



UNITED NATIONS

Reimagine the UN Together Challenge Dialogue Series



COVID-19
RESPONSE

Playbook for holding a dialogue



Join the conversation
on reimagining the UN

Background

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed our ways of working. We have had to adapt to working remotely, postpone or cancel duty travel, learn how to move events to virtual platforms, balance home, family and work responsibilities, and much more. The pandemic presents unprecedented challenges, but also opportunities for collaboration, innovation, learning and transforming the UN together. When the dust settles, what has this difficult time taught us that we want to hold on to? What challenges will we need to continue to navigate? What do we think about all these issues?

The [Reimagine the UN Together Challenge](#) was launched on 8 July. This crowdsourcing challenge seeks to leverage the creativity, experience and skills of colleagues from across the system, inviting all personnel to submit ideas and solutions to support our collective reimagining of the UN.

Complementing and in parallel to the Challenge, a Dialogue Series is also being initiated to “deep-dive” into certain topics and provide a platform to those who may not be ready or able to submit an idea through the challenge related to the pandemic and post-COVID workplace. It will also facilitate discussion on sensitive topics or aspects that may not have a clear “solution”.

“When the dust settles, what has this difficult time taught us that we want to hold on to?”

Why dialogue?

The Reimagine the UN Together Challenge seeks to leverage the creativity, experience and skills of colleagues from across the system to reimagine the UN together!

However, not everyone has the time or resources to join a project team or develop a solution. The Dialogue Series offers everyone a chance to contribute.

These small, facilitated dialogues aim to:

- Provide a forum for sharing thoughts and feelings and contributing to reimagining the UN together.
- Provide a safe space for more “localised” discussions to address specific issues or particular needs of different groups (e.g. mental health and well-being, personnel with children or elderly to care for, those with disabilities, and those at high-risk, etc.), local conditions, type of services, etc.
- Feed into and connect the dots with other discussions on the COVID-19 response and phased return strategies, reform, future of work,

All UN entities will play pivotal roles in stimulating dialogues. This playbook will help you get started.

Thematic Areas *3 Big Challenges*

More than 4,600 colleagues from across the UN system responded to a UN-wide pulse check, which helped narrow down the focus areas for the Reimagine the UN Together Challenge and Dialogues as follows:



Agile mindsets and practices: flexible programming, budgeting, and policy design for responsive decision-making;



Knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and resource pooling: to build back better and be more prepared for future crises; and



Support to colleagues in times of crisis by providing access to information, training, resources, and enabling better communication and dialogue.

These themes help define a clear scope for both the innovation challenge and dialogues. We realize that there are many topics and issues that may interest personnel across diverse entities, environments, etc., however a limited scope was defined at this time to minimize the impact on personnel time and resources and ensure these areas are given the proper focus and attention. Lessons learned will be used to improve the overall process and launch other challenges and expand the dialogue series. The vision is to mainstream this process and ensure ongoing innovation and dialogue across the system.

Following are suggested sub-topics to help you further define questions for the dialogues to help tease out additional and alternative voices, ideas, thoughts, hopes and fears – contributing to the overall conversation. These sub-topics should not generalize the discussion. For example, the discussion would not be innovation* in general, but innovation in the context of agile mindsets and practices. We suggest a maximum of three questions per dialogue.

Agile Mindsets and Practices

- Self-managing teams
- Business continuity
- Facilities
- Data
- Finance and funding challenges
- Challenges faced in missions
- Challenges faced in Country Teams
- Innovation*

Knowledge Sharing, Collaboration and Resource Pooling

- Multilateralism, events and conferences
- New policies and processes
- New tools
- Coordination on the ground
- Response and recovery
- Partnerships
- Resource pooling
- UN75

Support to Colleagues in Times of Crises

- Mental health & well-being
- Trust
- Superpowers/skills development
- Coaching/mentoring
- Flexible workspace
- Cross-assignments
- Virtual meetings & teams
- Navigating change
- Communication/engagement
- Staff with disabilities
- Staff with caretaker responsibilities
- LGBTQIA staff

How to Run a Dialogue Series

4-ingredient recipe for a successful dialogue related to the pandemic and reimagining the UN together.

1. Prepare!

Send out a call for expression of interest. Use this guide & other resources from the [Reimagine the UN Together Challenge online space](#).

