



EARNING TO GIVE +

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RECOMMENDED

Background to this research

Charity Entrepreneurship helps start high-impact nonprofits through researching [promising interventions](#) and running an annual [Incubation Program](#) to launch the best of them.

In 2021, we researched top interventions that could be implemented in the **effective altruism meta** space. Meta work helps individuals or other organizations accomplish their goals. For example, effective altruism (EA) meta might look at the best ways to help the [EA movement](#) accomplish its goal of maximizing good through reason and evidence. Charity Entrepreneurship is itself an EA meta charity, doing good through helping other charities get started instead of directly implementing interventions. [This post](#) discusses why we selected EA meta as a cause area.

Our 2021 recommendations in the EA meta space are training, exploratory altruism, and earning to give +. To arrive at our three recommendations we used a many weak arguments approach, including synthesizing views from across the EA community (with a survey of forty EA community leaders), and assessing our priors, cross-applicable data, crucial considerations and a need for flexibility. Our research on these three top ideas involved among other tools cost-effectiveness analysis, in-depth expert interviews, theory of change design, and further informed consideration.

Please see the [annex](#) for further discussion of our EA meta research methodology, and refer to our [detailed research process](#) for a full discussion of the core ideas and methodology used for other causes.

This writeup assumes the reader has some background knowledge of the effective altruism (EA) movement. Readers not familiar with it can learn more about it [here](#).

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1 What is E2G+?

The basic idea of an earning to give (E2G) career is to focus on having an impact by donating a significant portion of your income to effective charities. The career path often involves making career (and life) decisions that increase the amount you can earn and donate. E2G, as we conceptualize it here, can be done in any profession: as well as entrepreneurs or investment bankers, people earning to give can be teachers, programmers, healthcare workers, or carpenters. We discuss this in [section 3](#).

Earning to give + (E2G+) follows the same idea but includes more elements. It includes E2G'ers bringing lessons from their professional fields into the EA movement to support EA organizations and EA decision-making (e.g. management practices, communications strategies, and decision-making methodologies). It also includes bringing EA into the E2G'ers professional workplace (e.g. through fundraisers, donation matching, and EA movement building).

E2G+ can be a highly impactful career path able to absorb a large number of impact-focused individuals. It could strengthen the EA movement, both financially and through introducing best practices and ideas from outside. A vibrant supportive E2G+ community would address two of the largest concerns with the EA movement: the [small number of impactful opportunities available](#); and EA's insularity, which often leads to reinventing the wheel. We discuss this in [section 2](#).

We think this organization could focus on creating useful tools and resources for E2G+'ers and on community engagement, such as events and one-to-one support. For example, they might support a E2G+ community for people in law.

Narrative example

B earns to give at a major technology company. Her workplace offers a strong donation match which she takes advantage of yearly. However, she feels disconnected from EA and like her job is no longer seen as impactful. She finds it hard to connect with others who are earning to give and is unsure how to make more impact in her career. A E2G+ organization connects her with an E2G in tech community that helps with both psychological benefits like feeling more connected, and more practical ones, e.g. how to negotiate a raise or launch a fundraiser in the workplace. B ends up having considerably more impact over the long term.

K is a recent grad who has been rejected from a number of EA jobs and feels like there is no impactful way forward. He has considered earning to give but does not know who to connect with or the best options to consider. A E2G+ organization connects him to a mentor in a field who talks him through some of his strengths and weaknesses and ways to make an impact through E2G. K ends up taking a job that allows him to donate double what he expected (due to a donation match), and gets the job much more easily thanks to his mentor's help.

M is an unengaged earning-to-giver. He took the Giving What We Can pledge at university and gives to AMF each month. He finds the esoteric discussions in EA community spaces disconnected from the decisions he has to make in life and has engaged with them less and less over the past few years. An opportunity comes up to help with the organization's fairly large CSR budget but M is unsure what they could even do with it. They view some of the resources on the E2G+ website about how to have an impact through CSR and end up being able to shift it to significantly higher impact charities than it would otherwise donate to. They also find a large list of factors that makes them feel more confident in their path to impact and learn some more ways to leverage their personal donations.

