J. Savoie, K. Sarek, October 2019

Animal Research
Scope of the research and description of the approach:

Using research is a meta-approach aimed at helping animal organizations, activists, and donors do more good in the long term. There are numerous ways of performing research to benefit animals, and many organizations are working on different components. Conducting and publicizing research results can inform decision-makers, making research impactful through translating it into concrete action and change. Research can vary from empirical, such as randomized controlled trials (RCTs) on online ads, to softer research, such as examining crucial considerations that might affect the animal movement.

The main areas we considered were:
- Animal Ask Institute
- Funder-directed research
- Animal research agenda creation
- Randomized controlled trials for animal issues
- Deeper intervention reports
- Macro data research
- Impact evaluations for animal organizations
- Hiring a research organization (internal to the animal advocacy movement)
- Hiring a research organization (external to the movement)
- Research on other movements
- Field establishment research
- Cross-cutting animal research
- Gene-modification research
- Tools of research
- Charity evaluation research
- Creating a research database

Throughout this report, we consider crucial considerations that cut across different types of research. We dive deeper into each of these possibilities using a number of methods, including expert interviews, to eventually narrow down the most promising approaches for a new research organization.
Crucial considerations

Remaining crucial considerations affecting this area

- How will research be applied to decision-making?
  - Funders, particularly more EA-aligned ones, seem more open to using research in their decisions than they have been in the past. It seems like good research could either somewhat reduce the funding for an area or greatly increase it. Funders sometimes have a 'pet' intervention that is hard to sway them from, but often support secondary causes that are more likely to change depending on the state of the evidence.
  - NGOs seem to have been fairly reluctant to change based on the evidence. Logistical difficulties make it harder for them to change quickly. NGOs might be amenable to detail-focused changes, e.g. what ask to use, rather than broad strategic differences, e.g. moving from individual vegan outreach to government outreach. Many NGOs are legally mandated in a way that makes implementing change difficult. Consider how The Good Food Institute, for example, would find it hard to move out of food technology regardless of future research.
  - Most research is not currently utilized or applied by funders or NGOs. However, there is not much explicit research time allocated to research application compared to conducting the research. Among all the animal-focused researchers we interviewed, only a few pieces of research were considered "good examples of funder- or NGO-influencing research", and these were generally the same few studies. Funders and implementing NGOs did not often describe research as a key motivation behind their decisions.
  - Application seems like a huge concern - maybe the biggest concern for the impact of any new or existing research organization.

- Is there enough talent to run an animal welfare research organization?
  - In general, many organizations within the animal movement have concerns with finding enough talented individuals for a variety of job roles.
  - There is a large pool of poverty- and animal-interested effective altruists, some of whom have experience working in Innovations for Poverty Action or other poverty research organizations. Based on casual conversations, many of these people also seem interested in animal studies.
  - Many research jobs, such as The Humane League Labs and Charity Entrepreneurship researcher roles, have remained open for a long time. On the other hand, junior researchers have been hired by organizations at a decent rate; for instance, Rethink Priorities’ recent hiring round went well. It seems as though with very strong co-founders, a supporting research team could be hired, albeit slowly (e.g. one hire every six months).

- Could one organization carry out research and another implement it?
  - Such a division between research organizations seems possible, but it is likely that the organization coming up with the research agenda would need access to funding that could then be provided to the implementing organization.
This could follow the model of the Open Wing Alliance, which promotes collaboration between organizations and provides information and funding.

- Given how soft much of the research is, many judgment calls would be required during the process, making it hard to usefully divide these up. Organizations would have to be fairly coordinated to effectively execute this. A bad judgment call in either the design or implementation process could lead to an unreliable study outcome, so both organizations would need to be strongly coordinated and run to a high standard.

**Biggest crucial considerations**

- What is the default trajectory of research in the animal movement?
  - The future trajectory seems like it would be similar to the past, but with more funding and talent invested into it. Many small animal organizations already perform research with scattered research agendas. In the future, research is likely to be of similarly mixed quality and be somewhat untargeted. This would lead to limited change among funders or implementing NGOs.

- Could new research organizations address current animal movement research needs?
  - Many research organizations, including newer ones, have a scattered research agenda that is directed by staff interests.
  - Newer research organizations can close gaps, but it still seems like there is considerable scope both for coordination and for additional deeper, focused research. For example, there were several gaps that could have been addressed with deeper research in almost every area Charity Entrepreneurship looked into for its 2019 charity recommendations.

