



Charity Evaluation Handbook

Version 1.2 | Updated June 2020

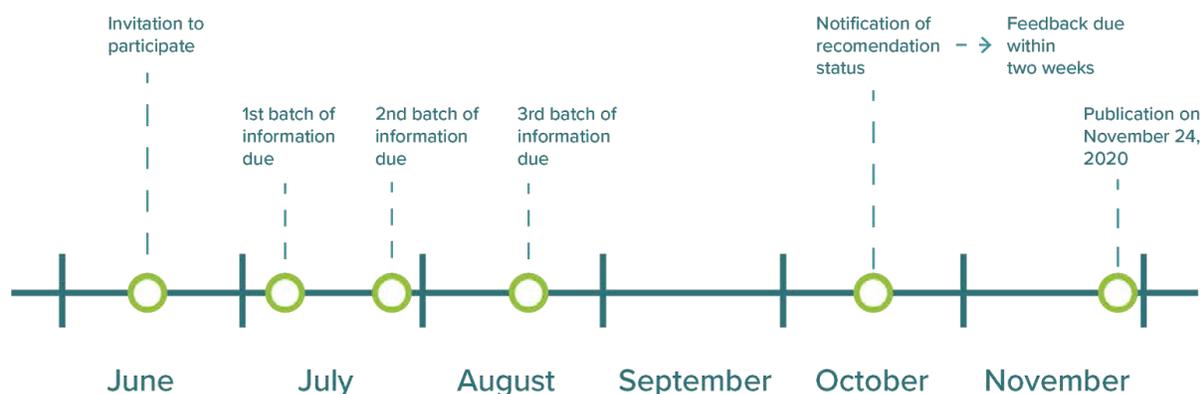
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PART ONE | INTRODUCTION

Animal Charity Evaluators is a nonprofit organization dedicated to finding and promoting the most effective ways to help animals. One of the ways we do this is by evaluating animal charities. We share our findings on our website and encourage donors to give to the charities that will do the most good with their donations.

Our evaluation process runs from June to November. Participation in the process has three basic stages. First, we request written information. Second, we notify charities of their recommendation status and send out drafts of our reviews, soliciting feedback. Finally, we publish our reviews. Here is a timeline of the most important parts of our process:



Please note that this schedule is subject to change.

This handbook details our [evaluation process](#) as well as our [policies and procedures](#). There is a section for [frequently asked questions](#) at the end. If you have any other questions that are not addressed there, please feel free to contact our Charity Liaison:

Melissa Guzikowski, Managing Editor: melissa.guzikowski@animalcharityevaluators.org

You may also contact:

Jamie Spurgeon, Research Manager: jamie.spurgeon@animalcharityevaluators.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 | Invitation to Participate

Each year we invite a group of highly promising charities to participate in our evaluation process. We work hard to make our evaluations as beneficial as possible for the charities we evaluate. Participating in our process demonstrates to donors that your organization thinks strategically and actively seeks ways to improve your work. If your organization is selected as a Top or Standout Charity, we will help you promote it to donors as one of the most effective animal charities in the world. We are also happy to offer [participation grants](#) to all charities who make a “good faith effort” to work with us towards the publication of a review.

1.2 | Stage One: Information and Documents

The first stage of our evaluation process is to request some written information about each reviewed charity. We also request that you distribute an organizational culture survey to a core group of your staff and/or volunteers, on our behalf. We do not require that your employees take the survey or share any particular piece of information with us, but sharing as much information as possible will aid us in writing our reviews.

1.3 | Stage Two: Feedback and Approval Process

Though our [schedule](#) is subject to change, we plan to send reviewed charities a draft of their review in October. All charities will have **two weeks** in which to correct any factual errors and/or request that we remove confidential information from the review. If you are not happy with our review of your organization for any reason, you may choose to [withdraw](#) it from publication.

1.4 | Stage Three: Publication

When we send the draft of your organization’s review, we will also notify you of your organization’s recommendation status. This year, we will publish our reviews the week before Giving Tuesday: this year that will be Tuesday, **November 24, 2020**.

