

✓ WHAT IT IS

A process of looking for early signs and signals of change happening around us, identifying what the changes are and what effects they may have when they develop.

✓ WHEN TO USE IT

Use it as an internal early-warning system, to systematically analyse risks, opportunities and developments that could affect an organisation's strategic direction. It can be integrated into strategy, planning and design processes.

✓ WHY USE IT

Horizon scanning provides weak or strong signals that there are emerging risks, opportunities or trends. Use these as baseline information or include them in assessments of the landscape, trends and risks.



Ask who needs to be included in horizon scanning – who is not in the room? People tend to contribute from their own expertise and immediate responsibilities. Having a diverse group of participants reduces the risk of “blind spots”, which can undermine strategies or lead organisations to misplace their efforts or miss critical opportunities. Include men and women, and people with different expertise and levels of seniority.



WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

New Zealand Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). Horizon Scanning.

👁 Available at <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-methods-toolbox/futures-thinking/horizon-scanning>

Pacific Community. 2022. A compendium of Pacific practice in strategic foresight, page 51.

👁 Available at <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/b47zt>

UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. 2022. Foresight playbook, pages 45–48.

👁 Available at www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/undp-rbap-foresight-playbook

UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence. 2018. Foresight Manual: Empowered futures for the 2030 agenda, pages 26–30.

👁 Available at www.undp.org/publications/foresight-manual-empowered-futures

HOW TO DO IT



Time
60–90 minutes



No. of participants
Unlimited. Ideal group sizes are between 8–10 people



Facilitation
One lead facilitator, with support facilitators to guide each group. A note taker for each group can be useful.³

Material



Butchers paper



Sticky notes



Coloured marker pens



Virtual collaboration platform
i.e., Google Docs, Miro, Conceptboard etc. (if online)

Time & Activity

Step

Description

15 minutes

Introduce the activity

1



Explain what horizon scanning is and why we do it.

Explain the activity to the group(s) and the time period being looked at i.e., 2050.

2



Select a framework to categorise the drivers of change.

For example, the PESTLE⁴ or STIR-DEEPER⁵ frameworks. Allow participants the opportunity to add categories that they think may affect strategy.

45 minutes

Complete the activity

3



Get participants to brainstorm drivers of change for each category.

Depending on the dynamics of the group you may wish to work through one or several categories at a time. Ensure that an equal amount of time is spent on each category for the time allocated to the activity. For each category look at the drivers of change with a direct and indirect impact.

60 minutes

Following activity

4



Consolidate and synthesise the drivers of change information.

The consolidated information can be used as the base material for a driver mapping exercise where the drivers of change are categorised by potential impact and (un)certainty.

³ To save time recording contributions, a notetaker can enter participant contributions directly into an online template in Google Docs during the session.

⁴ PESTLE stands for political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors.

⁵ STIR-DEEPER stands for society, technology, industry, resources, demographics, economics, environment, politics, energy and religion. The STIR-DEEPER framework involves looking at all these aspects of the external environment, to see how they may affect a strategy.



CASE STUDY 1

DRIVERS AND FORCES SHAPING THE PACIFIC REGION

When SPC was developing its Strategic Plan 2022–2031, we used horizon scanning to understand more about the drivers and forces that are shaping the Pacific region and our organisation.

WHAT WE DID

Sixty interested staff from across the organisation took part in this online workshop. Before the workshop, the organisers reviewed the participant list and invited additional staff to attend, to ensure the diversity of SPC was represented by the participants.

Over 90 minutes, participants worked in small groups to identify issues that could shape the future of the Pacific and SPC. We asked them to think about what issues may arise that would lead to changes between 2021 and 2031, and what issues Pacific Island countries and territories may need to respond to.

Each group considered seven categories of drivers of change, which we had identified by modifying the STIR-DEEPER framework.

For this exercise, we looked at these seven categories:

- Natural environment
- Demographics and society
- Built environment
- Technology and communications
- Resources
- Energy and productive industry
- Economics and politics

