



COUNCIL OF STATE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES (COSCDA) STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

COSCDA

THINK-TANK REPORT

Council of State Community Development Agencies

WASHINGTON, DC

JANUARY 2024





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This report summarizes the outcomes of the COSFDA Think-Tank workshops that were held on December 7 & 8, 2023. Approximately 16 Board Members and COSFDA staff participated in the workshops and developed the scenarios presented in this report. This report has been produced as part of the COSFDA strategic planning project which aims to provide strategic direction that will guide decision-making for the organization over the next three years.

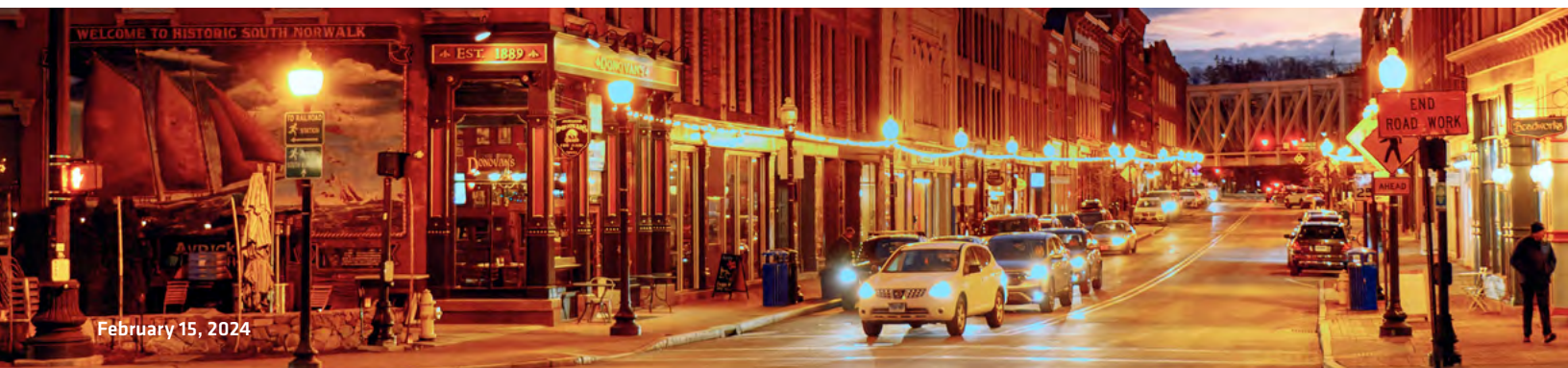
This report and the associated data analysis are available at:
lab2.future-iq.com/cosfda-strategic-action-plan-project/

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COSFDA
Council of State Community
Development Agencies



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This report lays out the findings from the future-oriented scenario planning work for COSCDA on December 7 & 8, 2023. This process has identified a preferred future and highlighted some of the future challenges and opportunities facing the organization looking out to 2035. This understanding helps lay the groundwork for figuring out 'how we get there' and informs the upcoming strategic planning work.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THIS PLANNING WORK TO DATE



STRONG DESIRE TO INCORPORATE INNOVATIVE CHANGE

Throughout the visioning process, stakeholders consistently expressed a desire to see COSCDA emerge at the national forefront of expertise in community development. This will require an openness to change, exploration, and innovative approaches to the grand challenges of today. Intentional actions and investment that build on current strengths and new areas of expertise need to be part of how COSCDA achieves its preferred future.



LEVERAGE THE ORGANIZATION'S STRENGTHS

COSCD A has built a strong reputation for its advocacy and training programs, housing, homelessness, and disaster recovery. In order to maintain this reputation as a value proposition to its members, the organization will need to build out its training opportunities and remain cutting-edge in its topic offerings at conferences and events. This will require continuous investment in updates to programming, research, and staffing requirements.



EXAMINE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND STAFFING NEEDS

Stakeholders recognize that in order to support COSCDA's expansion and the organization's ability to play a leadership role at the national level, consistent investment in organizational capacity and staffing needs will be required. This was acknowledged especially in the area of new trainings (for example, disaster relief), research, and member services as the organization grows.



EXPAND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Investment in innovative solutions, programs, and cutting-edge member services requires time and money. Stakeholders acknowledged that a more diversified funding stream would help to make COSCDA more sustainable and resilient in the long run. Think-Tank participants were keen to establish a COSCDA Foundation as one potential solution to this challenge.

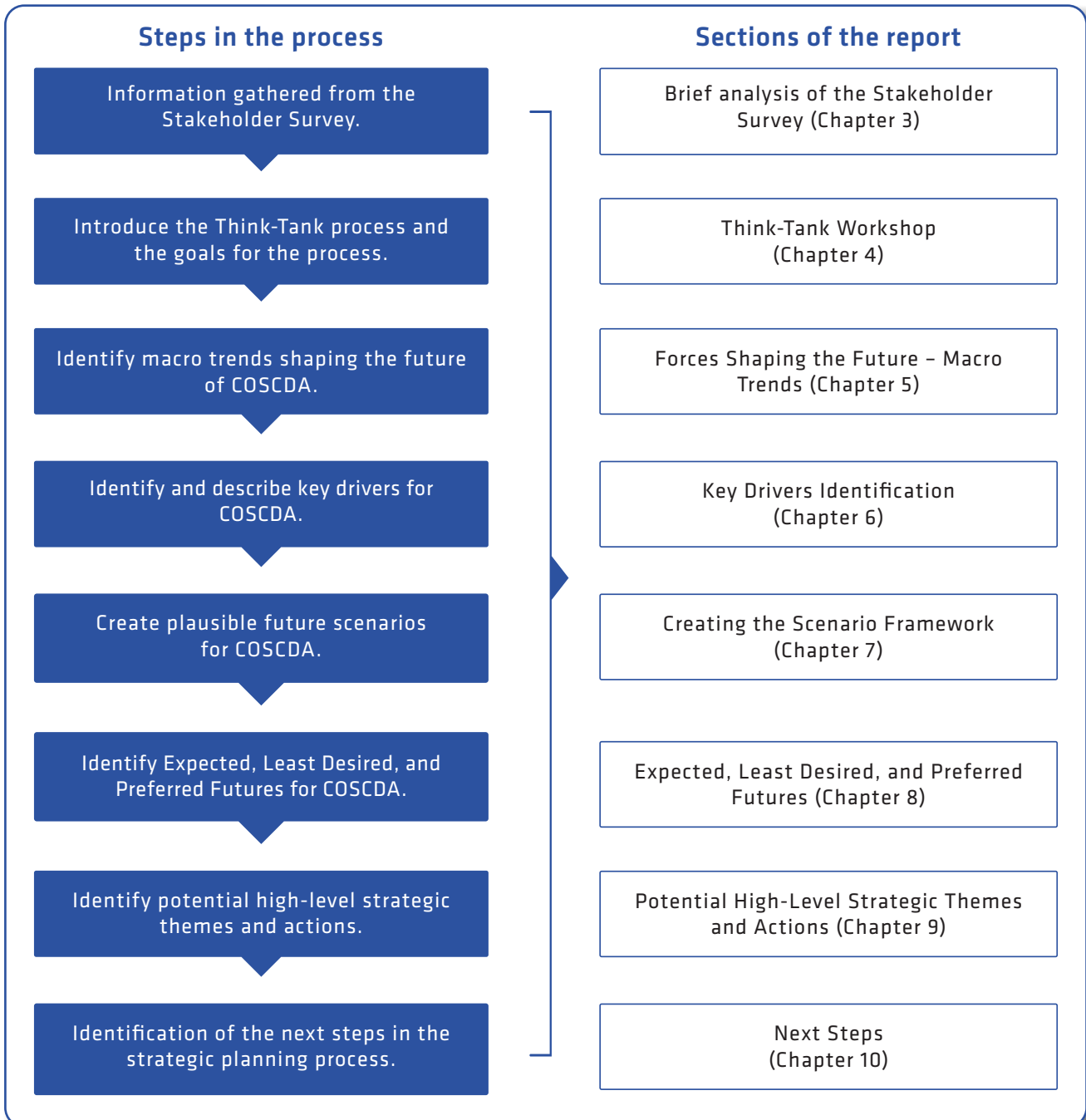


1.0 | HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The importance of visioning and planning for the future have been highlighted as critically important to building resiliency and sustainability for COSCDA as stakeholders look to the grand challenges ahead.

