

WcVA

CgGC

BUILDING BETTER FUTURES:

Toolkit



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Introduction

Better Futures Wales:

COMMUNITY FORESIGHT PROJECT

In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, voluntary organisations in Wales told us about their shared ambitions for a future post-pandemic that is more equal, just and green. They told us that they want the voices of diverse communities across Wales to be heard and able to actively shape our futures.

Introduction

We hope the practical tools set out in this toolkit will now help people to imagine and to take steps to achieve the better futures they want to see.

This toolkit has been developed through a pilot community foresight exercise with voluntary and community groups across three different communities in Wales.

It is a partnership project between WCVA, the national membership body for voluntary organisations in Wales, and the School of International Futures, an organisation that helps people to use foresight and futures methods to improve the present and the future. It is funded by the National Lottery Emerging Futures Fund.

The initial idea for the project came from the Better Futures Wales advisory group. The group is made up of voluntary sector leaders from across Wales who met regularly through 2020-2021. It builds on early engagement with diverse voluntary and community groups about how we can shape a positive future in the wake of COVID-19.

This was an opportunity to engage with, learn from and understand the visions and aspirations of diverse communities in Wales and to use this learning to make a positive difference. We hope this toolkit will continue to develop and strengthen community foresight capability in Wales.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Dafydd Thomas and Johann Schutte for all their hard work in drafting the toolkit. Thanks also go to the Better Futures Wales advisory group for overseeing the project – Fran Targett (Chair), Steve Thomas, Joe Stockley, Christian Servini, Jess Blair, Rocio Cifuentes, Gaynor Richards, Menai Owen Jones, Zoe King, Kate Young, Katie-Jo Luxton and Chris Johnes.

Part 1

Getting started

Toolkit Overview

THE COMMUNITY JOURNEY

The activities in this toolkit are participatory and inclusive. They rely on a group of people to come together to complete them. They are intended to stretch the shared imagination about what might be possible in the future, and to support communities to identify a preferred future and to make specific plans to work towards that future.

The first two activities are open-ended and diverge into the realm of exploration. They will guide you to look far and wide for signs of what a positive future might look like and then help you draw inspiration and brainstorm what might be applicable in your own context.

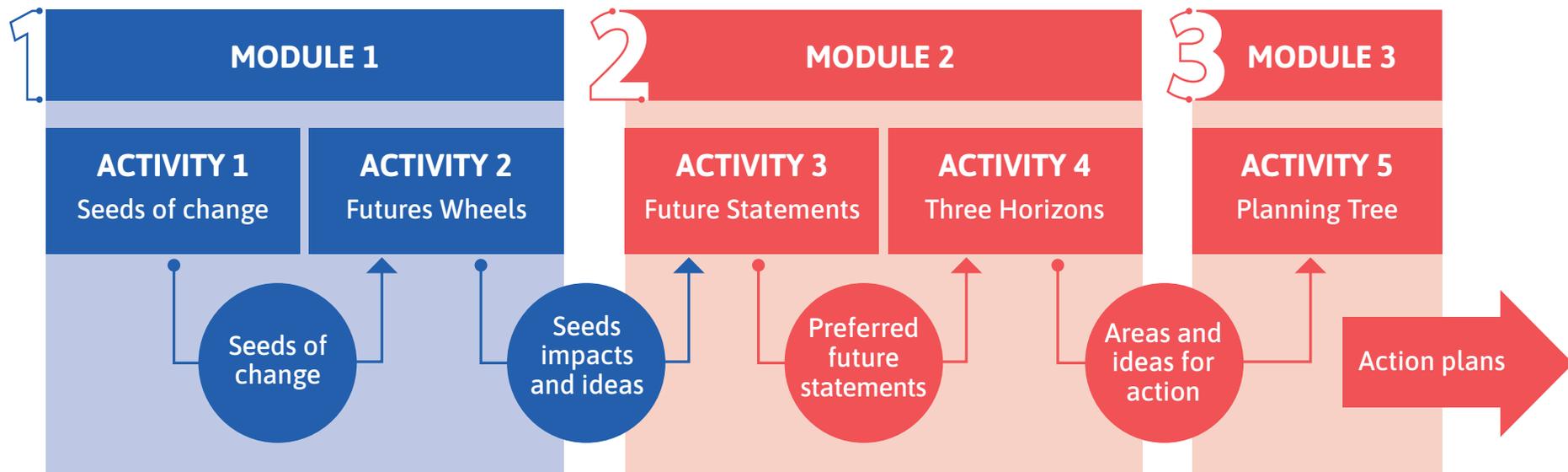
The remainder of the activities become increasingly focused, guiding you to explore aspects of a preferred future that your community might want to call your own, as well as the challenges and opportunities you might find along the way to making this future a reality. Finally, the outcomes of the different exercises converge into a set of practical steps you could take towards this preferred future.

HOW THIS LOOKS IN PRACTICE

This toolkit is flexible and can be used in a variety of ways.

As you can see from the diagram, the whole community futuring project is built up from five different activities. Working through all the steps in your community will create a new future story for your community. However, you don't need to do it as a full set of steps to get positive results from the work.

Diagram 1: The Toolkit Activities, their modules and outputs.



As a complete project

Activities 2-5 can be done sequentially with a group of people in one and a half days, for instance over a weekend in your local town hall or on a retreat. This is provided that the Seeds of Change from Activity 1 have been selected beforehand. This approach would be beneficial to strengthen community relationships and should be an immersive, inspiring experience.

Alternatively, you could use, say, one evening per week over a period of five weeks to complete the activities. This approach will not be as disruptive and may make it easier for some to participate while allowing offline time for additional, individual reflection and thinking about the journey.

A modular approach

The activities can also be approached in a modular fashion. Activity 1 and 2 (Module 1) go together, exploring what is possible. Activity 3 and 4 (Module 2) explore the preferable futures of your community, and the tensions that lie in the gap between these futures and the present. Activity 5 (Module 3) is a specific tool that helps to turn goals into action steps over the short and medium term.

As single exercises

While you should not skip Activity 1 or 3, if you don't do the complete process, some activities can be done on their own.

For instance, the Futures Wheels exercise (Activity 2) does not necessarily need the output of Activity 1 if done on its own, and can really help explore the implications of any important change you might face. Similarly, the Planning Tree (Activity 5) can be used to clarify further steps in relation to goals that already exist.

However, you will benefit the most if you do all the toolkit activities in sequence!

Preparation

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.'

Margaret Mead, Cultural Anthropologist, 1901 - 1978

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTION

It is good to have a clear understanding of why your community wants to embark on this journey. It may be that you want to develop a strategy for the future, to define your purpose more clearly, or to find ways to address a specific problem you are facing. Whatever the reason, a good project question is like a guiding star that will keep you on track and guide you to successful implementation.

Designing the right project question will rely on discussions with the community, community leaders and any related committees or organisations to understand what the needs truly are. It may take several discussions with the relevant stakeholders and working through several versions to arrive at a good question. This is part of the process, and is a way to build successful participation.

ENSURE REPRESENTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Think through the key stakeholders that need to be involved. Can you think of anyone who should be taking the lead on this work? For some reason they might be unable to take up that leadership role, but their involvement might still benefit the process. Can you think who will be responsible for implementing project outputs? Are these stakeholders in agreement with regards to what you're trying to achieve?

If you are trying to engage the whole community, it is important to be as representative as possible and include everyone you can think of who has a stake in the project question. These foresight activities are participatory and inclusive and provide an opportunity to bring into the room those voices that are not always heard. Focusing on the future instead of the present, they enable people to dream, and this helps groups to get beyond current day-to-day disagreements as people work together to think beyond the present.

DECIDE HOW YOU WILL INTEGRATE PROJECT RESULTS

The activities in this toolkit will provide a clear vision of what the future might look like, and how you could get there through a set of practical steps that act as a roadmap.

Before you start, it helps to plan ahead about what you want to do with these outcomes. The following questions might support you in your thinking:

- How will you communicate project outputs, such as your preferred future and how to get there, to the community and key stakeholders?
- Who might be the leaders and champions to take this forward within the community?
- How will you integrate project outputs with your existing projects and programmes?
- How would your current community structure be able to respond to the project outputs?

Guide for facilitators

Setting up sessions

- Share an agenda.
- Ensure participant representation.
- Send out any briefing material (eg Seeds of Change, Future Statements).
- If virtual, ensure everyone has the relevant links and adequate devices.

Overall session timings

- Each time you get together, we recommend about 20-30 minutes check in which could be informal, for example through an icebreaker exercise.
- All exercises culminate in feedback sessions. Plan for these feedback sessions to be about 30-40 minutes, allowing for detailed discussion.
- At the end of each session, allocate about 10 minutes for next steps and checkout.

How to start a session

- Using a simple icebreaker at the start of your workshop can help set the tone for the rest of the meeting. They provide an opportunity for all the participants to speak at the beginning of the meeting, and to share some details about themselves – their names, why they're attending the workshop and what they hope will happen.
- You can also use icebreakers as an opportunity to inject a bit of fun and energy into proceedings.
- You might want to start with some future specific icebreakers like 'What object from today would you want to take to 2030 or 2035?' 'Or what do you think will be harder to find in 2030/35 than it is today?'
- You could also ask people to bring objects or photos of objects to the workshop as part of the icebreaker.
- Most of all, keep it simple and use it as a light and easy way for the workshop participants to get to know one another.

Working in small groups

- When working in small groups, you want everyone to work together well. You could ask people to have different roles during the discussion – such as note taker and time keeper, but remember to swap people around on occasion if you do take this approach.
- Another way to ensure that everyone works together well, you might decide to develop some ground rules for your workshop.
- You could do that by starting with a blank piece of paper and ask participants to add suggestions. Or you could have a number of ground rules prepared and see if anyone has anything to add. Here are some examples:
 - Be present in the room. There will be breaks to catch up with messages and so on.
 - Listening is as important as talking.
 - Be respectful of the contributions of everyone in the room.
 - Build on what you hear, because you'll have a better conversation.
 - Speak as individuals not representatives.

Facilitating feedback

- Before groups give feedback, suggest they spend a bit of time reviewing the information they have gathered during their activity. They might want to amend or edit part of it, let them do so, but also explain that the feedback process will help everyone make sense of what's been discussed.
- Remind them to always designate someone beforehand to give feedback to the larger group as this saves time. Ask them to keep it short – there's always room for questions. They might want to think of their feedback as newsfeed. Ask them 'what are the top three items?' Alternately, they might want to summarise their feedback as a picture, so what would that picture be? What stood out for them in the discussion?
- During feedback, try to give each group the same amount of time. Give time for people to ask questions of the different groups and discuss the answers.
- Try and notice similarities and understand any differences.
- While you listen as facilitator, try and bring together what everyone has discussed or presented. It sometimes helps to have someone else listening to all of the feedback and sharing the main points at the end - but remember to ask them beforehand!

At the end of each session

- Make a point to thank participants for their time, their participation and enthusiasm.

Using Post-its

- Always write only one idea per Post It.
- Keep the sentences short.
- Make sure the ideas are concrete, for example, 'bureaucracy' is too vague an answer. What is it in particular about the bureaucracy? For instance, is it an obstacle? Is it confusing? Is it too slow? Is it too complicated? Does it help big organisations at the expense of small ones?

Synthesizing outputs

- Arrange a notetaker to capture the essence of the conversation.
- Try and make connections while listening to feedback (see chapter on Futures Statements, Steps 4 to 5, as an example of how to go about connecting different contributions into specific themes).
- If your activity has been live in a real room, remember to gather the templates and take pictures of everything so that you can refer to them later on.
- For a digital workshop, remember to download the templates from the platform.

