

Local Career Advice Network Plan

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Feel free to comment. message or [email](#) Vaidehi Agarwalla with any questions. To see the current stage of the project, see the project [Timeline](#).

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You can see the website for our active projects: <http://www.localcareeradvicenetwork.org/>

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Overview

What is the Local Career Advice Network?

The Local Career Advice Network (LCAN) is a project to improve the state of current career advice in the EA community by:

1. creating a **network** to improve collaboration between local group organisers
2. providing **support and services** to help local, cause and career organisers improve the quality of career advice they can provide
3. create **resources** to help retain movement knowledge about best practices in career advice and careers research

Why is this project valuable?

1. Help fill career advising gaps in the EA community
2. Improve coordination, collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst group organisers
3. Produce meta-research on careers advice by experimenting with new projects and refining old ones
4. Strengthen local groups and the global EA movement. Currently, the lack of effective opportunities and guidance make member retention and engagement more difficult overall, as it sidelines members who are currently unable to directly contribute to prioritised paths.
 - a. Improve the impact of location-constrained or early-stage promising EAs. Location constraint is a widespread issue observed by group organisers because family, visa limitations, English fluency, or personal preference.

What is our strategy?

You can read our strategy doc [here](#).

Demand for career support

We have identified a demand for career support and guidance services from both group organisers via survey for their members, and from EAs themselves in the process of a career change via in-depth qualitative interviews. There is a demonstrated demand for greater collaboration amongst group organisers and for career advice services in particular.

- From the 2019 group organisers' survey:
 - One of the main focuses for a majority of local groups is providing information on effective career options
 - When asked about other services or support they would like to see, over 60% of group organisers ranked personal feedback and support at a 4 or 5 for service they would like to see.

- There is also demand for both career coaching services, and more collaboration amongst group organisers as “the most common suggestion was **external coaching**, followed by **greater local organizer collaboration**.”
- With regards to coaching, organizers sought a personal contact that could offer mentoring, **accountability, career coaching, how to conduct shallow research**, how to run events, impact evaluation, and recruitment.” (emphasis added).¹
- The local career advice network to date has a working group of ~10 active members from different groups, a mailing list of over 60 interested organisers. I have presented our research and work at the EAANZ group leaders’ retreat to about 10 local organisers, where it was well-received.
- According to our career advice bottlenecks survey, of the organisers who said they prioritise careers advice a little or do not prioritise it at all, over 50% cited that they do not feel qualified or knowledgeable enough to give careers advice.
- It is difficult to quantify the precise value of providing collaborative support, since many of the services I offer are hard to track or concretely measure, but I estimate I could save 1 hour for every 5 current hours spent on career advice research by group organisers by offering the group organiser services. I also expect this work to save organisers in the future significantly more time, maybe up to 2-3 hours for every 5 hours they spend on research, as I aim to build upon previous research.

Career advice bottlenecks survey results

This survey was completed by 27 group organisers (⅓ city, national and student) primarily from Europe and Asia Pacific and asked them questions about their members’ bottlenecks and their own challenges giving careers advice. The preliminary analysis of the survey has been completed, and the write-up will be shared in the coming weeks.

The highest ranked bottlenecks were personal and path uncertainty. The top reasons for uncertainty were: a lack of confidence, a lack of ambition and a lack of path-specific knowledge. I believe it is tractable to address a lack of confidence and path-specific knowledge via the bootcamp.

A lack of local jobs and freedom of movement were the next highest ranked bottlenecks. I estimate we could help at least 50-70% of people in this category, who are willing to follow EA-aligned paths and move if necessary but are unable to.

Innate talent was one of the least prevalent bottlenecks. Other relevant bottlenecks which were more prevalent and co-occur - like credentials, experience and skills. It seems that these are structural concerns and are affected by connections, access to opportunities to build career capital locally and challenges signalling credentials.

Qualitative interviews with career changers

I conducted a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 EAs last summer. From this research with EAs who were very committed to EA but struggling with their transitions and often isolated from the local community, we identified the need to provide consistent support, connections and guidance for these individuals. We also hypothesized that such services could help an individual reduce the length of their career transition. From our bottlenecks survey, only a few group organisers mentioned events that provided these kinds of services.

¹ [Local EA Group Organizers Survey 2019](#)

Who is running this project?

Vaidehi Agarwalla founded and has run the Local Career Advice Network since October 2019, with about 10-15 other group organisers from around the world. Vaidehi is a Singapore group organiser and an Effective Environmentalism community organiser who has conducted qualitative interviews with career changers, created practical and strategic group building resources for the EA Hub, and developed a sociological model of EA movement building. You can read the full list of her [past projects here](#).

Project Timeline

Note: Grey text indicates completion.

