



THE CENTER
FOR EFFECTIVE
PHILANTHROPY

**Key Findings and Recommendations from the
Paul Hamlyn Foundation 2025
Grantee and Declined Applicant
Perception Report**

Prepared by the Center for Effective Philanthropy

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Solid Understanding and Increased Impact on Fields and Communities	5
Grantmaking Characteristics – As Reported by Grantee Survey Responses.....	6
Opportunities to Provide Useful Support Beyond the Grant	7
Important Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racist Practice.....	7
Relationships Based on Trust and Clear Communications	8
Application Process.....	9
Stable or Less Positive Experiences for Declined Applicants.....	11
Evolving Grant Request Characteristics – As Reported by Declined Applicant Survey Responses	11
Continued Opportunities for Improving Interactions and Communication	11
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racist Practice	13
Lower Perceptions of the Application Process	13
Insufficient Feedback on Declinations	14
A Note on Methodology.....	16
The Grantee and Applicant Perception Reports.....	16
Contact Information	17

Executive Summary

 October and November 2025 Survey Period	 597 Grantees Surveyed	 360 Responses Received	 60% Grantee Survey Response Rate
	1211 Declined Applicants Surveyed	384 Responses Received	32% Applicant Survey Response Rate

- ▶ In October and November 2025, for the fifth time, since 2009, CEP has administered a survey of PHF's its grantees. This was also the fourth iteration of the survey for PHF's declined applicants.
- ▶ The surveys were administered online obtaining response rates of 60% and 32% respectively.
- ▶ The surveys use standardised questionnaires that allow for comparative analysis and benchmarking over time and with other funders. A set of custom questions, specific only to PHF, have also been added to the survey instruments.¹

The 2025 Grantee Perception Report findings show that Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) is having a stronger impact than ever on its grantees and their fields. Grantees particularly value PHF's trust-based, multi-year, and increasingly unrestricted funding, as well as its explicit and courageous commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist practice. In a challenging external context marked by funding precarity, rising inequality, and political hostility, PHF is widely seen as a values-driven and reliable partner.

At the same time, the feedback highlights some opportunities for continued improvement. While grantee experiences are largely positive and improving, applicants report less positive experiences, including concerns about accessibility, responsiveness, consistency of communication, and the usefulness of feedback. Both grantees and declined applicants also point to opportunities to streamline and simplify the application process, and enhance clarity around renewal and how application funding decisions are made.

¹ This memo accompanies the comprehensive survey results found in PHF's interactive online report at <https://cep.surveylresults.org> and in the downloadable online materials, including respondents' written comments. PHF's online report also contains more information about the survey methodology and subgroup analysis. Throughout this summary, 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 0.1.

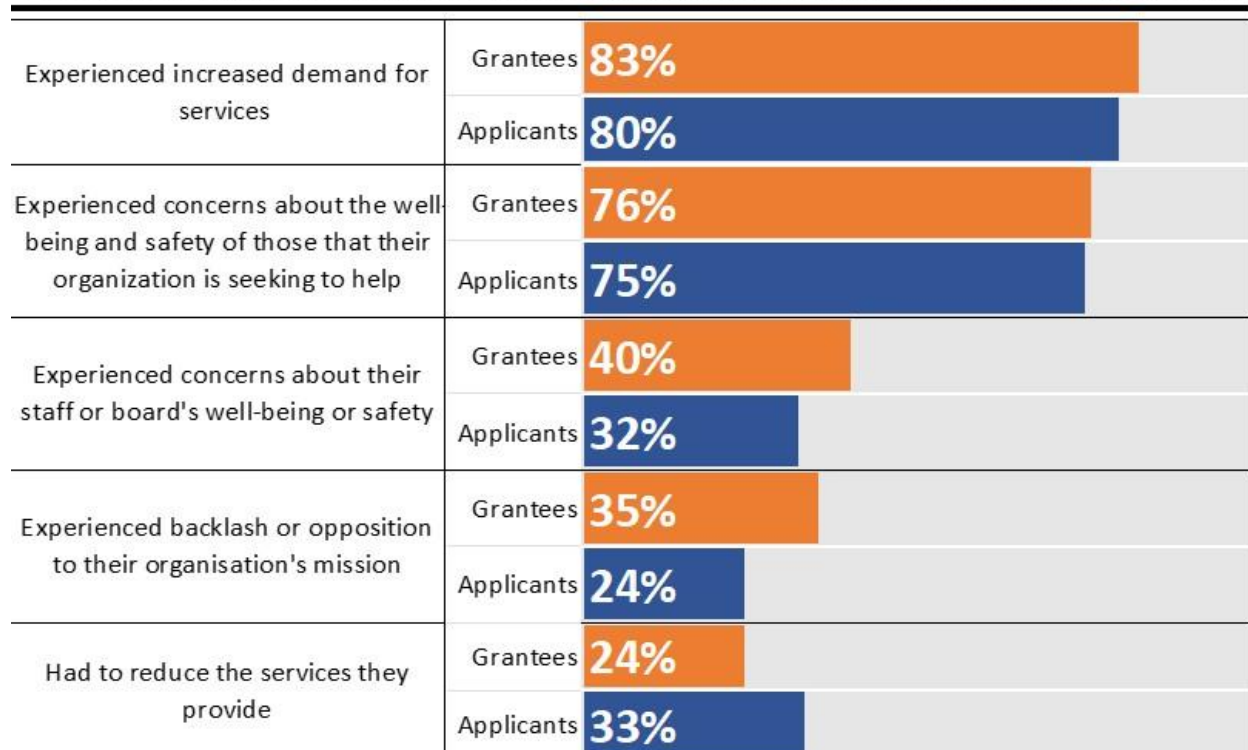
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Increasingly Challenging Context

Both grantees and declined applicants alike are working in a very challenging external environment. In written comments they share concerns about the rise of the far-right and threats, funding precarity, as well as staff wellbeing and safety concerns.

