



# Foresight for Governance in Singapore

May 2019

# Agenda

1. The place of foresight in Government: the PMO Strategy Group and its antecedents
2. History and landscape of foresight in Singapore
3. CSF: Set up + Functions

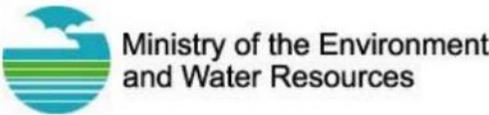
Governance context has become more challenging: the **Strategy Group** has dedicated teams focused on whole-of-government (WOG) and sector level strategic planning, and cross-cutting areas such as population and climate change policies

The Centre for Strategic Futures houses the Singapore government's foresight capabilities

# Evolution of Foresight in the Singapore Government



# The foresight landscape is burgeoning



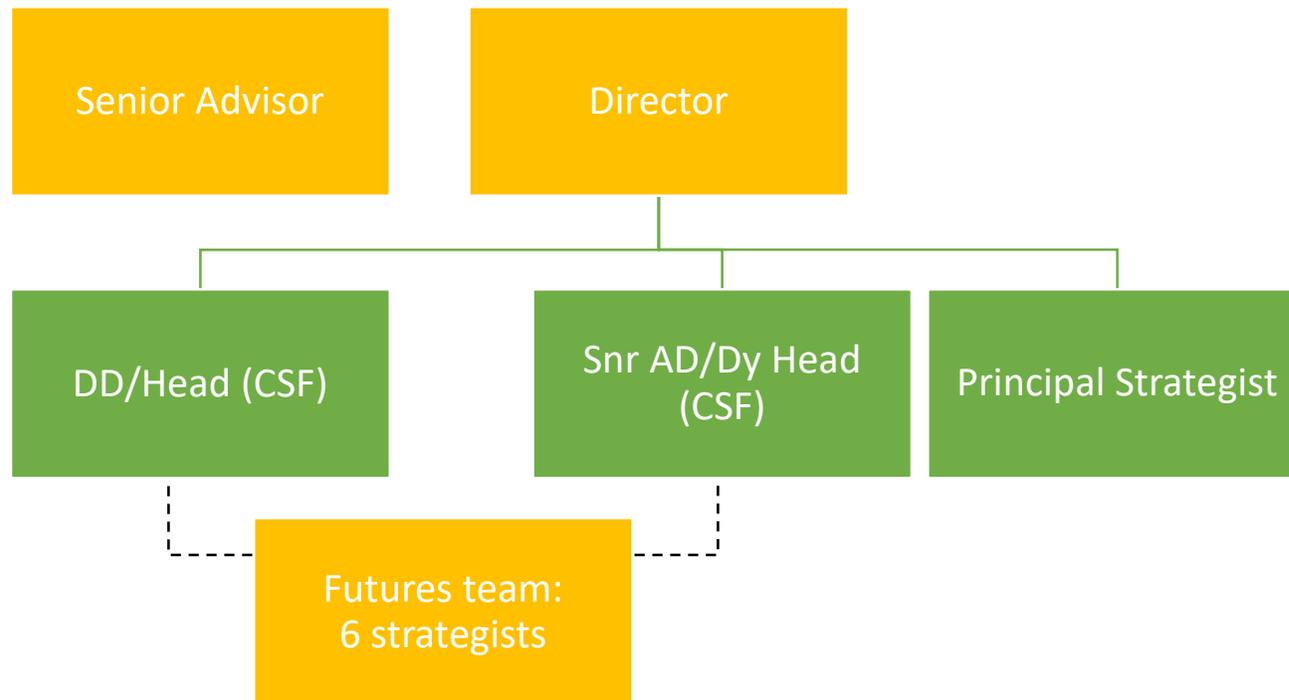
CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC FUTURES



