

Legislative Institution Subcommittee of LSCC
Futures Study:
Researching Horizon Issues in Driving Force Areas
2007-2008

Methodology

- Examine works in the field of futures study for guidelines and for particulars (an obvious starting point is The Practical Guide to Futures Study).
- Read Legislatures of the Future: Implications of Change in its entirety to obtain perspective and framework.
- Consult with members of original task force, especially Max Arinder, who chaired the 1998-2000 effort and assisted the Legislative Institution Subcommittee of LSCC in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.
- Start with the driving forces in the original report to understand the particular area (demographics, economics, technology, political, and environment) and to obtain clues on where to look for information.
- Research using the Internet, books, and periodicals.
- Not all horizon issues/driving forces that are discovered may be relevant to the legislative institution, but they can help paint a picture of what is happening in the given area.
- Some forces may directly impact the legislature itself while others impact society and thus the legislature indirectly.
- It is important to maintain a distinction between the legislative institution and issues of legislative policy; while policy is important and needs consideration, focusing on it in this context will confuse matters with the issues facing the institution itself, which is the area of immediate concern.
- Driving forces must be reviewed frequently and consistently to identify new horizon issues as well as those formerly identified that have not developed as anticipated or that have diminished.

Recommendations

- Establish and maintain a consistent research and review cycle. A suggested pattern is to focus on the technology and political areas one year, then social, economic, and environmental the next. This would provide an on-going level of experience on the subcommittee, expose all subcommittee members to each area, and keep all areas current.
- Monitor results of previous research in each area. For instance, in the political area, term limits were a substantial horizon issue several years ago, and it appeared that they might be enacted across the country. Since then the trend has halted, with even some retraction. This type of circumstance bears consideration.
- Utilize expertise in various staff sections to research horizon issues. An obvious example is asking NALIT for insight into technology developments.
- Suggested schedule:
 - 2008-2009 Legislative Institutions Subcommittee
 - Summer – provide members with A Practical Guide to Futures Study and Legislatures of the Future: Implications of Change prior to fall meeting.
 - Fall – familiarize members with driving forces, horizon issues, and doing research; assign research in the areas of technology and political driving forces.
 - Winter – discuss and process results of research.
 - Spring – identify horizon issues worth watching.
 - Summer – report on findings.
 - 2009-2010
 - Repeat above, substituting economic, social, and environmental driving forces.
 - 2010-2011
 - Repeat 2008-2009
 - 2011-2012
 - Repeat 2009-2010
 - And so on...
- Each new subcommittee should do an initial analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in relation to its task that year. This will help identify both positive and negative characteristics to keep in mind as the subcommittee proceeds.
- Membership on the subcommittee should represent various staff sections, geographic areas, and other diverse characteristics. Particular attention needs to be given to inclusion of partisan staff, who are underrepresented on LSCC.

Resources

- A Practical Guide to Futures Study. NCSL Task Force on Legislatures of the Future. NCSL, 2000.
- Legislatures of the Future: Implications of Change. A Report of the Task Force on Legislatures of the Future of the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee. NCSL, 2000.
- General search terms: futures study; combination of driving force area (e.g., technology) and “future” or “20 years”; alternative futures; forecasting; mega trends
- Social/demographic: *see driving forces report*
 - U.S. Census Bureau - www.census.gov
 - U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services - www.hhs.gov
 - Standard and Poor's Investor - www.standardandpoors.com
- Technological: *see driving forces report*
 - Search terms: artificial intelligence; technology trends; biotechnology; nanotechnology; supercomputers
- Economic: *see driving forces report*
- Environmental: *see driving forces report*
- Political: *see driving forces report*