



Berkshire/Columbia Counties → **Pay Equity Project**

FINAL REPORT

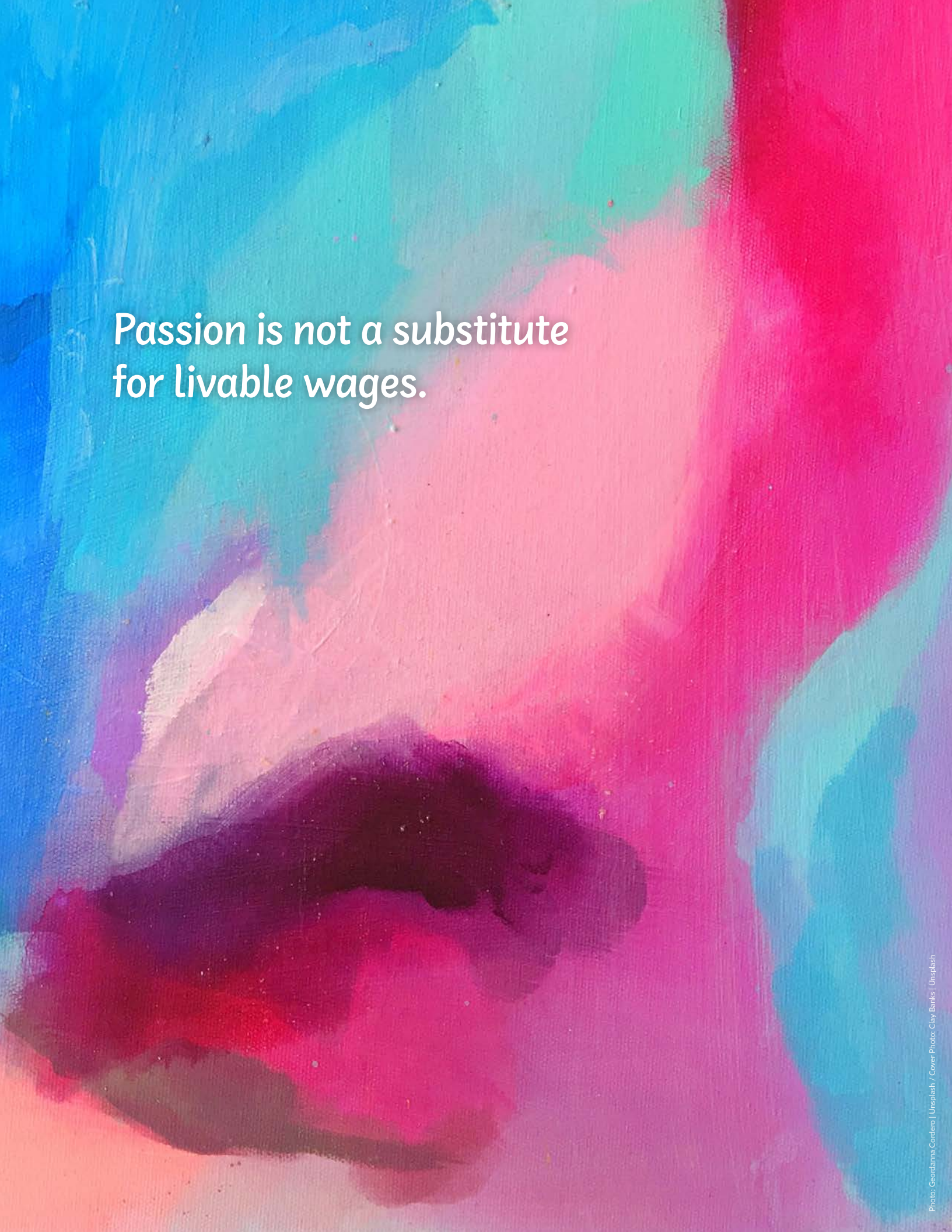
JUNE 14, 2023

REPORT PREPARED BY:

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LEAD ORGANIZATIONS:

Art Omi, Berkshire Art Center (formerly IS183), Community Access to the Arts (CATA),
Flying Cloud Institute, Jacob's Pillow Dance Theater, Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center,
WAM Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival

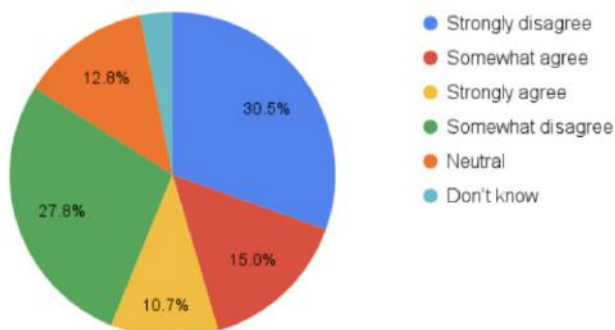


Passion is not a substitute
for livable wages.

Summary, Findings & Recommendations

Compensation inequity is intrinsic to many segments of the arts and culture sector (and the broader nonprofit sector). The result is that employees are financially precarious on a permanent basis, or effectively excluded from the sector altogether. We can no longer ignore that low pay is a barrier to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce that is inclusive across race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and more. While these dynamics are not new, the “double pandemic” of Covid and a global racial reckoning have added clarity, urgency, and the sense that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to be transformative.

FIGURE 1 “My rate of pay was/is fair and comparable to what others make doing similar work.”



The six arts and culture organizations that formed the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Initiative (now eight organizations) began with the solid foundation formed as an Inclusive Leadership Cohort (ILC) led by Multicultural BRIDGE. This foundation allowed the group to design and execute an innovative and ambitious project focused on pay equity.

This project used a range of methods to engage significant numbers of employees (202) and employers (38) in the sector and region. This approach was intended

to give the fullest possible picture, and to ensure that both the process and outcomes were driven by a commitment to equity and inclusion.

The result was an enormous amount of learning and insight, which the group is eager to make public. The group then collectively condensed their learning and insights into the following set of recommendations for organizations and ideas for collective action, and to help bring about real changes throughout the region. While some recommendations may be immediately actionable, others take time.

Key Findings

- Only 39% of entry- and mid-level workers can imagine a future employed by an arts or culture institution in the region.
- Three-quarters of workers report unpaid overtime.
- Thirty-three percent of employers report unpaid interns.
- Most entry- and mid-level workers have multiple jobs—not by choice, but out of necessity.
- 58% indicated they had other sources of income or wealth.
- Many entry- and mid-level workers perceive their financial compensation, benefits, and job expectations to be unfair and unreasonable.
- Only about half of respondents reported that their compensation completely paid for housing, transportation, food, healthcare, phone/internet, or entertainment/recreation.
- A degree, certificate, or some type of formal credential was a prerequisite for 38% of entry- and mid-level positions.

- 25–48% of entry- and mid-level workers lack even the most common types of benefits: health insurance, dental insurance, retirement/401K, and paid time off.
- Other benefits – including mileage/commuting reimbursement, remote work option, flex/comp time, technology stipend—are even more rare.
- Benefits for part-time workers are inconsistent, insufficient, or nonexistent: “I had a technology stipend but no health stipend.” For workers, this reflects the values of their employer.
- 29.5% of employees (or 284 employees) are full-time and earn less than \$50,000 annually; 25.2% (244 employees) are part-time with hourly wages less than \$50,000 full-time annual equivalent.
- Sixty-five percent of regional arts and culture employers surveyed either have no plans to increase pay equity, “haven’t had a chance to delve into this yet,” or “aren’t sure what steps to take.”
- Other surveyed employers report specific and substantial changes designed to increase compensation equity.
- Similar pay equity initiatives and movements are emerging across the country.

“The salaries might be more manageable if 60 to 70 hour weeks were not expected.”

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT

Selected Recommendations for Employers

- Develop compensation framework and philosophy for your organization which outlines how compensation is set, including:
 - Commit to minimum pay rates, or a plan to get there, based on living wage data ([MIT LIVING WAGE CALCULATOR](#)).
 - Create consistent salary bands based on job titles and responsibilities and communicate these transparently to staff.
- Analyze and track the compensation ratio across the organization between the highest paid and lowest paid employee (for example, the [PAY EQUITY STANDARDS](#) certification program uses a 5:1 ratio.
- Increase all employees pay annually including COLA increases.
- List rates of pay on all job descriptions and hiring postings.
- Eliminate unpaid internships.
- Commit to forty-hour workweeks, with exceptions guided by transparent protocols.
- Review job descriptions annually to ensure alignment with actual work (avoid responsibility creep).
- In hiring and promotion, recognize the equivalent value of life experience relative to educational degrees.
- Embed specific equity considerations into each stage of the hiring process, such as including a range of stakeholders in the interview and decision making process.
- Provide prorated benefits for part-time employees working 20 hours/week or more.
- Provide robust benefits including:
 - Paid sick, holiday, vacation, personal, bereavement, and jury duty.
 - Health insurance, health reimbursement account, medical flexible spending account.
 - Retirement plan with minimum 3% match.
 - Laptops, when necessary.
 - Mileage reimbursement.
 - Flexible scheduling, some remote work, where possible.
 - Pursue reciprocal free admission privileges with other cultural organizations.
 - Consider payment in lieu of some benefits, more flexible benefit options.

- Incorporate concrete targets for compensation equity into strategic plan and multi-year financial projections.
- Make compensation equity a regular board agenda item.
- Provide role-specific job training and professional development to increase retention and help a broad range of people to succeed.

There are also several overarching institutional commitments to equity that are prerequisites for many of these compensation-specific recommendations for employers, including: an explicit formal and cultural commitment to the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; regular professional development and trust-building among staff, board, donors, and other stakeholders; ongoing relationship building with underrepresented communities; and accountability mechanisms.

Selected Recommendations for Movement Building

- Plan the next phase of the Pay Equity Project, including funding and expansion of participant organizations.
- Annual regional Pay Equity Summit, with broad participation among arts and culture organizations, as well as other nonprofit and for-profit regional employers, to showcase pay equity initiatives and increase accountability.
- Advocate for systems change and increased (not substitute) funding from the public sector (local, state, federal) and private sector (individual, institutional, and corporate) to support pay equity.
- Narrative shift campaign to recast arts and culture workers as essential workers.

“One of the most important opportunities that positive compensation changes provide is increasing the economic and racial diversity of entry level positions.”

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT

It is clear this initiative is part of a rising national conversation. Individual organizations, regional coalitions, and industry associations are taking on similar work—gathering data, changing pay structures, and advocating for legislative reform, and more.

As long as working in the arts is considered a privilege, only the privileged will work in this field. Not only is this result unconscionable, it also diminishes the quality of artistic expression, and it ultimately threatens the viability of the sector.

Join us as we expand our work, pursuing transformative regional change, realizing ambitious equity values, and enriching the entire region.

Acknowledgements

The Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project is a truly collaborative project that would not exist without meaningful guidance and contributions from: Jeremy Adams, Ruth Adams, Gavin Berger, Lucie Castaldo, Kristen van Ginhoven, Margaret Keller, Danielle King, Janis Martinson, A. J. Pietrantone, Maria Rundle, Karin Watkins, Emma Whittum, Allison Wintner, Sharron Frazier-McClain, Kristin Grippo, Melissa Martinez, Gwendolyn VanSant, Florence Afanukoe, Jeff Lowenstein, Emily Bronson and Peter Taylor from Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Jenna Clark Embrey, Erin Murphy Design, James Abruzzo, Greylock Federal Credit Union, Berkshire Bank, anonymous institutional “data donors,” focus group participants, and survey respondents throughout the region. We thank you for your contributions, vision, and courage.

For more information: Visit npcberkshires.org/payequity, email payequityproject@npcberkshires.org, or call the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires at 413-441-9542.



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Background & Context

→ The background and context for this project includes a renewed motivation to address profound structural inequity as a result of a global racial reckoning subsequent to the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

The global Covid pandemic also exacerbated existing workforce inequities, and contributed to labor market shortages that strengthen workers' ability to advocate for change. According to the US Labor Department, wages and salaries for US workers rose 5.1% in March 2023 compared to the same time in 2022. However, inflation offsets these gains, and The New York Times characterizes this trend as "good news for workers trying to keep up with the rising cost of living." (NYT, 4/28/23)

And there are two regional factors without which this project may not have been conceived.

- Starting in 2020, many cultural employees found outlets for their voices through Change the Museum, an open letter to White American Theater, Change Berkshire Culture, and other outlets. This project seeks to amplify some of the concerns that were raised around compensation and its relationship to equity, and to pursue positive changes.
- The second essential element of the Pay Equity Project's "origin story" is the Inclusive Leadership Cohort (ILC) led by Multicultural BRIDGE, a Berkshires-based organization, and supported by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. The Pay Equity Project was conceived as the culmination of an ILC project group which included representatives of area arts organizations. During the year-long ILC program, BRIDGE provided the equity-based training, relationship building, and motivation to inspire and fuel this initiative.

"...all of this prevents middle and lower class individuals from being able to make careers in the arts, keeping the field a playground for a narrow elite."

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT



Methodology & Approach

Project structure, governance

The Pay Equity Project was a direct result of a BRIDGE ILC, and was initially led by senior representatives of the participating organizations: Art Omi, Berkshire Art Center (formerly IS183), Community Access to the Arts (CATA), Jacob's Pillow Dance Theater, Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, WAM Theatre. Subsequent to an event to raise awareness about the project and share preliminary findings on February 3, 2023, two additional organizations joined: Flying Cloud Institute, and Williamstown Theatre Festival. As it evolves, the project hopes to recruit additional organizational partners.

The project is guided by Aron Goldman, an independent consultant based in Western Massachusetts with extensive regional and national experience with equity-driven policy and data analysis, community engagement, and institutional change.

Additional stakeholders, including survey respondents, focus group participants, peer organizations, funders, and the policy and research community are also essential sources of input and feedback.

Guiding principles

From the start, this group was committed to the idea of “practicing what we preach.” If the objective of the project is equity, those values should also be reflected in the process by which that objective is pursued. The principles of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR), which call for including target populations in the results of the project, but also the implementation, interpretation, and decision making, were central to the planning and execution of the project. The project consultant, who was hired in part based on his experience with CBPR, helped to creatively incorporate participatory elements into many aspects of the project.

The decision to use a range of qualitative and quantitative methods to connect with entry- and mid-level workers directly to uncover meaningful insights was based on these values. Being careful to fairly compensate entry- and mid-level workers who took time to thoughtfully contribute to the project was another example of the project's guiding principles.

Even then, marginalized groups often feel over-researched, and that they never hear about the results or if action is taken in response. As a result many people are unwilling to participate in research, or cynical about any real changes taking place as a result. Understanding this context, the Pay Equity Project leaders are very grateful for the faith that the survey responses and focus group participation represents.

Survey (entry- and mid-level workers)

An online survey that collected a combination of quantitative and qualitative responses was disseminated widely by entry- and mid-level workers themselves (see [QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES](#) in the following section, and qualitative open-ended responses in [APPENDIX E](#)), by employers, and as a result of effective media coverage. The survey generated 188 responses. While some identifying information was collected in order to ensure non-duplication, respondent identities are anonymous and the data is only reported in the aggregate or in the form of anonymous quotes.

Focus groups (entry- and mid-level workers)

Two focus groups were organized with three main objectives: 1) Gather qualitative data to complement the online survey and quantitative compensation benchmarking analysis; 2) Gather input and feedback on the draft online survey for entry- and mid-level workers; and 3) Recruit additional people and perspectives to help with implementation and ongoing input/feedback for this project. Consistent

with the values and objectives of this project, focus group participants were paid \$100 for the participation. The payment process protected anonymity. Two focus groups were conducted, on August 16 and 18, 2023, both from 6 to 7:30 pm.

Six people participated in the first session, and eight people participated in the second session. The participants were all either current or former entry-level employees of Berkshire or Columbia County arts and cultural organizations. The group skewed young, and was diverse in terms of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Discussion prompts

- What does “compensation equity” mean to you?
- What is your personal experience at work (in the context of compensation equity)?
- What have you seen?
- Pain points?
- If you could speak directly to EDs/Boards, what would you want them to know/understand (about this)?
- Possible (creative) solutions, knowing that circumstances vary for each organization?

Stakeholder/Expert interviews

A small number of key stakeholder and expert interviews were conducted to gain insight on similar initiatives around the country. Additionally, an “Initial Findings” event on February 3, 2023 also served as an opportunity to solicit input and feedback from regional arts and culture leaders.

Institutional data request

An institutional Data Request Form (see [APPENDIX B](#)) was created to anonymously collect and aggregate basic information regarding wages and benefits for entry- and mid-level workers. Thirty-eight organizations submitted data.

Analysis is easier and more common regarding upper-level workers because a lot of information regarding this population is readily available on IRS 990 forms (accessible for free from Guidestar and ProPublica). Systematic data collection, analysis, and dissemination for entry- and mid-level workers therefore seemed important and potentially valuable to a range of audiences.

In addition to descriptive wages and benefits information, organizations were asked to identify steps taken to increase pay equity.

Benchmarking analysis

The benchmarking analysis is meant to complement and build on the other elements of the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project (focus groups, survey, data request, events, and interviews.).

The following questions are posed:

- 1 How does the current state of pay equity among entry- and mid-level workers in arts and culture organizations in Berkshire and Columbia County compare to that of other regions and sectors?
- 2 What internal and external factors are contributing to the current state?
- 3 How are other organizations, sectors, and regions rising to the challenge of pay equity, and making change?

The analysis draws on excellent research and analysis that has already been done in this region, statewide, nationally, and in other parts of the country (i.e., New York City), and two examples of promising pay equity initiatives. Following some overall insights, key studies and coverage of related initiatives are selectively excerpted, and interpreted in the context of pay equity.

Analysis & Findings

→ Rates of pay are low, low wage workers experience this as inequitable, and most respondents are unsure or doubtful about their future in this sector/region.

Entry- and Mid-Level Worker Survey

188 responses from the survey for entry- and mid-level employees disseminated widely in Berkshire and Columbia Counties generally proved the Project's hypothesis: Rates of pay are low, low wage workers experience this as inequitable, and most respondents are unsure or doubtful about their future in this sector/region. The particular quantitative and qualitative insights from respondents regarding problems and potential solutions are compelling.

Thinking about marginalized groups, this is a young sample, and LGBTQ+ and BIPOC respondents are well represented.

The verbatim responses to the open-ended questions (edited slightly to protect identities) provide a powerful collective voice delineating the implications of the financial challenges faced by entry- and mid-level cultural employees. Low compensation and poor benefits, alongside the high education levels and long hours required by many positions, set off a series of dominoes that include long commutes to and from affordable housing, which lead to higher commuting costs and less time to earn supplemental income or generate savings. Many respondents speak of a short-term financial vision, unsure how they will pay off debts, cover medical costs, or save for retirement and seeing little hope for significantly increased compensation in their professions over time. There are family costs, either through their own dependence or their inability to care for family members.

And ultimately, they report the emotional toll of those burdens, from stress and mental health consequences to feeling devalued and demoralized.

"I have no retirement savings and am still paying off college debt. I have no safety net."

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT

Quantitative insights

The quantitative data from the Entry- and Mid-Level Worker Survey provides a very precise assessment of the dim prospects for workers in the region. Furthermore, it is clear that the barriers and sources of inequity exist at many levels:

- Unpaid overtime work is widespread.
- Most entry- and mid-level workers have multiple jobs—not by choice, but out of necessity.
- Entry- and mid-level workers perceive their financial compensation, benefits, and job expectations to be unfair and unreasonable.
- 25-48% of entry- and mid-level workers lack even the most common types of benefits: health insurance, dental insurance, retirement/401K, and paid time off.
- Other benefits—including mileage/commuting reimbursement, remote work option, flex/comp time, technology stipend—are even more rare.

- Benefits suggested by respondents include: Free admission to area arts and culture institutions, housing or housing subsidy, and prorated health insurance for part-time employees.
- A degree, certificate, or some type of formal credential was a prerequisite for 38% of entry- and mid-level positions. While credentials typically command higher wages, this is not the case for many low-wage workers in this sector/region. Even if credentials were properly rewarded, many credentials (e.g., prestigious degrees) are associated with privilege. Making credentials and “lived experience” financially equivalent, as a policy and practice, helps eliminate this bias.
- While 38% of respondents are still paying off the debt for those credentials, the institutional data request results reveal that 19% of employers do not know if they are eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.
- Only about half of respondents reported that their compensation completely paid for housing, transportation, food, healthcare, phone/internet, entertainment/recreation.
- Significantly fewer than half of all respondents report that their retirement savings, child care, care for other dependents, and overall cost of living is completely paid for by their arts employer; and significant numbers of respondents said those costs are not even partially afforded by their compensation.
- Only 39% of entry- and mid-level workers can imagine a future employed by an arts or culture institution in the region.
- Respondents have held the position in question for a long time — many years in most cases.
- 64% of the positions cited took place in 2022.
- High educational attainment.
- Unpaid overtime is widespread. Only 33% of respondents say they are never expected to work unpaid overtime.

FIGURE 2 Is this employer organization a Berkshire (MA) or Columbia (NY) County organization that is partly or entirely focused on arts or culture?

142 responses

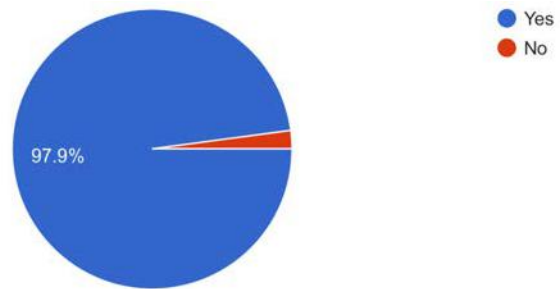


FIGURE 3 Is this a current or former position?

151 responses

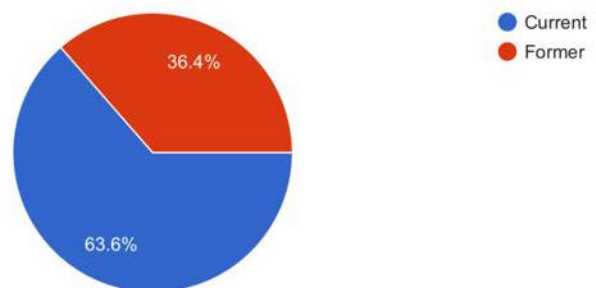


FIGURE 4 How often are/were you expected to work over-time unpaid?

