



ANIMAL CHARITY EVALUATORS

Better Food Foundation (BFF)

ACE 2025 Charity Evaluation

Theory of Change Table

Yellow highlight = priority path to impact as identified by ACE in collaboration with BFF

Program	Program expenses (% total expenditures)	Program description	Activities (what BFF does to create change)	Early outcomes (the change in behavior, knowledge, or attitudes that results from BFF's activities)	Near-term intermediate outcomes (the near-term results that follow from BFF's early outcomes)	Medium-term intermediate outcomes (the medium-term results that follow from BFF's near-term outcomes)	Final outcomes (the final steps that need to happen for BFF to have their desired impact)	Impact (the ultimate change BFF is trying to achieve)
Transforming Food in Higher Education	52%	This program aims to normalize plant-based food in university dining (U.S. and Canada) within five years through plant-based defaults/nudges.	Train students on implementing plant-based defaults/nudges across campus dining through the DefaultVeg Ambassador Internship program and trainings offered to students working with partner NGOs.	Students increase their knowledge on how to implement plant-based defaults/nudges on campus.	Students recruit support for plant-based defaults/nudges from campus stakeholders (faculty staff, student clubs). Students collect data about campus food services that is useful to plant-based advocacy groups.	Plant-based defaults/nudges are implemented in the U.S. and Canada on university campuses in dining halls, catering, cafes and events.	Reduced animal consumption in U.S. and Canadian university campuses.	Farmed animals are spared.
			Organize and support faculty (in departments like environmental science, nutrition and ethics) to make	Faculty increase their awareness of plant-based solutions and confidence to do more plant-based advocacy on their	Faculty tap into resources of the academy (research, presenters, grants) to support the work of NGOs.	Increased implementation of plant-based defaults in university dining. Large-scale	Reduced animal product consumption in U.S. and Canadian university campuses. Increased support for	



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	<p>plant-based food a part of their classroom teaching, research and campus advocacy work, via Scope 3 Campus Network.</p>	<p>campuses.</p> <p>Faculty meet like-minded project partners from other universities.</p>		<p>collaborative plant-based education programs are developed.</p> <p>Funds raised for large-scale plant-based food research and publication.</p>	<p>p</p> <p>p</p> <p>p</p> <p>(</p> <p>i</p> <p>a</p>
	<p>Provide training to university foodservice professionals on plant-based dining solutions via conference presentations and webinars, and publishing reports.</p>	<p>University foodservice professionals increase their awareness of the benefits of, and available solutions for, shifting to plant-based food on campuses.</p>	<p>Attitudes shift—the professional culture of university foodservice professionals becomes more open to plant-based solutions.</p> <p>They avail themselves of the help provided by the Plant-Based NGO Network.</p>	<p>Plant-based defaults and other effective solutions offered by the NGO Network (e.g. vegan chef training, supply chain transformation) are implemented by U.S. and Canadian universities in dining halls and catering.</p>	<p>F</p> <p>c</p> <p>a</p> <p>u</p> <p>M</p> <p>r</p> <p>u</p> <p>a</p>
<p>This network aims to scale the strategy of plant-based defaults and nudges by training and supporting other NGOs to use the strategy in their own outreach and advocacy work, facilitating</p>	<p>Organize and support other NGOs to more effectively transform institutional dining, via Plant-Based Defaults NGO Network.</p>	<p>NGO staff in animal, environment and health movements increase their skill at advocating for plant-based food in universities (and other kinds of</p>	<p>NGO staff collaborate more effectively with each other on approaching institutional targets.</p>	<p>Increased implementation of plant-based defaults in institutions.</p> <p>Collective grants are raised to do larger-scale outreach</p>	<p>F</p> <p>p</p> <p>i</p> <p>u</p> <p>M</p> <p>r</p> <p>i</p>



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collaboration between NGOs on larger projects to promote plant-based food norms, and creating resources (presentation decks, talking points, research) that can be used by other NGOs in their advocacy work.		institutions) by learning about plant-based defaults and other effective strategies.		to universities and other institutions. Plant-based NGOs make a more compelling case to decision makers than the meat industry (meat industry marketing spend is less effective).	a S e r p c b
This program aims to address the knowledge and skill gap needed by the climate movement (sustainability professionals, climate NGO staff, climate volunteers) to embrace and implement plant-based solutions as a means of reducing GHG Emissions and addressing other forms of environmental harm.	Lead narrative change in the climate movement about plant-based diets: Raise awareness through pop-up experiences (e.g. Oatmilk by Default Coffee Bar) at public-facing climate movement events (e.g. NYC Climate Week), run social media campaigns, creating videos for youtube, and promote success stories in both old and new media.	Climate advocates are more aware of impactful and scalable plant-based solutions like defaults.	Climate advocates change—become more open and enthusiastic (less fearful) about embracing diet-change as part of their climate work.	Increase in positive and solutions-oriented content about plant-based diet change at influential climate events, climate media, and from climate social influencers. Increase in climate organizations that serve plant-based or plant-based default food at their events.	l c i t c a s p b i v p p c g
	Train climate movement	Climate professionals increase their skill	Professional norms of the climate	Green Teams and other climate	F p



