

Futures Game

Pacific Northwest

*powerful tool to engage communities and
organizations in debating their future together*

The Futures Game-Pacific Northwest explores how public and private sector decisions shape our economy, environment, and community well-being. Working in teams, participants are challenged to make decisions about contemporary issues, including land use, workforce development, and investing public funds. The game gives them an opportunity to balance economic development with environmental stewardship, one of the most difficult issues facing the Pacific Northwest.

How the Futures Game works

Each team starts with a base map depicting a hypothetical region of the Pacific Northwest, including small towns, a variety of land uses, and a mix of ownership patterns. At each of four stages (the years 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2020), teams are asked to choose between two policy alternatives. They are also given a set of global events to consider as they make their choice. After each stage, teams receive a new map depicting the impact of their decision on regional land use, population, and the economy. By the game's end point in 2030, each team has charted a course for the future reflecting the decisions they've made.

The game, which takes about two hours to play, takes a multifaceted and integrated view of the future, allowing people to explore a range of plausible outcomes. By the end, it's clear to everyone who plays that choices about people and place can have unexpected consequences.

What people gain from playing the game

Communities and organizations can use the game's future simulation approach to achieve several powerful outcomes. The most obvious is that people have a chance to discuss growth and development in a hypothetical region, making it easier to explore alternatives than is often the case in real world settings. They learn how decisions that seem sensible in the short-term may play out in unpredictable ways over time, making it critical to shift course to reflect new priorities and values. Many communities use the game to assess where they are today relative to where they'd like to be 20 years in the future – and action steps required to get there. On an individual level, the Futures Game is an excellent tool for people to better understand their own leadership and decision making styles.

If you are interested in reserving the game

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The Futures Game is available to those in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Lewis Counties at no charge and available for outside parties by contract.

The Futures Game was developed by Innovative Leadership and the university of Idaho.