- ▶ Over three-quarters of grantees and declined applicants report that since 2024, their organisation has experienced greater levels of demand for their services, as well as concerns about the wellbeing and safety of those that their organisation seeks to help.

Grantee and Applicant Experiences as a Result of Changes in the Current Climate



“The rise of the far right has had a very real impact on our work and the people we support. We’ve seen a sharp increase in the need for our services — from organisations struggling to respond to hostile narratives, to individuals experiencing fear and distress. As a result, we’ve had to operate in a near-constant state of crisis and reaction, while our core funding remains insecure.” - Grantee



“We have experienced a higher number of declines to support from trusts and foundations... the charity's financial risk is much greater because of the current climate and we are continually assessing expenditure and remain unable to commit to longterm programme delivery unless multi-year funding is secured.” - Applicant

- ▶ Similar effects are being felt by civil society organisations more broadly as well. In a recent field-wide research report² of over 400 nonprofit organisations in the U.S., nearly two-thirds of civil society leaders report increased demand for their services, and nearly a third report that they have had to reduce the services they provide due to the current context.
 - Forty percent of civil society leaders in this study indicate that the most useful way that Foundations can help them in this context is through capacity building support.
- ▶ When asked what the most important social issues are in their community, PHF's grantees and declined applicants lifted up inequality, poverty and the cost of living crisis, the rise of far-right politics, and anti-migrant hostility as some the areas that their communities, or Paul Hamlyn must address within the next 5 years.
 - As one grantee says, *"[The] political context is harder to work within. Anti-immigrant sentiment is growing. Anti Human rights approaches are growing, attacks on the rule of law and lawyers are increasing, all while inequity is growing and many people's lives are getting tougher."*
- ▶ Grantees also appreciate the Foundation's courage for maintaining its values and supporting progressive work even as the political climate becomes more hostile. In the words of one grantee, *"The Foundation sets a hugely important example to other funders at a critical moment for all those working for a fairer and more just society. Right now, core progressive values such as equality, human rights and even the basic idea of empathy towards others now coming under sustained political attack not just in the UK but internationally. Yet PHF has firmly stood by its values and the grantees it supports, even as funders face mounting pressure to back away from areas which far right politicians and media outlets have tried to make 'controversial'."*

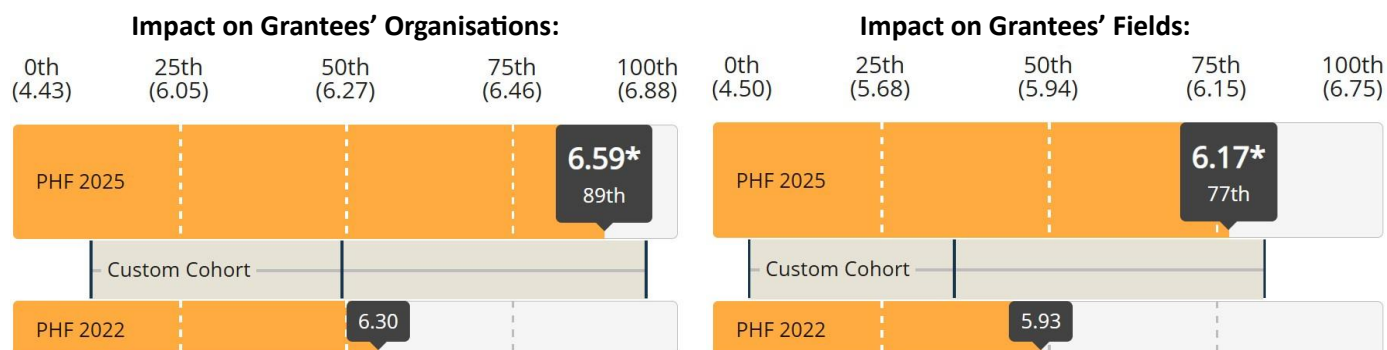


Recommendation: Consider how PHF can further support grantees as they navigate uncertainty and challenges during this moment. Continue giving large, multi-year, unrestricted grants, and explore opportunities to increase support amount or length, especially for highly aligned organisations during this challenging moment. Continue to maintain an open line of communication with grantees and others in the field about how to meet this moment.

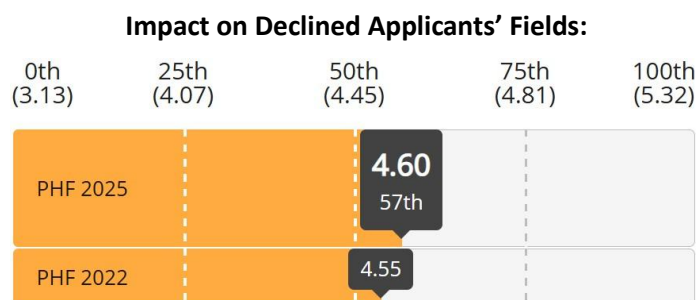
² CEP's recent research report, "A Sector in Crisis" can be found [here](#).

