



EA TRAINING

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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 EA training?

The most important talent gaps in EA often change more quickly than the time taken for many to skill up in an area, or for mass outreach to successfully target groups with that skill set. A new organization would identify talent gaps (e.g. through surveys) and then address these through approximately quarterly training and mentorship programs.

The organization would be built flexibly to adapt to the highest area of need and quickly upskill people in each area. For example, one round could focus on communication skills (e.g. public speaking or fundraising outside EA); the next could focus on policy skills (e.g. identifying high-impact opportunities in government), etc.

We think that the main three ways that upskilling could result in impact are as follows.

1. Helping more EAs get into impactful positions outside the movement. This will promote and disseminate EA ideas more broadly.
2. Helping more EAs get into impactful positions within the EA movement. EA organizations will be able to hire more qualified candidates and scale more in total. In this respect there may be particular opportunities in LMICs (low- and middle-income countries) where the EA movement is less developed.
3. Supporting EAs with general skill-building relevant to, for example, starting projects, independent altruistic endeavors, and so on.

Narrative examples

Jane is an EA thinking about entering policy. Despite performing well on test tasks, she has struggled once getting to interview. She joins a weekend training program on “How EAs can interview better” and gets a bunch of practice and specific feedback on her interview style. Her next policy interview she makes it past the interview and is offered the job.

Armaan runs an animal advocacy organization in India and is struggling to hire good staff with a grasp of quantitative decision making. With the help of an EA training organization, he runs a regular training program for animal advocates in India. The program introduces them to EA ideas and quantitative tools for working out how to maximize impact. The quality of the staff who apply for roles at Armaan’s organization goes up.

Fred is a young talented EA who wants to make a difference. Sadly, he has been rejected from several EA jobs for being too junior. He is not quite sure what this means or how to improve in it other than getting older. He hears about an EA training organization running a “Becoming a senior staff member” program and signs up excitedly. A week-long training program teaches him how to break down large tasks, how to prioritize, and how to do simple back of the envelope calculations and Fermi estimates. He comes out of the program feeling more confident in his project management skills and gets an EA job he previously would not have been strong enough to acquire.

2 Why is EA training a potentially promising area?

Training related bottlenecks

We asked a number of EAs about the different bottlenecks within the space. Interestingly this was one of [the questions](#) we got the largest amount of disagreements with. Each cause area and even subgroups within a cause area tended to have a very different perspective on e.g. how to trade off a talented hire against a large donation. There were also numerous complexities about how strength in one area could offset weakness in another. For instance, an organization with a lot of funding could spend much more on hiring, or a cause area with a lot of hours could direct people towards earning to give.

Even in this relatively noisy environment, a few bottlenecks stood out. There are some skills that EAs uniquely value but that seem hard to find or train (e.g. quantitative comparison) and other skills that the EA movement as a whole tends to be weak in (e.g. management or communication skills). We also gained a strong confidence that EAs are looking for ways to build skills: demand for internships, fellowships, mentorship and other related services is consistently high.

The consensus seems to be clearer for EAs getting positions outside of EA movement. EAs tend to have skills that would make a given position more impactful but may be weaker in some skills important for jobs outside the EA movement. One example of this is communication skills at interviews – EAs might, for instance, err on the side of full disclosure rather than selling themselves.

There was high variance in people's confidence of whether these skills could be trained. However, some empirical evidence shows that at least some of the skills that respondents were negative about training are teachable a reasonable amount of the time (see [section 5](#) for further discussion).

An easily overlooked factor when considering training is that bottlenecks can be contextual. Finding an experienced EA animal advocate might be much easier in the UK than in Vietnam. This can lead to location-based training bottlenecks (often in middle- and lower-income countries) in skill sets that might be more readily accessible in other locations. Some of our interviewees suggested that part of the problem lies with a lack of connections. In China and India, people cannot

contribute to the EAA movement without an introduction to EA and support building a network, even though they have the relevant skills.

Demographics of the EA movement

A number of demographic factors make EAs a promising audience for upskilling. Most EAs are quite young and early in their career, with [80% aged under 35](#). A large proportion of EAs are still deciding what career to pursue (17.2%) or building up career capital (18.7%). Both these demographics have a strong interest in skill building and testing career paths. An even higher percentage (over 50%) put career capital as a focus above direct impact. These demographic factors suggest strong interest in gaining skills that could create future opportunities or help someone understand what jobs might best fit them.

