



## Ideal Future Scenarios

### INTRODUCTION

Campuses may choose to incorporate scenario planning exercises as part of the initial Resilience Assessment as a method to envision *ideal* future scenarios. This can help bring to light common values, and identify a positive vision for the

future. Understanding the ideal future scenario will help campuses identify how climate change may threaten this vision. However, future scenario visioning is not required to implement the Climate or Resilience Commitment.

## WHAT IS FUTURE SCENARIO VISIONING?



Social Equity & Governance



Health & Wellness



Ecosystem Services



Infrastructure



Economics

Future scenario visioning is a facilitated brainstorming exercise that asks campus and/or community stakeholders to imagine and create a vision of their institution and community for the future. The vision should reflect a realistic balance of priorities for a specific time period – 10, 20, or even 30 years in the future. Participants should consider the ideal future in each of the **Five Dimensions of Resilience: Social Equity & Governance, Health & Wellness, Ecosystem Services, Infrastructure, and Economics**, as it relates to the campus and community. As much as possible, the vision should also incorporate existing strategic priorities. For example, is the college intending to be a leader in service learning, or in research? Is the university focusing on having the best graduation rates, or a diverse student body?

Future visioning can help create a shared understanding of the type of future that is desirable for the campus and/or community. Scenario planning enables a campus and

community to explore a range of futures and weigh the associated opportunities, benefits, challenges, and expected vulnerabilities.

Many communities have already been through scenario planning exercises. In this case campuses can use the information to inform resilience planning. If the scenario process did not involve the college or university campus, schools may want to organize their own campus version to assess the role of the institution in the future of the community.

If a community has not already been through a scenario-driven process, schools may want to spend some time considering what an ideal future may look like. This could be a brief “visioning exercise” as part of a resilience workshop, or it may be a more in-depth process itself. There is no single way to complete future scenario planning. Below are some steps that can be included.





**TIP:** Clearly articulate the end goal for the process and be clear about the geographic boundaries.

**Example:** “We want to focus on scenarios for 2030, create several scenarios and compare futures while keeping options open. This will be for the campus and city.”

**Example:** “We want to create several scenarios and converge on one main scenario. This is just for the campus.”

Instead of starting with the whole community or campus, it’s possible to start with being a ‘water resilient city’ or a ‘transportation resilient city’. While Second Nature encourages systems thinking, beginning with one theme will still touch on many of the areas of resilience capacity. This may be a more manageable process for campuses that are new to this effort.



Arizona State University hosted a series of workshops that included future visioning exercises as part of the Resilience Assessment. This [blog post](#) briefly describes how a shared vision was created and incorporated into the Resilience Assessment process.

# SUGGESTED STEPS FOR IDEAL FUTURE SCENARIO PLANNING

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## **1. Identify the stakeholders and ensure there is a communication plan to reach them.**

While the process should be inclusive, with underrepresented groups present, there is also appropriate balance between inclusivity and too large a group to be productive. Some schools organize a series of stakeholder meetings, and some do just one or two workshops. Schools should decide based on staff, budget and the amount of joint effort possible with the city or community.

## **2. Set a timeline for the scenario process.**

## **3. Create a 'business-as-usual' scenario.**

Before the workshop or exercise, create a scenario that includes a future campus and/or community that reflects development continuing as expected, demographics shifting as expected, and climate changing as expected.

## **4. Hold the scenario workshop(s).**

There are many ways to do this, but consider starting by understanding what the participants think are strongly-held community values. This can include asking some *either/or* questions to gauge priorities. The answers may start to yield insights about whether there is more focus on economic development, natural resource conservation, social enhancement, etc.

## **5. Create the scenarios.**

Use the information gathered during the workshop(s) to generate one or more future scenarios. This may be an opportunity to utilize experts at the college or university. What are the high priorities of the future scenarios? What policies would support these priorities? What are some of the implications for the campus and community?

The results of future visioning exercises can be captured in several ways. A day-long exercise might yield a simple vision statement, while something more long-term (a series of events over weeks or months) could facilitate the development of more comprehensive future scenarios for the institution. Once a vision is established, campuses can share the idea scenario(s) with a broader set of stakeholders to gather feedback. This can develop engagement, buy-in, and investment in supporting these future directions.

Now that there is a vision for the future, campuses can assess specific threats to achieving that vision. This likely includes climate changes and associated vulnerabilities that may impact the feasibility of the ideal scenario.