

ANNEX C: HORIZON SCANNING WORKSHOP 20 JUL 12

The one day workshop used four syndicates to discuss a variety of different issues surrounding horizon scanning across Government: solutions and obstacles to effective horizon scanning, the way horizon scanning is (and could be) structured, achieving impact and improving communications. Several themes repeated themselves throughout the day:

The **relationship with customers** for horizon scanning products was seen as a key issue. End products needed to be tailored to meet customer requirements, both in terms of content but also in terms of prioritisation and presentation – brevity and relevance in particular. Commissioning processes should involve policy stakeholders, and horizon scanning analysts need to be aware of the policy agenda and political situation (ensuring content is focused and timely in delivery). Whilst political short-termism was seen as a barrier to horizon scanning, it was also seen as a hook for products to centre on by providing challenge and highlighting predicted long term implications.

Linked into improving the relationship with customers was finding a **common language and communicating horizon scanning** more effectively. There seemed to be a general concurrence that for horizon scanning to be understood and used within departments, it should use common, non-technical language. The diverse array of academic and commercial horizon scanning products was highlighted as a large knowledgebase to draw upon, and analysts should be able to translate that work and draw out its relevance to policy makers.

Another recurring theme was the requirement to **demonstrate the impact of horizon scanning and promote accountability**. Several examples were given of the impact of horizon scanning in providing challenge to policy formation (or even the lack of policy formation). Practitioners highlighted how other countries ensure specific horizon scanning products are brought into the public domain. This allows for public challenge of policy decisions at odds with horizon scanning predictions. A variety of presentational options were also discussed.

Doing both of the above was seen as a way of **embedding horizon scanning** into organisations. Various ideas were suggested as to how this could be achieved in practice: for example rolling horizon scanning into wider analysis and promoting awareness, a peer-to-peer network of senior horizon scanning ‘champions’ and reporting directly to board level management. But the common thread was horizon scanning should run throughout a Department from working level to senior management: a part of day-to-day working.

Syndicates discussed four options for governance of horizon scanning activity: keeping the status quo, adopting centralised co-ordination, enhancing desk level engagement or departments focusing on their own independent horizon scanning structures. Across all four groups, the preferred model was a **centralised approach to the co-ordination of horizon scanning**. This could enable commissioning, provide senior level sponsorship, quality assure products and co-ordinate multi-departmental pieces, but should not be responsible for writing products itself. This centralisation would also enable greater sharing of products within government and would potentially also provide a conduit through which academia could access, and share their own, products.