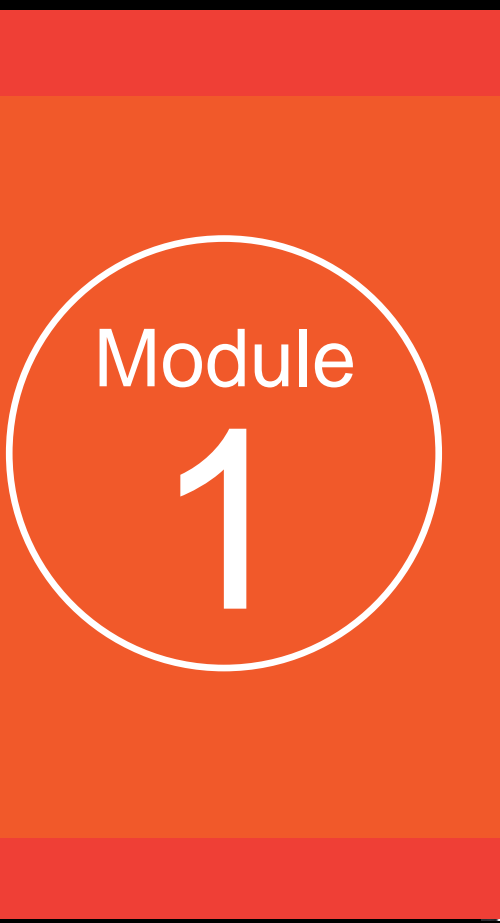




HORIZONS **FORESIGHT** METHOD



Module
1



Introduction
to Foresight



Government
of Canada
Policy Horizons
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du Canada
Horizons de politiques
Canada

Canada 

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OVERVIEW

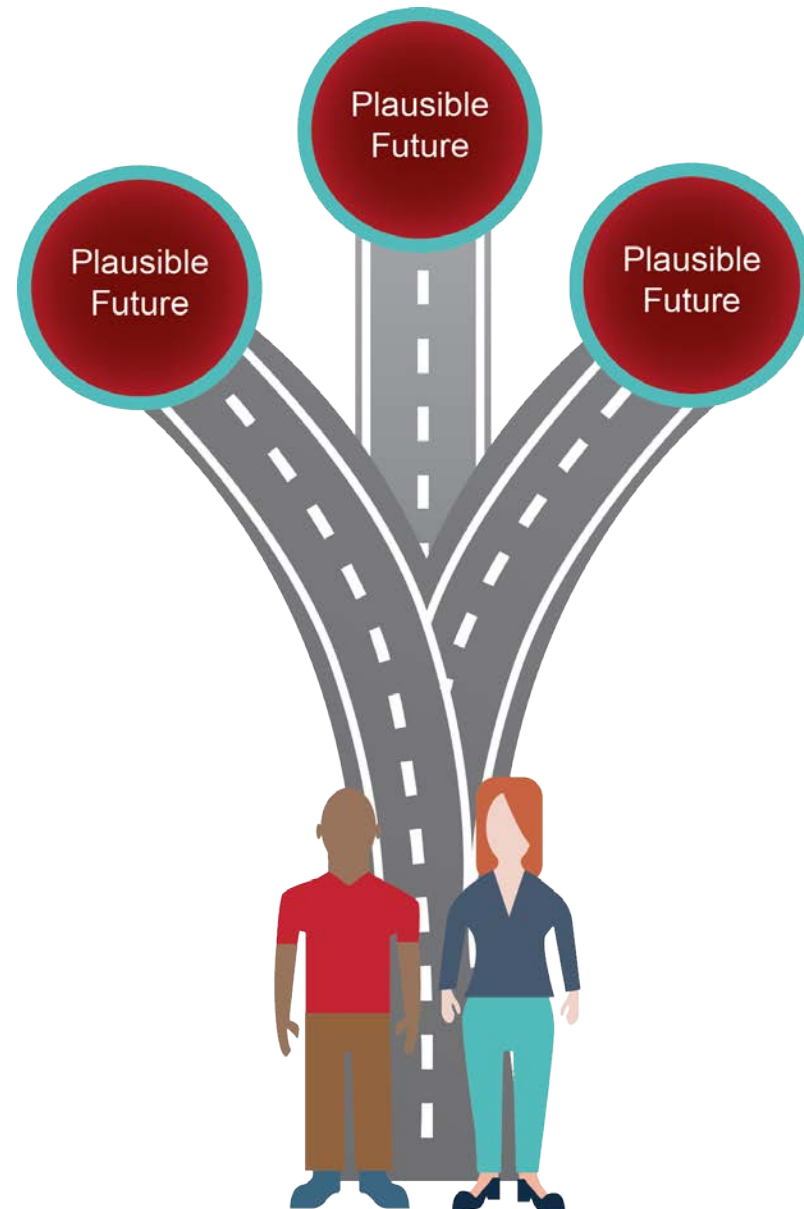
- What is Foresight?
- What is Horizons' Approach to Foresight?
- How is Foresight Useful in Public Policy?

