

Key Findings and Recommendations from Argidius' 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 Argidius' grantees, achieving a 74% response rate. The memo below outlines CEP's summary of key strengths, opportunities, and recommendations from Argidius' Grantee Perception Report ("GPR"). Argidius' grantee perceptions should be interpreted in light of its goals, strategy, and context.

This memo accompanies the comprehensive survey results found in Argidius' interactive online report at <https://cep.surveymethods.org> and in the downloadable online materials. The 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 Argidius' second Grantee Perception Report.

- ▶ CEP most recently surveyed Argidius' grantees in 2019. As in 2019, grantees continue to hold positive perceptions of Argidius and their work together. Grantees' feedback highlights Argidius' impact on the field of enterprise development, its provision of large, multi-year grants, and its robust support for organizational strengthening as key strengths.
 - In written comments, grantees describe Argidius as a "critical partner" that demonstrates "mutual respect and a shared commitment to making a positive impact" and overall, note that Argidius "prioritizes their time... around the key issues that drive [grantees'] success and impact."
- ▶ Grantees' ratings and written suggestions also indicate opportunities for improvement: to continue prioritizing relationships with grantees through more frequent touchpoints and clearer communications about Argidius' goals and strategy, and to continue refining its grant processes.

Notable Impact on the Enterprise Development Field

Grantees view Argidius as playing an important role in the global enterprise development field, writing that "Argidius is a true thought leader" and invests "time and resources to understand, research, assess, and communicate good cases, data, and trends from the field."

- ▶ Reflecting these comments, grantees' ratings continue to place Argidius in the top quarter of CEP's overall comparative dataset, and at the top of its custom cohort of peer funders, for its impact on grantees' fields. Argidius is also rated in the top two percent of CEP's dataset for its understanding of grantees' fields.

¹ Throughout this summary, Argidius' 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.

- Relatedly, Argidius remains one of the top-rated funders in CEP’s dataset for the extent to which it advances knowledge in grantees’ fields. Ratings have also significantly improved since 2019, and now place Argidius in line with the typical funder in CEP’s dataset and in its custom cohort, for the extent to which Argidius affects public policy.
- ▶ On another dimension of impact – Argidius’ impact on grantees’ communities – grantees’ perceptions have also significantly improved over time. Argidius is now rated above the typical funder in its custom cohort for its impact on grantees’ local communities.

Grantmaking Characteristics

Strong perceptions of Argidius’ field impact are likely related to its grantmaking characteristics.

- ▶ Argidius provides grants that are larger than those of over 90 percent of funders in CEP’s dataset, and that are larger than the typical funder in its custom cohort (€583K at the median). Moreover, nearly all Argidius grants (95 percent) are made for two years or longer, placing Argidius near the top of CEP’s dataset for its provision of multi-year funding.
- ▶ Overall, Argidius provides 28 percent of its grantees with multi-year, unrestricted support. This represents a significantly larger proportion than in 2019, and places Argidius above the typical funder in CEP’s dataset and in its custom cohort for this pattern of support.



“Argidius is a well-known leader in supporting the development and dissemination of evidence and best practices in enterprise development. In particular, their work on [business development services] has been seminal in the field and they have not only been a funder of this work but have actively participated in sharing knowledge that benefits all.”

Important Focus on Strengthening Grantees’ Organizations

Grantee ratings place Argidius in line with the typical funder in CEP’s dataset, and above the typical funder in its custom cohort, for its impact on their organizations.

