

# Impact Report

2020



**GIVING  
GAMES**

# Thank you

We would like to *sincerely thank our supporters* for making all of what is described below possible.

Due to the support of Brian Lonergan and Douglas Alexander, in 2019, the Giving Games Project was able to employ a full-time member of staff, Kathryn Mecrow-Flynn, which has greatly increased our capacity. We are very thankful to The Australian Communities Foundation’s Social Justice Fund, specifically, David Morawetz who sponsored many of our 2019-2020 Giving Games. We are grateful

for Luke Ding and Charlie Bresler for their guidance and support throughout this year. We would like to thank and acknowledge the hard work of Luke Freeman who developed our Giving Games Platform, Nicole Sutton of the University of Technology Sydney, Heidi Furey of Manhattan College, the One For The World Team, and Greg Gianopoulos. Gabel Taggart from the University of Wyoming—who we would like to thank for this—assisted in the independent analysis of our data in this report and has been a valuable partner to the Giving Games Project. Finally, we thank our partners, our facilitators, and the Effective Altruist and high impact philanthropy ecosystems.

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# Executive summary



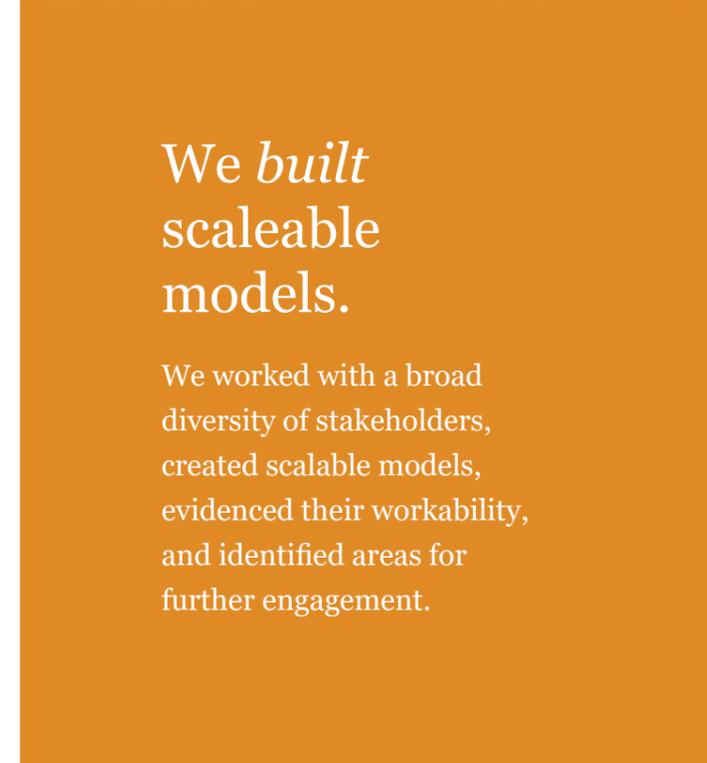
## We strengthened our foundations.

With the hiring of our first full-time member of staff we increased our capacity, with the intention of scaling in 2020. We assembled ready-to-run materials including videos to guide facilitators through each stage of a Giving Game and launched an online Giving Games Platform to administer our impact tracking.



## We demonstrated our impact.

We collected compelling evidence that Giving Games change people's minds and plans towards charitable giving. Most importantly, we were able to evidence concrete actions taken as a result of Giving Games.



## We built scaleable models.

We worked with a broad diversity of stakeholders, created scalable models, evidenced their workability, and identified areas for further engagement.

## We've refocused how we measure our impact.

We primarily look at two core criteria: changes in how participants value considerations associated with effective giving and plans to give more effectively going forward or become involved in effective altruist/ effective giving groups or organizations. We decided to focus on reaching people who are at the beginning their journeys in effective altruism and high impact philanthropy.



## We will now prioritize scaling and concrete end asks.

We will prioritize scaling through partnerships with universities, effective giving/ effective altruist groups, corporations, and giving circles.

