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Conversations for Scotland: your journey to a different future

Downloadable Workshop Playbook

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1. Overall aims of the workshops

The workshops have been designed to help community groups answer three core questions:

- Q1: What are the most important factors for a good life?
- Q2: What are your hopes and fears for the future of your community?
- Q3: What kind of future does the community want to work towards?

The Playbook is an example (or model) to support facilitators and their groups to answer the questions. Many facilitators will have in-depth knowledge of the groups that they are working with and will want to adapt the structure and content to reflect this. There is no *right* or *best* way to hold these discussions and we would encourage each workshop organiser to shape the material to their specific needs.



2. General pointers and instructions

2.1. The role of the facilitator

Now you have organised a venue and invited some participants it is time to think about how you will run the workshop itself. It is useful to have someone who can guide the conversation and keep track of time. You might want to do this yourself or find a friend or colleague to help you with it. You might also want someone to help you take notes of the conversation. You can ask for volunteers on the day or in advance.

Before the workshop think carefully about accessibility issues, for example, access to the venue and using understandable language.

It is important that everyone has the chance to contribute and feel comfortable to do so. For that reason, we would suggest that you set out some simple 'ground rules' for the discussion. These usually include:

- Confidentiality: while you may want to share this conversation with others, please do so in a way that doesn't reveal personal information about individuals;
- Look after yourself: think carefully about what you share and avoid sharing anything that could make you feel vulnerable;
- The rule of two ears and one mouth: listen at least twice as much as you speak. Give space for others to contribute and be open to listen to opinions that differ from your own.

While the workshop is happening:

- Remain neutral and encourage everyone to really listen to each other;
- Avoid judgement and encourage diverse viewpoints into the conversation;
- Encourage everyone to participate. For example, by actively bringing quieter members of the group into the conversation by asking their response to what is being discussed;
- Keep an eye on the time and politely remind the group when it is time to move on.

Overall, facilitators ensure that discussions stay on track, conflicts are addressed constructively and that the goals for the session are achieved. In the case of Conversations for Scotland, good facilitation will help participants to come to more grounded, effective decisions about the type of future that they want for their community.

There are numerous online resources available to support facilitators (for example, this [collection from Chris Corrigan](#)). If you feel that you would like additional help, then please contact us as we may be able to provide more hands-on support.



2.2. Group Size

For up to 10 participants the workshops can be run in one big group. For larger groups, we recommend breaking into sub groups of around 5 during the workshop exercises. This is to ensure that all voices are heard and that the depth of conversation is meaningful.

2.3. Workshop content

We feel strongly that these workshops should be accessible to anyone that would like to host one. We have therefore divided the content into two workshops. Workshop 1 is designed to answer the 3 core questions. Workshop 2 is an optional add-on if groups would like to continue the conversation. This workshop builds on Q3 of the core questions and looks in more detail at how a community can work together, including the additional resources they might need.

2.4. Workshop design

We have divided the Workshop Playbook into 4 components:

(1) Pre-workshop preparation

(2) Workshop overviews and requested outputs for the Central Team

It is important that we communicate the workshop outputs to the Scottish Government to inform the current National Outcomes Review and beyond. We have therefore requested specific outputs from the workshops to be collated and sent to the Central Team to collate and distribute.

(3) Workshop delivery plan

The workshop plan provides the timings, activities, resources and outputs for each section of the session.

The workshop exercises have been designed to take place in person but can also be adapted for the online environment if needed. In this case, we suggest using break-out rooms and a Miro Board to mirror the in-person structure.

(4) Available tools

We have linked the open-source tools that you can use into the relevant parts of the Playbook (e.g. the online questionnaire). You can also find them on the Free Tools page of the website.

2. Framing notes: who are we? How can you and your community contribute? Does your voice matter?

These notes are for you as a facilitator to use as a base to prepare for the workshops. You will of course have your own experiences, views and insights to add to the explanations you give



during the workshops. Please explain the purpose of the workshop from your own perspective, using language that you feel is appropriate for the group.

