



CHANGE TOOLKIT

Tool: Scenario Planning

Used in:
GENERATE OPTIONS
Also good for:
DISENGAGE

My Notes

What is it?

Scenario planning involves thinking about what you would do in a number of possible future situations, or scenarios. The technique is used where there is insufficient information available to do more accurate modelling or predictions. It is often used to imagine what will happen in the longer-term, say in five, ten or twenty years' time. This is because the further into the future you are planning, the harder it is to predict, so you need to use a more imaginative and intuitive technique.

Why use it in a change process?

Change is very complex and it is likely that the project or change you are working on will be taking place in conjunction with a number of other planned or unplanned changes. Scenario planning is useful, because it offers you a way to think about the connections between these different changes and factors, as well as the impact they have on each other. It is a way to enable people to think about the uncertainty and unpredictability involved in change and provides a structured way to think about how various futures may play out. Seeing that one scenario is more favourable to you than others, you may want to ensure that you do all you can to make the variables work out as you would like them to.

You could use scenario planning during **Generate Options** to think about different futures. You could also deploy it during **Disengage**, because one scenario could be based on a future where the desired change has not taken place.

What do I need to do?

1. Pull together an appropriate group of people in a workshop. It may be helpful to include people outside the service or experts from outside the organisation to get a mixture of perspectives and to understand the full range of variables.
2. Ask them to list the key drivers that they see affecting the future in the next five to ten years. It may take some encouragement for people to be comfortable working with the uncertainty involved in scenarios.
3. At this stage, you might get quite a long list, which you can then prioritise and refine down to a few important main factors.
4. Using the refined list, ask the group to start imaging what will happen if the factors that they have identified do or do not happen. What occurs if they happen to a greater or lesser extent than imagined?

At this stage, you need to encourage people to project themselves into these futures and paint the fullest picture they can.

5. Some people find it helpful to plot different variables onto an X-Y axis, as shown in the diagram below, and develop the scenarios within these quadrants. The scenarios themselves should not be complete opposites, however.



6. Ideally, assign one or two people to write up each scenario, based on the notes and input from the meeting. These need to be as rich and detailed as possible, but provide a word limit for the scenarios.
7. Participants in the first workshop will need to attend a second and possibly further workshops in order to start planning for the eventuality of those scenarios happening. What will the impact of any one of those scenarios be on business/service strategy? How will the service respond? Are there any immediate actions to be taken? What can be done over the longer term to ensure that the service could respond flexibly to each of these futures?
8. Ensure that responsibility is assigned for any actions and that a review is planned.