

# What If? Anticipating the Future through Scenario Planning



**Oregon Civic Engagement Conference**

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Write to Know *nonprofit consulting*

# Looking backward . . .

In 2005, 2000, 1990, 1980 . . .

- What did we know about trends affecting volunteerism and civic engagement?
- What didn't we know at the time, but could see in hindsight?
- What surprised us?





**We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are.**

*- Anais Nin*

# Imagining forward . . .

- Long term: 5-10 years
- Outside-in thinking
- Multiple plausible futures
- Stories as starting point for strategies



# Applications

- **Culture:** change the conversation about what's possible
- **Capacity-** sharpen perceptive and adaptive abilities of organizations
- **Innovation-** develop breakthrough strategies
- **Testing-** hypothetical “wind tunnel” for strategies
- **Collaboration-** build powerful consensus and agreement about desired future and actions



# Focus Question

**What will civic engagement  
look like in the future?**

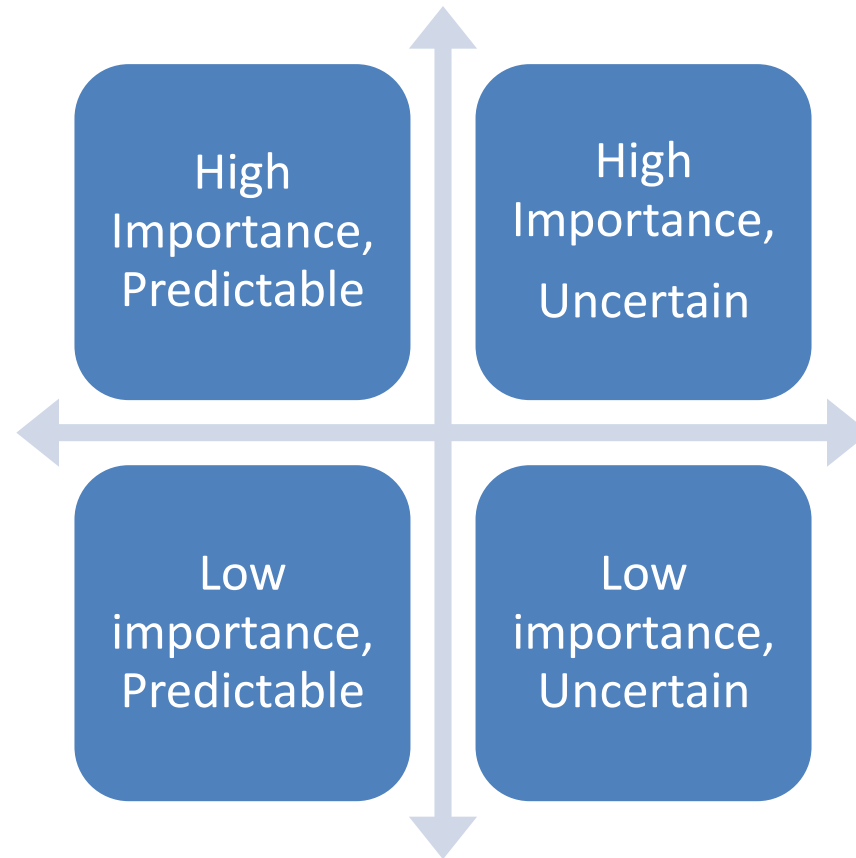


# Driving Forces

- Social
- Economic
- Political
- Environmental
- Technological



# Which matter most?







**The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. The opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.**

*- Niels Bohr*

# Provocative, Plausible Futures

- What is happening? When and where?
- Why has this happened?
- Who is involved?
- Who are the winners-- and losers?



# Strategies

- Risk/resilience assessment
- Reacting vs. shaping strategies
- Desired vs. possible futures



# The Benefit of Foresight

- What do we anticipate about the future of civic engagement?
- What information will tell us which future is actually unfolding so that we can adapt our actions as needed?





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**Kathi Jaworski**

[kjaworski@write-to-know.com](mailto:kjaworski@write-to-know.com)

541-953-4755

[www.write-to-know.com](http://www.write-to-know.com)