

Omidyar Network Backs Good ID

MAY 2019

Omidyar Network began actively exploring issues in digital identity in 2015. Since then we have grown our portfolio and seen how well-designed ID systems can truly empower individuals, and how poorly governed systems can exploit them. We have built knowledge on how to supply Good ID. And we have called for better standards as well as more transparency, accountability, and debate. We look forward to establishing more dynamic collaborations with missioned-aligned startups, nonprofit organizations, funders, and governments to keep up with a fast-moving agile sector and to prepare for the future.

How is Omidyar Network enabling Good ID?

As a philanthropic investment firm that invests in and helps scale innovative organizations to catalyze economic and social change, Omidyar Network aims to make very unique contributions toward Good ID.

Established in 2004 by Pam and Pierre Omidyar, the founder of eBay, the organization has committed more than \$1.4 billion to for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations across multiple initiatives, including digital identity. All of our digital identity investments, whether with companies or nonprofits, are aimed at advancing Good ID. We only support solutions and activities that promote privacy, inclusion, user value, user control, and security, many of which are featured on our [website](#).

We believe that markets and technology can be forces for good, but only as part of a broader social contract. Good ID is a new chapter in that contract.

Over the next two years, we are making significant investments in the Good ID vision by:

1. Strengthening the knowledge, capacity, and incentives of ID issuers to deliver Good ID, while also holding them accountable

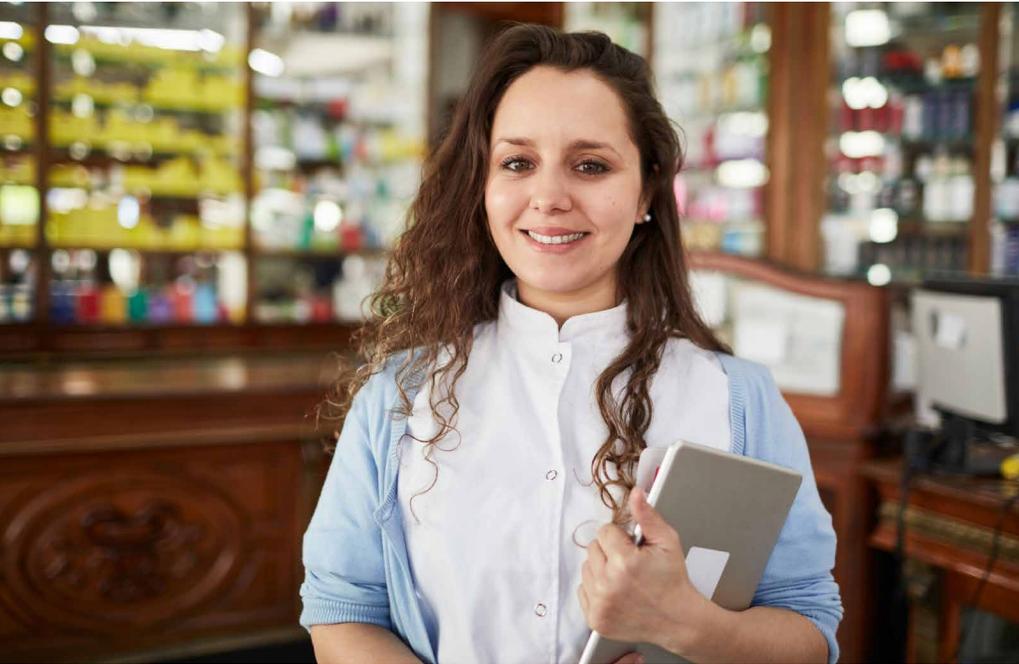
We believe that people are fundamentally interdependent, good, and capable. To best serve their constituencies, though, both public and private digital ID issuers may need more information, guidance, co-designers, and support.

We specifically invest our time and capital in three types of activities— (a) research, (b) institutions, companies and networks, and (c) strategic communications—to make Good ID practices and features easier to adopt, implement, manage, and evolve. Through these efforts, Omidyar Network works to help lower the barriers for digital ID issuers to do the right thing.

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RESEARCH

We first began bringing more evidence and rigor to the debate on digital identity three years ago. We recognized the countries and companies that adopted digital identity systems early could not only affect the millions of residents in the system, but also other countries and companies watching from afar. We also saw how the data economy was shaping up and knew it would be critical to build knowledge of the risks.



We are investing in global research that can help identify good practice, inform the norms associated with Good ID, and provide practical guidance for digital ID issuers.

For example, India has created more than a billion digital IDs, therefore, we invested heavily in learning more about that country's experience. With our support, Digital Identity Research Institute, Data Governance Network, Centre for Policy Research, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, State of Aadhaar, and others are actively researching ways to reduce exclusion and privacy risks; build an innovative ecosystem; and share learnings from India.