2.1 Summary

- **Who are we?**

Carnegie UK, Dark Matter Labs, Foundation Scotland, WEAll Scotland and Northumbria University are part of a group of organisations who are interested in improving the quality of citizen engagement in Scotland. Our view is that there needs to be greater citizen engagement in shaping our national policies and making decisions about the future that we want.

- **How can your community contribute?**

To help achieve this goal we are promoting a new workshop based model called *Conversations for Scotland*. Our aspiration is that these conversational workshops, together with the insights gained about the wellbeing priorities of people in Scotland, could be used as part of the evidence that shapes national policy on an ongoing basis. By taking part and sharing your views you can play your part in helping the Scottish Government to understand what matters to Scotland's people.

- **Does your voice matter?**

The short answer to this is yes. Probably the most important reason for that is that we, as the people of Scotland, have to make sure that it does!

We are constantly bombarded with new and worsening issues and if we allow ourselves a moment to reflect, many of us are deeply frightened about the kind of future that our children will face. The rise of technology and social media (including new developments such as Chat GPT) means that we are not even making personal decisions based on the same facts. This is leading to increased levels of distrust and social fragmentation and consequently to previously unthinkable outcomes. We need to create a new social momentum that can bring us together (in all our colourful and beautiful diversity) as engaged citizens. We might disagree but let's do so with our eyes wide open and with a commitment to the future generations of Scotland.

2.2 Additional context (if useful but not required)

- **Why are we doing this?**

We need to be careful not to set unrealistic expectations but on the other hand we really want the participants to feel empowered by these conversations. The following table provides a good base to start the conversation about why we created these workshops and to ask why people (including you as the facilitator) decided to take part.



FROM...	...TO
Here are some of the reasons we think we are here:	
Committed local communities <i>Local groups as a force for good</i>	A connected global network <i>A growing community of countries having robust national conversations will amplify existing local community initiatives</i>
Citizen participation <i>Being asked about our views</i>	Civic empowerment <i>Ensuring our values shape the society we live in</i>
Individual actions <i>E.g. choosing not to fly or eating less meat</i>	A new social contract <i>Feeling part of a bigger societal shift</i>
Periodic voting <i>E.g. general elections or referendums</i>	Everyday curiosity <i>Staying connected to decisions that affect us</i>
Highlighting issues <i>E.g. Extinction Rebellion</i>	Co-creating responses <i>Connecting issues to practical pathways for change</i>
Endless doom <i>Climate, cost of living, pandemics.....</i>	Civic scenario planning <i>What would we like our community to look like in 2035?</i>
How about you? What brought you to the workshop today? What do you think could happen?	

