

**GiveWell San Francisco Research Event December 13, 2016 –  
Open Philanthropy Project**

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00:01 Holden Karnofsky : I know I sound like Ellie when I take questions. I'm going to repeat them for the recorder. So just the same person basically. I'm co-founder with Ellie of GiveWell and I'm here to talk about the Open Philanthropy project which is a project that is spinning out of GiveWell. So we've been running as a part of the same organization for the last few years and now we're in the midst of a legal transition. On the quick side, what Open Philanthropy project is, it is similar to GiveWell in that we look for the ways to do as much good as possible by giving. It is different in that we target major high-net-worth donors who are highly engaged, rather than targeting a large number of individual donors who might have a few hours a year to decide where to give. The reason we do things this way, basically in 2011 when we were running GiveWell we met Cari Tuna and Dustin Moskovitz. Dustin's co-founder of Facebook and Asana. And they were trying to figure out how to give away a very large amount of money over the course of their lifetimes and do as much good as possible. This was obviously related to the thing we were already doing, but also a very different and interesting challenge.

01:13 HK: And so we started working together then. We still work together and the Open Philanthropy project is the name of our partnership. And so basically what the Open Philanthropy project is, is we are trying to figure out what we can do as kind of a large philanthropist, giving a really large amount of money over the next several decades to do as much good as possible. And then we also want to share our findings with the world. Although in practice that does look different from GiveWell. Because I'd say with GiveWell usually all of the reasoning is available online. And basically every statement that's made you can see why it's made, and as you're going to hear with Open Philanthropy, a lot of times we get very deep into expertise rabbit holes.

01:56 HK: And it isn't practical to share everything going into our decisions but we still try to share a lot of our thinking and therefore inform other people. Because one of the things that motivated the formation of the Open Philanthropy project was this fact that, just like with GiveWell, if you're looking for how to give well there's very little to read. There's very little existing wisdom out there, there's no scholarship devoted to it, and there's just little to go on in terms of getting up to speed, and figuring out what are the different approaches to doing this well and which one should I take?

02:31 HK: So that's where we are. In terms of what we've done, so first off a couple of differences to highlight with GiveWell. GiveWell looks for things that are proven, cost effective, and scalable. And those criteria are optimized for individual donors. They're optimized for the kind of person who might say, "this year I have a few hours to decide and I want something that can be explained, something that makes sense, something that can be vetted, something I can be confident in." By contrast Open Philanthropy, instead of focusing on organizations, instead of looking for charities people can give to, we really think about which causes to work on. And we try to work in areas or on issues that we call important, neglected, intractable. So important means it affects a lot of people and there's an issue that is a big deal that affects a lot of people and it affects them a lot. Neglected means it's not already covered and so we look for things where we can add special value if they don't already have a lot of philanthropy working on them. And intractable means we see kind of a path to actually getting something accomplished.

03:36 HK: But one of the big differences is, we often are interested in things that are more long term and harder to measure, and inherently just riskier and more uncertain than anything GiveWell does. Because we are able to hire staff, we're able to build our own trust relationships and we're able often to get to the point where we feel we have a cutting edge understanding of an issue that would be very hard to write up and very hard to make a full case for publicly, but that is world class or cutting edge. And that therefore we're willing to try things that other people won't try, and to do things that may not make sense everyone in the world. And so it's a very different philosophy of giving. And one of the posts that I think really illustrates how we think is this blog post called, "Head Space Giving", that really makes the case that a lot of what we do, we might fail nine times out of 10 when we try to get something done, but one time out of 10 we'll have the kind of success that makes up for everything else. And it takes inspiration from a lot of the best philanthropy in the past, where people took an issue where they thought they had a special edge, a special insight, they took a big risk, a lot of times they failed.