Part 2

The activities

Activity 1: Collecting seeds of change

'Seeds are likely not widespread nor well-known. They can be social initiatives, new technologies, economic tools, or social-ecological projects, or organisations, movements or new ways of acting that appear to be contributing to the creation of a future that is just, prosperous, and sustainable.'

Seeds of Good Anthropocenes
goodanthropocenes.net/what-are-seeds

OVERVIEW

Purpose

This activity explains what Seeds of Change are, why and how you will be using them and what discussions they are supposed to trigger as part of the Better Futures Toolkit. It has been adapted for this toolkit from the [Bright Spots – Seeds of a Good Anthropocene initiative](#). This is a crucial and engaging

starting point in the process. It will excite and energise the rest of the Better Futures activities.

Introduction

Participants will understand, explore, and select Seeds of Change that might already exist somewhere in the world. These Seeds will help them dream about the future and start to think about possibilities.

This activity will guide you to find potential Seeds of Change that have the capacity to make conversations happen. You'll probably need to gather about 20 Seeds of Change to inform the next stage in this process.

It is completely fine for you to develop Seeds of Change by yourself, but we suggest that you involve a few members of your organising group or steering committee as well. And don't worry: there are online resources to point you in the right direction.

PREPARATION

Preparation time	Not specified
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Activity duration	Not specified
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Difficulty level	Medium
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Input

1. A short-list of representative participants to help you prepare your community's journey
2. A list of potential sources participants can look at for seeds of change such as websites, other networks, conversations or inspirational community activity
3. A repository to collect participants' Seeds of Change (eg online excel sheet)

Output

A Seeds of Change shortlist that can be used in [Activity 2 about building Futures Wheels](#)

Materials needed

For Step 3

- Flip charts and different coloured Post It notes (or digital equivalents for online events)
- A lists of seeds that have been previously gathered by the workshop participants

ACTIVITY

Timetable

This is not necessarily intended as a formal activity within a workshop. Participants could work on their own and get together only at the end of a period to finalise the Seed selection.

Instructions

Step 1 Explain the Seeds of Change

This step could take in an initial small group meeting.

Introduce participants to what a Seed of Change is. You could use the description from the Seeds of **Good Anthropocenes** at the start of this chapter to set the scene. Or you could use the following examples of seeds to get you started:

Examples of Seeds of Change

‘A network of local public and private vegetable smallholdings, and indoor vertical farming facilities, supplies a large proportion of the community's fresh produce in a sustainable and affordable way.’

‘There are regular "Dialogue Days" where young people meet town leaders to talk about issues.’

‘Many public buildings in the town or area are now owned by the community and generate income or create new opportunities for participation.’

‘There are low-interest loans available that include business skills training for young people who want to start their own business.’

‘The community owns or manages local woodlands-creating new opportunities for leisure and recreation, learning, health, biodiversity and employment.’

Step 2 Collect Seeds of Change

This step might take around a week or even longer and is done by participants on their own.

One way to collect Seeds of Change is sourcing them from the **seed bank** that contains a selection of example seeds used in previous projects. This is a quick start and they could easily be rewritten to tailor them for your community.

Another way is to ask some volunteers from your community to participate in an initial seed gathering process to look for

seeds on the internet, within their various networks, in conversations or from other communities. This could be part of their homework before the meeting. Share the 'About the Seeds of Change' section with participants so they know what to look for and expect.

Seeds are not geographically limited and can be collected from all over the world. Working with your community to find seeds in this way will greatly benefit the seed bank if you add them to the existing list. That way others can benefit from your efforts.

Step 3 **Decide on the most useful Seeds of Change**

We suggest this step takes place as an actual meeting.

Decide how many seeds you need for your project.

Participants will work in smaller groups of about five, and each group will work with three seeds (See **preparation** in the **Things to consider** section of this chapter).

Check your potential Seeds of Change against these simple statements:

- A seed is anything that is innovative, already happens and points to a positive future, but is not well-known or widespread.

- A good seed would have people excited and inspire them to think of how their own community could change.
- It should be novel and not exist at scale in your community but should actually be possible.
- It should stretch the imagination and help the community dream beyond your existing conversations.
- It should energise or even excite the group when they discuss it, and they should feel comfortable using it at the start of the process.

If your potential Seed of Change meets most of these criteria, re-write its description in the present tense, as if it already exists and has grown beyond a mere idea to being mainstream or commonplace. For instance, the seed of a single repair cafe has grown into a place where everything can be repaired, or the seed of a single community bus has become a free transport network! Writing the description about your Seed of Change in such a way makes it easier for participants to understand its impact in the next module – building Futures Wheels.

This activity is complete when you have enough seeds for every breakout group you expect to facilitate in the next section.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The way the seeds will be used will be described in Activity 2, the Futures Wheels.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Key framing messages for this activity

1. We found that people really wanted to be involved in this part of the process, but you need to balance involving everyone with recognising that this is a step on the way to a much richer discussion in the next activity – building Futures Wheels.
2. The intention is not to copy or implement the seeds or use them to set expectations or a specific agenda. They are designed to open up better conversations about the future.
3. The purpose of the Seeds is to draw out new ideas and to help to build a picture of what our future community might look like. Their purpose is to explore and inspire. They are intended to push people to dream about the future and what might be possible when building Futures Wheels.
4. During Activity 4, the Three Horizons, you will go beyond these seeds to think more closely about specific futures for your own community.

Preparation

5. You can work out how many Seeds of Change you need in the following way: divide the number of expected participants in the journey by five, then times that number by three. (They will work in groups of about five and each group will need three seeds).

During the activity

6. Participants will get excited about the Seeds of Change and may want to spend a lot of time discussing them. That's fine because it's new and interesting. Indeed the possibilities will seem endless – but this is only part of the process.
7. It's good to have some of your participants involved in this, but not all of them – otherwise the activity could become unmanageable.
8. Remember you want to keep most of your participants excited and energised about the next step – where there will be ample time to reflect on the Seeds of Change you develop as part of this module.

Activity 2: Building Futures Wheels

OVERVIEW

Purpose

This activity explores 'signals of change' – initiatives or ideas that can be discussed together as a group. These discussions spark further discussions and ideas that will ultimately be brought together as your community's Preferred Future.

Introduction

Participants will be exploring the Seeds of Change that were developed in the previous module.

This activity is intended to generate lots of interesting ideas. It is about creatively brainstorming a diverse set of possibilities and how they might develop under different circumstances. It is about stretching the limits of current thinking and considering different levels of impact. All of this activity will be sparked by the Seeds of Change you and your colleagues identified in the previous workshop.

It is best done in smaller groups of four to six participants.

PREPARATION

Preparation time	30 Minutes
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Activity duration	120 Minutes
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Difficulty level	Easy
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Input

Three Seeds of Change for each small group of participants (see output from Activity 1)

Output

A set of Futures Wheels depicting possible future impacts of the Seeds of Change

Materials needed

1. Futures Wheels templates (could even be hand-drawn or you could use a blank space on a wall)
2. Flip charts and two different coloured Post It notes (or digital equivalents for online events)

Room arrangements

Divide your large group into smaller groups and hand out three Seeds of Change for each group

Templates

Find downloadable templates in Part 3 of this toolkit

ACTIVITY

Timetable		
As a whole group Introducing the activity		10 minutes
In small groups		55 minutes
Step 1	Getting clarity on the seeds	(5 minutes)
Step 2-3	Explore the initial impacts	
	Wheel 1	(20 minutes)
	Wheel 2	(10 minutes)
	Wheel 3	(10 minutes)
Step 5	Explore your wheel	(5 minutes)
Step 6	Find an image	(5 minutes)
Break		10 minutes
As a whole group		20 minutes
Step 7	Groups give feedback	
In small groups		10 minutes
Step 8	Making connections	
As a whole group		15 minutes
Step 9	Sharing the connections	

Instructions

Activity introduction

During this workshop, each small group will receive three Seeds of Change which they will grow by building a Futures Wheel. Figure 1 below show how the Seeds of Change grow with the help of the Futures Wheel exercise.

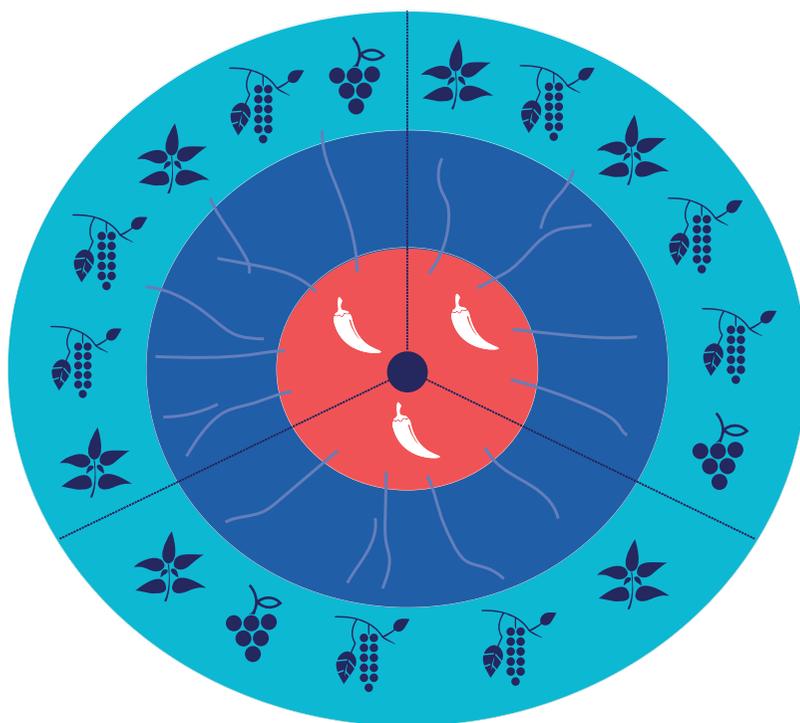


Figure 1: A Future Wheel

Groups will put their three Seeds of Change in the centre of a Futures Wheel (red).

Participants will then explore some immediate impacts this seed might have locally in your community. These impacts could be political, economic, technological, environmental, social or legislative in their nature (blue middle layer).

Once you have explored these immediate effects, you build on them further by asking what these effects might lead on to (the 'second order impacts' on the local community), and adding these to the light blue outer layer.

If this sounds a bit abstract, there are a couple of worked examples below of how this conversation might go in practice from the pilot projects.

At the end, each group shares the three or four stories or outcomes from their wheels with the other groups. It helps to listen out for connections between the different discussions.

In a smaller group of four to five people

Step 1 Does everyone understand what each seed is about?

Make sure all three seeds are clear to the group before you build your wheels.

