

# Future Academy Impact Evaluation and Retrospective

## 0.0 Executive summary

### Introduction

Impact Academy is a new field-building and educational institution seeking to enable people to become world-class leaders, thinkers, and doers, using their careers and character to solve the world's most pressing problems and create the best possible future. Impact Academy was founded by Vilhelm Skoglund, Sebastian Schmidt, and Lowe Lundin. We have already secured significant funding to set up the organization and carry out ambitious projects in 2023 and beyond. Please read [this document](#) for more about Impact Academy, our Theory of Change, and our two upcoming projects.

The purpose of this document is to provide an extensive evaluation and reflection on Future Academy - our first program (and experiment). Future Academy aimed to equip university students and early-career professionals worldwide with the thinking, skills, and resources they need to pursue ambitious and impactful careers. It was a free six-month program consisting of four in-person weekends with workshops, presentations, socials, and monthly digital events. Furthermore, the 21 fellows worked on an impact project with an experienced mentor and received professional coaching to empower them to increase their impact and become their best selves. Upon completion of the program, all participants went to a global impact conference (EAGx Nordics) where four fellows presented their projects. We awarded stipends of a total of \$20,000 to the best projects. The projects included a sentiment analysis of public perception of AI risk, a philosophy AI alignment paper, and an organization idea for improving research talent in Tanzania. Our faculty included entrepreneurs and professors from Oxford University and UC Berkeley.

Note that this document attempts to assess to what extent we've served the world. This involves an assessment of the wonderful fellows who participated in Future Academy, and our ability to help them. This is **not** meant as an evaluation of peoples' worth nor a definite score of general abilities, but an evaluation of our ability to help. We hope we do not offend anyone and have tried our best not to do so, but if you think we write anything inappropriate, please let us know in the comments or by reaching out to [sebastian \[at\] impactacademy.org](mailto:sebastian@impactacademy.org).

### Main results and successes

- We confirmed a key hypothesis underlying Future Academy - namely that we can attract promising and talented people who i) have no to moderate knowledge of Effective Altruism and longtermism, ii) are coming from underserved regions (e.g., 40% came from Southern and Eastern Europe), and are more diverse (e.g., 56% were female).

- We created a bespoke primary metric called counterfactual expected career contribution (CECC) inspired by 80,000 hours' [IASPC metric](#) and Centre for Effective Altruism's [HEA metric](#). We think the total score was 22.8, and ~ four fellows made up the majority of that score.
  - To give an understanding of the CECC metric, we'll give an example. Take an imaginary fellow, Alice. Before the intervention, based on our surveys and initial interactions, we expected that she may have an impactful career, but that she is unlikely to pursue a priority path based on IA principles. We rate her Expected Career Contribution (ECC) to be 2. After the program, based on surveys and interactions, we rate her as 10 (ECC) because we have seen that she's now applying for a full-time junior role in a priority path guided by impartial altruism. We also asked her (and ourselves) to what extent that change was due to IA and estimated that to be 10%. To get our final Counterfactual Expected Career Contribution (CECC) for Alice, we subtract her initial ECC score of 2 from her final score of 10 to get 8, then multiply that score by 0.1 to get the portion of the expected career contribution, which we believe we are responsible for. The final score is 0.8 CECC. As a formula:  $10 \text{ (ECC after the program)} - 2 \text{ (ECC before the program)} * 0.1 \text{ (our counterfactual influence)} = 0.8 \text{ CECC}$ . See [here](#) for a more detailed description of the metric.
  - It seems as if we played a substantial counterfactual role (~50%) in bringing about three-four people with an expected career contribution of 10. This corresponds to someone who is now actively searching for a full-time junior role or got an internship in a priority path and is on track to making a senior-level contribution - see an example of a case study [here](#).
  - There were 11 fellows with a CECC score of 2 (which means they may or may not become a 10 eventually), and where we would've played a substantial counterfactual role (~50%) in their progress if that were to happen. See an example of a case study [here](#).
- We had a control group of the top 30 rejectees (only 14/30 responded to our surveys). Thus, this was a [quasi-experiment](#) - not a randomized control trial. 70% (10 people) of the control group didn't do anything similar to Future Academy, and of those who did, we think it's likely that two of them would've been better off by doing Future Academy, whereas one of them was probably better off not doing Future Academy and one where we are unsure. The control group had a final ECC that was 40% lower than the fellows, which might support our assumption of being able to create counterfactual impact via programs like Future Academy. This supports our assumption of being able to counterfactually engage people in EA.
- The fellows were very satisfied, with an average satisfaction score of 9.6/10 (with an 86% response rate). We asked the control group how satisfied they were with what they did instead of Future Academy. The average satisfaction was 6.7.
- Future Academy seems to have increased the fellows' number of connections relevant for doing good substantially. The average number (before) was 3. The average number (after) was 17. This corresponds to an increase by a factor of 4.5 (compared to the control group, which was increased by a factor of 2).
- 92% of the fellows reported that they changed their career in ways they think will make it more impactful (compared to 71% of the control group).

- Our focus on well-being and general human development via coaching appears to have been a success. For example, two out of the four well-being metrics had a statistically significant increase with a moderate-strong effect size. The two other metrics didn't change in statistically significant ways. Relatedly, it increased the overall engagement with the program (fellows reported an average engagement increase of 30.5% due to coaching) while providing career-related outputs (e.g., being more ambitious and optimistic about the impact they can have).
- We were excited about awarding \$20,000 to the best projects.
- The total cost (including staff salary) of Future Academy was \$229,726, which corresponds to \$11,000/fellow and ~ \$10,000/Counterfactual Expected Career Contributions (CEEC). The total FTE of the core staff was ~ 2.

## Main challenges and mistakes

1. Impact evaluation presents multiple challenges. We take all of the results with substantial uncertainty and worry that our conclusions could easily change within six months. Relatedly, the assessment of our control group could be much more rigorous.
2. Three fellows reported having had difficult experiences with one of the organizers - e.g., feeling that the organizer had been too pushy with some of the EA ideas. This made them feel uncomfortable and less prone to engage with the effective altruism community. None of the fellows are hurting in any way - they shared the information to help Future Academy thrive. We took this feedback very seriously, solicited advice from around ten people, and considered a wide range of options for moving forward with the organizer (including whether the person should continue with us). We eventually decided to continue as we trust the person's ability to grow and saw that the person created a convincing development plan for improvement.
3. We needed to spend more time and resources on marketing and attracting applications to the program. We weren't particularly systematic in the recruitment process, as multiple individuals were involved, and we want to set aside more time and resources for both marketing and application processing. With a simple budget of \$2,000 at least three participants found the program through paid advertising ("eyeballs can be bought").
4. The fellows didn't get as much out of the Impact Projects and mentoring as we would've liked. For example, 3/18 didn't hand in a project, only four fellows worked in groups, and some mentor-mentee-pairings seemed not to have taken off. However, compared to other programs (e.g., SERI), it seems as if this was a high rate of project completion.
5. We needed fewer normal lectures and more time for active learning and a [flipped classroom](#) approach. Relatedly, the exercises prepared for the workshop elements were of varying quality - e.g., they hadn't been test-run.

