FUTURECAST

A GAME EXPLORING
THE PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

PREPARATION GUIDE

UN GLOBAL PULSE

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CONTENTS

PREPARE

Welcome to the FutureCast Preparation Guide!

EXPLANATIONS, TRICKS, TIPS AND EXAMPLES TO HELP PREPARE FOR YOUR SESSION.

FutureCast is a highly interactive game that will take you and your team through three time horizons to explore risks and opportunities during and after an election period in your country or region.

All examples given in this manual are fictional, any resemblance to real life events is purely coincidental.

DEFINE

DEFINE THE SCOPE, PURPOSE AND PARTICIPANTS

A. SCOPE

- Identify the **topics** you want to explore: from specific emerging challenges or phenomena to broader themes (e.g. the risk of disinformation on social media, climate change-related issues or generational differences).

- Choose **critical actors** to include in the game's narrative: for instance, the governing party, opposition parties, civil society, or third countries. Be aware that critical actors are different from game participants and key stakeholders - these are the people and partners you would like to invite to play the game or take part in the process.

> **TIP**
>
> Is this your first time engaging in a foresight exercise? Are you uncertain about which future topics to include? Start by exploring emerging trends and drivers of change in your specific country or region. Consult think tanks, research institutes, government websites and UNGP's Horizon Scan Manual for more information.

B. PURPOSE

- Define your game's **goal**: from supporting a particular outcome or avoiding a specific crisis, to informing a policy or strategy. For example, the game might help to:

  - Reveal possible pathways and strategies to positive change in an upcoming election.
  - Influence political discourses and change agents around elections.
  - Assess the potential impact of the election outcomes in the development and human rights landscapes.
  - Explore underlying concerns from a variety of stakeholders on new policies.

- Tie your goals to related activities you are already engaged in – whether reports, response plans, other foresight efforts, etc.

- Ensure you have buy-in from your management to start this process and share a mutual understanding about how this game can benefit your foresight planning.

TIP

Running the game once will provide you with valuable insight, but it might not be enough to cover everything. **Running the game multiple times** and engaging different participants (who represent diverse stakeholders) will result in an even deeper exploration and allow you to compare and contrast the results.

C.PARTICIPANTS

- Identify your **players:** this game can be played with experts and non-experts, youth and elders, politicians, NGOs, academics, companies, and more.

- You can run different sessions for each type of stakeholder or invite a variety of stakeholders to each session. While a homogeneous group of attendees may help participants feel more comfortable, a diverse group might generate more ideas.

TIP

Consider doing a quick stakeholder analysis to identify the most relevant participants and determine who should be part of the process (designing the game, sharing the results, etc.).

CUSTOMISE
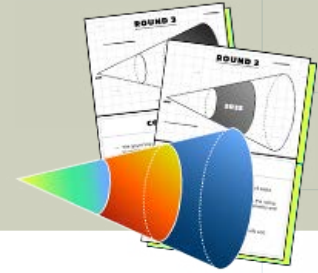
CUSTOMISE THE TIME HORIZONS, CONTEXT CARDS AND GAME QUESTIONS

A.TIME HORIZONS

The game consists of three rounds, each reflecting a different period of time in the future.

- Define the time horizons based on your **specific election context**.
- Avoid setting the first round in the **present** to avoid safe or obvious answers.

> **EXAMPLES**
>
> Both examples are equally valid:
>
> - **1: zoomed-in to one specific election**
>
>   - **Round 1:** the two months of campaigning leading up to the election
>   - **Round 2:** election day and the following 48 hours as votes are tallied
>   - **Round 3:** the two months following the election
>
> - **2: zoomed-out to the next 10 years**
>
>   - **Round 1:** the 2025 general election
>   - **Round 2:** the 2029 general election
>   - **Round 3:** the 2033 general election

B.CONTEXT CARDS

Context cards are used to introduce each round and help participants situate themselves in the future scenario.

Create a **context card** for each of the three chosen time horizons. Edit your **Context Cards** and **Workshop Slides**.

