From: **Steve Hindi** <shindishark@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Jun 9, 2017 at 3:35 PM
Subject: Serious concerns regarding Animal Charity Evaluators
To: Jon Bockman <jon.bockman@animalcharityevaluators.org>, Allison Smith <allison.smith@animalcharityevaluators.org>, Gina Stuessy <gina.stuessy@animalcharityevaluators.org>, kalista.barter@animalcharityevaluators.org, Erika Alonso <erika.alonso@animalcharityevaluators.org>, Peter Singer <singerp@gmail.com>, Robert Wiblin <robertwiblin@gmail.com>, Claire Zabel <clairelouisezabel@gmail.com>, Jonas Emanuel Müller <jonas.mueller@gmail.com>, Jeff Sebo <jeffsebo@gmail.com>, Peter Hurford <peter@peterhurford.com>, Sam Bankman-Fried <11235813sam@gmail.com>, Spencer Greenberg <spencer.g.greenberg@gmail.com>

Dear Mr. Bockman,

Thank you for your June 3 response.

When I first heard about Animal Charity Evaluators a few years ago, I wondered if there was need of a group whose primary, if not sole purpose was to evaluate animal organizations. While evaluations can prove helpful to potential donors besieged with pleas from groups across the country and around the world, Animals 24-7 editor Merritt Clifton had in the past executed that duty by himself when he was with Animal People. Additionally, Mr. Clifton reported on animal issues worldwide. Year after year, Mr. Clifton worked up vital, detailed reports on 150 to 180 organizations, by himself.

A review of your website lists a staff of 17 people, a board of 6 people, and a few more people listed as "External Reviewers." Nevertheless, in the approximately 4 years that ACE has been in operation, it has "fully reviewed" only 21 organizations, with another 26 organizations listed as "Exploratory." **It is inconceivable to me that an organization which functions as an evaluator of all animal charities (as indicated by its name) has evaluated only a tiny fraction of the organizations after four years of operation, and nearly $700,000 in grants and donations received between 2013-2015.**

I acknowledge that, with the number of scam organizations falsely claiming to help animals (i.e. Alex Pacheco's 600 Million Dogs, and Will Potter's fictitious drone fleet), an organization that would ferret out such louts would be helpful, but again, Mr. Clifton executed that function by himself. Interestingly, ACE has not exposed so much as a single rip-off.

Serious questions have been raised regarding ACE, and whether it is truly an impartial, objective evaluating organization. Based on your answers and what we have independently discovered, it appears that ACE at a minimum is heavily biased toward only certain organizations. **It also possible, and we believe probable, that ACE was designed from the start to be a front group to funnel donations only to pre-selected organizations.**

You wrote:

Suggesting that there is collusion between Nick and ACE because of your accusation of plagiarism doesn't make much sense. If there was a collusion, then why I would obviously flaunt it? You also neglected to mention that Bruce Friedrich also has a presentation where he shows a before and after picture of him with and without dreadlocks. Does that mean that there is collusion between me and Bruce

Friedrich as well? I've seen many charities and advocates use graphics ACE created in their presentations, including people who are in no way affiliated with us or our recommended charities.

As someone who has made a great many public presentations over the past 30 years, I can tell you that if I started copying another's speech it would be called plagiarism. This would be true for almost anyone - unless all those involved were aware and approved of that use. It's ironic that you mention Bruce Friedrich as using the same presentation, for Mr. Friedrich is executive Director of the Good Food Institute, which just happens to be one of your Top Charities. And let's not forget that Mr. Cooney is Board Chair and co-founder of that organization as well.

You admit that you and two people representing one of ACE's Top Charities use the exact same presentation. If you don't like the word "collusion" than please call it *"coordination."* **Either way, it shows a relationship between you and the organizations you are evaluating that is so close that you freely copied a public speaking presentation from them.**

You wrote:

Regarding your claim, that we "must understand that the odds that of 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.": First, your claim is inaccurate; Animal Equality—an organization in no way affiliated with Cooney—was a Top Charity for two years, thereby invalidating your entire premise. Second, Cooney has worked with other animal charities that have not received a recommendation, another fact that discredits your claim. Furthermore, those who are follow our work closely understand that we use heuristics to narrow down our search for effective charities. We are not reviewing tens of thousands of animal charities; in fact, we only have comprehensive reviews for 21 different charities on our site, and exploratory reviews for 26 different charities.

There is an extremely important paragraph. Let's first talk about Mr. Cooney and Animal Equality (AE). As you are well aware, two of Mr. Cooney's organizations, The Humane League and Mercy for Animals have been Top Charities since ACE began. That's two-thirds of the money being sent to Top Charities going to organizations associated with Mr. Cooney. That's serious enough, however you suggest that AE has no relationship to Mr. Cooney. **That is false.**

Sharon Nuñez Gough is co-founder and International Director of AE. She's also the Co-Director of LiberAnima. From her LinkedIn page:
https://www.linkedin.com/in/sharon-nu%C3%B1ez-gough-b31b9a98

The collection "LiberAnima" promotes equality and justice towards animals in Spanish speaking countries through a series of key book publications. "LiberAnima" is a one-of-a-kind collection that has brought animal rights books to the general public in countries like Spain and Mexico.

One of the books she published is Mr. Cooney's *"Change of Heart."* **That means there is a probable financial relationship between Ms. Nuñez Gough and Mr. Cooney.** But you already know this because on one of your own web pages it states, regarding AE, that, *"They have translated Nick Cooney's* Veganomics *into Spanish."*

Additionally, AE hosted a presentation by Cooney in 2013:
https://www.facebook.com/events/1419714914907149/, and Mr. Cooney even helped design AE's

literature. Again, you knew this because we found it on your own site: https://animalcharityevaluators.org/charity-reviews/charity-conversations/conversation-thomas-hecquet-animal-equality/

Farmed animal investigations were a priority and they released some footage this year (through the end of August, two had been released in Germany, one in Spain, and one in Italy). In addition, they are running some online ads, distributing veg literature, and doing research on efficiency of their work. They created their veg literature with the help of Nick Cooney and a sociologist so that it would have as much impact as possible on university students.

