

Report

Evaluating Evaluators 2024: Animal Charity Evaluators' Movement Grants Program

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**Giving What
We Can**

Executive summary

As part of Giving What We Can's (GWWC) work [evaluating evaluators](#), this report lays out our 2024 evaluation of [Animal Charity Evaluators' Movement Grants program \(ACE MG\)](#) as a grantmaker in the [animal welfare cause area](#). In it, we explain:

1. Why we decided to include ACE MG in our [list of recommended charities](#)
2. Why we plan to allocate half of GWWC's [Effective Animal Advocacy Fund](#) to the ACE MG as of our grantmaking round reflecting the Q4 2024 fund balance¹

When [we first evaluated ACE MG in 2023](#), we concluded that [Effective Altruism Funds' Animal Welfare Fund \(EA AWF\)](#) was a better donation option for the impact-focused donor. However, as we noted at that time, this difference was relatively small, and there were some areas where we thought that ACE MG had actually performed better than EA AWF.

Our 2024 evaluation finds that ACE MG has improved substantially on many of our most significant areas of concern from 2023. In particular, we noted improvements in the quality of ACE MG's:

- Marginal grantmaking
- Weighting of geographical neglectedness
- Approach to grant selection and sizing

As a result, we no longer believe that the marginal cost-effectiveness of ACE MG's grantmaking is justifiably different to that of EA AWF (by [our evaluation of EA AWF in 2023](#)).

While our 2024 findings are mostly positive, we still note some areas for improvement in ACE MG's approach. Of these, the most significant are:

- Improving their approach to capturing scope, and using scope to prioritise among applicants implementing different interventions
- Being more explicit about how optimistic they are about the impact of different types of interventions
- Documenting the underlying reasoning of their final decisions more clearly

We also note that there were several [limitations](#) to our evaluation, including our limited internal animal welfare expertise, the early stage of the charity evaluation space in animal welfare, the fact we didn't perform a side-by-side evaluation of EA AWF, and the limited time devoted to this evaluation.

¹ Please note that our decision to rely on ACE MG is independent of our evaluation of ACE's Charity Evaluation program, which we have ultimately decided not to rely on for our recommendation and fund distribution decisions this year (see [report](#)).

Overall, we were impressed by the improvements ACE MG has made since our 2023 evaluation and would be excited to see the fund continue to improve in the future. We do not believe that our investigation identified ACE MG to be justifiably better or worse than EA AWF in terms of marginal cost-effectiveness — based on our 2023 evaluation of EA AWF — and so we continue to recommend EA AWF as a donation option alongside ACE MG, and to allocate half of our Effective Animal Advocacy Fund to EA AWF (see our [2024 evaluating evaluators page](#) for the reasons we no longer recommend The Humane League).²

² We intend to re-evaluate EA AWF (and possibly other evaluators and funds in effective animal advocacy) in 2025, at which time we will once again revisit our recommendations in effective animal advocacy.

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Background on the Evaluating Evaluators project

This section provides background on the Evaluating Evaluators project, as well as an introduction to our approach for evaluating evaluators and funds in 2024. We explain:

- [Why we evaluate evaluators](#)
- [Our bar for relying on an evaluator](#)
- [Our process for evaluating evaluators in 2024](#)

Why we evaluate evaluators

We want to help donors maximise their impact by recommending the best funding opportunities from a range of (sufficiently plausible) [worldviews](#). Rather than evaluate individual charities ourselves, we rely on the work of impact-focused charity evaluators and grantmakers (whom we collectively refer to as ‘evaluators’)³ with the required expertise to identify the best opportunities in each of our [high-impact cause areas](#).

The goal of this project is to:

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of different evaluators
- Use that understanding to decide whether and how we defer to the evaluator’s recommendations (ideally in direct comparison with evaluators we currently rely on in the same cause area)
- Transparently explain and justify that decision to donors

More concretely, this project informs:

- Which evaluators we rely on for our [recommended charities and funds](#)
- Which evaluators we ask to advise our own [cause area funds](#)

For more comprehensive information about this project, visit the [Evaluating Evaluators page](#) on our website.

Our bar for relying on an evaluator

Because we want our evaluations to support donors in having the highest expected impact given their worldview — rather than either simply pass a certain bar of effectiveness or be optimal by the GWWC’s team’s views — all our evaluations are comparative.

³ Note that a grantmaker is implicitly an evaluator in that it must evaluate funding opportunities to make grants.

As such, our bar for relying on an evaluator depends on the existence and quality of other donation options we have evaluated in the same [cause area](#).

- In cause areas where we currently rely on one or more evaluators that have passed our bar in a previous evaluation, any new evaluations we do will attempt to compare the quality of the evaluator's marginal grantmaking and/or charity recommendations to those of the evaluator(s) we already rely on in that cause area.
- For worldviews and associated cause areas where we don't have existing evaluators we rely on, we expect evaluators to meet the bar of plausibly recommending giving opportunities that are among the best options for their stated worldview, compared to any other opportunity easily accessible to donors.

Our process for evaluating evaluators in 2024

Our principles

Just as we did with our own [impact evaluation](#) and our 2023 evaluations of evaluators, we used [usefulness, transparency, and justifiability](#) as our guiding principles (as opposed to procedural uniformity and exhaustiveness). In this vein, we didn't attempt to apply a uniform framework or model for each evaluator we looked at — instead, we focused on trying to resolve the uncertainties that seemed most decision-relevant for reaching our goals of understanding the evaluator, deciding whether to defer to their recommendations, and being able to explain and justify that decision.

The stages of our evaluation process

Our evaluations were composed of two key stages, which we explain in more detail below. These stages were:

- [Stage 1 — Selecting our cruxes](#)
- [Stage 2 — Investigating our cruxes](#)

Following each stage of our evaluation process, we consulted with external domain experts for feedback. To see which domain experts contributed to each evaluation, please see the [Acknowledgements](#) section of each report.

Stage 1 — Selecting our cruxes

The first stage of our evaluation was identifying the key uncertainties (cruxes) that we would investigate during our evaluation and planning how we would investigate them. This specifically involved:

- Performing a cursory review of information about the evaluator

- Using this information and our list of broad [starting questions](#) to develop preliminary cruxes and a preliminary plan for investigating each⁴
- Sharing our preliminary cruxes and plans with the evaluator and external domain experts for feedback on:
 - The usefulness of our cruxes for determining the outcome of our evaluation
 - Our proposed lines of investigation
 - Specific questions we had for experts that we thought could help us resolve our cruxes
 - Any additional cruxes that might be worth investigating
- Finalising our cruxes based on this feedback
- Finalising our plan for investigating these cruxes
- Requesting information we would need from the evaluator to resolve these cruxes

Stage 2 — Investigating our cruxes

The second stage of our evaluation was investigating and resolving each of the cruxes developed during Stage 1, and reaching a preliminary decision of whether to rely on the evaluator for our [charity and fund recommendations](#) and/or grantmaking from our relevant cause area funds.

Resolving our cruxes specifically involved:

- Investigating each of our cruxes according to the plans developed in Stage 1
- Where necessary, requesting additional information and conducting additional investigations to resolve (further) cruxes
- Writing up our findings and preliminary conclusions and sharing these with the evaluator and external domain experts to:
 - Ensure we had not missed or misinterpreted important information that could call our findings into question
 - Get outside feedback on whether our preliminary conclusions seemed appropriate based on our findings — and if not, determine whether we needed to:
 - Provide more substantial justification
 - Conduct further investigations
 - Change our conclusions
 - Identify which sections of our final report would benefit from the most detail and justification
- Conducting final investigations based on feedback from reviewers
- Reaching a final decision and writing up a final report

⁴ Where we had previously evaluated an organisation, our cruxes were informed by findings from our previous evaluation.

Background on ACE MG

This section aims to provide an overview of our understanding of ACE's Movement Grants program (ACE MG) and why we chose to evaluate it. In particular, we provide information on:

- [Why we evaluated ACE's Movement Grants program](#)
- [ACE MG's worldview and strategy](#)
- [ACE MG's evaluation process](#)

Why we evaluated ACE's Movement Grants program

We [previously evaluated](#) ACE's Movement Grants program (and their Charity Evaluation program) in 2023. At that time, we ultimately decided not to rely on ACE (CEP or MG) for our recommendation decisions or as an advisor of our [Effective Animal Advocacy cause area fund](#), because we determined that EA Funds' [Animal Welfare Fund](#) (AWF) — which we [also evaluated](#) in 2023 — was slightly preferable for donors wanting to maximise their impact.

However, this difference was small, and we noted in our evaluation that there were promising signals that ACE's grantmaking would improve. Our correspondence with ACE since our last evaluation suggested that ACE may have made sufficient improvements to their Movement Grants program to be justifiably competitive with the AWF, prompting us to undertake a re-evaluation.

ACE MG's worldview and strategy

ACE's stated aim is to reduce the largest possible amount of animal suffering over time through funding cost-effective interventions. They strive to rely on evidence where it exists, and defer to expert opinion where it does not.