1.5 | Our Continuing Relationship

We hope that each new evaluation is just the beginning of a long working relationship with each charity. If we select your organization as a Top or Standout Charity, we will promote it for the next year (for Top Charities) or two years (for Standout Charities). We will feature it on our website, in

our promotional materials, on social media, and in presentations. We will also fundraise on your behalf, provide you with your donors' contact information every two months, and distribute donations to you twice per year. We will send you ACE-approved "badge" graphics for use in your promotional materials, newsletters, websites, or however you see fit.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

In June we will invite a group of charities to participate in our evaluation process. At a minimum, this group includes:

- ACE Top Charities
- ACE Standout Charities that we did not review in the previous year
- Some previously reviewed charities whose reviews are out of date
- Some new (or new to us) charities that seem promising

2.1 | Benefits of Participation

We aim to secure a high level of participation in our evaluation process, and we've designed our process with the goal of maximizing the benefits for those charities who participate. As you know, many donors are looking for independent charitable impact reviews, and ACE is one of the resources they turn to for thorough reviews of animal charities. Having a review of your organization on our website will strengthen the trust that your current and potential donors have in your work because it indicates that you are interested in evaluating your impact and effectiveness.

This year we are happy to offer small grants to compensate you for your time spent participating in the review process. We will be sending grants of \$2,000 to the charities that are selected for and participate in our reviews.

If we select your organization as a Top or Standout Charity, there are additional benefits. In 2019, we influenced over \$8 million to our recommended charities—an average of \$1.4 million to each Top Charity and an average of \$111,000 to each Standout Charity. We provide our recommended charities with high-value donors; the average gift to our recommended charities in 2019 was \$806. In 2020, we aim to influence \$9 million to our recommended charities. If you'd like to read more about our impact on charitable giving, please refer to our [2019 Giving Metrics Report](#).

2.2 | Other Considerations

For some charities, choosing whether or not to participate in our evaluation process is a difficult decision. Here are six reasons why some charities [decline to be evaluated](#):

- They are too busy during our evaluation season to participate in the review process
- They prefer to wait until the following year to be evaluated (e.g., because they are developing a new program or bringing on new staff)

- They disagree with our evaluation criteria, methodology, and/or philosophy
- They do not support our decision to evaluate charities relative to one another
- They do not consider themselves to be an animal charity
- They do not currently have a significant need for more funding

If you are unsure whether these (or similar) reasons apply to your organization or whether they outweigh the benefits of participating in our process this year, we would be happy to discuss the decision with you.

PART TWO | EVALUATION PROCESS

STAGE ONE: INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS

All charities that are invited to participate in our evaluation process will be contacted by our Charity Liaison, [Melissa Guzikowski](#). She will be your first point of contact for all matters related to evaluation.

The first stage of our evaluation process consists in requesting information from each charity that has accepted to be evaluated.

3.1 | Requested Information

This year, we are requesting information from each charity under evaluation using Google Forms and Qualtrics. We will send your organization these forms at three stages during the first half of the evaluation process. Among other things, we will solicit:

- The primary outcomes your organization achieved in the past couple of years
- A detailed breakdown of your budget and time allocation by activity
 - The amount of restricted donations your organization received in the past year (if any)
 - The names of any revenue-generating programs and how much revenue they generated in the past year
 - If you operate in multiple countries, your spending totals for each country
 - The details of any major grants received in the last two years (i.e., anything greater than 20% of your current budget)
- A list of board members and brief descriptions of their occupations or backgrounds, if this information is not available online (job titles/industries or links to LinkedIn are sufficient)
- Your organization's strategic plan (if you have one)

ACE acknowledges the great challenges that COVID-19 has caused for many organizations. We will address this by requesting additional information on how this situation has affected your programs and activities.

To ensure that we have adequate time to draft all of our reviews, we request that you send us the above information **within three weeks** of receiving the forms. If that schedule won't work for your organization, just let us know and we will try to accommodate you. Please feel free to share any additional information or documents that you feel demonstrate your successes or impact. The deadline for providing additional information is **September 18, 2020**.

3.2 | Format and Publication of Documents

We generally plan to publish your organization's Google Form responses that contain the above information so that we can easily cite them in our reviews. If any of the information in those documents is confidential, we recommend **highlighting** or ****starring**** the confidential information, and we will remove it before publication. If necessary, you may send us separate documents that are entirely confidential.

We know that editing is time consuming, so please don't worry too much about the format or appearance of the information you send us. Our Managing Editor will copy edit all materials and format them for consistency before publication. As with all materials pertaining to your organization's evaluation, we will send you the edited versions of your documents ahead of time and publish them only with your approval.

3.3 | Other Corroborating Information

We may seek other sources of information to corroborate claims made by leadership during the charity evaluation process. For instance, we may seek news reports and other publicly available information to corroborate information about events that your charity organized. If you use a media monitoring service to track mentions of your charity in the press, we may ask to see copies of the reports, though furnishing this information is optional for your charity.