Historical frustrations

Many respondents noted that the number of people whose skills are optimally put to use within effective altruism is very low. Some of the most [upvoted posts](#) of [all time](#) on [the EA forum](#) describe this concern in more detail. A job opening might receive a hundred applicants, with one or no person hired and ninety-nine recommended to skill up and reapply.

Upskilling can be good advice if there are time-effective pathways to do so and the candidate would thereby have a good chance at getting a job in the future. However, with relatively time-consuming options commonly suggested for skilling up (such as getting an economics PhD) and relatively few pathways to test fit in different EA jobs, this recommendation can lead to further frustration down the line.

Concerns with low talent utilization can also greatly affect the impact of conducting outreach for the EA movement. That there are ninety-nine underutilized EAs for each who is optimally utilized, might suggest that supporting those already in the movement would be a better use of resources than getting twice as many EAs to apply for the same job. This would also suggest that roles that enable more EA organization growth might be particularly important, e.g. senior management.

At the same time, many organizations expressed difficulty in finding candidates who are an ideal fit for the position they have open. Sometimes these organizations have to compromise on skills the applicant would ideally have, and other times they scale more slowly (or not at all) due to the difficulty of finding a good fit for the role.

Some of these roles might be better suited to targeted outreach than to training, if they require high capability across multiple skills, each of which is lacking in the current movement. A training focused organization would be better placed if there were a small number of skills holding back otherwise strong candidates.

Another possible source of these frustrations that training could help with is a misidentification of what skills are required for a certain role. Few organizations give specific feedback to candidates and our team has often seen a lack of recognition of what skills needed by potential participants. For example, an EA researcher who cannot acquire a job in a non-EA NGO might think that they need to get better at technical research skills, instead of recognizing that the shortcoming is communication skills at interview.

Speed of new skill requirement

A related concern relates to the relatively high time cost options that are typically suggested to skill up. Although an economics PhD might be one way to learn cost-effectiveness analysis, it is a slow way of learning this skill. If this is the main skill set someone is missing it seems likely it could be taught much more quickly and cost-effectively. This seems even more likely to be true with skills that are unusually helpful in the EA movement but not as applicable outside of it. Often even absent a skillset the person might still be the strongest candidate; however, many upskilling pathways are mutually exclusive to full time work. In these cases, the person might simply conduct their job with a less than ideal amount of skill.

Cost-benefit analysis

The costs of this intervention are both fairly low and fairly easy to measure, but the benefits are much harder to evaluate. A quick extrapolation from an [early CE budget](#) leads to a yearly cost of around \$300,000. This estimate assumes approximately three full-time equivalent (FTE) staff and includes the full costs for twenty participants to attend an in-person training program (room and board), where training programs are held twice annually for one month at a time in an expensive city. This budget estimate could go up or down considerably depending on factors such as the number of people trained, whether the program runs online or offline, and whether it is based in a specific region or internationally. Costs could also be decreased by coordinating with other organizations that focus on training, e.g. CE or the EA hotel. Baseline assumptions used for the budget estimate were that the training program would be international and offline, the most costly scenario.

The benefit is far harder to measure and likely will vary considerably depending on the skill set changed. A quick comparison to headhunting prices can approximate what the training program would need to output. Headhunting fees run to about 25% the first year salary of the hired candidate. The typical salary range for EA jobs tends to range from \$50,000–\$100,000, depending on the position. Headhunting by traditional firms might thus cost ~\$18,000 per candidate. This figure implies that of those forty people going through the program, seventeen would need to get an EA job or make an equivalently impactful career change. Although this seems like quite a high bar, it does only take into account the first job the candidate gets, not how their long-term impact changes or the benefits to EAs who do not get a job at an EA org but have a more impactful role than they would have otherwise.

Evidence

The evidence base for this idea is relatively weak, and it is unlikely that more data will be generated in the near future: few training focused organizations deeply track their metric closely associated with impact. Animal Advocacy Careers is the most likely organization to have new deeper data on the success of training in the next twelve months.

