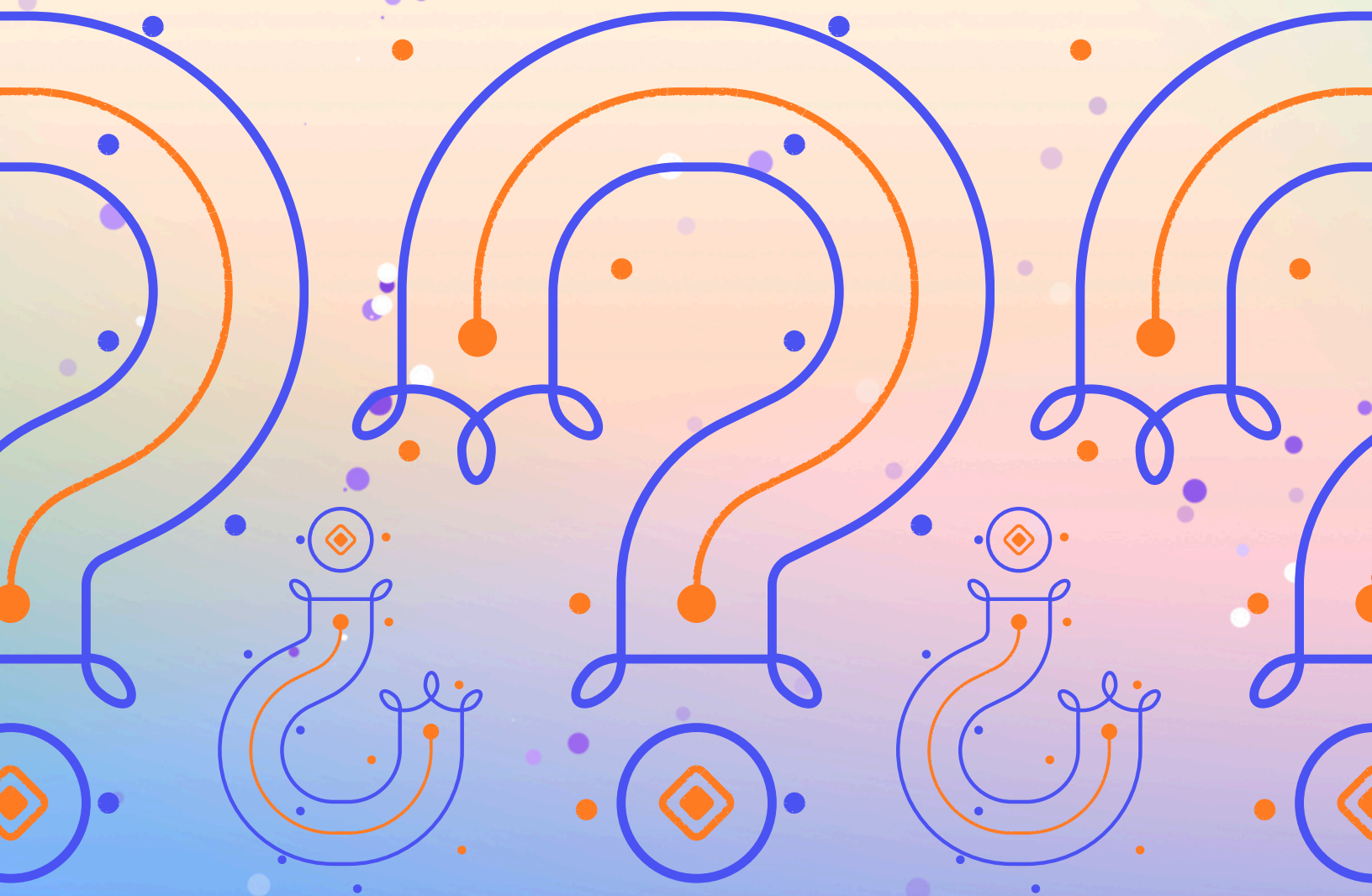


# COMPASS

THE GLOBAL VOICE OF PROFESSIONAL FUTURISTS



**BIG  
QUESTIONS**



ASSOCIATION OF  
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# A BOLD CALL FOR THE CREATION OF A U.S. OFFICE OF STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