2 Solid Understanding and Increased Impact on Fields and Communities

- ▶ Paul Hamlyn’s impact on grantees’ organisations and fields is very high, now at the 89th and 77th percentiles respectively in CEP’s dataset, both significantly higher than in 2022.



- ▶ Similar to 2022, PHF’s impact on declined applicants’ fields remains at typical levels.
- ▶ The Foundation’s understanding of grantees fields remains similar to the typical funder. This remains relatively consistent across funds, except for Ideas & Pioneers grantees, who provide lower ratings.



- Declined applicants’ perceptions of the Foundation’s understanding of their fields are lower than in 2022, but still similar to the typical funder.³ Some declined applicants comment that they don’t feel the Foundation understands their work or field deeply. For example, this applicant says, *“I’m not sure that the foundation fully understands the creative industry that I work in, or the hurdles that underrepresented creatives in my industry face.”*
- ▶ Ratings are higher than 2022 (5.95 out of 7, up from 5.8 out of 7), and now similar to the median funder in CEP’s dataset for PHF’s understanding of grantee organisations’ strategy and goals, however, Youth Fund grantees provide lower ratings on this measure (5.55 out of 7).
 - Declined applicants’ ratings on this measure remain lower than the typical funder (3.31 out of 7, 23rd percentile), similar to responses in 2022.
- ▶ Grantees’ ratings are high – in the top quarter of the dataset – for the extent to which the Foundation is aware of challenges their organisations are facing (5.65 out of 7, 78th percentile). Grantees provide consistently high ratings on this measure, with the exception of SLII⁴ grantees, who provide ratings near the bottom of the dataset (4.82 out of 7).

³ In this case, the inclusion of Ideas & Pioneers Fund declined applicants, does not have a significant effect on the overall rating.

⁴ Strategic Learning, Insight and Influence (SLII) grantees include those funded through the ‘Evidence and Learning’ and ‘Voice, Influence and Partnership Funds’.

- Declined applicants provide ratings in line with the typical funder, and similar to 2022 for the Foundation’s awareness of challenges facing their organisations.



“The support from the foundation was generous and timely and clearly showed their understanding of our context - our field, and community - and showed a sensitivity to our organisation which I have not seen from other funders. I feel that this approach has a very positive influence in our sector.” - Grantee



“The PHF grants officer would gain a much deeper understanding of the projects by visiting the sites in person and observing the work as it happens. First-hand exposure would allow them to see the day-to-day realities, meet the staff and participants, and witness the direct impact of the initiatives.” - Applicant



Recommendation: Celebrate the strong – and improved – grantee perceptions across many measures of impact and understanding. Reflect on the values, approaches, and practices that may have contributed to grantees’ positive experiences and codify and maintain these practices going forward. Consider how the practices that drive strong grantee relationships and impact can be applied earlier in the process to strengthen understanding of declined applicants, their organisations, and their fields.

3 Improved Grantee Experiences

Grantees are receiving impactful grants, and they hold strong, positive perceptions across several themes. In many areas, including the Foundation’s commitment to DEI and anti-racist practice, relationships, and communication, ratings are significantly higher than they were in 2022.

Grantmaking Characteristics – As Reported by Grantee Survey Responses

- ▶ PHF grants are slightly larger typical, £165K at the median, to grantees that are smaller than typical (£0.5M at the median). This results in 12 percent of grantees' budgets, on average, being funded by their grant from PHF, which is a larger than typical proportion.
- ▶ Over 90 percent of PHF’s grants are multi-year, which is a larger proportion than for most other funders in CEP’s dataset. The Foundation also provides a high proportion of grantees with core or unrestricted funding (42%)⁵. Notably, over a third of grantees received a combination of multiyear, unrestricted funding, which is a larger proportion than for all other funders in PHF’s custom cohort of peers.

⁵ Grantees were asked If their funding was restricted to a specific use, or if “this funding was not restricted to a specific use (e.g., general operating, core support)”

Multi-year Grants	Unrestricted Funding	Multi-year Unrestricted Grants
91%	42%	38%
PHF 2025	PHF 2025	PHF 2025
vs.	vs.	vs.
73% at PHF in 2022 and 55% at the typical funder	26% at PHF in 2022 and 28% at the typical funder	19% at PHF in 2022 and 11% at the typical funder

- ▶ The most common suggestion in grantees' written comments is for adjustments to PHF's funding structure and approach. Specifically, many request even longer-term grants.

- As one grantee says, *"Sustained core funding – particularly across a multi-year period – would enable long-term planning, maintain continuity, and reduce the administrative pressure of short-term cycles."*

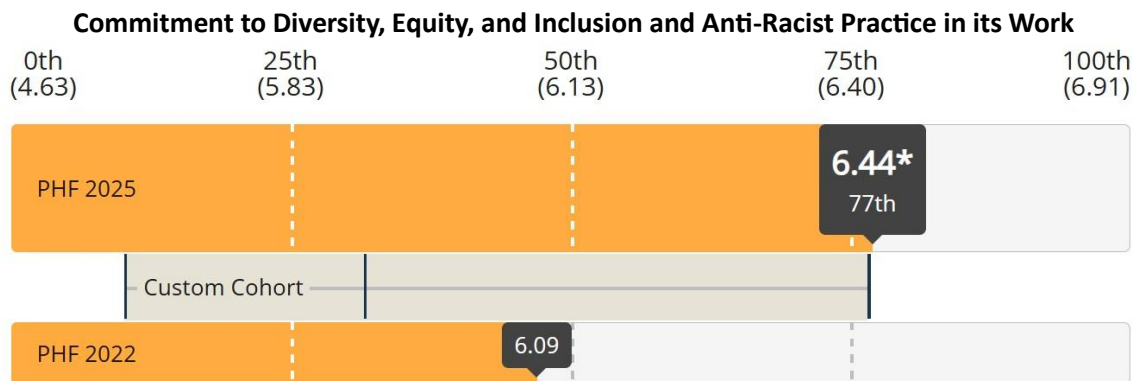
Opportunities to Provide Useful Support Beyond the Grant

