

Appendix B: For and against a focus on various bottlenecks

This is an appendix for Animal Advocacy Careers' post: [2021 Plans and 2020 Review](#)

Leadership and senior managers

For:

- "Leadership and senior managers" had the highest average score (3.6 out of 5) in answer to the question "How difficult is it to *hire* high-quality candidates for the following categories of roles or types of expertise?" in our [2020 survey](#) of 39 different organisations working on animal advocacy.
- In our main 2020 survey, when asked, "If your organisation could have all-expenses paid, high-quality training for all the staff members whose job descriptions refer primarily to tasks in one of the following categories, which type of training would you be most excited about?" the most common response (28%, double the next highest option) was "Leadership and senior managers."
- In our short [survey](#) from 2019, 7 respondents selected "management" as one of up to 6 skills (out of 25 options) that their organisation most needed. Additionally, 3 respondents selected "leadership and management" as the bottleneck that they "identify most" with in their organisation, though most respondents selected more than one option. 2 out of 10 respondents to the same survey mentioned "management" or "leadership" roles as being "the hardest to fill" and another 2 respondents mentioned "senior" roles.
- Faunalytics' [survey](#) of why some advocates leave animal advocacy organisations or the movement entirely found that 40% of respondents cited problems with management and leadership as a reason for leaving their organisation — this was the most commonly selected response. Additionally, "How satisfied they were with their organization's leadership" was a stronger predictor of advocates' intentions to stay in the movement than a number of other factors.
- The importance of improving M&L has been emphasised to us anecdotally in other contexts by employees of animal advocacy nonprofits.
- In a 2019 [survey](#) of effective altruism organisations by the Centre for Effective Altruism, "management" was rated as the most needed skill or ability.

- Intuitively, it seems likely that leaders and senior managers are the most influential employees of effective animal advocacy nonprofits; changes in the quality of leadership and senior management could have a more substantial multiplier effect on the impact of the resources dedicated to animal advocacy than could changes in the quality of other contributions to the movement.
- There is a substantial body of academic literature (albeit relying mostly on subjective survey scales and observational studies rather than randomised controlled trials) about "[The Characteristics of Good Management and Leadership](#)." This makes it easier to identify goals to strive for in support or recruitment services.
- There is academic research providing evidence of "[The Effectiveness of Management and Leadership Training](#)."
- Our impression (e.g. from the [interviews](#) for our [M&L skills profile](#)) is that many managers and leaders in effective animal advocacy work their way up through nonprofit organisations (or found them themselves), and hence have effective animal advocacy expertise but limited M&L expertise. This could plausibly be remedied through training.

Against:

- The distinction between "Leadership or senior managers" and "Middle or junior managers" (the two options provided on our 2020 [surveys](#)) is ambiguous, so different respondents might have meant different things.
- In a second survey from 2020, we asked researchers, grant-makers, plus others working on "meta" and movement-building services for animal advocacy "If AAC could provide all-expenses paid, high-quality training for staff members in effective animal advocacy nonprofits whose job descriptions refer primarily to tasks in one of the following categories, which type of training would you be most excited about?" Only 1 of the 13 respondents selected "Leadership or senior managers," though 5 selected "Middle or junior managers."
- Our "[Effective Animal Advocacy Nonprofit Roles Spot-Check](#)" provides some evidence on which role types are difficult to hire and retain high-quality staff in; If certain types of expertise are undersupplied in the community, relative to its needs, we would expect that such skillsets would be overrepresented in animal advocacy job adverts. We did not find this to be the case for "Management and leadership."
- Similarly, our "[Animal Product Alternatives For-Profit Roles Spot-Check](#)" found that M&L roles were not overrepresented in job adverts at plant-based food companies and were substantially underrepresented in job adverts for cultivated meat

companies. So progress in effective animal advocacy nonprofits might not be very useful if we wanted to expand our work to include these companies too.

- Given the wide availability of M&L trainings and [self-development resources](#), it seems easy for managers and leaders themselves to dedicate time and resources to training, or for their employers to encourage them to do so. It seems unlikely that AAC will be able to design substantially higher quality training resources from scratch, so there doesn't seem to be much that AAC can add here, apart from offering various incentives and providing some support to make it easier for individuals and organisations to identify high-quality training providers.
- Similarly, there are many recruiters and executive search firms specialising in M&L roles and in nonprofits that organisations could work with, if they thought that the problems were large enough.