184 responses

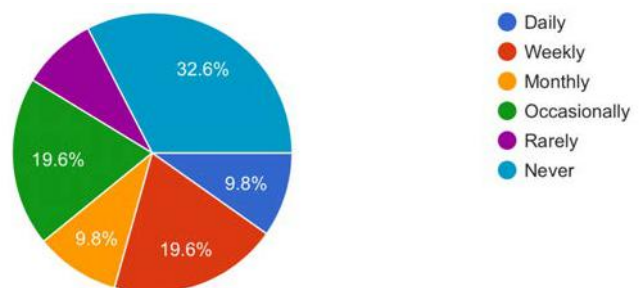
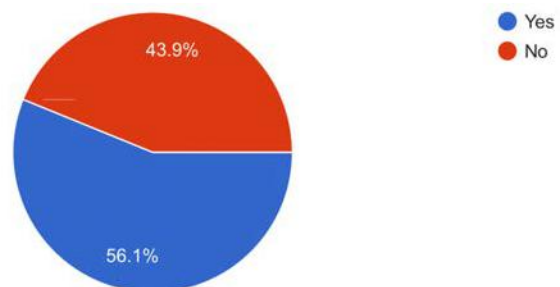


FIGURE 5 Do/did you have additional jobs simultaneously?

187 responses



- 56% of respondents had another job simultaneously, and 73% of these would have preferred a single, full-time position.
- 58% indicated they had other sources of income or wealth.
- 38% have monthly student loan payments ranging \$50–\$1,000/month.
- Affordable housing is a common concern in open-ended responses.
- Lots of people “not sure,” trying to figure out how to make the numbers work.
- Concern about employers’ enlightened rhetoric contradicted by unfair practices.
- Somewhat young demographic (largest category: 39% 25–34 years old).
- 58% of respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the statement, “My rate of pay was/is fair and comparable to what others make doing similar work.”
- Respondents are 14% BIPOC.
- 39% LGBTQ+ or “prefer not to say.”
- Lots of gratitude and positive comments in the “any feedback?” final question.
- Respondents were overwhelmingly from Berkshire & Columbia County, as intended by survey design.

FIGURE 6 Do you have other sources of income or wealth? (Other sources of income or wealth can include income from other jobs or household members; major gifts from others, such as a home down payment or repaid loans; or inheritance/trust, among other economic resources.)
185 responses

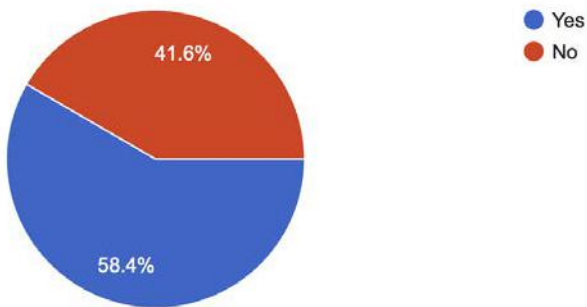


FIGURE 7 “My rate of pay was/is fair and comparable to what others make doing similar work.”

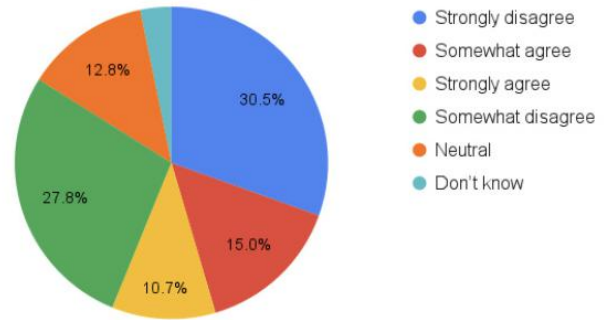


FIGURE 8 “My benefit package was/is fair and comparable to what others make doing similar work.”

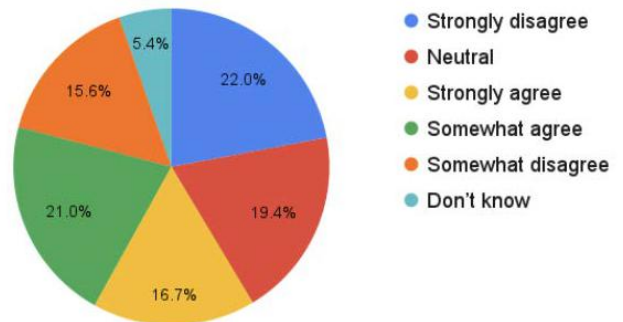


FIGURE 9 “Job expectations were/are reasonable.”

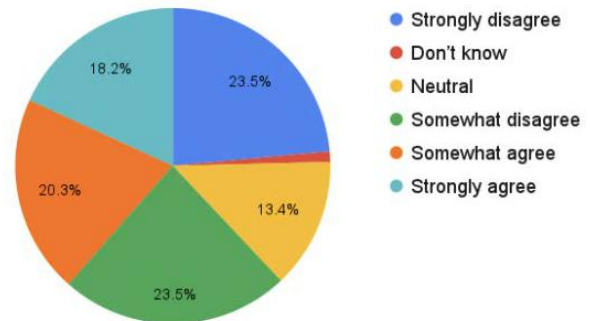


FIGURE 10 What benefits were/are included as part of your compensation?

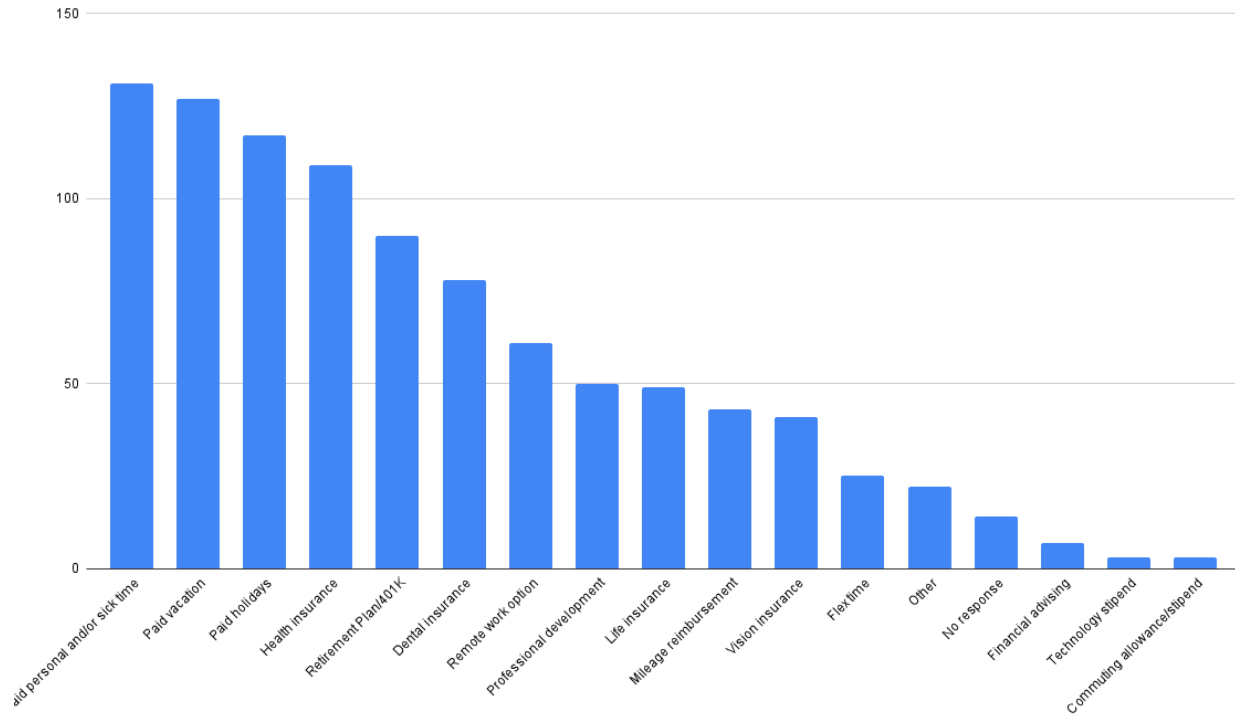


FIGURE 11 Which of the following costs are paid for based solely on your own income from a Berkshire/Columbia County arts or cultural organization?

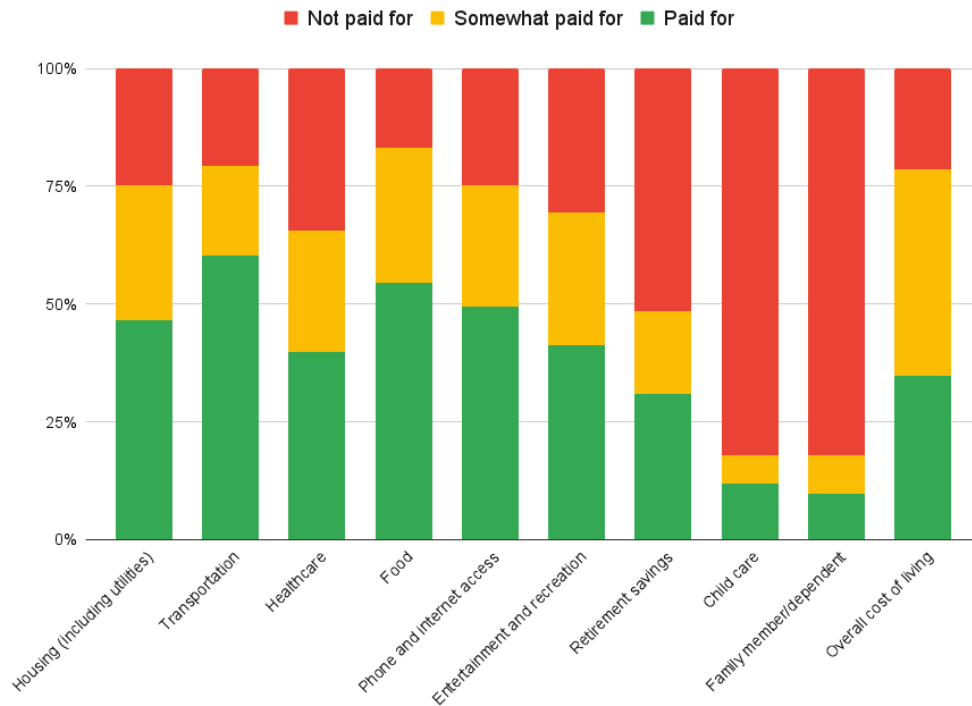


FIGURE 12 Highest education level completed
186 responses

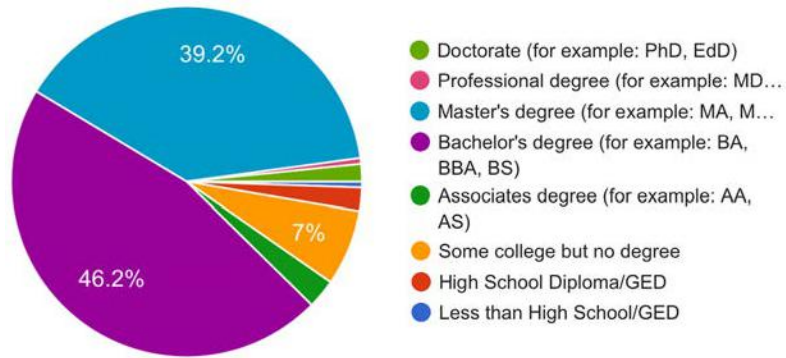


FIGURE 13 Is a degree, certificate, or formal credential a prerequisite for your job?
186 responses

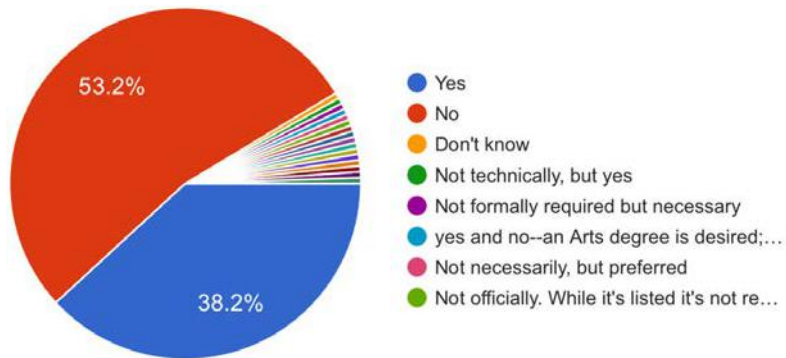


FIGURE 14 Do you have a monthly student loan payment?
186 responses

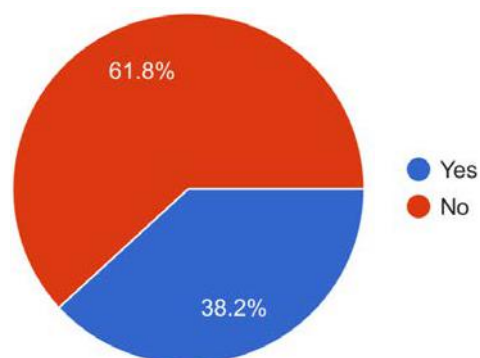


FIGURE 15 Can you imagine a future for yourself as an employee of an arts or cultural organization in the Berkshire/Columbia County region?

186 responses

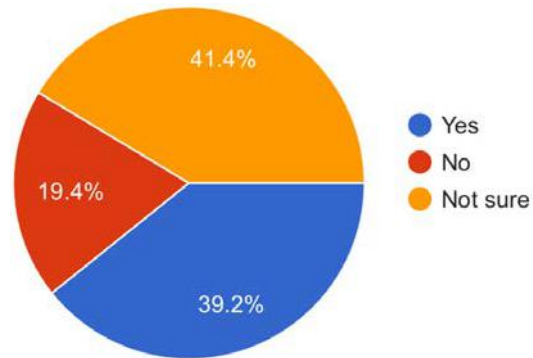


FIGURE 16 Age

182 responses

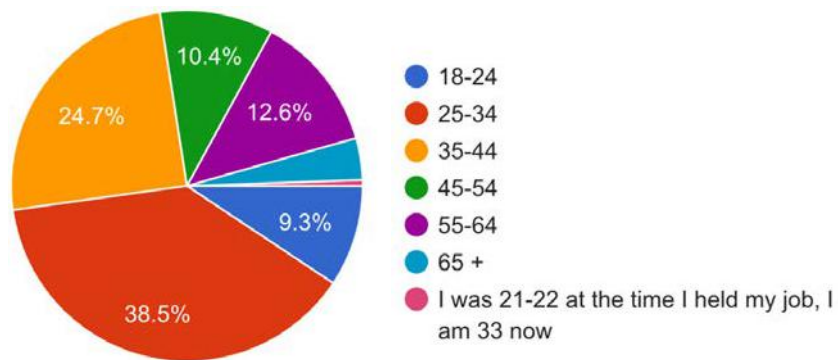
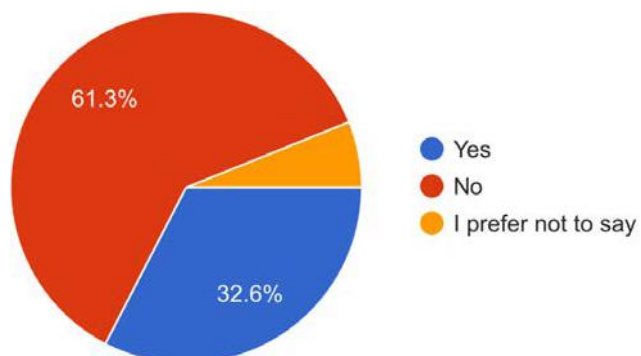


FIGURE 17 Do you identify as LGBTQIA+?

181 responses



Qualitative insights

The following are excerpted verbatim open-ended responses to the survey for entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers (edited slightly to protect identities). A complete set of the open-ended responses can be found in [APPENDIX E](#).

- As I head into middle age I am not saving enough for health care / retirement costs for the future. My commute is long and Berkshire County is expensive to live in.
- They justified my inappropriately low salary by saying my money would go further.
- Organizations that are performatively equitable (such as stating on websites or hiring platforms that the organization has Equity at the heart of its mission) but in reality has not implemented these practices into its daily life and operations perpetuate harm in so many ways.
- On a \$35,000 annual salary, my rent was \$945/month, which was approximately 40% of my net income. I was also on [family member's] health insurance at the time, so I was not paying for healthcare.
- I rarely visit other art organizations because they are beyond my budget.
- I do not feel valued (monetarily or otherwise) for my contributions to the organization.
- I work a full time job where I can barely take freelance work to make extra money, and still I scrape by every month. Forget about buying a house.
- I moved to New York City in pursuit of better work for better wages.
- Even after over 10 years in the sector, I have no retirement savings and am still paying off college debt.
- Our board is out of touch and often condescending to the plight of those struggling while openly speaking about their second homes and trips abroad.
- DEIA is an attempt to let niceness replace equity. I don't need verbal pats on the head to affirm the importance of my work for this community. I need salary and advancement that adequately values my time so that I can properly care for my family, friends, colleagues and community.
- It has always seemed immensely hypocritical to me that arts and culture institutions, particularly those who make access and equity part of their mission, underpay and underserve their staff.
- It is so hard to build a local community outside of your workplace when you have no time or energy for non-work activities that many people feel isolated and leave.
- A staff member who feels financially secure is worth gold IMHO.
- I currently earn less than my potential in order to qualify through the government for the healthcare I require to survive that I cannot receive from my employer. This is a problem created by government income limits to access healthcare but is compounded by the culture of part-time work not being offered healthcare options.
- People from backgrounds with no inherited wealth or privilege typically live paycheck to paycheck.
- I had to live really far to find housing that I could afford which was still too expensive. And then I spent so much on my gas and car that only increased my expenses.
- Not being able to afford to live in the town you serve is dehumanizing.
- I actually ended up babysitting to cover my "fun" money and savings outside of my living expenses. I was making more per hour doing that work so sometimes I would even use sick/personal time to cut out early and babysit if I had the opportunity.
- One thing that doesn't always get considered is how much time it takes to navigate living on a lower-income/being resourceful/maintaining public benefits/participating in mutual ways in community care/working other gigs. These all take time and

energy, and so I feel like I'm working full-time, even though I am at half-time with my organization.

- It's no wonder that my organization has had so much turnover.
- It is nearly impossible to accomplish the amount of work that is needed in my particular role without going into overtime.
- Don't put on shows if you can't afford to pay adequately.
- I buy things from Amazon and Walmart because I don't make enough to buy local.
- Even more than compensation, the workplace culture needs to change. I felt a WIDE divide between our patrons/donors/county leaders and myself.
- Paying someone so little puts them into a perpetual state of worry, unease and hopelessness...chronic low wages creates a situation that isn't easily remedied by a small COLA or small percentage raise over 5 years.
- I'm concerned that answering things in more detail could negatively impact my employment, but I still felt compelled to participate even in this limited manner.
- How does one make a living at this??



Focus Groups

Insights (Focus Groups)

Overall, focus group participants told personal stories about challenges that fall into four basic categories:

- 1 Insufficient salary/wages and benefits
- 2 Compensation and personnel policies
- 3 Organizational culture (junior staff, senior staff, trustees, donors)
- 4 External challenges specific to the region/geography

The most pressing and interesting solutions arising from the focus groups included:

- Continuing the innovative practices that emerged from the pandemic, including streamlined financial support for workers and organizations to support basic needs (e.g., food, housing).
- Continue the bold movement toward racial reckoning tragically inspired by the murder of George Floyd.
- Improved personnel policy and practices that prioritize transparency.
- Meaningful trust-building and inclusion measures to bridge the culture and trust gap between entry- and mid-level workers on the one hand; and senior staff, trustees, and donors on the other hand.

The stories that arose from the focus groups put a human face on the problem and illustrate the cost for individuals and families: mental and physical health, family stability, allowing workers to stay in the region and sector. Focus group participants also named several advantages of increased pay equity for employers: reduced attrition, improved morale, higher productivity, more effective fundraising, and more inspiring artistic expression.

Excerpted open-ended responses

The following is an anonymized digest of participants' perspectives, which were used to inform the final report, findings, recommendations, and next steps. A complete set of responses can be found in [APPENDIX E](#).

Understanding the problem

- It is hard to find affordable and comfortable housing options.
- There is a tendency to think larger organizations have bigger budgets, and are more professional and accountable, and so they can pay more. But it's the opposite. Small organizations seem to care more about their people, and larger ones try to have their prestige substitute for decent compensation.
- One participant described working for four years without a raise, and the outlook worsening during the pandemic.
- Comp time is becoming increasingly common, but then there's no time to use the comp time. It doesn't matter how much paid vacation you have if you can't use it.
- One participant joined the Zoom session from their second (evening) job.
- Being overworked is sometimes the result of no one else knowing how to do your job, and your job is an essential function.
- Partly by choice, but mostly out of necessity, many entry-level arts and culture workers have multiple identities: Working artist, educator, parent, student, etc.
- One participant cannot afford to send their child to the camp that is operated by their employer.
- There is general ignorance of how financial resources are allocated within an organization. (Is the pay scale steep or relatively horizontal?)
- Sometimes there is an idea that poor compensation is necessitated by "lean times" generally, but there is no confidence in that story. Is my employer flush? Strapped?
- There is a need for more transparency:
 - Dollar amounts on job announcements.
 - Overall budget info.
 - 990 info.
- Lot of people are leaving the arts for financial reasons.
- The group agreed that long drives on dark curvy roads are typical for commutes, and only one known case of mileage reimbursement.
- Entry-level employees are more likely to be single and therefore unable to use their partner's health insurance.
- First admin/oversight experience for many entry-level people is too intense and unsupported, "set them up for success."
- More than one participant described a waiver they felt they had to sign which waived their rights to overtime.
- Multiple nights working until 2am.
- One participant described having to work in very uncomfortable (cold, wet) conditions for extended periods without any accommodations.
- When helpful changes are made, they are often made too late.
- One case of "pay equity" adjustments, though the schedule (timing) was not followed.
- Entry-level employees often bring talents well beyond their job description. When an employer discovers these talents and taps into them, compensation doesn't follow suit.
- Lived experience doesn't compete with degrees, but it is more valuable in many cases.
- Year-round positions are replaced with seasonal positions to avoid obligations.
- Salaried positions also make overworking (overtime) easier because no extra pay is needed and hours are not tracked as carefully.