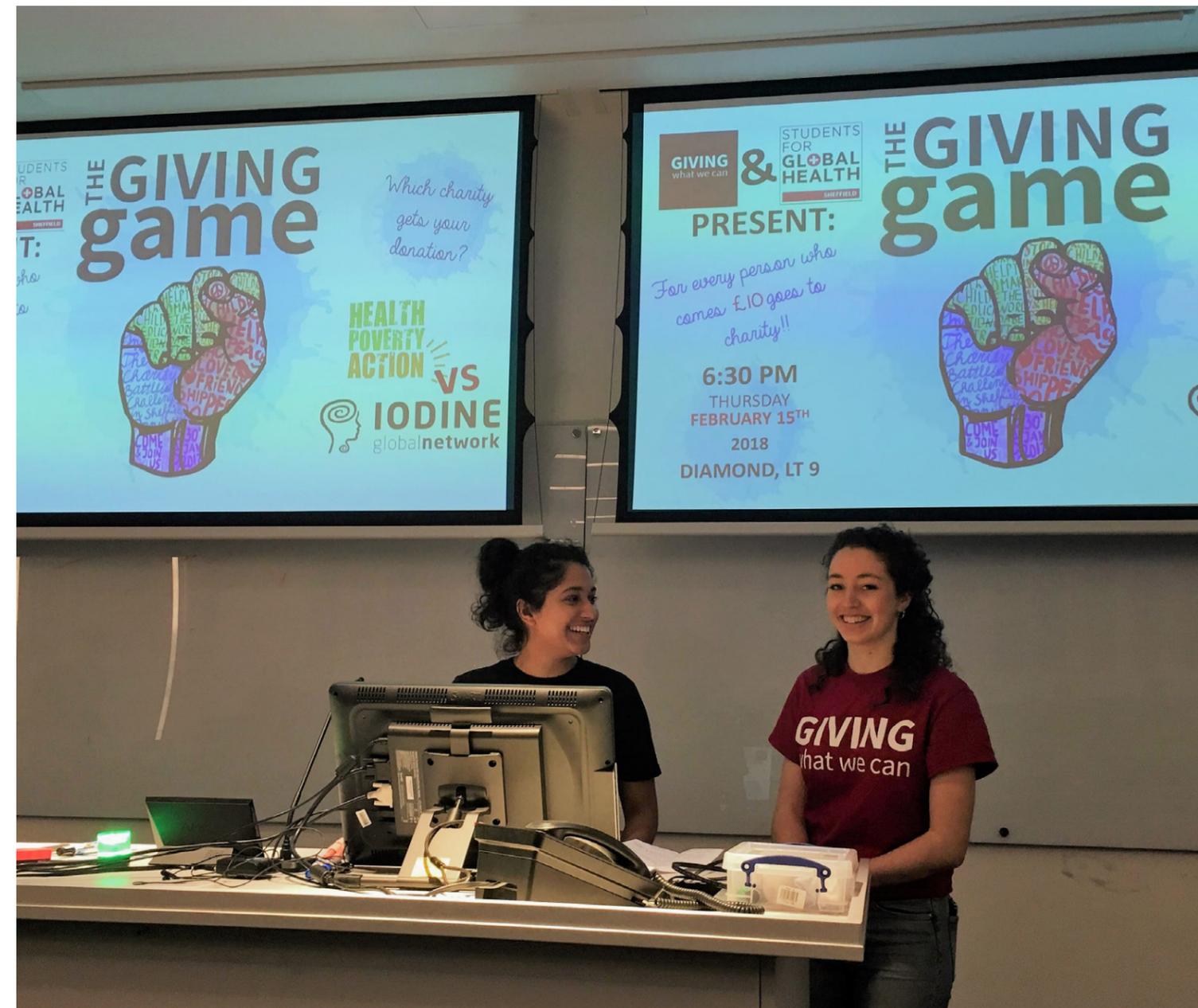
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# I. Introduction

Giving Games are cost-effective educational activities designed to introduce participants to effective giving. During a typical Giving Game, each participant is given \$10, introduced to the featured charities, and asked to make an initial choice based on short fundraising pitches. The facilitator then goes into more detail about the work of the non-profits, and how to maximize the potential impact of charitable giving. In particular, the facilitator explains core concepts like cost-effectiveness, evidence, and how the overhead myth is incorrectly used to assess the performance of nonprofits. At the end of the Giving Game, participants decide where to donate.

This year has been really exciting for the Giving Games Project. With the hiring of our first full-time member of staff—Kathryn Mecrow-Flynn—we increased our capacity, enabling us to strengthen our foundations with the intention to scale in 2020. We improved our processes and strategy by focusing on three fundamental questions:

- A.** *What does the Giving Games Project want to accomplish?*
- B.** *How can we best do this?*
- C.** *How can we effectively track whether we are succeeding?*



## A. What do we want to accomplish?

We have an ambitious goal: we want to fundamentally shift the way people learn about, and practice charitable giving. Our aim is to inspire people to give more and give effectively.

