

Strategic Positioning for Future Success:

Building Futures Literacy & Scenario Planning
in Schools

Ann Marsh Rutledge | Mount Vernon Ventures



ACIS Thanks ISU Insurance

**For Sponsoring Workshops at the
36th Annual Leadership Conference**



ISU Insurance Services of Colorado (ISU) is a 139-year-old independent insurance brokerage firm, partnering with independent schools on their commercial insurance, risk management and employee benefits protection.

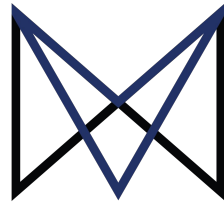


we are

MOUNT VERNON



**THE
MOUNT
VERNON
SCHOOL**



VENTURES



**MOUNT
VERNON
SCHOOL
ONLINE**



VENTURES

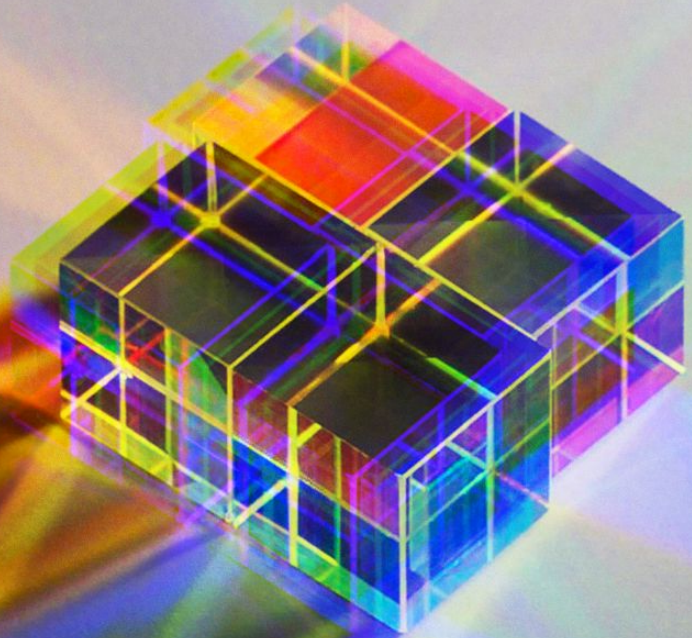
CONNECT

**Envision your
future self**



Essential Questions

- Why do we **need futures literacy**?
- How might we **prepare** for the futures?
- How might we **enhance strategic planning** by integrating future trends and scenarios?
- How might we cultivate the creativity, agility, and confidence necessary to position our schools strategically to **thrive amidst uncertainty**?



