



What is Environmental Scanning?

What?

Environmental scanning is the art of **systematically** exploring and interpreting the external environment, to better **understand** the nature of trends and drivers of change and their likely future **impact** on your organisation. Environmental scanning informs the thinking that occurs before your strategic direction is decided.



Why?

Everyone scans the environment every day, whether it is conscious or unconscious scanning. In an organisational setting, managers usually scan around both their jobs, their professions and their industries, but this scanning is usually done as individuals. Setting up a formal scanning system in your organisation allows this individual scanning knowledge to be surfaced **to generate collective and shared views** about what matters for your organisation.

Scanning on a regular and systematic basis allows you to build a strong intelligence base about events, trends and emerging issues that you see today and which are likely to have an impact on your organisation into the future.



Exploring how these trends and issues might evolve over time allows you to be **proactive** in your strategy, and **avoid the reactive, crisis management** approach to events so often characteristic of organisations today.

The aim of scanning is to **strengthen the quality of** information that informs strategic thinking **before** critical decisions are made.

How?

A typical environmental scanning project covers the following stages, depending on an organisation's existing scanning capacity:

- scoping your needs and identifying the scanning team,*
- agreeing on the scanning framework – key strategic issues to be explored, focus, categories for scanning 'hits', recording of 'hits',
- a one day workshop tailored for your organisation to introduce your scanning team to the principles and approaches underpinning scanning, how they will scan, what to look for, and how to record scanning 'hits',
- setting up a repository for scanning 'hits', either in house or using existing (usually free) external systems,
- regular review sessions to support staff, either in person or remotely (email/online project management site) during the initial scanning phase,
- support to develop ways to report the outcomes of the scanning to staff across the organisation, including both electronic and face-to-face reporting,
- aligning scanning outcomes with your strategy/planning processes, and
- gaining support and participation across the organisation to embed scanning in day-to-day activities.

More?

Contact Maree Conway at Thinking Futures if you have questions or need more information about environmental scanning (email: maree.conway@thinkingfutures.net or telephone +61 3 90169506, skype mkconway1).

*Better outcomes are always achieved if a small team of staff form a scanning team to work with Thinking Futures to undertake the environmental scanning process.