

5. Pathways designed to meet specific business needs

Introduction

The 12 tools are flexible and adaptable and can be customised to meet the needs of most futures projects. To illustrate how to combine tools, this chapter describes 7 pathways designed to meet specific business needs identified by futures practitioners.

There are 7 pathways

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Pathway 1

Exploring underlying issues or causes when scoping or defining a policy area

Business need: Building futures intelligence

Aim: To develop a deep understanding of the underlying issues that will shape the policy area in the near, mid and long term

To use that understanding to scope the policy development process



Primary activities: Desk research and interviews followed by a workshop to discuss the findings

Tools: Horizon scanning, 7 Questions, Issues Paper

Participants: Internal stakeholders, external stakeholders, subject experts

Number: No limit

Timing: Several weeks

The approach: A project managed round of intelligence gathering and analysis

The main steps are

1. Invite team members plus suitable externals – academics, industry experts, NGOs for example - to join the intelligence gathering team
2. Start two strands of activity: horizon scanning and 7 Questions interviews. The same people can do both if you choose
3. Establish a file structure for storing and sharing information
4. Run both strands for a suitable period of time – say 6-8 weeks
5. Gather the individual scans into one document, randomly
6. Prepare an Issues Paper
7. Gather the team together for a workshop to
 - Examine the horizon scans
 - Review the Issues Paper
 - Identify emerging issues and themes
 - Identify the implications for the policy areas
8. Produce a workshop report that summarises all strands of work and highlights the implications for scoping or defining the policy areas

Output: A horizon scanning report, an Issues Paper and a workshop report highlighting the implications for scoping or defining the policy areas

Pathway 2

Determining a vision for a new policy area

Business need: Creating a shared ambition for the future

Aim: To build a shared aspiration of future success
To create a shared sense of purpose and understanding of the futures task



Primary activities: Desk research leading to a workshop to determine the vision

Tools: Horizon scanning, Driver mapping, Visioning

Participants: Members of the policy team who are new to futures (experienced team members can participate as well)

Number: Between 6 and 16

Timing: 5 hour workshop. 4-6 week lead time if participants also carry out scanning

The approach: The heart of this pathway is a one day workshop where participants use Driver mapping and Visioning. If there is time, participants should carry out Horizon Scanning before the workshop. If there is no time – and if one is available – participants can read a Horizon Scanning paper instead

The main steps are

1. If there is time, invite participants to conduct horizon scanning around the policy area. There is an option to use the tool as an individual learning exercise rather than a shared information gathering exercise if time is limited (ie participants do not need to share abstracts). If there is no time for Horizon Scanning, give participants an existing Horizon Scanning paper to review prior to the workshop
2. Run a workshop where participants
 - Brainstorm drivers shaping the policy area in the future
 - Map the drivers to identify predetermined elements and critical uncertainties
 - Use the mapping exercise to identify key factors for the vision
 - Determine the vision
 - Determine what need to be done to achieve the vision
3. Produce a report that sets out the conclusions of the workshop and records the consolidated vision. Send it to all participants

Output: A workshop report which sets out an agreed ambition of the future

Pathway 3

Testing policy options for an existing policy area under time constraints

Business need: Futureproofing policy

Aim: To test policy options against a range of future conditions
To determine whether - and how - policy options should be modified to meet policy objectives in light of the time constraints



Primary activities: Workshop

Tools: Policy stress-testing

Participants: People with responsibility for the policy or strategy area. Participants will work with scenarios but don't need to have developed them.

Number: Between 6 and 16

Timing: 1.5 – 2 hours

The approach: The aim of this pathway is to use a set of scenarios to test policy options.

The scenarios may have been developed as part of a project to explore the future of this policy area; or policy makers may want to use a generic set of scenarios as a context for the conversation.

If the latter is the case, the facilitator will need to find a suitable set of existing scenarios and customize them to the needs of the project. Existing scenarios do not need to be specific to the policy area; any (broadly) up to date socio-economic scenarios will work well.

The steps are set out in the Policy stress-testing tool. The facilitator should

1. Introduce the scenarios
2. Review the policy or strategy objectives being tested
3. Test the objectives against all scenarios
4. Focus in particular on how the time requirement of the project determines robustness and resilience of the outcomes and determines the need for objectives to be modified or adapted
5. Review the findings and discuss the implications for policy

Prepare a report following the workshop that records the findings from the workshop and circulate it to all participants.