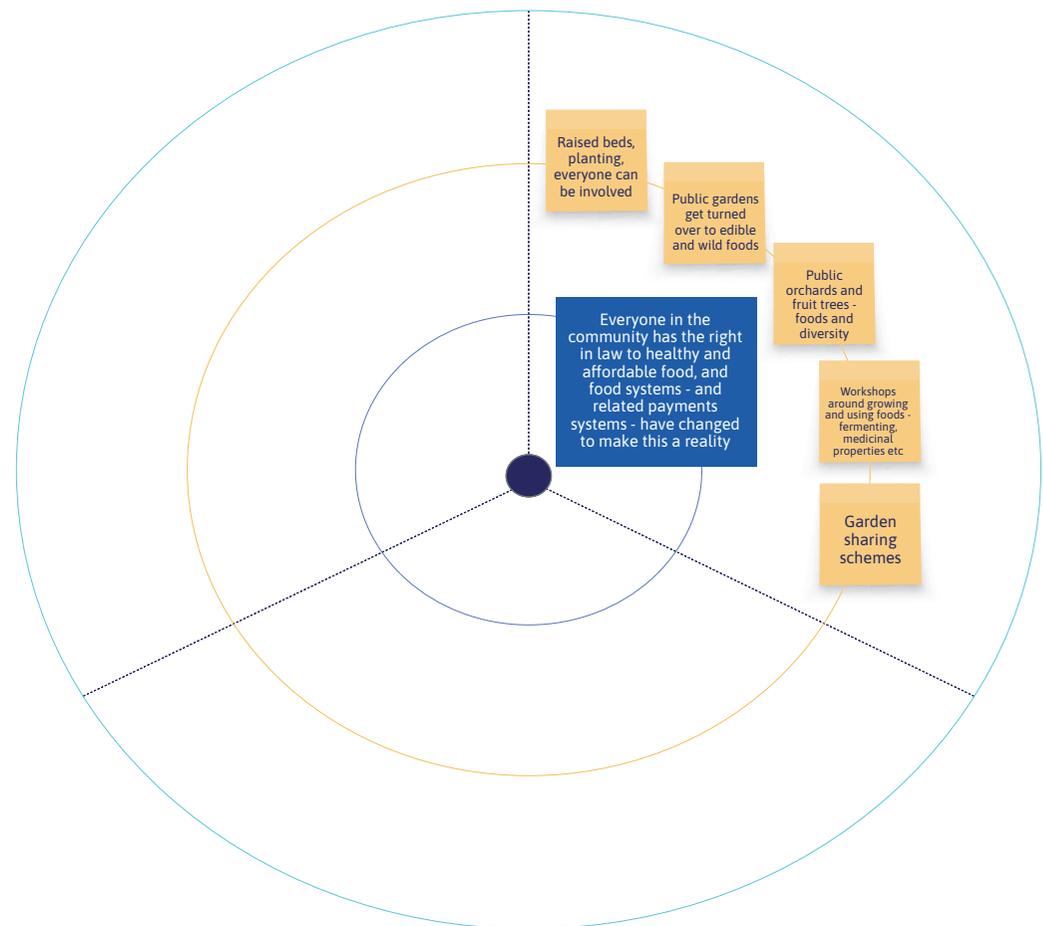
Step 2 Explore the initial impacts

Select one of the seeds and put it in the centre of your wheel.

What could happen if this seed existed in your area? What impact would that have?

Come up with about **five good ideas** and write them down on yellow Post It notes. (As a facilitator you can prompt the group to consider the social, technological, economic, environmental and political impacts). Five or six ideas or impacts, in total, is a good outcome from this first round.

Examples of Step 2 output



Step 3 Explore second-order impacts

Look at each yellow Post It, one at a time. What would happen if each yellow Post It existed in your area? What positive impact would that have?

Come up with one or two **good ideas or positive impacts** for each Post It and write them down on green Post Its. Having between five and seven green Post It notes in total is a good outcome for this activity.

Step 4 Repeat for the other seeds

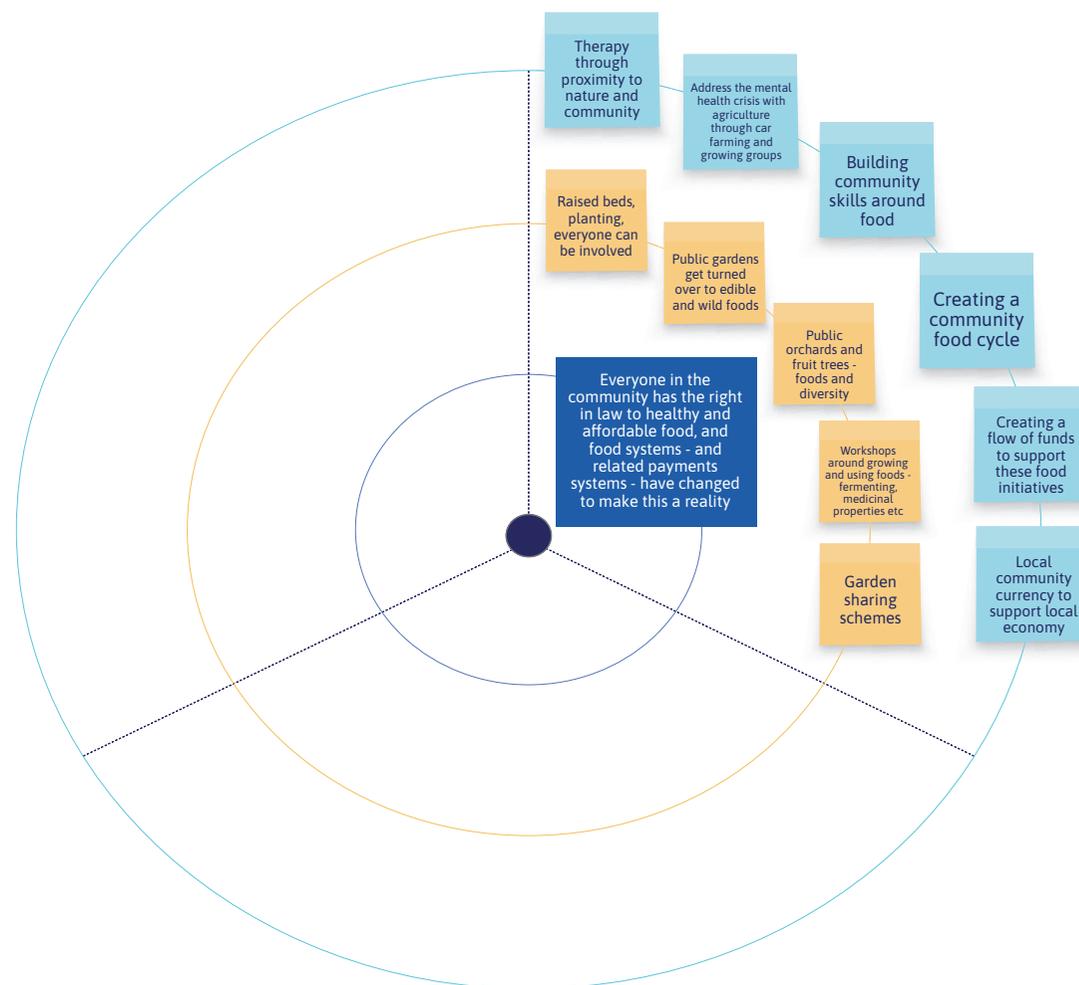
Repeat Steps 2-3 for the other two seeds with your group.

Step 5 Explore your wheel

After looking at all of the impacts for each of the seeds, look at the wheel you built and answer the following questions:

1. What will have the most immediate impact on your community?
2. What is the most surprising story?
3. What would cause the most change over time in your community?
4. Are there stories and themes that pop up in different places on your wheel

Examples of Step 3 output



Examples of Step 5 output

IMPACT	SURPRISE	CAUSING CHANGE
Shared and accessible public and community-owned/publicly-owned spaces that are funded and create social and economic opportunities for development	The impact of local growing, sharing, learning about food	Valuing the natural resources we have around us, conserving them and creating access to them and sustainable use of them.

Step 6 Find an image

Each small group comes up with an image that sums up the conversation you had about the future.

Break**As a whole group****Step 7 Each small group gives feedback to the whole group**

A representative from each group gives feedback from their wheel, using the outputs from Steps 5 and 6 as their guide.

In smaller groups of the same people**Step 8 Making connections**

Back in your breakout group, share any connections and themes you could make from your group with other groups after listening to them. Write that down and be ready to feedback to the other groups.

As a whole group**Step 9 Sharing the connections**

Each group feeds back about the connections and themes they've identified from the different breakout group discussions.

End

Alternative steps for working with young people

For youth groups, we suggest alternatives to Steps 5 and 6 here:

Step 5 **Explore your wheel**

After looking at the impacts for each of the seeds, look at the whole wheel you have built and answer the following questions:

1. Which two Post Its or set of Post Its do you like the most?
2. Can you turn each one into a one-sentence story?

Step 6 Can you think of an image that captures one of your Post Its or anything you talked about that was interesting?

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The output from the Futures Wheels will be synthesised to create statements of preferred futures in the next activity, where you will explore what is needed to move from the present to this preferred future.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Key framing messages for this activity

1. There are no right or wrong answers when building the wheel, but the participants should be able to explain the thinking behind their answers.
2. This activity's primary purpose is to generate creative ideas about what could happen in your community if the Seeds of Change grew to their full potential.
3. Just because someone writes something on a Post It note it doesn't mean it will necessarily happen or that it has to be brought to life! They are suggestions and dreams. Please make sure the participants are aware of that.

Preparation

4. When choosing the three seeds for each group, make sure they are different from each other. For instance, don't give a group two business/economic seeds. Mix this up with (say) a social seed and a technology seed.

During the activity

5. Implications of the first seed will take a while to develop as participants get the hang of the process. Expect to build out the wheels for seeds 2 and 3 more quickly.
6. Prompt the participants to think about the political, economic, technological, environmental, social and even legislative impacts of their discussions. For example, if a discussion starts off with a technology seed, this could have social, economic and environmental implications. As a facilitator, try and help the participants to look at things from more than one angle by asking open ended questions, and listen carefully to what they say. If you don't fully understand their reasoning, ask an open-ended follow up question (eg 'can you just explain a bit more about the connections that you're making here?').

EXAMPLES OF A FUTURES WHEELS EXERCISE

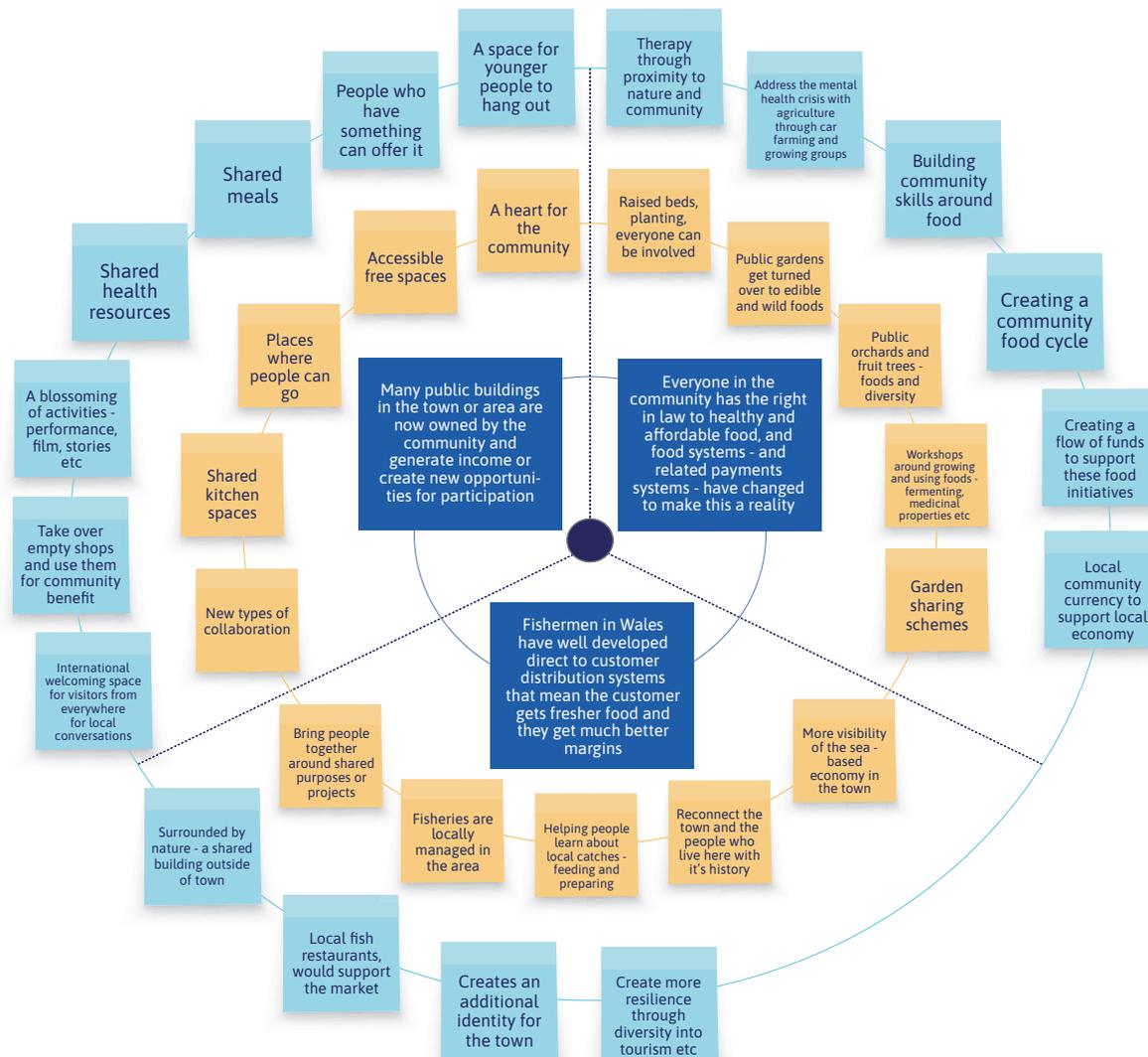


Image 1
Futures Wheel Example 2

Source: WCVA community workshop

Activity 3: Futures Statements

OVERVIEW

Purpose

This activity will help you identify and focus on the specific themes which you think will make the most difference in your community.