WHAT IS FORESIGHT?

- **Foresight is a skill** we use every day that allows us to consider a problem, explore options, run mental movies and in so doing develop possible strategies and desired future outcomes
- **Foresight as a sub-discipline of Future Studies** uses a systematic approach to explore how complex issues could evolve
- Foresight tools help people share, explore and test their mental models about how the world is changing and what it could mean for their organization
- Foresight is beyond the normal 1-5 year planning horizon

EXPLORING A RANGE OF PLAUSIBLE FUTURES

Foresight is *not* about trying to predict the future. It helps us understand a range of plausible futures that may lie ahead.



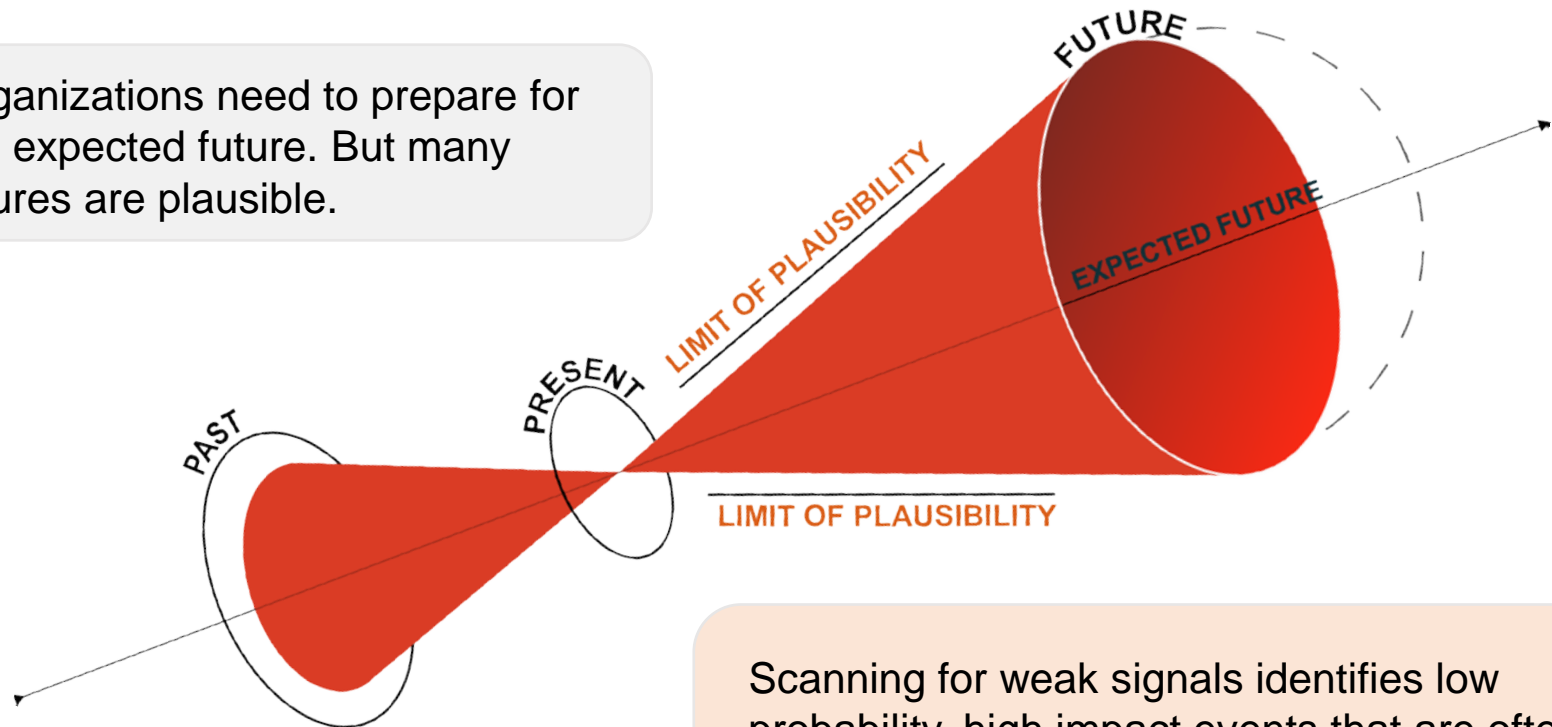
WHY FORESIGHT?