**Why do we need
futures literacy?**

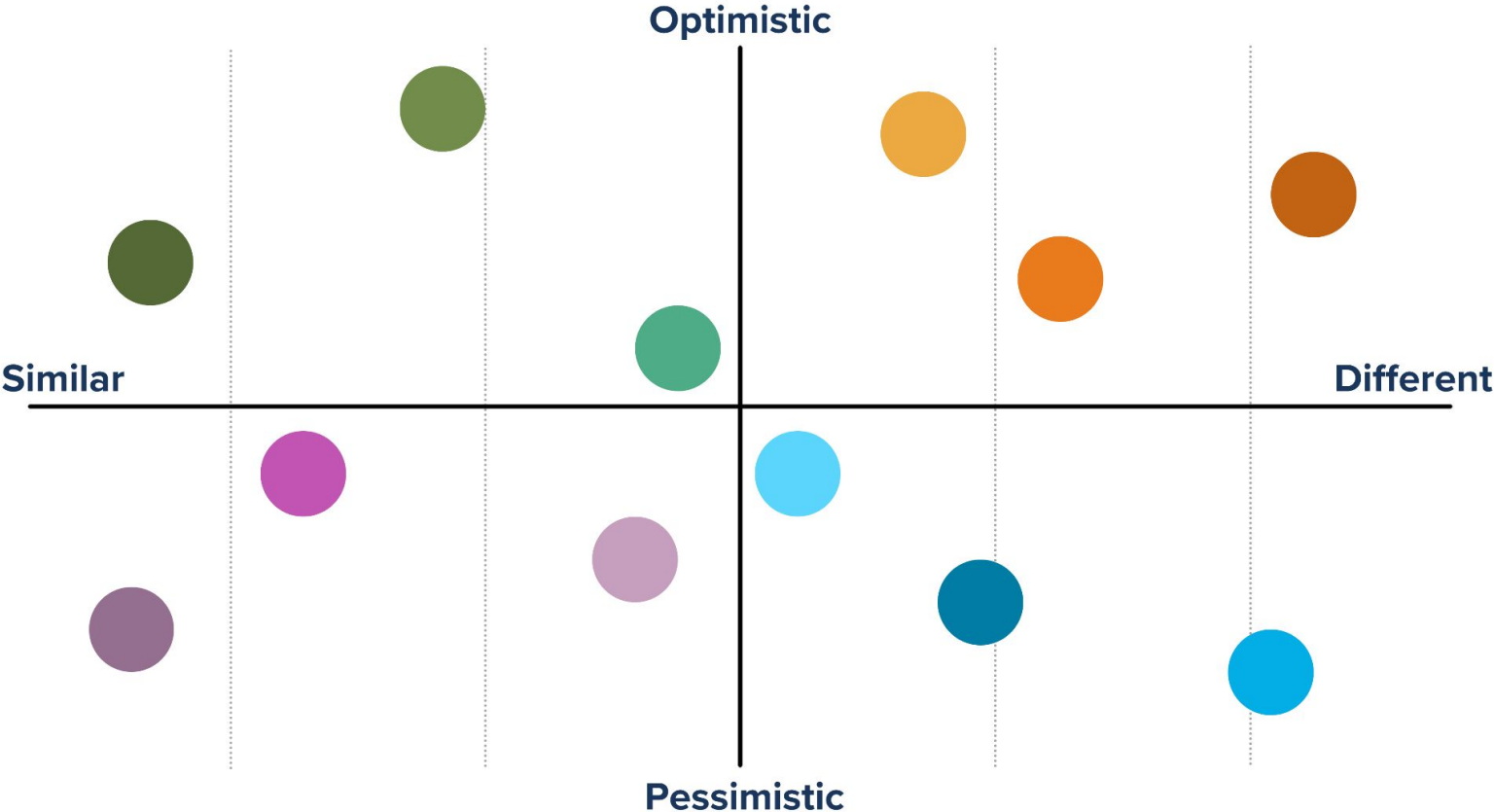
““

What school leaders need right now is a robust form of ‘futures literacy’ or a ‘universally accessible skill that builds on the innate human capacity to imagine the future in order to help people better understand the role of the future in what they see and do.

-Jared Colley et al, *Imagine Then Act Now: Futures Literacy for Learning Organizations*, Mount Vernon Ventures Transformation R&D Report, Spring 2024



Attitudes Towards the Futures



Global Risks Ranked by Severity

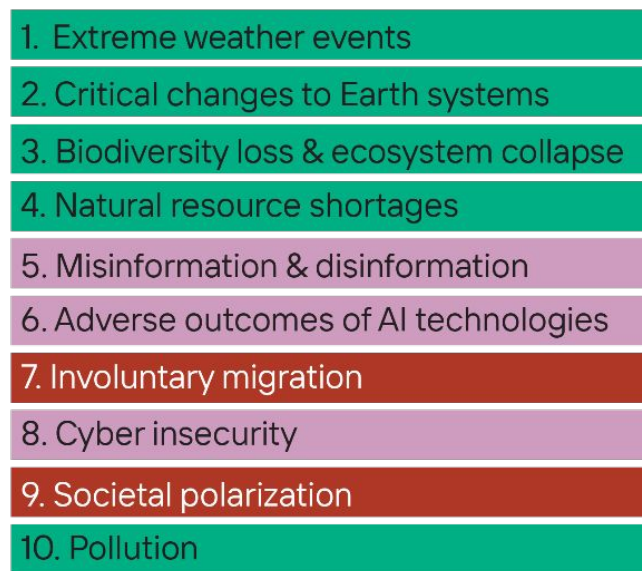
2 YEARS



ECONOMIC
ENVIRONMENTAL

GEOPOLITICAL
TECHNOLOGICAL

10 YEARS



SOCIETAL

Source: World Economic Forum Global Risks Perception Survey 2023-2024.

