



## **Animal Charity Evaluators**

*Strategic Plan (2015-2017)*

# **Executive Summary**

Animal Charity Evaluators works to find and promote the most effective ways to help animals. We conduct analysis, make recommendations on where to give and what to do, and promote our findings to the public. This work is vital because the animal advocacy movement lacks research and guidance on what works.

We have a series of goals that will enable us to promote, sustain, and grow our activities. These are spread out across four core statements: 1) Continue to produce and disseminate quality research and recommendations. 2) Increase brand awareness and use of our recommendations through outreach. 3) Ensure organizational effectiveness and efficiency. 4) Increase revenue to allow for growth.

In carrying out these goals, we will ensure that we continue to provide animal advocates with the best available information on helping animals effectively.

## **Introduction**

Animal advocacy organizations and individuals are uncertain about the most effective ways to help animals, resulting in inefficient use of limited finances, time, and resources. ACE works to enable individual advocates and organizations to maximize the impact of their work by providing recommendations on what to do and where to give.

In this section, you will find information about:

- Background and History
- Mission and Vision
- What We Believe
- What We Do
- Lessons Learned

## **Background and History**

ACE was founded in 2012 under the name Effective Animal Activism (EAA), a project under the Centre for Effective Altruism in Oxford, England. EAA was run as a volunteer organization until Jon Bockman was hired as Executive Director. Soon thereafter, the organization merged with another US-based nonprofit, Justice For Animals, while maintaining their original intention of providing advice to donors on the most effective animal charities and building a community of effective altruists interested in animal issues. EAA became an official 501(c)(3) in November 2013.

In December 2013 EAA rebranded as Animal Charity Evaluators, and is currently operating out of San Diego, CA as a US-based nonprofit. At this stage the organization narrowed its focus to research and outreach. It is financially independent from the Centre for Effective Altruism, although is still a member of the community.

## **Mission and Vision**

ACE's mission is to find and advocate the ways to most effectively help animals. Our vision is a world free of avoidable suffering where animals are given equal consideration regardless of their species.

## **What We Believe**

ACE believes in helping animals as much as possible. We focus on research because we believe it provides value that can maximize impact in individuals and organizations. We strive to be transparent so that all groups can learn from and critique our work.

ACE practices effective altruism, which involves applying evidence and reason to determine the most effective ways to improve the world. Careful consideration of where you donate your money or volunteer your time can significantly increase philanthropic impact, so ACE works to promote the most impactful ways to help animals.

*See Appendix A for more information*

## **What We Do**

ACE researches interventions and organizations to determine the most effective ways to help animals. This includes using our rigorous evaluation criteria to evaluate the methods employed by various organizations as well as their own strategy and structure. We use our findings to educate the public about where to give their time and money.

Our primary audience is people in the wider animal movement who want to become more effective; our secondary audience is people already interested in effective altruism who care about animal suffering.

*See Appendix B for more information*

## **Lessons Learned**

Through the course of our first full year as Animal Charity Evaluators, we have learned a lot about what works well, and what doesn't work. Some of the lessons that we learned:

### **What has worked well:**

1. **Our process for narrowing down charities.** We were able to successfully select an appropriate number of charities for consideration, and we feel we've collected an appropriate representation from different fields. We selected timelines that allowed us to meet our deadlines for publication.
2. **Our communication strategy.** We spent considerable time recreating our brand to showcase ACE as a credible organization, and will continue to do this on a regular basis. We are extremely transparent, produce materials for general audiences as well as those looking for higher amounts of detail, and produce quality presentations and printed materials. These efforts have led to consistent growth on social media and moving over \$141,000 to our top charities.
3. **Our board of directors.** The board of directors effectively communicated critiques to the staff, and these critiques significantly contributed positively to the development of the organization. Additionally, many of the board members supported the organization financially.
4. **Our matching campaign.** We raised an entire year's budget in a single campaign near the end of 2014. This will allow us to spend more energy on our work in 2015, though we will continue to

fundraise.

