

Instructions for Participants

Strategic Foresight Exercise: Exploring Possible Futures for Immigration to Canada

To be used with: Sutter, A., & Esses, V. M. (2026). P2P strategic foresight toolkit. A practical scenario planning activity on immigration. *Pathways to Prosperity Partnership*.

<https://p2pcanada.ca/library/p2p-strategic-foresight-toolkit-a-practical-scenario-planning-activity-on-immigration/>

Welcome

In this activity, you will take part in a strategic foresight exercise. Foresight is a way of thinking that helps prepare for more than one possible future. Working together in your group, you will explore what the future of immigration to Canada might look like in 10 to 15 years, under different conditions. Rather than trying to predict what will happen, this activity invites you to explore several plausible futures so that you can better prepare for the different directions change could take.

Goal of the Activity

To explore how key change drivers could shape different futures for immigration in Canada, and to discuss the challenges and opportunities in each, as well as strategies that could be valuable in preparing for multiple futures.

How to Work Together

You will have three hours in total, including a 10-minute break. Everyone in the group should take part – each voice matters. To stay organized, you can assign a few roles:

- One person to keep time
- One person to record ideas on the sheets

These roles simply help the group stay on track. Everyone should contribute ideas and comments, and should vote on the most impactful and uncertain change drivers using the stickers. We encourage you to stay curious, listen to one another, and enjoy discovering new possibilities together. There are no wrong futures – only unexplored ones!

What You Will Do

1. Identify key change drivers that could shape the future.
2. Select the two most important and uncertain ones.
3. Use these change drivers to create a 2x2 scenario matrix showing four possible futures.
4. Describe the four possible futures.
5. Discuss the challenges and opportunities that might arise in each possible future and the strategies that could be valuable in preparing for multiple futures.

Detailed Outline of the Steps to be Taken

Here are the steps to be taken to complete the activity. Each step will outline its goal and materials required and provide instructions. Please complete one step at a time before moving on to the next step.

Step 1: Identify Change Drivers (25 minutes)

Goal: Identify the main forces that could shape the future of immigration to Canada in the next 10-15 years.

Materials: Sheet 1 – Change Drivers Worksheet: A list of sample change drivers, plus space to add your own.

Change drivers are large-scale forces – social, economic, technological, environmental, or political – that can influence immigration to Canada.

There are already a few sample change drivers listed on **Sheet 1 – Change Drivers Worksheet**. Add any others your group thinks are relevant in the blank spaces provided on the Change Drivers Worksheet. **Write your change drivers using short, simple, and neutral wording.** For example, “public attitudes toward immigration” is purposely neutral (as opposed to “increasingly negative attitudes toward immigration”). Neutral phrasing keeps your group open to multiple futures (e.g., positive or negative public attitudes) rather than assuming one direction of change. In addition, focus on identifying **broad** and **distinct** change drivers. If you identify similar drivers, group them under a larger theme (for example, “cost of living” and “housing affordability” could be combined as “economic conditions”).

Guiding questions:

- Which big forces are already shaping immigration to Canada?
- What new or emerging factors could strongly affect the next 10-15 years?

Step 2: Identify the Most Impactful and Uncertain Change Drivers (30 minutes total)

A: Discuss the Change Drivers (20 minutes)

Goal: Build a shared understanding of the change drivers before rating them.

As a group, discuss the change drivers on your sheet. Talk about what each one means and their importance for the future of immigration to Canada. Also discuss how predictable or unpredictable each might be. Please share your reasoning with each other.

Guiding questions:

- How is this change driver relevant to immigration to Canada?
- Which change drivers could make the biggest difference?
- Which ones are most difficult to predict or control?

B: Vote on the Most Impactful and Uncertain Change Drivers (10 minutes)

Goal: Visually identify the most important and uncertain change drivers.

Materials: Two red dots and two blue dots for each person in the group.

After your discussion, each person places their stickers independently on the Change Drivers Sheet:

- **Place your two red dots** on the two drivers you think are **most impactful**.
- **Place your two blue dots** on the two drivers you think are **most uncertain**.

When everyone has finished, sit back and look at where the dots cluster. The drivers with the most red and blue dots combined are the most impactful and unpredictable forces shaping the future. Select the top two change drivers – the ones with the most dots overall – to form the two axes of your Scenario Matrix.

Troubleshooting:

- If your group identifies more than two main change drivers: The scenario matrix works best with two broad drivers. If your group identifies more than two, try clustering similar drivers into a larger theme (for example, “AI tools” and “automation” could be combined as “technological change”).
- If your group cannot agree on two drivers: Choose the pair that seems to present the most interesting or contrasting futures. The goal is not to be “right” but to explore possibilities.

Step 3: Transfer the Top Two Change Drivers to Sheet 2 – Scenario Matrix Worksheet (10 minutes)

Goal: Name the two axes of your scenario framework.

Materials: Sheet 2 – Scenario Matrix Worksheet: A 2×2 chart for mapping your four possible futures.

On your **Scenario Matrix Sheet**, write one change driver along the **horizontal axis** and the other along the **vertical axis**. Then, provide contrasting or opposite end points for each of the change drivers (e.g., low – high, negative – positive, closed – open). The end points will depend on the specific nature of the change driver (e.g., negative attitudes toward immigration – positive attitudes toward immigration; low integrity of the information ecosystem – high integrity of the information ecosystem). These two axes then create four quadrants, each representing a different combination of how the two drivers might evolve.

Step 4: Build Your Four Scenarios (40 minutes)

Goal: Describe what each possible future could look like.

Work together to imagine one future in each quadrant. Give each quadrant a short, memorable **headline or title**, and list **three or four key features** that describe what life, work, and community might look like in that world. Stay realistic but open-minded; these are plausible futures, not predictions. All four scenarios are possible. This is exactly why foresight exercises are especially useful: they help us to prepare for several futures instead of assuming only one.

Guiding questions:

- What might each world look and feel like if both change drivers move in these directions?
- What might newcomer experiences and communities look like in this future?

****Break (10 minutes)****

Step 5: Discuss Challenges, Opportunities and Strategies (50 minutes)

Goal: Reflect on what each of the four futures could mean for Canada’s immigration system and capture your main takeaways.

Materials: Sheet 3 – Implications Worksheet: For discussing the challenges and opportunities that each of the four futures may bring, and the strategies that would be valuable in preparing for multiple futures.

Turn to **Sheet 3 – Implications Worksheet** and work together to discuss and record your thoughts on what each of the four futures could mean for immigration to Canada, and for your own area of work.

Guiding questions:

- What challenges could arise in this specific future?
- What opportunities could also be present?
- How might academics, policy-makers, and representatives of the settlement sector need to adapt?
- What strategies or approaches (e.g., digital innovation, cross-regional collaboration) might be especially valuable in preparing for multiple futures?

Conclusion of the Interactive Activity (5 minutes)

At the end of the activity, please ensure all your worksheets are complete, easy to read, and well labelled, and give these to the facilitator.

[Optional: The organizer will review all the worksheets and share a summary with all participants.]