

✓ WHAT IT IS

A tool that identifies what our vision for the future is (“pulls”), what is pushing us towards the future (“pushes”) and what is holding us back from achieving our vision (“weights”).

✓ WHEN TO USE IT

With stakeholders or staff to develop a vision for a strategy, generate buy-in for a change or explore newfound threats or opportunities. It is most valuable in a group setting but can be used as part of an independent analysis.

✓ WHY USE IT

It provides a visual map of the present and future, which includes the plausible futures that emerge from the triangle’s three corners—pulls, pushes and weights.



WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

The Pacific Community. 2022. A compendium of Pacific practice in strategic foresight, pages 51–52.

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

Motusaga, M. 2022. Designing youth futures: a Pacific recipe in foresight application, page 43.

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

Ask participants what pulls, pushes and weights look like to different social groups; to people in urban and rural areas; and to the Pacific region; countries; provinces or regions; and local communities. This helps ensure that goals, initiatives or challenges are assessed through different lenses, and do not unconsciously or unintentionally disadvantage the most vulnerable and marginalised groups.

– Rose Martin, former Team Leader, Mainstreaming & Capacity Building, Human Rights and Social Development, SPC

Allow room for participants to provide their own interpretation of the futures triangle. The Navosa Provincial Youth Council (See Case study 10), viewed the ‘weights of the past’ as positives that anchor personal identity. Participants referenced their cultures, their churches and their vanua/families. This shows a distinct Pacific culture and connection with the past.

HOW TO DO IT



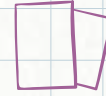
Time
60 minutes



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



Facilitation
One lead facilitator, with support facilitators to guide each group.



Butchers/drawing paper



Visual aids to inspire visions for the future

Material



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




Set the scene and introduce the futures triangle exercise to the group plenary.

Explain each of the three components of the futures triangle, using examples relevant to the group(s):

- Pull of the future
- 1 • Weights of the past
- Pushes of the future

Take the time to explain the exercise. Observe participants responses, reactions and try to connect with them.

- 2 Communicate the ground rules. Ask participants to withhold judgement, be kind to each other and to be bold and creative. Remind participants that there are no wrong answers. Provide participants the opportunity to ask questions before breaking into smaller groups.

 30 minutes

Complete the activity

- 3 In small groups, draw the futures triangle. Participants may use images to explain the pulls, pushes and weights, for example, the ocean, streams, rivers and anchors. Facilitators may choose to explore the interactions between the different corners of the triangle with participants as part of the discussion.

| Time & Activity | Step | Description |
|---|------|---|
| <i>Table continued from previous page...</i> | | |
| | 4 | <p>Ask the group to identify their images of the future—the vision. Print outs of visual aids can be used to prompt discussion. Try not to be too prescriptive with the visual aids so they do not limit alternatives.</p> <p>Using sticky notes or different coloured pens, add all visions contributed by the group to the top section of the triangle.</p> |
| | | <p>➡ Next, ask the group to discuss and add the weights of the past.</p> <p><i>Questions to prompt discussion may include:</i></p> |
| | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is holding us back, or getting in our way of achieving our vision? What are the barriers to change? How is (geographical or organisational) culture perceived – as an anchor or as an inhibitor of action? |
| | | <p>➡ Next, ask the group to discuss and add the pushes of the future.</p> <p><i>Questions to prompt discussion may include:</i></p> |
| | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What trends are pushing us towards particular futures? What quantitative drivers and trends are changing the future? |
| <p>🕒 15 minutes</p> <p>Reflect and summarise activity</p> | 7 | <p>Request all groups to present their futures triangle to the other groups. Include time to highlight the main points discussed, questions from other groups and share reflections on the findings.</p> |
| <p>Post activity:</p> <p>🕒 15 minutes</p> <p>Consolidate information</p> <p><i>Provide to participants within 3 days of the activity.</i></p> | 8 | <p>Facilitator(s) to consolidate material and make it available to the participants. Offer a follow-up session with the lead organiser(s) or group representatives to see how the information may be used to support strategy and long-term planning.</p> |

CASE STUDY 7: CREATING VISIONS FOR SPC'S STRATEGIC AREAS

37
68

The futures triangle was the main tool used to develop a shared vision for each of SPC's seven key focus areas (KFAs). We combined this exercise with causal layered analysis ([See Case study 15](#)) and backcasting ([See Case study 16](#)).