We are also investing in global research that can help identify good practice, inform the norms associated with Good ID, and provide practical guidance for digital ID issuers. For example, research is underway across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to demarcate when requiring digital ID has a positive impact and when it creates more risk. This work seeks to shed light on when it is appropriate to use identification to verify an individual's eligibility for products, services, and experiences. By "appropriate" we mean, using the digital identity creates value for individuals and minimizes their risks of exposure, discrimination, and other harms. The study aims to clarify the differences between what type or amount of identification is most appropriate in a range of scenarios; for example, we anticipate a distinction in when a driver's license, a national identity number, a bank ID, and an employee ID are appropriate to use. The study will also allow us to examine where our defacto IDs (the data trails we create when engaging online and with technology) are most useful to us and where they make us more vulnerable. Ultimately, we hope this information helps policymakers, ID issuers, civil society organizations, and individual users better understand what Good ID looks like in practice and how best to safeguard against misuse.

We have seen evidence of digital identities used for purposes that stray beyond their original intent, some of which can create additional value for individual users as well as increase their risks of harm. We anticipate this research will reveal how those changes are positively or negatively affecting our lives. We're also researching how companies can improve their data practices and remain both innovative and profitable. Similarly, we're looking into how national and regional policies can enhance privacy protections. Our collaboration with the World Economic Forum and its members is helping us think through the most effective governance models, measurement mechanisms, and innovations. And our partnership with the World Bank Group's ID4D program helps to provide key insights for the sector, such as analysis of each country's digital identity system, the cost of providing digital identity, and data on the world's progress toward providing "identity for all".



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INSTITUTIONS AND NETWORKS

Omidyar Network supports several organizations that can help move Good ID norms into practice. We deliberately and objectively work with all types of stakeholders, and other funders, knowing that no one group alone can achieve Good ID.

One approach we support is strengthening the capacity, tools, and incentives of a range of actors to make decisions that favor individual agency. Data protection authorities, ministries of finance and ICT, banks, mobile network operators are just some of the decision makers that can champion Good ID. We also engage with civil society, media, and global governance institutions to help hold ID issuers accountable to and aspire toward Good ID.

To date, we have supported several institutions to create tools, trainings, and networks such as:

- A [modular, open-source ID platform](#) that institutions can use to deploy national ID systems and embed default privacy settings into its code, led by IIIT-B

- National ID system assessments; operational guides; learning exchanges; and a privacy-oriented innovation challenge, led by the [World Bank Group's ID4D program](#)
- A framework of 10 principles for Good ID in Africa, the establishment of a [Center for Excellence on Digital Identity in Africa](#), and capacity-building training to support regional harmonization, led by the UN Economic Commission for Africa
- Tools addressing data protection and national ID systems for African data protection authorities through our support for [Africa Digital Rights Hub](#)
- Civil society networks that advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations and monitor national digital ID systems, via [The Engine Room](#)
- Scholarships for women FinTech leaders and policymakers to participate in a digital identity online certification course by [Digital Frontiers Initiative](#)
- The [EthicalOS toolkit](#) to help technology product designers consider the risks and future implications of technology as they design it

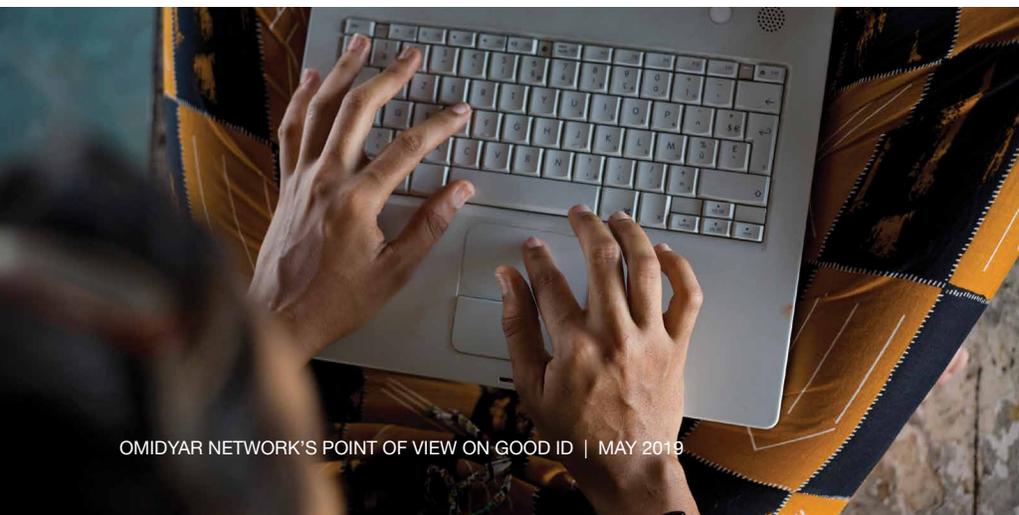
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