## Conclusions for Impact Academy

Overall, we think Future Academy was a successful experiment as we were satisfied with how we ran the program and the outcomes of the program. However, there was significant

room for improvement, and we don't want to run Future Academy in its exact form again. We've decided to run another version of Future Academy where we will continue to primarily target people who

- Have no or moderate knowledge of and engagement with EA/longtermism and
- Are from underserved regions and groups.

We'll also update the program to reflect best practices within education, the science of learning, and other programs we think highly of. Finally, we'll also explore the feasibility of targeting early-mid career professionals as the wider community seems to be very interested in individuals with 3+ years of experience.

You can learn more about the other project (an AI governance fellowship) we will be running [here](#).

## Recommendations to the EA community

Based on our experience with Future Academy, we think these recommendations might provide value to the EA community as a whole:

- More focus on recruiting from underserved communities (like Eastern and Southern Europe and specific regions in Africa and Asia) - it's possible!
- Consider adding a component around well-being and general human development via coaching appears to have been a success. For example, two out of the four well-being metrics had a statistically significant increase with a moderate-strong effect size. The two other metrics didn't change in statistically significant ways. Relatedly, it increased the overall engagement with the program (fellows reported an average engagement increase of 30.5% due to coaching) while providing career-related outputs (e.g., being more ambitious and optimistic about the impact they can have).
- Learn from educational best practices. Many things related to field-building can be modeled as education. From the design of programs (e.g., by backward chaining from where you want fellows to end up) to the impact evaluation (it can be similar to grading hard things like essays). See this excellent [blog post](#) by Michael Noetel for more.
- Be more rigorous and systematic about impact evaluation. E.g., creating a baseline estimate or a simple control group by sending a survey with a \$20 Amazon gift card to top rejectees led to a surprisingly high response rate. That said, impact evaluation is hard, and we'd be interested in exploring some form of external evaluation. For instance, multiple organizations could hire someone to do it collectively for them.
- Run more ambitious experiments, including experiments that are not EA-branded.

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# 1.0 Introduction and background

Impact Academy is a field-building and educational institution seeking to enable people to become world-class leaders, thinkers, and doers using their careers and character to solve our most pressing problems and create the best possible future. Impact Academy was founded in February 2023 by Vilhelm Skoglund (VS), Sebastian Schmidt (SS), and Lowe Lundin (LL). We have already secured significant funding for setting up the organization and carrying out ambitious projects in 2023 and beyond.

This report seeks to evaluate and improve our first program called Future Academy. Future Academy was a free six-month program aimed to equip university students and early-career professionals from anywhere in the world with the thinking, skills, and resources they need to pursue ambitious and impactful careers. There were four in-person weekends with workshops, presentations, socials, and monthly digital events. Further, the fellows worked on an impact project with an experienced mentor and received professional coaching to empower them to increase their impact and become their best selves. Upon completion of the program, all participants went to EAGx where four fellows presented their projects. We awarded stipends of a total of \$20,000 to the best projects. The projects included a sentiment analysis of public perception of AI risk, a philosophy AI alignment paper, and an organization idea for improving research talent in Tanzania. Our faculty included entrepreneurs and professors from Oxford University and UC Berkeley. The program received around 400 applicants in 2022 and ran from October 2022 to April 2023.

## Team Future Academy

Future Academy had the following core team (not including our wonderful team of faculty, mentors, and coaches):

[Vilhelm Skoglund](#) - CEO

[Sebastian Schmidt](#) - Director of Education

[Lowe Lundin](#) - Project Manager and Executive Assistant

[Mimmi Thor](#) - Communication and Project Assistant

[Krummi Kristjansson](#) - Intern

Everyone worked part-time on this throughout the period.

## Program and curriculum

### Program overview

The program ran from October 2022 to April 2023, consisted of four modules, and included a variety of activities. The most substantial activities were

- Impact Summits: Four weekend-long retreats with a mix of one-one interactions with peers and faculty and workshops and lectures.
- Readings: Each Impact Summit had essential readings in the form of book chapters, articles, papers, podcasts, and videos corresponding to 15-20 hours. They also had optional readings.

- Impact project and mentoring: Self-directed work on a project relevant to Future Academy guided by a mentor. A total of \$20,000 were awarded to the best projects, which was assessed by a group of judges based on written submissions.
- Coaching: Six coaching sessions with curated coaches to empower the fellows to grow as people, personally and professionally.

You can find a full overview of the program here:

Activity	October				November				December				Jan				Feb				Mar				Apr						
	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	
Impact Summit				21-23							9-11						27-29													19-21	
Online Workshop							15							4												20					
Impact Project																		Continuous work ~2 hours a week												Present	
Mentoring																		Continuous meeting ~twice a month at times convenient for you												End	
1-1 coaching					Weekly --> biweekly coaching																										
Companion check-in																		Continuous check-in weekly/forthnightly												End	
Impact conference (EAGx)																														22-23	Last day
Award Grant(s)																														23	
Career coaching																															
Office hours					On Thursdays 3-4 PM CET																										

You can access the spreadsheet [here](#).

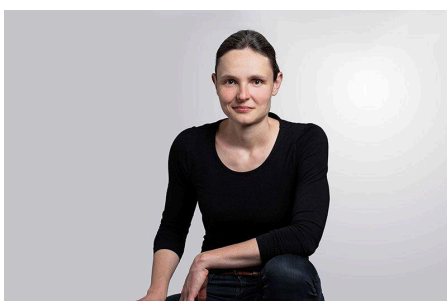
## Content, curriculum, and faculty

We had four modules which approximately corresponded to the four Impact Summits.

### Module 1 - Introduction to Future Academy and Effective Impact

We provided a thoughtful introduction to Future Academy’s program, vision, and culture and attempted to wholeheartedly introduce the fellows to each other and build a sense of “togetherness”. We introduced core aspects of doing the most good (effective altruism) - frameworks, concepts, and skills from science, ethics, and critical thinking. This included sessions on rationality and scientific thinking, how some causes and interventions seem to do much more good than others, and coaching.

**The faculty of this module included:**



**Friederike Grosse-Holz (PhD)**  
Scientific Director on the Blue Horizon Growth team.

**Saul Perlmutter**  
Nobel Laureate and professor of physics at Berkeley.

**Matteo Trevisan**  
Coach mentor and director of professional development at the International Coaching Federation

## Module 2 - Orienting toward the future

We continued to explore the core principles of effective impact and specifically focused on the moral relevance of the future and how we can create a flourishing long-term future. We attempted to come to terms with the tradeoffs we face in our altruistic efforts and started thinking about how to prioritize between different global causes before we began to explore some of the most urgent threats facing us today. Threats such as artificial intelligence, global pandemics, nuclear war, and climate catastrophe. We also attended an event with the Nobel Foundation on the Future of Life.