- ▶ A larger than typical proportion – 74 percent – of grantees report receiving assistance beyond the grant. Most commonly this consists of meeting or connecting with people beyond their field or usual networks, or programme-related assistance.
 - Ratings are lower than typical for the quality of the support beyond the grant that grantees received, including the extent that the support met an important need for their organisation or programme (24th percentile), and was a worthwhile use of the time required (18th percentile).
- ▶ Advice and support from grants managers is rated as the most helpful type of support offered. While there are requests in written comments for more opportunities for networking and peer learning, grantees report signposting or linking with other leaders or organisations as one of the least helpful types of support currently provided, along with use of the Foundation's meeting space.
- ▶ When grantees were asked how the Foundation can amplify the impact of their work, two of the top themes in grantees' comments are requests for PHF's support in raising their profile and reaching wider audiences, and more opportunities for networking and collaboration. Similarly, requests for more support beyond the grant, including networking and peer learning opportunities, and capacity building and organisational development is the third most common topic in grantees' suggestions.
 - For example, one grantee suggests the Foundation, *"enhance the opportunities for grantees to share practice"* while another says, *"There is significant potential to deepen [the Foundation's] impact through enhanced capacity-building support... Additional investment in training for trustees and senior staff, as well as technical assistance for data management, financial systems, and impact measurement, would help ensure that organisations can operate more efficiently."*

Important Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racist Practice

- ▶ Ratings have significantly improved since 2022 for the extent to which the Foundation demonstrates an explicit commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racist practice in its work. PHF is now the highest rated funder in its custom cohort for this measure.

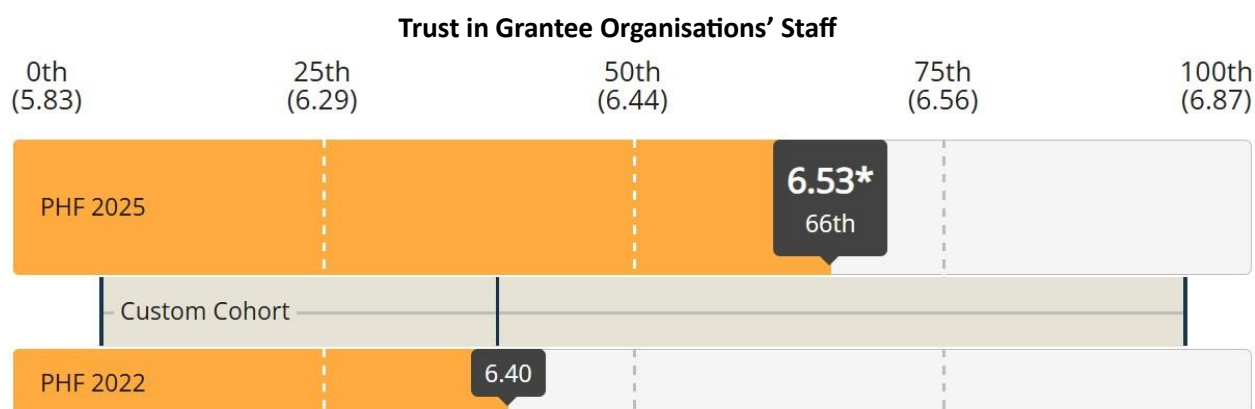
- PHF receives high ratings from grantees across most funds except SLII grantees, who provide lower ratings (5.6 out of 7).



- ▶ Grantees provide strong, positive ratings related to the Foundation meeting its commitment to being an 'equitable and relational funder' (6.43 out of 7). Ratings are similar to 2022 and to the typical funder (5.65 out of 7, 41st percentile) for the Foundation's understanding of the needs of the people and communities that grantees serve.
- ▶ Eighty-eight percent of grantees report that the efforts funded by the grant are meant to benefit people facing entrenched inequity. Most commonly these are educationally or economically disadvantaged people, children and young people, and people experiencing racial inequity.
- ▶ In comments, many grantees praise PHF's explicit commitment to anti-racism, equity, and social justice. One grantee says, *"PHF has become much bolder and clearer about the change it wants to see, with a greater explicit commitment to anti-racism and to challenging how power operates in the arts. This is influencing the field to also be braver and more radical in our practice."*
- ▶ Grantees also reiterate how valued it is that the Foundation remains clearly and unapologetically committed to DEI and anti-racism practice, despite any external pressure to back down. As one grantee says, *"PHF is open about their radical politics and that definitely influences other organisations in the sectors ability to do more radical things, knowing at least one significant funder understands that!"*

Relationships Based on Trust and Clear Communications

- ▶ When asked about how responsive PHF staff are, ratings continue to be lower than typical, at the 25th percentile (6.21 out of 7). There is some variation across funds, as Youth Strategic Investment and Teacher Development Fund grantees provide higher ratings of responsiveness (6.86 and 6.75 out of 7, respectively), while SLII and Neighbourhood Development Fund grantees provide lower ratings (5.09 and 5.85 out of 7, respectively).
- ▶ Many other ratings related to interactions and relationships with grantees are similar to the typical funder. This includes grantees' comfort approaching the Foundation if a problem arises (52nd percentile), the extent the Foundation exhibited candour about its perspectives (48th percentile), and compassion for those affected by grantees' work (49th percentile).
- ▶ Ratings are higher than they were in 2022, and now higher than the typical funder, for the extent that the Foundation exhibited trust in grantees. Again, ratings from SLII grantees are lower than others for this measure (6.0 out of 7).



