

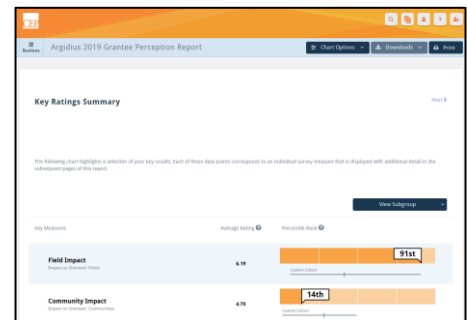
# Key Findings and Recommendations from Argidius 2019 Grantee Perception Report

Prepared by the Center for Effective Philanthropy

In September and October of 2019, the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) conducted a survey of Argidius’s grantees, achieving a 95 percent response rate. The memo below outlines the key findings and recommendations from Argidius’s Grantee Perception Report (GPR). Grantee perceptions should be interpreted in light of the Foundation’s goals and strategy.

This memo accompanies the comprehensive survey results found in Argidius’s interactive online report at <https://cep.surveymresults.org> and in the downloadable online materials.

Argidius’s full report also contains more information about survey analysis and methodology.



## Exceptionally Strong Impact on and Understanding of Grantees’ Fields

- ▶ Characterized by its “knowledge of the industry [that] gives them particular credibility among grantees,” and a “systems view and long-term perspective...[that] set [it] apart,” Argidius receives ratings that are higher than typical and in the top 10 percent of CEP’s dataset for its impact on grantees’ fields.
  - Ratings are even higher for the extent to which Argidius understands grantees’ fields, placing Argidius at the top of CEP’s comparative dataset for this measure.
- ▶ Grantees also note that Argidius is “proactive in sharing lessons learned from various interventions,” and rate Argidius higher than nearly all other funders in CEP’s dataset for its advancement of knowledge in their fields.



*“...Argidius has been a leading thinker and funder for at least the past ten years. They take risks on new organizations, build scale of successful ones, and contribute insights based upon their portfolio that influence how sector players (and funders) operate...They are probably THE most influential and supportive organization in the...sector.”*



*“Expand the list of countries they focus on to create more room for experimentation in different environments.”*

## Typical Organizational Impact with Appetite for Even More Valuable Non-Monetary Support

- ▶ Grantees rate Argidius similar to the typical funder for its impact on and understanding of their organizations.
  - No group consistently rates significantly higher or lower than another when grantees are segmented by program area, geography, general performance ranking, or length of relationship, suggesting a consistency of experience across Argidius's partners.
  - Yet grantees who have received multiple grants from Argidius do provide significantly more positive ratings than grantees who have received only one grant for a few measures in the report, including for Argidius's understanding of their beneficiaries' needs, staff's responsiveness, and its impact on their organizations.
- ▶ Compared to the typical funder, Argidius gives grants that are longer and larger in size. However, Argidius gives relatively little unrestricted funding – only 12 percent of its grantees report receiving general operating or core support compared to 21 percent of grantees at the typical funder.
  - According to CEP's recent research, nonprofit CEOs see general operating support grants as having the greatest impact on strengthening their organizations.
- ▶ Though a much larger than typical proportion of Argidius grantees (62 percent versus 28 percent) are first-time grantees, those who report having been consistently funded by Argidius in the past provide significantly more positive ratings on a number of measures in the report including for Argidius's impact on their organizations, fields and for their overall relationships with Argidius.

### Helpful Non-monetary Support and Strong Understanding of Grantees

- ▶ CEP's research finds that the provision of intensive patterns of non-monetary support is associated with significantly more positive perceptions of impact on grantees' organizations. CEP defines intensive patterns of assistance as 7 or more different types of non-monetary support combined.
  - More than half of Argidius grantees, a much larger than typical proportion falling in the top 10 percent of CEP's dataset, report receiving intensive patterns of non-monetary assistance. Importantly, grantees receiving these intensive forms of assistance rate Argidius significantly more positively for its impact on their organizations.
- ▶ When asked to provide suggestions for how Argidius could improve, 14 grantees provide recommendations related to non-monetary assistance, making it the most common theme of grantees' suggestions.
  - In response to a custom question about what types of support would be most helpful on their journeys towards sustainability, grantees most frequently indicate that assistance securing funding from other sources, introductions to leaders in the field, and strategic planning advice would be most beneficial to their organizations.
- ▶ Further, the majority of grantees, a larger than typical proportion, indicate that when they request non-monetary support from Argidius they do so based on what their organization

needs, rather than based on what they were told to request or what they believed Argidius would be willing to fund.

- ▶ Perhaps relatedly, grantees' ratings reveal a perception that Argidius is particularly understanding of the challenges their organizations face, providing higher than typical ratings on this measure.
- ▶ According to CEP's research, seven related survey measures of understanding together create the larger construct that CEP refers to as "understanding." The extent to which grantees perceive their funders to be understanding, for instance of their organizations' strategies and goals and the context in which they work, is one of the strongest predictors of the funder-grantee relationship.
  - On this summary measure of its overall understanding of grantees' contexts, organizations' strategies and goals, fields, and beneficiaries, Argidius receives higher than typical ratings.