WHAT WE DID

We used Conceptboard for this exercise. We ran a two-hour workshop for each KFA, which included 30 minutes to co-create a futures triangle. On average, 14 people took part in each of the seven workshops, including country and territory representatives and SPC senior leaders and technical staff.

During the workshops, participants contributed virtual post-it notes to a futures triangle. First, they added notes about their vision (the pulls); then they added notes about what forces they think are helping us achieve this vision (the pushes); then they added notes about the forces that are holding us back from achieving this vision (the weights). Figure 7 shows the futures triangle our participants created for planetary health.



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Figure 7:
Planetary health futures triangle

FUTURES TRIANGLE: OUR PREFERRED FUTURE



Source: SPC

WHAT HAPPENED

For each KFA, we synthesised the participants' vision statements, before testing them with the Drafting Committee for the Strategic Plan.⁹ The final vision statement for each KFA became the Future State 2031 statement used in the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2022–2031 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8:

Vision statements for the planetary health and sustainable economies and livelihoods KFAs in SPC's Strategic Plan 2022–2031.

Planetary health

FUTURE STATE 2031

Collaboration and stewardship of our Blue Pacific for healthy islands; where children and vulnerable groups are nurtured in body and mind; environments invite healthy lifestyles learning and leisure; people work and age with dignity; ecological balance is a source of pride; people maintain their cultures and traditions with the land; water and oceans are protected.



Source: Pacific Community (SPC)

Sustainable economies and livelihoods

FUTURE STATE 2031

The Blue Pacific is a well-being economy through a balance of sustainable economic growth, protection and inclusive distribution of resources, energy secure, healthy and resilient communities with livelihoods sustained through trade, maritime connectivity and harmonious relationships with the land and the sea.



WHAT WE LEARNT

The futures triangle is an effective tool for getting into a futures mindset. It helped to open participants' minds to conceive multiple futures instead of a single future (usually informed by forecasts, not foresight and futures). It supports deeper, intentional discussions on possible futures. It also provides understanding of different perspectives and cultures to assist in identifying areas of action.



It was interesting to see how just one futures session impacted on thinking and on the discussions that followed. It was obvious that that futures triangle session had a deep impact on the thinking of the team, and you knew that it was going to inform the way that they tackled activities moving forward.

– Dr Frances K. Vaka'uta, Team Leader, Culture for Development, SPC

⁹ The Drafting Committee for the Strategic Plan was made up of SPC representatives of countries and territories.

CASE STUDY 8: VISIONING THE PACIFIC FISHERIES AND OCEAN SECTOR

We held a special virtual session for 70 fisheries stakeholders at the 13th Heads of Fisheries meeting to discuss what investments are needed for a futures-ready fisheries and ocean sector.