- ▶ In a series of custom questions only asked of PHF grantees, the Foundation receives high ratings (all over a 6.4 out of 7) for how the Foundation demonstrates thoughtfulness in its work and relationships, is approachable, and demonstrates and builds trust within its relationships.
 - These themes also emerge in grantees written comments, as grantees say, *“I have been amazed by the approach as it starts on trust and it continues to build it.”*
- ▶ Over 20 percent of grantees report having contact with their main PHF contact only yearly or less often, which is a bit higher than in 2022, when this proportion was only 16 percent. This group that has less frequent contact also provide lower ratings on many other measures throughout the report.
- ▶ Site visits are another important touchpoint for grantees. Forty percent of grantees report that they did not have a site visit from PHF, and they also provide less positive ratings on many other survey measures compared to those who did receive a site visit.
- ▶ Grantees also provide stronger ratings than they did in 2022 for items related to the Foundation’s communication. Specifically, ratings are now in the top quarter of the dataset for how clearly the Foundation has communicated its goals and strategy to grantees (6.06 out of 7), and now in line with the typical funder for the consistency of communications (also 6.06 out of 7), and grantees’ understanding of their own fit within the Foundation’s efforts (5.58 out of 7).

Helpful Reporting with Continued Opportunity to Streamline and Improve the Application Process

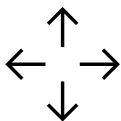
- ▶ Grantees provide more mixed ratings for PHF’s application process. Ratings are in the bottom third of the dataset for the helpfulness of the application process (5.71 out of 7), and similar to the typical funder for the clarity and transparency of the process and timelines.
 - Grantees also report feeling a typical amount of pressure to modify their priorities in order to create an application that was likely to receive funding.
- ▶ Many items related to the Foundation’s grant processes are strong, receiving ratings of above a 6.5 out of 7, including that the schedule of grant payments was appropriate, the offer letter and award documentation were easy to understand, and that grant payments were received when expected.

- Two items that did not receive as strong ratings are that the accessibility support bursary offered during the application process met grantees’ needs (5.12 out of 7), and that it was easy to access (4.88 out of 7). Both of these are also significantly lower than in 2022⁶.
- ▶ In written comments, several grantees request earlier and clearer communication about the likelihood of renewal or any continuation funding. One grantee says, “It would be very helpful to be clear on whether funding will renew and know this before the funding period ends.”
- ▶ Grantees report spending a higher than typical amount of time on PHF’s application processes. At the median, grantees estimate that they are spending 30 hours on the application process, and while there is variation on time spent across funds, overall, this figure puts the Foundation in the top quarter of the dataset for most onerous application processes.
 - When asked to what extent the application process was an appropriate level of effort given the amount of funding, ratings are similar to the typical funder, and unchanged from 2022 (6.04 out of 7, 46th percentile).
 - In open-ended comments, several grantees do suggest that the application process, specifically the stage 1 application, can be improved or streamlined. One grantee says, *“The preparations needed throughout the application process and the length and intensity of the interview made this a very tiring process, it was very resource-heavy for a small organisation.”*
- ▶ Just over 70 percent of grantees indicate that they have had a discussion with the Foundation about how their organisation would assess the results of the work funded by the grant. Grantees who did have this type of conversation also provide significantly higher ratings on many other items throughout the report.
- ▶ Grantees provide positive feedback for all items related to the Foundation’s reporting processes, with ratings in the top third of CEP’s dataset for the extent that the process was straightforward, adaptable, relevant, and helpful.

Recommendations:



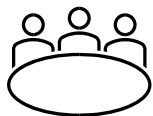
Assess whether there are opportunities, particularly in the current climate, to extend the length of multi-year grants to provide greater stability and enable long-term planning for grantees.



Engage grantees directly to better understand what types of networking, peer learning, and capacity-building support would be most valuable, and refine current offerings accordingly.

Celebrate the acknowledgement of PHFs commitment to DEI and anti-racist practice from grantees. Continue developing and deepening this engagement and practice as best fit.

⁶ In 2022, both of these items omitted the word “bursary” in their question text, (i.e. in 2022 the question read “The accessibility support offered by the Foundation during the application process met my needs” while in 2024 it reads “The accessibility support bursary offered by the Foundation during the application process met my needs.”



Reflect on the Foundation's trust-based approach, and valued partnership with grantees. Establish clearer expectations for response times across teams and increase opportunities for meaningful touchpoints, including site visits.