Up until now you have been searching all over for inspiration - using the Seeds of Change and generating your own creative ideas based on what you found on the Futures Wheel. We will now want to bring the conversation back to something specific which can work for you and your community.

Introduction

To move from general ideas about how the future could be to what might specifically work in your community, we will write statements about future possibilities that you'd like to see come to life, and which you might want to pursue. You can't control the future, but you can certainly influence it.

These Preferred Future Statements are drawn from themes emerging from your Futures Wheels. They will consolidate and make sense of the community's thinking on the wheels in such a way as to be useful going forward. In this way, you will build a bridge between Activity 2 Futures Wheels, and Activity 4 the Three Horizons.

The Preferred Future Statements might seem similar to the Seeds of Change, but they are not. The Seeds were novelties from outside the community intended to spur imagination. In contrast, the statements describe specific ideas generated by your community from your Futures Wheels. They are not random, but emerging aspects of a vision for your community by the community, which you can gradually work out in more detail to become a practical strategy.

PREPARATION

Preparation time	30 Minutes
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Activity duration	70 Minutes
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Difficulty level	Moderate
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Input

The collaborative output from the Futures Wheels exercise, including the wheels themselves and any other discussion notes from the feedback sessions.

Output

A shortlist of Preferred Future Statements that appropriately capture the conversations and point to aspects the community might like to include in their broader vision of the future.

Materials needed

Access to the Futures Wheels and any discussion notes.

Room arrangements

This process can happen either in a special meeting or offline where a small group of participants can work on their own or at their own pace.

ACTIVITY

Timetable

This activity does not need to include all participants of the session but it is advisable to have some involvement by the participants in this decision making process.

Instructions

Step 1 Explore the final feedback session from activity 2

First, look at the final feedback from the Futures Wheels workshop in which groups shared what they perceived to be connections between their outputs and those of other groups. Specifically, they were asked 'What three things have you heard from the other groups that connect to the futures stories from your group?'

This was an initial attempt to identify patterns or themes important to the group as a whole.

Step 2 Explore the group feedback from activity 2

Add to this list by looking at the respective group outputs individually. Earlier in Futures Wheels workshop they were asked to give feedback from their wheel on what they think were:

- the most surprising,
- would have the most immediate impact,
- or would cause the most change over time.

See if there are any patterns or connections emerging from this feedback which groups did not identify or share with everyone. Add anything new that emerges to the list.

Step 3 Explore the Futures Wheels

Now also read through the actual Futures Wheels from all groups. Are there any interesting impacts or themes not reflected in any of the feedback? This might be a singular, important impact or a couple of impacts across the wheels that connect with one another to form a theme. Add this to your list as well.

Step 4 Cluster your sentences

Looking at your aggregated list, see if some of the items go together. If possible, merge them. Here is an example of two clusters of ideas, drawn from an actual example of feedback and the wheels themselves:

Cluster example 1

From Step 1 A connection all the groups identified

'Sense of community ownership of assets (eg legal acquisition) and broader (concept of ownership) and ownership of design itself.'

From Step 2 A feedback point from one group

'Running public buildings on behalf of the community (eg former pubs etc that are prominent in the high street).'

From Step 3 A specific idea from a Futures Wheel

'Not just spaces, but activities and action be more inclusive and sustainable.'

'ownership.'

Cluster example 2

From Step 1 A connection all the groups identified

'Community learning and education - cultural shift using opportunities to learn within communities (broader than institutional learning).'

From Step 2 A feedback point from one group

'The impact of local growing, sharing, learning about food.'

From Step 3 A specific idea from a Futures Wheel

'Opportunity to do stuff and try things (with space and place to do this).'

'A Circular Food system.'

Step 5 Write your Preferred Future Statements

The items on your list will now have to be transformed into Preferred Future Statements.

A Preferred Future Statement describes a positive vision for the future, in relation to one specific theme. It should be clear and succinct. It should also, counterintuitively, be written in the present tense. This helps the audience to envision this specific future, bring it to life, and see themselves within this new world.

Examples of Future Statements from cluster 1 and 2

Cluster 1

'Town Centre spaces: making the most of assets and infrastructure to benefit the community and environment.'

Cluster 2

'A flourishing circular food system locally, from farm to fork, promotes learning and sharing and supports local food producers.'

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The Preferred Future Statements can now be used as the input for Activity 4, the Three Horizons.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Preparation

- If time is of the essence (or if you wish to involve all participants in this process), initial Preferred Future Statement drafts can be written at the end of the Futures Wheels workshop but would still require tidying up afterwards.
- This activity could also be a stand-alone part of the process in collaboration with an agreed-upon smaller group from the community. With both options, the drafts are shared and circulated to the broader community for input and approval.

- If you are running the process over two days, you would identify the Preferred Futures Statements overnight and test them with participants at the start of the second session.

During the activity

- Make sure you have enough Preferred Futures Statements. If you will be using small groups again (preferably of no more than five or six participants) you will need one Preferred Future Statement for each group. Five Futures Statements is probably as many as you'll be able to focus on. If you have more groups than this, get some of them to double up and do separate reviews of the same Futures Statement.

After the activity

- You might consider circulating these statements before you commence with Activity 4, to allow people to suggest improvements so that they are comfortable with them.

Activity 4: Three Horizons

OVERVIEW

Purpose

This activity explores the Preferred Future Statements you created in Activity 3 to identify a set of possible ideas for action which may help you progress your vision of the future.

Introduction

Participants in this activity will focus on three different times: the future, the present and the time between the two – the Three Horizons.

They will first be exploring the Preferred Future Statements, which represent aspects you want to include in your vision of the future. They will expand on what these statements of the future mean for them and what it might look like.

They will then compare these statements to the present to note how the preferred future is different. These differences will highlight gaps, obstacles and possible opportunities that lie in wait.

Using this information, the group will finally identify possible broadly defined actions as a way for the community to move towards the preferred future.

PREPARATION

Preparation time	60 Minutes
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Activity duration	120 Minutes
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Difficulty level	Moderate
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Input

The Preferred Future Statements created in Activity 3.

Output

A list of actions or action areas based on identified gaps, obstacles and opportunities that lie between the present and their preferred futures.

Materials needed

1. Three Horizons Templates (could even be hand-drawn or blank space on a wall).
2. Flip charts and different coloured Post It notes. (or digital equivalents for online events).

Room arrangements

Divide your group into smaller groups and hand out one Preferred Future statement to each group.

Templates

Find downloadable templates in Part 3 of this toolkit.

ACTIVITY

Timetable		
Part A		15 minutes
Step 1	Understand your Preferred Future Statement	
Step 2	Explore your Preferred Future Statement and describe its building blocks	
Part B		15 minutes
Step 3	Describe your world today	
Step 4	Identify any signs of your preferred future that already exist	
Part C		35 minutes
Step 5	Identify gaps, obstacles and innovations between present and future	
Step 6	Cluster ideas together where possible	
Step 7	Turn your clusters into action sentences	
Break		10 minutes
Part D		40 minutes
Step 8	Group feedback and identifying common themes	

Instructions

PART A: Horizon 3 – Your Preferred, Positive Future

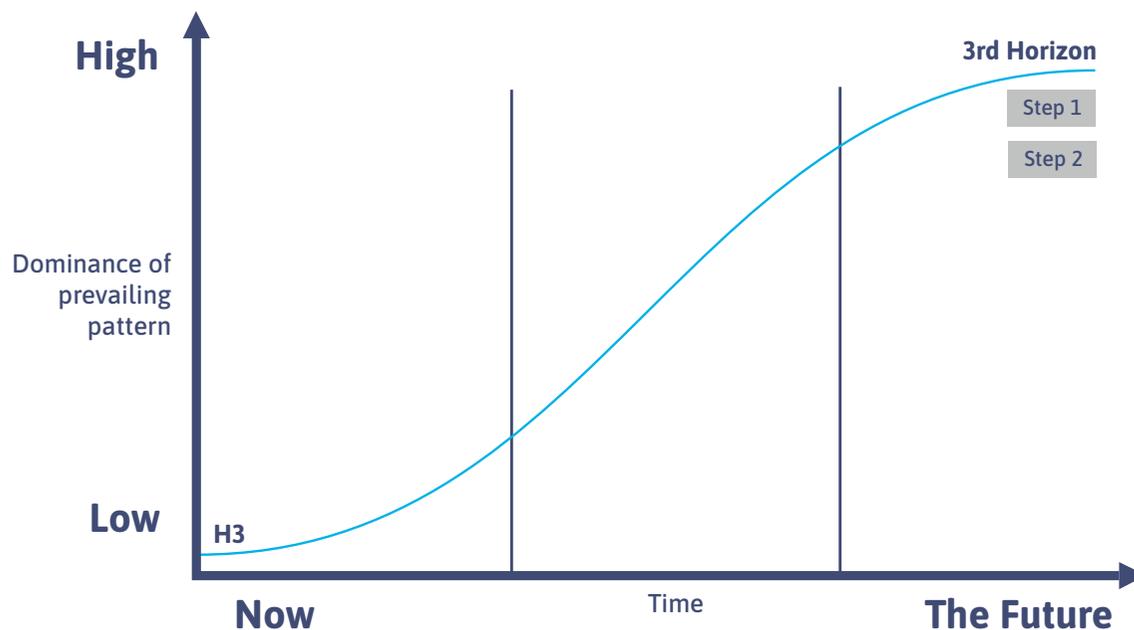


Figure 2: The Third Horizon

In Figure 2 the present is on the left hand side of the diagram. And the Future is on the right side. The blue line, or Horizon 3 represents our Preferred Future Statements. In the diagram, the ideas described in the Future Statement are low on the left hand side; they are the exception rather than the rule. They are not a mainstream part of everyday life.

Compare that to the Preferred Future, where the ideas described in your statement are commonplace, or dominant. That's why they are at the top right of the diagram.

STEP 1 Understand your Preferred Future Statement

Look at your Preferred Future Statement and consider each of the following questions:

1. What stands out from your Statement?
2. What is most exciting about this Statement?
3. What insights does this statement raise for you?

Based on your group's discussion, does the statement need to be changed in some way so it makes more sense or is easier to discuss? If so, make any related changes.

