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Horizon Scanning:

Should your organisation do it and, if yes, how?

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Horizon Scanning:

Should your organisation do it and, if yes, how?

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What is Horizon Scanning?

Horizon Scanning is the purposeful and systematic gathering of intelligence about emerging trends, drivers and weak signals of change to better understand what may lay ahead and plan for future risks and opportunities. Horizon scanning can help us deal with uncertainty and map out potential changes in our area of work or interest.

“...horizon scanning in its broadest sense **is an attempt to systematically imagine the future in order to better plan a response**. In the absence of a crystal ball, it can help organisations to detect signals, identify trends and think more inventively about what the future might hold, enabling them to capitalise on opportunities and better mitigate threats. It is a crucial activity for any organisation tasked with long-term decision-making.” (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, [Government Horizon Scanning](#), 2013-14).

Who is this toolkit for?

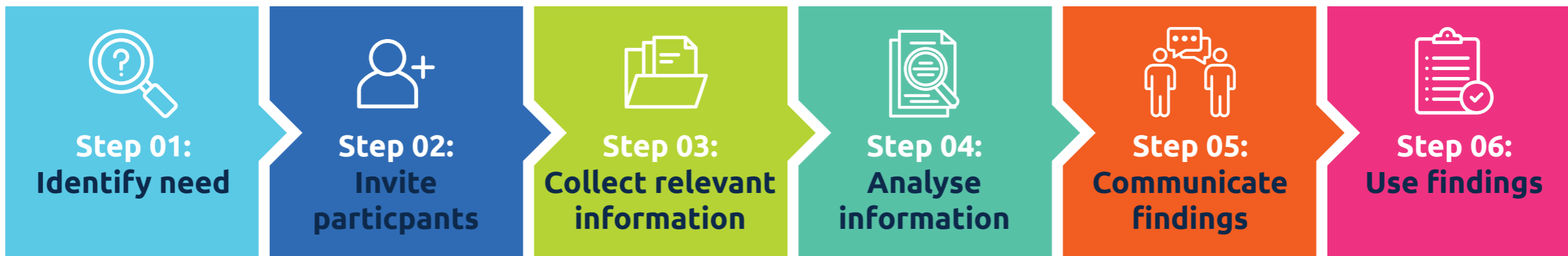
Anyone involved in informing or making decisions needs to consider the future and future generations, like public bodies in Wales with duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This can help better implement the legislation and specifically the long-term way of working.

This is a scalable method. You can work alone and focus on desk research or involve a group of experts to inform the work and identify potential impacts during the analysis. This can be a self-contained exercise to inform policy or a part of a string of exercises in bigger projects. It can be followed up by Driver Mapping, Visioning, SWOT Analysis, Policy Stress-testing and more.

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The process...



Key questions to ask:

- Do we have a good reason to do horizon scanning?
- Do you have the buy-in to support horizon scanning?
- Do the resources you have for horizon scanning match the expectations?
- Are the obstacles to using horizon scanning findings being addressed?

If the answer to these questions isn't **yes, you need to rethink whether you should start doing horizon scanning.**

Following a Horizon Scanning exercise, you end up with:

- A set of documents ('scans') or a report highlighting trends and early signals that may affect the future operating environment of the organisation or a policy area
- A better understanding of trends and changes shaping the external world
- An understanding of how your strategy or policies might need to change in response



Identify need



Why would **your organisation** want to do it?

Horizon scanning helps you to...

- Gather **information about emerging trends and developments** that could have an impact on the policy or strategy area in the future
- Explore how these trends and developments might combine and **what impact they might have**
- Support decision-makers to make choices that are more **resilient to future shocks, surprises and uncertainty**
- **Engage a range of people in futures thinking**, so they increase their insight into the changing environment, and gather a variety of opinions



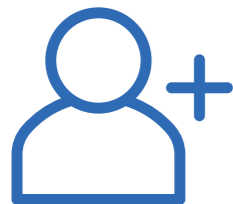
DO

- Understand what you are trying to influence
- Channel results into a decision process



DON'T

- Inflate the potential to find early signals of change (also referred to as scan 'hits') – they are hard to find
- Focus on gathering as much information as possible at the expense of informing a time-sensitive decision



Invite partnerships



Who would **your organisation** want to involve?