This report lays out the findings from the Think-Tank and each key step in the process. More details about the overall planning process may be viewed on COSCDA's project portal at: lab2.future-iq.com/coscda-strategic-action-plan-project/.

The Think-Tank process built a range of future possible directions for COSCDA. This work represents robust 'future gazing' where Board Members and staff considered possible directions and the impacts and consequences of those directions. The process, and the report, then drill down deeper into what people saw as the optimal or preferred future. This understanding helps lay the groundwork for figuring out what next steps to take. The draft vision and strategic action plan for COSCDA will be completed after a series of in-depth focus groups in February.





2.0 | INTRODUCTION

This scenario-based Think-Tank report summarizes the visioning and planning workshop that took place on December 7 & 8. The Think-Tank workshop was conducted as an initial step in the project to develop an executable plan that will guide COSCDA for the next 3 years. The components of the planning work to date have been comprised of:



KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews were held with Board Members and key stakeholders to gather input and to further understand diverse perspectives on current and future organizational operations.



COSCD A STRATEGIC PLAN STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

An extensive survey was completed by 44 COSCDA Board Members, staff, and stakeholders. The survey aimed to understand stakeholder perspectives on current conditions of COSCDA, as well as their aspirations for the future.



THINK-TANK WORKSHOP

The COSCDA Think-Tank was held on December 7 & 8, 2023. At this workshop, participants learned about current conditions and macro trends impacting COSCDA, and participants produced four plausible potential futures for the organization.



THINK-TANK PARTICIPANT HEATMAPS

Think-Tank participants completed heatmaps at the end of the Think-Tank to express their Least Desired, Expected, and Preferred future scenarios for COSCDA looking out to 2035. The results are examined in this report.

The COSCDA Think-Tank workshop allowed stakeholders to take a 'deep-dive' into strategic visioning and future-thinking through a scenario-planning process.

"COSCDA has their 'fingers' on the pulse of what is happening across the breadth of programs for community development. The advocacy shown in Washington during recent years has been exceptional and is helpful to us 'little people' who don't have the ability or availability to advocate for our state individually or collectively."

- COSCDA Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey Respondent





3.0 | SURVEY RESULTS - KEY STAKEHOLDER INPUT

3.1 | HIGHLIGHTS AND INSIGHTS

Prior to the Think-Tank, a survey was distributed to the COSCDA Board and membership to gather insight into the perceptions of the current operations and future of COSCDA. Forty-four out of 500 people responded to the survey. There was good representation from all for COSCDA regions across the United States (20-30% from each region).

The survey results may be viewed in detail on the project portal at: lab2.future-iq.com/coscdas-strategic-action-plan-project/.

While the sample size of the survey was relatively small, the respondents were well informed stakeholders and had a solid understanding of the organization and its challenges.

STRONG SUPPORT FOR A SHARED VISION AND A SHARED STRATEGIC PLAN

Survey respondents showed a very high level of interest and support for developing a shared vision and shared plan. This provides strong support for the overall strategic planning process.

SATISFACTION WITH DIRECTION AND PERFORMANCE

The vast majority of respondents are satisfied with COSCDA's current direction and performance. Respondents also emphasized the need to develop the organization's training opportunities and member services to keep relevant as leaders in the field.

APPROACH TO MEMBERSHIP SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Responses to the approach COSCDA should take to its membership services and programs indicate a desire to both stay the course (21%) and to expand its services to some degree (69%). This gives the board a mandate to both continue its current operations, and to initiate the changes needed to propel the organization to its preferred future.

MOST CRITICAL ISSUES AND SECTORS TO COSCDA OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

When asked to rate the importance of a set of critical issues and sectors to COSCDA over the next 5 years, respondents identified Trainings and Professional Development, Compliance Regulations, Housing, Funding Resources, and Organizational Partnerships as the top five areas.



3.2 | IMPORTANCE OF A SHARED VISION AND PLAN

Survey respondents were asked how important it is to have a shared vision and shared plan for COSCDA. Respondents were asked the two questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

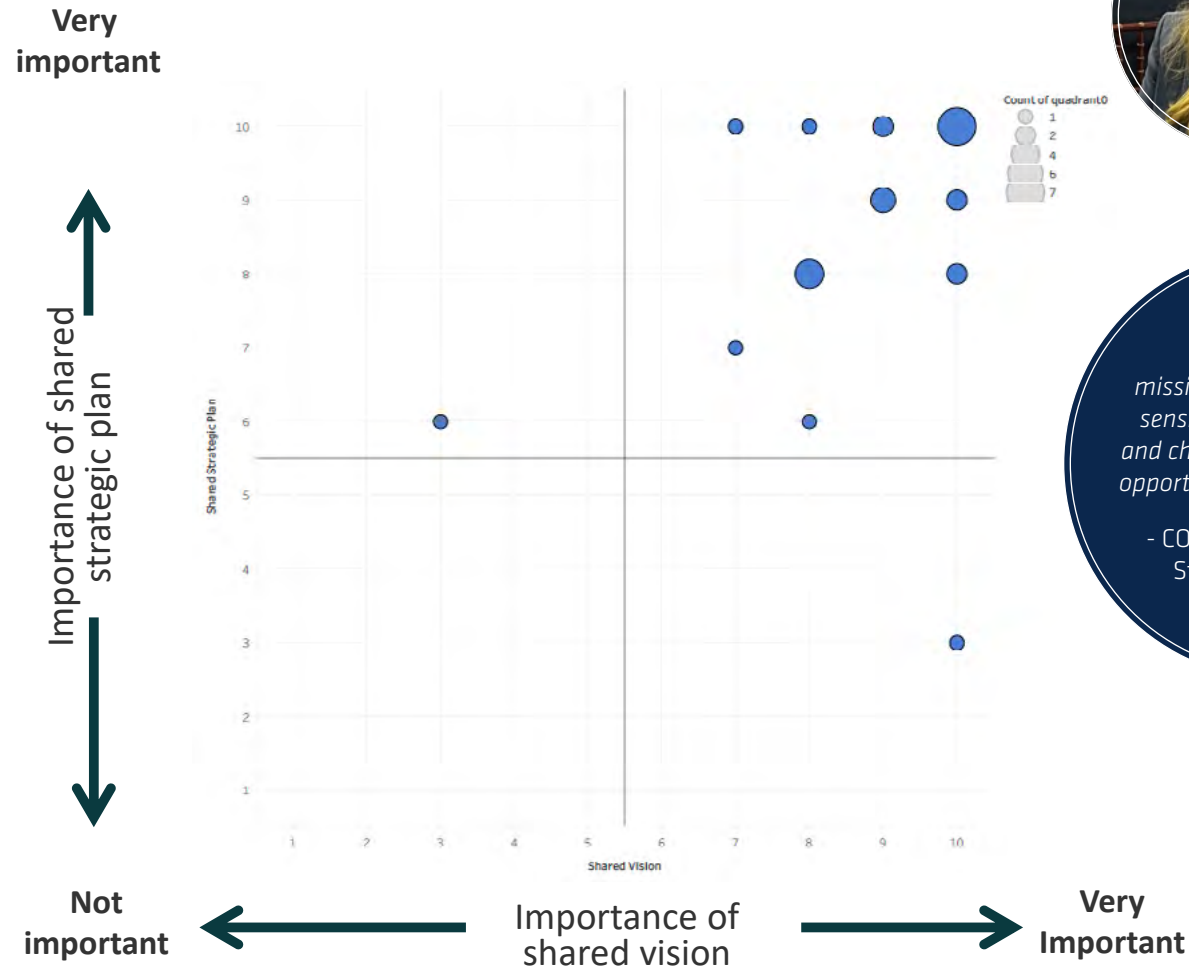
How important is it to have a SHARED VISION for the future of COSCDA?

Scale = Not important; 10 = Extremely important

How important do you have a SHARED STRATEGIC PLAN that maps our a strategic future for COSCDA?