04:47 HK: But when they succeeded we got things like the green revolution or the pill or other things that I think philanthropy's been very impressive at. And if you want a list of them our conference rooms are named after some of these successes. [chuckle] So I could explain those if anyone wants to raise your hand about one of them. So those are some of the core philosophical differences between the two organizations. A lot of times in the first session of this kind

of event people will ask about GiveWell, "Well, aren't you missing good things that you can't measure?" Whereas in this part of the event people will often ask, "Well, how could you do something that wacky that'll never work?"

[laughter]

05:26 HK: It's these two ends of a spectrum and they both take extreme principled position on one end or the other. In terms of what we've done to date at Open Philanthropy project, our first couple of years we're getting our bearings and also picking issues to focus on, picking focus areas. So one of the core building blocks of our, of our philanthropy, is picking a limited number of issues to focus on, so that we can really get deep into them. So that we can have contacts, so that we can have networks, so we can have good relationships with people who tell us the truth, so that we can understand all of the difficult issues, all of the literature. And so for example, one of our focus areas is criminal justice reform, and our work is led by Chloe Cockburn, who we hired from the ACLU. And she brings kind of a career in criminal justice reform and knows everyone in the space. She knows all the arguments, knows all the issues, knows all the players, the papers, or knows someone who knows those things, and so is able to often see ahead of the rest of the field, see what others can't see.

06:30 HK: And that's kind of the philosophy. And so our first couple of years were spent picking focus areas. Like I said, we looked for things that were important, neglected, tractable. We followed a cause-selection process where we did investigations of increasing depth on... As the cause looked promising we would get to know it more. And eventually once we picked the causes that we wanted to focus on, we basically spent 2015, last year on hiring.

06:56 HK: And so we picked a bunch of causes, we tried to hire the best possible people we could find to lead our work in those causes. And then in 2016 our focus has really been on grantmaking. And so you can see it. I think when we put out our reports you'll see it in the numbers that I estimate that there was something like \$15 million in grants recommended in 2015. And those were all very exploratory, those were all trying to get to know a focus area or trying to get to know a space, and in the process making some grants that we came across. Whereas for 2016 I'm going to guess that it's going to come to something more like \$100 million total in grantmaking. And that's grantmaking made by Good Ventures, by Cari and Dustin, and it's made at the recommendation and based on the research of the Open Philanthropy Project. And it does not include donations to top charities or anything on the GiveWell side. It's just things that we're doing.

07:51 HK: And so our focus this year has been, we had built out our staff a lot last year. This year we focused on giving. And just to give a quick overview of the areas we work in, some of the stuff we've done and then what's next, then I'll take questions for the rest of the time. So one of the areas that I mentioned, criminal justice reform, this is an area we picked, because out of all the policy advocacy issues we might work on, when we're looking for things that are important, neglected and tractable, criminal justice reform really stood out on tractability. We saw political opportunities there that we didn't see in other causes. And actually I think if you look at most of the big policy issues in the US, a lot of them at this point look really hard to get anywhere on anytime soon. And a lot of that is because a lot of the most important issues are just federal issues. And so the dynamic in Washington DC is pretty tough and pretty adversarial right now.

08:47 HK: Criminal justice reform is a state and local issue. It gives us an ability to pick our battles more. We do believe that across the board, across the states, across the localities, incarceration is at historically extreme levels, globally extreme levels. The US just incarcerates an extreme number of people. And we believe, based on our best read of the literature which I'm happy to answer questions about, that we're not getting a public safety benefit, commensurate with all the pain and suffering and expense of the amount we put people in prison and jail. And so when looking for ways to create a more humane, a more sane system that does a better job balancing public safety with the fact that we don't want to incarcerate people for no reason, we have... Like I said it's at the state and local level, and so we have a large variety of different places we can go and opportunities we can look for.

09:42 HK: And in addition I think this issue is an area where public opinion is changing and that is a little bit less prone to the usual partisan battles and other issues. So it's an opportunity where, if you want to help the worst-off people and you want to cut the size of government, those are often the same thing. When it comes to criminal justice reform it's an area where there is a growing consensus of which direction we can move, and it's not just the left and it's not just the right. So that is an area we work on. I mentioned Chloe who we hired to lead that work, and she has really led our work. And the general way that we've done grantmaking, is we try to find the best people for this job, for this role, and then they really lead the process of deciding what their priorities are, what grants they want to propose, what grants they want to advocate for.