While ACE's Recommended Charity Fund aims to identify some of the most effective animal advocacy charities, the Movement Grants program aims to fund underserved segments of the global animal advocacy movement and address two key limitations to effectiveness within the movement:

- Limited evidence about which interventions are effective and in which contexts
- Disproportionate attention devoted to some regions and animal groups

In pursuit of these goals, ACE MG has heuristics that they believe differentiate their approach compared to other funders:

- They preferentially support:
 - Smaller organisations and projects

- Neglected groups of animals and those that are farmed in high numbers (e.g., they are more open to funding work that helps aquatic animals, invertebrates, and liminal and wild animals)
- Countries with little or no existing professional animal advocacy but where funding might have an outsized impact
- They are more risk tolerant in cases where there are possible high rewards ([hits-based](#)) or in cases where there is significant learning to be gained — for instance, through testing new interventions

Finally, [we observed in our investigation](#) that, compared to our existing recommendation in effective animal advocacy — EA Funds' Animal Welfare Fund (EA AWF) — ACE MG prioritises a different set of interventions in their grantmaking. For example, ACE MG funds more institutional diet change advocacy campaigns than EA AWF. As explained [below](#), this does not impact our overall judgement of whether ACE MG is competitive with EA AWF, but we do think the difference in approach is worth highlighting to donors.

ACE MG's evaluation process

Here, we aim to provide a brief summary of ACE MG's 2024 grant review and decision-making process. This is not intended to be a comprehensive overview, but a summary that will provide important context for understanding our investigation.

Initial screening

The first stage of ACE MG's grant review process is the screening stage. In 2024, the majority of applicants were excluded from consideration during this stage (180 out of 323 total). According to ACE, applicants were most commonly excluded from this stage for being out of scope (because their work is unlikely to help a large number of animals) or because the applicant was requesting a very small portion of their overall budget and so ACE funding is unlikely to influence implementation of the project.

Unlike later stages of the process, where at least three ACE researchers were involved in any grantmaking decision,⁵ this stage was undertaken by just one reviewer, the Movement Grants manager, with brief quality assurance checks by the Programs Director.

Initial assessment

Next, applicants were sorted into batches based on animal group, geography, or intervention area. In this stage, ACE assessed and scored applicants on five criteria. A weighted sum of these criteria was used to produce a final score for

⁵ Note other ACE staff members were invited to be guest reviewers for batches for which they had expertise.

each applicant. The weighting of each component was based on its expected importance, as determined by ACE's model, explained in the table below.

| Criterion | Range | Weighting | ACE's explanation |
|---|-------|-------------------|--|
| Impact Potential Score | 0–100 | 0.25 ⁶ | Theoretical impact potential of a grant based on the animals affected, the intervention, and the country/region of implementation. |
| Theory of change | 1–7 | 0.3 | How strong is the theory of change presented? |
| Long-term impact | 1–7 | 0.1 | Is there an additional long-term impact that is not sufficiently covered in the theory of change score? |
| Right fit | 1–7 | 0.2 | Is the applicant (and their organisation) a good fit for the work they are proposing? |
| What difference would ACE funding make? | 1–7 | 0.15 | What difference would ACE funding make to the implementation of the project? |

Criteria are presented from top-to-bottom in the order that they are scored by ACE MG reviewers.

With the exception of the Impact Potential Score (IPS) — which was available to ACE MG reviewers before they scored the other criteria (discussed more below) — each criterion was scored by at least three ACE researchers independently (i.e., before they saw the scores of the other members), and the average of these scores was used to calculate the final score.

The IPS for each applicant, by contrast, was constructed from a weighted factor model⁷ that considered the intervention type, the country, and the type of animals affected. Specifically:

- Scale of problem in country: [Welfare-range](#)-weighted number of animals in the intervention country (43% weighting)
- Intervention tractability in country: A composite tractability score composed of proxies of tractability for the specific intervention within the country (33%)
 - For example, internet penetration for a vegan app intervention
- Country neglectedness: Number of animals slaughtered in country per dollar of animal advocacy funding (13%)
- Country global influence: [Elcano Global Presence Index](#) (11%)

All of these factors were transformed and capped between 0 and 100.

⁶ This weighting is applied after standardisation of the 0–100 score to 0–7 (not 1–7 as for the other criteria).

⁷ For an overview of the general principles behind weighted factor models, see [this article](#).

Once preliminary scores had been added, reviewers met to discuss whether an applicant should proceed to the next round. In these discussions, applicants within each batch were compared against each other to allow reviewers to calibrate their assessments of the quality of the applications. Notably, while final scores were calculated, these were not rigidly used to make decisions. Instead, reviewers generally integrated all information and criteria scores for the applicants qualitatively to reach an overall judgement — reflecting that different criteria were more relevant for some applicants than for others.

Once ACE reviewers had completed the assessment of all the batches, they compared between the batches to ensure that assessments between batches were consistent — in other words, to ensure that decisions were made with the same bar for cost-effectiveness across all batches.

Decision stage

For applicants proceeding to the next stage, ACE asked follow-up questions (of both applicants and external experts) to resolve remaining cruxes and determine whether a grant should be made. Reviewers then met to decide whether grants should be awarded and what amount to give. Finally, ACE completed due diligence checks on all applicants before disbursing the grants.

How we evaluated ACE MG

This section will cover how we performed the evaluation of ACE MG, including:

- [Information we reviewed](#)
- [Our cruxes for this evaluation](#)
- [Our bar for this evaluation](#)

We also discuss some of the [limitations of our evaluation](#).

Information we reviewed

This evaluation was based on information ACE shared with us directly or that could be found on ACE's website.

The information ACE shared with us directly included:

- A document summarising their approach to ACE MG grantmaking
- A spreadsheet containing their Impact Potential Score model
- A spreadsheet documenting the screening and evaluation process of 287 out of 324 (88.5%) of their 2024 ACE MG applicants,⁸ including:
 - Application responses

⁸ The 287 applicants whose information ACE shared with us were selected on the basis that these were the applications ACE MG had permission to share (i.e., they were not specifically selected by ACE). Considering this was such a large sample — including ~90% of both funded and total applicants — we treated this sample as representative and focused most of our specific investigations on grantees in this sample.

- Screening outcomes
- All scores and reviewer reasoning
- Follow-up questions for applicants and responses
- Additional questions for experts and responses (where applicable)
- Funding amount
- ACE's [position on plurality](#)
- Information about ACE's IPS model
- Comprehensive responses to our questions about the fund

The public information we considered in our evaluation included:

- Information on the [ACE website](#):
 - [Announcement of 2024 ACE MG grantees](#)
 - [Announcement of 2023 ACE MG grantees](#)
 - [List of past ACE MG recipients](#)
- Our 2023 evaluations of:
 - [EA Funds' Animal Welfare Fund](#) (AWF)
 - [ACE](#) — specifically the Movement Grants component of the evaluation

Our cruxes for this evaluation

Here, we briefly introduce the cruxes we investigated in this evaluation and how they were selected.

Three of the cruxes we investigated in this evaluation directly related to considerations that influenced our decision not to rely on ACE MG following [our 2023 evaluation](#). These cruxes related to:

- ACE MG's weighting of [geographical neglectedness](#) in grantmaking decisions
- ACE MG's policies and approach for [sizing grants](#)
- The extent to which ACE MG is successfully [executing on their stated strategy](#)

We chose to investigate a further two cruxes because we thought they could potentially have significant implications for the expected marginal cost-effectiveness of ACE MG's current marginal grantmaking. These cruxes related to:

- The [types of interventions](#) ACE MG prioritises
- ACE MG's [scope sensitivity](#), as we were concerned that the Impact Potential Score (IPS) didn't sufficiently capture scope

Our final crux was concerned with how we should expect the [future marginal cost-effectiveness](#) of ACE MG to compare with its current marginal cost-effectiveness.

We go into more detail about each of these cruxes — including how we selected them and how they were resolved — in the [next section](#).

Our bar for this evaluation

For all of the cruxes we investigated, we compared ACE's Movement Grants program (ACE MG) to EA Funds' Animal Welfare Fund (EA AWF), our current recommendation in effective animal advocacy, per our 2023 [evaluation](#) of AWF. We used our investigation of each crux to determine whether there was still a meaningful difference in expected marginal cost-effectiveness of donations between ACE MG and the EA AWF.

As a result, ACE MG did not need to perform perfectly on each of these cruxes in order for us to decide to rely on their grantmaking; rather, it needed to perform better than or comparable to how the EA AWF performed in 2023.

At the outset, we expected three possible conclusions from our evaluation, each of which would have had different implications for our charity and fund recommendations and our Effective Animal Advocacy cause area fund:

1. There is no longer a justifiable overall difference remaining between ACE MG and the EA AWF (as it performed in 2023)
2. There remains a justifiable difference that favours the EA AWF
3. There is now a justifiable difference that favours ACE MG

Ultimately, our evaluation concluded that there was no longer a justifiable overall difference remaining between ACE MG and the EA AWF, leading to us recommending both and deciding to allocate half of GWWC's Effective Animal Advocacy Fund to each going forward.

