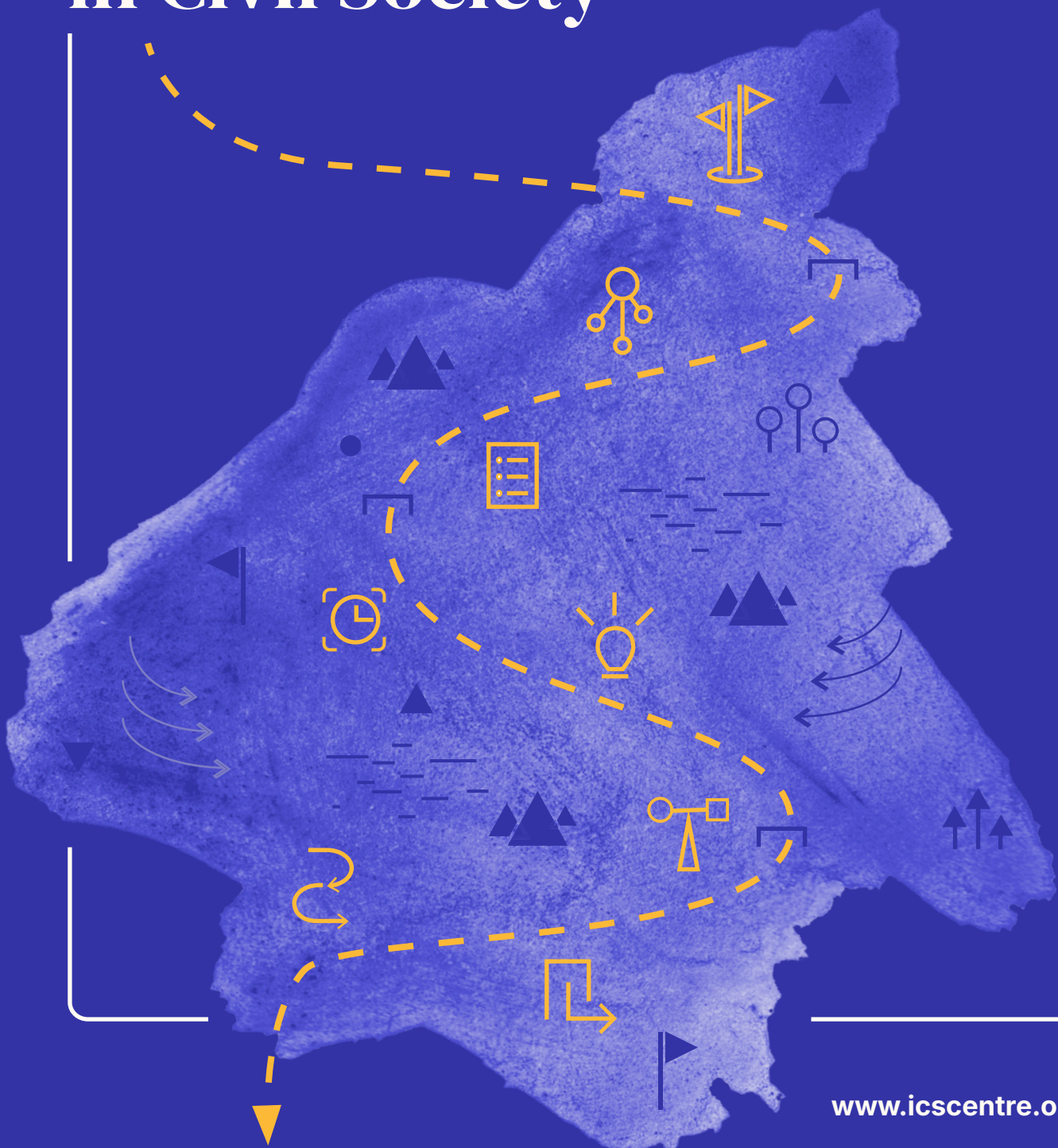


# Anticipating Futures: A Guide to Stress-Testing Organisational Strategies in Civil Society



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# Glossary

## **ADAPTABILITY**

The ability to adjust your strategy and ways of working as your context shifts.

## **BACKCASTING**

An exercise for mapping the milestones, changes and enabling conditions required to move from the present day to a desired end state, working backwards from success to identify what must be in place at each stage.

## **CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

The collaborative and people centred effort needed to build shared ownership of change, integrating leadership, communication, facilitation and empathy to help an organisation navigate strategic adaptation.<sup>1</sup>

## **DRIVER**

A variable or a combination of variables that influences or shapes a process.

## **ENABLER**

A condition that must be in place to unlock progress toward long-term goals. In this guide, enablers appear as medium-term (“primary”) or short-term (“secondary”) milestones in the backcasting pathway.

## **FORESIGHT**

Not a prediction, but a process of looking towards the future using insight and imagination to consider a range of possible futures.

## **MILESTONE**

A critical point along a pathway. Milestones are sequenced over time to guide progress toward an organisation’s long-term goals.

## **MONITORING**

An ongoing process of tracking progress against milestones and observing shifts in the operating environment over time.

## **MORPHING**

A strategy transformation exercise that reshapes an organisation’s strategy to be resilient and effective across different possible futures. Morphing involves keeping, dropping, adapting or innovating strategic components so that the strategy remains relevant and impactful, whatever the future holds.

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<sup>1</sup>

Built from Harvard Business Review Editors (2026): [Our Favorite Management Tips on Organizational Change](#), Harvard Business Review

## **PREFERRED FUTURE**

The future scenario a group intentionally chooses to work toward and invest in shaping.

## **SCENARIOS**

Stories that describe possible futures by exploring the interplay of different factors and forces shaping them. By presenting different possible futures, scenarios offer a valuable way to grapple with uncertainty.

## **SCENARIO ARTEFACTS**

Creative products (such as diary entries, news articles, situation reports or letters) that create a tangible representation of a scenario and support the reader to emotionally inhabit a possible future.<sup>2</sup>

## **SIGNAL OF CHANGE**

An observable event or piece of evidence that indicates future shifts in trends or drivers. Signals of change are used to track changes in your context.

## **STRATEGIC COMPONENTS**

The high-level elements that express the core intent of an organisation's strategy, representing major choices about what the organisation seeks to achieve rather than detailed plans or activities.

## **STRATEGIC CONDITIONS**

The key long-term shifts or requirements necessary for a strategy to succeed.

## **STRATEGIC RESILIENCE**

An organisation's capacity to remain effective across different possible futures by anticipating change, proactively adapting and strengthening long-term alignment and impact.

## **STRATEGY**

An overarching mission and the layered objectives that support it, forming a path toward a potential future state.

## **TREND**

A persistent pattern of change that is observable over time.

## **WIND-TUNNELLING**

A stress-testing exercise that evaluates strategic components across multiple scenarios to determine how successful a strategy could be in different futures.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the work of Institute from the Future (ND): [Artifacts from the Future – Tangible, Concrete, Experimental](#), IFTH

# Introduction

Figuring out how to maintain effectiveness in a volatile and changeable environment is a pertinent goal for civil society organisations around the world. In today's world, civil society actors must navigate geopolitical volatility, digital disruption, the intensifying impacts of climate change, and shifting models of aid and governance. This guide is designed to **help organisations test the resilience of their strategy against different possible futures and adapt accordingly to ensure that their long-term visions remain relevant**. The goal of using this guide is to challenge and update your existing strategy, rather than design a new strategy from scratch. By stress-testing organisational strategies against future scenarios and ensuring that they are agile enough to remain effective in different contexts, organisations can strengthen their capacity to anticipate, rather than react to, systemic shifts. In volatile times, organisations must invest in adaptability to ensure their long-term impact. This guide enables you to:

- **Adapt your organisational strategy to ensure that it continues to deliver impact despite the uncertainty of the future;**
- **Align your teams around a shared long-term vision and co-create a pathway forward; and**
- **Strengthen your organisational resilience and adaptability by integrating futures practice into your leadership culture.**

While this guide outlines a series of sequential exercises to support a strategic review, technical exercises alone are not enough to future-proof an organisation. **The success of this initiative depends on people** and their leadership, collaboration, communication and ability to build **shared ownership of change**. It requires soft skills, such as facilitation, negotiation and empathy, and a change management approach that fosters a collective understanding of current and potential future challenges and how the organisation can effectively and proactively respond to them. In times of uncertainty, it is essential for organisational leaders to be conscious of the personal and emotional dynamics of change processes.

# Buy-in of key stakeholders

Any strategic process that lacks the **buy-in of key stakeholders** is destined to fail. Building buy-in early helps ensure that the insights you generate from the guide are translated into sustained organisational transformation. As such, a prerequisite to undertaking a strategic review is to map the key stakeholders of your organisation. The identity of these stakeholders will vary depending on the structure and mandate of the organisation. At a minimum, the group will include partners, staff and board members. When possible, integrating the perspectives of communities as additional key stakeholders adds tremendous value. Once stakeholders have been identified, you must consider the best way to engage them throughout the strategic process.

**Here are some tips to secure buy-in from key stakeholders:**

## 1 Clearly communicate the objectives and proposed process before you begin

Key stakeholders should understand why you are investing time and resources into this process, as well as what is expected of them and when they will be asked to give input. If you are open to feedback, you can ask for suggestions from stakeholders to make the process more relevant for your organisation and give them the opportunity to shape it. For example, stakeholders could provide recommendations for who participates at each stage, which scenarios are used or how you select your strategic approach. These suggestions can be provided through a survey or an all-staff webinar.

- a. Align with board members:** A common shortcoming of many strategy exercises is a failure to adequately consult the board of the organisation about the process and expected outputs, leading to a final product that has not been validated by key stakeholders. To avoid this, share the proposed process for board sign-off and clearly define the expected outputs before you begin. Then, provide regular updates to the board throughout the process.
- b. Position this process as a journey:** As you present this process to stakeholders, ensure to frame it as a journey. The collective reflection during the strategic process is as important as the end point. Each of the exercises in this guide builds upon the one that precedes it.

## 2 Use participants' time appropriately

Regular work does not stop for strategic processes, which means that the people participating in the process will be doing so in addition to their regular workload. That means you should be conscious of what you are asking for and endeavour to adjust the workshop and engagement schedule as needed. Many participants find foresight exercises engaging and stimulating and are excited to participate in them, but the

commitment can feel daunting if it does not allow for existing obligations. In addition, you should endeavour to respect participants' time by finishing all sessions on time. If you are concerned about running over, block more time than you think you need to avoid frustrating participants.

### **3 Report back**

As you progress through the guide, you will find notes on follow-up at the conclusion of each exercise. These notes suggest a structured way for you to circle back with workshop participants – and other stakeholders, at times – to ensure that you are maintaining the buy-in of your organisation at each step of the process. Follow-up helps keep participants motivated because they can see how their time and contributions are feeding into the overall objectives of the process.

### **4 Consult widely**

While workshop space is limited for feasibility, it is a good idea to integrate external perspectives as part of your strategic adaptation process. As such, it is recommended to take time between workshops to share the outputs, gather feedback from stakeholders who did not participate in developing them and validate the final version before moving on. These consultations are an important part of maintaining buy-in from your organisation, partners and community by inviting them to share their thoughts and perspectives. They can also strengthen the final output by ensuring it reflects a diversity of opinions.

### **5 Provide a calm space for reflection**

Working on a strategic review is an opportunity to reflect on the work and direction of the organisation. You can increase participants' buy-in in this process by acknowledging that change can feel daunting and unsettling, especially in times of uncertainty, and by allowing them time and space to reflect on the discussions and their implications for the process.

