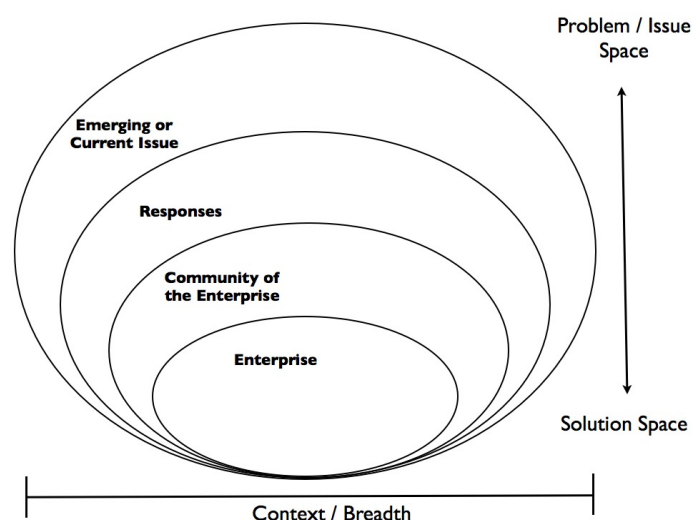# The Futures Action Model for Policy Innovation

Overview

Governments are facing unprecedented changes in the 21st Century. Rapid demographic shifts are reshaping constituencies. Environmental challenges are forcing us to rethink urban design and resource use. Cultural dynamics are bringing forth new expectations across the generational spectrum.

When governments prepare for the future effectively, regions can leverage social change to create social goods. But when there is little awareness and preparation for change, regions can find themselves with intractable problems, some which are beyond any capacity to address.

The Futures Action Model (FAM) is a proven methodology which enables the rapid prototyping and rigorous conceptual development of breakthrough policy and innovation strategies and models. FAM is a comprehensive methodology in which team and network based creative and analytic processes enable the development of breakthrough strategies and models to emerge.

Thinking Really Matters

In a changing environment, especially a rapidly changing one, what worked in the past does not necessarily work in the future. Evidence based policy making is crucial, but in areas where there are major challenges, wicked problems and unknowns, governments require breakthrough strategies.

Yet risk exists for governments to experiment with new models and innovation. FAM addresses this risk by putting clients and participants through a rigorous process of research, ideation and design. Instead of supporting one big idea that, if it failed, would have negative effects on the whole organization, the FAM process delivers a number of new strategies and models that can be scaled from small experiments (limiting risk) to more robust implementations as success unfolds.

In addition, FAM is not a departure from evidence based policy development, but rather blends the best of evidence based research with rigorous anticipation and creative design. Why follow one half-baked idea, when you can have multiple rigorously developed ones?

FAM Process

FAM is a team based approach that leverages organizational knowledge. Participants who are interested in exploring and developing policy strategies come together in a workshop setting. Participants bring together their organizational knowledge, and use the FAM tools and methods over a number of sessions.

Phase 1: In the first phase we develop an understanding of emerging issues and the global responses that are occurring relevant to your area. This gives you knowledge and clarity of the most significant changes and critical issues within your governmental sectors or region.

Phase 2: In the second phase you explore the connection between the most significant global responses and innovations that connects with your network of stakeholders. In this phase you analyze your stakeholder needs and imagine potential strategic responses. Teams normally develop three or more viable concepts.

Phase 3: In the third phase you engage in detailed analysis of the policy and strategy options conceived, model them and then develop detailed designs for the strategies. This includes general modeling and detailed design of the purposes, governance systems and resource exchanges for each idea.

So... What is Under the Hood?

Central to the approach is an engine for creating new policy pathways and strategies in the face of complex challenges:

o   designed to address wicked problems

o   experiential – based on action learning principles.

o   incorporates an organization's key stakeholders into the strategy development process

o   employs continuous scanning for change and improves an organization's real-time strategic agility

Key Outcomes

The key outcomes of using FAM includes:

1.   The development of breakthrough policy concepts, models and designs

2.   A short report which includes:

        a.   Key policy strategies, models and designs

        b.   An analysis of global responses, emerging issues and the partnership ecosystems

        c.   Environmental scan of issues impacting region

3.   Other valuable outcomes include new capabilities and capacities based on knowledge of tools / methods, skills / practices, and capacity to generate creative ideas including:

        a.   Knowledge of new tools and methods

        b.   Transfer of knowledge for how participants can guide the process

        c.   Collaborative (team / net) work skills