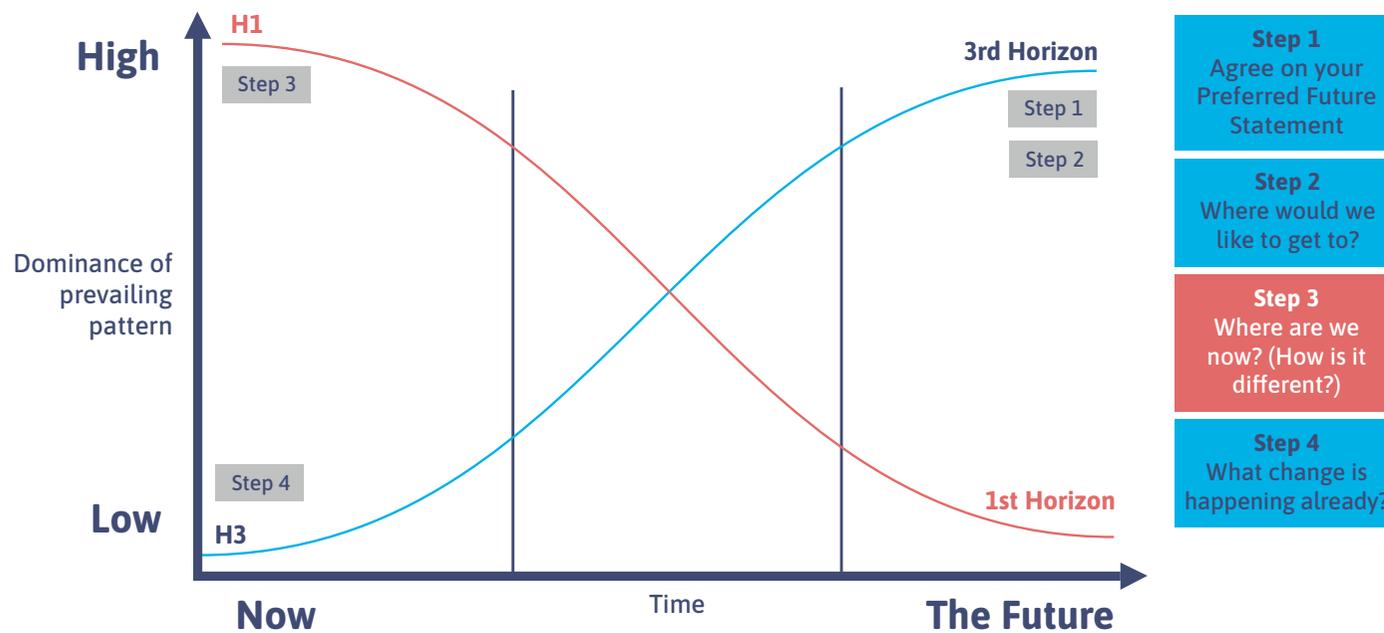
STEP 2 Explore your Preferred Future Statement

Imagine yourself living in this world and discuss each of the following:

1. How do you act in this Preferred Future?
2. How do you describe yourself to someone in this Preferred Future?
3. How are your values different? In what way
4. How are the values of society different? In what way
5. What are the foundations for this Preferred Future?

Based on your discussion, add short descriptions of this world on green cards and add them to the top right of your template. Remember there are no right or wrong answers!

PART B: Horizon 1 – What your theme looks like today



In Figure 3 we now also have a red line – that’s Horizon 1. It represents the present, our current situation in which we find ourselves. Interestingly we can also see that a small part of the green line, our Preferred Future (Horizon 3) already exists – they are the exception rather than the rule.

In Part B, we will explore the red line and also identify small signs of our Preferred Future we can think of today.

Figure 3: The First Horizon

STEP 3 Describe your world today

Think deeply about the way we live today. In relation to our Futures Statement, think about the following:

1. What words would you use to describe the way in which we live today?
2. What values or worldviews underpin the way we live today?

So, for example, if you are working on a Preferred Future Statement about food, you'll end up focussing on factors that influence the way the current food system works. Think about social factors, technology, the local and national economy, the environment and the influence of local and national politics.

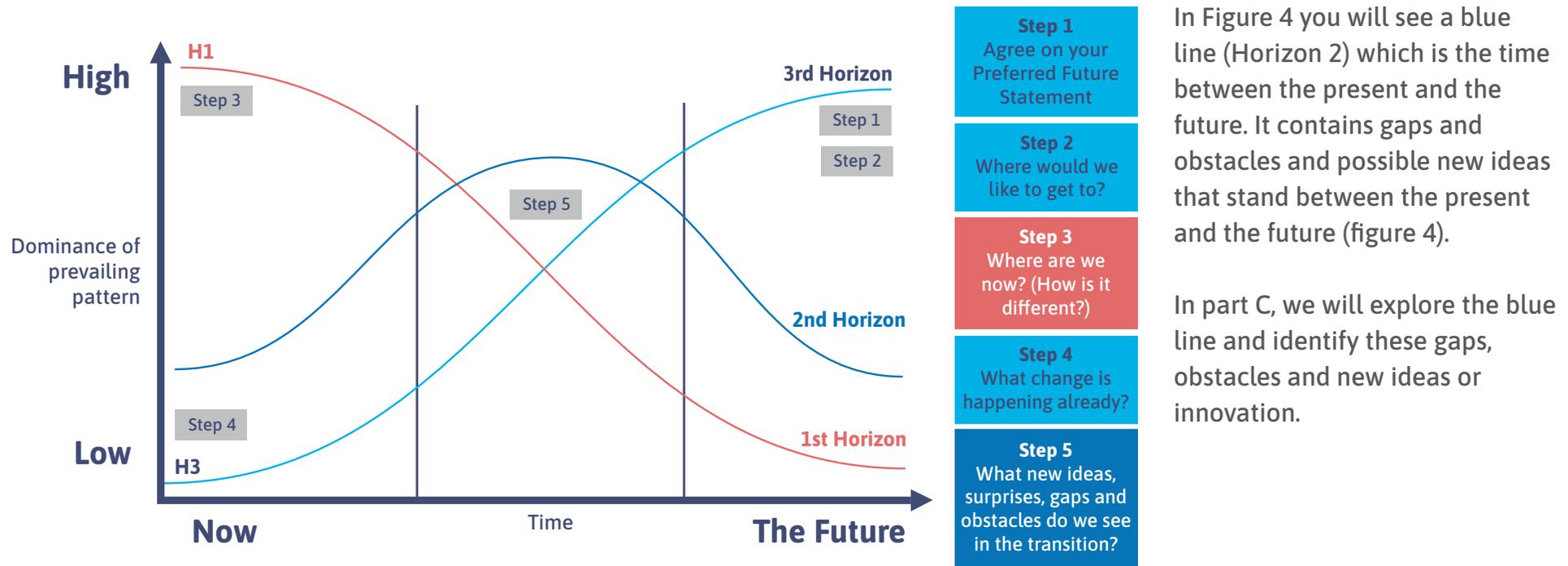
Write down your insights on red Post Its and add to the top left corner of your template.

STEP 4 Identify any signs of your preferred future that already exist

Do you know of any projects or pilots that are happening today, either locally or elsewhere? Those trying to achieve something related to your Preferred Future?

Write down any current activities or capabilities you might think of on green Post Its and add them to the bottom left of your template. (Some examples might have come up in your earlier discussion about Seeds of Change in Activity 1).

PART C: Horizon 2 – Explore how to move from today to your preferred future



In Figure 4 you will see a blue line (Horizon 2) which is the time between the present and the future. It contains gaps and obstacles and possible new ideas that stand between the present and the future (figure 4).

In part C, we will explore the blue line and identify these gaps, obstacles and new ideas or innovation.

Figure 4: The Second Horizon

STEP 5 Identify gaps, obstacles and innovations between present and future

Look at the space between the future and the present and think how they might connect them. Use these questions to help steer the conversation:

1. What new ideas or innovations could help us?
2. What needs to happen to make things change?
3. What gaps are there?
4. What obstacles may we encounter on the way?
5. What do we need to know that we don't currently know?
6. Who do we need to talk to or connect with?

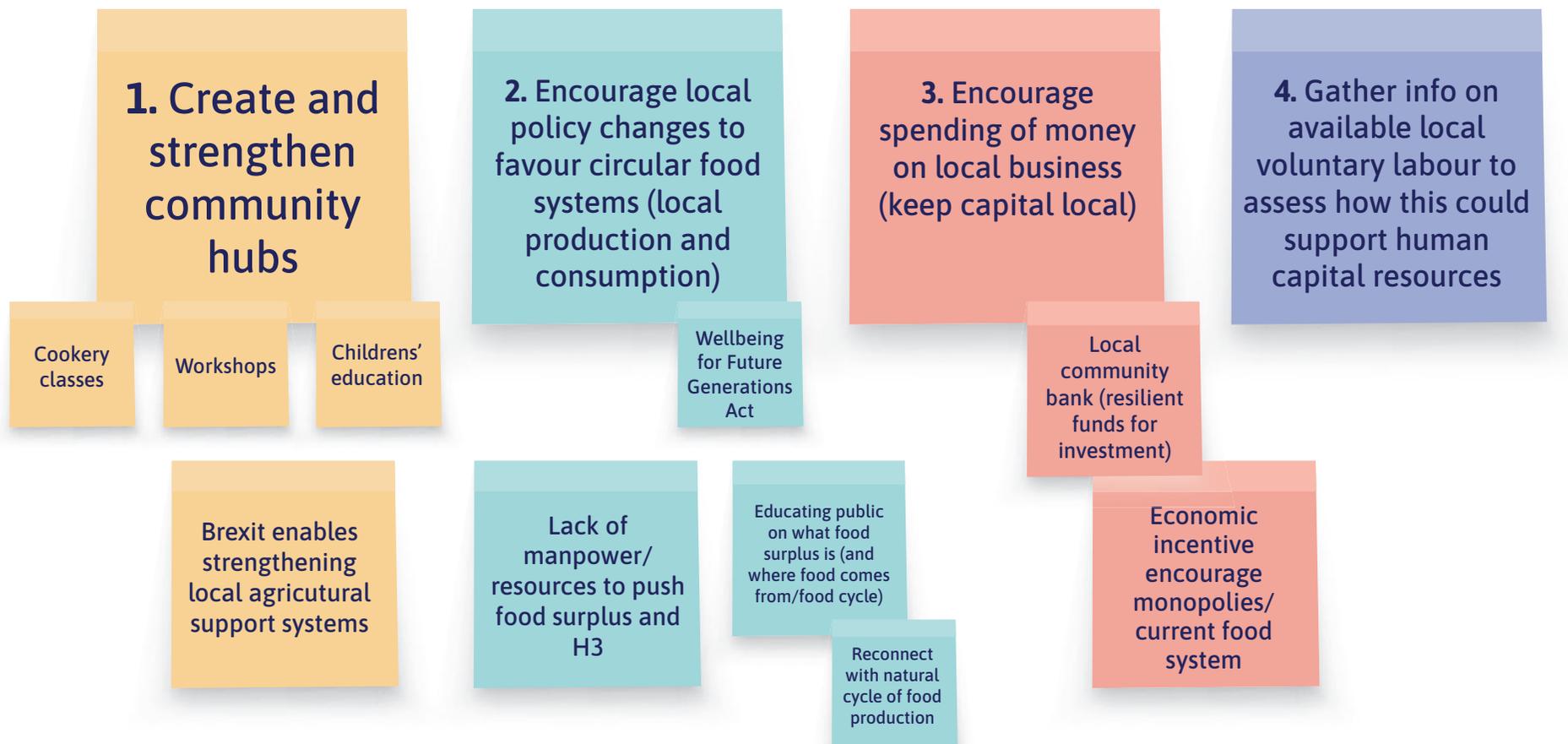
Write your main ideas on blue Post Its and add them to the center of your template, between the present and the future.

