Vinelight Community Funding Application (Working Doc)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Elevator pitch

"What would it be like to live in a community that is built around helping you flourish?"

An organization that runs short, medium and long-term retreats and residentials to support consistent progress in personal eudaimonia and personal growth through evidence-based community design, while working on high-impact projects in an environment of deep, meaningful connections.

We are asking for 6-12 months of funding to:

1. Finish research and planning phase to integrate best evidence and practices
2. Run ~20 person 1 month retreat/alpha test
3. Find location for 3 month residential, plan and execute
4. Continue, running next iterations of either smaller retreat and/or 3-month residential

1.2. Diagrams/visuals

Project Timeline

Initial month	Funding application submitted!	Next 1-2 months	Beyond
Ideation, brainstorming, red-teaming		Continued research & development	Iterative execution: trial communities
Research		Team building & collaborator outreach	
Creation of this funding document			

Model of our community design

What would it be like to live in a community that is built around helping you flourish?

Prerequisites & Infrastructure

Basic Needs			
Adequate space	Proximity to nature	Legal stuff	
Shared amenities	Food & internet	Money	

Culture & Structure	
Possessing, recording, and disseminating a common vision and/or goal	Making agreements as clear as possible and writing them all down
Lorecraft	Effective communication
Agreeing on a decision making process	Selecting members based on emotional maturity, self esteem, alignment with shared vision, etc
Accountability	Clear roles and responsibilities (e.g. Holacracy model)
Community health agenda (e.g. meetings)	Separation of personal and private business
Forums for relational harmony/ conflict resolution	Community formats for healthy interpersonal interaction

Attendee Skills	
Ability to resolve conflict (e.g. nonviolent communication)	Curiosity
Skills of self-awareness	Appreciation of others
Personal agency	Ability to speak the truth
Members should be personally open enough to interact with others and grow	Exploration of personal patterns and needs

The 6 Pillars/ Inputs & Outputs

Specific interventions (non-exhaustive)

Mental Health

Connection	Wellbeing		
Group work	Meditation	Emotional check-ins	
Social events	Journaling	On-site therapists	
	Breathwork		

Outputs: Eudaimonia · Belonging · Reduced burnout risk & value drift · Improved emotional regulation

Physical Health

Movement	Diet	Ergonomics	Sleep hygiene
Workout sessions	Group meals	Multiple desk options (standing, seated, yoga ball)	Temperature control
Yoga	Fitness supplements		Earplugs
Nature-based activities	Vegan options	Laptop stands & keyboards	Sleep masks
Incidental fitness			Encouraged device usage hours

Outputs: Eudaimonia · Improved fitness & longevity

Relational Flourishing

Relational training	Connection events	Celebrations, rituals and ceremonies	Forums for relational harmony
Authentic relating games etc	Group singing	Parties	Conflict resolution forums
NVC workshops	Group dancing	Welcome events	Gratitudes/ appreciations
Conflict resolutions workshops	Improv	Leaving ceremonies	
	Music making	Win celebrations	
	Crafts		

Outputs: Eudaimonia · Improved EQ & relational skills · Psychological safety · Connection & belonging · Increased self awareness · Increased empathy

Nature

Outdoor adventures	Wellness interventions	Time in nature
Campfires	Ice baths	Morning sun exposure
Hiking	Sauna	Sunrise/ sunset
Games		

Outputs: Eudaimonia · Reduced anxiety · Increased connection to the world

Impactful Work

Productivity	Non-work productivity	Improved thinking	Collaboration
Partnered coworking	Ugh busting	Rationality dojos	"Cofounder" hackathons/ speed dating
Accountability buddies	Life coaching	Career coaching/ workshops	
Hamming Circles		Reading group	Paired discussion walks
		Lightning talks	

Outputs: Eudaimonia · More work on highest impact causes · High productivity

Leisure time

Solo recharge time	Group chill time
Encouragement/ support to take solo time as needed	Movie night
	Video games
	Listening to music
All activities optional	Board games

Outputs: Eudaimonia

Eudaimonia → Maximal impact → Personal growth

[Link to PDF version](#)

Example Weekday Agenda

Start-of-day slot

07:00	08:00	Hike	or	HIIT & calisthenics
08:00	09:00	Breakfast		

Work slot 1

09:00	09:15	Outlining top work priorities for day & discussing ughs	or	Outdoor adventures
09:15	11:00	Partnered deep work coworking		

Break & work slot 2

11:00	11:30	Yoga	or	Solo recharge time
11:30	13:00	Partnered deep work coworking	or	Paired discussion walks

Lunch break

13:00	13:30	Lunch		
13:30	14:00	Yoga	or	Ice baths

Work slot 2 & recharge time

14:00	16:00	Partnered deep work coworking	or	Recharge time/ open slot
16:00	18:00	Recharge time/ open slot	or	Partnered deep work coworking

Evening

18:00	19:00	Dinner		
19:00	21:00	Authentic relating workshop	or	Meditation, journaling, breathwork
21:00	23:00	Music around campfire	or	Solo recharge time

- = relational flourishing
- = physical health
- = nature
- = impactful work
- = leisure time
- = mental health

[Link to PDF version](#)

Funding Application Doc Structure

Introduction

Elevator pitch	Diagrams/ visuals	Team members
Terminology	Uncertainties and remaining planning	

Project Outline

Problem statement	Proposal summary	Demonstrated need
Tractability/ neglectedness	Approach, goals & objectives	Impacts & benefits

Logistics

Monitoring & evaluating success	Timeline	Budget & funding models
Collaborators & partnership with other orgs	Next steps	

Risk Mitigation

Pre-mortem & risk mitigation

Community Competitors

Maximal Impact

- Prague Fall Season
- Mexico City EA Residential
- WorldAlchemy AI residency
- CEEALAR
- EA Berlin Longtermist Hub (cancelled)
- Leaf Changemakers Fellowship

■ = EA/ EA-aligned

- CFAR retreat

- Zuzalu City*

Eudaimonia

- MAPLE
- Minoma/ Mindful Nomad
- Awakeland
- Kift

- Life Itself
- Creator Cabins
- Skyway
- WifiTribe
- The Integral Centre
- VibeCamp
- Twin Oaks
- Cohere
- Liminal Village
- Bloom City
- Enspiral
- Mindvalley University

Personal Growth

- Awakened Leadership
- Tamera
- Momentum

*specifically focused on longevity: non-cause neutral

Communities: Size, Duration, Location

	Nodal (dispersed living, central gathering space)	**Nuclear** (living & gathering in close proximity/ same location)
Short-term <1 month)	Mindvalley University	Awakened Leadership VibeCamp Minoma/ Mindful Nomad Leaf Changemakers Fellowship WorldAlchemy AI residency
Medium-term (1-3 months)	Life Itself Prague Fall Season Mexico City EA Residential	Zuzalu City
Permanent	Bloom City The Neighbourhood SF The Neighbourhood NYC	Skyway Creator Cabins The Integral Centre MAPLE Twin Oaks Enspiral CEEALAR

Link to PDF with links

1.3. Team Members
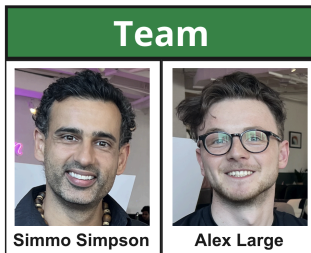
Simmo Simpson

[LinkedIn](#)

Previous roles:
- **Alvea**, In-House Life Coach, Support and Wellbeing Team, and Executive Assistant to COO (2022)
- **Authentic Revolution** (leading Authentic Relating organization), Ops, Research, Communication (2020-21)
- **Rethink Charity**, Ops and Fundraising (2018-20)
- OG **EA Taiwan** Organizer (2016-17)

