



FUNDRAISING SKILLS PROFILE

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SUMMARY

By reading this profile we hope that you can build a better understanding of whether seeking to develop fundraising expertise seems like one of the best ways for you to use your time in order to help animals.

HOW DOES THIS WORK HELP ANIMALS

Fundraisers can increase the money available for effective animal advocacy nonprofits, enabling them to help animals more.

WHO IS THIS WORK A GOOD FIT FOR

Generalists with a mixture of interpersonal, communications, research, and analytical skills, though this varies by role type.

HOW MUCH DO WE NEED MORE EXPERTISE IN THIS AREA

A lack of funding is one of the main problems that the animal advocacy movement faces. We believe that fundraising is one of the top areas where the movement most urgently needs more expertise.

WHAT OPTIONS WOULD YOU HAVE IF YOU WERE TO LEAVE THIS PATH

Various other nonprofit roles (including campaigns, marketing, or management and leadership), roles in government institutions, or roles at for-profit companies.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR FUNDRAISING ROLES

Seek fundraising experience, professionally or voluntarily. Some for-profit experience types, such as sales, could help.



INTRODUCTION

Nonprofit organisations need funding to pay their staff’s salaries and other operational expenses. The animal advocacy movement needs to raise hundreds of millions of dollars every year to sustain itself at its current size, let alone grow.

In this profile, we will share insights with you from the experiences of some of the movement’s fundraisers (via 9 interviews), plus interesting research findings.



This graphic, from [Animal Charity Evaluators](#), shows that farmed animal advocacy lacks funding, relative to shelters and other animal causes.

HOW DOES THIS WORK HELP ANIMALS?

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN HELPING ANIMALS EFFECTIVELY THROUGH YOUR CAREER, YOU SHOULD PRIORITISE WORK THAT HAS HIGH POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT.



Spending resources on fundraising can have a multiplier effect by raising substantially more money than is invested.

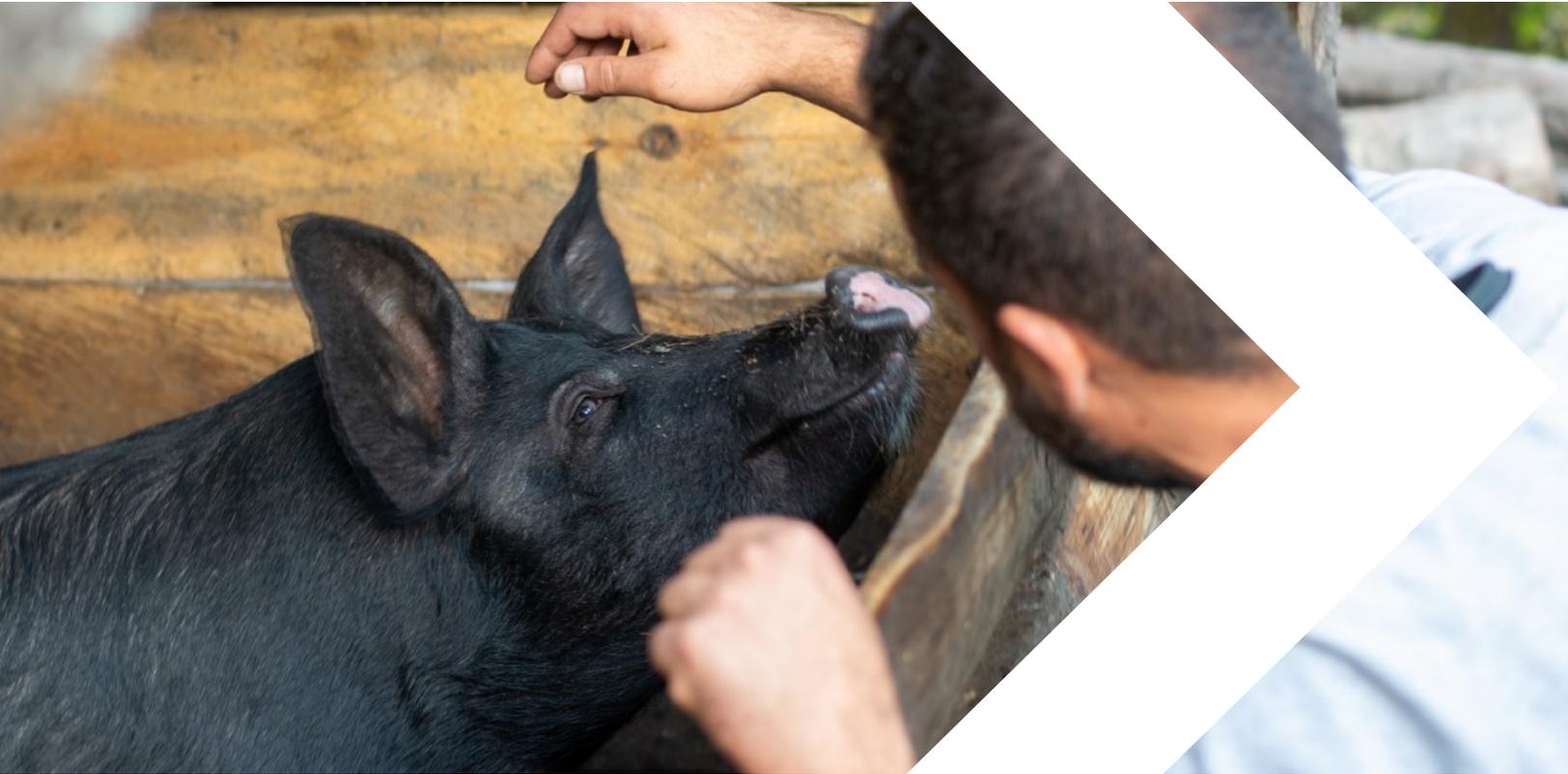
However, not all fundraising efforts are equal; measured in terms of money raised, there seem to be large differences in the effectiveness of fundraising efforts. 80,000 Hours [found](#) that “for each £1 spent on fundraising, studies have shown that charities typically raise £4-10,” but some organisations manage to raise [even more](#) than this. So good fundraising could make a big difference to what animal advocacy nonprofits can achieve.