1. **Project Proposal (1 week, 15-30 hours)** *October 2019*
 - a. Write proposal
 - b. Get feedback from other group organisers, 80K, CEA on risks, desired end-products, approaches
2. **Collaboration (5-10 hours)** *October 2019*
 - a. Do an initial collaborators call and figure out what backgrounds and expertise is present, as well as time availability
 - b. Decide on the team structure. Vaidehi will be the main coordinator and collaborate with others as and when they are available.
3. **Literature Review (10 hours)** *November 2019*
 - a. Do a literature review of previous efforts to provide career advice services and career advice theory
 - b. [First draft literature review](#)
 - c. Literature review revealed major information gaps and a lack of clarity around what the current bottlenecks are and how widespread they are. There was also a lack of clarity on group organisers' current efforts and knowledge.
4. **Preliminary Research (30-60 hours)** *December 2019 - Feb 2019*
 - a. Get feedback on our thinking and our [constraints categories](#) from group organisers who have done work on career advising
 - b. Present initial work at EAANZ group leaders' retreat
 - c. Conduct a survey of group organisers
5. **Share Research Findings of Career Advice Bottlenecks Survey (10-30 hours)** *March 2020*
 - a. Write up and share survey results with group organisers
 - i. Publish a forum post on advice on running career events
 - ii. Host group calls to discuss findings from the survey
 - b. Share the full survey results with relevant stakeholders (CEA, 80K)
6. **Prioritize projects based on survey results (10-20 hours)** *April 2020*
 - a. Based on the people dedicated to this project, only a few options are both high in expected value and tractable. (See [prioritisation criteria](#) for variables that were considered)
7. **Apply for funding (10-30 hours)** *May-June 2020*

8. **Plan and conduct [career 1-1 trainings workshop](#) (100-150 hours) May-August 2020**
9. **Workshop feedback (4-6 hours) August 2020**
 - a. Collect feedback from group organisers about all work to date
 - b. Collect more in-depth feedback from the working group
10. **Evaluate next projects (10-20 hours) August 2020**

Project Structure

Project Collaboration

- Organising & facilitating regular conversations on various topics
- Connecting people to those with more experience to give feedback
- Sharing and raising awareness of best practices and written resources
- Accountability, regular check-ins and general support
- Work collaboratively with CEA groups team and EA Hub to provide careers advice knowledge

Resources & Research

- Creating collaborative resources
- Compiling existing resources and making them accessible to all group organisers across regions and languages (e.g. some organisers have translated resources into English to share upon request)
- I also conduct additional research if organisers face information bottlenecks that I believe others may face as well.
- Research on current impact tracking for events and how to improve it, especially for career events
- (Eventually) Tracking project progress and success
 - Goals: forms should be quick, convenient but informative. Ideally, some core data is systematically collected for careers events.
 - Challenges: getting group organisers to consistently fill these out. Perhaps better to send out a monthly reminder (check survey for frequencies)

Career Advising Learning

- Accountability partners (doesn't need to be career advice specific)
- **Providing training to group organisers**
 - Career 1-1s
 - On existing [resources](#)
 - Metrics: Document views, comments, engagements
 - Follow up survey with organisers who join the call on how useful they found these resources
 - And how accurately they can recall resources/information
 - Note: something like this will be done by EA Hub on general group resources.
 - On 80K's most recent priority paths

- Metrics: test their knowledge before, after and 1 month after
- Survey them on the kind of advice they'd give hypothetical candidates before and after

Foundational Research

Foundational research was conducted from Oct 2019 - March 2020.

No systematic or representative research has been done on group members' main bottlenecks to pursuing high impact careers or challenges group organisers face. Given the lack of information, we feel we cannot adequately figure out the most impactful projects to work on without developing a more robust set of metrics to evaluate, get an accurate picture of career bottlenecks in the movement currently, and evaluate different career products. Therefore, we have dedicated significant time to establish a solid foundation on which to make our recommendations and to direct our work.

We conducted a [career advice bottlenecks survey](#) for group organisers in Feb 2020. We expect this research will be valuable for anyone in the community looking to develop EA career advice. We also expect that this external perspective may act as a check and balance to existing career advice, and evaluate commonly held beliefs in the movement. *The results of the survey are forthcoming, but preliminary analysis has been completed.*

Project Outputs to Date

* indicates this output is complete

indicates output is upcoming

1. A [project proposal](#)*
2. A [literature review](#)*
3. Primary Research
 - a. Conduct a group organisers' survey
 - i. A list of [career constraints](#), currently under review
 - ~~b. Conduct a members' survey~~
4. Crowd-sourced write-ups on career products
 - a. A comprehensive list of [Potential Career Advice Products](#) with links to similar efforts, costs, benefits, risks
 - b. A list of [Research Methods for Career Advice Products](#)
 - c. A list of potential [Career Advice Prioritisation Criteria](#)
 - d. A WIP [Guide to High Impact Career Research](#)
5. (Ongoing) Coordinating between people working on career projects and tracking progress
6. Support Service Progress to date
 - a. Monthly calls since Jan 2019 (Read our meeting minutes [here](#))
 - b. We helped facilitate the production of EA Israel's [Career Consultation](#) guide.
 - c. Coordinating org research, developing a guide to [evaluating high-impact organisations](#)
7. (April 2020) *An updated list of recommended career events for group organisers*

- a. A [list of potential experiments](#) based on our research
8. (April 2020) Summary write-up of the results of our group organiser survey

Appendix

Existing career advice resources

Existing resources only service a small fraction of the EA community, and for only a few cause areas, specifically longtermism and meta causes. 80,000 Hours and the Center on Long-term Risk provide career advising for primarily longtermist causes. 80,000 Hours also targets individuals who have been less engaged with the EA community.