Skills and experience:
- *Life Coaching* (2021~)
- *Relational Facilitation* (2020~)
- *Community building and events organization* experience for over 10 years
- Contributed to *tribe-sized groups* for weeks, months+ multiple times
- *Network* of connection in the realm of AI, EA, relational facilitation, coaching, & related domains is a resource for growing both the community and the core team

Immersive Groups:
> *Simmo has been part of large immersive communities multiple times over the last 15 years. He's always been drawn to cultivating connected, goal-focused immersive groups. He's seen what works and what doesn't and has a strong intuitive grasp of how to design a place that allows all people to feel welcomed and supported.*
> *Here are some of his experiences of immersive group living:*

- CEEALAR/EA Hotel: 9.5 months, 24/7 covid bubble, ~50 housemates (~15 at a time)
- Disaster Relief work in the Philippines: ~4 months, 24/7, ~100 volunteers living in a single former school building
- Dragon boat team in Taiwan: 9 months, ~24/7 training and social life, ~70 person
- Concert tent construction: 2 months, 24/7, 10-50 people working at music festivals
- Art House Cinema team: ~1 year, most waking hours together, ~50 person team

Relational Flourishing:
> *Additionally, the cultivation of the skills and systems for relational harmony, psychological safety, support, collaboration, conflict resolution and connection have been a increasingly important to Simmo over the years:*

- **Coaching** — [Simmo has been coaching](#) since 2021, including ~a year at the EA-aligned biotech org, Alvea, on the support and Wellbeing Team, with his primary role being In-House Life Coach.
- **Authentic Relating**
  - *Authentic Revolution* — With the aim of learning more about the world of relating and seeing how it's strengths could best be leveraged for impact, after finishing work with Rethink Charity, Simmo secured a role with one of the leading Authentic Relating organizations
  - *Facilitation* — Simmo has been facilitating Authentic Relating events for the likes of CEEALAR, EA Philippines, the EA *Metta*-House in Oxford, and Rationalist men's circles

References upon request:
- Tee Barnett, Co-Founder of Rethink Charity; Tee Barnett coaching: teebarnett0883@gmail.com
- Sara Ness, Founder of Authentic Revolution: ness.sara@gmail.com
- Cate Hall, CEO, Alvea: cate.hall@alveavax.com

Alex Large

[LinkedIn](#)

Previous roles:
- **Alvea**, Head of Shared Knowledge and Process Improvement Specialist ([feedback doc](#)) (2022)
- **EA Funds**, 3-week work trial at as Process Improvement Specialist, ultimately turned down role to focus on this project
- Programmer and data analyst (~3 years)
- Bioengineering MSc, Imperial College London

Skills and experience:
- Highly competent, entrepreneurial, organized
- Exceptional at both digesting a huge amount of information during research phase and clarifying and distilling information into actionable insights during convergence phase
- Extremely high productivity & focus

Interest in project:
- Passionate about mental health and self improvement since the age of 18, slowly converging on healthy ways of being. Very excited to work with Simmo to create healthy communities for flourishing and sustainable long term impact

References upon request:
- Ethan Alley, co-CEO of Alvea: ethan.alley42@gmail.com. Letter of Recommendation has been written & is ready to be shared.
- Robert Boelkow, Head of Internal Operations, Alvea: robert.boelkow@alveavax.com

Alex and Simmo combined

- Alex and Simmo worked together at the EA-aligned startup, Alvea (Simmo primarily as in-house life coach, Alex as Head of Knowledge Management/Process Improvement Specialist)
- Their diametrically opposed traits have allowed them to work together better than any professional partnership either of them has found before.
- Simmo = divergent thinking, planning, strategy, relational skills, extroversion, facilitator, etc
- Alex = Convergent thinking, pushing the action, assimilating ideas, concise communication of complex ideas, knowledge management

1.4. Terminology

- **Eudaimonia** - the condition of human flourishing or of living well
- **Retreat vs Residential vs Community**: our labels for 3 different timescales of community
  - **Retreat**: 1-2 weeks
  - **Residential**: 1-3 months
  - **Community**: ≥1 year

1.5. Uncertainties and remaining planning

This document is the summary of an initial quick research and planning. As such we have many uncertainties we are excited to work through.

Additionally, in the next month we intend to:
- Build our team further, and connect with collaborators and advisors
- Conducting a rigorous pre-mortem, red teaming and risk mitigation process
- Searching for location and property
- Get a clearer sense of financial models for our plans

Our current plans are subject to change - this document outlines our current understanding.

Project Timeline

Initial month	Funding application submitted!	Next 1-2 months	Beyond
Ideation, brainstorming, red-teaming		Continued research & development	Iterative execution: trial communities
Research		Team building & collaborator outreach	
Creation of this funding document			
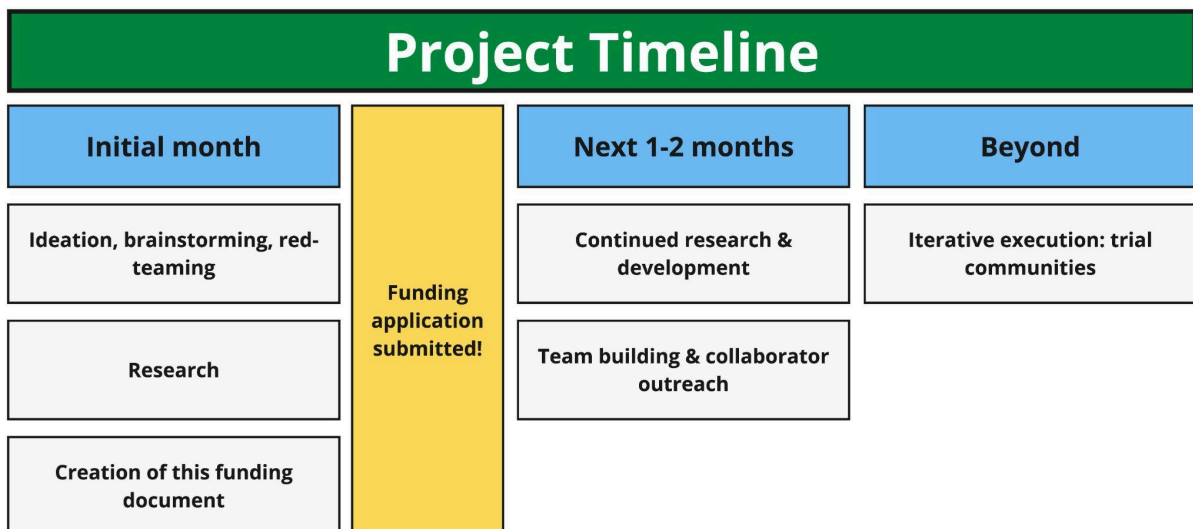
2. PROJECT OUTLINE

2.1. Problem statement

(A) Pursuit of impact often leads to reduced wellbeing which leads to burnout & value drift

A common criticism of the Effective Altruism community in post-EAs and others, and a common experience for EAs, is that pursuing impact is detrimental to the personal wellbeing of those pursuing it. The general impression is that in order to maximize impact, people have to make choices that **reduce their wellbeing**.

From Tyler Alterman's [EA forum post](#):

> I didn't want to be Bad. So I needed to spend all my time becoming Good. There was no time for other seemingly meaningful pursuits. Art, relationships, and so on – these apparent ends-in-themselves would need to be cast aside, or become means to serve my moral obligation, like coal that feeds a furnace.