Limitations of our evaluation

The most noteworthy limitations of our evaluations were:

- [Our lack of domain-specific expertise](#) in animal welfare
- The relatively [nascent state of the effective animal advocacy field](#)
- [A lack of side-by-side comparison to EA AWF](#)
- The [time constraints](#) we faced during our evaluation
- [Potential conflicts of interest](#)

All of these limitations, with the exception of a lack of side-by-side comparison to EA AWF, were also limitations of our [2023 evaluation of ACE](#).

Given these limitations, we aimed to:

- Focus our efforts where they would be most useful, by prioritising decision-relevant considerations over those without immediate relevance to our recommendation decisions
- Only make decisions we thought we could justify, and highlight our uncertainties where we didn't feel confident enough to make a decision
- Be as transparent as possible in our reasoning in this report, without breaching any confidentiality agreements we made and limited also by our time constraints

Our lack of domain-specific expertise

Our research team doesn't have extensive expertise in the animal advocacy field:

- We tried to account for this by asking external reviewers for input during our crux formulation and crux investigation stages of our process, and by keeping most of our evaluation focused on evaluation and grantmaking aspects where only limited subject-specific expertise is needed.
- We think those evaluation and grantmaking aspects cover most of what's important here — and that our lack of direct expertise isn't a fundamental barrier to us doing this evaluation — but still acknowledge that we had to make some judgements where such expertise would have been valuable, for example on the quality of grants.

The experts who kindly provided feedback on our cruxes and/or investigation findings and conclusions (besides ACE themselves) were:

- Dave Coman-Hidy and Jesse Marks (The Navigation Fund)
- Vicky Cox (Ambitious Impact)
- Zoë Sigle (EA Animal Welfare Fund / Farmed Animal Funders)
- Emma Buckland (Open Philanthropy)
- Saulius Šimčikas (independent)

Any remaining errors in this work are our own.

The nascent state of the effective animal advocacy field

Second, the animal charity evaluation space — and the animal advocacy movement more generally — is still relatively small and not especially developed (particularly compared to global health). As a consequence:

- There is limited high-quality empirical evidence on animal advocacy interventions and on how these work together in larger theories of change.
- Experts in the field often disagree on what the most promising longer-term strategies in the space are (for example, doubling down on corporate campaigns vs broad movement building).
- Much of the work being funded is relatively new, so there is often a limited track record to refer to.

This makes it harder to do evaluation and grantmaking in animal advocacy, and, in turn, makes it harder for us to come to conclusions about the quality of evaluation and grantmaking without making at least some judgement calls that can't be justified by referring to existing field-specific standards.

A lack of side-by-side comparison to EA AWF

While we made every effort to compare ACE MG to the benchmark of our current recommendation in effective animal advocacy — EA AWF — we were limited by the fact that we did not undertake a re-evaluation of EA AWF in this round of evaluating evaluators. This means we were unable to conduct direct comparisons between recent grants made by the two funds, which was one of the most useful tools available to us in our 2023 evaluation.

While we believe our evaluation was still sufficient to conclude that ACE MG is justifiably competitive with the EA AWF (as of our evaluation of EA AWF in 2023), we think this represents a limitation of this evaluation.

Time constraints

We were highly time-constrained in completing this round of evaluations, and these time constraints also affected ACE. In this evaluation, we were able to spend about 10 researcher-days, a large part of which also went into planning and scoping, internal discussion on the project as a whole, communications with evaluators, report writing, and so on. While we have tried to make our report as comprehensive and transparent as possible, we aimed to invest most of our limited time in the investigation itself.

Potential conflicts of interest

Last, we have one minor potential conflict of interest with ACE: both Giving What We Can and ACE have received funding from [Open Philanthropy](#).

We don't think this fundamentally challenges our position to do this evaluation — and think some conflicts of interest are nearly unavoidable in the still very small charity evaluation space — but we want to be transparent about it.

Our cruxes and their resolution

This section aims to summarise each of our key cruxes in this evaluation. It includes information about why the crux was selected, what we found in our investigation, and how it influenced our overall decision to rely on ACE's Movement Grants program (ACE MG).

The cruxes were (in no particular order):

- [Geographical neglectedness](#)
- [Grant sizing](#)

- [MG strategy](#)
- [Intervention focus](#)
- [Scope sensitivity](#)
- [Future room for funding](#)

The first three of these cruxes are concerned with the considerations that primarily influenced our decision not to rely on ACE MG following [our 2023 evaluation](#).

Please note: Because of our crux-based approach to this investigation, this section focuses heavily on what we consider to be some of the weakest aspects of ACE MG (both in the past and now) — rather than providing a balanced view of ACE MG.

Geographical neglectedness

The crux: Geographical neglectedness

In [our 2023 evaluation of ACE MG](#), we were concerned that the program seemed to overweight geographical neglectedness as a consideration in grantmaking decisions compared to other factors relevant to prioritisation, such as the quality of the application. In our view, in 2023, ACE MG made more grants that we characterised as small, geographically localised, and with limited scalability and no clear long-term theory of change compared to EA AWF (see 2023 MG grants [here](#)). This was one of the key reasons we opted to rely on EA AWF over ACE MG in 2023.

Because this was one of our key concerns following our 2023 evaluation, we sought to determine whether it appeared to remain an issue for ACE MG in their 2024 grantmaking round.

Our findings: Geographical neglectedness

We investigated this crux in three ways:

1. [ACE MG's Impact Potential Score \(IPS\)](#)
2. [The geographic breakdown of the MG's grantmaking statistics](#)
3. [Grant quality and reasoning](#)

From this investigation, we [concluded](#) that we no longer think ACE MG's approach to weighing geographical neglectedness is inconsistent with their marginal grantmaking being competitive with that of EA AWF.

ACE MG's Impact Potential Score (IPS)

The IPS is one of the five criteria that ACE scores applicants on when making grantmaking decisions (see [this section](#) for more information about the IPS).

Given this factor was weighted 25% in ACE's final model, implying it may be an important factor in their grant decisions, we sought to determine whether this component seemed to overweight geographic neglectedness as a consideration in grantmaking decisions.

We concluded that the IPS **does not** seem to provide a significant systematic advantage to opportunities in neglected regions. This is because:

- Geographical neglectedness of countries is weighted 13% in the Impact Potential Score (IPS), corresponding to a ~3% weight in ACE's final scores.
- This modest boost to opportunities in geographically neglected regions in the model is partly offset by the global influence score (weighted 11% in the IPS), as these factors are somewhat anti-correlated.
- ACE does not rely as heavily on the final score of the five criteria in their MG decision making as we had initially expected. This means, in practice, this minor weighting of geographical neglectedness in the model had an even smaller impact on grant outcomes than we would naively expect from its weighting.

Our conclusion from this investigation was that we do not think the way geographical neglectedness is integrated in the model has a significant detrimental effect on the overall quality of the MG's marginal grantmaking.

The geographic breakdown of the MG's grantmaking statistics

Even though ACE MG did not seem to overweight geographical neglectedness in their IPS model, they could still do so in their qualitative decision making, which could still impact their marginal grantmaking.

To determine whether MG had changed their approach to weighting geographical neglectedness in their grantmaking, we assessed the proportion of grants made to different regions. If the proportion of grants ACE MG made to different regions differed substantially from the proportion in 2023, then this could indicate that ACE had meaningfully updated their approach to weighting geographic neglectedness. We were particularly interested in the proportion of grants made to sub-Saharan Africa, as we thought some of ACE's grants to this region most exemplified our concerns about weighting of geographical neglectedness in 2023.

We therefore performed a naive comparison of the geographical distribution of grants made by MG in 2024 compared to 2023. We found that very neglected regions seemed to constitute a smaller part of ACE's portfolio than they did in 2023. For example, projects in sub-Saharan Africa received [33% of funding in 2023](#) compared to [8% in 2024](#).

We don't consider this to be strong evidence that MG has achieved an ideal approach to weighting geographical neglectedness — indeed, we don't think we could conclude this from grantmaking statistics alone. However, it does imply that ACE MG made concrete changes to their approach to considering geographical neglectedness since our previous evaluation — specifically in the direction of weighting geographical neglectedness less strongly. As such, we considered this to be weak-to-moderate evidence that MG has improved on this crux.

Grant quality and reasoning

The final and most direct way we investigated this crux is by considering the specific makeup of ACE MG grants in 2024 and the reasoning associated with several specific grant evaluations to see if this indicated ACE may still be overweighting geographical neglectedness as a consideration in their Movement Grants program.

Our first finding was, in contrast to [the 2023 list](#), ACE's [list of 2024 MG grantees](#) didn't seem to include any particularly concerning instances where ACE MG made “small, geographically localised grants with no clear long-term theory of change or scaling potential beyond a general idea of diversifying the global animal advocacy movement to places where there currently isn't much of a presence” (our concern in 2023). This constituted a significant positive update compared to 2023, where we identified several such examples.