2. Pre-workshop preparation

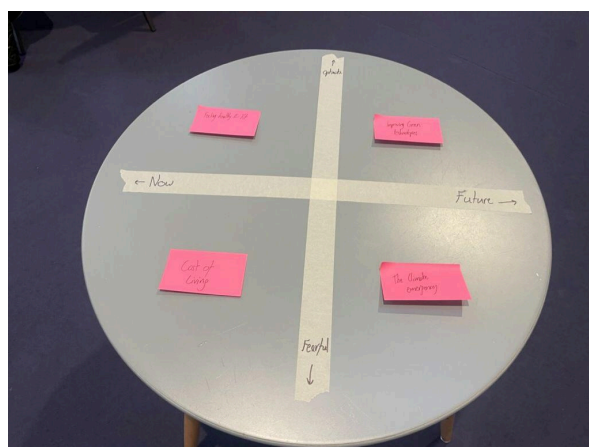
2.1 Preparation for Workshop 1

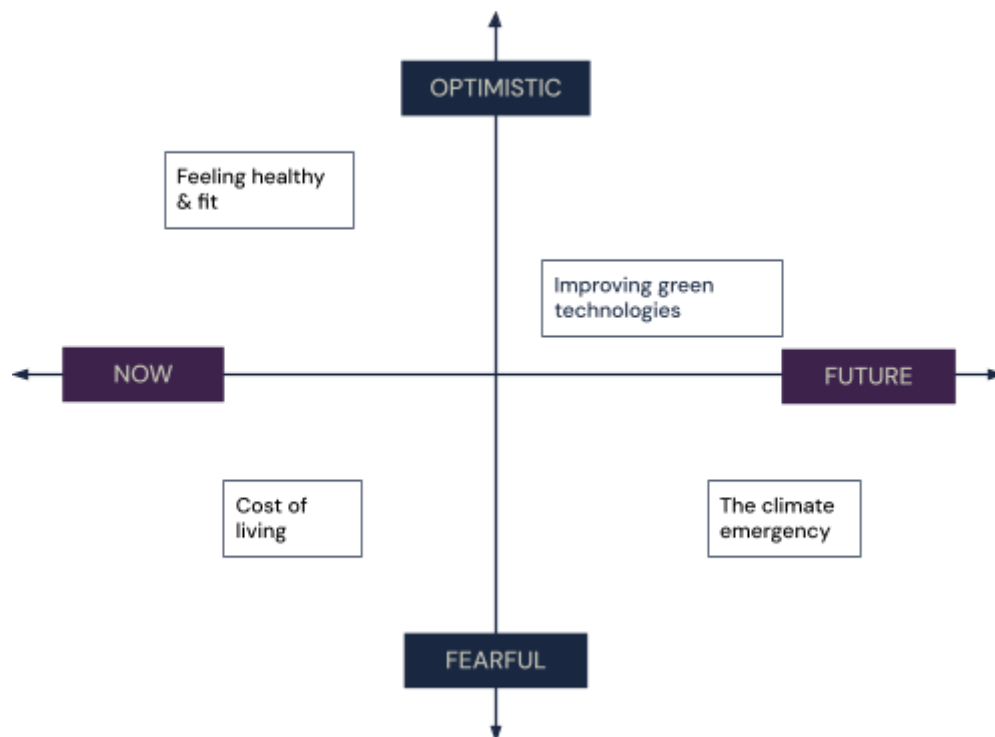
There are 3 tasks to complete before Workshop 1:

1. Send out the pre-workshop questionnaires:
 - The online version [is here](#).



- If anyone would prefer to have a printed copy then a printable version [is here](#).
 - Please let the [Central Team](#) know that you are expecting questionnaire responses and the name of your community.
 - The Central Team will monitor the response email and forward any responses to you ahead of the workshop date.
2. Create the building blocks for a simple **response quadrant** that will be used in workshop 1 to demonstrate and capture information:
- This is designed to be very low tech! You can use pieces of string, beer mats, or a large piece of paper to create the 4 quadrants. The axis labels (Now, Future, Optimistic, Fearful) can be simply written on pieces of paper.
 - We would suggest adding a few examples (ideally using the questionnaire response - see point 3 below) before the workshop begins.





