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The GiveWell Blog



[Draft] GiveWell's plans for 2019

Previous Post

April 24, 2019 (updated on: April 24, 2019) | by [Catherine Hollander](#)

Our top priorities this year support our goals to (a) increase the impact of the funds we direct and (b) increase our money moved. In 2019, we are focused on:

- Building research capacity. ([More](#))
- Experimenting with approaches to outreach to find ones that we can scalably use to drive additional money moved. ([More](#))
- Exploring new areas of research. ([More](#))
- Improving GiveWell's organizational strength. ([More](#))
- Ongoing research. ([More](#))

Building research capacity

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Allocation of discretionary funds from Q4 2018

March 2019 open thread

What is it like to work at GiveWell?

Announcing a call for grant applicants in Southeast Asia and Bangladesh

We **announced earlier this year** our plans to hire researchers at three levels of seniority, listed here from most junior to most senior: Research Analyst, Senior Research Analyst, and Senior Fellow. Our goal is to have 3-5 signed offer letters in hand from new research staff by the end of 2019.

We're hoping to that additional research capacity will enable us to **expand the scope of GiveWell's research**, with the aim of finding opportunities that are more cost-effective than our **current top charities**. We're planning to roughly double the size of the **research team** over the next few years.

Outreach experimentation

We plan to expand our outreach to current and potential donors going forward, with the aim of increasing the amount of money we direct to our recommended charities. As part of this work, we recently **hired Stephanie Stojanovic** as our first Major Gifts Officer. Our goal is to decide by the end of the 1st quarter of 2020 whether to scale our staff capacity further in the area of major gifts, based on Stephanie's initial work.[\[1\]](#)

We're also planning to conduct experiments in 2019 related to how we message about our work to reach more people. These experiments could include work on search engine optimization and building landing pages that aim to communicate what GiveWell does and why it's valuable, among other possibilities. We expect to have results by early 2020, as the bulk of donations we receive are made in December.

Finally, we're planning to search for a Director of Outreach to oversee work across outreach domains (including major gifts, donor retention, advertising, marketing, and written communications). We guess there is a 50 percent chance we make a hire for this role in 2019.

Exploring new areas of research

How GiveWell's research is evolving

Schedule a quick call to make giving easier

December 2018 open thread

Staff members' personal donations for giving season 2018

We've added more options for cryptocurrency donors

Response to concerns about GiveWell's spillovers analysis

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As mentioned above, we're in the early stages of expanding the scope of GiveWell's research. We plan to look into several new areas in 2019, including public health regulation and possible paths to support government aid agencies.

This work is new for GiveWell, and as noted in our 2018 review post, we failed to make as much progress as we hoped in 2018 on our work on public health regulation. In 2019, we're aiming to get substantially closer to the point where we have the staff structure to support grantmaking in new areas, though given how early we are in this work, we don't yet have concrete goals we're confident that we'll achieve.

A stretch goal for 2019 is to settle on a structure that we believe will support grantmaking in public health regulation and begin making grants in that area.

We also plan to continue our investigation into possible paths to support government aid agencies; in particular, we plan to complete an investigation into an opportunity to do so in the area of results-based financing.

Improving GiveWell's organizational strength

We expect to need additional operations capacity to maintain critical functions as GiveWell grows and to improve the organization going forward. We plan to hire one Operations Associate this year to assist with general operations needs, such as improving HR practices and facilitating organizational learning opportunities.

We plan to hire many new staff over the coming years. In preparation, we plan to improve our procedures and information for recruiting, vetting, and onboarding staff to GiveWell this year, such as by improving inclusive recruitment practices, tailoring the substantive content of our onboarding

JAMES (GIVEWELL)
COMMENTED ON

What is it like to work at GiveWell?

JOHN COMMENTED ON

What is it like to work at GiveWell?

SAM COMMENTED ON

Allocation of discretionary funds from Q4 2018

WAYNE CHANG
COMMENTED ON

Allocation of discretionary funds from Q4 2018

ISABEL ARJMAND
COMMENTED ON

Allocation of discretionary funds from Q4 2018

MILAN GRIFFES
COMMENTED ON

March 2019 open thread

JOSH (GIVEWELL)
COMMENTED ON

activities, and taking a more employee-centric approach to onboarding. We also plan to improve our systems for soliciting feedback from staff about how GiveWell can improve as an organization, in order to give management better insight into how things are going.

To accommodate our planned expansion, we plan to move to a new office that better suits our expected size and staff requirements.

Ongoing research

We have a number of ongoing research projects, detailed [here](#). These include:

- Completing a full draft of qualitative assessments of our top charities.

In theory, we aim to maximize one thing with our top charity recommendations—total improvement in well-being per dollar spent—and this is what our cost-effectiveness estimates intend to capture. In practice, there are costs and benefits that we do not observe and are not estimated in our models, and so we allow for qualitative adjustments to affect our recommendations. We're in the process of laying out a framework for qualitatively assessing relative organizational strength.

- Updating key inputs into our cost-effectiveness estimates, such as:
 - How we use vitamin A deficiency data.
 - Using new malaria prevalence and child mortality data.
 - Using new data to update the our estimates of costs incurred and target population reached for

March 2019 open thread

DARIO SILIĆ
COMMENTED ON

What is it like to work at GiveWell?

ODEKE NICHOLAS
EMMY COMMENTED ON

March 2019 open thread

MILAN GRIFFES
COMMENTED ON

March 2019 open thread

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five of our top charities: Malaria Consortium's seasonal malaria chemoprevention program, the Against Malaria Foundation, Helen Keller International's vitamin A supplementation program, Sightsavers' deworming program, and Evidence Action's Deworm the World Initiative.

- Better understanding the counterfactual to the work Evidence Action's Deworm the World Initiative has done in India (more information below). This goal is one we hope to achieve if we have time, but is not critical to our assessment.
- Publishing charity and intervention assessments that we completed but have not published yet. We wrote about our failure to publish research in a timely manner on [our mistakes page](#) in 2018; we plan to begin to reduce this backlog by publishing 5 shallow-level charity and intervention reports by the end of 2019.

Conclusion

The concrete goals we aim to achieve in 2019 follow. We plan to revisit this list in early 2020 to assess our progress relative to our expectations, and to publish a blog post accounting for our work:

- **Building research capacity**
 - Have 3-5 signed offer letters in hand from new research staff.
- **Outreach experimentation**
 - Decide whether to scale up Major Gifts work.

2017

2016

2015

2014

2013

2012

2011

2010

2009

2008

2007

2006

- Conduct experiments related to messaging about our work to reach more people.
- Begin search for a Director of Outreach.

- **Exploring new areas of research**
 - Look into several new areas, including public health regulation and possible paths to support government aid agencies. Get substantially closer to the point where we have the staff structure to support grantmaking in new area.
 - Stretch goal: Settle on a structure that we believe will support grantmaking in public health regulation and begin making grants in that area.

- **Improving GiveWell's organizational strength**
 - Hire one Operations Associate.
 - Improve procedures for onboarding staff to GiveWell.
 - Improve systems for soliciting feedback from staff.
 - Move to a new office.

- **Ongoing research**
 - Our full list of concrete research goals for 2019 is in [this document](#).

Notes

1. The majority of donations in support of GiveWell's recommended charities are made in the fourth quarter of the year, and we generally don't have a clear sense of the total amount given to GiveWell directly until the first quarter of the following year (and the second quarter for direct-to-charity donations that are reported to us), so we think this is the right time frame on which to assess major gifts work.

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