Some related interventions have seen success within the EA movement. We dive into this deeper in [section 5](#), but some quick examples include the [CE Incubation Program](#) itself (which has helped found eleven new charities since its official launch in 2019), internal staff training programs, and [coaching training results](#) (which estimate a benefit–cost ratio of 1.95:1). Outside of the EA movement, some advocacy training programs¹ in the climate change movement seem popular (although their effectiveness has not been rigorously evaluated). Typically organizations that run training programs have not modeled out their cost–effectiveness or theory of change. Often feedback and user surveys are used as the primary source of data.

Limiting factor

The main limiting factor is likely the number of skills that can be useful, trained, and then put into practice by effective altruists. This will depend on the cause area in question. If we look at the main cause areas within effective altruism:

- For animal welfare, AAC is already working in this space.

¹ <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/climate-advocate-training/> , <https://www.ccinnolab.org/en/YouthInternationalClimateAdvocacy>

- In global health, it seems organizations are often able to find people eventually by investing more in recruiting.
- In meta and long termist spaces, there may be some room for activity. However, it could be very difficult to have an impact due to the complexity of the skills required.

When looking at the demand side, there are a few concerns (which we have not investigated in depth), such as how much commitment would be required for training and whether people would be able or willing to invest that time without a guaranteed job. However, this could be mitigated by aiming training at students or recent graduates. Based on our knowledge of other training and mentorship programs, we would be quite surprised if demand were a limiting factor.

Funding and talent to run the organization (since it does not require specialist skills) are not expected to be limiting factors. Furthermore, counterfactual replaceability could be high since the organization would be flexible in what it trains, so could choose neglected areas.

Execution difficulty

Execution difficulty is a mixed concern. On the one hand, Animal Advocacy Careers and CE's Incubation Program provide models to follow in terms of running training programs and evaluating their effectiveness. Feedback loops would also be very quick: a new charity could evaluate the number of candidates placed at EA organizations or other successes. The main concerns here are the probability of success, which could vary widely depending on the skills trained (in our estimate 5%–75% of people going through a program will gain the skills) and the troubling historical track record of other training programs (e.g. workplace skills training done outside of EA).

Externalities

It seems quite possible that the positive externalities could be a significant factor in the organization's total impact. Depending on the scope of the project, training could make the EA movement as a whole more well-rounded, and give members a way to progress their impact in a more structured way.

There are many possible positive externalities of EAs getting important jobs outside of the EA movement, such as spreading EA values to other professions (e.g.

government roles), improving the perception of the EA community, and building the EA network.

There is some learning value of determining what skills can and cannot be trained, and some benefits of having generalized coordination and Schelling points when considering what the EA movement needs to skill up in.

3 Identifying skill gaps

If training is worth considering more deeply, the next question is what skills or abilities would be most important to train. Three questions can help determine the most useful skills:

1. What are the current or expected skill gaps of EAs going into careers outside the EA movement?
2. What are the current or expected skill gaps within existing EA organizations?
3. What current skill gaps prevent new impactful projects from being founded or independent work from being done?

Skills for careers outside of the EA movement

The skills that EAs need to excel outside of the EA movement can be quite different compared to the skills needed to excel inside it. There are certain traits the EA movement might require more or less of than an impactful external role. A lot of different skills came up with speaking to EAs about these sorts of skills, but three areas in particular stood out.

Communication and interview skills

The first and easily most frequent skill gap mentioned was communication skills. EA has a distinctive way of communicating. Often very strong applicants who communicate in this EA style do not get job offers in more traditional roles. Improving an EA's communication skills could enable them to succeed in a wider range of impactful jobs, and EA ideas to be more widely applied outside of the movement.

Many EAs have expressed that the interview is the hardest part of a job process, with their CV and test tasks being strong but their verbal communication skills being the weak link. Anecdotally, this is very true among applicants to the CE Incubation Program. EAs tend to score much better on test tasks but are weaker at interview than non-EA candidates.

Communication skills were primarily brought up in terms of verbal communication, but written and visual communication skills were also mentioned. It seems likely that within a group of EAs, 25% of them or more could be held back by some form of communication skills weakness. Moreover, there is a lot of preexisting content on how to train communication skills, and they benefit a very wide spread of jobs.