It has been suggested that most fundraising efforts don't really “raise” money — they just move it from one nonprofit to another. Fundraising for a charity that isn't the best [could actually be harmful](#).

However, widespread use of effective fundraising techniques could increase the total amount of funding available for animal advocacy nonprofits. Redirecting funding between animal advocacy charities can also still be good, because some charities are [much more impactful than others](#). Overall, fundraising for the most effective animal advocacy charities is probably a good thing.

IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

THE INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION IS INTENDED TO HELP YOU ASSESS WHETHER YOU WILL HAVE GOOD PERSONAL FIT WITH FUNDRAISING ROLES. YOUR “[PERSONAL FIT](#)” WITH A ROLE OR CAREER PATH IS HOW WELL-SUITED YOU ARE TO IT AND YOUR CHANCES OF REALLY EXCELLING AT IT. WE THINK THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN [IMPACT-FOCUSED CAREER STRATEGY](#).



If you already have substantial M&L expertise and are reading this profile to decide whether you should seek to apply your expertise to animal advocacy, you might like to skip this section.

WHAT DO FUNDRAISERS DO?

Notable themes that emerged from our interviews with animal advocacy fundraisers about what they do include:

- ▶ Communicating with donors. Of course, this often involves directly asking donors or institutions for their financial support.
- ▶ Researching potential donors and grant-makers.
- ▶ One-to-one communication with individuals and institutions that might make gifts and thanking them for gifts they have made. Fundraising involves both cultivating relationships with prospective donors and stewarding relationships with existing donors.
- ▶ Organising fundraising events.
- ▶ Coordinating with other employees in the organisation to ensure that information relayed to donors is well-informed and to support communication with or proposals for donors.
- ▶ Logistical work coordinating fundraising across the department or specific fundraising campaigns.
- ▶ Tasks relating to any management and leadership responsibilities that they have, such as calls with their team members or training and recruitment.



[Heather Herrell](#) is the Director of Philanthropy at Animal Charity Evaluators. She raises money for ACE itself and ACE's [recommended charities](#).

There are a number of different types of fundraising roles, including:

- ▶ Supporter care roles, e.g. operating membership schemes,
- ▶ Digital marketing and mass communications with donors who give smaller amounts,
- ▶ Fundraising from major donors,
- ▶ Fundraising from foundations and grant-makers,
- ▶ Fundraising from corporate partners, and
- ▶ Fundraising at events.