### **Improvement Potential:**

1. **Identifying the most effective interventions.** Very few field studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of common tactics used by animal advocates. ACE tried to carry out two such studies in 2013 and 2014, but we did not acquire a large enough sample size, and found that field studies in general demanded more resources than we had available. We developed an intervention evaluation template in 2014, and plan on using it in 2015 to help us identify the most effective interventions.
2. **Understanding the long-term effects of welfare and reduction campaigns.** As we concluded in our evaluation of corporate outreach, we feel confident that such efforts have significant positive short-term and likely medium-term effects. However, we are unsure as to the longer-term effects on the perception of animals or the complacency of using them for food.
3. **Improving transparency while maintaining high quality reviews.** We want to increase the amount of information we publish about our recommendation process, and our thinking in general on issues related to animal advocacy. However, we need to be careful about how much time we spend writing about our thinking to avoid detracting from the quality of our work.
4. **Exploring novel approaches to achieving the greatest good for animals.** We currently use a metric that considers the number of animals people save through their diet as a way to estimate the effectiveness of an organization. We are open to the possibility that there are more effective ways to help animals, but have not yet had success in determining such methods.
5. **Understanding the effectiveness of intervention tactics in other countries.** Different places in the world have very different laws and views on animals, and in considering the effectiveness of different tactics, we must take these aspects into consideration. We attempted to do so for our December 2014 recommendations, but our investigation into this area was limited.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Goal 1: Continue to produce and disseminate quality research and recommendations.**

#### ***Strategies:***

1. Examine and improve research program quality.

#### **Key Activities**

- a. Assess the impact of our research projects, phasing out lower performing areas
  - b. Grow our research department by hiring another researcher on staff
  - c. Interview experts, both inside and outside the animal advocacy movement
  - d. Explore our role as instigator or evaluator of research
  - e. Improve clarity on how we come to our recommendations and why
2. Determine and define research program direction, scope, and priorities.

#### **Key Activities**

- a. Explore our role and how we can achieve maximum impact
  - i. Address key questions regarding the scope of our reach, focus on farm animal charities, prioritization of research/outreach, effectiveness of interventions, and other core important questions.
- b. Segment our audience and select target segment(s)
  - i. Formulate hypotheses
  - ii. Determine criteria for selecting target audience segment(s)
  - iii. Divide our possible audience into segments, incl. detailed segment descriptions
  - iv. Select target segment(s)
  - v. Draw implications for our research, recommendations, brand, outreach, organization, and fundraising

**Goal 2: Increase brand awareness and use of our recommendations through community outreach.**

***Strategies:***

1. Develop a comprehensive outreach plan.

**Key Activities**

- a. Initiate more key promotional opportunities
  - b. Present/exhibit at annual AR conference and at least one other conference
  - c. Identify and leverage our most influential supporters
  - d. Develop clear criteria for evaluating outreach efforts
2. Improve transparency by publishing materials on our website.

**Key Activities**

- a. Publish updated board meeting minutes, blogs, mistakes, history, budget, and strategic plan
  - b. Increase frequency of blogs on our thinking and process
3. Build web presence.

**Key Activities**

- a. Increase number of Facebook likes, Twitter followers, and newsletter subscribers
- b. Publish weekly blogs and monthly newsletters
- c. Increase traffic to our top charities and other key pages
- d. Test and improve user functionality

**Goal 3: Ensure organizational effectiveness and efficiency.**

***Strategies:***

1. Develop and implement a quality management system in order to improve overall organizational performance.

### **Key Activities**

- a. Create an overall performance measurement system
    - i. Collect baseline information
    - ii. Set goals, monitor progress
  - b. Monitor money moved to recommended charities
  - c. Produce Gantt chart to outline schedule
2. Optimize our organizational structure.

### **Key Activities**

- a. Ensure high performance through regular evaluations of the staff and Board
  - b. Investigate restructuring ACE as a non-profit that can redistribute donations
  - c. Monitor infrastructure needs
3. Develop staff, volunteers, and board through education and skill development.

### **Goal 4: Increase revenue to allow for growth.**

#### ***Strategies:***

1. Develop a 3-year fundraising plan.

### **Key Activities**

- a. Build a Development Committee
  - b. Formulate fundraising goals and action plans
    - i. Utilize donor management software
    - ii. Set goals for funding and donor types
    - iii. Diversify funding sources
    - iv. Create donor recognition and stewardship plan
2. Develop the capabilities of the Board of Directors, key staff, and supporters to lead major donor fundraising efforts.