## B. How can we do this?

In 2019, we refocused the way we measure the impact of Giving Games. We now primarily look at two core criteria, which were changes in how participants:

- *Value considerations associated with effective giving.*
- *Plan to give more effectively going forward or become involved in effective altruist/ effective giving groups or organizations.*

Based on analysis of our results through to late 2019, we decided to focus on reaching people who are at the beginning their journeys in Effective Altruism and high impact philanthropy. Accordingly, we are focusing on partnering with those who reach large numbers of young adults and are prioritizing scalability.

To increase scalability, we improved the quality and comprehensiveness of our materials and their accessibility. We assembled a ready-to-run Giving Game, and updated all of our resources. Visitors to our [website](#) have access to a pre-made powerpoint presentation, discussion sheet for participants to use when deciding where to donate during a Giving Game, and Giving Games Facilitation Manual which records all our lessons learnt. We additionally have videos available detailing the content of a standard sixty minute Giving Game.



## C. How can we effectively track whether we are succeeding?

In the 2018 [Giving Games Annual Report](#), we identified that the biggest priority in the near term was to encourage as many Giving Game facilitators as possible to administer an online survey immediately after their Giving Games. This was prioritized due to a gap in our data; we only had survey data for ~20% of Giving Games participants.

We additionally decided to administer a preliminary survey (“pre-survey”) to more effectively track peoples’ attitudes to giving before the content

was delivered. This provided us a point of comparison for the survey answers we collect after each session, creating an opportunity to see how much of a change was created by the Giving Game.

In 2019, we introduced a new online platform created by Luke Freeman, to provide a convenient way to incorporate the surveys into Giving Games. This provided us with one centralized place where we could collect and analyze data. The platform additionally automatically subscribes participants who opt in to the relevant mailing lists, records the amounts donated, and completes automatic calculations on the difference between the pre-and post- Giving Game survey responses for our impact tracking.



## II. Do *Giving Games* work?

### A. Did we change minds?

Before a Giving Game, we asked each participant to rank in order of importance six factors they consider when donating to nonprofits. We then asked them the same question immediately after the Giving Game. The six considerations are listed below and are phrased in the same way they appear on the survey. The “Impactful Factors” are important to high impact philanthropy and the “Alternative Factors” while commonly held factors that have little bearing on effectiveness. If the Giving Game is working the way we hope, we should see participants rank the “Impactful Factors” as more important after the Giving Game than they did before it.

#### *Impactful Factors*

1. *Supported by evidence on the effectiveness of its work.*
2. *Having a high positive impact per dollar donated.*
3. *Tackling one of the world’s most critical problems.*

#### *Alternative Factors*

1. *Spending the majority of its funds on the cause, not its own running costs.*
2. *Helping people in my community.*
3. *Working on an issue I have a personal connection to.*

**TABLE 1**

Changes in attitudes by consideration before and after a Giving Game

	Consideration for Giving	Pre	Post	Change	P Diff
Impact Metric	Supported by the evidence on the effectiveness of its work.	2.62	2.30	-0.32	-
Impact Metric	Having a high positive impact per dollar donated.	2.68	2.44	-0.24	-
Impact Metric	Tackling one of the world’s most critical problems.	3.15	3.13	-0.02	0.74
Alternative Metric	Spending the majority of its funds on the cause, not its own running costs.	3.64	4.00	0.36	-
Alternative Metric	Working in on an issue I have a personal connection to.	4.21	4.43	0.22	-
Alternative Metric	Helping my community.	4.68	4.73	0.05	0.41

Table 1 shows the results of Giving Games in changing the views of participants in the relative importance of the different considerations for giving. “Pre” and “Post” refers to the surveys given to participants before the Giving Game and immediately after and shows how the participants ranked each consideration on average (lower ranking = higher priority). The table records the changes in each participant’s rankings between the post and pre-results and the probability that this change was caused by the Giving Game.

As you can see in the table, we can be certain that attending the Giving Game had a significant impact on people’s reported attitudes towards charitable

giving in four of the six metrics we measure, and in the desired direction. Participants prioritized the importance of cost-effectiveness and evidence, and deprioritized a nonprofit’s overhead and their personal connection to the charity.

The other two metrics saw only very small changes (in both cases, the change was in the desired direction). This suggests our Giving Game materials can be improved to emphasize consideration of the severity and scale of the issue and the effectiveness of international giving vs. local giving. This has been amended in the materials as part of our continual fine-tuning on the materials in response to the data we receive from these surveys.

