

Clean Slate

The “clean slate” approach involves identifying the broad causes or issues that concern you, regardless of your giving and volunteering history.

This approach may be helpful if:

- **You are new to philanthropy.** If you are just beginning to think about philanthropy, this approach will help you choose focus areas.
- **You have generally given reactively.** Reflecting on your giving history, have most of your donations resulted from friends asking or in response to emotionally compelling appeals? If so, the clean slate approach may enable you to think more strategically. (We’re not suggesting that you exclude all reactive giving. Many strategic donors maintain philanthropic budgets for unanticipated opportunities, friends and family, and emergencies.)
- **You feel your current giving is not fully aligned with your values.** Have you been giving mainly to your alma mater, religious institution, and similar organizations and now realize that there are other entities or causes that you also believe are important? The clean slate approach can help you to articulate those areas and focus your philanthropy.
- **You believe that the scope of your current philanthropy may be overly constrained.** In this case, begin exploring issues on the periphery of your vision, or consult some wise friends and colleagues for their ideas.

ACTIVITY CLEAN SLATE

Refer to the Issue Cards at the end of this chapter.⁵ Select up to five issues that most resonate with you and write them down below. Think about how your motivations and values align with your priority causes or issues.



EXAMPLE

I am interested in protecting the environment. I am aware that many of my neighbors do not participate in the county's recycling program because of unclear recycling guidelines and collection schedules. For me, recycling is a concrete program that I can support to contribute to protecting the environment. As a donor, I would like to focus on improving the way our recycling programs operate—striving for them to be more efficient and innovative in making recycling easier within my community.
