



## DEFINITION OF XSP

Exploratory scenario planning, or XSP, helps community members prepare for probable, desired, and uncertain futures while pursuing an overarching vision, rather than relying on a single, presumed future. It explores the root drivers, or causes, of possible futures, allowing planners to consider multiple potential paths and makes the tool highly useful in planning for uncertainty.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Driving forces:** Driving forces are factors outside of one's control (or over which one has very little control) that are therefore uncertain and can affect the future.

**Future states:** Future states, also called "end states" or "outcomes," are the possible subsequent conditions of a driving force.

**Strategy:** Strategies are concrete actions a community can take in response to projected scenarios. They could be steps taken by an institution (such as the county) or actions people can do individually. There may be strategies you would choose to implement for more than one scenario. Strategies can help you attain, avoid, or adapt to anything in the scenarios.

**Transformational strategies:** Strategies that require institutional changes to be successful. Examples might include water rights transfers, development of drought resistant crops.

**Robust strategies:** Robust strategies lay out actions that work well to respond to a wide range of possible futures.

## MESA COUNTY, COLORADO EXPLORATORY SCENARIO PLANNING EXERCISE

The following information is a companion to the video *Sowing Seeds: How Scenario Planning Can Help Agricultural Communities Build a Resilient Future*.

In March 2023, a consortium of Mesa County, Colorado community members, guided by the Mesa Conservation District, gathered to apply a process called Exploratory Scenario Planning, or XSP, to envision a more resilient future for their county. Rather than relying on a single, presumed future, XSP helps communities prepare for probable, desired, and uncertain futures while pursuing an overarching vision. XSP encourages communities to explore the root drivers and causes of possible futures and allows participating communities to consider multiple potential paths.

Mesa County's two-day XSP workshop was attended by more than 50 participants and facilitated by local and regional water and land use experts. Participants identified approximately 250 strategies to address the six scenarios they developed during the workshop. A month later, a dozen Mesa County XSP participants came together to determine top priorities and begin developing implementation action plans.

They selected and aggregated strategies for implementation, encompassing approximately a third of the potential actions identified during the workshop. For the 13 composite strategies, initial action plans being developed and implemented include ways to:

- establish a local watershed group to continue building collaboration amongst all stakeholders and facilitate securing funding and implementing priority strategies; and
- develop local agricultural markets to strengthen the connections between agriculture and the larger community, to facilitate the development and marketing of drought tolerant crops, and to provide revenue to sustain local farming.

Other potentially transformative strategies prioritized for implementation include:

- addressing issues related to water markets that could result in transferring water rights;
- creating incentives or regulations for improving the measurement of water use; and
- diversifying revenue sources that can sustain agricultural lands through agri-tourism and other revenue-generating opportunities.

To follow the ongoing efforts to maintain a strong agricultural economy in Mesa County, Colorado, visit [mesacd.com/xsp](https://mesacd.com/xsp).