STEP 6 Cluster ideas together where possible

See which innovations, gaps and obstacles you identified in Step 5 might connect with each other and go together in a group. For instance, some gaps or obstacles might be related, or some ideas and innovations could fill the gaps or overcome the obstacles.

Cluster Post It notes together wherever possible.

Examples of Step 6 output



STEP 7 Turn your clusters into action sentences

Look at each cluster and ask what this cluster prompts you to do in order to reach your preferred future.

Write down one action sentence for each cluster of Post Its, beginning your sentences with verbs that denote a specific action.

Examples of Action Sentences

'Encourage local policy changes to favour circular food systems (local production and consumption).'

'Gather information on available local voluntary labour to assess how this could support human capital resources.'

'Create and strengthen community hubs (eg the cookery classes, workshops, children's education).'

'Encourage spending of money on local business (keep capital local).'

PART D: Feedback**STEP 8 Group feedback and identifying common themes**

All groups give feedback in the larger group, sharing the content and main themes from their template.

See if there are any common themes that emerge from the feedback and write them down.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The output from this activity will be collated and refined to be used in the next activity which will help us to focus strategically on next steps.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Key framing messages for this activity

- Should you use the version that depicts the Three Horizons as curves, let participants know they're not doing anything complicated! Reassure them that the curves only indicate that all horizons are present at the same time – but that each is dominant at different times.

Preparation

- Write the Preferred Future Statement and any additional descriptions in the present tense will help participants explore this future more easily.

- Make the Preferred Future Statement as concrete as possible, while keeping it broad enough to explore.
- People can choose which group they want to work in, or you can direct people to a particular theme they may be interested in. You'll need to decide which is most important based on the participant's interests.

During the activity

Horizon 1

- Spend just enough time here to highlight the important differences between the Preferred Future and the present and move on to Horizon 2.

Horizon 2

- Try to get to Horizon 2 quickly so the group can spend the most time here exploring the ideas for innovation, gaps and obstacles.
- When participants are developing their Action Statements, challenge them to start with a verb and develop something concrete about what will be done next.

EXAMPLES OF A THREE HORIZONS EXERCISE

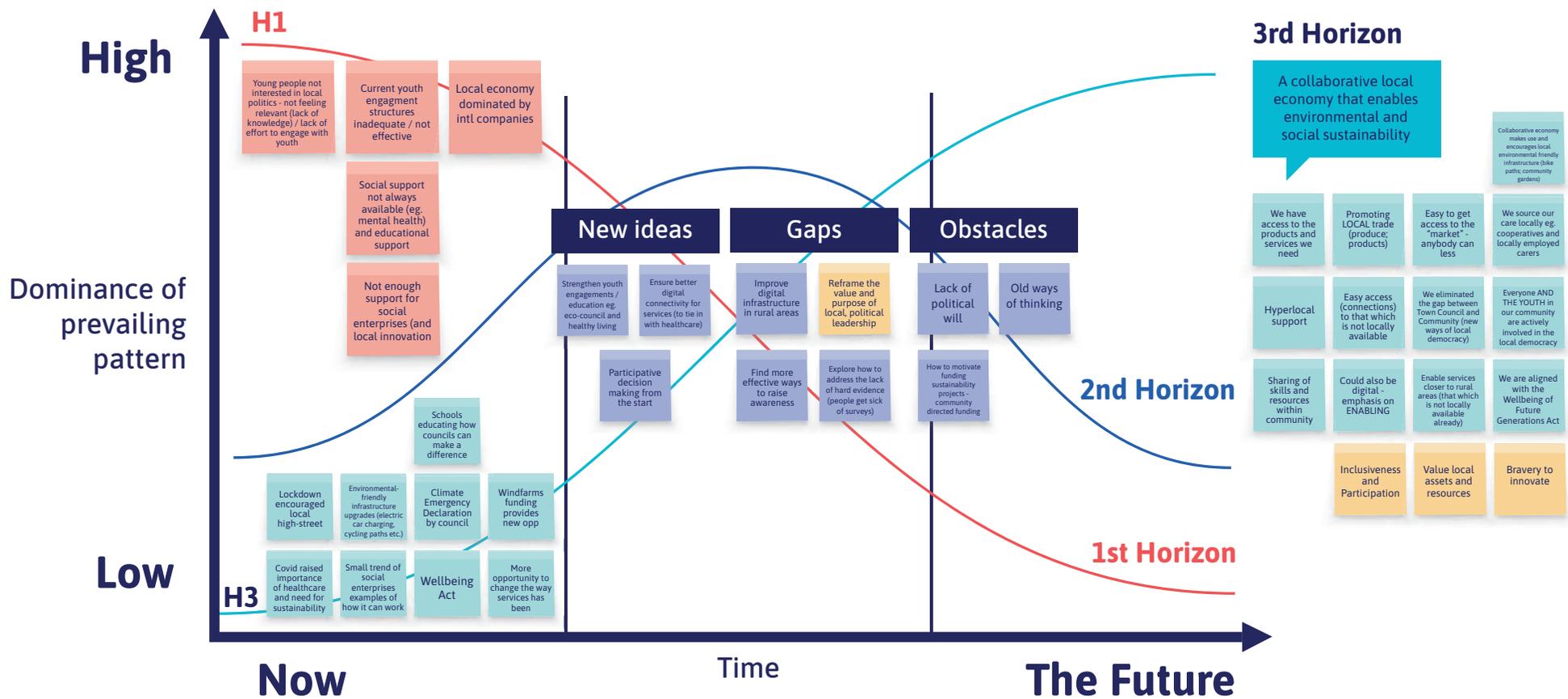


Image 3: Three Horizons Example Source: WCVA community workshop

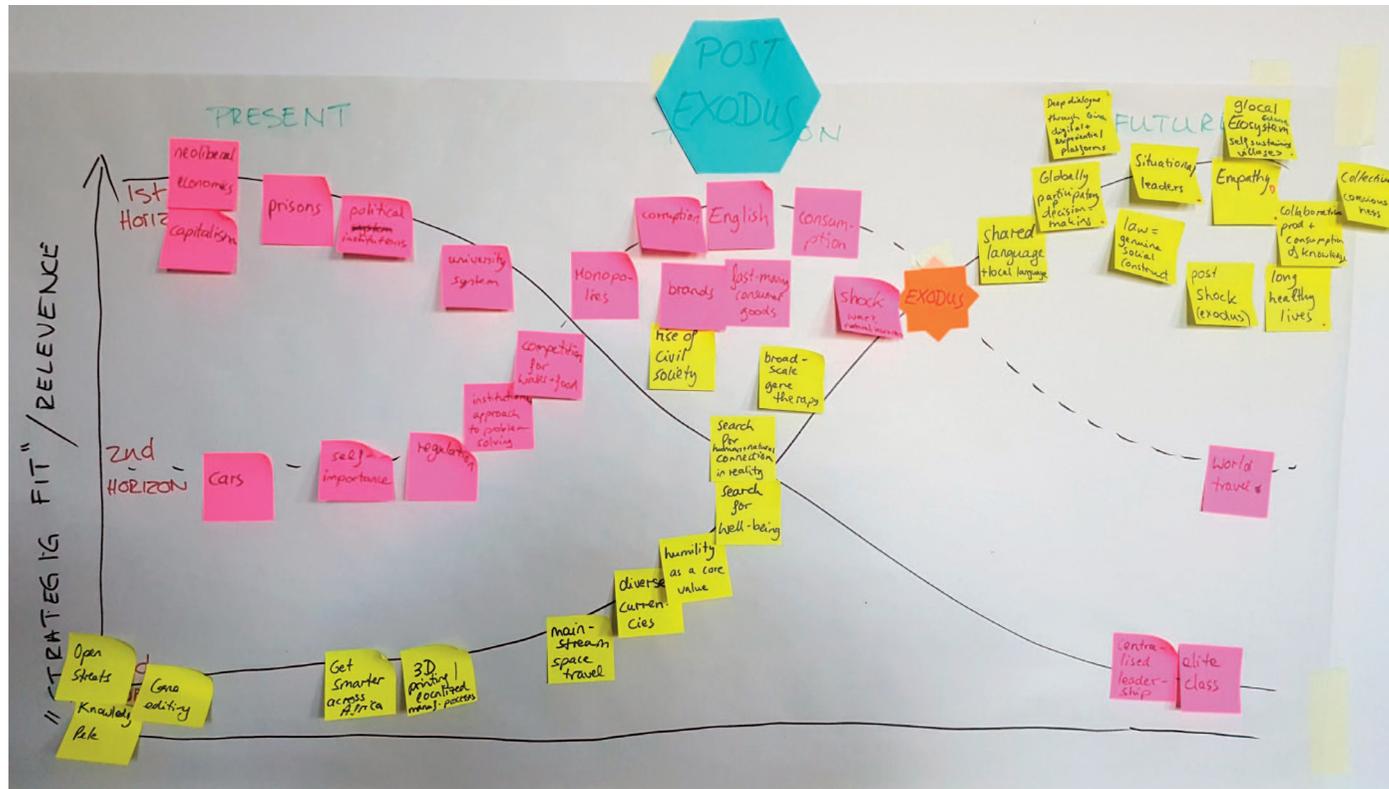


Image 4: Three Horizons workshop example.

Source: M. Hamann et. al. 2018. Using futures methods to create transformative spaces: Visions of a good anthropocene in Southern Africa. In Ecology and Society 23(1). [\(Link\)](#)

Activity 5: The Planning Tree

OVERVIEW

Purpose

Previously in Activity 4, you identified a set of actions that could be taken today that would, together, help you reach your community's Preferred Future. In this exercise we will start to think about these actions differently. They'll now be reframed as the goals of the whole process and during this exercise we will start to explore how to reach them over time.

Introduction

Participants in this activity will explore the action statements that allow them to reach their preferred future. They will first explore their motivation for wanting to reach this goal. Then they will convert their action statements into specific goals and describe them further. This will allow them to construct a step-by-step roadmap towards reaching this goal.

This exercise effectively connects the futures journey with strategic planning, by providing a goal and a specific roadmap that can be incorporated into strategy.

PREPARATION

Preparation time	30 Minutes
<hr/>	
Activity duration	75 Minutes
<hr/>	
Difficulty level	Easy

Input

1. The action statements groups wrote from the end of activity 4 (Three Horizons).
2. The positive signals of change identified in Horizon 1 of activity 5.

Output

A list of short term and medium actions your community could pursue towards your goal.

Materials needed

1. The action statements as outputs from Activity 4, the Three Horizons.
2. Flip charts and different coloured Post It notes.

Templates

Find downloadable templates in Part 3 of this toolkit.

ACTIVITY

Timetable		
Part A		15 minutes
Step 1	Turn your actions into goals	
Step 2	Clarify your motivation	
Step 3	Describe the outcome of this goal five years from now	
Part B		10 minutes
Step 4	Identify any signs of your preferred future that already exist	
Part C		20 minutes
Step 5	Connect what you have today with your desired goal	
Part D		30 minutes
Step 6	Feedback and discussion from all groups	

Preparation

Look at the action sentences from all groups and see whether there are some you could combine. If any are combined, rewrite the combination into a new action sentence.

Different people might be interested in different actions. You could divide them into groups according to their interests to complete steps 1-4 below.

Instructions

PART A: Why are we doing this and what will it look like?

Step 1 Turn your actions into goals

Select an action from one of your action sentences related to your preferred future. What does success for this action look like five years from now?

Write this into a goal at the top of your template. Goals usually are single statements.

Example of a goal

‘Creating positive community investment by keeping money in the community.’

Step 2 Clarify your motivation

Define your goal more clearly by exploring your motivations for pursuing this goal and the values that drive you as community. Why are you doing this? Write that down and possibly start with ‘We are doing this...’