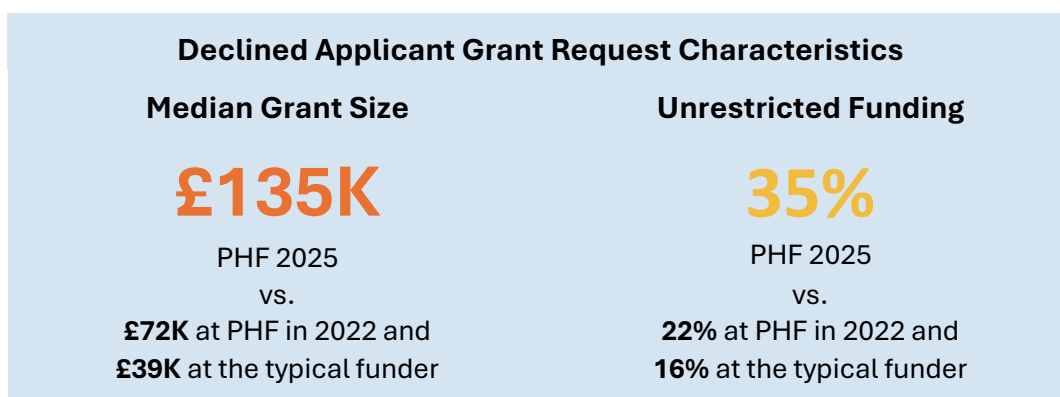
Simplify stage 1 of the application process and improve clarity and accessibility of guidance and support, while increasing opportunities for pre-application dialogue.

4 Stable or Less Positive Experiences for Declined Applicants

Declined applicants' experiences with the Foundation have either been similar or less positive than in previous years. While grant requests are now larger and more frequently for unrestricted funding, there are some recurrent issues regarding the interactions, communications, the application process, and particularly the usefulness of the feedback provided on declined applications.

Evolving Grant Request Characteristics – As Reported by Declined Applicant Survey Responses

Grant requests reflect important changes in relation to previous years. The median grant size requested by declined applicants in 2025 was £135K, almost double that of 2022 (£72K). Further, 35% of applications were for core funding, or funding not restricted to a specific use, an important increase since 2022 (22%). For both these measures, PHF is placed among the 20% of funders in CEP's dataset receiving the largest and most unrestricted funding requests.



- ▶ Meanwhile, PHF is among the 20% of funders that welcome applications from the smallest organisations in CEP's dataset; the median annual organisational budget of declined applicants in 2025 was £200K, compared to £600K at the typical funder in CEP's dataset.

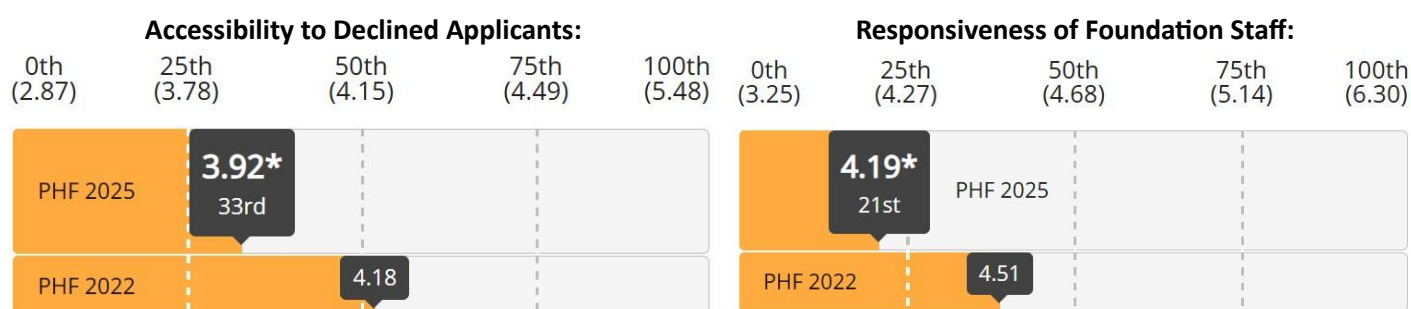
Continued Opportunities for Improving Interactions and Communication

Regarding how PHF interacts and communicates with declined applicants, there seem to be a few sticky points that affect declined applicants' experiences and indicate that there is room for continued efforts to address these.

- ▶ Declined applicants continue to provide ratings that are lower than typical about how fairly they feel they have been treated by the Foundation (mean rating of 4.48 out of 7, placing PHF at the 31st percentile for this measure).

- ▶ Further, there have been a handful of measures showing significant declines in applicants' ratings, including regarding how accessible the Foundation is to them and how responsive they perceive the Foundation's staff to be to declined applicants. In a custom question about how easy it was for them to speak to someone at the Foundation about questions regarding the application process, declined applicants gave an average rating of 3.67 out of 7.

- Many declined applicants comment about equity and accessibility, specifically in regards to the language used in PHF's application process. In the words of one declined applicant: *"The guidance language is quite academic and sometimes overly reliant on concepts that it is difficult to meaningfully grasp for many, particularly aspiring migrant leaders, e.g. intersectionality. This makes it difficult for non-native English speakers without prior experience/coaching to complete the application process to a quality good enough to be successful."*



- ▶ Declined applicants continue to provide typical ratings for the clarity of communications that they receive from the Foundation (4.88 out of 7, placing PHF at the 58th percentile).
- ▶ When it comes to the consistency of the information that they receive from different sources at the Foundation, declined applicants' ratings move in the opposite direction than those of grantees. While still at relatively typical levels in comparison to other funders, they have significantly declined since 2022, from 4.98 to 4.76 out of 7.
- ▶ Declined applicants continue to consider that PHF is overall transparent with them, with ratings that place PHF in line with the typical funder.



"I found it quite difficult to reach anyone at the fund, I had a question about the status of our organisation before applying - but no one seemed to answer the phone or respond to emails on the general email address... I also hadn't received the rejection email, it hadn't gone to junk - it simply hadn't arrived..."



