

2025

YEAR IN

REVIEW



ANIMAL CHARITY
EVALUATORS

HELPING PEOPLE HELP MORE ANIMALS

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BOARD MEMBERS

We are thankful to our Board for their steady guidance, thoughtful oversight, and continued commitment to helping animals as effectively as possible.



Amy Odene
Board Member



Anju Goel
Board Member



Jacob Peacock
Board Member



John Seber
Board Secretary



Kieran Greig
Board Member



Mo Esan
Board Member



Ravi Mulani
Board Chair



Tom Bilello
Board Treasurer



Zach Frietas-Groff
Board Member

A LETTER FROM ACE'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When you care about the wellbeing of all animals, end-of-year reflections are complicated. We are working hard to make the world a more hospitable place for all, yet, more animals than before are enduring bleak lives and brutal deaths. That's not a cheery note to end the year on. And knowing that a year from now, when I'll sit down to write this again, the amount of suffering will likely be even greater, that's not a happy thought to carry into 2026.

But none of that is actually relevant for us to think about. What matters is the difference we can make. It's the scale of the solution that's important, not the size of the problem. And when you look at how much good we collectively do, it's hard to deny that something extraordinary is happening. Hundreds of millions of animals are escaping profound suffering because of our grantees. I'm not sure where else you can have such an impact.

So, I hope that you will keep your eye on the prize. Don't be distracted by what you cannot do. Let's be inspired by the work of our Recommended Charities and Movement Grants recipients. Cherish our collective achievements for the shrimps, chickens, pigs, tilapia, rats, and cows of the future. And tell your community about what you do—and what they can just as easily do, with surprisingly little effort, to reduce the cruelty in our world. Because then we can get to a point sooner where we review the state of animal welfare and see a decline in harm done to animals.

My personal and Animal Charity Evaluators' mandate is the same: help people help more animals. I want you to feel confident that with ACE, you can make informed choices. That with us, you trust that your generosity maximizes the good you do for animals. If you read this report, and you see the incredible amount of good we do together—share this with your friends. If you see opportunities where we can do better, I hope you'll reach out to me.

SvP

Stien van der Ploeg
Executive Director



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01. Department Snapshots



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PROGRAMS

In 2025, the Programs Department focused on strengthening the rigor, clarity, and reach of our core work across charity evaluations, grantmaking, and impact assessment.

Within our Charity Evaluations and Recommendations program, we refined our evaluation methods, comprehensively evaluated nine charities, and recommended five of them, bringing our total number of Recommended Charities to 10. Through Movement Grants, we improved our grantmaking processes, introduced two funding rounds per year and multi-year funding, disbursed 29 grants across the July and April rounds, and awarded an additional 25 grants in December.

Across programs, we broadened our impact assessment approach and published updated Influenced Giving Reports for both our Charity Evaluations and Recommendations and Movement Grants. Together, this work supports some of the most cost-effective and promising animal advocacy organizations—helping them deliver programs that reach far more animals than would be possible without this support.



9

Charities Evaluated
in 2025



49

Grants awarded in
2025



5

Charities Recommended
(bringing our total
Recommended Charities
to 10)



Key Highlights

More strategic charity recommendations

- We incorporated a stronger focus on strategic prioritization and marginal activities in our charity evaluations and Recommended Charity Fund disbursement decisions.
- This increased our confidence in how donations will be used over the two-year recommendation cycle by ACE's Recommended Charities.

Responsive and stable grantmaking

- We began offering two Movement Grants rounds per year, including multi-year funding.
- As a result, successful applicants receive funding more quickly, and organizations receiving multi-year grants benefit from greater financial stability.

Stronger external input

- We developed more robust processes for soliciting feedback and insights from external experts, increasing our confidence in charity evaluations, recommendations, and grant decisions.

Biggest Win

Launching [Better for Animals](#). This resource meaningfully strengthens the connection between animal advocates and the current state of evidence by providing curated, synthesized summaries on the effectiveness of animal advocacy interventions. This foundation of robust research directly supports the quality of ACE's charity recommendations and grantmaking.



Biggest Learning

A major area of learning this year has been an ongoing feasibility study looking at our evaluations and recommendations. The study explores potential alternative approaches to the program, with the goal of identifying ways to increase the quality of our recommendations and counterfactual funding for effective animal advocacy.

DEVELOPMENT

ACE's resource development efforts focus on two distinct tasks: raising the funds necessary to do our own work, and meta-fundraising. The latter means securing as many donations as we can for the high-impact work done by advocates around the world—so they can help animals better. In 2025, we reorganized our Development work to better support ACE's growing emphasis on meta-fundraising.

We fundraised for [Movement Grants](#) and the [Recommended Charity Fund](#) (RCF) through our matching challenge, launched the [Greatest Need Fund](#), and experimented with new approaches to communicating impact. We piloted [Impact Gifts](#) as a step toward a potential broader gift card rollout, restarted our workplace giving program with a talk at Google, and attended new events aimed at reaching new donors.