### The faculty of this module included:



**Anemone Franz**  
Physician and Medical Consultant at Alvea, a biotechnology company focused on preventing large-scale pandemics.



**Hilary Greaves**  
Professor of philosophy at the University of Oxford and director of the Global Priorities Institute



**Olle Häggström**  
Professor in mathematical statistics, researching futurology and existential risks at Chalmers University of Technology.

## Module 3 - Working to safeguard the future

We practiced skills such as forecasting and introduced notions such as grand futures and existential hope. We also introduced causes such as the governance of AI, great power conflict, and global priorities research. We heard case studies of different career paths, such as entrepreneurship and operations, and ran a workshop on careers to make the most of our approximately 80,000 working hours. Finally, the fellows started to work on their impact project and got matched with their mentors.

### The faculty of this module included:





**Emad Kiyaei**  
Director of the Middle East  
Treaty Organization

**Kat Woods**  
Cofounder of Charity  
Entrepreneurship,  
Nonlinear, and Charity  
Science Health



**Anders Sandberg**  
Researcher at the University  
of Oxford, focusing on  
issues of ethics and social  
impact of emerging  
technology and existential  
risks



#### Module 4 - Graduation and setting ourselves up for future impact

We discussed critical perspectives on the ideas we covered during the program and learned more about the ideas we had covered thus far. Importantly, all fellows presented their projects to a jury of experts which awarded a total of \$20,000 to further their impact efforts. Additionally, we attempted to set the fellows up for future success by strengthening their connections, celebrating their progress, and running another career workshop. The entire journey culminated by going to EAGx Nordics - a conference for 500 selected attendees from around the world where the fellows got the opportunity to attend lectures and workshops, and connect with like-minded people outside of Future Academy. Some of them even got to present their work at the conference.

#### The faculty of this module included:



**Nuno Sempere**

Researcher, software  
developer, and forecaster.  
Part of the renowned  
forecasting group  
Samotsvety



**Signe Saven**  
PhD student in philosophy at Lund University writing

her dissertation on longtermism.



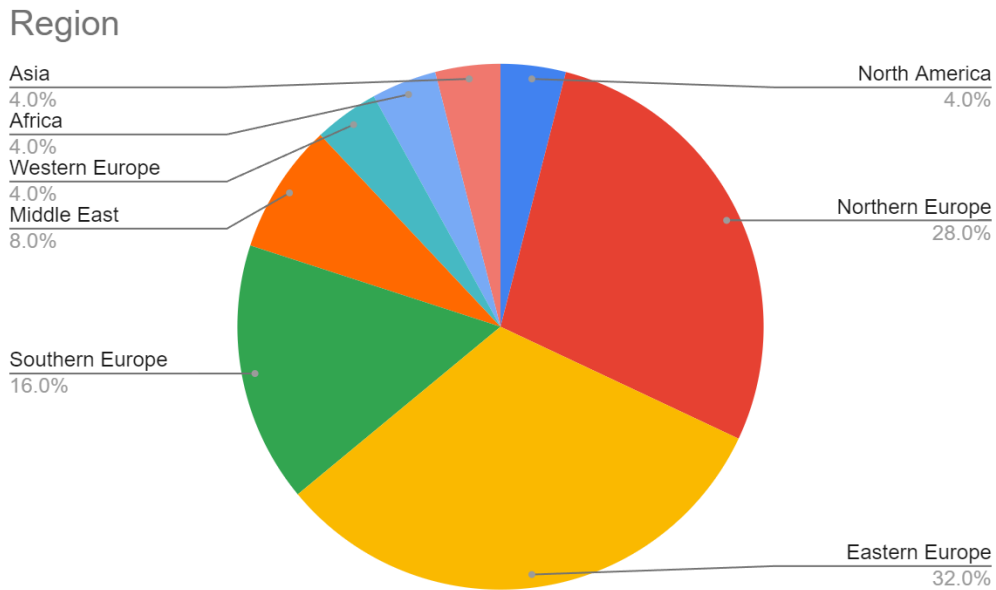
**Fazl Barez**

PhD researcher at Edinburgh Centre For Robotics and visiting PhD Scholar at the University of Oxford and is pursuing AI safety.

## Fellows

Our fellows came from diverse regions:

Figure: Region of origin of our fellows



Our fellows had the following other social demographic characteristics:

Table: Sociodemographics of our fellows

Average age (lowest and highest)	Gender (% female)	Career stage (% students)	EA engagement (< 100 hours and no meet-ups)
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24 (18; 32)	56%	72%	88%
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Compared to the global EA community ([Rethink Priorities Survey, 2020](#)), our fellows were younger (the global mean is 29 years), significantly more female (27% globally), and more students (32% students globally).

4/25 dropped out of the program - see [this section](#) for more.

## 2.0 Methods

### Study design and control group

We attempted to approximate a quasi-experimental study design by doing a pre and post-evaluation for the fellows (intervention group) and a post-evaluation of a control group. The control group was the top 30 rejectees who weren't already highly engaged in EA.<sup>1</sup> You can see an overview of how we approached it below.

	Baseline measurement	Ad hoc	End of Future Academy	Six-month follow-up
When	Oct 2022		Apr 2023	Dec 2023
Who:	Intervention group (IG)	IG	IG Control group	IG
How and what:	- Two step written application process (June-Sep) and a supplementary baseline surveys (mid-October).	- Surveys after impact summits  - Informal user interviews	- Two surveys. One of them was offered to be anonymous.  - Evaluation of impact projects  - Our qualitative impressions  - Case studies	- Survey  - LinkedIn  - (interviews)

We couldn't collect as much data on the control group as for the fellows as we were relatively confident that would reduce the response rate significantly. Consequently, some of the metrics were only measured for the fellows and not the control group.

### Survey distribution

For the baseline estimates, we used the responses from the two-step application process and two supplementary questionnaires distributed just before the launch of Future Academy.

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned, we targeted people who were very new to these ideas so we rejected dozens of people who were already highly engaged in EA.

For the post-intervention survey, we distributed two surveys to Future Academy fellows and one survey to the control group (whom we offered \$20 Amazon gift card if they responded). You can find all of the surveys in the appendix.

Among Future Academy fellows, all surveys had a response rate between 85% (18/21) and 96% (23/24).

Among the control group, the survey had a response rate of 47% (14/30).

## Primary metric

Assessing the counter-factual impact is extremely tricky. We call this counter-factual expected career contribution based on Impact Academy principles (CECC). We were dissatisfied with Highly Engaged Effective Altruist<sup>2</sup> as it doesn't reflect the heavy-tailed distribution of impact (it's 0 or 1) and overemphasizes the importance of engaging with the Effective Altruism community rather than doing good. We were somewhat satisfied with 80,000 hours' impact-adjusted significant plan changes (IASPC). So, inspired by these metrics, we created our own.

To give an understanding of the CECC metric, we'll give an example.

