



Paths to Impact: A Food System Opportunity Map for Funders

There are multiple paths to impact within this sector, and many ways that funders can enter and achieve high impact change. However, without a coherent way to understand the scale and scope of the issues, as well as the competing agendas presented by various stakeholders (e.g., hunger vs. obesity vs. locally-grown food), it can be difficult for donors to know when and how to act.

There is no large-scale, national “silver bullet” solution that will fit all donors’ criteria across all related issues; however, there are helpful higher-level, evidence-based conclusions that can be synthesized and translated to give stakeholders of all expertise levels more confidence that their money will make a difference in the lives of the people they aim to help. Moreover, there are scanning approaches that can help funders more easily identify opportunities for partnership and leverage beyond their primary focus area.

The Center for high impact philanthropy has developed an “opportunity map,” or framework, for funders who are interested in maximizing the effectiveness of their philanthropic capital in the food system space. This framework is designed to serve as a learning and decision-making tool for funders of all levels of philanthropic sophistication. This session will introduce you to the map and take you behind the scenes to learn more about scanning tools and skills that could be part of your practice.

Learning objectives for this session include:

- Bringing donors up to speed faster on many complex topics, clarifying many of the issues related to impact, and mitigating barriers to entry resulting from confusion
- Shedding light upon some of the key tensions and tradeoffs within the sector and illuminating collaborative opportunities
- Highlighting critical scanning skills that enable funders to cut through the noise and identify the highest impact approaches

Moderator

Jan Jaffe, *consultant to foundations and senior partner, The Giving Practice at Philanthropy Northwest, NY*

Speakers

Carra Cote-Ackah, *director, Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives, Center for High Impact Philanthropy, PA*

Katherina Rosqueta, *founding executive director, Center for High Impact Philanthropy, PA*

INTRODUCTION // Jan Jaffe

Experience comes from having interviewed people about the purpose of scanning. Questions workshop attendees discussed at tables:

- (1) How have you used scanning?
- (2) What is the purpose of scanning?
- (3) What questions do you have about scanning?

Question: What do you mean by scanning?

Answer: Scanning answers the question of: “What’s going on?” “Where are the gaps vs. overlaps?” “What’s already working?” “Who are other funders?” **Scanning in order to create the ecology of your field.**

Dilemmas faced:

- Managing information overload (how to organize it?)
- How do you represent it visually or thru narrative → how to communicate it?
- Raising expectations
- What are the right questions to ask? Info you need vs. what you want to find out?
- When to stop collecting?
- When do you trust your gut? When to move/go and start?
- How do you find all of the other players?
- Am I talking to just the people I know? (use of Funder Collaboratives)
- How do you find people that you don’t agree with? Importance of struggling through that.
- What do you do with the data? How do you give the data back and share with others?
- How do we do a collective scan?

We reinvent the wheel when we do a scan for the first time. How to be more efficient and effective and scan collectively. Convening power to share this information. Importance of having a set of questions that you repeatedly ask individuals to have an informal scan (way to check the pulse)?

- (1) Who do you know that I don’t know?
 - (2) And who do you know that disagrees with you?
 - (3) What are you reading on a day-to-day basis? How do you stay informed on the issues?
- Importance of *informal scanning* (i.e. reading the newspaper)

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

First speaker: Katharina Rosqueta

Center for High Impact Philanthropy (School of Social Policy & Practice)

- Based at University of Penn, started out of frustrations of:
 - Donors (giving focused on social impact, frustrated)
 - Social Policy and Practice Partners (frustrated by the amount of knowledge that we already collectively have, and weren’t in use)
- “We are not researchers, but good recyclers of knowledge”
- Mission-driven, not peer-reviewed journal driven

Goals of the presented effort:

- To make the space less complicated
- A desire from existing and prospective donors to clarify opportunities (w/in issue areas and across)—cannot jump over hurdle to commit funds
- To break down silos and identify opportunities for collaboration
- Breaking down the bias that is inherent in any one perspective
- Multi-perspective, evidence-informed approach
 - Field experience (practitioner wisdom)
 - Informed Opinion
 - Research
 - *Each of the above three components has a piece of the puzzle: when they all point in the same direction, THEN you can know you are moving in the right general direction.*

Second Speaker: Carra Cote-Ackah

Sifting through the wealth of information that is available. *How did you select this info?*

- Did an initial aggregation of robust info. Asking experts what they think should be included
- Solicited information
- Benefited from field experience and robust partnerships, which led to the sharing of opinions and information

“Knowledge of real world action”—Benjamin Franklin, Uni Penn founder → luxury that The Center has that other orgs or foundations might not have. The Center has had trouble/growing pains with question of: How to provide and package information? How much info and for whom? *Where did The Center start?* Created a framework for the issues to begin with. (Created a system or platform to do thinking around → systems thinking). Looked at what frameworks were pre-existing.

Importance of having a framework:

- MECE: “mutually exclusively, comprehensively exhaustive” makes good framework; making a structure that represents all of the complexities but also simplifies to the basic most important components. This framework also helps to make the call about what to include in scope (in the case of this report, it was restricted to the U.S.)

Scanning lessons learned:

- Be willing to LET GO of ideas that you created
- Have to know that it’s an iterative process.
“In some ways it never ends, be able to say this is my best 3 month answer. Need to say, pencils up.”

Question: What didn’t you include animal welfare, or biodiversity?

Answer: Decided that it was about social impact, human welfare.

Question: What's the value of going through the process of doing a scan vs. receiving the information (i.e. in the said report)?

Answer: Every donor's needs are different, and at different points in the decision process. The Center needs this exact feedback about how useful the report is. Funders are interested in the *why*? Start with the end first: *what is the change you are seeking ultimately?* Food lends to these integrated (multi)impacts → to an even more important opportunity for leverage.

Once had scope and framework settled, were able to put issues into categories → the four quadrants (ultimately change desired on the outside and process or means of achieving this in the colored blocks: i.e. if you want Vibrant Communities, then should pursue fostering community engagement and supporting local economies)

To avoid reinventing the wheel: ask what has happened and what was the result of it?

When there's been impact, how much did success cost? Need this empirical evidence, even if it's just a back of the envelope estimate. And then address WHY the numbers are reading the way that they are.

What's a nonprofit partner that is equipped to deliver the change that we (as a funder) are looking for?

Can the Canned Food drive article (link: <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/18/opinion/la-oe-arnold-canned-food-20111118>)

Questions: How far out do you need to measure as a funder and how much can the field of study prove/cover the remaining gap/connection?

Answer: The field can measure all the way out to impact, the funder just needs to prove that their certain situation is similar enough to the situation/study that they evidence is coming from.

Question: How do you ensure that you have sector level expertise in a scan like this?

Answer: Strength is in ability to access enormous amounts of information, and do the footwork that others aren't willing/don't have the capacity to do. Transparency of how this report was constructed, in order to get feedback on how to tighten methodology.

CHALLENGE: Do a drawing of what YOUR foundation's approach to scanning looks like. On the other side draw (no narrative) a framework that you are using for your grant making.

Send Carra any feedback on the document via email.