



Future Regions

The Local Government Institute of Wisconsin is excited to announce the kick-off of Future Regions!

What are Future Regions?

It is an initiative to bring key community stakeholders together to discuss the future of their community and prepare a plan for addressing an important issue that involves multiple organizations.

We will be using a planning process called Strategic Foresight. This entails looking at the future through a lens of multiple scenarios – different events that might unfold in the community over the next 20 years. Most planning processes look at the future through a single lens – the shared vision, the single desired future for the community. We believe the act of key stakeholders discussing multiple possible futures and then together creating a plan to address an important issue affecting them will make communities better able to deal with any issue that arises over time.

One of our objectives, since we are the Local Government Institute, is to engage local units of government as key community stakeholders. Future Regions will model the characteristics that local governments need to remain relevant to their communities:

- Collaboration
- Engagement
- Accountability

Why this project? Why now?

When you think about the future of local government in Wisconsin, do you feel like the sky is falling or the sun is rising?

In spring 2016, the Local Government Institute of Wisconsin surveyed over 40 subject matter experts about their predictions for the future of local government in Wisconsin. The survey was part of a yearlong project to explore the future of local government in our state. When subject matter experts were asked, "What's the highest potential for local government?" half responded, "Maintain existing services levels."

For many, the sky is falling.

The Local Government Institute of Wisconsin (LGI) is not satisfied with this grim, potential future. We believe we have a choice: we can continue to bemoan our current existence, or we can take a cold, steely look at the future and ask, "How can we reinvent ourselves? How can we rethink and refresh our

organizations to work better for a new era?” The Local Government Institute of Wisconsin has chosen the latter road, with some inspiring and positive outcomes.

LGI used the process of strategic foresight to get beyond the day-to-day, budget-to-budget, crisis-to-crisis mode of running our cities and villages. In a one-day session in Stevens Point on June 28, 125 people gathered to explore the question, “What is the 20-year future of local government in Wisconsin?” The results were inspiring.

What is the future of your community? What can you do to help shape it?

The key insight from last year’s work is that the future doesn’t just happen to our communities. Our communities can be proactive and shape the futures they want. We don’t have to wait for the other shoe to drop. We don’t have to believe that the sky is falling. We can choose to make the sun rise. Specifically, LGI discovered three factors that will make Wisconsin communities more resilient and vibrant in the future:

- Collaboration
- Engagement
- Accountability

Now, LGI is rolling out a new opportunity for communities in Wisconsin to understand and shape their futures. The LGI Future Regions program will help 9 self-determined regions over the next 3 years become future ready. Any configuration of towns, villages, counties, cities, etc. dedicated to working together to create a brighter future can apply to be a “Future Region.” If selected, Future Regions will join Rebecca Ryan, LGI’s Resident Futurist to engage in a strategic foresight process¹ that will:

- **Promote collaboration:** Future Regions will assemble and work with a dynamic and diverse group of participants to complete the Future Region process. This means going beyond the usual players! Successful Future Regions will build partnerships across the public and private sectors, engage multiple generations of thinkers, and solicit broad community feedback.
- **Deepen engagement:** Future Regions encourages participation from all major segments of the community – those demographics who have traditionally been in power and those not. We will conduct multiple professionally facilitated workshops. These workshops will engage Future Regions’ teams in new and dynamic ways. The workshop process is aimed at learning a compelling and ambitious method to meet the future with your community intact. It is based on strategic foresight: identifying trends, imagining the region’s possible futures, choosing a preferred future, and building strategies and teams to activate the future.
- **Build Accountability:** Future Regions will walk away from this process with a 20-year Vision for the future of their region.

How does the Future Regions program work?

Each year, for the next three years (2017, 2018 and 2019), LGI will solicit applications for potential Future Regions. Applications for the 2017 program are due on June 30th. If selected, Future Regions will engage in 4 key stages of the process with LGI’s Resident Futurist, Rebecca Ryan:

¹ What is strategic foresight? Strategic Foresight is a multi-step process to help you and your community get a handle on your future. Foresight is based on trends that enable you to see what the future may be, and then build the future you want. It’s a professional, multi-step process that’s used by NGOs, the military, and Fortune 500s to anticipate the future and be future ready.

1. Identify Trends Likely to Impact our Region’s Future;
2. Defining A Preferred Vision for the Future;
3. Create a Plan for the Future;
4. Implementation.

All told, Future Region’s will work with LGI and Rebecca Ryan from August 2017 – September 2018.

What’s the investment?

LGI is contracting with Next Generation Consulting to facilitate the Future Regions workshops. LGI will be underwriting 50% of the cost of each workshop. The cost of participating in the Future Regions initiative depends on the population of the communities participating. Costs are estimated as follows:

<u>Population</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>	<u>LGI Share</u>	<u>Local Share</u>
Less than 150,000	\$35,000	\$17,500	\$17,500
151,000 – 499,999	\$48,000	\$24,000	\$24,000
Over 500,000	\$70,000	\$35,000	\$35,000

In addition to the costs shown above, the local share also includes expenses for hosting the events associated with the program. Participation in the program includes access to the Polco civic engagement platform - <https://polco.us/> - for each participating community group.

For example, let’s assume a municipality and three of its surrounding townships and a community organization are interested in participating. Forty miles away, another set of communities is interested. They could both participate in a Future Region event for their region. The population threshold will be determined by adding the populations of all participating jurisdictions within the region. The cost to all participants will be the local share shown next to the population category. Within each region, participants will decide how to come up with their local share. Allocating the local share across the multiple jurisdictions participating should make this an affordable event for just about any locality wanting to participate.

How can I learn more?

To learn more about the Future Regions project, please visit http://www.localgovinstitute.org/future_regions. LGI and Rebecca Ryan will be hosting online Q&As on Wednesday, May 3rd from 12-1pm and Tuesday, June 6th from 12-1pm. Both sessions will be recorded and available for viewing at the website listed above.

If you have specific questions, please contact Gary Becker at gary@localgovinstitute.org or by calling 608-960-2850.

How do I apply?

After May 1st go to www.localgovinstitute.org/future_regions to review the Future Region criteria and to complete an application. All applications for the 2017 program must be submitted by 11:59pm on June 30, 2017. Applicants will be informed of the LGI Board’s decision by the beginning of August.