Rapid change and system complexity are driving a need to complement current processes

- Look beyond the ‘rearview mirror’
 - Generally, policy is developed based on an extrapolation of past data and experiences
- Anticipate surprise events
- Build early warning systems:
 - Identify signposts of potential futures
- Support resilient strategies, policies and programs
 - Informed risk management

THE CONE OF PLAUSIBILITY

Organizations need to prepare for the expected future. But many futures are plausible.



Scanning for weak signals identifies low probability, high impact events that are often ignored. Foresight explores how they may interact to help us anticipate surprises.

THE ROLE OF SCANNING

- Insightful scanning is the foundation of foresight
- **Scanning** identifies changes in the domestic and international environments that could have a significant impact on the issue or system under study. It focuses on weak signals, indicators of possible change. It explores low probability, high impact events that few people talk about or consider
- **Foresight** explores how these changes may evolve and interact to create a range of futures as well as new policy challenges and opportunities

THE HORIZONS FORESIGHT METHOD

The Horizons Foresight Method is a rigorous and systematic approach that allows us to test assumptions against a range of plausible futures and identify policy challenges and opportunities



FEATURES OF THE HORIZONS FORESIGHT METHOD

- Systems thinking is the foundation
- Engages knowledgeable people to share their mental models of the system and how it may evolve
- Uses our amazing capacity to visualize the future through our mental models and movies
- Visual tools provide scaffolding at every step of the method to help participants share their models and facilitate dialogue
- Uses various forms of reasoning to better understand the system under study
- Focuses on policy