2 Why is E2G+ promising?

Why support EAs in specific career paths?

The EA community has been growing steadily, but there have been limited concerted efforts to build community or offer support to people who have chosen a specific career path. EA career organizations focus more on career choice and less on how to have an impact within a chosen career. Although local EA community groups in big cities have done some work to support E2G'ers and there is a growing body of [EA career Facebook groups](#) (EA lawyers, EA academics, etc.), this support is fairly capacity constrained.

The impact reports of [existing EA career](#) organizations (as well as the work of Charity Entrepreneurship) demonstrate that providing decision support to individuals with altruistic goals helps them maximize their impact. As set out below, our interviews with existing E2G'ers highlighted a need for more community support.

Having focused communities allows future targeted outreach

To decide what EA-meta charities to start, Charity Entrepreneurship [interviewed 40 EA community leaders](#). Targeted EA outreach was a particularly high-ranking subarea to explore – many experts felt that outreach had slowed down and there was a lot of room for improvement in outreach to specific communities and for key ideas such as effective giving outreach. At the same time, interviewees expressed a preference for improving rather than expanding the EA community. Professionals in specific careers can represent EA within their networks, and can be supported to build the movement. There has also been historical success in providing a supportive community for niche networks like [poker players](#) and [athletes](#).

Why focus on the E2G career path?

1) E2G is a popular career path in EA. Data from [the EA survey](#) suggest there are around 1,000 people who identify as E2G'ers. This is easily a big enough community to focus on.

2) E2G is a career path that can absorb a large number of candidates. People from many different backgrounds with many different skills can pursue it. Other EA

career paths are open to fewer candidates, which has [led to dissatisfaction](#) with the movement.

3) E2G is flexible to the changing needs of the EA community. Donations are very fungible, so E2G can be an impactful path regardless of the cause areas or ways the EA movement evolves.

4) A charity focused on E2G can easily (for an EA meta charity) demonstrate impact by measuring funds moved. This matches how the EA community has grown historically with an initial interest in moving donations before expanding to other areas. The EA community has a strong track record of encouraging donors to give more, and more effectively, and of measuring the impact of this (see for example the work of GWWC, Raising for Effective Giving, and Founders Pledge).

5) This project will lead to more money being donated, more effectively. Many nearertermist causes (and global health and development in particular) have significant room to increase current donations. There is also some [evidence of some funding constraints](#) limiting longtermist EA work, although the space [seems](#) to be more talent-constrained. We also hope the community aspect of the project would help prevent [value drift](#) within the E2G community.

6) This project can improve funding diversity in the EA community. Funding in the EA space is concentrated in the hands of a few large donors. As [Peter Wildeford observes](#), diversified donor bases are good for the health of individual organizations, to avoid being overly dependent on any one donor. Additionally, this situation can leave gaps for smaller, less well networked projects and those which are not considered by current donors. Furthermore, some large EA donors have a cap on how much of an organization's funding gap they will fill. This leaves room for other donors to fill in the funding gap. We are most excited about diversifying the global health & development space to support smaller new projects in new cause or intervention areas. For more details, see [funding gaps left by OPP & EA Funds](#).

The [40 community leaders we interviewed](#) highlighted a number of concerns with the current EA community trajectory. We think an E2G+ organization could fix or alleviate many of these issues:

7) E2G addresses the problem of 'limited opportunities for engagement and involvement in EA'. Support for individuals in specific career paths can provide ways for those individuals to have an impact through their work, a community to be

a part of and support and a way of being engaged. Engagement in EA career community groups may form or lead to the creation of good [Task Y](#) candidates, providing easy ways that people can help the world.

