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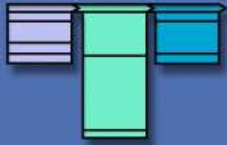
FORESIGHT

Strategic futures planning
Suggestions for success

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Strategic Futures Planning

Suggestions for Success

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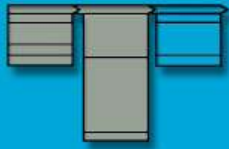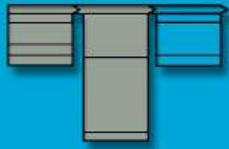
How to use
this guide

Review and development

- Even though you will have developed your visions and should have good underpinning information as the basis for the visions, you need to explore them with the stakeholders and experts. This will allow all to develop a common understanding as the evidence is tested and the vision is developed

- Use the results of this review to produce your final findings

- Present the findings to your stakeholders to engender action

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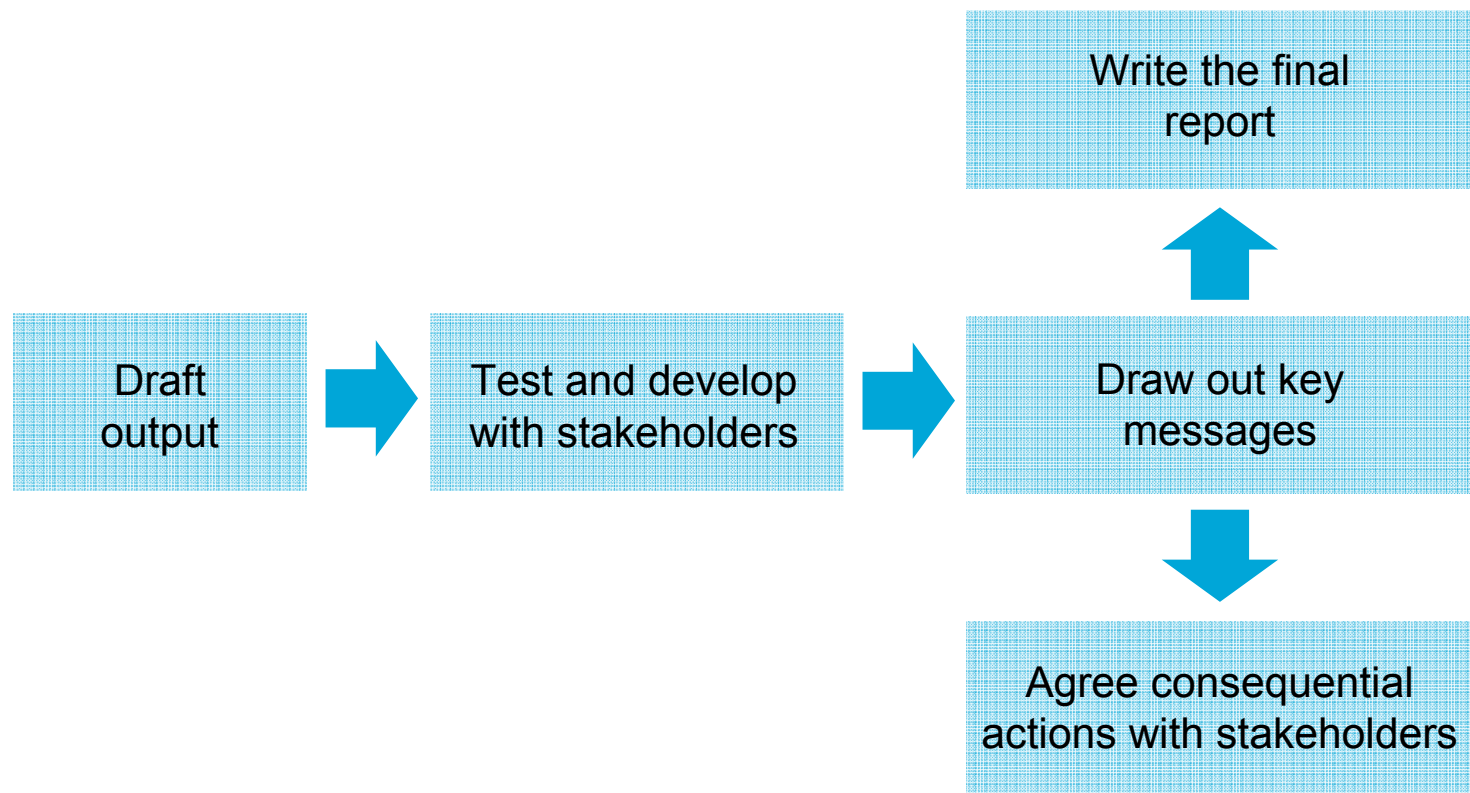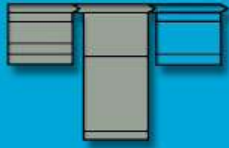
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How to use
this guide

Review and development

The diagram below sets out the stages in the development of the key messages and the delivery of the report and response.

Draw out key messages

Write the final report

Draft output → Test and develop with stakeholders → Draw out key messages

Agree consequential actions with stakeholders

ADDING VALUE

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Writing the report

Suggestions for success

- **Involve the right people.** Drawing out the key messages from futures work in a way that will lead to action is an art

- **Start with an outline for the content**, and make sure it reflects the original questions you set, or, where you have developed the questions, explain why

- **Develop a suite of documents to suit the stakeholders' needs**. Usually you will need at least: a one-or two-page executive summary; an overview which draws together all of your work; and the more detailed underpinning papers

- **Set aside time to do this and refine it.** It is often in the process of writing the final documents that some of the key findings are made

- **Make sure you include the context and evidence to support your findings.** Test the work on people outside the project. If you have been involved in the project throughout, there is a risk that you have made too many assumptions so those new to the work will not accept it. There is also a risk you will use language whose significance only those in the project will fully understand
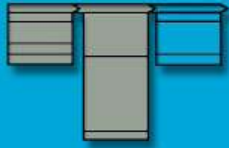
Communication

The approach you take for communication is the same as for any other project, but in a few areas, futures work warrants extra attention.

Suggestions for success

- Communicate regularly with stakeholders and experts throughout the process. Because of the dependence of the work on the experts and stakeholders, you need a proactive approach to communication

- Agree lines to take from the start of the project and update them as you go along. Futures work is, by its nature, speculative and challenging. Your work may be misinterpreted as descriptions or criticisms of today, or as a definitive forecast, or a statement of a desired future. It is therefore essential to have thought through the lines you wish to take and to ensure that the participants have a common understanding of the nature of the exercise

- Develop a communication plan for the launch of the findings. You will need to make sure that you have the resources, up to 25% of the project's budget, to communicate the findings of the project. The approach you take will depend very much on what and who you are seeking to influence

- Do not underestimate the time it takes to produce the final outputs, whether they are released in paper, CD-Rom or on the web. In addition to the time to write it, you need to think about production and clearance

- Consider phasing the publication of your findings. It may be helpful to publish some of the materials part-way through the project, to reach a wider audience. But you need to be sure that your stakeholders have had the chance to think through any implications for them and that publication of early results will not constrain the final stages of the project unnecessarily

- Develop a media handling plan – essential given the potential sensitivities surrounding futures work

- Decide whether to have a launch event or events. It is important for all to draw a line under the analysis and review; a launch event is good for this. It is also a good way of sharing with all who have been involved the final conclusions of the work, to cement networks and share visions developed during the course of the project