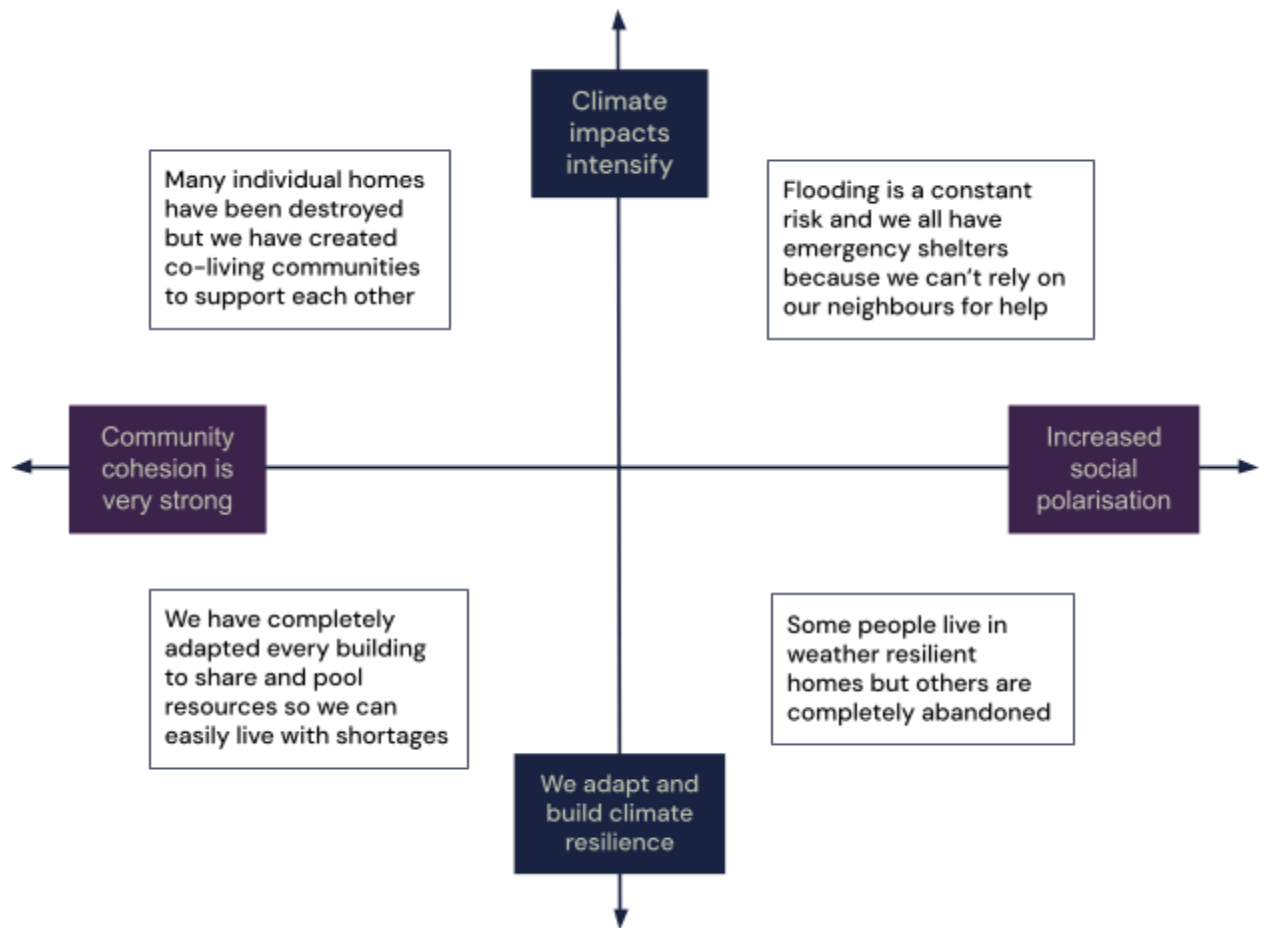
3. Look at any completed questionnaires to identify some key themes to use as examples in the workshop:

If participants complete the questionnaire in time, then please have a scan through the answers to identify some key themes. These will be useful as examples in the quadrant and can also help you to focus the workshop discussions.

2.2 Preparation for Workshop 2 (optional add-on workshop)

If you would like to run Workshop 2 then please prepare the following:

1. Create a Scenario Board
 - Again, this is designed to be very low tech. You can use pieces of string, beer matts, or a large piece of paper to create the 4 quadrants. The axis labels can be simply written on pieces of paper.
 - We would suggest adding a few examples (ideally using the outputs from Workshop 1) before the workshop begins.