# What is a strategy review?

This guide will help you collaboratively assess your organisation’s strategy and consider if and how you may need to adapt it to be effective in the future. Before moving forward, it is important to note that the tools in this guide are intended to support **a strategic review process**. As a starting point, it is useful to clarify what we mean by strategy.

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“A strategy defines an overall objective or mission and its underpinning hierarchy of objectives; it is a journey towards a possible future.”<sup>3</sup>

“Strategy” is distinct from “planning” which is defined as “a process to translate a strategy into an effective plan to implement, identifying the activities and the outputs necessary to achieve a strategy.”<sup>4</sup>

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Focusing on strategy, the process outlined in this guide will support organisations in assessing the long-term relevance of their identity, ensuring their impact and defining their future value-add. This process consists of a series of workshops, each building upon the last, that comprise **a journey towards strategic resilience**. Each workshop is designed to be **participative**, providing a structured way to engage with uncertainty and refine your organisational strategy. You will need time between each workshop to summarise the outputs of each discussion and validate material for the next step, so plan to undertake this journey over the course of a few weeks or months, depending on stakeholders’ availability. This guide is intended to **revise and adapt existing strategies**, rather than develop a new strategy from scratch. It is structured on the assumption that your organisation already has a strategy you want to assess.

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<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, Eilidh and Maietta, Michel (2021): Strategic Planning in the Humanitarian Sector: A Manual to Foresight and Futures-Focused Thinking (1st ed.), Routledge

<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, Eilidh and Maietta, Michel (2021): Strategic Planning in the Humanitarian Sector: A Manual to Foresight and Futures-Focused Thinking (1st ed.), Routledge

# How can foresight help?

When managing future uncertainty, few tools are as valuable as those developed in the different schools of foresight. Foresight is a structured process which allows users to explore how the dynamics around them may shift and change and to consider not only the best way to navigate that uncertainty but how to influence it and shape the future they want to see. “Foresight is not a prediction. It is a process of looking forward in time and using collective intelligence and imagination to consider a range of possible futures.”<sup>5</sup>

There are many benefits to using foresight as part of your strategy project, including the ability to:

## → Consider multiple futures

Integrating future scenarios into your thinking enables you to better understand the complexity and uncertainties you face. Scenarios are an engaging and digestible way to frame uncertainty that encourages you to build organisational adaptability.

## → Improve strategic alignment

You can use collaborative foresight processes to build a collective understanding of the future, the challenges and opportunities you face and a shared language to describe your role within the future. These processes can build greater strategic alignment between different stakeholders (e.g., board members, leadership, staff, partners and communities).

## → Strengthen long-term resilience

Strategic adaptation is a continuous process. By applying foresight to track emerging signals and shifting trends, you can anticipate disruptions earlier, proactively adjust your strategy and build a more resilient organisation over time.

Foresight is critical to adaptability, because it encourages you to engage with uncertainty and consider multiple futures rather than betting on just one. This means you can build into your strategy the ability to shift direction when needed.

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<sup>5</sup> Kennedy, Eilidh and Maietta, Michel (2021): Strategic Planning in the Humanitarian Sector: A Manual to Foresight and Futures-Focused Thinking (1st ed.), Routledge, p. 207

# Prerequisites

## Scenarios

**Scenarios** are the starting point of this guide. You will need a set of scenarios that cover the topic, geography and time horizon you are working on. You can use scenarios that have already been created or draft your own.

**Finding scenarios** that have already been developed and match your specifications can be challenging. However, scenarios can be adapted for your use if they are broader in geographic scope and longer in time horizon than your strategic outlook. For example, if you are an organisation in Kenya looking to adapt your 2030 strategy, you could use a set of regional East Africa scenarios with a 2040 outlook. One way to adapt scenarios is to consider how the global/regional/national trends and uncertainties they explore would be represented in your locality and then complement that analysis with any specific dynamics you feel are overlooked. Similarly, when using a set of scenarios with a longer time horizon than your own, you can consider what stage of their evolution they would be at for your strategic window. For example, if you are using a set of scenarios with a 2040 time horizon to refine your 2030 strategy, you can review the dynamics of those scenarios and consider what may have realistically materialised by 2030, eradicating some of the longer-term elements of the scenario to fit your purpose.

**Here are some recommended sources of scenarios that have already been developed:**

↳ **International Civil Society Centre:**

[The Futures of Localisation: Scenarios for Civil Society in 2046](#)

↳ **InterAgency Research and Analysis Network (IARAN):**

[Future of Aid 2040: Scenario Report](#)

↳ **Impact Works:**

[Four Possible Futures for the World, Civil Society and INGOs](#)

↳ **World Economic Forum:**

[The Global Risks Report 2026](#)

↳ **Office of the Director of National Intelligence:**

[Global Trends 2040: Scenarios for 2040](#)

This list is not exhaustive and is intended as a starting point. You may also work with a different set of scenarios.

If you can't find scenarios that suit your purpose, you can build your own. For assistance in crafting a set of scenarios, you can use a variety of published materials, such as the [Toolkit for Tomorrow: Anticipating Civil Society Futures](#) (developed by the International Civil Society Centre), [The Foresight Handbook](#) (by the Solferino Academy) or [The Stages in the Foresight Process](#) (by Futuribles). Many approaches to building scenarios are outlined in these and other publications, and you can select the method that most aligns with your ambition. To start, we recommend using a simple **2×2 matrix** (instructions for which are included in each of the suggested guides listed above), as this is an excellent approach to scenario building for teams at all levels of foresight experience. The 2×2 approach helps teams to visualise uncertainties, identify strategic levers, and craft different potential futures.

## What makes a good set of scenarios?

A strong set of scenarios should meet the following criteria:

### → **Relevant to your ecosystem**

The scenarios should explore the drivers, geographies and time horizon that matter for your organisation's strategy.

### → **Realistic (plausible)**

Each scenario should be coherent and grounded in reality, built from identifiable and robust drivers of change and supported by professional research.

### → **Mutually exclusive**

The scenarios should describe genuinely different futures, not variations of the same trajectory.

### → **Challenging**

A good set of scenarios has the potential to make participants a bit uncomfortable.

We strongly recommend that at least one of the scenarios in your set describes a disruptive future (sometimes called a "wild card" or "high-impact, low-probability" scenario).

Participants tend to underestimate the magnitude of possible disruption, populating their scenarios with incremental change. Yet, the events that have most threatened organisational strategies in recent years (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, the abrupt dismantling of major donor institutions such as USAID and rapid geopolitical realignments) were precisely this disruptive type of scenario. Testing your strategy against a deliberately uncomfortable scenario is one of the most powerful uses of this guide.

A common and legitimate concern is: "What if the future that materialises is not in any of our scenarios?" This is almost always the case. Scenarios are not predictions, and no set of scenarios can capture every possible future. The value of foresight is not that it lets you

predict the unpredictable; rather, it is that organisations that engage in foresight processes are systematically better prepared, even for events they did not see coming. By rehearsing a range of futures, your teams develop the cognitive flexibility, shared language and adaptive habits needed to respond when reality diverges from any single scenario.

Throughout this guide, we refer to “preferred” and “worst-case” scenarios. These are useful shorthand, but they carry assumptions that must be made explicit before you begin:

### → “Preferred” for whom?

A scenario that appears preferable from an organisational perspective may not be preferable for the communities it serves or for partners, particularly where Global North actors hold greater decision-making power than those in the Global South. These differences in perspective and influence should be explicitly considered when making your assessment.

### → “Worst” for whom?

Similarly, what one set of stakeholders considers a worst-case future may reflect ongoing lived realities for others. These differences are often shaped by structural inequalities and varying political, environmental, economic and security contexts.

This guide is not only about reacting to the future: it is about taking responsibility for the future you choose to work towards. The collective definition of what is a desirable future is, in itself, a strategic act.

## Strategy components

In addition to the scenarios, you will need your current organisational strategy, broken down into its core components. This work can be done as a group or individual exercise, but the current strategy should be shared with workshop participants prior to starting the strategic process.

Strategies can take many forms and may include elements such as a theory of change, strategic pillars or objectives and log frames, any of which can be used to identify your strategy’s core components. No matter how you break down your strategy, the goal is to identify 5–15 core components that are broad enough to capture the organisation’s main direction and specific enough to meaningfully represent the organisation’s work across different futures. These components should capture the high-level intent and outcomes of the strategy, focusing on what the organisation seeks to achieve, rather than detailed activities or operational plans. What matters most is that participants share a common understanding of this breakdown and agree on what will be tested.

## Strategic components are high-level elements that, taken together, express what your strategy is intended to achieve.

How you derive these components depends on the architecture of your strategy. Common starting points include:

### → Theory of change

Focus on the long-term goals and intermediate outcomes, not the activities or assumptions. For example, if your theory of change looks like the one for [Oxfam International: Global Gender Justice Strategy 2024–2029](#), the simplest approach is to use the three "Strategic Goals" and the three sub-goals described as "Our Collective Strategies", giving nine strategic components in total (see Figure 1). Resist the temptation to add every "Key Action" or thematic priority as a separate component (see Figure 1).

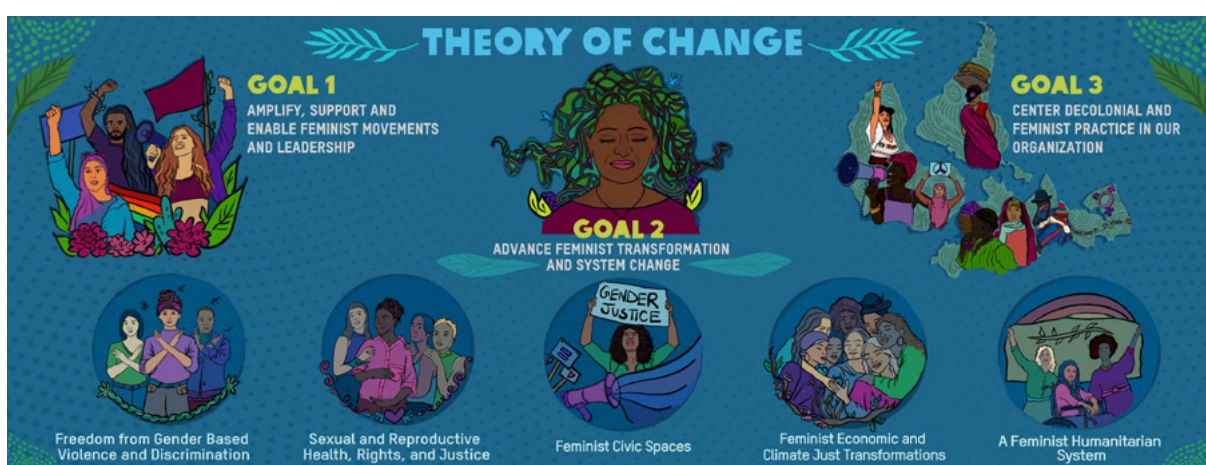


Figure 1

### → Strategic pillars, objectives or priority areas

Each pillar or objective typically yields one or two components. Capture the intent of each pillar rather than just its label, because strategy maps are designed for communication and visual conventions can hide the underlying logic. All strategies can look and be structured differently, which may make it challenging to identify strategic objectives. For example, if your strategy "map" looks like the one for [Islamic Relief Worldwide: Islamic Relief Global Strategy Framework 2023–2033](#), you would treat the three "Programme Outcomes" (Themes 1, 2 and 3) as one component each, and the two transversal Themes 4 and 5 at the level of their three sub-elements, giving a total of nine components, including three programmatic and six organisational components (see Figure 2).