Some teams in larger organisations (e.g. The Humane League, The Good Food Institute) have highly specialised staff that focus on only one of the role types from the list above. However, fundraisers at smaller organisations (or in countries where

organisations only have a small team) tend to be more like generalists, working on lots of different types of fundraising.

The specialised role types are not exactly alike:

- ▶ There is quite a lot in common between roles focusing on raising money from major donors, corporations, and foundations. Each engages with a relatively small number of individuals or institutions. They have to understand the goals and priorities of those individuals or institutions, then build a relationship with them. There are some differences between these roles. For example, grant writers likely do more “behind the scenes” work to prepare for their communications with donors.
- ▶ However, these three role types are all quite different from roles focusing on digital fundraising or supporter care, where fundraisers communicate with a large number of individuals giving smaller amounts, including via channels such as mailing lists and blog posts. This involves more data analysis and less face-to-face contact.
- ▶ Fundraising roles more heavily focused on events organising and face-to-face contact at those events are also quite different.

Our interviewees also noted that:

- ▶ It’s important to be — or become — comfortable in asking people for money. Asking someone for \$100,000 can be scary, but this is less of a barrier if you’re not focusing on one-to-one fundraising.
- ▶ For face-to-face fundraising, it’s helpful if you are extroverted and enjoy interacting with other people.
- ▶ Fundraising can be more satisfying than other role types in the sense that you get to see how successful you are via the money that you raise. This sense of visible impact can be missing from other types of work, such as in various operations roles or in political advocacy.
- ▶ Fundraising involves a variety of skillsets and tasks, including story-telling, people skills, and data analysis, which can be rewarding if you enjoy using all of these varied skillsets.

Additionally, fundraising seems to be slightly better paid than other nonprofit roles.



WHAT MAKES GREAT FUNDRAISERS?

Our interviewees believed that great fundraisers:

- ▶ Have good “people skills” and “emotional intelligence.”
- ▶ Have passion for the cause.
- ▶ Are able to “sell” the organisation, convince people, and tell compelling stories to donors.
- ▶ Have familiarity with data, data analysis expertise, and an ability to make decisions based on evidence and testing.
- ▶ Have good writing skills.
- ▶ Are able to research donors to understand their priorities and prepare for interactions with them.
- ▶ Are comfortable talking to many different audiences and have the ability to tailor fundraising pitches to different donors.
- ▶ Have marketing expertise.

These answers seemed to agree with much of the advice offered by many careers-guidance websites.

Fundraising teams use a number of software tools in their work. These include donor research tools like “[Wealth Engine](#)” or “[Donor Search](#),” analytics tools like “[Donor Trends](#),” and various donor database tools. But the skills described in the list above are probably more important than technical skills with these tools.

We asked our interviewees directly about the differences between different types of fundraising roles. They noted that these various roles were similar in many ways, but differences included:

- ▶ Those working with major donors can be slightly less focused on data analysis or marketing-style skills than those working with large fundraising campaigns for smaller donors.
- ▶ For those working with major donors or face-to-



face fundraising at events, one-to-one communications skills seem more important. Those fundraising from major donors also need to be able to create tailored strategies for maximising gifts from particular individuals.

- ▶ Grant-writers need to demonstrate evidence of impact, whereas face-to-face fundraisers have to focus more on building an emotional connection.