**TABLE 2**

Changes in overall ratings of considerations before and after a Giving Game

Sample Size: 421	Pre	Post	% Change
Top 1 Impact	2.62	2.30	-0.32
Top 2 Impact	2.68	2.44	-0.24
Top 3 Impact	3.15	3.13	-0.02
Top 1 Alternative	3.64	4.00	0.36
Top 2 Alternative	4.21	4.43	0.22
Top 3 Alternative	4.68	4.73	0.05

This table shows the changes in each participant’s broader responses to the pre and post- survey question. “Top 1 Impact” refers to the number of participants who rated an impactful factor as their most important consideration when making decisions about charitable donations, while “Top 1 Alternative” refers to the participants who considered an alternative factor as their most important consideration. “Top 2 Impact” refers to those who rated

impactful factors as the first and second most important considerations, while “Top 2 Alternative” is for those who put alternative factors as their first and second most important considerations. The “Top 3” for each is for those who rated either all three impactful or all three alternative factors as their top three selections. (These numbers are not additive, as for example people in the “Top 3 Impact” category are also included in the “Top 2 Impact” and “Top 1 Impact” categories).

By the end of the game, there is an 8% increase in the number of people who have an impactful factor as their top consideration, a 24% increase in participants who have an impactful factor as their top two and a 35% increase in participants who have impactful considerations as their top three. By contrast, participants were less likely to prioritize alternative factors after the Giving Game.



**TABLE 3**

Changes in overall ratings of considerations before and after a Giving Game in participants with no prior exposure to effective giving concepts

The table below is a sample of 48 persons who reported that they had no prior exposure to charitable giving and is structured in the same manner as Table 2. With this, unsurprisingly the effects are significantly more pronounced as

you can see below. For example, there was a 100% reduction in the number of people who prioritized all alternative factors and a 63% increase in the number of people who prioritized all impactful factors.

Sample Size: 48	Pre	Post	% Change
Top 1 Impact	33	38	15%
Top 2 Impact	22	31	41%
Top 3 Impact	16	26	63%
Top 1 Alternative	15	11	-27%
Top 2 Alternative	6	5	-17%
Top 3 Alternative	4	0	-100%



## B. Did we change plans?

In addition to the quantitative survey data, we also provide Giving Game participants with the chance to offer open-ended qualitative feedback.

In response to the question “How has this Giving Game changed how you will donate in the future?”, many answers from the last year covered themes that we’ve also seen in past surveys: an intention to do more research (e.g. “I will do more research into the effective of the charity that I’m donating to”, “It made me realize that I should be asking more questions and conducting more research before donating”), greater attention to cost-effectiveness (e.g. “I want to focus on looking at charities that have a high impact per dollar!”, “I definitely want to know where my donation is going and how much of an impact each dollar creates”), and appreciation for the need to look beyond a charity’s marketing materials (e.g. “I will think not just about the outer advertisements, but about the evidence and effectiveness”, “Looking beyond the first one sentence pitch”). Open ended survey answers also help us understand

areas where we need to improve, and whether our fixes are working. The heightened emphasis we now place on teaching participants about the “overhead myth” was largely motivated by data we’ve collected in the past that suggested that participants weren’t grasping this concept as much as we’d like. The most recent set of open ended survey data we’ve collected shows an improved understanding of the overhead myth, which is consistent with our quantitative analysis showing statistically significant changes in attitudes around overhead. Going forward, we’ve noticed a recurring theme in the feedback that participants would like to see more advertising to encourage larger events. This suggests we have opportunities to improve the materials and training we offer facilitators to promote their Giving Games, which would also help our goal of reaching as many people as possible.

## C. Did this lead to action?

We go into detail below about specific programs we have run this year. While attitude and plan change is indicative of the effectiveness of our materials, we do not think it matters very much unless it motivates current or future actions, i.e. people giving to effective charities, becoming involved in Effective Altruism, or looking at additional resources. As such, *we pursued a partnership with One For The World where their campus Chapters ran Giving Games or hosted our facilitators, and asked students to pledge 1% of their future income to effective charities.*

In late October 2019, One for the World added a field to their payment platform to capture donors’ primary reason for donating. Since that time, 60 people answered “Giving Games” when asked why they decided to take the pledge. Of those, 53 have not canceled their pledges, for a

remaining expected total of \$35,275 per year. The majority of these pledges come from Giving Games we ran during the Fall term. Taking four Giving Games where we can be confident of the number of attendees and the number of pledges, between 4%-14% percent of attendees pledged. The average across these events was 8% of attendees who were inspired by Giving Games to pledge, with a cost of \$10 sponsorship per person. We will continue to work with One For The World to grow this dataset in the future and explore retention over time.

