

# The Futures Game

## Midwest USA

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

**T**he Futures Game – Midwest USA explores how regional and local decisions shape our economic, environmental, and community well-being. Working in teams, participants are challenged to make decisions about contemporary issues, including; investment in renewable energy, land use planning, workforce and economic development, education services, and investing public funds. The game, which is played in a two to three hour workshop format, provides an opportunity to balance economic and community development and explores the long term consequences of decisions facing regions in the Midwest USA.

### How 'The Futures Game' works

Each team starts with a base map depicting a hypothetical region of the Midwest USA, including small towns, a variety of land uses, and a mix of businesses. At each of five stages (the years 2010, 2012, 2015, 2020 and 2030), teams are presented with a particular situation and asked to choose between two critical decisions.

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 and condition, town populations and services, 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 in the game.

The game 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 that choices about people and place can have significant and sometimes unexpected long-term consequences on the region and its communities.

### 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 critical decisions and their impact 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. In this way, it can be a powerful way for community members to consider their own vision and desires for the future of their region and community, and begin to explore the action steps required to get to their preferred future.

On an individual and organizational level, *The Futures Game* can be an excellent tool for people to explore decision making, and to better understand their own leadership and decision making styles.

### For more information on using or purchasing *The Futures Game – Midwest USA*

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