

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Omidyar Network 2024 Grantee Perception Report

Prepared by the Center for Effective Philanthropy

In February and March of 2024, The Center for Effective Philanthropy conducted a survey of Omidyar Network's (referred to as "ON") grantees, achieving a 43% response rate. The memo below outlines CEP's summary of key strengths, opportunities, and recommendations. Omidyar Network's grantee perceptions should be interpreted in light of ON's goals and strategies.

This memo accompanies the comprehensive survey results in Omidyar Network's interactive online report at <https://cep.surveymethods.org> and in the downloadable online materials, including respondents' written comments. Omidyar Network's full report also contains more information about survey analysis and methodology.¹

Overview

The Center for Effective Philanthropy is pleased to share the results of the Omidyar Network's fifth Grantee Perception Report.

- ▶ In 2024, ON's grantee survey achieved a response rate of 43 percent, which is lower than CEP's target response rate of 50 percent. Due to this, CEP conducted analysis to determine if certain grantees were more likely to respond than others.
 - The analysis found that there were no differences between those who did and those who did not respond to the survey, based on the following categorizations: purpose of funding, whether the grant was a follow-on or renewal, sub-focus, and survey version (domestic or international).
 - There were differences between those who did and did not respond by investment type and support type. Among investment types, ONFI Grant recipients were more likely to respond to the survey than grantees who received either Programmatic Contracts or LLC Program Funding. By support type, grantees who received Program Support were more likely to respond.
- ▶ In addition to the lower response rate compared to the typical funder and to ON's last survey in 2021, ratings from Omidyar Network grantees have declined across most themes in the report, with declines reaching statistical significance on some measures.

¹Throughout this summary, Omidyar Network's ratings are defined as higher than typical when average ratings are above the 65th percentile in CEP's overall dataset, lower than typical when average ratings are below the 35th percentile, and typical when ratings fall between those thresholds. Ratings described as "significantly" higher or lower reflect statistically significant differences at a P-value less than or equal to .1.

- ▶ Of note, while the organizational life span and staff size of ON’s 2024 grantees is generally unchanged since 2021, there are two key changes in Omidyar Network’s grantee populations over time.
 - In 2021, 89 percent of grantees reported that they were currently funded by ON, compared to just 73 percent in 2024. Mirroring CEP’s broader dataset, currently funded grantees rate significantly higher on most measures of the report, such as those related to ON’s impact on their organizations, fields, and communities, its understanding of their organizations and work, the utility of beyond the grant assistance received, and its relationships and communications with grantees.
 - Additionally, Omidyar Network is now funding organizations with larger operating budgets—the median budget of 2024 ON grantees is \$3.1M versus \$1.5M in 2021. As such, grants from ON in 2024 account for a smaller percentage of grantees’ annual budgets.

Impact on Grantees’ Fields and Organizations

- ▶ Omidyar Network grantees report higher than typical ratings for ON’s effect on public policy in their fields and typical ratings for the extent to which ON has advanced the state of knowledge in their fields.
 - In an ON-specific custom question, around 60 percent of grantees (rating a 6 or higher on a 7-point scale) report that they believe their relationship with ON has resulted in new and/or deepened relationships with valuable key actors, partners, networks and/or experts and in new insights that had led or will lead to decisions in their work and organizations.
 - Interestingly, ON receives ratings in the bottom ten percent of CEP’s comparative dataset for measures related to its overall impact on grantees’ fields.
- ▶ In addition to less positive perceptions of ON’s impact of their fields, grantees also provide lower than typical ratings for ON’s impact on their organizations. CEP’s broader research has shown is associated with funders’ grant characteristics, specifically size, length, and whether the grant was restricted.
 - Since 2021, ON’s average grant length has remained steady, at 1.4 years long, and continues to be shorter than those at the typical funder.
 - The proportion of grantees who received unrestricted funding (around one third) has also remained virtually unchanged since 2021, placing Omidyar in line with the typical funder in the overall dataset and in its custom cohort.
 - Median grant size has decreased slightly since 2021 from \$200K to \$150K. Grantees who received larger grants (greater than \$100K) rate significantly higher on measures related to impact, understanding, relationships, and communications.
 - Over a fifth of grantees’ suggestions pertained to grant characteristics, with over 10 percent requesting longer grants and 5 percent requesting larger grants. One grantee writes, “The single most useful thing is multi-year, flexible grants that help us plan AND respond to a dynamic context.”

