

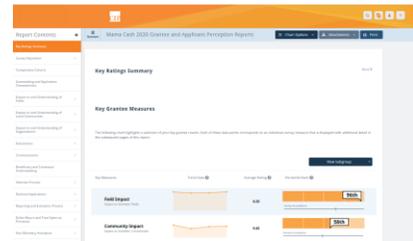
Key Findings and Recommendations from Mama Cash’s 2020 Grantee and Applicant Perception Report

Prepared by the Center for Effective Philanthropy

In February and March of 2020, the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) conducted a survey of Mama Cash’s (“Mama Cash” or “the Foundation”) grantees and applicants, achieving a 60 percent response rate for grantees and a 36 percent response rate for applicants. The memo below outlines the key findings and recommendations from this Grantee and Applicant Perception Report.

It’s important to note that CEP fielded this survey at time of great uncertainty across the globe. After the survey was in the field for a month, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. To better understand grantees’ experiences, CEP conducted statistical testing comparing all Mama Cash grantee responses before and after March 9th (when the WHO declared a global pandemic). Broadly, ratings from these two sets of grantees are consistent and exceptionally positive. However, grantees who started their survey after March 9th did provide significantly lower ratings for a few questions related to Mama Cash’s understanding. These findings are detailed in the following memo.

Grantee and applicant perceptions should be interpreted in light of Mama Cash’s goals and strategy, particularly as the Foundation continues to refine its strategy. Context matters – both in terms of interpreting results and planning for future actions.



Strong Field and Community Impact

- ▶ As in 2018, Mama Cash grantees give outstanding ratings for the Foundation’s impact on their fields, placing Mama Cash in the top five percent of funders. Grantees also provide significantly higher ratings than in 2018 – now in the top ten percent of CEP’s comparative dataset – for perceptions of how well Mama Cash understands their fields.
 - Grantees see Mama Cash as a leader in women’s rights, and their written comments highlight the positive impact Mama Cash is having on their fields and communities, with grantees stating that the Foundation “opens spaces so we can continue to publicize our battle,” has “a clear and absolute understanding,” and is making a “very significant and visible” impact.
- ▶ These positive perceptions carry through into perceptions of impact on and understanding of grantees’ local communities. The Foundation receives ratings similar to the typical funder for both measures.
- ▶ When it comes to understanding more specific aspects of grantees’ contexts, Mama Cash ratings similarly indicate an improvement from 2018.
 - When asked how well the Foundation understands the social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors that affect their work, grantees now provide ratings that are in the top half of CEP’s comparative dataset.

- Mama Cash also receives ratings in the top quarter of CEP’s comparative dataset for the Foundation’s understanding of beneficiaries’ needs and that its funding priorities reflect those needs.
- ▶ It’s important to note that grantees who began their response to the survey following WHO’s announcement declaring a global pandemic, had less positive perceptions for aspects of Mama Cash’s understanding of their work.
 - More specifically, these grantees rate significantly lower than grantees who started their survey before March 9th for their perceptions of Mama Cash’s understanding of the contextual factors affecting their work, awareness of challenges facing grantees’ organisations, and the extent to which Mama Cash’s programmatic priorities reflect an understanding of beneficiaries’ needs. These findings may suggest that the crisis may change the depth, approach to, or types of understanding grantees hope that Mama Cash (and other) funders will have during this crisis.
 - Apart from these aspects of understanding, grantees who began their survey after March 9th maintain similar and overwhelmingly positive perceptions of Mama Cash.



“As the biggest fund in Europe, Mama Cash has a leading role in conversations/advocacy with donors, governments, institutions and it’s one of their biggest impacts on our field/movement.”



“Mama Cash has a very strong vision, strategic thinking capacities and is admired for its inspiring and enriching leadership in the field and sub-fields.”

Continued Strong Organisational Impact with Opportunities to Provide Larger and Longer Grants

- ▶ Similar to 2018, ratings of the Foundation’s impact on and understanding of grantee organisations are in the top ten percent of CEP’s comparative dataset. Mama Cash grantees also continue to find the Foundation more aware of their organisations’ challenges than is typical.
 - Grantees note this impact and understanding in their open-ended comments, stating that “Mama Cash has had an enormous impact on our organisation,” through “core support grants,” and as a result, allows organisations “to develop a proper structure and be sustainable in the future.”

Continued Requests for Larger and Longer Grants

- ▶ Since 2018, Mama Cash’s grantmaking characteristics have remained consistent.
 - Mama Cash provides grants that are smaller than typical: its median grant size is smaller than that of 70 percent of funders in CEP’s comparative GPR dataset. Mama Cash also continues to fund comparatively small organisations, with the median grantee budget falling in the bottom five percent of CEP’s comparative dataset. In turn, Mama Cash funds a larger than typical proportion of grantees’ budgets: 34 percent versus four percent at the typical funder.