The context card should contain **three to five** items providing information on what is happening in the future in your country.
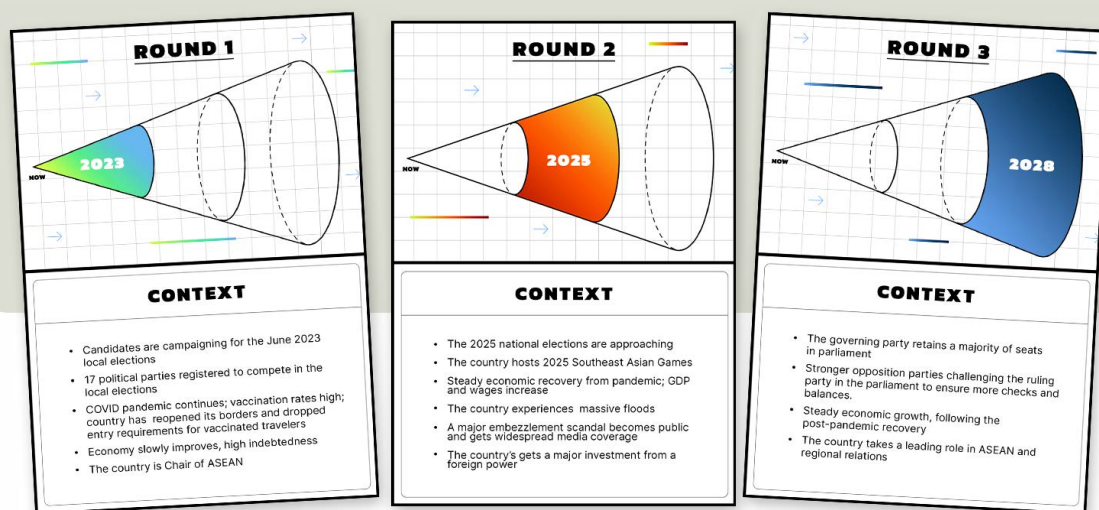

HOW TO WRITE CONTEXT CARDS

- Envision the cards as fictional mini-scenarios: they don't have to be true, but should be **realistic** and **probable**.

- An easy way to start is by using the PESTLE analysis tool[1] to add different dimensions beyond political elements. This will help participants think about the context's impact and add specificity to their answers. Place yourself in the chosen year and imagine what your country would look like. For instance:

  - **Political:** *Who is the governing party? And the opposition? Are there any surprising outsiders? What is the political sentiment in the country? What is the position of this country on the international stage?*

  - **Economic:** *What is the status of the economy? Is the economy stronger or weaker? Do citizens and businesses have access to equal economic opportunities?*

  - **Social:** *How prevalent is social media in society? Are there any major challenges (e.g. a pandemic, uprisings, etc.) putting political stability at risk? Are there any specific fault lines or tensions in society?*

  - **Technological:** *What technologies play a big role in this time period? Is the country benefiting from technological development by supporting its economic growth? Are (new) technologies used for election and political campaign purposes?*

  - **Legal:** *Are there any legal disputes between the governing political party and the opposition? Are there any laws or regulations contested by civil society?*

  - **Environmental:** *Are there any environmental and biodiversity conservation priorities for the governing political party? Is the government achieving its net-zero objectives? Are there any specific environmental or climate change-related challenges that influence the political debate?*

1   PESTLE stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental.

FOR THE MORE EXPERIENCED FORESIGHT PRACTITIONER:

- To create a more systemised exploration of the future, it may be beneficial to draft alternative scenarios using, for example, the **2 x 2 scenario method** or the **archetype method.** These scenarios will build on the phenomena and drivers that you identified in the scoping phase.

- Once you have drafted these scenarios, you can focus on the ones that are most interesting to you for further exploration (e.g. positive scenarios that identify entries for positive change, or more negative scenarios for risk management).