**The FFAA seeks to galvanize the foresight community and government leaders in establishing a central foresight office in the U.S. government.**

***Editor's Note:** Several months ago, the Federal Foresight Advocacy Alliance (FFAA) launched a bold call for the U.S. government to create an Office of Strategic Foresight.*

*While the U.S. government employs futurists and foresight strategists throughout the government, serving in a wide range of departments, agencies and sub-agencies, the U.S. lacks a central office to lead and coordinate thinking about the future for the United States across the entirety of government.*

*For this article, futurists Robin Champ, Kara Cunzeman and Suzette Brooks Masters, co-founders and co-chairs of FFAA, responded to a handful of questions that Compass Magazine posed about this new initiative.*



## #1

### Could you please describe why you founded FFAA?

Other governments (the European Union, Canada, Finland, Singapore, Wales, etc.) are seeing value in embedding strategic foresight into high level decision-making and experimenting with how to do that within their specific contexts and structures. The fact that the U.S. is not engaging in similar efforts is troubling and that's why we founded the FFAA.

Past efforts to enhance American foresight capabilities in government to date have not succeeded in meaningfully embedding strategic foresight at the highest levels and have rarely been public or coalitional.

We wanted to try a different approach. So, we set up the FFAA intentionally like a campaign, designed to raise visibility and awareness, to be inclusive and "big tent," and to spur excitement and broad engagement. We put out a [white paper](#) outlining why we need an office. And we invite organizations and individuals who agree with us that the U.S. needs to up its foresight and anticipation game in order to develop robust strategies and thrive through periods of tremendous change, instability, and opportunity to join us in calling for the establishment of a U.S. Office of Strategic Foresight.

## #2

### Why are you calling for a U.S. Office of Strategic Foresight, and why now?

We are calling for the establishment of a U.S. Office of Strategic Foresight because of the increasing complexities and uncertainties in our rapidly changing world that our government must respond to and work within. The need for proactive governance, better strategic planning, and the ability to anticipate and address future challenges has never been greater.

Establishing this office now will ensure that the U.S. remains competitive, resilient, and prepared to navigate future uncertainties effectively. Other countries are recognizing this need and developing new ways of governing with a more anticipatory mindset and approach. We think the U.S. should too. This is not a nice-to-have but a must-have capacity and approach to change how government officials think, plan, and act – from a reactive to a proactive posture.



Suzette Brooks Masters



Robin Champ



Kara Cunzeman

### #3

## Who is leading this initiative? Who can Compass readers contact if they want to get more involved?

The FFAA is an all-volunteer effort led by three co-chairs:

- Robin Champ, LBL Strategies
- Kara Cunzeman, The Aerospace Corporation
- Suzette Brooks Masters, Democracy Funders Network

Robin Champ brings extensive experience leading foresight and strategy in the federal government, with a focus on national security. Kara Cunzeman brings issue expertise on space, visioning, and interacting with and advising federal government agencies. Suzette Brooks Masters brings a focus on governance systems and practices that can make government function more effectively.



More information about us is available on [FFAA's website](#). The best way to reach us is by sending us a message on [FFAA's LinkedIn page](#).

## #4

### **Who else is behind this effort?**

We've recruited a blue-ribbon team of experts in foresight, strategy, management, and governance to serve as FFAA's advisory board members: Ari Wallach, Al Faber, James-Christian Blockwood, Maria Bothwell, Brian David Johnson, Cynthia Selin, Peter Scoblic, and Karthick Ramakrishnan.