Scale: 1 = Not important; 10 = Extremely important

Shared vision and importance of a shared strategic plan



"We have stayed true to the core mission(s) while also being sensitive to the many new and changing related funding opportunities in recent years."

- COSCDA Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey Respondent



DataInsight

- The size and color of the circle denotes the popularity of the response. This chart shows that respondents felt that a shared vision and plan were both important to the future development of COSCDA.
- These results can be filtered on the portal according to age, zip code, affiliation with COSCDA, length of time involved with COSCDA, and COSCDA region.





4.0 | SCENARIO-BASED THINK-TANK WORKSHOP

The COSCDA Think-Tank Workshop was conducted on December 7 & 8, 2023, at the COSCDA offices in Washington, DC. The workshop explored how COSCDA could evolve looking out to 2035 and consisted of:

- A review of global trends and the impact of these trends on COSCDA
- Assessment of COSCDA's strengths and weaknesses
- Formulation of the different plausible scenario 'spaces' and development of detailed narratives and descriptions of each scenario
- Examination of the impact and consequences of each scenario on various aspects of COSCDA
- Identification of the preferred future and potential critical action steps to achieve the preferred future

Scenario planning provides a way to explore various plausible futures. This adds a richness and depth to the discussions about preferred future, and a consideration of the intended and unintended consequences.

The Think-Tank began with an in-depth presentation on future trends and global conditions. Participants then reviewed current conditions for COSCDA before moving on to conduct scenario planning for the organization. Future IQ's scenario planning process provides a methodology from which to explore plausible futures and takes into consideration the implications of various future scenarios. The process aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape COSCDA looking out to 2035
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for COSCDA
- Begin exploring alignment around a shared future vision for COSCDA
- Begin exploring high-level strategic themes for economic development in COSCDA

The scenarios developed during this Think-Tank workshop and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for the future of COSCDA. Workshop deliberations can assist in identifying key strategic actions for the organization and how various groups might best contribute to future developments.





5.0 | FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS – KEY THEMES SHAPING THE FUTURE

Think-tank participants explored the forces of change shaping the future of COSCDA, including three key areas of emerging macro trends and forces of change. Perceptions around the nature of impact of these trends, both in terms of size and timing of impact, were explored to gauge how important participants consider the trends. Participants discussed the emerging trends on global, regional and local scales, and related them directly to COSCDA in terms of how well prepared they considered the organization.

Specifically, the key trend areas included:

- Demographics, population and mass urbanization
- Energy, food, water and climate change
- Technology and the speed of change

Of relevance to the discussion on trends is the speed and scale of change occurring. Newly developed innovations are being implemented globally and locally at all scales, thereby changing the face of industries and society in a rapid and profound way. Velocity and trajectory are key elements that often create resistance to change and require clear communication and outreach to promote trust around the purpose of change. Think-tank participants emphasized the need for increased intentional investment in the organization as well as consistent communication and messaging to its membership as the COSCDA pursues its preferred future.

In the face of accelerating speed of change, the key to long-term resiliency for COSCDA is the ability to anticipate change, adapt, and remain agile in response to emerging trends. This includes collaboration and an organization-wide approach to change.





6.0 | KEY DRIVERS IDENTIFICATION

With the background of external trends, Think-Tank participants produced drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of COSCDA. The drivers were discussed at a small group level and then at the wider workshop level. The scope of each driver was clarified, and any similar drivers were grouped, and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique key drivers were identified.

Drivers are events, trends, developments, catalysts, or forces that actively influence or cause change. The top 20 economic development drivers for COSCDA are seen to shape the organization's future.

6.1 | DRIVER DESCRIPTIONS

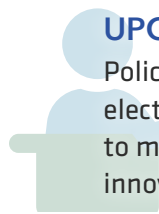
Key drivers shaping the future of COSCDA, as identified and developed in small working groups by the Think-Tank participants:

(Please note that these drivers are not in any particular order.)



STAFFING GENERATION CHANGES

Need to keep up with technology; stress multi-modal engagement. Organizations must have flexibility and engage with youth. Need to prevent loss of institutional knowledge.



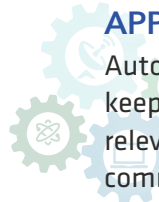
UPCOMING ELECTION

Policy changes may occur depending on election outcome. COSCDA may be fighting to maintain funding or enhancing and innovating to expand programs.



GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Many competing interests exist. Funding is not predictable. Need the staff capacity to manage the unpredictability of government funding timing and amount.



APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY

Automation and AI are occurring. Need to keep up with technological changes to remain relevant. Leverage the opportunity for greater communication systems and networks.



INTENSITY AND FREQUENCY OF DISASTERS

Disaster intensity and frequency are increasing. Opportunity for COSCDA to lead; potentially develop permanent program. Build and train on best practices.



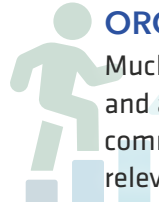
REGULATORY ISSUES AND DEMANDS

Constantly new and changing regulations places more demands on training needs. Opportunity for COSCDA to lead and be the conduit for sharing peer resources.



BREAKTHROUGHS IN HOUSING

Housing crisis persists. Many breakthroughs occurring – green building, energy efficiency, innovation in construction methods and materials, public commitment to solving the crisis. Potential change in focus of members and COSCDA staff for training.



ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCY

Much depends on Congress. Need for flexibility and additional sources of funding. Requires communication strategies to stay on point and relevant. Build coalition with other stakeholders.

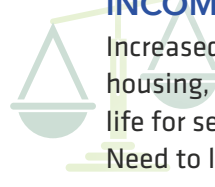


PARTNERSHIP BUILDING



Essential to build new and nurture existing partnerships on national level; vital to assist in funding projects or addressing gaps. Have those partnerships trickle down to states.

INCOME DISPARITIES AND HOMELESSNESS



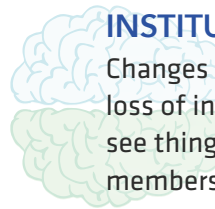
Increased disparities caused by cost of living, lack of housing, healthcare accessibility; decreased quality of life for seniors and youth (fixed incomes/stagnant).
Need to lean into partnerships and shared resources.

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP



Changes in federal and state programs and administration impact level of funding and relevancy to members. Significant competition for members. Potential to impact focus of organization.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY



Changes in organizational staffing can cause loss of institutional knowledge. Potential to see things in new ways. Need to engage with members and build the COSCDA community.

COSCD A VALUE PROPOSITION



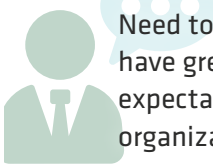
Reduced government funding is affecting members. Need to increase communications to engage younger audiences and show COSCDA relevancy and value of membership.

INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS



Membership constrained by politics (apolitical), 50 states limitation, focus on CPD programs, and HUD process. Need to be proactive, keep staff trained as new issues arise, and maintain/grow membership.

ROLE IN ADVOCACY



Need to increase influence of organization; have greater role in Congress. Will be increased expectation of COSCDA staff to grow role of organization and its members.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



New issues require new training and staffing demands to support training. Need more flexibility with training needs; move some online for greater access.

DECLINING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT



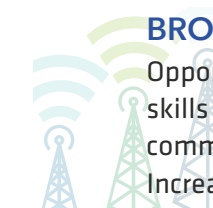
General/perceived declining trust can't be articulated; COSCDA at risk of being considered part of government. Work to help build trust by showing we are good stewards of tax dollars.

CAPACITY TO INNOVATE



Innovation takes time and energy. Limited by time, energy, staffing, funding, support from Board and members. Potential to leverage innovation successes with partnerships.

