

# **The Use of Foresight**

## **What is Foresight?**

Foresight is a systematic approach, drawing on a set of tools, for anticipating the future. It permits preparation for diverse challenges with adequate lead time. Foresight does not predict or forecast the future, nor is it a strategic plan. Rather, the nature of foresight is to anticipate and create multiple, plausible futures that are possible and believable. These futures may be positive or negative, but in their diversity they bring into view issues and perspectives that may not have been initially considered.

Foresight carries the expectation that through the collective experience, imaginative abilities, and interactive knowledge of a wide range of expertise, a coherent view of a 10 – 25 year future horizon can be constructed. Foresight encourages participants to imagine possible futures without it being an extension of present thinking. Thus, it provides a means of liberating thinking.

## **The Value of Foresight**

The strength of foresight as a process is that it can accommodate uncertainty and diversity. As well it highlights longer term opportunities and vulnerabilities. The process identifies and accommodates the significant factors which are driving change and allows anticipation of and preparation for such change. Awareness of what futures might look like allows preparation for such futures, as opposed to surprise if they do come to pass.

Specifically, foresight engages multiple stakeholders across many disciplines and encourages the building of networks. By creating mental images, the meaning and understanding of possible changes become clearer. The foresight process offers a rehearsal for potential critical challenges and also serves as a tool to educate leaders, communicators and the public.

## **The AAVMC Foresight Project**

The use of the foresight process in this study will involve a series of developmental steps.

In the Scoping meeting, a selected group of participants will frame the environment for this study, what will be included in the study and what will not be included. This meeting will initiate the development of challenge questions for the future. It will also brainstorm parameters for the development of future scenarios and agree on the definition of scenarios. Finally it will confirm the expectations for the project.

In a series of two Workshops, two larger groups of diverse stakeholders will generate responses to the challenge questions and will develop future scenarios. Then, looking back from a perspective of 20 years in the future, they will consider what impact events, decisions, or actions may have had in the 20 year span from the present, that could have led to this future (back casting).

Finally, the same group of participants as were in the Scoping meeting will conduct an analysis of the findings of the two Workshops. They will consider what conclusions and recommendations could be drawn from the analysis. Based on these conclusions, they will initiate the creation of a vision and future direction. To conclude, they will validate the achievement of the initial expectations which they enunciated in the Scoping meeting.

A final report will be prepared and presented to the Executive Board of the Association of the American Veterinary Medical Colleges for their approval.