- Draw a timeline indicating the present and the three time horizons you have chosen (see image). Between the present and your first time horizon, think about what might happen - what could be the main events and what actors are involved? Then continue moving towards your second and third time horizons. This process will help you map changes and build coherence between context cards.
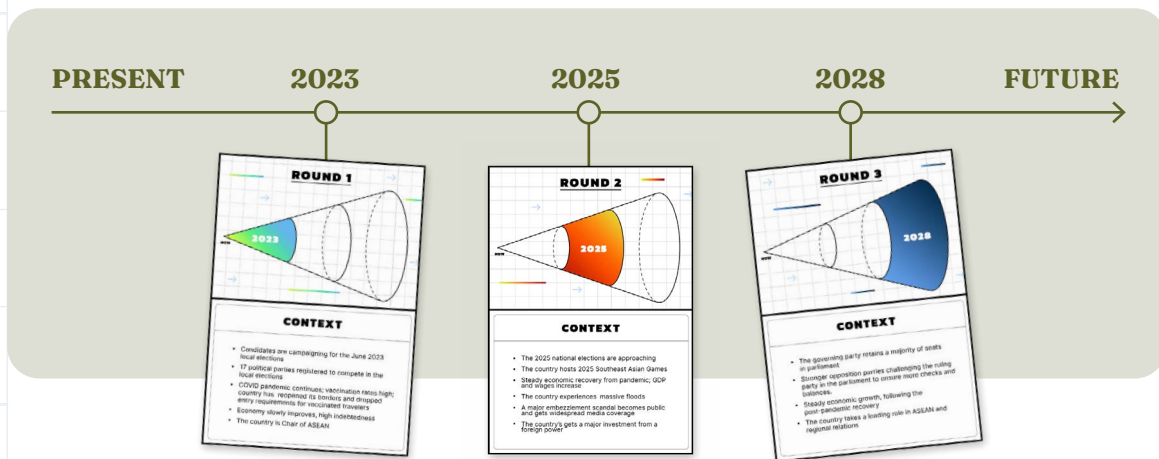
ADDITIONAL TIPS:

• Make the context specific to your location; link it to reality to help participants (specific apps or news outlets, major holidays, specific locations, etc.).

• Keep in mind the overall goal of this exercise; add specific elements if you would like to explore certain trends or issues (a disinformation campaign, a distinct power balance, a technological development, etc.).

• Link it to your geographic scope (local, regional or global).

• Find inspiration to fill in your context cards below!
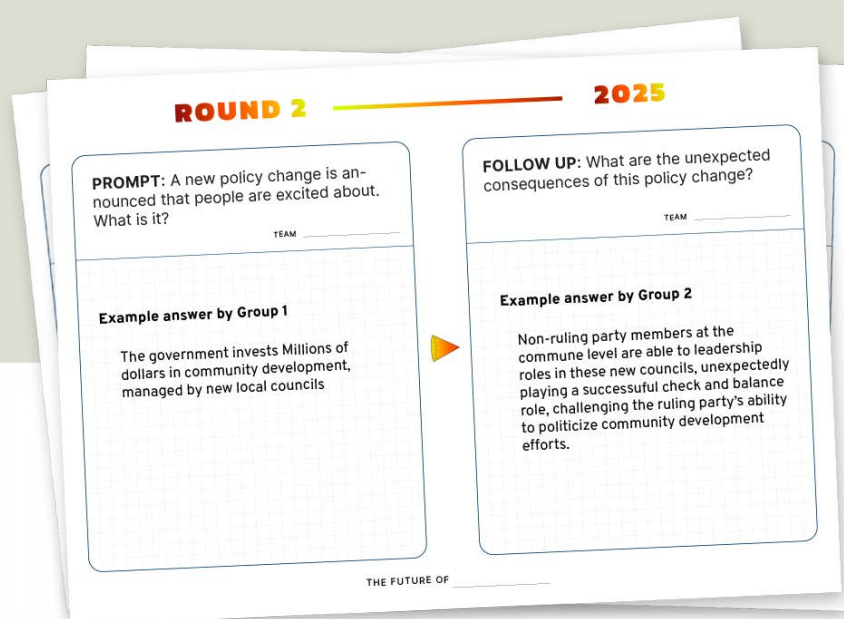
C.GAME QUESTIONS

Game questions are the core aspect of this game. Every team will answer one question, trade papers, and respond to a different group's answer.

- Define your **game questions and edit the Question Sheets and Workshop Slides.** Depending on the number of participants, you will need to prepare **3-4 questions and 3-4 follow-up questions** *per round* (9-12 in total).

- You can customise your questions, focusing on the:

  - **Actor:** focus on a specific actor (e.g. one politician) or a broad group (e.g. the entire voting public).
  - **Issue:** focus on a specific issue (e.g. violence at voting sites) or a broad issue (e.g. growth of an environmental rights movement).
  - **Time scale:** focus on a specific moment in time (e.g. an election day in 2023) or zoom further out (e.g. years spanning 2024-2028).

- **Example follow-up questions:**

  - **Reasons:** Why is this happening? How and who started it and what actions were taken? Who supports, who resists?
  - **Consequences:** How will this affect the country? What are the consequences? What are the unexpected consequences of this policy change? What would happen if this hope were to be realised?
  - **Reactions:** How does the public respond to the disinformation being spread? How does the government respond?