Better communication skills also seems likely to have positive flow through effects, making the EA movement generally better perceived.

E2G skills

Example skills include how to negotiate a raise or more quickly climb a corporate ladder. This has considerable overlap with communication skills but is more focused and could likely get highly specific (e.g. tailoring to a career that is common among EAs). Relatedly, earning to givers expressed high interest in being taught how to speak/fundraise for EA to their work peers and networks. Many felt that they currently lack the skills to do so. The clearest path to impact is that EAs doing or considering earning to give could progress more quickly and thus donate more to highly effective charities.²

Policy skills

Although this is a growing interest for many people, the skill gaps for the career path towards policy are both numerous and poorly understood. This might be a hard one to train as variation between countries could be quite high, but it still seems worth noting. Some skills might be connected to holding a policy job, such as how to notice opportunities for impact within a broader policy role. If properly marketed, this training would also be of interest to policy makers who are not yet aware of EA, serving as a new entry-point into the movement. A downside of this is that a different training program might be needed in different countries.

Overall we think this area is a particularly promising area to train skills for EAs currently.

Other career path skills

Similar to the training above on how to have an impact in a policy job or in E2G, training could be run on how to have an impact in your workplace in various potentially impactful careers paths. Examples include [entrepreneurship](#), charity sector jobs, and grantmaking.

² OFTW may do some work in this area in the near future, as might the earning to give + organization we recommend (full report via [our website](#)). Depending on the extent of overlap, an EA training organization might wish to focus on different skills or to collaborate with these other organizations.

Skills for positions within the EA movement

Within the EA movement, two particularly promising focus areas are (1) supporting organizations in countries without a strong EA community and (2) addressing skill gaps within well-established organizations.

Overall the promise of skill training seems to depend largely on the cause area, though some skills cut across causes (e.g. hiring and measurement and evaluation).

EA skills in LMICs without a strong EA community

Feedback from EAs starting projects in the developing world is that they struggle to find people they can work with who are familiar with EA style ways of thinking. A training course could be part of the solution to that problem, although some introduction content already exists both online and in fellowships. A more advanced version of this program could also involve a structured internship or volunteer program managed by the training org to help new projects test out talent with minimal costs to themselves. Sections of the training may be more specific to the cause (e.g. for animal welfare, how to talk about animal welfare or managing volunteers). It could be quite time-effective to run multiple iterations of the program.

Unlike some of the other suggestions, we expect this one may be more time intensive since it would involve outreach to new geographies and newcomers to the EA movement.

Skill gaps in well-established organizations

Within EA organizations there are gaps the organization has identified (e.g. difficulty hiring for a specific skill set), and gaps the organization itself has not noticed but external EAs have noticed (e.g. X skill seems missing in Y organization). Full details of these gaps broken down by cause area can be found in the [appendix](#). Interestingly, there is less overlap than expected between internally and externally identified gaps.

We note that staff at many EA organizations we have reached out to are not optimistic about the value of additional training for current staff, although we did not dive deep into this area. It is possible that a better approach to addressing this skill gap without directly training staff would be to train EAs who might go on to get jobs at well-established EA organizations.

Cross-applicable skills

Some skill gaps do not affect jobs directly but can affect the output of high-quality work.

EA style calculations and estimates

Many individuals mentioned not having good research for teaching back of the envelope calculations, cost-effectiveness analysis, counterfactual estimates, or related analytical tools commonly used by EAs. Often these individuals were directed towards paths that teach these skills but in connection with many others (e.g. want to learn CEAs? Get an economics PhD. Want to learn how to read a study? Aim for a masters in statistics). Many of these skills seem possible to teach much faster and in a more directly applicable way if built for an EA audience and run more like a programming boot camp.

Such a curriculum could also be made available on online learning platforms for people to complete on a self-paced basis, and EA groups could also organize co-working sessions for people to complete the course together. This could create valuable new ways of engagement while also creating a new entry-point to the movement. We could look into the success of [Peter Singer's Coursera course](#) as an example.