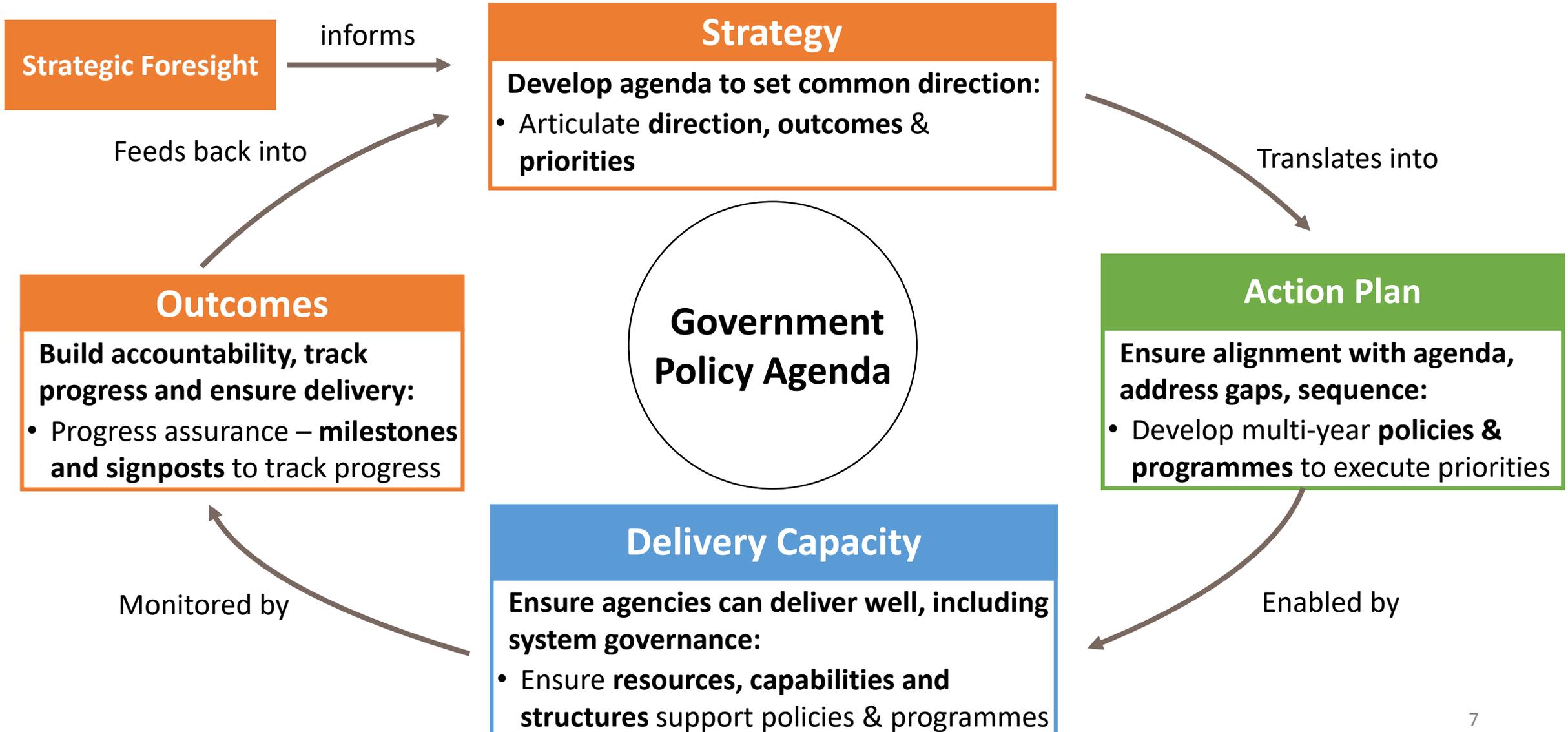
# CSF: Resourcing



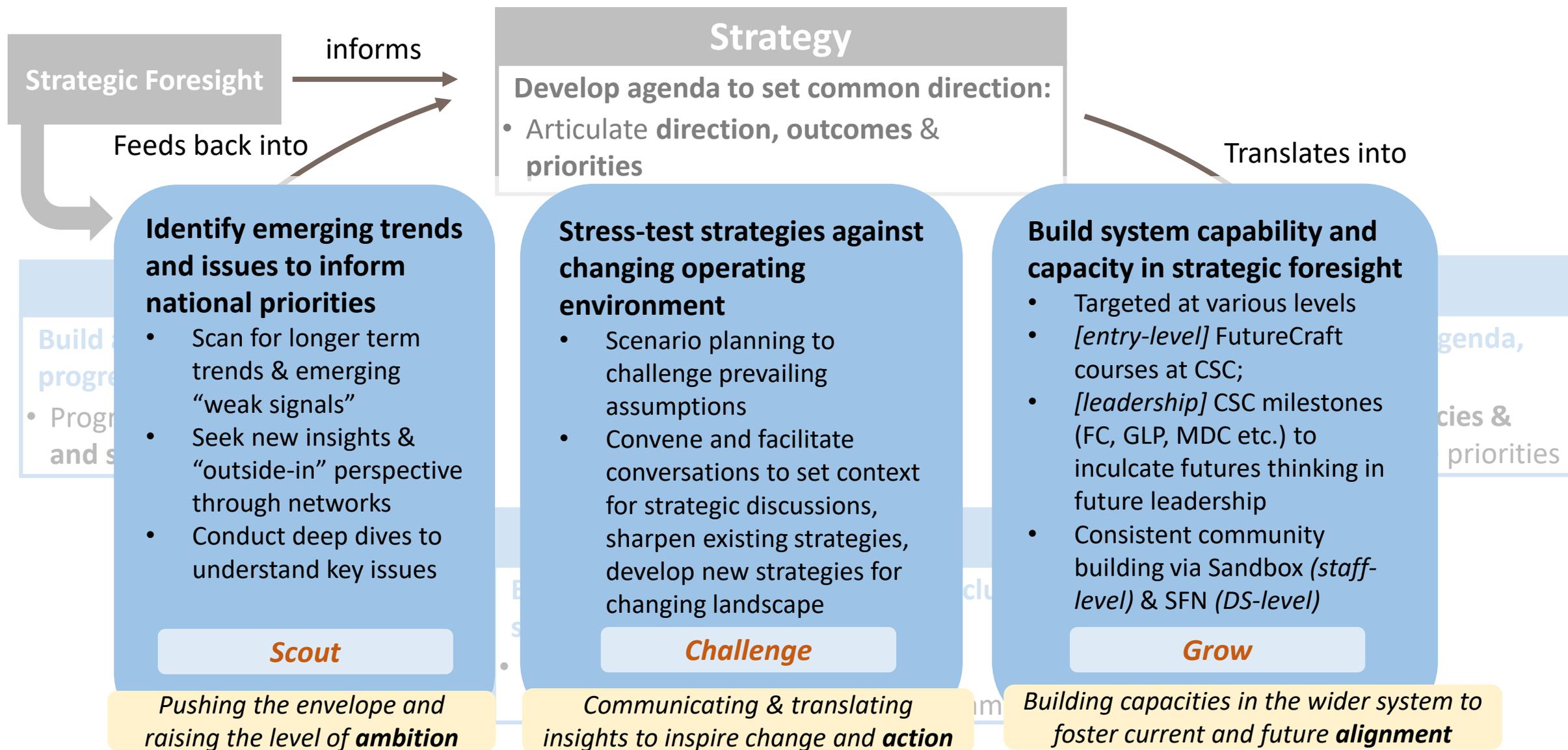
- 9 Staff working on futures, diverse backgrounds
- Capabilities range engagement, research, methods
- Works closely with WOG strategic planning teams