"Our request to speak to someone at the foundation pre-application was refused. It is hard to understand how we can build a relationship with funders and it seems that previously-funded organisations who have that advantage are hugely favoured over those of us who have no option but to be 'cold-calling' at the application stage."

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racist Practice

- ▶ A larger proportion of declined applicants than in the past report that the efforts of their grant application primarily would have been directed to benefit people facing entrenched inequity (93% vs 89% in 2022). This is higher than for the average funder in CEP's dataset (81%).
 - Most commonly, declined grants would have targeted educationally and/or economically disadvantaged people (77%), children and young people (68%), and people experiencing racial inequity (51%).
- ▶ When asked about the extent to which PHF demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist practice, declined applicants provide overall positive ratings (5.01 out of 7) that place the Foundation in line with the average funder, the 45th percentile.
 - In written comments however, some declined applicants expressed concerns about whether PHF's DEI and anti-racist practice has become exclusionary and if it genuinely serves equity, as noted by this declined applicant: *"[...] some of the additional processes [PHF] has introduced [...] [are] taking the focus away from the work organisations are doing to counter structural racism and towards the manner in which that work is being done."*

Lower Perceptions of the Application Process

- ▶ Similar to 2022, only 30% of declined applicants report having had some kind of direct contact with Foundation staff before applying, vs. 47% for the average funder in CEP's dataset. It is worth noting that declined applicants that had prior contact tended to provide significantly higher ratings across the survey, including how PHF understands the context in which they operate, the fairness and responsiveness in their relationship with the Foundation, and the overall helpfulness of the application process. It is important as well to take into consideration that the application process varies considerably between funds.
- ▶ Declined applicants' perceptions about the different aspects of the application process have overall declined since 2022, while they still tend to be at higher levels than for the median funder.
 - A few significant decreases in ratings have been noted, particularly for the helpfulness of the process (4.33, down from 4.65 in 2022), how appropriate the level of effort required is (4.79, down from 5.02 in 2022), and how clear were the process requirements and timelines (5.36, down from 5.64 in 2022).
- ▶ Declined applicants express higher levels of pressure to modify their priorities in order to create a grant application that is likely to receive funding; their ratings place PHF amongst the 15 percent of funders in CEP's dataset that are seen as placing most pressure on declined applicants.
- ▶ Declined applicants continue to estimate they spent a considerable, higher than typical, amount of time on the application creation and overall application process (24 hours on average, up from 20 hours in 2022).
- ▶ There is important variation in the number of hours invested in the process depending on the Fund for which they apply: from 10 hours for declined applicants in the Ideas & Pioneers Fund to 35 hours for the Arts Fund⁷. And while for those whose application was ineligible, the amount of hours invested

⁷ The Arts fund process has recently changed, and is operating in a new iteration for these applicants. This new process included a site visit at second stage for many applicants.

was 8 hours on average, for those declined at the first stage was 17 hours, while for those declined at the second stage, the time investment went all the way up to 40 hours.

- In this vein, the second most common suggestion⁸ made by declined applicants was to reduce the burden and complexity of the application process, particularly for smaller or grassroots organisations, with many suggesting further simplifying stage 1 of the application process, requiring only an initial expression of interest.



“We would suggest offering application requirements for organisations based on size/turnover as a more equitable approach to grantmaking. As a small, grassroots charity, we do not have access to the resources and capacity of a large, or even medium sized organisation, but we’re still expected to deliver the same level of detail, depth, and forward planning.”



“A short EOI form would help you filter for the strongest strategic fit before inviting full applications. This would save time for both applicants and the Foundation.”

- ▶ In custom questions asked regarding the application process, most respondents reported having a good understanding of when they should expect to receive a decision (giving an average rating of 5.52 out of 7). However, they continued to provide overall lower ratings, similar to 2022, about other aspects of the process including the items below:

Understanding of the timeline when they should expect to receive a decision	5.52	
The accessibility support was easy to access	4.39	
The accessibility support met applicants needs	4.20	
The pre-application enquiry call or webinar was useful in developing their application	4.31	
Understanding of the likelihood of receiving a positive decision	4.05	

Insufficient Feedback on Declinations

- ▶ 92% of respondents said that they have been given a reason for which their application was declined (10% more than in 2022). The most common reason given to 35% of them was “Not enough funds/too many good applications”, which places PHF in line with the typical funder.

⁸ This most common suggestion related to insufficient and generic feedback on declined applications, which is discussed in the following page of the report.

- While also in line with the typical funder, there was, however, a significant decline in applicants' perceptions about how honest the response provided by PHF was (mean rating of 4.5 out of 7, down from 4.91 in 2022).
 - Similar to the typical funder and to 2022, 62% of declined applicants report receiving no indication from PHF about whether they should reapply for funding in the future. Nevertheless, a lower portion (80%), in relation to previous years and to most other funders, say that they would consider applying again for funding from PHF.
- Out of the declined applicants that requested feedback on their application only 47% received it. This proportion has dropped from 2022 (55%) and is considerably less than what is typical for funders in the CEP dataset (64%).
- What's more, there has been a significant decline in ratings about how useful the feedback provided was in strengthening future applications to PHF (4.28 out of 7, down from 4.74). Helpfulness of the feedback for strengthening future applications to other funders was also rated comparatively low. For both these measures, PHF's ratings are now below typical in CEP's dataset.
 - This sentiment was also reflected in qualitative comments made by declined applicants. Like in 2022, the most common theme in the suggestions made by respondents was for the Foundation to provide more useful feedback: *"I believe the Foundation could improve by providing more specific, meaningful, and constructive feedback, particularly to smaller and emerging organisations. Generic responses can make applicants feel unseen and unsure of how to develop their work further... Finally, it would help if feedback highlighted both strengths and areas for development, with greater transparency around decision-making criteria."*

Recommendations:



Set and communicate clear standards for responsiveness and create more structured opportunities for declined applicants to connect with staff during Stage 1 to improve perceptions of fairness and accessibility. Consider introducing or expanding a lighter-touch expression of interest stage to reduce burden, particularly for smaller and grassroots organisations.