Simmo's experience interacting with almost every EA he has coached, dozens of attendees at CFAR retreat, and living at the EA Hotel for 9.5 months, was that almost everyone was wrestling with the **dichotomy** of wanting to be maximally impactful and wanting to have a satisfying life, with the pursuit of impact reducing their life satisfaction, causing stress, sacrifices, jobs they didn't want to do, living in places they didn't want to be, working in a way that was taking all their energy, and causing their lives to go out of balance.

This phenomenon typically leads to one of three typical outcomes:

1. People **abandon** the pursuit of maximal impact, mistakenly believing it is not possible to also have maximal personal eudaimonia.
2. People feel **significantly suboptimal eudaimonia**, sacrificing their wellbeing at the altar of impact.
3. People find a way to **balanced flourishing**: doing what they can to have as much positive impact as possible while also living deeply satisfying lives of eudaimonia, personal growth and impact.

In addition to these imbalances being a less pleasant way to live, it also has serious risks to impact such as:

- Value drift with people just shifting to less impactful work
- A growing number of anti-EA calls to abandon the pursuit of maximal impact and avoid EA
- Burnout and struggles with mental health

Sources:
- [EA 2021 mental health survey](#)
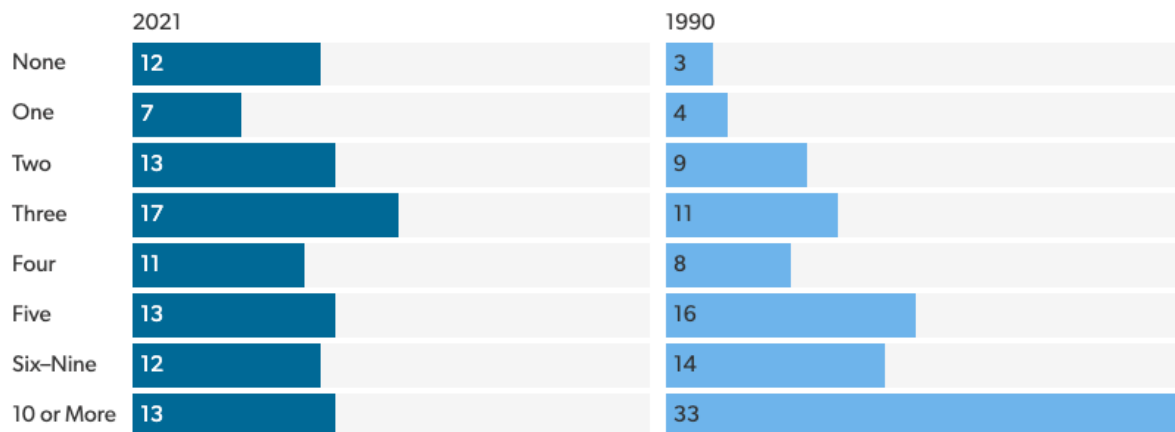- [Some mental health resources tailored for EAs](#)

- [How do we create a culture of ambition without deteriorating the community's mental health?](#)
- [EA Survey 2018 Series: How Long Do EAs Stay in EA?](#)
- [Empirical data on value drift](#)
- [Tyler Alterman, Effective altruism in the garden of ends](#)

(B) Friendship crisis, loneliness epidemic, community is core to maximizing eudaimonia

Statistics show that people have fewer friends now than they did in the past. For example, from The State of American Friendship: Change, Challenges, and Loss - American Survey Centre, 49% of Americans say they have less than 4 close friends (see image).

The Number of Close Friendships That Americans Have Has Declined Over the Past Several Decades

Percentage of Americans who say they have the following number of close friends, not counting their relatives . . .

	2021	1990
None	12	3
One	7	4
Two	13	9
Three	17	11
Four	11	8
Five	13	16
Six–Nine	12	14
10 or More	13	33

Creator Cabins:
> *Americans are currently less happy with their lives than they've been in 50 years. There seem to be two main causes: increasing loneliness and decreasing standard of living.*

Admittedly, these figures will cover all age groups, but YouGov published data in 2019 (Millennials are the loneliest generation):

> *"Millennials are also more likely than older generations to report that they have no acquaintances (25% of Millennials say this is the case), no friends (22%), no close friends (27%), and no best friends (30%)".*

EAs often prioritize impact above other things, which in turn leads them to have less time to cultivate the most supportive long-term friendships and relationships or find time and forums for optimal growth. From the EA forum post Friendship Forever (new EA cause area?):
> *"The totalizing/optimizing mindset ("doing the most good") of EAs and other intellectual types predisposes them towards "far" things (like large-scale technocratic projects aimed at reducing the suffering of faceless future beings) over "near" things like friendship and sports."*
> *"Maybe I'm overreacting here, but I would argue that now is precisely the time for us to start overreacting, because if we don't have a "friendship crisis" now, then we sure as hell will have one in the near future."*
> *A second and more immediate cause of this budding "friendship crisis" is the rise of remote work.*

Tweet:

"Many SF communities are organized around learning or discovering new ideas (not weird), but the true friendship part feels missing. There are v few SF friends I feel like I can call or turn to or even expect to show up at an event even tho I've lived in the city for 8 yrs."

(C) Need for personal growth and support systems

Living in a healthy and intentional community with personal growth as one of its core pillars provides the optimal environment for people to have unprecedented levels of sustainable personal growth.

Throughout his coaching, every single person Simmo has coached has struggled to make the progress they want to in all areas of life. With group support and accountability, personalized coaching, productivity systems and the other components of our plan, people will have all they need to build the consistency they desire, the balance they need, and the systems and mindset to maintain progress over the long-term.

Sara Ness, the CEO of Authentic Revolution, Simmo's former manager, and a key influence, wrote the thesis "Onwards to Utopia - Practical Models for Building Intentional Communities." Below are some relevant quotes.

> *"Research shows that people with healthy social connections live longer, are more resistant to stress and illness, and have improved immune systems. Living together also decreases feelings of loneliness and depression. The number of social connections we experience on a regular basis has dropped dramatically in the last few decades"*

> *"Longterm members of community agree that most people tend to mature through community living. Receiving feedback from other members on personal behaviors, and experiencing the communication skills modeled by more experienced residents, can help new communitarians expand their range of situational response. Christian calls this the "rockpolisher" effect: living in community, our rough edges grind up against each other continually, until they are worn smooth by contact with others' edges.*

> *"Living in community raises situations that we never have to deal with alone. We get the chance to witness the impact that our interactions have on others, to hear their feedback on our gifts and weaknesses, and to discover who we really are and what we really want."*

> ***"In the right kind of community, there's really nowhere to hide anymore, and I think there's something beautiful about that . . .you live with a bunch of mirrors, and . . . to the degree that you want to evolve, the space is 100% welcoming of that."***