Politically charged rumors and conspiracy theories about Helene flourish on X

OCTOBER 3, 2024 · 9:39 AM ET

By [Huo Jingnan](#)

Source: NPR;
<https://www.npr.org/2024/10/03/nx-s1-5134866/rumors-conspiracy-theories-helene-social-media>



Marine One, carrying President Biden, flies above a storm-impacted area near Asheville, N.C., on Wednesday. Biden was visiting North and South Carolina to survey damage after Hurricane Helene. Social media sites, especially X, were filled with politically charged rumors and conspiracy theories about the hurricane response.

Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

ECONOMY | JOBS

Weekly U.S. Jobless Claims Rise Ahead of September Unemployment Report

Data hint of continued cooling in the labor market ahead of Friday morning's unemployment data for September

By [Matt Grossman](#) [Follow](#)

Oct. 3, 2024 8:58 am ET

[Share](#) [AA](#) [Resize](#)

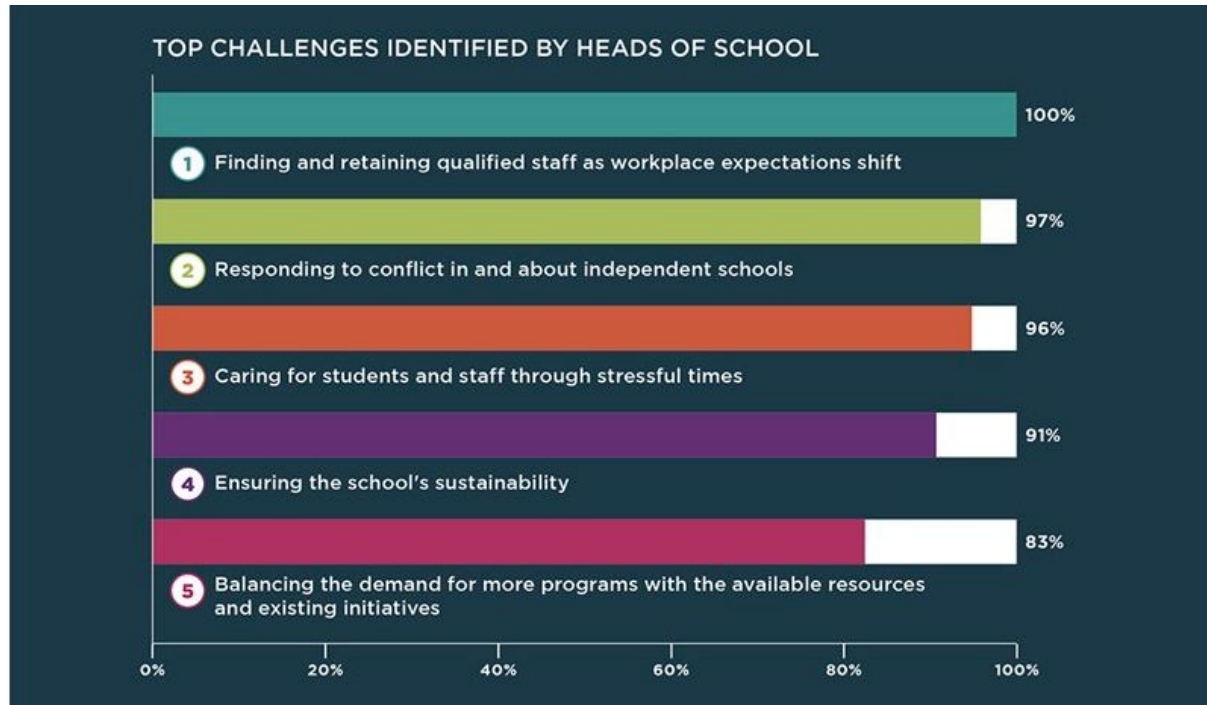
[Listen](#) (1 min) [⋮](#)



More Americans filed for initial jobless benefits last week PHOTO: ALLISON JOYCE/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Source: The Wall Street Journal;
https://www.wsj.com/economy/jobs/weekly-u-s-jobless-claims-rise-ahead-of-september-unemployment-report-82ae30c6?mod=economy_lead_post1

Identify Current Challenges



Source: National Association of Independent Schools, Hot Issues Survey, 2023

6699

There has hardly been a time in history when the strategies of players in so many industries and sectors needed fundamental rethinking. To remain relevant, all these players are increasingly being called on to reimagine their strategies to achieve innovative value at lower costs.