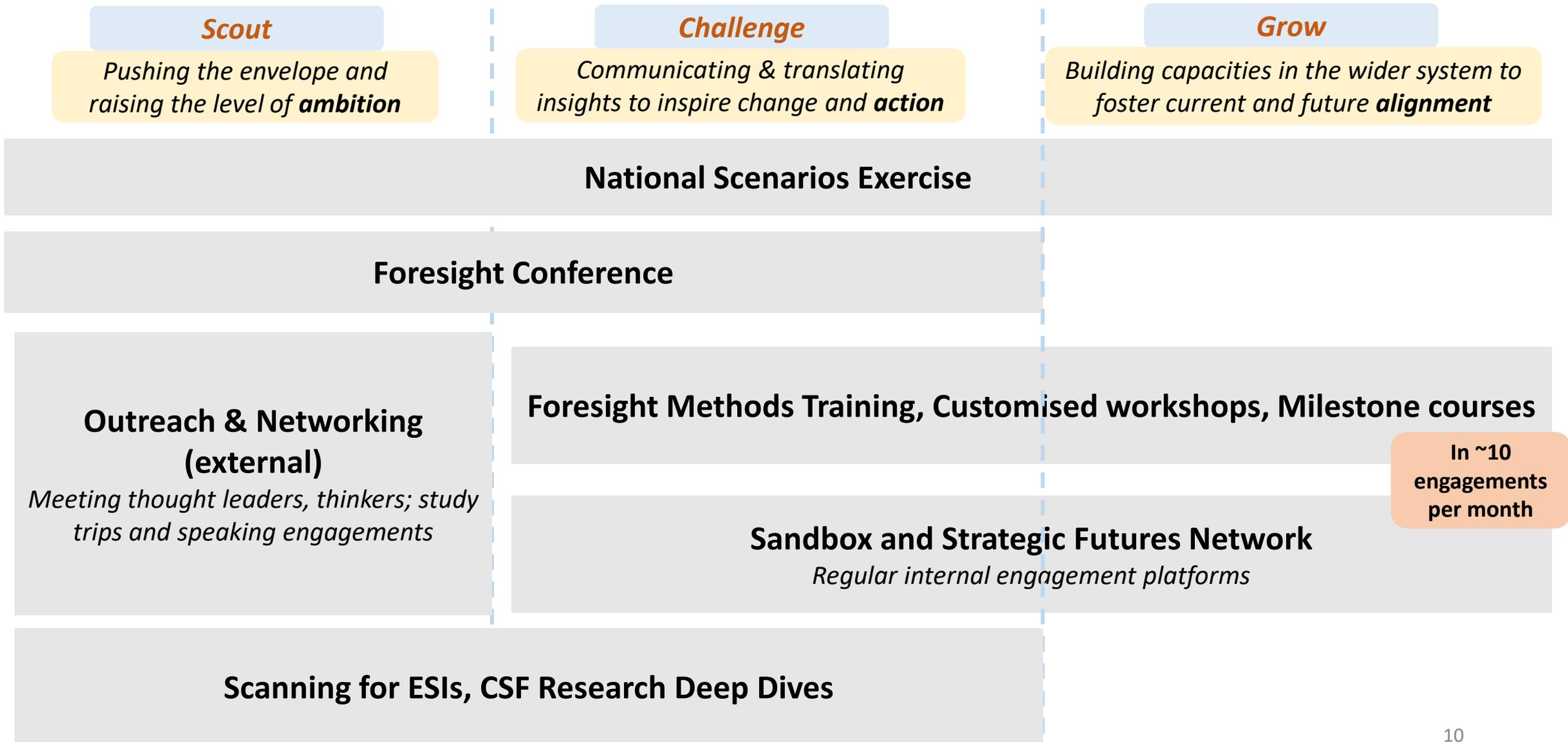
# Foresight as part of the Strategic Planning cycle



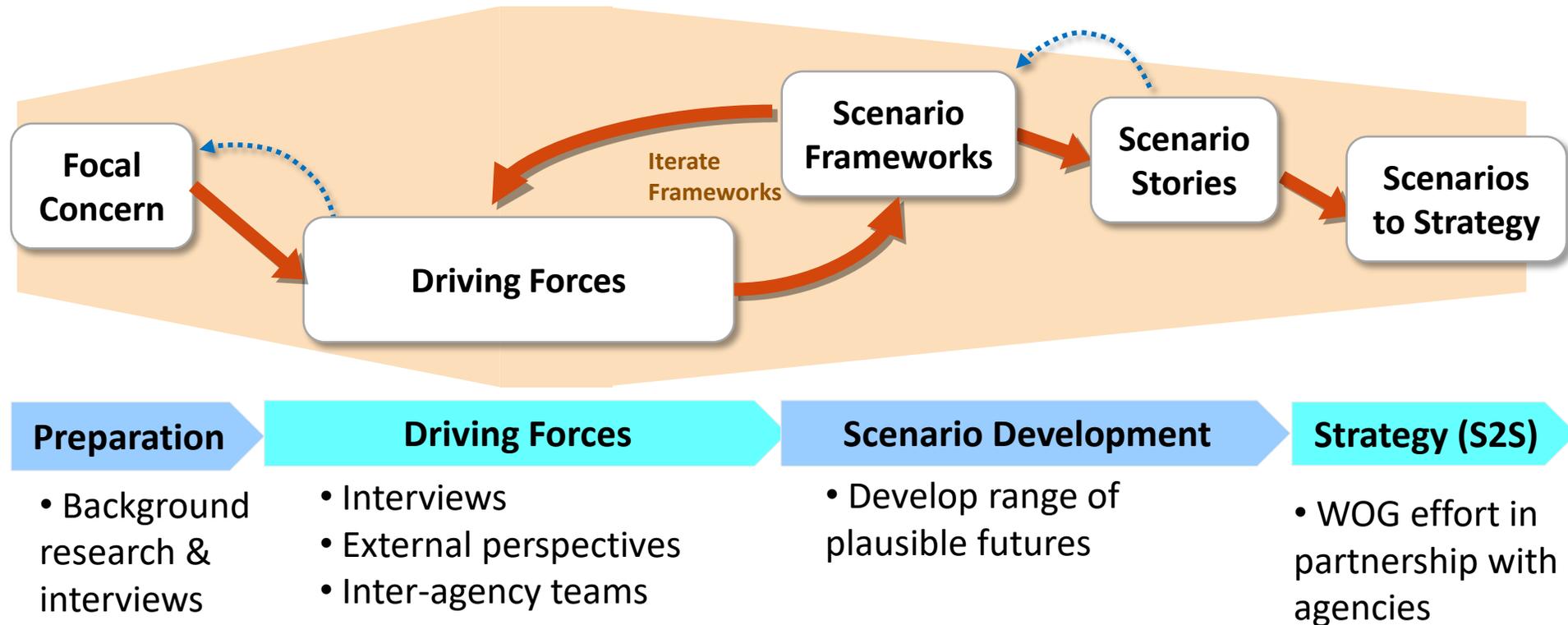
# How Foresight supports the strategic planning cycle