We next performed a spot-check of the reasoning associated with three grants ACE made to geographically neglected regions:

- Dharma Voices for Animals (Thailand)
- Farmállatvédelem (Hungary)
- GYG Project Foundation (Ghana)

Our general impression was that these opportunities seemed reasonably competitive with MG grantees in less neglected regions. This was mostly based on the fact that these grants had a clear theory of change, and the interventions had relatively convincing potential for scale.

Additionally, reviewing ACE's reasoning on these grants, we were left with the impression that reviewers mainly evaluated geographic neglectedness in the context of other factors relevant to impact (e.g., movement building in regions with expected future intensification), rather than valuing it independently of these instrumental benefits.

We consider our findings from the grant quality and reasoning investigation to be the strongest evidence we found that ACE MG has improved substantially in this area since our 2023 evaluation.

In addition to the above, ACE's MG manager shared with us that they felt that in 2023, ACE may have overprioritised geographies with less scope for the movement to grow, which increases our confidence that these changes represent a deliberate shift in strategy.

Conclusion: Geographical neglectedness

Considering our findings from this investigation, our current view is that ACE MG's approach to weighting geographical neglectedness is compatible with them identifying opportunities with competitive marginal cost-effectiveness to the EA AWF. Overall, we think there is strong evidence that our main concerns in this area from last year have been largely or completely addressed.

We aim to continue monitoring ACE's approach to weighting geographical neglectedness in future evaluations to ensure this improvement persists.

Grant sizing

The crux: Grant sizing

In our 2023 evaluation, we were concerned by ACE MG's strategy for selecting and sizing grants. Specifically, we were concerned that ACE MG:

- Was not discerning enough in identifying which opportunities to fund (i.e., our impression was they funded too many opportunities rather than prioritising the best opportunities).
- Was overly discerning regarding which opportunities to fully fund (i.e., our impression was they didn't provide top opportunities with sufficient funding to close funding gaps).
 - In particular, ACE MG had a \$50K funding cap for each funding opportunity and a \$150K lifetime cap on funding for any single organisation.

In our 2024 evaluation, we revisited ACE's approach to filling funding gaps to determine whether the concerns from our previous evaluation had been addressed.

Our findings: Grant sizing

As with the geographic neglectedness crux, there are reasons to think that this is an area of improvement since last year. This was based on:

- [ACE MG removing application and lifetime funding caps](#), which was a major source of our concern
- [Grantmaking statistics from ACE MG's 2024 round](#), which we think show a better balance than we observed in 2023

- [ACE MG's 2024 approach to closing funding gaps](#), which we find more compelling than their previous approach

As a result, we [conclude](#) that ACE MG's approach to grant sizing is compatible with their marginal grantmaking being competitive with that of EA AWF.

Removal of funding caps

ACE [announced](#) that they removed the \$50K USD funding cap on Movement Grants applications and the \$150K USD lifetime cap on Movement Grants applicants as of 2024. [We were concerned in our 2023 evaluation](#) that these caps constrained ACE MG's ability to size grants in a way that was optimal for marginal cost-effectiveness. As such, we think that this reflects an improvement. Some early benefits of removing these caps have already been realised, with ACE MG advising two promising-seeming grants this year for amounts over \$50K USD.

Seven grantees received a grant of \$50K USD in 2024, which we were initially concerned might reflect that a \$50K USD cap is still implicitly used by ACE MG. However, among the six of these that we have information on, five applied for \$50K and received full funding; only the sixth received partial funding. For this sixth grantee, we do not think that the award of \$50K is good evidence of an implicit \$50K cap, as there is information in MG's notes that they were also considering a smaller amount for this applicant and increased this to \$50K — implying the grant was not intended to be larger and then simply rounded down to an arbitrary bar. We are also aware of other instances where MG was considering grants larger than \$50K USD, but decided against making them for reasons not related to their previous cap.

Overall, we think that the removal of the arbitrary cap on grant size is a positive update that has enabled ACE MG to grant to highly promising opportunities that would otherwise not be available to the program.

Grantmaking statistics from ACE MG's 2024 round

The concrete changes in ACE MG's approach to grant sizing are best illustrated by the following table, in which we compare 2024 ACE MG grantmaking statistics to those of ACE MG and EA AWF in 2023. While last year ACE MG funded approximately 25% of applicants, and fully funded about 10% of those that received any funding, in the 2024 round, MG has funded ~10% of applicants and fully funded 70% of those who were funded.

| | 2023 AWF grants | 2023 MG grants | 2024 MG grants (all) | 2024 MG grants (shared with GWWC) ⁹ |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|--|
| Applications | ~400 | ~200 | 324 | 287 |
| Funded (% of applications) | ~60 (15%) | ~50 (25%) | 31 (10%) | 27 (9%) |
| Fully funded (% of funded) | ~30 (50%) | ~5 (10%) | 23 (74%) | 19 (70%) |
| Total funding (USD) | \$4,000,000 | \$800,000 | \$1,100,000 | \$1,000,000 |

While we can't conclude from this alone that the MG has reached an optimal approach to sizing grants, we do think that this demonstrates MG has made meaningful changes to their approach to selecting and sizing grants.

Additionally, our view is that this approach of funding fewer grants more fully is likely closer to an optimal balance — particularly based on the types of grants that were made (for example, many were to fully fund discrete projects). Our reasons for this are roughly:

- 1) Reviewing the applications ACE MG received in 2024, we expect the differences in the cost-effectiveness of applicants to be fairly substantial and outweigh concerns about diminishing returns of additional funding in most cases. As such, we expect the marginal dollar to be better spent further closing the funding gaps of the best opportunities, rather than partially funding less good opportunities.
- 2) When full funding is provided, work can start sooner and less time is spent by charities fundraising from other sources, which we understand poses a significant burden on these organisations.

ACE MG's approach to closing funding gaps

In response to our questions on this crux, ACE confirmed to us that the above changes in grantmaking statistics reflected a conscious change in strategy. While not a hard rule, they shared that ACE MG tended to favour fully funding successful grant applications, provided that they constituted a third or less of the organisation's total budget. ACE shared that some factors they consider when deciding whether to deviate from fully funding a successful applicant include:

- Where there is a budget line item ACE unambiguously does not think is a good use of funds, they will subtract that from the grant and let the grantee know the reasoning.

⁹ Not all 2024 MG grants had information shared with GWWC (see ['Information we reviewed' section](#) above).

- Where ACE MG would contribute a large fraction (over 50% of the total budget) they encourage grantees to find other future funders so they have more diversified funding streams.
- Where the budget looks obviously inflated, since this is likely to reflect poorly on the applicant and would require follow-up questions.
- Where ACE thinks there is significant opportunity cost by fully funding the grant application, because they know of other, more impactful work they could fund instead.

ACE also acknowledged some promising plans for future improvements, such as liaising more closely with other funders so they don't have to guess what these funders are likely to do.

Conclusion: Sizing grants

Overall, we are satisfied that ACE's approach to sizing grants has improved significantly since our [2023 evaluation](#) and is compatible with their marginal grantmaking being competitive with the AWF.

ACE MG strategy

The crux: ACE MG strategy

In our [2023 evaluation](#) of ACE MG, one of our key cruxes in deciding not to rely on MG was that we were concerned that they were not executing on their stated vision in a way that made their grantmaking competitive with EA AWF.

In 2023, we thought ACE MG's overarching strategy could be characterised as a 'test kitchen' — where new interventions and broader theories of change are tested, with the ultimate goal of gaining information about the most promising strategies available in effective animal advocacy. We were concerned at the time that, while this was a promising vision, ACE MG's approach was not implemented in alignment with the broader strategy.

This crux was concerned with:

- Understanding MG's current worldview and strategy
- Understanding whether their approach was consistent with the strategy
- Determining whether MG's execution of the strategy seemed likely to enable marginal cost-effectiveness competitive with EA AWF

Our findings: ACE MG strategy

Here, we discuss our overall findings for this crux. Specifically, we consider the questions:

- [What is ACE MG's strategy?](#)
- [Is ACE MG's strategy promising?](#)

- [Is ACE MG's execution on this strategy promising?](#)

We ultimately conclude that ACE MG is executing more promisingly on its stated strategy than it was in our [2023 evaluation](#).

What is ACE MG's strategy?

ACE's MG manager now reports that they would no longer endorse the characterisation of the MG program as a 'test kitchen.' From this and other conversations with the MG manager, our understanding of ACE MG's approach as it differs from other funders is as follows:

- Movement building in neglected areas is weighted more highly as a factor in grantmaking decisions (though now, in contrast to what we found in [our 2023 evaluation](#), this consideration is rarely sufficient for awarding grant funding without other promising branches of a theory of change).
- As a result, ACE expects the Movement Grants program focuses slightly less on immediate direct impact than other funders, in favour of also prioritising potentially high-leverage opportunities to support advocacy efforts in countries where consumption and production of animal products are high, or likely will be high in the future, but with little current funding for animal advocacy. The rationale for this is summarised as follows:

This approach helps to grow talent in critical regions and creates positive feedback loops: initial successes of campaigns builds advocacy experience, entices more advocates to join the movement, and gives the movement more credibility and power. A larger healthier movement tries and tests more interventions. —MG manager

- However, ACE also emphasises that MG does not fund projects solely on the basis that they work in high-priority species/countries, but also ensures the organisation has a generally promising theory of change.