- Could CE directly conduct some of this key research or create an agenda for others to implement?
  - Sadly, given the relatively limited time that Charity Entrepreneurship has to spend on this topic area, it does not seem feasible to generate a robust movement-centric research agenda. It would likely require at least a full-time team of two working for two months to produce an adequate survey of funders and NGOs in order to get a sense of what the needs are, and to obtain a deeper sense of the nature of the current research that is being conducted across existing organizations. We think this would still not cover all potential needs, as there might be topics of interest that current NGOs and funders do not know about but would be interested in if they were researched further, e.g. **baits** or **feed** fortification.
  - Implementing direct research to the level of detail needed to reach new conclusions requires considerable hours, which would often be spaced out further over a long period of time. This is infeasible for Charity Entrepreneurship, given other priorities.

- Has research been impactful in other movements in the past?
  - Poverty
    - **The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, Innovations for Poverty Action**,....
IDinsight, and the Center For Global Development all seem to have done a significant amount to improve the evidence base in the poverty space. Their work has resulted in the creation of many RCTs and a much stronger understanding of what works in development.

- Research continues to be efficient, although it is fairly slow and expensive, even in a highly evidence-based space such as poverty.
  - Environmentalism
    - Environmentalism has benefited less clearly from the large amount of research in the field. Although there is a near scientific consensus, relatively few effective interventions have been enacted relative to total spending.

- Has research been impactful in the animal welfare space in the past?
  - Experts had mixed views on this. Researchers generally had a more positive impression than the implementing organizations or funders.
  - Different types of research aimed at helping animals have failed in many different ways:
    - Randomized controlled trials have generally failed because of small sample sizes, quality issues, and a lack of experience. These issues could theoretically be solved by conducting further research.
    - Charity research has been seriously challenged by the lack of intervention and RCT-style research that could be used to analyze the impact of different options.
    - Some organizations and projects did not get off the ground or were shut down because of limited staff’s lack of ability to maintain the required hours.
    - Intervention-research and meta-research have had poor targeting relative to the interventions that funders are most interested in. In comparable charitable fields where research is often primarily funder-driven, research is better aligned with funder preferences.
    - Historically, there has been very limited funding for research, although this has changed in recent years. More data on this can be found below.
    - Many of the issues seem like they could be solved by experienced EA-minded researchers with a very carefully picked research agenda.

- Are there certain interventions that are much stronger in certain research climates? For example, certain types of research, such as meta-analyses, might be hard to do without a large preexisting research base.
  - Meta-tools and research agenda creation largely benefit from stronger existing research organizations.
  - Research aimed at building a field is generally stronger when driven by other organizations.
  - Organizations that both conduct the research and promote its application are comparatively stronger in a field with low levels of research application, even if this comes at the cost of a narrower research scope.
**Estimated funding within the space of research**

One important detail is the current and historical funding for research within the animal space. These values are approximations based on publicly available data and, in some cases, interviews. We do not expect the numbers to be absolutely precise, but to be generally within the right order of magnitude. Our estimates indicate that research funding has grown greatly in recent years, but still makes up a relatively small fraction of overall animal funding (<5%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Funding in the past 5 years</th>
<th>Funding in 2019</th>
<th>Staff FTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Philanthropy</td>
<td>~$500,000</td>
<td>~$200,000</td>
<td>~$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project staff conducted animal research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Charity Evaluators</td>
<td>~$2,200,000 (spent over 5 years)</td>
<td>~$1,000,000</td>
<td>~7 research staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE research fund</td>
<td>~$666,000 (spent over 2 years)</td>
<td>~$333,000</td>
<td>~1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faunalytics</td>
<td>~$750,000 (spent over 5 years)</td>
<td>~$250,000</td>
<td>~2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Humane League Labs</td>
<td>~$450,000 (spent over 3 years)</td>
<td>~$200,000</td>
<td>~3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy For Animals research</td>
<td>~$50,000 (spent over 1 year)</td>
<td>~$50,000</td>
<td>~1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rethink Priorities</td>
<td>~$68,000 (spent over 1 year)</td>
<td>~$450,000</td>
<td>~7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Welfare Action Lab</td>
<td>~$200,000 (over 1 year)</td>
<td>~$0</td>
<td>~0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentience Institute</td>
<td>~$190,000 (over 1 year)</td>
<td>~$120,000</td>
<td>~2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Animal Initiative</td>
<td>~$500,000 (over 3 years)</td>
<td>~$300,000</td>
<td>~3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Suffering</td>
<td>~$150,000 (over 3 years)</td>
<td>~$0</td>
<td>~0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other researchers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,724,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,903,000</strong></td>
<td>~40 FTE</td>
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Subapproaches

We considered 16 subapproaches. Each is discussed below, ordered roughly based on their promise.

