

COVID-19 Effects on GiveWell

Summary

This is a short document covering the major ways in which COVID-19 has affected GiveWell and our 2020 plans.

COVID-19 has had major effects on where we work (all remotely) and has modestly reduced the amount of time many staff (especially parents) can work, but we don't expect it to have major effects on GiveWell's plans for 2020 or the future.

Operating Funding

GiveWell has a substantial amount of operating reserves, and we expect that the operating funding we receive in 2020 will cover our growing expenses. Given our fundraising expectations and reserves, we plan to operate in 2020 as we planned to before COVID-19.

Attachment E provides more detail. In short, we currently project raising \$13.4 million in 2020 and spending \$11.2 million. In a severely negative scenario, we anticipate raising \$8.5 million. We currently hold \$17 million in reserves.

Research

- **COVID-specific research.** Two staff members are now working full-time on COVID-19-related research and grantmaking. We expect this to continue for at least another 6 weeks but it may end after that. As of May 12th, we have made three grants to [COVID-19-specific projects](#).
- **Top charities.** We expect that our top charities will have less room for more funding in 2020 than they otherwise would have because COVID has slowed their ability to run programs.
- **New opportunities.** COVID has slowed our work looking for new top charities and new giving opportunities in public health regulation because organizations' work has been disrupted. We're in close contact with the most promising organizations so that we can resume our research when possible. There are some organizations (e.g., New Incentives, where we recently received results from an RCT we funded of its work) where our evaluation can go ahead notwithstanding COVID.

Outreach

Major Gifts and the donor retention team are in the process of contacting our major donors to understand the extent to which COVID will affect their giving plans in 2020. Overall, the donors they have talked to have said that COVID will not have a major effect on their giving.

Our marketing work is new, and we have relatively little basis on which to make projections. Based on the data the retention team has gathered and the fact that GiveWell donors are continuing to give, we currently expect that marketing will move approximately as much money as we expected pre-COVID. We continue to follow this data closely so that we quickly update our forecasts if the situation changes.

Operations

All GiveWell staff now work remotely. We continue to pay for our office space and don't currently believe we can reduce that expense. We don't currently expect to be back in our office for a while.

We run a weekly survey of all staff to ask how they are feeling and how they feel their work is going. We have used this to follow up with staff who seem to be struggling. Overall, people seem to be doing OK and improving, though several staff are struggling. We created a monthly staff wellness stipend (redirected from our office snacks budget) that staff can use on expenses that improve their physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing during shelter-in-place.

We are tracking regulatory updates that pertain to employers and have implemented and notified staff about the relevant updates to paid time off, insurance coverage, and retirement plans.