Example of a motivation statement

‘We are doing this to create a more viable local economy which creates opportunities for higher value work and skills, by keeping money that the community spends within the community.’

Step 3 Describe the outcome of this goal five years from now

If you have reached your goal five years from now, what would this look like? What are the concrete things that have been put in place along the way? Write down the three to four significant things that will be in place if this goal is a reality.

Description examples of how a goal might look like five years from now

'A local investment fund has been designed and is being piloted.'

'The Town Council has implemented a procurement policy that enables local businesses to compete for tenders.'

'A network of several viable community businesses in multiple sectors, supported by Cambrian digital currency.'

Example descriptions of current status and capabilities

'We already have a viable community cafe as a role and learning model.'

'Some work has been done on a local or regional digital currency.'

2. You can also explore which of the positive, existing signals of change you identified in Horizon 1 you might connect with, emulate or use as inspiration to help you start.

PART B: What are our current status and capabilities?

Step 4 Deciding how to start today

1. Think about what you already have in place that can help you start your journey towards achieving these goals.
 - What are your current capabilities and successes?
 - What are your existing assets, networks and resources?
 - What existing relationships can you harness to achieve this specific goal?

Description of signals of change

'Time banking'

'Regional cooperative banks'

'Local currency'

PART C: What gaps do we need to fill?

Step 5 Connect what you have today with the attainment of your desired goal

We now look at the gap we have created between the present and when the community has reached the goal, five years from now.

Discuss what you as a community need to do to successfully achieve your outcome over time. During the discussion, try to arrange ideas into the short and medium term:

- What are the three to five most important things we need to do in the next one to two years?
- What are the two to three things we'd need to do three to five years from now?

Some ideas could be executed immediately, while others could happen only later. There might also be a chain of ideas that needs to be arranged in logical sequence from short to medium term.

Write these ideas down, but keep it clear by always starting with a verb.

Ideas of things you could do in the next one to two or three to five years

'Establish within the Town Council the state of interest and work done on local procurement rules. Support this if needed.'

'Research status of regional co-operative banks.'

'Identify possibilities such as pension based or savings based local fund.'

PART D: Feedback

Step 6 Feedback and discussion

Groups can now share their Planning Trees with the other groups.

Take care to note whether some trees share common actions or capabilities in the short term (in the next few years). Is there anything that could be done with these common actions to reach the goals even faster?

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The actions identified in the short and medium-term can now be integrated into a workplan.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Preparation

- Make sure to have clear action statements from Activity 4.

During the activity

- Step 5 might feel too open ended, messy and disorderly at first. But allow time for the discussion to develop and highlight the difference between the short term and medium-term ideas.
 - Think about the order of actions too. What should come first? What are the following steps?
- During the feedback, take note of which actions correlate with those from other groups and see how they can be clustered together into one strategic track.
 - If you are doing this in a face-to-face workshop, you can also get the group to help you prioritise the different proposed actions across the different Planning Trees by using sticky dots. Give each participant two sticky dots and ask them to put those dots on the activity in years one to two that will have the most overall impact. Then review which actions have attracted most dots, and ask people why they have focussed on those actions.

EXAMPLE OF A PLANNING TREE EXERCISE

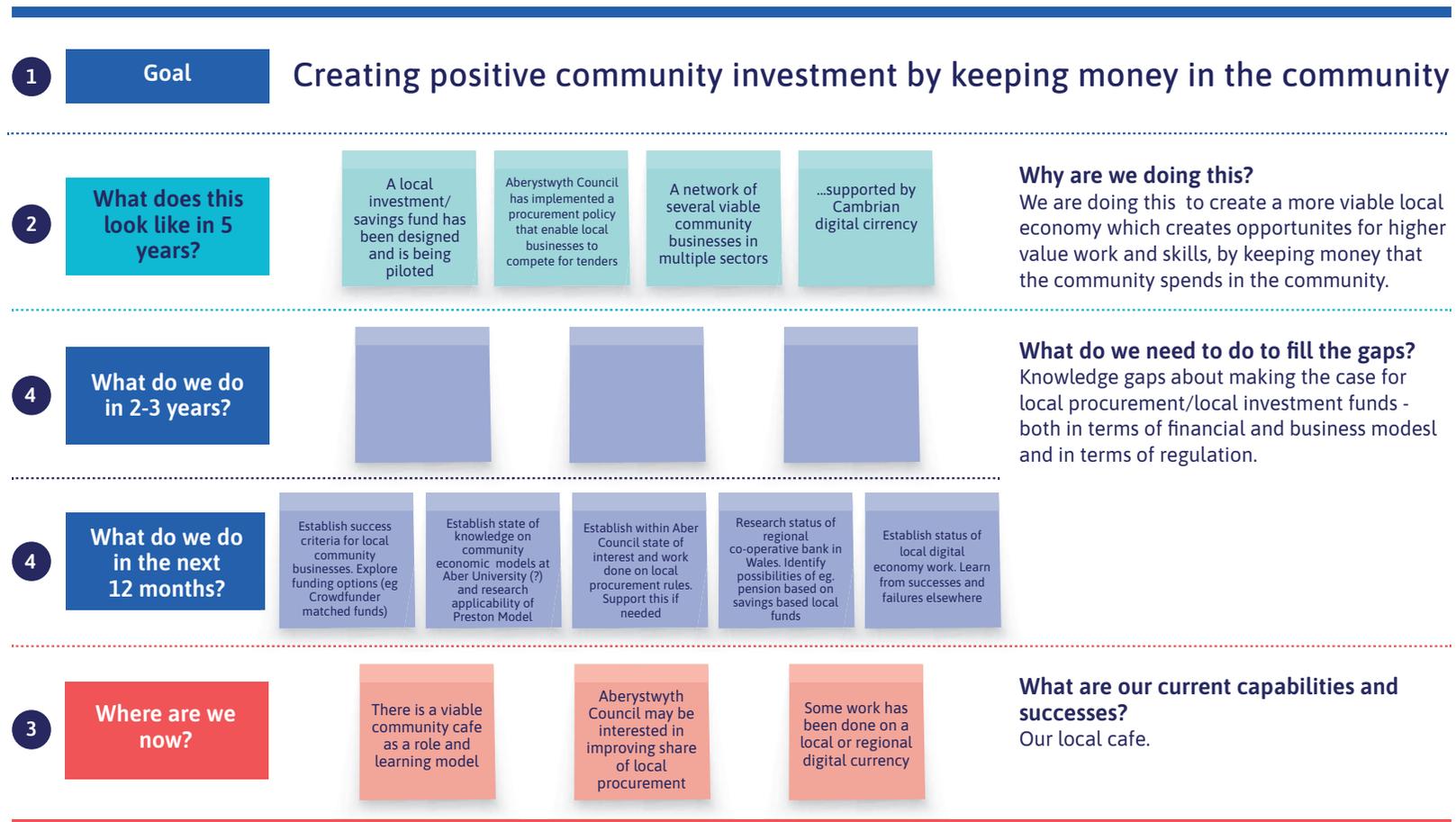


Image 5: Planning Tree example. Source: WCVA community workshop

WHAT NEXT

Integrating with your plan

Having done these exercises, you should have a set of desired outcomes to support you in taking steps towards your Preferred Futures, a clear sense of purpose, and a way to address specific problems that have come up during the overall process.

It is good to reflect on the project's original question and purpose so you can integrate these outputs with your planning more meaningfully. Have you got to somewhere that is going to be valuable for your community or organisation? Are you confident enough to act on the output, or do you need to extend this conversation to include other people?

At the start of the toolkit, we suggested you plan beforehand on how to use the project output. The points we suggested you consider will help you refine the output more clearly and adapt them to fit your present resources:

1. What is your plan to communicate project outputs? Who do you need to talk to? (Who can help you reach your goals?) What key messages do you now need to share?
2. How will you align project outputs with existing projects and programmes, if you have these? For instance, what is new, and what can be added to existing work? Is there low hanging fruit that would be an 'easy win' and would be an early sign of progress?
3. How will your current community structure be able to respond to the project outputs? Would you need to make some changes, hire more staff, drop or add new capabilities? Or do you need to set up an organisation to take things forwards?

Just as importantly, you might also want to explore how project outputs will link with and influence your community values, approach and organisation.

Influence on community level

Before starting the project, we asked you to consider who the leaders and champions might be that could take the outputs forward in your community. How can you involve those who participated in this project and have an interest in helping to take it forwards? What type of engagements would be most suitable? And what new stakeholders do you need to connect with, based on your output?

Influence on regional or national level

Some of your outcomes might relate to systemic factors on a broader level than your immediate context. You might need to reach out and have conversations with the existing political or regulatory institutions, or other organisations operating on that level.

Part 3

Resources and support

The Seedbank, other resources and networking

Seeds of Good Anthropocenes

The Seeds of the Good Anthropocene is a project that aims to identify signs of positive, alternative futures that are environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable and that may already exist in many places around the world. Their focus on positive images counterbalances the dystopian images that often dominate our thinking and prevent us from moving towards a more positive future.

The project forms part of the 'Bright Spots – Seeds of a Good Anthropocene,' initiative and is a collaboration between McGill University in Canada, the Stockholm Resilience Centre at Stockholm University in Sweden, and the Centre for Complex Systems in Transition (CST) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa.

For more information visit:

<https://goodanthropocenes.net/what-are-seeds/>

WCVA Influencing A Positive Future

During the different Coronavirus lockdown episodes, WCVA wanted to support the sector as it responded to the immediate crisis, but also do it in a way that supports better futures for the long-term.

For more information visit:

<https://wcva.cymru/influencing-a-positive-future/>

Understanding Welsh Places

This Institute of Welsh Affairs project collected and analysed data on over 300 towns in Wales which can be used to help inform and empower communities across the country.

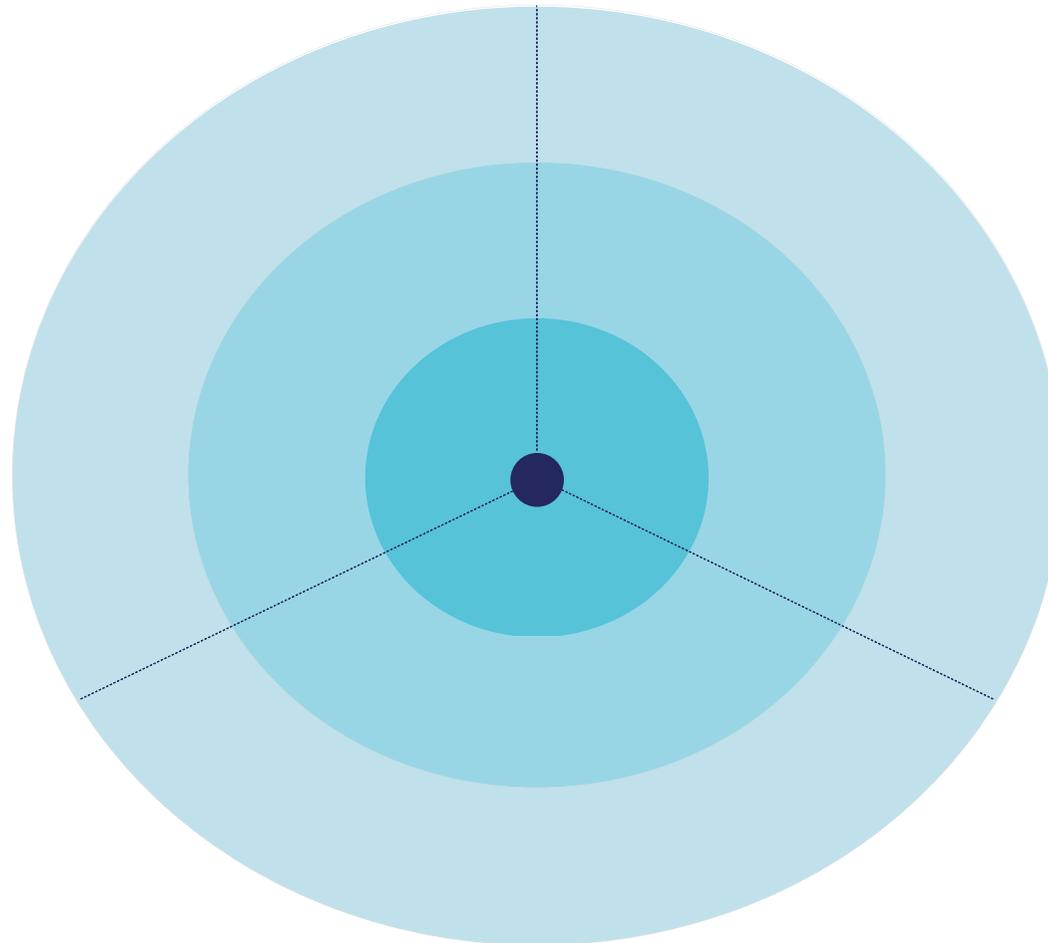
For more information visit:

<https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2019/10/understanding-welsh-places/>

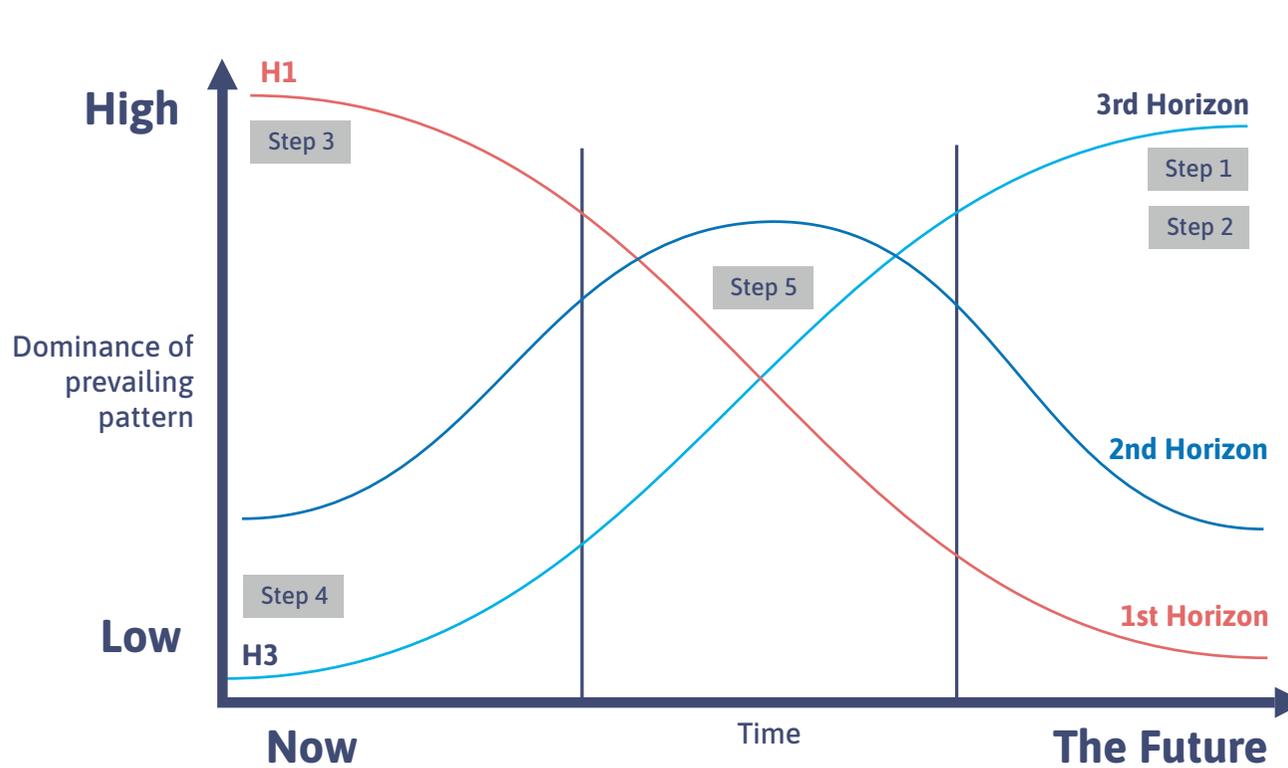
Downloadable Templates

ACTIVITY 2 Building Future Wheels

1. Futures Wheel 1



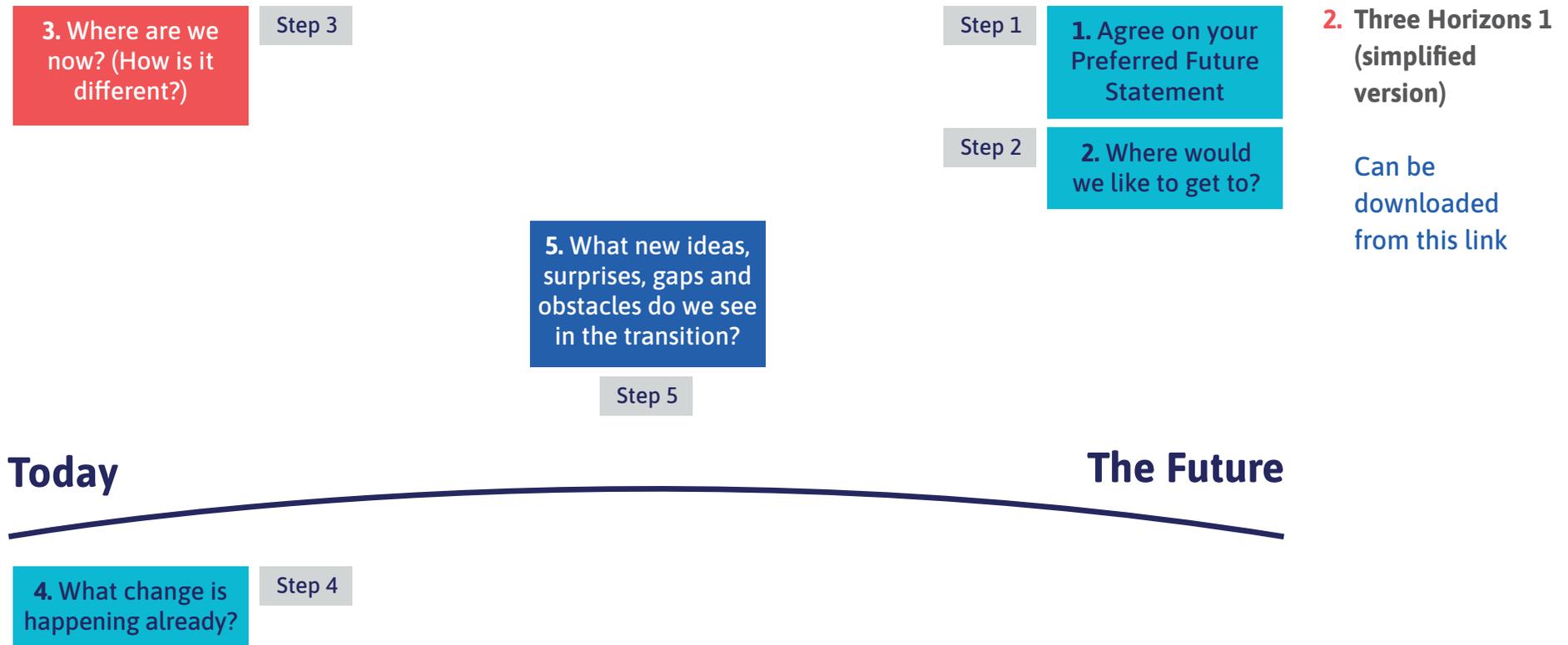
ACTIVITY 4
Three Horizons



- Step 1**
Agree on your Preferred Future Statement
- Step 2**
Where would we like to get to?
- Step 3**
Where are we now? (How is it different?)
- Step 4**
What change is happening already?
- Step 5**
What new ideas, surprises, gaps and obstacles do we see in the transition?

1. Three Horizons 1 (standard version)

Can be downloaded from this link



ACTIVITY 5 The Planning Tree

1	Goal		
2	What does this look like in 5 years?	<div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p>Add only about 1 -2 ideas here</p>	<p>Why are we doing this?</p>
4	What do we do in 2-3 years?	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> </div> <p>Add only about 3 -5 ideas here</p>	<p>What do we need to do to fill the gaps?</p>
4	What do we do in the next 12 months?	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> </div> <p>Add only about 4 -6 ideas here</p>	
3	Where are we now?	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; width: 100px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> </div> <p>Add only about 2 -3 ideas here</p>	

1. Planning Tree

Can be downloaded from this link

Hosting virtual workshops

THE CASE FOR GOING VIRTUAL

The intention is for the activities in this toolkit to be run as an physical event in a venue that is safe and accessible for your participants. If you are unable to safely hold workshops in a venue because of Government restrictions, or because your community is geographically dispersed, it is possible to do all of the activities online.

PREPARATION

Connectivity

Before considering any online engagement, make sure the intended participants can collaborate effectively online by having:

- a. adequate connectivity and bandwidth to collaborate on online platforms, and
- b. the necessary devices such as laptops/a computer as phones or tablets might limit their participation to some extent.

Materials and platforms

All activities in this toolkit can be done with participants in a physical room with the basic printouts or cards you can make yourself, a set of flipcharts, pens and Post It notes.

However, if you do this virtually, your only interaction with participants is through their screens. To have a successful virtual meeting, you would need four components:

A guiding PowerPoint

We suggest the PowerPoint to contain the following:

- An agenda for your time together.
- An introduction to the necessary exercise inputs (eg the Future Statements).
- Exercise instructions.
- Placeholder slides to indicate where you are in the agenda (eg group breakout or feedback times, and comfort breaks).

A meeting platform

We suggest the meeting platform to be able to do the following:

- Have all participants hear and see one another.
- Screensharing by hosts and any participants where needed.
- A chat function.
- Ability to divide larger groups into smaller breakout rooms of about four to five people.

Zoom or Google Hangouts are examples of recommended platforms which are easily accessible. Before your meeting, have a trial run to make sure everything works as intended and so that you're really confident using the system.

A collaboration platform

We suggest that the collaborative platform should contain:

- Exercise instructions and templates for each breakout group to work on separately.

- A dedicated space additional to group spaces where notes from feedback sessions can be written for all to see.
- Open access to anyone who needs to collaborate on this.

You will ideally need a facilitators for each of the small groups. You could set up the session so that only facilitators access the collaborative platform and add items to the exercise board on behalf of participants during the conversation. This might prevent frustration from participants struggling to operate the platform.

Good platforms for this purpose are are Miro, Mural or Google Jamboard.

A communication backchannel

You could also consider setting up a temporary Whatsapp, or Signal group, especially for the hosts and facilitators to communicate with one another outside of the room around technical issues, timing changes or important questions that need to be addressed.

PROS AND CONS OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Pros

- Software can help organise information.
- People from a wide area can participate and even join from their homes.
- People from diverse backgrounds can be included more easily.
- A highly visual and discursive process.
- The digital format appeals to younger people.
- The chat facility provides another means of communication during the session.

Cons

- Might disadvantage some groups who are without digital access.
- Does not allow the important offline conversations during breaks or lunch time.
- It is less effective than face to face encounters in building relationships.
- Some of the processes benefit from a more informal discussion process that allows agreement to emerge, which works better in a physical setting.
- Tends to elevate one language for discourse above others in order to be efficient.
- It is harder to gauge the emotional connection of participants to the process.