

Follow-Up Questions for Vegan Outreach, Part Two (2018)

Can you provide estimated expenses and your fundraising goal for 2019?

Salaries will be \$146,000 to \$200,000 depending on if we hire an additional fundraiser for the second half of the 2018-2019 fiscal year. We hope to raise \$2.6 million.

Estimated Expenses		With hire
Salaries	\$146,000	\$200,000
Travel	\$7,500	\$7,500
Per Diem	\$1,100	\$1,100
Donor Database & Email Delivery	\$11,508	\$11,508
Supplies	\$1,250	\$1,250
Advertising	\$2,000	\$2,000
Website Maintenance	\$2,250	\$2,250
Shipping/Postage	\$500	\$500
Bulk Mail	\$2,250	\$2,250
VO Hosted Fundraising Events	\$5,000	\$5,000
Giving Campaign Fees	\$2,250	\$2,250
Meals, Gifts & Donations	\$2,500	\$2,500
Training	\$1,000	\$1,000
	\$185,108	\$239,108

Now that your sponsorship of the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition (FFAC) has ended, will you continue to invest in humane education in some other way, or do you plan to shift that portion of your budget to other activities?

With negligible exceptions, FFAC raised their own funds. Those funds and fundraising efforts have moved with FFAC to their new organization. Vegan Outreach does a significant amount of humane education in Mexico and India, but we lump those funds into the outreach expenses for those regions. Because we often do more than one activity in the same location, it would be very difficult to estimate how much of our outreach expenses go solely to humane education as compared to leafleting and tabling in those regions. We plan to continue to spend about the same amount in Mexico and India into the foreseeable future. We will also do humane education in the U.S. when requested, though it accounts for only a tiny portion of our budget.

In terms of measuring your success, you mentioned switching your focus from how much outreach you do to how many people sign up for your 10 Weeks to Vegan program. Could you tell us more about why you made this decision and how it might impact your other outreach?

Taking an action to sign up for 10 Weeks to Vegan shows a commitment to investigating moving towards an animal-free diet, and we think it makes more sense to measure our impact based more—though not solely—on how many commitments we receive rather than how much outreach we do.

It's been difficult to measure the impact of leafleting, but we have a captive audience with the 10 Weeks to Vegan series and we have already started a survey to measure its impact. Funneling people into 10 Weeks to Vegan will give us a level of data about our impact that we haven't had previously. Of course, it won't tell the whole story, but it can give us an "at minimum" idea of our impact.

The main way it will impact our work in the near future will be through our outreach staff, who have begun making an effort to promote the series and to sign people up. One example, and probably the most disruptive change, will be that our leafleters now carry a clipboard sign-up sheet for 10 Weeks to Vegan while they're leafleting. They can hand this to someone to sign up while continuing to leaflet, though it's likely they'll hand out slightly fewer leaflets than they would if they weren't signing people up for the program at the same time. We'll be attempting to assess what types of events and audiences lead to more 10 Weeks to Vegan sign-ups, which could impact our outreach in the future.

Note that current vegans are not the targets of our 10 Weeks to Vegan sign-ups, and our research so far indicates that only a very small percentage of our audience is already vegan upon signing up for the email series (13% based on food frequency and 15% based on stated identity, of the 124 participants surveyed to date).

You mentioned that after an analysis showed that you were on track to get 10,000 sign-ups for your 10 Weeks to Vegan series, you decided to increase your goal fivefold for the next fiscal year, setting it to 50,000 sign-ups. How long did it take to get 10,000 sign-ups, and how did you settle on your new goal of 50,000?

From June 29, 2017 to July 5, 2018, we had 9,095 sign-ups, but we'd been receiving more in the latter months (2,874 from March 30 to July 5, 2018) due to pushing the program more than we had at the beginning of that fiscal year. I rounded up the estimate to about 10,000. We settled on 50,000 because it was a nice round number that seemed achievable but not easy. As of September 24, we've signed up over 5,500 accounts for the current fiscal year. We launched our Indian 10 Weeks to Vegan program last week (September 17) and will be launching our Australia version in the next few weeks.

How many staff were sent our culture survey? (We'd like to calculate the response rate.)

We sent the survey to all 38 of our staff (which doesn't include myself—I didn't take the survey).

Given that many in the EA community view randomized controlled experiments as the “gold standard” of evidence, can you tell us more about why and how you rely on anecdotal reports to inform your approach? What value do you see in them?

VO has gone to significant lengths to test our booklets and our outreach under real-world scenarios—we don't only rely on anecdotal reports. I, too, am a strong believer in randomized controlled experiments as the gold standard, but sometimes you simply don't have that luxury and it doesn't mean you'll be doing more good by ending all activism that can't be tested via randomized controlled trials.

This is true of public health as well as animal advocacy. I listen to the “[80,000 Hours](#)” podcast, and recent episodes have highlighted these problems. It's very difficult to know the outcomes of our actions across a wide range of behavior and disciplines.

For example, you might check out the episode from May 15, “[Dr Eva Vivalt's research suggests social science findings don't generalize. So evidence-based development – what is it good for?](#)” I realize Dr. Eva Vivalt isn't saying that research is useless, and neither am I—rather, I'm saying that if you have to wait for perfectly controlled experiments before acting, you might be waiting for a very long time, if not forever.

There are a limited number of ways to spread a vegan ethic. Giving a powerful argument accompanied by semi-graphic images of how animals are treated and information on how to eat satisfying, healthy food that doesn't support such cruelty seems intuitively to be one way to help spread such an ethic. Our experience is that at any given time, there is a small percentage of people who, upon learning how animals are treated, want to take steps not to support animal cruelty. We meet these people on a daily basis, and one of our missions is to continue to reach them until we believe this form of outreach has run its course.

As you expand to new countries, to what extent are you tailoring your programming to the local culture and environment?

When expanding to new countries, we hire or work with local activists who are very experienced in their regions, and they're given unlimited input to inform how VO will do advocacy in their area.

In our conversation summary, you mention moving to virtual reality (VR) instead of leafleting. To what extent is VR displacing leafleting in your efforts? What information will be used to guide decisions about how much of your resources will be devoted to one or the other?

I originally thought VR would displace our leafleting efforts, but for the most part it seems that we can continue running both programs simultaneously. Luckily, we've had the funds needed to continue to leaflet at most of the colleges in the regions where we've traditionally leafleted. We currently have one dedicated person doing VR tours who normally doesn't leaflet—he is solely focused on maximizing VR views, and his volunteers normally spend their time recruiting viewers rather than leafleting. But, we still reach most of the schools he goes to with heavy leafleting by others during any given semester. We also have other leafleters who, when they have volunteers and an option to table, will often do VR along with heavy leafleting.

How has Vegan Outreach transferred the experiences and skills that you've gained through leafleting to your newer programs?

Leafleting, tabling, doing virtual reality, and putting on events all have much in common—in each case, we're talking to individuals about why and how to go vegan. The interpersonal dynamics of how to diffuse defensive people and nudge them toward taking more steps are the same in all these forms of outreach. The logistics of planning a leafleting tour versus planning a virtual reality tour are also very similar and overlap with the tabling that we do at festivals. Through all these forms of outreach, we're able to use our literature to give someone a message to take away with them.

Another way our experience with leafleting has transferred to newer programs is to know that good things sometimes take time. We pushed leafleting on college campuses for a good 10 years before it caught on to where we were on most campuses in a given year. While 10 years is much too long to wait for most projects, we know that the first time you try a strategy and it doesn't work well, it doesn't mean you shouldn't give it a few more tries and possibly adjust the strategy before giving up.