



Navigating Uncertainty through Scenario Planning

Nonprofit Federal Policy Response Network
May 22, 2026



What is Elevate NP?

We are a regional movement of nonprofits, funders, and capacity builders working together to help organizations **access knowledge**, **build networks**, and **create greater impact** in the communities they serve.

What we're hearing...

- Organizations are in emergency mode
- Government and philanthropic funding uncertainty
- Long-term infrastructure and capacity gaps
- Collaboration is more important than ever

Scenario planning helps to **inform decisions amid uncertainty**

[The Bridgespan Group's framework](#) provides an approachable structure for scenario planning.



Continuous iteration

As circumstances change and as you learn more, new information is available

STEP 1: Identify key drivers at risk

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IDENTIFY KEY DRIVERS AT RISK

Develop and model scenarios

Create a portfolio of actions

Determine key trigger points



TIP: Don't get distracted by the small things

What aspects of your organization have already been or might be most impacted?

**STRATEGY/
PROGRAMS**



OPERATIONS



FUNDING



STEP 2: Develop and model scenarios



Construct **moderate, and worst-case scenarios** anchored in these key drivers and uncertainties, that reflect the full spectrum of possible outcomes

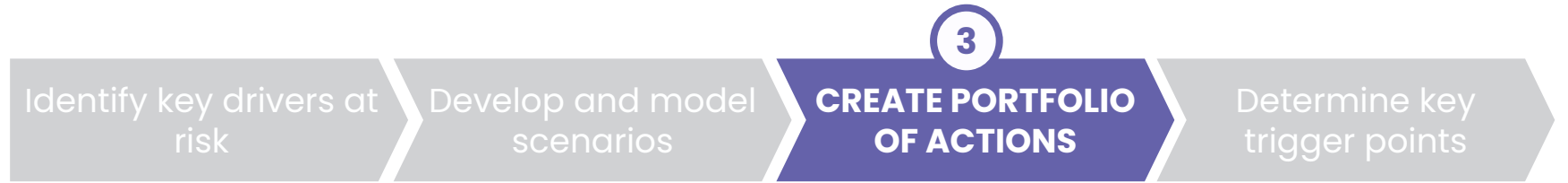


TIP: Don't underestimate



TIP: Precision isn't the goal

STEP 3: Create a portfolio of actions



Defend and protect our work today

Actions you can take in the short- and medium-term to keep the work you do today moving forward

Reimagine and reinvent for the future

Actions you can take that might inform major changes or more permanent shifts in how you do the work in the future

STEP 4: Determine key trigger points

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Identify key drivers
at risk

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Create portfolio of
actions

**DETERMINE KEY
TRIGGER POINTS**



Trigger point could be an **EVENT**

If X contract falls through, or program volume drops to XX, we'll pause the program / furlough staff



Trigger point could be a **DATE**

By X date, we'll need to decide whether to move forward with (or cancel) annual organization retreat



TIP: Establish (or update) your decision processes and roles so that you're ready to act when needed

Getting started on scenario planning

- **Do use a framework** like that of [The Bridgespan Group](#)
- **Don't work alone!**
 - Include senior leaders and your board
 - Consider talking with peers facing similar challenges
 - Seek outside expertise (e.g., legal counsel) if needed
- **Don't wait** on “no-regrets” actions



Local scenario planning clinics

Elevate NP is hosting **free**, 3-hour, in-person clinics around the region to help nonprofit leaders work through the process with the help of local facilitators. Dates and locations include:

- Thursday, June 18th – [Uniontown](#)
- Tuesday, June 30th – [Homestead](#)
- Wednesday, July 15th – [Canonsburg](#)
- Thursday, August 20th – [Butler](#)
- Thursday, September 3rd – [Pittsburgh](#)

Detailed information is available [on our website](#).