1) Animal ask research

Explanation: An organization researching which ask should be made of a given corporate or government body. This organization would carefully and systematically research which asks would do the most good for the target animal, as well as look into the tractability of specific asks. With more time, they could consider a single issue from various angles, rather than repeat the current pattern of relatively single and informal comparisons. This information could be of use to funders and implementing NGOs in conducting a campaign. Research in this area could benefit both corporate and government campaigns. Given the high prevalence of campaigns (for example, cage-free and broilers), it seems that this kind of research could be ongoing. Deeper and more focused research of this kind could have a huge impact on changing the goals and, consequently, the actions that are taken for the benefit of animals. By our estimate, it seems likely that choosing the best, compared to the worst, ask could double or triple the impact of an entire campaign.

\[ \text{Choosing the best ask} \]
\[ \text{(comparing to the worst)} \]

Example: Extremely in-depth research could be conducted on fish water quality and fish slaughter as these are two serious possibilities for future corporate asks. This review would include:
- interviews with fish farms about implementation;
- detail the two processes;
- estimate which might be more tractable;
- summarize the ideal standards and the multiple plausible versions of useful asks.

The team could construct an extensive cost-effectiveness analysis to estimate the benefit that each of the possible campaigns would have, on each individual animal and on animal welfare as an aggregate. We expect the difference in impact between these two fish asks to be more than an order of magnitude. Research could also be done on a larger number of asks in total, similar to the way CE conducted ask research – the implementing animal organizations would start with the broadest possible set of ideas before settling on a specific ask.

Related organizations: The Humane League, Mercy For Animals, Compassion in World Farming, and others all do some ask research before launching a campaign. Some organizations like the Albert Schweitzer Foundation have been contracted to look into certain asks, but they do not compare a wide range of asks thoroughly.
Strengths

- It is neglected.
- There is not a specific organization dedicated or primarily focused on this type of research.
- This research seems tractable and fairly quick to progress in. For example, asks can be compared over a period of months while randomized controlled trials can take years.
- There has been limited research on historical asks, which suggests there might be room for more research in the future.
- Given the low cost of a research organization conducting this sort of research, and the possibility to significantly affect a corporate campaign’s net impact, this research could be extremely high impact and cost-effective.
- Effective altruist founders would likely have a competitive advantage at this sort of comparative research, over academics and animal organizations that also conduct research.

Weaknesses

- Impact depends very strongly on the effectiveness of corporate and government campaigns.
- Impact relies on other organizations successfully executing the campaigns.
- Impact relies on NGOs or funders incorporating the research to pick a better ask (However, even if this happens only once in several campaigns, the research still remains important).
- Founders would likely require strong research and interpersonal skills.
- Relatively few asks are picked up annually; if an opportunity is missed, there might be downtime between research projects. However, this time could be used to research other asks to be considered in the future.

Steps to impact and the estimated chance of successful execution of each step:

1. **Determine which asks NGOs and funders are still in the process of choosing (90%).**
   Funders and NGOs are fairly transparent with other animal-focused organizations about what campaigns are being considered and what asks might be used in them. A unique or unpredictable opportunity might arise that makes it harder for NGOs and funders to know what area they will focus on in the longer term.

2. **Conduct research on the most plausible asks (95%).**
   Ask research seems fairly straightforward to carry out and many of the meta-structures created by Charity Entrepreneurship could be utilized for deeper ask research. Brainstorming a variety of asks could be aided by conducting a survey of different knowledge groups of people, including farmers and researchers.

3. **Generate a recommendation report for NGOs/funders comparing asks, suggesting the one with the highest impact (80%).**
   Determining the specific recommendation will often be harder than writing reports. Research in these areas is often tentative and not fully conclusive, so the research team would have to be careful not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. In some cases, there will not be a clearly best ask, and the research might not be directly impactful.
4. **High-impact ask used instead of a less high-impact ask (30%).**
   The biggest uncertainty regarding this research is whether it will be implemented by the organizations that focus on corporate and government campaigns. Organizations in the animal space are increasingly aware of the importance of research, but often there are many factors to consider, including logistical ease, momentum, and donor interest. It is possible that this research would not be the determining factor in many cases.

5. **Using a high-impact ask, leading to more implemented change for animals (25%).**
   There is a chance of a campaign not working, for example if corporations do not pledge or follow through, or a government bill is not passed. Any given campaign has a small chance of success when each of its steps are considered.