Take an imaginary fellow, Alice. Before the intervention, based on our surveys and initial interactions, we expected that she may have an impactful career, but that she is unlikely to pursue a priority path based on IA principles. We rate her Expected Career Contribution (ECC) to be 2. After the program, based on surveys and interactions, we rate her as 10 (ECC) because we have seen that she's now applying for a full-time junior role in a priority path guided by impartial altruism. We also asked her (and ourselves) to what extent that change was due to IA and estimate that to be 10%. To get our final Counterfactual Expected Career Contribution (CECC) for Alice, we subtract her initial ECC score of 2 from her final score of 10 to get 8, then multiply that score by 0.1 to get the portion of the expected career contribution which we believe we are responsible for. The final score is 0.8 CECC. As an formula:  $10 \text{ (ECC after the program)} - 2 \text{ (ECC before the program)} * 0.1 \text{ (our counterfactual influence)} = 0.8 \text{ CECC}$ .

See [here](#) for a more detailed description of the metric..

For an example of an ECC category of 10, please see the [case study](#) section.

## 3.0 Impact (outputs and results)

This section seeks to assess some of the main outputs and results of Future Academy. While we attempted to be rigorous, it's very difficult to make causal claims for various reasons. Among other things, the sample size of the intervention control groups was limited

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<sup>2</sup> A highly engaged effective altruist is a concept used by CEA. It includes the following components:

- They are using High-quality reasoning to determine which actions to take
- They are motivated by Impartially altruistic principles in deciding to take that action
- They stand a significant chance of becoming Leaders, thinkers, and philanthropists

(21 and 14, respectively), and the groups weren't randomized.

We expect that most impact can only be observed after a year or two and a likely failure mode is being too enthusiastic about our impact. Impact evaluation is just very hard. For reference, 80,000 Hours has [found](#) that “top plan changes are highly delayed (usually none tracked within one year; and a median delay of two years in the current sample). This means that we don't yet have much direct evidence for how many plan changes our programmes caused in 2018 or 2019.”.

## Counter-factual expected career contribution based on Impact Academy principles (primary metric)

As mentioned in the methods section, this is a complex score that has multiple different components and ultimately attempts to assess the expected impact fellows will have due to us (although this is of course, very hard). Below you'll find the results of the expected career contribution based on IA principles (ECC) followed by the counter-factual expected career contribution based on Impact Academy principles.

### Expected career contribution based on Impact Academy principles (ECC)

For an explanation of the different categories, please visit the [methods section](#).

However, we'll briefly describe the score of 10 (which was the highest score we gave): 10 indicates that a fellow is contributing to a junior-level impact option and/or have >10% of becoming a 100. This category requires a mix of *significant action* (great publications, impact projects, or a junior-level jobs) AND a convincing case of their interest in and ability to excel at a priority path (career strategy and general impressiveness) based on FA principles. For an example of a 10, please see this [case study](#).

Table: Overview of the different scores of expected career contributions based on Impact Academy principles among fellows

	Total	# of 10s	# of 2s	# of 1s	# of 0s
<b>Before</b>	28	1	2	14	8
<b>After</b>	79	5	11	7	2

### Counter-factual expected career contribution based on Impact Academy principles (CECC)

However, we care about the score after adjusting for our counter-factual influence. This is because the changes that happened during Future Academy are unlikely to be entirely due to us (e.g., at least one fellow did an EA-related residency which they'd likely have done regardless). Therefore we subtract the ECC estimate from our estimate of where they were when they started the program (the baseline) and multiply that change by the counter-factual influence. We use the following categories for the counter-factual influence:

- 0: Not at all due to FA (<2%)
- 0.1: Somewhat due to FA (~10%)
- 0.5: Substantially due to FA (~50%)
- 1: Completely due to FA (~100%)

Example:  $(10 \text{ (ECC)} - 2 \text{ (baseline)}) * 0.5 \text{ (our influence)} = 4 \text{ CECC}$ .

The total CECC score was 22.8.

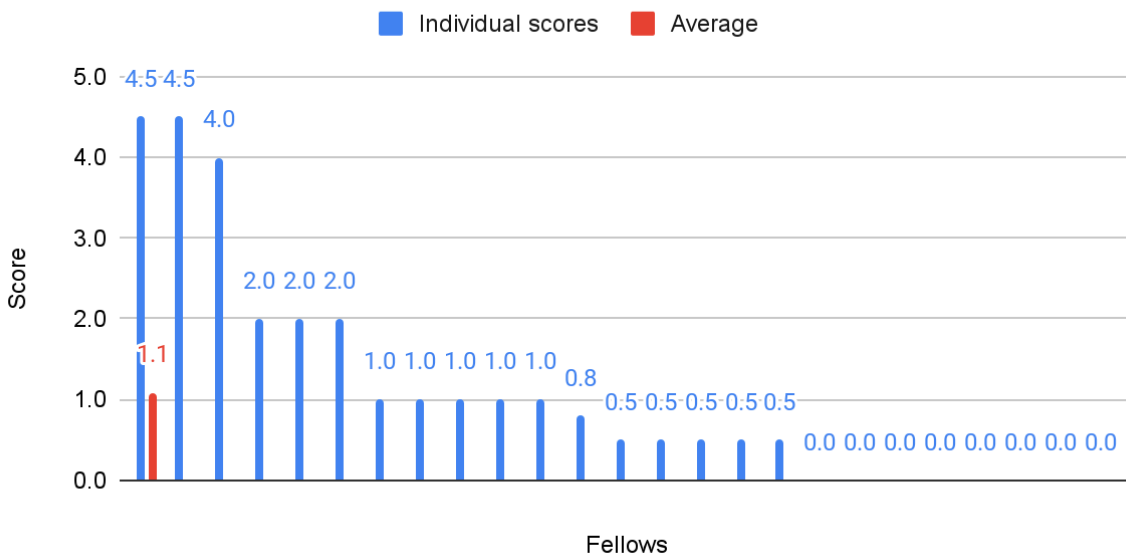
The average score was 1.1.

A few fellows made up the majority of the score.

For an overview of the scores, please see this figure.

Figure: Counter-factual expected career contribution based on Impact Academy principles

### Counter-factual expected career contribution based on IA principles



Red shows the average score for the fellows.

### Case studies

This section contains two case studies. Both fellows read through them and gave permission for them to be published.

#### A (ECC 10)

A is 23 years old and from Eastern Europe. He has a background in Business Administration, operations, and management. He started out with a low engagement with EA (read a book and some articles and was on an EA slack channel) and wanted to pursue a

management career in ecosystem restoration. During Future Academy, he asked great questions and clearly engaged a lot with the ideas, which seemed to resonate with him, while still being critical. He combined his Impact Project with his Master's thesis and did a systematic literature review of food chain resilience during pandemics. His new career strategy consists of a Plan A (land a job within a startup working with an existential risk) and B (land a job in an ops/management position for a high-impact / EA-aligned organization). We think we played a substantial role (~50%) in the change described above.

## B (ECC 2)

23-year-old soon-to-be double bachelor in international relations from East Africa based in Northern Europe.

