

SCANNING THE LANDSCAPE

How can you keep up with new developments in your field? Where are the best opportunities to make a difference?

IN THIS GUIDE

Scanning can help you see the field as a whole and expand your perspective beyond the relationships you've built with particular grantees. Contributors to this guide explore the processes of beginning a scan, choosing the best approach, ensuring diversity of input, and analyzing and using the results.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Keeping current: why scanning isn't just for newcomers**
- **Designing the scan that fits your needs**
- **Getting honest feedback**



“My job was not to have all the answers, but to have my eyes and ears open.”

—A grant maker on the link between scanning and successful grant making

*\$15.00 – Order today at store.grantcraft.org
To learn more, visit www.grantcraft.org*

A sample from the guide:

Getting a Good Discussion Going

Once you have the right people in the room, how do you get them to share good ideas? Breaking people into small groups, so everyone gets a chance to talk, and posing a few good questions can go a long way. Linda May, an experienced facilitator with the Center for Applied Research, suggests some provocative questions, aimed at surfacing leverage points and momentum. (You could also use questions like these in one-on-one conversations.)

- **The Big Picture:** Step back and think about the big picture over the next five to ten years, locally, regionally or nationally. What are three to five things happening now in the larger environment that have the potential to make a major difference in your field?
- **What Keeps You Awake at Night?** From your own perspective working in the field, what are the three to five things that worry you most – and why? How have you personally seen these issues played out on the ground?
- **Windows of Opportunity:** Windows of opportunity can open and close before you know it. What are five to seven especially promising windows the funder and its partners might pursue? What are some specific ways the funder and others could take advantage of those windows before they close?

In parallel, you might ask another small group to grapple with a different set of questions:

- **Trends in the Field:** What are four or five of the most interesting trends that are leading to new practices in your field? How have you, yourself, seen these trends played out on the ground?
- **Strange Bedfellows:** Innovative strategies sometimes call for unusual affiliations. What are five to seven unexpected alliances, partnerships and conversations that could advance your field? Think out loud about specific ways to deepen those alliances. How can the funder act as a catalyst?
- **Missing “Infrastructure”:** Most fields require a solid infrastructure of information technology, communication channels, incentives, revenue models, and other underlying support. In thinking about your field, are there key pieces of infrastructure that seem to be missing? Why are those pieces especially critical?

WHEN BEING A LISTENER IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN BEING AN EXPERT

In order to make the most of their opportunities to gather information, grant makers may need to develop a different set of listening skills. A grant maker in human rights described how her prior experience as an attorney influenced her information-gathering style:

“Some people are uncomfortable if they can’t first establish their peer level of knowledge with the person they’re talking to. But I had learned as a practicing attorney in taking depositions of expert witnesses that I would learn more from expert witnesses if I approached them as if I knew absolutely nothing. And it was never a problem for me in conducting a deposition of an expert witness to appear to know nothing, because I would then learn a great deal.

“So as a grant maker, I took that comfort into these meetings. And I didn’t feel any pressure to start the meeting by laying out some level of expertise. I didn’t have the need to establish that I had some grand vision of economic and social justice. I was in this wonderful position of being able to say, ‘I’m new at this foundation, I’m exploring, I’m really thinking about these things and I would like to learn from you.’”