In addition to ethical technology, rigorous research, and stronger institutions, Omidyar Network also values and works to foster open debate. Because Good ID shouldn't be defined by one interest group, we have invested in several forums—online and in-person—to connect disparate groups that we know are critical to improving upon and implementing Good ID. The [Good ID website](#), workshops, email bulletin, and podcast, in coordination with Caribou Digital and Unfold Stories, and the Case for Good ID toolkit co-created with a broader community are examples of this work. Reducing the silos and building understanding across sectors, services, and geographies is one neutral and catalytic way we aim to help advance Good ID.

We also continue to look for new opportunities to tell and promote stories about Good ID in practice as well as increase the transparency surrounding digital identity systems. We fundamentally believe no decisions about digital identity should be shrouded in secrecy. For example, our support of the [Identities Research Project](#), led by Caribou Digital, delivered several policy-influencing stories in India.

Our collaborations with journalists, creative storytellers, visionary leaders, and event hosts worldwide allow us to explore this important topic, objectively in the public sphere. We invite anyone actively designing or refreshing digital ID systems, building applications, navigating the legal and political complexities of a digital identity system, researching the topic, and advocating with and on behalf of vulnerable groups to join us in these spaces to talk about the advantages and complexities of Good ID.

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In 2019, for example, we will expand our activity across Africa, where half of the one billion people who lack legal identity reside. And we would love to hear from you about any regional and global opportunities you see emerging and where we might collaborate.



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2. Supporting Good ID technology and business model innovations

Disruption in the digital identity landscape is another path toward Good ID. We see substantial potential for more innovative technologies and businesses that enhance privacy. Some innovations we support strengthen issued ID systems, while others give users the direct ability to better manage the use of their digital identities, especially their data trails, for their own benefit. Another segment of Good ID technology we support creates infrastructure and services that help companies meet and exceed new regulations designed to safeguard individuals.

As examples, our global investments in Digi.me, Learning Machine, Terbium Labs, and Cambridge Blockchain, and the Bharat Inclusive Technologies Seed Fund are aimed at shifting incentives in the data economy by establishing new business models. And our grant to build a modular, open-source identity platform introduces ID issuers to new options in a vendor-dominated marketplace.

How can others champion Good ID?

It's now more important than ever for a diverse community of stakeholders to align on and advance Good ID. Momentum for digital identity is rising in reaction to the Sustainable Development Goals and to the explosion of data available online. We're seeing an exponential expansion in digital ID issuers and users, and an increased recognition of the role data plays in the economy, trade, and geopolitical power. From our vantage point, this is leading to larger attack surfaces and higher stakes. The window is now, and the task is urgent.

As the pace of digitization and other changes accelerate, and infrastructure and rules get solidified, now is the time to build systems that have a positive impact on society in the decades to come.

We certainly don't have all of the answers. Good ID will only develop with intellectual capital from all sectors, services, specialties, and geographies.

Some of the key questions that need more conversation and collaboration are how to specifically:

- Offer users more choices and control, protect their rights, empower them to manage how they are identified, and design transparently with their interests in mind
- Design digital identity systems that cannot be repurposed for state or corporate surveillance
- Build trust and acceptance, provide accurate records, secure data and systems, make privacy and security system defaults, collect and store minimal data, reduce and address harms, hold authorities accountable, and audit for misuses, breaches, and other issues
- Ensure the right to proof of legal identity, eliminate discrimination, and design ID systems so that they are inclusive and accessible
- Improve efficiency and utility, allow data and IDs to be interoperable and responsive systems, and leverage open-source technology
- Work on ethical and legal frameworks for the rapidly growing use of passive biometrics, such as facial recognition technology
- Strengthen institutions and interests in civil society, media, and elsewhere that will hold ID issuers to account for making good choices and operating in a transparent fashion
- Plan for future growth and changes linked to sustainability and scalability

By joining the global movement of Good ID champions, sharing your expertise, and exploring not-yet-seen scenarios, you can help ensure Good ID remains agile and becomes sharper.



By joining the global movement of Good ID champions, sharing your expertise, and exploring not-yet-seen scenarios, you can help ensure Good ID remains agile and becomes sharper. Technology trends, political will, and today's standards will inevitably change, but you can help establish privacy, inclusion, user value, user control, and security as the new normal for digital identity today.

We believe Good ID will only be successful if it is designed and championed by a wide range of stakeholders.

Please help unlock the full potential of Good ID by sharing your learning, viewpoints, projects, events, and other resources on the Good ID online platforms—www.good-id.org and @GoodID.