TIP RESOURCE LAB

TOOLS · ACTIONS · LEARNINGS

Futures Literacy Lab

Instructions for facilitators

Transformative Innovation Policy (TIP) entails a rethinking of our socio-technical systems – the configurations of actors, technologies and institutions for societal needs that form the backbone of our civilisation. However, the future tends to be shaped by contemporary conditions and experiences. One challenge for funders and policymakers is to move beyond anticipatory back-shadowing and the tendency to forecast the future as a continuation of the present.

This document draws on the experience of TIPC's Nordic members (Business Finland, The Research Council of Norway and Vinnova), of running a digital Futures Literacy Lab to address this challenge in 2021, in partnership with UNESCO Futures Literacy and the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education.

It provides guidance for TIP practitioners aiming to facilitate an online Lab, based on the methodology created by Riel Miller and colleagues at UNESCO, and tested by the Nordic innovation practitioners.

This document is designed to accompany the online Futures Literacy Lab tool in Component 1 of the TIP Resource Lab, which provides a sample Miro canvas for a four-part online workshop series on **the theme of Food Systems.**

About the Futures Literacy Lab tool

The particular methodology is anchored within the tradition of Futures Literacy, developed within the UNESCO Global Futures Literacy Network, a diverse community of researchers, practitioners, and supporters, working to build capabilities to cultivate more effective and efficient use of the future

The tool adapts the method to take Transformative Innovation Policy practitioners through a four-part, online workshop series, designed to help them strengthen their imaginative capabilities, and to reveal, reframe and rethink assumptions used to imagine the future.

The point is not to predict the future, but to explore different stories, and to use these stories to reflect on preconceptions about social, cultural, economic, environmental and technological drivers, and develop imaginative capabilities.

Before you begin

The tool is for use by participants during a facilitated workshop series. These instructions are for the facilitators organising the sessions.

1. **Resources:** If you are planning to facilitate a Lab, you may want to read the slides introducing Futures Literacy Lab methodology by Lisa Scordato. We also recommend watching the café conversations and presentations on using the future in Section 3 of Component 1.

2. **Time required:** The tool divides the Lab into three sessions of 90 minutes in length and a final session of two hours. These could be delivered intensively over two days or spread over a week.

3. **Theme:** The Lab series will focus on a particular theme, which needs to be agreed with participants in advance and shared in advance of the workshops. The demonstration version of the tool uses the theme 'food systems'.

4. **Group size:** The tool is designed to be used by four-to-six groups, with five-to-seven people per group. You can adapt it for smaller or larger groups by adjusting the timings. The sessions include a mix of plenary elements (all the small groups together) and breakout work.

5. **Platform:** The tool uses online coloration platform, Miro. You will need a Miro account to duplicate the tool for your groups. You will need to duplicate **one version of the tool** for each of the small groups.

Duplicating the tool for each group

Make copies of the master board as follows:
- Click on the 'download' link to access the Lab master board
- Then click on the title
- Press 'duplicate' – you should now have your own board
- Rename the tool Group 1, 2, etc, and save the URL

You will need to complete this process for each group's board.

If you are new to Miro, there is a short intro here. The tool uses basic functions (pasting an image and writing comments on sticky notes) and should be accessible to most participants.

If you accidentally change the Master Board on the Resource Lab, please leave a message in the comments and the team will update it.

6. **IT requirements:** The method works best with a video conferencing service, such as Zoom or MS Teams – so that groups can see each other – but is also possible with audio-only. We recommend that participants join the workshops from a laptop or desktop if possible, as they may find it harder to use the Miro tool on a mobile phone or tablet.

7. **Image representing the future:** Participants should be invited to choose an image of an object that represents the future before they begin and bring this to the first session.

Roles and responsibilities

Four types of roles are required to help run the Lab smoothly:

- One **lead facilitator** to organise the series and overall process. The lead facilitator will facilitate the plenary parts of the sessions. They will also prepare the **reframing scenario** in advance of Session 4.
- The **small group facilitator** takes a breakout group through the Lab methodology over the course of four sessions, working with the same group for the whole series. The small group facilitators will need to prepare in advance by reading the guidance for facilitators and familiarising themselves with the Miro tool.
- The **participants** need to be available for **every session** in the series to get the most out of the methodology. They not need special instructions in advance – although you may wish to send them Miro guidance if they are not used to this platform.
- You will also need **rapporteurs**, but these can be selected from the participants during the workshops and do not need any special preparation. Rapporteurs can vary from session to session.

We suggest the lead facilitator convenes at least one meeting of the small group facilitators before the first session to go through the method and how the Miro boards work.

Session plans

Session 1: Getting started
(Estimated time required: 90 minutes, plus 30 minutes preparation)

In the first session, participants will learn about the Futures Literary Lab methodology, practice using the visual collaboration tool Miro, and get to the know the people you will be working with during the sessions.

