



Futures Ready Strategy Getting Started Checklist

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About Maree Conway



Maree holds a Bachelor of Arts in history and media studies from Griffith University, a Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education and Masters in Educational Administration with Honours from the University of New England.

She is currently researching a thesis on strategic thinking in Australian Universities to complete her Master of Management in Strategic Foresight at Swinburne University of Technology.

Maree Conway is the Owner and Principal of Thinking Futures, an innovative futures practice that works with organisations to create futures inspired strategy.

Maree has been using futures approaches with universities, government departments and non-profits since 1999. After a long and successful career in university management over more than 25 years, Maree established Thinking Futures in 2007 to work full-time in the futures field. Her expertise is in strategy development and strategic planning, and the use of futures approaches to enhance strategic thinking in organisations.

Maree writes of futures work:

Doing futures work is some of the most challenging work you will ever do, but it is also by far and away, some of the most rewarding work you will ever do. Broadening out your perspective to focus on the futures imperative - the need to make wise decisions today to ensure a sustainable future – will allow you and your organisation to focus on what matters rather than what's urgent. And, strategy developed using futures approaches is stronger and more sustainable into the future. There is nothing to lose and everything to be gained by using futures approaches to create futures ready strategy.

Maree's website is:

[Thinking Futures](#) – the website for her innovative futures practice, which details services provided to organisations wanting to build futures ready strategy.

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Futures Ready Strategy Getting Started Checklist

Creating futures ready strategy for your organisation takes time and effort. Futures ready strategy is about enhancing your organisation's strategic thinking capacity to help broaden perceptions of the strategic options available to you. This checklist will give you some idea about the steps you need to take to get started on your futures journey.

The steps provided in this checklist are not exhaustive, instead providing a broad overview of how to get started with futures approaches to create futures ready strategy. Key resources which you can access for further reference are also provided.



Understand the essential difference between strategic thinking, strategic decision making and strategic planning. Futures approaches belong to the strategic thinking stage of strategy development.

Key Resource: [Strategic Planning Revisited: A Futures Perspective](#)



Spend some time exploring the futures field, and getting to know the leading thinkers and the key concepts.

Key Resource: [Joseph Voros, Futures Primer](#)

Key Resource: [Richard Slaughter, Knowledge Base of Futures Studies](#)



Work out where you want to position yourself in the organisation in terms of integrating futures approaches into existing strategy development processes.

Key Resource: [Andy Hines, An Audit for Organizational Futurists: 10 questionsevery organisational futurist should be able to answer](#)



Use the Generic Foresight Process to help you design futures processes that will work in your organisational context.

Key Resource: Joseph Voros: Generic Foresight Process

(Joseph Voros (2003) A generic foresight process framework. In [Foresight](#), 5 (3): 10-21)



Learn from the experience of others who have been working in the field. A set of good practice benchmarks has been developed by Thinking Futures and is included in the [Using Futures Approaches](#) guide, which is available on the Thinking Futures website.

Key Resource: Future Program Benchmarks



Evaluate your futures processes every time to see what worked and what didn't. You can do this using a simple survey asking for feedback on what worked and what didn't.



Build networks in the futures field. There are several organisations that will help you do this:

- [Association of Professional Futurists](#)
- [World Futures Studies Federation](#)
- [World Futures Society](#)



Be prepared for the challenges associated with trying to introduce something new to an organisation, including:

- the reaction of people: (i) some will 'get it' and will be your allies, (ii) some won't, but will want to know more, while (iii) others just won't want to know about it – pitch your message to the second group,
- if you are going to do this work seriously, recognise that it is a long term endeavour – strategic thinking is about changing the way people think about the future, and how they view the options that are available to an organisation – and that's hard work,
- working out how to communicate the value of futures approaches in strategy development – you will need to work out the best way to convey your message in ways that make sense to your organisation.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the checklist, would like to know more about any of the steps or would just like more information, you can contact me at:

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If you would like more detailed information about using futures approaches in your organisation, you might be interested in the ebook: [Using Futures Approaches: A Guide to Getting Started](#), which is available free to download from the Thinking Futures website.