10:35 HK: And Cari and I are more at the level of asking critical questions, reviewing internal write-ups, but really letting these specialized staff lead the way. And so under Chloe's direction we've made a variety of grants. Some of them are for very action oriented, short-term things like a campaign to close Rikers Island in New York, one of the infamous jails. And we believe that closing it would require policy reforms that would lead to fewer people in jail. So the goal is not just to move people from Rikers to somewhere else. And also the Alliance for Safety and Justice is a group that has spun out of Californians for Safety and Justice. Californians for Safety and Justice was behind two of the biggest criminal justice reform successes in the last few years. Prop 47 and Prop 57, both in California. And they're trying to take their work national now and look all across the country for opportunities to get similar wins. And so we've been one of the biggest funders of Alliance for Safety and Justice.

11:35 HK: And we've also funded work that is more long-term and more speculative in a sense. So we funded some work around restorative justice, which is sort of an attempt to find an alternative to putting people in jail and in prison. To take someone who's committed a crime, and have them reach an agreement with the victim of the crime that can serve a lot of the goals we might have for jail and prison, which is having people face up to what they did. Make them less likely to do it again, but not all the same cost. So we've been investing in sort of groups that are experimenting with that approach, piloting it. See if it can work practically and politically, and what the results might be.

12:12 HK: Another cause that we have prioritized, that we've hired for, farm animal welfare. So I think that there's an enormous number of animals being raised on factory farms for food. I think that they're treated incredibly badly. I think it's quite an eye opener, if you ever read about how animals are treated on factory farms. And I think there's definitely a lot of animal welfare groups out there. Most of them do not prioritize factory-farmed animals. And when I look at this cause it's an interesting one because it's not straightforward to say how important it is. I think people really have different opinions of how to compare animals to humans in terms of the value of the suffering, in terms of how much we should care about reducing suffering.

13:00 HK: I certainly believe, and I think most people would believe that we should care more about humans. But there is a question of how much. So one of the things that I have kind of learned about farm animal welfare, is that it's a very neglected cause, there's very little money in it, there's very little attention to it. And as we've stepped in, we've seen a huge amount of tractability and a huge number of victories. And so I'd say, over the past year, there's been a series of pledges by grocers, by fast food companies to sell only cage-free eggs. And these pledges have gotten to the point of basically covering all of America. This could affect billions of chickens and take them, I would say, from conditions that are unacceptable to conditions that are still unacceptable but no longer involve a cage. And then I think they're significantly better. And it's interesting because while with GiveWell top charities, the best we can do is sort of \$2,000-\$3,000 per death averted. With farm animal welfare, we might be looking at something like 50 or 100 chickens out of cages per \$1 spent.

14:07 HK: And so I certainly believe that humans count for more than animals in a moral calculus. But when you ask the question of how much more, it becomes very murky when you're dealing with a multiplier like that. A multiplier in the range of 10,000 or something. And so this is one of these cases where I don't have a firm view, but I definitely feel there's an argument that we should feel this is incredibly important and incredibly overlooked opportunity to reduce a huge amount of suffering. And I think we've seen a lot of victories, and our priority so far has largely been funding attempts to get corporate reforms. So to get fast food companies, grocers, to commit to treat animals better. And I think that has the advantage both of reducing suffering pretty directly and pretty quickly, and also establishing some winds and establishing some momentum for what I hope is a growing field that will eventually get us to a point where I feel okay about the way animals are treated who are being eaten, and I currently don't. So that's a major priority.