The **lead facilitator** should allow 30 minutes before the start of the session for a final run-through of the session plan and last-minute clarifications with the **small group facilitators**. You should also make sure that groups have been assigned to each facilitator.

- PLENARY: To kick off the session, the **lead facilitator** should introduce all participants to the Lab methodology, the theme for the workshop and expectations for the four sessions. You may want to use the resources in Section 3 of Component 1 of the TIP Resource Lab or do a short warmup exercise. Allow time for participants to ask questions about the method and process. (Estimated time required: 20 minutes)

- BREAKOUT GROUPS: Participants should then enter breakout groups with their assigned **small group facilitator**. The **small group facilitator** should introduce themselves and take the group through the four steps on the Miro board. They should also invite one or more group members to act as a **rapporteur**, to share insights from the small group discussions in plenary. It may be a good idea to use 5 minutes at the end of the breakout sessions for the **rapporteur** to do a 'practice round' of what they will present to the other groups to ensure themes/certain ideas that tell the story of the discussion are shared. (Estimated time required: 50 minutes)

- PLENARY: Finally, the groups should return to plenary and the **lead facilitator** invite each **rapporteur** to summarise the small group work very briefly, encouraging them to share, for example: who is in their group and their motivations for taking part, the images selected, the routines, worldviews and principles they identified and key ways of working together. The **lead facilitator** should then confirm the plans for the next session and close Session 1. (Estimated time required: 20 minutes)

Session 2: Imagining desirable futures
(Estimated time required: 90 minutes, plus 15 minutes preparation)

In this session, participants will develop a preferred scenario for 2050. They will be invited to set out the future they dream about, freeing themselves from the boundaries imposed by realism, and revealing aspirations and ideals.

The **lead facilitator** should allow 15 minutes before the start of the session for a final run-through of the session plan and last-minute clarifications with the **small group facilitators**.

- PLENARY: The **lead facilitator** should welcome participants back to the Lab, perhaps with a short warm-up exercise, before inviting them to re-join the small groups. (Estimated time required: 10 minutes)

- BREAKOUT GROUPS: Participants should then enter breakout groups with their assigned **small group facilitator** to work on desirable scenarios for the theme (on the demonstration board, the theme is 'food systems in 2050'). If there has been a break since the last session, the **small group facilitator** should invite participants to take a few minutes to reconnect with the group, before taking the group through the four steps on the Miro board.

    At the beginning, it may be a good idea to start by asking participants to close their eyes for a few moments and then when reopening them, imagine themselves in 2050. Encourage participants to really 'get into character' and speak in the present tense about 2050, whether asking questions or offering insights. Consider founding myths (proverbs, images, idioms) and media headlines in this scenario. It may help to explore the desirable future in relation to one or more of the system dimensions highlighted on the board.

    Bear in mind that 'desirability' may be defined differently in relation to the individual, their community, or the broader society. There are no right or wrong answers, and ideas do not need to be cohesive or well thought through. **Small group facilitators** can help participants deepen their thinking by posing questions about the future they depict and inviting others to do the same.

    As before, invite one or more group members to act as a **rapporteur**, and do a 'practice round' before returning to plenary. (Estimated time required: 60 minutes)

- PLENARY: Finally, the groups should return to plenary and the **lead facilitator** invite each **rapporteur** to tell the story of their group's desirable future (on the demonstration board, this is the group's desirable food system in 2050). Ask **rapporteurs** to introduce the scenario in the present tense. They can also share any observations on the group process. The **lead facilitator** should then confirm the plans for the next session and close Session 2. (Estimated time required: 20 minutes)

Session 3: Imagining probable futures
(Estimated time required: 90 minutes, plus 15 minutes preparation)

In this session, participants will develop a probable scenario for 2050. You will be asked to describe what you realistically believe will be the situation in the future. The aim is to map out preconceptions and mental barriers.

The **lead facilitator** should allow 15 minutes before the start of the session for a final run-through of the session plan and last-minute clarifications with the **small group facilitators**.

- PLENARY: The **lead facilitator** should welcome participants back to the Lab, perhaps with a short warm-up exercise, before inviting them to re-join the small groups. (Estimated time required: 10 minutes)

- BREAKOUT GROUPS: Participants should then enter breakout groups with their assigned **small group facilitator** to work on probable scenarios for the same theme (on the demonstration board, the theme is 'food systems in 2050'). If there has been a break since the last session, the **small group facilitator** should invite participants to take a few minutes to reconnect with the group, before taking the group through the four steps on the Miro board.

  As before, encourage participants to close their eyes and really ground themselves in the present tense. And invite one or more group members to act as a **rapporteur**, and do a 'practice round' before returning to plenary. (Estimated time required: 60 minutes).