2. Convene

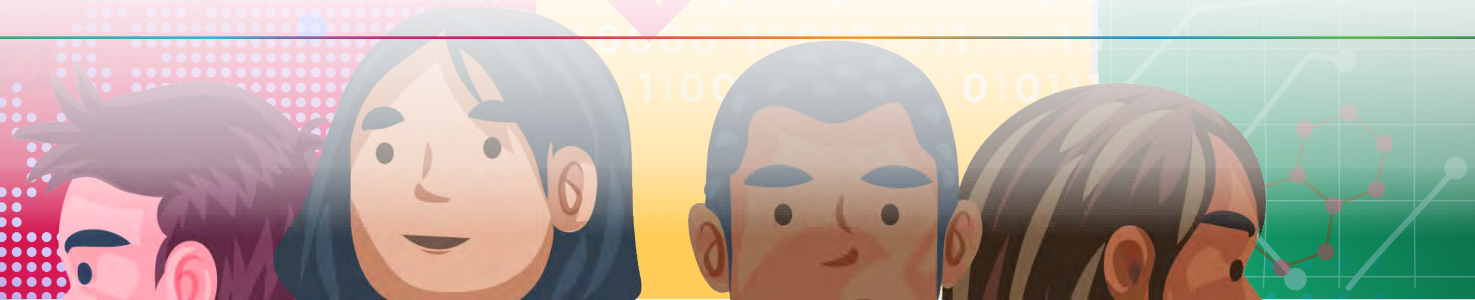
Organize sessions online, using Teams, Zoom or other tools, inviting as few as 5 and as many as 15 participants. Use Mural, Menti, Miro, Whiteboard or other brainstorming.

3. Talk!

Get the conversation going, guided by thematic areas of the challenge & tailored to local realities. Use selected visual brainstorming tool to guide the discussion.

4. Feedback

Take notes during the dialogue, outlining questions discussed and ideas proposed, as well as noting pain points or parked items. Complete the dialogue report/outcome form to add your dialogue voice to the global conversation.



1 - Prepare

The Reimagine the UN Together Challenge and Dialogue Series is open to all colleagues from all UN entities who are interested in collectively reimagining the next UN.

Any staff member can get involved in the Dialogue series including consultants, interns, volunteers, etc.

Think about how and who to reach out to – and use this playbook as a guide. It may be convenient to link dialogues to existing meetings and conferences or something more social like a team event, lunch or coffee session.

Using a variety of methods and channels, reach out to colleagues and provide information to them about how to get involved. You may consider sending out a “call for expression of interest”, and then organizing the dialogue sessions based on response.

Take a look at this template to call for expression of interest and adapt to your needs.

Alternatively, you may already have ideas of how to organize different dialogue groups. Consider the tools you might need and the format.

- Define the most effective channels/forums/opportunities to reach participants.
- Consider and identify your moderator(s): whatever the format, the moderator plays the crucial role.
- Identify, remove/manage constraints blocking participation. Adopt confidentiality safeguards if needed.
- Host conversations at existing events or forums—make it fun and social!
- Consider co-organizing dialogues with partners.
- Regularly draw and apply lessons learned from previous dialogues and events.
- Define a maximum of 3 questions per dialogue and include in the invitation (use the thematic areas on page 2 as a guide)

Reimagine the UN Together Moderators Community of Practice

Moderators have the option to join an online community to bounce ideas for dialogues and questions off one another, as well as share experiences with conducting the dialogues and sharing lessons learned. Members of the Reimagine the UN Together Alliance will be available to answer questions or address concerns.

2 - Convene



Invite colleagues to join the conversation! Whatever your method, think about the tools you may need to use to facilitate the discussion, for example:

Virtual Meeting Platform:

MS Teams, Zoom, WebEx, Go To Webinar...

COVID-19 has shown us the multitude of options and possibilities for communicating online. Some solutions offer chat and breakout options.

Brainstorming Platform:

We know the value of using post-its, whiteboards, Legos and other collaborative tools in workshops. The following are some options for taking the brainstorming online:

- **Microsoft Whiteboard** is a freeform digital canvas that also includes predefined templates. It is available as a stand-alone app or integrated with MS Teams meetings.
- **Mural** is a visual collaborative, online brainstorming tool that helps guide virtual discussions, in real time using a variety of predefined templates to organize thoughts and ideas.
- **Miro** is a visual collaborative, online whiteboard platform that helps guide virtual discussions, in real time using a variety of predefined templates to organize thoughts and ideas.
- **Menti** is online tool for interactive presentations that allows for live polls, quizzes, word clouds, Q&As and more.
- **Sli.do** is another online tool for interactive presentations that allows for live polls, quizzes, Q&As and more.