Before Future Academy, he had a goal of positively changing the lives of 3 million people via entrepreneurship (e.g., participated in UNLEASH) and hadn't heard of EA and related ideas. During Future Academy, he engaged quite eagerly with the program (e.g., listened to extra podcasts and started engaging with the community outside of Future Academy (e.g., joined an residential EA program). He ran a pilot related to Effective Thesis in Eastern Africa and co-started a local EA group. He intends to start an organization related to upskilling local talent in research this Summer and applying for Charity Entrepreneurship (2024) and has expressed interest in combining it with AI safety, local priorities research, and fish welfare. We feel that he could go on multiple trajectories (all entrepreneurial) and have high confidence that he'll do something generally impressive. Still, the future will tell to what extent he'll take significant action based on these ideas.

## Control group

As mentioned, we sent a follow-up survey to the top rejectees (people who had gone through to our final stage). As we were primarily targeting people new to EA, we rejected many promising individuals as they were too engaged. We didn't include these amongst the top 30 rejectees as they didn't represent our main target audience. It's also worth noting that we didn't collect as much information about the control group as the fellows and that this is very far from a randomized controlled trial.

### What did they do instead?

We asked:

*What did you do instead of Future Academy?*

- *Other*
- *Nothing similar*
- *A similar program*

There was an optional follow-up question where they could choose to elaborate.

Based on the self-assessment and the elaboration, 4/14 control participants did something somewhat similar to Future Academy. Concretely, they

1. Participated in a similar fellowship
2. Local EA career course
3. University Group Accelerator Program
4. Engaged with the national EA community and volunteered during an EAGx

We'd claim that 2 and 3 likely (70%) would've been better off with Future Academy, whereas 1 likely (70%) was better off with what they did and 4 could go either way though they may have been able to do Future Academy next to the other thing.

## ECC

Based on the responses, we assessed their ECC in a fashion similar to the fellows, although we did so much more pragmatically by assessing their career strategy for relevant mentionings of priority cause areas (e.g., biosecurity) and other keywords (e.g., EA community or x-risks). Four people seemed relevant, and we then looked them up on LinkedIn to check for relevant objective outputs such as job positions, mutual connections, relevant posts, or projects (e.g., ran a two-day workshop on space governance) to look for ECC of 2 or higher.

Based on this, we'd say that

- Two had an ECC score of 10
  - They said they decided to take up local community building while aiding an AI safety researcher with operations.
- Two had a score of 2
  - Example: "I'll learn fundamental aspects of existential risk. Subsequently, I should be able to invest more time into research in the field and eventually contribute to high-quality work in the field." Of concrete outputs, we saw on LinkedIn that they participated in a similar local fellowship and ran a two-day workshop on space governance.
- We assume that the rest are 1s or 0s - equally distributed.

To make this pool comparable to the intervention group, we'll assume these are representative of the control group as a whole and multiply by 1.5 (to bring the 14 control group participants up to match our 21 fellows).

Based on this, the control group had the following ECC scores.

Table: Expected career contributions based on Impact Academy principles (control group)

Total	# of 10s	# of 2s	# of 1s	# of 0s
46.5	3	5	6.5	6.5

This is around 40% lower than what the Future Academy fellows scored at the end of the program.

## Overall comparison to the control group

We think the main takeaways from comparing to the control group were:



- That ~ 70% didn't do anything similar to Future Academy, and of the four who did, we think it's likely that two of them would've been better off by doing Future Academy. This supports our assumption of being able to counter-factually engage people in EA.
- The control group had a final ECC that was 40% lower than the fellows, which might support our assumption of being able to create counter-factual impact via programs like Future Academy.
- Note that we did several additional comparisons with the control group but chose to include them under the specific sections (e.g., satisfaction). Based on this, the Future Academy fellows compared favorably to the control group which further supports the promise of Future Academy.
- Doing control groups seems good but also takes some time, and we would've liked to do this more rigorously and/or outsource as we're obviously biased.

## Satisfaction and net promoter score

We asked the fellows:

*How likely are you to recommend Future Academy to a friend or colleague similar to you?*

We asked the control group:

*How likely are you to recommend **what you did (instead of Future Academy)** to a friend or colleague similar to you?*

Table: Satisfaction and net promoter score (compared to control group)

	Satisfaction (average)	Satisfaction (median)	NPS
Intervention group	9.6	10.0	88.9
Control group	6.7	7.0	-35.7

This might be the metric with the biggest difference between Future Academy and the control group and it seems like the fellows were unusually satisfied with the program. However, the control group didn't have any of the social desirability bias which is likely to drive some of the high scores.

## Drop out and negative effects

4/25 dropped out of the program. We think this was primarily due to them being very busy with other things and/or not being a particularly good fit for Future Academy.

In our survey, one out of 21 reported negative effects:

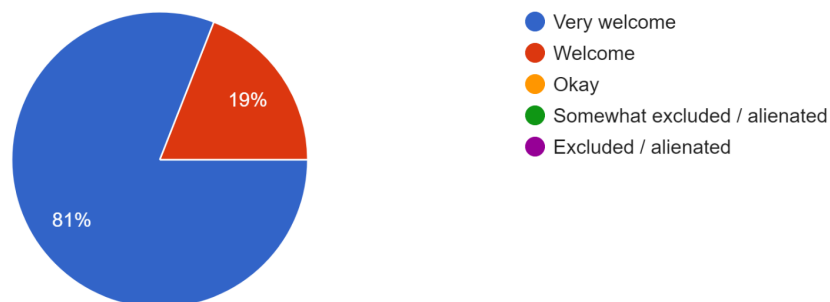
- *“Somewhat a bit more stress and expectations, journeys also took time and energy”*

However, three fellows reported having had difficult experiences with one of the organizers - e.g., feeling that the organizer had been too intense with some of the EA ideas and unprofessional and judgmental. This made them feel uncomfortable and less prone to engage with the effective altruism community. None of the fellows are hurting in any way - they shared the information to help Future Academy thrive and avoid similar negative experiences in the future. We took this feedback very seriously and solicited advice from around ten people and considered a wide range of options for how to move forward with the organizer (including whether the person should continue with us). We eventually decided to continue as we trust the person's ability to grow and saw that the person created a convincing development plan for improving.

## Culture/atmosphere/fellows

After each Impact Summit, we asked the fellows about their experience with the culture. This is from the third Impact Summit (which was representative of previous summits though people felt slightly more welcome).

I felt ... at the Summit  
21 responses



Overall, the culture seemed very welcoming with the exceptions mentioned under negative effects.