3. Workshop 1

3.1. Workshop 1 overview

Title	What matters most; now and in the future
Overview	This workshop is designed to explain why these conversations are happening and to begin exploring people's views on what is important, together with their hopes, fears and intentions for the future.
Time	2 hours
Exercises	1,2,3
Aims & objectives	Overall the goal is to answer 3 questions: • Q1: What are the most important factors for a good life? • Q2: What are your hopes and fears for the future of this community? • Q3: What kind of future does the community want to work towards?
Requested outputs	We would suggest that you capture the following outputs: 1. A completed questionnaire for each workshop participant. If they didn't have time to do it before the workshop, then please ask them to spend minutes at the end to do this; 2. Please complete the facilitator feedback form to capture the overall responses to the 3 core questions listed above. <i>If possible, we would suggest asking someone to help you to capture what is said during the workshop and to take pictures of the post-its responses after each exercise.</i>

3.2 Workshop 1 delivery plan

Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
N/A	Set-up	Please lay out the response quadrant (or quadrants if you have a larger group) that you prepared before the workshop. Ideally, it will be on a table or board that people can gather around, but if that's not an option you can put it on the floor or pin it to a wall. If your group is larger than 10, you will need to divide people into groups of around 5 for some exercises. Have a look at the space and think about how this will work best.	Facilitator	Organise a selection of pens, post-it notes (or pieces of scrap paper are fine) and notepaper to be available ready for the participants.	N/A
2 mins	Welcome	Welcome the group. Let them know that for the next two hours you are going to work through some questions with each other. During that time you will be guiding people between the full group and smaller break-out groups to make space for everyone to speak. Please make it clear that this is a safe space and that all conversations will remain confidential.	Facilitator	N/A	N/A



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
8 mins	Warm-up	Over a period of 8 minutes people will partner up with 2 different people to answer 2 questions. • Ask people to form their first pair; • Tell everyone that they will have 4 minutes to share their answers with the other person to the following question: <i>Describe a moment in your life where you felt most alive?</i> • Let them speak to each other for 4 minutes, then stop the room and ask them to change partners. • Next question (again let them know they have 4 minutes): <i>I want you to imagine that a future version of yourself has come back to give you some advice about how to live your life to the fullest right now... What is that advice?</i> • After 4 minutes, ask the room to say thank you to each other in any way that feels appropriate and then go and sit in small groups ready for the workshop to begin.	Full group	N/A	N/A



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
5 mins	Framing	Explaining the point of the workshop We have given some suggested framings in Section 2 but please feel free to interpret it using your own experiences. The key point is that we will be communicating the outputs from the workshops to the Scottish Government, to help connect local conversations to national decision making.	Facilitator	N/A	N/A
35 mins	Question 1 <i>What are the most important factors for a good life?</i>	Exercise one: exploring what matters most to people, now and in the future • Introduce the response quadrant and highlight some examples; • Split people into groups of around 5 and ask them to sit around the response quadrants (one per group); • Give everyone 5 minutes and ask them to write down anything that comes to mind in relation to having a meaningful, thriving life, now and in the future. These can be both positive and negative, factors and feelings - there are no rules. The idea is to	Full group split into smaller groups of 5 (or remain as a single group if you prefer)	Pre-made response quadrants Post-it notes and pens	Summarise the key factors for Q1 on the facilitator feedback sheet . Please take a picture of the completed response quadrants for reference.



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
		answer instinctively and just see what comes up; • Spend 10 minutes sharing what came up and putting the themes into the quadrants in their smaller groups; • Ask each participant to circle the response that matters the most to them personally and ask them to share why that is with their sub-group; • Give the full group a 5 minute warning to let them know the exercise will be ending and that you will be transitioning to the next one. • STOP the whole room. <i>N.B. in the test workshops we found that people were very engrossed in the conversations that developed during the first exercise. Although Exercise 2 builds on Exercise 1, it is important to help people mentally transition by giving them some warning that it is going to happen and encouraging people to get up and move about.</i>			



