HORIZON SCAN USER MANUAL

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

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A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

UN
GLOBAL
PULSE

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PREFACE

This horizon scan manual is designed to help you set up your own horizon scanning practices. It outlines a simple five-step process, provides templates for inspiration, and gives you very hands-on tips and tricks.

The manual originates from a horizon scan that was conducted by UN Global Pulse and Bappenas (Ministry of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia) on the Future of MSMEs in Indonesia. Mariska Yasrie, Associate Planner in the Directorate of Cooperatives and MSMEs, about her experience engaging in a horizon scanning exercise:

"Horizon scanning pushes us to think beyond the immediate issues around MSMEs. We are generally more familiar with thematic issues around how to improve MSMEs' access to finance, market, good quality of human resources, as well as how they might affect MSMEs. However, now we are also thinking in a broader way about how changes in the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal landscape can impact the sector. This is critical for long-term planning."

We took the main lessons learned from this project and incorporated them into this General Horizon Scan Manual, that can be used by the broader policy making community (beyond the MSMEs domain) and applied to any desired policy field or topic.

QUICK OVERVIEW: HORIZON SCANNING

WHAT IS HORIZON SCANNING?

Horizon Scanning is a method for identifying potential early signals of change and its challenges and opportunities. It is a structured evidence-gathering process that explores the external strategic environment. It is a collective intelligence process and brings together perspectives from different sources. Horizon scanning is the foundation of a strategic foresight process and is often found at the beginning of the forward-looking activity.

Horizon Scanning can help policy makers to better understand:

- Emerging trends and developments that could have an impact on the future policy environment;

- How the different trends and developments are interconnected;

- What potential future (policy) needs might emerge.

OUTPUT: WHAT DOES IT PRODUCE?

An overview of prioritised signals of change in support of policy planning and anticipatory governance.

OUTCOME: WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THE RESULTS?

We engage in Horizon Scanning to identify the potential early signals of change and prepare ourselves for it. Results can be used to:

- Update current policies and strategies, or develop new ones to address **future needs**;

- Provide a baseline for **risk management** and to monitor future challenges and opportunities;

- Further develop a set of **scenarios** to explore a wide range of plausible future outcomes;

- Involve **stakeholders** in participatory foresight exercises to combine dialogue with futures thinking;

- Introduce activities and **policies** to support positive developments and mitigate the negative ones proactively.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS?

STEP 1:
GETTING
STARTED

Frame the experiment needs and resources

STEP 2:
SCANNING AND
COLLECTING DATA

Gather information about the external environment

STEP 3:
INTERPRETATION
AND FILTERING

Organise and prioritise the findings

STEP 4:
SENSEMAKING

Validate findings and identify key actions

STEP 5:
REPORTING

Share the results!

Reminder: a horizon scan can either be a one-off exercise, or part of a continuous effort to scan for emerging signals of change. This would mean repeating the steps 2 to 5.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

1.
PARTICIPANTS

↘ **Background**:
Anyone who is interested in exploring the future environment.

No previous experience needed.

↘ **Quantity**:
The core team of scanners is usually 10-20 people. More people join the workshops to validate and process the results.
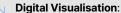
2.
TECHNICAL TOOLS
Only one per category needed

↘ **Data Collection**:
Excel
Google Workspace
Airtable
Notion

↘ **Digital Visualisation**:
Miro
Mural
Mentimeter
Word Cloud

3.
TIME

↘ **Overall**:
A horizon scan is best run over a couple of months *(either once, or recurringly)*.

↘ **Per step**:
Steps 1-3: +/- 2-3 months
Step 4: 6-8 weeks
Step 4: 1 month
Step 5: 1 month

THE BASICS: INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

WHAT IS STRATEGIC FORESIGHT?

Strategic foresight is an approach to long-term thinking and planning, often used to improve the ability to anticipate strategic opportunities and threats. It builds on collective intelligence in a structured and systematic way to help develop participatory, future intelligence-gathering, and medium- to long-term vision-building and decision-making.

Strategic foresight - along with data, digital, innovation, and behavioural science - are a setof cross-cutting strategies, also known as the 'quintet of change', proposed in Our Common Agenda.

Through Our Common Agenda, the UN is supporting the overall change in the way policies are being developed, helping ensure that strategic foresight is leveraged as an integral part in all policy making efforts.

It is essential to highlight that foresight is not about prediction, but rather about exploring a wide range of plausible future outcomes. Strategic foresight helps to navigate in a fundamentally complex and uncertain world, and transition from being in primary reactive mode to a proactive mode.

