

Future Scenarios Game - Facilitator's guide (2007 edition, from Landcare Research Ltd)

Welcome to the scenarios game

This participative 'game'/workshop works best with groups of 4 people, and each facilitator should have no more than 4 groups (16 people) to look after. Due to the noise and distraction generated, there should also be no more than 4 groups per room. To get the most out of this game we recommend at least 2 hours playing time, which allows each group to look at two contrasting scenarios, and it is important that participants stay for the whole time. (This is not an effective exercise if participants come and go throughout.)

Before you start we recommend you read all the other information on this website about this game, especially the background material, so you have a good understanding of how the game has been used in the past, what the process is trying to achieve, and how the game can fit into your own agenda. Feel free to contact us (www.landcareresearch.co.nz/services/sustainablesoc/futures/) if you need help or clarification about this. We also recommend you write a descriptive paragraph to send to participants before the event, so they know what they are coming to and how it fits in with your agenda. Restate this in your introduction at the beginning of the 'game'.

Read all this guide once when first planning your session, then go through it again before delivery, either on a print out (with a highlighter for where you need emphasis), or, if read on screen, copy the text to a word processor, then edit out any surplus material and add the real timings.

Bold text used below is a suggestion to help you inform the room of players. The rest is operating notes for you, usually presented in a box like this:

You will need some 'flip chart' or similar large sheets of paper and marker pens for each room, and also photocopies of the 'Recording sheet' (at the end of these notes) for each participant. Spare pens or pencils will be handy for participants who do not have their own. And you will need to print and cut up all the game cards you require.

Elapsed Timings indicate suitable/suggested intervals for a scenarios game session – you'll need to substitute real timings, based on the actual start time.

start

“This event should stimulate your imagination. It’s being run in support of our focus on more distant horizons and new thinking about resilience in the face of global climate change and resource scarcities.

We would expect that you flesh out your introduction here so that the participants can understand why they are there and what their task is e.g., to use this time in a creative way, to help stimulate further debate about your areas of business interest or Long-Term Council Community Plan, or organisation development, etc.

“It is *also* a contribution to action-research in progress at Landcare Research - Manaaki Whenua, at Lincoln, who devised the materials. We are invited to feed-back our findings to these researchers.

“We will soon need to spread across the room(s) to find seats in small discussion groups. Make sure you can hear comfortably. Before you move, please note these instructions: Aim to sit with people that you do NOT already know really well – it makes role playing later on easier! Introduce yourselves as you arrive. We will be working first in pairs and then as a foursome. For the event to work well, we seat up to four people at each table, and aim to slot any latecomers into vacant seats before expanding the size of groups. You will need a pen later on – we provide the rest. OK, it’s now time to move into the space available and start introductions around your tables.”

+5 mins elapsed

Once players/participants are seated at the tables and have introduced themselves, give each group of four (or max 5) **two** randomly selected **Trend Picture Cards**. These look back 20 years for influences on aspects of life in the present. Do not put out any of the other resource materials at this stage. Get discussion under way quickly.



“In pairs, please discuss the recent and existing trends that are pictured on your cards, taking that theme ahead about 20 years – represented by the question mark. Then tell the other pair in your small group what the topic is that you considered and what you think might happen in the future. Your table will be given additional cards after a few minutes.

This is only a short warm-up session – get extra trend cards out to them promptly and be ready to move on to the next stage after about 7 to 10 minutes. Next up you will need the **Future Possibility** cards.



+ 15 mins elapsed

“In a second stage, called Future Possibilities, we will look at newly emerging drivers of change, perhaps some without historic trends. Your group will be given two Future Possibility cards to consider (the topics are again drawn at random). These speculate about an aspect of New Zealand life in 2055. Discuss these in your group of four. What we ask is: How might people have got to that Future Possibility from today’s starting point? What influences may drive such changes through to 2055, to make a distinct difference from our present-day life?”