### **Key Activities**

- a. Train on general best practices
- b. Encourage/incentivize attending development education
- c. Provide ongoing opportunities for acquisition of donors

# **Appendix A**

## *Our Philosophy*

### **1. Introduction**

- i. This document*
- ii. Prioritization of animal advocacy*
  - a. Scale*
  - b. Tractability*
  - c. Neglectedness*
- iii. Our vision*

### **2. Core Values**

- i. The importance of spreading values and norms*
- ii. Anti-speciesism*
- iii. Transparency and community*
- iv. Concern for suffering regardless of cause*
- v. Individuals matter most*
- vi. Effective altruism*

### **1. Introduction**

#### *i. This document*

This document lays out the philosophical reasoning that underlies the work of our organization. First, we describe our prioritization of animal advocacy and our overarching vision. Then, we outline our core values. You are welcome to [contact us](#) with comments on this document.<sup>1</sup>

#### *ii. Prioritization of animal advocacy*

We focus our efforts on animal advocacy because of its scale, tractability, and neglectedness.

*a. Scale.* The number of nonhuman animals in the world is staggering. At this moment, there are roughly 7 billion humans in existence, but there are [24 billion](#) land-dwelling farmed animals and many more wild animals in the world. Additionally, just as the expected number of human descendents in the far future dwarfs the current number of humans, the expected number of animals in the far future is exceedingly large. In this

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding person is the Executive Director.

regard, it is crucial to ensure that humanity acts with much greater concern for animals for the coming centuries.

*b. Tractability.* Our current [research](#) indicates that we can help large numbers of animals for low costs. Additionally, historical evidence from previous social movements suggests it is possible to substantially affect the ideas and moral values of humanity on a large scale. Finally, there is an abundance of research from social psychology, marketing, and other areas that illustrates the ability of purposeful messaging to change individual attitudes and behaviors. The totality of this evidence gives us good reason to believe that we can make serious improvements in the lives of animals.

*c. Neglectedness.* The vast majority of philanthropic funding in the United States goes towards human aid. Even among the funding spent on animals, only [a small portion](#) goes to farmed animals, despite the fact that farmed animals make up the overwhelming majority of animals killed or used by humans in the United States. Given the scarcity of philanthropic support for animals, we expect the cause of animal advocacy to be particularly promising for people interested in doing the most good with their resources. There is also little existing guidance about where to give and what to do to benefit animals the most.

### *iii. Our vision*

We envision a society where people act with much greater concern for animals.

## **2. Core Values**

### *i. The importance of spreading values and norms*

We think the most effective interventions are those that affect the values and norms of society and are therefore able to effect future change. For example, while we admire and recognize the direct value in rescuing farmed animals, we see an even greater opportunity to help animals by sharing their stories with a wide audience, which leads to helping many more animals through social impact.

### *ii. Concern for all sentient beings*

We assign moral value to all sentient beings<sup>2</sup> regardless of species classification.

### *iii. Transparency and community*

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<sup>2</sup> Although not all animals are obviously sentient (e.g. sponges) and not all sentient beings are necessarily animals, we use these terms interchangeably for convenience.

We value transparency and honest communication in ourselves and other animal advocacy organizations. To help animals as effectively as possible, we must collaborate and share resources. We appreciate the willingness of our community to evaluate and critique our work. We believe this open line of communication between animal advocates is key to producing the highest quality research and recommendations.

*iv. Concern for suffering regardless of cause*

We care about the suffering of all animals, whether it is caused by humans or another source. We are open to the possibility of working to help animals harmed by sources other than humans.

*v. Individuals matter most*

We believe that the wellbeing of sentient beings should take priority over biodiversity, ecosystems, species, and wilderness preservation.

*vi. Effective altruism*

We support effective altruism, a “philosophy and social movement which applies evidence and reason to determining the most effective ways to improve the world”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [Wikipedia.](#)



## **Appendix B**

ACE conducts the following activities to achieve our mission:

*We do the thorough analysis that others do not have the time and resources to do on their own.*

- Animal advocates and donors face obstacles because little research or synthesis has been done on the effectiveness of different ways to help animals. Organizations and individuals have no central place to turn to for guidance.
- We will provide assistance for them through our reviews of organizations, existing research, and interventions.
- Most other animal organizations are not interested in this type of work, or do not have the resources to make it a priority.
- We are in a great position to fill this gap. We have members and affiliates of our organization who are unusually experienced and skilled analysts and thinkers on how to do good for animals.
- We intend on using our independence to allow us to serve as a credible center for analysis and discussion on what works and what doesn't.
- As a side effect of rewarding top organizations, we encourage an environment where other organizations use evidence to guide their efforts.

