A17
TOOL

THE INNOVATION CODEX · TOOLKIT

Future-Back Plan

Purpose. Start with a defined future outcome and plan backward so that scope and investment follow evidence.

What it captures. The target outcome and its horizon; the observable signal that confirms arrival; three to five backward milestones, filled in reverse from the outcome to today; the evidence that would confirm each milestone; the prerequisites between them; and the smallest next step that yields the most learning toward the first milestone.

When to use it. At the start of an initiative whose end state is clearer than its path, or when running the Future-Back Thinking exercise in chapter 2. Pair it with the Portfolio Tranche (appendix A7) to gate funding to each stage and the Go/No-Go Gate (appendix A9) to govern the transitions.

Common mistake. Planning forward from today's constraints, which anchors the plan to current limits and lets the horizon drift. Future-back planning fixes the outcome first, then asks only what must be true just before it, and repeats backward.

Decision rule. Define the outcome and its arrival signal before listing any milestone. If a milestone has no evidence that would confirm it, it is a hope, not a milestone, and does not belong on the plan.

Initiative or Project

Horizon *for example, about one year out*

Target Outcome *the defined future state you are planning back from*

Arrival Signal *the observable signal that confirms you have arrived*

Fill milestones in reverse, from the outcome back to today.

Backward Milestones *three to five, starting with the one just before the outcome*

Milestone (working back from the outcome)	Evidence that would confirm it	Prerequisite (what must be true first)

Smallest Next Step (now) *the step that yields the most learning toward the first milestone*

Owner

Date

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