Short Term

- 1-3 years
- Focus on the near future: high probability high impact events

Medium-Term Planning

- 3-5 years
- Looks for new ideas that are feasible and to improve efficiency

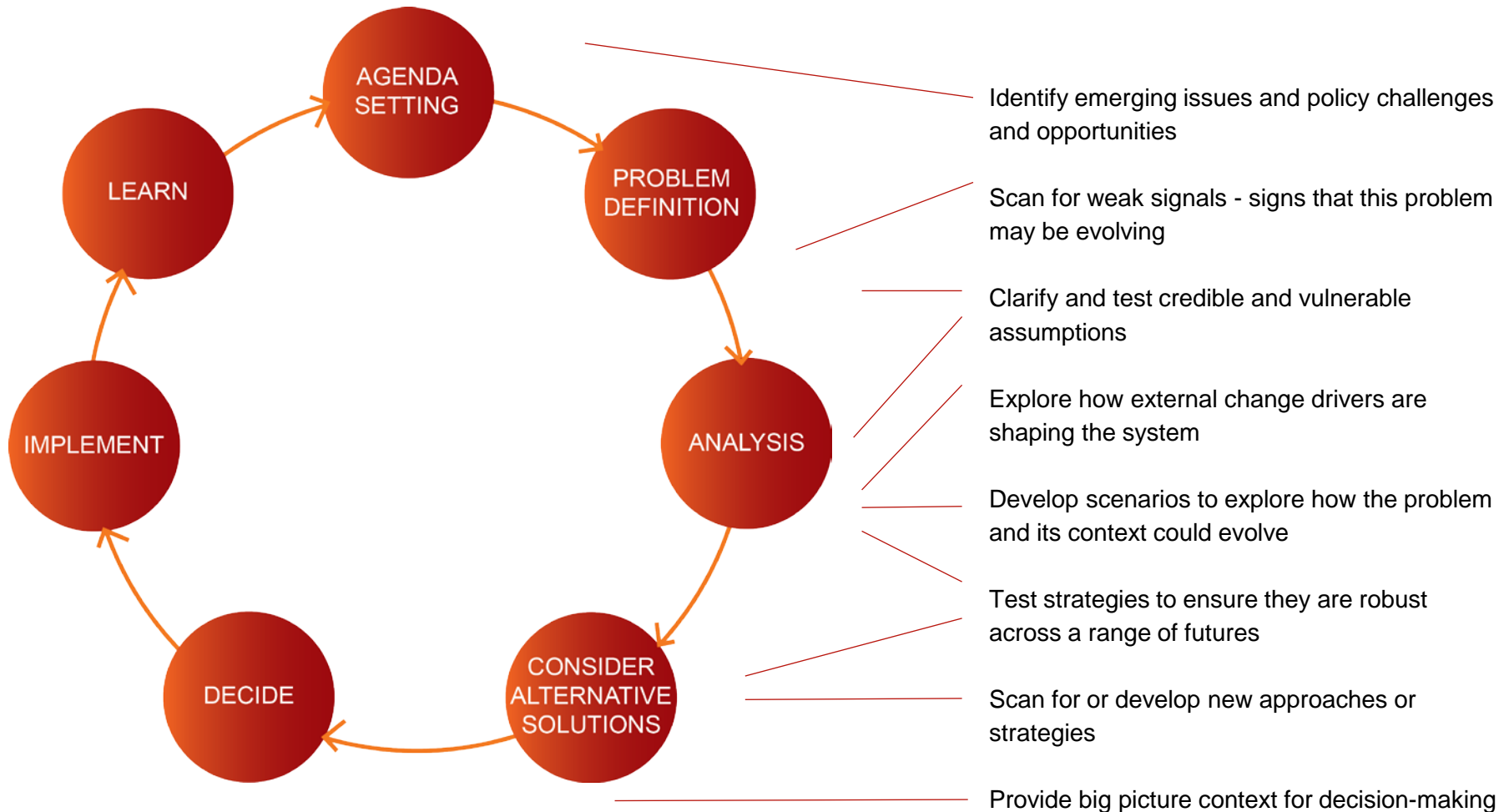
Foresight

- 5 to 15 years
- Looks for robust strategies to cope with increasing uncertainty



Foresight can provide a context to improve near- and medium-term thinking.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF FORESIGHT TO THE POLICY PROCESS



SUMMARY – VALUE OF FORESIGHT

- Clarify and challenge assumptions
- Identify emerging issues and potential discontinuities
- Recognize opportunities and deal with surprises across a range of plausible futures, not only the expected future
- Develop an improved early warning system
- Rehearse for change by testing readiness across a range of future scenarios
- Improve an organization's resilience in a rapidly changing, complex environment
- Help focus current planning and research on strategic issues

REFERENCES

Books:

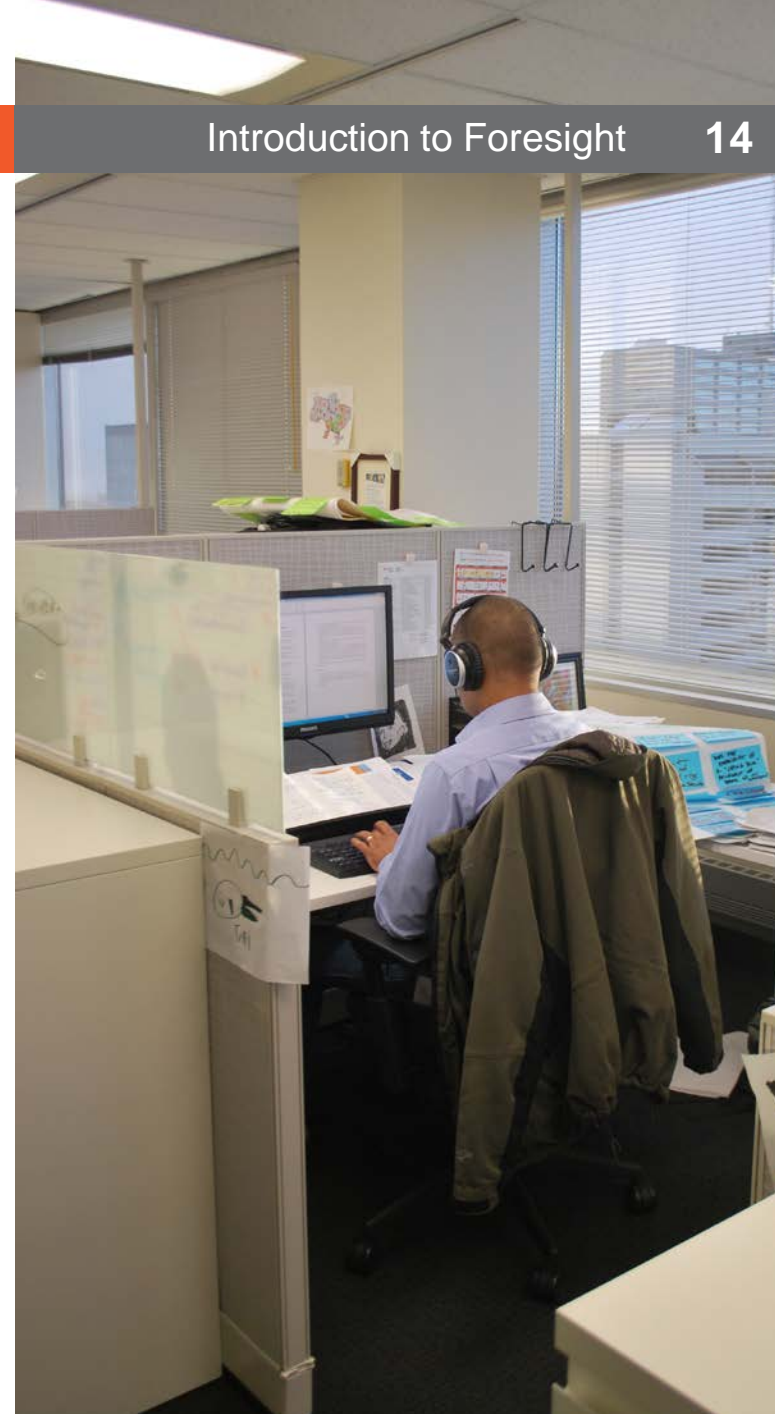
- Bishop, Peter and Andy Hines. **How to think about the future: a guide to strategic foresight.