This is promising data that we can and have successfully motivated action. We also have anecdotal data of people being introduced to Effective Altruism through Giving Games and will place emphasis upon this angle of impact tracking and partnership development next year.

“While attitude and plan change is indicative of the effectiveness of our materials, we do not think it matters very much unless it motivates current or future actions.”

## III.

# Can *Giving Games* scale effectively?

## A. Have we succeeded in laying the groundwork to reach our target audiences?

We are in a promising position from which to scale the Giving Games Project. We have developed a variety of use cases and materials for people interested in working with us in the future. Below are some highlights our team is particularly proud of and excited to share as case studies. Game than they did before it.



## 1. Universities

Due to the successes in this area of outreach, building educational partnerships will be a core focus for our team in 2020. In late 2018, [we partnered with Nicole Sutton and her team at the University of Technology Sydney \(UTS\)](#), to incorporate Giving Games into their curriculum. Following a [successful pilot with student volunteers](#), Giving Games are now incorporated into undergraduate tutorial classes with a cohort each semester of approximately 300-400 students. Results from the first semester indicated that classroom Giving Games have been well-received by both students and teachers. Notably,

students scored the classroom Giving Game very highly and teachers assessed the Giving Game as highly effective at demonstrating the relevance of accounting to areas of social impact, 4.4 out of 5, between “very effective” and “extremely effective” at helping students understand decision-making concepts. We go into more detail about each aspect of the activity in our detailed [impact report](#). Based upon this, we now have materials which can be used by other educators, and a proof of concept that Giving Games can be adapted to a classroom setting and utilized by educators at scale.

“A new trend has emerged that is significantly more scalable and dynamic. Rather than running extensive educational programs, where students ultimately donate large sums of money to their chosen charities, recent experiments have dabbled in a ‘micro’ approach.

They ask, “If a class had \$20,000 to donate instead of \$10,000, would students learn twice as much?” And the answer, of course, is no, they wouldn’t.”

— Fred Hollows Foundation

We additionally partnered with Heidi Furey, an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Ethics Center at Manhattan College, with a current student body of 3,654. During 2019, we worked with Heidi to introduce students to Effective Altruism. Kathryn visited Manhattan College and

ran multiple Giving Games with the students. In early 2020, Kathryn ran a teaching training. Based on the success of these events, the Center of Ethics and Leadership have now allocated their own budget to sponsor teachers at all departments of the colleges to run Giving Games with their students.

“This will sound like hyperbole, but I cannot say enough about the impact Kathryn Mecrow-Flynn has had on Manhattan College. As the director of the Center for Ethics, I had wanted to organize the Center’s activities around the theme of effective altruism. However, I had no idea where, to begin with, this project and almost gave it up altogether. By the time my first meeting with Kathryn had ended, I had an entire EA program mapped out from beginning to end. Not only that, but Kathryn helped me run the program from start to finish...introducing me to new partners, brainstorming about events, traveling to New York to run workshops, following up after events took place to see how they went... And I am even more blown away by how enthusiastically and energetically she answered our call for help... The events that she helped make possible this semester have sparked a wave of interest in high impact philanthropy and effective altruism that I am certain will continue to grow as time goes on.”-

— Heidi Furey

## 2. Groups



The Giving Game Project works with a large number of groups, many associated with the Effective Altruism movement. During 2018, we collaborated with One For the World (OFTW), a nonprofit that encourages students to donate at least 1% of their future income to charities that fight extreme poverty. Following the success of our 2018 - 2019 ad hoc

workshops with OFTW chapters, we joined forces to launch a structured Giving Games outreach program. Giving Games were held at ten OFTW campuses in the U.S. and Australia. The reception from the Chapter Leaders was enthusiastic, and consistent with the positive pledge data previously discussed:

“A Giving Game is such an eye-opening experience! Everyone who attended the event could agree that the presentation was inspirational. It entirely changes how you think about effective giving and understanding that not all charitable actions are the same. Highly recommend attending!”