They are academics, consultants, former government officials, organizational leaders and creatives. They all share in the belief that we are living through extraordinary times and that we need better capabilities to anticipate and prepare, contemplate varied futures, and do so across the entirety of government, not just in international affairs or matters of national security. More information about our advisors is available on [FFAA's website](#).

## #5

### **Do calls for establishing a U.S. Office of Strategic Foresight have the support of the current Administration and Congressional leaders?**

We launched FFAA on March 1, World Futures Day. To date, our call for the creation of a new office consists of a [white paper](#), socialization of the issue on social media platforms, and outreach to influencers in Washington, including select administration officials and House and Senate staff.

In the coming months, our goal is to continue to elevate the issue so it can gain traction, especially through the Presidential transition planning process. In addition, we are engaging in field-building activities within foresight and policy circles to bring collective expertise and resources to bear on this conversation. We know this effort will take time, but we're committed to pushing for these long-overdue reforms and innovations.

## #6

### **What would be the process for establishing this office and how soon do you think it could happen?**

It's still early and there are several possible paths that could lead to the creation of a dedicated Office of Strategic Foresight in the federal government.

An office could be created in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which is the FFAA's recommendation, the Executive Office of the President, or in a federal agency as a pilot.

It also could be created by executive order and stood up with staffing and resources from other parts of the U.S. government. But for longer term impact and sustainability, we believe this office will need Congressional support through legislation.

While operating in today's uncertain environment requires agility, it must also be balanced with a focus on the long game. A U.S. Office of Strategic Foresight would help ensure long-term success for our country.

## #7

### **What do you envision would be the key roles/duties of this new office in guiding U.S. policy, decision-making and, possibly, legislation?**

A U.S. Office of Strategic Foresight would play a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a national futures strategy, providing early identification of emerging opportunities and threats, improving strategy and policy formulation, enhancing adaptability and resilience, facilitating cross-disciplinary collaboration, and cultivating a long-term thinking culture. It would guide U.S. policy, decision-making, and potentially influence future legislation by providing foresight-informed insights and recommendations.

**#8**

## **Why should the average American taxpayer care that we have this new office?**

The establishment of this office would benefit the average American taxpayer by ensuring better governance, enhancing national resilience, improving strategic planning, and focusing on a proactive approach to examining future challenges that would contribute to shaping a better, more secure future for the nation.

A robust office of foresight deploying a whole-of-government approach to this discipline across all agencies could help the nation better prepare for disruptive events, be on the leading edge of new technology adoption and the opening of new market opportunities, as well as develop better policy frameworks and systems to deal with persistent and emerging challenges.

A well-functioning foresight infrastructure could reduce silos and contribute to better integration of information and understanding of trends to solve problems and identify opportunities.

**#9**

## **U.S. politics are fairly polarized at this time. Do you think this idea can obtain the bi-partisan support it will need to receive Congressional approval and funding?**

Achieving bipartisan support may be challenging given the current political climate, but in our initial interactions, many policymakers are in strong agreement that we have to improve our strategic approaches and decision-making because the world we live in demands it, and this need is urgent.

Highlighting the non-partisan benefits of strategic foresight, national resilience, and improved governance could help garner support across the aisle. Thinking about possible futures may surface areas of broad agreement among the American public and its elected officials.

**#10**

**Some organizational foresight groups, such as those in corporations, suffer when there is a change in leadership. What do you think this new office will need to do to survive changes in presidential administrations?**

To survive changes in presidential administrations, the new office would need to establish its value through tangible successes, build bipartisan support, and ensure its operations are structured to maintain continuity and adaptability across different leadership styles and priorities.

Some tangible ways we can help ensure success include language changes to OMB Circular A-11, modifying GPRAMA (Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act), and ensuring the leadership of the new office is not a political appointee, and that its leadership rotates on a staggered schedule that is not affected by political cycles. Bipartisan support for the office will be essential as well in ensuring that the office's mission is not overtaken by political considerations and maintains legitimacy across administrations.