Based on this and other conversations with ACE, we think MG's current approach is distinct from the previous 'test kitchen' strategy in a number of ways:

- 1) Information value for the broader movement seems to be a less central aspect of their stated strategy. Instead, ACE MG's strategy (as articulated to us) emphasises:
 - a) Movement building (particularly seeding work in new areas)
 - b) Funding more small organisations than other funders
 - c) Funding work on neglected species
 - d) Risk tolerance — which applies to both hits-based approaches and grants primarily aimed at gaining information value.
- 2) While an emphasis is still put on funding movement building in neglected contexts with large potential scope, the current approach seems to put more emphasis on ensuring that groups have a strong theory of change and unpromising applicants are not funded on the basis of more

speculative, long-term movement-building considerations alone (which is reflected in our findings for the [geographical neglectedness crux](#)).

Our reflections on how promising this strategy is and how well MG is executing on it are summarised below.

Is ACE MG's strategy promising?

While we don't have strong views on the relative importance of movement building as compared to more direct impactful work, we think prioritising this kind of work in an impact-focused way is a plausibly promising way to greatly improve the lives of animals in the long term. This is based on:

1. Theoretical reasoning: Almost any animal advocacy work relies on a base of animal advocates, so presumably much of the impact of animal advocacy to date can be attributed to early-stage movement builders. Similarly, it seems likely that much of the future impact of animal advocates in neglected regions could be attributed to early movement building in these regions.
2. Consultations with domain experts: Several experts shared with us their view that early movement building in a new context is potentially very cost-effective (although this may have relatively steep diminishing returns once a movement is seeded).

We also think that it's likely that this kind of work is most effective if there is a focus not just on seeding an animal advocacy presence, but also on supporting any new animal advocacy groups to be impact-focused and strategic in their approach — something that MG seems to do to some extent (see below).

Is ACE MG's execution on this strategy promising?

We think that the grants made by ACE MG indicate that they are executing their program in a way that reasonably balances the trade-offs between direct impact and movement building. For example, the grants that we reviewed in high-priority geographies seemed to have theories of change and potential to scale that were competitive with opportunities that were funded in other geographies.

ACE shared information about two instances where groups operating in high-priority geographies were sent follow-up questions because their funding request did not seem particularly scope sensitive. We think this kind of interaction with grantees is promising, as it suggests ACE could play an important role in promoting an impact focus among early-stage animal advocates in contexts with a more nascent movement. We think this could be a key part of the promise of this strategy and hope this is something that MG builds upon in the future.

On the other hand, in reviewing MG grant evaluations, it isn't always clear to what extent movement building is viewed as central to the ultimate theory of impact of a grant as opposed to a positive side effect of some grants. This is partly because ACE MG's grant evaluation model isn't clearly optimised to identify grants with high 'movement-building value' — movement building is mostly captured by the long-term impact criterion of their model (and only constitutes one aspect of this criterion).

We think this constitutes room for improvement:

- If movement building is considered a key part of ACE MG's strategy, then this should be more explicitly accounted for in MG's model.¹⁰
- ACE could be more explicit in their grant reasoning to justify which grants are made primarily on the basis of movement building and which are made on a more 'direct impact' basis — and how they trade off these considerations against each other.

Conclusion: ACE MG strategy

Overall, we think MG's current strategy and approach are consistent with the program having competitive marginal cost-effectiveness to the AWF. While MG seems to have shifted strategy away from a 'test kitchen' model, we believe that ACE is now executing more effectively on their stated MG strategy than they were in 2023. However, we also think there is some scope for ACE MG to improve their execution by crafting their model to reflect their movement-building strategy.

Intervention focus

The crux: Intervention focus

Our impression at the start of this evaluation was that ACE MG funded a somewhat different profile of interventions than other impact-focused funders like EA AWF. While we did not have strong pre-existing views on the promisingness of different interventions, we wanted to ensure that ACE MG's approach to intervention prioritisation was compatible with the program having competitive marginal cost-effectiveness compared to other funders.

Our findings: Intervention focus

Here we discuss our findings from our investigation of this crux, which considered:

- [Does ACE MG favour different interventions than EA AWF?](#)
- [Are institutional diet change advocacy campaigns competitive with other opportunities?](#)
- [How promising are relevant 2024 ACE MG grants?](#)

¹⁰ Although if this is done, care should be taken to ensure that this change does not cause ACE MG to overemphasise geographical neglectedness as they did in the past.

We find that ACE MG does seem to fund a larger proportion of grants for institutional diet change advocacy than the EA AWF. While we have some uncertainty about whether these types of grants are typically competitive with ACE MG's other grants, we ultimately [conclude](#) that we have not encountered compelling evidence that the different intervention makeup of ACE MG grant recipients is a significant cause for concern.

While we think ACE MG could improve its cross-intervention prioritisation, we do not think the program performs justifiably worse on this metric than the EA AWF.

Does ACE MG favour different interventions than EA AWF?

Our impression at the start of the evaluation was that a higher fraction of ACE MG funding was directed towards institutional diet change advocacy compared to EA AWF funding. By “institutional diet change advocacy,” we are referring specifically to interventions that seek — in the short to medium term — to replace meals containing animal products with meals without animal products at an institutional level (for example, in schools). We do not include interventions that develop alternative proteins in this category, as we believe these have quite a distinct theory of change, with most impact occurring in the medium to long term.

To investigate if there was, indeed, a concrete difference in the intervention focus of EA AWF and ACE MG, we reviewed the summaries of the [2024 MG grants](#) reported on ACE's website and an approximately equal-sized sample (~30) of EA AWF's most recent grants recorded in [their database](#) at the time of this analysis — those made between Q2 2023 and Q1 2024. Based on the summaries, we categorised these as either mostly related to institutional diet change advocacy or not.

Using quite an expansive definition of institutional diet change advocacy, we identified that two of the 30 EA AWF grants (constituting 0.27% of funding) went to these kinds of activities, compared to six out of 28 MG grants (constituting 11.12%¹¹ of funding).

The ACE MG grants that we characterised as institutional diet change advocacy are the following:

¹¹ ACE reports the proportion of funding to ‘institutional diet’ interventions as 13.4% [here](#). However, we think this is partially a product of their approach to classification. For example, in their grant database, Unión Vegetariana del Perú is characterised as ‘skill building,’ Sociedade Vegetariana Brasileira is characterised as ‘government outreach,’ and Dharma Voices for Animals is characterised as ‘formal education.’

| Organisation | Grant size (USD) |
|--|------------------|
| Alianza Alimentaria y Acción Climática | \$21,800 |
| Dharma Voices for Animals | \$30,000 |
| GYG Project Foundation | \$15,000 |
| Plant Based Campaigns Ltd | \$20,000 |
| Sociedade Vegetariana Brasileira | \$28,000 |
| Unión Vegetariana del Perú | \$14,000 |

While people could reasonably disagree about the specific grants we characterised as institutional diet change advocacy for each funder,¹² we think the overall pattern of ACE MG devoting far more funding to institutional diet change advocacy campaigns than the EA AWF is relatively clear.

Are institutional diet change advocacy campaigns competitive with other opportunities?

To understand whether this difference constituted a concern, we asked experts for their views on the promisingness of institutional diet change advocacy.

Feedback from experts on our questions about this reflected several themes:

- The experts tended to be less confident in institutional diet change advocacy interventions than they were in promising farmed-animal welfare interventions, such as cage-free corporate campaigns, because they thought there was less evidence about which institutional diet change advocacy interventions work, and that the evidence was more heterogeneous than for welfare-improvement interventions.¹³
- On existing evidence, some institutional diet change advocacy campaigns can meet a cost-effectiveness bar, but this is not typical.
- It's probable that most of the impact of institutional diet change advocacy runs through direct impact rather than movement building.
- There's insufficient evidence to have high certainty about any of their views on the promisingness of institutional diet change.

¹² For example, for EA AWF we characterised a grant to Oxford Vegsoc and a grant for a plant-based universities campaign in Denmark as institutional diet change advocacy. Although the Oxford Vegsoc grant does not clearly fit the definition, as it is more related to community building, we included it to ensure we were not underestimating the AWF fraction.

¹³ We should note that, during the evaluation, we did not explicitly compare the proportion of grants that ACE MG and EA AWF directed to the types of welfare-focused interventions that experts expected to be more promising than institutional diet change. As such, we cannot conclude that ACE MG is funding a smaller proportion of these promising interventions than EA AWF.

This left us with the impression that the experts we consulted expected these kinds of interventions to be (in general) significantly less cost-effective than pursuing the most promising welfare-based approaches.

However, we acknowledge that:

- We only consulted a small pool of experts, so there may be more disagreement in the wider community
- Our selection of these experts could be biased
- There is generally considerable uncertainty about this as well as about variation in the effectiveness within intervention types, which could make some interventions more promising in some contexts

We also note that the uncertainty here probably indicates that there is reasonable information value in testing these approaches (however, this requires following up and explicitly evaluating the cost-effectiveness of these grants, which is not currently a component of ACE MG's strategy).