HOW TO FORMULATE GOOD GAME QUESTIONS

- Keep the **goal of your exercise** in mind and focus on the phenomena you would like to explore (tensions around certain political actors or in society, trends in civic space, a broad or specific issue, a specific moment in time, etc.).
- Questions should be **open-ended** and invite participants to add their own ideas.
- Good questions have some **degree of specificity.** An overly broad question might leave participants unsure of how to respond.
- Keep the follow-up questions linked to the game's objective.

ROUND 2 ——————— **2025**

PROMPT: A new policy change is announced that people are excited about. What is it?

TEAM _____

Example answer by Group 1

The government invests Millions of dollars in community development, managed by new local councils

FOLLOW UP: What are the unexpected consequences of this policy change?

TEAM _____

Example answer by Group 2

Non-ruling party members at the commune level are able to leadership roles in these new councils, unexpectedly playing a successful check and balance role, challenging the ruling party's ability to politicize community development efforts.

THE FUTURE OF _____

Find inspiration to help you formulate questions [below](#)!

INSPIRATION TO CUSTOMISE CONTEXT CARDS AND GAME QUESTIONS

Need ideas to adapt your **context cards** and **game questions**? Here are some examples and inspiration to help you get started. They are organised into six categories: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE):

POLITICAL

ENVIRONMENTAL

ECONOMIC

PESTLE

LEGAL

TECHNOLOGICAL

SOCIAL

POLITICAL

CONTEXT CARDS

- The governing party retains a majority of seats in parliament.

- Stronger opposition parties challenge the ruling party in parliament to ensure more checks and balances.

- A major political figure is involved in an embezzlement scandal that gets widespread media coverage.

- The 2025 national elections are approaching and candidates are actively campaigning.

- A crisis in a neighbouring country sends refugees to the border.

- The country receives a major investment from a foreign power.

- The country is the Chair of an international or regional organization or forum.

QUESTIONS & FOLLOW-UPS

Questions	Follow-ups
There are widespread protests happening in the country. Who is participating in the demonstrations and what are their demands?	How does the government react to the protests?
Young people are engaged in an election activity. What issues are they passionate about and how are they trying to make a difference?	How does the government respond?
There are outbursts of violence at polling locations. Who is involved and why?	What are the consequences of the violence?
The government has arrested several members of the opposition party on contested charges. What does the opposition party do in response?	How do the people react to the arrests and the response?
In the lead-up to the elections, local civil society organizations are launching major initiatives. What are they?	How does the government react to the CSO actions?
The opposition is mobilising rural areas. How are people responding? Do they respect the opposition's message, or are they loyal to the ruling party?	How does the government respond to this challenge to their authority?
A major policy change is announced that people are excited about. What is it?	What are the unexpected consequences of this policy change?
What are the potential economic, political and security implications of the foreign power's major investment in the country?	How might other countries respond to it?
What are the unexpected consequences of the influx of refugees from a neighbouring country?	How might different communities respond to the crisis?
How might the country address concerns from other countries about potential political or economic influence in their region?	What are the unexpected implications of this strategy?

ECONOMIC

CONTEXT CARDS

- Steady economic growth following a post-traumatic event recovery (e.g. new pandemic).

- A new economic agreement or partnership is signed between countries.

- GDP growth slows, prompting (fears of) a recession.

- The country experiences a surge in renewable energy investment with major projects underway to transition to a low-carbon economy.

- A major cyberattack hits the country's critical infrastructure, leading to significant disruptions and economic losses.

QUESTIONS & FOLLOW-UPS

Questions	Follow-ups
A pandemic impacts people's livelihoods. How does the government respond?	What is the public's response to the actions taken by the government?
The country's economy is projected to recover gradually. However, some economic agreements might be cancelled due to human rights violations. What are the implications on the country's economy?	If the withdrawal happens, how will the government react?
The new economic partnership comes with other explicit or implicit expectations. What are they and what could be the effect?	How will third countries respond to this new dynamic?
How is the economy impacted by the crackdowns and related international response?	How do local business leaders respond to the crackdown and economic change?
The government is implementing policies and incentives to encourage the growth of renewable energy investment. How have these measures affected the country's energy mix and economic development?	How do households and local businesses react to the changes in the energy system?
Following a cyberattack, what steps has the government taken to address vulnerabilities and improve the resilience of critical infrastructure and networks?	What are the unexpected economic consequences of the measures taken by the government?