BROADBAND EXPANSION



Opportunity for new technologies, digital skills and digital equity. Increased efficiency in communication between staff and members. Increased demand for on demand training.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS



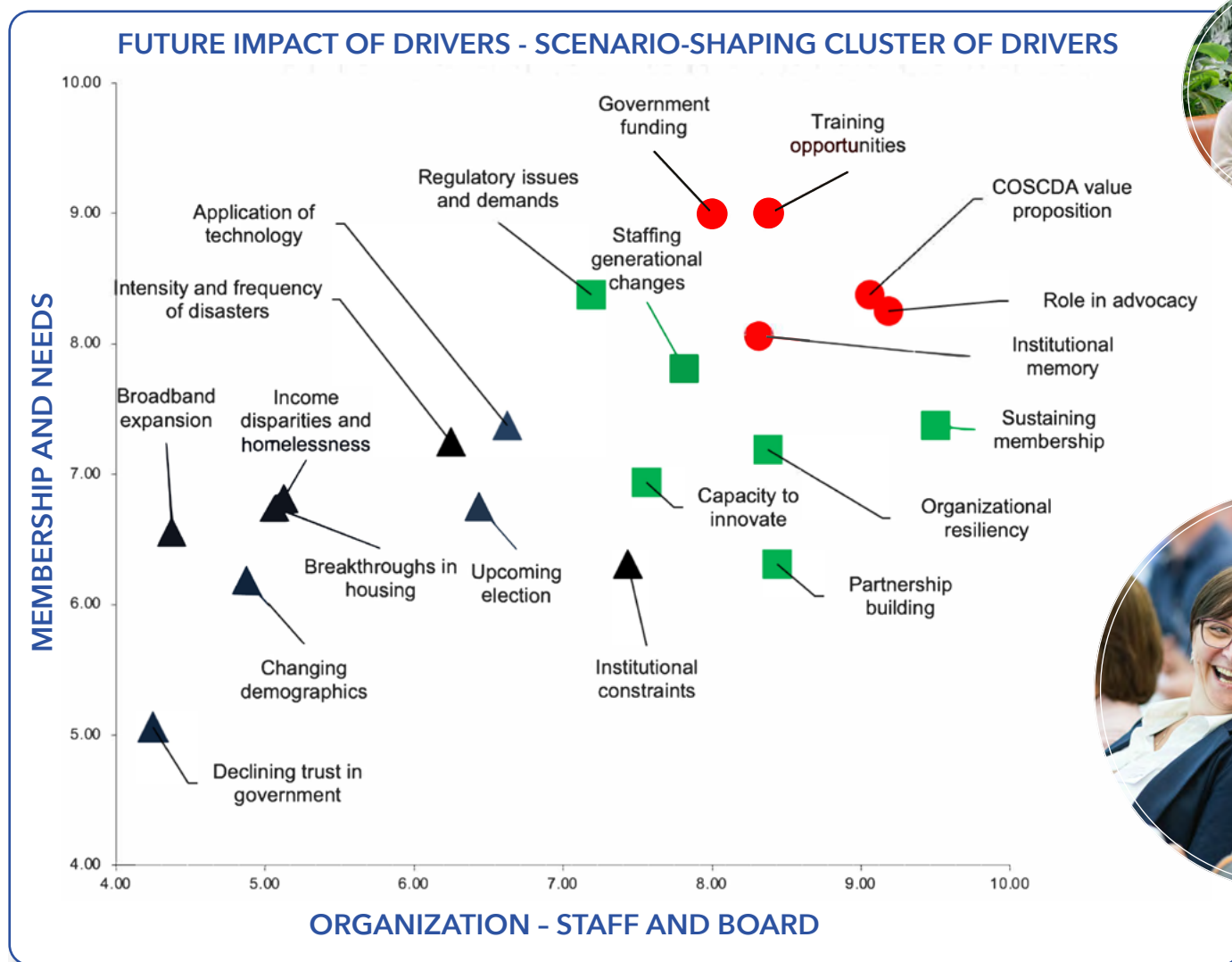
Economic disparities are growing; change in workforce needs. Migrant influx and lack of work permits has highlighted need for policy advocacy on flexible program activities.

6.2 | IDENTIFYING SCENARIO SHAPING CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

After agreement on the drivers, Think-Tank participants rated each of the twenty key drivers in terms of the size of impact on the future of COSCDA. The scale used was 1 - 10 (1 = low relative future impact; 10 = very high relative future impact). The individual ratings by each participant were pooled and averaged, providing an overall rating for each driver by the entire group of participants. Then, a scatter diagrams of the drivers, based on size of impact were developed. The diagram represents the driver assessment in terms of **Organization - Staff and Board** and **Membership and Needs**. The process illustrated below show the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future - these clusters are termed 'Scenario-shaping clusters of drivers.'

This scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the future of COSCDA looking out to 2035.

The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact.



- The identified drivers for the organization - staff and Board, were clustered around the dimensions of government funding, training opportunities, COSCDA's value proposition, role in advocacy, and institutional memory.
- The drivers identified as having the greatest impact on membership and needs were regulatory issues and demands, staffing generational change, sustaining membership, organizational resiliency, partnership building, and capacity to innovate.



DataInsight





6.3 | CLUSTER MAP DEVELOPMENT AND SCENARIO AXIS

Grouping similar drivers into two categories, clusters of drivers were identified by adding a thematic name linking the drivers in the clusters. These themes became the basis for the two axes on the scenario matrix that define the four scenario 'spaces', with quadrants either towards or away for each driver cluster. These quadrants were used to formulate four plausible scenarios. The two axes were defined as '**Organization Focus and Role**' and '**Membership and Network**'.

The two axes of the scenario matrix were developed through the thematic clustering of the key drivers identified by Think-Tank participants.

FUTURE-SPLITTING THEMES BASED ON CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

Organization Focus and Role Membership and Network

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role in advocacy • COSCDA value proposition • Training opportunities • Government funding • Institutional memory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing generational change • Regulatory issues and demands • Sustaining membership • Organizational resiliency • Capacity to innovate • Partnership building |
|--|---|

Additional Drivers

- Application of technology
- Intensity and frequency of disasters
- Upcoming election
- Institutional constraints
- Income disparities and homelessness
- Breakthroughs in housing
- Changing demographics
- Broadband expansion
- Declining trust in government



7.0 | CREATING THE SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

Workshop participants were presented with the scenario matrix, defined by the two major axes, 'Organizational Focus and Role' and 'Membership and Network'. Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axes. Participants were divided into four groups to develop a narrative for each scenario. Each group was asked to describe the characteristics of COSCDA in 2035 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given. After the characteristics were established, Think-Tank participants were asked to devise major events or headlines of how the scenario occurred using the years 2025, 2030 and 2035, and to give their scenario a descriptive name. The name is intended to represent the description of the scenario in the form of a short title. Narratives, descriptions, and names of each scenario as developed by the workshop participants are included in the following sections.





7.1 | SCENARIO A: COSCDA FOUNDATION

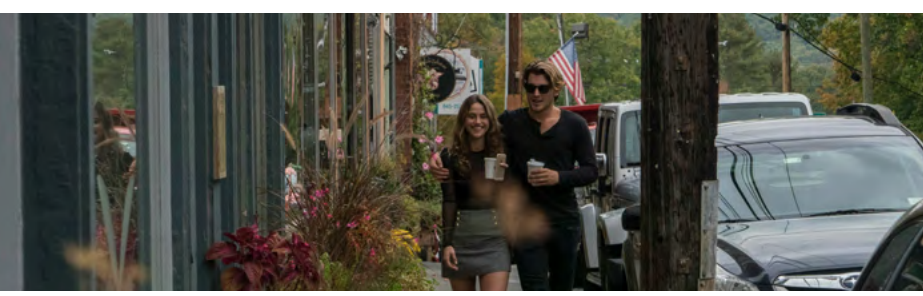
The 'COSCDA Foundation' scenario conveys a future where the organization remains focused on what it does best. Partnerships expand with like-minded organizations and staff is stretched to accommodate program demands.

This scenario forecasts a future that is shaped by a strong focus on building and improving the organization's traditional mission and role in community development.

COSCDA pursues its strong relationships with HUD and other like-minded organizations. Membership categories are expanded and Associate memberships allow individuals and other agencies to join COSCDA. Rapid growth puts pressure on staffing and training demands. The organization establishes a Foundation to provide grant funding for traditional training and programs for members. More boots on the ground increases COSCDA's impact at the legislature and the organization celebrates unprecedented regulatory reforms. COSCDA builds its already strong reputation by becoming more of a specialty issue advocacy organization. Over time, this laser focus impacts COSCDA's ability to innovate and respond when rapid change occurs in other areas.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT - FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- **COSCDA stays the course** and its mission and role remain the same.
- **Partnerships are expanded** to support traditional training and programming.
- **COSCDA establishes a Foundation** to provide grant funding for members.
- **Advocacy and training** are growth areas that place demands on staffing.