- ▶ Ratings are also typical for Argidius’ understanding of grantees’ organizations and its awareness of grantees’ challenges. In a custom question, over three-quarters of grantees strongly agree (rating a 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) that Argidius staff listen when they share their organization’s challenges and that Argidius staff care about the challenges their organizations are facing.
- ▶ Grantees’ written comments also underscore the impact of their work with Argidius. When asked in a custom question to share the most significant change that has occurred as a result of their partnership with Argidius, grantees often note the following:
 - **Scaling:** Argidius’ funding has allowed grantees to “reach more businesses, create more jobs, and amplify [their] positive influence in the region,” “expand to additional geographical regions,” and put their organizations “on a path to growth.”
 - **Impact Measurement:** Comments also highlight the ways in which “Argidius’ focus on data has changed the way [they] approach and implement [their] impact measurement systems” which, overall, has led to “program improvements and deeper understanding.”
 - **Organizational Strategy:** Finally, grantees’ partnership with Argidius has facilitated “a stronger strategy” and has led to “more clarity about [their] challenges and where to go.”
- ▶ Overall, a larger than typical proportion of grantees (83 percent) report receiving assistance beyond the grant from Argidius. Most often, they receive monitoring and evaluation assistance (52 percent), program-related assistance (45 percent), and fundraising and development assistance (40 percent).

- ▶ This support is valuable to grantees, and they indicate a desire for even more assistance beyond the grant in their written suggestions for improvement. The largest proportion of all suggestions relates to this theme, where grantees most often ask for Argidius to “build and nurture the grantee community,” connect grantees with “other potential donors,” and for continued “support and methodological guidance on impact/results measurement.”
 - Relatedly, in a custom question, grantees indicate that the most helpful supports from Argidius in their journey towards sustainability would be assistance in securing funding from other sources (57 percent) and introductions to leaders in the field (40 percent).



“With Argidius’ funding, we have the opportunity to develop innovative programs, strengthen our networks, and implement sustainable solutions that address the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in our region. By leveraging the resources provided by Argidius, we can amplify our outreach, engage with a broader audience, and foster an ecosystem that nurtures entrepreneurial talent and fosters economic growth.”

Opportunity to Continue Prioritizing Funder-Grantee Relationships

Grantees hold Argidius staff in high regard, describing them as “professional,” “collaborative,” and overall, note that they “learned a great deal” from their work together.

- ▶ Grantees’ ratings place Argidius above the typical funder in its custom cohort for their comfort approaching Argidius if a problem arises and for the responsiveness of Argidius staff.
 - However, ratings are lower than typical for the extent to which Argidius exhibits trust in grantees’ staff and compassion for those affected by grantees’ work. Ratings are also lower than typical for grantees’ agreement that Argidius demonstrates an explicit commitment to and has clearly communicated what gender equity and social inclusion means for its work.
- ▶ Eighty percent of grantees (a much larger than typical proportion) report having received a virtual or in-person site visit from Argidius, and grantees’ perceptions of these site visits are positive. As in 2019, grantees strongly agree (rating near a 6.50 on a 7-point scale) that the visits were conducted and managed in an inclusive manner, strengthened grantees’ relationships with Argidius, and were appropriate in quantity considering grantees’ capacity and the size of their Argidius grant.
- ▶ Grantees also hold positive perceptions of Argidius’ communications, which is another important component of funder-grantee relationships.
 - Ratings are in line with the typical funder in both CEP’s dataset and the custom cohort for the clarity of Argidius’ communications about its goals and strategy, as well as its transparency. Ratings place Argidius at the top of its custom cohort for the consistency of its communication resources.
- ▶ Still, grantees’ feedback indicates an opportunity for Argidius to further strengthen its relationships with grantees. One-quarter of all suggestions relate to Argidius’ relationships with grantees, where they most often ask for Argidius to “improve the communication of Argidius’ own strategy, theory of change, and project portfolio,” conduct “more visits to [small and growing businesses],” and have more “informal moments for mutual feedback” and relationship-building.



“The interactions with Argidius have consistently been characterized by openness, receptiveness, and a genuine commitment to shared goals. Their team exhibits a collaborative spirit, actively engaging in discussions, and providing valuable insights that contribute to the success of our projects.”



“Communications [with Argidius have been] limited, always pleasant but it would have been nice to receive more active support around what we were doing and build the relationship rather than it being about evaluation/results/challenges etc. Check in to see how we are doing.”