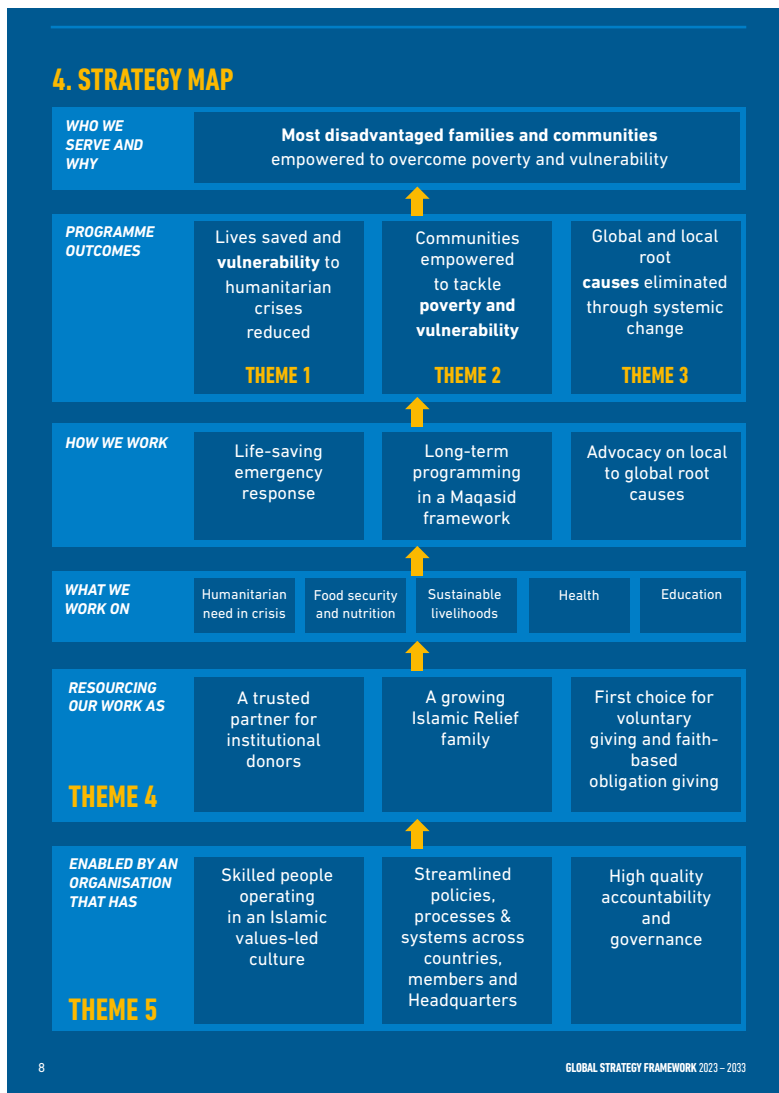


Figure 2

### → Mission, vision and strategic commitments:

For organisational strategies that are articulated as a set of commitments rather than a structured plan, each commitment can be treated as a component.



#### PRACTICAL TIP:

Aim for a range of 5–15 components: Fewer than 5 and you risk losing nuance; more than 15 and an exercise becomes unmanageable in practice.

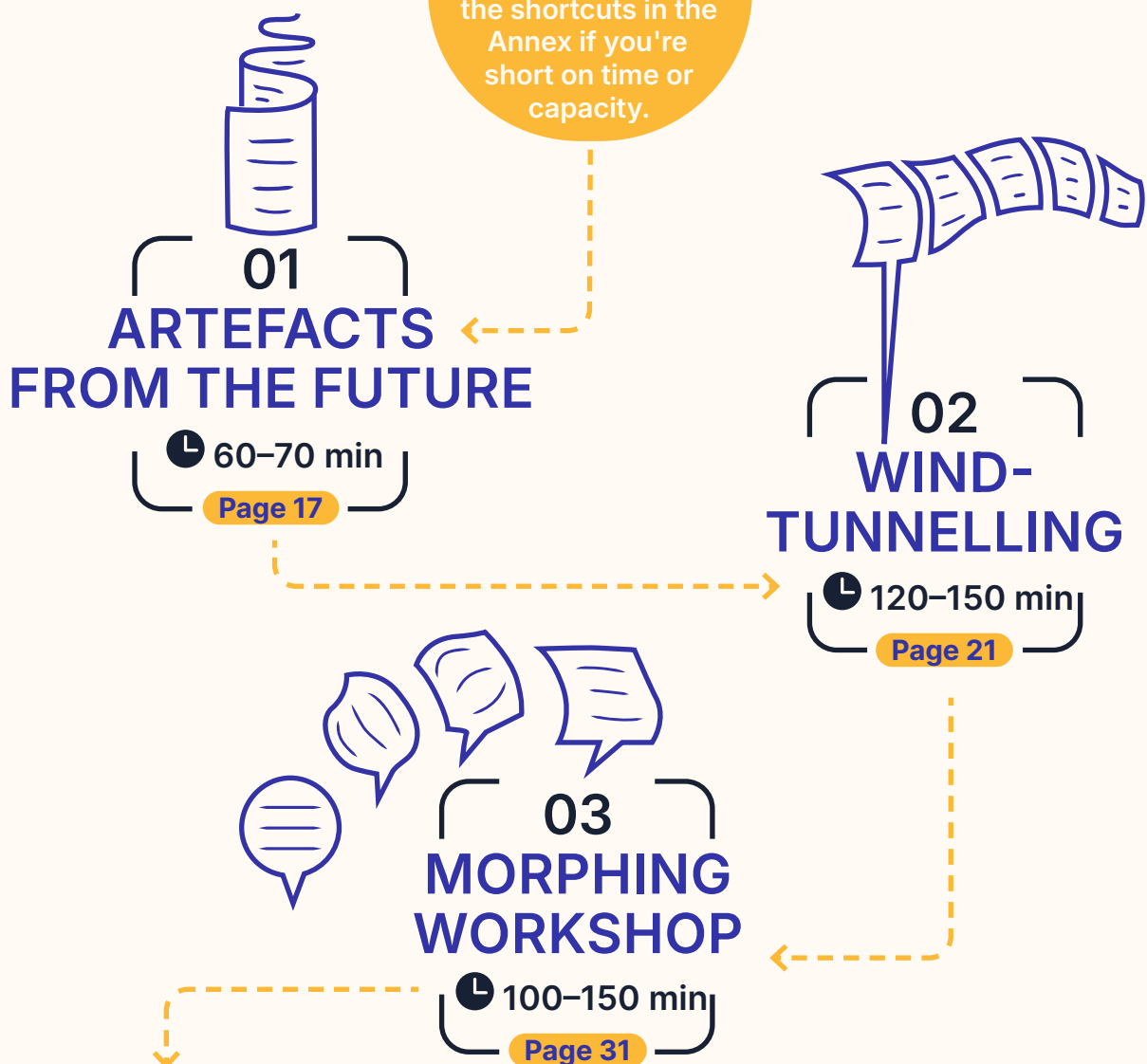
# How to use this guide

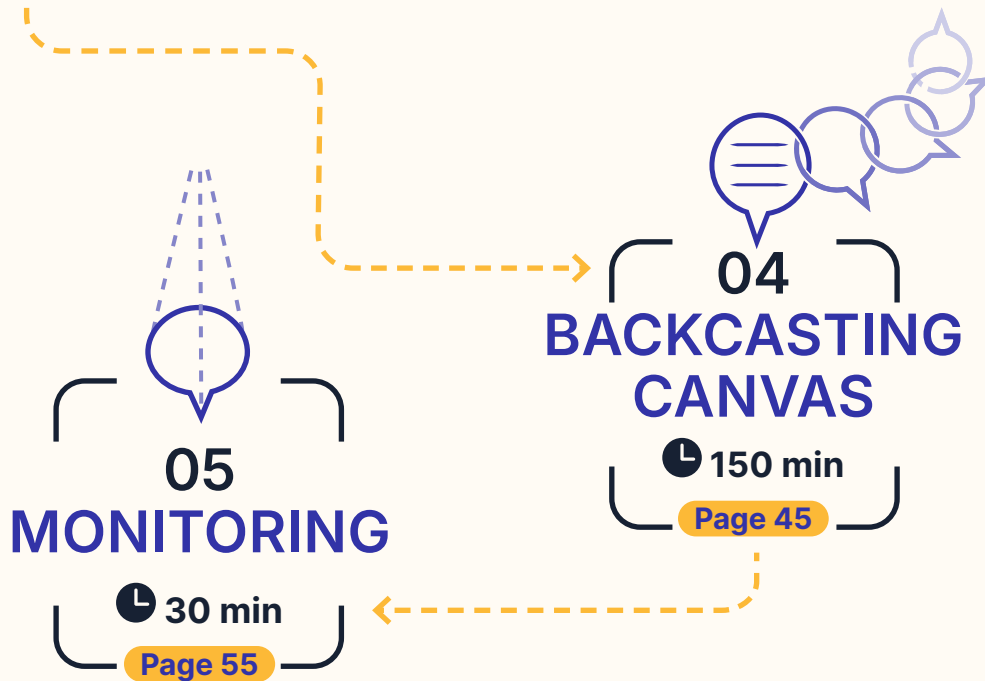
## Starting point

- A set of scenarios that provide different images of the future for your targeted time horizon.
- An organisational strategy, broken down into strategic components.

You are embarking on a journey to increase the resilience and effectiveness of your organisational strategy. This journey is structured as a series of workshops, each supported by an exercise to help you build a robust and future-fit strategy.

Follow the full journey through all five exercises, or use the shortcuts in the Annex if you're short on time or capacity.





This guide is designed as a journey in which each exercise builds on the one before it. As a facilitator, you can use this guide to lead your organisation through a collaborative process of reflection and co-creation, helping participants envision the future they see for your organisation, define its impact and identify pathways to get there. Ideally, you would follow the exercises in the guide in the order they are presented, as each step builds the foundations for the next. Collectively, these exercises comprise a comprehensive and grounded process for stress-testing your strategy against different possible futures. This process will help you move beyond reactive planning and develop strategies that are resilient, adaptable and aligned with your long-term goals.

At the same time, we recognise that many organisations face significant time and capacity constraints and may need to adapt or condense this process. Suggestions for how to do so effectively and efficiently while still retaining the core benefits of stress-testing your strategy can be found in the Annex (page 62).

**We also encourage you to treat this guide as a flexible resource: Use it as inspiration for learning and reflection, experiment with it, and make it your own in ways that best support your organisation's strategic thinking!**

## EXERCISE 1:

# Artefacts from the future (Shifting the mindset)

## What are artefacts?

Artefacts are creative outputs used in foresight processes to make scenarios feel more concrete and tangible. This exercise invites participants to create a product (e.g., a newspaper article, diary entry or situation report) from within a scenario, encouraging them to more deeply explore the dynamics, assumptions and lived realities of that possible future.

## Purpose

This activity enables participants to *feel* the logic and atmosphere of different futures as they uncover assumptions and stimulate creative thinking, helping to shift the group's mindset. By crafting short "artefacts from the future," team members internalise what that future might look and feel like and start to see their place within it.

For many people, jumping into a strategic discussion without establishing a long-term perspective can be very challenging. Without taking time to readjust their mindsets, participants tend to focus on today's urgent priorities rather than the long-term strategic outlook. Encouraging participants to immerse themselves in the future can help them to detach from their daily to-do lists and prompt long-term thinking. Creating artefacts is a useful opening activity to gain participants' buy-in for the strategic process. Moreover, this activity produces outputs that can be used to underpin thinking for the rest of the strategic discussions.