8) E2G+ helps address the problem of ‘EAs reinventing the wheel’. Effective altruists can often reinvent concepts that have been well known in other areas, wasting both time and effort. Having more EAs who are taking part in the community while also working at non-EA organizations can allow these best practices to be more easily integrated and applied in the EA community.

9) E2G+ helps address the problem of ‘EA closed-mindedness/stagnation’. EAs working outside of EA organizations still being connected to the community can make EA less insular, bringing the networks, skills, and expertise that are well established outside of EA. A more diverse [EA network](#) can help EA be exposed to a variety of experts.

Interviews

Once we identified E2G+ as a focus area, we carried out [interviews with 8 current or past E2G'ers](#). We found a need for targeted EA community building that caters to the E2G population to help provide support on the challenges of E2G, networks for mentor-mentee and peer-to-peer advice and motivation, and ways to improve donor coordination.

CEA

Our [cost-effectiveness analysis](#) estimates the counterfactual funds this charity could raise. Our estimates showed that we would expect this organization to bring in significantly more than it spends, and this figure would increase over the first few years. Our estimates were:

	Year 1	Year 3
Amount raised	\$480,000	\$875,000
Costs	\$135,000	\$150,000
Leverage ratio	3.5	5.8

Please note this CEA is only comparable to other CEAs created for EA meta charities by charity entrepreneurship. Other EA organizations use vastly different methodology when estimating their leverage ratio.

Crucial considerations

We used crucial considerations to evaluate the range of possible EA meta organizations. The E2G+ approach:

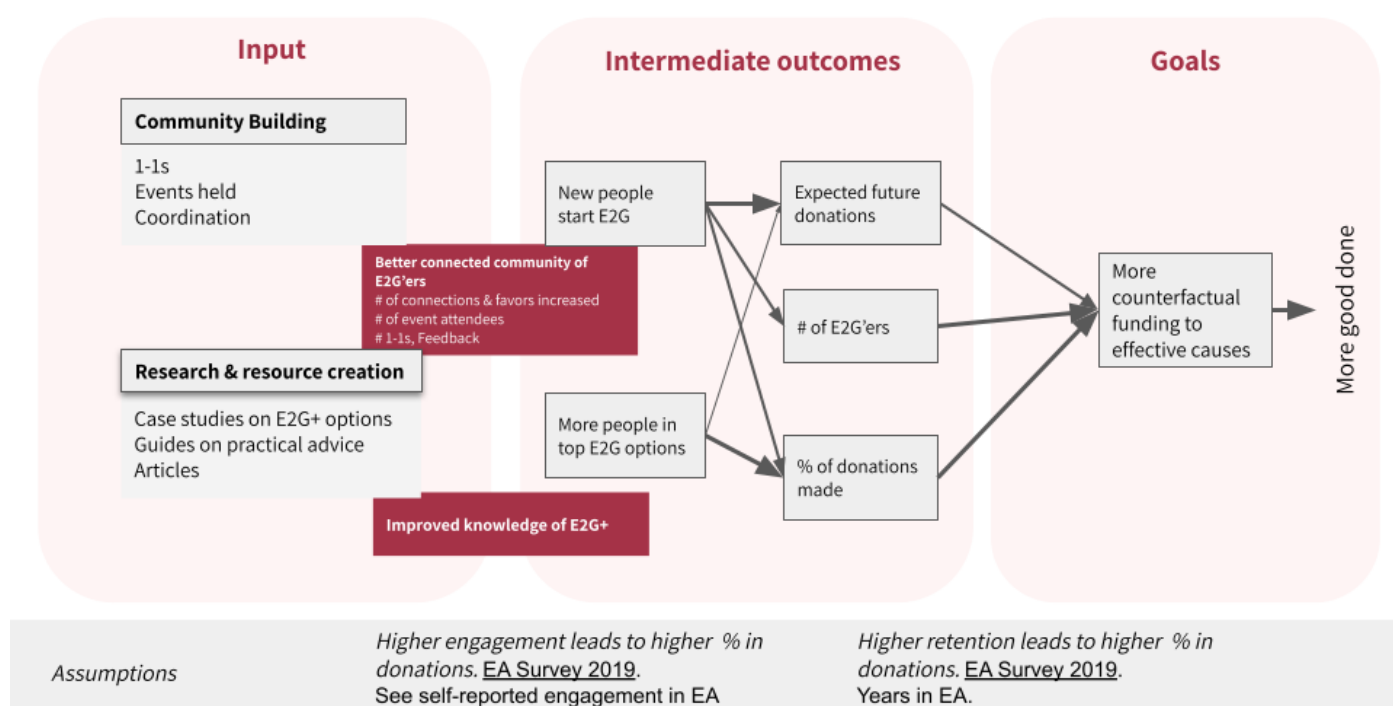
- Aims to improve the EA community (rather than expand it)
- Focuses on money (vs time and information), although some actions also bring in information and time in the form of professional expertise.
- Is a form of narrow or targeted (vs broad) outreach insofar as it is focused on people already following or considering the E2G path.
- Accommodates flexibility.