We also plan to send a culture survey to your organization for administration to a core group of staff and/or volunteers. The survey is part of our ongoing effort to address systemic problems in the animal advocacy movement by providing animal advocates with a safe, anonymous way to discuss problems in their workplace. We also hope that our surveys of advocates can teach us about what works well in the promotion of healthy organizational cultures. We will administer the survey as follows:

- 1) The Charity Liaison will collect a list of names and work email addresses of your staff via email. This list will be stored offline and will only be visible to the Charity Liaison.

- 2) The Charity Liaison will then distribute a survey to those staff via email. All responses will be anonymous; we won't be able to connect them to individual email addresses or names. The deadline for response will be approximately one week.
- 3) Once the deadline for response has passed, the Charity Liaison will delete both their offline copy and the email containing the list of names and email addresses.
- 4) The responses will be used to produce a summary report that identifies themes in the responses and details the average score and distribution of the quantitative questions.
- 5) This summary will be used by staff to draft the final review, but will not be published alongside the review.

Note: We will use Qualtrics for collecting the anonymous survey results in order to guarantee the anonymity of respondents.

Note: We can provide the questions featured in the survey, and a contract detailing the handling of your employees information, on request.

3.4 | “Questions for Further Consideration”

We may send your organization a list of questions that are written from a more critical (rather than simply information-seeking) perspective. Please don't take these questions to reflect ACE's attitude towards your organization. We simply try to anticipate some of the intelligent, probing, and often critical questions we may receive from our community about your organization so that we can address them in the review. We also aim to give you the opportunity to provide your perspective on complex issues. We will compose the answers to these questions using a combination of relevant information we have gathered and citations of any responses you may have given us. For this reason, you needn't write fully developed answers on your own.

STAGE TWO: FEEDBACK AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Though our schedule is subject to change, we plan to send reviewed charities a draft of their review in October. All charities will have **two weeks** in which to correct any factual errors and/or request that we remove confidential information from the review, though we understand that some discussion of more complex issues may extend beyond two weeks. If your organization is unable to send us your initial feedback within two weeks, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can make every effort to accommodate your schedule.

When you receive the draft of your review, please bear in mind that *all* of our reviews, even reviews of our Top Charities, contain critical content. Our role is not to “sell” any particular organization to our community, but to provide honest, detailed reviews of each organization. After all, it's our honesty and transparency that lend credibility to the positive statements that we

do make. Also remember that your review was written alongside many others, which were all created through the same process and using the same format. The format may or may not have changed significantly from those used in previous years, but we assure you that it is consistent with all reviews written during the same year.

If you are not happy with our review of your organization for any reason, you may choose to [withdraw](#) it from publication. We will simply list the name of your organization on our full list of charities with a brief note about the stage in the evaluation process at which your organization withdrew (see [section 5.2](#) and [section 5.6](#) for more information).

STAGE THREE: PUBLICATION

When we send the draft of your organization’s review, we will also notify you of your organization’s recommendation status. Your organization may or may not be selected as a Top or Standout Charity. We select two kinds of Standout Charities: Special Interest and General Interest. You can read more about our recommendation categories on our [website](#).

We ask that you please keep the contents of your review (along with your recommendation status) confidential until publication. This year, we will publish our updated reviews the week before Giving Tuesday, on Tuesday **November 24, 2020**.

If we recommend your organization as a Top or Standout Charity, we will send you ACE-approved 2020 “badge” graphics for use in your promotional materials, newsletters, websites, or however you see fit. Here are our 2019 badges:



PART THREE | USEFUL INFORMATION

OUR CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP

We hope that each new evaluation is the beginning of a long working relationship with each charity. If we select your organization as a Top or Standout Charity, we will promote it for the next year, featuring it on our website, in our promotional materials, on social media, and in presentations. We will encourage the public to donate to your organization as one of the most effective animal advocacy organizations in the world.

Even if your organization is not selected as a Top or Standout Charity, we may reach out to you to participate in our [interview series](#), to provide feedback on our research, or to be featured in a [blog post](#). Occasionally, we even help connect donors with charities that we have reviewed but not recommended, if they are a very good fit. We are always looking for new ways to involve a broad range of charities in our work and to promote many different ways of helping animals.

If you like, please feel free to contact us throughout the year with updates on your accomplishments. We love to hear from you! We carefully keep track of all of the information you send us, though we generally [update](#) our reviews only during our standard review cycle each year.