15:06 HK: Another focus area of ours, biosecurity and pandemic preparedness. So you know this kind of fits into the category of global catastrophic risks. I think one really interesting place for philanthropy to work is to look at risks to global civilization. Things that may be very unlikely, but if they got bad enough could kind of threaten the whole interconnected civilization we live in. This is the kind of thing that no one government, no one company really has the incentive to think about. We're looking at really low probability, really huge deal for everyone kind of situations, and so I think there are some really interesting gaps for philanthropy.

15:44 HK: Climate change is a global catastrophic risk. But I would also say that if I somehow learned that humanity had gone extinct or civilization had collapsed in the next 100 years, and I had to guess how, probably at the top of my list would be that there was some kind of pandemic. Especially a pandemic that was made possible by synthetic biology, a kind of super bug or a custom bug. And I believe that the world is underprepared for that kind of thing. We'll

be especially underprepared a decade or two from now, when synthetic biology becomes easier to use. And so one of the things we've been doing with our staff there, Jaime Yassif and Howie Lempel, has been looking for ways to get better prepared, to have governments paying more attention to the worst possible cases, to fund groups that are helping to think these things through and put the most important risks on the map and think through what those risks are. And so that's been a major focus for us.

16:39 HK: And then the final thing I'll mention before I take a break. Potential risk from advanced artificial intelligence. So this cause is a bit a mouthful just to say and certainly a lot to get into, but it's another case where I think as a philanthropist one way to have a big impact is to help the people, or in some cases the chickens, who are the most marginalized, who are the worst off, who are getting the least attention. Another way to have a big impact is to look at issues and factors and maybe X factors that could affect the whole planet, that could affect all of civilization at once. Climate change is one of them, a pandemic is one of them, and I think artificial intelligence is a third really huge one. I think that AI is probably one of the most dynamic and unpredictable areas of science right now. Over the last four or five years we've seen artificial systems be able to do things that were previously thought to really be kind of human specialties, like being able to see and use your intuition to decide what you're seeing in an image. Also the board game Go, previously considered one of the hardest games for machine to play, now as a machine world champion and it kind of happened overnight. So I think it's a very interesting area of science, and I think it's very hard to say how far the current wave of innovation can go.

18:00 HK: But I do believe that the reason that humans have transformed the planet so dramatically, and have so much more power and impact than other species, is basically intelligence. And I think if you had something that had greater intelligence than humans in certain domains, like doing science, you may see a comparably dramatic contrast and a comparably dramatic transformation. And so, my best guess is that if we get transformative artificial intelligence, on the soon side, which I would say might be a couple decades or so, my best guess is that'll be a very good thing. And I can tell you many good things that might happen because of it, but there are also ways it can go wrong. And I think if you had the wrong government or the wrong people having a cutting edge AI that helped them to get a lot of the goals they have, that could be very bad.

18:52 HK: And also, if you had an AI that had the wrong combination of being very intelligent, very powerful, but also buggy in some way, I think that this could be a long debate, but I think that can also be very bad, and bad on a planetary scale. Bad to the point where I think, even if I'm not totally sure what to do about it today, I would like to see society look a little bit more paranoid than it currently does and be putting in a little more effort than it currently is to raise questions. Is there research we could be doing today, to make it less likely that we'll end up in a bad situation with AI in the future? And so, there Daniel Dewey's our full time employee, and a bunch of the rest of us put in time. And we've been looking for both on the policy side and on the technical side, is there work we can do today, to lay the ground work, establish some ideas, and make it less likely that if and when we get transformative artificial intelligence that it happens in a bad way. So that is an overview of what the Open Philanthropy project does, who we are, what we've been doing and with that I'll take questions for a while, and then maybe at some point, I'll talk about our plans for next year. Questions?

20:00 Speaker 2: So you talked about a bunch of different important causes, and seems like there's a lot of hard challenges to solve in the world, I guess. I was just curious, to what extent is it an issue of having enough money to give towards those causes versus finding great people in the world who are able to work on them? I guess another way to phrase it would be like, is the incentive structure set up for great teams of people to come together and try to work on these problems, or are they just going to go do [20:31] \_\_\_\_ or something like that?