Foresight fosters our ability to envision the future as something we can shape and influence instead of something already decided.

A SHIFT IN MINDSET

Rather than adopting a new method, it is even more important that we make a fundamental shift in mindset. **We need to move from a reactive approach to a proactive and anticipatory approach.** This means we need to free ourselves from the constraints of our daily work and the current short-term priorities and focus on the long-term. **Instead of focusing on *'what is',* ask yourself *'what could be?'*** It is about identifying what we do not yet know, instead of what we do know. We will look for potential weak signals: things that could spark a change. This is an exciting learning process in which you will be able to step outside your comfort zone and embrace uncertainty.

THINKING, DEVELOPING, PLANNING

Strategic foresight should not be a stand-alone or separate activity, but rather a part of the normal policy- and strategy-making process. Foresight expert Joseph Voros developed a helpful framework to understand where foresight 'fits' into this process (Voros, 2003). Foresight, as part of strategic thinking, helps explore strategic options, which feeds into the process of strategy development (making decisions) and strategic planning (implementation of actions) (see Figure 1).
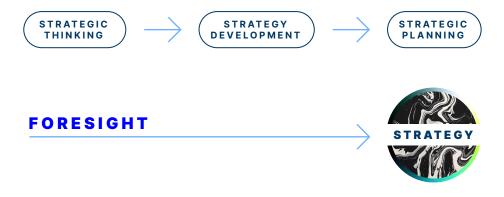
FIGURE 1: FROM STRATEGIC THINKING TO PLANNING (BASED ON VOROS, 2003)

GENERIC FORESIGHT FRAMEWORK

Voros developed a Generic Foresight Framework that consists of four elements (see Figure 2):

- **Inputs:** focuses on gathering information about the external environment.
  There are different tools and methods to do this, such as horizon scanning.

- **'Foresight Work'**: starts with a preliminary analysis and interpretation of the findings to look for deeper structure and insights, and then creates and examines alternative futures, for example, through scenario analysis.

- **Outputs**: the expanded perception of the strategic options available.

- **Strategy**: the critical decision to be taken.

FORESIGHT

INPUTS	ANALYSIS	INTERPRETATION	FORWARD LOOKING
Things happening	"What seems to be happening?"	"What is really happening?"	"What could happen?"

OUTPUTS
"What might we need to do?"

STRATEGY / POLICY
"What will we do?"
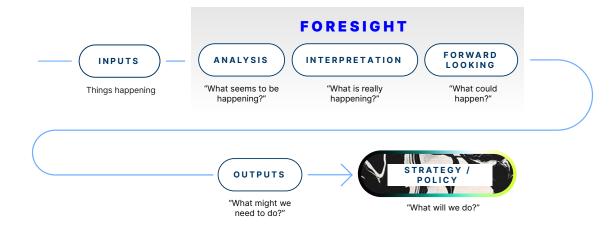
FIGURE 2: A GENERIC FORESIGHT FRAMEWORK (VOROS, 2003)

FORESIGHT IN A GOVERNMENTAL CONTEXT

Thinking about the future has always been an implicit part of policy making. **By building foresight capacity across the government, this thinking is systematised and explicitly embedded into policy-making processes.**

Many have adopted foresight in a more structured way, from international organisations such as the UN and the EU, governments (Singapore, Canada, Finland) to NGOs (Save the Children), and the private sector (Shell, PWC).

According to a recent study carried out by the School of International Futures (SOIF, 2021), an effective foresight ecosystem contains four elements: culture and behaviours, systems, processes, and people.

THE KEY IS TO REALISE THAT WHAT WORKS FOR ONE COUNTRY MAY NOT WORK FOR ANOTHER: CONTEXTUALISING FORESIGHT INTO THE SOCIAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT IS ESSENTIAL.

HORIZON SCANNING

Horizon scanning, also known as 'environmental scanning', helps to understand the system and the factors that might shape the future. It is part of the strategic foresight toolbox and aims to enhance future preparedness. It should help decision-makers take a longer-term view and make present choices more resilient to future shocks and uncertainty.

Horizon scanning is the foundation of a strategic foresight process and is often found at the beginning of the forward-looking activity. It is a structured evidence-gathering process, exploring the external strategic environment in a systematic way to identify potential challenges and opportunities. It aims to gather information about emerging trends and key drivers of change that could have an impact on the future.