Self-care/burnout

EAs tend to face unique challenges when it comes to psychological care. Many EA coaches and EA psychologists have seen large demand from the community and even when professional help is not sought it can be an area many EAs neglect or do suboptimally. Potential solutions could be learning basic cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) skills to combat common issues like imposter syndrome or scrupulosity or experimenting with group therapy sessions (there is some evidence for the efficacy of group therapy).

Conclusions on target audiences

In the section above we list three areas of skill gaps: for careers outside the EA movement, for careers within the EA movement, and for independent projects. Our tentative overall view is that the biggest gap is training EAs in skills for careers outside of the EA movement, but that there might also be specific areas within careers for the EA movement and independent projects that are also impactful.

4 Identifying skills to train

Weighted factor model

The skill gaps identified in section 3 informed our [weighted factor model](#). Other factors in our model include:

- Impact per trained person (e.g. how much impact in terms of dollars donated to top charities is generated per person trained in this skill set).
- Trainability (i.e. how easy we expect training this skill to be)
- Neglectedness (e.g. the likelihood that this skill be trained/skill gap be met absent this start-up)
- The limiting factor of scale of possible need (e.g. how many people could benefit from being trained in this skill).

The ideas considered in the weighted factor model are a sample. The model does not include some trainable skills that are impactful and score well (including some skills discussed as promising elsewhere in this report).

Skill selection was mostly based on survey data from EA organizations and a small number of deeper individual conversations with meta focused EAs. Larger surveys of the EA movement would likely generate some more options outside of the ones listed. We would expect a training focused organization to create a much deeper version of this data.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Possible skill	Possible sub-skill	Impact	Trainability	Neglectedness	Need		
2			Impact of an individual getting trained in this skill	How hard this is to train or teach	Is there already a program or an org much better placed to do this?	Gaps within EA orgs	Gaps for EAs at non-EA orgs	Gaps for independent projects
3	Sr staff skills	How to pivot effectively	High	Easy	Unlikely	Mid	Low	High
4	E2G	How to a negotiate raise or promotion	High	Easy	Yes	Low	High	Low
5	Communications	How to hire EAs well	High	Mid	Unlikely	High	Low	High
6	Sr staff skills	How to break down large tasks	High	Mid	Unlikely	High	Low	High
7	Research	How to evaluate experts	High	Mid	Unlikely	Mid	Low	High
8	E2G	How to spread EA ideas in the workplace	High	Mid	Unlikely	Low	High	Low
9	Operations	How to prioritize between tasks	High	Mid	Yes	High	High	High
10	Research	How to evaluate studies and research literature	High	Mid	Yes - Cochrane	Mid	Low	Mid
11	Research	How to evaluate strength of reasoning/a priori evidence	High	Hard	Unlikely	Low	Low	Mid
12	Policy	How to notice opportunities for impact	High	Hard	Unlikely	Low	High	Low
13	Research	How to do non-standard M&E	High	Hard	Unlikely	High	Low	High
14	Policy	How to compare policy jobs	High	Hard	Maybe - prob good	Low	High	Low
15	Research	How to make Fermi estimates, BoEC, and 90% CIs	Mid	Easy	Unlikely	High	Low	Mid
16	Communications	How to receive and give feedback well	Mid	Easy	Maybe	High	Low	High
17	Communications	How to improve at public speaking	Mid	Easy	Yes	Low	Mid	Mid
18	Other	How to practice self care/avoid burnout	Mid	Easy	Yes	Mid	Mid	Mid
19	Research	How to read and make CEAs	Mid	Mid	Unlikely	High	Low	Mid
20	Other	How to get geographic expertise	Mid	Mid	Unlikely	High	Low	Mid
21	E2G	How to compare E2G jobs	Mid	Mid	Unlikely	Low	High	Low
22	Communications	How to fundraise well outside of EA	Mid	Mid	Maybe	High	Mid	High
23	Communications	How to create psychological value	Mid	Mid	Maybe	Mid	High	High
24	Policy	How to communicate in/with government	Mid	Mid	Maybe	Mid	High	High
25	Communications	How to understand people	Mid	Mid	Maybe	Mid	High	Mid
26	Sr staff skills	How to admit to failure	Mid	Mid	Maybe	Mid	Low	High
27	Operations	How to handle high stress operational situations	Mid	Mid	Maybe	Mid	Low	Mid
28	Sr staff skills	How to communicate well with a team	Mid	Mid	Maybe	Mid	Mid	Mid
29	Communications	How to write interestingly	Mid	Mid	Yes	Mid	Mid	Mid
30	Sr staff skills	How to manage professionally	Mid	Mid	Yes	High	Mid	Low
31	Other	How to build stoicism/resilience	Mid	Mid	Yes	Mid	Mid	Mid
32	Other	How to scale up a program or project	Mid	Hard	Maybe	Mid	Low	Mid
33	Research	How to make an epistemic house	Mid	Hard	Unlikely	Mid	Low	Mid
34	Communications	How manage volunteers well	Low	Easy	Yes	Low	Mid	Mid
35	Sr staff skills	How to think independently	Low	Hard	Unlikely	Mid	Low	High