-W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne, Blue Ocean Strategy, Harvard Business Review Press, 2015, xvi





**How might we
prepare for the
futures?**



6699

Futures Thinking is about seeing new possibilities. Thinking about the future is also about imagining. It's about transforming how we think. It's about creating a map to the future and looking for the big areas of opportunity...How can we shape the future to make it more equitable? How can we amplify learning outcomes? What do we need to do to achieve these outcomes?

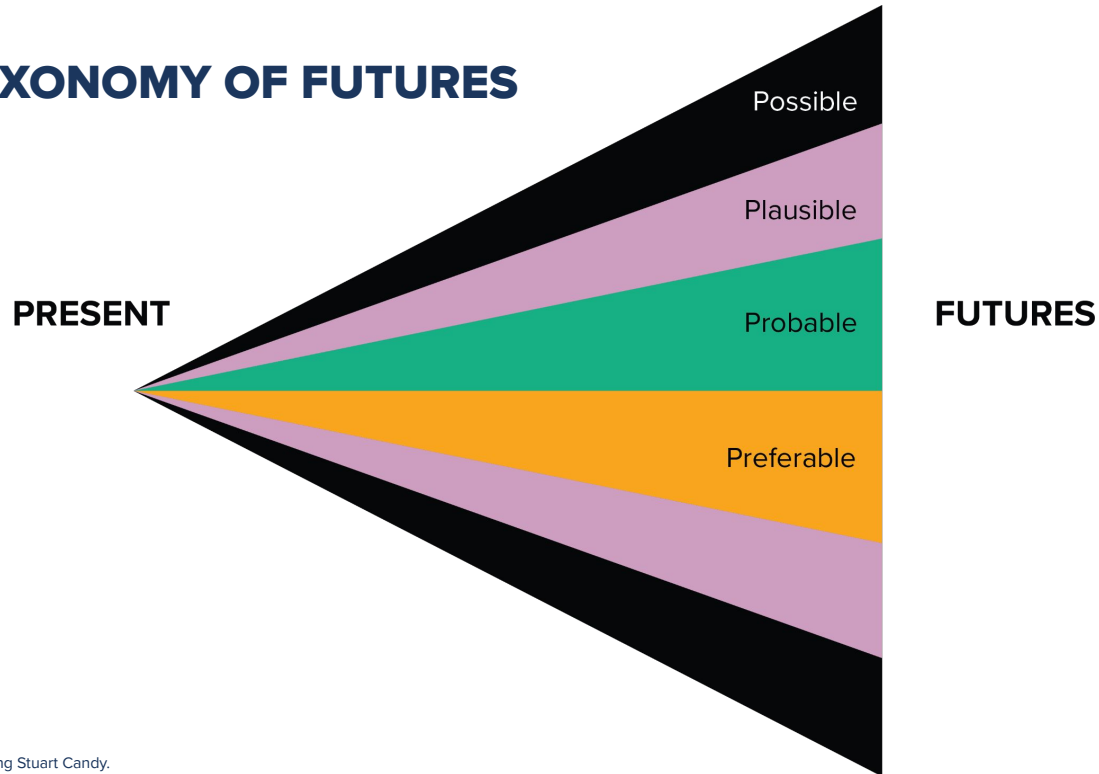
-Dr. Marina Gorbis, *5 Principles for Thinking Like Futurist*, EduCause Review, 2019