There are many different ways of setting up horizon scanning practices, which can be organised in a highly structured manner or in an informal way. This manual outlines three specific methods:

⬊ What	DESK RESEARCH	INTERVIEW	CONSULTATIONS
⬊ **How**	Manual scan of relevant (non-traditional) sources: websites, recent publications of institutes and organisations, specialised press, and (validated) social media feeds of relevant experts	Interviews and surveys with relevant experts and other stakeholders, conducted after a brief stakeholder mapping.	Focus group discussions, workshops and participatory foresight sessions, including people who are affected by the future under study.
⬊ **Why**	To collect information from a wide range of different sources	To gain a deeper understanding of the changes emerging and the possible consequences of the signal in a certain context	To validate scanning results, reduce biases in our future thinking, and identify potential areas that have been missed
⬊ **When**	#2 Scanning and collecting data	#2 Scanning and collecting data	#4 Sensemaking

TIPS AND TRICKS

- **Horizon scanning is not the same as browsing the media.** It is a structured and systemic process focused on finding signals with possible future implications.

- **A challenging aspect of horizon scanning is that you are looking for weak signals.** The signal of change might not be that apparent or clear in the beginning. It requires time to understand the system before you will see the changes that could potentially alter this.

- **Scanning is not the same as searching.** Do not look for what you know or want, but try to look for the unknown. Think outside the box and investigate a broad range of sources.

- **It is not about how probable a signal is, but about what could happen.**
  We are not necessarily interested in the signals that have a high probability of occurring, but we aim to explore the developments that could possibly change the future landscape.

- **Scanning is not supposed to be done alone.** It requires an open and safe (work) environment that lets you think out loud.

- **The process is not linear, there is no fixed way of doing horizon scanning.**
  It is iterative and we continuously learn throughout the entire process.

HORIZON SCANNING IN 5 STEPS

STEP 1: GETTING STARTED

Frame the experiment needs and resources

STEP 2: SCANNING AND COLLECTING DATA

Gather information about the external environment

STEP 3: INTERPRETATION AND FILTERING

Organise and prioritise the findings

STEP 4: SENSEMAKING

Validate findings and identify key actions

STEP 5: REPORTING

Share the results!

STEP 1: GETTING STARTED
FRAME THE EXPERIMENT NEEDS AND RESOURCES

To set up a horizon scan process, consider the following points:

Determine your scanning frame: determine the key future learning questions that your organisation is dealing with. Is the scan focusing on a certain (policy) area or would you like to keep it open and exploratory? What is in and what is outside the scope of this horizon scanning exercise? Is it limited to a specific geographical reach? What is the time horizon under consideration? Does it capture the changes for the next 5 or 10 years? It is advisable to not narrow the scan too much in the beginning, to ensure you are not missing the emerging issues.

Understand your scanning needs: Before you start, consider carefully what you aim to achieve with the scan. Which policy or strategy-making process are you trying to influence? For whom are you undertaking the scanning effort? Try to understand your end users' consumption patterns to determine what a successful end-product might look like (format, length etc.). It is encouraged to actively seek the support and buy-in from (senior) management and have their commitment from the start (on both the process and product, as well as the time and human resources allocated).

Establish a diverse horizon scanning team: the horizon scanning team will likely consist of a core organising team and a team of 'scanners'. The exact number of scanners depends on your needs, and the level of (time) commitment that these scanners can make. The scanning team should be as representative as possible and scanners should come from mixed backgrounds and experiences. Scanners do not need previous experience with strategic foresight nor horizon scanning, but should have an open mind and a willingness to learn a new method. The organising team could consider organising a kickoff meeting with the scanners to run through the process and the framing of the scan (please see an intro slide deck here), as well as regular check-in sessions to discuss progress and results.

Organise how participants are collecting the data. As the organising team, ensure you have the logistics in place before the scanners start their screening efforts. An easy way to collect signals is by creating an online form, such as a Google Sheet or a more advanced data-visualisation program such as Airtable (see also step 02), which will create a database automatically. Offline tools such as Excel can be used as well.

WHAT TO SCAN FOR?

The scanners should focus their efforts on identifying weak signals, growing insights, and emerging issues that are likely to have an impact on the future. These are things that indicate the spark/beginning of a change that might be coming on the horizon, but are not yet captured in the mainstream (policy) discourse (see Figure 3).

As scanners, we aim to identify the source of potential change before it is well established.