We collaborated with peers in the effective giving and animal philanthropy communities, like Animal Grantmakers, Charity Navigator, and Giving What We Can to encourage more people to make informed grants and gifts for animals.



IMPACT GIFTS

We piloted Impact Gifts as a step toward a potential broader gift card rollout



GNF

Launched the Greatest Need Fund (GNF)



COLLABORATION

We collaborated with peers like Animal Grantmakers, Charity Navigator, and Giving What We Can



Key Highlights

Significant growth in program fundraising

- From January–November 2025, we raised \$3.4 million for the Recommended Charity Fund (RCF) and Movement Grants combined (a 55% increase compared to the same period in 2024), including \$1.6 million for RCF alone (a 53% increase over the prior year).
- This does not include the many influenced donations that people make directly to charities on our recommendation.

Faster matching challenge success

- We met our \$300,000 RCF Matching Challenge goal nearly three weeks earlier than in 2024.
- We see this as a testament to the quality of our recommendations and our meta-fundraising tactics.

Larger fund distributions

- We completed the second-largest RCF distribution to date in February, totaling \$1.8 million and directing more funding to our high-impact Recommended Charities.

Biggest Win

This year, we grew our fundraising amidst a rapidly changing movement for animals. To prepare for future changes to priorities and needs across our programs, we launched the new [Greatest Need Fund](#) in December. This fund allows donors to donate unrestricted gifts in confidence that our experienced staff team allocates according to the area of greatest need for animals each quarter.

The Greatest Need Fund

Support the greatest need

A donation to the Greatest Need Fund supports the greatest need for animals on a regular basis. ACE will allocate donations to our Recommended Charity Fund, our Movement Grants, specific Recommended Charities, or our operating costs, depending on the area most in need of funding at that time.



Biggest Learning

Juggling grant proposals, in-person and virtual events, multiple fundraising appeals, implementing new funds and giving options—that was a lot for a partially-new and small Development team. We needed to pivot some of our tactics so we could launch successfully while laying the groundwork for future expansion. To maintain quality over time, we will need to invest in capacity and improve efficiency, or scale our ambitions accordingly.

COMMUNICATIONS

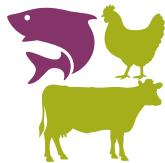
In 2025, the Communications team focused on three core priorities: strengthening systems, expanding our audience, and deepening engagement with the community we already serve.

We published more than 20 blog posts and launched two new content series.

Better for Animals focuses on individual interventions and the evidence behind them, while Monthly Spotlight highlights the work of different recommended charities or Movement Grants recipients in each feature.

Alongside this foundation, we worked to increase ACE's reach and credibility with key audiences. We ran three new drip campaigns to grow our subscriber base and also trialled direct donation campaigns across different audience segments, coming out net positive, while gaining valuable lessons to inform future fundraising efforts.

We also prioritized meaningful engagement with existing supporters. This included running campaigns in support of Movement Grants and the Recommended Charity Fund, redesigning how charity recommendations are presented to improve clarity and usability, and hosting our first-ever event celebrating the impact of ACE's recommended organizations.



BFA

Launched Better for Animals, focusing on individual interventions and evidence behind them



SPOTLIGHT

Launched Monthly Spotlight to highlight impactful work in the movement



REACH

Ran three new drip campaigns to grow our subscriber base and also trialled direct donation campaigns



Key Highlights

Expanded reach and credibility

- ACE achieved strong media visibility through placements in [The Guardian](#), [The Independent](#), [Vox](#), and [Alliance magazine](#), alongside notable social media engagement driven by contributors such as John Oberg and Cloe Sousa.
- These placements reinforced ACE's role as a credible voice in evidence-based animal advocacy.

Direct fundraising impact

- Communications efforts contributed to over \$60,000 raised for the Movement Grants Matching Challenge, more than \$70,000 through Meta ads, and over \$80,000 for the Recommended Charity Fund Matching Challenge.

Sustained audience growth

- Our email audience grew significantly in 2025, with an ~85% year-on-year increase, adding 4,800 new net contacts, and over 10,000 active subscribers by year's end—substantially increasing the reach of ACE's research, recommendations, and fundraising work.

Biggest Win

The [interview with ACE's advisor Prof. Peter Singer](#), alongside co-editing the [full Alliance Magazine feature](#) with Zoë Sigle from Senterra Funders, placed evidence-based animal advocacy in front of a large philanthropic audience. It created an opportunity to share ACE's perspective while highlighting the breadth and quality of work happening across the movement. This visibility helps lay the groundwork for meaningful opportunities in the years to come.



Biggest Learning

Meeting this year's goals required several adjustments, making balance an ongoing challenge. Looking ahead to 2026, to ensure sustainable workloads and quality output, we must be more intentional about where our time, energy, and attention are best spent.

OPERATIONS

The theme of 2025 for the Operations Team has been streamlining—with a focus on improving efficiency, clarity, and decision-making across the organization.