- Moreover, a larger than typical proportion of grantees – about 70 percent – report receiving unrestricted funding (i.e., general operating support). In 2018, a similar proportion of grantees reported receiving general operating/core support (61 percent).
- Mama Cash gives grants that are typical in length – about two years on average. Grantees who report receiving a grant that’s at least a year and a half in length provide significantly more positive ratings than Mama Cash grantees for most measures in the survey, including perceptions of organisational impact and understanding, and for the overall quality of the funder-grantee relationship.
- Twenty-seven percent of grantees’ suggestions relate to Mama Cash’s grantmaking approach. These grantees ask that the Foundation “remove the limit for how long one group can be funded for,” ask for “long funding commitments,” and “larger levels of support.”

Interest in More Non-monetary Support

- ▶ Beyond traditional grantmaking, 11 percent of Mama Cash grantees, a smaller than typical proportion, report receiving intensive patterns of non-monetary assistance. In CEP’s field-wide research, grantees who receive these intensive types of support – 3 forms of field-related assistance or 7 forms of non-monetary assistance overall – provide significantly more positive perceptions of a foundation’s work, in particular the impact a foundation is having on an organisation.
 - In their suggestions, grantees frequently request more support beyond the grant check. Six grantees ask for more collaborations and convenings, while five grantees request opportunities for organisational capacity building.
 - In a separate open-ended question regarding data security, grantees most frequently request more capacity building and training on best practices.



“Mama Cash has had a large impact for us to press forward as an organisation. It has helped us strengthen ourselves to continue defending mother earth and our rights as women.”

Exceptionally Positive Funder-Grantee Relationships

- ▶ Mama Cash’s grantees’ ratings of the quality of their relationships with the Foundation are now in the top 20 percent of CEP’s comparative dataset. Grantees write that staff are “available to listen,” “inclusive,” and “quite friendly to interact and communicate with.”
- ▶ The Foundation’s grantees continue to be more comfortable approaching the Foundation if a problem arises than is typical. In fact, ratings on this question place Mama Cash in the top five percent of CEP’s comparative dataset.
 - Grantees also continue to rate Mama Cash similar to the typical funder for its responsiveness.
- ▶ Like in 2018, grantees rate the Foundation’s transparency and clarity of communication higher than typical – placing Mama Cash in the top ten percent of the comparative dataset for both measures.
- ▶ A larger than typical proportion of Mama Cash grantees (33 percent) report interacting with the Foundation monthly or more often. Grantees with this frequent level of contact rate significantly higher for aspects of the Foundation’s understanding of their work.

- Moreover, grantees report significantly fewer contact changes than in 2018. A typical proportion of grantees (14 percent) report their main Foundation contact changed in the past six months, compared to 45 percent of grantees in 2018.
 - Like in 2018, a smaller than typical proportion of grantees (13 percent) report receiving a site visit from Mama Cash during the course of their grant.
- ▶ That said, the most frequent theme of grantee suggestions related to interactions and communication with Mama Cash. Eight grantees ask for “more frequent and more open” communications, while six grantees request visiting “the organisations they fund.” Often grantees tie these interactions to “more understanding of the context and environment where grantees work and give Mama Cash better insights on how to aid the management and improvement of the work of grantees.”



“They are very supportive, responsive and responsible as a donor, there is trust built between us and Mama Cash's grant team. Communication has always been clear and timely, currently, we see a lot of understanding from Mama Cash around the crisis with the corona virus.”



“We find Mama Cash to be 'a breath of fresh air' when it comes to funders, they listen, they don't push, don't enforce a different agenda, ask questions to understand contexts, and genuinely care how things are going/ we're doing.”

Significantly More Helpful Yet Time-Intensive Processes

- ▶ Grantees continue to find Mama Cash's processes more helpful than is typical.
- Mama Cash receives one of its highest comparative ratings – in the top two percent of CEP's comparative dataset – for the helpfulness of the selection process. This rating is significantly higher than in 2018.
 - When asked in a custom question to select the top two most accessible application formats, 67 percent of grantees selected a web-based, written application, while about half of grantees (54 percent) selected a written application sent in by mail.
- ▶ When it comes to the reporting process, Mama Cash receives ratings in the top one percent of CEP's comparative dataset for the extent to which grantees find it a helpful process to reflect and learn.
- Mama Cash grantees also place the Foundation in the top 20 percent of CEP's comparative dataset for both the extent to which its reporting process was adaptable and relevant.
 - Further, a typical proportion of grantees (70 percent) report exchanging ideas with the Foundation regarding how their organisation would assess the results of the work funded by the grant. These grantees provide significantly more positive perceptions on nearly every measure in the report.
 - Yet, Mama Cash receives one of its lowest comparative ratings – near the bottom third of CEP's comparative dataset – for the extent Mama Cash's reporting process was straightforward.
- ▶ Relatedly, as in 2018, grantees are spending more time (53 hours) than is typical on funder requirements over the grant period.
- As a result, Mama Cash grantees have a lower than typical “dollar return.” Mama Cash grantees at the median receive 800 USD per hour they spend on the Foundation's

processes, compared to 2,500 USD in CEP's overall comparative dataset.