- Benefits for part-time workers are inconsistent and insufficient. “I had a technology stipend but no health stipend.” For workers, this reflects the values of their employer.
- One participant described using all their accrued sick time and vacation time during a single illness.
- Conversations with board members (decision makers) do not feel safe or comfortable. “Board members are all rich.”
- “My supervisor lowered his own salary in order to increase mine.”

Possible solutions

- Ask entry-level employees “What do you do?” Formal/regular process can be used to compare job description with “actual job” to ensure conformity, identify variances, and either adjust compensation or actual job.
- Develop creative ways to bring human stories to boards of directors.
- Better rotation for interns to prevent burnout. (Work smarter, not harder.)
- Internships (and entry-level positions) should be a two-way street: Employer benefits, and employee gets financial compensation plus: mentorship, experience, upward mobility.
- One participant referenced a similar and current project focusing on economic inequality among dance workers in New York City called the Dance Industry Census. According to Dance/NYC’s executive director, Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, “we need to look at it from the vantage point of individuals, because helping workers create healthy, thriving businesses creates healthy, thriving industries.” (NYT, 7/13/22)
- Compensation should be based not just on degrees, but also levels of training, level of responsibility experience, etc.
- Financial advising and financial literacy programs can be used to help employees take advantage of

employee benefits and plan and save overall would be helpful.

- Mental/emotional weight should be a compensation factor too. For example, people of color (and other marginalized groups) are often in the position of having to be an ambassador/teacher representing the entire diaspora single-handedly.
- There was broad agreement that any expense associated with better performance around (compensation) equity would be more than offset by a more desirable end product (i.e., more vibrant artistic and cultural offerings), and more and happier audiences and funders.
- Be more conscientious about who participates in personnel decisions, constitution of personnel committees, etc.
- A comparison of employer contributions to health insurance could be compared and shared.
- Ask funders to ask their (prospective) grantees about concrete pay equity measures.
- Need to change culture, not just policy.
- Budget principle learned from growing up in the church: Tithing is allocated $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$: “organization as a whole, structural, and value of ministry” (people).



Photo: Unseen Studio | Unsplash

Institutional Data Request

Insights

Among the 38 organizations who submitted data for a total of 963 employees, only 5.6% of employees (or 54 employees) are full-time and earn more than \$100,000 annually.

By contrast, 29.5% of employees (or 284 employees) are full-time and earn less than \$50,000 annually, and another 25.2% (244 employees) are part-time with hourly wages less than \$50,000 full-time annual equivalent.

19% of employers do not know if they are eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF). Given that 38% of Entry- and Mid-level Worker Survey respondents are servicing student loan debt, PSLF represents a cost-free strategy for employers to support some of their most vulnerable workers.

Part-time workers, unsurprisingly, do not generally receive the same benefits as their full-time counterparts. This gap can be addressed by moving more employees from part-time to full-time, and finding creative ways to include part-time employees in additional benefit programs in ways that minimize additional expenses for employers. Flex/comp time, and paid time off (vacation/medical/personal) are inexpensive approaches. The biggest gaps between full- and part-time benefits are in health and dental insurance, 401K, and life insurance. Offering these plans to part-time workers on a prorated basis can help.

More alarming, many organizations that responded to the data request reported very few benefits offerings, in some cases even the most common benefits like health insurance for full-time employees and paid time off are not reported. For any given benefit listed, fewer than half of employers offer that benefit to part-time workers.

The open-ended “What changes have been made...” question was an add-on to our primary purpose of collecting numbers, but it proved to be very fruitful.

One takeaway is optimism! Seeing all the concrete changes being made gives the impression that institutions want to change, and they are changing (if not at the speed one would like).

Employers offered numerous examples of increasing internal standardization, undergoing their own external comparability/benchmarking analysis, exceeding minimum wage, regular increases, and publishing pay ranges.

- Total number of responses:** 38 organizations
- Total number of employees:** 963
- Operating budgets:** \$4K-\$19M
- Full-time year-round employees:** 0-123
- Part-time year-round employees:** 0-42
- Seasonal/temporary/occasional employees:** 0-240
- Teaching/faculty artists hourly rate:** \$20-\$150
- Interns hourly rate:** \$7.50-\$20

The number of changes being made, with very few overlaps, is also striking. Arts and culture organizations would clearly benefit from exchanging success stories, in order to inspire their peers, and to provide hands-on advice. Being transparent means sharing positive developments as well as shortfalls.

“Putting your heart and soul into something you are not fairly compensated for takes a serious toll.”

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT

FIGURE 18 Compensation distribution (not including benefits)
n=963 employees, 38 employers

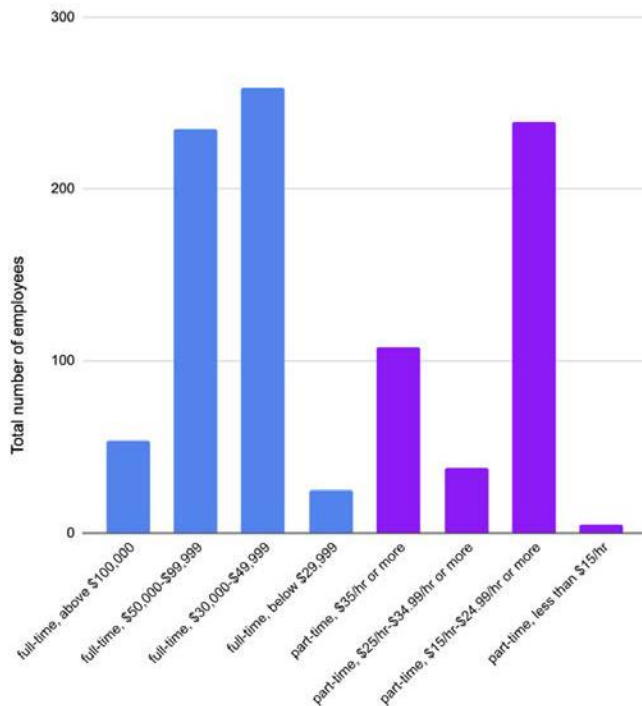
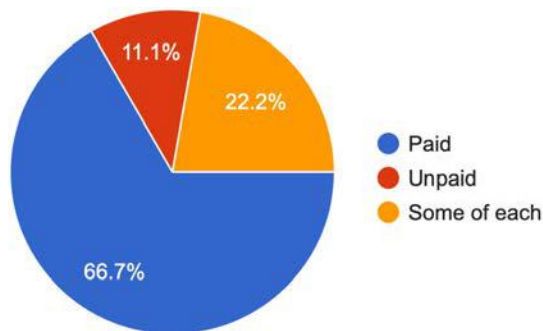


FIGURE 19 If you use interns, are they:
18 responses



Question:
Is your organization an eligible Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) employer?

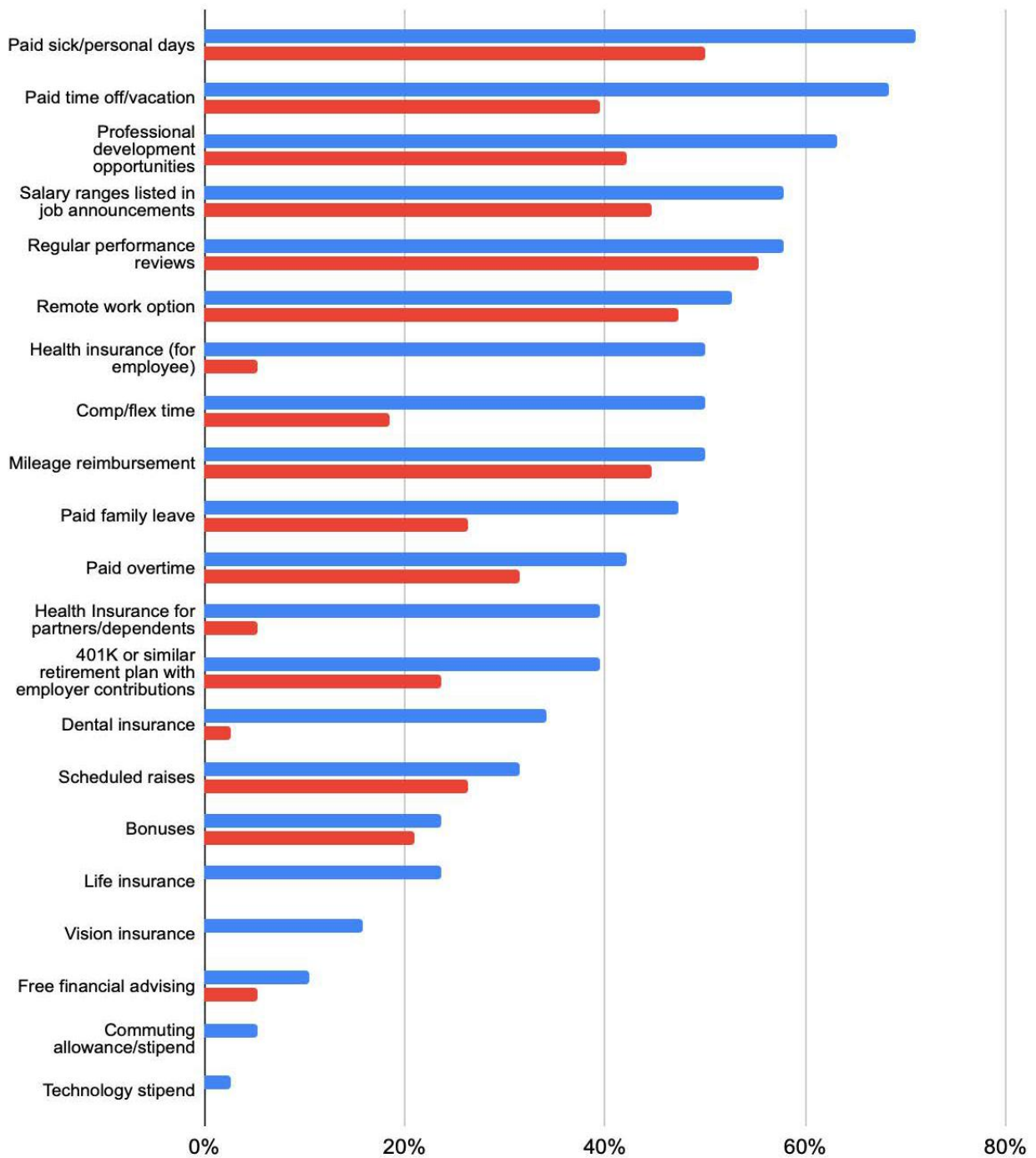
- Yes: 11.
- No: 10.
- Not sure: 4.

Question:
What changes have been made in the past two years, or are planned, to address pay equity?

What follows is the complete, verbatim responses to the question, “What changes have been made in the past two years, or are planned, to address pay equity?” Seven of the 38 respondents did not offer any examples of changes.

- We are standardizing job descriptions, creating salary bands, and have instituted an equitable Hiring Process.
- When we hired three positions in the past year, we discussed salary information in the position descriptions. Our salaries, while not entirely where we would like them to be, are at least comparable to average salaries provided locally at other companies in our industry. Our next area of focus is developing a proper benefits program.
- Salary range listed on job announcements.
- None.
- We have increased our base pay rate by 15% over the last two seasons.
- Annually we review wages and what is comparable to the market along with comparing internally. This past year with the minimum wage increased we researched the living wage needed in Berkshire county and looked at all employee wages from year round to temporary and overall gave an average of at 9% increase to all staff. The starting wage, including our tipped employees, is \$15 and will be discussed in the coming year when minimum wage increases again. This year we implemented annual performance reviews and have begun conducting market research for wages in the area to start planning our COLA increases.
- We are an entirely volunteer organization. Our limited fundraising income is passed on directly for artist commissions.

FIGURE 20 % of employers who offer the following benefits to entry- and mid-level employees:



- Pay increases; no unpaid internships; pay above minimum wage; salary in job postings; HR committee formed; HR practices audit.
- Established published ranges based on a market study, expanded benefits.
- None .
- Ongoing adjustments from survey data, internal charting, and comparison to market.
- We raised salaries to \$15/hour, and are planning another increase. Also, we will start working on implementing equity initiatives and more employee benefits a little at a time.
- We've instituted mileage reimbursement, adjusted personal/vacation time to be eligible to FT and PT year-round workers, created an infrastructure for remote work with company provided laptops, & advertising salary ranges in job postings. We raised the minimum hourly rate for faculty artists to \$35/hour and increased all other pay tiers. Over the last two years, all current staff were given raises to move them closer to an appropriate salary bracket. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done to continue to raise all staff to appropriate rates & clarity around benefits. Our board plans to address salary ranges for each existing position.
- Increased salary transparency including salary range listed in job postings, organization-wide compensation increases alongside implementation of salary bands, increase retirement plan benefit.
- We just began hiring part-time staff and made sure to pay the maximum we could afford to attract good candidates.
- Listing salary in job postings, increased hourly rates and salaries for seasonal staff, increased intern stipend, increases entry level salaries.
- We are raising hourly rates paid to our part-time team, working as independent contractors.
- Our freelance teachers are all paid a high hourly rate. The organization is trying to look at higher salaries for full time and part time employees in the future. As the organization transitions and grows,

it is the Board's intention to offer benefits in the future.

- We are currently undergoing our own pay equity study specifically for our year-round employees that will also include developing a pay philosophy. In the past two years, we have begun to include salary descriptions in all job postings and currently we are working on a pay philosophy that will help us with our year-round job postings when it comes to salary and benefit packages. We are hoping for that work to also inform how we continue to think about and revise our seasonal staff compensation structure.
- Formal 360 degree performance reviews; codified payscale; minimum salary listed in job announcements.
- Full Comp analysis with pay grades; Posting pay on job ads.
- MORE FUNDRAISING.
- We have been actively benchmarking wages and salaries against available surveys (such as regular surveys by the American Public Garden Association) and are seeking to bring all wages to at least the 50th percentile COLA adjusted. We have made significant strides to improve wages at all levels in the last few years, although this work has been partly eroded by recent inflation.
- We have been offering bumps at 3 and 5 years to make sure all employees are at market rate at 3 years and market + 10% at 5 years. Raised minimum wage.
- There are no plans as our pay is currently equitable.

"I can only afford to be paid this low wage because my husband earns a good salary at a for profit company and gets health insurance for both of us."

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT

Benchmarking Analysis

→ This benchmarking analysis demonstrates that entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers in Berkshire and Columbia Counties are undercompensated, struggling to meet basic needs, and considering imminent moves out of the sector and/or out of the area.

Insights (regional, statewide, and national benchmarking analysis)

Overall, this benchmarking analysis reveals that the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project, and the movement behind it, is not alone. Amazing work — with similar values, objectives, and methods — is happening in many parts of the country.

Motivated in many ways by the pandemic, a global racial reckoning, and now market forces that give workers a bit more leverage, chronic and systemic inequities are being confronted. This is an historic moment to think differently, and collectively, and to question assumptions such as “following your passion requires unfair working conditions.”

Knowing that the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project is, in a sense, less unique, and actually symptomatic of much more universal trends and historic shifts, makes the movement seem less “rogue” and more a part of a rising tide. In turn, those who choose to stay on the sidelines risk being left behind and noticed for their inaction.

The examples of systematic thinking that are taking place serve as models for increasing equity, while minimizing net costs, and maximizing a broad range of potential benefits. These models also have relevance for the nonprofit sector beyond arts and culture, as well as the for-profit and public sectors throughout Berkshire County, Columbia County, and beyond.

One compelling example of an action step, The Pay Equity Standards certification process, is a model that reflects similar values and goals, and a process that is further along than the Pay Equity Project. While this could be a good process to replicate in Berkshire and Columbia Counties, even without a formal certification process, the criteria can help provide structure, standardization, and concrete targets for employers who may be ready but “aren’t sure what steps to take.” (See [BERKSHIRE COUNTY NONPROFIT SALARY AND BENEFITS SURVEY](#).) Simply disseminating this report also has the potential to address gaps in understanding, and provide concrete strategies for change.

We can see below that, in Berkshire County, independent contractors (with fewer if any benefits) perform many essential functions, including technology, accounting, maintenance, fundraising, human resources, and many more. Many employers (regardless of budget size) pay minimum, or sub-minimum wage.

Sixty-five percent of Berkshire employers surveyed either have no plans to increase pay equity, “haven’t had a chance to delve into this yet,” or “aren’t sure what steps to take.” (See [BERKSHIRE COUNTY NONPROFIT SALARY AND BENEFITS SURVEY](#).)

Many of their counterparts in other parts of the state and country are experiencing something similar, and those that also belong to one or more historically marginalized groups are generally faring even worse.

There is also some hope amid the struggle this analysis reveals: This may be a unique moment for transformative systems changes. And in fact, movements like

the ones led by Dance/NYC and Pay Equity Standards provide inspiring examples (and potential partners) for the Berkshire/Columbia Counties' own bold initiatives.

Demographically, the new Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS 2023–2027) depicts a regional population that is shrinking overall, but the overall trend obscures two things: First, the region experienced an overall uptick as a result of urban transplants during Covid; and second, the non-white population is actually growing in absolute terms. This trend suggests that the region, whose culture generally revolves around white culture, may be changing — independent of any deliberate

intervention to increase diversity. The trend is likely to accelerate since the region's white population skews older. Ensuring that arts and culture institutions are accessible to (and benefit from) new and growing groups — as workers, leaders, artists, patrons, donors, etc. — becomes an enormous opportunity.

“My life isn't sustainable as the cost of living for a single person with two college aged kids...”

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT



Photo: Patrick Fore | Unsplash

Living Wage Calculation for Berkshire County, Massachusetts (MIT)

The [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#) is region-specific and accommodates for one or two working adults in a household, 0–3 children, and includes 8 expense categories including income tax, and inevitable but less tangible expenses labeled “civic” and “other.” The livable wage for a single adult with no children is not much more than minimum wage – \$17.78/hour – for Berkshire County, but it rises to \$66.00/hour with three kids (and still only one working adult).

	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORKING)			
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Living Wage	\$17.78	\$37.65	\$49.32	\$66.00	\$26.66	\$32.62	\$38.47	\$41.44	\$13.33	\$20.52	\$26.66	\$32.62
Poverty Wage	\$6.19	\$8.38	\$10.56	\$12.74	\$8.38	\$10.56	\$12.74	\$14.92	\$4.19	\$5.28	\$6.19	\$7.78
Minimum Wage	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25	\$14.25

Typical Expenses

These figures show the individual expenses that went into the living wage estimate. Their values vary by family size, composition, and the current location.

	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS	
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child
Food	\$3,891	\$5,734	\$8,613	\$11,425	\$7,133	\$8,878	\$11,446	\$13,934	\$7,133	\$8,878
Child Care	\$0	\$14,215	\$28,431	\$42,646	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$14,215
Medical	\$2,612	\$7,680	\$7,467	\$7,777	\$5,465	\$7,467	\$7,777	\$7,566	\$5,465	\$7,467
Housing	\$10,622	\$15,167	\$15,167	\$18,949	\$11,679	\$15,167	\$15,167	\$18,949	\$11,679	\$15,167
Transportation	\$4,244	\$7,531	\$9,791	\$11,565	\$7,531	\$9,791	\$11,565	\$12,560	\$7,531	\$9,791
Civic	\$3,207	\$5,149	\$6,361	\$8,307	\$5,149	\$6,361	\$8,307	\$6,603	\$5,149	\$6,361
Other	\$5,275	\$7,867	\$7,197	\$10,471	\$7,867	\$7,197	\$10,471	\$10,128	\$7,867	\$7,197
Required annual income after taxes	\$29,974	\$63,466	\$83,151	\$111,263	\$44,948	\$54,984	\$64,855	\$69,863	\$44,948	\$69,197
Annual taxes	\$7,008	\$14,839	\$19,441	\$26,014	\$10,509	\$12,856	\$15,164	\$16,334	\$10,509	\$16,179
Required annual income before taxes	\$36,982	\$78,305	\$102,592	\$137,276	\$55,457	\$67,840	\$80,019	\$86,197	\$55,457	\$85,376

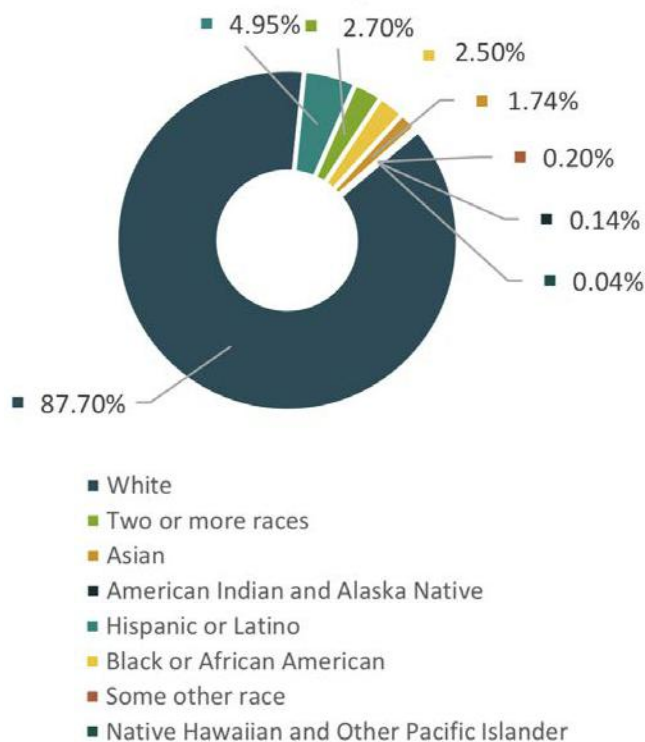
Source: Living Wage Calculator, MIT

Report

Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2023–2027: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

The CEDS report highlights that while overall population of Berkshire County has been declining since its peak in 1970, as has the white subgroup, from 2010 to 2020, the non-White subgroup has increased in absolute number (11,589 to 15,489), and as a portion of the total population (8.8% to 12.3%). The reports refers to this as an “opportunity to the region if appropriate steps are taken to welcome and support this growing proportion of the population.” The objective of this Pay Equity Project is to be one of those steps.