DEGREE OF PUBLIC AWARENESS; **# OF CASES**

MAINSTREAM

EMERGING ISSUE

GROWING INSIGHT

WEAK SIGNALS

TIME

FIGURE 3: WHERE TO SCAN (ADAPTED FROM POLICY HORIZONS CANADA, 2018)

What are the characteristics of "Good" signals? Good signals have the following characteristics (Please see for examples **ANNEX 1**). They should be:

1. SIGNIFICANT	**2. NOVEL**	**3. TIMELY**
It can create disruptive changes in the future landscape (either positive or negative) or have a considerable impact.	It is something that has not been a factor in policy making yet, and has not been widely discussed among governmental bodies.	It is likely to occur within the study's timeframe.

STEP 1:	STEP 2:	STEP 3:	STEP 4:	STEP 5:
GETTING STARTED	SCANNING AND COLLECTING DATA	INTERPRETATION AND FILTERING	SENSEMAKING	REPORTING
Frame the experiment needs and resources	Gather information about the external environment	Organise and prioritise the findings	Validate findings and identify key actions	Share the results!

STEP 2: SCANNING AND COLLECTING DATA

Once the structure is set up, participants are invited to start scanning a wide variety of sources for developments that could potentially alter the future landscape.

Desk sources could include:

- News sources; opinion pieces; popular/commercial publications and blogs;

- Recent publications of national and international research institutes and organisations, non-profits, grassroots groups, and think tanks;

- Interviews with stakeholders, subject matter experts and grassroots organisations (see **ANNEX 2** for example questions);

- Listening on the ground in communities;

- Academic journals and research;

- Webinars and conferences;

- Government publications;

- Social media (such as Twitter or LinkedIn feeds from renowned experts), YouTube (TED Talks), podcasts.

Make sure to consult a balanced list of sources and resources. Are you missing any essential voices from an inclusion and diversity point of view? A tip on how to avoid biases, is to start your scanning efforts by setting up a source list and have this reviewed by peers.

Participants are especially encouraged to have conversations with stakeholders to gain their perspectives on the potential future changes. Try to go beyond consulting the 'usual suspects', e.g. subject matter experts and academia. Instead, have conversations with people who are actually involved in the future under study: consult grassroots organisations; go to local communities; talk with (small) businesses and start-ups; engage in discussions with local youth groups; advocate for women's rights, people with disabilities, etc. Guiding questions for these informal interviews can be found in the Annex.

CURIOSITY AND THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IS KEY.

Participants are encouraged to look beyond the traditional sources and to scan outside their own regional, thematic and social 'bubble'.

In a government context, there is a tendency to divert to peer-reviewed academic journals and official government reports. However, this is often not where the most forward-thinking activity is taking place and we run the risk of missing important signals.

Depending on the aim and scope of the horizon scan, the PESTLE methodology can support scanners in ensuring a wide scope of scanning: PESTLE stands for Politics, Economics, Social, Technological, Legal, Environment (see Figure 4). An additional consideration could be to divide the team into (a combination of) these various categories.

FIGURE 4: PESTLE

Scanners are asked to process each of the identified signals, through an online form (see template here). Elements that should be captured for each development are outlined in Table 1

CATEGORY	ASK PARTICIPANTS TO…
↘ Title	**Write a 1-sentence title.** To capture the essence of the signal and be memorable.
↘ Description	**Explain the content of the signal.** How is this constituting a relevant future development? What change is emerging? Who is affected by it? Where do we see this change coming? Etc.
↘ Awareness	**Define if the signal is known.** Is it already on the radar of the organisation? For example, is it mentioned in official documents such as reports, speeches, briefs, etc. This helps establish the novelty of the signal.
↘ Implications	**Speculate on the possible implications of the signal.** Is it primarily perceived as a threat or opportunity? Is it a negative or positive development? Who is primarily affected by it? Is the change limited to the region or area under consideration, or are spillover effects anticipated?
↘ Impact	**Assess the anticipated impact of the signal.** What are potential political, social, economic, technological or environmental impacts? For prioritisation purposes, it could be useful to use a scale to assess the impact (for example, on a 1-5 scale, running from no impact to very high impact).
↘ Likelihood	**Estimate the probability of the signal emerging.** For prioritisation purposes, it could be useful to use a 1-5 scale ranging from very probable to very unlikely.
↘ Reference	**Name the source and the publication or interview date.** If applicable, link to the online place of reference (URL).

