GUIDANCE FOR SCENARIO PLANNING

SCENARIO PLANNING

A process that allows you to **plan for an uncertain future**

First, you scan the current reality, identify things that could change, and assess how they could change. These changes allow you to produce scenarios.

Then, you develop initiatives, projects, and policies that support a preferred scenario, multiple scenarios, or all scenarios

RULES-OF-THUMB

Your Mind is (Mostly) Free
Scenario Planning is mostly about imagining the future collaboratively with others in your organization and in your community. **What do you think could happen, and what would that mean for your region?** Imagining doesn't cost a dime.

Start the Conversation
Every community, no matter how big or small, is full of smart folks. **Public outreach and advisory committees** can be very inexpensive and very high-value — not only can they reveal public preferences and beliefs you may not have anticipated, they also lend your effort credibility, integrity, and approachability in the eyes of your public and stakeholders.

Take Your Time and Ask for Help
Your region, state, and country are full of potential partners that can pool resources or share their advantages with you. Also, long-term planning is cyclical, and you don't need to get all the way there the first time. If you don't have the staff time to spend all at once, do one step for this LRTP and make a plan for what you'll tackle next time.
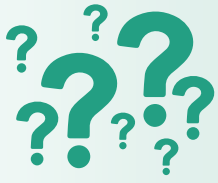
Scenario Planning
LITE

WHAT COULD CHANGE?

ACTORS	FACTORS	SECTORS
People, institutions, and organizations whose decisions impact the future	Societal concepts, constructs, or characteristics	Arenas where actors and factors interact

WEAVING SCENARIOS

SINGLE VARIABLE

A global force (climate change), an external human decision (factory closure), or a sector variable (automated vehicles)

INTERACTIONS

Can be intuitive (how would these trends occur together?), thematic (start with concept and work back), or data-based

OUTCOMES

Predictive | We assume we know what will happen, so we pick actions that will help
Normative | We pick actions that make a desired future more likely, while hedging for others
Explorative | We pick robust actions that will help in the most plausible futures
Generating and prioritizing actions will require input from advisors, partners, and stakeholders

SAMPLE SCENARIOS

ENDURING URBANISM

SEVERE CLIMATE

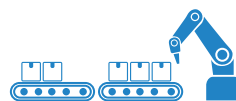THE U.S. ENERGY BOOM

TECHTOPIA

GENERAL SLOWDOWN

THE FREE AGENT ECONOMY

TRANSPORTATION ON DEMAND

INDUSTRIAL RENAISSANCE

SILVER AGE