Improvements in Processes with Continued Opportunity to Streamline

Argidius has made significant progress in streamlining its grant processes since 2019. At the median, grantees now report spending 150 hours over their grant’s lifetime on Argidius-required processes, compared to 240 hours in 2019.

Still, this time demand for processes is much greater than that of most other funders in CEP’s comparative dataset and in Argidius’ custom cohort. Moreover, there is wide variation in the amount of time grantees spend on Argidius-required processes, which appears to be primarily driven by their grant’s Argidius strategy: grantees in the Geography strategy report spending significantly more time on Argidius processes.

- ▶ Grantees’ ratings have significantly improved since 2019, and now place Argidius above the typical funder, for the helpfulness of Argidius’ selection process. Grantees provide typical ratings for the extent to which Argidius’ selection process was an appropriate level of effort given the amount of funding received.
 - However, ratings place Argidius in the bottom 20 percent of CEP’s dataset for the clarity and transparency of its selection process requirements and timelines. Written comments underscore these findings, where grantees note that they would appreciate “more transparent communication with potential grantees” about Argidius’ “funding cycles and internal approval processes.”
- ▶ Additionally, Argidius grantees continue to experience more pressure than is typical of most other funders in CEP’s dataset, and of any other funder in Argidius’ custom cohort, to modify their organizational priorities during the selection process to receive Argidius funding.
 - Importantly, grantees who experience less pressure during the selection process provide significantly higher ratings than those who experience more pressure on some measures in the report, particularly related to the theme of Argidius’ understanding.
- ▶ When it comes to the reporting process, grantees’ perceptions are mixed. While ratings are higher than typical for the extent to which the reporting process was a helpful opportunity for grantees to reflect and learn, ratings are in the bottom 15 percent of CEP’s dataset, and on the lower end of Argidius’ custom cohort, for the extent to which the reporting process was straightforward and adaptable.
- ▶ Still, Argidius’ evaluation process is meaningful to grantees’ work. Ratings place Argidius in the top five percent of CEP’s dataset, and at the top of its custom cohort, for the extent to which the evaluation resulted in grantees making changes to the evaluated work.



“[Argidius] now guides its funding much more tightly along certain parameters that meet with its own theory of impact and potential grantees therefore need to fit their proposals far more tightly within Argidius particular approach... While at times this discipline is good to help potential grantees be more rigorous in their approach, it can create issues when an organization requires more flexible support.”



“We understand that Argidius values data, and learning from data, very highly. This made the grant proposal very tedious though and not all data could properly fit into the used format - for the proposal but also for the reporting later... While we understand the need to standardization across the grantees, maybe there is a way to have slightly adapted reporting formats depending on the nature of organization and activities.”

CEP Recommendations

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

- ▶ Reflect upon and celebrate continued strong perceptions of Argidius' impact on the enterprise development field. Dedicate time to understanding and codifying the practices and values that Argidius has used to achieve these results to maintain grantees' positive perceptions.
- ▶ Utilize Argidius' strong position and connections within the field to facilitate introductions to other funders that might be interested in its grantees' work. Additionally, find opportunities to connect Argidius grantees with each other to enable mutual learning and network building.
- ▶ Further strengthen relationships with grantees by engaging in more frequent, informal touchpoints and communicating more clearly about Argidius' goals and strategy.
- ▶ Celebrate the substantial reduction in time that grantees are spending on Argidius processes while continuing to identify areas of processes that can be refined or removed to further streamline.
 - Additionally, reflect upon the variation in the amount of time that grantees spend on Argidius processes according to their grant's strategy, and consider how to balance process demands across strategies.
- ▶ As CEP recommended in 2019, identify aspects of Argidius' approach that may contribute to the pressure that grantees feel to modify their priorities during Argidius' selection process and seek ways to mitigate the potential adverse effects of this pressure.

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