FIGURE 21 Berkshire County Race & Ethnicity



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2016–2020), Table DP05

FIGURE 22 SWOT

Strengths

- Agricultural Heritage
- Brand Identity
- Collaborative Approach
- Cultural Amenities
- Educational Institutions
- Outdoor Recreation
- Redevelopment Potential
- Strong Core Employers

Weaknesses

- Broadband/Cellular
- Health Rankings
- Insufficient Housing
- Low Wage Levels
- Limited Access to Capital
- Public Transportation
- Regional Disconnect

Opportunities

- Entrepreneurship
- Future-Proof Job Training
- Increased Coordination
- In-Migration
- Increased Diversity
- Outdoor Recreation
- Remote Work
- Tourism

Threats

- Access to Childcare
- Declining Population
- Educational Setbacks
- Future of Work Changes
- High Energy Prices
- Housing Crisis
- Loss of Farmland

One implication of a declining overall population is reduced political representation (for example, the loss of a seat in the MA House of Representatives). This is could be a barrier as this Pay Equity Project begins to pursue systems change.

Unemployment is low in Berkshire County and the Capital region of NY, as it is in most places in the US since Covid. A tight labor market becomes more so for entry-level positions because Berkshire County has fewer young people per capita than other regions, and the number has declined between 2010 and 2020. Conversely, Berkshire County generally has more seniors per capita than other regions (almost double the national rate).

The report also lists average annual salaries by sector. The category called “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” lists the salaries for Berkshire County, Massachusetts, and the US (respectively) as: \$33,800, \$48,152, and \$45,369. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation is the second lowest earning sector (out of twenty) in Berkshire County, significantly lower than state and national averages, and well below the MIT living wage estimate for Berkshire County.

FIGURE 23

HOURLY LIVING WAGE ANNUALIZED (\$)	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
36,982	0
78,312	1
102,586	2
137,280	3

Source: *Living Wage Calculator, MIT*

The CEDS report interprets an overall increase in population in Berkshire County during the pandemic according SPS data in this way:

“Many newcomers were urban transplants seeking to marry the best of city life (vibrant downtowns, high-quality food and retail, bike- and pedestrian-friendly

communities) with rural amenities (clean air, safety, larger dwellings, and access to outdoor recreation), setting the stage for a new era in which the Berkshires is reimagined not solely as a place to go for recreation but also for permanent residency to obtain the elusive work-life balance so many crave.”

The report’s reference to Berkshire County’s reputation as a destination for an “elusive work-life balance” is familiar, but also troubling. Ironically, a distinct lack of work-life balance for many entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers (who themselves produce “quality of life”) is a striking alternate reality this project seeks to understand and address. The irony points to an unusual element of contrast in this region: Remarkable affluence and quality of life coinciding with the very opposite in many cases. This project seeks to reconcile this contrast, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the assets for which this region is known.

The report also references the region’s unique and progressive culture:

“Berkshire County is celebrated for its collaborative approach, seen in high rates of volunteerism across 1,000 nonprofits; an active and engaged regional philanthropic foundation (Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation); and novel initiatives such as Berkshares.”

Although this characterization is accurate, several footnotes are appropriate here. First, one of the most common pay equity issues is unpaid work. Ensuring that interns, and all workers, are paid has also been one of the most common strategies to increase pay equity. Second, there are many important funders in this region, and the one mentioned here (Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation) is a principal funder of and partner in this Pay Equity Project. Third, alternative currency projects like Berkshares could be a creative way to address the non-financial dimensions of compensation equity and quality of life that matter to workers.

The Pay Equity Project's target population is captured in this description of lower wage workers' struggles (also confirmed by this Project's primary source survey and focus group data contained in this report):

"For service-sector and retail workers, securing apartments within walking, biking, or even short driving distance to the region's downtowns has become very difficult, resulting in out-migration of workers, longer commutes, and small businesses unable to meet customer demand."

While the CEDS report's recommended actions do not specifically include equity issues (pay or otherwise), the following section of the CEDS report is an excerpt of the Vision Statement, and it serves as a mandate for the Pay Equity Project to identify strategies, and pursue real change.

One concern about this Vision Statement is the characterization of the arts as one of the region's "amenities." First, for arts workers, the arts is more than a perk—it is a primary source of income and survival. Second, particularly in the context of the "double pandemic" of Covid and racial reckoning, the arts play a vital role — a spiritual lifeline, a source of hope during very challenging times, an inspiration to imagine creative solutions to seemingly intractable challenges, and a motivation for change that can be more powerful than any form of data analysis (including this report) could be.

FIGURE 24

- *Currently, we are a region with an aging populace and a shrinking workforce.*
Our VISION is to be a region that attracts people of all ages because we are safe, offer affordable housing, have great schools and high-quality healthcare, and provide easy access to amenities, namely the arts and outdoor recreation.
- *Currently, we are a relatively racially and ethnically homogenous region.*
Our VISION is to be a region that values the diversity of our residents and welcomes newcomers without prejudice or malice.
- *Currently, we often lose young people to employment opportunities elsewhere.*
Our VISION is to nurture and reward talent, helping people apply their skills to start careers and grow families.
- *Currently, our jobs revolve around healthcare, education, hospitality, and the arts.*
Our VISION is to train and employ people for in-demand jobs of the future (e.g., Industry 4.0: robotics, AI, Internet of Things, cybersecurity, digital and tech enabled economy, biomanufacturing) and believe everyone, regardless of their chosen career path, deserves to earn a fair and living wage.

Source: Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2023–2027

Report

Coronavirus Dance Impact Study: A Dance Sector in Peril March 2021, Dance/NYC

“In a New Census, Dance/NYC Wants to Count Every Dance Worker” 7/13/2022

Covid, and the rise of Black Lives Matter in response to the murder of George Floyd, represented a kind of “double pandemic” for dance workers in New York City. The impact lives on for this group, and there are many parallels with arts and culture workers in the Berkshires. This double pandemic also drew attention to many long standing challenges for arts and culture workers everywhere. As stated in the report:

“The current structure of the system has allowed a crisis like the pandemic to exacerbate conditions that were already dire prior to the arrival of the pandemic.”

Dance/NYC developed two survey instruments in 2020 (February and November) to track dance workers, and this report reflects those findings. The two surveys yielded 1,047 and 794 respondents

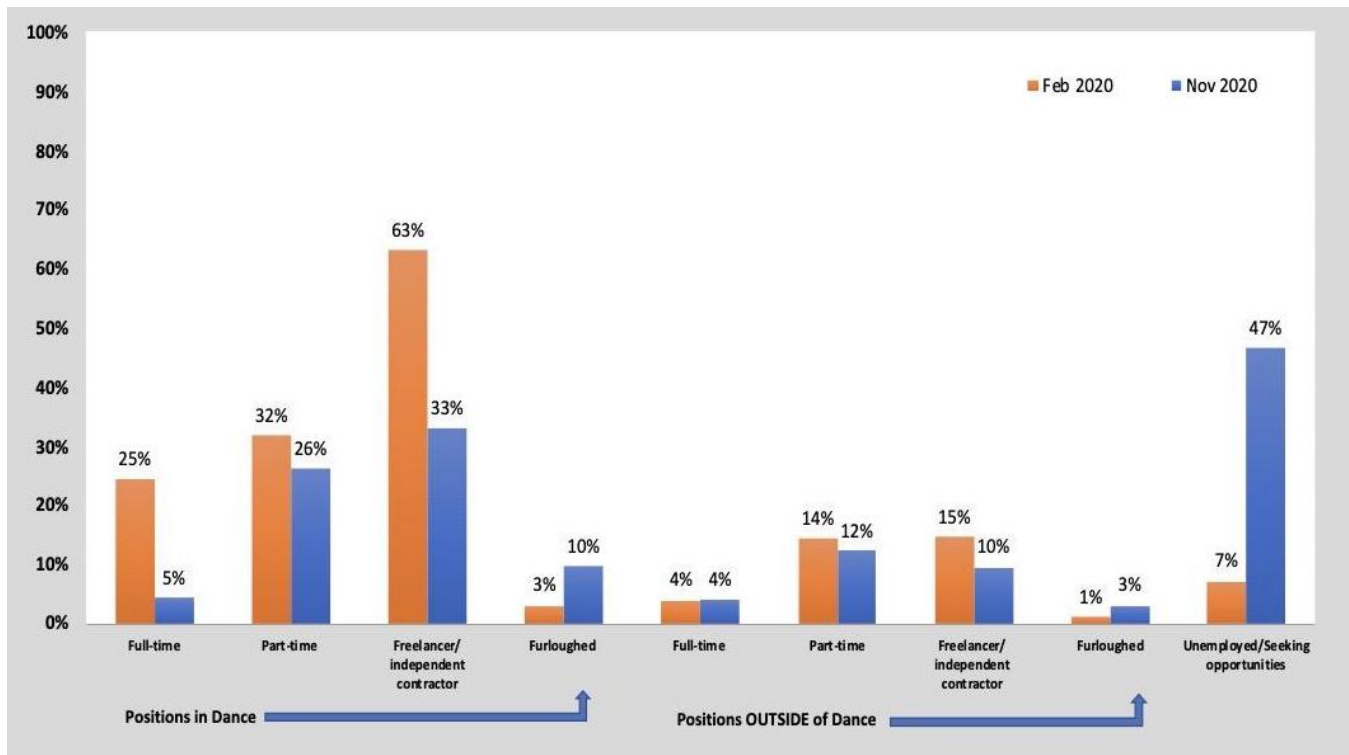
respectively, representing 321 and 201 dance organizations, groups, and projects respectively.

The two surveys reflect similar dynamics in New York City as compared to Berkshire and Columbia Counties: Scarce full-time positions offset by high rates of part-time and freelance positions, while 43% of dancer workers are considering abandoning the sector. (See graphic below.)

Dance workers also report insufficient financial resources for housing, food, physical and mental health care services. According to the survey results, struggles increase disproportionately for Dance workers with disabilities, young people, people of color, and immigrants.

FIGURE 25 Employment status

n=770 individual dance workers

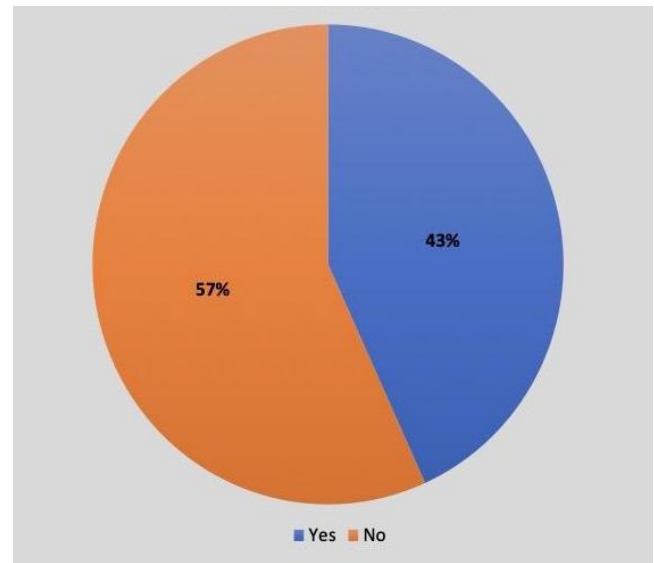


The report provides several recommendations based on the survey data. These recommendations, paraphrased in an abbreviated form here, not surprisingly overlap with the recommendations offered by the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project:

- Direct financial aid for food, housing, and physical and mental health services.
- Unrestricted general operating support for dance organizations to offset additional operating costs.
- Technical assistance to adapt programs to new formats that protect workers.
- Collective advocacy.
- Structural shifts to address white supremacy and systems of oppression.
- Narrative shifts to reframe dance workers as essential for a healthy and thriving community, using tactics including universal basic income and livable wages.
- Make streamlined, flexible, and equitable funding practices developed for the special circumstances of Covid permanent.

FIGURE 26 Considering long-term career options outside of dance

n=747 individual dance workers



Source: Dancy/NYC, 2021



Photo: Fusco Studio | Unsplash

Report

Burden of Bias in the Bay State:

The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in Massachusetts

The 2020 “Burden of Bias in the Bay State: The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in Massachusetts” centers racial equity, but instead of compensation specifically, its focus is leadership and advancement. Many of the findings are nonetheless relevant here.

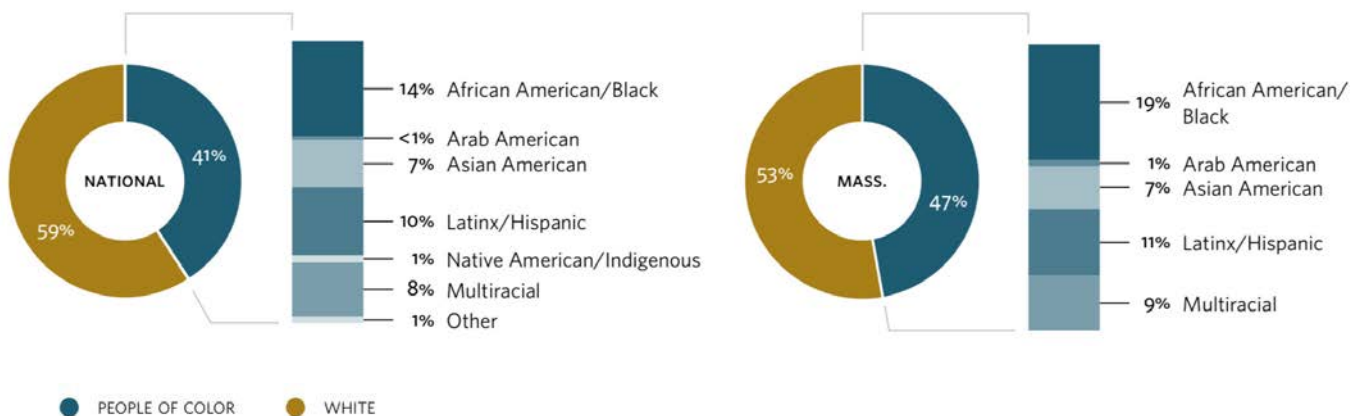
The report is based on 2019 survey data from 5,200 respondents nationally, of which 417 were in Massachusetts (78% in the Boston area), and insights from six focus groups conducted in Boston in 2020.

Race and racial equity has been difficult (but not impossible) to address directly locally in the context of the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project (partially because the numbers of self-identifying people of color has been low), but this set of Massachusetts and national data helps understand and anticipate racial equity dynamics.

- More respondents who are people of color as compared to white respondents are seeking advancement.

- More respondents who are people of color as compared to white respondents experienced bias in the form of “organizations that lack ladders, succession planning, or effective mentoring, as well as nonprofits in which favoritism and inconsistent standards yield unfair outcomes.”
- Many respondents also felt their race had a positive impact on their career advancement, though some also perceived a bias against internal candidates.
- Fewer POC respondents (nationally and within MA) reported receiving cost of living and performance-based raises.
- Most respondents – and almost all people of color – agreed that “people of color must demonstrate they have more skills than white peers.”
- Almost half of all people of color felt their compensation was inadequate, and about a third felt their compensation was inequitable (defined as “not commensurate with salaries of colleagues doing similar work”).

FIGURE 27 National and Massachusetts demographics comparison
n=5,200



Source: *The Building Movement Project, 2020*

- Most organizations in MA and nationally report being engaged in some form of DEI work. The list of approaches hew closely to that of this initiative, as well as other work that the Project’s partner organizations are engaged in.
- Both in MA and nationally, about half of people of color (respondents) said their race was a barrier to career advancement, compared to only 4% of white respondents who felt their race is a barrier.
- Respondents of all races reported greater job satisfaction if they were employed by POC-led organizations rather than White-led organizations according to three questions:
 - “I would be happy working here three years from now.”
 - “I feel I have a voice in my organization.”
 - “My organization offers fair and equitable opportunities for advancement.”
- These findings reinforce the Pay Equity Project’s convictions that: a) even among already precarious populations (entry-level workers), people of color fare worse; and b) increasing racial equity benefits everyone.
- The final visual, CURRENT DEI INITIATIVES, names several concrete action steps to increase equity, some of which appear to be supported by both Black and white respondents, in Massachusetts and nationally. The numeric responses may be less important than the list of strategies employers can take to pursue its commitment to advancing equity.

FIGURE 28 People of color must demonstrate they have more skills than white peers.

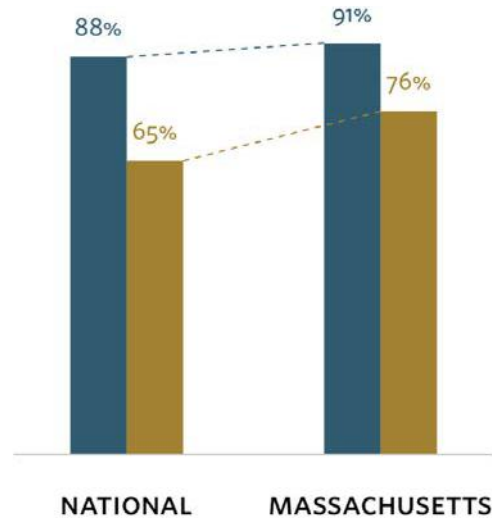
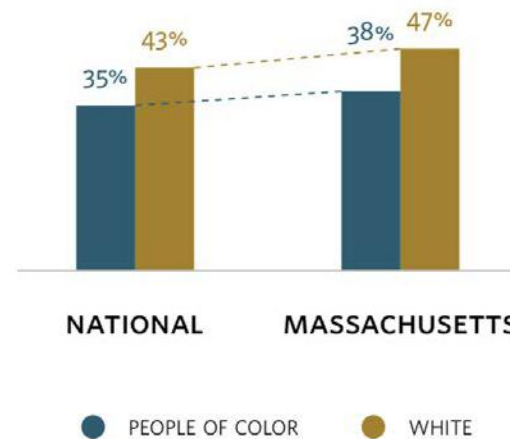


FIGURE 29 I received a cost of living raise.

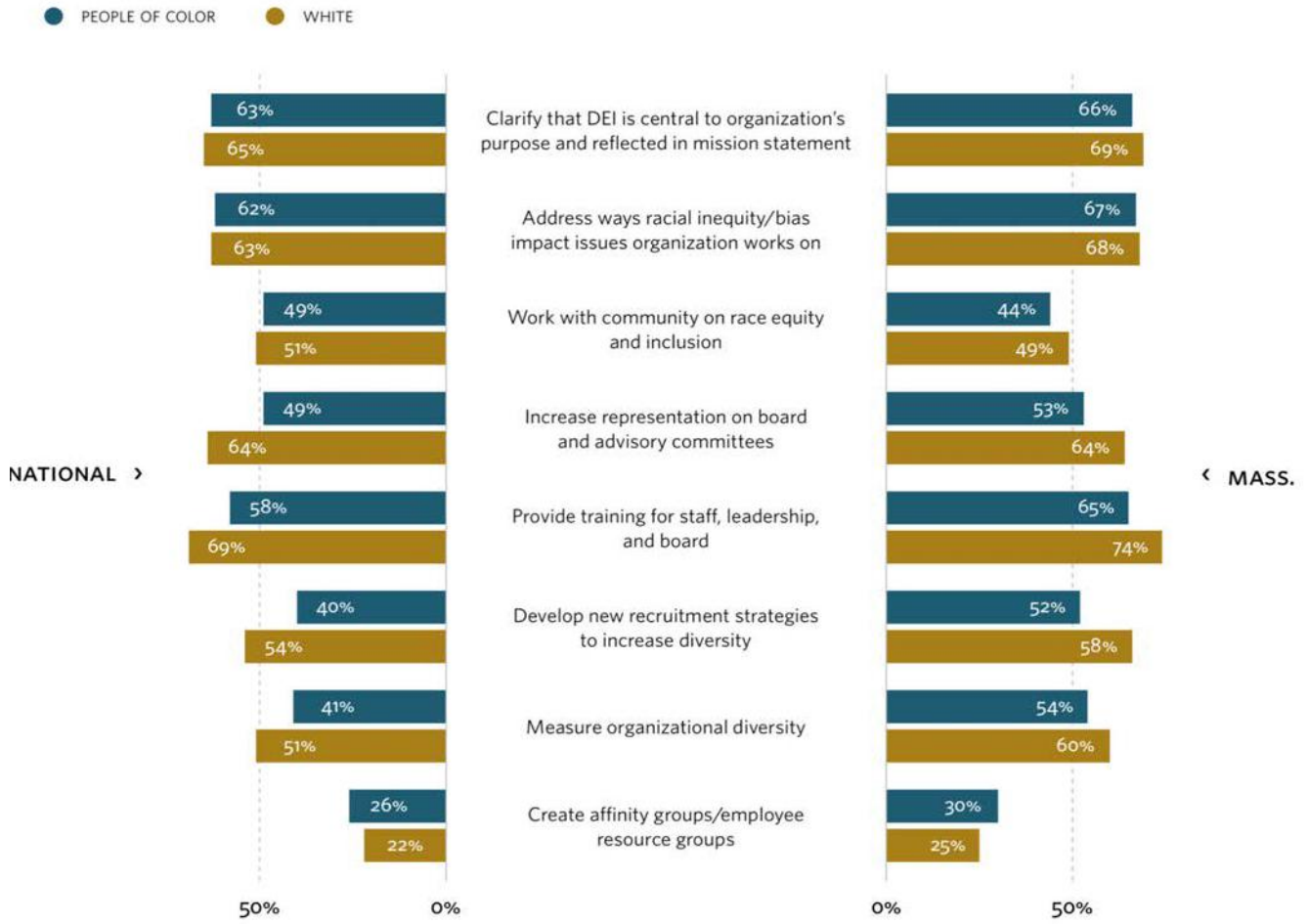


FIGURE 30 I received a performance-based raise.



Source: The Building Movement Project, 2020

FIGURE 31 Current DEI Initiatives



Source: The Building Movement Project, 2020



Photo: Mario LaPergola | Unsplash

Survey

Berkshire County Nonprofit Salary and Benefits Survey (Nash Insights, Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, Jan 2022)

This survey included 87 nonprofits, all of whom have at least one paid employee. This is estimated to be 20% of the total number of nonprofits in Berkshire County. All sectors of the nonprofit sector were included, though “arts, culture, and humanities” was the largest category (24% of respondents).

Many full-time positions reported are at or below minimum hourly wage (or the annualized salary equivalent), and organizations with larger budgets are not more likely to pay more:

Independent contractors are used to fill a wide range of essential functions:

Responses to a question about employers’ efforts “to ensure that approaches to salaries and promotions are equitable” help demonstrate the need for an initiative like the Pay Equity Project. Given the income data and the qualitative feedback the Pay Equity Project has collected from entry- and mid-level workers, 42% of employers claiming they “are satisfied that we already have equitable practices in place” represents a critical gap in understanding. This project, this report, and the dissemination of the results represent one opportunity to help close this gap.