20:33 HK: Sure, yeah. So to what extent is the challenge money and to what extent is the challenge people? When we have these problems, these challenges facing humanity, is it more important that we spend enough money on them or that we get the right people to work on these challenges and get them doing that instead of... I mean, I actually think some of the things you named are very good for the world, but I certainly think there are great people doing pretty useless things and just making a lot of money, and so, which is the bigger problem? I would say the two are very interconnected. So without people, I think money is mostly useless for a lot of the problems that I've talked about. And I would also say that a lot of what we try to do is make it easier for people to work on the problems we care about, than to just work on things that are very industry dominated. And so, a lot of what we've dealt with is the feedback loop, because I think to give AI as an example, we look at a situation where there's no real field that works on technical research around AI safety. It's kind of this nascent growing field. There's a bunch of people who work on AI, but there's almost no one who works on AI with a particular slant toward trying to think about social impact and make things go well.

21:53 HK: And it's kind of a tough thing, because junior people don't want to work on this because they don't see a career path and they don't see any professor they can work under, and they don't see any professor they can turn into. But professors don't want to work on this, because they don't work on it and it's not what they've done, and it's not where they're at. And so, you get this kind of chicken and egg problem, and a lot of what we've been doing is just finding anyone we can who is interested in working on these problems, make it as easy for them as we can, fund them when they're an academic and when we can fund them. And then by doing that to also create common knowledge that there is money in this field and that actually if you want to work on this stuff, you can get your salary paid, and then that hopefully brings in more people, and as more good people come in, then more people hear about it. And so, I think it's the two are interrelated, I think that you can lead with money and you can try to make it easier for people to switch, or you can lead with people and you could have people raising money. But our comparative advantage is money and so a lot of what we've tried to understand is how a philanthropist can change the human capital composition of an area and draw good people into a field, that it's not always that straightforward.

23:05 Speaker 3: So, the first two projects you mentioned are dismantling institutions or dismantling [23:11] \_\_\_\_\_, the last two projects being forward looking and predictive in nature, and obviously those are very two different things. And I guess my question is, since you're concerned about catastrophic events, and the predictive nature means that there's going to be things that you don't predict, that could be the thing that wipes everyone out, how do you account for that when you're making these different strategies and when you're planning ahead and thinking about what might happen?

23:36 HK: Sure. So I think the question is how do we account for the fact that it's probably the things we're not thinking of that could derail a lot of the work we're trying to do? And when we work on things this long term, and even to some degree criminal justice reform and farm animal welfare a very long term compared to giving out bed nets for example, how do we deal with the risk of an unknown? And you know, I don't have any kind of one systematic answer to that. I mean, I think one of the things we have to go into our work knowing is just that the future is very hard to predict and that no plan is going to go exactly the way we wanted it to. One thing I can say, I mean I think there's a couple of attitudes we bring to this work. One is the hits-based giving approach I mentioned earlier, which is that we don't expect to be able to see how everything is going to play out. But if our goal is more to have a really big win one time out of 10 than to have a small win 10 times out of 10, I think it becomes more reasonable to say, "Hey, we're going to try a bunch of things that could work, and hopefully some of them will work really big."

24:40 HK: And I would say another attitude we bring to our work is that we're less about planning exactly how things will go than we are about laying the groundwork to make good things easier to happen. When we do our biosecurity and pandemic preparedness work we don't have a year in mind and a pandemic in mind, and an exact thing that's going to happen. When we do our potential risk for advanced artificial intelligence work it's also like that. But in both cases we want there to be a more robust field. We want there to be a stronger set of institutions, a stronger set of people who are really experts, who are full time, who think about these issues. And we feel that the difference between a world that has very few people who ever think about these things and it has to frantically improvise when something happens versus a world that has a lot of people who are steeped in the relevant issues all the time, we don't know exactly how things will play out, but we think the second world goes better than the first, and with some reliability, not just randomly.