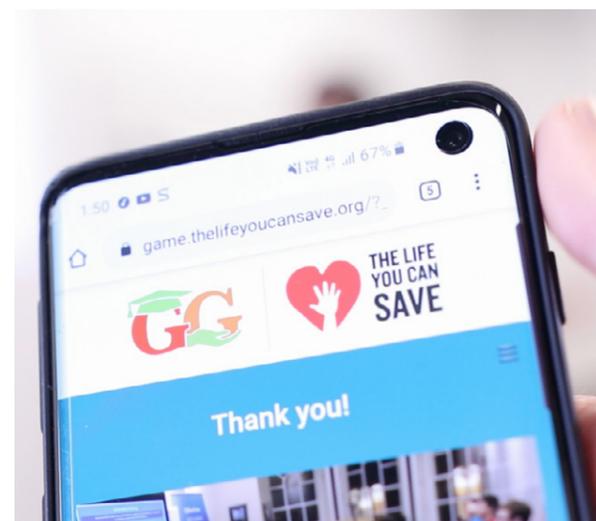
— Yasaman Salahmand, George Washington Chapter

“Running a Giving Game is always an incredibly rewarding experience. I’ve been a habitual donor for some time now, and so the good feeling and sense of purpose associated with effective giving is pretty normal to me. *But running a Giving Game allows me the chance to feel that ‘effective giving glow’ all over again. It’s like doing it for the first time, except with dozens of other people, and that’s just awesome.*”

— Stefano Gunawan, OFTW University of Melbourne

Based on these successes, we will continue to work with One For The World to incorporate Giving Games into Chapter activities throughout 2020 and further build our evidence base. With the assistance of the Centre for Effective Altruism we engaged with Effective Altruist Local Groups around the world. In 2019, we supported Giving Games in India, Hong Kong, and the Philippines.

The Local EA Group Organizers Survey 2019 found that Giving Games were the most well attended events on average, along with speaker events, a finding that’s consistent with a [2015 field experiment we ran](#). *To date, relatively few of these groups have held Giving Games, which we believe creates an opportunity for us to help EA local groups reach more people.*



### 3. Online Teaching

During 2020, we developed an online Giving Game to celebrate the launch of the tenth anniversary edition of *The Life You Can Save*. The Giving Game was incorporated into Coursera’s Effective Altruism course. This has been sent to Coursera’s 20,000 subscribers for their participation. We are excited to further explore how Giving Games can be incorporated into online teaching methods.