- ▶ In addition to financial assistance, funders also impact organizations through the nonmonetary assistance they provide. Sixty-nine percent of Omidyar Network grantees report receiving at least one form of assistance beyond the grant.
 - Nonetheless, grantees have an appetite for additional support, with 17 percent of suggestions requesting that Omidyar facilitate greater connection and convening among grantees or fund capacity-building support.
 - And there is a clear benefit to those who received beyond the grant assistance, as these grantees rate significantly higher across almost all measures in the report.



“It’s clear in its actions that the ON strategy includes adding value beyond the grant... I would recommend “keep at it” but also: lean more into building community among grantees, especially in emergent areas...[It] is so essential to most large-scale change. It both builds fields and is a key to renewing them -- especially our many “stuck” fields, over time.”



“Omidyar could provide trainings on topics from fundraising, communications, or organization support. They could also provide ways for their grantees to connect or collaborate on different projects if their interests and goals align.”

Providing Greater Clarity in Communications and Strategy

- ▶ When it comes to ON’s communications, ratings reflect a desire for greater clarity, consistency, and transparency, with grantees providing lower than typical ratings for each of these measures. Ratings are also significantly lower for the clarity and transparency of Omidyar Network’s communications compared to 2021.
 - There has also been a significant decline since 2021 in grantees’ agreement that Omidyar Network has clearly communicated what diversity, equity, and inclusion means for its work.
 - Thirteen percent of grantee suggestions request greater communication of ON’s strategy. Grantees, for example, express that, “It would be helpful to get a clearer sense of the overall strategy of the organization,” and others note that they would like “more clarity about [ON’s] strategies and how and where they interconnect.”
- ▶ When asked how well they understand the way in which the work funded by their grant fits into Omidyar Network’s broader efforts, over half of grantees report not having a thorough understanding (rating a 5 or lower on a 7-point scale).
- ▶ In addition to growing their understanding of ON’s work and where they fit in, almost 10 percent of grantee suggestions encourage a different approach and strategy. One grantee, for example, writes, “We believe that funding priorities should be community-centric and driven by the concerns of directly-impacted people.”
 - There has been a significant decrease in ratings for the extent to which grantees feel Omidyar Network understands the needs of the people and communities that they serve, now placing ON in the bottom ten percent of CEP’s comparative dataset.



“It was always a struggle understanding the big picture and ON's strategy, or role I could play in shaping it.”



“Consistency in their strategy in the long-term is also crucial to allow projects to thrive. The change we are trying to bring to the world take[s] time and will not be achieved from one day to the other.”

Frequent Interactions with Opportunity to Develop Deeper Relationships and Greater Understanding

- ▶ ON grantees continue to experience higher than typical levels of interaction, with over 90 percent of ON grantees report interacting with their main contact at least once every few months, if not more frequently.
- ▶ Analysis finds that these touchpoints are valuable and should be maintained: grantees who experience a greater frequency of contact rate significantly higher on their perceptions of their relationship with Omidyar and how well they feel Omidyar understands their fields, organizations, and contexts.
- ▶ Yet, despite frequent interactions, Omidyar Network grantee ratings have declined, sometimes significantly, since 2021 on measures related to their relationship with Omidyar Network, which include its responsiveness, approachability, candor, compassion, and openness to ideas from grantees.
 - Ratings are now lower than typical for all these measures, except for grantees' perception that Omidyar Network exhibited trust in their organization's staff during the grant.
- ▶ According to CEP's field-wide findings, one of the two strongest predictors of funder-grantee relationships is the degree to which funders understand their grantees' organizations and the contexts in which they work. On these measures in the report, grantee ratings are lower than typical.
 - Also, ratings for ON's awareness of the challenges that grantees' organizations are facing are significantly lower than in 2021 and now in the bottom quarter of CEP's dataset.



