



# Scenario Planning

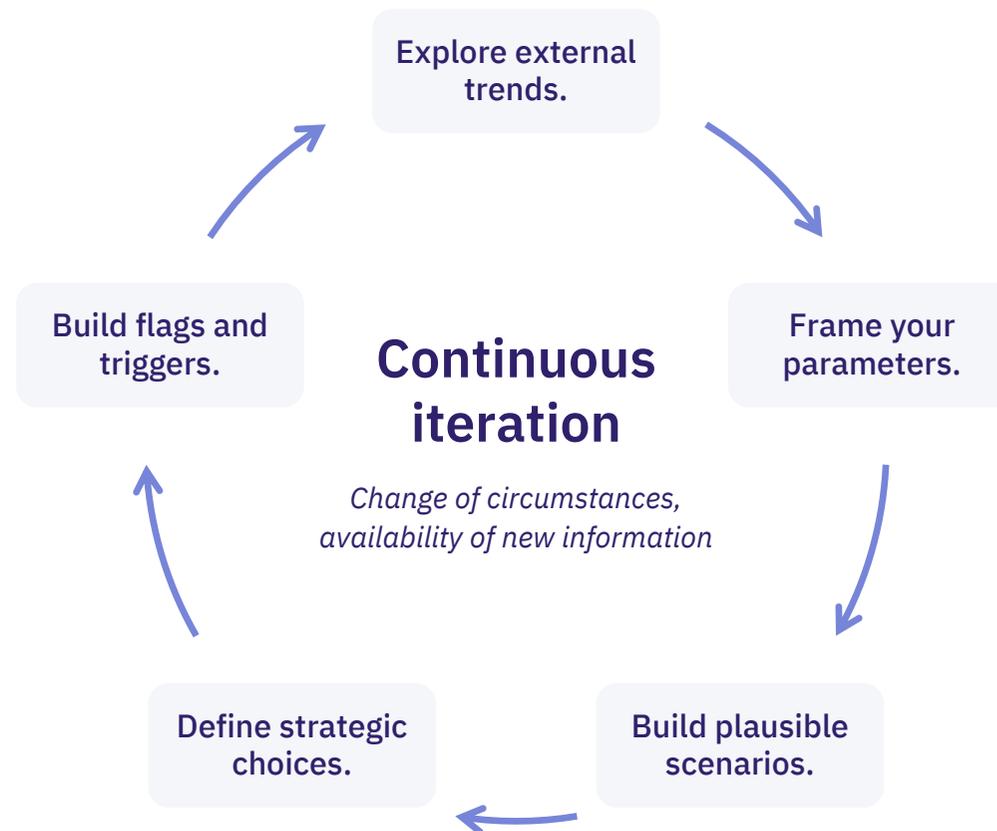
TEMPLATE

# Introduction

The **Scenario Planning Templates Toolkit** is a fillable tool designed to help you envision and prepare for plausible future scenarios. Following the step-by-step Scenario Planning Process Model, you will identify key drivers and uncertainties, develop diverse scenarios, assess implications, and formulate action plans.

Once you've filled in the scenario planning templates, the completed document will become a dynamic tool to guide strategic HR decisions and enhance organizational resilience. This is incredibly useful when engaging in activities such as strategic workforce planning and risk management, enhancing organizational agility, or facilitating change management.

You can also embed the insights gained from the scenarios into the broader HR strategic plan, ensuring that long-term HR initiatives are robust and adaptable to various future conditions.



**Scenario Planning Process Model**

# Step 1: External Drivers and Influences

Begin by conducting a PESTEL analysis, or incorporating an existing one you have already created, to provide a comprehensive view of the potential drivers (key trends or forces) and the implications they will have for HR. By the uncertainty level, add the likelihood that the driver and implication will occur by assigning it a range (high = most likely, low = unlikely).

## TIP



For an explanation on how to conduct a PESTEL analysis, download our guide from the course page.

PESTEL domain	Drivers	Implications for HR	Uncertainty level (high/medium/low)
 Political			
 Economic			
 Social			
 Technological			
 Environmental			
 Legal			

# Step 2: Frame Your Parameters

**Next, define the boundaries of your planning process before building the scenarios.** This will determine whether you are focusing on a short-, medium-, or long-term time frame, what you are hoping to explore when creating the scenarios, what is in and out of scope, and what assumptions are going to be made within these scenarios.