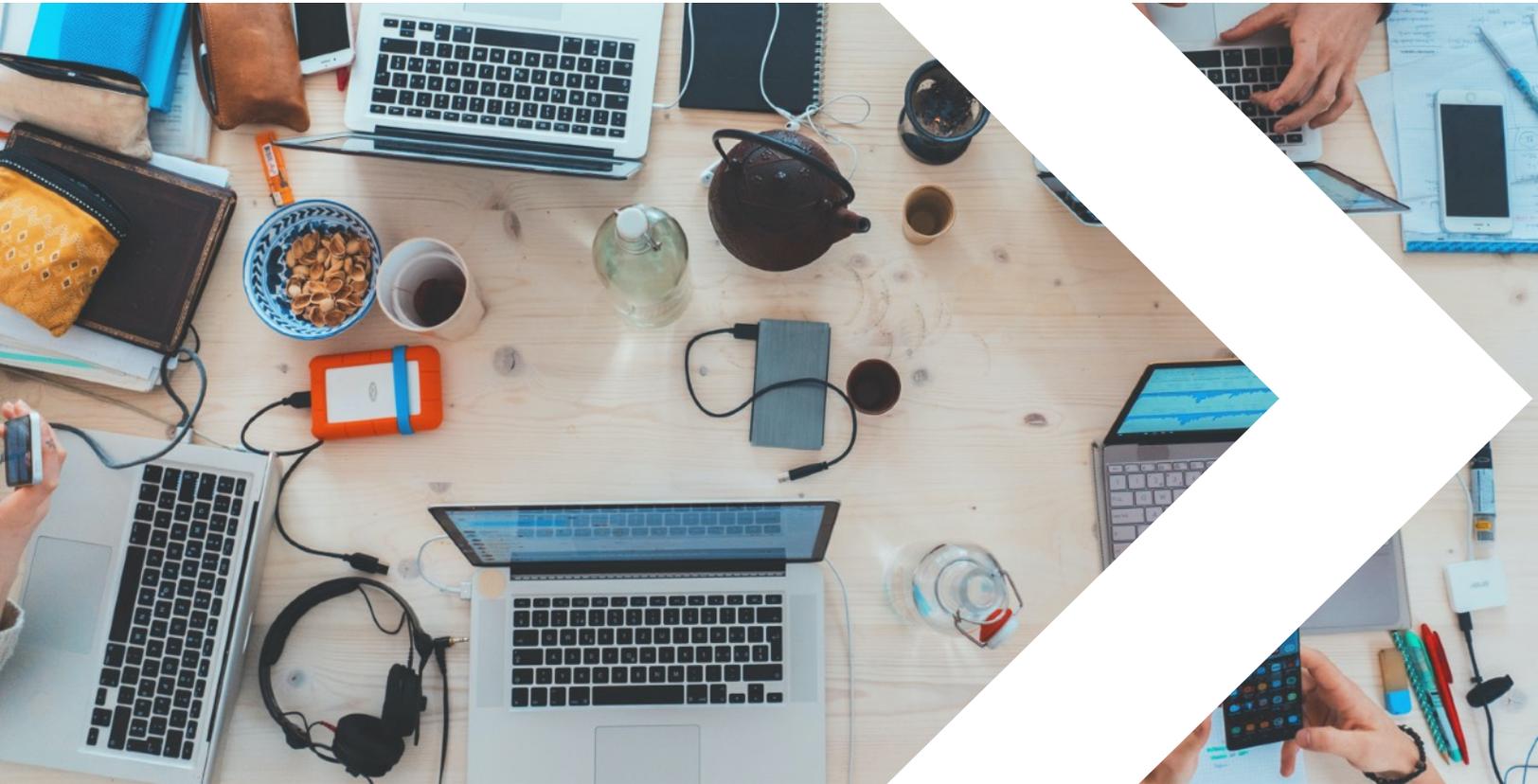
There is some research focused specifically on fundraising effectiveness that could support effective fundraising. For example, having reviewed relevant research, Aaron Gertler [encourages](#) asking donors how they are doing before asking them for money, adding pictures to donation materials, and various other strategies. [NextAfter](#) publishes the results of “1500+ experiments” that “can give you ideas on new tests to run as you look for new ways to optimize your online fundraising.” Faunalytics have [also written several research posts](#) seeking specifically to support fundraising for farmed animal advocacy.

HOW CAN YOU ASSESS YOUR PERSONAL FIT?

- ▶ Look honestly at your previous success in related work that uses the skills described above.
- ▶ If you don't currently work in fundraising, there might be opportunities to explore fundraising yourself. Can you get involved with existing fundraising initiatives at your university or company? Can you do some fundraising as an individual? Can you write a pitch to a donor for a nonprofit?
- ▶ You might be able to fundraise directly for an organisation in a more formal voluntary capacity.
- ▶ Lots of organisations look for help with planning and running special events or with campaigns that interact directly with the public.
- ▶ You can try to understand the roles and work of fundraisers better by reading or listening to materials about them.
- ▶ Talk to fundraisers and ask them about your uncertainties.
- ▶ If you think that you are plausibly a good candidate, you should apply for fundraising roles at effective animal advocacy nonprofits. This can provide useful feedback. Job hunting and fundraising itself have several characteristics in common so your ability to network and secure yourself a paid role in fundraising may be a good indication of how well-suited you are to the role itself.