**Overall chance of impact:** 5%
**Overall size of impact:** Extremely large
**Overall promise relative to other research:** 9/10

### 2) Funder-directed research

**Explanation:** The most likely path to impact for research is through affecting the funding decisions of large, well-informed funders. Research that funders would find helpful may differ from priorities set by a research team or suggested by an NGO survey. Potential funders could be surveyed or interviewed about their priorities, and research directed accordingly.

**Example:** A funder survey on the kind of research that would be most valuable can be used to create a list. Accounting for tractability, the research organization could then start at the top, and work its way down. The survey could be re-conducted every few years to account for changing priorities.

**Related organizations:** No formal funder survey has been done. Rethink Priorities and ACE both aim to influence funder choices with their research, and they consult with funders informally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• This idea can be used in combination</td>
<td>• Funders might be overconfident in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with many of the others, as technically</td>
<td>their favored intervention and might suggest studies based on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any other type of research could be</td>
<td>assumed impact (e.g. running a study comparing two different videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funder-directed.</td>
<td>instead of a video vs. control group).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Performing a survey with funders and</td>
<td>• The organization is unlikely to be able to cover all the types of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using that data should be both quick</td>
<td>research demanded. So, although this survey seems valuable, an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and logistically straightforward.</td>
<td>organization might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multiple organizations could change their</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research agenda based on this data.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- This strategy directly addresses our biggest concern with research - its application.
- There are likely to be many different types of research that funders want to see, so there is room to scale.
- They want to limit the scope of their first research project.
- Funders may not have a sense of the research they would like to see conducted.
- Funders might overprioritize short-term, salient or narrowly-focused research.

Steps to impact and the estimated chance of a successful execution of each step:

1. **Ask the funders which research would most help them and improve their decisions (90%).**
   Many funders are easy to contact and seem likely to have the time to fill out a short survey or attend a quick interview. Funder interest surveys have historically been successfully conducted with low time and financial costs.

2. **Based on step 1, make a list of priority research to conduct (95%).**
   Generating a list of priorities based on a well-designed survey ought to have a low chance of failure. It could be that not enough funders have a preference to create a coherent list.

3. **Conduct the research (50%).**
   Different types of research have very different odds of being implemented successfully. Historically, some research has been quite challenging to do well, such as randomized controlled trials, while other types, such as surveys, are fairly simple to complete.

4. **Funders change donation choices based on the research (50%).**
   If research is prioritized according to funder needs, the odds that the funders will use this research in their decision-making are higher, although this is not guaranteed. There is also the possibility that research could lead the funders to a worse decision and therefore turn out to have a net negative effect.

**Overall chance of high impact:** 21%
**Overall size of impact:** Moderate
**Overall promise relative to other research:** 8/10

### 3) Animal research agenda creation

**Explanation:** Some animal organizations are carrying out research, but the agendas are not created with a detailed understanding of funder needs or other research that is being conducted in the movement. There is room for an organization that creates a research priorities agenda for the animal movement as a whole. This could provide a list of valuable projects that organizations from across the movement could consult and consider when creating their organizational research agendas. It would also allow for the consideration of a broader set of preferences overall.

**Example:** A consolidated public summary of the current and near-future research that is being conducted across the different animal organizations, to reduce duplication.
Related organizations: Every organization currently creates its own research agenda based on many different factors, and the accessibility of these agendas varies. The level of cross-organizational understanding is low, and there is some duplication. Communication between research organizations do occur, but there is not a single central point of contact that would yield a good sense of the overall research space nor is much public information created in these meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Could allow for the better utilization of the current talent and organizations that are working on research.</td>
<td>- It would be difficult to convince research organizations to agree without guaranteed funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Could be conducted with a small staff team.</td>
<td>- There may not be an organization with the capabilities required to perform some types of research (e.g. RCTs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research agendas are some of the hardest things to create, and thus one of the more neglected areas in research.</td>
<td>- A research agenda organization would likely have to oversee and monitor the research at a meta-level, which would require significant time and coordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Coordination is challenging, in part due to varying priorities among different organizations. This is also true of animal research organizations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Steps to impact and the estimated chance of successful execution of each step:

1. **Conduct surveys with funders and NGOs to determine what is needed and what is currently being done (95%).**
   
   Many funders are easy to contact and seem to have the time to fill out a short survey or attend a quick interview. Funder interest surveys have historically been successfully conducted with low time and financial costs. NGO surveys have also been historically easy to conduct.

2. **Create a research agenda for the animal movement and publish it (95%).**
   
   Some research might have to be kept confidential, but most research could be published. The creation of a top priorities list could follow once all the required information is acquired.