Note these are just a snapshot of available tools. The Reimagine the UN Together Challenge organizing team (innovate@un.org) is available to advise on tools and channels, if needed. Be sure to check with local IT to ensure compliance and security standards are met.

3 - Get Talking!

Some simple guiding principles to running the discussion include:

Introduction

- 1 - Greet participants as they log onto the call and welcome them to the dialogue
- 2 - Remind them of the agenda (1-hour max)
- 3 - Introduce cohosts if any
- 4 - Invite participants to introduce themselves and turn on their video
- 5 - Outline the aim of the dialogue and the main question(s) as indicated in the invitation
- 6 - Underline the value of participation: this is a unique opportunity to convey opinions and ideas that will be shared with senior management and relevant committees

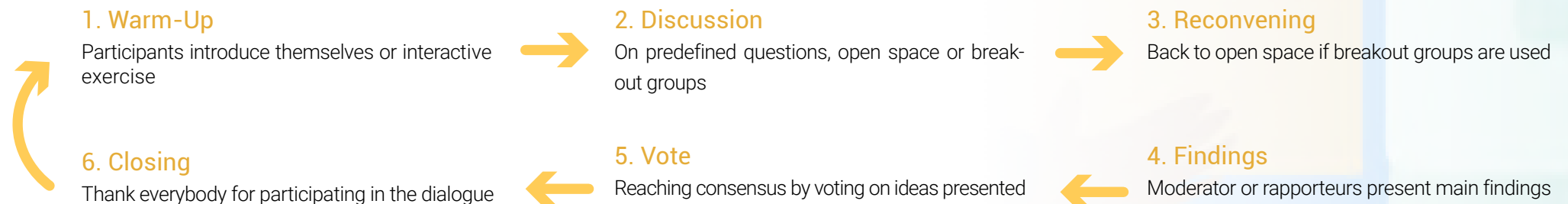
Discussion

- Remind participants of the question(s) to be addressed in any given session
- Encourage everybody's participation
- Guide the discussion using selected visual brainstorming tool (or in person tools if possible)

Conclusion

- 1 - Debate the different ideas proposed
- 2 - Encourage group consensus by holding a vote on the ideas discussed
- 3 - Thank everybody for participating

Example of an interactive dialogue format:



Tips for Moderators

Whatever the format, moderator is a critical role. Some guiding principles for moderators are:

- Include the discussion questions in the invitation to participants
- State clearly why the dialogues are taking place, and the goal of the discussion
- Encourage people to turn on camera
- Remind people to mute when not speaking (mute your mic video)
- Ensure participants are familiar with the tools and features and expected behaviours (such as hand raising, commenting, etc.)
- Respect and facilitate the sharing of different perspectives
- Constructively address conflicting positions and power imbalances
- Adapt to local needs and interests
- Structure your notetaking tool and/or brainstorming tool to align with the dialogue report/outcome form to ensure key points are captured
- Update attendance sheet

4 - Feedback



Distill and disseminate insights!

Use the thoughts organized on the brainstorming platform/data collection method to spur your memory, then complete the dialogue report/outcome form to outline the questions discussed and the general consensus reached amongst participants.

Each conversation is an opportunity to encourage individuals to take actions in their own lives in line with what they have heard and learned. They can yield insights and evidence that the UN can apply in broader discussions around the post-COVID workplace.

Documenting the evidence is crucial.

Fill in the form!

Ensure you complete the dialogue report/outcome form. This is essential for the results of your dialogue to be included in the overall dialogue evaluation. This will then be shared with other discussions on the COVID-19 response and phased return strategies, UN Reforms, future of work, new ways of working, Digital UN, mobility and others.

If you have trouble accessing the form, please contact the Alliance at innovate@un.org.

Annex A *Summary of Resources*



- [Form to submit dialogue report/outcomes to the Alliance](#)
- [Expression of interest sample form](#) (please contact innovate@un.org if you'd like to copy this and use locally)
- [Reimagine the UN Together Challenge](#)



Reach out to innovate@un.org to get the conversation started!

The challenge and dialogue series has been developed and is driven by an alliance of interested individuals, networks and departments across the UN system, such as the UN Development Coordination Office, the UN Innovation Network, #NewWork, the UN System Staff College, Young UN: Agents for Change, and the Office of Information and Communications Technology, in collaboration with staff unions and other key bodies.

