information exchange processes.



Information sharing is a strategic process. Seeking an effective monitoring to attain elements of analysis might hinder the correct development of this practice. Therefore, the multidisciplinary group must integrate, process, and channel the necessary information with the purpose of identifying the public issues to be considered within the Local Action Plan (LAP)⁴. This can be done by implementing a problem tree method⁵.

³ The Stakeholder Mapping is a technique to identify the key stakeholders of a system, which also allows analyzing their interests, importance, and influence on the results of an intervention. (Tapella, 2007)

⁴ Document that integrates commitments, activities, products, and Open Government results agreed during the roundtables. For further information please visit: <https://micrositios.inai.org.mx/gobiernoabierto/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/6-PASOS.pdf>

⁵ A technique used to specifically identify an issue, its causes, its negative consequences, and its possible alternative solutions.

Note: For further information on the problem tree method, please refer to the Commitment Co-creation Guidelines II - Plurality of Views to Solve Public Issues (*Guía de Cocreación de Compromisos II - Pluralidad de opiniones para resolver problemas públicos*).⁶

3. Setting Common Agendas with Strategic Partners. The work of the Local Technical Secretariat must be aimed at the permanent search for strategic partners from different sectors committed to making progress within a work agenda based on the formal space for dialogue. This entails a permanent awareness raising work on institutional opening schemes and the expectation or goals that the integration of Action Plans and co-created commitments implies.



Without a doubt, permanently working with **strategic partners will further diversify the Local Technical Secretariat and the co-creation process.** Diversity, if managed and promoted properly, may bring benefits aimed at the creation of innovative Open Government commitments for effective resolution of public issues.

⁶ Available at: https://micrositios.inai.org.mx/gobiernoabierto/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Cocreacion_Compromisos-II_EspWeb_080119.pdf

SUMMARY OF STEP 1

Collecting and Processing Information on Key Public Issues



Using Information Technologies
Apps that gather data and their systematization.



A Form Designing

Accessible and understandable forms for citizens.

Surveys to obtain the perception of citizens, as well as the following information:



Statistics



Contact Information



Primary Information List of the main issues affecting citizens.

Technological Tools



Google Forms



Monkey Survey



Survio



B Determination of Public Policies (Substance over Form)

Talking about priority or common interest topics benefiting the community, rather than about complex methodological processes.



Systematization and Interpretation of the Information Gathered in the Previous Stage. The interpreted information will lead to cataloging and directing more detailed discussions.



Data interpretation is recommended to be conducted by a multidisciplinary group.



Information Sharing. The multidisciplinary group must integrate, process, and channel the necessary information with the purpose of identifying the public issues to be considered within the Local Action Plan (LAP).



Setting Common Agendas with Strategic Partners. Permanent search for partners from different sectors willing to make progress within the work agenda set by the space for dialogue.



Permanently working with strategic partners will further diversify the Local Technical Secretariat and the co-creation process.

Step 2: Promoting and Creating Spaces of Trust for the Development of Participatory Practices

The second task identified in the field of the Local Technical Secretariat is the development of workspaces in order to make progress in the integration of Open Government commitments aimed at solving public issues. Here, as in the previous step, it is necessary to have favorable conditions and environments to ensure trust between authorities and citizens.

Therefore, an alternative is the effective use of information technologies and communication platforms to facilitate the proper development and activation of spaces for dialogue and information exchange; (I don't understand after the semi colon) the foregoing in order to conduct effective communication practices. However, despite the limitations of remote meetings, here are some recommendations:

Considerations and Recommendations

1. In this step, the Local Technical Secretariat once again plays a very important role, striving for an effective activation of exchange spaces. Thus, one of the main activities will be preparing inputs that, on the one hand, allow the participants to obtain information from primary sources and, on the other, that allow them to understand the reasons to take part in certain remote work meetings.

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended to prepare executive documents (maximum 3 pages) including the following elements:

Element	Objective
Introduction	To let the participant know the main reason of his/her presence in the virtual meeting.
Objective	Briefly explain the tasks to be completed throughout the work session. It is essential to capture the main highlights to be created jointly.
Background (Where we are?)	Brief overview of the work that has been coordinated by the members of the Local Technical Secretariat.
Where are we going?	To describe both future elements and what they will allow for the creation of Action Plans.
Description of the issue	Brief summary of the public issue chosen to tackle through the collaborative construction of public issues identified in Step 1 .

Element	Objective
Problem tree method	Detailed explanation of the causes and effects produced by the chosen key issue, and of the methodology used to choose the relevant issue(s).

