

The image features a long-exposure photograph of a starry night sky. The stars have created numerous concentric, circular light trails in shades of green and yellow, radiating from a central point. The trails are most prominent in the upper half of the frame. At the bottom, there is a dark silhouette of a mountain range. A thin, horizontal line of light, possibly a meteor or a satellite, streaks across the lower portion of the image, transitioning from yellow to orange and red.

Institute for Alternative Futures

Our Vision for Our Work and Our World

The Institute for Alternative Futures leads in the discovery and creation of preferred futures. People in organizations, communities and governments benefit from our drive to constantly think beyond the edge. We develop and teach our methods and processes. We plant the seeds for endeavors which will be sustained beyond our lifetimes.



Our staff, individually and collectively, are recognized and respected as catalysts for transformation. Our staff and clients are partners in a journey. We are guides and advocates, not for the destination, but for the search. Evidence of our work is abundant and clear. Leaders inspired by our work are more inclined and more capable of thinking in a futures context. Their decision-making is recognizably more strategic, systemic, global, and humane. The organizations they serve reflect the health instilled by vision and integrity.

We are idealistic and enterprising. Our creative adventures at the margins are anchored and supported by financial and systemic strength at the core. We are driven by compassion, fulfillment and service. We are constantly and wisely investing in our people, our infrastructure and our alliances. Quality of life matters. We live and perform in the moment while consciously creating alternative futures and expanding opportunities for future generations.

Have you reached one of these Leadership moments...

When change is coming fast and your people are caught between fear and hope.

When what you were sure you knew starts to look shaky and your smartest people don't have good answers.

When times are good but you sense these conditions will not last.

When you are too busy to find time to consider new strategies that might offer greater opportunities.

When everyone is running hard but they have lost that special spark that vision and purpose give to our lives.

When you need goals to unite people and guide their key decisions and everyday actions.

When you are wrestling resistance to change and need to open people's minds to embrace new possibilities.



The Institute for Alternative Futures helps you create the future you want.

We have methods, processes and tools to scout what could happen in the future and how it might affect your organization. This learning is not enough to transform any organization or situation. You also have to understand the aspirations people have for their future. When you can connect the opportunities of the future with the aspirations people share, you can lead real and lasting change. The Institute for Alternative Futures calls this practice aspirational futures.

Our founders made an important choice 30 years ago. They decided IAF would be a nonprofit institute that seeks out clients who can shape the future for their industry, profession, field, community or country. Whether you are a nonprofit CEO, government official or corporate executive, we encourage you to discover a preferred future that other stakeholders will value as much as you do. We also bring this awareness of corporate citizenship into our proprietary work through our for-profit subsidiary, Alternative Futures Associates.

Our core team of futurists is based in Alexandria, VA. We enjoy this access to the nation's capital and its leaders and learning opportunities. Our futurists draw from many different disciplines including futures studies, political science, public administration, business management, medicine, economics, communications, organizational learning, psychology, marketing, and technology and science policy. We are not experts in your field. We can be experts in your field of vision because we are continuously learning and connecting to aspirations across many different fields and sectors.

You can find descriptions of our past work, information on our futurists, and examples of our futures research, tools and project reports on our website, www.altfutures.com

Institute for Alternative Futures Briefly

Founded 1977 as a nonprofit institute

Expanded with for profit subsidiary, Alternative Futures Associates

Founder and Chairman, Clem Bezold and
President, Jonathan Peck

Headquarters, Alexandria, VA

Practice Areas: Health, Associations, Education,
Government, Environment, Technology, Economics

Visionary leaders perform in the moment with both eyes on the future, a clear grasp on the aspirations of those they lead, and a finger pressed on the pulse of opportunity.

Aspirational Futures—A simple yet profound practice.

IAF has identified four overlapping and reinforcing phases in our practice of aspirational futures. In most consulting engagements, we use a mix of methods to guide you through the full cycle of aspirational futures. We customize our approach and methods to best fit your current situation and deliver the outcomes you need today to create the future you want.

Learning about Your Future

We bring you compelling images of alternative futures that challenge your assumptions. We rely on leading-edge futures research and our integrated knowledge of diverse fields to show you patterns of possibilities where you may only see constraints. We detect threats that may lie just outside your awareness. We see surprises that create discontinuous change. We ask provocative questions to put a new frame around your expertise, world views, and current practices. And we help you stay alert to continuous changes in your environment. This is why we often hear from our clients, you changed the way we think.