## Connections relevant for doing good

At the beginning, we asked fellows:

*How many people do you know that you could ask for high-quality guidance or favor with regard to your impact plans?*

At the end, we asked fellows:

*How many people do you know that you could ask for high-quality guidance or favor with regard to your impact plans because of Future Academy?*

We also asked the control group:

*How many new people do you now know that you could ask for high-quality guidance or a favor with regard to your impact plans (because of what you did instead of Future Academy)?*

Table: Connections relevant for doing good (before and compared to control group)

Average # of connections (before FA)	Average (gained via FA)	Average (Control group gained via non-FA)
3	14.2	3.2

The fellows started out with an average of 3 and over the course of Future Academy, they gained another ~ 14 connections which corresponds to an increase by a factor of 4.5, which was substantially more than the control group which saw an increase by a factor of 2.

## Perceived change in career strategy

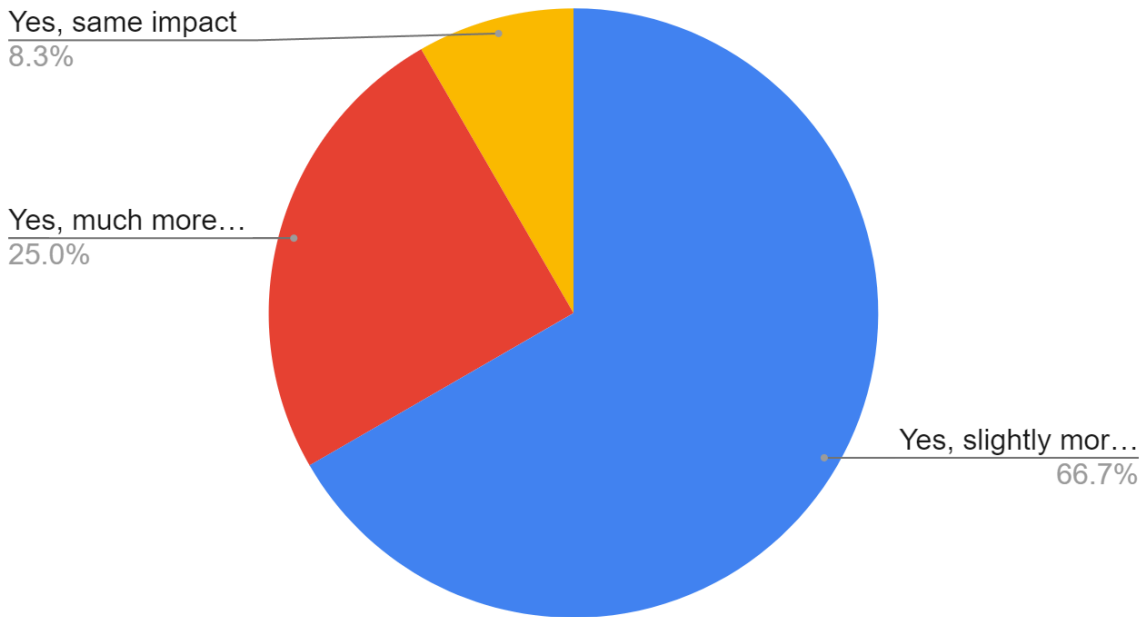
We asked fellows the following question:

*Since you first started Future Academy, have you made any changes to your career strategy?*

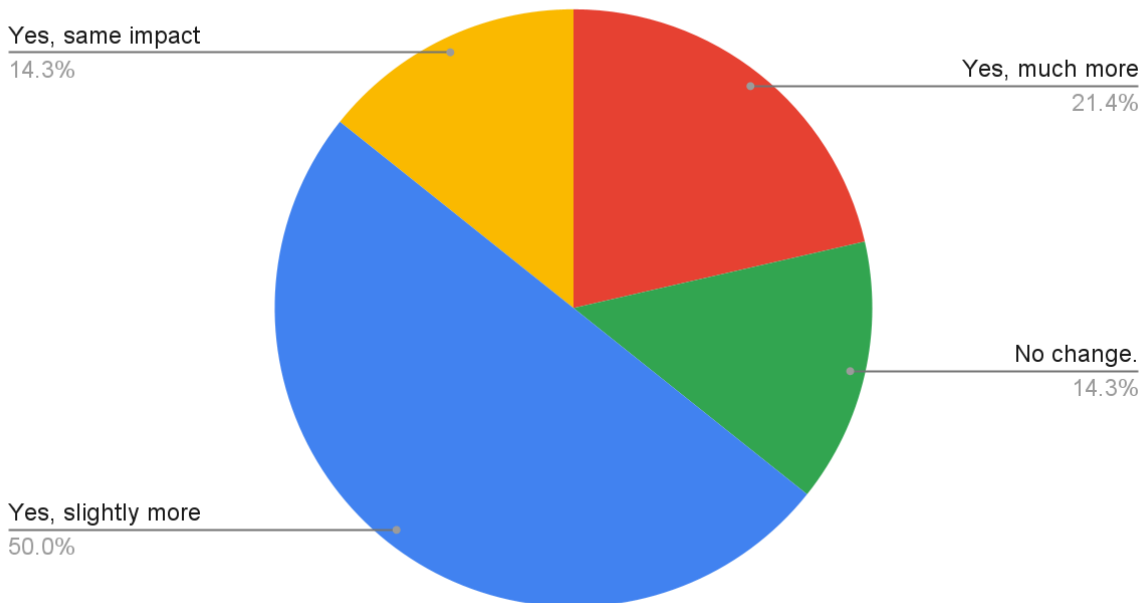
- *Yes, and I expect my career to be much more impactful because of it.*
- *Yes, and I expect my career to be slightly more impactful because of it.*
- *Yes, and I expect my career to have roughly the same impact.*
- *Yes, but I now expect my career to have much lower impact.*
- *Yes, but I now expect my career to have slightly lower impact.*
- *No.*

Figure: Self-reported change in impact of career change

### Self-reported change in impact of career change



### Self-reported change in impact of career change (control group)



The main difference between the fellows and the control group is that the fellows had slightly more “much more impactful” changes, fewer “no change”, and more “slightly more impactful”. 92% of the fellows changed their career in ways they think would make it more impactful compared to Overall, the difference between the two groups are smaller than our assessment of the primary metric which somewhat weakens the indication of the counter-factual impact of Future Academy.

## Development and well-being

The fellows were asked questions related to their general well-being before and after Future Academy using established well-being metrics. You can see more in the methods section.

Please see this example of the questions we used:

*Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?*

Table: Before and after comparison of three major well-being measurements

	Average (before)	Average (after)	Hedge's g	p-value
SPANE Total	5.5	6.7	0.13	0.6
PWB Total	37.4	41.9	0.72	0.02*
Cantril's Ladder of Life	6.6	6.6	0	1

\* - indicates statistically significant value.

The average well-being of the fellows increased somewhat on two out of three well-being measurements. However, only one of them (psychological well-being) was statistically significant and had a moderate effect size.