TABLE 1: DETAILS OF INFORMATION THAT COULD BE COLLECTED FOR EACH OF THE SIGNALS (THROUGH AN ONLINE FORM)

The organising team should encourage scanners to not be hesitant to include signals that might feel uncertain or weird in the beginning. Throughout the process, the less relevant signals will be filtered out. Remind participants that a signal might not be new to them, but perhaps to others it is. Encourage scanners to not dismiss any information that they do not agree with, or alternative/fringe perspectives. This is where it gets interesting and where scanners might want to explore a bit further.
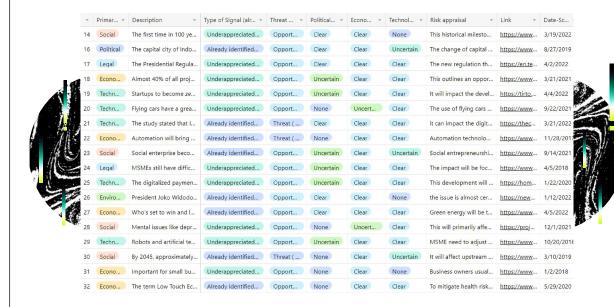

	Primar...	Description	Type of Signal (alr...	Threat ...	Political...	Econo...	Technol...	Risk appraisal	Link	Date-Sc...
14	Social	The first time in 100 ye...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	Clear	Clear	None	This historical milesto...	https://www...	3/19/2022
16	Political	The capital city of Indo...	Already identified...	Opport...	Clear	Clear	Uncertain	The change of capital ...	https://www...	8/27/2019
17	Legal	The Presidential Regula...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	Clear	Clear	Clear	The new regulation th...	https://en.te...	4/2/2022
18	Econo...	Almost 40% of all proj...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	Uncertain	Clear	Clear	This outlines an oppor...	https://www...	3/21/2021
19	Techn...	Startups to become ze...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	Uncertain	Clear	Clear	It will impact the devel...	https://tirto...	4/4/2022
20	Techn...	Flying cars have a grea...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	None	Uncert...	Clear	The use of flying cars ...	https://www...	9/22/2021
21	Techn...	The study stated that I...	Already identified...	Threat (...	Clear	Clear	Clear	it can impact the digit...	https://thec...	3/21/2022
22	Econo...	Automation will bring ...	Already identified...	Threat (...	None	Clear	Clear	Automation technolo...	https://www...	11/28/201
23	Social	Social enterprise beco...	Already identified...	Opport...	Uncertain	Clear	Uncertain	Social entrepreneurshi...	https://www...	9/14/2021
24	Legal	MSMEs still have diffic...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	Uncertain	Clear	Clear	The impact will be foc...	https://www...	4/5/2018
25	Techn...	The digitalized paymen...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	Uncertain	Clear	Clear	This development will ...	https://hom...	1/22/2020
26	Enviro...	President Joko Widodo...	Already identified...	Opport...	Clear	Clear	None	the issue is almost cer...	https://new...	1/12/2022
27	Econo...	Who's set to win and I...	Already identified...	Opport...	Clear	Clear	Clear	Green energy will be t...	https://www...	4/5/2022
28	Social	Mental issues like depr...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	None	Uncert...	Clear	This will primarily affe...	https://proj...	12/1/2021
29	Techn...	Robots and artificial te...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	Uncertain	Clear	Clear	MSME need to adjust ...	https://www...	10/20/2016
30	Social	By 2045, approximately...	Already identified...	Threat (...	None	Clear	Uncertain	It will affect upstream ...	https://www...	3/10/2019
31	Econo...	Important for small bu...	Underappreciated...	Opport...	None	Clear	None	Business owners usual...	https://www...	1/2/2018
32	Econo...	The term Low Touch Ec...	Already identified...	Opport...	None	Clear	Clear	To mitigate health risk...	https://www...	5/29/2020

FIGURE 5: EXAMPLE OF THE DATABASE OF SIGNALS THAT WERE COLLECTED IN AIRTABLE FOR THE HORIZON SCAN: THE FUTURE OF MSMES (2022)

Please, visit **ANNEX 1** "Example of Signals" to learn more about how to identify good signals and how to frame them.

STEP 3: INTERPRETATION AND FILTERING

After a period of scanning, the organising team reviews the scanning results.

- A first step is assessing the quality of the inputs: did the scanners provide all necessary information? Is it sufficiently forward-looking? Is the level of detail sufficient?

- Next, the results can be prioritised using the assigned impact vs probability matrix (see Figure 6), or other tags, such as novelty vs risk (threat or opportunity).

