



The State of Foresight in the U.S. Executive Branch

A Federal Foresight Advocacy Alliance Research Snapshot

November 2025

1. Introduction / Purpose

Every era of disruption brings with it a chance to lead. The United States now faces a defining moment, one where our institutions must adapt to a world that is faster, more complex, and more interconnected than ever before. Strategic foresight, the disciplined practice of exploring possible futures, equips leaders to navigate these shifts, anticipate risks, and turn uncertainty into strategic advantage. Yet just as the need for foresight grows, the federal government's internal capacity to practice it is under strain. This 2025 research snapshot by the Federal Foresight Advocacy Alliance (FFAA) examines that tension, highlighting both areas of decline and bright spots of leadership that demonstrate what's possible when long-term thinking is embedded in public decision-making. Strengthening foresight capacity across government is a prerequisite for delivering national competitiveness, resilience, and innovation in the decades ahead.

What is Strategic Foresight?

Strategic foresight is a disciplined approach to exploring a range of possible futures that can help decision-makers better navigate uncertainty. In the context of a strategic planning best practice, foresight is generally characterized as insight into how and why the future might be different from the present. Foresight practices include environmental scanning, trend analysis, and scenario-based planning, and other methods to engage individuals in thinking about the long-range future. While foresight is often considered as the "act of looking forward" so as to plan for the future, it is not the same as forecasting, which seeks to make statements or assertions about future events based on quantitative and qualitative analysis and modeling. Foresight is recognized as a best practice in crafting and implementation of national strategy by [OMB Circular A-11](#).

The [Federal Foresight Advocacy Alliance \(FFAA\)](#) believes in harnessing foresight to build America's national prosperity, global competitiveness and overall collective wellbeing now and into the future. In light of significant recent disruptions and changes to federal agency staffing and administration priorities, the Federal Foresight Advocacy Alliance undertook a snapshot study to assess the state of formal foresight practice across U.S. federal agencies in 2025. Specifically, this study seeks to understand how federal foresight programs have evolved over the past year, including trends in funding, personnel, and influence over decision-making processes. The findings aim to inform policymakers, practitioners, and the public about this critical capability and potential implications for U.S. governance and strategic readiness.

2. Results

Among the **33 foresight programs and units** we tracked:

- **73%** experienced a decline in funding, personnel, or influence in decision-making.
- **15%** of programs were completely eliminated in 2025 including, the National Intelligence Council's Global Futures Group, the Office of Navy Net Assessment, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's foresight function.
- **6%** reported growth or increased demand for foresight capacity, notably within the Department of Homeland Security, the Joint Concepts Division of the Joint Staff J7, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Figure 1 below illustrates the 2025 changes among the 33 U.S. agencies identified as formally using foresight. Additional data from the survey can be found in the appendix.

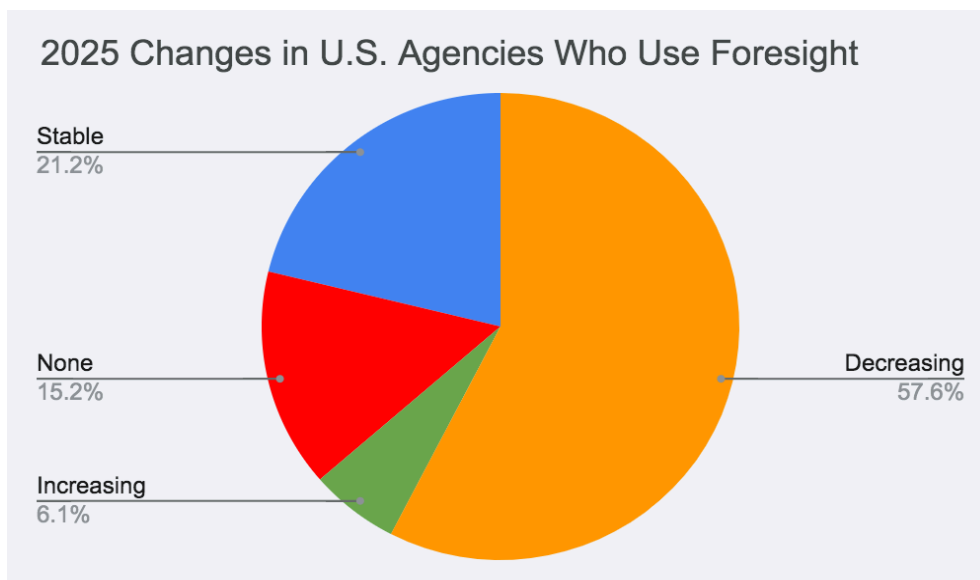


Figure 1. 2025 Changes in U.S. Agencies Who Use Foresight

3. Discussion

The findings suggest a contraction of foresight capacity across the federal government. This reduced capacity poses risks not only to government preparedness but also to the nation's ability to navigate complex, emerging challenges—from rapid technological change and severe weather events, to emerging risks to the homeland and public health crises. Failure to build foresight practice and expertise into our government institutions can also hamper our leaders' ability to shape a prosperous future for all Americans at a time of change and transformation at home and across the globe. It is precisely at times of rapid change and disruption like the 2020s that the disciplined use of foresight is critical.