SCENARIO A CHARACTERISTICS: 'COSCD A FOUNDATION' - 2035

In the 'COSCD A Foundation' scenario, the organization's success in its traditional strengths enable it to grow quickly, but over time COSCD A's capacity for innovation in new areas is diminished.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future where COSCD A's focus and role is to stay the course and the organization's membership develops into a broad and active network. COSCD A excels at its traditional functions of advocacy, training, and peer to peer engagement. Expansion and growth places increased demand on staff and member services. The organization responds to changing funding and program needs in a reactive manner and innovation wanes.



2035 Organizational Focus Characteristics

COSCD A focuses on maintaining key relationships with HUD and other federal agencies.

- Continued strong focus on services for membership.
- COSCD A seeks contributions from philanthropy and support from other professional organizations.
- Primary organizational focus is on advocacy, training, and peer to peer engagement.



2035 Funding and Regulatory Characteristics

Regulatory consistency and relief are maintained through collaboration and expanded networks.

- More boots on the ground increases regulatory impact.
- A new COSCD A Foundation is established to provide grant funding for traditional training and programs for member states.
- Nationwide partnerships are expanded to support traditional training and programming needs.



2035 Services and Membership Characteristics

Membership grows with new types of membership categories and levels.

- Increased participation from states at the state level.
- Increased membership puts pressure on COSCD A staff to keep up with demands for services and trainings.
- Associate memberships allow individuals and other agencies to join COSCD A.

2025 Headline News

"COSCD A ANNOUNCES INITIATIVE TO BROADEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS."



2030 Headline News

"COSCD A ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF COSCD A FOUNDATION."



2040 Headline News

"COSCD A CELEBRATES RECORD LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT."





7.2 | SCENARIO B: COMMUNITIES LEADING EDGE

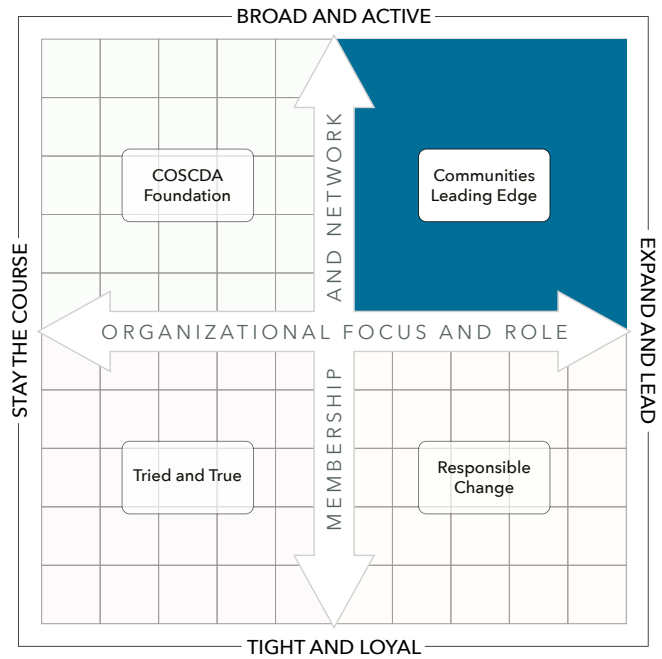
The 'Communities Leading Edge' scenario conveys a future where COSCDA is propelled into a national leadership role and membership is supported with innovative and up-to-date trainings and events.

This scenario forecasts a future that sees the expansion of COSCDA's mission to provide more cutting-edge thought leadership, programs and training opportunities for its members and others in the areas of advocacy, housing, disaster recovery, and homelessness.

Partnerships and collaboration with new agencies are forged. COSCDA becomes the branded expert advocacy voice for community development on a national level, including representation for other entities needing a voice with similar goals. A growing diversified funding stream provides for additional organizational and staffing capacity. This results in the ability to provide increased access to subject matter experts for trainings up-to-date technical assistance at conferences and events. COSCDA's value proposition is recognized by an widening audience and membership grows. Membership categories are expanded with new levels that allow individuals and other agencies to join.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT - FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- **COSCDA expands its role** at the national level and is the 'go to' organization on key issues.
- **The organization diversifies its funding stream** and supports innovative programs.
- **COSCDA is the branded expert advocacy voice** for housing, disaster recovery, and homelessness.
- **Organizational staffing grows** with specialists in topic areas.
- **Membership grows** with expanded categories and levels.



SCENARIO B CHARACTERISTICS: 'COMMUNITIES LEADING EDGE' - 2035

In the 'Communities Leading Edge' scenario, COSCDA expands its offerings through increased partnerships and successfully advocates for increased funding and capacity.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future where COSCDA's organizational focus and role are to expand and lead, and its membership and network are broad and active. The organization takes on a thought-leadership role at the national level and it is considered the go-to organization for expertise in cutting-edge programs in community development.



2035 Organizational Focus Characteristics

Focus is on becoming branded experts in housing, homelessness and community development.

- Organization offers topic-oriented training in all relevant programs.
- COSCDA becomes advocacy voice for community needs beyond state programs.
- Organization offers local capacity- building services.



2035 Funding and Regulatory Characteristics

Funding increases and the organization expands staffing to support increased advocacy initiatives and programs.

- Growing organizational staff capacity allows for remote work in other states.
- COSCDA is the 'go-to' organization on key issues and regulations.
- There is increased investment in training capacity.



2035 Services and Membership Characteristics

Membership options expand with separate categories and levels including non-state agencies.

- COSCDA's reputation as experts in the field grows and is branded.
- COSCDA offers representation to entities needing voice with similar goals.
- Increased memberships capture revenue raising.

**2025
Headline News**
"COSCDA HOSTS JOINT
CONFERENCE WITH EMERGENCY
SERVICES PROVIDERS."



**2030
Headline News**
"COSCDA COMPLETES
STAFFING FOR ALL
PROGRAM AREAS."



**2040
Headline News**
"COSCDA WINS AWARD FOR
MEMBERSHIP SERVICES."





The 'Responsible Change' scenario conveys a future where there is a tension between the desire for COSCDA's organizational growth and innovation opportunities, and a focus on prioritizing traditional membership needs and networks.

7.3 | SCENARIO C: RESPONSIBLE CHANGE

This scenario forecasts a future that focuses on providing enhanced and expanded advocacy, thought-leadership, and training opportunities for COSCDA's membership.

COSCD A is recognized as a leader in training and technical assistance by HUD and USICH. Membership is expanded to all states and priority is on serving member states' needs through expanded training and communications. Membership categories and dues structure remain the same. There is a growing need for more diversified funding streams to keep up with new training areas and staffing requirements for these trainings. Organizational staffing capacity is strained, and advertising revenue is increased to support funding demands. Over time, there is a danger of sponsors having an outsized influence on organizational priorities and spending.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT - FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- **COSCD A serves its members** with expanded programs and services.
- **Membership levels remain consistent** with its traditional dues structure and member categories.
- **COSCD A relies on marketing and vendor support** for increased funding resources.
- **Organizational capacity is strained** by the need to service new advocacy initiatives and trainings.



SCENARIO C CHARACTERISTICS: 'RESPONSIBLE CHANGE' - 2035

In the 'Responsible Change' scenario, COSCDA's staffing capacity is strained to keep up with the increased membership demand for new and updated trainings and programming.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future where COSCDA's organizational focus and role expands to support its members, and its membership and network remains consistent and loyal. Marketing and communications are promoted to raise awareness of the organization's strong advocacy and training programs. COSCDA's network remains constrained and vendors have an increased influence with sponsorship opportunities.



2035 Organizational Focus Characteristics

Focus is on advocacy and more diverse training opportunities for members.

- Marketing and communications are expanded with monthly newsletters.
- COSCDA's value to members is recognized in advocacy and training.
- COSCDA partners on trainings with like organizations such as NAHRO, NACO, LCT, NCSHA, NCH, and NCDA.