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
30 mins	Question 2 <i>What are your hopes and fears for the future of this community?</i>	Exercise 2: exploring the key hopes and fears of the community Ask the groups to spend 20 minutes discussing the following 2 questions: → <i>What are your wishes for the future of this community?</i> → <i>What are you most worried about for the community?</i> After 15 minutes, stop the room. • Give everyone 5 minutes and ask them individually to write down their biggest hopes and fears for the community over the next 10 years. Place the hopes in one cluster and the fears in a second cluster on their group's table. • Ask one member of each group to verbally summarise the key hopes and fears from their sub-group to the rest of the room.	Full group split into smaller groups of 5 (or remain as a single group if you prefer)	Post-it notes and pens	Please summarise the key responses to Q2 on the facilitator feedback sheet . Please take pictures of the hopes and fears post-it clusters for reference.
25 mins	Question 3 <i>What kind of future does the community want to</i>	Exercise 3: working together to find solutions Using the fears identified in exercise 2 guide the group to come up with possible solutions.	Facilitator leading full group	The fear post-it notes from exercise 2	Please summarise the key responses to Q3 on the facilitator



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
	<i>work towards?</i>	Fear + response ideas (15 mins): → Read out a fear randomly selected from the Exercise 2 post-its. Place the post-it on a board or table. → Ask the rest of the group to respond with potential options (e.g. 'but what if we could.....'). Capture the responses on post-its and cluster them around the fears. → Repeat this process for additional fears. Please give them an example to set the scene. For example: Fear: <i>"I am frightened that people will become very aggressive if prices keep rising and there is not enough food to go around"</i>. Response: <i>"what if we start using empty space to create community gardens.....what if we start speaking about how this might happen and what we could do to support each other... what if we campaign for our</i>			feedback sheet. Please take pictures of the <i>fear + what-if clusters</i> for reference.



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
		<i>supermarkets to stock more locally produced food”.</i> Reflecting (10 mins): Spend 10 minutes discussing what this might mean for the future they would like to work towards.			
10 mins	Wrapping up	Spend 10 minutes helping people to make sense of what has come up for them during the workshop. • Give everyone 5 minutes to write down some thoughts in response to the following question - <i>What are you walking away with after today’s session?</i> • Please ask participants to place these thoughts on a table or board next to the question.	Full group	Write the closing question on a piece of paper for people to place post-its next to. <i>What are you walking away with after today’s session?</i>	Add the responses to the facilitator feedback sheet under the <i>General Reflections</i> section.
5 mins	Check-out	Thank everyone for coming and let them know the following: • If they would like to run a workshop themselves then they can access the Playbook at www.cornerstoneconversations.org	Full group	N/A	N/A



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
		• If they would like to attend a 2nd workshop then please let you know; • If they would like to continue the discussion as a group then suggest that they set up a WhatsApp group before they leave.			

4. Workshop 2

4.1 Workshop 2 overview

Title	Future scenarios: building pathways towards a desirable future
Overview	In this workshop we are using scenarios to explore how people can build resilience and agency in their local communities to shape a future direction of travel for Scotland.
Time	2 hours
Exercises	1,2
Aims & objectives	Overall the goal is to answer 3 questions (Q1 is repeated from Workshop 1 to build more depth): • Q1: What kind of future does the community want to work towards? • Q2: What does the community already have that can be built on? • Q3: What else does the community need?
Requested outputs	We would suggest that you complete the facilitator feedback form to capture the overall responses to the 3 questions listed above. <i>If possible, we would suggest asking someone to help you to capture what is said during the workshop and to take pictures of post-it note responses after each exercise.</i>

3.2 Workshop 2 plan



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
N/A	Set-up	Please lay out the scenario quadrant that you prepared before the workshop. This will remain in one place throughout the workshop so that people can add their thoughts to it. Ideally, it will be on a table or board that people can gather around, but if that's not an option you can put it on the floor or pin it to a wall.	Facilitator	Organise a selection of pens, post-it notes (or pieces of scrap paper are fine) and notepaper to be available ready for the participants.	N/A
10 mins	Welcome & Warm-up	Welcome the group back to the second workshop. Take the participants through Rob Hopkin's Time Machine Visualisation. • Ask people to split into pairs, stand in a line (shoulder to shoulder) and close their eyes; • Explain to the group that they are going to use their imagination with all its senses, sight, smell, sound, feeling. Explain that we have a time machine and when we turn it on we are going to travel forward 10 years, to Scotland in 2033. They are not going to a utopia. They are travelling to a future where the 10 years between now and then saw the most remarkable social and	Full group	N/A	N/A