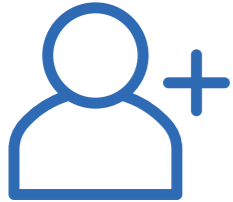
You can involve anyone with an interest in futures work or in the subject area.

Participants can come from inside or outside the team or organisation.

Start with the internal team and then think about inviting external stakeholders who have a good knowledge of the policy area.

To keep the process manageable, you may wish to start with no more than 10 people. You can expand the network at a later date once you have worked out the logistics of your process.

Step 02:



DO

Decide in advance the extent to which you will use external/new voices rather than rely on internal/ the 'usual suspects'



DON'T

Use security/ privacy concerns as a reason to limit the participation of people outside your team



Collect relevant information

 Where should you search for **information**?

Horizon Scanning helps participants to read news articles and journals differently and develop a long-term perspective



Surveys



Workshops



Conferences



Interviews



Data mining

Step 03:



DO

- Decide on the scope of your search i.e. broadly more than one area or deeply at specific areas
- Look outside the box – balancing 'traditional' versus non-traditional sources of data
- Look for 'game changers'



DON'T

- Dismiss information out of hand
- Over collect at the expense of relevance
- Use uncertainty or change as a reason not to think through the long-term implications



What process would **you** want to use for scanning? Who, how often and for how long?

- Horizon scanning is best run in **bursts of several weeks**, or can be run throughout a project to continually build intelligence.
- Each scanner can be asked to **produce one 'scan' per week** that answers the following questions:

1. What is the scan about?

2. How is this related to the policy or strategy area?

3. Why is this important and what has it made you think about?

- The scan can contain links to the original source material/ any other relevant or interesting articles. Ideally, **each scan should be a single page only.**
- Horizon scanning is relatively straightforward but does rely on intuition and insight – which can feel counterintuitive to those who are more practiced in evidence based strategic thinking.
- The hardest part for many authors is knowing whether something they have read is interesting or different enough to include in the scan. Scanners should err on the side of including as much information as possible – even trends that may seem irrelevant at first.



Frequency

- Ongoing, with regular reporting?
- A special request i.e. to support a specific piece of work?
- Periodic e.g. timed to certain events like annual planning?
- Ad hoc i.e. acting when a topic of interest arises and reporting when there are results of note?



Scope

- Wide or narrow?
- Specific issues or whatever comes up?



Difficulty

- Systematically structured or more organic?
- Small or large number of people involved?



Resource requirements

- Dedicated resources or within existing roles?
- Part of or separate from other work e.g. annual planning?
- Specifically funded or within current budgets?



Analyse information



What information would be important for **your organisation** to bring together?

HORIZON SCANNING

Title	More than just affordable
Workstream	Housing
Source	10 Innovative Affordable Housing Designs For Sustainable Living.
Date published	

What is changing?

Recognising that being affordable isn't the only goal. Also want them to be sustainable and create communities.
 E.g. 1) [Via Verde](#), New York City: 222-unit affordable housing complex built on a brownfield site. Certified as sustainable (LEED), a display in the lobby shows energy statistics such as solar panel outputs in real time. The design includes an upward spiraling courtyard garden and social space and 34,000 sq ft of green roof that offer active gardening, reduce storm water run-off, and enhance building insulation.
 E.g. 2) [60 Richmond Street East](#), Toronto: An urban infill project that used reclaimed materials and energy-saving strategies. Features a resident-owned and operated restaurant and training kitchen on the ground floor. Fruit and veg is grown on the 6th floor terrace to help supply the restaurant with food.
 E.g. 3) [Fillmore Park](#), San Francisco: Designed for residents who earn 70-100% of the area's medium income. It is designed around a central courtyard to create a social 'village feel' despite the central urban location.