*"[Argidius is] truly committed to the space and in the development of organizations. I have found them to be thoughtful, committed, and asking tough but very important questions yet supporting and trusting our judgement as experts in this field..."*



*"...More connections to other key stakeholders in the industry and open doors to experts in the field. They are open to this, but I don't think it's an active process or one where follow through is particularly good."*

## Opportunity to Strengthen Relationships with Grantees Through Improved Responsiveness

- ▶ Although grantees describe Argidius staff as "understanding and flexibl[e]" and "a true partner," they rate less positively than typical for the overall quality of their relationships with Argidius, suggesting an opportunity for Argidius to further strengthen its relationships in service of impact.
- ▶ Ratings are higher than typical for the extent to which Argidius displayed respectful interaction and candor about its perspectives on grantees' work, and similar to the typical funder for the fairness with which grantees were treated, openness to grantees' ideas and their comfort approaching Argidius if a problem arises.
  - Yet, grantees rate Argidius lower than typical for staff's responsiveness.
  - Perhaps also noteworthy, Argidius grantees who self-identify as male provide significantly more positive ratings than grantees who self-identify as female for the extent to which Argidius is open to grantees' ideas, the helpfulness of the selection process and for its understanding of their fields.
- ▶ A larger than typical proportion of grantees (97 percent versus 82 percent at the typical funder) report having contact with their program officer at least once every few months or more often. In addition, a larger than typical proportion of grantees report not having to most frequently initiate contact with their program officers.

- Grantees that report having contact with their program officer monthly or more often provide ratings that trend higher than Argidius’s overall ratings on a number of measures in the report, including on most relationship-related measures.
- Further, those grantees that report experiencing reciprocal or funder-initiated contact have significantly more positive perceptions of Argidius for its impact on their fields, communities, responsiveness, and their overall relationships with Argidius.
- One-fifth of Argidius grantees, a larger than typical proportion, report having had a contact change in the past six months, with a particularly high proportion of grantees indicated as “C: Limited Performance” experiencing contact changes.
- A larger than typical proportion of grantees report having received a site visit from Argidius. In a custom question, grantees most strongly agreed that the visit was managed in an inclusive and manner, that it strengthened their relationship with Argidius, and was planned and managed effectively.

### Clear and Consistent Communications

- ▶ When asked about Argidius’s communications, grantees rate Argidius similar to the typical funder for the clarity and consistency of its communications, as well as for the extent to which it is transparent with grantees’ organizations.
- ▶ Responses reveal that Argidius grantees rely heavily on individual communication with staff; 98 percent of grantees report using individual communication with Argidius staff. Their ratings also indicate a perception that individual communication with staff is most helpful.



*“Argidius is among the best grant makers we have worked with in terms of the processes and interactions. They truly feel like partners in the development of the initiatives they have funded...Argidius staff is always willing to share insights to improve the ideas.”*



*“...Not sure whether possible in practice (small team), but would be very interested in interacting more frequently, also beyond the scope of what Argidius funded, to bounce of ideas and learn from sharing experiences...”*

### Helpful Yet Complex, Time-Intensive Processes

- ▶ Overall, while grantees find Argidius’s processes to be helpful, grantees also experience them to be complex and time intensive.
  - In fact, Argidius grantees report spending more time (a median of 240 hours versus 32 hours at the typical funder) on funder requirements over the lifetime of their grants than the grantees of any other funder in CEP’s dataset.
  - Not only do grantees report spending more time on Argidius’s processes than is typical, they also report having waited longer than typical for clear commitment of funding. Seventy percent of Argidius grantees (compared to 38 percent at the typical funder)

reported waiting four or more months from submitting their proposal to a clear commitment of funding from Argidius.

- ▶ Though grantees rate Argidius more positively than typical for the helpfulness of its selection process, they also report feeling more pressure to modify their organizations' priorities in order to receive funding, with ratings falling in the top 20 percent of CEP's dataset.
- ▶ In terms of Argidius's reporting process, grantees' perceptions are mixed. While ratings are higher than typical for the helpfulness of the reporting process as an opportunity to reflect and learn, ratings are less positive than typical for the extent to which the process is straightforward, adaptable, aligned appropriately to the timing of grantees' work and relevant.
  - Further, while all grantees report having exchanged ideas with Argidius about how they would assess the grant-funded work, they emphasize that Argidius could take a more tailored, streamlined approach to its data-collection requirements. As one grantee writes, "the reporting processes are extremely time consuming. While we support the push for more rigorous reporting and M&E requirements, we find the enterprise level data ill-suited to our organisation, inflexible and onerous...."
- ▶ One fifth of grantees make suggestions related to Argidius's reporting and evaluation processes, making it the second most common theme of their suggestions. Most frequently, grantees express desires for Argidius to establish shared metrics, streamline the process, and establish clear expectations.
- ▶ Ratings are higher than typical for the extent to which the evaluation resulted in grantees' organizations making changes to the evaluated work. On the other hand, ratings are lower than typical for the extent to which grantees believe the evaluation generated information they believe will be useful for other organizations.
  - A higher than typical proportion of grantees received full support from Argidius for the costs of the evaluation (78 versus 37 percent at the median funder).



*"It would also be helpful for Argidius to be more sensitive that the collection of this data is extremely time consuming, and therefore costly...they also need to provide a learning budget to each organization they work with to do Argidius reporting and data collection, and to spend time with the external evaluator."*



*"We understand the necessity of research, nevertheless, the reporting requirements (ex. enterprise level data) can be very time consuming and challenging for the team. A little more pragmatism in the field of results measurement would be appreciated."*

## CEP Recommendations

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

- ▶ Determine whether Argidius might provide grantees with even more of the highly valued and frequently requested **intensive patterns of non-monetary assistance**, for instance by connecting grantees with other potential funders and fostering collaboration among grantees.

- ▶ As a means of improving the quality of interactions with grantees, identify barriers preventing staff from responding to grantees in a timely manner.
- ▶ Examine ways in which Argidius could decrease the high amount of pressure felt by grantees to modify their organizational priorities during the selection and implementation process.
- ▶ Given grantees' quantitative and qualitative responses, **review Argidius's reporting and evaluation processes**, as well as its approach to data-collection, with an eye towards streamlining and tailoring the process to better align with grantees' work and decrease the time grantees spend on grant requirements.

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