

# Tackling Wicked Problems

Day 3 – Scenario Thinking, Connecting Dots and Next Steps



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## About FCI



Our **vision** is a strong, secure and sustainable nonprofit community throughout Wisconsin.

Our **mission** is to transform communities by building capacity in mission-based organizations through leveraging lower-cost capital, expert advisory services and timely resources.



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# What We Do



- \* Advisory Services
- \* Investments
- \* Lending Services
- \* Grantmaking
- \* Research Initiatives

forwardci.org

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# Resource Reference

## What If? The Art of Scenario Thinking for Nonprofits

\* Diana Searce, Katherine Fulton and the Global Business Network community

[http://www.monitorinstitute.com/download/s/what-we-think/what-if/What\\_If.pdf](http://www.monitorinstitute.com/download/s/what-we-think/what-if/What_If.pdf)

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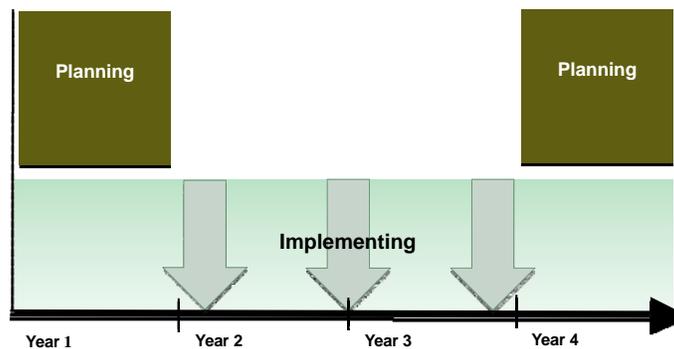
# Scenario Thinking

*Asking  
What if?*

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# Traditional Planning



## Difference between planning versus thinking

### Planning

- \* Static
- \* Pre-determined
- \* Explicit

### Thinking

- \* Dynamic
- \* Responsive
- \* Implicit

*Critical factor: translation into action.*

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## Process of Scenario Planning

- \* Identify forces of change (the iceberg!)
- \* Use these forces to create a set of stories
- \* Imagine living in this future

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“Scenario thinking is a platform for structuring dialogue around a lot of loose ideas, making choices clearer,”  
“It rewrites the way you think about the future.”

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## Guiding Principles

- \* The Long View
- \* Outside-In Thinking
- \* Multiple Perspectives

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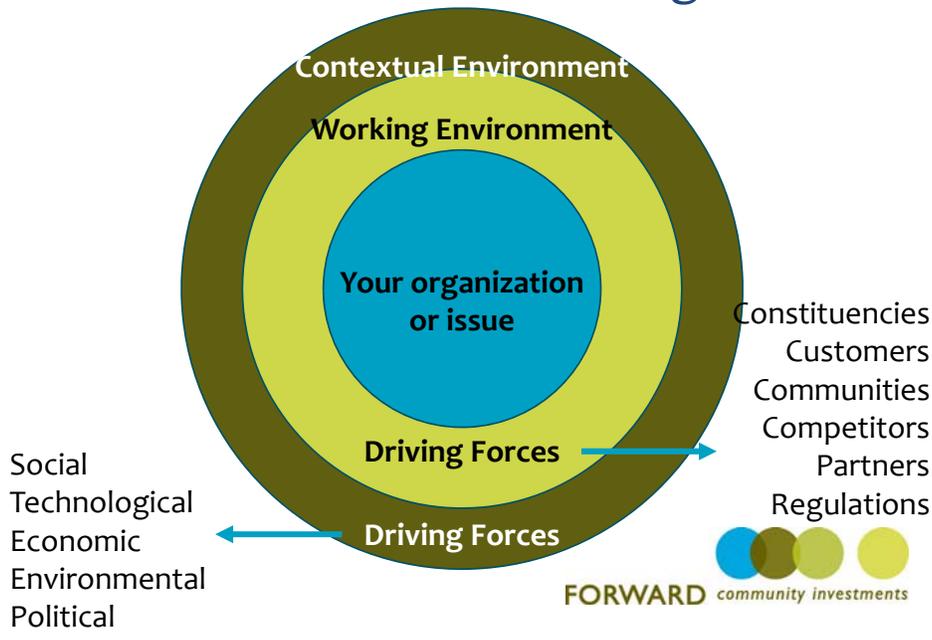


# The Long View



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# Outside-In Thinking



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## Multiple Perspectives



## Why do Scenario Thinking?

1. Setting strategic direction
2. Catalyzing bold action
3. Accelerating collaborative learning
4. Alignment and visioning

## Conditions for Success

- \* You are open to hearing multiple perspectives and challenging commonly held assumptions.
- \* You are positioned to change in a meaningful way.
- \* You have a well-positioned leader for the process
- \* You are willing to commit the necessary resources.

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## Do not use scenario thinking when...

1. The problem you are dealing with is not central to your organizational strategy and/or your problem and solution are clear.
2. The outcome is largely predetermined due to internal or external forces.
3. The leadership wants to maintain the status quo.
4. There is too much urgency to step back for a reflective and creative conversation.
5. Your desired outcomes are poorly aligned with your dedicated resources.