The gap in understanding is further exacerbated by an additional 17% of employers who don’t see the circumstances of entry- and mid-level employees as urgent (“We haven’t had a chance to delve into this yet”), and 6% of employers who “aren’t sure what steps to take.” Again, the Pay Equity Project has potential to help these employers as well.

Furthermore, an open-ended version of this question prompted respondents to identify many important ideas for increasing pay equity:

- A few mentioned doing human resources and salary audits/analysis.
- A few are working with consultants or HR firms in developing HR practices.
- A few mentioned having Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committees.
- Some feel that their small size prevents them from paying all employees what they are worth.
- Organizations are looking for more diversity for their staff, boards, and committees.
- Two organizations have participated in staff training in eliminating bias; another has been doing anti-racism, accessibility, and inclusion work for a few years and has adjusted salaries based on living wage research.
- Some noted that salaries are based on factors such as job descriptions, requirements, experience, credentials, education, and performance.
- One organization emphasizes experience over degrees.
- One provides a \$2/hour bonus for foreign language fluency.
- One is reflecting on their process of hiring independent contractors.
- Some have begun to have discussions but have not yet implemented strategies.

Some benefits are available to part-time employees (below). These part-time benefits rates are much higher than the rates among employers who responded to the Pay Equity Project’s Data Request Form. This regional standard could be validated further with additional research and be used to help arts and culture employers come into alignment with prevailing policies and norms.

Many organizations go beyond the standard benefits offerings. Again, this data can be used to inspire arts and culture employers.

Respondents identified a number of opportunities for additional research and development, some of which are already integral to the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project.

FIGURE 32

BUDGET SIZE →	All organizations n=79	\$0 - \$249,999 n=23	\$250,000-\$499,999 n=11	\$500,000-\$999,999 n=9	\$1,000,000 - \$2,499,999 n=18	\$2,500,000 and above. n=18
< \$13.50	1% (1)	4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
\$13.50	19% (15)	13% (3)	9% (1)	0% (0)	33% (6)	28% (5)
\$13.51-\$14.00	4% (3)	4% (1)	9% (1)	0% (0)	6% (1)	0% (0)
\$14.01-\$15.00	20% (16)	13% (3)	27% (3)	22% (2)	11% (2)	33% (6)
\$15.01-\$16.00	14% (11)	13% (3)	9% (1)	22% (2)	6% (1)	22% (4)
\$16.01-\$17.00	6% (5)	9% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	17% (3)	0% (0)
\$17.01-\$18.00	6% (5)	4% (1)	18% (2)	11% (1)	0% (0)	6% (1)
\$18.01-\$19.00	5% (4)	4% (1)	0% (0)	11% (1)	6% (1)	6% (1)
\$19.01-\$20.00	11% (9)	17% (4)	9% (1)	11% (1)	11% (2)	6% (1)
\$20.01-\$25.00	11% (9)	17% (4)	18% (2)	11% (1)	11% (2)	0% (0)
>\$25.00	1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Average annual salary increases among the respondents were mostly in the range of 0–6% in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Salary increases were lower in 2020 than in the previous two years, with nearly half of respondents reporting increases in the range of 0–2%.

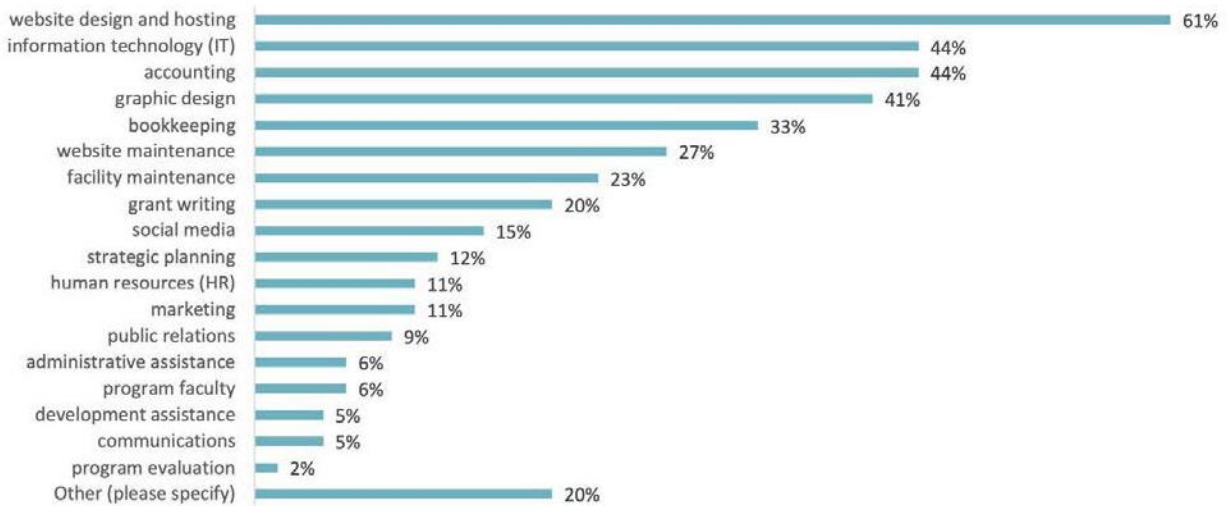
Source: Nash Insights, Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, Jan 2022



Photo: Caio Silva | Unsplash

FIGURE 33

n=66



Other: Payroll, artistic director, press, film professionals, curator, custodian, maintenance, investments, legal, Medical Director, Dental Director, volunteer management, musicians, accompanists, clinical supervision, licensed social workers

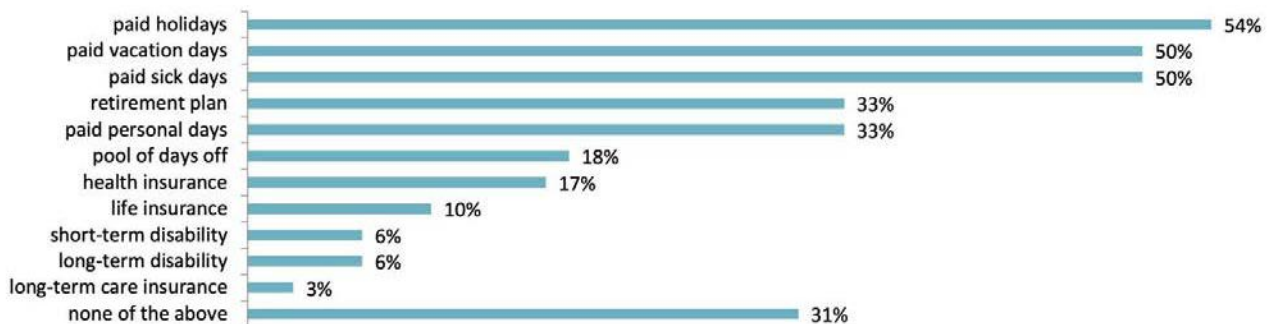
FIGURE 34

n=84



FIGURE 35

n=78



Source: Nash Insights, Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, Jan 2022

FIGURE 36

n=74

	both part-time and full-time	full-time only
flexible work hours	47%	20%
paid jury duty leave (included as a choice on survey, but required by MA law)	47%	20%
work remotely	47%	18%
paid bereavement leave	41%	26%
discounts on your organization's goods/services	31%	1%
annual bonus	27%	7%
paid parental/family leave	27%	11%
wellness programs (such as smoking cessation, weight loss, stress reduction, other)	18%	1%
flexible spending account/cafeteria plans (pre-tax \$ set aside for benefits)	16%	15%
tuition assistance/educational loan repayment	15%	9%
paid military leave	11%	8%
childcare (ie on-site center, tuition subsidy, other options)	7%	4%
health savings account	7%	12%
hazard pay	5%	0%
cash in lieu of benefits	1%	1%
drug/alcohol treatment programs	1%	1%
elder care	1%	0%
Other employer-specific benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkshire Passport (\$500 toward wellness/cultural packages) • Employee assistance program for employees and family members • Fitness membership for employees and family members • Floating religious holidays • Health reimbursement account • Holiday cash gift (can't call it a bonus) • Housing benefit; Food, meals, utilities in employer-provided housing • Payroll deduction for family/medical leave • Technology stipend for using own devices • Tuition benefit for family members • Vacation cash out policy for excessive accruals 		

FIGURE 37

n=49

Benefits	Salaries
Childcare reimbursement Educational /tuition reimbursement Dental services Disability insurance Family leave <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is required • Best management trends for maternity and paternity leave Flexible and remote work Flexible spending accounts Health insurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health insurance for small employers; how to help employees purchase health insurance when we are so small Health Savings Accounts incentive plans Housing allowance/reimbursement/stipend Long Term care insurance Life insurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in payout Paid family leave Pet insurance Prorating benefits for part-time workers Retirement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 401K plan, IRA plan • Cheaper, easier IRA options other than core plan through MA Rewards and recognition programs Sabbaticals Vision services	Automatic enrollment in 401K program to encourage higher participate rates for younger staff Comparative data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average salaries and benefits in western MA and southern NE • Pay scale in similar industries Competitive salaries, sustainable salaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has cost of living changed in past two years? Executive Director compensation for small 501(c)(3) Fairness, comparability, paying living wages Market data – interested in survey results, will use this salary information to help update compensation plan Merit based increases Models and structures for paid time off Pay equity Salary, recruitment, and retention trends Setting ranges
	General topics/issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the Berkshires become too expensive to support early-career professionals who could fill entry and mid-level positions? • Learn more about Hay-pointing job evaluation technique • Models and structures for paid time off • Opportunities to pool resources together or work with a third party • What additional benefits could be offered to full time employees that are economical for a small nonprofit?

Source: Nash Insights, Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, Jan 2022






Report

The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0: A Shared Economic Vision and a Plan for Action

Prepared by 1Berkshire, Michael Kane Consulting, Stephen Michon, FutureWorks, Judith Lorei, Marty Jones, 2019.

The Berkshire Blueprint identifies the creative economy as a \$400 million regional industry, employing 5,450 people in 2019. Regionally, the creative economy is the fastest growing sector, though creative economy job growth rates are higher statewide and nationally. Finally, the region's creative economy is described proportionately large for the region ("Industry Concentration" factor = 1.62) as compared to other regions nationally.

FIGURE 38 Economic Performance of Berkshire Industry Clusters

					
	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Services	Creative Economy	Food and Agriculture	Healthcare	Hospitality and Tourism
Gross Regional Product	\$917,000,000	\$398,000,000	\$416,000,000	\$702,000,000	\$394,000,000
Total Jobs (including self-employed)	6,450	5,450	8,947	11,417	6,329
Job Growth 2010-2017 (Berkshire County)	3.1%	9.5%	4.0%	3.0%	6.3%
Job Growth 2010-2017 (Massachusetts)	3.4%	18.1%	16.1%	14.6%	11.7%
Job Growth 2010-2017 (United States)	8.8%	14.2%	16.2%	14.2%	8.7%
Industry Concentration	0.98	1.62	0.92	1.50	1.29
Average Wage & Salary	\$72,477	\$30,249	\$22,184	\$52,877	\$27,735
Jobs Multiplier	4.8	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.4

Article

Theater workers in New York City: “When Paying Dues Doesn’t Pay the Rent, How Does the Theater Survive?,” (NYT, 7/6/2022)

A movement to raise awareness and support vulnerable New York City-area theater workers is in some ways parallel to the Berkshire/Columbia Pay Equity Project. According to the article, “a pervasive story theater people have told themselves forever says that scrounging and sacrificing and ‘paying dues,’ sometimes indefinitely, are part of the identity, even the glamor of the field. Poverty may be seen as a sign that progress, if it comes, has been earned by suffering.”

The movement began with exploitative stories shared (in many cases anonymously) in an online newsletter called “[Nothing for the Group](#).” Next a crowdsourced “[Theater Salaries Spreadsheet](#)” was launched, and now lists 543 jobs. The founder and manager of the database, Jenna Embrey, shared their experience and insights with the Berkshire/Columbia Pay Equity Project in the context of a key stakeholder/expert interview documented above.

In addition to “doing the right thing,” and the “equity benefits everyone” logic, the article points out that post-Covid labor market trends mean that low wage workers have a degree of power, leverage, and opportunity they have not had perhaps in a generation.

Elsa Hiltner’s “Pay Equity Standards” certification benchmarks are referenced in the article, and explored further [BELOW](#).

In terms of action steps the article warns that increasing pay equity sometimes means significant new expenses, or conversely, significantly reduced programming to allow the amount (and quality) of work to be better aligned with existing financial resources. PlayCo, for example, increased its budget by 20% for their pay equity strategy.

On the other hand, the reporter argues that “Pay equity need not, after all, be a zero-sum game. (Soho Rep, which recently introduced a [living-wage job creation program](#), is actually planning to expand its programming.) If theater, as Hiltner puts it, operates under a scarcity model — ‘there’s not enough and there will never be more’ — perhaps it’s because we undervalue it ourselves. Noxious stories about the value of suffering and a lifetime of scrounging exist to convince ourselves of the false idea that a passion cannot be a profession.”

The piece concludes with an abstract but appealing and encouraging reminder of the unique and central role that the creative community plays in society: “Still, creativity, like water, takes the shape of its container. And what is the creativity of the theater about, above and beyond that of other industries, if not to imagine, rehearse and revise better worlds, both onstage and off?”



Photo: Alberto Bigoni | Unsplash

Project Pay Equity Standards



Pay Equity Standards is a project of a small Chicago-based nonprofit founded in 2020 “to address ongoing labor and pay equity issues in Costume Design and other theatrical design areas.” Pay Equity Standards is an annual certification process that launched in 2022 for “theater companies, arts organizations, and not for profit organizations.” The certification badge (above), it is hoped, helps distinguish the organization. To date only three organizations have earned the badge, and another six organizations are pursuing certification.

The criteria fall into three categories — Transparency, Working Conditions, and Accountability — and include:

- Values commitments including diversity, equity, inclusion, and safety.
- Board-led policy transparency.
- Compensation transparency for all workers.
- Rates of pay on all jobs descriptions.
- Transparent compensation guidelines and budget.
- Maintains regional living wage data and time bound plan to get there.
- Pay range no greater than five times.
- No unpaid internships.
- Minimum wage or timeline to get there.
- 40 hour work week to “greatest extent possible.”
- Timely payment and advances for supplies.
- Copious documentation of above.
- And for organization with budgets over \$1 million:
 - Board training.
 - Immediate minimum wage requirement.
 - Annual pay equity external audit.

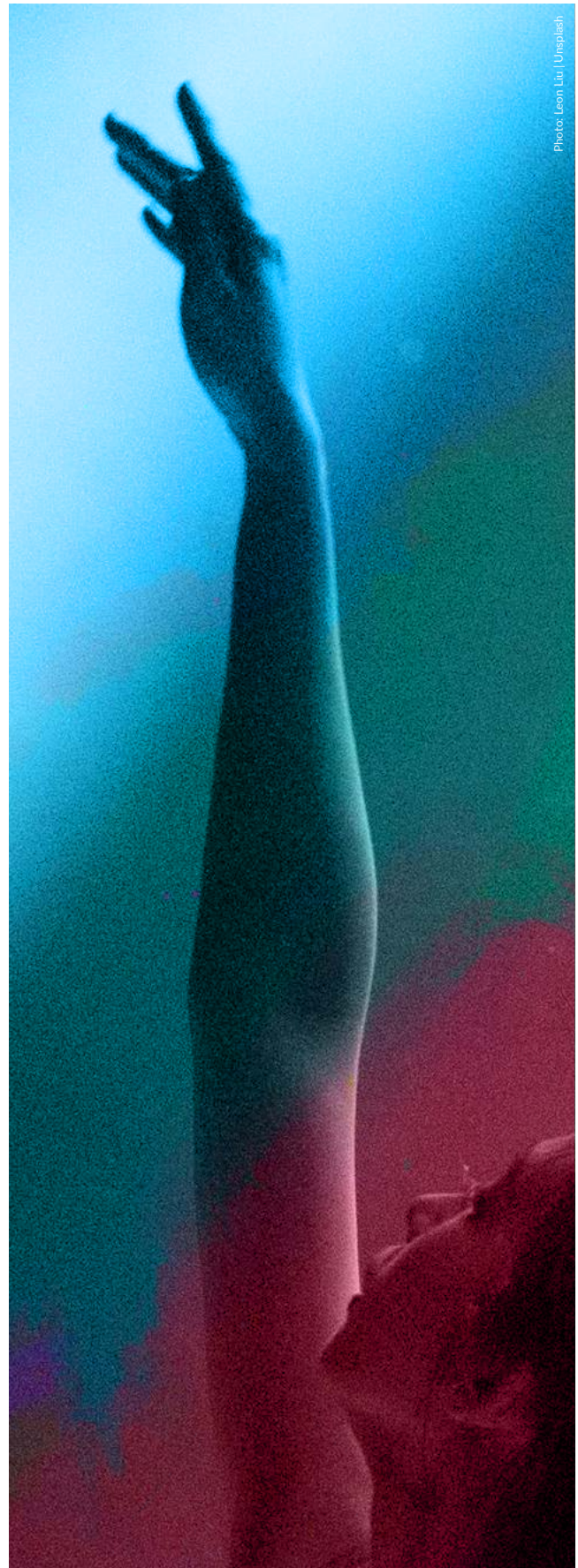


Photo: Leon Liu / Unsplash

Conclusion

→ As long as working in the arts is considered a privilege, only the privileged will work in this field.

The six original partner organizations that formed the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Initiative began with the solid foundation formed as an Inclusive Leadership Cohort (ILC) led by Multicultural BRIDGE. This foundation allowed the group to design and execute – in just twelve months – an innovative and ambitious project focused on pay equity. The group grew to eight partner organizations (thus far), and used a variety of methods to engage a broad range of stakeholders. This approach was intended to give the fullest possible picture, and to ensure that both the process and the outcomes were driven by a commitment to equity and inclusion.

The result was an enormous amount of learning and insight, which the group is eager to make public. The group then collectively condensed their learning and insights into the set of findings and recommendations presented in this report. These finding and recommendations are meant to guide the next steps for

this movement, and to help bring about real changes throughout the region.

It is clear the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project is part of a rising national conversation. Individual organizations, regional coalitions, and industry associations are taking on similar work-gathering data, changing pay structures, and advocating for legislative reform, and more.

As long as working in the arts is considered a privilege, only the privileged will work in this field. This result is unconscionable, it diminishes the quality of artistic expression, and it ultimately threatens the viability of the sector.

Join us as we expand our work, pursuing transformative regional change, realizing ambitious equity values, and enriching the entire region.



Photo: Blake Cheek / Unsplash

Resources, Bibliography & Media Coverage

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Media Coverage

[Berkshire Edge](#)

[Berkshire Eagle](#)

[iBerkshires](#)

Appendices

Appendix A: Entry- and Mid-Level Worker Survey

Berkshire/Columbia Counties Arts and Culture Compensation Equity Survey - Deadline extended to Dec 19th!

Thank you for completing this **BRIEF** survey. All responses are **OPTIONAL** (other than the initial verification question) and **CONFIDENTIAL**. For more information about this survey, [click here](#) or contact aronpgoldman@gmail.com.

* Indicates required question

1. Thinking specifically about a current or former entry- or mid-level position with a Berkshire or Columbia County arts or cultural organization (which your responses below will refer to) what is/was your current or former entry- or mid-level job title?

2. Employer organization for the job you described above?

3. Is this employer organization a Berkshire (MA) or Columbia (NY) County organization that is partly or entirely focused on arts or culture? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

4. Is this a current or former position?

Mark only one oval.

- Current
 Former

5. In the position listed above, what was/is your most recent rate of pay? Specify "Hourly" or "Annual." (For example, "\$20,000, annual")

6. How many hours per week is/was this position?

7. How often are/were you expected to work over-time unpaid?

Mark only one oval.

- Daily
 Weekly
 Monthly
 Occasionally
 Rarely
 Never

8. How long have you worked in the arts and culture sector? (approximate number of years)

9. Do/did you have additional jobs simultaneously?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

10. What year was this arts and culture position held? ("2022" if currently held)

11. If your job is/was less than full-time, or if you had multiple jobs simultaneously, would you prefer (have preferred) a single full-time position?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

12. Do you have other sources of income or wealth? (Other sources of income or wealth can include income from other jobs or household members; major gifts from others, such as a home, down payment or repaid loans; or inheritance/trust, among other economic resources.)

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

13. What benefits were/are included as part of your compensation? (For "Other," include only those that were/are meaningful to you.)

Check all that apply.

- Health insurance
 Dental insurance
 Vision insurance
 Life insurance
 Commuting allowance/stipend
 Mileage reimbursement
 Retirement Plan/401K
 Flex time
 Remote work option
 Paid personal and/or sick time
 Paid vacation
 Paid holidays
 Technology stipend
 Financial advising
 Professional development
 Other: _____

14. Please rate your agreement with each statement.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
"My rate of pay was/is fair and comparable to what others make doing similar work"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"My benefit package was/is fair and comparable to what others make doing similar work"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Job expectations were/are reasonable."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. How long is/was your commute? (in minutes, each way)

16. Highest education level completed

Mark only one oval.

- Less than High School/GED
- High School Diploma/GED
- Some college but no degree
- Associates degree (for example: AA, AS)
- Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, BBA, BS)
- Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MPA)
- Professional degree (for example: MD, JD)
- Doctorate (for example: PhD, EdD)

17. Is a degree, certificate, or formal credential a prerequisite for your job?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

18. Do you have a monthly student loan payment?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

19. If yes, please specify the monthly amount. (Otherwise leave blank.)

20. Which of the following costs are paid for, based solely on your own income from a Berkshire/Columbia County arts or cultural organization?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Paid for	Somewhat paid for	Not paid for
Housing (including utilities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Healthcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone and internet access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertainment and recreation (restaurants, music, arts, sports events, skiing, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Retirement savings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Caring for a family member or another dependent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall cost of living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Can you imagine a future for yourself as an employee of an arts or cultural organization in the Berkshire/Columbia County region?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

22. If you answered "No" or "Not sure," please share your thoughts about why not.

23. Thinking broadly, please share any additional thoughts about how compensation changes can: make life less precarious, allow entry- and mid-level employees to thrive, and contribute to greater equity among Berkshire/Columbia County arts and culture organizations. [IMPORTANT: When answer is complete, please click "next" to provide demographic data.]