3 How to make an earning to give + organization

A new E2G+ organization could pursue any of a wide range of possible actions, from coordination to community building to resource creation. We explore some options here but would expect an organization to test out multiple paths and focus on the most promising, similarly to how [Animal Advocacy Careers conducted their experiments](#).

Theory of change

The main path to impact is mapped in our theory of change:



As well as leading to more effective donations we also believe this organization will have a range of other positive benefits for the EA movement. In particular:

1. Alleviating frustrations around limited career opportunities
2. Engaging mid to late career professionals
3. Improving retention
4. Improving the EA network & epistemics
5. Improving the EA funding ecosystem
6. Providing a new way to engage more deeply with EA

Aims

The aims would be to help E2G'ers coordinate and improve the impact and increase the size of their donations, enable the E2G network to help each other in their own career paths, to help others in the EA community, and to leverage opportunities for movement building.

Target audience

There are two target audiences for this organization.

1. This organization would target the large community of EAs already earning to give. This would capitalize on interest from people engaged with existing giving organizations and EA groups to increase their existing donations and/or deepen engagement from their most engaged members.
2. This organization would target other members of the EA community who might be best suited to E2G+ careers. This includes students considering E2G and people whose skills do not make them best suited to competitive careers in EA organizations or other organizations that do good directly. (In this latter group we are aware there is a significant section of the EA community who feel disheartened and that there is no path forward to impact as they are not able to get competitive positions in the EA space.)

We do not see it as the role of this organization to directly grow the E2G community to those who are not already involved in EA (although supporting E2G'ers to involve colleagues with giving and EA would be part of E2G+).

Areas of activity

We envisage two main areas of activity:

- **Community engagement activities.** This would involve hosting meetups and events to enable better coordination, mentorship and conducting 1-1 calls to support individuals etc. This could also involve finding ways to pair E2G+ focused people to other ways to contribute to the broader community (e.g. contributing to advisory boards).
- **Resource creation and research.** Resources could be created on different E2G career paths, and ways for E2G'ers to contribute their skills or networks to

the EA community. Specific research such as how to talk to others in your workplace or how to become an advisor to a charity could also be created.

This organization would [fit in with existing organizations](#) by working in a niche that is not currently being filled and coordinating with existing giving organizations. We have talked to other actors in the space (One for the World, Giving What We Can, and Match for More), and it seems there is room for an organization focused purely on E2G+ community support.

Key subcommunities

The evidence from our interviews with current E2G'ers suggests that there are two types of subcommunities that founders might want to create:

Career focused subcommunities. Communities focused on specific career paths, be it healthcare or consulting or finance or self-employed paths, can help E2G'ers with their career decisions, with finding mentors, and with support on how to have an impact within that career path. This kind of support is particularly useful for the '+' aspect of E2G+ as the ways that people can contribute will differ significantly between different career paths. For example, an E2G'er in law may be able to provide pro bono support and an E2G'er in healthcare could be a good for a health charity advisory board. E2G'ers are particularly interested in meeting other E2G'ers who are a few years further than them along their career path.