Depth of information table

For the most promising possible areas it would likely be worth making an information table to find the exact scope of the project and determine how much time would be needed before hitting diminishing returns. Tables like the template below could be made for any skill under consideration. Links are added to all available resources and color coding shows how much information is available.

Example: How to become a better researcher	Level of proficiency		
	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
One hour	Some content	Lots of content	Some content
One day	Lots of content	Lots of content	Lots of content
One week	Low content	Some content	No content
One month	Lots of content	Some content	No content
One year	Some content	Some content	No content

5 How to train

With a sense of what skills might be best to train, we can turn our attention to how to train those skills. This section looks at what methodologies might be best employed both generally and for specific top skills.

Current research in educational psychology

The evidence base in education is far from perfect. However, it offers a lot of data and cross-applicable techniques that can be fairly directly used in many possible training programs. A previous research project to improve CE's curriculum identified some promising and less promising techniques.

Strong ways to improving learning

1. Spaced repetition ([lots of evidence](#))
2. Testing and retrieval practice ([lots of evidence](#))
3. Daily review ([lots of evidence](#))
4. Interweaving the content ([moderate evidence](#))
5. Feedback ([moderate evidence](#))

Possible ways to improve learning

6. [Direct instruction?](#) ([confusing evidence](#))
7. Dual coding ([some evidence](#))
8. Meta cognition ([some evidence](#))
9. Collaborative learning ([some evidence](#))
10. Peer teaching ([some evidence](#))

Low evidence ways of improving learning

11. Streaming ([mixed evidence](#))
12. Self explanation (weak [evidence](#))
13. Elaborative integration (weak [evidence](#))
14. Asking the class lots of questions (Unsure)
15. Modeled and worked and concrete examples (Unsure)

Many of these techniques apply to any kind of learning. This suggests that one could learn general education skills that could be moved across teaching different skills. Most educational techniques that have been studied are not subject specific or do not necessarily require subject domain expertise to implement. The evidence that

training will work for some people is fairly robust although specific techniques and methods vary greatly in both their effectiveness and level of evidential support.

Characteristics of effective training programs

Animal Advocacy Careers has [conducted research](#) to determine which features, formats, and designs of training programs seem most likely to be cost-effective. Full results are available in their “[Summary of findings](#)” spreadsheet. The identified research items provide evidence for the following claims, among others:

- Distance learning is, on average (though not in all individual cases), as effective or more so than face-to-face learning.
- There is some evidence that group education may, on average, be as effective or more so than individual education.
- Smaller groups are preferable, but changing the size of the group only has small effects, perhaps especially for distance learning.
- An effective training program may need to be spread out over a relatively large period of time, rather than condensed into a single course without prep and follow-up. Notably, the education research literature highlights “spaced repetition,” “practice,” and “feedback” as important components of effective education.
- With less experienced participants, a training program should have a greater emphasis on the teaching and transmission of core content.
- Participant evaluations of internships and shadowing are highly positive. Though the evidence for improvements in the career success of participants is weak, these programs may have a variety of other benefits, such as contributing to participant well-being and satisfaction.

As the research was focused on AAC’s needs (i.e., tailored to the effective animal advocacy movement), the findings may not be as relevant for the needs of other training programs. AAC’s view updates can be seen on the second tab of the “[Hypotheses and updates](#)” spreadsheet.