# Examples of CSF's work--Scout, Challenge and Grow



# Scenario Planning Process



# National Scenarios - a key vehicle

It identifies key shifts and trends, stress-tests current strategies and builds capabilities by developing a common understanding and vocabulary around how the future could change

80-strong inter-agency team **developed research** around Driving Forces that will shape Singapore's operating environment



Stories and DF material written, road-tested and developed

Decision-makers interviewed to **reveal current hopes, fears and operating assumptions.**

Leadership **discussions convened** at management level

Public **Service-wide engagement** and sharing of scenarios via toolkits, customized workshops etc.



## Impact:

- Scenario immersion via game, video, workshops
- NatScens toolkit for agencies = > **8,000 officers** engaged, of which **~2,000** played the game (CSC to incorporate NS2035 game as part of SLEAD milestone prog)
- Some policy reviews **channeled directly to agencies**
- **Commissioned inter-agency work groups** to tackle specific issues (e.g. future of work)
- Incubated by **CSF as deep dives** e.g. Human Augmentation, AI Ethics & Governance

# Foresight Methods Training and Customised workshops

## Formal Foresight Training Future Craft

- **Every year, ~170 public service officers** attend FutureCraft courses
  - A means of sharing insights from CSF's deep dives
  - A platform for other futurists in Govt to share

## Customised workshops; Facilitation expertise

- **At least 1 customized workshop per month** on futures (e.g. Natscens/Driving Forces-related)
- Or facilitation and workshop design expertise rendered to public agencies/groups

## Milestone Courses

- About **8 scheduled workshops per year** on foresight at leadership-development courses at the Civil Service College



# Outreach and Networking efforts



## Networking

- **External Affiliation Framework:** CSF Fellows, CSF Distinguished Fellows
- CSF's **international network** (individuals and institutions)
- CSF's **international counterparts:** ESPAS, OECD Govt Foresight Community, NISTEP (Japan), Policy Horizons (Canada), National Intelligence Council (USA).

## Study Trips

- Curated or collaborative study trips with other public agencies
- Exploratory study trips to plug knowledge gaps (e.g. China, India)
- International conferences and meetings

