

Workshop Catalogue

Strategic Foresight | Alliance for Innovation

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About AFI

The Alliance for Innovation (AFI) is a leading non-profit association of local governments committed to fostering innovation and enhancing the quality of life in communities across the United States. Since its founding in 1994, AFI has served as a dynamic platform for collaboration, learning, and the sharing of best practices among its members. Our mission is to drive transformative change in local government through the power of innovation and foresight.

In partnership with Strategic Government Resources (SGR), AFI leverages the expertise of top specialists to deliver comprehensive services in anticipatory leadership, future-readiness, and innovation. AFI and SGR are proud to offer a robust selection of programs and resources designed to support local governments in their quest for excellence. From thought leadership and cutting-edge research to practical training and hands-on support, our offerings are thoughtfully crafted to meet the diverse needs of our members. For further information about our services and how we can assist your organization, please visit our website or contact AFI.info@governmentresource.com

What to Expect

The world is changing faster than local governments can adapt. The challenges of the 21st century are interconnected, “moving targets” with multigenerational impact. Decision-making informed by comprehensive data and decades of experience is necessary but not sufficient. Leaders need methods and mindsets that prepare them to embrace uncertainty rather than minimize it. Governments around the world have recognized strategic foresight as best practice for navigating uncertainty with resilience and adaptability.

1.0 Shaping the Future in Three Horizons

2.0 Deconstructing Obstacles to Change

3.0 21st Century Decision-Making

4.0 The Postnormal City Game

5.0 Thinking in Systems

6.0 Collaboration that Embraces Uncertainty

Workshop Options

1.0 Shaping the Future in Three Horizons

Bill Shape's Three Horizons Framework is a foundational strategic foresight tool that provides a collaborative, structured approach to balancing the demands of current operations with the foresight needed to anticipate change and adapt proactively. Through a combination of presentations and interactive exercises, participants will learn to assess the current state of affairs, explore possible futures, and design a strategic path towards their desired future. Applying this framework will empower teams to collaborate across competing priorities and lead through uncertainty.

Objectives

1. Learn to create clarity and alignment on practices losing effectiveness due to long-term changes in your operating environment.
2. Cocreate a desired future that grows in efficacy with critical change and underpinned by novel assumptions.

3. Surface innovations and partners that amplify effective transition from the current state of play to the desired future.
4. Develop shared language for systems change.

2.0 Deconstructing Obstacles to Change: Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

Leaders will come across continued practice despite no longer being linked to the broader vision, strategy, or the changing world. To address this challenge, futurists have used Sohail Inayatullah's Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to uncover four layers of change influencing an uncertain, complex challenge. CLA empowers participants to collectively identify underlying obstacles to change, going beyond symptoms and systems to surface what shapes behavior. Ultimately creating positive alternatives for each layer to form an integrated vision of the future. This strategic foresight method will allow leaders to create deeper understanding and lasting change.

Objectives

1. Understand the role of metaphor in problem and solution identification.
2. Identify and reimagine new barriers to change for complex challenges.
3. Strengthen capacity for strategic thinking and shaping organizational narrative.
4. Learn how to form an integrated strategy from a complex problem.

3.0 21st Century Decision-Making

When decisions in local government are intertwined with complex community impacts, the ability to discern and adapt to the context of each challenge is pivotal. This workshop empowers participants to understand and navigate five distinct operating contexts, fostering a nuanced approach to decision-making. Participants will collaboratively apply Dave Snowden's Cynefin framework to the challenges they face. This workshop is for leaders and decision-makers looking to ensure resources are deployed in the appropriate context for maximum effectiveness.

Objectives

1. Understand different decision-making contexts and the costs of misalignment.
2. Improve decision-making effectiveness by applying appropriate strategies to distinct contexts.
3. Collaboratively apply the Cynefin framework to organizational challenges.
4. Recognize which situations to lean into expertise, learning experiments, best practice, and authority.

4.0 The Postnormal City Game

Postnormal times has been described as "an in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have yet to be born, and very few things seem to make sense." Since its introduction in 2010, accounts of postnormal phenomena have multiplied and the concepts refined. What has become clear is that straight-line, goal-fixated problem solving will not work in postnormal change. With this insight in mind, the postnormal solution space holds no answers. Instead, it holds space for leaders to carve new ways of focusing attention and generating new questions. Postnormal Times requires us to think beyond resolutions and explore tools for orientation and navigation.

The Postnormal City Game is an interactive, participatory, and experiential exploration of postnormal times. Participants will apply postnormal theory to navigate chaos, complexity, and contradiction in the context of a community planning simulation set in 2045. The session will provide a unique opportunity for participants to experience the relationship between core PNT concepts and their work in local government. This session is for local government professionals who are looking for new ways of leading in an environment characterized by accelerating change, contradiction, and uncertainty.

Objectives

1. Learn about Postnormal Times through simulated resource constraints, cross-system collaboration, and disruption.
2. Recognize how local government challenges are impacted by the evolution of change i.e chaos, complexity, contradiction, speed, scope, scale, simultaneity
3. Enhance decision-making through trust and empathy between partners amidst dwindling resources and disruptive external events.

5.0 Thinking in Systems

Local governments serve at the intersection of diverse community needs, policy dynamics, and resource constraints, where traditional, siloed approaches are increasingly inadequate. Thinking in systems empowers local government leaders to recognize, map, and collectively navigate these complexities. This workshop introduces participants to key concepts crucial to understanding how actions in one area can have direct impacts throughout their organization and community.

Objectives

1. Acquire a robust understanding of systems thinking principles.
2. Learn to map and analyze interconnections between systems.
3. Learn to identify leverage points and system archetypes.
4. Recognize when reinforcing and balancing behavior in your organization.

6.0 Collaboration Embracing Uncertainty

This session integrates four strategic foresight tools that leaders can use to foster collaboration that embraces uncertainty. They can be used individually or together on issues that impact uncertain, complex areas of local government. The futures triangle allows leaders to map the future by surfacing and aligning on the three factors influencing change. The implications wheel allows leaders to anticipate unintended consequences and ripple effects of change. Scenario planning creates four distinct strategic alternatives for the futures we want. Finally, backcasting connects the future with today by helping break out of today's constraints to plan for the desired future.

Objectives

1. Surface and align on what impact forces shaping the future have on your organization.
2. Learn how to anticipate unintended consequences and ripples effects of impactful change.
3. Craft scenarios of the future integrating disruptive change with action leaders can take.
4. Develop pathways for transformative change by breaking out of today's constraints.