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
		economic transformation in history. Climate and biodiversity have started to repair, industries have been transformed and Scotland is proud to be one of the most inclusive and diverse countries in the world; • Ask everyone to take a step forwards to signify moving forwards in time to that moment in the future; • For 2 minutes ask people to sit in silence and reflect on what they see in this future; • Then, keeping their eyes closed invite them to share with their partner what they saw; • Ask the group to come back together and to share what they experienced.			
55 mins	Question 1 <i>What kind of future does the community want to work towards?</i>	Exercise 1: visualising a future scenario to work towards Introduce the Scenario Board and explain that you will be using it to frame possible scenarios for this specific community. The reason for giving some boundaries is to keep the conversation focused and to help compare the outputs between different communities.	Full group lead by the facilitator	Scenario board Post-its and pens	Summarise the key factors for Q1 on the facilitator feedback sheet. Please take a picture of the completed



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
		• In the full group, spend 10 minutes visualising a future scenario in each of the quadrants (40 mins in total). Ask the participants to imagine themselves going through a day in their life in this new scenario. What would they feel like? What would they be doing for work? What would their family be doing? • 10 minutes - Go around the group and ask people to share what they think will be happening in their community and personal lives. Ask people to note down any strong feelings or intuitions and place them on the Scenario Board. • 5 minutes - write down the main elements of a scenario that they would realistically like to aim for.			scenario board for reference.
40 mins	Questions 2&3 <i>What does the community already</i>	Exercise 2: creating an inventory of existing and required resources • In the full group, spend 10 minutes exploring what the community already has in place that can provide the	Full group	Create space for a two column list. This can be a whiteboard or you can place the headings on pieces of paper on a table and ask participants to	Summarise the key responses to Q2 & Q3 on the facilitator feedback sheet .



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
	<i>have that can be built on?</i> <i>What else do they need?</i>	foundations for a stronger future (e.g. good schools, shared outdoor space); • Ask everybody individually to think if there is an issue that they feel drawn to act on? Ask people that have one to write it on a post-it and place it on a clear area of the table. • Cluster the issues into logical themes and select 2-3 to work on as a full group. • Spend 10 minutes brainstorming pathways to begin addressing the issues. Discuss what is already happening in the community that could help with the chosen issue? What else would they need? What are the seeds that are already planted? • 10 minutes - draw up a two column list to summarise the discussion: ○ What does the community already have that can be built on? ○ What else do they need?		place their answers on post-its under the headings. → What does the community already have that can be built on? → What else do they need?	Please take a picture of the 2-column list for reference.



Time	Aim	Activity	Who	Resources	Output
10 mins	Wrapping up	Spend 10 minutes helping people to digest what came up for them in the workshop. • Give people 5 minutes to reflect on the following question: <i>whilst thinking about Scotland's future, what has come up most strongly for you?</i> • Please ask participants to place these thoughts on a table or board next to the question.	Full group	Write the closing question on a piece of paper for people to place post-its next to. <i>Whilst thinking about Scotland's future, what has come up most strongly for you?</i>	Add the responses to the facilitator feedback sheet under the General Reflections section.
5 mins	Check-out	Thank everyone for their time and let them know the following: • If they would like to give any feedback from their experience of participating in the workshops (good and bad) then we would really welcome it. • Once again, we will feedback the outcomes to the Scottish Government if the workshop happens within the review timeframe. If not, we would strongly encourage participants to communicate their views to their MSP.	Full group	N/A	N/A