WHAT IS FUNDRAISING IN ANIMAL ADVOCACY LIKE IN PRACTICE?

A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE LANDSCAPE OF THE ANIMAL ADVOCACY MOVEMENT MIGHT HELP YOU UNDERSTAND SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF WHETHER YOU ARE WELL-SUITED TO WORK IN THIS AREA.



It's also important for understanding how your strengths compare to other members of the animal advocacy movement who might plausibly do similar roles. This determines your [comparative advantage](#) — the job or path that is highest-impact for you, taking into account the possibility of coordination with others in the animal advocacy movement. This is something we can talk through with you if you apply for a [one-to-one careers advice call](#) with us.

HOW MUCH DOES THE MOVEMENT NEED MORE EXPERTISE IN THIS AREA?

Although fundraising can be a rewarding career, additional funds are only helpful if there are good uses for them. There are some reasons to suspect that there might not always be good uses for more funding:

- ▶ From late 2016 to March 2020, Open Philanthropy [granted](#) out \$110 million to organisations focusing on farmed animal advocacy, granting as much as \$17.3 million to the organisations that they believe help animals most cost-effectively.
- ▶ If you think that the gap between the most cost-effective charities (e.g. Animal Charity Evaluators' [Top Charities](#)) and [other funded](#) charities is large, you might think that there are few promising funding opportunities.
- ▶ A 2019 [survey](#) of effective altruism organisations (only two of which were animal advocacy organisations) found that, on average, organisations rated themselves as more “talent-constrained” (average 3.8 out of 5) than “funding-constrained” (average 2.4 out of 5).

Despite this, however, it does seem likely that more funding could increase the impact that the movement has for animals:

- ▶ Despite the large amounts of funding received through Open Philanthropy grants, Animal Charity Evaluators' “Top Charities” can only be assigned this status if ACE concludes that they have “room for more funding.” ACE has always had 3 or 4 Top Charities and numerous additional “Standout Charities” at any one time.
- ▶ Animal Charity Evaluators and Open Philanthropy seem to [frequently agree](#) about which charities can make best use of additional funding. If you disagree with their views about animal advocacy strategy, then you might think that other tactics and organisations need more funding.
- ▶ In our [survey](#) of animal advocacy nonprofits, 9 out of 12 respondents selected “funding” as one of the bottlenecks that they “identify most” with in their organisation.
- ▶ Several research organisations [report](#) struggling to get enough funding.

It's worth noting that a lack of *funding* can be a problem for the animal advocacy movement without *fundraising expertise* also being a problem. If we conclude that a lack of funding is a problem, then this increases the value of career options that bring more money into the movement. Apart from fundraising, [“earning to give”](#) could be a promising option; if you earn lots of money, you may be able to directly

donate enough to support one or more full-time staff members for animal advocacy organisations. [Work at foundations](#) could also be promising; you may be able to encourage the foundation to give more towards animal advocacy than it otherwise would or redirect grants to better organisations and interventions.



[Alexander Gordon-Brown](#) has worked as a quant trader and donated hundreds of thousands of pounds to effective nonprofits.

However, there is some evidence that a lack of fundraising expertise is indeed a problem:

- ▶ 5 out of 12 respondents to our [survey](#) selected “fundraising experience” as one of the skills that their organisation most needed.
- ▶ Our “[spot-check](#)” of current roles and advertised roles at 27 animal advocacy nonprofits suggested that these organisations struggle to hire fundraisers.
- ▶ There is evidence that senior fundraisers are difficult to [hire](#) and [retain](#) in US nonprofits generally. This makes it seem more likely that animal advocacy nonprofits face the same difficulty.

Overall, our impression is that a lack of funding is one of the main problems that the movement faces, if not *the main* problem, and that fundraising expertise is among the top 5 areas where the movement most urgently needs more expertise.