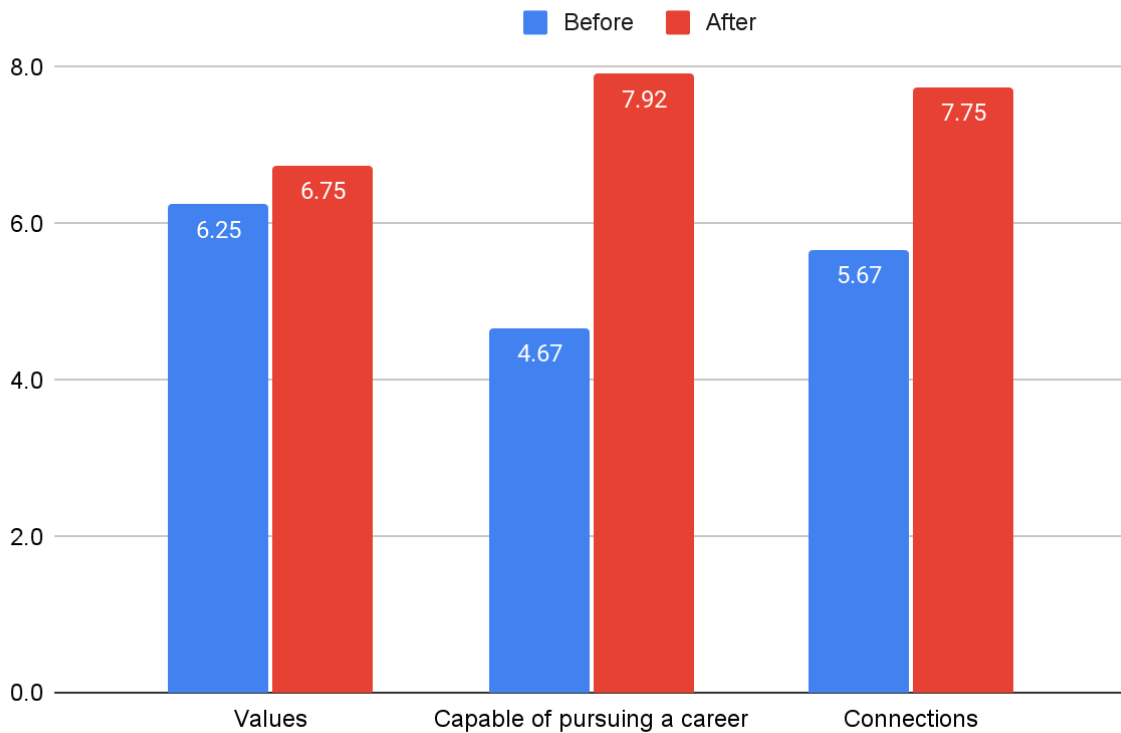
## Figure: Before and after comparison of longtermist inspired modification of self-determination theory

At the beginning and end of Future Academy, we asked fellows the following questions (scale 1-10):

*How well does it align with your **values** to pursue a career working to protect the long-term future? By "align with your values", we mean that you are motivated to develop and act on a career to protect the long-term future for its own sake. Not because you feel guilty, pressured, or seeking status. It's perfectly fine to not rate yourself highly on this.*

*To what extent do you feel **capable** of creating and pursuing a career strategy that will contribute to the long-term future? By capable we mean that you both feel capable and have the skills you need to figure out what the world needs and create career strategies.*

*To what extent do you feel **connected** with people who are pursuing careers focused on the long-term future?*



The paired t-test gave a value of 0.004 and Hedge's g was 0.96. This corresponds to a statistically significant difference and a large effect size.

We see substantial increases in the fellows' self-perceived capabilities to pursue longtermist careers and how connected they feel to others, but only a minor increase in how aligned with their values it feels.

Overall, this could indicate that a program with a development and wellbeing component can make people lead more flourishing lives.

## Coaching

We chose to include coaching as part of Future Academy as we believe personal and professional development as well as well-being is highly important when ambitiously seeking to do the most good and lead a good life. We measured multiple different metrics but will only include the most important ones for brevity.

### **How likely is it that you would recommend the coaching you received to a friend similar to you? (1-10)**

Average score=8

Median score=9

[Net promoter score](#)=44

### **To what extent did the coaching increase or decrease your involvement with the rest of the program and the main purpose of Future Academy (%)?**

Average=30.5%

Median=25%

### **Did the coaching have any negative effects on you? (yes/no)**

No=17/18

Yes=1/18

The fellow who indicated yes elaborated in the following manner: “Took time, added a bit of stress (wanting to be prepared), small ‘guilt’ that someone else could possibly get more of it”.

### **What were the most significant benefits you experienced as a result of coaching?**

Both fellows and coaches responded to this question. The responses were analyzed by reading through and coding relevant pieces, picking out higher-level concepts or areas to generate a category. We counted the frequency of the category and created a descriptive theme to represent the changes and why they’re relevant. The most important ones were:

- Self-understanding (introspection, understanding emotional blockers and how it relates to productivity)
- Identity, self-worth, confidence and self-compassion
- Goal-setting
- Career (being more ambitious and strategic about their career)

## Lessons learned

Overall these results strengthen our hypothesis that coaching is a promising component of an excellent educational program and that what we did here represents a good enough version. With that said, we can improve this by

- Allocating more time to the recruitment and training process of coaches (or only going with experienced coaches).
- Improving the matchmaking and information around making the most of coaching.
- Having it start a couple of weeks/months into the program (instead of right away).
- Analyzing the data we’ve gotten from the coaches.
- Allowing fellows to spread out the coaching across every other week.
- Making it to a more engrained part of the program

## Impact projects and mentors

The impact projects were done by the fellows between Impact Summit 3 (January 29th) and Impact Summit 4 (April 20th). We informed them early on that they would do an Impact Project later in the fellowship, but told them not to focus on it too much early on, to allow them to keep their minds open to new ideas. They were also informed that the best project would win \$10 000 and that some smaller grants might be given out to “runner-ups”.

The only strict rules for the projects were that fellows had to do something related to the topics covered during the program and turn something in at the end of the project period. Further, we encouraged them to keep the purposes of the project work in mind, namely to:

- Serve as an engaging vehicle for learning and applying Future Academy ideas
- Provide opportunities for furthering your future impact plans

- Teach essential "real-world skills"
- Foster relevant connections
- Direct impact (however, we emphasized that direct impact from such a short project was not a priority and should not be a major consideration)

The fellows were also supported by mentors, who were people active in fields relevant to the topics the fellows were pursuing. They were encouraged to have check-ins with them every 2 weeks.

## Results

We think the main results were

- The projects included a sentiment analysis of public perception of AI risk on Twitter, a philosophy AI alignment paper, an initiative to improve science, a PhD application (including PhD offers) in ethics and longtermism, and an organization idea for improving research talent in Eastern Africa.
- 18 fellows handed in their project, whereas three didn't.
- Our review committee was excited about giving grants totaling \$20,000.
- Five of the projects were also selected to be presented in lightning talks at EAGxNordics.
- Most fellows found the impact projects to be among the most important parts of Future Academy.
- 85% of fellows had four or more meetings with their mentors.
- The fellows found the mentoring valuable, but less so than the impact projects.
- Four fellows chose to work in pairs.

## The promise of the different interventions

This section attempts to approximate how important various aspects of Future Academy were.