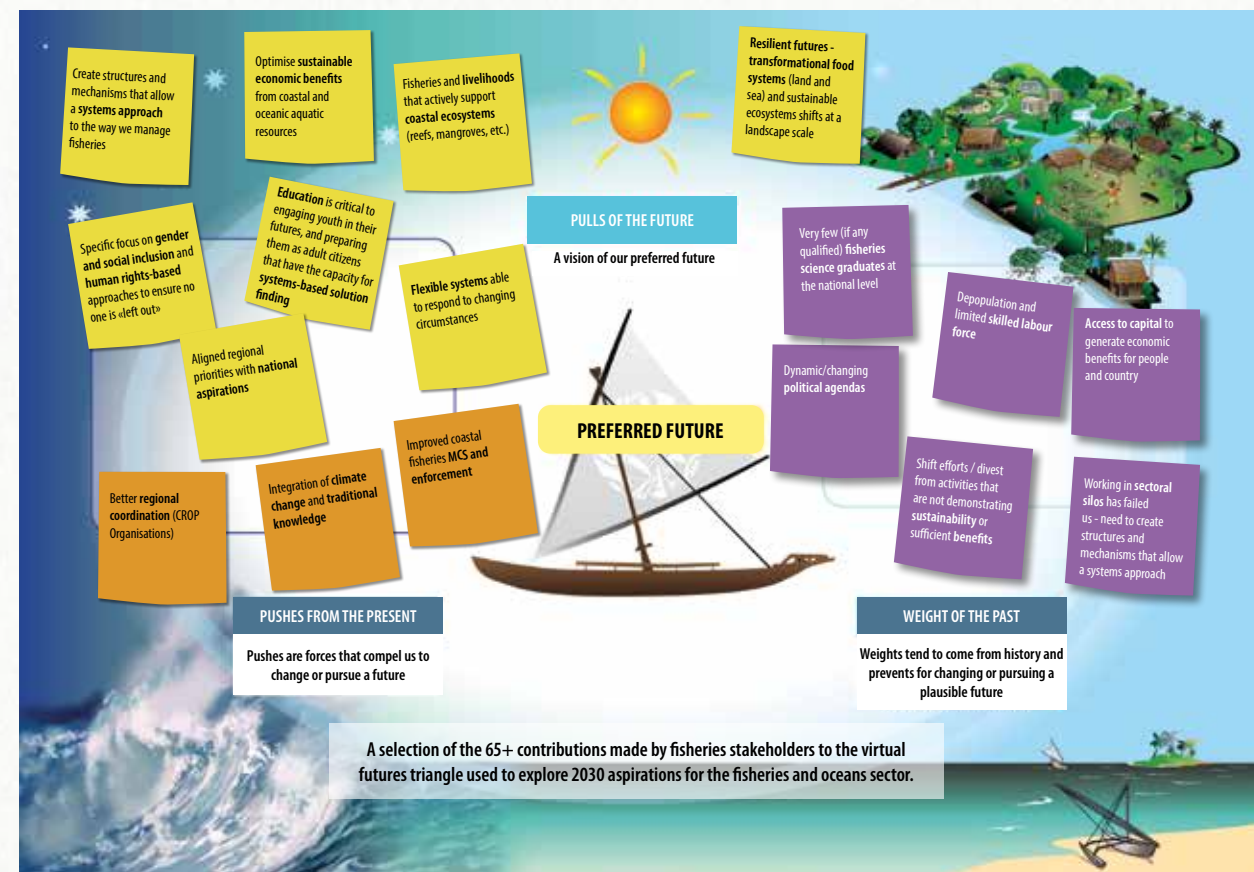
WHAT WE DID

We used Conceptboard for this one-hour exercise. After introducing strategic foresight as a concept, we asked participants to share their visions for the fisheries and oceans sector, and then identify the pushes from the present and the weights of the past that would influence the sector in achieving these visions by 2030 (see Figure 9). We invited participants to add virtual post-it notes to the Conceptboard, raise their hand to speak or contribute using the chat function.

The facilitator's role was to guide and encourage conversation as well as weave together inputs to present an emerging vision to participants at the end of the exercise.

Figure 9:

Extract from the futures triangle created at the 13th Heads of Fisheries meeting



Source: Pacific Community (SPC)

WHAT HAPPENED

Participants made more than 65 contributions, which included:

- o developing interactive and interoperable web portals;
- o building national capacity in science;
- o investing in new tools and next-generation software (including artificial intelligence);
- o planning for the assets and infrastructure that the oceanic and coastal fisheries sectors need.

We used the contributions to inform the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2022–2031 and the SPC's Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) [divisional business plan](#). We gave the participants a copy of the co-created futures triangle that they could use for their own long-term planning and strategic work.

WHAT WE LEARNT

Using Zoom enabled different modes of participation, so people could contribute in a way that was comfortable for them. It was helpful to have a lead moderator for participants who wanted to speak, and two facilitators who transferred comments from the Zoom chat to the futures triangle in Conceptboard.



We found that this tool quickly and easily engaged people, as it provided a platform to share their knowledge and expertise to help define a preferred future. Contextualising the tool made it even more relevant and useful, as we explored the tensions between barriers and enablers to achieve our vision.

