

Wild Animal Initiative

Research Fund: Goals & Proposed Budget

A version of this document was submitted to Open Philanthropy as part of the proposal process that resulted in a \$3.5 million grant to Wild Animal Initiative to fund welfare research

Goals

The projections below are based on our thinking about how many projects we could find, assess, and process. Calculations of how many projects we could fund use a fixed project size of ~ \$105,000. We use this benchmark as it is the cost of a recent grant we helped facilitate, which covered hiring a PhD candidate and some equipment costs. Depending on what applications we receive, we may end up funding fewer larger-scale projects or more smaller-scale projects with the same budget.

1. What we will do:
 - a. **Fund early-career researchers.** We're currently working with a group of postdocs and graduate students to develop the precise details of our early-career research program, which we plan to launch by January 2022. The program will involve identifying promising researchers at an early career stage (most likely postdocs in the US and PhD students in the UK) who want to pursue wild animal welfare research with their career, and helping them develop an effective project idea. *Note: we are not requesting funding for the costs associated with running this program, but rather for research that will be conducted at the candidate's home institution at the end of the project development process.*
 - i. We project between 6 (95% confidence) and 20 (50% confidence) fellowships.
 - b. **Run calls for proposals (CFPs).** Starting in ~January 2022, we plan to run CFPs on a regular schedule. We expect that with sufficient advertising and planning we could receive ~100 applications for funding. With research involvement to identify promising projects and develop them further, as well as careful construction of the project call, we are extremely confident (~ 95%) that at least 1 project per CFP will be worth funding, and very confident (~ 75%) that 5% of applications per CFP would be worth funding.
 - i. We expect to run 8 CFPs and fund between 8 and 40 projects.
2. Why we are doing it:
 - a. **Early-career funding.** Postdocs (US-style systems) and PhD students (UK-style systems) are at a critical stage of their research career where a small investment now can influence

the course of their future projects. Participants in our working group mentioned assistance with finding funding, developing interdisciplinary project ideas and skills, support from other researchers interested in wild animal welfare, and identifying mentors as the key barriers to pursuing a career in wild animal welfare research. We believe that the early-career program may be equally high impact to narrowly framed calls for proposals, despite the increased time investment required, because of the quality of proposals we will be able to help the fellows develop, the value of reaching a researcher at this career stage, and the relationships we will build with the candidates.

- b. **CFPs.** While our long-term goal is to build a field of wild animal welfare that is self-sufficient and funded through existing scientific funding agencies (like the National Science Foundation), there is currently insufficient community awareness of wild animal welfare as a compelling research area with adequate funding to pursue a career. By granting directly to scientists, and selecting projects carefully for their field-building potential, we aim to build awareness of and interest in the field and grow it in an organic way. We also plan to encourage cost sharing with other funders as a way to add a wild animal welfare component to existing projects and reduce the costs.
3. Outcomes we are looking for:
 - a. **Early-career projects**
 - i. **Secure additional funding:** Fellows will be able to leverage the project support we offer to secure a mentor, who will then need to secure (or already have secured) additional funding. In this way, we will be able to use Open Philanthropy funding as leverage to direct more mainstream scientific funding toward wild animal welfare research.
 1. Our goal is that at the end of the program, \$20,000 (80% confidence) to \$200,000 (5% confidence) of additional scientific funding will have gone towards our fellows' projects from other grantors.
 - ii. **Relationship building:** By using the fellowship program as a conversation starter, we will build relationships with additional senior scientists interested in wild animal welfare research.
 1. We expect between 40 (90% confidence) and 80 (25% confidence) scientists who know about our work and we can contact for assistance/about projects
 - iii. **Career advancement:** 25% of early career researchers participating in the project development program go on to secure careers that will contribute to the growth of wild animal welfare as a research field (background level of postdocs going into academic careers is 21 - 37%).

b. CFPs

- i. We want all funded projects to significantly advance the field of wild animal welfare, either by leading directly to a positive outcome (such as informing policy for wild animal management) or by helping to establish the field of wild animal welfare research. Long-term goals that will not be measurable within the two-year period include:
 1. **Publications:** 100% of our funded work results in at least 1 publication.
 2. **Citations:** 20% of our funded work receives more than 10 citations within 10 years (background level is something like: 44% of papers receive no citations, 24% of papers receive 10 or more citations. The below average expectation is because papers get more citations in more established fields, and the work we fund will be part of establishing a new field).
 3. **Direct benefits to animals:** 5% of funded work results in a measurable benefit for wild animals within 20 years.
- ii. Within the two-year window, key milestones we hope (60% confidence) to see are:
 1. **Research value:** 100% of the projects we fund are assessed as “very likely to increase interest in wild animal welfare” or “very likely to lead to improvements in wild animal welfare” by Rethink Priorities or a similar panel of informed experts.
 2. **Academic community awareness:**
 - a. By the end of the two-year period, we expect to be receiving applications from a large number of candidates, indicating that more scientists are aware of our work and our goals.
 - i. 100 applications per CFP
 - b. By the end of the two-year period, we expect to receive more unsolicited inquiries about our work from scientists per year, indicating that more researchers want to engage with wild animal welfare as a research field.
 - i. 20 unsolicited inquiries per year
 3. **Understanding of wild animal welfare:** When biologists who have interacted with the organization are asked to define wild animal welfare research, 80% mention at least two of the three key components of the field: welfare (a mental property, distinct from species population or habitat condition, important in its own right, etc.), suffering not caused by humans (common, undesirable, potentially causing net-negative lives, etc.), human intervention to help animals (possible, desirable, etc.).

Budget

This budget includes 3 hires to significantly increase our capacity to fund external research. Note that all payroll costs include salary, benefits, and taxes.

Budget type	Description	Year 1	Year 2	Total (USD)
Communications Director	Advertises/promotes associated programs. Expected commitment = 20 hrs/week (½ of total cost of hire)	\$46,146	\$46,146	\$92,292
Researcher	Adds distinct research background from current staff to increase grant assessment capacity	\$78,842	\$78,842	\$157,684
Administrator	Adds grants administration experience, reduces research staff role in compliance, administration	\$71,292	\$71,292	\$142,583
	Total Payroll Costs	\$196,280	\$196,280	\$392,559
Software	Application management software, webinar hosting	\$9,400	\$9,400	\$18,800
Advertising	Advertising of grant programs + promotional webinars	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Legal consultation	For development of grant contracts	\$600	\$600	1200
Consulting	DEI Consulting with Encompass	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$15,000
	Total Administration Costs	\$18,500	\$18,500	\$37,000
Grants to external researchers	Made in response to calls for proposals (CFPs) (~55%), made specifically to early career researchers as part of a collaborative project development process (~35%), or made opportunistically when scientists approach us with great ideas (~10%).	\$1,485,000	\$1,590,000	\$3,075,000
	TOTAL	\$1,699,780	\$1,804,780	\$3,504,559

Organization budget information	
Total revenue 2020	\$605,908.65
Total expenses 2020	\$528,762.12
% of 2020 revenue from restricted sources	0%
Anticipated (non-OP) revenue in 2021 ^	\$733,077
Anticipated (non-OP) revenue in 2022 ^*	\$825,000

^ We do our financial projections on an April-to-March calendar. Correspondingly, projections are for April 2021 to March 2022 and April 2022 to March 2023.

*As a young organization, we have limited data off which to base our revenue projections. This number represents our best guess.