CE model cross applicability

A huge methodological advantage of this program is that it can cross apply many lessons learned from the CE Incubation Program. Cross-applicable material will be available for some content that could simply be built on (e.g. communications, building CEAs). The CE model can also indirectly strengthen a training program. For example, the CE program is also seen as a form of vetting and a way of building a

network – both benefits that an EA training program would likely also aim to create. Furthermore, a large pool of people in CE’s extended network would be interested in skills training, allowing quick tests to be done with minimal investment in outreach.

All the information from CE has the advantages of having been measured and tested in a context highly similar to that of the training program itself. It would give another strong source of evidence to pair with the more rigorous but less EA focused research in the general literature.

Possible methodologies

The best training methodology would be refined through experimentation and likely modified depending on the exact topic. Below we include some considerations to provide a good prior on how to start. We compare the various factors to the CE Incubation Program, as the founders will both know the program well and it has had strong results thus far.

Methodology	Notes
Frequency	CE runs one incubation program a year. However, it juggles this focus with research, fundraising (for multiple \$50,000 seed grants as well as to cover the organization’s own costs), and finding optimal co-founders. It seems likely that a program more narrowly focused on training could run programs 2-4 times a year.
Intensity	The CE program is quite intense – two full-time months at 40 hours a week. This is partly due to the time it takes for co-founder pairing and partly due to the very large amount of content covered. It seems highly likely that more focused training programs could be considerably shorter, such as 1-2 FT weeks or perhaps even taking place over a long weekend. We suspect that short and intense will generally lead to stronger outcomes than long and part time, and have seen this trend in other programs targeted at EAs.
Size	The cohort size of CE is approximately twenty people per year. This is partly due to the number of talented co-founders but also due to the expected number of new charities that could be

	<p>absorbed in the space. We expect a training program's cohort could be in this range or considerably higher, depending on whether training aims to upskill participants for a specific role with limited gaps (e.g. operations at EA orgs), or a more generalized skill that improves EAs ability to progress outside of the EA movement (e.g. communication skills). Whether the program runs online or offline will also greatly affect the cost of having a larger student base. In general, starting small and slowly increasing cohort size seems a strong way to test out training while running lean.</p>
Scope	<p>The CE program teaches a very broad scope of skills. It is rare for a job to require such a broad range of knowledge from different areas. It is therefore likely that the training program would focus more narrowly and deeply on a specific skill. Individuals could always attend multiple training programs for different skills.</p>
Geography	<p>There are solid arguments for both an online version of the program and an offline version. It seems likely worth testing both of these for skills that fit well into each structure. Sometimes running a training program in a very narrow location might be optimal, such as training activists in India on how to do corporate campaigns.</p>
Content format	<p>Although the content format will depend a lot on other factors such as if the program runs online or offline, some factors will likely be consistent. Evidence generally points towards doing projects and applying skills over reading about or listening to lectures on a topic. From a consequentialist standpoint it might also depend on what content already exists. Good books on a topic might stand in for a textbook, but activities would still have to be created. Regardless of the format, it is highly likely that co-founders would be experts in teaching rather than in the specific skills trained, and would collaborate with mentors and domain experts to make sure the content teaches relevant skills in the specific area of focus.</p>
Timing	<p>It is likely that the program will be timed to coincide with students' availability (e.g. during breaks between terms), as they</p>

	are a large part of the market looking to train up preprofessional skills.
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Personal fit

A large part of this organization would entail synthesizing useful content, acquiring mentors, and quickly learning and passing on knowledge about new skills. The ideal co-founding team for an EA training charity would have:

- Experience in more generalist roles (such as early-stage organizations) or in generally teaching and organizing content.
- The ability to quickly sort and prioritize many different books or courses on a given topic.
- The ability to form connections with mentors and experts in a given area as well as help connect people going through the training program.
- A specific background in teaching or workplace training.
- Strong communication skills with some research skills.
- An open mind and the confidence to pivot if new data came up on different skills to teach.
- No strong preference towards a single cause area, as many of the skills would apply across a larger range.
- At least one member with a very strong understanding of the EA movement and the organizations within it.

6 Next steps

We expect that around three months' more research would greatly benefit this program, ideally before the first full training program is run. Further research could take place after a pilot training program, as this will provide a large amount of applicable data.