- PLENARY: Finally, the groups should return to plenary and the **lead facilitator** invite each **rapporteur** to tell the story of their group's probable future (on the demonstration board, this is the group's desirable food system in 2050). Ask **rapporteurs** to introduce the scenario in the present tense and share any observations on the group process. Invite them to reflect on the tone of the discussion – how did it feel to discuss the likely and probable scenarios? The **lead facilitator** should then confirm the plans for the next session and close Session 3. (Estimated time required: 20 minutes)

Session 4: Reframing scenario
(Estimated time required: 2 hrs, plus 15 minutes preparation)

In this final session, participants will be required to work on a reframing scenario for their theme.

Preparing the reframing scenario

The reframed scenario is not probable, nor desirable – it is a scenario that is meant to stretch and challenge participants and their anticipatory assumptions. Participants should imagine societies, lives and traditions, based in this new reality. The lead facilitator will need to prepare the reframed scenario in advance to present during Session 4, perhaps in collaboration with other organisers – although it should be a surprise to most participants. We suggest also adding the main features of the reframed scenario on the Board (on the demonstration board, you will find an example for the food system in 2050). It is best to do this after Session 3, so it does not interfere with thinking about desirable and probable futures.

The **lead facilitator** should allow 15 minutes before the start of the session for a final run-through of the session plan and last-minute clarifications with the **small group facilitators**.

- PLENARY: The **lead facilitator** should welcome participants back to the Lab, perhaps with a short warm-up exercise. They should then introduce the reframing scenario that has been created in order to challenge anticipatory assumptions. If this is hidden on the group's Miro board, the **small group facilitator** can unlock the written description (see hiding and revealing

[frames on Miro](#)). Finally, invite participants to re-join their small groups. (Estimated time required: 20 minutes)

- BREAKOUT GROUPS: Participants should then enter breakout groups with their assigned **small group facilitator** to work on the reframed scenarios. If there has been a break since the last session, the **small group facilitator** should invite participants to take a few minutes to reconnect with the group, before taking them through the steps on the Miro board.

  As before, ask participants to take a moment to return to 2050. Then encourage participants to think about how people get their basic needs met under this unfamiliar scenario. They should also reflect on what strikes or surprises them, and if anything is exciting or worrying about this scenario. You could suggest the group imagine news headlines for the reframed scenario.

  ## Go deeper

  If you have time, you could invite one group member to introduce, in the present tense, a day in their life under this reframing scenario. Then ask other participants to ask them questions. This can be an effective way to challenge the group and explore the scenario in greater depth.

  Invite one or more group members to act as a **rapporteur**, and do a 'practice round' before returning to plenary. (Estimated time required: 50 minutes).

- PLENARY: Groups should then return to plenary, and the **lead facilitator** invite **rapporteurs** to tell the story of how their group coped with the reframed systems scenario in 2050. **Rapporteurs** should introduce the scenario in the present tense. They should pay particular attention to the feelings if those in the group, and how they will meet societal needs under the reframing scenario. (Estimated time required: 20 minutes)

- PLENARY: Finally, the **lead facilitator** should close the workshop series by inviting participants to close their eyes and take a few moments to return to the present day for a reflective discussion in plenary.

  This is an opportunity for the group to reflect on, for example, whether the reframed scenario has changed the way participants understand or think about the theme in the present day; their own imaginative capabilities; their experience of the group process; key takeaways from working with the methodology, and what role futures work can play in addressing system change. You may want to take participants back to the expectations they outlined in Session 1, and reflect on how the experience compared to these.

  The **lead facilitator** should then provide any closing reflections and thank participants, before ending the workshop series. (Estimated time required: 30 minutes)

Tips for small group facilitators

The method is designed to provide a fun and creative exercise for participants that also helps to strengthen relationships and networks, so each **small group facilitator** will work with the same group throughout the event. Their role is to help guide the group through the process in the time provided, and manage the group dynamic.

We therefore suggest that **small group facilitators**:

1. Attend all of the sessions, with cameras on, and lead the groupwork in an encouraging and supportive way
2. Value diverse ideas, questions and contributions
3. Make sure participants understand each task and what they are trying to achieve
4. Make sure the **rapporteur** is capturing thoughts/notes
5. Manage time, or get someone else in the group is doing this, and move things forward if required
6. Encourage contributions from all participants and try to avoid the discussion being dominated by a limited number of contributors
7. Confront any behaviour that limits the group's effectiveness
8. Make sure any ethical framework agreed by the group at the outset (e.g. around confidentiality) is kept to

They may also need to lend a hand with Miro if any participants are struggling.

Facilitators will need to devote their attention to the group dynamic, so are not expected to note-take – we suggest allocating this task to a different **rapporteur** for each breakout session.

After the Lab

This is primarily a capacity development activity and may lead to second order learning in relation to the assumptions and underlying beliefs influencing a theory of change for a transformative initiative. Please share Lab reports, tips for facilitators and reflections on the methodology through the TIP Resource Lab to support learning across TIP practitioners. For an example from TIPC's Nordic members, see Report of the Futures Literacy Laboratory 2021.