## AI TIP

Leveraging AI at this stage can reveal blind spots or overlooked risks that might otherwise go unchallenged. If you're unsure whether your assumptions are sound, try inputting the example prompt below:

```
Act as a critical analyst. Here are the key assumptions behind my scenario: [list your assumptions]. Which of these assumptions are most likely to be flawed or vulnerable to change, and why? What alternative perspectives should I consider?
```

Parameter	Prompt	Response
Time horizon	What time period are we exploring?	
Strategic question	What are we trying to anticipate or prepare for?	
In scope	What is included in our analysis?	
Out of scope	What are we intentionally excluding?	
Assumptions	What assumptions are we carrying into the process?	

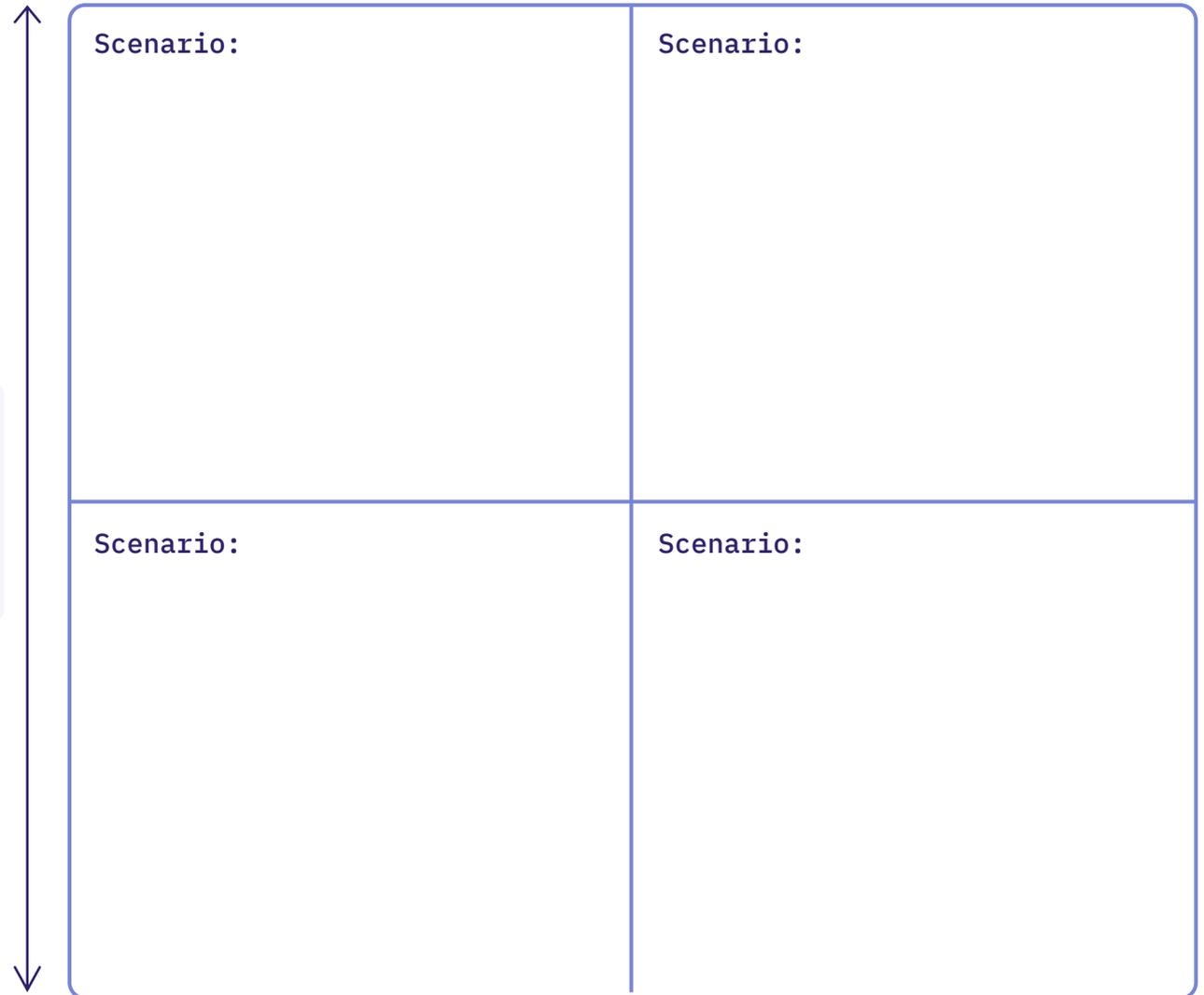
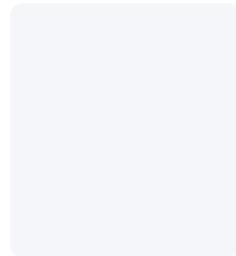
# Optional Step: Scenario Matrix