Why could this be important?

It sees the construction of new homes not just as a way of providing people with somewhere to live, but of creating better communities while respecting environmental sustainability needs.

What else did this make you think about?

Co-localisation of other key services within larger projects, e.g. pharmacies, areas for exercise etc. How many opportunities are there in Wales to do something of this scale? All of these examples are inner city, redesigning brownfield. To what extent is this viable in Wales?

Importance? How important is this to your work? Move the circle	Not important Very important
Certainty? How certain is this trend? Move the circle	Very certain Very uncertain



DO

- Explain how the trend or signal matters – the 'so what'?
- Consider all the 'hits' together, rather than just on their own
- Look for opportunities as well as challenges and risks
- Understand what you can and can't change




DON'T

- Re-hash old ground
- Overestimate the importance of the short-term and underestimate the long-term
- Only look at evidence that reinforces your current view
- Try and make your findings support the current approach



Communicate findings

 How would **your organisation** want to communicate the findings?
Who to, how often, in what format?

To help with Horizon Scanning...

- A nominated person can be responsible for collating and arranging the scans.
- They can collate them into a report, organised by theme or other formats e.g. newsletters, visuals, scenarios.

Step 05:



DO

- Think about how you communicate not just what you communicate
- Balance technical data with techniques like analogies, storytelling and visual images



DON'T

Forget that people:

- Prefer information that confirms their current views
- Perceive immediate threats as more important than future ones



Use findings



What would **your organisation** want to use it for?

This distilled information should challenge what we take for granted, shake-up complacency, and contribute to a re-think of tasks and activities that we might want to abandon or create.

A critical aspect of all approaches is that they are useful to decision-makers; helping them see around corners. To be fruitful, any horizon scanning approach must provide a channel into significant decision processes.

Step 06:



DO

- Be willing to challenge
- Help decision-makers use the findings to question what they believe to be true, what they want to achieve and how they will achieve it



DON'T

- Ignore the findings, even if they take you out of your comfort zone

Summary

Should we do it?

- Do we have a good reason to do horizon scanning?
- Do you have the buy-in to support horizon scanning?
- Do the resources you have for horizon scanning match the expectations?
- Are the obstacles to using horizon scanning findings being addressed?

If yes, how do we do it?

- 01. Identify need** – why would we want to do it?
- 02. Invite participants** – who would we want to involve?
- 03. Collect relevant information** – what process would we want to use for scanning? Who, how often and for how long?
- 04. Analyse findings** – how would we want to collate the information? What would be important for us?
- 05. Communicate findings** – how would we like to communicate the findings? Who to, how often, in what format?
- 06. Use findings** – what would we want to use it for?

References

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Appendix

SGANIO'R GORWEL / HORIZON SCANNING

Teitl / Title	Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun Click here to insert text.
Ffrwd waith / Workstream	Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun Click here to insert text.
Ffynhonnell / Source	Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun Click here to insert text.
Dyddiad cyhoeddi / Date published	Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun Click here to insert text.

Beth sy'n newid? / What is changing?

Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun [Click here to insert text.](#)



Pam y gallai hyn fod yn bwysig? / Why could this be important?

Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun [Click here to insert text.](#)

Am beth arall wnaeth hyn wneud i chi feddwl? / What else did this make you think about?

Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun [Click here to insert text.](#)

Pwysigrwydd / Importance Pa mor bwysig yw hyn i'ch gwaith? Dewiswch rhif rhwng 1 (ddim yn bwysig iawn) a 10 (pwysig iawn) / How important is this to your work? Choose a number between 1 (not very important) and 10 (very important)	Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun Click here to insert text. /10
Sicrwydd / Certainty Pa mor sicr yw'r duedd hon? Dewiswch rif rhwng 1 (yn sicr iawn) a 10 (ansicr iawn) / How certain is this trend? Choose a number between 1 (very certain) and 10 (very uncertain)	Cliciwch yma i fewnosod testun Click here to insert text. /10

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