This stage may take more explaining and will take about 10 minutes to run. Respond to questions raised at individual tables rather than to the whole group, to avoid diverting the whole room. You may need to describe one example, to show the players what you mean. Be prepared for this by pre-selecting one card that has made sense to you and speak about it briefly. We want the players to consider what might have influence society, the economy and the environment to get us to that point in 2055. Focus on drivers of change.

Example: ‘Future Possibility: Water rationing is widespread in eastern parts of NZ’: An environmental driver might be climate change; and economic/social driver could be lack of early adequate regulation to secure water sources and competition for use.

During this time, the facilitator should watch for a suitable ‘volunteer’, a good listener, to help you record the next part onto flip chart paper and be ready to gather players together around a flipchart (they can stand up if they prefer). We recommend you combine no more than 4 groups (16 participants) for this exercise. Larger Groups with multiple facilitators will have several chart records being made at once. You can record broad forces of change (drivers) or focus on drivers that will change your organization’s area of expertise or topic over the next 50 years.

+25 mins elapsed

“For our next activity, please gather around the flipchart. I need one person to help me by being the recorder, using this pen on the flipchart

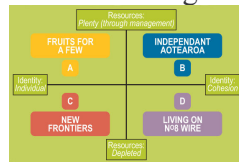
(If no one volunteers ask the person you think will be able to do it: **and may I ‘volunteer’.....**)

“This is a 5-minute *Brainstorming* session, on some forces or influences that may drive change in society, environment and economy, here in New Zealand (or in your topic area). You can include both the established drivers – think back to those trend cards for ideas – and the emerging drivers, as suggested by in the discussion on the future possibilities. Be brief and clear. Varied views are expected, and we will note all thoughts that are offered.” You can ask for clarification, but try not to debate suggestions.

NB: Add facilitator’s name, place, date and ‘drivers of change’ heading or footnote to *all* sheets. We'd welcome these back at Scenarios, Landcare Research, PO Box 40, Lincoln 7640, Canterbury, in due course, after your session.

Thank the recording volunteer and the participants.

It may be a good idea to present the chart of the relationship between the four scenarios now, while the group attention is focused on you, and while they are standing by the flipchart. Hold up a copy of the chart showing four scenarios and the two intersecting axes as you speak: (and then give one copy to each table as they return to their groups)



“This is how some plausible but speculative New Zealand scenarios were constructed, looking ahead to 2050. Look at this coloured chart, which shows – in simplified form – the logical contrasts used to help distinguish four future scenarios. Don’t get hung up on whether the names are accurate, they are just there to label and distinguish the scenarios – we could have used A, B, C, D, but that would be boring. These scenarios were devised by a reference group, meeting repeatedly in Wellington during 2004. To make them plausible they are each based on aspects of life found in New Zealand today, but extended into the future to emphasise or exaggerate certain characteristics that will distinguish them from each other.

The vertical axis represents a continuum from a world where natural resources are depleted to a world where they are plentiful, through good management; and the horizontal axis represents social cohesion, from a world that is very individualistic through to one that is cohesive and collective in nature. For example, the top right hand square represents a world that has a cohesive community and cares for its natural resources. I will bring copies of this chart to each table now, while you head back into the same small groups, then I’ll provide you with more information on one of the four scenarios.

+35 mins elapsed

Facilitator quickly provides a copy of the chart and several matching colour copies of the A5-size **Scenarios cards** to each table (there’s a different colour for each of the 4 scenarios), as participants return to the tables. **It is crucial to get all four scenarios offered within the room at this event, but only one scenario colour per table**, e.g., if 4 groups are present, the facilitator can distribute 4 different scenarios, one per table-group.

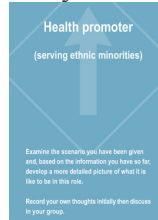


“For each small group (4 or at maximum 5 people), I’m giving out several copies of just one of the brief scenario descriptions, chosen at random from the four available. For a few minutes, read and reflect on the possibilities offered by life in such a scenario. Look again at the chart showing how this scenario was devised and how it differs from the other three.