3. **Get the top research done via grants - doing them internally or by encouraging other organizations (60%).**
   
   Research implementation could be prompted in a variety of ways, and some research might be contracted out to other research organizations, thus effectively using their capacity. Other projects might be on certain organizations’ agenda already and could be moved up their priority list when possible. Finally, certain pieces of research might be best conducted by the organization itself.

4. **High-impact, targeted, useful research conducted (40%).**

5. **Funding and other decisions changed via conducted research (25%).**
Overall chance of high impact: 5.4%
Overall promise relative to other research: 7.5/10

4) Randomized controlled trials for animal issues

Explanation: The research base in animal welfare is extremely shallow. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) for top interventions could provide funders and NGOs with valuable information about what works and what does not. Corporate campaigns and most forms of vegetarian outreach and policy, with a few exceptions, have not been tested with RCTs. This organization could replicate the role that Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) currently plays in the poverty space. If run in the same style as IPA, it would partner with both NGOs and academics to conduct studies.

Example: Conducting a high-quality RCT by randomizing the countries targeted for a corporate campaign and carefully measuring the results. This sort of study would provide a sense of how much of the success or failure of corporate campaigns is driven by pressure from animal organizations as opposed to external factors such as consumer demand.

Related organizations: Innovations for Poverty Action fills this role in the poverty space. MFA, Reducetarian Foundation, Faunalytics, and ACE have all conducted a single RCT, but not multiple. They do not seem to have plans to allocate major resources to RCTs in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There are many possible RCTs (at least 10) that would be of high impact.</td>
<td>• AWAL and ACE have tried this somewhat unsuccessfully, suggesting a negative track record.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• RCTs are foundational for more evidence-based areas, such as poverty or environmentalism.</td>
<td>• Requires a very high level of founder research talent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very few targeted RCTs have been conducted historically (~5 in the last five years), so this will likely continue to be the case in the future.</td>
<td>• High-quality RCTs are both slow (<del>1-5 years) and expensive (</del>$100,000-$500,000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talent from the poverty space could be used (e.g. ex-IPA hires) to run this organization in a similar way.</td>
<td>• Finding and coordinating with partner NGOs would be hard without strong funder support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some of the current animal funders could change their decisions based on evidence from RCTs.</td>
<td>• Funders would have to update their priorities based on RCT evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong evidence from RCTs is likely to be required to attract some donors to animal issues from more evidence-based spaces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Steps to impact and the estimated chance of successful execution of each step:

1. **Make a list of the most important RCTs to conduct (95%).**
   A few organizations (including CE) have internal lists that could be used as a basis for this, and further input could be solicited from research- and animal-focused experts.

2. **Set priorities within the list to select the most important 1-3 RCTs to run (95%).**
   Prioritizing a list would be difficult as there are likely a few different ideas with similar levels of merit. However, prioritizing the top ~5-10 from a long list of ~100 should be possible and would accomplish much of the final benefit.

3. **Conduct the RCTs at a high level of quality (25%).**
   This is possibly the most difficult stage of this intervention. RCTs are difficult to conduct even in ideal circumstances, and factors specific to the animal movement make it even more challenging. That said, building this capacity in the animal movement will aid the execution of effective interventions in the long term.

4. **Funders change their donation choices based on the research (20%).**
   Many funders in the animal space do not have a high level of scientific background, but some do have a sense of the value of high-quality studies. The study design and the specific question being tested will be major factors in the likelihood of implementation.

**Overall chance of high impact:** 4.5%
**Overall size of impact:** Moderate to High
**Overall prome relative to other research:** 7/10

**5) Deeper intervention reports**

**Explanation:** Charity Entrepreneurship was able to cover some new ground in intervention comparison fairly quickly, but research was targeted specifically toward new charities and was time-limited. Certain aspects of our research could be delved into further and/or reconsidered with funder decisions in mind.

**Example:** Humane slaughter, transportation, and pest control all scored quite well, but not well enough to justify a deeper analysis from our perspective. These interventions could be looked into in more depth (e.g. 300 hours instead of 30 hours), and useful results generated for funders and evaluators.

**Related organizations:** Charity Entrepreneurship and Rethink Priorities have both performed some research in this area. ACE conducted some research a very long time ago and has posted a few recent pieces. CE will only be in the area for a total of one year, and ACE does not seem like it will perform major research in this area in the near term.
CE has already set out and prioritized the different areas that could most benefit from deeper research.

- Stronger intervention reports would likely reveal which RCTs are most needed.
- A lot of this organization’s value could be gained in a fairly short time span, maybe 1-2 years.