Despite this overall reduction in capacity, there are bright spots: a few agencies continue to expand or integrate foresight into decision-making and drive impact at the highest levels, demonstrating that with leadership support and institutional investment, strategic foresight can deliver measurable value. Of particular note are the continued efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard, which has the longest running foresight program in the country (Project Evergreen), the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) Center for Strategic Foresight, and the Department of Homeland Security, [2] which has continued to evolve its practices to drive meaningful improvements in mitigating risks to our homeland [3].

4. Methodology

Building on Peter Scoblic's foundational research report, *Strategic Foresight in U.S. Agencies* [1], FFAA used a multi-source data collection approach:

- **Survey Distribution:** A survey was shared across FFAA's extensive networks. However, this only resulted in 14 responses despite multiple outreach efforts. Many of the emails bounced back due to personnel changes affecting federal workers in 2025.
- **Network Verification:** In addition, through personal and professional contacts and community outreach, FFAA identified 33 U.S. government organizations that currently or recently used foresight practices.
- **Cross-Referencing:** Data was cross-checked with historical records, experts within the foresight and strategy community, and limited use of AI-assisted review for validation of publicly known foresight offices.
- **Scope:** The analysis included federal government offices only, excluding contractors, Federally Funded Research Centers (FFRDCs), and academic programs. Only entities explicitly engaged in *strategic foresight*, not general forecasting or solely strategic planning, were included.

5. Recommendations

The United States is operating in a world that is faster-moving, more interconnected, and more unpredictable than ever before. Times of rapid technological, geopolitical, demographic and weather-related change and disruption are textbook cases for use of foresight. [FFAA's Case Statement](#), a white paper discussing the benefits of a centralized

federal foresight hub or office, describes how such enhanced and coordinated foresight capacity across the government can help decision-makers exploit nascent opportunities, create new markets, as well as mitigate emerging risks now and for decades to come. Cultivating these capabilities will advance our national competitiveness and prosperity.

Against this backdrop, the report's findings that foresight capacity in U.S. government institutions has eroded are concerning. Given the turbulent and uncertain environments we must navigate, we should see foresight capabilities more deeply embedded in both agency and legislative practice, not less. When we are limited in our collective foresight capacities, we risk being blindsided by the very futures we could have explored and prepared for: domestic attacks, infrastructure failures, public health crises, and other shocks that affect every American. We also cede strategic advantage to nations that are investing in long-term planning, scenario analysis, and future-oriented governance.

We recommend rebuilding foresight capacity to ensure our institutions are prepared for a range of futures, good and bad, and positioned to shape the best outcomes for the American people. Doing so requires steady, bipartisan commitment; sustained investment in training, tools, and talent; recognizing strategy and foresight as critical professional disciplines; and a culture that values long-range insight alongside near-term action.

FFAA will continue to track these trends and convene our partners across government, industry, academia, and civil society. We invite policymakers, practitioners, and concerned citizens to join us in championing the nation's foresight capacity so the United States remains ready to lead.

