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“Their stamp of approval means a lot.”

“Their funding shows that we’re one of the good guys.”

INSIGHT

A funder's reputation impacts the funder-grantee relationship.

In addition to providing an organization needed resources, a funding relationship establishes a public connection between the grantee and the funder, which can provide meaningful validation or, in some cases, bring up reputational challenges for grantees.

“The Omidyar name is highly respected and has protected us during difficult times.”

“Our human-rights work has good overlap, but in terms of general values? They are too Libertarian.”

Insights

In regions where Omidyar Network (ON) is established, receiving funding can mark an organization as stable, competent, professional, and committed to measurable impact. In regions where ON is less established, the funding can label an organization as either a rising star or as one of the top players in the field. The ON stamp of approval has the potential to make organizations much more attractive to other funders. Participants were aware that other funding decisions appear to be and can be influenced by receiving ON funding. As this research was conducted prior to the launch of Luminate’s brand, it is important to note that the brand and reputation that is spoken of is tied strongly to the name “Omidyar” (ON).

In contrast, many participants expressed concerns that the optics of their organization publically accepting support from a “Silicon Valley” funder could be a liability, particularly in contexts hostile to capitalism or corporate donors (e.g., social projects that are critical of free-market liberalism, or media projects critical of big tech). These concerns have been heightened due to global tensions around philanthropy, influence and power.

THEMES

- > Funder Identity & Culture
- > Trust & Power

Recommendations

A funder's brand brings both positive and negative optics for grantees. To reduce ambiguity around funder identity and strategic priorities:

- Clearly communicate your identity, where the cultural roots of your funding approach lie, and how those inform your strategies and practices.
- A section on “how we work” or “impact model” detailing the funding approach should be added to communications about mission and values.
- Be transparent about your strategic priorities, and keep grantees informed as to how they may be changing.