SOCIAL

CONTEXT CARDS

- A local pop musician goes viral and becomes world famous.

- The country hosts the 2025 Regional Games Tournament.

- A new social media movement in the country leads to massive disruptions in the streets.

- The country is awarded the Best Country to Live In award in 2028.

- Foreign youth movements are gaining traction in the country.

- The country approves a new law promoting equity between different minority groups.

QUESTIONS & FOLLOW-UPS

Questions	Follow-ups
There are major disinformation efforts pushed on local social media. What is the disinformation being spread?	How does the public react to the disinformation?
The government announces a new round of citizen-state dialogues. What are the main topics?	What change, if any, comes about because of the dialogues?
There is disgruntlement across the country. Who is unhappy and why?	How does the disgruntlement escalate (e.g. public protests) and how does the government react?
There are protests and incidences of violence. Who is involved and why?	What are the consequences?
A recent law on equity approved by the government is helping minority groups to address issues that have been overlooked for a long time. What are these issues?	How do non-minority groups react?
New social movements are organising themselves in non-traditional ways. How and what could be the effects?	How do the local authorities respond?

TECHNOLOGY

CONTEXT CARDS

- Self-driving cars have become widespread.

- The election results are safeguarded by blockchain making voting more transparent and equal.

- Widespread use of AI-powered chatbots is helping diverse political groups engage with voters.

- Technological development in the country is not a priority because of other more pressing issues.

- Politicians target specific demographics with tailored messaging thanks to big data analytics.

- Public opinion is concerned about the privacy implications of collecting and using large amounts of personal data.

- A large big-tech company is building a regional hub in the country.

- Several cities in the country are now "smart cities", improving citizen's welfare.

QUESTIONS & FOLLOW-UPS

Questions	Follow-ups
Blockchain is used to ensure the integrity of elections. What specific measures are being taken to safeguard voting systems using blockchain technology?	How does the public react to these measures?
Citizens use AI-powered chatbots to get information and inform their voting decisions. What are the challenges of this use of technology?	What does this mean for the most disconnected areas in the country?
The high use of data in the country is increasing energy consumption and technological waste. The government is putting forward policies to limit the number of new data centres in the country. How is this affecting the country's technological development?	What is the opposition's position on this issue?
New movements are trying to raise awareness about data privacy and the use of modern technologies. Who is behind these movements and what are their main demands?	What is the government's reaction?
A big tech company helping build smart cities has gained its grip on local authorities by accessing citizens' data. What are the consequences for society?	What is the government's reaction?

LEGAL

CONTEXT CARDS

- The government cracks down on protest groups around the country, imprisoning their leaders.

- A cure is found for most forms of cancer and made available at no charge.

- The country faces criticism and potential sanctions from the international community for its human rights record, particularly with regard to the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities.

- The country is leading the promotion of LGTBQ+ rights in a region where policies have recently become more conservative.

- The country has recently appointed supporters in higher courts and court president positions.

QUESTIONS & FOLLOW-UPS

| Questions	Follow-ups
A group of young members of the ruling party are advocating for human rights. Which rights?	How do party leaders react to this?
The government significantly expands rights related to freedom of expression. Why did they decide to expand these rights?	How do people use these rights?
The international community encourages an expansion of civic space, human rights and democracy in the country. How do they incentivise this change?	How does the government respond?
Civil society organizations call for expanding civic space and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms (freedom of speech, assembly and association). What actions will they take?	How does the government react?
The government conducts a harsh crackdown on protesters and opposition parties using violence and extra-judicial killings. How do the protesters and opposition parties react to this crackdown?	How do locals who were previously uninvolved in politics react to the crackdown and response?