Discovering Your Aspirations

Through our practices of dialogue, we engage your aspirations. We use the future to create a safe space to try on new ideas and attitudes. People are never as bound by their reality as they may believe. They may need to be reminded of their own history of personal bests and their core values. They may need to stop and listen better to one another. They often need to trust more in the good intentions expressed in a shared vision. This is why we often hear, you brought us together.

Choosing a Preferred Future

When others do strategic planning, they start inside your organization with what you want to do. We start with a keen awareness of changing conditions in your external environment and then consider what you need to do to align with emerging opportunities. We begin with your vision and then ask, what is the most audacious and yet achievable goal you could set. We guide you to wisely choose a preferred future. We value collaboration focused on results. We ask who will be needed to initiate these changes and then work to bring them into the decision making process. We ask which strategies you will need before proposing tactics you might use. Then we help you determine the first steps toward changes that signal the end of business as usual. This is why we often hear, you encouraged us to dream big.

"Summit attendees consistently told us that your presentation was among the most stimulating and engaging they had ever attended."

— Claus von Zastrow, Executive Director for the Learning First Alliance and its 2007 National Summit on Public Schools in 21st Century America

Leading Change

Through our experience in change leadership, we know any future worth creating will be difficult. Some of what we understand about leading change comes from watching and reflecting on failures. Too often what leaders believe to be failure is just an opportunity to learn how to succeed in their new context. You may need a new business model, a revised organizational structure, different strategies or new ways of working together as partners in your shared vision. We care about your success and will be your coach for as long as you need us to gain the momentum for change. This is why we often hear, you helped us take the important first steps toward our preferred future.

Learning about Your Future

▣Environmental scans

An environmental scan is a systematic way to anticipate trends, issues and new developments and understand their implications for your organization. IAF reviews key information sources to discover the forces of change that could catch you unaware and unprepared. This is an efficient way to transfer vital futures knowledge to your organization.

▣Forecasts

Forecasts project what could happen in an area of uncertainty that is especially important to your organization. IAF uses both plausible and provocative forecasts to help you test your assumptions about how the future will unfold. Because forecasts explore critical uncertainties, leaders can use them to assess their options for shaping the future.

▣Scenarios

Scenarios are stories designed to help organizations imagine what could happen in an expected, feared or preferred future. They give leaders much more than a Plan B. IAF uses scenarios to free people from believing their destiny is already determined and limited in its possibilities. They see new ways to be strategic and creative about their future.

▣Simulations

Learning about the future by living it through a simulation is powerful. Leaders can explore the advantages and consequences of potential decisions before making them. IAF has seen simulations turn stakeholders into collaborators with the confidence and the capacity to act together to create the future.

▣Speeches

Keynote speeches and presentations can help frame the future of your domain and offer provocative perspectives that will get your organization thinking and talking about change. IAF futurists can provide a top level view of important patterns of change affecting your world.

▣Executive and Board Briefings

What leaders need to know to be effective in changing conditions can get overwhelming. Summary reports and meetings to the leadership of your organization can ease them into the futures thinking process, get them up to speed and help them see the benefits of futures thinking. These briefings can help you test your organization's readiness for change.

☐ Leadership Workshops

In this era of distributed leadership, many people need to learn together about the future to promote change. Whether you are a national organization with local affiliates or offices or a multi-division operation, these workshops can help get everyone on the same page ready to move forward. IAF can facilitate full or half day workshops that introduce futures thinking and share futures knowledge of specific interest to your organization.

"IAF offers a great school for sharpening your future planning processes. Basic skills are underpinned by a wealth of real world experiences and reference cases. In short a true one-step shop for futurists."
— Wiser Futures workshop,
participant
World Future Society, 2007

"The Environmental Scanning presentation focused us on the need to not only look at our future but to address the fact that ASME in order to continue being the premier society must be ahead of the curve."

— Terry E. Shoup, 2006-07
President, ASME, a
professional organization for
mechanical engineers



Discovering Your Aspirations

▣ Dialogue

Leaders are often unaware of their own assumptions as well as those of others. When you suspect these unconscious assumptions inhibit your progress, the process of dialogue invites your organization into an open-ended, nonjudgmental conversation. IAF uses dialogue to create shared meaning, clarify aspirations, gain insights about your present and future identity and prompt innovative thinking.

▣ Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Appreciative inquiry opens up the full time continuum for your organization. The AI process helps you value your past accomplishments and identifies those strengths and values you want to carry forward into your future. AI involves satisfying conversations that celebrate your organization's identity and illuminate the aspirations that can be the foundation for vision building and strategic planning.