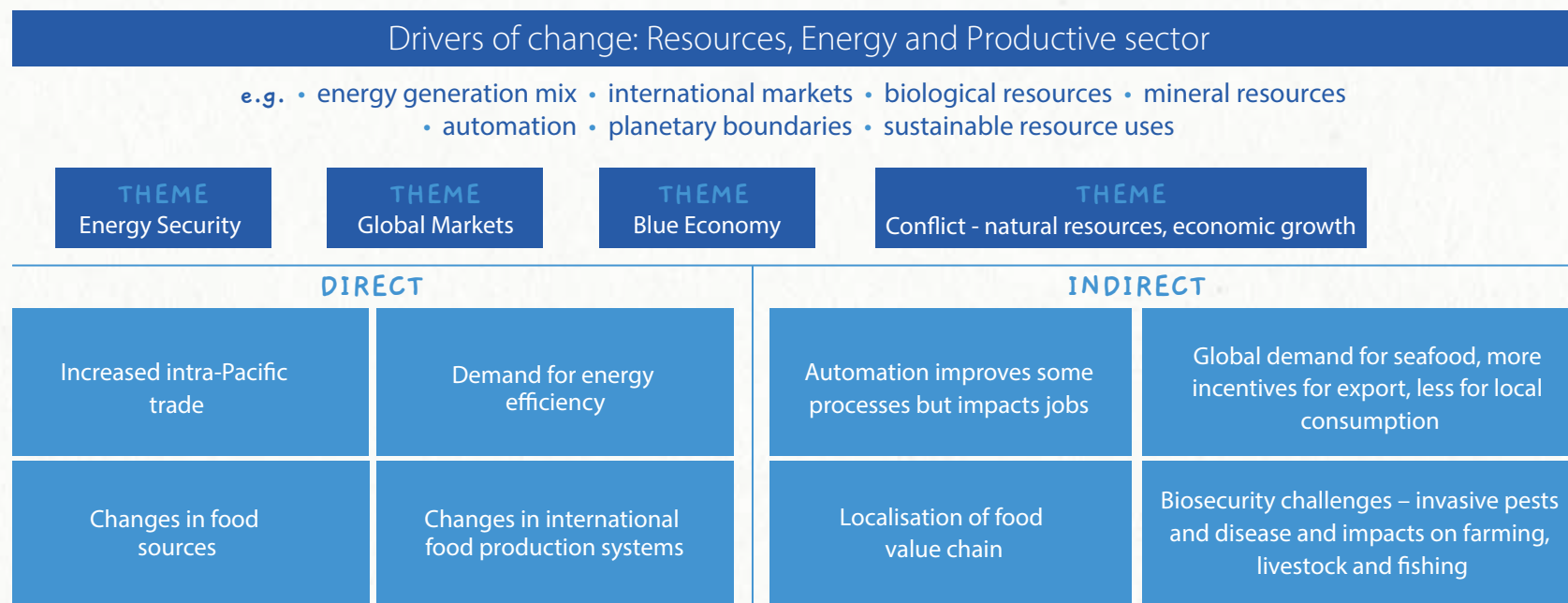
We used the virtual collaboration tool Conceptboard⁶ for this exercise. Conceptboard enables participants to write each driver they identify on a virtual sticky note and add it to the relevant driver board. Participants or facilitators can then cluster the sticky notes that relate to similar drivers.

We divided each driver board into three sections. On the top we wrote examples of drivers to stimulate thinking. On the left side, there was space for participants to add notes about drivers that would directly affect SPC (such as changes to funding or member engagement). On the right side, there was space to add notes about drivers that would affect people and places in the Pacific, which SPC would need to respond to (such as a public-health challenge). Figure 1 shows an example of a driver board ([see Figure 1](#)).

6 For more information about Conceptboard, go to www.conceptboard.com.

Figure 1:

Part of the driver board for the resources, energy and productive sector.



Source: SPC and University of Queensland Centre for Policy Futures

WHAT HAPPENED

Participants identified over 600 forces that are driving change across the Pacific.

To make these more manageable, we synthesised⁷ them into 13 core drivers:

1. Social change
2. Environmental health
3. Strategic recovery
4. Funding and independence
5. Interconnected systems
6. Conflicting priorities
7. Socially inclusive work
8. Climate change impacts

9. Support for social equity
10. Changing technology
11. Regionalism versus nationalism
12. Science for decision-making
13. Global decarbonisation

We used the core drivers to inform the next part of our strategic planning process (see Case study 3). We also used them to inform SPC's contribution to identifying and mapping drivers as part of developing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific continent.⁸

⁷ Synthesising is combining the main points of each source and putting together the ideas and findings of multiple sources in order to make an overall point. This involves looking for similarities and differences between sources and identifying where the sources overlap and where they diverge.

⁸ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 2022. 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific continent. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Retrieved from www.forumsec.org/2050strategy.



SPCs contribution to the Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy

60 drivers of change across 6 categories which may impact the 2050 vision

Social development

[Positive Social change and cohesion can result in the improvement of human and social conditions for the betterment of society.]

[Equity, equality, social justice, protection against gender-based violence etc. are fundamental prerequisites for social development.]

Economic

[A steady transition to low-carbon economies is encouraging diversification, sustainable resource management and production and consumption patterns.]

Environment

[Natural resource management (Good practice and sustainable harvesting) is strengthening abilities to monitor state of environment and state of resources.]