Based on our own and the fellows' assessment, we'd group the different elements into three different tiers based on their promisingness for this program and the importance of including them in future programs.

Tier 1

- Impact projects and presentations
- Faculty interactions (could be at conferences or retreats)
- High-quality lectures and workshops (could be at conferences or retreats)
- Fellow interactions during summits and throughout the program.

Tier 2

- Mentoring (can become tier 1 if more time is devoted and it's needed for the projects).
- Coaching.
- Adjacent events (e.g., Nobel week dialogue).

Tier 3

- Readings



- Cohort companion/peer coach
- Other sessions (Nobel and online workshops)

## Cost per fellow

These estimates are based on the total costs of the entire program (including staff time and salary) in SEK and USD.

<b>Total cost/fellow</b>	<b>118,039 kr</b>	<b>\$10,944</b>
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This corresponds to a cost of ~ **\$10,000/Counter-factual Expected Career Contributions (CEEC)**.

## 4.0 Discussion and recommendation

### For Impact Academy

The following section focuses on our top recommendations for different aspects of running programs like Future Academy.

#### Recruitment of talent

- Recognize that this is hard and put more deliberation into it - probably by doing work tests or interacting with them more (e.g., by seeing them at a conference or similar).
- Focus more on global south talent but consider keeping a bit of focus on the Nordics.
- At least three participants found the program through paid advertising (“eyeballs can be bought”).
- From a flagship program perspective, we think it makes significant sense to have participants with varying levels of engagement as that is important for group dynamic and engagement (e.g., more engaged people can lead the way and the counterfactual is likely higher for the least engaged. We also want to stay flexible based on the type of applicants we get. That said, we think that the following composition is likely optimal.
  - ~ 20% who are moderately engaged EAs but need mentors, time, and funding.
  - ~ 30% who are relatively close to this way of thinking and is someone who could end up contributing significantly.
  - The remaining 50% which feels more like a bet.

## Counterfactual impact and impact evaluation (primary metrics and control groups)

- Continue to primarily target people who i) have no-moderate knowledge of and engagement with EA/longtermism and ii) are coming from underserved regions and groups.
- Explore the feasibility of targeting early-mid career professionals, as the wider community seems to be very interested in more experienced folks. However, we seemed to have had success with students.
- Do a humble celebration of the impact we created while revising it again.
- Continue a similar evaluation approach but
  - Have fewer general impact surveys and secondary metrics (especially well-being ones).
  - Adapt it mildly-moderately to future programs (e.g., use graded essays or surveys for the flagship program).
  - In 2024 or 2025, consider doing a proper RCT.

## Satisfaction, culture, drop outs, and negative effects

- Appreciate how satisfying of an experience this was for the fellows (while discounting for it being a free service).
- Support and ensure the organizer who had come across as too intense and judgmental to grow. Immediately change their position if it repeats.
- Have a designated community health person and make it even easier to give anonymous feedback.
- Expect ~ 10% drop out.as

## Impact projects and mentors

- Consider including different tracks (research and entrepreneurship/organization-boosting) for the next program.
- Invest more time and resources in helping fellows pursue great projects and mentoring (including getting started in a good way).
- Encourage more people to work in pairs.

## Development and well-being and coaching

- Continue to have some focus on this but pick tops three measurements of well-being. Could be the [WELLBY approach](#).
- Continue with coaching and the overall vibe, but adapt it to the audience.

## Overall program and elements

- Largely continue with the same elements but make them better, this includes
  - Creating much better exercises.

- More flipped classroom but maintain some time for talks with very interesting faculty as it can attract people.
- Improve the impact projects part - primarily because we think the project part of this pilot didn't tap into the full potential of project-based work.
- Tailor it to the audience and do a test run.
- Allocate a larger portion of the total time to projects and mentoring.
- Consider having a few different tracks (e.g., research and entrepreneurship).

## For the wider Effective Altruism community

### Comparing to other interventions

It's hard to properly compare to the rest of the community and similar programs as it isn't entirely clear what our reference class programs are. The closest thing might be the [ERIs](#) (CERI, SERI, and CHERI), as these are also relatively ambitious and competitive fellowships, although they're more research-focused than us. We used [this evaluation](#) to contrast Future Academy with them. Overall, it's hard to compare but our best guess is that Future Academy was better at taking new individuals in, more diversity, and probably causing bigger career shifts with lower counter-factual opportunity cost (e.g., the ERI fellows don't change in their self-assessed probability of pursuing X-risk careers). Whereas the ERIs were better at upskilling engaged EAs in research and produced high-quality output but with a significantly higher opportunity cost for the fellows.

### Recommendations for the EA community

Based on our experience with Future Academy, we think these recommendations might provide value to the EA community as a whole:

- More focus on recruiting from underserved communities (like Eastern and Southern Europe as well as specific regions in Africa and Asia) - it's possible!
- Consider adding a component around well-being and general human development. For example, coaching appears to have been a good way of increasing the overall engagement with the program (fellows reported an average engagement increase of 30.5% due to coaching) while providing career-related outputs (e.g., being more ambitious and optimistic about the impact they can have). Relatedly, by focusing on creating a sense of purpose and having people reflect on their values, one can somewhat counteract feelings of guilt and burnout. The fellows in Future Academy appeared to have gotten happier because of the program.
- Learn from educational best practices. Many things related to field-building can be modeled as education. From the design of programs (e.g., by backward chaining from where you want fellows to end up) to the impact evaluation (it can be similar to grading hard things like essays). See this excellent [blog post](#) by Michael Noetel for more.
- Be more rigorous and systematic about impact evaluation. E.g., creating a baseline estimate or a simple control group by sending a survey with a \$20 Amazon gift card to top rejectees led to a surprisingly high response rate. That said, impact evaluation is hard and we'd be interested in exploring some form of external evaluation. For instance, multiple organizations could hire someone to do it collectively for them.
- Run more ambitious experiments, including experiments that are not EA-branded.

# Acknowledgments

We are incredibly grateful for having been able to deliver Future Academy to everyone who supported us. Our funders who believed in the idea. Our speakers who were eager to give some of their time and travel. Our fellows who took a chance on us by being open-minded (and crazy enough) to join a completely new program. Our mentors who guided the fellows while they were finishing their project. Our own mentors (very much including Michael Noetel) for providing us with ongoing feedback and guidance and helping us set a high bar. To the people who provided feedback on our evaluation (Anine Andresen, Henri Thunberg, Eirik Mofoss, Emil Wasteson, Vaidehi Agarwalla, Cian Mullarkey, Jamie Harris, Varun Agrawal, Cillian Crosson, Raphaëlle Cohen, and Toby Tremlett). Finally, to the wider community of do-gooders who collaboratively provided input on everything from the program design to the impact evaluation. Thank you!

# Appendix

## Baseline surveys

[General survey](#)

[Development and well-being survey](#)

## Post-intervention surveys

[General survey](#)

[Control group](#)

[Development and well-being survey.](#)