“We really appreciated the level of professionalism and interest that Omidyar staff showed in our organization and programs... We felt they were truly eager to learn about our work and the community we serve, and in all of our interactions before and since we have felt that Omidyar staff are our partners in this work.”



“Developing deeper, long-term relationships with their grantees could also help projects not just start strong but grow and sustain over time.”

Right-Sized but Unclear Grant Processes

- ▶ Grantees have mostly positive experiences with Omidyar Network’s grant processes, particularly when it comes to the reporting process. Specifically, grantees find the reporting process to be as straightforward and relevant as is typical and provide higher than typical ratings for its adaptability.
 - Interestingly, grantees spend a larger than typical number of hours on the reporting process, while finding it to be a less helpful than typical reflection and learning opportunity.
- ▶ When it comes to the selection process, grantees find the level of effort required to be appropriate and also find it to be helpful, placing ON in line with the typical funder on both measures.
 - Despite a drop in median grant size, the monetary return on grantees’ time is higher than in 2021, with grantees, on average, receiving \$7.5K in grant dollars per hour required by ON processes, placing ON in the top 25 percent of CEP’s dataset. This is primarily driven by the small drop in hours grantees spent on processes – 20 hours in 2024 compared to 24 hours in 2021.
- ▶ In contrast to positive experiences with helpfulness and level of burden in the selection process, grantees provide lower than typical ratings for ON’s clarity and transparency about the selection process’ requirements and timelines and the criteria used to decide whether a proposal would be funded or declined.
 - In their suggestions, grantees speak of wanting more information regarding the guidelines for the selection process (N = 5) and how their proposals are evaluated (N = 7). Some grantees (N = 5) also express a desire for greater clarity regarding what opportunities exist for future funding from ON and the process for renewal.
 - One grantee, for example, notes that “more consistent guidance from the outset about the proposal requirements would have helped streamline the process and ensure alignment.”
- ▶ Overall, grantees do not experience a high degree of pressure to modify their organization’s priorities in order to create a grant proposal that was likely to receive funding. Those who reported lower perceptions of pressure rate significantly higher on measures related to communications, relationships, and grant processes.



“Timelines and processes associated with reporting and grant renewal have not always been completely clear, which has in some cases led to putting work into reporting or proposal documents that were not germane to requirements or questions later identified.”



“We generally find Omidyar's processes to be very flexible and straightforward, which we appreciate. In particular the dedication of the staff and program officer to the grantees and their ability to be trusted thought partners, colleagues and allies, in a way that many other funders don't try to be.”

Recommendations

Based on its grantee feedback, CEP recommends that Omidyar Network consider the following in order to build on its strengths and address possible areas for improvement:

- ▶ Reflect on past changes since 2021 and ON's upcoming changes to strategy, and discuss how those changes are showing up in this set of grantee feedback. Identify areas and practices for maintenance, such as consistently strong perceptions of ON's advancement of knowledge and effect on public policy, and areas worth monitoring over time for progress.
- ▶ Given continued less positive perceptions of ON's impact on grantees' fields and organizations and persistent grantee feedback about changes to grant characteristics and assistance beyond the grant, leverage this moment of change to consolidate a list of resources and supports ON is interested and willing to provide to grantees. Engage with grantees directly about the most effective ways to strengthen their work and organizations, whether that's through financial or non-financial means.
- ▶ Dedicate organization-wide and one-on-one efforts to improving communications about ON's current and future strategy. In line with grantees' suggestions, focus on providing clearer information about where different portfolios intersect and how grantees fit into the ON's broader efforts.
- ▶ Given grantees' perceptions of ON's understanding of their organizations and contexts despite frequent interaction, seek to better understand current patterns in ON touchpoints with grantees. Share ideas about potential discrete or universal adjustments, such as to ON's processes, that could free up more time for listening and feedback.
- ▶ Build on generally positive experiences with ON's selection and reporting process by clarifying the timeline, requirements, and criteria used in its selection and renewal process.

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