2.2. Proposal summary

We are proposing running retreats and residentials with a focus on:
1. Maximal impact
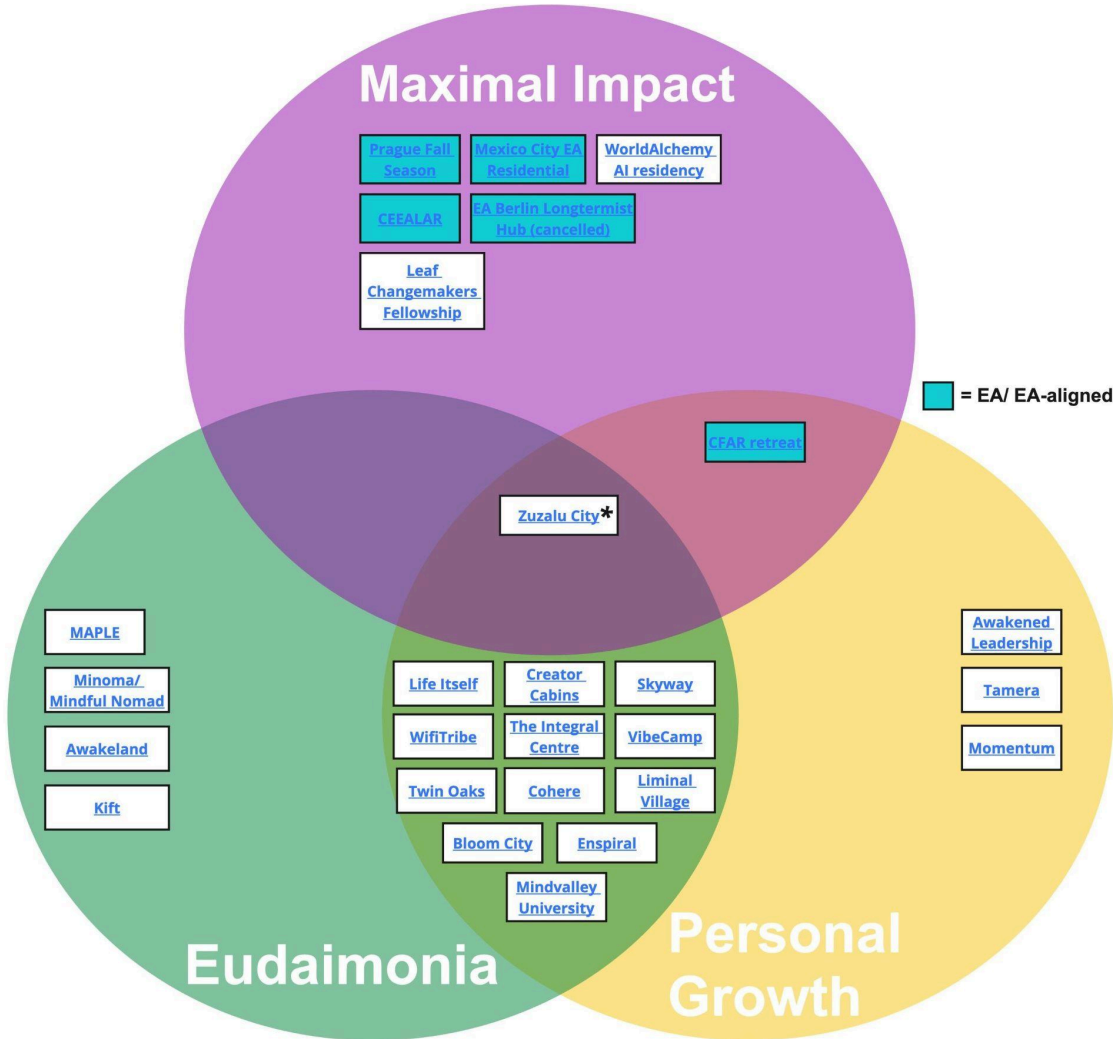2. Eudaimonia
3. Self improvement

We believe that we will be the only group in existence that organizes retreats and communities that prioritize maximal impact, eudaimonia and self improvement.

Other groups such as the EA Hotel, Prague Fall Season, The Neighbourhood in New York, LifeItself in Berlin etc typically only explicitly focus on a subset of these categories. (Note - with the caveat of Zuzalu City, but this is extremely exclusive and focused on longevity research) (see below diagram).

We are still in the planning phases and are investigating communities with a few key variables:
1. **Time scales**:
    a. 1-2 weeks ("**retreats**")
    b. 1-3 months ("**residential**")
    c. ≥1 year ("**community**")
2. **Density**:
    a. Multiple buildings/dispersed living, with a central meeting space ("**nodal**") (similar to Prague Fall Season)
    b. Dense, exclusive community or single building ("**nuclear**")
3. **Rural vs city**:
    a. City living changes accessibility of nature, but could be less logistically complex and more convenient

Community Competitors

Maximal Impact

Prague Fall Season

Mexico City EA Residential

WorldAlchemy AI residency

CEEALAR

EA Berlin Longtermist Hub (cancelled)

Leaf Changemakers Fellowship

= EA/ EA-aligned

CFAR retreat

Zuzalu City*

Eudaimonia

MAPLE

Minoma/ Mindful Nomad

Awakeland

Kift

Life Itself

Creator Cabins

Skyway

WifiTribe

The Integral Centre

VibeCamp

Twin Oaks

Cohere

Liminal Village

Bloom City

Enspiral

Mindvalley University

Personal Growth

Awakened Leadership

Tamera

Momentum

*specifically focused on longevity: non-cause neutral

Long term community scalability "moonshot"

For maximum long-term impact, we want to build our communities with scalability in mind, so that we can reach the maximum number of high-impact individuals.

Two long-term, moonshot ideas for reaching the maximum number of people:

1. **Habitation**

   Building a permanent village, town or neighborhood community for life-long living for people who want to live in an environment to maximally support their wellbeing, personal growth and impact

   - The habitation would additionally act to
     - Funnel in new retreat participants and core organizers for retreats, residentials and the community.

2. **Consultancy**

   Being the designers, exemplars and consultants for replication of the core components of our community (the Starbucks of impact-, growth- and eudaimonia-focused intentional communities)

   - The consultancy would intersect with the many new retreats, residentials and communities, current and nascent to:
     - Act as a centralized entity for collaborative growth and resource sharing and curated information on setting up retreats, residentials and other community projects
     - Source the best bits of other projects for x-risk reduction and wellbeing maximization to iterate our approach for maximal eudaimonia, impact, and personal growth (crucially, we've found no group pursuing x-risk reduction and wellbeing maximization in parallel).
     - Facilitate a community and system of support (such as monthly town halls, workshops, webinars etc)

2.3. Demonstrated need

Evidence of market

Impact-Focused Communities

EA-aligned communities/residentials already exist, such as the [CEEALAR (the EA Hotel in Blackpool)](#), [Prague Fall Season](#), and the 3-month [Mexico City fellowship](#).

Organizations also run their own internal retreats (such as the Alvea quarterly retreats), and [Canopy Retreats](#) exists to outsource the organization of retreats for EA orgs.

Most EAs are not in EA orgs (and some of those that are might like a coworking retreat away from their usual colleagues and collaborators). Thus, demand is strong but nobody is catering for the many thousands of impact focused people who don't have access to EA or other impact focused retreats.

The duration and attendance of these short- and long-stay residentials is evidence of sizable desire for wellbeing and impact focused residential.

As people increasingly become remote and accustomed to the benefits of remote work, this market will continue to expand.

Additionally, Simmo and Alex's anecdotal experience of the EA Hotel, Prague Fall Season, FTX Bahamas, and of remote work more generally, give them the clear sense that people have a longing for communities that stay together long-term and have the infrastructure to support both impactful work and wellbeing.

Eudaimonia and/or personal growth focused

See our competitor analysis venn diagram - there are many intentional communities, mindfulness and yoga retreats, leadership retreats etc that cater to a subset of improved wellbeing and/or personal growth.

2.4. Tractability & neglectedness

Our niche and what we offer that competitors don't

How we are different

We have found a large number of retreats, residentials and communities. None of them address all of the core needs we see as essential for creating sustainable, long-lasting high-impact, personal growth and eudaimonia.

- Having a major focus on designing the community to **minimize the risk of failure** (e.g. avoiding EA Hotel-like community attrition and dissatisfaction, Aurea legal failings, etc)
- **Sustainable impact through a focus on the wellbeing** of the residents
- Facilitated coworking (amongst other things) for maximal **productivity**
- Long-term goal: setting up a **long-term community** to support people in not needing to continually find a new set up
- Long-term goal: replicable (**scalable**) design (so orders of magnitude more can be reached)

What we understand that we believe other communities do not

Deliberate planning and ownership around creating an optimal environment across all 6 axes of mental health, physical health, relational flourishing, nature, impactful work and leisure time, with an engaging agenda of activities, often facilitated by skilled practitioners, will lead to the healthiest community, highest wellbeing, highest productivity, and most personal growth.