Anticipate **the Futures**



A TAXONOMY OF FUTURES





**How might we
enhance strategic
planning with
futures thinking?**

6699

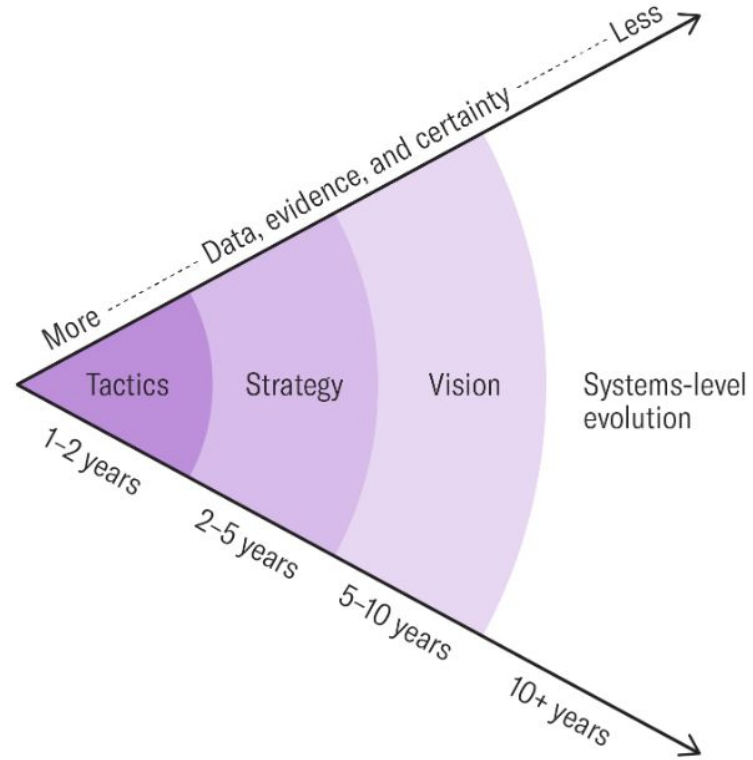
Lots of organizations get stuck cycling between strategy and tactics. While that process might feel like serious planning for the future, it results in a perpetual cycle of trying to catch up: to competitors, to new entrants, and to external sources of disruption. That's why you must be willing to accept more uncertainty as you continually recalibrate your organization's vision for the future.

-Amy Webb, *How to Do Strategic Planning Like a Futurist*, Harvard Business Review, July 30, 2019





A Futurist Framework for Strategic Planning



Source: Amy Webb, Future Today Institute



Sample School Strategic Plan Overview

People and Potential

Goal: Attract, retain, and develop world-class educators by unlocking their full potential through professional growth, mentorship, and a supportive community.

Place and Preservation

Goal: Maintain and enhance the school's buildings and grounds to foster a sustainable, safe, and inspiring learning environment.

Prosperity and Planning

Goal: Ensure long-term financial prosperity by balancing operational costs, planning for strategic growth, and diversifying revenue streams.

Programs and Pedagogy

Goal: Deliver excellence and innovation in academic programs and pedagogy, preparing students for future success through dynamic learning experiences.



Futures Thinking for Strategic Positioning

FORESIGHT

Develop
scenarios as
visions of the
futures



INSIGHT

Analyze and
generate ideas
from futures
scenarios



ACTION

Use insights to
act now and
shape the future



Envision Futures Scenarios



Refining Traditional Practices

The school refines its existing professional development programs, offering more structured mentorship, internal workshops, and annual reviews. Compensation remains competitive within local and regional benchmarks, and the school emphasizes its close-knit community as a key selling point for attracting and retaining staff.

Navigating the Talent Crisis

Facing challenges in recruiting and retaining educators due to rising housing costs and competition from other schools, the school redesigns its teacher recruitment and retention strategy. It introduces flexible work options, including hybrid teaching roles, and expands access to global professional learning communities. Competitive compensation is tied to additional benefits like housing stipends and wellness programs.

Talent Exodus

Economic pressures and social challenges, such as increasing polarization in education, make it harder for the school to find and keep qualified educators. Lower morale and increasing workloads cause many teachers to leave for better opportunities. The school tries to fill positions with less experienced or temporary staff, which undermines the quality of education and professional growth.

A Global Hub for Teacher Excellence

The school reimagines its approach to teacher development by creating a comprehensive professional growth program that integrates leadership development, global networking, and cutting-edge teaching methodologies like AI-enhanced learning and personalized education strategies. It becomes a leader in developing innovative teaching practices and partners with top educational organizations globally. The school offers unique, immersive learning experiences for both teachers and students, which attract talent from across the world.

Refining Traditional Practices

This future assumes that the school continues its current practices with incremental improvements to its educator development efforts.

Implications: The school maintains a stable workforce but risks losing top talent to more progressive institutions offering more flexibility and cutting-edge professional development.