FIGURE 6: IMPACT - PROBABILITY MATRIX

For example, you might want to focus on the green signals, the ones that: have at least a high impact (4 and 5 on a 5-point scale) and a high or very high probability of occuring (4 and 5 on a 5-point scale). Another selection criteria can be signals that have been assessed as a 'novel' (in combination with high impact).

Make sure you are transparent about the criteria you use to filter the most relevant signals.

At this stage, you will start to identify certain clusters of signals. Over time, these preliminary clusters of signals will become stronger and you will start to recognize certain patterns. The organizing team should guide the scanners in clustering their signals into trends or drivers of change.
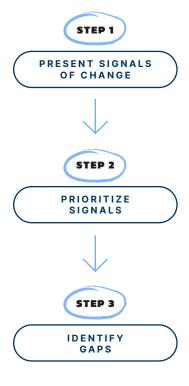
STEP 4: SENSEMAKING

Participatory sensemaking workshops can be held in various stages of the horizon scanning exercise to serve different purposes. This manual outlines two options:

OPTION 1: VALIDATION WORKSHOP

- **What**: In a validation workshop or focus group discussion, the scanners present their initial scanning findings (the clusters of signals/drivers of change) to a group of relevant stakeholders and/or subject matter experts.

- **Why**: The focus is on prioritising the findings, discussing the potential consequences of the signals, as well as discovering if any relevant emerging issues are missing

- **When**: This workshop is primarily useful when scanners are still in the open and exploratory phase, and could use the discussion to refine their scanning efforts and discover areas that are missing or they wish to explore further.

STEP 1

PRESENT SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Presentation of the signals and reflection: what could be the potential implications? Who will be affected by the change?

STEP 2

PRIORITIZE SIGNALS

What are the most relevant signals, based on: novelty, impact and likelihood?

STEP 3

IDENTIFY GAPS

What did we miss, what issues do we need to look into?

VALIDATION WORKSHOP

|	
↘ **Goal**	Validate the initial scanning results (drivers), teasing out potential implications
↘ **Duration**	2 hours
↘ **Modality**	Online or in-person workshop
↘ **Framework**	See Miro Board (and **ANNEX 3** to learn how to duplicate it)
↘ **Participants**	Between 10-20 relevant stakeholders. The scanning team is encouraged to include voices that are affected by the future and go beyond the usual suspects (academia and experts) - for example, youth groups
↘ **Needs**	1 facilitator and 1-2 active notetakers
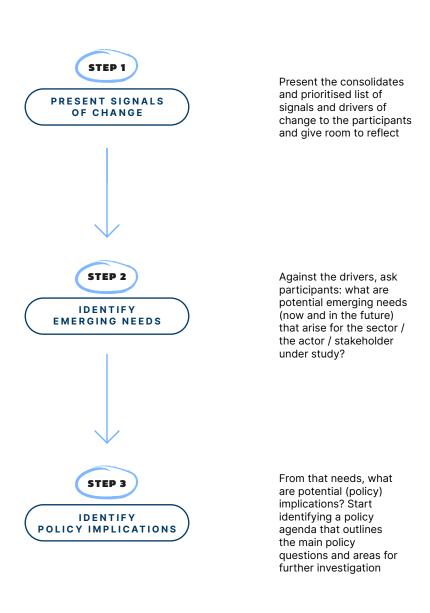
SAMPLE AGENDA

↘ **10 min**	Opening & Introduction of the project and agenda of today
↘ **15 min**	Step 1: Presentation of and reflection on the initial scanning results
↘ **45 min**	Discussion
↘ **5 min**	Break
↘ **20 min**	Step 2: Prioritisation of the results (use an online voting tool such as Miro or MentiMeter, or post-its on a poster)
↘ **20 min**	Step 3: Reflect on the results: is there anything missing and/or an area that needs further refinement?
↘ **5 min**	Closing remarks and next steps

OPTION 2: POLICY IMPLICATIONS WORKSHOP

- **What:** A follow-up workshop to identify emerging needs and possible implications for policy making.

- **Why**: To surface the needs that emerge if the drivers of change materialise. For example, for the sector that is under study. If it is within the scope of the study, this needs identification could be done with the stakeholders that are directly affected by the change. As a next step, policy makers could start to identify possible policy implications that could emerge from these needs, and formulate a policy agenda that outlines the key policy questions to tackle.

- **When**: This workshop is particularly useful in the last stage of the horizon scanning exercise, where there is a clear understanding of the future landscape and the drivers of change, and participants are ready to move towards the integration of the results in their policy making process.