Limited support is offered to EAs who are in the process of a career change. Some local groups have run retreats or events in the past, but this is not consistent and location-specific.

There is limited careers advice support for group organisers, especially for those outside the US and UK who want to provide localised services to their members.

For students

Many student groups offer EA fellowships, which provide some career advice. EA Oxford also provides [student career mentoring](#). Finally, students may have more opportunities available and find it easier to pivot, do internships and experiment than other EAs.

Value of Careers Research

- **Expand the list of EA-aligned jobs:** We are unsure how many promising jobs and career paths there exist outside of the US/UK but believe the chances of finding such jobs is quite high, since many countries have been neglected relative to their importance for specific causes. Sourcing additional job opportunities could help 80K broaden the geographic scope of their recommendations over time.
- **Build EA's external influence and network.** It's valuable for EAs to be in influential positions outside of explicitly EA organizations for many cause areas. Insider knowledge of how institutions work could be highly valuable.
- **Improve the talent pipeline to EA organizations and members' career capital.** This will be especially useful for EAs with a less-than-stellar track record, who are earlier in their careers, or who otherwise are currently not a good fit for existing opportunities. Given the high turnover at EA organisations due to a young median age, it's important that there is a constant supply of talent to impactful roles.

Previous Proposals

[Proposal 1](#) (Oct 2019-Feb 2020)

- Contains risks and risk mitigation strategies

Experiment #1: Career Change Bootcamp

Goal

Help EAs transition into high-impact career paths. Targeted at people who plan to transition in the next 12 months or so. This will help address a lack of structure, networks and support for EAs in the process of a career change.

Applicants would be recommended by group organisers or go through an application process to ensure a base level dedication and competency. The program will be 8 weeks, with twice a month calls, weekly 1-1 peer-peer check-ins and coworking sessions. The initial cohort of 10-12 participants split into 2-3 groups depending on similarities of career path. The cohort would be selected to have participants with similar career interests and transition stage.

Precise content will be molded to applicant's needs.

Participants

- vetted by group organisers
- an application process to ensure a level of commitment and alignment
- likely be later-stage academics or professionals, because students have [other resources](#) available. Calls will likely take place on weekends to accommodate this.

Time Estimates

Total estimate for trial run (excluding curriculum design): 58-79 hours

- For a 10-12 person cohort
- Recruitment/set-up: 10 hours
- Per week: 6-8 hours
 - 1 hour meeting
 - 2 hour pre/post meeting work
 - Follow-ups & check-ins
 - Research on specific questions
 - Coordinating with guest speakers
 - 2 hours 1-1s
 - 1 hour coordination work
- Evaluation: 10-15 hours

Course structure

- Week 0: Do quick chats with the ppts and see if their major bottleneck is not actually career related (i.e. mental health or productivity or language) and if so, send them on their way. Check in on them periodically to see progress and get feedback.
- Week 1-4:
 - Get participants to know each other, share their backgrounds, establish an environment of trust/honesty
 - Identify key uncertainties and bottlenecks
 - Try to resolve key uncertainties via research and networking if possible, if not plan for experiments to help resolve uncertainties
 - For bottlenecks, rank and evaluate bottlenecks and figure out which ones are the most tractable to work on.
 - Make a decision on which career path to pursue
 - Have EAs with relevant experience join 2 group calls, one junior EA and one more senior EA and have a guided discussion session with them.
- Week 4-8:
 - Targeted programming addressed at 1-2 similar roles. If there are individuals who've decided to choose a different path, we will still try to provide support to them, and they should still be able to benefit from the general course structure in taking the next steps. If needed, we can rearrange the cohorts so that more similar people are matched.

Measuring success

- Participant feedback: 2 feedback forms at 50% and 100% completion. An automated 3,6 and 12 month evaluation.
- Feedback from guest speakers about their interactions with the participants.

Tools

Zoom for meetings, Slack for communications - and letting participants use the rooms for coworking, setting up 1-1s and so on. I plan to automate check-ins and follow-ups as much as possible. Draw on existing resources for remote work and virtual meetings such as: [Ideas for virtual EA group meetups](#)

Expected value

I expect most of the value of this bootcamp to be experimental. It will allow me to test the hypotheses I've developed from the research conducted so far. I hope the bootcamp will provide value by improving the rates that people successfully take action:

- Helping people actually take action on their career change plans
- Encourage people who might be on the fence for whatever reason to seriously consider a career change, evaluate concrete options and take action
- Help people who are stuck overcome these bottlenecks such as a lack of connections or knowledge
- Speed up the process of a career change by providing an accountability structure