2035 Funding and Regulatory Characteristics

COS CDA maintains its funding and current staffing levels.

- Sponsorships and ad space in newsletters leads to new revenue streams.
- Membership levels remain consistent with solid membership dues structure.
- There is pressure to expand staffing capacity to support training needs.



2035 Services and Membership Characteristics

Training services are expanded for members and membership network remains the same.

- Training is expanded with regional and online options for members.
- Membership dues do not support expanded training and new revenue sources are sought.
- Diversifying revenue sources through sponsorships brings potential for vendor influence.

**2025
Headline News**
"NEW HUD SECRETARY SPEAKS AT ANNUAL COSCDA CONFERENCE."



**2030
Headline News**
"ALL STATE PROGRAMS PARTICIPATING IN COSCDA."



**2040
Headline News**
"COS CDA SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATES FOR CONGRESS TO INCREASE HUD BUDGET."





The 'Tried and True' scenario conveys a future where COSCDA focuses on its membership needs and what it does best. Over time, lack of innovation and investment in new ideas and solutions affect the organization's relevancy.

7.4 | SCENARIO D: TRIED AND TRUE

This scenario forecasts a future where COSCDA is committed to its core mission and the needs of its existing membership.

The organization continues to stay responsive to the political climate and stays the course with strong staff and traditional relationships. Funding sources remain unchanged and continue to support COSCDA's renown advocacy and training programs. Membership dues are raised over time to counteract a restricted funding environment and to support added costs and states' needs. Staffing levels remain consistent but it is difficult for the organization to keep up with the demands for new staffing expertise for its trainings. Lack of investment in innovation and new programming over time affects COSCDA's relevancy and ability to pivot to changing member needs.

- ### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT - FUTURE IMPLICATIONS
- **COSCD A maintains its strong relationship** to its membership.
 - **Funding relies on traditional membership dues** structure, trainings, conferences and events.
 - **COSCD A continues its focus on advocacy and training** as organizational priorities.
 - **Staff levels remain consistent.**



SCENARIO C CHARACTERISTICS: 'TRIED AND TRUE' - 2035

In the 'Tried and True' scenario, COSCDA struggles to compete with other like-minded organizations that have the ability to pivot quickly to rapidly changing state needs.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future where COSCDA's focus is on remaining true to its core mission, and membership remains tight and loyal to the organization. COSCDA buckles down on its traditional strengths and services and maintains its strong relationship to HUD. Eventually this inward focus and lack of innovation affect the organization's ability to pivot to new member needs and its relevancy declines.



2035 Organizational Focus Characteristics

Focus is on maintaining existing relationships with HUD and fellow advocacy organizations, legislators, and TA providers.

- The organizational mission remains the same.
- COSCDA continues its Training Academy and adds new topics.
- COSCDA captures the knowledge of experienced members in a 'library' of sorts.



2035 Funding and Regulatory Characteristics

COSCDA doubles down on programmatic training offerings and traditional funding sources for revenue.

- Revenue stream remains dues, trainings, and conferences/events.
- COSCDA stays the course and maintains strong staff relationships.
- COSCDA continues to engage external consultants for short-term/specific needs.



2035 Services and Membership Characteristics

Membership dues are raised to support consistent and stable programmatic services.

- COSCDA continues with an advocacy focus that is responsive to member needs.
- The organization maintains its relationships with traditional partners and program funders.
- Program contacts and relationships are established as needed.

**2025
Headline News
"COSCDA ROLLS
OUT NEW TRAINING
OFFERING."**



**2030
Headline News
"COSCDA INCREASES
MEMBERSHIP DUES TO
MAINTAIN SERVICES AND
OPERATIONS."**



**2040
Headline News
"INCREASED COSTS AND
LACK OF PROPOSITION CAUSE
COSCDA TO MERGE WITH
OTHER PROGRAM."**

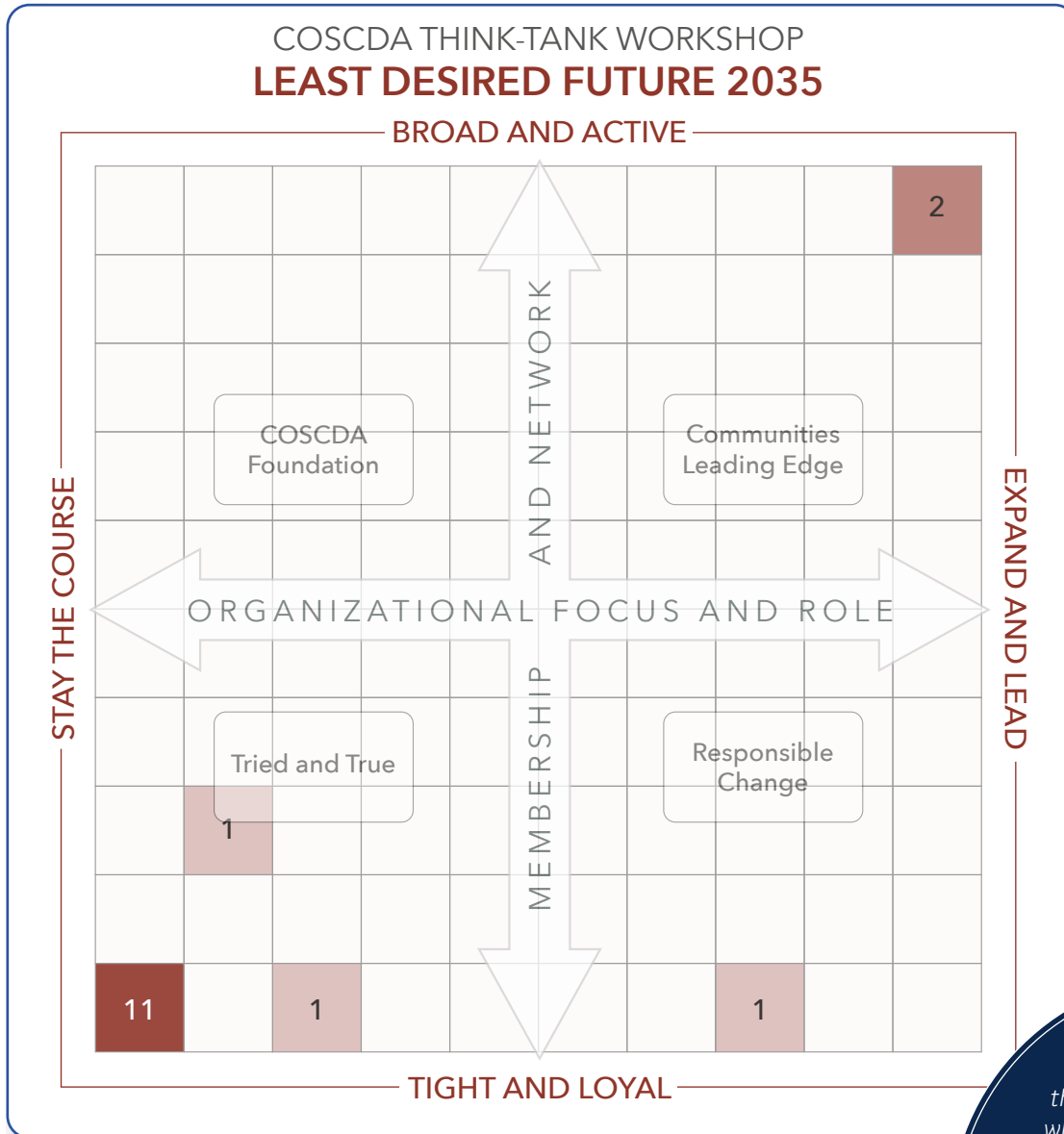


8.0 | LEAST DESIRED, EXPECTED, AND PREFERRED FUTURES

8.1 | LEAST DESIRED FUTURE

The Least Desired Future is defined as 'the future that you think will be the most undesirable (or least optimal or least desired) for the future of COSCDA'. Think-Tank participants most definitely considered Scenario D, 'Tried and True' to be the Least Desired scenario for COSCDA.

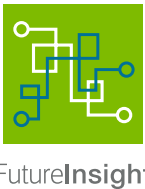
The least desired future is one where stakeholders have said, 'We don't want that for the organization.' This provides leadership a mandate to make sure the organization's trajectory does not go in that direction.