Mixed:

- There are not many individuals currently in "Leadership and senior management" roles, e.g. we would only classify 78 staff members identified in our "[Effective Animal Advocacy Nonprofit Roles Spot-Check](#)" (from 27 organisations) as meeting this definition. This means that the numbers involved in training or other support opportunities may be small, with limited opportunities to scale up interventions. Relatedly, the number of roles that fit this description that come up is quite small, e.g. only 7 of the 140 roles listed on our [job board](#) from October to December seemed to meet this definition. This means that interventions to make improvements in hiring practice might also be limited in scale. On the other hand, these small numbers could be seen as an opportunity; it might be easier to make substantial headway on addressing any bottlenecks in this area.
- Despite being rated highly in terms of difficulty to "hire" high-quality candidates in our main survey from 2020, "Leadership and senior managers" did not have substantially higher average scores for a question asking "How difficult is it to *retain* high-quality candidates for the following categories of roles or types of expertise?" (average 2.4 out of 5). Similarly, a 2009 [survey](#) of US nonprofits found that "64% had had their chief executive for 7 or more years," which compares favourably to median employee tenures of around 4 years, [according](#) to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. This suggests that, once in place, high-quality candidates are not especially likely to leave these roles, though it also suggests that these sorts of roles are less of a bottleneck than you might otherwise expect.
- There is [some evidence](#) that the US nonprofit sector in general faces difficulties with hiring M&L staff. This is due to demographic trends (postwar babyboomers starting

to retire) plus a general increase in the number of nonprofits. This provides external evidence that M&L is likely to be a talent bottleneck, but it also suggests that the problem may be difficult to solve through headhunting or other recruitment services.

Note, several of these “against” and “mixed” arguments could point in favour of providing services that focus on M&L more broadly. The disadvantage of that is that M&L more broadly was not the key bottleneck identified by respondents to our main 2020 survey.

Fundraising

For:

- “Fundraising or development” had the second highest average score (3.4 out of 5) in answer to the question “How difficult is it to *hire* high-quality candidates for the following categories of roles or types of expertise?” in our [2020 survey](#) of 39 different organisations working on animal advocacy.
- In our main 2020 survey, when asked, “If your organisation could have all-expenses paid, high-quality training for all the staff members whose job descriptions refer primarily to tasks in one of the following categories, which type of training would you be most excited about?” the (joint) second most common response (14%) was “Fundraising or development.” Though this was not much higher than the average score (10%), we asked a similar question (focusing on the movement more broadly) to researchers, grant-makers, plus others working on “meta” and movement-building services for animal advocacy; 31% of those respondents selected “fundraising or development.” Again, this was the second most commonly selected option, this time after “Middle or junior managers.”
- Our surveys from 2020 provide evidence that funding itself is a substantial bottleneck — perhaps even more so than a “Lack of (qualified and capable) activists and volunteers.” Various other evidence also suggests this (see “How much does the movement need more expertise in this area?” in our [fundraising skills profile](#)).
- In our short [survey](#) from 2019, 5 respondents selected “fundraising experience” as one of up to 6 skills (out of 25 options) that their organisation most needed; this was the second most frequently selected option, after “management.” 2 out of 10 respondents to the same survey mentioned fundraising roles as being “the hardest to fill.”

- The difficulty of hiring high-quality fundraisers has been emphasised to us anecdotally in other contexts by employees of animal advocacy nonprofits.
- If certain types of expertise are undersupplied in the community, relative to its needs, we would expect that such skillsets would be overrepresented in animal advocacy job adverts, since roles using these skillsets would be harder to fill. In our [“spot-check”](#) of current roles and advertised roles at 27 animal advocacy nonprofits, fundraising was one of the skillsets that was most notably overrepresented in animal advocacy job adverts (appearing to be important in 17% of identified job ads) relative to the number of current roles in the movement (appearing to be important in 10% of current roles).

Against:

- Our impression (e.g. from the [interviews](#) for our [fundraising skills profile](#)) is that many fundraisers in effective animal advocacy have stronger backgrounds in nonprofit fundraising work than they do in effective animal advocacy itself. This makes training and support services for current fundraising staff at effective animal advocacy nonprofits seem less promising.
- Given the wide availability of fundraising trainings and [self-development resources](#), it seems easy for fundraisers to dedicate time and resources to training, or for their employers to encourage them to do so. It seems unlikely that AAC will be able to design substantially higher quality training resources from scratch, so there doesn't seem to be much that AAC can add here, apart from offering various incentives and providing some support to make it easier for individuals and organisations to identify high-quality training providers.
- Similarly, there are many recruiters specialising in nonprofits that organisations could work with, if they thought that the problems were large enough.

Mixed:

- There are not many individuals currently in full-time fundraising roles, e.g. we would only classify 72 staff members identified in our [“Effective Animal Advocacy Nonprofit Roles Spot-Check”](#) (from 27 organisations) as meeting this definition. This means that the numbers involved in training or other support opportunities may be small, with limited opportunities to scale up interventions. Relatedly, the number of fundraising roles that come up is quite small, e.g. only 6 of the 140 roles listed on our [job board](#) from October to December were in fundraising. This means that interventions to make improvements in hiring practice might also be limited in scale.

On the other hand, these small numbers could be seen as an opportunity; it might be easier to make substantial headway on addressing any bottlenecks in this area.