– Sarah Mecartney,
Principal Strategy Adviser, SPC

CASE STUDY 9: CO-CREATING OCEAN FUTURES

The [Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science \(PCCOS\)](#) is a regional platform hosted by SPC for coordinating and integrating ocean science knowledge and information for the Pacific. The PCCOS team coordinates Pacific satellite events—Vaka Moana webinars—as part of the Ocean Decade Laboratories, which is an initiative focused on promoting ocean science.

The first two webinars in the series were Vaka Moana: A journey to an inspiring and engaging Pacific Ocean¹⁰ and Vaka Moana: Weaving traditional and modern science to understand current and future ocean conditions.¹¹ Both webinars included strategic foresight exercises to actively engage participants in designing the future they want and identifying the actions we need to implement in the next 10 years.

¹⁰ The Pacific Community, 8 July 2021. Vaka Moana: A journey to an inspiring and engaging Pacific Ocean. [webinar]. www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XRjahWNc3A

¹¹ The Pacific Community, 24 September 2021. Vaka Moana – Weaving traditional and modern science to understand current and future ocean conditions. www.youtube.be/XOcXCrH4kik

¹² Sli.do is an interactive app to use during hybrid meetings. Find out more at www.slido.com

WHAT WE DID

In each two-hour webinar, we started by introducing strategic foresight and explaining its power to imagine and create positive visions for the future.

During the webinar, framed on the futures triangle concept, we used Sli.do¹² to ask the webinar participants some questions.

For example, in the first webinar we asked these questions:

1. Imagine it is 2030, what does an inspiring and engaging Pacific Ocean look like to you?
2. What waves of change are pushing us closer towards this vision?
3. What weights are holding us back from moving towards our vision?

After asking each question, we gave participants 30 minutes to respond while they continued to listen to panellists discuss their vision for the Pacific Ocean. Our facilitation team worked offline to enter the responses from Sli.do onto Conceptboard, to develop the futures triangle. Contributions were provided anonymously.

WHAT HAPPENED

Towards the end of each webinar, we shared the consolidated futures triangle with the participants. We used the findings to shape questions for the remainder of the panel discussion—this gave the audience additional voice in the webinar.

The futures triangle exercise supported the objective to help design the future we want for the Pacific Ocean and identify the actions needed to implement in the next 10 years. The information gained from the exercise was used to design the Ocean Decade Laboratories activities for the Pacific and plan PCCOS priorities.

Our work with the Ocean Decade Laboratories created a dialogue with a wide range of participants. The webinars attracted academics, students, artists and community leaders and their contributions helped us validate the statements made by our staff and PICT representatives with regards to weaving traditional knowledge and modern science and prioritising partnerships and inclusion.

WHAT WE LEARNT

The webinars were an easy way to introduce strategic foresight to a wider audience. The use of the futures triangle brought dynamism to webinar by actively engaging participants, allowing them to share their visions, learn of other participants' perspectives and see their contributions used to enrich the broader discussions in the spirit of Pacific storytelling.



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CASE STUDY 10: YOUTH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

In Fiji, the Navosa Provincial Youth Council used the futures triangle to explore the information that had surfaced during its visioning activity (See Case study 6).

WHAT WE DID

The youth council asked 85 youth leaders to work in small groups and develop a futures triangle inspired by their visioning ideas. They considered what would help them achieve this vision and what would hold them back. Each group presented its futures triangle to the whole workshop and collectively discussed how to navigate shared challenges (see Figure 10).

WHAT HAPPENED

The youth council used the information in the futures triangles to develop its strategic plan. Interestingly, the group viewed the weights as anchors, providing a solid foundation to act from when they faced challenges. The participants talked about their culture, the church and their *vanua* (families) as anchors, which gave them a distinct Pacific culture, identity, faith and connection to the past.

Figure 10:
Workshop participants share their futures triangles



Source: Dr. Mema Motusaga



I drew on scenarios relevant to Nadroga Navosa and to the daily lives of the participants. It was important for me to recall the person I was as a young person and to draw on that inspiration to talanoa [dialogue] effectively and to give the space for participants to interpret the triangle. I will use the futures triangle in all the youth training work that I do. I'm so glad this tool is adaptable and useful.

- Dr Mema Motusaga,
former Social Inclusion Adviser, SPC