Contact and demographic information is optional, and is only used anonymously to prevent duplicate responses and contribute to equity analysis.

24. Age

Mark only one oval.

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Other: _____

25. Gender
(Optional)

26. How do you identify? (check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- African-American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Caucasian/European
- Latino/Hispanic/Chicano
- Middle Eastern
- Native American
- South Asian
- Bi-racial, multi-racial
- I prefer not to identify in this way
- Other: _____

27. Do you identify as LGBTQIA+ ?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

28. Name

29. Phone number

30. Email address

31. Thank you for your responses, and for the important work you do. Please add any comments or feedback regarding this survey.

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Appendix B: Institutional Data Request Form

Berkshire/Columbia Counties Compensation Equity Project - Data Request Form

Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief compensation data request form. All data is **confidential**. For more information, or to get involved, please contact project consultant, Aron Goldman: aronpgoldman@gmail.com.

1. 1. Organization
Contact info used only to ensure unique responses and avoid redundancy.

2. 2. Title

3. 3. Name

4. 4. Email

5. 5. Total operating expenses in most recently completed fiscal year

6. 6. Total number of year-round full-time employees (35 hrs/wk or more)

7. 7. Total number of year-round part-time employees

8. 8. Total number of seasonal/temporary/occasional employees

9. 9. If you retain teaching/faculty artists, what is their average hourly rate?

10. 10. If you use interns, are they:
Mark only one oval.
 Paid
 Unpaid
 Some of each
11. 11. If interns are paid, what is the average hourly rate of pay?

12. 12. Total number of full-time employees with annual salary/wages above \$100,000 (not including benefits)
Do not include benefits in salary numbers.

13. 13. Total number of full-time employees with annual salary/wages between \$50,000 and \$99,999 (not including benefits)

14. 14. Total number of full-time employees with annual salary/wages between \$30,000 and \$49,999 (not including benefits)

15. 15. Total number of full-time employees with annual salary/wages below \$29,999 (not including benefits)

16. 16. Total number of part-time employees who earn \$35/hr or more (not including benefits)

17. 17. Total number of part-time employees who earn \$25/hr-\$34.99/hr or more (not including benefits)

18. 18. Total number of part-time employees who earn \$15/hr-\$24.99/hr or more (not including benefits)

19. 19. Total number of part-time employees who earn less than \$15/hr (not including benefits)

20. 20. What is the lowest hourly rate paid for part-time/seasonal/temporary/occasional employees?

21. 21. What is the highest hourly rate paid for part-time/seasonal/temporary/occasional employees?

22. 22. What percentage of health insurance premiums do employees contribute? (If the percentage varies, use the lowest salary bracket, and the plan that covers only the individual employee)

23. 23. Which of the following do you offer to entry- and mid-level employees? (check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

	Part-time employees	Full-time employees
Health insurance (for employee)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health Insurance for partners/dependents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bonuses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scheduled raises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comp/flex time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Free financial advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401K or similar retirement plan with employer contributions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dental insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vision insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salary ranges listed in job announcements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular performance reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paid time off/vacation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paid sick/personal days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paid family leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paid overtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remote work option	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology stipend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mileage reimbursement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commuting allowance/stipend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. 24. Is your organization an eligible Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) employer?

25. 25. What changes have been made in the past two years, or are planned, to address pay equity?

Thank you for your time, and for the important work you do.

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Appendix C: Media Release 1

Berk/Columb Media Release Sept 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—November 14, 2022

BERKSHIRE/COLUMBIA COUNTIES ARTS ORGANIZATIONS LAUNCH

REGIONAL PAY EQUITY INITIATIVE

CONTACT: Aron Goldman, 413-218-7865, aronpgoldman@gmail.com



[LINK TO SURVEY](#)

Equity starts with arts and culture workers being able to support themselves and their families. Passion is not a substitute for livable wages. But it is a common tale told by nonprofit employers, and employees too, as they try to make ends meet doing what they love. A collaboration of cultural nonprofits from Berkshire and Columbia Counties is seeking input about how chronic low pay for nonprofit arts professionals perpetuates inequities, contributes to personal and family instability, and is a barrier for participation in the regional arts and culture sector.

To ensure that all voices are heard, the public is asked to help disseminate [this link](#) and QR code to a brief survey for current and former entry- and mid-level regional arts and culture workers. The cohort hopes to amplify local voices reflecting on how employment works—or doesn't work—for cultural employees in the Berkshire/Columbia County region. The survey will be open through December 5th: bit.ly/Equitysurvey2022. View [social media samples](#).

The results of the survey will be combined with the results of a focus group series and a compensation benchmarking analysis to create a set of sector recommendations and commitments to increase equity. This announcement will take place in early 2023.

As of November 2022, the Columbia/Berkshire Counties Compensation Equity Project includes: Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, WAM Theatre, Community Access to the Arts (CATA), Art Omi, Berkshire Art Center (formerly IS183 Art School), and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. The Project, which is funded in part by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, was launched during the 2021 [Multicultural BRIDGE](#) Inclusive Leadership Cohort, and is informed by local and national equity initiatives.

“Over the last four years, BRIDGE has served as a consulting partner and coach to the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Arts Build Community (ABC) in their efforts to develop capacity and accountability within local arts institutions, identifying barriers to access in our cultural sector. We've done this primarily through a combination of BRIDGE training, executive coaching, and more recently, our timely and bold Inclusive Leadership Cohort for Social Change (ILC) program.

Through ILC, I've witnessed earnest effort in identifying how these cultural institutions have made progress on equity issues like pay equity for arts professionals in this initiative; a need for more diverse leadership and audience participation; and culturally relevant presentations and programs. These are the some of the highest priorities we've identified in our arts community here to create new pathways to solutions. I am proud to see the

fruits of ILC leaders' dedicated efforts to make real change. This is the result of leaders authentically listening to concerns raised by a much wider set of arts professionals in our community."—*Gwendolyn VanSant, CEO and Founding Director of BRIDGE*

The collaborators in this compensation equity project, who represent the executive leadership of their organizations, strongly believe that the local arts sector cannot make good on its commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion without addressing head-on the issue of compensation. Entry- and mid-level jobs that pay adequately are key to creating an on-ramp for people of diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to pursue a career in the arts, and ultimately strengthening the sector as a result.

"New cultural offerings in our region are attracting growing numbers of homebuyers and visitors, while underfunded compensation models for arts professionals, especially entry- and mid-level workers, sustain outdated and elitist notions that working in the arts is a privilege that justifies sacrifice. The problem with that assumption is that it reserves work in the arts for individuals who have other forms of financial security or are willing to sacrifice financial security for work in the non-profit sector, limiting the voices and perspectives represented within our sector."—*Gavin Berger, Board Member at Art Omi*

"By assessing and ultimately improving compensation in entry-level and mid-level jobs, we can improve access to careers in local nonprofit arts organizations for candidates from diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, improving our organizations, extending our artistic breadth, and better serving our community."—*Kristen van Ginhoven, Producing Artistic Director of WAM Theatre*

"Berkshire Taconic is grateful for the committed arts and culture organizations that have taken on this important project to critically examine compensation levels to better ensure equity. This information will help retain and recruit skilled staff who are vital to the region's workforce and our neighbors."—*Emily Bronson, Senior Community Engagement Officer at Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation*

Appendix D: Media Release 2

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—June 6, 2023

Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project: Data Release, Recommendations, & Commitments

What we learned. What you can do. What we can do together.

CONTACT: Aron Goldman, 413-218-7865, aronpgoldman@gmail.com

Equity starts with arts and culture workers being able to support themselves and their families. Passion is not a substitute for livable wages. But it is a common tale told by nonprofit employers, and employees too, as they try to make ends meet doing what they love.

On Wednesday, June 14th from 3–5pm at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA, a cohort of cultural nonprofits from Berkshire and Columbia Counties will hold a FREE event to release the findings, analysis, recommendations, and commitments of the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project.

Launched during the 2021 Multicultural BRIDGE Inclusive Leadership Cohort, the Pay Equity Project has been working for over a year to gather first-hand perspectives from entry- and mid-level workers, collect original employer data, and benchmark results nationally. The findings were striking — and more so in a region known for bucolic landscapes, progressive ideals, and world class arts.

Consistent with the basic values of the project, current and former entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers themselves were incorporated into the design, implementation, and reporting of results.

Janis Martinson, Executive Director of the Mahaiwe, host of the event on June 14th and cohort member, shares, “We asked entry- and mid-level arts and culture employees about their experience of current compensation models. We asked arts and culture organizations how they are striving to do their best to make arts and culture work livable. And we asked ourselves to imagine a future that recognizes that passion doesn’t pay the rent. Now we can share the data, the stories, and a menu of offerings for a path forward together.”

“It is so integral that everyone involved with this issue join us to celebrate the pay equity initiatives being implemented at our arts and culture organizations, hear what the ongoing barriers are for the arts and culture workers, who are essential to our counties, and hear the recommendations on how to move forward together. Only if we all join together can we make significant change around this urgent issue.” adds Margaret Keller, Executive Director of CATA and cohort member. “We invite regional arts and culture organizations, nonprofit leaders and board members, press, entry- and mid-level workers, area creatives, funders, policy makers, researchers, and equity activists and experts, to join us for the public release of regional cultural employee compensation data, findings, and collective recommendations for regional change.”

“By all of us embracing the recommendations in this report, which includes many initiatives our arts and culture organizations are already doing around pay equity, our sector as a whole can improve access to careers in local nonprofit arts organizations for candidates from diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, improving our

organizations, extending our artistic breadth, and better serving our community.” shares cohort member **Kristen van Ginhoven, Producing Artistic Director of WAM Theatre.**

As of June 2023, Berkshire/Columbia Counties Compensation Equity Project includes: **Art Omi, Berkshire Art Center (formerly IS183), Community Access to the Arts (CATA), Flying Cloud Institute, Jacob’s Pillow, Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, WAM Theatre, and Williamstown Theatre Festival.** The Project is funded in part by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. The Project was launched during the 2021 Multicultural BRIDGE Inclusive Leadership Cohort, and is informed by local and national equity initiatives.

“Over the last four years, BRIDGE has served as a consulting partner and coach to the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Arts Build Community (ABC) in their efforts to develop capacity and accountability within local arts institutions, identifying barriers to access in our cultural sector. We’ve done this primarily through a combination of BRIDGE training, executive coaching, and more recently, our timely and bold Inclusive Leadership Cohort for Social Change (ILC) program.

Through ILC, I’ve witnessed earnest effort in identifying how these cultural institutions have made progress on equity issues like pay equity for arts professionals in this initiative; a need for more diverse leadership and audience participation; and culturally relevant presentations and programs. These are some of the highest priorities we’ve identified in our arts community here to create new pathways to solutions. I am proud to see the fruits of ILC leaders’ dedicated efforts to make real change. This is the result of leaders authentically listening to concerns raised by a much wider set of arts professionals in our community.”—**Gwendolyn VanSant, CEO and Founding Director of Multicultural BRIDGE**

The collaborators in this compensation equity project, who represent the executive leadership of their organizations, strongly believe that the local arts sector cannot make good on its commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion without addressing head-on the issue of compensation. Entry- and mid-level jobs that pay adequately are key to creating an on-ramp for people of diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to pursue a career in the arts, and ultimately strengthening the sector as a result.

“New cultural offerings in our region are attracting growing numbers of homebuyers and visitors, while underfunded compensation models for arts professionals, especially entry- and mid-level workers, sustain outdated and elitist notions that working in the arts is a privilege that justifies sacrifice. The problem with that assumption is that it reserves work in the arts for individuals who have other forms of financial security or are willing to sacrifice financial security for work in the non-profit sector, limiting the voices and perspectives represented within our sector.”—**Gavin Berger, Board Member at Art Omi**

“Berkshire Taconic is grateful for the committed arts and culture organizations that have taken on this important project to critically examine compensation levels to better ensure equity. This information will help retain and recruit skilled staff who are vital to the region’s workforce and our neighbors.”—**Emily Bronson, Senior Community Engagement Officer at Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation**

To register for this free event go to:

mahaiwe.org/event/berkshire-columbia-counties-pay-equity-project-data-release-recommendations/

Appendix E: Employee Responses to Open-Ended Questions (redacted to ensure confidentiality)

Can you imagine a future for yourself as an employee of an arts or cultural organization in the Berkshire/Columbia County region? If you answered “No” or “Not sure,” please share your thoughts about why not.

Living in poverty is not an option

Would never make enough money to survive living in this area

My life isn't sustainable as the cost of living for [my family] is approx 40% higher than my salary. I get further and further behind in all ways: financial, social fabric, health, education

I currently qualify for medicaid while working at this position, and have been looking fervently for something salaried, with benefits, and reasonable PTO. Thankfully I live with another family member who makes more money than me to be able to pay living expenses, but I find it impossible to save, make plans for the future, or even make ends meet just by my own income. At my particular institution there has been an immense staff turn around and folks are generally very unhappy, or have a partner/family member who can fill in where these benefits and compensation are severely lacking.

not enough opportunity and pay

I'm now working a [redacted] job making just below what I made in my arts job, but it does not require unpaid overtime or a passionate sacrifice of my time, energy and mental health. There is no room for compensated growth at such small companies, and there are such limitations on pay, vacation time and professional development that learning comes at your own cost. I am worth more than they can offer.

Many of us who work in arts non-profits are also working artists with other jobs, so having good part-time work is desirable to us and honestly also greatly beneficial to institutions too. I've tried full-time work but I simply can't afford to work a 40hr/wk job on the rate they pay while being a working artist and [supporting a family]. While I love the work I do for [organization], without an increase in pay and benefits as part-time employee, I'm finding myself looking elsewhere to see if I can make the same amount of money (airbnb?) for less time and mostly less of an all-consuming mental effort that occupies much of my brain at all hours of the day. It's high level work with big responsibility and very little pay.

I after a decade of low wages and abusive work expectation I have moved out of state to find work in my industry with more equitable offerings

Because it was a toxic environment with unreasonable expectations and unreasonable compensation

As I head into middle age I am not saving enough for health care / retirement costs for the future. My commute is long and Berkshire County is expensive to live in.

Life is getting even more expensive, and having less options here everyday

I live in another part of the state

The pay is too low and the work load is too high.

Making a living as a gig worker based in the Berkshires is becoming less sustainable as the years go on. If these companies want to hire locally, they need to up the pay scale and include health benefits at the least. Then we need to talk about the expected hours worked, time off for better work/life balance and work on dismantling the white supremacist practices that are infused in the arts sector...as next steps...

How does one make a living at this??

Many of the organizations have cut staff so dramatically that it may not make sense to look for employment in that field. Most places made cuts to protect the upper management and not the average mid or entry level positions. Showing their true colors.

I have affordable rent but if that changes, I will not be able to afford living in Berkshire County with my current income

Unsustainable. People in the top positions don't understand that the cost of living is so high in the Berks because they all own houses they've had for 20+ years. I still feel very betrayed that when I moved there, they misrepresented the cost of living as being much more manageable than bigger cities – and they justified my inappropriately low salary by saying my money would go further. That was obviously a willful lack of awareness on their part.

I am actively job searching and have concerns about nonprofit cultural organizations ability to pay a true living wage for the Berkshires.

If I didn't live in a dual income household, I would not be able to support myself on my own off of this salary alone. I would have already left this job in search of another that paid more in this field or I would have been forced to consider another industry/take on multiple jobs.

Affordability / retirement options in the non-profit sector.

May have to leave area due to high housing costs

I left the arts because it did not feel sustainable.

I moved away from the area for better opportunities and I'm not sure if I would move back.

The wages in the Berkshires (not just in the cultural sector) are stuck in the 1980s where \$50k is a good wage.

Berkshire arts are extremely exploitive. Most people in leadership positions do so as a hobby.(i.e., their lives and livelihoods do not depend on it, they do it because they like it and their salaries are not completely depended upon for shelter and every other essential necessity.)Often times their salary is in addition to a trust or inherited wealth and privilege. Previous compensations may also have been high enough to allow for savings and wealth building that other employees have never been afforded.

The consistent and notorious below-market rate of pay for each position combined with the higher-than-standard expectation of workload/ability/skill/dedication of time and lifestyle makes this field notoriously 'pay-to-play.'

In contrast, private organizations that are profit driven have an incentive to maximize investment and performance accountability, as well as efficiency, within their culture and organization. Private organizations can often provide higher pay, larger teams, and a lower (reasonable) expectation of productivity because they are under greater liability and vulnerability regarding a risk of reputation crisis and they understand the true expense of consistent turnover and burnout. When a private brand is impacted, their sales are impacted and there is no expectation of loyal donors to carry the organization through that crisis. Profit driven organizations increase the likelihood of holding inefficient employees accountable to Performance Improvement Plans, as well as the likelihood of holding leaders and employees accountable for predatory and harmful behavior.

They are more likely to have concrete job descriptions, equitable hiring plans, clear onboarding programs with training and clear expectations revolving around KPI's with incentives to surpass those.

In non-profit organizations rich in nepotism, there is an intentional vagueness around KPI's, expectations, accountability, and uniform disciplinary action and performance expectations.

Passively racist, exploitive, imbalanced and harmful behaviors are enabled and flourish due to the support from donors who are not impacted by the behavior and thus, enable the harm to continue.

This creates an unhealthy and harmful imbalance in leadership vs. staff regarding social standing, an environment of distrust, leadership leaning more heavily on teams to complete basic tasks which leadership refused to learn, and a glass ceiling within non-profit arts organizations that is difficult to break.

Nepotistic hiring instead of hiring based on skill, and lack of accountability even in the face of consistent wide feedback from staff not only creates an unhealthy and unsustainable reliability on donations, it also ultimately defines the difference between an Equitable organization, and a Colonistic organization, socially exploitive and harmful to BIPOC or otherwise marginalized peoples participating within it.

Additionally, organizations that are performatively equitable (such as stating on websites or hiring platforms that the organization has Equity at the heart of its mission) but in reality has not implemented these practices into its daily life and operations perpetuate harm in so many ways. This can lure BIPOC or marginalized people into a situation that is disastrously dangerous and harmful to them.

This appears to be prominent and rampant within Berkshire Arts organizations.

I have already moved away from the Berkshires, but feel strongly that I was underpaid and overworked at [organization] when I worked there. Unless there is real change in the Berkshires, I will not be moving back to work there because I could not make a living with my salary and I had a lot of debt.

I love the arts and many members of the regional communities, and held several positions at various times over ten years, but the field is deeply inequitable and not sustainable for a working class person such as myself. By leaving the arts for another field in the non-profit sector, I saw an immediate 40% salary increase, plus robust benefits. (I did not relocate for this job.)

At [organization] on a \$35,000 annual salary, my rent was \$945/ month, which was approximately 40% of my net income. I was also on [family member's] health insurance at the time, so I was not paying for healthcare.

It was an unsustainable situation financially, which unfortunately, is a large reason why I left [organization]. I could not sustain basic cost of living expenses, pay for [redacted], or save for future or unexpected expenditures on that salary. When I requested a \$[x] raise [redacted], I did not hear back from administration for 6 months, even after multiple inquiries on the status of my raise request. After I put in my two weeks notice, the administration informed me that I could get my \$[x] raise if I stayed on. I did not accept the offer and I chose to leave.

I am also very lucky to not have any [debt], yet although my expenses were already lower than many of my colleagues, I was still struggling monthly.

I marked "not sure" because I would only consider a position at an arts organization if the salary was above \$70-\$80K. Current salaries for entry and mid-level positions in the Berkshires simply are not sustainable here. The landscape of arts and cultural organizations in The Berkshires are very similar to each other in terms of salary and work conditions. As an artist and arts worker, it is disheartening to be essentially "forced out" of the field because I could not pay my basic bills.

I have started freelancing and am making an almost equivalent amount freelancing while working fewer hours.

I enjoy working as a freelance gig worker / independent contractor doing a variety of jobs.

Pay

It doesn't pay enough to cover the cost of living.

Can not afford to stay working here. Wear and tear on car etc

After working for [organization], I transitioned to freelance contractor work as a teaching artist. It was an incredibly hustle, and my health insurance and other monthly costs were far too high for it to be sustainable for me [redacted]. I ended up taking on a full-time job at an organization [redacted] that I can work mostly remotely for.

None

It was really expensive to live in the Berkshires. Felt comparable cost-wise to living in a city, but required a car, not many rental apartments (very expensive), and not many opportunities to engage with other young professionals.

Lack of affordable rental housing

It's not sustainable with how much money it costs to live vs. how much I make. I'd love to stay in this field, but it's not possible if there aren't major changes in compensation.

Unsure about the long-term sustainability of the intense summer performance season

Pay does not equate current cost of living. It is not worth it to work in the arts anymore.

I have since changed fields and not sure if I want to return to the arts/culture based on how much better I am treated in my new field.

Looking to see what my future holds is unclear at this time

Most of my family and friends are located elsewhere; I would need to find a steady full-time job at an arts organization for it to be worth it to me to go back. [Redacted.] A position with no real benefits and very few hours available is not sustainable in the long term. However, I am aware that full-time employees are consistently required to work excessive unpaid overtime.

I could live a better life in general if I made even a little bit more money. I rarely visit other art organizations because they are beyond my budget,

I do not feel like the lifestyle demanded of a worker in the arts and entertainment industry is sustainable long term while maintaining my best mental and physical health nor is it one I wish to continue. I am actively seeking to leave the industry.

We are considering a move so I will make more and the housing will be more affordable.

The pay scale is very low and the pressure can be very high. [Organization] expects a high level of customer service [redacted], serving an audience that brings a "New York City" level of expectations. I never felt reasonably compensated for the level of skill that I actually brought to the role. I will say though that I appreciated job perks such as one free meal on performance days, free tickets to see performances and the opportunity to observe some dress rehearsals.

Toxic/abusive workplace in exchange inequitable payment was unsustainable for me.

I honestly haven't found it to be a hugely welcoming environment for a female in her early 30s who did not grow up in the area. The vast majority of people already seem to know each other and don't place much emphasis on helping others to integrate into the community.

I am freelance now, putting together several different gigs — I love the work, but financial stability is an ongoing challenge. On the other hand, imagining a local cultural organization with a working environment I would want to spend time in...is also a challenge.

