Wild Animal Initiative  
Board Meeting Minutes  

7/14/21  

In Attendance:  
(sufficient for quorum)  
Christine Perry (Board President)  
Emily Hatch  
Ignacio Moore  
Josh You (Secretary)  
Michelle Graham (Executive Director)  
Nik Vetr  
Stien van der Ploeg (Treasurer)  

ORDERS OF BUSINESS  

● Organization Updates  
  ○ Wild Animal Initiative (WAI) has launched a call for proposals, using funds from Open Philanthropy.  
  ○ WAI’s new director of scientific affairs, Vittoria Elliott, will be starting soon pending authorization to work in the US. Michelle Graham’s planned three-month sabbatical from WAI may be delayed until Vittoria starts.  
  ○ WAI will accelerate its hiring push this year, possibly adding up to eight new staff members by the end of the year.  

● Board compensation  
  ○ Compensating board members may be a good policy to help ensure that underrepresented groups are not excluded from boards by the requirement to provide unpaid labor. Michelle has prepared resources discussing this idea but is not sure whether to recommend it. The DEI committee will do more research on this possibility.  

● Conflict of interest policy  
  ○ WAI will revise its conflict-of-interest policy to clarify rules regarding research grants, such as whether board members or WAI advisors can receive grants. The science committee will work on updating this policy.  

● Board committees  
  ○ Nik will be chair of the science committee.  
  ○ Committees should meet or check-in via email at least once per quarter. The finance committee will meet more often - two weeks before every main board meeting.
● DEI consulting
  ○ Michelle and Stien have started reaching out to DEI organizations for consulting regarding WAI’s grantmaking program, in advance of a potential full-organization review.

● Financials
  ○ WAI is in a strong financial position due to grants from Open Philanthropy, the Centre for Effective Altruism, and donations influenced by Animal Charity Evaluators. WAI’s net assets are now over $4.6 million including anticipated future grants. WAI nonetheless still has room for more funding due to expansion plans over the next five years.
  ○ The board unanimously votes to approve an amended 2021 budget (Q2 2021 through Q1 2022) that increases spending from approximately $647k to $1070k.
  ○ WAI now has enough cash-on-hand to potentially justify investing its assets. Board treasurer Stien van der Ploeg has prepared a draft investment policy, but WAI’s finance committee will meet next month to discuss options.

● Updates to bylaws
  ○ The WAI bylaws should be updated to include a statement describing WAI’s DEI objectives, as well as to describe the new committee system. The DEI committee will work on writing this statement.

● Executive Director review
  ○ The staff survey has been prepared for Michelle’s annual review, and will be sent out to staff members soon. Once the answers are collected, the board members will meet without Michelle to discuss the results.

Future Action Steps
● Nik will randomly assign board members to staff, who will then have one-on-one meetings to help build board-staff relationships. This will be done for two rounds of meetings.
● The DEI committee will discuss compensating board members and adding a DEI objective for the bylaws.
● The science committee will meet to write a new conflict-of-interest policy.
● The finance committee will discuss WAI’s investment policy and strategy, but anyone on the board is welcome to join the meeting or to submit questions about this to Stien.
● Board members will read other members’ “elevator pitches” - their brief pitch for supporting WAI.