

4. Using the toolkit

Introduction

The Toolkit contains 12 tools, organized into four categories and described in detail in the relevant chapter.

There are four tools for **gathering intelligence about the future** ➔ Chapter 6

- Horizon scanning
- 7 Questions
- The Issues Paper
- Delphi

There are two tools for **exploring the dynamics of change** ➔ Chapter 7

- Driver mapping
- Axes of uncertainty

There are three tools for **describing what the future might be like** ➔ Chapter 8

- Scenarios
- Visioning
- SWOT analysis

There are three tools for **developing and testing policy and strategy** ➔ Chapter 9





- Policy stress-testing
- Backcasting
- Roadmapping

The tools are summarised in the tables on pages 9-12. The relationship between the different categories is presented graphically in the icon map on page 13.



The Toolkit also contains 7 pathways – tools combined in particular ways to meet specific business needs. The pathways are set out in chapter 5.

The final two sections of this chapter introduce the guidance notes for facilitators and the navigation flags.




Tools for gathering intelligence about the future

Tool	Use it to	Time required
 <p>Horizon scanning is the process of looking for early warning signs of change in the policy and strategy environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve a wide group of people in futures thinking • Gather a data bank of ideas about trends and events shaping the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run it over a number of weeks as a one off exercise • Run it throughout a project to build strategic intelligence about change in the external environment
 <p>7 Questions is an interview technique for gathering the strategic insights of a range of internal and external stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify conflicting or challenging views of the future • Extract deep information about underlying concerns in a policy area • Stimulate individuals' thinking in preparation for a futures workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 minutes to conduct each interview • 60 minutes to write up each interview
 <p>The Issues Paper presents quotes from the 7 Questions interviews to illustrate the strategic issues and choices around the policy and strategy agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture different perspectives from the 7 Questions interviews about what success in the future will be like and what needs to be done to achieve it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow 20-30 minutes to process each 7 Questions interview per interview
 <p>Delphi is a consultation process used to gather opinion from a wide group of subject experts about the future and to prioritise the issues of strategic importance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather opinion from a group of experts • Refine thinking on the future • Highlight the potential trade offs and choices that policy design will need to address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies. Can take several weeks




Tools for exploring the dynamics of change

Tool overview	Use it to	Time required
 <p>Driver mapping is used to identify the political, economic, societal, technological, legislative and environmental (PESTLE) drivers shaping the future policy environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify drivers shaping the future • Identify which drivers are most important for the future of the policy area or strategic endeavour • Distinguish between certain and uncertain outcomes resulting from the action of drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5-2 hours in a workshop setting • 45-60 minutes for a small team discussion
 <p>Axes of uncertainty are used to define the critical uncertainties for the policy area in the future and to frame the scenarios</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterize the nature of the critical uncertainties facing the policy area in the future • Agree which critical uncertainties are most important • Create a meaningful and focused scenario matrix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 minutes

Tools for describing what the future might be like

Tool overview	Use it to	Time required
 <p>Scenarios are stories that describe alternative ways the external environment might develop in the future. Each scenario explores how different conditions might support or constrain the delivery of policy and strategy objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore different ways that the policy area might develop in the future • Consider how key actors - government, businesses, citizens, competitors - might behave under different conditions • Identify the key requirements of policy under different external conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3 hours or more (the exact time depends on the size of the group and the specific objectives)
 <p>Visioning is used to create a set of common aims and objectives for a project and to describe what the future will be like if they are delivered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups on what a successful outcome looks like • Agree what the current reality is and what needs to be done to deliver success • Set out and prioritise the steps required to achieve the vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3 hours
 <p>SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors that need to be taken account of when developing policy or strategy. Opportunities and Threats are external factors that need to be considered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what needs to be done to capture and build on opportunities • Identify what needs to be done to mitigate threats • Identify internal priorities and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 minutes

Tools for developing and testing policy and strategy

Tool overview	Use it to	Time required
 <p>Policy stress-testing is a method for testing strategic objectives against a set of scenarios to see how well they stand up against a range of external conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how different scenarios might affect strategic objectives • Identify which objectives are robust across the full range of scenarios and which will need to be modified if conditions change in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5-2 hours
 <p>Backcasting is a method for determining the steps that need to be taken to deliver a preferred future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what needs to change between the present and the preferred future • Build a timeline that sets out the key changes • Determine and address the key internal and external factors that might affect the timing or scale of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.5-5 hours
 <p>Roadmapping shows how a range of inputs - research, trends, policy interventions, for example – will combine over time to shape future development of the policy or strategy area of interest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a holistic picture of the different elements in a project and how they combine over time • Deepen understanding of the connections and relationships between different elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60-90 minutes for an initial map • Can be further developed throughout the life of the project if required

The icon map

The relationship between the different tools can be represented schematically by grouping the icons into the four categories