Donation amount subcommunities. Communities focused on people giving within a specific bracket, be it \$1k-\$5k or \$100k-\$500k, can help E2G'ers with their donation decisions, with finding giving opportunities, and with support on how to have an impact with their money.

Community creation and engagement

E2G+ specific meetups

One of the quickest and easiest gaps to fill would be connecting E2G people with each other for meetups, possibly with a focus on specific career paths. Some groups like this exist in certain cities, but there is relatively little cross city communication between people earning to give.

One-on-one advice

Having a central hub for a career (e.g. E2G+) enables better tracking of all the activities and options within a space. Someone who wants to connect deeper with EA or is considering E2G specifically could be connected with other community events.

Teaching of key E2G+ skills

Certain skills seem highly useful for people pursuing E2G+ to learn. Some are donation focused, such as how to negotiate a promotion; others may be more connected to the + aspect, such as learning how to be a strong advisory board member.

Mentorship matching

Many E2G+ folks could be great mentors to people considering the career path or starting along a similar journey. Most of the more experienced E2G'ers we spoke to were happy to help those earlier in their career.

E2G+ conference

It is common in other philanthropy communities to have conferences for philanthropists or others on the donor side of the charitable community. This could be a distinct place for people doing E2G to meet others without people seeking to fundraise from them. It could also allow more specialized events and talks like the above ideas.

Resource and content creation

Most of the content on earning to give is not up to date with the latest understanding of EA career paths and even options within earning. Some content that would be helpful has never been made. We list some ideas below of content that could or should be made; some of this may already be written down or known by certain members of the community, but is not easy to locate.

- E2G baseline argument
- Donation matching arguments
- E2G fundraising ability
- E2G and highly volatile careers (e.g. earning to give in for-profit founding)
- The benefits and disadvantages of having a range of donors
- Promoting E2G as a great default option
- A calculator of comparative numbers (e.g. how many E2G people are needed for each person working in the charity sector)
- Inspirational stories of how much an E2G'er helped launch a charity

- How E2G is needed for a healthy funding ecosystem (i.e. multiple possible funding streams)
- Comparisons of the impact of E2G across cause areas

Content could ultimately be collated in an E2G+ handbook (somewhat like Charity Entrepreneurship's [CE handbook](#)) to guide people through all the most relevant content and resources.

Risks and mitigation measures

This project poses a number of risks and challenges that founders would need to manage carefully.

Risk	Explanation	Mitigation
Reduces EA diversity	Targeting specific communities like programmers or finance professionals might actively increase the lack of diversity in the EA community. Even targeting only people already aware of EA might reinforce the existing lack of diversity within the EA community.	<p><u>Mitigation:</u> Avoid focusing only on well-paid careers or only on those that already have a high number of EA E2G'ers.</p> <p><u>Mitigation:</u> Include some aspect of diversity as an organizational goal.</p> <p>(See further discussion below.)</p>
Perceptions of the movement	Externally EA may be seen as all about E2G. This was one of the reasons EA moved away from promoting earning to give (as well as the fact that many EA meta orgs no longer faced funding issues).	<p><u>Mitigation:</u> This organization would not focus on outreach so would have far lower risk of jeopardizing perceptions of the movement.</p> <p><u>Counter-consideration:</u> Internally the EA movement leans towards only being a movement for people working full time at EA orgs, and more focus on E2G counters this.</p>
Decrease in direct work	The project could lead to fewer people pursuing direct impact, even if that path might better suit them.	<u>Mitigation:</u> The organization should recognize that E2G+ is not the only path to impact and that multiple factors should be