Wait for about 2 minutes of relative quiet while they read, then:

“Remember, as you read, these are future possibilities and they are being used as a tool for discussion – they are not projections, nor future predictions! Think about your grandchildren living in this different world in 50 years time and how they might cope. When you are ready, start discussing with your small group the broad picture of life as it is imagined in that scenario.

As discussion gets under way, the facilitator responds to any questions, and must have ready the **Role cards** and the Recording sheets (photocopies) and a few spare pens.



+40 to max +45 mins

“Each of you will now be given a ‘future role’ card. These are drawn at random from a large set – there will be a few different ones available as spares if you really need to change the first option! The aim of your future role card is to place you in the shoes of a future descendant, perhaps a grandchild, who would almost certainly have a different livelihood or social position compared with you today.

“From the perspective of this new role you're playing, carefully consider the experience and quality of life that may be available in the future scenario. Once you have thought about it, discuss it within your group. Try to imagine life in that scenario seen through the eyes of, say, your granddaughter’s or great-nephew’s generation living in 2050 (rather than through your own role, stuck back here today). You may wish to compare differences in experience within your group, finding contrasts between the roles we provided. ”

+50 mins

“The recording sheet invites you to note positive and negative aspects that occur to you. We may collect this later for research use, so please don’t put your name on it.

Please indicate the role that you played and which scenario you were 'visiting'. It may help clarify your thoughts to discuss these responses with the group *before* you write. We expect different roles will see these future scenarios in quite different ways – and Landcare Research hopes to capture those insights and the resulting diversity.”

While this discussion is taking place, facilitators select **wild cards** for use soon. If the process is running late, you could miss out the wild-card stage entirely and go straight to next item. Remember you will need to find spokespeople from the groups – be ready to encourage those who appeared as good listeners rather than those who may simply rehearse previously set views, departing from the scenarios task!



+60 mins

“I will be delivering extra information to your group, presented in the form of a 'wild-card'. Living out there in the future is an unpredictable place, with sudden changes as well as slower changes! Please indicate on your recording sheet any particular effects created by the wild-cards in that scenario and remember to indicate what topic the wild card was on, so that the researchers can make some sense of your findings. Our question is: how resilient is that future scenario to sudden, externally imposed change?”

+65 mins

“Continue writing comments on other questions. You can come ‘out of role’ to respond to these later questions.”

+ 70 mins

Gather them around you as you did previously. *If you have extra time available* you can re-issue contrasting scenarios cards (preferably those that are diagonally opposite on the scenarios chart) to new tables, so that, for example, those who looked at New Frontiers get to see Independent Aotearoa. Add 15 minutes to carry out scenario two and a different wild card. If you intend to re-issue cards it is best to organize this in advance of the workshop, because you will need to modify or duplicate the recording sheet. We recommend that each participant stays in the same role for both scenarios, so you will only need to add another tick-box question on the recording sheet on which scenario, and on more positive and negative lines for the new scenario plus a repeat of the question on wild-card effects.

“So we can tell the wider group just a little about life imagined in each scenario, we will combine the four small groups into 16 or more people, in order to represent all 4 scenarios. We have a few minutes for at least one spokesperson per group. Feedback time is limited, which is one reason for the written sheets – they capture more insights. Make some contrasts with today and offer comment on whether that future was or was not appealing to the people whose roles you played – this is an attempt to speak for future generations!

Allow a few minutes per scenario for these summaries but keep up the pace as people will become tired and may focus on the negative aspects of the scenarios. You need to facilitate actively, stop waffle and encourage positive input across the groups. Careful time-keeping should ensure all 4 scenarios get covered. Note-taking from this is not required and from experience would slow down comments too much. Sound recording – for a later transcript – would be a possibility.

+85 mins at earliest.

Add 15 to 20 minutes if a second round of scenario cards was used

Close game - thank all involved - offer refreshments if available - discuss follow up and consider feedback of results to Landcare Research.

Then collect the feedback sheets at the door as they exit. If you're finishing early, which from our experience is unlikely, wrap-up comments by facilitator might include these optional questions:

“If these were four plausible future scenarios for Aotearoa/New Zealand amongst a much larger number of possible futures, how do they relate to emerging public strategy and policy objectives in your business/organisation/local and central government?

