



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Webinar 4

Strengthening Capacities for Strategic Foresight in Support of Sound Policy Making

FUTURES THINKING IN THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT

Fuad Johari and Wee Xue Ting



11 September 2024



Why should we think about the future?

4 CHALLENGES

Accelerating change

Challenges of adaptation and size of impact increase

Wicked Problems

Interdependencies, multiple causes, multiple stakeholders

Shocks and discontinuities

We will never stop being surprised

Hidden future, powerful past

Adaptation is hard if we act as though the world remains unchanging



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Foresight has a long history in the Singapore Government





United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Foresight capability has broadened and deepened



Centre for Strategic Futures

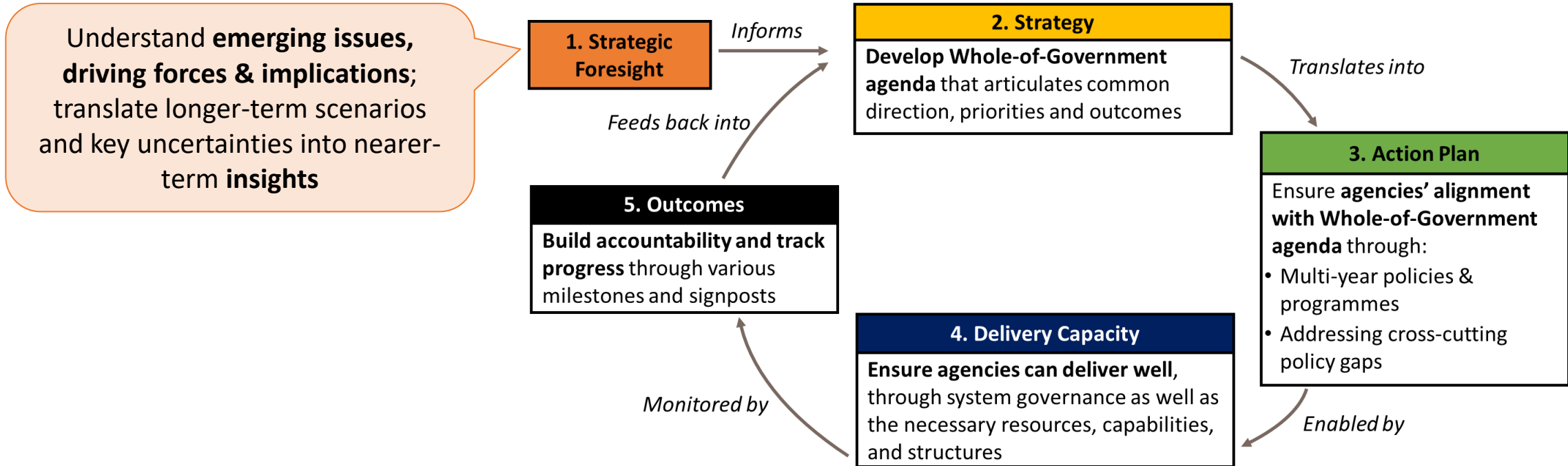
- Today, part of PMO-SG with improved links to strategic planning processes
- ~ 10 Staff, diverse backgrounds
- Foresight capabilities range across engagement, research, methods

Ministry/Agency foresight units

- Typically small, sited alongside strategic or corporate planning teams
- Growing network



Foresight has a role in Singapore's whole-of-government strategic planning process





How does the CSF think about the future?

Scout

Identify emerging trends and issues to inform national priorities

- Scan for longer term trends & emerging “weak signals”
- Seek new insights & “outside-in” perspective through networks
- Conduct deep dives to understand key issues

*Pushing the envelope and raising the level of **ambition***

Challenge

Stress-test strategies against changing operating environment

- Scenario planning to challenge prevailing assumptions
- Convene and facilitate conversations to set context for strategic discussions, sharpen existing strategies, develop new strategies for changing landscape

*Communicating & translating insights to foster **alignment***

Grow

Build system capability and capacity in strategic foresight

- Targeted at various levels to inculcate futures thinking in the government
- Consistent community building

*Building capacities in the wider system to enable **action***



United Nations

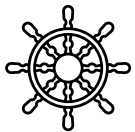
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Reflections on Singapore's strategic foresight journey

Helpful



Build instincts and muscle across the system



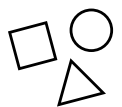
Forcing factors



Foresight as a safe space; CSF as a trusted & neutral party



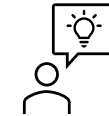
Strategic positioning of foresight & support from leadership



Diversity

Challenging

Improving the quality of insights generated



Ensuring insights are relevant across the system



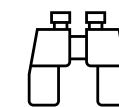
Developing and retaining capabilities in the system



Using tech/AI in our practice



Long-tail effects of foresight work make impact hard to observe





**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Conclusion



DESA

Public Institutions



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Thank you!

pmo_csf@pmo.gov.sg
www.csf.gov.sg