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Futurist Industry Association Develops Foresight Competency Model

- Promoting the professionalism of futurist occupations
- Utilizing the Competency Model Clearinghouse User's Guide
- Applying the futurist approach to real life scenarios

Introduction

Question: What is a futurist?

Answer: A futurist helps others to anticipate and influence the future.

Founded in 2002, the Association of Professional Futurists (APF) is comprised of futurists with a range of titles, including strategic foresight professionals, change strategists, technological futurists, design futures professionals, foresight practitioners and chief ideation officers. APF members utilize such methods as scenarios, emerging issues analysis, environmental scanning, trend analysis, and visioning to help a wide array of entities navigate uncertain futures. Futurists work in large and small businesses, governments and non-profits, as teachers and researchers in education, and as consultants or as permanent staff.¹

APF developed a Foresight Competency Model following the steps outlined in "A Guide for Developing Competency Models," and accompanying tutorials from the Competency Model Clearinghouse website, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. The model is intended to demonstrate the recommended competencies that individuals preparing for or considering a futurist career ought to possess.

Approach

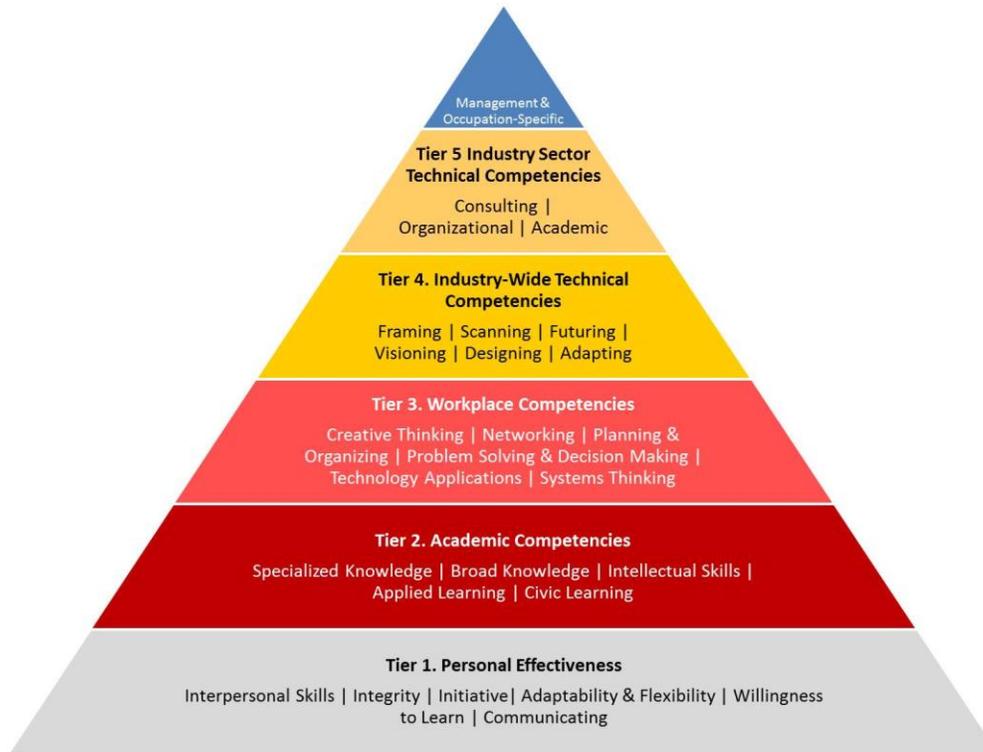
Although the potential impact of futurists is substantial, the professional itself is not widely known. "There are about 400 APF members,

perhaps representing 10% of the market of professional futurists, which would suggest about 4,000 at the higher end," posits Andrew Hines, Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator, University of Houston's Graduate Program in Foresight. The University of Houston, one of only a dozen educational institutions in the world to offer a graduate degree in foresight, has offered a Master's degree program in foresight studies since 1975. "Two thirds of the students who enter our program already have a futures-related job," says Professor Hines. "They want to take it to the next level so that they can provide more future-friendly innovations, strategies, or policies."

"We developed the Foresight Competency Model to promote the professionalism of futurist occupations," says Professor Hines. "In 2013, we formed the Professionalization Task Force and developed a report, 'Exploring Potentials Roles for APF in the Professionalization of Foresight.' The report was approved by our Board in 2015, including our recommendation to develop the Foresight Competency Model."

In 2015, APF's Competency Model team, led by Professor Hines and a core team of Jay Gary, Cornelia Daheim, and Luke van der Laan, began their deliberations. "We were a very global group, with representatives from the U.S., Europe and Australia," says Professor Hines. "The tough step was agreeing on the Tier 4, industry-wide competencies," says Professor Hines. After due deliberations, the team agreed on six key Tier 4 competencies.

¹ Association of Professional Futurists, <http://apf.org/>



<http://apf.org/2016/05/03/draft-version-of-foresight-competency-model/>

Application of Competencies

The Foresight Competency Model reflects a “big picture” approach: the world as we know it, how it is changing and what it means for how we work and live every day. A specific example of that approach is manifested in a June 2014 report that the University of Houston Foresight Program developed for the Lumina Foundation, “The Future of Student Needs 2025 and Beyond,” which addresses all six Tier 4 competencies:

FRAMING: Scoping the project, defining the focal issue and current conditions, including a map depicting the six domains of student need: Living, Learning, Working, Playing, Connecting and Participating.

SCANNING: Identifying the “signals of change” or indicators of the futures by forecasting how various aspects of student lives will be different in 2025.

VISIONING, DESIGNING AND ADAPTING: Exploring what the forecasts suggest will be different in the future, what they mean in terms of student needs, and how higher education and the Lumina Foundation might respond to those changes.

Next Steps

The Foresight Competency Model provides a shared view of what professional futurists consider to be central to carrying out foresight work. It is based on today’s landscape and will necessarily evolve and be revisited and updated.²

Related Links

Association of Professional Futurists
<http://apf.org/>

University of Houston Futurist Program
<http://houstonfutures.org/>

Lumina Foundation, The Future of Student Needs: 2025 and Beyond
http://www.houstonforesight.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FutureStudentNeeds2025_LR.pdf

² Association of Professional Futurists, <http://apf.org/>