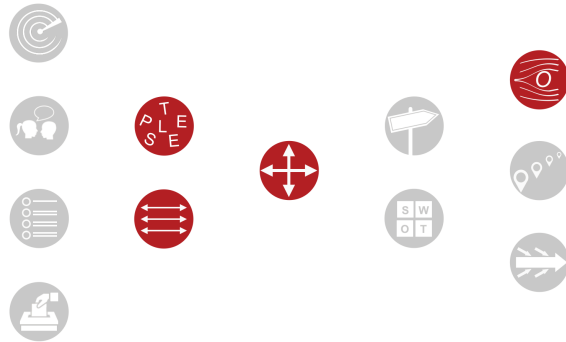
Output: A report that records the outcome of the workshop conversations.

Pathway 4

Testing policy options for a policy area

Business need: Futureproofing policy

Aim: To test policy options against a range of future conditions
To identify which aspects of the policy options are robust across a range of futures and which need modified to ensure the policy is resilient



Primary activities: Workshop

Tools: Scenario building (Driver mapping, Axes of uncertainty, Scenarios, Policy stress-testing)

Participants: People with responsibility for the policy or strategy area. Some external experts will add value

Number: 16

Timing: 1.5 days. Can be run as a full day plus half day or as three half days

The approach: The aim of this pathway is to develop a new set of scenarios that reflect the changing dynamics of the policy area and use them to test policy options.

The main steps are

1. Brainstorm drivers shaping the policy area in the future
2. Map the drivers to identify predetermined elements and critical uncertainties
3. Focus on the critical uncertainties and identify the main axes of uncertainty
4. Create a scenario matrix and develop four scenarios
5. Use the scenarios to test the policy options for the new policy area
6. Produce a workshop report that documents the process, the scenarios and the outcomes of the policy stress-testing exercise. Record, in particular, any suggested modifications to the policy options. Circulate the report to all participants

Steps 1-3 take
half a day

Step 4 takes half
a day

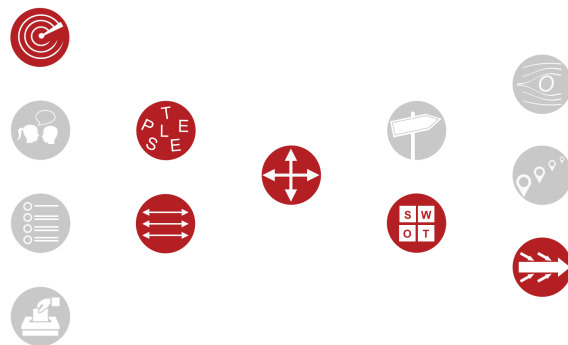
Step 5 takes 2
hours

Output: A set of bespoke scenarios and policy options

Pathway 5

Exploring and communicating the complexity of a situation

Business need:	Developing knowledge of the dynamics of change and understanding alternative ways that policy might develop
Aim:	To focus on change that is directly relevant to a policy or strategy area To understand what is driving change To explore the impact of change on the policy areas To build clarity around which change drivers are relevant for the policy area and which are not



Primary activities:	Desk research, workshops
Tools:	Horizon scanning, Driver mapping, Axes of uncertainty, Scenarios, SWOT, Roadmapping. Depending on the scale of this pathway, 7 Questions can add value to the process.
Participants:	Experts, policy problem holders, those with responsibility for communicating or managing a specific policy area
Number:	As many as required. The pathway can be divided up; different people can participate in different stages. Some may only do horizon scanning, some may only develop scenarios or a roadmap
Timing:	As required. Weeks for horizon scanning and for building the roadmap. The scenarios can be built in one workshop or over a period of time
The approach:	<p>This pathway is highly customizable to need. It can involve as few or as many people as required. It can be used to build detailed understanding of the dynamics of change in a small group of individuals who then communicate it more widely – or it can be used as a large scale learning exercise to build understanding of, and promote discussion about, the dynamics of change</p> <p>If the <i>primary</i> objective is to build detailed understanding of the dynamics of change in a small group of individuals who then communicate it more widely, run the methodology (set out on the next page) with that team.</p> <p>If, on the other hand, the primary objective is to manage a large scale learning exercise with a cohort of policy or strategy partners in order to explore and deepen understanding of the dynamics of change, run the methodology with a large group.</p>