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**People strategise better when they emotionally inhabit the future they are planning for.**

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## Objectives

- Understand the systemic logic and emotional tone of each scenario.
- Ground participants in future scenarios to help them extend their perspectives beyond the day-to-day and adopt a long-term mindset for the strategy review process.



## Prerequisites

- Four scenarios (If you have more scenarios, you can still run this exercise in the same format but be aware that it may take more time.)



## Resources



### For in-person workshop

- Large room with space for multiple tables (one for each group)
- Printed set of four scenarios for each participant
- Markers, sticky notes, paper
- Flipchart or wall space for notes
- Timer or visible clock
- Optional: props or sound for storytelling energy



### For virtual workshop

- One online workspace per group (e.g., Miro, Mural, Jamboard frame or slide deck section)
- Set of four scenarios in a PDF to circulate to all participants
- Screen-sharing and breakout-room function (one per group) so participants can discuss and complete their matrices in parallel after each scenario briefing
- Designated timekeeper and tech host
- Optional: props or sound for storytelling energy



## Timing & Format

**Total time:** ~60–70 min

**Groups:** One group per scenario, ideal number of participants: 4–6 per group

**Ideal participants:** Cross-functional team (e.g., leadership, operations, advocacy)

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
15'–20'	Intro & briefing	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Set the stage</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefly introduce the exercise and each scenario (2–3 min per scenario).</li> <li>Emphasise: There is no prediction – only exploration.</li> </ol> <p>→ <b>Assign groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Divide participants into scenario groups, ensure each group is assigned a scenario and understands the exercise.</li> </ul>	<p>→ Shared understanding of exercise, presentation of scenarios</p>
25'–30'	Break-outs	Group work	<p>→ <b>Create the artefact</b></p> <p><b>A.</b> Ask: “What would it look and feel like if this scenario became reality?”</p> <p><b>B.</b> Ask each group to produce one creative output:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News headline or short article</li> <li>Letter from a future staff member or partner</li> <li>Situation report (sit-rep) of a crisis in the scenario</li> <li>Diary entry from a person impacted by the dynamics of the scenario</li> <li>Social media post / audio script / field report</li> </ul> <p><b>C.</b> Encourage emotional and visual storytelling</p>	<p>→ Creative artefact (news piece, letter, etc.), with each group working on one scenario</p>
20'	Gallery walk / sharing insights	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Share &amp; discuss</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display or read the artefacts</li> <li>Debrief using questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What surprised or challenged you?</li> <li>Which assumptions from today break down?</li> <li>What are the main challenges in this future?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>→ Collective insights</p>

## Outputs

At the end of this exercise, you will have developed:

- **1 creative artefact per scenario** which can be used to immerse participants and decision makers in your different futures
- **1 shared reflection board** summarising assumptions and insights to ground participants in the scenarios you are working with

These outputs can be used as part of the Wind-tunnelling exercise (Exercise 2), and they can also be used to reinforce the uptake of scenarios among decision makers for any futures-oriented process. After the artefacts have been developed, you can share the artefacts produced in this activity at any stage of the strategy review process.



### FACILITATOR TIPS

- ① Keep storytelling grounded: focus on real people and real work.
- ② Remind groups to speak as if they were living in that world.
- ③ Encourage diversity of tone – some optimistic, some challenging.

## EXERCISE 2:

# Wind-tunnelling (Stress-testing the strategy)

## What is wind-tunnelling?

Wind-tunnelling is a foresight method used to support strategy development and refinement that mirrors a process in engineering in which prototypes are tested in different controlled environments. In a strategic context, wind-tunnelling helps organisations assess the robustness of their strategy by testing it against a range of possible future scenarios.

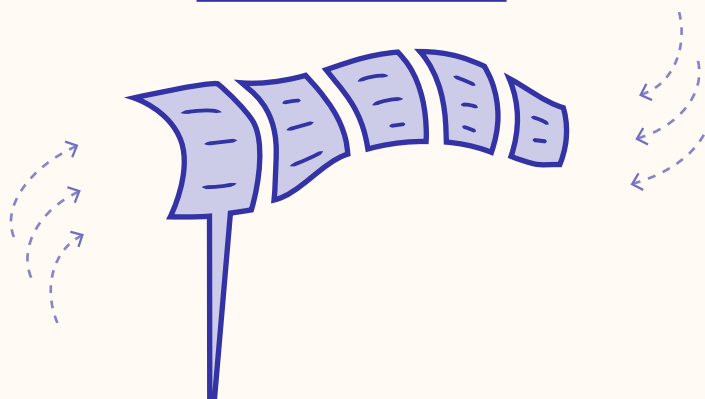
## Purpose

This exercise uses the wind-tunnelling methodology to evaluate how each element of your organisation's current strategy performs across multiple future scenarios. The structured process helps participants identify which objectives are robust, which are context-dependent and which may become obsolete, providing a foundation for subsequent adaptation.

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**This tells you how robust your strategy is  
in different contexts.**

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## Objectives

- Test each core component of the organisation's strategy across multiple future scenarios.
- Identify which components are robust, which require adaptation and which may be obsolete.
- Build a shared visual understanding of strategic strengths, gaps and priorities to inform Exercise 3: Morphing Workshop.



## Prerequisites

- Strategy core components
- Four scenarios (If you have more scenarios, you can still run this exercise in the same format but be aware that it will take more time.)



## Resources



### For in-person workshop

- Large room with space for multiple tables (one for each group)
- Wind-tunnelling matrix – one large sheet per group: rows contain 10–15 core strategy components; columns each represent one scenario (see template in Figure 1)
- Printed set of four scenarios for each participant
- Three different-coloured/shaped stickers or markers for scoring
- Flipchart or wall space for notes and summary lists
- Timer or visible clock to manage scenario transitions



### For virtual workshop

- One online workspace per group (e.g., Miro, Mural, Jamboard frame or slide deck section) pre-formatted with the Wind-tunnelling matrix: rows contain 10–15 core strategy components; columns each represent one scenario (see template in Figure 1)
- Set of four scenarios in a pdf to circulate to all participants
- Three different-coloured/shaped stickers or markers for scoring (or the voting system on the chosen platform)
- Screen-sharing and breakout-room function (one per group) so participants can discuss and complete their matrices in parallel after each scenario briefing
- Designated timekeeper and tech host to manage rotations



## ↳ Common Resources ←

- Strategy divided into a maximum of 5–15 core components
- Participant list and group assignment: Plan for 3–7 people per group, ensuring diversity of functions and perspectives
- Debrief template for capturing “Keep-Drop-Adapt” insights (see template in Figure 2)

## Timing & Format

**Total time:** ≈120–150 min

**Recommended group size:** 3–7 participants per group: ideally an odd number to support consensus and avoid deadlocks during group scoring

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
15'–20'	Briefing & setup	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Prepare the workspace (in-person or virtual)</b></p> <p> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Set up one dedicated table per group in a shared room.</p> <p> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Set up breakout rooms on whichever platform you are using.</p> <p>→ <b>Prepare materials:</b></p> <p>Each group should be provided with their own Wind-tunnelling matrix (see template in Figure 1) and a copy of the scenarios, either printed or embedded in the virtual whiteboard, as well as stickers or markers.</p> <p>→ <b>Frame the exercise (in plenary)</b></p> <p>Remind participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're not predicting which scenario will happen – we're testing whether our strategy is effective in each future. The facilitator will introduce each scenario and keep time throughout the exercise.</li> <li>• We will take each scenario one by one. In that future, you will evaluate all the components of the strategy. Each group will do the same exercise in parallel, and we will then combine the results.</li> <li>• Within your groups, you should discuss and come to consensus on how to score each strategy component. If consensus isn't possible, then score by majority. If your group is made up of an even number of participants and consensus is not reached, then mark it ● or (/) to signify this uncertainty.</li> </ul>	<p>→ Common understanding of the exercise and its purpose</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
			<p><b>The simplified scoring system you will be using is as follows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● or (+) = still relevant and effective in this future</li> <li>● or (/) = moderately relevant or partially effective in this future, relevant but not effective or effective but not relevant</li> <li>● or (-) = no longer relevant or effective in this future</li> </ul> <p>The term <b>“relevant”</b> refers to how much this component still matters for the achievement of the organisational mission and adds value for communities in this scenario.</p> <p>The term <b>“effective”</b> refers to how well this component can achieve its intended results within the given scenario.</p> <p>ⓘ <b>Each group will need to assign a timekeeper and a note-taker</b> – you can swap for each scenario!</p>	
20'–25'	Scenario 1 – first dive	Group work	<p>→ <b>Delve into Scenario 1 (in groups)</b></p> <p>The facilitator briefly immerses everyone in Scenario 1, using a calm and deliberate tone to outline the dynamics of that future, with short pauses to let key images or ideas sink in.</p> <p>After the presentation of the scenario, the facilitator divides participants into their groups (in-person or virtually) to begin the group discussions.</p> <p>Groups review the scenario, discuss each core strategy component and assign each component a score in their own matrix using consensus or majority voting (filling their Scenario 1 column). The facilitator should circulate among the groups, encouraging them to keep discussion per component short (≈2–3 min) and move steadily through the list and answering any questions where needed.</p>	→ Groups complete scoring for first scenario

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
<b>45'–55'</b> <b>total</b> (estimated at ~15–20 min for scenario outline & deep dive into each scenario)	Dive into each of the following scenarios	Group work	<p>→ <b>Repeat the exercise with the remaining three scenarios (in groups)</b></p> <p>Repeating the process detailed in Step 3, the facilitator conducts the same exercise for the other three scenarios, guiding participants through the sequence. After each short scenario briefing, groups work in parallel to score that scenario's column on the same matrix, maintaining the consensus rule when possible.</p>	<p>→ Scoring for remaining scenarios added to each group's matrix</p>
<b>20'</b>	Summarise insights	Group work	<p>→ <b>Summarise within groups</b></p> <p>Each group reviews its completed matrix and prepares a brief summary of their outputs.</p> <p><b>Keep:</b> components that are mostly ● or (+) across all four scenarios</p> <p><b>Drop:</b> components that are mostly ● or (-) across all four scenarios and may need replacement or phasing out</p> <p><b>Adapt:</b> components that are mostly ● or (/) or heavily mixed between ● or (+) and ● or (-) across all four scenarios</p> <p>Each group should capture 2–3 headline insights on the robustness of the strategy, with one-line rationales to present back to the plenary group (see template in Figure 2).</p>	<p>→ "Keep–Drop–Adapt" summary within each group's matrix</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
20'–30'	Debrief & wrap-up	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Debrief &amp; bridge to Exercise 3</b></p> <p>Prompt groups to reflect:</p> <p><b>Where are consistencies across the matrices?</b></p> <p><b>Where are key differences?</b></p> <p>Close with 3–5 agreed-upon takeaways and confirm that these learnings will directly inform Exercise 3 – Morphing workshop in deciding which strategy components to keep as anchors and which to redesign.</p>	<p>→ Reflections, lessons and transition to Exercise 3 (Morphing Workshop)</p>

## Outputs

At the end of this exercise, you will have:

- **A completed Wind-tunnelling matrix for each group**, containing each group's scored assessment (●, ●, ●) or (+, /, -) of every core component across the four scenarios
- **A “Keep-Adapt-Drop” summary sheet for each group**, consolidating their results and key rationales for each component
- **A list of key insights and emerging priorities** to feed directly into Exercise 3 – Morphing workshop, in which strategy adaptation and redesign will be developed

The wind-tunnelling outputs are an essential input for the Morphing exercise (Exercise 3). In addition, they can be used as a standalone analysis which graphically represents a collective sense-check on the direction of the organisation. These outputs can support reflective discussions on the progress and direction of your organisation.