- **Other communities** either
    - Fail to optimize for impact
    - Or if they try to optimize for impact, they fail to understand either
        - That rigorously, intentionally designing how to maximize eudaimonia is essential to long-term impact maximization and sustainability
        - How to effectively design a community to maximize eudaimonia
- **On impact**
    - We are well versed in the EA and Rationality canons, having lead EA local groups, worked for EA orgs, completed training in Rationality, and attended or run dozens of workshops on the likes of cause prioritization, scope insensitivity, imposter syndrome, burnout, etc
- **On eudaimonia**
    - We have worked on wellbeing support in the EA startup environment; run dozens of training workshops on relational skills; coached for 100s of hours supporting people to have a life of balanced flourishing
    - Reviewed literature on
        - Cultivating psychological wellbeing and eudaimonia
        - Psychological safety
        - Deepening relational connections and harmony and mitigating relational risk

- ■ Cultivating a regime for long-term health and physical wellbeing
- **General**
  - ○ We've lived in many communities and seen the above failure modes again and again, inside and outside of EA
  - ○ We care about maximal impact
  - ○ We see how cultivating and environment where all community members are supported in cultivating eudaimonia is massively neglected, tractable, and incredibly significant in
    - ■ Individual wellbeing
    - ■ Individual productivity
    - ■ Reducing community existential failure modes (e.g. facilitating conflict resolution)
    - ■ Multiplying the potential for impact by supporting the creation of a harmonious community, inhabited by people who care about creating big positive impact in the world

Why we think other communities don't offer what we will offer
(I.e. If our community niche/ idea is so great, why is no one else doing it? Sign that it's a bad idea/ not feasible? (E.g. Paul Graham's thing of "if your business idea has no competitors, maybe there's a good reason))

Why Impact focused communities don't focus on eudaimonia and personal growth

- "[EA is about maximization, and maximization is perilous](#)" (EA forum post from Holden Karnofsky)
- They fail to identify the importance of eudaimonia in cultivating sustainable impact
- Haven't had time or resources to bringing experts in to cultivate eudaimonia and personal growth Vs just creating a minimal viable environment without a more holistic approach to the cultivating and sustainability of impact

Non-impact focused communities
- By definition, those not who don't identify cause neutral maximal impact cultivation as a core value, don't have maximizing impact as a core value or output of their communities.

2.5. Approach, goals & objectives

Community model & implementation plan
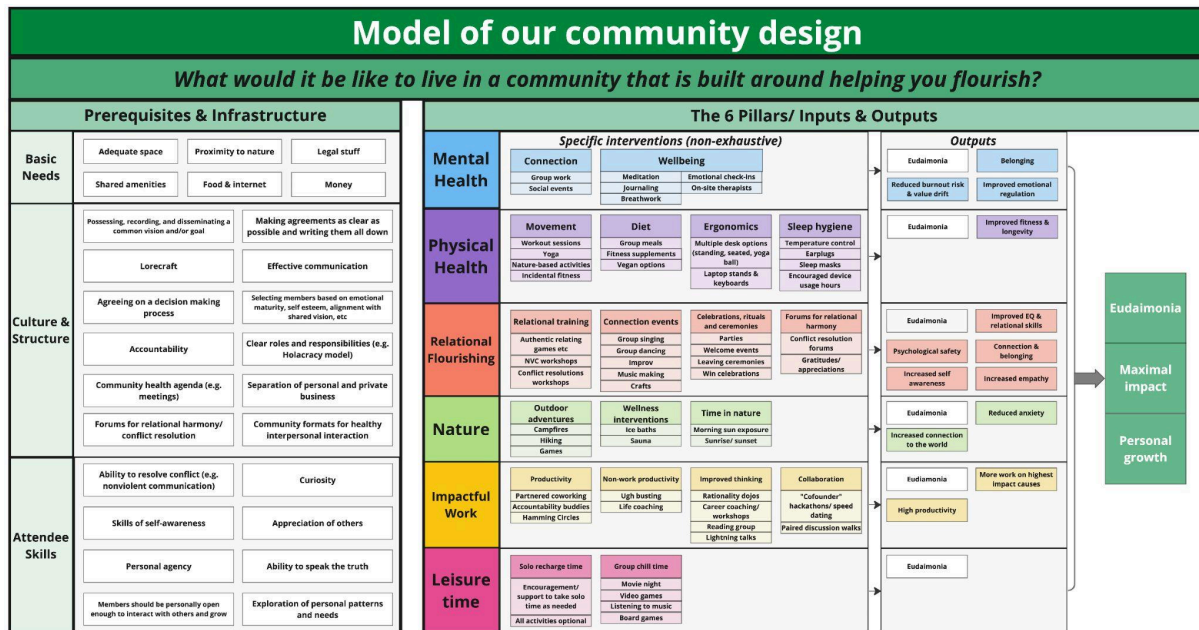
[Link to PDF version](#)

We want to create an environment where people can remain value aligned by allowing people to not just live dissatisfying unbalanced lives but rather the opposite - joy, flourishing, connection, with support for "time-economical maximal impact work environment.

See the visual model for an overview!
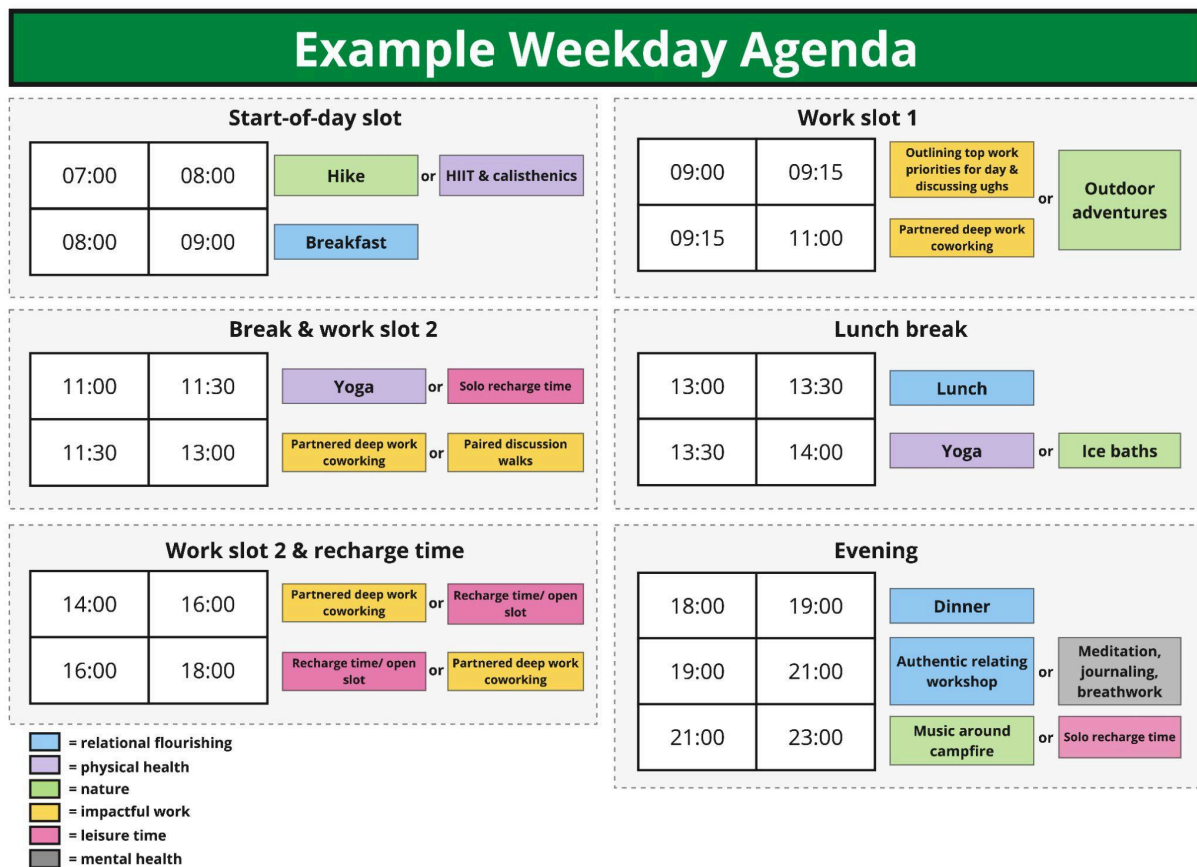
Initial community sizes