*We work to ensure that the best organizations get the resources necessary to carry out their most successful programs*

- We recommend that donors support our charity recommendations.

*We encourage and facilitate research*

- We encourage organizations and individuals to conduct research both in the field and online. This gives us a platform to work with other groups and also a way to increase our visibility.
- When possible, we act as facilitators to connect professional researchers with advocacy groups. We are in a good position to be a liaison between good researchers and animal advocacy groups now when little research exists in the animal advocacy area and few people are working on it. We are straddling the fence in the sense that we have academically oriented people involved with ACE but also outreach activists with on-the-ground experience.
- Few academics are interested in animal advocacy research and they do not seem to be well connected. Our experience has shown that academics are excited about research in these areas but don't have connections necessary to conduct their work.

*We might cooperate with other organizations in planning studies and analyzing the data but we do not expect to conduct complete impact studies ourselves*

- We might develop the methodology, run pilots, analyze the data, and work with other groups that carry out the main body of impact studies. We do not plan to conduct any more complete field studies ourselves (as in coordinating volunteers, etc.), but we do not rule it out.
- People most suitable to start an organization to conduct impact studies are likely high quality researchers. [Innovations for Poverty Action \(IPA\)](#) is a successful such nonprofit in development economics. It was founded in 2002 by Dean Karlan, Professor of Economics at Yale, who's also President of the [board](#).
- But there is no group of academics doing that in the animal area. And even if such a group were created, there is likely a need for us to be involved in field research because the research we most want to see happen does not seem to be what either advocacy groups or academics would do on

- their own. (That is, they would not address the questions we would most want to see addressed.)
- Our two own impact studies (on leafleting and humane education) have been moderately useful with respect to understanding which interventions work. Our research staff gained some knowledge supporting that leafleting is a promising intervention but that humane education is less promising. We also learned about conducting studies. But the studies generated data of moderate quality and have likely not resulted in any substantial program revisions from advocacy groups.
  - We ran a pay-per-view pilot study in the summer of 2014. In the end of our blog post on our findings, we will invite groups or individuals to contact us if they would like to work on the full study. If this ends up happening, we will participate but not run it ourselves. We are still testing this setup – if we cannot get a group or several to commit their own resources to run the pay-per-view study, then we plan not to spend a significant amount of time setting up studies ourselves in the future.
  - We seem to have a useful role in providing advice for how to conduct studies. There is demand for our advice – our research staff designs or provides advice on about one survey every two to three months. In [Feb. 2014](#), we finished our [Survey Guidelines](#)/Master Survey project, which provides guidelines for which questions to use when doing a survey in the animal advocacy area. Animal individuals/groups may have used some of our questions to help mold their own questions when conducting surveys, and at least one group had a call with our research staff to talk about the guidelines in detail. The guidelines have also streamlined our work on designing studies and our advice about designing surveys.

*We do not focus on changing other organizations, though we are happy to spend some time giving advice and we are glad if our findings influence their future decisions*

- We will make our findings available to other organizations. They are welcome to use our research, and we are happy if they do, but it is not our focus to change them and we do not measure our success based on whether we change other organizations. Providing advice or changing other organizations currently takes up only a small use of our time and we plan to continue that way. Our top priority is to help and reward the best organizations/opportunities that we can find.
- It is extremely difficult to change established organizations with many stakeholders.
- GiveWell noted in 2010 that top charities were born with an effective approach, they were not established organizations that eventually figured out what worked.
- But at least one group started a self-evaluation program after talking to us about our review process. And it is unlikely that they would have advanced that program without our presence.
- We have been providing generic [advice for existing charities](#) such as “monitor your programs,” “measure your impact,” and “keep up on research.” We also provide individual advice to groups who contact us asking for help with their evaluation programs, and we imagine some of these groups are contacting us about that because of our published generic advice.