ENVIRONMENTAL
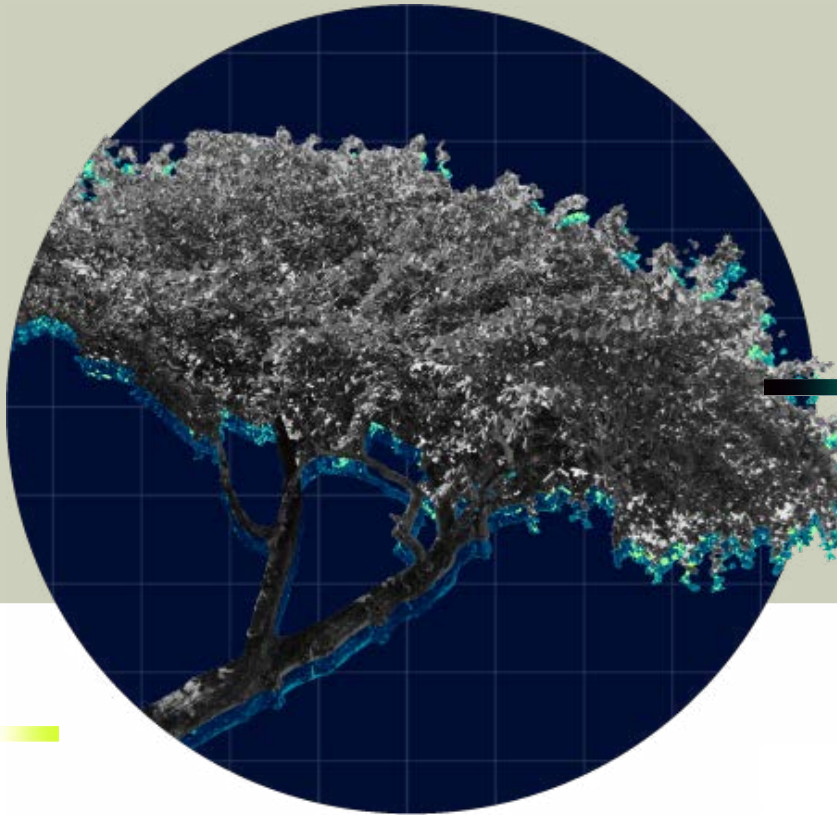
CONTEXT CARDS

- Global temperatures rise by 1.5 °C but many countries are approaching carbon neutrality.

- A deadly heat wave in the region kills 20,000 citizens.

- The country experiences massive floods causing billions of dollars in damages.

- Residents are suffering due to major climate-related floods and droughts that are impacting agriculture, water supply and energy.

QUESTIONS & FOLLOW-UPS

Questions	Follow-ups
Major disinformation efforts about climate change are being pushed. What is the disinformation being spread and who is behind it? How is it spread?	How does the public react to the disinformation?
After the floods, houses and cities have been destroyed. What are the mechanisms put in place by the government?	How does the opposition react?
New elections are coming and the major candidate does not include climate change in the agenda. What is the public feeling about this?	How does the international or regional community react to this anti-climate change agenda?
Droughts and floods have affected agricultural production. How does the government react?	What are the unexpected consequences of the government's measures?
Living conditions during the summer are becoming more difficult every year. What are possible actions local citizens, governments and businesses can take to deal with the new conditions?	Who pushes back against the actions, and how?

MATERIALS OVERVIEW

Use this checklist to make sure you have prepared all the materials needed to play and learn. *Visit the* Game's Website *to download all the resources.*
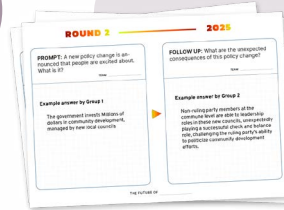
PLAY
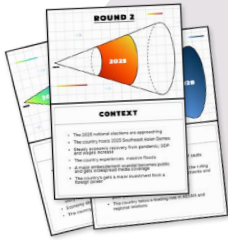
Context Cards

Cards for facilitators to introduce participants to each round's future scenario.

Customise the content with this preparation guide

Question Sheets

Template with questions for participants to answer and exchange with other groups during the game.

Customise the content with this preparation guide

Facilitation Guide

Step-by-step with tips and tricks for facilitators to guide discussions during the session.

Workshop Slides

Presentation for facilitators to help guide the session.

Customise the content with this preparation guide

Game Board

Board to place the cards on during the playing session (optional).

Note-taking Sheet

Template for facilitators to take notes during the session.

Other materials

1 timer
1 pen per participant
1 computer and projector/screen

Room

A space for attendees to organise into groups of 2-3 people each.

LEARN

Sensemaking Slides

Presentation for facilitators to run a Sensemaking session to synthesise insights from the game session(s) and inspire possible follow-up actions.

Results Template

Reporting template for organisers to share learniangs with participants and the broader ecosystem and keep stakeholders engaged.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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