Guideline for remote-working in Civil Service as a measure for continuous delivery of service during the COVID-19 outbreak

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1. Objective of working remotely

This guideline for remote working is for all Civil Service Agencies as a measure to reduce spread of COVID-19. It has now become imperative to be prepared for the eventuality of disruptions to our normal work, to whatever degree it may unfold. In light of occurrence of such events, it can bring our services and workforce to a standstill with physical distancing and other measures like the possibility of lockdowns. In such situations, the health and safety of staff as well as clients should be accorded the highest priority. Building an effective remote team would enable us to operate beyond the confines of a physical office and facilitate continuity of essential services.

The guideline is to help Agencies outline the protocols of official communications and reporting, fixing accountability, protocol on document movement and protocol on use of government resources for remote working/work from home.

Every Agency has its own requirements, processes and practices, therefore they must customise this broad guidelines by adding details that are specific to their own requirements. The following steps must be initiated to be prepared for remote working after mapping out tasks and people:

2. Set ground rules for remote working

This should help to set expectations between managers and team members.

2.1 Agree on remote working office hours

- Document the default expectations in a shareable document.
- Managers to sit with their team to come up with an agreed "Remote Working Office Hours and rules of engagement" document. This must be shared through a common folder that everyone can easily refer to.

2.2 Set ground rules for team communication

Setting ground rules for team communication goes a long way in making sure your team is productive and happy. Communication is critical for effective coordination and operationalising any plan in a short span of time and at any hour of the day. When operating remotely, we need to keep in mind that the kinds of nuanced communication you get in an office setting doesn't translate online. Therefore, setting up communications protocols in advance is most critical and preparedness is key to keeping communication lines live and active.

As such it is critical to identify what are the best tools to use and when to use it? Is the information time sensitive? Why is it important? It helps to set expectations between managers and team members.

On the choice of communication tools, please Refer to the Remote Toolbox section of this document (in Section 4).

The communications plan shall include :
- A file(s) that contain the communication details which the HRD/HRS shall compile and share in common folder with viewing rights to all in the organisation:

Name	Designation	Mobile No	Email	TrueConf ID/Skype/ Google meet	WhatsApp /Msg	Emergency Contact other than Employee

Identify the Primary communication channels and applications: It must be decided in advance what will be the primary channels of communication. While multiple communication channels can be explored, a primary means of communication is important.

3. Set management procedures

3.1 Task management procedures

Document the steps that employees need to follow to complete a certain task. Divisions/Teams can make their own internal protocol and understanding.

3.2 Motivation and guidance

Provide tools to help employees to make remote working comfortable and accessible.

Supervisors should make themselves available for virtual hangouts, the frequency decided according to their respective needs– to guide,coordinate and motivate team members, provide a conducive environment to brainstorm and make work from home productive.

3.3 Weekly 1-on-1s – with team members to chat about how work is going.

3.4 **Role of Tech Teams**

ICT Teams should make themselves available to support the other team members and provide technical support. ICT teams can support to make:
- Fix ICT System user rights and accountability for remote working
- Protect information and documents for common / shared services.
- Make the manual processes to fit the remote working as far as possible
- Generate daily system user reports and share with supervisors

IT Teams should train staff ASAP on the IT platforms for remote working
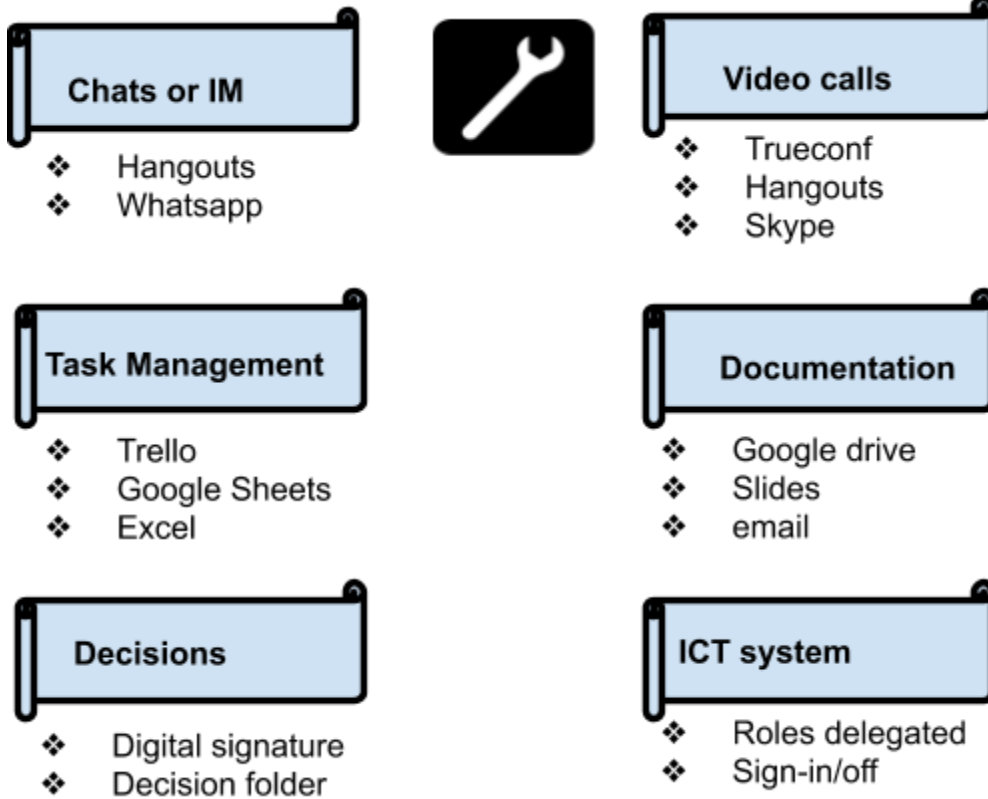
3.5 Document movement protocol

Agencies should institute protocol for document movement between the office and home. If possible one person among a team/division should be identified for maintaining the records of document movement and proper accountability.   In our efforts to facilitate remote working, we must not forget to prioritise proper management of documents and files.

