Advanced Strategic Foresight in Public Administration Training Course

23 - 27 Nov 2026

Vienna

5800 € (Per Person)

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Course Introduction / Overview:

In an era of unprecedented complexity and rapid change, traditional public administration models are increasingly challenged to address long-term societal issues. This course provides a robust framework for navigating uncertainty and shaping desirable futures through the disciplined practice of strategic foresight. It moves beyond conventional strategic planning, which often extrapolates from the present, to embrace a more holistic exploration of alternative futures. Participants will delve into the core principles of futures studies, a field significantly shaped by thinkers like Jim Dator, who proposed the "Four Futures" model to categorize different potential societal trajectories. This program, offered by BIG BEN Training Center, is meticulously designed to equip public sector professionals with the tools and mindset necessary for anticipatory governance. By learning to identify emerging trends, analyze weak signals, and construct plausible scenarios, attendees will be empowered to develop resilient, adaptive, and forward-looking policies and strategies that serve the public good effectively for generations to come. This is not merely about predicting the future, but about systematically building the capacity to influence it.

Target Audience / This training course is suitable for:

- Government Executives and Senior Leaders.
- Public Sector Managers and Directors.
- Policy Analysts and Advisors.
- Strategic Planners in Government Agencies.
- Urban and Regional Planners.
- Civil Service Professionals on a leadership track.
- Officials in International Governmental Organizations.
- Public Finance and Budget Officers.
- Heads of Research and Development in Public Institutions.

Target Sectors and Industries:

- Federal and National Government Ministries.
- State, Provincial, and Local Government Bodies.
- Public Utilities and Infrastructure Authorities.
- Regulatory Agencies and Commissions.
- State-Owned Enterprises.
- Public Healthcare and Education Systems.
- International Development Organizations.
- Non-Governmental Organizations involved in public policy.
- Public Safety and Emergency Management Services.

Target Organizations Departments:

- Strategic Planning and Policy Development.
- Research, Analysis, and Intelligence.
- Economic Development and Planning.
- Urban and Community Planning.
- Public Service Delivery and Innovation.
- Human Resources and Organizational Development.
- Finance and Budgeting.
- Regulatory Affairs and Compliance.
- Intergovernmental Relations.

Course Offerings:

By the end of this course, the participants will have able to:

- Master core foresight methodologies including horizon scanning, trend analysis, and scenario planning.
- Identify and interpret weak signals and drivers of change relevant to the public sector.
- Develop robust, long-term strategies that are resilient to future uncertainties.
- Integrate anticipatory governance principles into the policy-making cycle.
- Facilitate futures-oriented workshops and discussions within their organizations.
- Critically evaluate potential future scenarios to inform current decision-making.
- Communicate complex future-oriented insights effectively to stakeholders and decision-makers.
- Foster a culture of proactive and forward-thinking leadership within their teams.
- Apply causal layered analysis to deconstruct and reframe public policy issues.

Course Methodology:

The training methodology at BIG BEN Training Center is designed to be immersive, interactive, and highly practical. We believe that mastering strategic foresight requires more than theoretical knowledge; it demands hands-on application and critical thinking. The course is structured around a blend of expert-led presentations, interactive group discussions, and collaborative workshop sessions. Participants will engage directly with real-world case studies from various governments that have successfully embedded foresight into their operations. A significant portion of the training will be dedicated to experiential learning activities, such as building future scenarios, conducting a horizon scanning exercise, and applying the futures wheel technique to a current policy challenge. This approach ensures that participants not only understand the concepts but can also confidently apply the tools and frameworks within their own professional context. Peer-to-peer learning is highly encouraged, and structured feedback sessions will help attendees refine their skills and perspectives throughout the five-day program.

Course Agenda (Course Units):

Unit One: Foundations of Strategic Foresight for the Public Sector

- Introduction to Futures Studies and Strategic Foresight.
- The distinction between forecasting, prediction, and foresight.
- Historical evolution of foresight in governance.
- The importance of long-range planning in public administration.
- Key concepts: drivers of change, trends, and weak signals.
- Understanding the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) world.
- The ethical considerations of shaping the future.

Unit Two: The Foresight Toolkit Part 1 - Environmental Scanning

- Horizon Scanning techniques for comprehensive data gathering.
- Identifying and analyzing mega-trends, trends, and counter-trends.
- Methods for detecting and interpreting weak signals.
- Utilizing the STEEP framework (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political).
- Introduction to trend mapping and management.
- Conducting expert interviews and the Delphi method.
- Practical exercise in scanning for a specific policy domain.

Unit Three: The Foresight Toolkit Part 2 - Scenario Planning and Analysis

- The purpose and logic of scenario planning in the public sector.
- Building blocks of a scenario: critical uncertainties and predetermined elements.
- The 2x2 matrix method for developing alternative futures.
- Crafting compelling narratives for each scenario.
- Techniques for wind-tunneling current strategies against future scenarios.
- Introduction to Causal Layered Analysis (CLA).
- Group workshop: Developing scenarios for a national challenge.

Unit Four: Integrating Foresight into Strategy and Policy

- From foresight to insight: making sense of the findings.
- Linking foresight outcomes to the strategic planning cycle.
- Principles of anticipatory governance and adaptive policymaking.
- Using foresight to foster innovation in public services.
- Developing future-ready organizational capabilities.
- Case studies of successful foresight integration in government.
- Overcoming organizational barriers to long-term thinking.

Unit Five: Leading with Foresight and Building a Futures Culture

- Communicating foresight insights to diverse stakeholders.
- The role of leadership in championing a futures orientation.
- Techniques for building a foresight culture within a public agency.
- Developing a practical foresight project or initiative.
- Personal action planning for applying course learnings.
- Capstone exercise: A comprehensive foresight-to-strategy simulation.
- Course review and final reflections on future-ready leadership.

FAQ:

Qualifications required for registering to this course?

There are no requirements.

How long is each daily session, and what is the total number of training hours for the course?

This training course spans five days, with daily sessions ranging between 4 to 5 hours, including breaks and interactive activities, bringing the total duration to 20 - 25 training hours.

Something to think about:

How can public sector leaders balance the immediate demands of governance with the long-term, often uncertain, insights generated by strategic foresight?

What unique qualities does this course offer compared to other courses?

This course distinguishes itself by being exclusively tailored to the unique context and challenges of public administration. Unlike generic foresight programs, every module, case study, and exercise is designed with the public sector professional in mind, focusing on policy resilience, public value, and anticipatory governance rather than commercial profit motives. The curriculum emphasizes a balanced approach, ensuring participants not only learn a diverse toolkit of foresight methodologies but also master the critical skills of integrating these insights into the often-rigid structures of government. We move beyond a purely academic discussion to a highly practical application, facilitated by instructors with deep experience in public sector strategy. A core differentiator is our focus on developing a "futures mindset"—a cognitive shift towards embracing uncertainty and leading proactively. The program offered by BIG BEN Training Center is not about providing definitive predictions, but about building the enduring institutional capacity to think systematically about the future, enabling leaders to make wiser, more robust decisions today.