**Use this structured method to generate divergent, plausible scenarios from key uncertainties and their implications.**

To fill in the matrix:

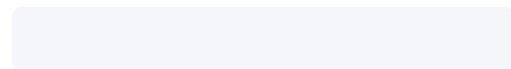
- Identify two high-impact, high-uncertainty drivers from your PESTEL analysis.
- Label one uncertainty on the X-axis and the other on the Y-axis of the 2x2 matrix below.
- Populate each quadrant by describing four scenarios based on the intersection of the two uncertainties. Explain what happens in each unique scenario using two to three bullet points.
- To proceed, choose three to four of the most relevant scenarios and move them into your scenario summary table on the next page for further analysis.

Uncertainty



←-----→

Uncertainty



## TIP



Use this matrix to stretch your thinking. Focus on plausibility, not prediction.

# Step 3: Build Plausible Scenarios

Use a matrix, drivers, or data-based logic to outline three to five different futures in the table below. You can focus on outlining one worst-case scenario, one best-case scenario, and a probable alternative scenario. Ensure the differences within each scenario are clear, as the scenarios are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Scenario	Description	Likelihood (high/medium/low)	Distinguishing drivers
Scenario A			
Scenario B			
Scenario C			
Optional			
Optional			



## AI TIP

If you're struggling with building scenarios, you can utilize a generative AI tool to help. To start, try inputting the example prompt below:

Act as a strategic foresight consultant in the [industry or function] sector. Given current trends and emerging signals, generate three to four distinct future scenarios that could affect [my organization/my HR function] over the next [No. of] years. For each scenario, briefly describe:

- A short scenario title and narrative
- The estimated likelihood of this scenario occurring (high, medium, low)
- The key drivers and uncertainties that distinguish this scenario from the others

Ensure each scenario represents a distinct and contrasting future (as if mutually exclusive) to cover a broad range of possibilities. Focus on plausibility, not prediction.

# Step 4.1: Scenario A – Details Page

**Flesh out each scenario in the following templates, using one page per scenario.**

- In the summary section, include a short description of the scenario.
- In the key drivers and assumptions section, expand on your PESTEL analysis by adding more detail about the key drivers and assumptions.
- List the potential opportunities and risks that can come from the drivers and assumptions below.
- Finally, list your HR objectives and determine the implications for them based on the scenario.

**Summary:**

**Key drivers and assumptions:**

**Potential opportunities:**

**Potential risks:**

HR objective	Key implications in this scenario

# Step 4.2: Scenario B – Details Page

**Flesh out each scenario in the following templates, using one page per scenario.**

- In the summary section, include a short description of the scenario.
- In the key drivers and assumptions section, expand on your PESTEL analysis by adding more detail about the key drivers and assumptions.
- List the potential opportunities and risks that can come from the drivers and assumptions below.
- Finally, list your HR objectives and determine the implications for them based on the scenario.

**Summary:**

**Key drivers and assumptions:**

**Potential opportunities:**

**Potential risks:**

HR objective	Key implications in this scenario

# Step 4.3: Scenario C – Details Page

**Flesh out each scenario in the following templates, using one page per scenario.**

- In the summary section, include a short description of the scenario.
- In the key drivers and assumptions section, expand on your PESTEL analysis by adding more detail about the key drivers and assumptions.
- List the potential opportunities and risks that can come from the drivers and assumptions below.
- Finally, list your HR objectives and determine the implications for them based on the scenario.