- As well as being rated highly in terms of difficulty to “hire” high-quality candidates in our main survey from 2020, “Fundraising and development” had the highest average score for a question asking “How difficult is it to *retain* high-quality candidates for the following categories of roles or types of expertise?” (average 2.6 out of 5). Similarly, [various surveys of US nonprofits](#) beyond animal advocacy find high turnover among fundraising staff. This suggests that fundraisers who are successfully trained or recruited by AAC are likely to leave their fundraising roles in effective animal advocacy fairly shortly afterwards (at least, relatively to other role types), so the benefits may not persist for long. However, it also suggests that these sorts of roles are more of a bottleneck than you might otherwise expect.
- There is evidence from a 2013 [report](#) that senior fundraisers are difficult to hire in US nonprofits generally. Another [report](#) found evidence that smaller nonprofits may struggle to attract the most experienced fundraisers; note that many animal advocacy organisations have small budgets. This provides external evidence that fundraising is likely to be a talent bottleneck, but it also suggests that the problem may be difficult to solve through headhunting or other recruitment services.

Lobbying

For

- “Government, policy, lobbying, or legal” had the third highest average score (3.2 out of 5) in answer to the question “How difficult is it to *hire* high-quality candidates for the following categories of roles or types of expertise?” in our [2020 survey](#) of 39 different organisations working on animal advocacy.
- In our short [survey](#) from 2019, 5 respondents selected “government” as “the biggest talent gap in the animal movement.” Another 2 respondents selected “legal,” which might partly overlap with politics, policy, and lobbying. We also conducted a survey that had 29 respondents from various animal advocacy organisations, in a variety of positions. This had asked the same question; “government” was, again, the most commonly selected option, with 8 selections.
- In a 2019 [survey](#) of effective altruism (EA) organisations by the Centre for Effective Altruism, “Government and policy experts” was rated as the most needed skill or ability for “EA as a whole.”
- If certain types of expertise are undersupplied in the community, relative to its needs, we would expect that such skillsets would be overrepresented in animal

advocacy job adverts, since roles using these skillsets would be harder to fill. In our [“spot-check”](#) of current roles and advertised roles at 27 animal advocacy nonprofits, “Government, policy, lobbying, or legal” was one of the skillsets that was most notably overrepresented in animal advocacy job adverts (appearing to be important in 13% of identified job ads) relative to the number of current roles in the movement (appearing to be important in 5% of current roles). Focusing more narrowly on lobbying roles, these roles also seem to have been overrepresented, though the sample size is very small for these comparisons.

Against:

- Our surveys and spot-checks have used the category “Government, policy, lobbying, or legal,” which is very broad. Survey respondents might have meant different things.
- In our main 2020 survey, when asked, “If your organisation could have all-expenses paid, high-quality training for all the staff members whose job descriptions refer primarily to tasks in one of the following categories, which type of training would you be most excited about?” “Government, policy, lobbying, or legal” was selected by 11% of respondents, which is close to the average (10%). We asked a similar question (focusing on the movement more broadly) to researchers, grant-makers, plus others working on “meta” and movement-building services for animal advocacy; 15% of those respondents selected this option.
- Our impression (e.g. see our [skills profile](#)) is that strong networks and people skills are both crucial parts of successful lobbying. These seem very difficult to train.
- For other skill types, it seems possible that there are people with relevant expertise from outside the effective animal advocacy community who have simply never considered (or had the support to) work in effective animal advocacy, e.g. people who developed M&L skills in a for-profit context or people who have developed fundraising skills in other contexts. By contrast, people working in policy, politics, and lobbying are probably well aware of the possibilities for social change in these areas. We’d guess that external recruitment or headhunting in this area will be especially difficult, or perhaps just expensive (e.g. competing with market rates for professional lobbyists).

Mixed:

- There are very few individuals currently in lobbying roles, e.g. we would only classify 14 (2%) of staff members identified in our [“Effective Animal Advocacy Nonprofit Roles Spot-Check”](#) (from 27 organisations) as meeting this definition. In open-ended

text response questions in our 2019 surveys asking “Which roles are the hardest to fill for,” which traits participants thought “were most influential to getting [them] hired,” in their current role and which traits they thought made them “successful” in their current role, no respondents mentioned anything to do with politics, policy, or lobbying. Animal Charity Evaluators found that the largest US farmed animal advocacy organisations only [spent](#) 7% of their resources on influencing policy and the law in 2016. In CEA and 80,000 Hours’ surveys of effective altruism organisations, “Government and policy experts” were rated much lower for the extent to which they were the “most needed skill” for “my organisation” (aggregated across the respondents), as opposed to for the EA movement as a whole. This means that the numbers involved in training or other support opportunities may be small, with limited opportunities to scale up interventions. Relatedly, the number of lobbying and policy roles that come up is small (but larger than some other role types), e.g. 10 of the 140 roles listed on our [job board](#) from October to December seemed to meet this definition (although 4 of these are not necessarily focused on farmed animals). This means that interventions to make improvements in hiring practice might also be limited in scale. On the other hand, these small numbers could be seen as an opportunity; it might be easier to make substantial headway on addressing any bottlenecks in this area.

- Despite being rated highly in terms of difficulty to “hire” high-quality candidates in our main survey from 2020, “Government, policy, lobbying, or legal” did not have higher average scores for a question asking “How difficult is it to *retain* high-quality candidates for the following categories of roles or types of expertise?” (average 2.3 out of 5). This suggests that, once in place, high-quality candidates are not especially likely to leave these roles, though it also suggests that these sorts of roles are less of a bottleneck than you might otherwise expect.