My first hesitation on imagining myself working for a local arts organization is that I value my freelance independence, and my second is a challenge in imagining a role I could comfortably fill. At this point, I would want it to be part-time and intellectually and creatively challenging — making, teaching, creating programs, leading workshops or tours, working with artists, archiving?

[Redacted.]

Not sure I can afford to go back to working in the arts. Just doesn't pay enough

My long-term ability to continue in this position, based on current economic trends, is tenuous — that said, it is a job I love and am well-suited for so I will likely stick it out longer than most.

I enjoyed living and working there for 9 years. Now the Berkshires are too expensive and too rural for the kind of life I want to lead. Also, not diverse enough.

The revenue coming in for arts and culture is disproportionate to the wages and benefits of employees. The hours are not suitable or sustainable for families with children or who depend on public transportation. I love the Berkshires but every summer I'm grateful once it is September 1st and it is quiet again.

I can only afford to be paid this low wage because my [partner] earns a good salary at a for profit company and gets health insurance for both of us.

It's not work I am fully satisfied with nor is it work I feel fulfilled with.

Didn't make a living wage, they would not give raises, even held back money I should have earned by doing extra work.

Can personally live on salary but not create a family with it.

Low pay

The jobs are too short and the season is too short – working even at this pay level for 5 to 15 weeks of the year doesn't cover my bills so I have to rely on my [partner] to pay our bills and that creates uneven pressure for [my partner] and strains our marriage

Semi-retirement

Pay vs cost of housing

I am not sure if I want to continue living here indefinitely. Good opportunities and community are too few and far between.

If current salary/payment remains the same and/or does not keep up with the rising costs of living in the area, then this is not a sustainable job, even if my salary is not the sole source of income for my family. Adding in child care options/reimbursement/contributions would help with this.

It's expensive to commute here – but even more expensive to live here.

If I were to lose my current job, I don't know what else I could do in this area

The expectations of the job are unrealistic. No one here is set up to succeed.

I don't think this salary is sustainable.

I could not support even one person consistently on the salary. I basically broke even on basic living expenses over the summer with any unexpected costs coming from savings from my other job or help from [family]. I would not leave my current full-time job to go back there.

This is not a livable wage in this area for the amount of hours I put in. I'm a single [parent] and my [family] support my childcare, but as they are elderly they won't be able to for long, and I'll need to make more to support child care costs and rising cost of living.

My job is seasonal and does not pay enough

I tried it years ago (at [organization]), but felt too much pressure to always be 'on the job' both during the busy season and off-season without compensation. Currently, [organization] has very few full-time positions available.

Minimum wage is difficult to accept

Low wages and long hours with no possibility of advancement within the org

I'm not sure I fit into the culture, and want to explore other sectors.

Living expenses are not entirely met from my earnings, and other income from savings and family members is necessary to fill gaps in pay to cover living expenses. I earn less now than I did in 2004 doing similar and other work.

Living wage and Conditions are not up to a living wage

I'm retired.

I love the work I do, but the salary is unsustainable if it were not for my [partner's] income.

It would be very difficult for me to live independently at my current compensation level; I am dependent on my partner's income. The compensation at other arts/cultural organizations in the area might be better than where I am now, but the lack of equity, generally, in the arts is a major deterrent to remaining in the field.

I want to continue to work in the arts/cultural sector, but the cost of living in the Berkshire region is higher than I expected for a rural area.

I do not feel valued (monetarily or otherwise) for my contributions to the organization.

Disturbed by the political climate in MA. Living now in FL until the season begins again.

It's not financially stable to do so, and if my cost-of-living increases (continued inflation, expanding my family, etc.) then it will be impossible to continue working in the sector here.

I'm not sure I could return to that sector now that I've grown professionally – my compensation needs may be too high for the type of position I would now want.

Compensation is one major factor as to why I would like to leave the arts sector

There is a cap on what I can make in my position, so there is no space for growth. I am fortunate to have other sources of income. It frustrates me that the pay rate is the same for me, after 2+ years of working here, as it is for our brand new [employees]. This makes it tough to feel valued by the organization. [Redacted]

The salary ranges are significantly lower than those in the private sector, for more responsibility. Salary ranges have not kept up with the rapidly increasing cost of living, especially housing. I have what is considered by many to be a "good" starting salary, yet even with a partner sharing expenses and having savings, I am living paycheck to paycheck and have to pick up other freelance work in order to pay my bills and have any disposable income.

The overall pay-scales are not high enough to allow people to afford life while gaining the experience they would need to reach higher level positions. There are not enough opportunities to allow a combination of finding the right organization, stable and comfortable income, supportive benefits, and a positive working environment.

The pay is ok, but not sustainable. My company gives out raises sporadically and does not give cost of living raises. Many other organizations in the Berkshires pay their execs very well, too much, but the support staff do not make what they deserve.

Systemic problems exist in the arts culture of Berkshire County at large. Exploitation of labor at all levels in areas including pay, job description, and SAFETY, have been paramount issues at the myriad of companies I have worked for.

It would need to be an equitable full-time position with certain benefits, otherwise it would be a waste of my time and energy at this point in my life

Frequent restructuring in response to a low-population area make cultural jobs unsustainable

The experience was one of the worst in my life, and unfortunately many arts orgs work with [organization] regularly. I was mistreated often by my supervisor, often to the point of tears, but they received no repercussions for this [redacted].

My particular field can be an incredibly lucrative position and is continuously becoming more and more in demand. The main reason I think of leaving is not because I don't want to work around the arts anymore, it's because I don't want to work where I can barely take freelance work to make extra money, and still I scrape by every month. Forget about buying a house. It's insane to work full time and not be able to afford buying a house in western MA. I want to apply my skills for things I truly believe in. But the truth is I could be compensated so much more if I went somewhere else or a nonprofit. The main reason I stay is because I don't want to work in a major metropolitan area, I want to be close to my family, and compared to others in my industry I have good work hours. Working on sets I would work 12-16 hours a day.

I don't think I will be able to fully sustain myself long term or be able to provide for myself or anyone else on my current salary.

I moved to New York City in pursuit of better work for better wages.

If I advanced my career in the arts in this region, then I would need a higher rate of pay to survive. Minimum of \$40,000/annually (barely cuts it) paired with affordable health insurance

Freelance and part time work in arts organizations is unstable and doesn't provide enough income to live on.

The issue is partly the pay but also the hours offered. Higher pay for PT work = less hours = netting the same take home. Cannot afford to work at a place with such a limiting pay structure. No chances to climb higher. Choose to higher outside applicants than promote from within.

I am still working in the sector and I'm doing it because of passion – for my organization, for my colleagues, and for our mission. At the time of this specific role, I was actively applying to other jobs and had received other offers. Due to changes at the organization, I decided to stay. I say, "not sure," because now, even after over 10 years in the sector, I have no retirement savings and am still paying off college debt. Now, if not for my partner, I would not have been able to buy a house with my slim savings and poor credit. I still have little in savings and no safety net. Passion (and obligation) makes me want to stay but knowing that I'm sacrificing financial stability along with my mental and physical health...I know this is not sustainable and at some point, I'll need to choose my wellbeing and family over my passion.

I answered not sure because I am still working in the sector but was actively looking for other positions at the time of this role.

I don't think I could make much of a living by working at a non-profit, sadly. I love working here and I enjoy the work, but [redacted], and I'm considering going back to grad school so that I can make more money [redacted]. Right now, I'm living with my [family] (and I'm [age]). My hours change [redacted] and there is no paid vacation time, so when we have [have no work], I don't get paid. It doesn't feel like a totally reliable source of income, ultimately.

I'm constantly barraged with mixed messages about why I'm so underpaid. I'm not happy with the fact that our salaries are not transparent at all and that decisions often happen behind closed doors, mob style. Our board is out of touch and often condescending to the plight of those struggling while openly speaking about their second homes and trips abroad. The shameful part is that most of us, especially those disgruntled and disheartened put in more effort than some of those being paid far more.

Thinking broadly, please share any additional thoughts about how compensation changes can: make life less precarious, allow entry- and mid-level employees to thrive, and contribute to greater equity among Berkshire/Columbia County arts and culture organizations. [IMPORTANT: When answer is complete, please click “next” to provide demographic data.]

Art organizations are being run and managed on the backs of part-time independent contractors and full-time underpaid and overworked staff, just under Exec. Dir.

Allowing to admit overtime spent on work to prepare for next working days and get paid for it!

Advancement pathways fuel one’s sense of purpose, enabling us to construct meaning, build motivation, mobilize our communities and yield creativity and curiosity that are essential to building communities we actually want to live and work in. There is a 1950’s mentality across the region, reflected in race and gender roles, that is reflected across the c-suites of each organization, and filters through to expectations that those who provide care and keeping of people should essentially be volunteers – child care workers, parents, community networks. When salaries move to reflect the cost of living, this starts to change. Until then, DEIA is an attempt to let niceness replace equity. I don’t need verbal pats on the head to affirm the importance of my work for this community. I need salary and advancement that adequately values my time so that I can properly care for my family, friends, colleagues and community.

Not making ends meet or not being fairly compensated is often seen by workers as a personal failure, as opposed to an institutional failing of supporting and allocating resources for staff – I think changing that narrative is important for employees to advocate for equitable opportunities. There is a lot of discourse about what exactly a “livable wage” is in different parts of the U.S., but most estimations are far more than what my colleagues and I make in the Berkshires/Columbia County. It has always seemed immensely hypocritical to me that arts and culture institutions, particularly those who make access and equity part of their mission, underpay and underserve their staff – leading to burnout, high turnover, less productivity, etc.

Higher wages and ubi

The cost of housing in the area is a serious barrier to these entry-level positions; a single person cannot pay 1,200 a month for a one-bedroom apartment on a salary of less than 45,000, yet many companies expect us to come in at the 35k range. The wealthy boards of directors making compensation decisions have so little understanding of what a person can live on in 2022 that they continually undercut senior staff’s attempts at retention through meaningful pay increases.

I think other than increased pay, the biggest compensation change would be in flex time and remote offerings. The tourist season demands more hours and effort than a 40-hour workweek, but that must be compensated for in the offseason with additional time off. The opportunity to work remotely during parts of the year will encourage those whose families are farther away to work here without losing contact with other community networks. It is so hard to build a local community outside of your workplace when you have no time or energy for non-work activities that many people feel isolated and leave.

As mentioned above, creating REALLY good part-time jobs with a competitive living wage and benefits like PTO. Invest in maternity leave for employees so you can support less turnover and invest in longer term committed staff members who want to stay in the job/area long term and build a family. Invest and invent early childcare options at work, now that’s an idea!

Rent is astronomical in the region. I had to commute an hour in each direction for affordable housing. Organizations need to offer health insurance and benefits full stop. Wages do not reflect to cost of living in the region. [Organization] Never paid me more \$16 per hour. Ever arts organization has given special treatment to NYC connected administrators and always treated the mid-level staff as disposable work horses. I now live in [another state] and have better benefits, dental and retirement 401k and I can afford to live in the city within walking distance to my job and the museum. [Other state] companies provide better benefits packages than any single organization I’ve ever worked for, despite [that state] being one of the POOREST states in America.

Support down-payments to home purchases (like Philadelphia’s HomeBuyNow program) to make housing more affordable in this region. And childcare.

I would definitely like to make a larger salary but it seems that salaries are tied to revenue streams for the organization and the Board is mindful of sustainability, understandably. However, a staff member who feels financially secure is worth gold IMHO,

More full-time work. Part time only works as a temporary solution. I feel lucky to have found two part-time jobs with a schedule that isn’t two grueling (though it does include night into morning shifts and weekend shifts) however it is not a long-term career.

Creating a larger community of new people, and that makes it less isolating

There is a HUGE disparity in wealth in the Berkshires. Keeping staff salaries at a minimum encourages this wealth disparity and encourages the “haves and have notes.” There is so much wealth here there is no reason for ALL of us to thrive!

Affordable housing crisis in Berkshire County plus 8% inflation is very difficult with current salaries

Higher pay would allow talented employees to stay and thrive at arts and cultural organizations.

Not only would a living wage (that increases each year) with benefits help provide job security and a stable living arrangement for the worker, it will potentially provide the organization the benefit of a skilled dedicated seasoned professional who is less likely to leave for any reason.

Wage equity levels the playing field for increased access and engagement in cultural work by people from a plurality of backgrounds, not only the wealthy and privileged, and would ultimately enrich the entire field with this expanded chorus of voices and viewpoints. One vital issue I don't often see addressed is how for people limited to part-time work (for a variety of reasons, including disability or caregiving) there is a total lack of consideration for meeting healthcare needs. I currently earn less than my potential in order to qualify through the government for the healthcare I require to survive that I cannot receive from my employer. This is a problem created by government income limits to access healthcare but is compounded by the culture of part-time work not being offered healthcare options.

A good step is to expose salaries and cost of living in the areas where these places are located. Realistic work expectations and an opportunity to talk with mid to entry level employees during the interview process without upper-level managers in the "room"

More income to nonprofit employees could lead to more spending at other nonprofit institutions

The instability of knowing if my hours will be cut in [each year] is difficult. [Redacted.] It also can create an atmosphere where I don't feel like I can speak out about discrimination/issues, for fear my hours will be cut further. Already living paycheck to paycheck and if it weren't for programs like heat assistance and state insurance — I wouldn't be able to barely scrape by. [Redacted].

Working in the Arts is passion driven and we should not be shortchanged following our passion.

I love the Berkshires, but the bubble aspect people try to hold onto is actually very destructive and will keep it from becoming what it could. The town is run by older, happily comfortable white people who just want things to stay how they are at the end of the day. I felt that I was treated very irresponsibly by the [organization] — I'm incredibly qualified, have an enormous amount of value to add, and brought a lot to the company despised not really being utilized by them. when I resigned I was treated like I was being a whiny brat. They had a terrible time replacing me and when they did, they had to pay the man who took my role almost 30% more than I was making. it's hard not to feel bitter about that.

Pre-pandemic, I was able to have a small discretionary portion of my wages, all bills paid instantly, no debt other than car/house, and now I am paycheck to paycheck with trouble paying timely. Cost of living has leaped so rapidly, that even earning \$57000 does not cut it anymore. I prefer to work in the nonprofit cultural organizational world, but am having trouble justifying the low compensation with few benefits.

I think it is important not to forget about growth opportunities. They are essential to employee engagement and go beyond a higher position or compensation. These opportunities enable individuals to grow as a person and become their best selves.

Also, it might be worth talking with the people who have been in this industry 5+ years in the Berkshires to learn how much they started making and where they are now. When I started, I was making \$[x],000/year as a full-time person (coordinator level) and my highest income was ~\$[x],000/year full-time (manager level). I think it is fair to say that my [#] years of experience should equal more than just a \$[x],000 increase and a barely livable wage.

Work/life Balance did not exist and was not supported by the salary for my previous position. Running a department single-handedly with only seasonal help, a department that grew to the size of 15+ people was unsustainable.

Just to be able to afford local housing would be nice

Everyone deserves a true living wage.

For more of the culturals to combine and share resources and financial growth of the organization.

Higher compensations would allow for staff to begin saving money instead of living from paycheck to paycheck. This will dramatically increase quality of life as well as equity in arts organizations regarding the following:

People from backgrounds with no inherited wealth or privilege typically live paycheck to paycheck. This forces these people to constantly live in scarcity-mode. It inhibits long term planning or investing, which is essential to begin to build sustainable wealth of any kind.

People who chronically live in scarcity-mode are unable to plan long term and are at the mercy of those who provide the paycheck. This opens the door to endless exploitation as the loss of a job could immediately impact one's housing, ability to eat, and be the line between living inside or becoming homeless.

Lower pay has created a pay-to-play system as well as a system high in exploitation by creating the following structure:

Lower pay inhibits a person's ability to participate in the 'soft culture' required to excel in a career setting. (especially a Cultural and Arts career setting.) While there are 'hard rules' (typically what's written in a handbook) social culture has been very clear in what is required regarding 'soft culture,' that being the ability to AFFORD to socialize in settings one typically cannot socialize in due to accessibility and affordability.

A lower paid person may not be able to afford the type, quality, or style of clothing that is favored in 'soft' culture, and often leads to greater confidence, promotability and enhanced visibility.

A lower paid person may not own a car or be able to afford one, thus needs to spend extra time or money commuting, which makes an overall greater impact on their personal finances or personal time than a higher paid employee would deal with.

A lower paid person may not be able to afford child or family care needed to be as accessible. They will often have to work more than one job just to pay for basic necessities, while putting in the same amount of hours (often more) than higher paid employees or leadership.

A lower paid person will more greatly be impacted by the loss of even partial health insurance benefits, and often suffer from more conditions that need more medical care than people with inherited wealth or privileged backgrounds that afforded them consistent access to health and dental care for preventative maintenance.

A lower paid employee is less likely to have the time or stability to seek other employment due to high workload and the imbalance of available time due to additional gig employment needed just to pay the bills that month — whereas a higher paid employee (with or without inherited wealth) may have been able to save money to have financial coverage through a possible gap in employment should they choose to leave a toxic situation before new employment is secured. (Again, scarcity and instability, lack of time due to lower pay allows for greater exploitation and leverage.)

Paying fair wages and salaries helps to prevent a high turnover rate. When orgs continue to have high turnover, the remaining employees suffer, which in turn pushes them to leave as well, and there's really no end to this cycle. Plus, it's really difficult to feel passionate about your work, when you can't get out of debt, afford a house, a car that actually runs to get you to and from work, or even enjoy a nice dinner out. During my time at Jacob's Pillow I gave up all of my free, personal time for that job and still struggled to make ends meet. I was pushed even further into debt. I had to ask for every raise and only then was I given the raise for fear that I would leave. Financial security allows individuals to enjoy the work they're doing and excel at it, but also takes away some of stress of everyday financial burdens. No one should have to struggle when they're working so hard.

Simply put, the combination of low salary, high barriers to entry (cultural acumen), expectation of uncompensated "extra" labor — all of this prevents middle- and lower-class individuals from being able to make careers in the arts, keeping the field a playground for a narrow elite. It's self-evident that better compensation would help lessen this disparity. But resources are committed to programming rather than personnel, often at the behest of privileged board members, and the cycle perpetuates.

Increased compensation changes make careers possible. They also retain employees at organizations so there is far less turnover. Institutional knowledge is also retained at organizations and everyone at the organization thrives when that happens. Talented people also stay in the region when they can afford to live here, which helps the entire community thrive.

I think a big problem with chronically low salaries in Berkshire arts organizations is also in relation to massive overtime work and summer busyness that goes unpaid and unaccounted for. The salaries might be more manageable if 60-to-70-hour weeks were not expected. My starting salary at [organization] was 38k and I worked on that for over a year. It was difficult to pay for my heating bill in the winter. I asked for consistent raises to accommodate inflation and increased hours/job responsibilities but did not receive any response.

My time working in the arts in the Berkshires has consistently involved being overworked, burned out & especially with the onset of COVID laid bare the complete lack of care towards employees.

Regular raises based on increased cost of living is ESSENTIAL.

I don't want a 40-hour week job because I want flexibility in my work

Berkshire County salaries are about 40% lower than metropolitan areas. Employers will say, "this is the pay because of the local market," but that's a fallacy. The Berkshires loses good employees who will move to other, higher paying jobs with similar responsibilities. The region needs to pay the wage expected for responsibilities of the job, not the "local market" which is a fiction.

Higher wages would me more fair employment and less stress and more motivation and sense of worth for employees.

With better pay more people with a good work ethic would be in these positions and our individuals would get the care and experiences they deserve.

People deserve to not only live but more importantly thrive. Survival state is the death of us.

Compensation has to do with quality of life. Great work gets done when people feel safe and don't feel worried about money, health care, housing, food, long term safety. When people are compensated fairly, the community thrives. There are better health outcomes, which makes it less expensive in the long run. There is less turn over, which is great for community retention. There is more space for people to have attention to do good work and make great art.

None

Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation does not fund The Arts in its counties of focus adequately enough, or broadly enough, we have found.

Housing in Berkshire County is a major deterrent. I would never have been able to consider buying a home with my wages in previous positions in Berkshire non-profits. Even now it poses a challenge, but the competitive wages in my current position make it a possibility. I believe that many mid-career arts professionals are struggling to make a life in the Berkshires because of the precariousness of the housing market.

I had to live really far to find housing that I could afford which was still too expensive. And then I spent so much on my gas and car that only increased my expenses. For a young professional to thrive in the Berkshires, they need to be making money to support themselves well & supported in finding a community of young professionals. \$35/\$40k does not feel like a living wage in the Berkshires or Columbia County.

Housing subsidy

Transparency, equity, opportunities for growth, more robust compensation, flexibility — particularly around hours

If you aren't willing to raise salaries, then at least strongly consider additional benefits that take the financial strain off of people (especially single people without generational wealth) — such as, at minimum; phone bill stipend, commute compensation, more

than bare minimum health insurance, bonuses, paid professional development opportunities that don't come out of your PTO, and flexible work schedules if you keep paying so low we need second or third jobs. Really look at the cost of living and cost of education these days and ask yourself if you are paying a fair and decent amount to people. We already have to work through the social stigma of a career in the arts, to not be financially respected is a blow that a lot of us cannot take anymore. Many of my former colleagues in various arts organizations have left the field because putting your heart and soul into something you are not fairly compensated for takes a serious toll. Finally, non-profit practices are NOT the end all answer to everything, in fact they should be seriously reconsidered as business models that should still exist in 2022. If the executive director of an NPO is making a quarter million dollars and the majority of your staff is living pay check to pay check — there's a clue you are doing something wrong.

Perhaps viewing employees as human who require a certain baseline to live, as opposed to resources that can be extracted from without consideration. For example...we're still living in a pandemic: ten allowed sick days per year is NOT enough, particularly if the organization does not have NPIs in place to mitigate covid. Beyond that, no one TRIES to get sick, but when things happen, no one in a full-time salaried position should have to wonder whether they'll lose the job they need to pay medical bills if they have to be out of work for more than those 10 days.

I would love to be able to survive solely on my own wages not being dependent on anyone leads to stability and decrease stress in most areas of life less stress can lead to better self-image less depression making a happier all-around workforce

In a position that offers very few hours, which are irregular week-to-week and often require evenings and weekends, it is difficult to hold multiple jobs at a time for additional income. It is impossible to work another job concurrently that would provide enough hours to give health insurance benefits. If a position like this were to offer higher wages, especially to be commensurate with experience if applicable, that would make it a lot easier to cover expenses without having to worry about how many hours I will be scheduled to work during a given week.