25:37 HK: And I think the same is somewhat true in politics as well. I think a lot of the policy work we do is trying to put ideas into the conversation, put ideas on the table, get people into the dialogue, because a lot of times actual policy change happens for some unpredictable reason. Something hits the headlines and people are making a deal in Congress. But if you wait for that to happen and then you frantically try to get up to speed, and try to get to the table, I don't think that's nearly as productive as in advance saying, "What are the most important issues to work on? What are the best the issues to work on? And how can we make sure that when there is a window of opportunity that there's a lot of people and a lot of good organizations that are ready to quickly take advantage of it." Corner. Yeah. Yeah, Eliza.

[chuckle]

26:25 Speaker 4: So I am just curious, from your perspective, I imagine there are a lot of things that GiveWell or Open Phil doesn't fund because there is a natural sort of profit incentive, do you [26:35] \_\_\_\_\_ and they're happening in the private sector? So what would you point to us as the things that you're the most excited about in terms of their potential benefit for humanity happening in the private sector right now? And if the answer is just artificial intelligence, like which particular applications would it be there?

26:48 HK: Yeah. Yeah. What am I excited about for the future of humanity that we're not doing anything about because

it's in the for-profit sector? Definitely not a question I think about every day. [chuckle] because we're so focused on the non-profit stuff. I mean, some things that I think are just robustly very good. Certainly I think medical technology, energy technology, these are things that are pretty good profit motors to work on and that are moving forward, and that I'm happy are moving forward. I'm excited about... I don't know. Recently I had the Impossible Burger, which is this kind of high tech veggie burger that is designed to really taste and feel and just seem like a meat burger. [chuckle] And that's a for-profit but if they're successful then, that will have huge implications not only for animal welfare but for the environment, for carbon emissions, for things like that. So that's exciting.

27:42 HK: Yeah, definitely, AI is exciting. Specifically what in AI? I mean, I think in general being able to automate anything should hopefully at least make the pie bigger, produce more wealth. And then, the question of how that wealth gets distributed, I think, can be something that rightly makes people nervous. I think that things like medical diagnosis can be made more accurate, perhaps education can be more customized, things like that. It's not what I'd put the most time into but I do at the same time feel that a lot of the most exciting things that have happened and will happen are coming from the for-profit sector. And also a lot of the most exciting transformations have happened because of policy change and they come from government. So I don't really think philanthropy takes up the lion share of good things that happen. I just think philanthropy has kind of a unique role of the play and it's through all that I spend my time thinking about.

28:40 Speaker 5: I'm going into your last point about pandemic preparedness. So it's struck me that you were talking about, on one hand sort of building that works of experts, of expertise and on the other hand building strong institutions. And the former to me seems much more attractive than the latter, specifically thinking about the... We would expect a pandemic to originate in a place with weak institutions, state institutions, like say, Ebola is endemic in Congo or Liberia. So when you're talking about organizations, institutions, what are you talking about? Is this just non-state, non-profit, maybe academic, are you working with [29:13] \_\_\_\_ build a governance capacity?

29:15 HK: Sure. Sure. What kind of institutions do I have in mind and do I feel that is really possible to strengthen those? So I should probably specify that I don't really mean institutions in the kind of why nations fail sense, so these kind of ethereal things that kind of pervade everything. I mean, I just don't really know how to make those better very much, except by focusing on just more specific problems in the world. So I think it really just varies by the cause. But a lot of times what I do have in mind is more like a network of really qualified people, non-profits that know what they're doing but also government agencies that know what they're doing and often get good advice or get people for non-profits. And so certainly, I think that that is a dynamic we're hoping for, for example in the biosecurity space. Other questions? Yeah.

30:06 Speaker 6: So, you mentioned that you seek funding primarily through high-net-worth individuals. Do you feel your research area could be influenced by their preference? And do you feel it's beneficial to maybe be more open to the public or to seek for suggestions and to know what causes do people really care about?