WHICH SORTS OF FUNDRAISING ROLES ARE MOST COMMONLY AVAILABLE?

Our impression is that there are few very highly specialised fundraising roles. For example, from the 72 fundraising roles identified in our [spot-check](#) of current roles at animal advocacy nonprofits, only two individuals had job titles that clearly showed that they focused on corporate fundraising or work with foundations. Similarly, only 2 titles seemed to clearly imply a primary focus on fundraising through events.

Smaller donors provide vital support for animal advocacy organisations. Nevertheless, some of the larger animal advocacy nonprofits in the US outsource their direct mail and online fundraising programmes, so the number of available direct mail and online fundraising roles may be lower than you would expect.



WHICH COUNTRIES ARE FUNDRAISING ROLES BASED IN?

In our [spot-check](#) of 27 animal advocacy nonprofits, 49% of fundraising roles were based in the US, 8% were based in other English-speaking countries, and the other 43% were based in countries where English is not the first language. Fundraising roles were identified in 13 countries in total. This research is not perfect though and there may be more roles outside the US than these results suggest. Some roles can be done remotely and may be flexible in terms of country.

WHAT OPTIONS WOULD YOU HAVE IF YOU WERE TO LEAVE THIS PATH?

SINCE DEVELOPING FUNDRAISING EXPERTISE REQUIRES BUILDING UP GENERALIST SKILLS, IF YOU WERE TO FOCUS ON THIS BUT THEN DECIDE THAT YOU ARE NO LONGER INTERESTED IN PURSUING THE PATH, THE [CAREER CAPITAL](#) (SKILLS, CONNECTIONS, AND CREDENTIALS) THAT YOU GAIN WOULD LIKELY BE USEFUL FOR OTHER AREAS WITHIN ANIMAL ADVOCACY.



Our interviewees pointed out that:

- ▶ Fundraising provides a lot of generally useful skills.
- ▶ The skills built up for fundraising with large numbers of donors could be quite transferable to large-scale campaigns or communications and marketing roles.
- ▶ The one-to-one people skills from face-to-face and major donor work seems likely to be transferable to corporate engagement roles.

- ▶ Donor management skills could be highly transferable to human resources roles.
- ▶ Given that everyone at a nonprofit tends to be involved in some way with fundraising, fundraising experience might be more generically useful for staff than experience in some other role types might be.

Fundraisers may be well-placed to enter high-level management and leadership roles in nonprofits. There are certainly some commonalities between the requirements of fundraising and management and leadership roles (even [charity entrepreneurship](#)), especially the need for “people skills” and a “generalist” skillset.

Our guess is that efforts that go towards building up the communications, analytical, and “people” skills that seem to be important for fundraising could also be applicable to government, policy, and lobbying roles.

Alternatively, you could transition into communications, marketing, sales, or corporate engagement roles in the for-profit sector, potentially at animal-free food companies.

INTERESTED IN FUNDRAISING ROLES TO HELP ANIMALS?

IF YOU NEED TO DO SOME CAREER PLANNING, 80,000 HOURS' [“TIPS ON MAKING CAREER PLANS”](#) WILL LIKELY BE HELPFUL.

If you're considering whether you'd like to focus on developing fundraising expertise, or bringing your existing fundraising expertise to support the animal advocacy movement, we might be able to help you talk through your options.

You can [apply for a one-to-one careers advice call with us](#).

HOW TO PREPARE FOR FUNDRAISING ROLES

SO FAR, THIS PROFILE HAS FOCUSED ON INFORMATION TO HELP YOU DECIDE WHETHER YOU SHOULD SEEK TO DEVELOP FUNDRAISING EXPERTISE. THE INFORMATION BELOW IS MORE FOCUSED ON HELPING YOU DECIDE WHAT YOU COULD DO NEXT IF YOU DECIDE THAT YOU *DO* WANT TO FOCUS ON THIS.



WHAT ARE THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS?

Our “[spot-check](#)” of advertised job opportunities at 27 animal advocacy nonprofits suggests that you may need a few years of relevant experience (not necessarily *fundraising* experience) to secure fundraising roles. Formal nonprofit experience is often required or preferred. Several of our interviewees emphasised that direct fundraising experience is a big boost to applicants and that there is no real substitute for this.