**Gleaning insights from diverse perspectives, plugging into foresight and governance community**

# CSF's ESI scanning process and outcomes

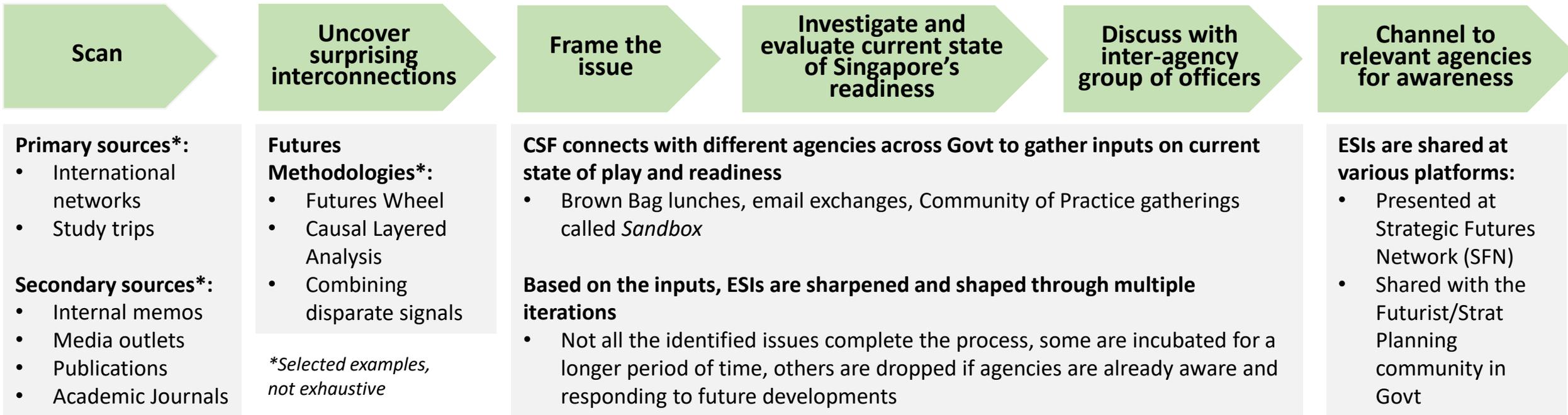
ESIs are identified through CSF's continuous horizon scanning process.

“Emerging” because the issues are nascent and their development trajectories are unclear and/or dependent on other critical developments.

“Strategic” because of their potential to significantly impact policy and overturn operating assumptions.

## Brief overview of the process

*(CSF is constantly reviewing and improving this scanning process)*



### \*ESIs on the 'back-burner'

- “**Genetic Re-wilding**”--Genetic re-wilding looks to recreate ecosystems by reintroducing new and possibly genetically modified species of fauna and vegetation that can cope with the new climate. Signs of this taking place in Germany and Russia.
- “**Gaming as (clean) Gambling**” ESI—convergence of signals about gaming being treated medically as an addiction, the growth of crypto-currency trading and investment as part of gamer behaviour and activity.
- “**Growing loneliness**” ESI—about the rise in loneliness and related online scams despite/due to proliferation of connective technology (e.g. social media, chatbots).

### \*ESIs that have sparked discussion and action:

- “**China's global R&D ambition**” ESI led to a deep dive on China's growing prowess in R&D.
- “**Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing**” ESI prompted MOH to explore how it could strengthen and mandate the moratorium on the use of genetic information for insurance underwriting purposes.
- “**Faker news**” ESI led Min(Law) to ensure that legislation around misinformation would take into account technology advancements in video/ audio-editing.

# Multiple Levels of Foresight

- **System – Inter-agency “common language”**
  - National Scenario processes (~ 3-5 years)
  - Emerging Strategic Issues (ongoing monitoring)
- **Structure & Architecture**
  - Centre for Strategic Futures Advisory Board (Permanent Secretaries)
  - Strategic Futures Network (Deputy Secretaries)
  - SFN Sandbox
- **Budgets & Incentives**
  - Cluster Strategic Reviews (sectors) / Strategic Budget Review Meetings (ministry)
  - Resources: Reinvestment Funding
- **Organisations & Teams**
  - Agency futures teams
  - Consultancy projects
  - Rotations – Administrative Service + emerging foresight “career track”
- **Individuals**
  - FutureCraft workshops

# Key Learning

- #1 – Aim for better decisions, not predictions
- #2 – Embrace discomfort and friction
- #3 – Harness diverse networks
- #4 – Craft immersive experiences
- #5 – Adopt a “design” approach

Further details here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFScAEmd5zI>

# Emerging Challenges

- Foresight as a Governance, not just Government function
  - Public sector → Thinktanks, businesses, citizens
- Measuring value: insight, challenge versus “output”
  - “Any useful idea about the future should at first appear to be ridiculous” (Jim Dator)
  - Value for the polity, for policy, for politics
- Talent, expertise, habits of mind
  - continuity & retention VS change & renewal

Thank you.  
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