30:30 HK: Sure. So, are we worried that we are going to be influenced by high-net-worth worth individuals that we work with, and would it be better if we were more public-facing and sought a more diversified base of donors? On the second one, I think that whoever you're accountable to, there is always a risk that they're going to make you do things differently from how you would have done them yourself. Or maybe not a risk, maybe that's a feature. I think in the case of the public, I think GiveWell has its approach and is very public-facing, but I think there's also a place in the world for organizations that are about taking risks, doing what others won't do. And I think in a lot of ways, the world looks more diverse when the individual organizations are trying less hard to represent the world in all its diversity, if that makes sense.

31:19 HK: So, in other words, if you have 100 organizations and each of them has their own unique world view and their own unique sort of leaders and they're doing things their way, and then they all contribute ideas, and then you have this kind of marketplace of ideas. I think that's a much more robust and healthy and diverse world, than if you have 100 organizations and they each kind of take a national vote on what they should do, for example. So, I basically feel like the core philosophy of Open Phil is a small number of decision maker's philosophy, and everything we do, every way we're structured is about having a minimal number of decision-makers. And it's not because we feel that we should be making all the decisions in the world, it's kind of the opposite. It's that, actually, there are a lot of other funders who have as much funds as we do, and we're not that huge a percentage of the total philanthropic capital. And so, what we want to do is do something special and different and us, and do it with integrity.

32:13 HK: In terms of being influenced by the high-net-worths, I think we have a very good partnership with Cari and

Dustin, and the reason that we've both chosen to work with each other is cause we feel so aligned that we feel that we're learning from each other and helping each other to be a better version of ourselves. But there's not a lot of feeling of compromise and, "I'm only doing this because you want to." There is some of that, but I think it is limited and I think we have quite purposefully... We are selective. I mean we wouldn't want to work with someone who had very different priorities from us. We're not a consultant. We look for people who have very similar goals and who we feel we can work with in a productive way, that sticks with that kind of high-integrity fidelity to a core vision. Yeah.

32:58 Speaker 7: What organizations do you think are doing something similar to described, if there are any?

33:06 HK: Yeah, whatever organizations that do something similar to Open Phil, if any. I think the most natural comparison to Open Phil is other foundations. So, other foundations just like Open Phil, they have a bunch of full-time people, they have a bunch of capital, and they spend their time trying to give away the capital to accomplish certain goals. I think the most noticeable differences between them, I would say, other foundations, and I think it's accurate to just literally say all other foundations, they are explicitly there to serve their funders and to do what their funders find personally meaningful, and Open Phil is much more set up as something to do the best thing we can, to help the world as much as we can. Now, obviously, help the world as much as we can often involves personal judgment calls, and there are times when you don't have any choice but to make a personal decision. But it's still a fundamentally different vision and a different mission to say: "We are trying to help the world as much as we can and we'll make the personal calls when we have to", than it is to say, "This is the Holden Foundation and it's here for Holden and it's here to do what appeals to Holden."

34:13 HK: So, that's a fundamental difference in philosophy, and it also relates to the fact that I think we put out more and more detailed public content than other foundations, and it also relates to the fact that we've been very different in the way we've picked our focus areas than other foundations. So, most other foundations and most other advice we get is to kind of pick focus areas from the heart, without doing a lot of analysis on that, and then to get into the analysis. And we did a great deal of analysis to pick our focus areas. So, those are differences. But in terms of the groups that are similar, I would say it's foundations, and there is a great variety in foundations. So, I think there is no one doing exactly the same as we are with exactly the same vision, but there are a lot of other foundations doing great work of one kind or another. And sometimes there will be a lot of overlap in our methodology, or there will be overlap in an actual area, and that's certainly something that happens. I can take a few more, unless I've answered all the questions. Yeah.

35:15 Speaker 8: Anything happening in science? I don't think you've talked about that.