The main steps are

1. Build a first draft roadmap with appropriate participants
2. Invite team members plus suitable externals – academics, industry experts, NGOs for example - to conduct horizon scanning for, say 6-8 weeks
3. Establish a file structure for storing and sharing information
4. Gather the individual scans into one document, randomly
5. Gather the team together for a workshop to
 - Examine the horizon scans
 - Review the Issues Paper
 - Identify emerging issues and themes
 - Identify the implications for the policy areas
6. Produce a workshop report that summarises all strands of work and highlights the implications for scoping or defining the policy areas
7. Gather appropriate participants together to refine and develop and timeline(s) in the roadmap. Use the output from the workshop to do this.

Output:

Shared understanding of the current and emerging complexity of the policy area, together with an emerging and dynamic roadmap that maps out complexity

Pathway 6

Identifying futures research and evidence priorities

Business need: To identify gaps in your knowledge about what will be important in the future

Aim: To identify 'known unknowns' and 'unknown unknowns'
To begin formulating hypotheses about future issues
To shape the future research agenda



Primary activities: Desk research, interviews, workshops

Tools: Horizon scanning, 7 Questions, The Issues Paper, Driver mapping, Roadmapping

Participants: Experts, policy problem holders

Number: No restriction to participation, but best managed by a small research team

Timing: Continuing over a number of weeks

The approach: The pathway is focused on producing a roadmap that draws together emerging trends to highlight the potential future development of the policy area. The roadmap highlights trends and developments to track over time.

The main steps are

1. Invite team members plus suitable externals – academics, industry experts, NGOs for example - to join the intelligence gathering team
2. Start two strands of activity: horizon scanning and 7 Questions interviews. The same people can do both strands – or you can run them discretely
3. Establish a file structure for storing and sharing information
4. Run both strands for a suitable period of time – say 4 - 6 weeks
5. Gather the individual scans into one document, randomly
6. Prepare an Issues Paper
7. Gather the team together for a workshop to
 - Examine the horizon scans
 - Review the Issues Paper
 - Identify emerging issues and themes
 - Map *when* the emerging issues and themes are likely to impact on the policy area and *how* they will impact

8. Use the output from the workshop to build a roadmap of the future development of the policy area [you may already have built a roadmap in which case the workshop will develop it further]. Focus in particular on emerging issues and previously unrecognized gaps in knowledge.

Output:

An evolving roadmap

Pathway 7

Identifying and prioritising future opportunities and threats for action

Business need: Determining short, medium and long term opportunities and threats

Aim: To agree future opportunities and threats
To prioritise areas for action



Primary activities: Desk research, workshops

Primary tools: Horizon scanning, Driver mapping, SWOT,

Participants: Subject experts, policy problem holders

Number: Say 10-12 or more for the horizon scanning. Policy problem holders in a workshop

Timing: Weeks for horizon scanning, short day workshop

The approach: The main steps are

1. Invite team members plus (if appropriate) suitable externals – academics, industry experts, NGOs for example - to conduct horizon scanning
2. Establish a file structure for storing and sharing information
3. Gather the individual scans into one document, randomly
4. Gather the team together for a workshop to
 - Review the horizon scans
 - Identify and map drivers.
 - Do not identify priority drivers; instead, categorise **all** drivers in the top two quadrants as either threats or opportunities for the policy area
 - For all threats, identify
 - Whether the threat will impact on the policy area in the short, medium or long term [define what timescale you mean]
 - The potential outcome and the implication for policy or strategy
 - Whether the threat is in your control or not
 - What action you can take directly or indirectly to mitigate the threat
 - Who you want to work with or through to deliver that action

- For all opportunities, identify
 - Whether the opportunity will impact on the policy area in the short, medium or long term [define what timescale you mean]
 - The potential outcome and the implication for policy or strategy
 - What action you should take directly or indirectly to capture the opportunity or to enhance its additionality
 - Who you want to work with or through to deliver that action
- Produce a workshop report that summarises all conversations, that prioritises opportunities and threats according to urgency and that sets out an action plan to capture opportunities and mitigate threats

Output:

Analysis of future threats and opportunities, with priority areas identified and initial plans for action in place.