▣ Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

People have different psychological preferences and those differences can become an asset for effective teams. IAF uses MBTI to help groups understand how individuals arrive at their aspirations and how the group can express a preferred future that honors its collective identity.

▣ Values Identification

Knowing what should not change is just as important as knowing what must change. Your core values will keep your organization centered on its authentic identity even while you are navigating significant change. IAF listens closely throughout all our processes for the values that form your aspirations.

▣ Evolutionary Spiral of Development

The evolutionary spiral of development refers to both the individual levels that people move through psychologically and the cultural levels that mark collective progress. In both cases the developmental path moves toward greater complexity, and each level transcends but includes the levels below. IAF uses eight levels of the evolutionary spiral to forecast how organizations and even societies will respond to an increasingly complex environment.

Choosing a Preferred Future

▣ Strategic Conversations

Leaders and their teams can get stuck in an overwhelming number of managerial duties and tactical decisions. By facilitating strategic conversations, IAF can help you open up the time and context to consider broader strategic topics. We help boards and executive teams see the big picture of changing conditions that may reframe everything you do.

▣ Strategic Issues

Many issues affect your mission, but do you have a clear grasp on which issues should define your organization and its leadership role? IAF can help your organization identify the priorities that will define you as a leader for years to come. We can help you discover which issues will sustain your value to members and stakeholders through the changes ahead.

▣ Vision

A great vision affirms the important and meaningful work people aspire to do together. IAF can work with you to find a vision that can hold your organization accountable to the future. This vision will guide your planning, shape your culture, and set expectations for decisions and behaviors that keep you on course to your preferred future.

▣ Strategic Frameworks

A great vision must be backed up with a clear plan for how to achieve it. In a strategic framework, your organization chooses a small yet audacious set of goals to achieve your vision. You define the strategies you will use, the competencies you must have, and the next steps you must take to begin transforming your organization. IAF can keep your planning focused on high impact initiatives critical to your future.

▣ Strategy Development

Strategies are the bridge between your vision and audacious goals and the pragmatic requirements of your present situation. Your strategies close the gap between your present condition and your preferred future. IAF can help you work smarter within your resources to leverage the forces of change and choose the most efficient route to get from where you are to where you want to be.

“Working with IAF was one of the landmark events for our business this year in terms of pointing a large group of people to future scenarios and new ways of thinking and engaging with our clients. IAF also worked with a small team of experienced leaders and strategists engaging in dialogue and scenarios to passionately discuss new directions and ways forward. Much of the nomenclature introduced by IAF and deduced during the meeting has now become regular reference points in company informal and formal discussions.”

— Stuart Cooper, CEO, Adelphi, a worldwide healthcare consultancy of the Omnicom group

Leading Change

▣ Innovation Workshops

Quite often Leaders recognize they need to innovate to achieve their preferred future. They may need new processes, organizational structures, practices and agreements that involve multiple stakeholders. IAF can facilitate design workshops that orient these stakeholders to the future requirements and enable them to co-create these solutions.

▣ Leadership Coaching

The nature and attributes of Leadership are changing. IAF can help you develop the qualities you will need to confidently lead in the future. We can be your trusted ally in thinking through the tough choices and sensitive relationships that may make or break your organization's transformation.

▣ Organizational Alignment and Development

Your organization was designed to succeed in the world you know rather than in the future you can now see. IAF can work with you to align your structure and culture with your vision. We can help you assess competencies, strategic alliances, and networks to achieve your goals. IAF can facilitate learning experiences for your leadership team and staff as they transition into new roles and skills.

▣ Thought Leadership

How can you share your vision and learning about a preferred future with other stakeholders and the public? IAF can help you establish thought leadership through multiple channels of communication. We can work behind the scenes to frame the foresight and insight for your leaders or front stage as recognized futurists speaking and writing on behalf of your preferred future.

▣ Stakeholder Summits

A preferred future needs many creators. IAF is skilled at facilitating stakeholder summits to bring your potential collaborators into a shared understanding of what you might achieve together. We know how to create a safe and creative space for exploring important changes.

Four Dimensions of Aspirational Futures

1. Learning about Your Future:
Understand major forces shaping your future
2. Discovering Your Aspirations:
Share what you want for your future
3. Choosing a Preferred Future:
Plan for the future you want to create
4. Leading Change:
Take action to move in your new direction



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