“Mama Cash is a wonderful funder and partner. However, in everything there is always room for improvement - the financial information, especially the forms can be daunting...the conversions and calculations.”

Improving Declined Applicant Experience

- ▶ As in 2018, Mama Cash applicant ratings continue to be lower than typical when compared to other applicants in CEP's comparative dataset. Yet despite these lower than typical ratings, applicants are providing significantly more positive perceptions on some aspects of understanding.
 - While still lower than typical, applicants indicate significant improvement in Mama Cash's understanding of their organisations' strategies and goals, as well as its understanding of their local communities.
 - Further, Mama Cash now receives ratings similar to the typical funder for its understanding of applicants' fields.
- ▶ Yet applicants still place Mama Cash in the bottom third of CEP's comparative dataset for perceptions of Mama Cash's impact on their fields and local communities.
- ▶ As it relates to aspects of relationships with Mama Cash, applicants continue to find Mama Cash less responsive than typical, and also provide lower than typical ratings for fairness of treatment and accessibility to applicants.
- ▶ More broadly, Mama Cash continues to receive relatively strong ratings for aspects of its communication with applicants. Applicants find Mama Cash's communication as clear and consistent as is typical.
- ▶ And Mama Cash now receives significantly higher ratings – and near the top quarter of CEP's comparative dataset – for the extent to which the selection process was helpful in strengthening the organisation or programme to which the grant funding would have been directed.
- ▶ After declination, 39 percent of applicants, a slightly smaller than typical proportion, indicate having received feedback or advice from Mama Cash. Nonetheless, a larger proportion of applicants who requested feedback are receiving it. Eighty-eight percent of applicants who requested feedback from Mama Cash received feedback – compared to 80 percent in 2018.
 - For applicants receiving feedback or advice, ratings for its helpfulness in strengthening future proposals are now trending upward, with Mama Cash now rated similar to the typical funder.
- ▶ Despite these improvements, Mama Cash applicants continue to rate Mama Cash lower than typical for the honesty of the reasons given for declination.
 - Perhaps relatedly, a larger than typical proportion of Mama Cash applicants report that the reason they were given from Mama Cash regarding their declination was “Not enough funds or too many good proposals.”
 - Applicants who do report receiving feedback rate Mama Cash significantly higher for their perceptions of impact on their field and communities, staff responsiveness and fairness of treatment by Mama Cash, as well as for the honesty of reasons that were provided for their proposal declination.

- ▶ Mama Cash applicants also report spending 32 hours on the median on Mama Cash’s application process – a continued upward trend from 2018 and in the top 20 percent of CEP’s comparative dataset.
- ▶ When asked how Mama Cash could improve, the largest proportions of applicants suggest to expand or change the orientation of the funding criteria, more frequent interactions or clearer communications, or to improve Mama Cash’s understanding of applicants’ organisations’ work.
- ▶ Concerning future applications, a typical proportion of applicants, 91 percent, and virtually unchanged from 2018, indicate that they would apply for funding from Mama Cash again.

CEP Recommendations

Based on its grantee feedback, CEP recommends that the Foundation consider the following:

- ▶ Continue to build on grantees’ strong perceptions of Mama Cash’s impact on their fields, communities, and organisations. Where possible, consider sharing best practices with the field more broadly.
 - Where possible, work to foster and demonstrate a strong understanding of grantee organisations’ changing contexts and challenges as a result of COVID-19.
- ▶ Recognizing resource constraints, consider providing a larger proportion of Mama Cash’s most closely aligned grantees with longer and larger grants.
 - Relatedly, consider where Mama Cash may provide more grantees with intensive patterns of support beyond the grant, particularly more frequent convenings and collaborations amongst its grantees.
- ▶ Celebrate and reflect on the strong relationships Mama Cash staff have built with its grantees. Work to codify best practices to ensure that these strong perceptions continue into the future.
- ▶ Where possible, streamline Mama Cash’s processes while maintaining its helpfulness, with an eye towards decreasing the time grantees and applicants spend on grant requirements.
- ▶ Considering the upward trajectory in understanding of declined applicants’ organisations’ goals and strategies and communities, continue to invest in improving and communicating this understanding back to applicants.
- ▶ Continue to work on providing even more specific feedback and helpful reasons for declinations of applications.

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