First steps for further research include:

- Brainstorming more training ideas and assessing interest in each program.
- Building a survey on how to train junior staff to support their progress toward more senior roles
- Conducting deeper research into the merits of offline vs online training
- Creating depth of information tables for the top ~10 options.
- Conducting deeper research into what makes training programs work well.

Appendix: Skill gaps in existing EA organizations

Animal welfare	
Internally identified gaps	Externally identified gaps
<p>The AAC survey suggests that leadership/senior managers, fundraising, and policy experience are most lacking.</p> <p>AAC is already in the process of piloting possible programs to try to address these bottlenecks. They ran a program for management training in 2020, and may run training for fundraising in the near future.</p> <p>Individuals within the animal space mentioned that in many cases the network was much more important than the skills gained.</p> <p>Animal organizations stated that finding skilled candidates in priority countries with small animal movement presence was often challenging.</p>	<p>Organizations have suffered from a major shortage of highly analytical, research-oriented effective altruists willing to work full-time in the space, rather than being a part-time academic and/or working across cause areas.</p> <p>Organizations have some shortage of senior professionalized management capacity. Organizations still come across as quite young and many management mistakes happen across a wide range of organizations.</p> <p>Animal welfare organizations face major challenges in expanding to countries outside the one they were founded in, often hiring skeleton crews instead of a team large enough to get impactful projects off the ground.</p>

Categories of roles or types of expertise (Exact wording offered to respondents)	"Hire" (n = 25 to 37)	"Retain" (n = 21 to 33)
Leadership or senior managers	3.6	2.4
Fundraising or development	3.4	2.6
Government, policy, lobbying, or legal	3.2	2.3
Campaigns, corporate engagement, or volunteer management	2.9	2.3
Marketing or communications	2.8	2.2
Research	2.8	2.3
Middle or junior managers	2.6	2.3
Natural sciences	2.6	2.0
Other technical skills, e.g. web or software development	2.6	2.1
Operations, administration, or HR	2.5	2.0

Figure: Talent bottlenecks in the animal movement. Table displays average scores from a Likert scale, where 1 = not at all difficult to hire/retain talent and 5 = very much so. Further data and analysis available via AAC: [Effective Animal Advocacy Bottlenecks Surveys](#)

Global health	
Internally identified gaps	Externally identified gaps
<p>Health organizations generally found they are able to find the skills they need through investing more in recruiting. Meta health organizations had more trouble than direct ones.</p> <p>Some organizations did not think there were any noteworthy trainable skills. That said, some skills cited as challenging to find seem possible to train, such as being able to critically review research literature.</p> <p>At least one organization was bottlenecked by senior candidates,</p>	<p>There are concerns that few senior staff at major global health organizations are based out of the region that the organization works in.</p> <p>A shortage of employees with strong HR backgrounds to find strong candidates for jobs that are challenging to hire for. Many instead rely on long hiring processes and trial periods, with hit-and-miss results.</p> <p>There may be a shortage of scaling experts when it comes to organizations rapidly growing.</p>

where years of experience or network is required – although this is not a trainable skill in the short term.	Many people reported not knowing how to do a CEA or back-of-the-envelope calculation being a major barrier for global health research.
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Meta & longtermism	
Internally identified gaps	Externally identified gaps
<p>People raised a very large range of skills that were lacking. <u>Recurring themes included epistemics, reasoning ability, good judgment</u>, handling feedback, senior researchers, and social skills. Some expressed doubt as to whether these skills were trainable.</p> <p>Some organizations had invested in resources to improve this with mixed results.</p> <p>Organizations face a major shortage of employees who can admit to failure or would be open to large scale pivots of an organization.</p> <p>Some worries about intellectual stagnation. Too few employees deeply consider issues and think independently of the organization they work for.</p> <p>There are few people with strong government knowledge, networks, or connections.</p>	<p>Limited formal measurement and evaluation experience and talent at meta organizations. Many organizations give up on measuring the impact due to its difficulty.</p> <p>Volunteer management and utilization came up multiple times (this concern was often cited by volunteers).</p> <p>Few people with strong communication skills who can interact at a high level with non-EA actors and also have a strong understanding of the space.</p>

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.