

PLEASE NOTE: THIS POSITION HAS BEEN FILLED

We're keeping this PDF online so that links we've previously posted to it do not break, but we are no longer accepting applications for the role described below.

Program Officer, Biosecurity and Pandemic Preparedness

The Open Philanthropy Project is looking for a recognized expert in the field of biosecurity with substantial leadership experience to serve as our founding Program Officer, leading our biosecurity and pandemic preparedness work.

Our goal is to reduce the threat of major global disruptions from outbreaks (whether natural or manmade) and/or biological weapons. To do so, we are open to supporting improvements to any aspect of global biosecurity or public health preparedness systems. This might include, but is not limited to, supporting research and development for improved countermeasures, surveillance systems, emergency operations centers, workforce development, biosafety, and governance of dual use research. We are particularly interested in high-risk high-reward strategies such as early-stage research and development, demonstration projects, or supporting strong advocacy and research institutions for the long run. Our interest in this area is not regionally restricted and we are open to funding preparedness wherever it will do the most good.

The Program Officer will be responsible for developing our strategy and making grants. We expect to invest \$10-15 million per year in this area to start but hope to give significantly beyond that level if the candidate continues to find great opportunities.

About the Open Philanthropy Project

The Open Philanthropy Project is a collaboration between Good Ventures and GiveWell in which we identify outstanding giving opportunities, make grants, follow the results, and publish our findings.

Good Ventures is a philanthropic foundation whose mission is to help humanity thrive. Good Ventures was created by Dustin Moskovitz (co-founder of Facebook and Asana) and Cari Tuna, who have pledged to give the majority of their wealth to charity. GiveWell is a nonprofit that finds outstanding giving opportunities and publishes the full details of its analysis to help donors decide where to give.

Biosecurity and Pandemic Preparedness Program

We believe that pathogens with pandemic potential pose one of the greatest risks to continued global progress in both the short and long term. If the world is caught unprepared, the emergence of a highly transmissible and virulent natural pathogen could lead to many millions of deaths and threaten global stability. In the longer run, developments in synthetic biology – in addition to bringing many extremely important potential benefits – may also create new risks unless the scientific, public health, and security communities take steps to prevent the accidental release or malicious misuse of novel pathogens. Our goal is to substantially reduce the risk of major global disruptions from infectious disease outbreaks.

We're hoping to invest around \$10-15 million per year in this field to start, but we aim to grow our giving in this area significantly beyond that level if we continue to find great giving opportunities or if a transformative investment requires a greater amount.

Our engagement in biosecurity and pandemic preparedness to date has been limited. However, some initial areas of potential interest include:

- improving surveillance systems that enable the world to quickly detect and respond to outbreaks
- supporting research and development for innovative countermeasures (such as drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics) addressing the biggest threats
- supporting policy research and development seeking to reduce risks from dual use research without impeding scientific progress
- encouraging collaboration and data sharing between countries and between the various sectors involved in biosecurity
- developing a strong long-term policy research and advocacy infrastructure.

These are only preliminary interests, and we are very open to revising them or pursuing other approaches instead.

About the Program Officer Position

The Program Officer will play the key founding role in our work on biosecurity and pandemic preparedness. They will be responsible for developing our grantmaking strategy and priorities, making grants, and forming and maintaining relationships with grantees and others in the space.

While we intend to formally incorporate the Open Philanthropy Project as an independent organization in the future, the Program Officer will start as a GiveWell employee. They will work with other colleagues under the guidance of Managing Director Elie Hassenfeld.

Key Responsibilities

- Develop a strategy for the Open Philanthropy Project's work in the field that clearly describes what kinds of grants we aim to make and explains why they believe this to be the best approach to pursue.
- Source and investigate promising grant opportunities within the purview of the strategy.
- In consultation with other staff, make grants to the most promising opportunities that arise.
- Establish and maintain relationships with current and prospective grantees and other funders in the field.
- Produce public writeups explaining the rationale for our strategy and our grants.
- Follow up with grantees periodically and produce public updates on their progress.
- Stay up to date on overall progress in the field and adjust strategic direction based on new information by building and maintaining relationships with a diverse set of players.
- Prepare briefs synthesizing knowledge on questions of key strategic importance.
- Provide input on Open Philanthropy Project grants in other areas.
- Represent the Open Philanthropy Project at relevant external meetings, conferences, and site visits.

Skills and Experience

We recognize that biosecurity is a broad field and few (if any) candidates will have all of the relevant criteria. However, the ideal candidate will have:

- Experience in a senior role in the biosecurity or public health preparedness space. We have no strict experience requirement but ideally a candidate will have at least ten years of relevant post-education work experience, and at least five years in a leadership role with direct responsibility for making and justifying difficult strategic and budgetary decisions.
- Recognized expertise within their field.
- An MD, MPH, PHD, or other relevant post-graduate degree.

- Extensive connections in the field. The candidate should already have working relationships with key policymakers, civil servants, NGOs, researchers, and other leaders in many of the disciplines that make up this space.
- Demonstrated ability to quickly build a strong network in subfields outside of the candidate's specialization.
- Significant experience in or aptitude for developing strategies that combine different approaches, such as public health, emergency response, research and development, and advocacy.
- Familiarity with the language and culture of the public health, medical, basic science, research and development, defense, anti-terrorism, and nonproliferation fields.
- Strong analytical and quantitative skills.
- Ability to work effectively with ideologically, internationally, and culturally diverse partner organizations.
- Curiosity about and ability to rapidly acquire knowledge in areas beyond current expertise.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, especially the ability to explain one's views clearly.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Ability to travel domestically and internationally.

We are also open to considering candidates with deep experience in a specific subdomain of biosecurity (e.g. surveillance, countermeasure development, or governance) even if their direct experience outside their specialization is more limited than suggested by the above criteria.

Personal Characteristics We Look For

- Alignment with the Open Philanthropy Project's core values of openness and impact maximization.
- Excitement about working for a relatively new organization whose processes are under development and subject to change.
- Strong self-direction coupled with eagerness for discussion and feedback.
- Directness and openness in giving and receiving feedback.
- Comfort with intense discussion and debate, including challenging one's manager.
- Quantitative mindset and comfort thinking in terms of expected value.

What We Offer

- Immediate opportunity to lead strategy development and grantmaking in biosecurity and pandemic preparedness for a major new funder in the field.
- Long-term opportunity to build a team. We anticipate that a successful Program Officer will lead initial strategy development and grantmaking with limited additional staffing, but will eventually have the opportunity to lead a larger team.
- Flexible location. The majority of the Open Philanthropy Project staff is currently based in San Francisco, but location is negotiable.
- Competitive compensation, commensurate with experience.

To Apply

Please send an email with a resume and brief cover letter explaining your interest in the position to jobs@openphilanthropy.org.