35:18 HK: Yeah, I didn't talk about science. So, I simplified a little bit. We chose focus areas from kind of an initial pool, an initial couple of categories. So, we chose policy focus areas and global catastrophic risk focus areas, and we haven't yet chosen science focus areas. That's just a long process, so, thinking about what science is most important, neglected, and tractable requires a level of scientific knowledge that you get to the point where it gets very hard to kind of bridge all the way from expert scientists who know their field, to kind of us and the decision makers and the donors. So it's just been an ongoing challenge, and I think we made a major step forward in August when we had two senior scientific advisors start, Chris Somerville and Heather Youngs. And so, that was a search that took, I think, over a year. And so, now we're definitely spending more time on science-cause selection than we used to. But we're still at the point of kind of figuring out even what does the process look like for figuring out whether a scientific cause is important, neglected, and tractable, and what we want our priorities to be.

36:27 HK: I'm also going to make a quick remark, since I have time, on just where we are in our evolution. So I mentioned that first we kind of did cause selection, then we did hiring, then we did grant making. This was the first year that we really did a really large amount of grant making. And I think there was some question at some point about when we were going to reach that point? But I think as we've ramped up the grantmaking, we've run into a lot of questions and issues and challenges that either didn't occur to us before or didn't seem very salient or important before. So questions like, how do we know when a grant is good enough to make the grant instead of saving the money for later? That's something we've been largely going on intuition or on a few heuristics. And we want to develop kind of a more formal framework for it. And there will be a blog post with more thoughts on that probably in the next week or so.

37:16 HK: And then, I think we can get our processes down better. I think just the step by step process for making a grant, for getting different people on the team with different levels of expertise, like the experts on the same page as the decision makers. Getting the money to the recipient a lot of the time can be a surprising challenge, especially in working with universities. So, I think there's just a whole bunch of questions that we just have muddled through. And I want next year to be largely focused on just building more robust frameworks, so that we're not only giving away a lot



of money, but giving it in a way that seems like every part of the process has really been thoughtfully designed, and we can scale it as much as we want to. And then we can think about what other causes we want to add on and how we want to ramp up further. So with that, I'll take one or two more questions. Then I'll stop. Yeah.

38:05 Speaker 9: What sort of time frame do you look at for policy questions? And the reason I ask is, you mentioned federal, there being a lot of difficulties right now in focusing on criminal justice because it's state and local? Is there something where recent events have changed your time frame in general, or is that something where you want to do the work so far in advance that you're taking a long view and still not really changing your plans based on recent development?

38:28 HK: Yeah. What kind of timeframes do we work on in policy? And by default, a lot of our policy issues, are kind of, we're trying to lay the groundwork in case something happens in the next 10 to 20 years. That's often the time frame we're kind of implicitly working with. Though the two causes I mentioned, I think are significantly shorter time frames than that. I think there is actually a window of opportunity in criminal justice reform. And so, we're hoping to actually see some impact in the next few years, and I think already have seen some impact. And farm animal welfare, I mean I think the impact has been big, and we've seen it. I don't know there's so much a window of opportunity as more like a neglected cause that with resources, I think, can go a lot further and a lot faster.

39:10 HK: So, I will say, you asked whether recent events have changed the outlook? And it's still something we're thinking through. And I think they have changed elements of the outlook, but we definitely did try to pick causes that we weren't going to... We wanted to pick causes that we could work in for a long time. because we had to pick them, and then hire them, and then learn about them, and then do the grants. And then after doing the grants, the institutions that we're supporting have to build. And so, everything we do is on a long timeframe. So, we really did try to pick causes where the case for them was very unlikely to vanish overnight. And I think it really hasn't vanished overnight. I think the prospects for criminal justice reform still look good at the state and local level, and that's always been where we're focused. And I think for all our causes, they all look very worthwhile for me, even in light of whatever might have happened recently.

[laughter]

40:00 HK: Cool. If there's one more question I'll take it. Otherwise. Alright, too late. Is Cat here?

40:06 S?: Yeah.

40:06 HK: Alright. Cool. I'm going to hand it over to Cat. So thanks everyone.

[applause]