



Futures Toolkit

Tools for strategic futures for policy-makers and analysts

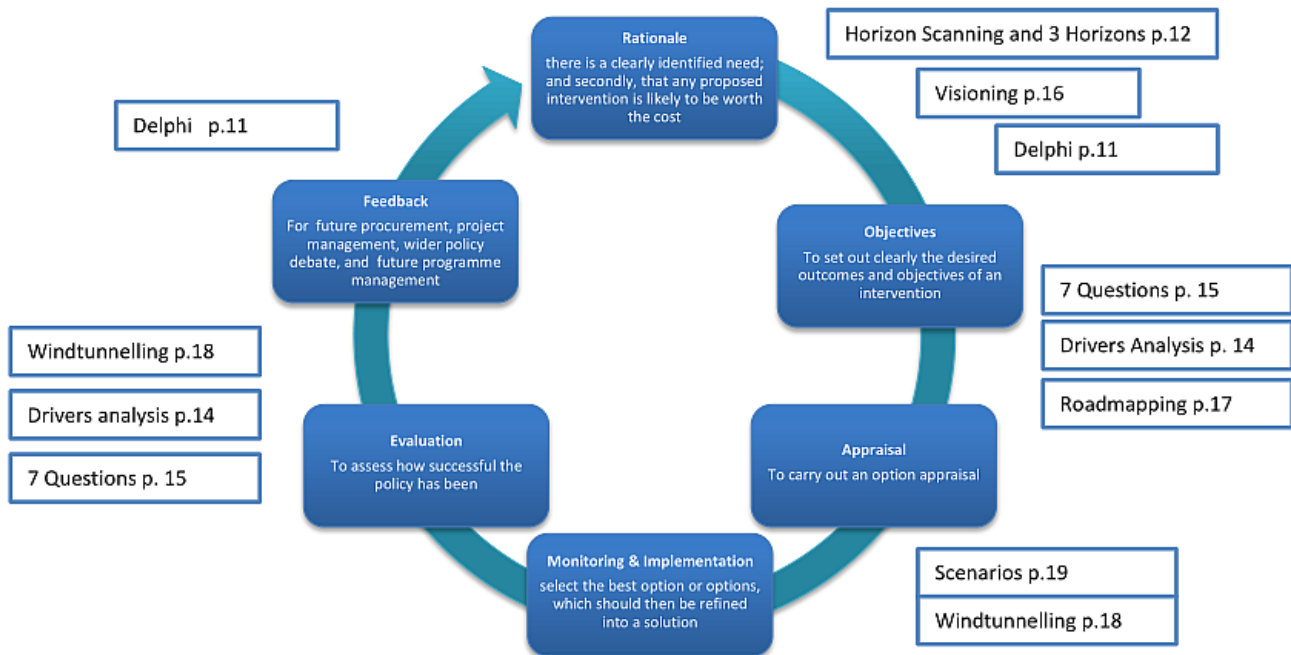
Horizon Scanning Program Team
United Kingdom

The UK [Horizon Scanning Program Team](#) is a joint Cabinet Office and Government Office for Science initiative that reports to the Cabinet Secretary and the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. The team helps government examine evidence about future trends to help policy makers better preparation for future threats and opportunities by building resilient public policies.

The [Futures Toolkit: tools for strategic futures for policy-makers and analysts](#) (Beta version) is a booklet advocating futures analysis by collecting and summarizing futures methods meant to support long-term thinking within the policy process. Though designed for use by government policy officials and analysts, the toolkit contains succinct overviews of many widely tested futures methods used in many organizations.

Futures analysis is complimentary to more common types of analysis like modeling and extrapolation. Its goal is to long-range policy plans more successful.

The tools themselves are linked to the UK's six-step policy development process:



The report also contains advice on using futures tools –

1. Identify a **need**—Find a straightforward reason and craving for success of futures analysis.
2. Secure a committed senior **champion/customer**—Design the product with customers in mind and early on get top level buy-in.
3. Develop a **response**—Bring in a diverse, challenging array of alternative perspectives.
4. Achieve **sign-off** and roll out the program—Cooperatively weave in other parts of the organization to the futures analysis; identify value add opportunities within organizations and widely distribute outcomes.
5. **Evaluate**—Assess what was the measurable impact of the products developed. Honestly share the findings. Listen to feedback from customers and senior leadership.
6. **Embed**—Monitor futures activities and build upon successful products.
7. Be **open, positive and persevere**—Futures work opens up organizational norms to the unconventional; keep bias and organization perspectives in mind and seek heterogeneous responses to help identify major emerging opportunities and threats.

In summary, "[t]o gain traction, futures work needs to have a committed senior customer, fit into the corporate planning cycle, use the language of the organization and ultimately be useful (rather than just 'interesting'). Proving the success of futures in small, iterative steps (proof of concept), will usually generate trust for larger, more ambitious pieces of work later on."

With likely policy "pressure points" identified, a set of nine futures methods (tools) is introduced: Delphi, Horizon Scanning, Horizons, Drivers Analysis, 7 Questions, Visioning, Roadmapping, Windtunnelling and Scenarios. Each tool is briefly defined and explained. After that, answers are provided to a series of questions about the context for using the tool.

- When should I use it in a project?
- Who should attend/take part?
- How do I do it?
- What outcomes should I get from it?

A streamlined "rapid approach" is also provided for each tool. Less robust results may occur as opposed to the results of the full version of the tool.

Furthermore, since much futures work is made up of discussions involving groups of people from assorted organizations, advice on "how to plan an excellent workshop" is provided:

- Have a clear question or need.
- Structure and plan—Link the workshop to wider organizational operations; communicate and follow up; design the workshop with the targeted customer involved in the event's input, when possible.
- Prepare the participants—Prebrief participants at least a week ahead of the workshop explaining aims, objectives and methods.
- Use a confident facilitator.
- Venue and logistics—Location characteristics and the number of participants help determine creativity and engagement.
- Creativity and Disruption—Alternative futures challenges norms so encourage imaginativeness.