[Biggest driver of change is loss of biodiversity which will lead to extremely difficult times for Pacific with food and water security – climate change and increasing natural disasters.]

Technological

[Digital technology and innovations continue to create profound change in the way we do business, communicate and live.]

[Improving capacity and pace of adoption of data and technology (as strategic resources).]

Political/Legal

[Growing uncertainty of effective good governance and stability in uncertain environment.]

[Regional connectivity and integration across the Pacific showcases a united group of large ocean states in their delivery of regional commitments, negotiations and network diplomacy.]

Geopolitical/Geostrategic

[Increased demonstrations of Pacific solidarity and a belief in common destiny grounded in the ocean, science, technology and knowledge enable advancement of the 2050 vision.]

[International volatility, global geopolitics and competition for influence threaten political solidarity and collective action on key regional and global priorities.]

WHAT WE LEARNT

Horizon scanning helped us tune into what is happening around us, so we could determine whether we are prepared for change, opportunities and threats. It was an effective way to start talking with our colleagues and members and to gather perspectives from people with diverse expertise. We found it a useful tool to understand how trends affect SPC and regional policy, and to determine which areas to focus on to achieve the group's preferred future.

Planners and policy analysts should combine it with other planning tools, to help them identify gaps and signals and present them in an accessible format on a user-friendly platform. Horizon scanning is a quick way to gather information from a group, but it takes time to synthesise and analyse the group's contributions and integrate them into other processes being used to improve strategy and policies.

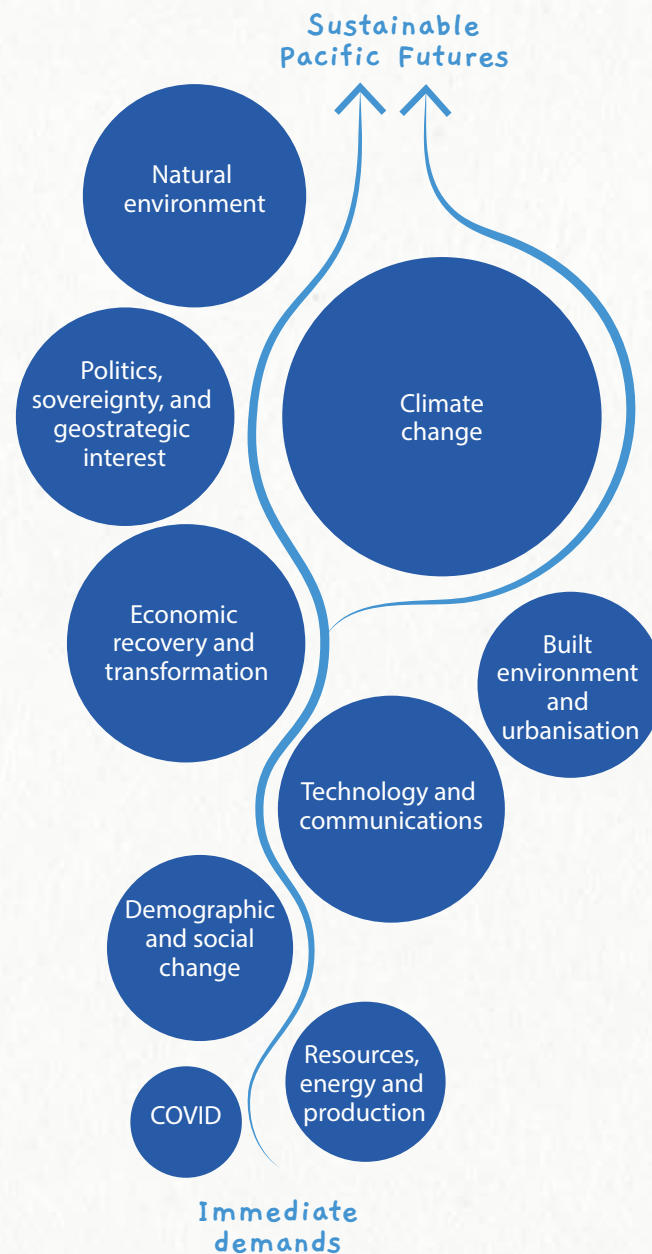
Figure 2 shows the drivers of change identified by SPC staff. It shows that you cannot only look at the mega trends shaping our futures at the global level, but that it is also important to use local knowledge for a contextual perspective of the drivers of change impacting us closer to home.



There are waves of deep thinking rolling across the Pacific region. What future do we want for us and next generations? Is what we are working on now fit for those futures? Are we stuck in business as usual? Are we holding onto used futures?

- Emily Sharp, Director - Strategy, Performance and Learning, SPC

Figure 2:
Drivers of change



Source: SPC and University of Queensland Centre for Policy Futures