We therefore don't rely heavily on this view in our overall judgement of whether ACE MG is competitive with EA AWF, but we do think the difference in approach is worth highlighting to donors. This is a question that we would consider returning to in future evaluations.

How promising are relevant 2024 ACE MG grants?

Information about broad differences between the promisingness of different interventions becomes less relevant if the specific grants ACE MG is funding have a compelling case for impact.

Of the ACE MG grants that we would define as institutional diet change advocacy, only one was granted to support work in a Western European and/or Anglosphere country (which we think are generally less neglected, implying the case for impact via movement building is less strong). This grant funds a project with an ambitious scope: to transition the university system (starting in the UK) to 100% plant-based. This seems like the kind of very large institutional campaign that could, in expectation, have high cost-effectiveness.

While we haven't attempted to model the scope of this grant, we think it could plausibly have expected cost-effectiveness competitive with the kinds of welfare-based interventions ACE MG funds (such as corporate cage-free campaigns for egg-laying hens).

Of the other 2024 ACE MG grant recipients, those working on institutional diet change advocacy included:

- An organisation training students to negotiate increased plant-based options at their universities in Peru

- An organisation undertaking institutional and corporate vegan outreach in Mexico
- An organisation working to introduce vegan alternatives in Ghana's school meal programs, primarily by lobbying local government (starting with Accra)
- An organisation that seeks to lobby the government to enact policies that will enable changes to school meal programs in Brazil
- A program to advocate for Thai Buddhist monastics to reduce animal product consumption

Reading through some of the details behind these grants, we found the case for the impact of these grants reasonably compelling, although we acknowledge that this is not our area of expertise. Our key reasons for this include:

- These grants are mostly targeted at medium- to large-scale institutional change, with the potential to effect a large-scale reduction in meat consumption.
- In most of the grant applications we reviewed, the organisation in question had a promising track record, including some early wins.

Some of these grants we attempted to roughly model in terms of marginal cost-effectiveness, drawing on information from ACE and using our best guesses for unknown inputs. From this we determined that the institutional diet change initiatives seemed competitive with at least some of the welfare-promoting programs that ACE MG supported via their 2024 grants. While we might be misjudging the probability of success and potential scale of these different programs, this analysis caused us to update slightly in favour of the specific grants ACE MG made being plausibly competitive with the welfare-focused initiatives available to the program.

In contrast, at least some of the experts we consulted for this evaluation felt that, on average, the welfare-focused work ACE MG funded were more promising than most of these diet-change grants — although they noted the information they had to go on was limited and they did not review ACE MG's grant reasoning. While this weighed on our decision-making, the degree of uncertainty about this was sufficient that we did not think it would be justifiable to make a decision on this basis, particularly considering institutional diet change advocacy grants constituted only about 10% of ACE MG's total grantmaking.

Overall, we are currently satisfied that, in general, ACE MG's grants in this area are plausibly competitive with those the program makes to applicants implementing welfare-focused interventions.

Conclusion: Intervention focus

Overall, while we think ACE MG could have a more transparent approach for prioritising between applicants implementing different interventions, and we have some remaining uncertainty about whether the institutional diet change advocacy interventions ACE MG funds are competitive with their other grants, we have not encountered compelling evidence that the different intervention makeup of ACE MG grant recipients is a cause for concern. As a result, we do not think the program performs justifiably worse on this metric than the EA AWF.

Scope sensitivity

The crux: Scope sensitivity

This crux is concerned with whether the scope sensitivity of ACE MG is sufficient to enable them to make decisions about marginal cost-effectiveness with comparable sensitivity to the EA AWF.

This crux was raised principally because we believe that the Impact Potential Score (IPS) used by ACE MG insufficiently captures scope, and it wasn't clear to us what other aspects of ACE MG's approach compensate sufficiently to enable the program to be scope sensitive.

Our findings: Scope sensitivity

In this section, we share our findings from our investigation into the scope sensitivity of ACE MG. Specifically, we investigated:

- [Does the Impact Potential Score \(IPS\) capture scope?](#)
- [How does the IPS contribute to ACE MG's decision making?](#)
- [Where else could scope factor into ACE MG's decision making?](#)
- [How has scope sensitivity changed since 2023?](#)
- [Do MG's marginal grants seem scope insensitive?](#)
- [How does ACE MG prioritise among interventions?](#)

We [conclude](#) that, although we think ACE MG has room for improvement in how scope is integrated into decision making, we did not identify compelling evidence that ACE MG's grantmaking is less scope sensitive than that of the EA AWF, as of our [2023 evaluation](#) of AWF.

Does the Impact Potential Score (IPS) capture scope?

ACE has five criteria on which they score applications and make their grant decisions. These are:

- Theory of change (30% weighting)
- Impact Potential Score (25%)
- Right fit (20%)
- Effect of ACE funding (15%)

- Long-term impact (10%)

All of these, with the exception of the Impact Potential Score (IPS), receive a score between 1 and 7, composed of an average of scores across all reviewers (for more information on each of these, see [this section](#)).

We are not convinced that the IPS sufficiently captures scope, and are concerned that it currently, at best, provides a very weak signal on the promisingness of an applicant (probably far weaker than any other component of MG's model). We believe that the IPS takes potentially useful inputs and combines them in a way that is not clearly theoretically justified and that masks the usefulness of the individual components.

To illustrate this, here is an example of 14 country and interventions combinations that all score between 50 and 51 on the IPS for interventions that target the group 'farmed animals':

- Bangladesh — Media outreach
- Ecuador — Media outreach
- Egypt — Government outreach
- Egypt — Podcasts
- France — Producer outreach
- India — Books
- Mexico — Podcasts
- Moldova — Books
- Russia — Government outreach
- Saudi Arabia — Physical advertising
- South Korea — Corporate and institutional outreach - Welfare improvements
- United Kingdom — Books
- United Kingdom — Producer outreach
- Vietnam — Documentaries and films

Many of these seem unpromising, and yet they score higher than **any intervention** targeting farmed animals in 119 out of the 148 countries for which IPS results can be generated for every intervention. These countries include:

- Australia
- Argentina
- Italy
- Nigeria
- Philippines
- Singapore
- South Africa
- Switzerland
- Thailand

The reason for this is that IPS only considers the number of animals in the country, which is rarely the [limiting factor](#) for an intervention. For example, the potential impact of a campaign to improve the welfare standards of a fast-food chain is limited by the number of relevant animal products bought by the chain and not the total number of animals in the country. We think this highlights that the IPS fails to usefully capture the limiting factor of an intervention, meaning that it does not model scope in a useful way.

How does the IPS contribute to ACE MG's decision making?

Given our substantial doubts about the IPS, we would have been concerned to learn that ACE had relied on the model significantly in their decision making. However, ACE acknowledged the issues with the model as it currently exists, and reported that the **IPS had a relatively limited impact on ACE MG grantmaking decisions**.

This is reflected in the fact that the IPSs correlated very little with final funding decisions. For example, among the 120 applicants for which we have IPS results (93 unfunded and 27 funded), the average IPS in the funded group is 48.7 compared to 46.1 in the unfunded group — indicating applicants with high IPSs didn't have a substantial systematic advantage in the selection process.

Additionally, in our review of specific grants made in the 2024 round, we encountered no instances where the IPS seemed to have a significant influence on the final outcome. For example, no grant reasoning that we viewed made reference to the applicant's IPS.

ACE has shared with us that their own concerns about the usefulness of the IPS caused them to weight it 25% in their model, when they had originally hoped to give it a larger weighting. They also pointed out that a 25% weighting probably overstates the true influence the model had on their decision making, as the final scores were rarely a key input to their decision making, and they more often formed their own judgements about a grant by qualitatively integrating the information they had attained across all the criteria.

Given the magnitude of our concerns (namely that the IPS provides more noise than signal), we are somewhat concerned that the IPS was incorporated directly into MG's model at all, but this is abated somewhat by the fact that there are no instances we know of where it seems to have substantially contributed to decisions.

In comments to us, ACE MG acknowledged:

I think that looking at the individual components of the IPS might have been more helpful - the final IPS score probably hides the differences

between the different component scores. We might even want to forget scores completely and just look at the underlying data (including comparisons to other countries), as set out in the [country data spreadsheet](#).

We agree with this sentiment and think that ACE would be better served by formulating their own subjectively derived scores on scope that could be partially informed by underlying data from the IPS. In our view, going forward, ACE's time would be better spent replacing the IPS with a more meaningful system (like the one suggested below) rather than making adjustments to the existing IPS.

Where else could scope factor into ACE MG decision making?

While the IPS not factoring significantly in ACE MG's decision making was a positive update, this also raised questions about which components of MG's model were scope sensitive. When we asked ACE about this, we were told that scope sensitivity is reflected in:

- The additional screening and early disqualification process
- The theory of change criterion
- The long-term impact criterion

We agree that each of these elements of ACE's decision-making process includes some consideration of scope (although we think this is least true of the long-term impact criterion). However, this is mostly by virtue of the fact that these aspects of the decision-making process exclude interventions with more limited scope and scalability. We are not clear how well they differentiate between interventions with relatively large scopes.