		<p>taken into account when evaluating career paths.</p> <p><u>Mitigation:</u> Given the prevalence of organizations focused on broader career advice (e.g. Probably Good, Animal Advocacy Careers and 80,000 Hours) this organization would not be doing much direct comparison of careers as opposed to comparisons within a career path.</p>
Specific companies' risks	<p>Specific firms might decide they do not want to hire EAs / E2G'ers if they have a certain reputation (e.g. likely to leave the firm for the charity sector). This seems more likely to happen if top companies are identified and many EAs work in them.</p>	<p><u>Mitigation:</u> The organization should be aware of this risk, and advise community members accordingly.</p>
Unilateralist's curse	<p>A more diverse funding pool might make it more likely for projects to get started that are harmful to the EA community.</p> <p>Within global poverty and animals, having a more diverse pool seems clearly net positive. Within EA meta and X-risk, a donor would need to be more informed to be net positive.</p>	<p><u>Mitigation:</u> ensure donors are well informed, especially in areas where there are risks.</p> <p><u>Counter-consideration:</u> A more connected and coordinated E2G network could lead to better information sharing and decision making about donation risks, than among independent EA funders.</p>
Less fair funding allocation	<p>It is possible that more funds from individuals might make it easier for well-networked EAs to get funds and harder for EAs who are less well networked.</p>	<p><u>Mitigation:</u> Build a geographically diverse E2G community.</p> <p><u>Mitigation:</u> support information sharing between donors and identify and share (lists of) good giving opportunities.</p>

It should be noted that most of these risks are risks that E2G'ers might face with or without an organized E2G+ community, and that full time community organizers may be able to actively mitigate rather than propagate these risks.

One key consideration that founders would want to think through is around diversity and elitism.

Trade-off: target the rich versus target everyone

If this organization's sole goal were to raise funds, it might focus largely on the most high-paid E2G'ers or on the career paths where there is a significant pool of fairly well-paid E2G'ers, such as programming or finance.

This has a cost. Focusing mostly on high paid careers risks making EA elitist and unwelcoming to those earning less. Focusing mostly on popular career paths such as programming risks making EA full of programmers and unwelcoming to other demographics. These demographic changes can be very hard to reverse, can lead to the EA community being smaller in the long-run, and can lead to poorer decision-making due to decreased diversity of views and backgrounds.

Ultimately there is a trade-off here that founders will need to think through carefully. Our current view is that creating a larger diverse community with a range of people and views is in the long-run more important than raising as much money as possible in the short term.

Founder personal fit

Ideal co-founders would have experience with earning to give as well as a high interest in helping those further along in their career path. They would have experience in community building or event running (such as being part of an EA chapter), and be generally comfortable in helping teach EAs how to talk to coworkers about EA concepts. Communication skills – particularly those applicable outside of the EA movement – would be particularly important for founders of this charity. Other important traits include cause neutrality and skepticism.

An ideal founding team would feel positive about the impact that can be achieved from marginal donations. Research skills would be less necessary for this project.

Beyond E2G+

If this project shows success, it is possible to envision similar projects that actively support EAs to follow impactful career paths beyond E2G (e.g. policy work, charity work, etc.). CE is already an example of this and we can imagine recommending another meta charity that does the same work in policy, for example.

4 Next steps

We recommend an E2G+ charity as one of the meta charities we would be keen to incubate. We believe this idea can have a positive influence on the trajectory of the EA community and direct funds to effective activities. Next steps would likely entail brainstorming content and early stage community activities, and trialing out a few different ideas.

Annex: Research methodology

Research to decide on our EA-meta charity recommendations

Many weak arguments

In spaces with less evidence available, we tend to favor [many weak arguments](#) over a single strong one. As such, we look at how to improve the EA movement from many different angles. Some of these fall within traditional EA frameworks, such as cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA); others are less commonly used in EA but still apply, e.g. limiting factor analysis (which identifies bottlenecks that will impede progress on an issue), or theory of change models. We can expect less consensus about the most important interventions in EA meta than in more established cause areas, although we can still define tiers of weaker and stronger ideas.