Most of our interviewees had worked in full-time fundraising roles prior to moving to the organisation that they currently work for. Few had previously worked in other roles at animal advocacy or animal-free food organisations.

Some job specifications ask for a degree, but, in terms of relevant skill development, a degree isn't necessary and you may be able to progress further in fundraising careers by applying directly to roles earlier. Note that sometimes formal entry requirements are not as "required" as the job advert implies. Of course, beyond the formal entry requirements, you'll also want to ensure that fundraising is right for you (see the relevant section above).



Unlike some of our other interviewees, [Marcela Borges](#) of the Brazilian Vegetarian Society had had little direct fundraising experience before securing her current role.

WHAT SORTS OF EXPERIENCE ARE MOST USEFUL FOR DEVELOPING FUNDRAISING EXPERTISE?

If you need to do other sorts of work before applying for fundraising roles, our interviewees recommended work that builds up expertise in relevant skillsets and activity types, such as in communications and persuasion, data analysis, and mediating between various stakeholders.

Several interviewees emphasised that direct fundraising experience is helpful. However, there may be some ways to get substantial fundraising experience without having a full-time fundraising role, such as using the website [idealists.org](#) to do pro bono and low-paid grant writing, attending conferences to make connections, or identifying fundraising opportunities in your existing role.

More concretely, four interviewees suggested that client relations or sales experience from the for-profit space would be useful preparation. Some suggested marketing, events planning, and project managing experience.

Of course, the relevance of particular types of fundraising experience might vary by the sort of fundraising roles you are interested in. For example, only some

organisations use face-to-face events for fundraising, so experience of fundraising at events would not be as highly relevant for all organisations.

Our interviewees tended to have more experience in fundraising than experience of full-time work in animal advocacy and most of them believed that fundraising experience was more important than experience in the animal advocacy or animal-free food communities.

WHAT SORT OF ACADEMIC TRAINING IS RELEVANT?



If you do get a degree, a wide variety of degrees are acceptable. More fundraisers seem to have degrees in humanities or social sciences than in natural sciences. At least [two universities](#) offer undergraduate degrees directly related to fundraising, but this seems to be rare. Some courses are available that focus on nonprofits generally, such as in “nonprofit management.” Some business schools and programmes might offer highly relevant courses, such as in sales. Our guess is that it’s probably better to focus on degrees that might support you to develop skills that you need, such as communications skills, people skills, and research, than to focus on taking a seemingly more directly relevant degree.

DELIBERATE PRACTICE AND TRAINING

Mentorship from more experienced fundraisers can be very helpful for developing fundraising skills. Courses, webinars, and certifications can be useful, though these qualifications are probably less useful than hands-on fundraising experience or mentorship.

Searches on Amazon for “nonprofit fundraising” or just “fundraising” reveal a number of guides on the topic. You can use a number of other platforms to identify relevant resources. See [here](#) for a short list of other fundraising resources, including those recommended by our interviewees.

Slow and deliberate practice of writing to individual donors could be a useful exercise for improving fundraising skills. Basic familiarity with social psychology could be helpful. Depending on what fundraising tasks you currently undertake, other ways to improve your fundraising technique might include [A/B testing](#), [formal experiments](#), or informally trying out variations to your practice and reflecting on the results.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- ▶ [The longer, more detailed version of this skills profile.](#)
- ▶ [Our list of fundraising resources for self-development.](#)
- ▶ [One-to-one careers advice calls with us.](#)
- ▶ The [interview findings spreadsheet](#) for this skills profile.
- ▶ [The effective animal advocacy community directory.](#)

For securing relevant roles outside of animal advocacy nonprofits, the following resources may be useful:

- ▶ 80,000 Hours' advice on "[how to get a job.](#)"
- ▶ 80,000 Hours' advice on entering specific [career paths.](#)

Individuals already working in fundraising may be interested in our short document on "[Which audiences are most receptive to fundraising for farmed animal advocacy?](#)"

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN HELPING ANIMALS!

Thank you for reading this skills profile. We hope this has been helpful for shaping your future steps. We wish you the best of luck in your animal advocacy career planning.

If you've found this skills profile useful, you can support our work by [donating to Animal Advocacy Careers.](#)

Your contributions will support us to help animals.