



Matt Boyd <matt@adaptresearchwriting.com>

Your EA Funds grant application submission (604484858eaff50bdd60f671)

1 message

Paperform <no-reply@paperform.co>
Reply-To: funds@effectivealtruism.org
To: matt@adaptresearchwriting.com

Sun, Mar 7, 2021 at 8:45 PM

Hi Matt Boyd,

Thanks for applying for a grant from EA Funds. We have attached a copy of your submission below.

Best,

The EA Funds Team

Submitted At

2021-03-07 07:45:09

Fund

EA Infrastructure Fund

Secondary fund: Long-Term Future Fund

No

Confirmation of fund scope

I confirm that I have read the information about the scope of each fund I am applying to, and that my application falls within the scope of the relevant fund(s).

Name

Matt Boyd

Organization name

Adapt Research

Organization website<https://adaptresearchwriting.com/>**Email address**matt@adaptresearchwriting.com**Short description**

Found a New Zealand Human Futures Forum to socialise evidence on catastrophic risks and decision theory for wise choices

Summary

Aim: to found a New Zealand Human Futures Forum (the Forum) and ensure its perpetuation. The Forum will bring together experts and stakeholders to influence government policy on catastrophic risks at the highest level.

Gap: high appetite for understanding catastrophic risk to New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours following the Covid-19 pandemic. However, policymakers have low awareness of possible catastrophic threats and few decision tools fit for purpose. For example, the National Civil Defence Resilience Plan does not mention the words 'catastrophic' or 'existential', and future utility is frequently discounted at 6%.

Steps: attracting prominent experts, policymakers and business leaders; convening a board; holding a workshop to develop an open letter to the Prime Minister and all New Zealanders; providing free talks on long-termism, catastrophic risk, and decision making under deep uncertainty to the public sector and large firms; securing the first donations.

Project goals

The aim of this project is to develop a self-sustaining collaborative Forum among subject matter experts, decision makers, business leaders, and stakeholders in global catastrophic and existential risks. This New Zealand Human Futures Forum would leverage international research and decision tools, translating them to the context of New Zealand and small Pacific nations.

The Forum is inspired by the nascent Australian Commission for the Human Future and the AI Forum NZ, which succeeded in bringing together New Zealand's AI community to provide succinct, reasoned independent advice to the New Zealand Government, culminating in the Government's decision to develop and pursue a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

Since Covid-19 there is clear appetite for robust long-termist thinking in government. However, the public sector in New Zealand lacks the imagination, expert knowledge, decision tools, theory and understanding of long-termism and the threat of truly catastrophic risks.

There is a powerful imperative to socialize the notions of long-termism and develop a National Catastrophic and Existential Risks Strategy. The Forum would undertake the task of filling this need, thereby representing the interests of future generations. The vision for the Forum is to be a source of digestible information, a resource of expertise, a forum for debate, and a facilitator of scholarship, communication, and independent advice outside the constraints of the political process.

Across 12 months Dr Matt Boyd will lead this mission and:

- Enhance his skills in NGO administration by undertaking online courses.
- Approach as many experts, stakeholders, decision makers, academics, and members of the public as possible (including: heads of government departments, risk advisors, CEOs and risk managers at major firms, researchers in disaster risk and resilience, economists, public health experts, etc, especially those operating in a global risk environment), and persuade them of the value of the project.
- Convene a Board, compile founding documents and a web presence.
- Provide a series of free (eg lunchtime) presentations at large firms, and government departments on long-termism, catastrophic and existential risk, mitigation strategies, decision tools, and moral frameworks.
- Convene a workshop among experts and stakeholders and develop an open letter to the Prime Minister and all New Zealanders.
- Attract a range of prominent New Zealanders to sign the letter and socialize it.
- Pursue and obtain the first private sector, public sector and individual donations to the Forum
- Devise evaluative criteria for, and award, the first New Zealand Human Futures Forum scholarship for Masters study to an individual wanting to transition their area of scholarship into the domain of catastrophic and existential risk.
- Gather interest and get in principle agreement for the first New Zealand Public/Private Conference or Symposium on Catastrophic and Existential Risk, to be organized for year 2 as the first donations/funding are secured.
- Provide additional presentations, communications, press releases, Zoom workshops (eg mimicking some of the methods of the Cambridge Centre for Existential Risk, or the Scottish Futures Forum), as time and resources permit.

Ultimately, the Forum will aim to nurture the political conversation in New Zealand, and direct thought shifts, toward long-termism and addressing GCRs.

The Forum could have a significant impact on the world because New Zealand policymakers have previously championed policy such as a nuclear weapons and warship ban since the 1980s, and more recently the 'Christchurch Call' following the March 15 terror attacks in Christchurch. The latter initiative brought together world leaders and Tech Giants to fight hate speech. New Zealand's progressive exemplars could be imitated around the globe.

Although appetite for this sort of Forum exists, successful implementation requires a well-resourced first mover.

Concretely, success can be measured by completion of milestones such as:

- Presentations at 10 government departments on catastrophic and existential risk.
- Holding a workshop for early interested parties.
- Attracting 100 prominent New Zealanders to sign the open letter.
- Publishing an open letter to New Zealand that is read by the Prime Minister.
- Generating the first donations from industry, the public sector and a private individual.
- Securing a formal memorandum of understanding with at least one government department.
- Awarding the Forum's first scholarship to study existential risk
- Confirming the date and venue for the first New Zealand conference/symposium on catastrophic and existential risk.
- Publishing 10 'New Zealand Human Futures' blogs with policy ideas for New Zealand and having each one picked up by the media.