Over the next 6-12 months, we are aiming to:
1. Finish research and planning phase to integrate best evidence and practices
2. Run ~20 person 1 month retreat /alpha test
3. Find location for 3 month residential, plan and execute
4. Continue, running next iterations of either smaller retreat and/or 3-month residential

Other models we're pulling from

Our community model is built from learnings from:
1. Sara Ness' thesis "Onwards to Utopia: Practical Models for Building Intentional Communities", which proposed a unified community model based on her experience in multiple successful intentional communities and other models
2. Creator Cabins resources, in particular "Building Cabin's Network City" and "The Pyramid of Coliving Needs"
3. LifeItself, in particular the "Guiding Purpose" document
4. Microsolidarity
5. Other codified culture documents such as Burning Man's 10 Principles

Typical day agenda

Example Weekday Agenda

Start-of-day slot

07:00	08:00	Hike **or** HIIT & calisthenics
08:00	09:00	Breakfast

Work slot 1

09:00	09:15	Outlining top work priorities for day & discussing ughs
09:15	11:00	Partnered deep work coworking **or** Outdoor adventures

Break & work slot 2

11:00	11:30	Yoga **or** Solo recharge time
11:30	13:00	Partnered deep work coworking **or** Paired discussion walks

Lunch break

13:00	13:30	Lunch
13:30	14:00	Yoga **or** Ice baths

Work slot 2 & recharge time

14:00	16:00	Partnered deep work coworking **or** Recharge time/ open slot
16:00	18:00	Recharge time/ open slot **or** Partnered deep work coworking

Evening

18:00	19:00	Dinner
19:00	21:00	Authentic relating workshop **or** Meditation, journaling, breathwork
21:00	23:00	Music around campfire **or** Solo recharge time

- = relational flourishing
- = physical health
- = nature
- = impactful work
- = leisure time
- = mental health

[Link to pdf version](#)

Potential facilitators

We're at various stages of talking with dozens of professional and personal connections across the domains of our plan. Although it's very early stages, we're hearing significant enthusiasm from a wide range of parties.

Target audience

"Come for the impact support, stay to feel like a full human being", or vice versa

Who will stay at our retreats and residentials?

- **AI-X-risk reduction people** (target of ≥30%)
  - We will soon pursue avenues to recruit this many AI-x-risk reduction people
    - worst-case scenario: community is full of impact-focused people
- **Facilitators** of the kinds of workshops and activities our retreats and residentials will contain
- People **wanting supportive community** while doing impactful work
- **Remote workers**
  - Who want to contribute and be part of a community of eudaimonia and personal growth
  - Who want to find ways to be more impactful
- People **not currently working** who would like to live in environment to cultivate personal growth and eudaimonia

The above list is indicative but non-exhaustive

Example module, workshops and/or entire retreat focus

- Overcoming/avoiding burnout
- Impostor syndrome realignment
- Value drift examination
- Cultivating Psychological Safety
- Sustainable Mental Health maintenance
- Sustainable physical health maintenance
- Joyful, consistent productivity
- Cultivating meaningful connections
- Getting needs met and holding boundaries
- Connecting to nature for stress reduction and cultivating happiness
- …

Orgs

- We will be a fully functional retreat specialist which EA and EA-adjacent orgs can plug straight into, thus reducing retreat planning up to 100%

Individuals

- Longtermists and Effective Altruists (EAs)
- EA Nomads
  - Evidence of interest
    - EA nomads group (238 members)
    - EA Anywhere (a group for EAs who don't have a local community)

- - People interested in EA without an EA community
      - ~600 FB group members, ~3k Slack members
    - EA Gathertown
    - EA FocusMate
- Relational experts (Facilitators of AR, NVC, conflict resolution etc)
- Alumni of CEEALAR, Prague Fall Season, FTX Bahamas, etc
- People from sizeable EA-Adjacent groups and communities such as TPOT (1000s)
- 30%+ AI
  - Evidence of interest: AI attendees at other retreats, residentials and communities (CEEALAR, Prague Fall Season, FTX Bahamas etc)
  - AI-specific retreats: World Alchemy, AI Safety Camp (remote), various international AI meetups
- Smart agentic people open to impact
  - Evidence of interest
    - See "personal growth" and "maximal impact" sections of competitor venn diagram

Their Needs

- See sections on need for wellbeing, eudaimonia, increased impact support in EA

How we'll find attendees

Warm leads

Attendees and residents of the likes of

- CEEALAR
- Trajen House, Oxford
- EAGs and EAGx's
- Berlin EA/Rationality Summer Camp
- Prague Fall
- FTX Bahamas coworking
- The other communities in our list [link]
- Past colleagues from Rethink Charity and Alvea and general
- Personal network in EA, Rationality, digital nomad etc
- Wider communities (Digital Nomad, Tech, Coaching, Relational, ..)

Social Media Presence

Alongside the building of the retreats, residentials and community, other main focus will be building a high-reach platform to spread the most effective relational skills for wellbeing and impact.

- We have a marketing consultant with an excellent track record
- As our online reach grows, it will act increasingly as a funnel for attendees who want to maximize their impact and eudaimonia.

2.6. Impacts & benefits

As in the visual model, we envision 3 primary outcomes of our community design:
   a. More impactful work
   b. Eudaimonia (& its benefits)
   c. Personal growth

(A) More impactful work

Impactful Work	Productivity	Non-work productivity	Improved thinking	Collaboration
	Partnered coworking	Ugh busting	Rationality dojos	"Cofounder" hackathons/ speed dating
	Accountability buddies	Life coaching	Career coaching/ workshops	
	Hamming Circles		Reading group	Paired discussion walks
			Lightning talks	

The work slots in the agenda will be run by an "Impactful Work Facilitator" who will own this domain, facilitating the areas above such as coworking sessions, accountability buddy setup, "Cofounder" nights etc.

In addition to this, we see how living in a community leads to emergent projects and people expanding their networks. To amplify this we'll run cofounder socials & project generation sessions (e.g. project "speed-dating").

See CEEALAR's outputs page as an example of outputs from an impact focused community.

What

- Increased productivity
- Work on higher impact areas

How

- Deep-work, coworking sessions
   - Non-coercive: bad to force everyone to work at the same time and take breaks at the same time but having scheduled sessions which many people opt into/out of, as a norm, creates a support network for those who want it
- Rationality dojos
- Collaboration mixers
- Cause selection coaching and workshops
- Career guidance coaching and workshops
- Supported, coordinated regeneration time (the non-work activities of the community)
   - See other sections on how prioritizing eudaimonia will help with productivity, prevent burnout etc

(B) Eudaimonia & its benefits

- Improved subjective wellbeing
- Improved mental health
- Reduced burnout and value drift

- Long-term productivity

From Creator Cabins:

> *"Living together in community is a deeply natural thing for humans to do. This truth is so banal that it's easy to forget how far from it most of us choose to live. Most people prioritize houses with cars in the suburbs instead of community, nature, and co-creation. It doesn't have to be this way—you can choose who is around your campfire.*
>
> *Spend any time in a well-organized coliving community and it's immediately evident how different of a lifestyle it can be for human connection, novelty, and happiness."*

Structural support has been shown to buffer the harmful effects of mental illness.