STEP 1

PRESENT SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Present the consolidates and prioritised list of signals and drivers of change to the participants and give room to reflect

STEP 2

IDENTIFY EMERGING NEEDS

Against the drivers, ask participants: what are potential emerging needs (now and in the future) that arise for the sector / the actor / stakeholder under study?

STEP 3

IDENTIFY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

From that needs, what are potential (policy) implications? Start identifying a policy agenda that outlines the main policy questions and areas for further investigation

POLICY IMPLICATIONS WORKSHOP

↘	**Goal**	Move towards an actionable future
↘	**Duration**	2 hours
↘	**Modality**	Online or in-person workshop
↘	**Framework**	See Miro Board (and **ANNEX 3** to learn how to duplicate it)
↘	**Participants**	Between 10-20 participants (stakeholders and policy officers)
↘	**Needs**	1 facilitator and 1-2 notetakers

SAMPLE AGENDA

↘	**10 min**	Opening & Introduction of the project and agenda of today
↘	**15 min**	Step 1: Presentation of and reflection on the prioritised drivers and signals of change
↘	**45 min**	Step 2: Discussion on emerging needs
↘	**5 min**	Break
↘	**45 min**	Step 3: Identification of potential policy implications
↘	**5 min**	Closing remarks and next steps

STEP 1:
GETTING
STARTED

Frame the experiment needs and resources

STEP 2:
SCANNING AND
COLLECTING DATA

Gather information about the external environment

STEP 3:
INTERPRETATION
AND FILTERING

Organise and prioritise the findings

STEP 4:
SENSEMAKING

Validate findings and identify key actions

STEP 5:
REPORTING

Share the results!

STEP 5: REPORTING

The type of reporting depends on your organisation's needs and should be determined at the beginning of the horizon scan exercise (see Step 1). This manual outlines three options, starting with the most straightforward option and building towards a more extensive report. A combination of these options is possible as well.

1. SCANNING HITS REPORT

- **What:** A quick presentation of the scanning hits that could be issued on a regular basis, for example, on a website, or in a newsletter, to continuously feed the audience relevant information derived from the scanning exercise.

- **Audience:** General public, policy makers

- **Suggested format:** A brief 1-pager per signal, outlining the 'what' (a short description of the signal) and a 'so-what?' (Why is this a relevant development for the policy area under study? What changes could result from it?)

- **Inspiration from others:** Policy Horizons Canada - Weak Signals; Accenture - Signals of Change

2. DRIVER OR TREND REPORT

- **What:** This type of report requires some prior sensemaking and interpretation of the scanning results. It synthesises the scanning hits and organises them into various categories of drivers or trends. It is advisable to have done at least one sensemaking session before you publish this report (option 1: validation workshop). This report could be issued at the end of the scanning process, or on a regular basis (quarterly, yearly), when the scanning exercise is a continuous process.

- **Audience:** General public, policy makers

- **Suggested format:** Executive summary; Overview of the prioritized signals of change that are organized around issues/drivers of change, focusing on the critical impacts and challenges; Discussion and Conclusion (What are the main challenges that we need to tackle? What future questions have we identified? What are suggested steps forward?)

- **Inspiration from others:** WHO - Horizon Scan for Global Public Health

3. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS REPORT

- **What:** This report aims to link the insights from the scanning exercise to the policy and strategy-making processes. It is meant to inform specific policy units what policy needs might emerge and what actions they can already take to prepare for the changes. It is advisable to have done both sensemaking sessions before you publish this report (option 1 and 2).

- **Audience:** (specific) policy makers

- **Suggested format:** Executive summary; Overview of signals of change (categorised by drivers/themes); Policy needs and Actions; Conclusion

- **Inspiration from others:** UNDP, The Future of MSMEs Report

READY TO START?

Scanning is a continuous learning process. No matter what the results, by simply going through this process, you will improve your future awareness and become more calibrated to the future changes that might occur.

You will become more aware of how the future might evolve in different ways, which is a very important insight for developing policies and strategies that are fit for the future.

Just remember to keep on going!