The table shown above is based on a much more detailed work process involving research tasks by the Local Technical Secretariat (STL). Nevertheless, Step 1—described in the previous section—sets some recommendations that will facilitate this information integration process, such as: mapping key academic or NGO stakeholders, constant feedback, and joint work.

2. Development of Remote (Virtual) Roundtables.

In order to adopt effective decision making processes for the joint resolution of public issues, here are some recommendations aimed at developing remote work sessions.

A) Items to Be Considered



Launch of Call: Launching a Call is critical to inform all possible target audiences that could take part in the co-creative processes. Also, a Call leads to a very effective average number of stakeholders and the possibility of preparing more efficient work spaces. It should be published 4-6 weeks in advance.

During this period of time, it is recommended to have a team or staff in charge for registering the participants and thus the STL may “balance” future roundtables. This means having a sufficient number of people from civil society, as well as from the authorities with powers to follow-up the requests and/or alternative solutions that may be presented. It is important to have a similar number of representatives from each stakeholder sector.



Documentation with the “Rules of the Game”: In parallel to the activity prior to launching the Call, it is important to prepare a formal document addressed to all participants, clarifying the scope and expected results during the online participation sessions.

Considering the above, it is considered recommended that the information contained in the document covers some of the following elements:




A) Session Form. Inform all stakeholders about the video conferencing software platform that will be used for the work sessions. This session form must include the connection link, registration requirements, such as email or filling out a form with personal information, user, the estimated duration of the session, participating organizations and institutions, and the role of each member of the management team.








B) Session Rules. One of the most common problems with video conferencing software platforms lies in the order of interventions, as well as in ensuring that the microphone of each participant is muted when not talking. To attain this, the management team should appoint a person (co-host) who can support the host properly, ordering the interventions and preventing the participants from refusing to talk but, at the same time, ensuring that they do not exceed their participation time.



C) Video Conferencing Software Platform: Once the steps suggested above have been followed, choosing a video conferencing software platform to ensure participation is critical. However, there are some limitations, especially regarding costs, since some platforms involve a paid subscription for their upgrading. Below is a table listing some available software platforms describing their advantages and disadvantages:

Video Conferencing Software Platforms:		
Platform	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
<p>Zoom Video Conferencing</p> 	<p>In the premium version, the platform allows to split the meeting, dividing large work groups into specific subgroups (breakout rooms). Thus, discussions could become more relevant when hosting simultaneous discussions and analysis sessions and to present initiatives for the development of possible Open Government commitments.</p>	<p>An annual USD\$150 payment is needed for taking full advantage of this platform.</p> <p>In the free-plan version there is a 40-minute time restriction for work sessions, which could affect the creative process at each roundtable.</p>

Video Conferencing Software Platforms:		
Platform	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
	<p>During these last months of remote work, the Zoom platform became well-known.</p> <p>Many people are now familiarized with this technological tool and know how to use it's features.</p> <p>Sessions can be recorded when upgrading to the premium version.</p>	
<p>Webex Go to meeting</p> 	<p>It is similar to the Zoom platform. It has the same elements for the development of sessions.</p> <p>There is a 14-day trial version enabling all its features. It has some features that ensure compliance with protection standards.</p>	<p>Approximate monthly cost: USD\$120.</p> <p>It seems that the platform interface is not as friendly and intuitive as other platforms.</p>
<p>Jitsi Meet Jistimeet.org</p> 	<p>Easy-to-use and free tool.</p> <p>Participants are not required to submit personal information to access the platform.</p> <p>Like other platforms, it has many features, such as: recording, automatic muting, linking to <i>YouTube</i>, screen sharing, among others.</p>	<p>The platform's information is only in English.</p> <p>If recording sessions is needed, user must use other servers, such as <i>Dropbox</i>.</p>
<p>Teams</p> 	<p>In this platform the user can make both voice and video calls.</p> <p>User can send images, texts, and documents in the same interface.</p> <p>Sessions have no time limit; it is possible to create working groups. There are no restrictions on the number of groups the user can participate in.</p>	<p>It is not possible to access other people's calendar. It is not possible to send Microsoft Office documents.</p>

Video Conferencing Software Platforms:		
Platform	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
	It has tools such as: calendar and forums for the exchange of documents and ideas. Chat and document exchange history remains available despite closing the app.	
<p>Hangouts</p> 	<p>Google platform supports chat, voice calls, and video calls.</p> <p>It supports hassle-free interaction with other Gmail users.</p>	Only Gmail users can access it.
<p>Meet</p> 	<p>Up to 250 guests can be added to a call and there can be up to 100,000 view-only guests.</p> <p>Google platform for video call "forums". Up to 250 guests can be added to a call and there can be up to 100,000 view-only guests.</p> <p>There is a free version, where video calls can be scheduled using the Google Calendar app.</p>	If the platform is not customized from the host's account, the menus are in English.