4.1 | ACE's Recommended Charity Fund

If we select your organization as a recommended charity, we will not only direct donors towards your organization; we will also actively fundraise on your behalf. In addition to collecting donations for our Top Charities through our website, we collect donations to our [Recommended Charity Fund](#), which we distribute among our Top and Standout Charities. This fund is distributed in January and July of each year and is based on our recommended charities' room for more funding, how much money is in the fund, and how effectively we feel each charity would use the funding.

4.2 | Tracking ACE-Influenced Donations

If your organization is selected as a Top or Standout Charity, we request that you help us track donations that are influenced by ACE's recommendation of your work. We appreciate your cooperation in helping us evaluate our own impact as a nonprofit organization. Please take a few minutes to review our donation tracking standard operating procedures for [Top](#) and [Standout](#) Charities for more details.

4.3 | Following Up on Your Organization's Room for More Funding

Each June, we follow up with our Top Charities about their room for more funding. If your organization is a Top Charity, we will simply ask for your best estimate of how much your organization has raised in funds since our previous check-in. Note that we are interested in your total revenue; there is no need for this update to distinguish donations influenced by ACE from other donations. If, based on your fundraising success, we're concerned that your organization may have limited room for additional funding prior to our next recommendation update, we may reach out again to discuss our questions about your current plans for growth. After each follow-up, we plan to write a blog post to update our community about the room for funding at our Top Charities, since this is something about which we are often asked.

4.4 | Review and Recommendation Updates

We generally do not update our reviews or change our recommendations outside of our annual evaluation process. We do, however, reserve the right to remove parts of a review, archive a review, and/or rescind a recommendation in the event that (i) a major change occurs at one of the charities we've evaluated or (ii) we discover highly relevant new information. We will make every effort to contact the charity in question to verify the relevant facts and notify them of our decision before making any such change.

4.5 | Schedule of Subsequent Reviews

If your organization is selected as a Top Charity in 2020, we expect to review it again in 2021. If your organization is selected as a Standout Charity in 2020, we expect to review it again in 2022. If we review your organization but do not select it as a recommended charity in 2020, we may ask to review it again in 2023. If you would like us to update our review of your organization sooner than scheduled, please let us know by June 1 of the year in which you hope to be reviewed. Additionally, please let us know about any major changes at your organization that you think may contribute to the need for an update.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Note: A complete description of Animal Charity Evaluators' [policies](#) is available on our website. Here, we describe those aspects of our policies and procedures that are directly relevant to our evaluation process.

5.1 | Participation in the Evaluation Process

We're always glad to hear that a charity has chosen to participate in our evaluation process. Please know that we will make every effort to evaluate your organization fairly and in line with our policies and procedures. To ensure consistency between reviews, we evaluate every reviewed charity according to the same [criteria](#). Each criterion is thoroughly researched and supported by evidence and reason. Nearly our entire research team participates in drafting each review. Prior to publication, we solicit feedback from other parties, including our Executive Director, a committee of board members, and you—the charity under evaluation. We understand that *you* are the expert on your own organization, and we value your input because it helps us to draft a review that accurately reflects your work.

We acknowledge the great challenges caused by COVID-19 this year, and will adjust our reviews accordingly. If you have any questions about this topic, please contact our Charity Liaison [Melissa Guzikowski](#) or Research Manager [Jamie Spurgeon](#).

5.2 | Declining Evaluation

If you decline to participate in our evaluation process, we—by default—list your charity on our website with the note “Declined to be Reviewed.” If you would like to select 1–3 reason(s) for declining (provided in [section 2.2](#)) we would be happy to include them on your charity’s page on our website. If you do not respond to our invitation to be evaluated, we will simply write that your organization “did not respond to our invitation.”

Listing all of the charities we consider on our website serves at least two purposes. First, it is consistent with our commitment to being transparent about our decision-making process. Second, it indicates to our community whether we have actively chosen not to write a review for a particular group, whether they’ve declined to be reviewed, or whether we’ve never considered that group. That said, if your organization would prefer not to be listed on our website, simply let us know and we will remove you from our [list](#).

5.3 | Conflicts of Interest

We maintain a strict charity evaluation committee conflict of interest policy, which is detailed on our [website](#) alongside all individual staff and board [disclosures](#). Serious conflicts of interests (e.g., previous employment or close personal friendships with members of an organization) disqualify the employee or board member in question from participating in any aspect of the evaluation of a particular organization. Minor conflicts of interests (e.g., volunteering or most donation histories) are publicly acknowledged, though in general we expect these not to interfere with our standard evaluation procedures.