## Post-workshop follow-up

After the conclusion of this workshop, you will need to develop a consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix. This is a single matrix which combines all the input from the different group exercises for all scenarios. The thinking for this output will have started in the final debriefing step of the exercise, but the combined matrix should be formally summarised and written down prior to beginning the Morphing workshop. If desired, this summary can be shared with your broader organisation,

partners and communities you serve to gather their reflections on your thinking before finalisation. The final product should be shared with the participants of both the Wind-tunnelling exercise (Exercise 2) and the Morphing workshop (Exercise 3) in advance of the next workshop.



## FACILITATOR TIPS

- ① Evaluating strategy components against multiple futures can feel uncomfortable for some participants, especially if it challenges existing priorities or areas of work. The facilitator should set a constructive tone focused on learning and transformation, emphasising that identifying low-fit elements is a strategic strength that allows for clearer focus and greater impact.
- ② Avoid debating which scenario is “most likely.” Treat all futures as equally plausible to ensure a fair test.
- ③ Use a deliberate tone when introducing each scenario. Brief pauses help participants absorb the dynamics of each scenario and imagine the future before discussion begins.
- ④ Aim to evoke reflection rather than emotion to maintain a calm atmosphere.
- ⑤ Watch the timing. Limit discussion per component to keep the full rotation on schedule. Be aware that the first scenario will always take more time than subsequent ones as participants become familiar with the exercise.
- ⑥ Capture insights visually. Photograph or export each matrix at the end to preserve raw results for Exercise 3.

**NB:** *The colour-coding scheme can be the most visually stimulating for participants; however, this approach can make the exercise inaccessible for those for whom colour is difficult to distinguish. Therefore, we recommend using symbols or a combination of symbols and colours to ensure that all participants can equally partake in the exercise.*



# Templates

FIGURE 1: WIND-TUNNELLING MATRIX

	CORE COMPONENT	SCENARIO A	SCENARIO B	SCENARIO C	SCENARIO D
01					
02					
03					
04					
05					
06					
07					
08					
09					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					



# Templates

FIGURE 2: KEEP-DROP-ADAPT SHEET

COMPONENTS	NOTES (especially for Adapt)
→ KEEP	
→ DROP	
→ ADAPT	

**2-3 headline insights on the robustness of the strategy with one-line rationales**

## EXERCISE 3:

# Morphing

(Transforming the strategy)

## What is morphing?

Morphing is a strategic adaptation exercise used in foresight processes to reshape a strategy so that it remains resilient and effective across different possible futures. Building on the outputs of the Wind-tunnelling exercise, participants review the core components of their strategy, retain those that remain relevant, drop those that are no longer effective or necessary, reformulate those that can still add value under changing conditions, and introduce new relevant components that are revealed through the scenarios.

Strategy adaptation can happen at four levels:

- 1. Keeping:** Maintaining a strategy component as it is
- 2. Dropping:** Removing a component that is no longer necessary or effective
- 3. Adapting:** Adjusting an existing component to meet future conditions, such that either the substance of the strategy component or the pathway to achieve it changes
- 4. Innovating:** Adding a new component that is deemed essential for future relevance and impact

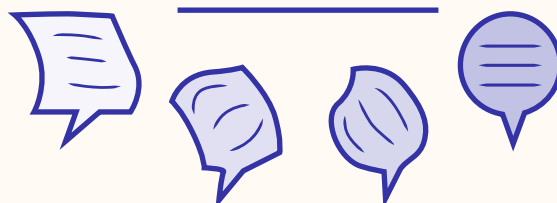
## Purpose

This exercise helps organisations adapt their current strategy to remain relevant, resilient, and responsive across a range of possible futures.

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**This is where strategy truly changes.**

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# Objectives

→ Define the strategy approach the organisation wishes to pursue:

**OPTION 1 – Adapting to possible futures** – Build resilience across multiple futures and focus on increasing organisational adaptiveness.

**OPTION 2 – Building a preferred future** – Select a preferred scenario and invest in working toward that future.

**OPTION 3 – Preparing for the worst-case scenario** – Focus on the worst-case scenario and prepare to manage risks and effectively respond in that future.

→ Craft a coherent and future-oriented draft of the updated organisational strategy based on the selected approach and input from the Wind-tunnelling exercise.

→ Identify the changes that must be integrated into the strategy before the Backcasting workshop (Exercise 4).

## Prerequisites

- Four scenarios
- Consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix

## Resources



### For in-person workshop

- Large room with space for multiple tables (one for each group)
- Printed version of the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix
- Printed set of four scenarios for each participant
- Sticky notes in two colours: one for adaptations and one for new components/innovations
- Markers, large sheets or boards for clustering outputs
- Timer or visible clock



### For virtual workshop

- One pre-formatted online board per group (e.g., Miro, Mural, Jamboard frame), including: the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix and scenarios, as well as space for notes on “Adapt” and “Innovate” components
- Set of four scenarios in a PDF to circulate to all participants
- Platform features enabled: breakout rooms, board access and voting or dot- placement tools
- Designated timekeeper

### ↳ Common Resources ◀

- Strategy divided into a maximum of 5–15 core components
- Participant list and group assignment: Plan for 3–7 people per group, ensuring diversity of functions and perspectives
- Debrief template for capturing “Keep-Drop-Adapt” insights (see template in Figure 2)







## Timing & Format




**Total time:** ≈130–150 min (Option 1), ≈100–110 min (Options 2 and 3)

**Recommended group size:** 3–7 participants: ideally an odd number to support consensus and avoid deadlocks during voting





## CHOOSING A STRATEGY APPROACH





DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
<p><b>20'–30'</b></p> 	Choose the approach	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Prepare the workspace (in-person or virtual)</b></p> <p> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Prepare three clearly marked physical spaces in the room, one for each possible approach:</p> <p><b>OPTION 1</b> Adapting to possible futures</p> <p><b>OPTION 2</b> Building a preferred future</p> <p><b>OPTION 3</b> Preparing for the worst-case scenario</p> <p>Print and display the scenarios on a wall or large board visible to all participants (A1/A2 format, ideally).</p> <p> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Prepare a triangle or three-choice panel in the same format as the physical one. Enable the voting function or place the instruction: “Please vote by dragging your dot or emoji to the stance which reflects your initial preference.” Add a section to the online board to display the scenarios.</p> <p>→ <b>Frame the exercise</b> (in plenary)</p> <p> <b>Remind participants:</b> “We’re not predicting which scenario will happen – we’re transforming our strategy to fit for the future.”</p> <p>The facilitator will introduce each scenario again and describe the different approaches that can be taken to adapt the strategy (i.e., adapting to different contexts, building a preferred future, preparing for the worst-case scenario). As part of this introduction, the facilitator should outline the potential pros and cons of each approach.</p>	<p>→ A collectively endorsed stance guiding the morphing work</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
			<p><b>OPTION 1 Adapting to possible futures</b></p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Reduces vulnerability to irrelevance by preparing to be effective in multiple futures; Maximises preparedness to shocks; Clarifies critical vulnerabilities.</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Potential to dilute organisational ambition by necessitating higher levels of adaptability; Can limit the resources that can be dedicated to transformation.</p> <p><b>OPTION 2 Building a preferred future</b></p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Gives the organisation a strong focus and clear direction; Sets the stage and structure for proactive innovation; Aligns the organisation around a clear vision/mission.</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Higher risk of irrelevance and ineffectiveness if the preferred future is not achieved; Depending on how different the preferred future is from your current reality, this approach may require bold organisational change.</p> <p><b>OPTION 3 Preparing for the worst-case scenario</b></p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Ensures a comprehensive risk management approach in extreme environments; Focuses on program continuation; Prioritises strategic components that are important for effectiveness in turbulent environments.</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Leaves limited space for investment in transformation; Opportunity cost of not preparing for potential opportunities for change.</p> <p><b>! The facilitator emphasises:</b></p> <p>“Selecting an approach to how we adapt our strategy will define how we undertake the next stage of this process and strongly influence the final output – so think carefully!”</p>	

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
			<p>→ <b>Approach selection (in plenary)</b></p> <p> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Participants are invited to indicate which option they would like to choose, voting for one of the three approaches. If Option 2 receives the majority in the initial vote, conduct a second poll by show of hands to identify the preferred scenario. If Option 3 wins the initial vote, conduct a second poll by a show of hands to identify the worst-case scenario.</p> <p> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Participants vote by using the voting function or dragging their dot or placing emoji to a dedicated section of the virtual board that displays the three approaches. If Option 2 receives the majority in the initial vote, conduct a second vote to identify the preferred scenario. If Option 3 wins the initial vote, conduct a second vote to identify the worst-case scenario.</p> <p>If there is a strong divide among the group, ask one participant who voted for each option to make a brief statement persuading others to change their vote. If no one changes their vote, the approach with the majority vote is selected.</p>	




## Next steps for **OPTION 1**




DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
<p><b>15'-20'</b></p> 			<p>→ <b>Frame the exercise</b> (in plenary)</p> <p> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Hand out the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix and Keep-Drop-Adapt summary and display the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix and the scenarios on a screen or large board visible to all participants (A1/A2 format, ideally).</p> <p> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Move to the area of the virtual board pre-loaded with the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix and scenarios.</p> <p> <b>Remind participants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We’re not predicting which scenario will happen – we’re preparing to be effective in each future.”</li> <li>• Explain how the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix was created from the parallel group matrices of Exercise 2.</li> </ul> <p><b>Guide the participants to quickly observe:</b></p> <p><b>Robust components</b> → mostly <span style="color: green;">●</span> or (+)</p> <p><b>Obsolete components</b> → mostly <span style="color: red;">●</span> or (-)</p> <p><b>Fragile/mixed components</b> → <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> or (/) or inconsistent scoring</p> <p><b>The facilitator highlights that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Keep</b> (robust components) is already clear.</li> <li>• <b>Drop</b> (obsolete components) is already clear.</li> <li>• <b>Adapt &amp; Innovate</b> (fragile /mixed components) is where strategic attention must now be placed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Then, the facilitator sets the expectation:</b> “Our work today will focus on reshaping the strategy components that appear future-fragile or scenario-dependent. These are the “Adapt &amp; Innovate” elements. The “Keep” and “Drop” components are already made explicit by the matrix.”</p>	