Navigating *the Talent Crisis*

In this future, the school is forced to adapt to limitations in the talent pool and new demands for flexible, modern professional development.

Implications: The school successfully retains educators by offering competitive, flexible benefits but must balance these costs with financial sustainability. It faces ongoing challenges in attracting new teachers in a highly competitive market.

Talent Exodus

This future reflects a decline in the school's ability to attract and retain educators, leading to a shrinking and destabilized faculty.

Implications: The school struggles to maintain high standards of education due to frequent staff turnover and limited professional development, ultimately affecting its reputation and student outcomes.

A Global Hub for Teacher Excellence

In this future, the school transforms itself into a sought-after destination for educators by embracing innovation, global connections, and cutting-edge professional growth opportunities.

Implications: The school becomes a global hub for educator excellence, attracting top talent from around the world and positioning itself as a thought leader in education. This transformation bolsters its brand identity and teacher retention remains high.



Analyze Across Scenarios

Rank order the futures scenarios.

Pull insights and synthesize what you like from each scenario.

Consider:

- Unique value added in each scenario
- New ideas, opportunities, or insights
- Mitigating risks and external threats
- Implications for successful planning

Discover Obstacles & Opportunities



Obstacles

What stands in the way?

- Rising operational costs
- Competition for talent
- Burnout and turnover
- Resistance to change
- External economic and social pressures

Opportunities

What new possibilities could we consider?

- Embracing flexibility and innovation
- Professional growth and leadership development
- New or enhanced compensation models
- Sustainability

Implications

What else must be considered?

- External threats
- School culture, well-being
- Succession planning
- Emerging technology and tech acceleration
- Financial sustainability
- Agility of operations
- Future-readiness of programs



Shape the Futures

Put insights into actions today to shape your school's future.

Consider:

- Your school's mission, long-term vision, and unique value proposition
- How you will operationalize your strategy
- Futures scenario planning doesn't take away uncertainty, it helps us respond with confidence, creativity, and agility



**How might we
cultivate the
creativity, agility,
and confidence to
thrive amidst
uncertainty?**



6699

Good ideas often come from bridging the gaps between people and groups with different areas of expertise.

-Chris Ertel and Lisa Kay Solomon, *Moments of Impact: How to Design Strategic Conversations that Accelerate Change*, p 60-61





Assemble a Diverse Guiding Team

Your Futures Team should represent a wide range of perspectives, positions, and lived experiences.

Consider:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the team as well as its individuals?
- What types of accountability measures are needed?
- What will we do when we disagree?
- What does success look like for the team?
- And how will we celebrate success?

““

Futures thinking isn't a superpower, and you don't have to fix everything or save everyone. But futures thinking *is* an incredibly useful, practical tool to prepare your mind to adapt faster to new challenges, build hope and resilience, reduce anxiety and depression, and inspire you to take actions today that set yourself up for future happiness and success.

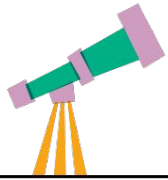
-Jane McGonigal, *Imaginable: How to see the future coming and feel ready for anything - even things that feel impossible today*



RANGE FINDER



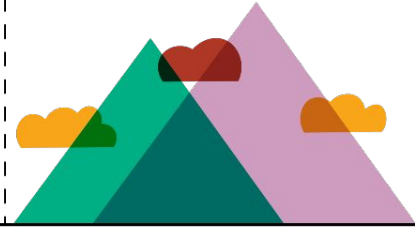
IN FRONT OF US



BEYOND THE TREES



OVER THE MOUNTAINS





Mount Vernon Ventures

mvventures.org

consulting@mvventures.org

More Resources

- Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies, <https://cifs.dk/>
- Institute for the Future, <https://www.iff.org/>
- UNESCO, Futures Literacy & Foresight, <https://www.unesco.org/en/futures-literacy>
- World Economic Forum, Global Risks Report 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/>
- Andrea Small & Kelly Schmutte, *Navigating Ambiguity: Creating Opportunity in a World of Unknowns*, 2022
- Jane McGonigal, *Imaginable: How to see the future coming and feel ready for anything-even things that seem impossible today*, 2022.

Scan to view and
purchase additional
Ventures resources.