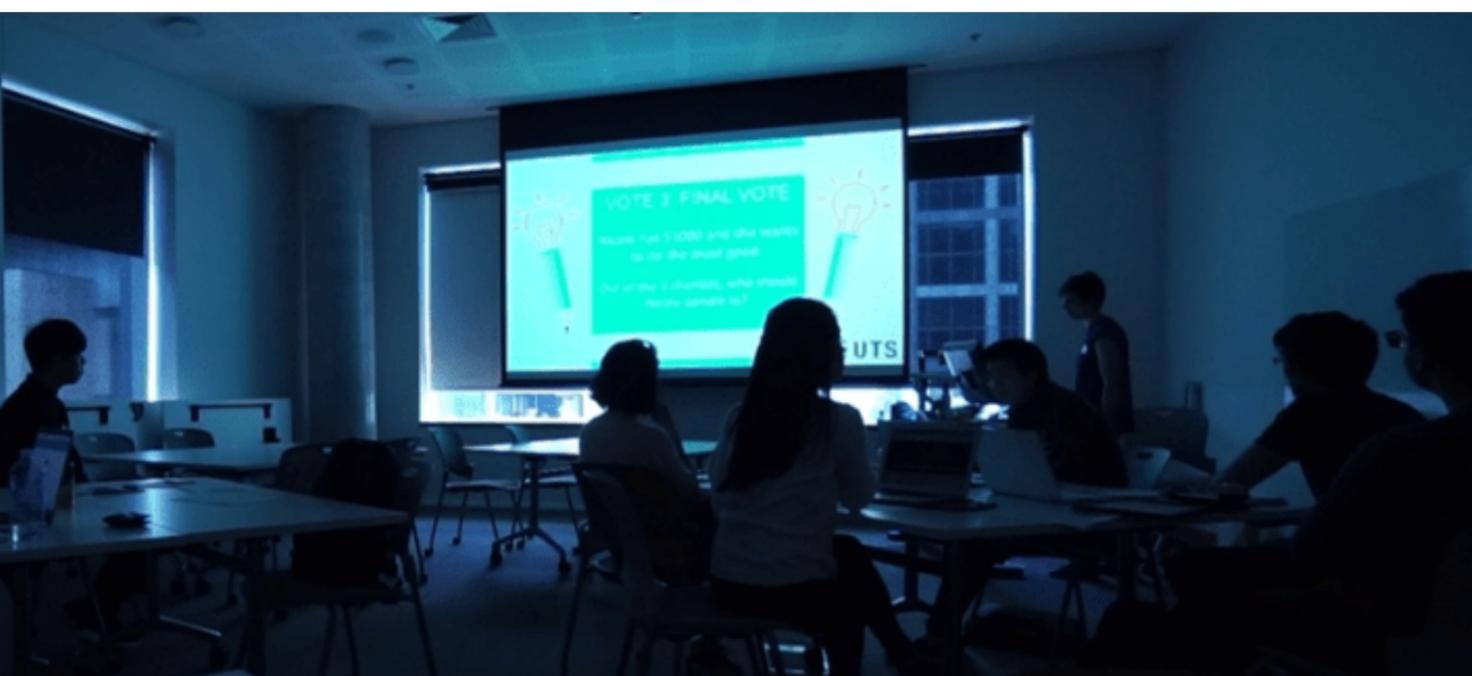
### 4. Corporate Giving Games

In 2020, Max Lafortune ran a very well-attended Giving Game at Bain & Company to conclude the company’s staff volunteering day. Our survey results indicated that the Giving Game was well-received and participants were motivated by the discussions on effective giving as a way to think about how to direct philanthropic dollars. Max describes the potential for corporate Giving Games as follows:



“I firmly believe that young professionals like us are inclined to give, but don’t always feel that they have the time or knowledge to be able to research and/or make effective choices, and hopefully this exercise armed folks with the knowledge to be able to make great choices going forward when thinking about philanthropic giving.”

We intend to scale up our corporate outreach as part of our broader scaling strategy in 2020.



## 5. Speed Giving Games

In 2019, we experimented with and collected data and case-studies for “Speed Giving Games.” Speed giving games are activities conducted in a high traffic area where people hear quick pitches about the featured charities, Effective Altruism, effective giving, and then decide where to donate \$10 (or often smaller amounts). The primary focus is to ask for subscriptions to allow further contact. The first was organized by Madhu Sriram, chapter leader of One for the World, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), as a “Picnic Giving Game.” Madhu and her team created

presentation boards and pasted powerpoint slides about each charity. They had six stations—a welcome table, a station for each of the three charities, a One For The World station, and a table for pledging 1%—as well as a food table. In order to make sure students learned about all the charities, they used raffle tickets. At each charity station, an officer handed out a ticket after the student listened to our pitch. The tickets were then collected at the food table in exchange for lunch. Madhu describes the impact of the event below:

*“We had a huge turnout of 110 students, which resulted in a total of \$1,100 being donated to the three amazing charities, with Against Malaria Foundation receiving the highest number of votes. Ten students were inspired to take the 1% pledge. We felt it was really beneficial to have the Giving Game outside to involve people who otherwise might have not attended the event. It took no more than 15-20 minutes of their time and they were very receptive to One for the World’s mission! The Giving Game was a huge success that helped spread the message of effective giving.”*

— Madhu Sriram, chapter leader of One for the World, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

The second and third speed Giving Games were run at EA Wooster and EA Oberlin. EA Wooster got ~150 sign ups out of ~350 students who participated. As a point of comparison,

the student club at the same outreach event only received ~30 sign ups. More information on these events can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#).

## 6. Schools

We generally do not focus on providing Giving Games to people under 18 due to the difficulty of tracking impact and ensuring appropriate tailoring and follow-up actions. However, we did experiment with sponsoring “Charity Elections” as part of our efforts to explore scalable and efficient models. The Charity Election program was

developed and run by Greg Gianopoulos at Northfield High School. It consists of a school-wide election where students vote on where to donate a pool of funding from among a selection of effective nonprofits. After researching the nonprofits, students submit voting ballots to choose which will receive a sponsored donation.



*“I was impressed with the Northfield High School charity election conducted in our Social Studies classes this past December. Students and teachers were given a great opportunity to discuss personal responsibility about world-wide issues. Researching a charity and casting a vote that includes actual funds to the winning charity gave students a chance to truly practice what it means to be ‘global citizens’.”*

— Kevin Dahle, NHS Civics Teacher, Former Minnesota State Senator, MN Alliance With Youth Board Member

At Northfield High School's second annual Charity Election, the student body researched three of The Life You Can Save's recommended charities in social studies classes. 874 students (66% of the student body) cast their ballots in the school library during voting week. 93% said they thought critically about what makes a charity effective.