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
<p><b>60'</b></p> 	<p>Adapt &amp; Innovate (Morphing) – Option 1</p>	<p>Group work</p>	<p>→ <b>Outline what is required for each group (in plenary)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Have one group per table in a shared room.</li> <li> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Use the breakout rooms on whichever platform you are using.</li> <li> <b>Remind participants:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Strengthen what is fragile, create what all futures require, and let the worst- case scenario be the final stress-test. If a component fails there, it doesn’t belong in the strategy.”</li> <li>• Each group will do the same exercise in parallel, and you will then combine the results.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The facilitator explains that each group will work on strengthening the fragile strategy components and creating the new components that are required for effectiveness in each of the four futures. For each proposed change, also note the level of adaptation it represents (adaptation, drop, or innovation), so the rationale is visible when groups present back.</p> <p>→ <b>Delve into adapting and innovating (in groups)</b></p> <p>The facilitator briefly presents a summary of the scenarios, using a calm and deliberate tone to outline the dynamics of that future, with short pauses to let key images or ideas sink in.</p> <p>After the presentation of the scenarios, the facilitator divides participants into their groups (in-person or virtually) to begin the group discussions.</p> <p>Groups should review the scenarios; discuss the fragile core components; then start to adapt them and create new ones. The facilitator should remind groups:</p>	<p>→ Groups transform the strategy</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
↓			<p>ⓘ "Take each scenario one by one and think about the relevant adaptations/new innovations, creating a long list of proposals. This should be a single list, but note which scenario each new innovation was prepared for."</p> <p>The facilitator should circulate among the groups, encouraging them to keep discussion per component short (≈3–4 minutes) and move steadily through the list, answering any questions where needed.</p>	
35'–40' ↓	Summarise, analyse and consolidate insights (Option 1)	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Summarise with groups</b></p> <p>Each group presents their work in plenary and explains why they have made the suggested changes they are proposing.</p> <p>As the groups present, the facilitator clusters similar points on a shared board (either physical or virtual), focusing on the areas of overlap. After the presentations are done, the participants review the board and highlight any points or language that strongly resonate. Once participants have reviewed the group work, they should begin to prioritise the proposed new innovations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All adaptations/new innovations proposed for the worst-case scenario should be clustered and selected. This step ensures that the organisation can function in all environments.</li> <li>2. All other proposed adaptations/new innovations should be grouped and then ranked according to those that deliver the most value across the highest number of futures. Each participant will be given 5 small stickers (physical or virtual) and will be asked to distribute their votes among the new innovations they believe are the most relevant and effective (see criteria above) across all four scenarios. The innovations with the most votes are the priority areas for the amended strategy.</li> </ol>	
↓				

## Next steps for **OPTION 2** and **OPTION 3**

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
15'	Consolidated matrix presentation (Options 2 and 3)	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Explain the exercise (in plenary)</b></p> <p>Focus on the Wind-tunnelling outputs for the selected scenario (preferred or worst-case).</p> <p> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Hand out the text of the selected scenario (either preferred or worst-case) and the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix. Display the consolidated matrix on a screen.</p> <p> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Move to the area of the board with the selected scenario (either preferred or worst-case) and the consolidated Wind-tunnelling matrix.</p> <p> <b>Remind participants:</b></p> <p><b>OPTION 2</b> “We are not predicting this scenario will happen – we’re working to build this future.”</p> <p><b>OPTION 3</b> “We are not engaging in wishful thinking but focusing on how to effectively manage the risks presented.”</p> <p><b>Explanation of Exercise 2 output:</b></p> <p>Present the Wind-tunnelling output, focusing only on the selected scenario, and guide the participants to quickly observe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Robust components</b> → mostly <span style="color: green;">●</span> or (+)</li> <li>• <b>Obsolete components</b> → mostly <span style="color: red;">●</span> or (-)</li> <li>• <b>Fragile /mixed components</b> → <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> or (/) or inconsistent scoring</li> </ul> <p><b>The facilitator highlights that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Keep</b> (robust components) is already clear.</li> <li>• <b>Drop</b> (obsolete components) is already clear.</li> <li>• <b>Adapt &amp; Innovate</b> (fragile /mixed components) is where strategic attention must now be placed.</li> </ul>	<p>→ Shared understanding of robust, context-dependent, and obsolete components</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
			<p><b>Then the facilitator sets the expectation:</b>            “Our work today will focus on reshaping the components that appear future-fragile. These are the “Adapt &amp; Innovate” elements. The “Keep” and “Drop” components are already made explicit by the matrix.”</p>	
<p>35'</p>	<p>Adapt &amp; Innovate (Morphing) –            OPTIONS 2 and 3</p>	<p>Group work</p>	<p>→ <b>Outline what is required from each group (in plenary)</b></p> <p> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Have one group per table in a shared room.</p> <p> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Use the breakout rooms on whichever platform you are using.</p> <p> <b>Remind participants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We adapt what the future weakens, and we innovate what the future requires.”</li> <li>• Each group will do the same exercise in parallel, and you will then combine the results.</li> <li>• Each group will use sticky notes to propose new language for adapted components and new strategic components required to be successful in each future.</li> </ul> <p>→ <b>Delve into the chosen scenario (in groups)</b></p> <p>The facilitator briefly immerses everyone in the selected scenario, using a calm and deliberate tone to outline the dynamics of that future, with short pauses to let key images or ideas sink in.</p> <p>After the presentation of the scenario, the facilitator divides participants into their groups (in-person or virtually) to begin the group discussions.</p>	<p>→ Groups transform the strategy</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
			Groups can review the scenario; discuss the fragile core components; then start to adapt them and create new ones where required. The facilitator should circulate among the groups, encouraging them to keep discussion per component short (≈3–4 minutes) and move steadily through the list, answering any questions where needed.	
30'	Summarise, analyse and consolidate insights – Options 2 and 3	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Summarise in groups</b></p> <p>As the groups present, the facilitator clusters similar points on a shared board (either physical or virtual), focusing on the areas of overlap.</p> <p>After the presentations are done, the participants review the board and highlight any points or language that resonate strongly.</p>	→ Draft notes for a transformed strategy

## Outputs

At the end of this exercise, you will have:

- **A defined strategy approach and a coherent strategic skeleton** that includes the agreed-upon components that are robust (keep) and wording to define the adaptations and new innovations agreed to during the workshop.
- **A clear understanding** of which aspects of your existing strategy are fit for purpose is a key outcome of the strategy adaptation process. This updated framing is essential for the next step (Backcasting – Exercise 4).

## Post-workshop follow-up

Before you move forward, you need to draft a combined version of the amended strategy. After the Morphing workshop, an individual or group of participants should take the agreed-upon strategy skeleton and propose final wording for the agreed-upon adaptations and new innovations, using the suggested phrasing from the workshop. They should integrate the components that will be kept and remove those that will be dropped before validating the new draft strategy with the relevant

stakeholders. This draft strategy should then be shared with participants and broader stakeholders for feedback and validation prior to being finalised and shared with participants before the next workshop.



## FACILITATOR TIPS

- ① Support groups to limit discussions to no more than 3–4 minutes per component.
- ② Ground all discussions in the selected approach (adaptability across contexts, building your preferred future, or focusing on the worst-case scenario). For groups who select Option 2, keep the "Preferable for whom?" question visibly in the room. If partner or community voices were not present at the scenarios stage of the strategy process, explicitly flag the assumptions about their preferences the group is making and mark them for validation in the post-workshop follow-up.
- ③ Focus on the relevant scenario(s) to guide the discussion: "In this scenario, how does this component contribute to effective action?"
- ④ Insist that "Drop" decisions are not re-opened. The decision to drop these components was made in the Wind-tunnelling workshop (Exercise 2). A separate discussion should address how to phase out these key components.
- ⑤ Remind participants that the goal is to amend an existing strategy, not create a new one. Preserving existing components and making small changes to those components required to adapt is the goal.
- ⑥ Remind participants that they will be implementing the strategy! They should not create new components that cannot be realised.



# Templates

**FIGURE 3: MORPHING CHANGE-LOG TEMPLATE**

The Morphing change log captures the decision made during the workshop for each strategic component and the level of adaptation for each. Depending on the number of components the group is keeping, dropping, adapting, and innovating, the final version may contain a different number of components than the original. This template should therefore be used flexibly and expanded or reduced as needed.

NO	COMPONENT	LEVEL OF ADAPTATION	NEW / REVISED WORDING	RATIONALE	OPEN QUESTIONS / DEPENDENCIES
	→ paste wording from current strategy	→ Keeping Adapting Dropping Innovating	→ final phrasing	→ why this change, with reference to wind-tunnelling	→ unresolved items
01					
02					
03					
04					
05					

## EXERCISE 4: Backcasting (The domino pathway)

### What is backcasting?

Backcasting is a foresight method used to help organisations map the milestones, changes and enabling conditions needed to move from the present towards a desired future state (e.g., the successful implementation of their strategy). This method requires participants to think backwards from an imagined end state of success to define the pathway needed to accomplish it. Where forecasting asks participants to project themselves into the future, backcasting asks: “If we are to be successful by the end of our strategic period, what do we need to achieve along the way?” Backcasting enables us to translate long-term goals into realistic and time-sequenced actions.

### Purpose

This exercise supports you in translating the adapted strategy developed through Exercise 3 into a clear and sequenced pathway for implementation, with defined milestones and enabling conditions scheduled at critical points along the way to help ensure progress towards long-term goals.

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**This is where you start to move  
from strategy to action.**

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# Balancing realism and ambition

At this stage, the group should already have broad agreement on the strategic direction the organisation will follow. This workshop focuses on translating that ambition into action. During the backcasting exercise, a new kind of tension may emerge in your group. As a facilitator, you will need to strike a balance between ambition and realism. Some participants may be hesitant to agree to milestones that they fear will place a burden on them and their teams, whereas some participants may be eager to overcommit beyond what will be feasible in the agreed-upon time horizon. Achieving a balance between these two extremes is essential for success.

This workshop is ideally conducted with the senior leadership of the organisation, so it is important that all participants have their voices heard and the process remains genuinely collective. For this reason, the workshop is primarily structured as plenary sessions.



## Objectives

- Define what success looks like for the organisation at the end of the time horizon across the scenario(s) you are working with.
- Work backwards to identify the elements that must be in place at critical points along the way (e.g., 10 years from now, 5 years, 2 years, and today).
- Identify the internal and external enablers, partnerships, governance shifts, and capacities required to achieve success.
- Highlight 3–5 initial steps that the organisation should begin immediately to kick off the journey.
- Create a complete Backcasting canvas to support organisational planning and monitoring (Exercise 5).



## Prerequisite

- A validated draft of the amended strategy from Exercise 3



## Resources



### For in-person workshop

- Large printed Backcasting canvas (A1/A2), structured by time horizons
- Printed morphed strategy components (output from Exercise 3)
- Sticky notes (3 colours) and markers
- Large wall space with areas for milestones
- Chosen scenario (Options 2 and 3) or all scenarios (Option 1) printed to circulate to all participants



### For virtual workshop

- One online workspace per group (e.g., Miro, Mural, Jamboard frame or slide deck section) pre-formatted with Backcasting canvas template, uploaded morphed strategy components (output from Exercise 3), and areas for milestones
- Chosen scenario (Options 2 and 3) or all scenarios (Option 1) in a PDF to circulate to all participants

### ↳ Common Resources ←

- Strategy divided into a maximum of 5–15 core components





## Timing & Format

**Total time:** ≈150 min

**Recommended group size:** This workshop is ideal for a maximum of 15 people, prioritising senior leadership.

**NB:** To illustrate this exercise, we have used an example of a time horizon of 2040 for the scenarios and strategy. You can adapt the time horizon to be relevant to your own project, but we recommend defining 3 distinct time periods spaced out from your present day to the end of the time horizon. For example: present day (2026), present day + 2 years (2028), present day + 4 years (2030), present day + 10 years (2036), time horizon (2040).

