

About The Game

OUR ORIGIN STORY

At Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, we've spent the past decades designing instruments and frameworks to accelerate thoughtful and effective philanthropic practices in the face of escalating, multidimensional global challenges.

In late 2023, we launched the Foresight & Futures Initiative to help philanthropy and the broader ecosystem institutionalize best practices of strategic foresight and futurism, in order to better anticipate the challenges of tomorrow, hone organizational innovation, and create more robust, equitable and adaptive strategies.

To match our ambition and help philanthropy meet the imperative to envision, innovate, and build a better future, we set out to create an unconventional instrument, one that could unlock imagination and build the discipline this work requires. Thus, *Forging Futures: A Strategic Decision-Making Game* for Resilient Societies was born.

WHY A GAME?

Philanthropy is serious work—and that's exactly why we need to play.

Philanthropy is constantly forced to be reactive, which further constrains our ability to exercise creativity. Transformative change requires imagination and the ability to think differently. That's what this game makes possible.

Games are powerful tools for honing innovation, strategic thinking, and shifting organizational mindsets. Today, philanthropy operates in a world shaped by nonlinear, overlapping, and accelerating change. Challenges arrive faster and with greater complexity, even as resources and mandates remain finite. Time was ripe for us to augment our traditional toolkit with a game that would help our sector overhaul default thinking and practices, to think and act outside of the existing norms and assumptions.

Forging Futures offers philanthropy a way to step away from day-to-day demands, from the internal and external fires it is called on to extinguish. Instead, it offers a powerful and imaginative way of practicing disciplined, futures-focused decision making.

Forging Futures combines role playing, storytelling, and visual and experiential futurism as a subtle way of exercising important cognitive “muscles” without realizing it. Thus, while building seemingly fictional societies, philanthropies will gain essential real-world skills that will strengthen their organizations, sharpen strategic clarity and create conditions for innovative, unexpected and powerful solutions to emerge.

OUR APPROACH

In our quest to create *Forging Futures*, we were guided by a few questions:

- How can we build anticipatory muscles and develop cognitive habits and practices that will prepare us to respond to fast-moving world challenges in the near and long-term future?

- How can the philanthropic ecosystem develop new strategies and embed futures-focused thinking and decision making in their organizational processes and structures?
- How can we practice making tough strategic choices when we can't prioritize everything?
- While we can't always collaborate, how can we practice making futures-focused decisions in an increasingly interconnected context, both in terms of the challenges we are facing and in terms of the solutions we put forward?

Our answer is by igniting imagination, leaving comfort zones, and playing our futures-focused game.

WHAT YOU'LL ACHIEVE THROUGH PLAY

Forging Futures will help philanthropies and nonprofits sharpen strategies, interventions and organizational effectiveness by:

- **Enabling team building, alignment and shared understanding** around different visions of the future that sit across the organization, as well as different capabilities and strategic pathways for implementing those visions.
- **Connecting the dots and bridging viewpoints**, ideas, expertise, lived experiences, and realities across various verticals within organizations, as well as between funders and nonprofit partners.
- **Practicing making disciplined strategic choices** under the conditions of complexity, uncertainty and risk—a difficult but crucial organizational habit.
- **Honing the ability to strategize and think imaginatively about the long term.**
- **Spotting signals of change and understanding** what they mean for “the what” and “the how” of the organization’s work.
- **Engaging in more authentic collective sensemaking conversations** with a broad range of ecosystem partners, including frontline activists and communities.

Together, these elements will build important organizational muscles and help funders and nonprofits carry out mission-driven work more effectively, with a greater sense of urgency, and clarity about how this work contributes to thriving global futures.

SO, HOW DO YOU PLAY?

The game consists of three rounds or eras. In each era, players are tasked with forging resilient societies with the resources they inherit and generate. Along the way, the resilience of these new societies will be tested by disruptive events. The player who builds the most resilient society becomes the architect of the future world.

Original idea, concept and name by Olga Tarasov, Vice President, Inquiry & Insights.

We are grateful to the Forum for the Future, Alisha Bhagat, Christina Daniels-Freeman, Caroline Suozzi and all the members of the Foresight & Futures community of practice for their thought partnership and contributions in bringing this game to life.

This game is dedicated to the legacy of Ashraf and Nazir Bhagat.