Significant differences in attitudes to charitable giving were observed in pre- and post- measures, indicating an increase in relative importance of a charity being 'supported by evidence on the effectiveness of its work,' an increase in the relative importance of cost-effectiveness and a decrease in relative

importance of 'helping people in my [particular] community.'

At Balcatta Senior High School's first annual Charity Election, 303 students (67%) voted. The Charity Election was organized by an effective altruism club, including a team of student leaders and teacher Michael Aird, who [applied for sponsorship](#) and conducted the event with The Life You Can Save's Charity Election Handbook. Several classes engaged in discussion on Will MacAskill's TED talk on global cause prioritization, and 178 subscriptions were made to The Life You Can Save or One for the World (two subscriptions per every five students).



## IV. Where next for the *Giving Games* project?

We made excellent progress this year, improving and expanding our resources, and building the processes and foundation for a promising evidence base for the short and potential long-term impact of The Giving Games Project. We have additionally built partnerships with a variety of individuals, groups, and organizations and assembled strong use cases for how Giving Games can be adapted to different contexts. While we think this is a promising start, it is a drop in the bucket compared to what we would like to achieve in 2020 and onwards. To use a metaphor, we have built and tested the rocket and now we need to launch it. We will focus upon the following:

- A. *We will scale.*
- B. *We will maintain our improvement mindset.*
- C. *We will explore the use of resources to compel positive action.*

## A. We will scale.

The next priority is to scale. We would like Giving Games to reach as many people as possible. We will prioritize two main pathways to scaling: 1) Outreach to educational institutions, particularly exploring how we can build Giving Games into curriculums and classroom activities, and 2) Collaborating with groups and chapters with the aim of getting people further involved and interested. We will also explore how we can run Giving Games in corporations, foundations, and giving circles with the aim of increasing our money moved to our recommended nonprofits and generating interest and engagement with our core messages.

## C. We will explore the use of resources to compel positive action

In 2020, we will test the hypothesis that Giving Games are most effective when there is a clear end ask and action for participants to take. In late 2019, The Life You Can Save launched the tenth anniversary edition of The Life You Can Save by Professor Peter Singer both an ebook and celebratory narrated audiobook. The Life You Can Save has been a very persuasive resource in encouraging people to give more, give effectively, and become involved in high impact philanthropy and effective altruism. We will explore how Giving Games can best utilize the book as a way to compel positive actions among our participants in 2020-2021.

## B. We will maintain our improvement mindset

We will continue to evaluate our evidence-base throughout the year on a quarterly basis with the aim of identifying and fine-tuning any areas of improvement in how effective our messaging is in introducing participants to effective giving and encouraging them to take further action.



V.

# How can you help?

## A. Introduce us to your networks.

We want Giving Games to become standard practice for introducing people to effective giving, philanthropy, and altruism. To do this, we need to spread the message about the potential uses of Giving Games. We would like you to get in touch with us if you want to run a Giving Game, or know of networks we can utilize to scale Giving Games effectively.

## B. Run a Giving Game.

We now have ready-to-run materials and a wealth of guidance for anyone wishing to run their own Giving Game. We aspire for our materials to be plug-and-play and continually tweak our materials to make them as usable and effective as possible. If you are interested in running a Giving Game, please reach out to us.



## C. Sponsor a Giving Game.

Sponsoring Giving Games offers an exciting opportunity to multiply your impact. 100% of your money will end up in the hands of outstanding charities. By letting others donate your money- and learn in the process- you gain the chance to influence how they give in the future. We sponsor each participant \$10 to donate during a Giving Game, which is a fraction of what is spent on traditional philanthropic education.

## D. Support our work

Giving Games rely on donations from our community and this support will become critical as we scale.

Please consider funding the operations for the Giving Games Project. We operate with full transparency, so if you are interested in seeing a breakdown of our project's expenses, please just reach out. Thank you!

“I love how the Giving Games Project encourages the next generation of donors to give more thoughtfully, and to have a bigger impact with their gifts. Funding the Giving Games feels like a way to expand the NIE Institute’s modest resources. By educating young people how to make better giving choices, we hope they’ll give more generously and effectively in the future.”

— Doug Alexander

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