"I am concerned when we don't focus on the organization as a whole when we make decisions. We need to be careful to consider the past but be open to new opportunities. Don't get locked in to 'we have tried that before and it didn't work'. Times change, people change. Be open to it."

- COSCDA Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey Respondent

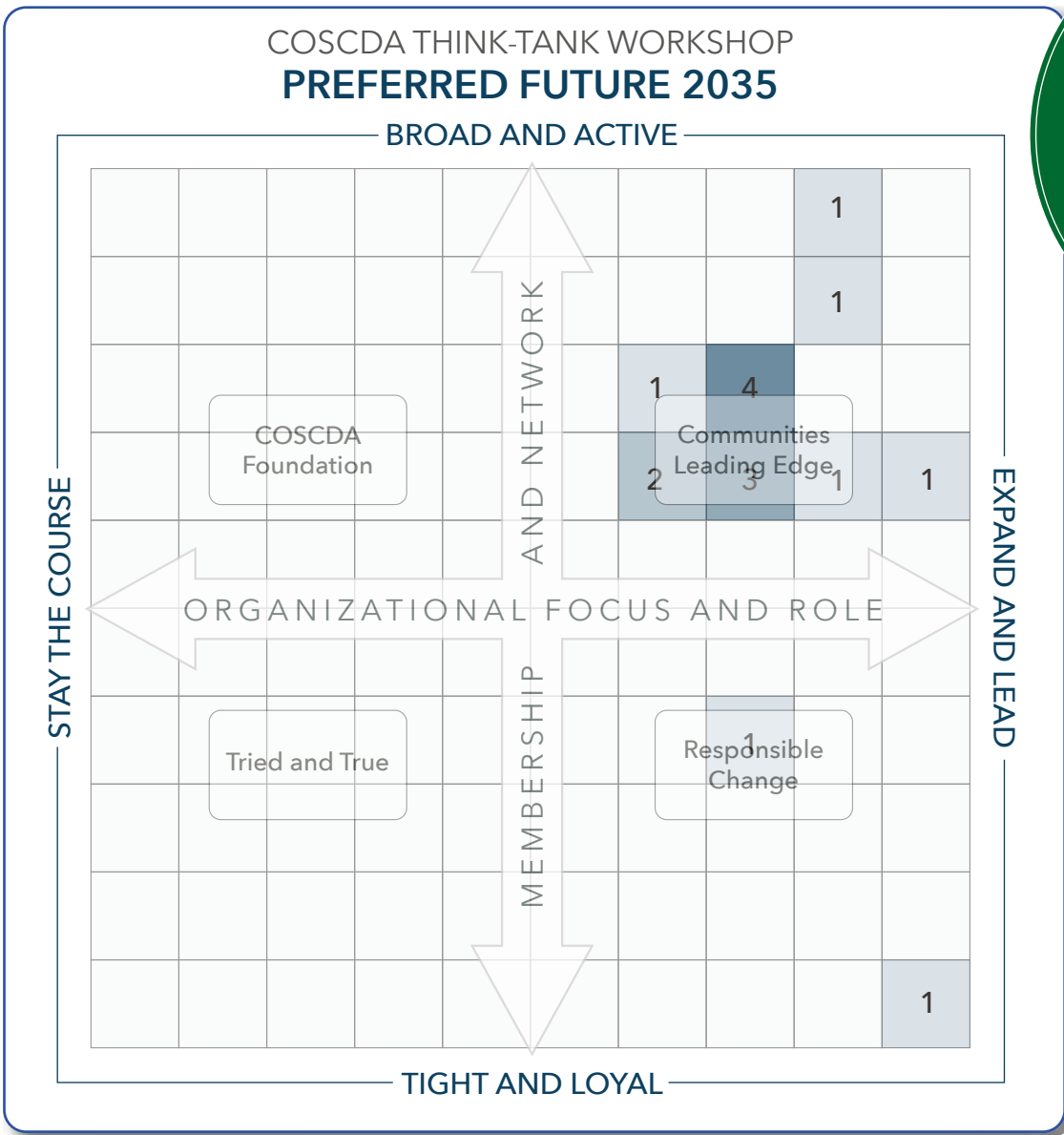
- The high concentration of color in the 'Tried and True' quadrant is a clear indication that participants do not want that future for COSCDA.
- The corners of the scenario matrix quadrants indicate the extreme versions of the scenarios.

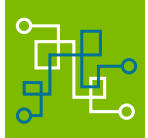


8.3 | PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank participants expressed an overwhelming preference for Scenario B, 'Communities Cutting Edge' as the Preferred Future for COSCDA in 2035. Think-Tank participants discussed the consequences of inaction and the need to take decisive action NOW to redirect the organization's trajectory over the next 10 years. There was a sincere desire by participants to build on and leverage the organization's reputation and brand existing to tell the story of COSCDA more proactively and intentionally.

Getting to the preferred future requires collaboration, alignment of vision and strong leadership. Think-Tank participants showed a clear desire for change and a willingness to work together to achieve the preferred future for COSCDA.



- 

The concentration of color in Scenario B, 'Communities Cutting Edge' indicates a close alignment of thinking among Think-Tank participants, and a significant appetite for change.
- Arriving at a point of consensus among stakeholders about the preferred future is very important to the visioning process as it provides a sense of cohesion, agreement, and collaboration going forward.

"The recent developments that we are seeing where old regulations are getting face lifts is a change that COSCDA has been actively involved in and I look forward to seeing the future with COSCDA representing the states. One future opportunity I am most excited about is COSCDA being actively involved if we ever see Washington act on codifying CDBG-DR."

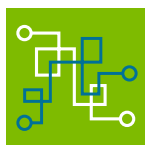
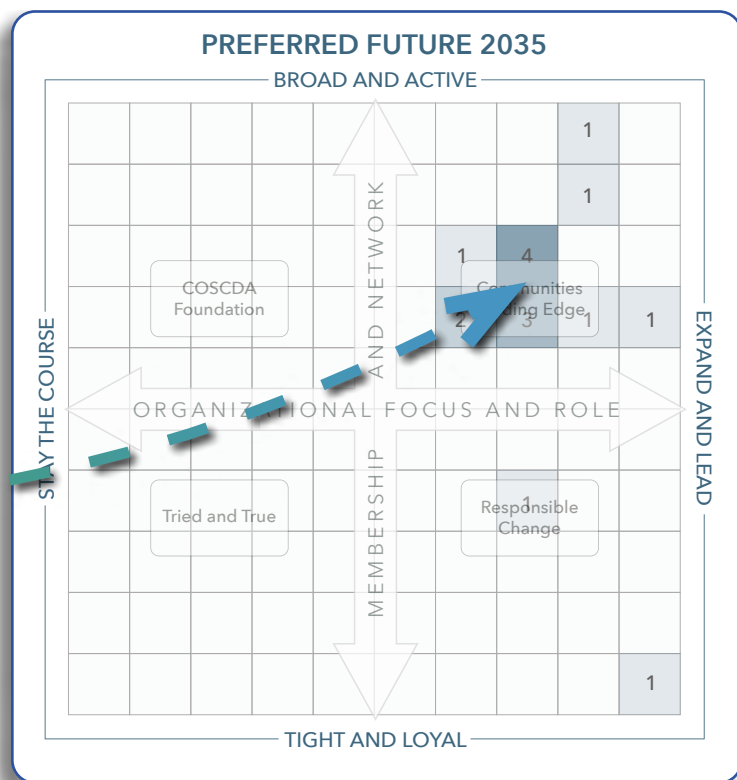
- COSCDA Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey Respondent



8.4 | GETTING TO THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Because of the long-term nature of the Scenario Planning methodology, stakeholders often see the 'distant future vision (2035)' as unattainable and unrealistic. However, this underestimates the progress that can be made during the intervening years, and the cumulative positive impacts of change.

Think-Tank participants discussed the ramifications and implications of failing to achieve the preferred future. While there was strong alignment among Think-Tank participants that Scenario B, 'Communities Leading Edge,' represented the preferred scenario, it was also recognized that reorienting the current trajectory will require significant collaboration with other entities and membership, increased communication, and proactive leadership by COSCDA.



