

AAPAM | 6TH STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

Anticipatory Governance and Future-Ready Leadership

Strategic Foresight and Scenario Planning for Government

Prof. Nura Mohamed, Ph.D., EBS

Director General, Kenya School of Government

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How we will work together

- 1. Learn by scanning | Short inputs on anticipatory governance, systems thinking and strategic foresight.**
- 2. Discuss | Structured discussion prompts, drawing on your own institutional experience**
- 3. Build something practical | Design a bounded experiment for institutions.**
- 4. Reflect and commit | We close with commitments for the next 90 days.**

02 | OPENING FRAME

The leadership question before us

Can our public institutions move from reacting to events to shaping the conditions that produce better futures?

Reactive government

Responds after problems become visible; often prioritizes urgency over root causes.

Adaptive government

Learns from evidence, adjusts systems and improves institutional responsiveness.

Anticipatory government

Identifies emerging risks and opportunities, tests options and acts before crises mature

Anticipation is not prediction. It is disciplined preparation under uncertainty

Why strategic foresight matters now

Complexity is rising

Public problems cross institutional, sectoral and national boundaries.

Trust is fragile

Citizens judge government through everyday service experiences & responsiveness.

Technology is accelerating

AI, data platforms and digital services are changing how value is created—and how risks spread.

Resources are constrained

Governments must achieve more with stronger prioritization, coordination and accountability

Shocks are interconnected

Climate, health, security, economic and social pressures can compound rapidly.

04 | CONCEPT

Futures Thinking

- 1. At a very basic level, futures thinking is an unconscious human capacity and process of thinking about what lies ahead**
- 2. Consciously, the futures practice is the deliberate anticipation of probable occurrences in order to take contingency measures as a necessary alternative to acting after the fact and managing crisis**
- 3. This is particularly imperative given the fast and furious complex changes currently happening in our society that adversely affect our plans or completely annihilate plans or organizations**
- 4. Since we can never tell the future with precision, we tell stories about probable futures that may occur based on data and intuition.**
- 5. This type of strategic engagement is a departure from traditional forms of planning where most organizations plan by understanding past trends in order to plan for the future**

- 6. This process assumes that a trend that has been rising or declining will continue that way, often projecting that the future will be a logical extension of the past**
- 7. Unfortunately, life is not linear and as foresight proves, when different, emerging changes begin to affect that pattern, those organizational projections become problematic**
- 8. It is therefore paramount that leaders understand **what is driving future change, possible impacts of these changes on society, but more importantly, to use this information to strategize, prepare for and/or create and shape preferred futures****

Foresight and scenario planning

Strategic foresight is the disciplined practice:

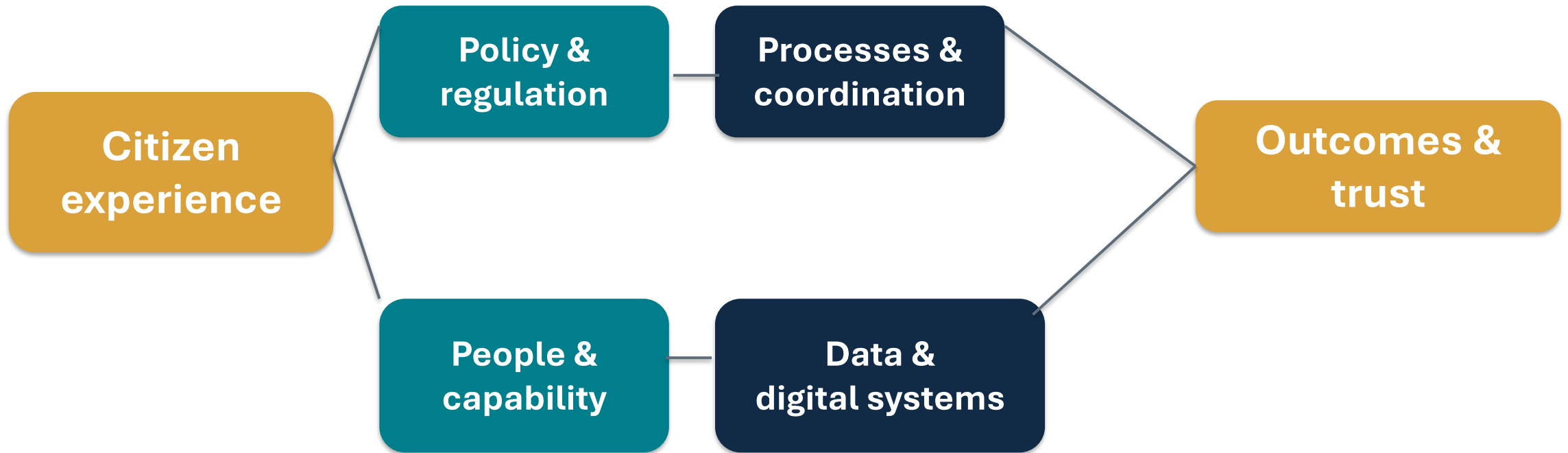
1. Scan the horizon for weak signals and emerging trends;
2. Identify the driving forces and critical uncertainties at play;
3. Construct plausible, structured scenarios of the future;
4. Test policies and strategies against those scenarios;
5. Translate insight into decisions made today.

Five foresight disciplines

1. Evidence before assumption
2. Plurality over single forecasts
3. Scenarios, not predictions
4. Systems over silos (WOGA/WOSA)
5. Embedded in planning, not one-off

Systems thinking: seeing the whole, not only the symptom

A service failure is rarely caused by one department, one process or one decision.