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
20'	Introduction	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Prepare the workspace (in-person or virtual)</b></p> <p> <b>For in-person workshops:</b> Prepare to project or display the Backcasting canvas (see template in Figure 4).</p> <p> <b>For virtual sessions:</b> Set up a virtual space with the Backcasting canvas (see template in Figure 4). For in-person and virtual sessions, feel free to decorate the canvas using the metaphor of a pathway or journey and related images – be creative!</p> <p><b>Prepare materials:</b> Each group should be provided with the final combined and validated strategy (output from Exercise 3) and a copy of the chosen scenario(s) according to the strategy approach selected (adaptability for possible futures, preferred future or contingency planning for worst- case scenario). These materials may either be printed or embedded in the virtual whiteboard.</p> <p>→ <b>Frame the exercise (in plenary)</b></p> <p>The facilitator reminds participants of the dynamics of the scenario(s) that they are working on. They also refresh participants' memories of the adapted/innovative strategy that was developed as the Exercise 3 output.</p> <p>The facilitator explains that Exercise 4 builds a strategic domino line towards your long-term success. Each milestone you identify in this exercise is a domino that, once achieved, will create the condition for the next phase of work.</p>	<p>→ Shared understanding of robust, context-dependent, and obsolete components</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
↓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The strategic conditions (10-year milestones)</b> are the largest dominoes at the end of the line, the major shifts we must achieve to reach success. The strategic conditions carry the greatest impact and cannot fail if the sequence leading up to them is strong and well-aligned.</li> <li>• <b>The primary enablers (5-year milestones)</b> are faster to achieve than the strategic conditions. By achieving these milestones, you will lay the foundations for success for your strategic conditions. Primary enablers are achievable in the medium term and, once achieved, they build momentum to make the strategic conditions realistic.</li> <li>• <b>The secondary enablers (2-year milestones)</b> are the first and smallest dominoes, the initial conditions that define the direction of the organisation's work and set everything in motion.</li> </ul> <p>When these dominoes are aligned, knocking down the first ones will enable the whole pathway to unfold.</p> <p>Give participants 5 minutes to read and review the material.</p>	
40' ↓	End state (2040)	Group work	<p>→ <b>Define success</b></p> <p><b>A.</b> Break participants into 3–4 different groups and ask each group to craft a brief statement that defines what success looks like at the end of the chosen time horizon. Your time horizon is dictated by the scenarios you are working with and the strategic period you are reviewing. These success statements should be based on the work revising the organisational strategic components that was completed in Exercise 3 (10 min).</p>	<p>→ Clear 2040 success statements</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
			<p><b>B.</b> Ask each group to present their success statement and discuss areas of similarity (15 min).</p> <p><b>C.</b> Prepare a consolidated group success statement. The wording of this does not need to be final, but everyone should be clear on what is included in it (15 min).</p>	
20'	Backcast to 2035 (2040 – 5 years = 2035)	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Backcast to 2035</b></p> <p>Work together to identify the major <b>strategic conditions</b> using the Backcasting canvas. For each strategy component, identify the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Capacities</b> (internal changes, prototypes at take-off phase)</li> <li>• <b>Partnerships</b> (alliances, networks, joint venture, etc.) and</li> <li>• <b>Structural shifts</b> (external changes) that must be in place by 2035 to make the end-state success in 2040 realistic.</li> </ul> <p>Use different colours of sticky notes consistent with each strategic condition (3 colours).</p>	→ 2035 Milestone cluster – Strategic conditions (capacities, partnerships, structural shifts)
20'	Backcast to 2030 (2040 – 10 years = 2030)	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Backcast to 2030</b></p> <p>Using the Backcasting canvas, groups work together to define the <b>primary enablers</b> that must be established by 2030 to enable the 2035 milestones. These are not activities, but they are causally linked to the 2035 strategic conditions.</p> <p>Use different colours of sticky notes consistent with each strategic condition and related primary enablers (3 colours).</p>	→ 2030 Milestone cluster – Primary enablers

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
20'	Backcast to 2028 (2040 – 12 years = 2028)	Plenary	<p>→ <b>Backcast to 2028</b></p> <p>Using the Backcasting canvas, work together to define the <b>secondary enablers</b> that must be established by 2028 to enable the 2030 milestones (primary enablers). These are not activities; they are underlying conditions that make possible the achievement of the primary enablers in the next time window.</p> <p>Use different colours of sticky notes consistent with each strategic condition and related primary and secondary enablers (3 colours).</p>	<p>→ 2028 Milestone cluster – Secondary enablers</p>
30'	Today → Immediate Priorities		<p>→ <b>Finalise priorities and pathway</b></p> <p>Summarise the top 2–3 milestones per time horizon using the clusters developed collaboratively. Identify 3–5 priority actions that must start now to unlock the pathway.</p> <p>Finally, the full group validates the pathway's coherence, feasibility and alignment with the organisation's strategic stance.</p>	<p>→ 3–5 near-term priorities Final Backcasting canvas (2040 → today)</p>

## Outputs

At the end of this exercise, you will have:

- **A backwards sequence of defined milestones** at 3 strategic points across your time horizon, showing the strategic conditions, primary and secondary enablers and shifts required to reach success.
- **A short list of 3–5 immediate priority actions** that must begin now to initiate the long-term trajectory towards your defined success.
- **A single integrated pathway**, validated in plenary for coherence, feasibility and alignment with the strategic stance chosen in Exercise 3.

The outputs of the backcasting exercise take you to the end of the strategic phase and prepare you to move into organisational planning for your adapted strategy. The sequenced milestones and agreed-upon priorities are structured for action. The outputs of this exercise are the foundation for the Monitoring exercise (Exercise 5) that follows.

## Post-workshop follow-up

After you have concluded the backcasting exercise, share the consolidated outputs widely within your organisation and partners and the communities you serve to capture their reflections and feedback. They may see priorities you have overlooked or assumptions you are making. Integrate their feedback prior to finalisation.



### FACILITATOR TIPS

- ① Ensure that the workshop participants focus on the long-term success statement that they generated, rather than becoming overly focused on present-day constraints. You can remind them of the scenario(s) in which they are working to help with this.
- ② Keep the milestones strategic by reminding participants to consider broader issues, such as relevant capacities, key partnerships and significant structural shifts in the external environment.
- ③ This exercise supports the transition from strategy to planning, but it is not designed to be the planning process. During this exercise, you should not engage in planning discussions (e.g., about detailed resourcing / budget / particular staff placements or positioning).
- ④ Carry through the causal logic of the exercise. Your Year 2 enablers should unlock your Year 5 enablers, which in turn set up the Year 10 conditions and ultimately converge on your successful end state.
- ⑤ Prioritise clarity and developing a common vision over having an exhaustive list. If everyone understands and agrees on the direction of travel and what is required along the journey, it is easy to refine and add elements along the way.
- ⑥ End on a positive note! The last thing to be discussed in this exercise are the 3–5 immediate priorities. When possible, nominate specific staff members to take these priorities forward before you leave the room.



# Templates

FIGURE 4: BACKCASTING CANVAS (page 1/2)

2040 SUCCESS STATE	2035 MILESTONES → Strategic conditions	2030 MILESTONES → Primary enablers	2028 MILESTONES → Secondary enablers
STRATEGY COMPONENT 1	Capacities:		
	Partnerships:		
	Structural shifts:		
STRATEGY COMPONENT 2	Capacities:		
	Partnerships:		
	Structural shifts:		
STRATEGY COMPONENT 3	Capacities:		
	Partnerships:		
	Structural shifts:		
STRATEGY COMPONENT 4	Capacities:		
	Partnerships:		
	Structural shifts:		
STRATEGY COMPONENT 5	Capacities:		
	Partnerships:		
	Structural shifts:		
STRATEGY COMPONENT ...	Capacities:		
	Partnerships:		
	Structural shifts:		
TOP PRIORITIES FOR EACH SET OF MILESTONES →	<b>2035:</b>	<b>2030:</b>	<b>2028:</b>
	1.	1.	1.
	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.

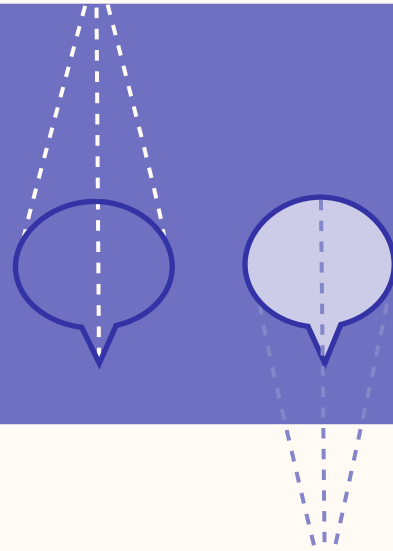


# Templates

FIGURE 4: BACKCASTING CANVAS (page 2/2)

3–5 priority actions to start now	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

## EXERCISE 5: Monitoring



### What is monitoring?

Monitoring is an ongoing process of tracking progress and observing changes over time. There are many approaches to monitoring your strategy. Here, we propose an exercise that builds upon the outputs produced through the implementation of this guide. It is important to monitor the progress of your strategy and track changes in your implementing environment to ensure its continued effectiveness. While monitoring itself is not a foresight method, incorporating elements of horizon scanning and regularly identifying new signals of change can help organisations anticipate developments that may affect their strategy over time. We encourage you to periodically repeat this exercise to ensure that the assumptions made to draft your adapted strategy are still relevant. Continued monitoring is especially important if you chose a single scenario to focus on, either the preferred future or worst-case scenario). This exercise is designed to be led by a small group and does not require a dedicated facilitator. Monitoring is not a one-off exercise but an ongoing practice that should be repeated throughout your journey to ensure that you are adapting your strategy where needed. It is advisable to conduct an annual strategy review using this monitoring tool. However, you may wish to engage in this exercise more frequently in more changeable contexts or if you see your operating environment radically shifting within a short period of time.

### Purpose

This activity supports organisations in maintaining regular sensemaking, ensuring the long-term pathway they are on remains relevant and that small, timely adjustments can be made before a larger strategic drift occurs.

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**This is how foresight becomes a practice,  
not a one-off workshop.**

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## Objectives

- Monitor the milestones developed in the Backcasting canvas
- Detect signals of change that may challenge the scenario assumptions or indicate that you are moving into a different scenario
- Identify early risks which could derail your strategic pathway
- Agree on any necessary small strategic adjustments or reprioritisation of actions
- Maintain a futures-ready stance with regular light-touch review



## Prerequisite and Resources

- Backcasting canvas from Exercise 4
- Chosen scenario(s)
- Related artefacts (developed in Exercise 1) if available



## Timing & Format

**Total time:** ≈30min

**NB:** This is not a workshop. It is a short internal check-in (30 minutes) completed by the strategy lead and 1–4 colleagues (strategy team).

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
30'	Revisit the pathway	Self-led	<p>→ <b>Follow a self-led routine (no facilitator required)</b></p> <p>A small team of colleagues reopens the Backcasting canvas developed in Exercise 4 and reviews the agreed-upon long-term pathway.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The team begins by considering progress toward each milestone at each of the critical points identified in the Backcasting canvas (e.g., 2 years, 5 years, 10 years), updating the Monitoring template (see Figure 5) with a simple status. You can use symbols such as (+) on track, (/) partially progressing, (-) delayed/blocked and add brief notes where required.</li> <li>2. Next, identify and discuss any new or shifting signals of change linked to the scenarios and structural conditions in the Backcasting canvas, summarising strengthening, weakening or new signals in the sheet.</li> <li>3. Signals of change are observable events or pieces of evidence that indicate future shifts in trends or drivers. Signals of change are used to track changes in your context.</li> <li>4. Briefly reflect on the implications of these signals: Are your assumptions still valid? Are there any milestones at risk of not being achieved? Will any milestones be achieved earlier than expected? Are there any external changes that require organisational attention?</li> </ol>	<p>→ Milestone progress, key signals of change, and 1– 3 small strategic adjustments to guide the next cycle</p>

DURATION	PHASE	MODE	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
			<p>5. Finally, if needed, identify 1–3 small strategic adjustments to apply to resolve areas of your strategy that are marked as delayed or blocked (e.g., accelerate a partnership, unblock a dependency, pause a stalled action).</p> <p>The updated Monitoring template can now be used as a worksheet, and this output becomes the basis for the next review.</p>	

## Outputs

At the end of this exercise, you will have:

- **A completed Monitoring sheet** for a snapshot of progress towards the strategy and context
- **A list of adapted strategy components** (if required)

The outputs of this exercise provide a template for you to take forward in an ongoing process of continued monitoring. This is not the end of the road (or a final output) but rather a platform from which you can continue to ensure your strategy is adapted for the future and for sustained impact.