FutureInsight

- The Think-Tank scenario planning is a significant step in COSCDA's strategic planning process to define collectively how the organization will strategically implement a plan to achieve its preferred future.
- COSCDA is well positioned to move towards the preferred future by leveraging its strong membership base and reputation as the premier national association advocating and enhancing the leadership role of states in community development.

"We have all had to manage through significant change. COSCDA should be thinking through what change means to our programs - If our programs are immediately quintupled in size or our programs are cut in half. (Both scenarios have happened, and it would be helpful to help guide states in these challenging situations.)"

- COSCDA Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey Respondent

9.0 | POTENTIAL HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIC THEMES AND ACTIONS

Following the scenario development and presentations, Think-Tank participants assembled into four small groups to discuss potential high-level strategic themes and actions that could propel COSCDA to its preferred future. Each group recorded and presented out their ideas to the larger group. This information, along with the stakeholder survey data, and Think-Tank data were compiled to create six overarching strategic pillars for the Strategic Action Plan. These Strategic Pillars will be further developed in Focus Groups that will take place in February 2024. Below are the six potential Strategic Pillars of the COSCDA Strategic Action Plan.

The strategic themes and actions are the building blocks of the Strategic Pillars that will create the foundation of COSCDA's Strategic Action Plan.



"More and more often I hear from people who had previously never heard of COSCDA discussing the advocacy and training work being done. This is evidence of the work being recognized in multiple circles and how successful it has been as of late."

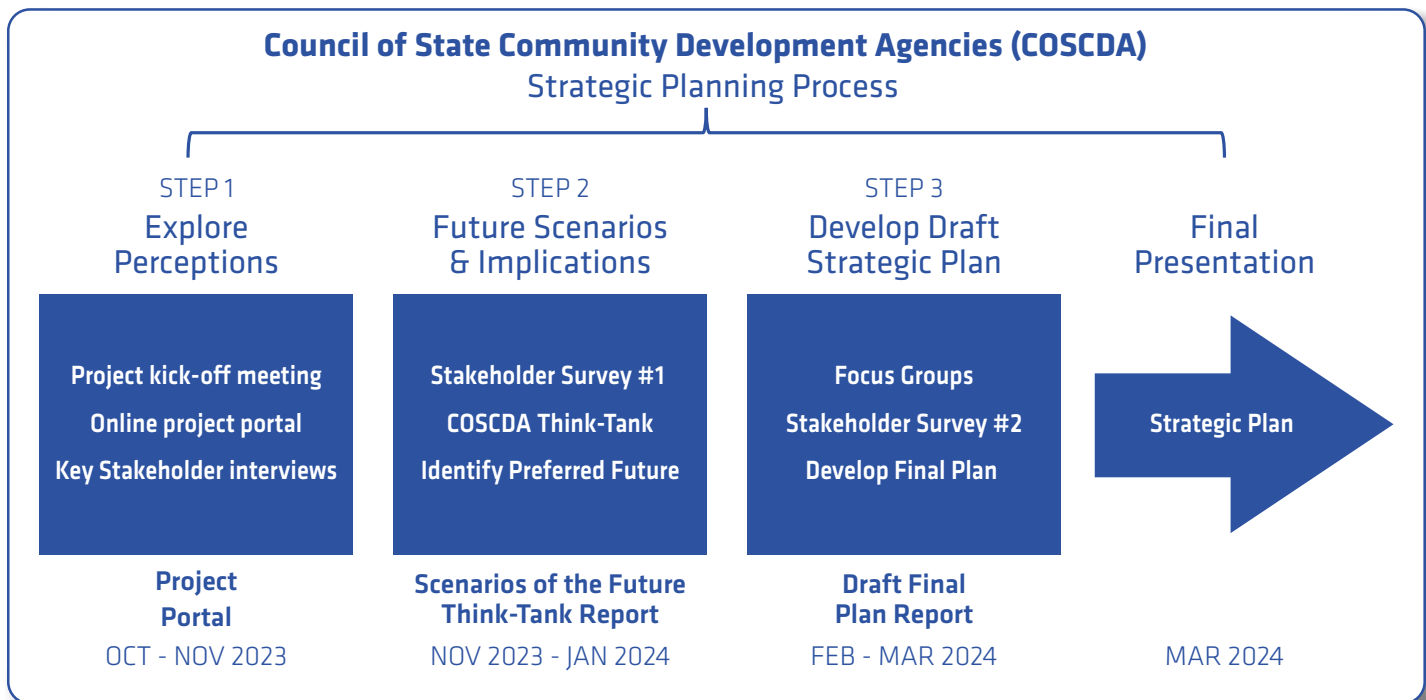
- COSCDA Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey Respondent



Please stay connected to COSCDA's strategic planning project at lab2.future-iq.com/coscdas-strategic-action-plan-project/.

10.0 | NEXT STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

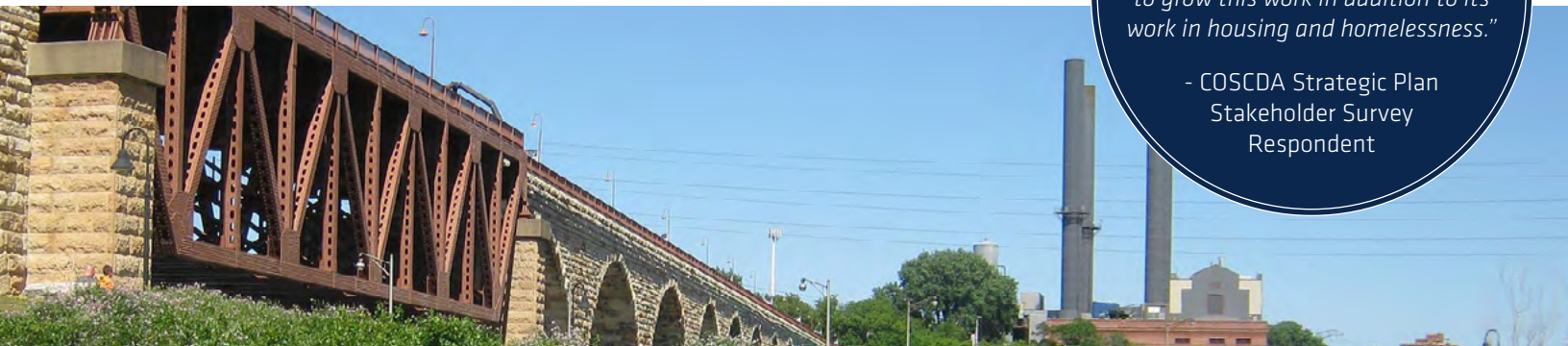
Following the Think Tank, this Think-Tank Report was written and published for distribution. The project will then move into the 'Develop Draft Strategic Plan' phase of the COSCDA strategic planning process.



- February 2024: Six virtual Strategic Pillar Focus Groups will be held to build out the strategies and actions for each Strategic Pillar of the Strategic Action Plan.
- February – March, 2024: Draft COSCDA Strategic Action Plan.
- March 2024: Final Presentation to the Board at the March 2024 Conference in Washington, DC.

"I am proud of COSCDA's expansion into disaster recovery. COSCDA is the natural leader in this space. I would like to see COSCDA continue to grow this work in addition to its work in housing and homelessness."

- COSCDA Strategic Plan Stakeholder Survey Respondent





»»»» 11.0 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COSCD Board Members and staff have engaged in this strategic planning process with great enthusiasm. Their passion and interest have ensured discussions at the Think-Tank were open, thoughtful, and reflective of the myriad of perspectives that exist within the organization. This dedication is also reflective of the deep commitment participants have to the future of the COSCDA.

Additionally, our appreciation is extended to Tess Hembree, who meets on a weekly basis and provides the organizational expertise that helps guide this project. Her time and dedication are greatly appreciated.

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»»»» 12.0 | FOR MORE INFORMATION

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13.0 | CONSULTING TEAM – ABOUT FUTURE iQ

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AGENCIES (COSCDA) STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

THINK-TANK REPORT

WASHINGTON, DC

JANUARY 2024