** 2007
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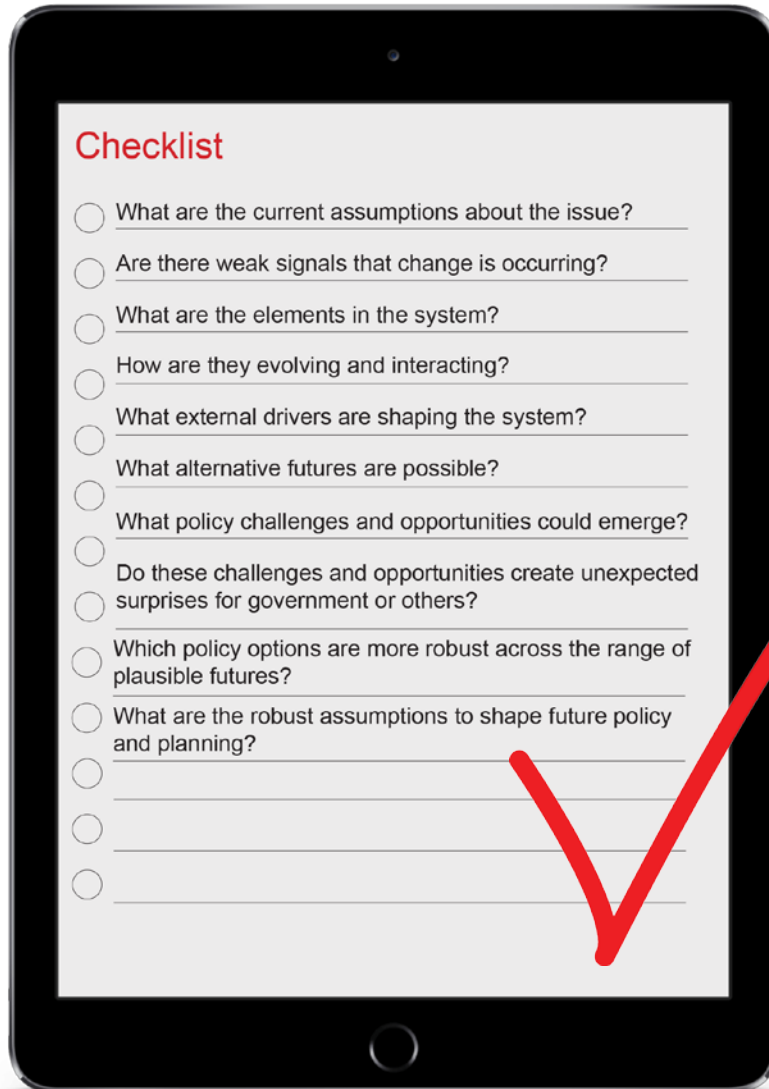
Websites:

- Horizons foresight videos <http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/videos>
- UK Foresight (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/foresight> and tools at <http://hsctoolkit.bis.gov.uk/>)
- Shaping Tomorrow <http://www.shapingtomorrow.com/> (scanning site and toolkit)

INFORMATION

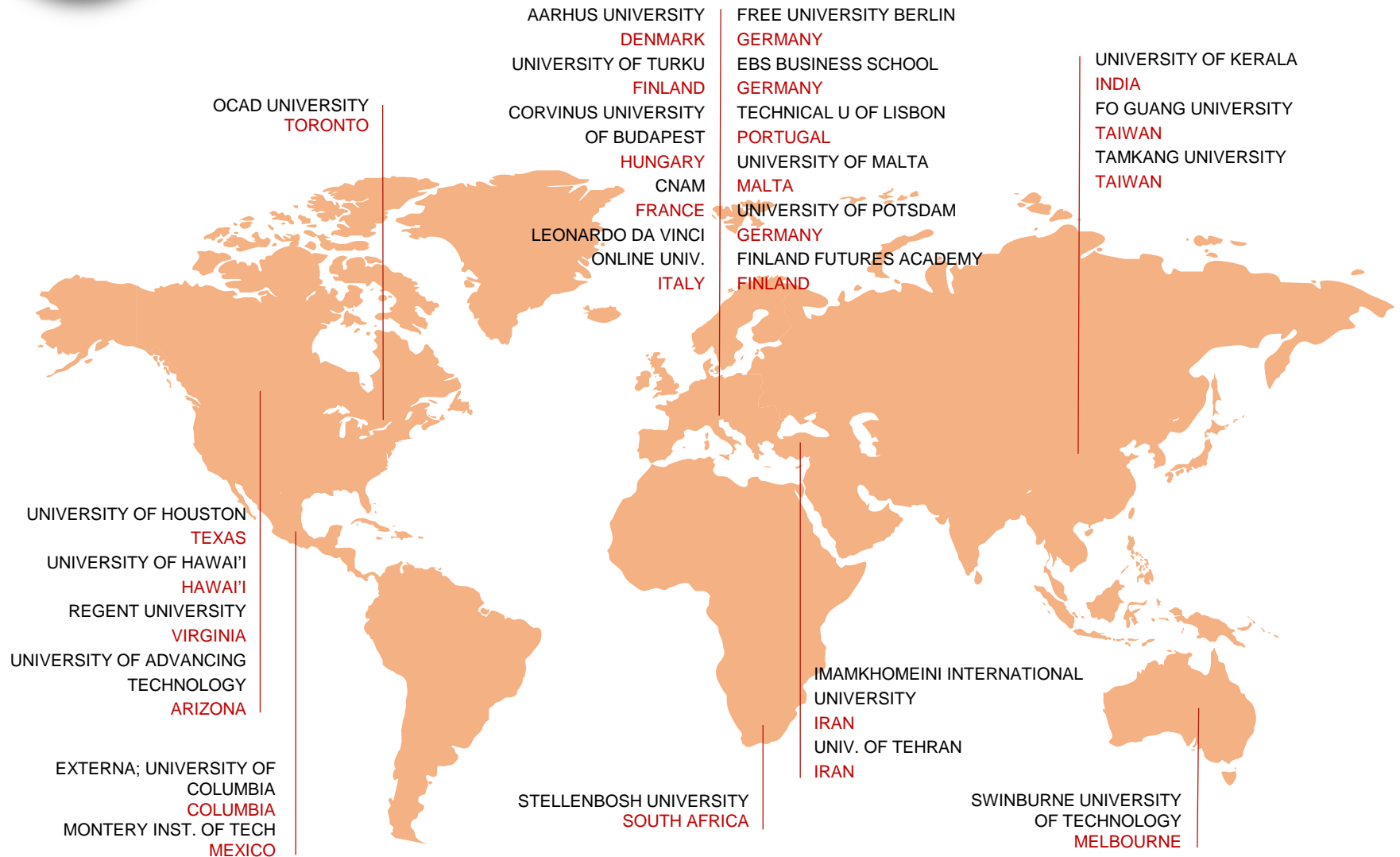
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ANNEX 1: QUESTIONS TO MAKE POLICY ANALYSIS MORE FORWARD-LOOKING

ANNEX 2: ACADEMIC FUTURES PROGRAMS



ANNEX 3: FORESIGHT CAPACITY IN GOVERNMENTS

POLICY HORIZONS CANADA
SOME DEPTS AND SCANNING NETWORKS
Provinces
Ontario
Alberta
Saskatchewan
(CANADA)

UK FORESIGHT, FUSION NETWORK
(UK)

CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES IN SUPPORTING ACADEMIC FORESIGHT EFFORTS
(EU)

NATIONAL REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
(CHINA)

FUTURE STRATEGY CENTER, PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AND 20 DEPTS
(SOUTH KOREA)

HORIZONS SCANNING CENTRE
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND 5 DEPTS
(SINGAPORE)

INTERNATIONAL FUTURES PROGRAMME
(OECD)

PARLIAMENT PM'S OFFICE AND MANY DEPTS
(FINLAND)

PM'S OFFICE SCANNING NETWORK
(AUSTRALIA)