A LITTLE CHECKLIST TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF YOUR SCAN:

• Process and collect your signals in a systematised manner through an online form;

• Be open to non-conventional sources of information and ask others to review your sources;

• Filter and/or assess your signals through a set of (peer-reviewed) criteria;

• Include a diverse group of people in your sensemaking process (step 4);

• Organise regular check-in sessions throughout the scanning process to review the quality of signals and/or set-up an online environment to interact with the other scanners;

• Make sure the report is peer-reviewed by a large group of stake

RESOURCE LIBRARY:

• Slides for a kick-off workshop

• Template form for a signal tracker

• Miro boards for sensemaking: Validation workshop and Policy Implications workshop

TO CONCLUDE

Horizon scanning is often found at the beginning of a foresight process and forms an important foundation for further foresight research. It helps policy makers develop a better understanding of the emerging issues and facilitates a structured analysis of how potential risks and opportunities could influence strategic policy planning. Throughout the policy-planning process, a continuous horizon scan to update the scanning findings can improve the detection of early signals and serve as an 'early warning system'. Finally, the results of the scanning exercise can act as building blocks for further foresight research. For example, for identifying the main driving forces for a scenario-building exercise.

ANNEX

1: EXAMPLES OF SIGNALS

Some examples from the Horizon Scan "The Future of MSMEs".

SIGNAL EXAMPLE 1

Source: WEF, 3 March 2021
PESTEL Category: Economy
Time-horizon: Long-term (10-20 years)
Impact on: Environment, Tech
Underappreciated: No, already on the radar
Probability: Very likely
Threat or opportunity: Opportunity

↘ **What?**

Plastic waste is a massive threat to the Indonesian Marine Environment. Upstream innovations to reuse and reduce plastic are key to fighting plastic pollution and creating circular business opportunities in Indonesia.

↘ **So what?**

This development creates a window of opportunity to shift businesses into the circular agenda and effectively mitigate plastic pollution, utilizing green innovation as an engine for the future, changing the business landscape in Indonesia. This could create ample new business opportunities for MSMEs. During the transition phase, we can expect disruptions in how MSMEs conduct business.

SIGNAL EXAMPLE 2

Source: Al-Jazeera, 19 March 2022
Main PESTEL Category: Social
Time-horizon: Long-term (10-20 years)
Impact on: Social, Political, Economic
Underappreciated: Yes
Probability: Probable
Threat or opportunity: Opportunity

↘ **What?**	↘ **So what?**
The first time in 100 years that women are in the decision-making body of the world's largest Islamic organisation, creating a historical precedent to further enhance women's leadership across Indonesia.	This historical milestone can foster a new wave of future female leaders, changing the leadership landscape, promoting the role of women in business and decision making, and impacting not just the future of businesses but also societal norms.

2: EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Frame the interviews as informal conversations about the future. They should be conducted with open-ended questions to avoid bias and interference in the exploratory process of the interviewee. When the interviewee finds it difficult to think beyond short-term, it might be helpful to probe his/her thinking with a mini-scenario (In 2050, when we do x or z, what does the world look like according to you?). Try to push for novelty and unusual angles and opinions. These are examples of questions that can be used to start and guide the interview:

- In your field of work/community, what are the novel things around you/that have surprised you?

- What is happening now, or has happened recently, that signifies a break of a trend?

- What are the people who will be key players in the future, doing, saying, thinking?

- Have you recently observed something new emerging/bubbling up that might have a bigger impact?

- What is a key assumption you make about the future? Do you think this still holds true in the future?

- What are sector leaders saying about the future?

- What are laboratories and universities researching today that might impact the future?

3: MIRO BOARD ACCESS AND USE

Miro is an online collaborative whiteboarding platform that enables distributed teams to work together. Here is a video about how to use it. You can also use Mural, Figma, Lucidspark, and many others tools.

To get a copy of the Miro framework, please go to: **Settings** > **Board** > **Make a copy**, as the Figure 7 shows.
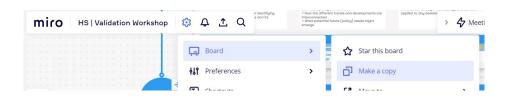

FIGURE 7: HOW TO COPY A MIRO BOARD

FURTHER READING MATERIAL

- Carney, J., "The Ten Commandments of Horizon Scanning', U.K. Government Office for Science", 8 March 2018

- Cuhls et al, "Models of Horizon Scanning: How to integrate Horizon Scanning into European Research and Innovation Policies", Brussels: European Commission, 10 December 2015

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- Policy Horizons Canada. "Scanning in the Horizons Foresight Method"

- School of International Futures (2021), "Features of effective systemic foresight in governments around the world", April 2021

- UK Government Office for Science. "Futures Toolkit for policy-makers and analysts", 8 July 2014 (Last updated 16 January 2018)

- UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, "UNDP RBAP Foresight Playbook", July 2022

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