Prior views

These include the views of our board, advisors, and CE staff members on how to improve the EA movement specifically and social movements in general.

Our team has been deeply connected to the EA movement for many years. We have gained insight into how to improve the movement through projects we have worked on or consulted with outside of our formal research years (such as [helping advise meta](#) projects in the EA space) as well as through direct research prior to founding Charity Entrepreneurship.

More recently, meta research featured in Charity Entrepreneurship's animal advocacy work. Our [recommendation](#) of [Animal Advocacy Careers](#) improves animal welfare indirectly, through strengthening the animal advocacy movement. This past meta research on animal advocacy informed our approach to our EA meta research.

Synthesized views

To incorporate the varying perspectives from across the EA community, we surveyed a number of different EAs including chapter leaders, meta EA funders, and individuals working full time at EA meta organizations. The survey asked about broad crucial considerations and about specific areas or ideas that might be

promising. This gave us a soft sense of the ranking of a wide range of ideas, which we narrowed down using our traditional method of [iterative depth](#).

In addition to this survey created in-house, we drew significantly on the [yearly EA surveys](#) (conducted by Rethink Priorities) to better understand trends and gaps. These sources are the closest thing to hard empirical data that the EA movement has on itself. We also used some isolated data sets that more specifically targeted a key question (e.g. on [value drift](#)).

Cross applicable data

We pulled out information from other cause areas that better track and evaluate their own impact, including the animal and global health movements. In studying these other movements we looked at solutions as well as mistakes and how to avoid them. Although we think the EA movement is unique in many ways, it still seems likely that information can be cross applied, particularly where common failure modes exist.

Crucial considerations

A large part of our research into EA meta interventions looked at cross-cutting crucial considerations, to rule out or highlight as promising multiple ideas. For instance, a consideration such as how important it is to grow versus improve the EA movement could greatly affect the prioritization of different ideas. We have pulled these considerations into a [separate report](#). Key considerations include:

- Is it better to expand or improve the EA movement?
- Does the EA movement need more time, money, or information?
- Should the EA movement be broader or more narrow?

Flexibility

We considered and weighted highly two types of flexibility: organizational and movement flexibility. In a space like EA where evidence is scant and the movement is rapidly changing, it seems important to create organizations that can achieve impact even as new trends or perspectives arise. This tends to result in flexible organizations whose focus is slightly broader or whose approach can be easily adapted to changing circumstances. Organizational flexibility leads to movement flexibility – the movement as a whole can more readily grow and improve over time. For example, some meta organizations within EA would do equally well if a new cause area were added, while others would fare worse. We think that this can create

negative norms and intellectual stagnation and thus put a value on organizations that can adapt easily to this sort of update. We expect having organizations like this will tend to help the EA movement improve over time.

Additional research for developing this charity recommendation

After identifying three EA meta charities to recommend, we carried out further in-depth research to develop the ideas. This included

- [Informed consideration](#). Broad research thinking through each idea from many different angles, brainstorming potential approaches, and considering crucial considerations.
- In-depth [expert interviews](#). We spoke to three to five experts who might have good views on the idea and could provide a deeper dive than our initial interviews. We sought out people in the EA space who would have views on exactly what the need and appetite is for a new charity and on what the charity should focus on.
- Theories of change. We mapped out a few theories of change for each of the charity ideas, comparing them and drawing conclusions about the possible ways the new charities could be run.
- [Cost-effectiveness analysis](#). We carried out a very rough cost-effectiveness analysis for the plausible impacts the charity could have for few of the most promising theories of change that could be adopted.

We spent between 2–10 hours on each of these steps. This additional in-depth research on each idea was combined with our earlier cross-cutting research and written up into the report you see here. The report does not include private notes, and we will speak to the founder of this charity in far more depth than is provided in these pages.