We also have a policy to prevent conflicts of interest arising from donations. Should ACE receive a donation from an individual strongly tied to a recommended animal charity, the donation will be returned, and said individual will be directed to the section of our [website](#) that addresses this

issue. ACE will not apply for grants from organizations that could be considered for future recommendations.

If you believe that your organization has a conflict of interest with any member of our staff or board and you do not see it reflected on our [disclosures](#) page, please contact our [Research Manager](#) or our [Executive Director](#).

5.4 | Sensitive and Confidential Information

During the evaluation process, you may wish to share information with us that is not yet public and that you wish to remain confidential. There will be many opportunities for you to share such information, and for you to notify us of its confidential nature. We will never disclose information that we understand to be private—neither in our reviews nor in our conversations with donors. We will send you our evaluation of your organization prior to publication, so you will have an opportunity to review it for any information you would prefer not to include in the published version.

Our commitment to honoring confidentiality extends to most circumstances surrounding your participation in our evaluation process. For example, if at the start of this process you choose not to participate in our process for reasons that you prefer not to publicize, we will not disclose those reasons to third parties.

5.5 | Approval of Publication

We will not publish a review of your organization without the explicit permission of your appointed charity representative. By approving a review for publication, you agree to its use on our website and in our promotional material. You also agree that we may share information that appears in the review in our conversations with donors. We may also use information that appears in the review in other materials, like a [charity comparison chart](#) or [charity quiz](#).

If you wish, you may quote parts of the review or link to the entire review on your website or in your promotional materials. You may also publish a response to the review in your own materials.

5.6 | Withdrawal from Publication

All organizations are free to withdraw from our evaluation process at any time, for any reason. If your organization chooses to withdraw in a given year, we will not disclose any information we acquired about your organization during that year's evaluation process. This includes the reason(s) for your withdrawal, should you wish for them to remain confidential.

We will, however, note the approximate stage of the evaluation process at which your organization withdrew participation. For example, one of the following notes might appear on our website next to the names of withdrawn charities:

- Withdrew from evaluation before we began drafting our review
- Withdrew from evaluation before we completed a review
- Withdrew from evaluation after viewing a draft of our review

If you would like us to publish a reason for your withdrawal from publication, you may select a reason from [section 2.2](#), or we can state that you believe our review “misrepresented and/or misvalued” your organization.

5.7 | Mutual Non-Disparagement Agreement

In choosing to withdraw from publication, you agree to enter a mutual non-disparagement agreement with Animal Charity Evaluators. We promise not to make public evaluative claims about your organization in the case of your withdrawal, so we ask that you make a similar commitment to us. This agreement is designed to protect our organization; because we maintain the confidentiality of all information gathered during discontinued evaluations, we would not be able to respond if a charity made disparaging statements about us after their withdrawal—even if those statements were false.

Your agreement not to disparage Animal Charity Evaluators means that you will not make any negative evaluative statements (written or verbally) about our work during the evaluation process from which you withdrew. Examples of negative statements include (but are not limited to):

- Claims that our unpublished evaluation of your organization was poorly conducted or poorly written
- Claims that our unpublished evaluation of your organization would cause harm to the animal advocacy movement
- Claims that we lack expertise or are otherwise ill-equipped to do our jobs

While, in the case of your withdrawal, we ask that you do not make negative *evaluative* statements of our work, you are welcome to make *factual* statements about your withdrawal from our evaluation process. For instance, you may state that you chose to withdraw from evaluation because you disagreed with our review or because you believe we misunderstood your work.

5.8 | Donor Privacy Policy

ACE will distribute donations and share donor contact information with our recommended charities so long as they maintain strict adherence to our [donor privacy policy](#). Charities are required not to share, sell, or rent a donor’s information with any other entities without first obtaining the donor’s permission.

5.9 | Participation Grants

We administer participation grants to all organizations that make a “good faith effort” towards the publication of a review. Allowing us to publish a review of your organization is not a requirement for receiving a participation grant. Charities that participate in our review process will receive a participation grant of \$2,000.

Participation grants are administered by our Director of Operations soon after the release of our updated reviews. Organizations may choose to have their grant sent by check or by bank transfer. For a check, we will need to know (i) who to make the check out to, and (ii) your organization’s mailing address. For a bank transfer to organizations in the U.S., we will need to know the following information about your organization’s bank account: (i) routing number, (ii) account number, and (iii) account type. We will also need to know the name of the account, your organization’s physical address, and a contact name and email address.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Where will ACE’s review of our organization be published?