In support of scope factoring into the decision-making process, we have seen examples where ACE MG committee members have used the theory of change criterion to compare different interventions of the same type on scope-relevant factors (for example, number of schools/universities reached, size of organisations targeted by corporate campaigns, number of animals in the country of the species influenced by corporate campaign). In some cases, this seems to have been a decisive factor in a grant decision — in other words, some applicants were not funded because their approach had a smaller scope than another applicant being considered.

We think this is the way that ACE MG most clearly differentiates between promising applicants implementing the same intervention on the basis of scope, and is a key benefit of ACE MG's approach of batching grant applicants by specific characteristics (e.g., intervention or geography).

Identifying that ACE MG had meaningfully incorporated scope in this way was a positive update for us, but we still think there is room for improvement in the way that ACE MG considers scope:

- While we did see attempts at comparing applicants on the basis of scope, we think this could have been done more often in ACE MG grant reviews.
- ACE MG could probably benefit from trying to compare different types of interventions on the basis of scope, where currently they seem to almost exclusively compare the scope of interventions of the same kind. ACE has indicated some resistance to this idea on the basis that this would be unhelpfully speculative (and they think they may be less willing to speculate on numerical inputs than other funders); however, our position is that ACE is already implicitly speculating about this by prioritising some applicants over others. Rather than trying to integrate scope consideration into other criteria, or capturing it using a standardised, inflexible model (like the IPS), scope could exist as another criterion scored independently by each MG committee member — and this scope criterion score could (when applicable) be informed by elements of the IPS model.

To this end, possible approaches ACE could consider are:

- 1) If introduced as a bounded score like other scores in ACE MG's model, including a clear definition of each scoring tier under the scope criterion (e.g., 3 corresponds to expected impact of 100K-1M animals, 4 corresponds to affecting 1M-10M animals) so reviewers have a rough estimate of scope for each application that they can integrate meaningfully into the decision.¹⁴
- 2) Being explicit about which kinds of impacts are ideally captured by this criterion — in particular, determining whether this criterion should attempt to include the scope of longer-term and movement-building paths of impact, or whether these should be captured in other criteria.
- 3) As with other criteria in ACE MG's model, not integrating this input consistently into the final decision using a fixed weighting, but weighting this criterion in accordance with how relevant it is to marginal cost-effectiveness in specific instances.
 - a) In particular, where relevant, considering order-of-magnitude differences in potential impact as such, rather than as linear steps in a model. This is important because, for instance, if applicant A is judged to affect 100 times more animals than applicant B if successful, then A still has higher expected impact even if B is 10x

¹⁴ Note that even though we are raising the possibility of an approach using a linear score system to classify orders of magnitude differences, which seems to go directly against scope sensitivity, we are doing so because we understand that ACE MG's current approach is to qualitatively integrate components of their model into their decision, corresponding to components' usefulness in particular cases (rather than consistently in all cases) — and so we hope in cases where this factor leads them to identify clear scope differences, this will weigh on their decision making to a degree consistent with the difference (see also (3)).

more likely to be successful (as determined by the theory of change analysis).

- 4) Only estimating scores on this criterion for opportunities that pass initial screening and selection, or else iterating on and refining these estimates the further applications get in the selection process.¹⁵

How has scope sensitivity changed since 2023?

While scope sensitivity wasn't explicitly raised as a concern in our 2023 evaluation, we believe that some of the problems we identified in the 2023 evaluation reflected some degree of scope insensitivity. In particular, decisions to prioritise geographically neglected regions, even in cases with a relatively small scope for direct impact and a poor case for scaling, seem indicative of this.

As noted [previously](#), this is an area where we think ACE MG has improved substantially since 2023, and as such, we think some of the most concerning outcomes of ACE MG's scope insensitivity have been reduced since last year.

ACE also mentioned that scope had led it to weight applications targeting numerous animals (like fish and invertebrates) more heavily in 2024 than in previous years. As evidence for this, ACE shared that the fraction of funding to aquatic animals increased from ~7.4% [in 2023](#) to [14% in 2024](#).¹⁶

Do ACE MG's marginal grants seem scope insensitive?

While we have concerns about ACE MG's model, this may not translate into significant scope insensitivity in practice if ACE MG is able to sufficiently account for scope via other heuristics.

To investigate this, we performed some spot-checks of ACE's marginal grants to determine whether they seemed to have relatively similar scope. If scope varied widely between applicants that were rated similarly, this would imply that ACE MG's process may not be sufficiently tracking scope.

This involved performing some very simplistic modelling of ACE MG's marginal grants to see if we could identify orders of magnitude of difference in expected marginal cost-effectiveness of the various opportunities (and, in particular, if any unfunded opportunities seemed substantially more promising than funded opportunities).

¹⁵ The rationale for this is that, in many cases, it may not be worth the time investment of carefully considering scope for applicants that can clearly be identified as unpromising based on other heuristics.

¹⁶ Note that at the time of writing, these numbers do not match those cited by ACE on their MG grant pages for 2023 and 2024. However, ACE has shared that the numbers provided in this report are the correct ones.

In this analysis, we found that ACE MG's marginal 2024 grants seemed to have a relatively similar scope (within ~one order of magnitude by our very rough calculations for most of the five marginal grants we considered). We were surprised to find this degree of similarity between the different opportunities and acknowledge that it is possible that this is at least partially the result of [anchoring](#) on our part.

Despite this, we still consider this some evidence that MG is at least somewhat scope sensitive in its decision making, likely by virtue of the comparative approach to grant evaluation and deliberative, all-things-considered approach to decision making.

How does ACE MG prioritise between interventions?

We remain somewhat concerned that ACE MG does not currently seem to prioritise sufficiently scope sensitively between applicants implementing different kinds of interventions.

For example, while they may compare between scope-relevant factors for applicants implementing similar interventions (e.g., number of universities targeted by plant-based campaigns), they seem to rely heavily on other heuristics to compare between applicants implementing different interventions (e.g., probability of success or the suitability of the team). While these heuristics are generally relevant factors, we expect that these considerations will sometimes be swamped by scope of the expected impact, and we are concerned that ACE MG's current approach is not equipped for dealing with this.

ACE MG addresses this to some extent by ruling out interventions with very unpromising scope (e.g., veterinary care and shelters), but we expect that, even among the more promising interventions that ACE funds, there could be orders of magnitude differences in expected cost-effectiveness that they may only be able to very roughly capture via heuristics. As such, we think ACE MG could improve in its ability to prioritise scope sensitively between different interventions.

One positive update on this front is that ACE has shared they are working on an 'intervention effectiveness tracker.' We are currently unsure what the final version of this will look like, but we hope that this product will help enable MG to prioritise meaningfully between interventions on the basis of scope.

In the future, we would hope for ACE MG to have a clearer framework for prioritising between interventions. However, given that our review of more than 10 individual grants across our various investigations indicates that ACE MG's grants are generally promising, we do not think this concern is sufficient to constitute a meaningful difference in the expected cost-effectiveness of ACE MG and EA AWF.

This is particularly true as EA AWF was not doing clearly better on this metric in our 2023 evaluation than ACE MG is now:

[W]e saw some references to the numbers of animals that could be affected if an intervention went well, but we didn't see any attempt at back-of-the-envelope calculations to get a rough sense of the cost-effectiveness of a grant, nor any direct comparison across grants to calibrate scoring. — GWWC's [2023 evaluation of AWF](#)

Conclusion: Scope sensitivity

Overall, we were left with concerns about the way ACE MG accounts for scope in their overall decision-making process. We also think ACE MG could improve its cross-intervention prioritisation.

However, despite this, we have not identified compelling evidence that this has had a significant adverse effect on ACE MG's grantmaking. Considering this, and the fact that EA AWF also had significant room for improvement on scope sensitivity in our [2023 evaluation](#), we do not believe that this concern implies a substantial difference in the expected marginal cost-effectiveness of ACE MG and EA AWF.

Future room for funding

The crux: Future room for funding

Our final crux was: If we were to recommend ACE MG, could the program effectively distribute the additional funding that would be influenced by our recommendations? In 2024, [MG distributed \\$1.024,172](#) in the eighth Movement Grants round. For us to consider both recommending ACE MG and inviting them to advise some fraction of GWWC's Effective Animal Advocacy Fund, we would want to be confident that they could utilise at least an additional \$500K USD¹⁷ in funding as cost-effectively as the EA AWF could use this additional funding.

To investigate this crux, we considered:

- [Is ACE MG funding constrained?](#)
- [What is ACE MG's likely 2025 funding situation?](#)
- [How might the number/quality of MG applications change in 2025?](#)

Our findings: Future room for funding

Overall, we [conclude](#) that the marginal use of counterfactual funding from a potential GWWC recommendation would have similar cost-effectiveness to ACE

¹⁷ We chose \$500K based on the fact that GWWC's Effective Animal Advocacy Fund has received ~\$1M USD in the first year of existence and ACE MG would be allocated up to 50% of the Effective Animal Advocacy Fund going forward.