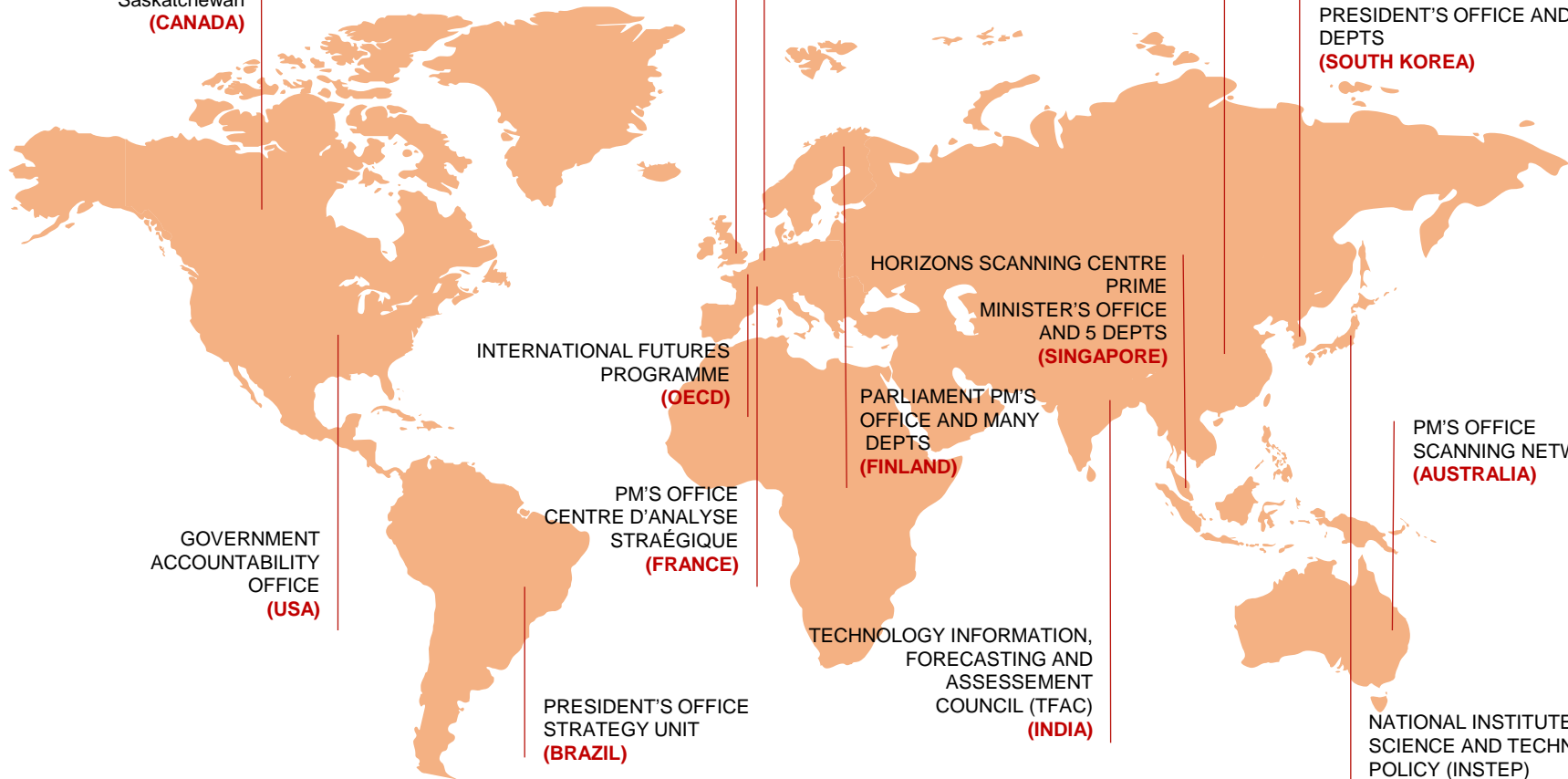
GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE
(USA)

PM'S OFFICE CENTRE D'ANALYSE STRAÉGIQUE
(FRANCE)

TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION, FORECASTING AND ASSESMENT COUNCIL (TFAC)
(INDIA)

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE STRATEGY UNIT
(BRAZIL)

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY (INSTEP)
(JAPAN)



ANNEX 4

APPROACHES TO LONG-TERM THINKING

APPROACH	TOOLS	IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS	PRODUCT
Focus on forecasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scanning for trends • Data analysis • Trend extrapolation • Trend impact assessment 	The future is an extension of the present. Surprises come from changes in the value of known variables.	An understanding of the expected future.
Focus on foresight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scanning for weak signals of change • Driver analysis • Cascade Diagrams • Cross-impact analysis • System analysis • Scenarios • Assumption testing 	The underlying system is evolving. Surprises come from changes that disrupt the system.	An understanding of the range of plausible futures.