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	professionals and advocates to successfully implement plant-based defaults.	offering plant-centered foodservices and advocating for more plant-based food using defaults and other behavioral psychology tools.	movement increasingly require sustainability professionals to have skills for serving plant-based food.	professionals succeed in getting businesses, government and events to implement plant-based defaults in their food services.	in g e A c e b g e P
	Provide advice and consultations to mobilize climate funders to support plant-based solutions.	More climate funders are aware of plant-based solutions like defaults that are tractable, scalable and fundable, and of the landscape of plant-based NGOs that are ready to use funds.	Increased grant-making to plant-based diet work being done by NGOs whose work benefits farmed animals. Decreased funding for false-solutions that harm farmed animals.	Changes to food culture, policy and practices are more enduring because a better-funded movement can better respond to the world's needs.	T a is r p
BFF's Strategy Incubation Program offers capacity-building support (fundraising, admin, fiscal sponsorship, and sometimes programmatic support) to launch new programs that fill important gaps in diet change advocacy, particularly when	Produce and promote reports that inform and lay the groundwork for institutional procurement campaigns.	Increased knowledge by target audience (environmental advocates, NGO staff, policymakers, institutional leaders media) about industry greenwashing and disinformation.	Change in attitude—increased openness to question industry narratives about sustainability. Change in attitude—belief that critics of animal agriculture are	Campaign leaders invited to engage with environmental and institutional leaders directly explore solutions that include plant-based alternatives and greater transparency in NGO	F f s in a t p s



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the ideal brand or leadership for the projects is outside of BFF.			credible, research-backed and need to be taken seriously.	communications.. Papers form the basis for NGOs to use in campaigns that change consumers' attitudes about animal products.	
	Conduct research, interviewing dozens of organizations, and strategic planning.	Increased knowledge by the campaign's leadership and allied animal organizations about strategic gaps and opportunities.	Campaign deliverables (presentations, reports, media interviews, etc) both fill important gaps in advocacy and are trusted by stakeholders (sustainability leaders, foodservice decisionmakers) because they are informed by knowledge of their fields.	Overcome distrust between animal advocates and sustainability advocates to build a strong, diverse and well-resourced coalition.	A s a

BFF's Overall Theory of Change Assessment

Based on our theory of change assessment, which includes an evaluation of logical reasoning and evidence and considers assumptions and risks, we are **moderately convinced** that BFF's programs are likely to create positive change for animals.



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Our uncertainty in this assessment is **moderate-to-high** due to the limited evidence on the effectiveness of network building and climate movement outreach on increasing plant-based options (both in general and in BFF's case in particular).

The most important considerations informing this verdict were:

- (+) BFF has a strong track record implementing plant-based defaults and other nudges (e.g., drop upcharge of plant-based milk in beverages, drop dairy milk defaults, add new plant-based options, move plant-based foods to more central locations) in universities across the U.S. and Canada. An outstanding achievement was Sodexo adopting plant-based defaults in more than 400 cafeterias in U.S. universities, which has been well-documented and studied.¹
- (+) There is evidence supporting the effectiveness of plant-based defaults in U.S. universities on decreasing animal product consumption,² and it's reasonable to believe that by being an intervention that doesn't restrict freedom of choice, it can be more easily adopted by institutions than mandatory plant-based offerings.
- (-) While there is some evidence favoring network building as a way for nonprofits to solve complex problems³ and achieve policy goals,⁴ the evidence comes from non-animal advocacy organizations. In addition, evidence in favor of running an NGO network to promote plant-based defaults in universities or other institutions is lacking, and there are mixed opinions about the effectiveness of BFF's NGO network in particular, as it could be duplicative with other efforts. (+) However, BFF's network is based on the theory according to which action networks aim to facilitate connection and learning in service of coordinated action.⁵ Additionally, we note that BFF's NGO network is a recently launched initiative (fall 2024) for which BFF is currently developing a data collection and tracking system.
- (+) While there is some evidence suggesting that environmental organizations are interested in collaborating with animal advocates, with an interest in promoting plant-based diets,⁶ (-) available evidence on the effectiveness of reaching out to the climate movement to promote plant-based defaults and other nudges is lacking because this is one of first instances that such outreach has been attempted by animal groups.

¹ [Ginn & Sparkman \(2024\)](#); [BFF \(2024\)](#); [Sodexo \(2024\)](#)

² [Zhang et al. \(2022\)](#); [Zhang et al. \(2024\)](#); [Boronowsky et al. \(2022\)](#); [Ólafsson \(2024\)](#)

³ [Chandler & Scott Kennedy \(2015\)](#)

⁴ [Shawki & Schnyder \(2021\)](#)

⁵ [Ehrlichman \(2021\)](#)

⁶ [Arevalo et al. \(2024\)](#)



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- (+) BFF argues that now the climate movement is more open to plant-based options,⁷ especially to defaults/nudges, and that their work with the climate movement aims to introduce plant-based solutions into new spaces, with the potential to tap into the much greater resources of the climate movement, while also creating a presence to shape the narrative around dietary change. (-) However, strong counter-narratives promoting animal agriculture still exist within the climate movement, creating some uncertainty about the likelihood of success.

⁷ [Feigin et al. \(2025\)](#)