Leadership task: identify feedback loops, unintended consequences, bottlenecks and leverage points.

Discuss: Reactive, Adaptive or Anticipatory?

1. **Reflect individually | Think of one service or policy area you oversee. Is it reactive, adaptive or anticipatory?**
2. **Name one blocker | What in your institution's incentives, capacity or culture keeps it reactive?**
3. **Report back | Share one blocker and one enabler with the full room**
4. **Compare examples. What evidence, structure or habit made the difference?**
5. **Bridge to plenary | Participants to share their insight.**

The building blocks of strategic foresight

Horizon scanning

Systematic monitoring of weak signals, trends and emerging risks across sectors

Driver & uncertainty analysis

Identifying the forces shaping the future—and which of them are genuinely uncertain

Scenario construction

Building a small set of plausible, structured futures—not a single forecast.

Policy wind-tunnelling

Stress-testing today's strategies and decisions against each scenario.

The objective is not to predict the future. It is to make today's decisions robust across several plausible futures.

The foresight capability equation



When foresight tools are introduced without capability, leadership commitment and institutional habit, scenarios become reports that nobody uses

Foresight must therefore be treated as a leadership discipline and institutional habit, not only a planning technique.

What future-ready leadership looks like

Horizon scanning

Detect weak signals, emerging risks and opportunities.

Strategic sense-making

Connect evidence, context, values and institutional purpose.

Cross-boundary collaboration

Work across agencies, sectors, disciplines and communities.

Digital fluency

Ask the right questions about data, AI, platforms and ethics

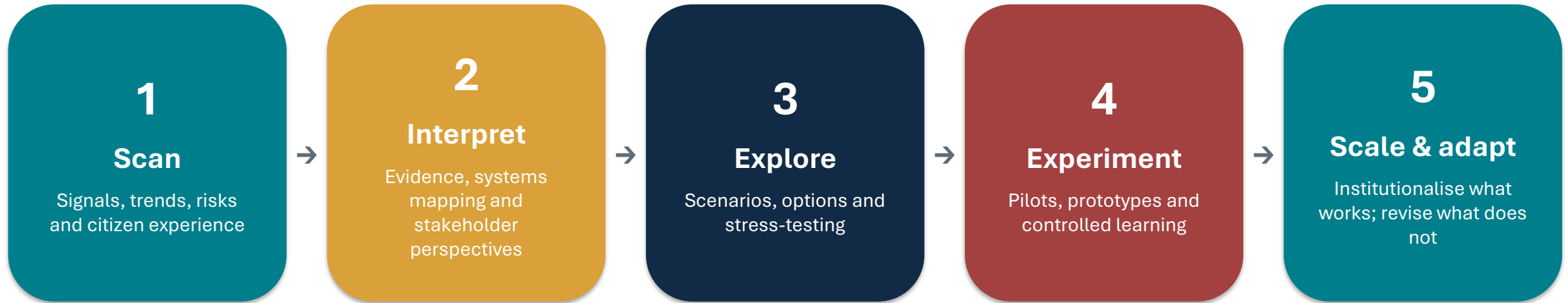
Adaptive execution

Move from plans to experiments, feedback and course correction.

Stewardship of trust

Protect fairness, privacy, inclusion, accountability and legitimacy.

A foresight-to-action cycle for public institutions



The cycle should be anchored in institutional routines: strategy, budgeting, performance management, learning and public engagement.

From foresight to policy: closing the loop

When foresight stays a report

1. scenarios built once, then shelved
2. findings that never reach budget or planning cycles
3. analysis disconnected from real decisions
4. success measured by the report being produced

When foresight informs policy

1. scenarios revisited and refreshed on a cycle
2. findings tested against real budget and planning choices
3. analysis linked explicitly to decisions and trade-offs
4. success measured by decisions that changed

A scenario exercise that never touches a real decision is not strategic foresight—it is an academic exercise

Guardrails for good foresight practice

Rigor

Ground scenarios in evidence and data, not assumption or hope

Plurality

Include dissenting voices and perspectives from outside the usual room

Humility

Treat scenarios as plausible futures—never as predictions

Relevance

Link every scenario explicitly to a real decision or trade-off

Institutionalization

Revisit and refresh scenarios on a fixed cycle, not just once

Bias awareness

Guard against groupthink, optimism bias and recency bias

Implications for public-sector institutions in Africa

1. Build foresight capability at the intersection of policy, leadership, data and citizen engagement.
2. Establish dedicated foresight and scenario-planning units within national and county institutions.
3. Promote shared scenario methods while respecting national context, law and institutional mandates.
4. Invest in leaders who can convene foresight processes across government, business, academia and civil society.
5. Link foresight directly to budgeting, planning and measurable policy choices - not stand-alone reports.
6. Create safe spaces for scenario exercises, peer learning and evidence-based adaptation.

Africa's transformation agenda requires both foresight ambition and institutional depth.

15 | FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION

A leadership action agenda: the next 90 days

1. **Establish a foresight habit | A regular horizon-scanning and strategic sense-making conversation**
2. **Select one high-value challenge | Map the system and identify the leverage points that matter most**
3. **Build a cross-functional team | Bring policy, operations, finance, ICT, legal and citizen perspectives together**
4. **Run a bounded experiment | Define the problem, hypothesis, safeguards, measures and learning questions**
5. **Review and institutionalize | Use evidence to scale, redesign or stop—and share the lessons.**

CLOSING REFLECTION

The future of public service will not be secured by chance

**It will be shaped by leaders who can scan the horizon, think in scenarios,
decide early and keep citizens at the centre.**

Scan early. Think in scenarios. Lead with foresight.

Thank you