Also, there are some digital tools and/or platforms to conduct processes of work or to bring teams together both virtual and in real time:

a) Mural - www.mural.co

b) Miró - <https://miro.com>

Other digital tools to simplify remote work: <https://www.notion.so/e82b76d16b46472cb-64dfbec27390426?v=b2486>



D) Host: As explained above having a host is quite important for the development of work sessions aimed at creating Open Government commitments.

The role of this person is relevant because, ideally, he/she should have a general knowledge of the public issue to be discussed. Likewise, the host must have some skills, such as conflict resolution management and mediation, communication skills, empathy, fairness, and sensitivity.



At the end of the session, the main role of the host will be to ensure the drafting of an ambitious but short-term achievable Open Government commitment. The commitment's deadline will be defined by the Technical Secretariat itself. The host must also be aware of the relevance of incorporating all the ideas and then identifying them through the set of principles of Open Government: Transparency, Citizen Participation, Accountability, and Innovation.

Conducting trial sessions prior to the formal development of work sessions is recommended. This will provide hosts with confidence so that they can ensure the correct development in real situations and also use a timer tool or app to time interventions.



E) Co-Host: Co-hosts are essential to ensure the correct recording of the most relevant aspects occurring during work sessions. The host may rely on the co-host for brainstorming, retrieving information given by participants, maintaining the order in sessions, etc.

In order to build trust during the first stage of the process of structuring the Open Government commitments, using the Chatham House Rule⁷ is recommended, which allows participants to use the information they receive, **but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker may be revealed.**

Following the recommendations presented herein are not mandatory for all Local Technical Secretariats when they conduct actions aimed at the creation of Action Plans during the health emergency situation that the world has experienced since March 2020.

⁷ The Chatham House Rule helps create a trusted environment to understand and resolve complex problems. Its guiding spirit is: share the information you receive, but do not reveal the identity of who said it.

On the contrary, these recommendations are meant to be a set of guidelines that—pursuant to the experience of the General Head Office of Open Government and Proactive Transparency of INAI—facilitate these processes, so that in the future these efforts may lead to the development of more effective spaces for dialogue.

B) Additional Considerations - "Quick Tips"

1



Importance of Desk-Research Work.

According to the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an important element not contravening the principles of Open Government is directly related to a previously structured work. Therefore, the work entailing an analysis and diagnosis of public issues will allow all people involved in the process not to start from scratch. Having prior and structured elements will facilitate the implementation of dialogue, saving valuable time to focus efforts on viable alternative solutions. In summary, “built is not the same as closed”, however, it is recommended that prior instrumentation or work input practices are agreed upon.

2



Key Individuals and Institutions Mapping and Identification.

As mentioned above, an essential activity consists in the identification of people and institutions specialized in the issues to be resolved through the co-creation of Open Government commitments. It is important to stress that, while the Local Technical Secretariat represents a highly relevant space for dialogue, through which Open Government practices are conducted in each state, it should not be understood as the goal. This means that people and institutions leading a specific work agenda will not necessarily have to actively take part in each and every one of the work sessions conducted. It is recommended that key individuals and institutions are called according to the thematic agenda, avoiding to share unnecessary information. The above entails a hassle-free and a specifically-addressed communication.

3



Accurate Shots by Designing Clear Targets..

Efforts to hold virtual meetings must be made together with effective planning practices that allow attendees to learn the objectives, structure, forms of participation or intervention; preferably these meetings will have a maximum number of participants.

This strategic and planning design will help achieving the objectives more clearly, but it will mainly help having a better control of work sessions for the joint creation of the Open Government commitments. The better controlled and ordered spaces are guaranteed, the greater the acceptance and trust of the people involved in the processes.

4**Focusing on Planning over Complex Technological Tools.**

Over the last few months, many people whose work dynamics have changed are using different technological tools that facilitate exchange or interaction processes. Notwithstanding the foregoing, when conducting participatory processes, it is recommended to focus on planning and desk-research work, rather than the selection of the best technological tools. Therefore, essays, preparation of documentation, meetings and participation guidelines, etc. should be prioritized over efforts towards exclusively finding the best tool.