Where are we trying to head?

And/or “Where may we actually be heading in New Zealand right now, as a trend relative to these particular four directions, whether or not it is a policy objective, *and do you actually want to go there?* What are the longer term or inter-generational consequences of our current direction?



Council staff and elected reps, Far North District Council



NGO members, Christchurch



Community health workers, Christchurch



Futures conference, Cardiff, UK

Close-ups of groups at varied events using the Scenarios Game

Participant Recording Form

Scenarios workshop using Landcare Research © materials

Date: _____ Venue: _____

1. What role or character from a future generation of 2050, did you take?

(Your real-life name is not required – you can be anonymous in this role-playing)

2. Please indicate which of the four future scenarios below were you ‘visiting’ on this occasion?

Fruits for a Few Independent Aotearoa New Frontiers

Living on No. 8 Wire

3. Please first describe 3 positive and then 3 negative aspects of New Zealand life in this imagined future scenario, viewed from the role you took:

+

+

+

-

-

-

4. Was a wild card delivered to you? What did it say?
.....

How resilient does this future NZ scenario look in the face of this particular sudden shock or major event? How would your role character be affected, for example?

Responding to these additional questions may interest you and will be useful in our research at LCR. It's OK to come out of role here.

5. What would make a good 'next step' activity, to follow up the Future Scenarios Game, in considering sustainable future visions for New Zealand?

6. Have you any observations to make on today's Scenarios Workshop – on the facilitation or the process & materials that we used?

8. If you'd like news of this research project and its publications by email after 2007, either email us at scenarios@landcareresearch.co.nz, send back your business card, or write your contact details here, but only if anonymity is not important:

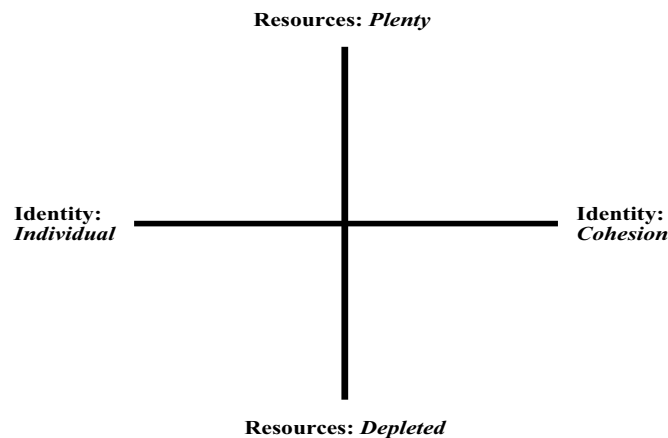
Thank you for taking part today & to the facilitator(s) for arranging your access to these materials, which are published on the internet at www.landcareresearch.co.nz/services/sustainablesoc/futures/

LCR scenarios team: Rhys Taylor 03 960 2656; Bob Frame 03 321 9673; & Melissa Brignall-Theyer

Please return (via facilitator) to: Bob Frame, Landcare Research, PO Box 40, Lincoln 7640

These are optional questions you could add to the recording sheet. Landcare Research has used these in the past and found they helped further stimulate the creative thinking and discussion process.

1. Things to avoid: From the viewpoint of the role you played, what must New Zealand do in the next 10 years, to avoid later unwanted effects of change (e.g., your 'negatives' in the comments above)?
2. Things to encourage: What must New Zealand do in the next 10 years, to encourage or protect the desirable effects of change (e.g., your 'positives' above)?
3. Below are the axes in which the four scenarios used today sit (these are the same axes used when the scenarios were created). Please identify where you would place New Zealand in 2005 (with an 'X'), where you would like New Zealand to be in 50 years time (with a 'G'), and where you think NZ is heading with a 'T' using an arrow for the direction of the trend. Remember the axes are a continuum so your marks can be placed anywhere around or on the axes.



4. Considering where you have put your X on the axes above, what is one thing that *you personally could do* to help New Zealand move towards your desired place in 50 years time?