We are capable of creating an environment where people can remain value aligned/avoid value drift, by supporting people in both:
1. Cultivating joy, flourishing, connection with their lives and their work (researching from the heart)
2. Leveraging "time-economical maximal impact work environment"

(C) Personal growth

- A failure mode of EA residentials and communities such as Prague Fall Season and CEEALAR is that neither personal growth nor relational health are sufficiently supported, and rather, many people fail to make progress with personal growth or make far less progress than they could.
- Many, especially those who could most value from developing their interpersonal skills, regress into isolation without adequate support to integrate or grow.

Supporting personal growth is a key value and value proposition of our community

- Increased autonomy and skill for residents in:
  - Emotional self regulation
  - Emotional and physical health
  - Productivity
  - Impact
  - Relational flourishing
- Retention of personal growth wins and ongoing growth
  - Support systems and strategies to ensure residents integrate and retain the learnings and ways of being related to their personal growth (Integration session near end of retreats and residentials; Intentional Society model for monthly support for each cohort; …)

Sara Ness quotes:

> *"Living alone isolates us from our own personal growth, and from our ability to empathically relate with other peoples' needs and styles of life."*
>
> *"Coliving mandates a willingness to look at one's own failings, and even to change one's patterns of behavior when they bump up against the good of the group as a whole"*
>
> *"Long-term members of community agree that most people tend to mature through community living"*

From [Creator Cabins testimonial](#):

> *"He also felt himself open up to the rest of the community. He learned how to give and receive platonic physical affection, gestures that had been difficult for him in the past. Even small things like folks casually checking in with him, made all the difference. He recounts, "Instead of waiting for people to prove themselves to me, this experience helped me build the habit of trusting people by default." He credits Montaia's caretaker for helping the residents get under each other's skin in the best way. "That was very intentional on Kaela's part. She facilitated exercises to get us beyond surface level stuff.""*

Testimonials from people living in Intentional Communities

LifeItself "[Celebrating a Year of Residencies](#)":

We have noticed some common effects among participants:

- Joy of doing things together
- Reconciliation with one's place in the world
- Self love
- Legitimacy of doing without having to save the world
- Increased energy
- Re-evaluation of identity
- Sense of being part of a supportive whole
- Growing sense of compassion for self, others and the world
- Willingness to contribute in an adjusted way

(D) Redirecting resources to AI X-risk reduction and other high impact causes

"As our reach grows, we intend to use our amplified influence to bring in the top domain experts and redirect their work towards AI x-risk reduction orgs to help those orgs radically improve their internal coordination and external communication"

This is not central to our pitch but something we envisage as potentially tractable and high impact as we progress.

By bringing people with the skills to support mental health, relational skills etc into the retreats and residentials, they gain an opportunity to support people working on AI x-risk and other high impact areas, thus effectively increasing the resources aimed at those areas.

- **Indications of tractability**
    - Relational facilitators are now working with AI and other high impact orgs on internal communication, psychological safety, emotional and mental health etc
    - Growing mainstream concern about risks of AGI
- **Indications of impact**
    - Echo chambers and entrenched communication are evident in public discourse between accelerationists and those worried about AI x-risks. We've seen little evidence of mediation or communication experts seem to be aiding this discourse. This seems shockingly bad.
    - Support teams and individuals are highly sought after in EA and beyond (eg long waiting lists to see EA therapists such as Eva Tur)

(E) Measurably increase the effectiveness of organizations working on the world's most pressing problems

In service of greater effectiveness, we will aim to support residents in cultivating psychological safety within the organizations they run and work in
[Alex and Simmo designed a process for implementing and monitoring this at Alvea](#) (*[Supporting and cultivating a culture of maximal psychological Safety](#)*). We have personal and professional connections who do this full-time at medium and large sized tech companies, both in-house and as consultants

- We will share the evidence on why this is potentially extremely impactful
- We will run workshops (and potentially entire retreats) on this
- Our retreats, residentials and communities will have psychological safety as an overt core principle in how they are run, allowing participants to participate in the 'how' and 'why' in action
- We create and share clear manuals on how to bring more psychological safety to orgs
- Additionally, for many, this will not be their first time hearing about the efficacy of psych safety (lots of the ppl I discuss it with are well aware)

# (F) Less value drift, burnout and impostor syndrome

Being surrounded by people focusing on impact can increase people's engagement both immediately and long-term and reinvigorate those suffering from uncertainty, burnout and a lack of value-aligned social support. Additionally, we'll host workshops to support people in these areas if needed/desired.

From EA 2020 survey - people involved in in-person group are more engaged (obvs)

Group membership by self-reported engagement
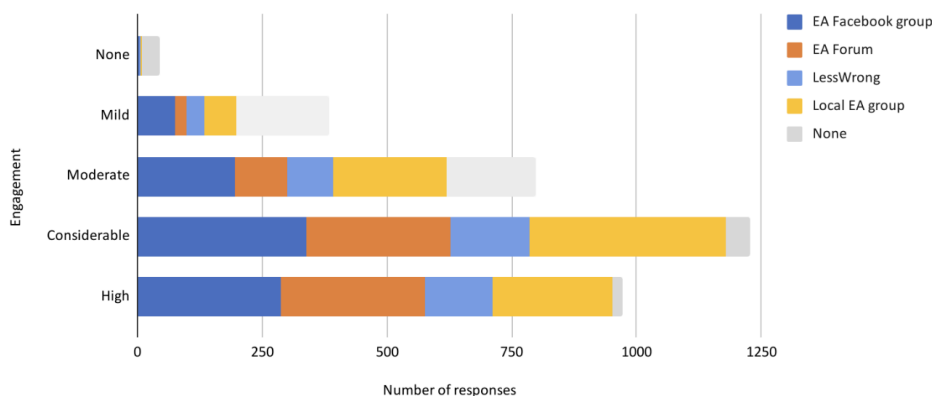
Local EA group, EA Facebook group, EA Forum, None and LessWrong
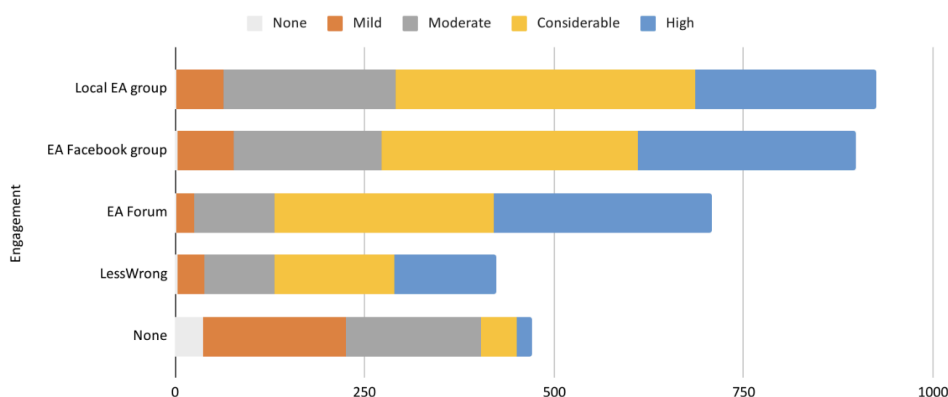
(G) Teaching community health

Post-FTX crash, Ben Todd outlined his updates on the Effective Altruism community. Vinelight proposition in relation to Ben Todd's points:

1. Significantly increase community members' interpersonal skills (character judgements, ability to negotiate community controversies through skillfully meditated challenging discussions and training the skills to have such conversations with empathy and collaborative intent)
2. Prioritize the creation of a community for impact focused people that feels extremely pleasant to be a part of
3. Not be "EA" but rather a place for connection, growth and wellbeing for people wanting to contribute to the biggest problems

3. LOGISTICS

3.1. Monitoring & evaluating success

We will monitor the success of our community & interventions throughout the process.