**Summary:**

**Key drivers and assumptions:**

**Potential opportunities:**

**Potential risks:**

HR objective	Key implications in this scenario

# Step 5: Strategic Response Options

**Once your scenarios and their impacts are clear, create three responses per scenario that determine how HR could react depending on how the future unfolds.** These are not necessarily fixed action plans, but directional responses dependent on the situation and should focus on translating insights into action.

Scenario	Response option 1	Response option 2	Response option 3
Scenario A			
Scenario B			
Scenario C			
Optional			
Optional			

# Step 6: Flags and Triggers

Now, populate the table below with the signals or external flags that would indicate the probability of each scenario occurring is increasing or decreasing. Then, determine the internal triggers or actions, which will help you respond to the external flags.

Scenario	External flags (signals)	Internal triggers (actions)
Scenario A		
Scenario B		
Scenario C		
Optional		
Optional		

# Step 7: Testing Your Existing Strategy

**Populate the template below to determine how well your current strategy holds up in each of your scenarios.**

Include the HR objective, it's relevance in each scenario, and what would need to adjust within your objective to accommodate the scenario's new parameters.



## AI TIP

Visit the appendix at the end of this resource to see how AI can be used to help stress test your strategy in each scenario.

Objective	Relevance in scenario A (yes/no)	What would need to change?	Relevance in scenario B (yes/no)	What would need to change?	Relevance in scenario C (yes/no)	What would need to change?

# Step 8: Continuous Iteration

**Last, manage your flags and triggers by identifying key data sources, setting a review schedule, and assigning someone to monitor changes that could impact your scenarios or planned actions.** Refer back to the rest of your scenario playbook during each review to ensure it's up to date. Use it to adjust assumptions, update scenario likelihoods, and revise actions as new information emerges.

<b>Flag/trigger indicators</b> <i>What's being monitored</i>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Review frequency</b>	<b>Owner</b>

# Appendix: Using AI to Stress Test Your Scenarios

**Optionally, you can use AI to stress test your scenarios to examine underlying assumptions, surface hidden risks, and explore alternative outcomes.**

Use can use the table below to:

- Identify how AI can help challenge and expand your scenario thinking.
- See example prompts you can use and personalize based on the tips to fit your own scenario and strategic focus.

## KEEP IN MIND



Remember, use AI to push your thinking, not replace it.

Use case	Example prompt	How to personalize the prompt
Challenge assumptions	Act as a strategic foresight advisor. Based on a given scenario, what key assumptions are being made about external conditions? Generate plausible counter-scenarios that challenge those assumptions.	Replace “given scenario” with the specific name or description of the scenario you're working with. Specify which external conditions are most central to your scenario (e.g., technology, talent mobility, economic stability).
Identify overlooked risks	What are three potential second-order risks HR leaders might face if an organization becomes overly dependent on a single workforce strategy? Identify a distinct risk across three different HR domains.	Define the workforce strategy in question (e.g., remote-first, local-only, heavy automation). Choose two to three HR areas relevant to your organization (e.g., DEI, leadership, engagement, compliance).
Test HR objective resilience	Assume a defined set of HR strategic objectives. For each selected scenario, assess whether each objective remains relevant and what adaptations may be required to ensure strategic fit.	List your current HR objectives (e.g., digital transformation, DEI, leadership development). Specify two to four scenarios from your scenario matrix. Ensure the language of the objectives matches your strategy language.
Forecast emerging signals	Analyze current workforce-related trends and policy developments. Identify early indicators HR teams should monitor that may signal a shift toward one of the outlined future scenarios.	Choose one scenario you want to monitor. Then, list two to three external domains to scan (e.g., regulation, labor market trends, tech adoption). Tailor the prompt to match the scenario’s drivers and assumptions.
Simulate workforce needs	Given a specific scenario, what workforce capabilities will become critical for HR to develop? Frame your response across multiple HR functional areas.	Insert the name or description of your scenario. Select HR functional areas relevant to your role (e.g., L&D, workforce planning, talent acquisition). Optionally, frame it around a specific job family or industry.