## Post-workshop follow-up

After you have completed a monitoring meeting, reflect on the components that are indicated as delayed or blocked and the strategic adjustments you have recommended to resolve those issues. These adjustments should be integrated into your strategy document and monitoring template to be included in subsequent rounds of strategy review.



# Conclusion and recommendations

This guide is intended to provide exercises and approaches that organisations can use to review and revise their strategies to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, while also introducing foresight methods that can support long-term thinking and adaptability. It is clear that we are living through a period of heightened uncertainty, and our world is likely to remain volatile in the near to medium-term future.<sup>6</sup> Civil society organisations must not falter in the face of these challenges. Instead, we must embrace this uncertainty and use moments of disruption to advance transformation. We must invest in building adaptability and resilience to continue to work effectively for the communities we serve.

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**“Hope locates itself in the premises that we don’t know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act.”<sup>7</sup>**

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Undertaking this shared journey together with colleagues produces more than just an updated strategy document. It creates a renewed sense of direction and shared purpose and ensures that organisations are leveraging their skills and capacities in the most effective ways. This is a journey of co-creation, and your strengthened leadership can use the foundation built through these exercises to implement what comes next. Some next steps for you to consider include:

- 1 Translate your revised strategy into operational planning**  
Take the strategic choices you have made during this process and embed them into concrete annual plans, budgets and team priorities, ensuring every part of the organisation is aligned and moving in the same direction.

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<sup>6</sup> “Uncertainty is the defining theme of the global risks outlook in 2026. Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) respondents viewed both the short- and long-term global outlook negatively, with 50% of respondents anticipating either a turbulent or stormy outlook over the next two years, deteriorating to 57% of respondents over the next 10 years (Figure 1). A further 40% and 32%, respectively, view the global outlook as unsettled over the two- and 10-year time frames, with only 1% anticipating a calm outlook across each time horizon.” World Economic Forum (2026): [The Global Report 2026 – 21st Edition Insight Report](#), World Economic Forum, p. 7

<sup>7</sup> Solnit, Rebecca (2016): [‘Hope is an embrace of the unknown’: Rebecca Solnit on living in dark times](#), The Guardian

## 2 Share your renewed direction with stakeholders and partners

Communicate the refreshed strategy to your board, funders, partners and communities, using this moment to strengthen relationships, build confidence and open conversations about shared goals and collaborative opportunities.

## 3 Schedule your next strategy review

Set a date within the next 6–12 months to reconvene your leadership team, revisit the assumptions underpinning your strategy and assess whether the signals you identified are playing out as expected (see Exercise 5).

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**“Courageous leadership is not about bold risk-taking, but about making deliberate, values-driven decisions that turn uncertainty into an opportunity for growth and transformation.”<sup>8</sup>**

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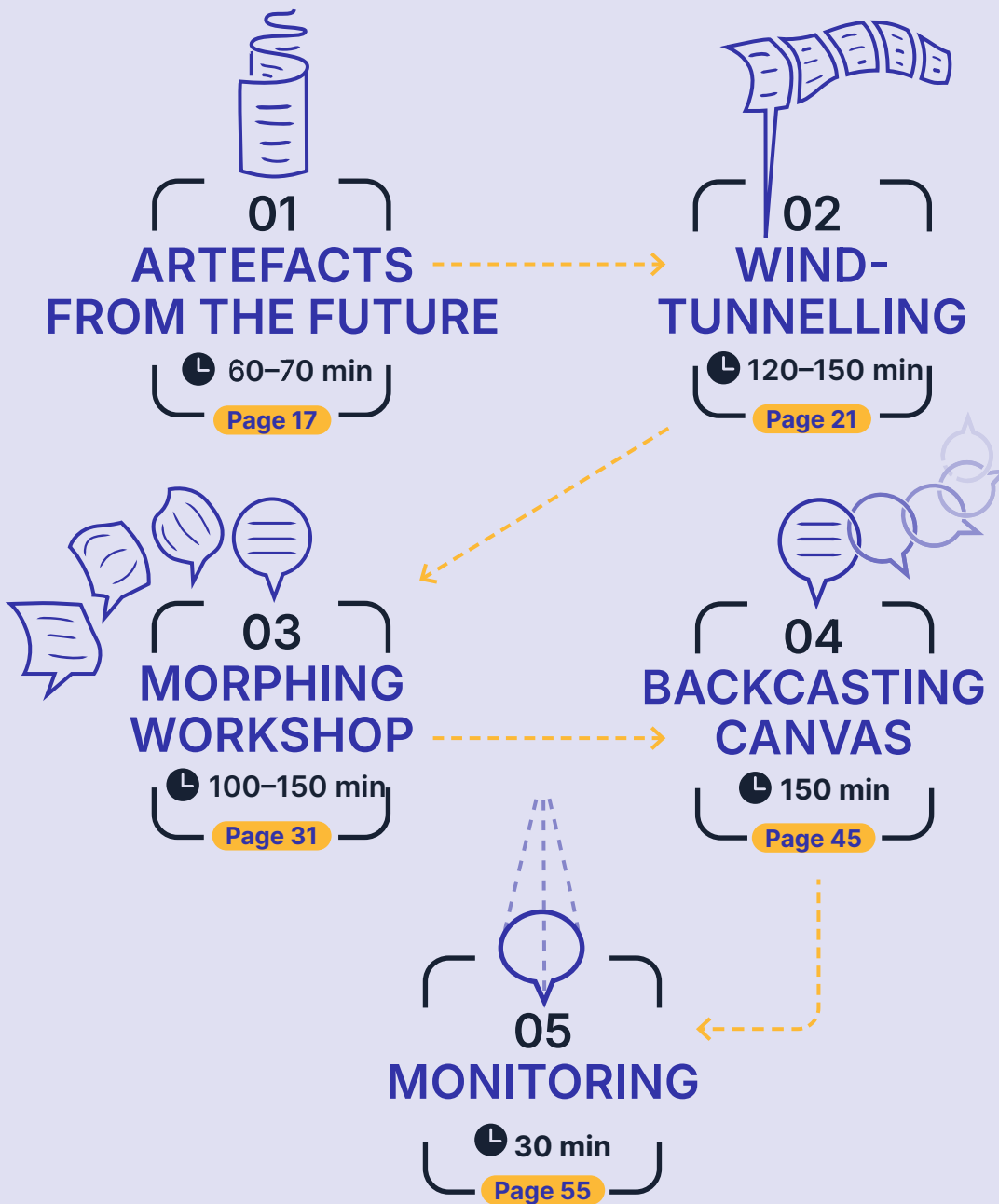
By taking charge of your organisation’s strategy and considering your long-term effectiveness, you have already taken a meaningful step towards being future-fit. At every point of this collective journey, your organisation strengthens its ability not only to successfully manage change but to shape the future with confidence and move forward with clarity and purpose. With these skills and a futures-oriented mindset, the opportunities for transformation are yours to grasp.

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<sup>8</sup> Menon, Parvathi (2026): Courageous Leadership: Transforming without Losing Your Core, Harvard Business Review

# Annex: Shortcuts

This guide took you through the following journey:

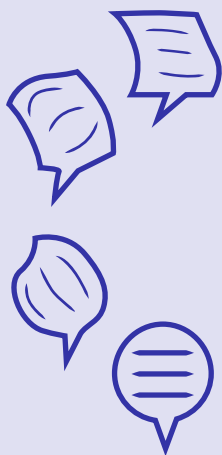


We recognise that organisations may face time and capacity constraints in conducting the full journey when reviewing their strategy. Here are some recommended ways to shorten this process if needed:



### Artefacts from the future

This is a useful exercise to help participants internalise the dynamics of the scenarios you are using. Creating artefacts helps participants extend their perspective and think in a strategic rather than short-term timeframe. This exercise is particularly important to build buy-in if the participants were not involved in crafting the scenarios you are using. The outputs of this exercise are useful but not strictly required for the rest of the process. If necessary, you can skip this step.

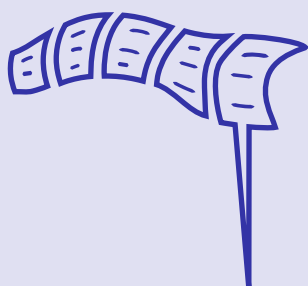


### Morphing workshop

If you cannot complete the Wind-tunnelling exercise in its entirety, you can shorten it by first deciding on the strategy approach you wish to take for the overall process. Skip directly to Phase 1 – Choosing a strategy approach of the Morphing workshop (20–30 min exercise) and run this short workshop first before the Wind-tunnelling workshop. If you select the organisational adaptability approach (Option 1), you will need to complete the full Wind-tunnelling exercise (2.5 hrs). If you choose to focus on building a preferred future (Option 2) or contingency planning for the worst-case scenario (Option 3), then you can move on to the following shortcut (outlined in the next bullet point).

### Wind-tunnelling workshop

We encourage you to test your strategy's effectiveness across each of the scenarios that you are using. Even if you have opted for Option 2 or 3 of the Morphing exercise and will not be integrating this information into your strategic planning, you will benefit from understanding how resilient your strategy is so you can effectively monitor for needed changes (Exercise 5). However, if you are short on time or only interested in working on one possible future (i.e., a preferred or worst-case scenario), you can complete the Wind-tunnelling exercise faster by having all groups complete the exercise only once, focusing on a single scenario rather than all four possible futures (30 min, as opposed to 2 hrs). With this approach, you can assess how robust your strategy is for that one future and base all adaptations on that analysis.





## About us

The International Civil Society Centre is owned and supported by 16 international civil society organisations. We bring these organisations together to share knowledge, strengthen collaboration, and tackle the significant challenges facing civil society today. Through hosting events, facilitating joint learning, and analysing future trends, we help organisations explore new ideas, respond to emerging risks, and shape the future of civil society. Together, we strive to ensure that civil society remains strong, connected, and capable of advancing justice and dignity for individuals and communities worldwide.

The Inter-Agency Research and Analysis Network (IARAN) is a collaborative hub of aid professionals with decades of collective experience across the sector, united by a shared vision for a reimagined aid system that is locally anchored, collectively owned, and fit for challenges. To support this vision, IARAN produces independent foresight and strategic analysis, and provides facilitation, training, and consulting services that help organisations plan more strategically and operate more collaboratively.

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The guide was written by Eilidh Kennedy and Michel Maietta from IARAN, drawing on their expertise in strategic foresight and organisational resilience.

The production of this guide was devised and managed by Eva Gondor at the International Civil Society Centre.

The guide was edited by Amy Andrews and designed by Karen Eckert.

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International  
Civil Society Centre

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June 2026

IN COOPERATION WITH:

■■■ HEINRICH  
BÖLL  
STIFTUNG



GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions or feedback regarding the guide or are interested in collaborating with us, get in touch with Eva Gondor from the International Civil Society Centre at [egondor@icscentre.org](mailto:egondor@icscentre.org).