SUMMARY OF STEP 2

Promoting and Creating Spaces of Trust for the Development of Participatory Practices



Development of Workspaces

It is necessary to have favorable conditions and environments to ensure trust between authorities and citizens.



A The COVID-19 Pandemic has Modified People Interaction.

Thus, an alternative is the effective use of information technologies and communication platforms. However, despite the limitations of remote meetings, here are some recommendations:



Inputs Allowing Participants to Have Information

- Introduction
- Objective
- Background (Where we are?)
- Where are we going?
- Description of the issue
- Problem tree method
- Primary information list of the main issues affecting citizens.



Development of Remote (Virtual) Roundtables

1 Items to Be Considered

- Launch of Call
- Documentation with the "rules of the game"
- Session Form
- Session rules
- Video conferencing software platform
- Host
- Co-host
- The Chatham House Rule is recommended

2 Additional Considerations - "Quick Tips"

- Importance of desk-research work
- Key individuals and institutions mapping and identification
- Accurate shots by designing clear targets
- Focusing on planning over complex technological tools



Some Suggested Video Conferencing Software Platforms



- Zoom: Video conferencing



- Webex: Go to meeting



- Jitsi Meet: Jistimeet.org



Digital tools and/or platforms to conduct processes of work or to bring teams together both virtual and in real time:

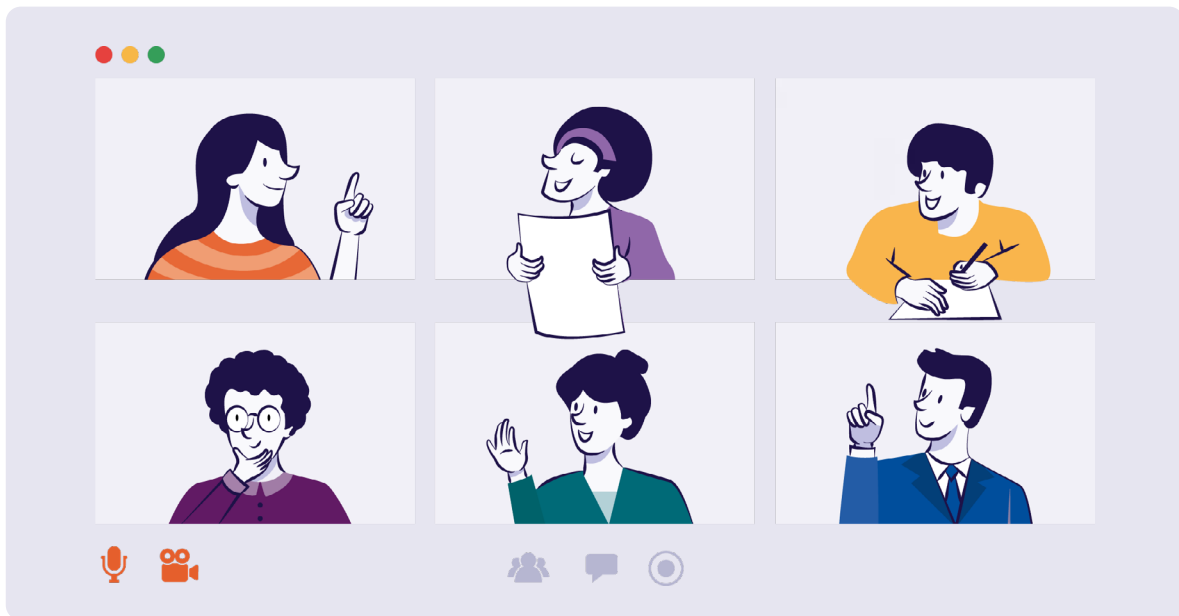
- **Mural** - www.mural.co
- **Miró** - <https://miro.com>
- **Other digital tools to simplify remote work:** <https://www.notion.so/e82b76d16b46472cb64dfbec27390426?v=b2486>

III. Final Thoughts

After the health restrictions imposed almost worldwide as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions have been forced to adapt to this new normal and announce changes regarding their way of working to evolve and adapt themselves.

The methodology presented in this Guidelines results from a change that has led to a remote scheme, emerging as an alternative to the conditions caused by the current context. The continuity of the Open Government practices is key to promoting more open and resilient governments.

Due to the foregoing, INAI makes this document available so that people may move forward towards institutional opening strategies, for the benefit of people's and community's quality of life.





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