MG's marginal funding in the 2024 grant round without the GWWC recommendation. Because of this, and our earlier conclusions that the marginal grantmaking of ACE MG in 2024 is justifiably competitive with that of the EA AWF, we conclude that ACE MG could effectively use any expected increase in funding.

Is ACE MG funding constrained?

In response to our questions on this topic, ACE shared that ACE MG considers themselves more funding constrained than application constrained. ACE provided some mechanistic explanations for why they think this is the case:

- Significant funders (such as Open Philanthropy) are no longer funding interventions specific to invertebrates and wild animals, meaning there is likely to be a funding gap for promising opportunities in these areas
- The animal advocacy movement is benefiting from an increase in incubation programs — including AIM, Kickstarting for Good, Welfare Matters, Animal Advocacy Africa — so ACE expects an increase in the number of new organisations requiring seed/early-stage funding
- “Concerns about animal welfare and consumption and production are increasing in priority regions; we expect that applications from these regions will also increase. The pace of philanthropic donations in these regions (at least for animals) does not seem to be correlated with this increased concern (yet!)” —MG manager

We are not well-placed to assess most of these claims, so this did not update us significantly. However, the point about changes to the funding landscape for programs targeting invertebrates and wild animals seems compelling given our present understanding of the reliance of the effective animal advocacy movement on Open Philanthropy funding. ACE has separately expressed to us an interest in funding more of this work following changes to the funding ecosystem.

In support of being more funding constrained, ACE also provided us with a summary of how they would likely have disbursed an additional \$200K–300K USD in the 2024 round. This included a mixture of fully funding more of the opportunities that they only partially funded, and funding some opportunities that missed out altogether in the round — in particular, two opportunities related to insect farming. We attempted to naively model the scope of some of the opportunities that MG indicated they would have funded and concluded that we expect these opportunities to have relatively high marginal cost-effectiveness — competitive with other opportunities ACE MG funded.

For all of the opportunities ACE indicated they would have funded if additional funding had been available (including those that we did not model), we considered the case that was made for funding in the original application and were left with a generally favourable impression. This was a relatively strong positive update for us on this crux.

What is ACE MG's likely 2025 funding situation?

Ultimately, we are interested in ACE MG's marginal cost-effectiveness over the period that the program is recommended by GWWC. For this reason, we requested additional information about how ACE expected their funding situation to change in 2025 and considered whether that had implications for their future marginal cost-effectiveness. In response to our questions, ACE shared some information about how their funding situation might change in 2025.

Overall, absent a recommendation from GWWC, ACE expects funding to MG to remain similar or temporarily increase slightly in 2025. Holding everything else constant (which we don't expect to be the case— see [below](#)), this update would imply expected cost-effectiveness of marginal funding would decrease slightly in 2025.

ACE also shared some changes that ACE MG would likely implement if there were more funding available. If their funding reached \$1.5M USD, they might provide some funding to organisations with an operating budget larger than \$1M USD, if the proposal were to fall within the ACE MG focus areas and the charity could not complete the work without an ACE MG grant. (Currently ACE MG rarely considers organisations with an operating budget larger than \$1M, so this could potentially unlock a number of new impactful funding opportunities.) On the other hand, we are unsure whether ACE MG would reach this level of funding in 2025, even with a recommendation from GWWC, and we have not evaluated their approach to funding these different types of opportunities.

How might the number/quality of applications change in 2025?

ACE shared that they expect the number and quality of applications to increase in 2025, based on an upwards trend they have observed in both over time. While we cannot comment on the upward trend in quality, as we have not directly compared past applicants to 2024 applicants, [according to the ACE website](#) the number of MG applicants has increased year-on-year over the past four years: 146 applicants in 2021, 164 in 2022, 200 in 2023, and 324 in 2024).¹⁸

We think this is a positive update, as we think it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the growth in MG applicants is due to an increase in the number of highly impactful organisations requiring funding.

ACE also shared their plans to attract new MG applicants through conferences, coalitions, networks, and online spaces.

¹⁸ 2019 and 2020 technically had more applicants than some later years (165 and 193 respectively), but these were spread across multiple application rounds (two per year) so some of these applicants may not be unique. Additionally, to the extent that having multiple rounds does attract more applicants, this is a positive update, as ACE MG plans to return to running two funding rounds in 2025.

Finally, ACE shared that they are making some changes to the 2025 ACE MG application process, which they hope will allow more applicants to apply and be screened:

- They are going to run two funding rounds in 2025, which they hope will allow more applicants to apply.
- To manage the increase in applications while maintaining current operating costs and not exceeding staff capacity, they are going to start a rolling screening process through an expression of interest form.

We think the fact that ACE MG is pursuing these routes for increasing the number and/or quality of applicants is another promising signal in favour of them maintaining high marginal cost-effectiveness.

Other considerations

We think there is a possible theoretical argument that, because EA AWF has a much larger budget, of which GWWC-recommendation directed funding would constitute a smaller fraction than it would for ACE MG, we should expect more rapidly diminishing returns for ACE MG than for the EA AWF. We did not engage deeply with this question as we ultimately did not expect it to alter our final decision, but it might be a question we return to in future evaluations.

Conclusion: Future room for funding

Overall, we expect that the marginal use of counterfactual funding from a potential GWWC recommendation would have similar cost-effectiveness to ACE MG's marginal funding in the 2024 grant round. This is broadly because:

- 1) Evidence from the 2024 round implies that marginal opportunities just below the bar for funding were not substantially less cost-effective than those just above the bar.
- 2) We expect that other sources of funding to MG will remain relatively constant or increase slightly in 2025.
- 3) In 2025, MG is likely to attract more high-quality applicants than in 2024.

Other observations/recommendations

The most important considerations and recommendations from this evaluation are captured in the crux investigations. This section is intended to capture recommended improvements that are not captured elsewhere in the report. We think these constitute relatively minor considerations and they did not have a meaningful impact on our decision to recommend ACE MG. We include them here for the purposes of transparency.

Documentation

We thought ACE's internal documentation for ACE MG exhibited a lot of strengths (and indeed is one area where we think ACE MG was outperforming EA AWF as of [our 2023 evaluation](#)). For example, for each criterion that was scored (with the exception of the IPS), ACE had compiled the notes from each of the reviewers and included these in their final spreadsheet. Additionally, they documented the follow-up questions that were sent to the applicants that reached the final stage and the responses that they received.

However, as outside reviewers, we thought aspects of ACE MG's documentation could have been improved.

- Most significantly, in many cases, it wasn't explicit what the key inputs to the final decision on funding an opportunity had been, and we had to piece this together from information scattered across various notes on different criteria.
- In rare cases, it wasn't at all clear (through reviewing the documentation) why a final decision on an application had been made (though when we followed up on these ACE could always provide an explanation for the decision).

Ultimately, we would recommend including a separate section for documenting the overall rationale for grant decisions. We would expect this to generally be a paragraph or so summary of the key factors that determined each decision — particularly for those applications that were scored on all criteria and which were more marginal.

Approach to grant funging

In one case, where ACE MG made a grant to fund a specific project, the team expressed concern about the possibility of [funging](#) with another project the grantee was carrying out, the impact of which they thought could be net negative for animals. Ultimately, ACE awarded a restricted grant to the program they were interested in, but we think, in this case, ACE could have also asked the funded organisation to match the funding ACE MG provided from its unrestricted budget. This would likely have reduced the likelihood that the ACE MG grant funged with the project they were more concerned about.

Conclusion: Our overall view

This section is intended to summarise our overall view on how the marginal cost-effectiveness of ACE's Movement Grants program (ACE MG) compares to EA Funds' Animal Welfare Fund (EA AWF).

As explained above, our overall conclusion is that there is no longer a justifiable difference in cost-effectiveness between EA AWF (as of 2023) and the ACE MG (as of 2024). We think that ACE MG has improved markedly since our 2023 evaluation, and it is now one of the best two options we know of for donors wanting to maximise their impact on animal welfare. In short, this is because ACE has addressed our main concerns from our 2023 evaluation.

While our overall findings were positive, we also identified room for improvement for ACE MG. The specific areas where we think ACE MG has the most room for improvement are:

- Replacing the Impact Potential Score component of their model
- Better integrating scope comparisons into their decision making
- Introducing and applying a more justifiable approach for prioritising between interventions
- Providing an overall rationale for grant decisions — for example, including a paragraph-long summary of why each grant decision was made

We should emphasise that we do not necessarily think that EA AWF (as of 2023) was performing better than ACE MG on these.

We should also highlight that we think there are key aspects of ACE MG's approach that weigh positively in their favour as compared to AWF in our 2023 evaluation. For example:

- Scoring of all applications independently by at least three reviewers
- Batching applications to enable explicit comparisons between interventions with similar characteristics
- A relatively well-documented process for grant scoring and discussions

We intend to re-evaluate the AWF (and possibly other effective animal advocacy evaluators, including MG) in 2025, at which time we will once again revisit our recommendations in effective animal advocacy.

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All views expressed here are our own, as are any remaining errors or omissions.