Plan for monitoring and evaluating success

Expected outcomes (short- and long-term)

- **High-impact work**
  - Change in people's productivity
  - High impact work done the wouldn't have otherwise happened
  - New projects created Vs counterfactual
- **Personal wellbeing and eudaimonia**
  - Change in people's self-assessed subjective wellbeing
- **Healthy community**
  - Number of people residents can call on in an emergency
  - Anonymized surveys, to score participants feelings of psychological safety
- **Personal Growth**
  - Progress in people key life areas
  - More constancy in long-term habits

How success will be measured and evaluated

- **High-impact work**
  - Regular surveys to assess change in productivity
  - Within- and post-residential surveys to monitor outputs and new projects
- **Personal wellbeing and eudaimonia**
  - Baseline (before residential) survey and weekly surveys throughout
- **Healthy community**
  - Anonymous surveys to assess state of community, psychological safety, desired changes etc
- **Personal Growth**
  - Anonymous surveys

Ownership and timing of evaluation

- An owner of evaluation will be assigned responsibility for managing impartial collection and processing of impact assessments over various timelines (e.g weekly, post-retreat, quarterly, annual). Some outputs might be immediately measurable while others can be tested for many months or more later
- Cost of conducting program evaluation?
  - We expect surveying and analyzing data to be take about 1-3 days of work

3.2. Tentative Timeline

May 2023 — Initial planning and grant submission

May - September — Detailed planning and team expansion

June 2023 — Finding location and final preparations for beta run

September 2023 — Beta test run for 2 weeks with 10-20 people

October 2023 — Post-Beta processing and design improvements

Nov 2023 - Jan 2024 — First full sized 3 month cohort or continued 1-2 week retreats for iterative learning and treasury expansion

2024
— Iterative improvement
— full sized 3 month cohort
— Conduct financial costing and create detailed plan for 1+ year residential community

3.3. Communities & funding model(s)

Retreats (1-2 weeks)

Funding
Initial funding
- Ticketed attendance

Route to financial scaling
- Increased ticket price
- Train more community leaders to run simultaneous retreats
- Occasional large cohort, short retreats

Initial retreat
- Duration and population: 1-2 week retreats (~15-20 ppl)
- Location, group space and housing: Unified retreat location
- Details
  - Somewhat similar to Minoma with more impact focus
- Profitable, fun and decent impact
- Similar length projects with other crossover
  - 1-2 weeks+
    - Minoma
    - LEAF changemakers fellowship
    - Mindvalley 21-day university
    - …
  - <1 week
    - Mindvaley 4-day A-fest ($4k)
    - CFAR retreats
    - VibeCamp
    - EA Summercamp
    - …

Nodal Residentials (1-3 months)

Funding
Initial funding
- Initial grant for planning and set up
- Accommodation costs covered by individual attendees
- Other costs covered by one of the following
  - Grant funding
  - Ticket price
  - Profit from shorter retreats
  - Ticketed events for non-residential community members

Route to financial scaling
- Primarily a self-funding non-profit entity?

What
- Duration and population: 1-3 month retreat (50+ ppl)
- Location: Urban
- Group space: Centralized coworking and event space
- Housing: Individual (nodes) houses/apartments (akin to Prague Fall Season, LifeItself, The Neighborhoods NYC and SF, …)

Nuclear Residential (1-3 months)

Funding

Initial funding
- Initial grant + accommodation, food etc costs covered by individual attendees

Route to financial scaling
- Primarily a self-funding non-profit entity
- Additional revenue through
    - Increased ticket price
    - Grant funding
    - Profit from shorter retreats and/or content platform
    - Ticketed events for non-residential community members

What
- Duration and population: 1-3 month retreat (50+ ppl)
- Location, group spaces and housing: Unified residential space (rural or urban)
    -

Nodal Long-term community

Funding

Initial funding
Either
- Grant funding, or
- Other paid shorter retreats

Route to financial scaling
- Primarily a self-funding non-profit entity
- With additional revenue from
    - Content, retreats of varying lengths

What
- Duration and population: Permanent (No cap on population)
- Location: Urban
- Group space: Centralized coworking and event space
- Housing: Individual (nodes) houses/apartments (akin to Prague Fall Season, LifeItself, The Neighborhoods NYC and SF, …)

Nuclear Long-term community

Funding

Initial funding

- Initial grant + costs covered by individual attendees

Route to financial scaling

- Primarily a self-funding non-profit entity
- Additional revenue through
  - Increased ticket price
  - Grant funding
  - Profit from shorter retreats
  - Ticketed events for non-residential community members

What

- Duration and population: Permanent (up to Dunbar's number sized (150))
- Location, group spaces and housing: Unified residential space (rural or urban)

Funding Request

Funding for Alex & Simmo runways

Core request

- £3k a month living costs each (post-tax) = ~£4k a month each
  - 20% LLC tax, 16% on student loans & national insurance contributions
- = ~£96k total for 1 year for Alex & Simmo or ~£48k for 6 months for Alex & Simmo
- This funding finance Alex and Simmo to work full-time on the projects herein

Ideal

- Grant funding to cover salaries and expenses until we have enough income to cover costs and trajectory indicating that we will soon be in profit
- Income from running 1-2 week retreats
- Income from running 1-3 month residentials

1-2 week retreat

- Minoma (8 day retreat)
    - 6-8 hours per day for ppl to do their own work
    - EUR 1700 for private room | EUR 1250 shared room | EUR 2400 shared double

1-3 month residential

- LifeItself (participants pay EUR X/3 months)
- Noting that these two Portuguese communities (below) might be a bit woo but act as potentially useful models
    - Awakeland (Meditation Tantra Yoga community in Portugal) runs frequent week long retreats with external facilitation
        - Profit model - bring facilitators to run events, external people come in and participate, take a fee
    - Tamara Peace Research & Education Center in Portugal
- Auroville (experimental township in India (~3k people))
    - One of the oldest large ICs in the world, thousands of residents maybe
    - Residents pay. Also paid day visits

1+ year residentials

- CEEALAR - all food and board covered by EA grant funding (~$5k/person per year)
- The Neighborhood; Bloom Cities; … — Costs paid for by residents
- Creator Cabins — Costs paid for by residents

3.4. Collaborators & partnership with other orgs

Activity facilitators

- Recruit facilitators who
    - Fit with the core ethos of the community
    - Collectively are able to provide guidance for the core components (PRIMOL - Physical, Relational, Impact, Mental health, Outdoors, Leisure)
- Recruit facilitators to maximize coverage of core components
    - Have multiple specialist for domains where possible to protect against facilitators dropping out
    - Have an agile system of programming, designing the schedule depending on who is present

4. RISK MITIGATION

4.1. Pre-mortem & risk mitigation

(Also pulling from post-mortems)

📄 Community pre-mortem

This doc lists a preliminary assessment of potential risks.

One of our core tasks prior to the community launch will be to conduct a rigorous pre-mortem, red teaming and risk mitigation process.

Although some risk mitigation suggestions have been made in the doc, this process is yet to be conducted with rigor.