All of this evidence (book publishing, conference hosting and literature design) points to a very real relationship between AE and Mr. Cooney. Was there a deal between Mr. Cooney and Ms. Nuñez Gough that in return for publishing his book in Mexico and Spain he would help AE get funds by promoting them to be a top Charity? This is not unreasonable speculation considering AE's sudden rise as a Top Charity and potential royalties or fame that may very well flow from an international book deal. It is certainly enough to raise strong questions about the relationship between Mr. Cooney, AE and ACE.

With your evaluating system in mind, we must go back to the letters published by Nathan Harrison that excoriate your so-called science.

It is critically important to understand that Mr. Nathan is a whistleblower. He volunteered for The Humane league and uncovered disturbing aspects of their research, which is why he went public with his letter. Your blog post, which you claim to be a response to criticism, ignores much of what Mr. Nathan stated. Here is an extended quote from Mr. Nathan's response to your post: https://medium.com/@harrisonnathan/re-evaluating-animal-charity-evaluators-c164231406f7

That is, Cooney has been the main person responsible for producing the pseudoscientific research that ACE relies upon to justify its belief in the effectiveness of interventions, which is the allegedly objective basis for its unfailingly consistent recommendation of Cooney's charities; and moreover, when Cooney became involved in a new charity lacking any track record, ACE suspended its normal criteria in order to recommend it. At the very minimum, Cooney's thinking has had a great degree of influence on ACE's thinking.

In other words, The Good Food Institute hasn't accomplished anything, but they somehow made it to be a Top Charity along with other organizations founded or having a financial relationship with Mr. Cooney. **That's not science. That's selection.**

In that same paragraph you respond to our question regarding the astronomical odds that out of thousands of active animal organizations, only those related to Mr. Cooney achieve Top Charity status:

"We are not reviewing tens of thousands of animal charities; in fact, we only have comprehensive reviews for 21 different charities on our site."

This is telling; out of all the animal organizations in the world, you specifically chose only 21 to evaluate for top position and push donations toward. Out of those 21, only those organizations tied to Nick Cooney rate Top Charity status. We are not even dealing with odds, but that ACE is playing with loaded dice so that the winner is always known before they are thrown. You simply cannot

make a sound argument that ACE is objective when Mr. Cooney's organizations right from the start were destined to win top place because they were given no real competition.

One final critical subject: Who was on the ACE advisory board when it started?

You wrote:

I honestly don't remember who was in that group, but it was a group we created with the intention of getting feedback from the community on content that we were planning to post on our site. It didn't have much participation, so we stopped using it very soon after it was created. It's been closed for years. I'm guessing it did have Nick as a member, and probably a few other people from our recommended charities as well. Again, the field of effective animal advocacy is small so this is not surprising.

Mr. Bockman, the admission that Mr. Cooney and others who represent recommended organizations were on the ACE Advisory Board is damning, and shuts down every argument you try to conjure about ACE being objective.

You claim there are few activists in the field you chose to evaluate, but is that because you deliberately chose a niche of animal activism that contained only the people you wanted it to? You do not call yourselves *"Farm Animal Charity Evaluators,"* you call yourselves *"Animal Charity Evaluators."* To any reasonable person, that means you evaluate any/all animal charities, but this is not so. You are using an ideology to define your objectives, and as we know, ideology is faith, not science. **Therefore ACE is not a science-based group, but one based on a moral doctrine that then bends disputed data to justify pushing money toward organizations that fit the pre-defined space you fabricate.**

ACE has set itself up as a judge over animal charities. Judges must be held to a very high standard of ethics - extraordinarily high. ACE first fails its ethical obligations by failing to look at enough organizations and then nosedives even deeper into the void by funneling money raised back to its own participants. **This cannot be allowed by any legitimate movement, and it will not be tolerated by SHARK.**

Creating an evaluation organization to draw money to specifically chosen organizations may be a brilliant idea, but it is equally unethical and we believe may represent fraud, for it deceives individuals who are trusting ACE to be fair and honest, when in fact the deck is stacked from the very beginning.

I am sending this to you and the ACE Board as I strongly suggest that the Board meet as soon as possible to discuss the following:

1. ACE must reject and remove all recommendations for any organization related to Nick Cooney, and any/all organizations who were represented on the Advisory Board. It should not have to be stated that this is a most basic requirement for any organization claiming to be independent, impartial and unbiased. Furthermore, as this was an official advisory board mentioned in your own minutes, those names and organization must be released publicly.

2. ACE must make a public statement acknowledging the existence of, and apologizing for the unfair method in which organizations were chosen, and hereafter offer fair, proper and timesly evaluations for any group that makes such a request. SHARK will not apply for such an evaluation to avoid any conflict of interest.

If ACE is unable or unwilling to do that, then the organization should return any remaining funds in its possession to donors and shut down immediately, as ACE either cannot or will not fulfill its stated mission to function as a proper, unaffiliated, and unbiased evaluator.

Please understand that we consider this to be a very serious issue. ACE is, by your own accounts, persuading donors to spend millions of dollars on your Top Charities, which are pulled from a small, pre-selected batch of groups of which a number comprise members of your own initial advisory board. **We are, therefore, not talking about minor ethical violations, but rather very significant acts of potential fraud.**

It is our hope that the ACE board will see the perilous state the organization is in, and take immediate action to rectify all the relevant issues.

Sincerely,

Steve Hindi
President, SHARK