Rethink Priorities and ACE both seem fairly well-positioned to do this.

- The animal movement would likely benefit from intervention reports more than specific charity reports, but they will still be limited by the lack of RCT data.
- Intervention reports require many subjective judgment calls that could lead to disagreements between research teams or between funders and research teams.

### Strengths

- CE has already set out and prioritized the different areas that could most benefit from deeper research.
- Stronger intervention reports would likely reveal which RCTs are most needed.
- A lot of this organization’s value could be gained in a fairly short time span, maybe 1-2 years.

### Weaknesses

- Rethink Priorities and ACE both seem fairly well-positioned to do this.
- The animal movement would likely benefit from intervention reports more than specific charity reports, but they will still be limited by the lack of RCT data.
- Intervention reports require many subjective judgment calls that could lead to disagreements between research teams or between funders and research teams.

### Steps to impact and the estimated chance of successful execution of each step

1. **Make a list of the interventions, or find one (100%).**
   - There would be many ways to find decent lists – for example, by pulling from the CE expert survey. Because of the relative lack of research in this area, even very well-known interventions could benefit from an updated, deeper analysis.

2. **Determine how much time to allocate to each intervention (95%).**
   - Given that the intervention list will be lengthy, the main capping feature will be researcher time. CE has written a number of reports and short blog posts on related topics. It is likely that greater depth would be valuable to provide a more definitive report. CE reports were ~40-hour reports, so it seems likely that with 400 research hours, or about x10 the depth, new and important information could be uncovered.

3. **Prioritize the list to select the most important 3-5 interventions to research during the first year (95%).**
   - If this were the sole organizational focus, within a year, several interventions could be researched in substantial detail.

4. **Funders change donation choices based on the research (20%).**
   - Many funders in the animal space would be keen to read detailed intervention reports. However, given the low baseline of evidence, it will be difficult to make definitive claims to impact funders or implementing NGOs.

### Overall chance of high impact: 18%

### Overall size of impact: Moderate

### Overall promise relative to other research: 6.5/10

### 6) Macro data research

**Explanation:** There is numerous macro data suggesting the success of certain interventions. This macro data is generated by governments or other large agencies and is of high quality, but is not targeted toward animal issues. Synthesizing whether broader trends match an animal research organization’s estimates could make macro data useful for animals as well.
Example: Comparing how many cage-free eggs have been bought compared to the total number of cage-free pledges made, or looking at Gallup poll data to analyze the changing rates of vegetarianism.

Related organizations: Many organizations have looked at macro-level data, including nearly all vegetarian outreach organizations looking at vegetarianism trends. Cage-free egg production trends have been considered by both Rethink Priorities and CE, as well as the organizations conducting the campaign.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Macro-level data is often freely available.</td>
<td>• There is a limited amount of macro data that is of use for animal organizations’ analyses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Macro-level data has a low level of bias toward animal issues, because it is collected for other purposes.</td>
<td>• Available macro data is of limited use because few organizations are large enough to affect country- or state-level trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Macro-level data is fairly easy to find and easy to work with.</td>
<td>• Reliable macro-level data is less readily available for non-US and non-EU countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most likely, there are some macro data sources that are not currently utilized by the animal movement.</td>
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Steps to impact and the estimated chance of successful execution of each step
1. Find several useful sources of macro data (50%).
2. Analyze these sources to yield new conclusions about animals (50%).
3. Decisions by funders or implementation of organizational change based on the research (10%).

Overall chance of high impact: 2.5%
Overall size of impact: Moderate
Overall promise relative to other research: 5/10

7) Impact evaluations for animal organizations

Explanation: Currently, impact evaluations of animal organizations are very challenging because the data required are difficult to obtain from the organizations themselves. IDinsight works with poverty organizations to improve their measurement and evaluation systems so that this data is more readily available and usable for charity evaluators and funders.

Example: The organization could partner with an NGO to keep careful records of how and where their time is spent and organize the records into clearer outcome metrics. These outcome measures could be tracked monthly and used to compare programs within the same NGO.
Related organizations: IDinsight, ImpactMatters, and other organizations conduct this sort of work with poverty charities. Within the animal sphere, ACE is the closest equivalent but does not work intimately with organizations as much as it externally evaluates them. Some groups aim to improve organizations (e.g., Encompass for diversity), but there are no known groups focused on research, impact, or measurement.