**#11**

**If such an office were created, would this be a Cabinet-level position or a senior advisor role to the President of the United States? What about Congress?**

The short-term goal is to establish an office in OMB or the White House. In the future we believe a more robust department or Cabinet-level position should be established to further cement foresight across national decision-making at the highest levels. As far as Congress is concerned, it should establish a stronger foresight capacity, too, to guide its work and engage productively with the Executive Branch to inform the country's future course.



## #12

**There are a number of departments within the federal government that have foresight strategists who are working on foresight-related issues for their departments. If a new office is created, how would it interact with other departmental offices?**

The new office will connect and amplify the use of foresight across the U.S. government. Ideally, it would collaborate with existing departmental foresight offices, fostering coordination, consistency, and continuity in foresight practice across the government.

We also recommend the creation of an Interagency Foresight Coordination Council – convened and chaired by the director of the new foresight office. It would include each agency's chief foresight/strategy officer, to ensure effective representation and information-sharing across the USG. In addition, the office could help agencies build up their own foresight capacities.

## #13

**How would this new foresight office interact with intelligence departments – the NSA, CIA, FBI, the Pentagon, etc.?**

The new foresight office would interact with intelligence departments to leverage their expertise and insights, enhance horizon scanning capabilities, and ensure a comprehensive understanding of emerging threats and opportunities.

However, we must be clear that intelligence departments often rely on predictions and forecasting that are more accurate in the near term. This new office would be focused on foresight — more akin to thinking through scenarios and scanning signals in order to chart possible futures under conditions of uncertainty and complexity — looking farther into the future. Additionally, the foresight office would be able to consider both foreign and domestic trends through the context of what challenges and opportunities arise for the American people (the intelligence community is focused largely on foreign aspects).

**#14**

**How do you see this new office interacting with similar types of foresight offices that have been established by other countries?**

The new office would benchmark similar foresight offices established by other countries to share best practices, exchange insights, and foster international cooperation in addressing global challenges. It would also do so with the UN, European Union, and OECD, which are actively incorporating foresight into their planning and decision-making.

**#15**

**Some experts say that we are (already have) entering a new Cold War era, as tensions continue to rise with Russia as well as China, and where political blocks (BRIC) seek to redefine political dominance in the years and decades ahead. How would this new office play into that evolving reality?**

The new office would play a crucial role in understanding and navigating geopolitical complexities, assessing strategic implications, and informing policy and strategy formulation to ensure U.S. interests and values are upheld in an evolving global landscape. One foresight tool that would be critical to use for this would be scenario-based planning in order to explore various future scenarios that could unfold and help the nation identify innovative and resilient strategies across the critical uncertainties it faces.

## #16

### **What can the foresight community do to support this initiative?**

The foresight community can support this initiative by advocating for its importance, sharing relevant expertise and insights, fostering collaboration, and engaging with policymakers and stakeholders to promote wider adoption of strategic foresight practices and the creation of a dedicated office of foresight.

We welcome volunteers to write articles, host panels, and share ideas for how we can promote this effort. Finally, we need help identifying champions with influence who understand that our government must do things differently to pave the way for needed change. Of course, we hope you'll follow FFAA on LinkedIn, share our posts in your networks, and check out our website, [www.ffaa-us.org](http://www.ffaa-us.org).

## #17

### **If an Office of Strategic Foresight is funded and established, what do you think its impact will be?**

The impact of an Office of Strategic Foresight would be felt immediately through improved governance, enhanced strategic planning, and proactive consideration of current and emerging challenges.

Over the long term, this could contribute to shaping a more resilient, adaptive, and prosperous future for the nation and its citizens. At a time of great disruption and rapid change, hearing from our most senior officials about how to navigate that uncertainty and do so with confidence – not denial – will improve the public's trust in our leaders.

Most importantly it would help us define the vision we want for our country and align certified and trained strategists behind it — to ensure implementation across government and greater accountability.