This work aligns with the EA Infrastructure Fund's goals of providing national intellectual infrastructure to foster EA thinking and priorities, disseminate information, run events and raise funds, by increasing the number of people, particularly those in the public sector and big business who are exposed to the principles of EA as well as global

catastrophic risks. The proposed Forum will be well-placed to coordinate with similar organisations worldwide, such as the Australian Commission for Human Futures.

Track record

Examples of Dr Boyd's high-impact work:

- Altmetric score of 325 for a peer reviewed paper on preparedness for GCBRs.
- Awarded 'Best Paper 2020' accolade by international journal 'Risk Analysis' for a paper on catastrophic risks and the United Nations.
- Invitation to meet with New Zealand Government Minister for digital media to discuss risks from artificial intelligence.
- Invited attendance at University of Otago Centre for AI and Public Policy roundtable on the Future of Work.
- 250+ citations of a paper on building teamwork and communication strategies to improve patient safety in healthcare.
- Over a dozen media reports on research papers, such as:
 - o The Guardian. 5 Feb 2021. 'Covid: could Britain have been more like New Zealand?'
 - o Newsweek. 3 Oct 2019. 'These Are the Best Places on Earth to Survive a Global Pandemic Threatening to Wipe Humans Out—according to Scientists.'

Broad generalist professional experience:

- PhD in Philosophy of human evolution and long-term cognitive change.
- Research and publication of 30+ peer reviewed research articles including a dozen peer-reviewed papers on global catastrophic risk and existential risk with a focus predominantly on biological threats.
- Research Fellow, University of Auckland (2011–2014) in team training and professional development for patient safety, leading to publications on patient safety.
- Member of the research, development and implementation team for a pilot immersive simulation course to improve patient safety, which became a nationally funded course rolled-out nationwide.
- Prioritisation and health economics work in the public sector for the New Zealand National Health Committee.
- Commissioned research partner (as Adapt Research Ltd) authoring the AI Forum New Zealand reports on 'Our Intelligent Future' and 'AI for Health in New Zealand'.
- Working Group Lead for the AI Forum New Zealand.
- Experienced liaising, collaborating, and co-authoring with surgeons, professors, public health experts, National Health Committee members, direct report to the AI Forum Executive Director.
- Founder, owner and sole-Director of Adapt Research Ltd, a research services business now six years old, and publishing the Adapt Research Blog.
- Contracted by Future of Humanity Institute, University of Oxford, to write a peer-reviewed paper on global catastrophic biological threats, now published in BMJ Global Health.
- Invited speaker at events such as Nerdnite, and the KiwiFoo unconference.
- Blogs, such as:
 - o Public Health Expert. 11 Jun 2020. 'Five Key Reasons why NZ Should have an Official Inquiry into the Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.'
 - o Adapt Research Ltd Blog. 10 Aug 2020. 'The algorithm, the asshole, and the virus: Social media is killing us with Covid-19.'

The above demonstrates that Dr Boyd is a very strong generalist and project manager, with high-level experience in the public and private sector, as well as academia, networked to a wide range of thought leaders and decision makers. He is capable of liaising and collaborating productively with very senior members of organizations, driving projects to completion, to produce impactful work.

Funding amount and breakdown

Essential:

Salary contribution to Dr Boyd (0.6 FTE, 12 months): NZD\$60,000

Forum web presence: NZD\$5,000

Administrative assistance (returning calls, email campaigns, organising workshop, etc) 0.2 FTE (including overheads): NZD 15,000

Workshop/Symposium expenses: NZD\$10,000

Highly desirable:

First scholarship for the Forum to present (symbolic exemplar to publicize): NZD \$22,000]

Total: NZD\$112,000

Requested amount (USD)

80265

Alternatives to funding

Most of Dr Boyd's publications on catastrophic risk and existential risk have been self-funded with co-author Nick Wilson. Dr Boyd does not receive any regular institutional funding to work in this field and would not be able to dedicate the required time to founding the Forum without external funding. An application is being made simultaneously to 'Survival and Flourishing', have previously applied there without success.

File upload

[210307 Boyd EA Infrastructure Project Goals Links.docx](#)

[210307 Boyd EA Infrastructure Track Record Links.docx](#)

Grant duration

12 months

Location

A project based in New Zealand, that influences policy in New Zealand and the Pacific Region

References

Professor Nick Wilson (Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington): nick.wilson@otago.ac.nz

Dr Cassidy Nelson (Future of Humanity Institute, University of Oxford): cassidy.nelson@gtc.ox.ac.uk

Organisational leadership

Dr Boyd is owner, sole director and sole permanent employee at Adapt Research Ltd. The proposed Forum would be run under the governance of a Board, and in accordance with laws for NGOs in New Zealand.

Referral to other funders

Yes

How did you hear about EA Funds?

EA Newsletter

80,000 hours podcasts

Time-sensitive grant

No

Public reporting

PUBLIC - I am okay with a public grant report. (You will be given the opportunity to request changes to the report before we publish it.)

Anything else you would like us to know about?

I drafted the application with links to evidence, however the links disappeared when pasting into the form, so I've attached the docx versions of 'Project Goals' and 'Track Record' which contain the links to further evidence of statements made.

Submission ID

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