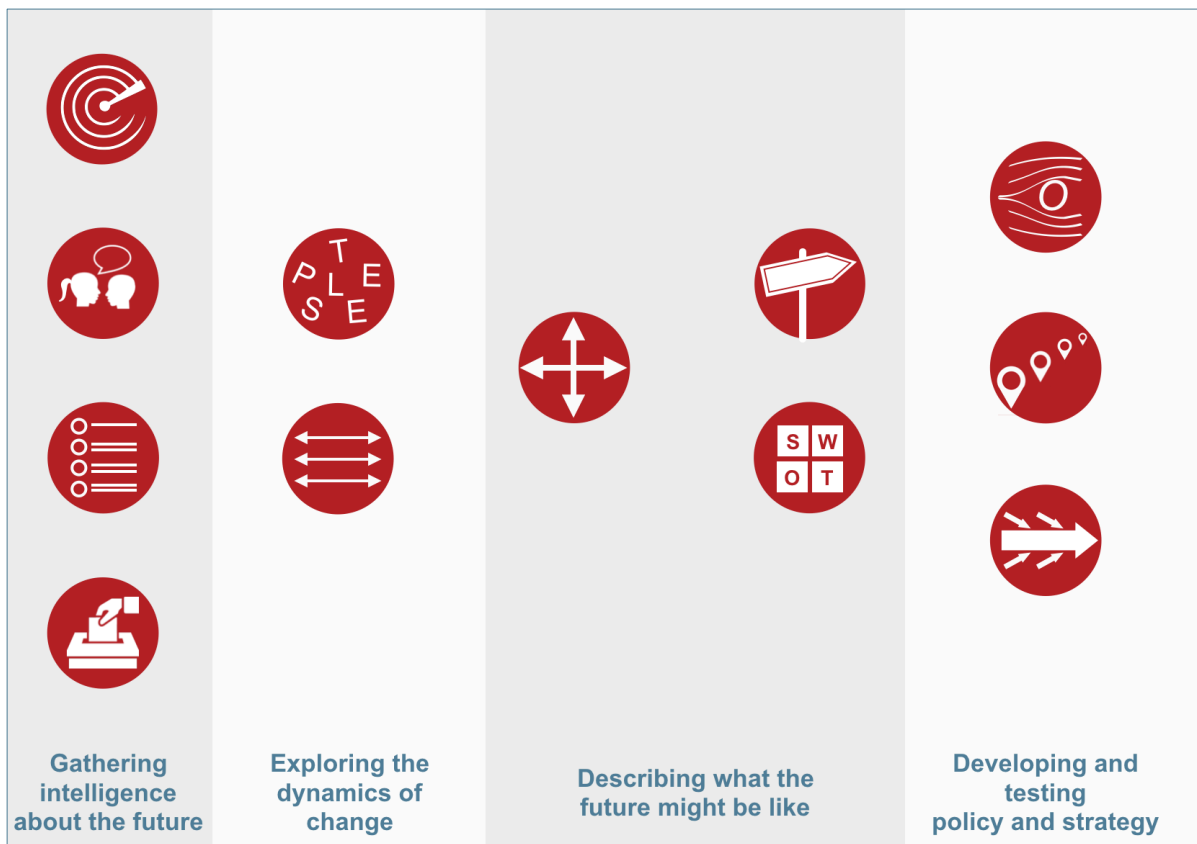


Figure 6: The icon map

As well as providing a useful visual representation of the different techniques, the icon map helps to define the process relationship between them. Icons on the left of the map represent tools that are generally used before ones on the right. While this is not set in stone - roadmapping, for example, can be used throughout the project - it is broadly the case.

The icon map is used in two ways. In Chapter 5, where the Toolkit sets out pathways that show how to combine tools in different ways to meet specific business needs, the icon map provides an immediate visual representation of the tools being used. The map for Pathway 5 (*Exploring and communicating the complexity of a situation*), for example, shows that six tools are used:

- Horizon scanning
- Driver mapping
- Axes of uncertainty
- Scenarios
- SWOT analysis
- Roadmapping



In the rest of the Toolkit, the icon map is used to remind users which techniques relate to each of the four different categories.

Guidance for facilitators

Facilitating futures thinking requires both an understanding of individual techniques and a degree of skill in managing groups through a strategic process. Some of the tools and processes included here are relatively straightforward to manage and others require facilitators to think through the process in advance and identify any adjustments that might need to be made.

The tools include facilitation notes that offer practical advice on various aspects of the process. The notes are found in the yellow boxes placed in the margin at the relevant point in the process.

Facilitation notes

Each tool offers some guidance on the degree of facilitation skill required to deliver it. There are three levels:

- **Novice**, where the tool is straightforward and can be delivered by facilitators with limited experience
- **Advanced Beginner**, where the tool requires some customisation to fit it to the specific needs of the task
- **Experienced**, where both the tool and the facilitation approach may need significant customisation

This is not intended to suggest that someone new to futures can only facilitate a Novice level tool; rather, it suggests something about the degree of preparation and design thought that is required to run the tool successfully. Someone new to futures can certainly run an Experienced level tool but will need to familiarize themselves with the underlying ideas and think through the steps and facilitation process in more detail than for the other two levels.

Overall, process design is taken care of in the way the tools are described – but facilitators should not hesitate to adjust or customize the process as they need to. Particularly once they feel comfortable with techniques and have some experience of using them, facilitators will want to introduce their own design improvements.

There may be occasions when a team wants to bring in an external facilitator. Externals are useful if they have a particular technical skill that is missing from the in-house team or if the team wishes to use someone who is a neutral independent.

Navigation flags

There are three types of navigation flag used in the Toolkit.

Blue boxes are found on the introductory page for each tool and indicate how each tool links to others in the Toolkit.

Links

Blue signposts are found at the end of a number of tools and point towards the case studies (Annex 4) that illustrate how the particular tool is used in practice.

Case studies

Red signposts indicate alternative start points for techniques - if, for example, the facilitator is continuing from a previous technique rather than starting a fresh workshop.

Starting point