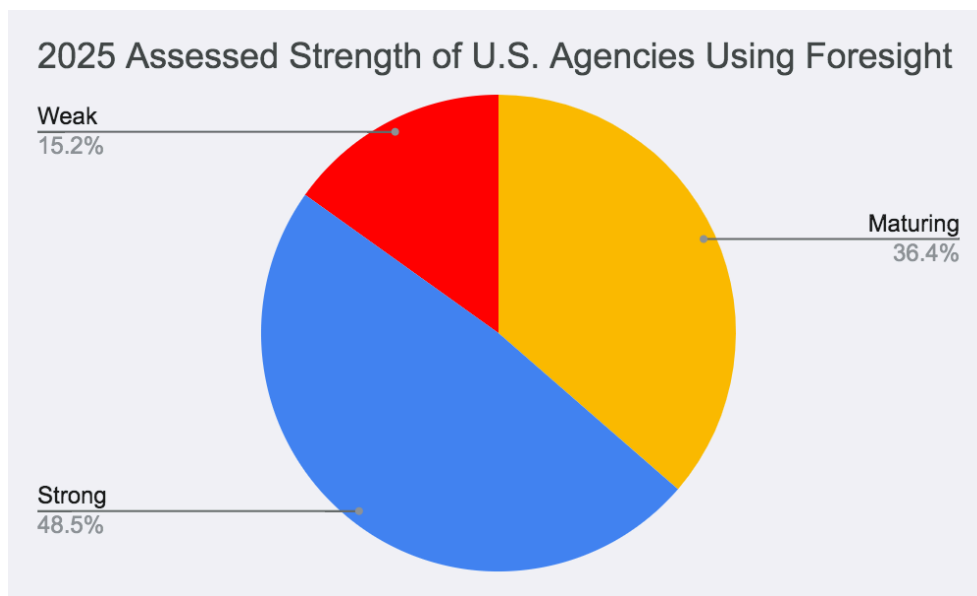
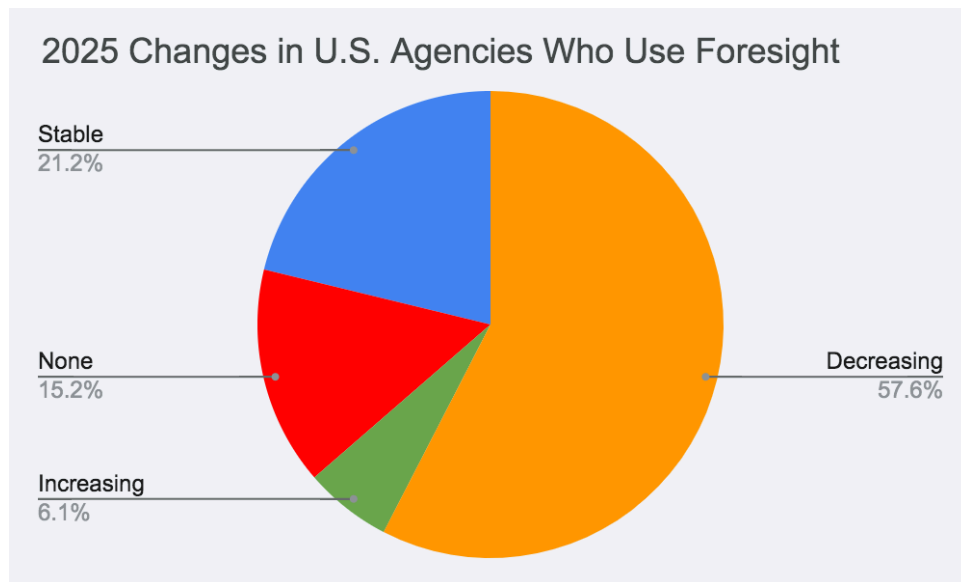
Please reach out to us on LinkedIn if you have additional information to share or want to join our community.

Appendix:

A. Subset of raw data from the survey and FFAA analysis

(Note: detailed data has been stripped to maintain anonymity of the reporting offices).

Anonymized Numbering for U.S. Agencies	Currently using foresight? (as of Aug 2025) 1= YES, 2 = NO	0 none 1 decreasing 2 stable 3 increasing	Strength of program (qualitative 0 none, 1 weak, 2 maturing 3 strong
1	1	2	3
2	2	0	2
3	2	1	3
4	1	2	3
5	2	1	2
6	1	1	2
7	1	1	3
8	1	1	3
9	1	1	2
10	1	1	1
11	1	2	3
12	2	0	1
13	1	2	2
14	1	2	3
15	1	1	3
16	2	0	1
17	2	1	1
18	2	1	3
19	2	1	2
20	2	1	3
21	1	1	3
22	1	1	3
23	1	0	2
24	2	1	2
25	2	0	1
26	1	3	3
27	1	3	2
28	1	1	2
29	1	2	3
30	1	2	3
31	1	1	2
32	1	1	2
33	1	1	3



B. Select anonymized quotes from survey participants:

"As a consequence of all the trauma inflicted by downsizing and RIFs, managers of all levels are paralyzed by all the uncertainty in an endless wait for guidance because they feel they lack needed context to make most decisions. This creates conditions stifling creativity and any innovative thinking beyond what is absolutely necessary in a day-to-day survival mode. That's the thing about trauma— survival takes up all the space and energy so planning, especially for the future, is just not within the organizational capacity right now."

"Foresight was growing and really gaining traction until this year. The impacts were being felt and while it was still in its infancy, the use was definitely picking up."

"Perverse incentives to seek certainty (ie probabilistic forecasting) rather than use imagination (ie foresight and forethought) - it has become a contested space between policy, strategy and intelligence functions, diluting effort and impact."

"Better information flows from grassroots might help identify emerging risks and opportunities. A rational longer-term budget cycle (two years) would reduce uncertainty and allow bureaucracies to better plan their budget expenditures. Actually applying structured analytic tools to the business of intelligence would offer foresight."

Citations:

[1] Scoblic, J. Peter. *Strategic Foresight in U.S. Agencies: Improving the Future and Building Capacity Across Government*. Washington, DC: New America, 2020.

<https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/strategic-foresight-in-us-agencies/>

[2] U.S. Department of Homeland Security. "What's the Future World Gonna Look Like?" *Science and Technology Directorate*, October 24, 2023.

<https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology/what-future-world-gonna-look>

[3] U.S. Coast Guard. "How the Coast Guard Is Planning for the 2040s and Beyond." *MyCG*, August 22, 2024.

<https://www.mycg.uscg.mil/News/Article/4266509/how-the-coast-guard-is-planning-for-the-2040s-and-beyond/>