From developing scoring systems to identify opportunities to restructure our work for greater impact, to auditing every meeting on our calendars, to thoughtfully leveraging AI tools, the team has worked to critically examine how time, energy, and resources are used.

Across these efforts, the goal has remained consistent: to reduce friction, simplify processes, and enable the organization to do more in less time, without compromising on quality or rigor.



AUDITS

Audited organizational meeting calendars



SCORES

Developed scoring systems to better identify high- and low-impact opportunities



AI

Thoughtfully leveraged AI tools



Key Highlights

Expanded Team Capacity

- We hired an Administrative Assistant (a new role for ACE), Ethan, and a Development Director, Emma.
- Both quickly integrated into their roles, strengthening our organizational capacity and multiplying our overall impact.

Strong Team Engagement

- Our annual engagement survey achieved a 100% response rate, with an average score of 4.35 out of 5—reflecting a highly engaged team and a positive organizational culture.

Improved Operational Support

- We made it easier for team members to request support with workflow optimization, project management, and other operational needs, and improving collaboration across the organization.

Biggest Win

Bringing our globally distributed team together in person for our annual staff retreat in March was especially meaningful. The retreat gave us space for deep conversations about our mission and what we can mean for animals' wellbeing, time to set ambitious goals for the year ahead, and enjoy each other's company during walks and meals!



Biggest Learning

Recruiting and hiring continues to be time-consuming and financially challenging. This year reinforced the importance of refining how we identify candidates who will not only thrive at ACE, but also meaningfully amplify our impact.

02. Team Snapshots



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THE PEOPLE BEHIND ACE

(and some fun facts)



Aditi Sharma
Communications Fellow

Dancing is one of my favorite things to do!



Alina Salmen
Senior Researcher

The best movie I've seen this year is Perfect Days, by a mile!



Charlie Messinger
Operations Director

My favorite animals are pigs because they're smart, social, cute, and deserve a better reputation.



Elisabeth Ormandy
Director of Research

I joined a local choir this year, and it has been so much fun to spend two hours per week singing with new friends!



Eleanor McAree
Movement Grants Manager

My favorite animal is frogs because I love their little hands with their weird bulbous fingertips.



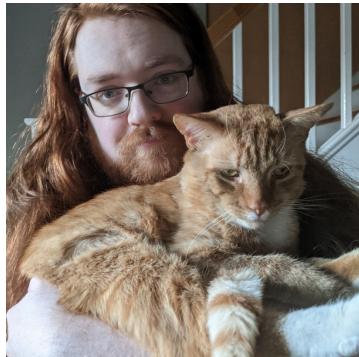
Emma Cameron
Development Director

I am a race director and love to organize races in the Driftless Area of Wisconsin for fellow runners!



Erika Alonso
Project Facilitator

My go-to comfort drink while working is Soylent OG, Strawberry, or Banana.



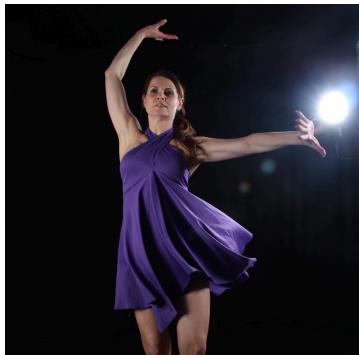
Ethan Eldreth
Administrative Assistant

The best book I devoured this year was *Katabasis* by R.F. Kuang; it's a darkly funny, riveting odyssey that I couldn't put down.



Gina Stuessy
Research Associate

One thing I love doing when I am not saving animals is rock climbing.



Heather Herrell
Development Manager

I enjoy the "Book Cheat" podcast, which humorously reviews classic novels.



Julie Zeilinger
Research Associate

The best podcast I devoured this year was *Good Hang* with Amy Poehler.



Maria Salazar
Senior Researcher

I love traveling - exploring cities, gardens and parks.



Max Taylor
Senior Researcher

I love hiking, running, camping, swimming, and anything else outdoors.



Rana Ejtehadian
Web and Digital Products Manager

My favorite animals are sea turtles because they are calm and have a graceful way of moving.



Shweta Sood
Communications Director

I love dancing - when nobody's watching! 😊



Stien van der Ploeg
Executive Director

My go-to comfort snack while working is caffeinated cookies.



Vince Mak
Charity Evaluations Manager

I make high protein smoothies from Huel Black (especially the banana flavor), soy milk, and frozen fruits and vegetables.



Zuzana Šperlová
Research Associate

The best media I devoured this year was watching the Twilight movies in the cinema.

Stay Informed: Subscribe to [our newsletter](#) to learn how people successfully help animals in need.

Donate: [Support](#) more animals in need worldwide!

Follow our journey: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Bluesky](#), and [Threads](#).

Thank you for considering the experiences of animals. By making smart and kind choices, you can help end animal cruelty and create a more compassionate world for all.

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