

From: **Steve Hindi** <shindishark@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Jun 1, 2017 at 4:12 PM
Subject: Questions Regarding Animal Charity Evaluators
To: jon.bockman@animalcharityevaluators.org

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John Bockman
Executive Director,
Animal Charity Evaluators

Dear Mr. Bockman,

I am writing to you with a series of questions about Animal Charity Evaluators (ACE). As you have claimed in the past that you will respond to questions, I sincerely hope you will take the time to review this and provide honest answers to these important questions.

The most controversial problem for Animal Charity Evaluators (ACE) is that you have consistently placed organizations listed as “Top Charities” that are tied directly to Nick Cooney. This includes *The Humane League* (Founder, Board Chair) and *Mercy For Animals* (Executive Vice-President). More recently, *The Good Food Institute* (Co-Founder and Board Chair) was made a top charity. This last placement has been particularly disturbing as the organization is new and certainly has done little to help animals, especially if compared to other established organizations whose sole mission is to fight for farm animals.

In ACE’s own words, being a top charity can potentially be worth millions of dollars:
<https://animalcharityevaluators.org/about/background/goals-and-strategy/>

In 2015, we influenced \$1.19 million in donations to our recommended charities; in 2016, we influenced over \$3.5 million. We are setting a goal at \$5 million for 2017.

Based on this, and with Mr. Cooney’s organizations holding the three top spots, ACE, therefore is potentially directing millions of dollars to Mr. Cooney’s organizations.

You claim to deal with science, so you must understand that the odds that out of thousands of active animal protection organizations, only those where Mr. Cooney either directly profits from or is a board member are given Top Charity status is astronomical. It simply is not reasonable that there has been such an outcome, unless there are deeper ties to Mr. Cooney then you are admitting. And if there are such ties, then claiming to be an objective evaluator while funneling money to organizations tied to one may potentially constitute fraud.

What appears to be clear is that Mr. Cooney’s ideology and methods are a foundation of ACE. For instance, before the ACE name was legally active, Nick Cooney spoke about “*effective advocacy*,” which you can in this video from 2012: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kddhboV0ynU>]

"Effective advocacy" is a philosophy ACE has adopted and embraced, and it can be found on a number of pages on your website, such as "Introducing the Effective Animal Advocacy Research Library," and "Foundational Questions In Effective Animal Advocacy." On top of that, Mr. Cooney talks in the video about focusing on farm animals, which is a core belief of ACE.

In a 2013 video titled "The science of animal advocacy," Mr. Cooney projects a picture of himself from ten-years past, where he is disheveled, next to a more recent picture where he is cleaned up and wearing professional clothes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUEGBDpmX0A>

In a 2016 video, you have a picture of yourself from the past projected, and you compare it to how you are today, copying Mr. Cooney's presentation. You even quote directly from Mr. Cooney's book, "Change of Heart," right before you show the picture. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0aT-a7do04>

Even if there is no direct financial connection between Mr. Cooney and ACE, you have shown such a preference toward him, to the extent that you have copied his presentation to the point of plagiarism, that the appearance of favoritism and bias is overwhelming. You simply cannot whitewash Mr. Cooney's influence on ACE and yourself, and then claim that ACE's promotion of Mr. Cooney's business interests is coincidental.

Question:

In your previously mentioned video, you spoke about a consultant you used to rebrand ACE. Please identify that consultant, and give a detailed accounting of the financial arrangement with the consultant.

Question:

In your 2015 990, it states that ACE, "ACTED AS A CONSULTANT TO DOZENS OF SIGNIFICANT DONORS..."

As you claim you want to avoid conflicts of interests by being transparent, please list all of the donors, how much each gave to ACE, and what ties they may have to any organization you have reviewed. For instance, has HSUS or anyone associated with HSUS donated to ACE? This would include any donors to HSUS who may have donated to ACE so HSUS could receive a positive review and position as a "stand out charity."

We must note that HSUS took in \$133,000,000 in 2015 with a quarter of a billion dollars in assets. It is unfathomable that any organization with that much money - and paying multiple employees hundreds of thousands of dollars year - has a positive dollar to animal saved ratio.

Question:

In the Board Minutes from November 24, 2013, [<https://animalcharityevaluators.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/November-2013-24.11.13Boardmeetingminutespublic-1.pdf>] at which you were present, it states "ACE Advisors Facebook group created."

Please tell us who were the advisors to ACE at that time (before ACE was the official name and you were still operating under a previous group name) and a complete list of advisors from then until the present, and the URL of this page.

In those same minutes, it states, regarding your website, "i.Potentially very high leverage, which is a prima facie reason to offer them."

Question:

What were you offering this "very high leverage" for, and to whom?

Finally from those minutes, there was this:

Transparency: Sharing meeting minutes

i. Good thing to do but be careful what to record in writing for legal reasons, no quotes, be aware of sensitive information

Question:

For a group that claims to value transparency, this is very disturbing. What exactly were you hiding?

From the Board meeting minutes, nov. 30, 2014, it states that you reviewed a group called the "*Humane Slaughter Association*,"

[<https://animalcharityevaluators.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/30.11.14BoardMeetingMinutesforpublication.pdf>]

Review Humane Slaughter Association

1. ACE already looked into them for a shallow review, but were not allowed to publish it.

Question:

How can you claim to be an objective evaluation company if you allow companies you evaluate to censor the publication of those evaluations? Clearly there is a public interest in finding out what a group called the "*Humane Slaughter Association*" is up to, but by burying such information, you give the appearance that you are not held to the truth, but the whims of those you evaluate.

Since forming in 2013, ACE has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars mostly on research and some on advocacy.

Question:

Can you prove that this money saved tens of thousands of animal lives, and if you cannot, then doesn't ACE fail it's own standards of being an organization that is worth donating to because of your poor dollar to animal ratio?

Finally, I want to point you to two essays written about ACE by Harrison Nathan. Mr. Nathan goes into great detail about his criticisms of ACE, and he does so using science as his method. I do not believe you ever responded to Mr. Nathan's well-thought out essays in specifics, and I am asking you to do so now.

To quote from his second post, "*Earlier this month, I released an extensive critique of the current Effective Altruist work on animal welfare, which in particular accused Animal Charity Evaluators (ACE) of using pseudoscience, fabricating figures, ignoring scientific literature, using unrealistic metrics which promote co-optation, and suspending its own formal criteria in its evaluation of the Good Food Institute (GFI).*"

The Actual Number is Almost Surely Higher - An Evaluation of Effective Animal Activism

<https://medium.com/@harrisonnathan/the-actual-number-is-almost-surely-higher-92c908f36517>

Re-evaluating Animal Charity Evaluators

<https://medium.com/@harrisonnathan/re-evaluating-animal-charity-evaluators-c164231406f7>

In order to ensure you are giving honest answers, would you be willing to sign an affidavit that your answers are truthful?

Thank you,

Steve Hindi

President, SHowing Animals Respect and Kindness