Agency should also classify those documents that cannot be taken home.

4. **Remote Toolbox**

In a remote team, you'll need the right tools to make sure everyone stays on the same page and can continue to execute efficiently.

Identify tools that your team is familiar with or train your teams to use the tools. Some handy tools that make working remotely successful are listed for your reference:

Chats or IM
- ❖ Hangouts
- ❖ Whatsapp

Video calls
- ❖ Trueconf
- ❖ Hangouts
- ❖ Skype

Task Management
- ❖ Trello
- ❖ Google Sheets
- ❖ Excel

Documentation
- ❖ Google drive
- ❖ Slides
- ❖ email

Decisions
- ❖ Digital signature
- ❖ Decision folder

ICT system
- ❖ Roles delegated
- ❖ Sign-in/off

- Use official group chats for seeking common clarifications or cross-platforms with mobile apps
- Set-up accountability for outgoing official decisions
- Create channel of communication for queries and client response mechanism
- Establish protocol for how and when teams will coordinate and meet.
- Remote yet collaborative working
- Data security-It has been possible to build a network of apps tailored to our workflows using the best tool for each job with Google authentication for single sign-on (only one login to Google Chrome to access them all) and integrations between the services. This allows for a single point of entry for data while allowing access to it from wherever it is relevant.

Assess the comfort level with specific applications, such as video conferencing and other collaboration/communication platforms. Where you find gaps, provide training and opportunities for practice before people need to use them to reduce inefficiency. Identify devices owned by the organization that people could use and clarify acceptable "bring your own" phone and laptop options.

Agency may refer to the RCSC Technical remote protocol attached with this document for setting up your own Remote Tools.

4. Accountability and productivity management

4.1 **Accountability System** – develop accountability metrics that align with your team's priorities and values. This helps your team to focus on the right things. Set out- Check-ins & Check-outs time, Pre-empt a set time for calls – E.g., every 2 hours, be available for a phone call.

4.1 **Time Blocking.**

Divide your day into blocks of time. Each block is dedicated to tackle a specific task. This helps you focus all of your mental resources on one thing at a time rather than spreading your attention thin across several tasks. Every employee will keep a daily log of activity as shown below.

Time	Task	Work progress	Means of verification
9 AM	Email & messages	Eg. Responded to 5 emails	
10AM	Meetings	HRC	
11 AM	Desk review/proposals	Completed the draft and shared by email	
	Coffee break (11:30-11:45)		

12 AM	Desk review/proposals		
01PM	Lunch		
02PM	Email & messages		
03PM	Meetings		
04 PM	Prepare for tomorrow		
05PM	End of day		

4.2 **Jot-down meeting minutes**

Have your meeting minutes in a shared doc. that the team can refer to. In the event if a team member couldn't sit in for an important virtual meeting, you can use Zoom's/Google Hangouts auto-record feature so they can playback to keep themselves in the loop.

4.3 **Communicate and document tasks**

Keep your teammates and supervisors updated of your daily activities either by sharing them in the assigned task management tool or sharing the above daily log of activities.

5. **Resources for Remote working**

Agencies in discussion with their staff must ensure that they have the necessary facilities like computers/laptops to work from home. For internet access, we recommend that Agencies must determine the extent of data usage for working remotely depending on criteria like working on data heavy Online Systems (e.g. ePEMS). We request Agencies to be conservative in allocating and the use of Government resources.

6.   General Do's and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Stay Home and limit the number of visitors coming into your space to only very essential visitors.	Organise or attend social gathering like dinner parties, meeting up with friends or make unnecessary visits to hospitals and other public places
Plan gainful engagements or pursue hobbies like reading, listening to music, writing or giving time to family and children.	Get into alternate employment/engagements like operating businesses, driving taxis, manning shops or working in any commercial establishments etc.
Maintain at least 6 feet distance from others when going out to do essential errands such as buying food, get necessary health care, take care of relatives, etc.	Engage in contact sports like playing football, volleyball, or other group games like Khuru/Archery etc where there is possibility to come into close contacts with others
Maintain personal hygiene like washing hands frequently for at least 20 seconds and using hand sanitizer.	Leave the duty station without informing immediate supervisor
Keep yourself healthy through exercise like solitary walks or jogs and having a balanced diet.	Change contact addresses or contact numbers without prior information to your immediate supervisor
Keep updated about organisational activities and be ready to be called to duty at any time.	Use public transportation (Bus, Taxis) unnecessarily
Update yourself with the news and follow BBS, the Ministry of Health Facebook page and website and PMO's facebook page and twitter handle for updates on Covid 19 outbreak.	Spread rumours and fake news which might lead to unnecessary fear and panic amongst the public.
Seek appropriate medical assistance if you develop flu like symptoms	

In addition to the above, everyone should strictly follow HPMs instructions issued 27 March, 2020 regarding public gathering, travel, business/entertainment activities, games and sports .