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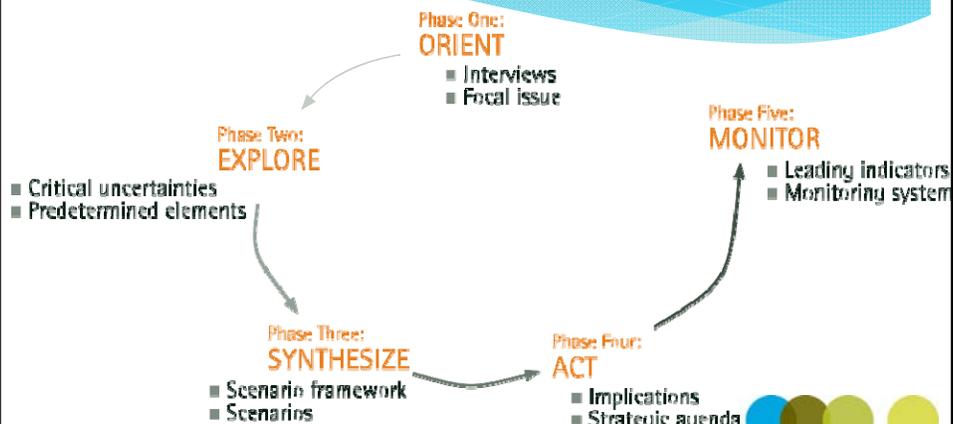
## Your situation is ideal for scenario thinking if...

1. You are dealing with a strategic issue and the solution is unclear.
2. You are working in a highly uncertain environment.
3. There is leadership support for the scenario thinking process.
4. Your organization is open to change and dialogue.
5. You can attract the resources necessary for a successful initiative.

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## Scenario Thinking in Practice



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## Phase One: Orient

- \* Clarify the issue to use as a device through the remaining four phases
- \* Recall the **systems thinking principles** from Day 1

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## Sample Questions for Consideration

- \* If you could have any question about the next “x” years answered, what would you want to know?
- \* What do you believe is predetermined for the next “x” years?
- \* If you looked back from “x” years hence and told the triumph of your organization/issue, what would be the story? Why?
- \* If you looked back from “x” years hence and told the failure of your organization/issue, what would be the story? Why?
- \* What are the most important strategic issues/decisions for your organization on the immediate horizon?
- \* What do you want your personal legacy to be? What do you fear it might be? What do you aspire to?

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## Phase Two: Explore

- \* What are the **driving forces** that could shape your issue?
  - \* **Predetermined Elements** – what elements are relatively certain to occur?
  - \* **Uncertainties** – what elements are unpredictable?

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## Phase Three: Synthesize

- \* Prioritize elements by **importance** and degree of **uncertainty**
- \* **What are the two to three most important uncertainties for your issue?**

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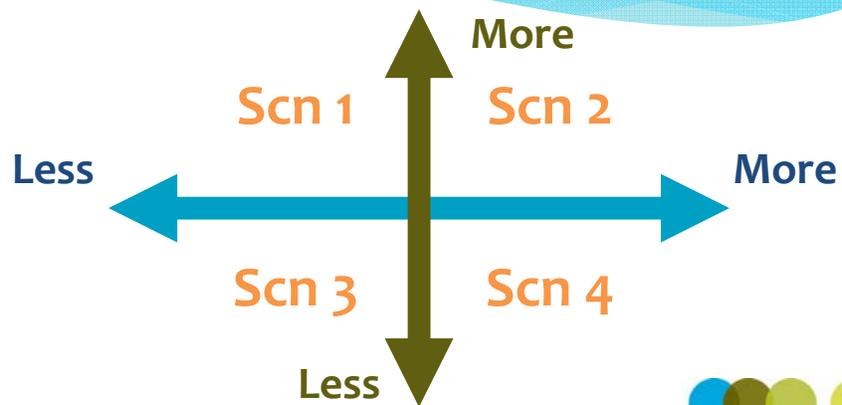
## Create your scenario matrix

\* For each critical uncertainty, align along an axis



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## Combine the two axes



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## Group Exercise

- \* What are the two most important uncertainties for your issue?
- \* Chart each uncertainty on an axis
- \* Name each scenario

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## Develop a scenario narrative

- \* What would each scenario look like?
- \* How did we get from today to this future scenario?

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## Phase Four: Act!

- \* What if this scenario is the future?
- \* What actions would you take to prepare?
- \* How can we maximize our impact and mitigate any risks in this scenario?

***These answers are your scenario implications.***

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## Phase Five: Monitor

- \* What implications are common to multiple scenarios?
- \* Which are divergent?
- \* What are some **leading indicators** that would hint that a scenario may be unfolding?

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## Assessing your Risk Portfolio

- \* **Low risk** strategies work in any scenario
- \* **Medium risk** strategies make sense in some, but not all, scenarios
- \* **High risk** strategy has potential for high rewards but is relevant in just one future scenario

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## Common one-off applications of scenario planning

- \* Surfacing Assumptions
- \* Articulating the “Official” Future
- \* Test Current Strategy
- \* Discuss Implications of Scenarios
- \* Monitor and Scan for Uncertainties

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## Who should participate?

- (1) decision-makers,
- (2) people who represent diverse perspectives within the organization or group, and
- (3) outsiders who can contribute new or different perspectives.

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## Connecting the Dots

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## How do the three days fit together?

- \* **Systems thinking** moves us away from isolated perspective to take the bigger picture
- \* **Collaboration** and **collective impact** demonstrate ways to find bigger solutions than we can manage on our own
- \* **Social innovation** demonstrates how we can discover new models for delivering impact
- \* **Scenario planning** is about aligning diverse perspectives, evaluating risk and examining the strategic implications of your decisions.



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## So What's Next?

### Actionable Items

- \* For both you (your organization) and your issue, set forth what you would like to accomplish in the next two, four and six months
- \* If you have any specific questions, do not hesitate to reach out to us for a conversation.



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# Thank You

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