Ground application language in accessible, non-academic terminology or jargon, that is relevant to organisations lived reality. Ensure communications about antiracist practice clearly articulates intent and expectations without creating confusion or perceived exclusion.



Review internal communication processes to ensure declined applicants receive consistent messaging across staff, materials, and stages of the process.
Provide more specific and actionable feedback to declined applicants to support learning and decisions around future applications.

A Note on Methodology

The Grantee and Applicant Perception Reports

- ▶ The GPR and APR represents a snapshot of grantees' and declined applicants' perceptions at a particular moment in time on several themes: PHF's overall impact on and understanding of grantees' and applicants' fields, local communities, and organisations; perceptions of PHF's grantmaking and assistance beyond the grant; relationships with grantees and applicants; grant processes; the declination process; and commitment to DEI and anti-racist practice.
- ▶ This is one learning tool to get a better understanding of stakeholders' perceptions and is not an evaluative tool. It should be considered one input to a larger set of feedback, reflection, and learning tools PHF uses in its learning and reflection process.

Rating Scale

- ▶ Most questions in the surveys are asked on a 1-7 rating scale, where 7 most often reflects the positive end of the range.
 - Given the power dynamic between funders and grantees, and the intrinsically positive perceptions of organisations that have received or applied for funding, you may notice that average ratings cluster towards the higher end of the scale, especially for grantees.

Subgroup analysis

- ▶ Grantee survey results have been analysed by different grantee sub-groupings including, by Fund, Leadership Demographics, Organisation Budget Size, Funding History, and Respondent Gender Identity.
- ▶ The Funds included in the grantee analysis are:

Youth Fund	Backbone Fund
Youth Strategic Investment Fund	Major Awards and Strategic Interventions
Migration Fund	Strategic Learning, Insight and Influence Funds (SLII)
Arts Fund	Neighbourhood and Development Fund
Arts-based Learning Fund	
Teacher Development Fund	
Ideas & Pioneers Fund	
- ▶ Declined applicant survey results have been analysed by different grantee sub-groupings including, by Fund, Declination Stage, Leadership Demographics, Organisation Budget Size, and Respondent Gender Identity.
- ▶ The Funds included in the declined applicant analysis are:

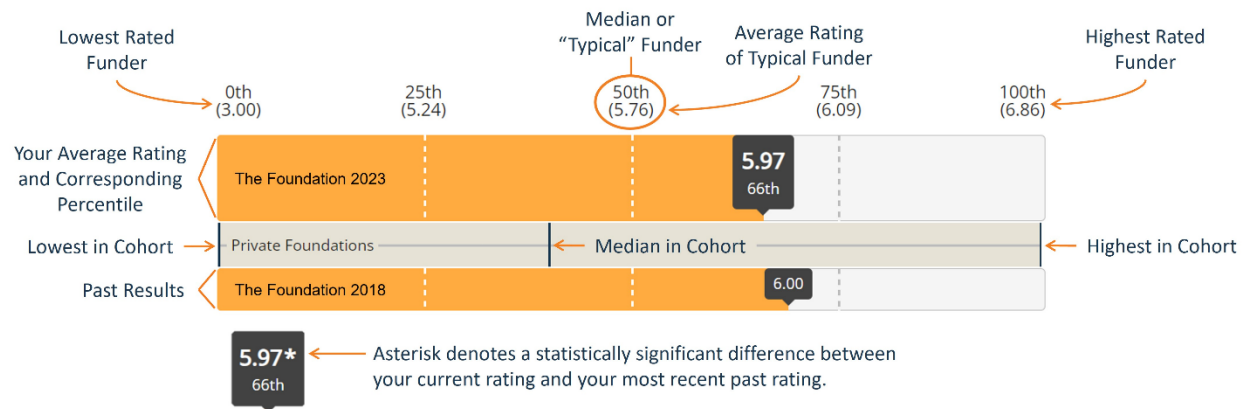
Arts Fund	Migration Fund
Arts-based Learning Fund	Teacher Development Fund
Ideas & Pioneers Fund	Youth Fund

Comparison to CEP's Dataset

- Throughout the GPR, “typical” grantee ratings are defined as ratings between the 35th and 65th percentiles in CEP’s overall comparative dataset of over 350 other funders. Ratings at or above the 65th percentile are defined as “higher than typical,” while ratings at or below the 35th percentile are defined as “lower than typical.” These thresholds were selected based on CEP’s analysis of where meaningful differences most commonly occur across funders.
- In addition to the overall dataset, grantee feedback is also compared to a custom cohort, selected specifically for PHF, that includes the following funders:

City Bridge Trust	Oak Foundation
Clean Air Fund	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Comic Relief	Paul Ramsay Foundation
Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland	Quadrature Climate Foundation
Fondation CHANEL	SHINE
Lankelly Chase Foundation	The National Lottery Community Fund
Laudes Foundation	Trust for London
Minderoo Foundation	Unbound Philanthropy

How to Interpret CEP's Charts



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