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<tr>
<td>• Deeper impact evaluations and assistance with monitoring and evaluation might bring useful data from organizations without running a costly RCT.</td>
<td>• NGOs can be resistant to tracking metrics that could make them look bad; therefore, this would likely have to be enforced by funders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No organization is working in this space for animals.</td>
<td>• Lack of evidence from RCTs might mean that the measured metrics are not correlated with doing good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• EAs would be a very good fit.</td>
<td>• Requires a very high level of NGO cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Requires less research ability compared to conducting a full RCT.</td>
<td>• Some work is implicitly hard to track, e.g. lobbying work, limiting cross-comparability.</td>
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Steps to impact and the estimated chance of successful execution of each step

1. Partner with a decently sized NGO to track key impact measures (25%).
2. Key measures that would not have been tracked otherwise are now numerically and systematically tracked (50%).
3. NGO changes its actions based on monitoring and evaluation data (25%).

Overall chance of high impact: 3.1%
Overall size of impact: Moderate
Overall promise relative to other research: 5/10

8) Hiring a research organization (internal to the animal rights community)

Explanation: An organization or individual could conduct research quickly by hiring an animal organization with a record of conducting high-quality research. Some organizations conducting research are open to considering partnerships in this way, such as Faunalytics and Rethink Priorities.

Example: An animal-focused organization, like Faunalytics, could be contracted to run an RCT on a nonprofit program, such as the 360-degree vs 2D video testing they performed for Animal Equality.

Related organizations: Faunalytics is the only organization explicitly offering this service on their website, but other organizations might be open to the idea. Few effective altruism-minded animal activists are using organizations in this way.
Would be able to get started on research faster.
Would build on historical animal research experience.
The organization will have more connections to NGOs than a new independent charity.

Few animal organizations accept contracts within the animal movement.
Animal organizations would encounter the same talent gaps upon expansion as when starting a new organization (compared to external hires).
There is a high chance of bias from organizations that are more involved in the politics of animal rights.

Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research:** 4/10

### 9) Hire a research organization (external to AR)

**Explanation:** A lot of research needs to be conducted in the animal movement, but there are relatively few skilled, research-minded animal activists. External companies have expertise in conducting studies and could directly translate funding into research. An individual or small team could contract and manage a research-focused organization to conduct high-quality research.

**Example:** Contracting a company to perform an RCT comparing different flyers between multiple market segments.

**Related organizations:** Statisticians Without Borders and countless for-profit market research firms. A limited number of animal organizations have worked with these firms (e.g., Faunalytics with Statistics Without Borders, and Mercy For Animals with a for-profit group).

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<tr>
<td>Requires far fewer skilled researchers from within the animal movement than any other idea.</td>
<td>Research firms have mixed incentives when performing research, such as being rehired. Many explicitly state they can achieve whatever result you are looking for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings a level of expertise that would take considerable time to build independently.</td>
<td>Most firms focus on market research, which is very limited in its applicability to animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could coordinate with a research organization to carry out certain, but not all, parts of the process – e.g. help with data analysis specifically.</td>
<td>Historical work with research firms has not yielded good results.</td>
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</table>

Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research:** 5/10
10) Research on other movements

**Explanation:** Although the amount of research in the animal movement is more limited, there is a deeper pool of research on other movements that could be cross-applied to animals. External research has the advantage of being more numerous, although cross-application can prove tricky.

**Example:** Applying lessons learned from tobacco taxation to increase taxes on meat. Looking at the LGBTQ+ movement for lessons cross-applicable to animal rights.

**Related organizations:** Sentience Institute is explicitly focusing on this. ACE has done some historical work in this area, but stopped when Jacy Reese, a researcher and former chair of the board of directors, left to start Sentience Institute.

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<tr>
<td>• Much quicker to pull data from other movements.</td>
<td>• Sentience Institute is already explicitly focusing on this, which leaves less room for a new organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• There is a lot of research on movements that might be cross-applicable.</td>
<td>• It seems difficult to pull generalized conclusions that are cross-applicable to the field of animals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Many studies cannot even be generalized from one location to another, not to mention across different countries, times, and movements.</td>
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Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research:** 4/10

11) Field establishment research

**Explanation:** Some areas with animal concerns are not yet established as fields of study or are not well-known by closely related fields. Building an academic field of study could allow research to progress in the future along more formal lines.

**Example:** Wild animal suffering is a sufficiently new idea that the first step for many organizations would be to build the field and conduct high-level research. This would include talking to academics and helping them understand the relevant issues.

**Related organizations:** Wild Animal Initiative and Animal Ethics both have worked on this historically and plan to work on this in the future.
Might be the clearest and the least controversial way forward on wild animal suffering.

Academics can give credibility to currently unknown ideas.

Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research:** 4/10

### 12) Cross-cutting animal research

**Explanation:** There is a lot of very broad cross-cutting research that could allow a better understanding of animals in general and, long-term, could be used to help them. Most of this research would not be specific to a particular animal or intervention but would instead increase knowledge across a wide range of animals in different situations.

**Example:** Sentience research could help convince scientists that animals are more likely to feel pain, and thus change their attitudes towards them.

**Related organizations:** Open Philanthropy has one detailed report in this area and Rethink Priorities is working on deepening some of the aspects of this work. There are labs working on this in a non-animal-focused context.

**Strengths**

- Could benefit a very large range of animals, from farm animals to wild animals.
- Could increase the size of the animal movement, particularly with academics.
- Could lead to new interventions and ways to help more neglected animals, such as insects.

**Weaknesses**

- Cross-cutting research is both difficult to get traction on and has a less clear causal path to impact.
- Our team expects perceived lack of sentience to be an excuse more often than the real reason people are supporting factory farms.
- Much of this research requires deep specialization.

Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research:** 3/10
13) Gene modification research

Explanation: Both selective breeding and genetic modification (GM) can be powerful tools to change a plant or an animal. The same technology that is used in GM food could, in theory, be used to increase animal welfare. However, there are no documented cases of this being done yet.

Example: Gene modification research could be refocused on making minor changes to animals that reduce suffering, such as cows being born without horns or buds so that painful dehorning processes would be unnecessary. It could also be used for interventions that affect happiness more directly.

Related organizations: There are some academic-based organizations and some for-profit organizations working in this area. Relatively few of them are focused on improving animal welfare.

Strengths

- Possibility for a very large impact.
- Very neglected.

Weaknesses

- This field is both very young and small.
- Gene modification could be susceptible to a large amount of public backlash similar to that experienced by GMOs.
- As our genetic report describes, we believe this intervention would be extremely easy to get wrong, and thus we do not recommend it.

Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research:** 3/10

14) Tools of research

Explanation: Many of the primary steps of research and meta-tools have not been developed or formalized. These questions, if fleshed out, would allow for better research to be conducted in the future.

Example: An organization could write about whether we should use Mturk or write up what questionnaires to use to track food consumption.

Related organizations: Humane League labs and ACE have done some meta-research. Many questions and areas still remain unexplored.
Research tools are an intuitive first step in building a research base. Tools could be used across multiple organizations. Many tools will not have to be reinvented but can be taken from other stronger research fields and cross-applied.

Impact depends on the expectation that future animal research will take place. This does not seem like a safe assumption. Tools are only impactful if they are used by other research organizations. Tool creation requires a detailed understanding of research, so it would be easy to come to the wrong conclusion about whether a tool should be used if expertise is not present.

Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research: 4/10**

15) Charity evaluation research

**Explanation:** GiveWell has made a large impact by directly evaluating charities. This process of directly comparing charities is one of the least abstract methods of comparing ways to do good.

**Example:** The Humane League and Good Food Institute are both strong charities, but a potential donor needs to decide between them.

**Related organizations:** ACE does this extensively for animals. GiveWell has done this for poverty. FAF and Founders Pledge have also looked into specific charities.

Very direct.
Donors care about the results.
It seems possible to rule out the weakest organizations even with the current state of research.

Lots of organizational time is currently going into this.
Existing organizations may be hostile to a new organization in this space.
It is difficult to obtain sufficient details from nonprofits to separate the good from the best.
Research is hampered by the current lack of evidence.

Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research: 4/10**
16) Creating a research database

Explanation: There is a lot of research conducted that is directly or indirectly related to animal concerns. This research can be difficult to find using Google Scholar or other more generalized research databases, meaning it is underused by NGOs and funders.

Example: An academic runs a study on the recidivism of vegans and what causes it. This research could be featured on a database exclusive to animals and thus be easily found by a vegetarian outreach organization which could change their handouts.

Related organizations: ACE and Faunalytics both have extensive databases.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allows research to be found faster.</td>
<td>• Both ACE and Faunalytics have databases that cover this purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adds credibility to the animal movement.</td>
<td>• Limited, useful, and applicable research exists to be compiled.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Few animal organizations keep up with the latest research, even with a compiled database.</td>
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Steps to impact were not researched for this approach.

**Overall promise relative to other research:** 2/10

Summary

There are numerous different ways to improve research within the animal advocacy space. Some organizational hours are going into almost all of these research areas, but many have significant gaps compared to other more research-based movements. The most promising idea from our research is founding an institute researching possible asks, which seems both easier to conduct and more directly applicable than a full-scale RCT research effort.