All of our reviews are published on our [website](#). We also promote our recommended charities in our [Guide to Effective Giving](#), our newsletters, and other promotional material.

2. How long does the evaluation process take? What deadlines will you have for our organization?

The [evaluation process](#) lasts from June until November. Most of that time, however, our team is doing the work—not yours! We require three basic stages of participation from the charities we evaluate. First, we ask you to send us some information in three batches via Google forms/Qualtrics and answer some [follow-up questions](#), with each batch of information having a deadline of about **three weeks**. In mid- to late-**October**, we will ask you to spend up to **two weeks** providing [feedback and approval](#) of your review. Finally, around the time of review [publication](#) (**November 24, 2020**), we may ask you to implement donation tracking and to send us your contact details so that we can administer your participation grant.

According to our most recent survey of charities we have previously evaluated, participating in our evaluation process takes about **50 hours**, on average. If you find that your organization is spending significantly longer than that, please let us know so we can discuss ways to reduce your time commitment.

3. How does being evaluated help our work? Will we be compensated for our time?

As you know, many donors are looking for independent charitable impact reviews, and ACE is one of the resources they turn to for thorough reviews of animal charities. Having a review of your organization on our website will strengthen the trust that your current and potential donors have in your work, because it indicates that you are interested in evaluating your impact and effectiveness.

This year, we are happy to offer small [grants](#) to compensate you for your time in participating in the review process. We will be sending grants of \$2,000 to the charities that are selected for review.

4. My organization is very busy at this time of year. Can a certain aspect of the evaluation process be delayed a few weeks? Can it be delayed until spring?

We will make every effort to accommodate your organization's schedule, but there are certain deadlines that we are not able to move. We publish all reviews by Giving Tuesday each year, and they must be completed well in advance so that our communications team has time to format and publish them. If you'd like to request a deadline extension that would not interfere with our November publication date, please email our [Charity Liaison](#) to inquire.

5. Can my organization be evaluated next year instead of this year?

We would be happy to add you to our list of charities to consider next year. If we invited you to participate in our evaluation process this year and you [chose to wait](#), it's fairly likely that we will invite you to participate again next year. However, since there may be time constraints or other factors that we are not able to anticipate or control, we cannot guarantee that we will select your organization for evaluation next year.

6. Can my organization be evaluated both this year and next year?

Generally, we evaluate our Top Charities every year, our Standout Charities every two years, and other charities every three years or more. Unless you are selected as a Top Charity, then, it's unlikely that we will evaluate your organization both this year and next year. However, you should always feel free to [keep us apprised](#) of major changes at your organization, and we may choose to reevaluate your organization sooner than scheduled.

7. Will Animal Charity Evaluators publish sensitive or confidential information about my organization?

We will never disclose any information about your organization without your explicit permission. You will have an [opportunity](#) to read our review of your organization before publication.

8. Can my organization withdraw from evaluation at any time?

Yes. The entire evaluation process is optional, and your organization may [withdraw](#) at any time. In line with our commitment to maintaining [transparency](#) with our donors, we list the status of all organizations we work with on our website. If your organization withdraws from the evaluation process, we will list it on our website with the note: “withdrew from the evaluation process.” We may also list the approximate stage in the process at which you withdrew.

9. If we are selected as a Top or Standout Charity, for how long does that status last?

Top Charity status is reevaluated every year. Standout Charity status is reevaluated every two years. We reserve the right to revoke either status in the event that we uncover significant new information about a Top or Standout Charity during the year.

10. Can my organization decline to be listed on Animal Charity Evaluators’ website?

While charities that we have not evaluated [can decline](#) to be listed on our website, we will list all charities who have participated in the evaluation process. Alongside the name of each organization, we write a note about whether the organization was evaluated, [declined](#), or [withdrew](#) from the evaluation process, or did not respond to our invitation. Publishing this information helps us maintain transparency about our process, and we feel it is immensely helpful for our donors.



Animal Charity Evaluators

P.O. Box 5482

San Diego, CA 92165

www.animalcharityevaluators.org

I have read the contents of ACE's Charity Evaluation Handbook and, on behalf of my organization,

_____, I agree to participate in ACE's 2020 evaluation process.

Signature

Date

If your organization chooses to participate in Animal Charity Evaluators' 2020 evaluation process, please sign and return this form to our Charity Liaison at:
melissa.guzikowski@animalcharityevaluators.org