Worked paycheck to paycheck. Hard to work for a very wealthy and elitist clientele and Board when you are struggling to make ends meet yourself would never afford to attend your employer's performances/events otherwise. Lack of respect for staff felt from some Board members and from some "higher level" staff.

Making the arts a more accessible field would help to enliven the industry. I am lucky in that I share housing/utilities with my partner, have a low auto loan, qualified for accessible/affordable health care, and do not have student loans. If I did not have all of these considerations, this would not be a viable career option for me.

Arts and cultural organizations NEED TO UNIONIZE! Minimum wage is not enough for even a single person to live comfortably in Berkshire County (this is a fact). Arts and cultural organizations must go above and beyond to be leaders in employment practices in Berkshire County in order to allow their employees to stay living in the area and thrive as mission-driven professionals.

I think there could be a regional nonprofit insurance offering complete with other benefits like 403b matches for retirement. Maybe if all the nonprofits bought into such a vehicle there would be more hope for the area's employment future.

It was a long time ago that I worked for [organization], they were generous with pay and promoted from within due to exceptional performance.

Even if I was working full time in this role I would not have earned enough money to cover my basic living expenses. Either you need other jobs or sources of income to be able to "afford to work at a cultural organization."

The Berkshires will continue to be a transitory place for those who can't afford to stay here as cost-of-living increases, specifically due to the development of our communities. The irony of not being able to afford to live in the town you serve is dehumanizing.

The lack of full healthcare in my current position is a HUGE deterrent from staying long-term. If organizations claim to support their employees, they need to put them in a position where they are able to access / afford the mental and physical healthcare they need. I also think there could be a greater focus on long commute times and area housing costs as well as more DEI training across the board.

Short answer — good management. Arts and cultural organizations need to recognize and value creative, imaginative and open-minded people on their staff — and they need to realize that creative, intelligent people who love their work will need room to do their work. I have too often seen people leave local organizations, and leave the Berkshires, because they were stifled at their jobs, aggressively micromanaged or forced to do their work badly because their managers were disorganized. We've lost some local leaders in the pandemic.

I am still in the arts and culture sector in Berkshire Co. I have advanced to a higher-level position, though my compensation has not been on par with other organizations. I have made my peace with this level of compensation as it allows me a very flexible work/life balance.

A more comfortable wage will help stimulate the economy

People shouldn't have to sacrifice to work in the arts. Organizations should provide proper prof dev so the same errors aren't perpetuated by management

Having a more sizable compensation ensures that Berkshire County will experience the level of long-term growth that it has been lacking in the modern era. The myth that art and culture doesn't need to pay well only ensures that our region will not see that growth.

Working in the arts may always be stressful and unpredictable, a fair living wage can lessen these stressors. When I was at an entry level position, many of my fellow entry level colleagues also worked additional jobs (in addition to their full-time work). When folks leave the arts it is usually due to two factors: burn out or to make a more livable wage elsewhere.

Paid sick leave. And food access partnerships across the county.

For me personally, [organization] does an excellent job at paying its employees fair wages that align with the expensive cost of living in the Berkshires. However, in an intern position at [another organization], I had moved to the area and was expected to live off a very small stipend through the winter. In this position, I had to cover my own transportation, groceries, and other costs of living, for only \$200 biweekly. While this is more than some internships, I was losing money from my bank account regularly.

In general, it is hard being a young person in the Berkshires. Housing has only gotten more expensive, and in a very isolated location it is vital to have access to a car. Finding roommates can be difficult or nearly impossible, and there are a limited number of job opportunities available locally if we decide to leave our current place of work. To me, it is no surprise that young people rarely stay in their entry to mid-level positions. At my previous position, even when I received a raise to be added to the staff, I had every intention of leaving the area to a city in order to have more opportunities.

Less of an expectation to find total fulfillment in one's job. Many of us want to have a job that sustains our lifestyles and not a job that is our life.

As a smaller organization of less than 11 employees, providing benefits such as sick time, vacation, paid holidays, etc. are not required. If funding can be found, offering these items would help to attract and retain qualified employees.

Too many people earned over \$100,000 at the top while the real workers who worked the hardest earned poor salaries with no prospect of earning more, while more jobs are piled on and they don't pay you anymore money to do them. [Redacted.]

For low level there are a bunch of contract periods for most of the summer but no guarantee.

Higher pay

Look at longer term contracts or at least more forward planning to better anticipate cash flow. If annual employees are offered retirement benefits offer them to seasonal full-time employees as well. Don't create conditions where overtime is required, especially if you aren't going to pay it. [Redacted.]

Being paid more would allow me to better focus on my work and not worry about extra jobs. I think it would make the general culture at a workplace much better as people are able to more fully engage. It would also better allow people with fewer financial and social recourses to draw on better access to jobs in the arts.

In 2011 when I had this job, I was only able to support myself because I found an incredible living situation [Redacted.] I actually ended up babysitting to cover my "fun" money and savings outside of my living expenses. I was making more per hour doing that work so sometimes I would even use sick/personal time to cut out early and babysit if I had the opportunity since the money was so much better. Moving to the Berkshires for entry level positions is hard enough for a young person – between social shock and trying to find housing, that getting paid a living wage

would alleviate so much external pressure and allow one to focus more on the important part of settling into one's first job. From an equity perspective, the evidence is just so clear: people with a cushion can afford to get paid less. I've had many friends leave an entry level job because they simply can't keep up with their living expenses, on top of the extra hours they are expected to work (unpaid) at arts orgs where you are expected to show up early and stay late, limiting their availability to get a second job.

We should be living in the communities we serve and we cannot afford to.

Commuting expenses, at the very least, should be paid for. Also, health care should have a +1 option, not just "single" or "family" – because when choosing "family" the rate TRIPLES, even if only adding one other person (a spouse, for example) – this is entirely unfair to people without children.

I think the wealth disparity in this area and arena is unfortunate. [Redacted.] Many (most?) people who work for my organization can't afford to live near/in the same town as the institution. There are big income disparities within this organization and sector and even bigger disparities between staff and board members. These disparities can feel pretty demoralizing at times.

With housing prices rising in Berkshire County and the increase in cost of living, it is nearly impossible to live comfortably off of just my current salary. A compensation that reflects the cost of living in its community would attract more applicants, allow employees to comfortably live and work in the community. It would also help smaller businesses in the area because there would be more disposable income available to dine at restaurants and shop locally.

It would be a huge help to increase compensation. My position requires a degree but I don't make enough to offset the cost of the degree that I now have to pay for along with other costly monthly expenses. With loan payments picking back up I know this will be a struggle for myself and many others. The cost of living in the Berkshires is very high for the salaries provided and increased equitable compensation across the board would ensure that people are able to stay committed to an organization that they actually enjoy working for.

Compensation changes make employees feel valued and encourage people to be loyal to their present employers and the field, in general.

I believe more funds could be allocated towards artists and their families by providing over-time pay for non-exempt employees, a more competitive rate for entry-level and a higher rate of pay for those that are mid-level that are also helping to train and operate programming but are being paid the same rate as entry-level. Pay raises for skill and experience and a spoken mentorship agreement.

Being able to completely cover average rent, mid-range food, some entertainment and travel, health costs, and put away savings without being constantly worried let's artists concentrate on art and have longevity in their careers. Having to scrimp on things that make life worth living just to eat isn't a way to live. Having insane hours on top of that just leads to burnout and health problems

that take dedicated artists out of the field. We make art because we love it, but if it isn't sustainable to live on, we have to move to something else, and that's really sad and demoralizing to know that's how we'll all end up.

I can resonate with life being precarious, but also don't think that the responsibility for this solely rests on my employee, when many systems feel like they are on the verge of collapse. Ultimately, I would like to receive a slightly higher rate of pay, and at least five more hours a week to fulfill the responsibilities of my current position. Given my commute time, I'm not sure it would make sense for me to ever be a full-time employee with my organization. Currently, I am reliant on public benefits (EBT and public health) and community care (food kitchen, local farm, etc.) and have reduced rent based on a family arrangement to get by, and also wouldn't want to lose the public benefits unless they could be covered by my organization. One thing that doesn't always get considered is how much time it takes to navigate living on a lower income/being resourceful/maintaining public benefits/participating in mutual ways in community care/working other gigs. These all take time and energy, and so I feel like I'm working full-time, even though I am at half-time with my organization. The stress of poverty is real, and I'm also not new to the game.

Arts organizations have not upped their pay in accordance with the economic situation of our time. We primary care givers will be forced into other work, and many younger, recent college grads will gladly make 40K per year.

While wage increases can make everything better, though I know this isn't always a reality due to arts funding and many other factors, I think one of the most important opportunities that positive compensation changes provide is for increasing the economic and racial diversity of entry level positions in the Berkshire area.

One thing I am extremely grateful for at [organization] are there being professional development funds available, so that even if my salary does not allow me to comfortably travel for workshops, symposia, etc., there is a small fund to help offset some of these costs. I can imagine that having similar "pools" available for this specific purpose could positively contribute to making life less precarious, helping entry- and mid-level employees to thrive, as well as greater equity among local arts and culture organizations, as well as organizations nationally and internationally, where these professionals would be supported to go to.

I would have less resentment towards those I serve and work for.

I use many managerial and executive skills that are not compensated for at this entry-level paid job. I am appreciated in word only, and that simply does not go far enough. With growing demands on those who work with the general public, new/changing technology, staff-shortages, etc. I am expected to continue to perform at a high level, which I do, while being paid the wage of a h.s. student. As the pandemic recedes and more and more visitors come to the Berkshires, the demands on those dealing with the general public (including health and safety concerns) also grow.

Chronic underpayment seems to be the norm in all non-profit/arts organizations everywhere. We are expected to live off of our "passion" for whichever institution we are employed. Because I have a home and a [partner] with an income, I can work at an arts organization part-time while being a [parent]. But I am aware that

my skills are not being compensated for, and that wears on my self-esteem. All of our part-time employees [redacted] offer so much experience and knowledge that also is not given a commensurate compensation. And this affects them as well. It feels like we are the ones holding up the organization and we should feel privileged to do this! How can we ever expect to attract smart, diverse, young people who wish to live in the Berkshires — on a single, yet unsustainable, salary? Something's gotta give to keep our Arts/Culture alive in Berkshire County.

Contributing in art events to grasp more ideas and learn each department in order to move forward with the career we are interested in.

The main thing I've struggled with working in Berkshire/Columbia County arts and culture organizations is that there is no affordable housing in the area. I've been looking for a place to live that is both close to where I work and affordable at my current pay rate of 18 dollars an hour and there is nothing around. The most logical option is to find housing outside of the area that is more affordable and drive over a half hour to come to work in Berkshire or Columbia County, which is still unrealistic to achieve by yourself.

An increase in compensation would better position me in the housing market (currently live with [family]), allow me to consider upgrading to a more reliable car (maybe hybrid or fully electric), and ease the burden of [debt]. If those three things were not concerns, or if I felt overall more financially secure, I think I would be able to devote more time and energy into my [work].

The cost of living in Berkshire County is rather high, making living and working here more difficult

The cost of living in the Berkshires is high, therefore housing costs on my salary comes up short

The arts organizations "cost of living" wage increases across the entire staff are not the same as a job wage increase tied to and based on performance and or increased responsibilities due to job title change.

Currently there is substantially high cost of living in the area of our arts institution. The "cost of living" salary increases that the entire staff may or may not receive every year or so., while helpful, were much too low to offset inflation BEFORE covid. but since Covid not even a "once every 10 year raise" of [x] can offset this type of inflation.

I think having more transparency of the non for profit financials could be a move in the right direction...; toward feeling included in the mission. Also, it could help make staff feel more included if entry and mid-level employees had a voice (it'll be most likely a small one), in how we as an inclusive institution are allocating and make best use of those scarce non-for-profit resources. Starts with accountability & transparency and learn from there what works.

Some major effort at encouraging tipping.

Finances would be a lot less stressful; affecting mine and partner's mental health

Lack of strong fundraising efforts in the org means it is made sustainable on the backs of P-T and freelance labor

Cost of living does not match compensation and every month we dip into our savings to do the work we love in this area.

Fair compensation allows entry- and mid-level employees to feel confident in their positions within the organization and are more likely to stick around long term.

There is no doubt that pay needs to improve. Many colleagues find it difficult to make ends meet on the compensation our arts organization provides. Many of these colleagues like their work, but are stressed and unhappy with compensation. Some feel stuck because there are few alternatives in the Berkshires. Many have left the organization for increased pay and a better work life balance, finding jobs in other areas of the state and abroad. There is no doubt that arts organizations are struggling to recover from Covid and the havoc it has had on the economy by trying to accomplish more work with less employees, and it's affecting mid to lower-level employees by increasing work load demand without increasing pay. It has affected morale, productivity and disrupts continuity within the organization because the employees do not feel valued or fairly compensated, and rightfully so. It's no wonder that my organization has had so much turnover. [Redacted.]

I already answered, but I wanted to add that I hope folks with disabilities are included in the inclusion conversations. Physical and mental. Also, as a seasonal employee, why can't we file for unemployment compensation instead of being hired strictly for a contracted period. [Redacted.]

A Living wage and Conditions are not up to a living wage for the country

[Redacted] more compensation would be greatly appreciated due to the fact that the position is physically and mentally challenging.

Compensation changes can help sustain someone's financial woes if they are in a situation where their cost of living is not up to par compared to others' living conditions. Changes would possibly draw in more attention and applications for those who may potentially want to work in the field of arts and culture.

I love working for the arts, but as I get older, I need to be saving more money, and it's very hard to do in with my salary. The wage disparity between people in leadership positions and those in entry/mid-level is significant. It can be especially disheartening when those (not all) in leadership roles don't seem to be putting in the same amount of time and commitment to the work. There are also people in mid-range roles with pretty significant titles and expectations of their time, who are exempt employees and are not getting paid nearly enough. It is nearly impossible to accomplish the amount of work that is needed in my particular role without going into overtime, which I rarely charge the organization for, since we — like other Berkshire arts organizations — are struggling financially. Unfortunately, if arts organizations want to keep good employees, salaries will have to increase. Otherwise, we will keep losing good people who can keep our organizations moving forward. To clarify some of my multiple-choice answers, our organization does offer health insurance and other benefits that I personally don't use because I am on my [family member's] plan.

All of the above. Improved compensation would also support the growth of local businesses and the local economy. Being able to afford to work in the arts would not be a prerequisite for working in the arts. Employees would be able to plan for their futures. Having children, supporting family members, owning a home, becoming more educated, and enjoying leisure time might all become more possible. Mental health would improve dramatically.

Positions that require a Master's degree at an entry/mid-level should be compensated more to reflect that educational investment, especially since many people (I am privileged to be an exception) will still be paying off student loans.

The biggest financial difficulty in working in the Berkshire area was buying a car. Moving from a more metropolitan area, I needed to buy a car before starting the position. However the relocation support was only \$[x] (and also had to cover my move), so I needed to take out a large loan to cover the majority of my purchase. This monthly payment plus high gas prices has made transportation a large burden on my finances.

The cost of living in Berkshire County is extremely high, and housing is unstable/competitive. Finding affordable rent that is within a reasonable distance from work is a challenge, and compensation changes might alleviate this barrier. Furthermore, retirement contributions would provide security and peace of mind.

My experience is from a different generation with very different work expectations. The work hours and skills required to be successful required a dedication and commitment only compensated by a relaxed flex schedule when it was possible, which was not necessarily when it was needed the most.

There is no clarity about seasonal wages...sometimes high expectations of employees collide with the fact that some sites, like mine, are only open six months a year. Also visitation is off since 9/11. It would be wonderful if other cold weather opportunities existed

It's incredibly difficult to work in this field, and I am deeply privileged with other sources of income/financial support and no student loans. For anyone without those two factors which increase their financial stability, it would be impossible to work in this sector. My job can pay for the absolute bare minimum of my living expenses (rent, utilities, health insurance) and am only able to afford to the rest of those expenses (car insurance, out-of-pocket health expenses, groceries, eating out/entertainment, etc) because I have other income. For instance, right now I am not able to afford both therapy and psychiatry, so I have to choose between the two.

Compensation changes would allow me to save for retirement, afford better housing, attend recreational activities at other venues putting money back into the local economy. It would allow me to broaden my life experience as I would be able to afford the needed things in life and maybe have a bit left over to share with others.

I think particularly entry-level employees would benefit from compensation changes; they would be able to thrive in and fully participate in the Berkshire culture we all love (dining, arts, recreation, etc.), afford better housing, and save for the future.

I would feel valued by my organization and might not need to find so many other sources of income.

Everyone benefits from increased salaries. When employees' cups are full, they are more motivated and have the reserves to give back to their workplaces and communities. Paying employees less than generously (with consideration to the entire job market, not just the non-profit sector) is in direct contradiction to having an altruistic mission.

A challenging and skilled position should earn more than the average no-experience-necessary barista job.

Rent to income is becoming more impossible fiscally as well as rentable locations. Owning a house seems impossible

I believe the salaries for entry and mid-level positions are much too low. Front line staff workers at many institutions also barely make above minimum wage which is not right since they are the face of these institutions. Executive Directors at many of these institutions make disproportionately more than mid- and entry-level workers. Since the cost of living is increasing, it is only fair wages increase as well. The Berkshires are not an affordable place to live with the exception of a few towns where you find a majority of cultural workers live.

Thanks to the freeze on student loans, I haven't had a monthly payment in a while. I certainly will when it starts up again. In fact, the hope of PSLF is a major perk of the job: I'm not sure I would be able to pay them off in any other way.

As a small organization, even on days off I regularly check my email and do a small amount of work, at least while we are open. It's minimal (and mostly due to expectations I put on myself) but would be nice to be nonexistent.

Don't put on shows if you can't afford to pay adequately. Don't dumb down timelines on production to compensate for a tight summer schedule. The corners that get cut and the long, insane hours worked lead to inherently dangerous work environments.

I worked [multiple] jobs (not all at once, but staggered) in my time that I was working at [organization]. I was asked to train people in upper-level management positions who were horribly under qualified for their jobs with no additional pay. If I ever did work in a cultural institution again, it certainly would not be [organization].

More than 2/3 of our entry-/mid-level employees have at least one other job, including myself. Despite having a related college degree, it's nearly impossible to find a job in the area that has adequate pay &/or benefits. It's very stressful to have to work long days due to multiple jobs and impacts our health / wellness. I haven't had a raise that wasn't due to the rise in minimum wage since I was promoted to this position. I love the arts, but it's very difficult to

have the money / time to engage with them beyond work. I'm very concerned that I will never receive greater compensation, or that my position could potentially be outsourced to save money. I feel as if I'm being overlooked entirely.

I'm grateful that [non-profit] employees are working together to unionize. I wish this had come to be a long time ago, as it would have saved a lot of former employees a lot of undue financial stress. I was "strongly encouraged" when I was hired to sign a contract that waived my lunch breaks — I was fresh out of college and easily coerced to do so. My negative experiences there have stopped me from returning to [organization] as a patron, and I regularly discourage friends visiting the area from spending their money at [organization]. They may think that they're "improving" the "culture" of the area, but they are doing nothing to improve the lives of those that they are making money off of.

Compensation changes would allow me to not live paycheck to paycheck and be able to thrive and be more involved as a member of the greater Berkshire County community.

At the time, there were few paid production positions. The rest of the work was performed by interns who received housing, meals, and some small stipend. They worked hard for experience but not enough proper compensation.

Entry level employees should have every opportunity to bolster their skills. They should receive a livable starting wage (compared to the area they live in) and offered plenty of opportunities to learn/advance skills so they can move up the ladder.

[Redacted.]

Creating long term stable jobs for ALL levels of employees (even for workers doing physical labor like myself) is the only way to help low-income art workers survive in the industry.

More money in our pockets means more money in the local economy. I buy things from Amazon and Walmart because I don't make enough to buy local. I haven't been to a local restaurant in a long time because I don't make enough money. When people complain that nobody is patronizing the local businesses, it's because we can't afford to. One cannot expect to work in a thriving community if our employer will not give us enough money to live in the community as well.

At the time of this position, I was living with my parents and I would not have been able to have this job if that was not the case. I worked all through college in a variety of jobs but graduated with no savings. On this salary, I was saving to afford to move out — and when I did, those funds were quickly spent on new costs of living. I constantly worked overtime — especially around our annual event [redacted]. Instead of monetary raises, I received extra weeks of vacation time. I wasn't allowed to take vacation during the summer season and I often had too much work to be able to take any time off — which did not roll over. I felt lucky to be hired right out of college but in hindsight, my friends in other sectors were the lucky ones. Adequate pay and appropriate compensation or policies around overtime ensure that entry level employees are able to build a future to continue in their nonprofit jobs.

I can only speak to my direct experience — but the following anecdotes illustrate an experience that I know is not just my own. Of course adequate compensation would make a massive difference to make life less precarious — it would also have allowed me, then and now, to afford to take advantage of the fabulous organizations and activities in our region in addition to affording to live here. It would be a step to feeling part of the Berkshire community. Even more than compensation, the workplace culture needs to change. I felt a WIDE divide between our patrons/donors/county leaders and myself. My role ranged from training staff & giving grant presentations to cleaning mouse nests & spending entire workdays cleaning out storage units (using my personal car). I babysat (often for board members) and catered on the side. I felt like an object of fascination — taken to special events by board members who then made comments about me doing my laundry at the laundromat and living in a “dangerous” area in Pittsfield. A donor and a board member (separately) asked me about my nationality and then commented, “oh, that’s why you look so ethnic/exotic” (I’m Caucasian). Having FT administrative staff who are responsible for running the very programs that donors are keen to fund — working the bar & serving hors d’oeuvres — it sets a clear tone. For me, it set me up on countless occasions to be talked down to and even yelled at (ex. for pouring a Riesling instead of a Chardonnay) by donors who the next day I would be asked to write a thank you letter to. Paying mid-level employees inadequately, forcing unpaid overtime, and setting them up for uncomfortable social situations has lasting social and emotional effects.

I feel beholden to my salary to uphold my family’s standard of living. If I could work less and make less in order to have more time with my family, I would.

There needs to be room for growth in these jobs. After recently asking for a moderate raise to what is on par with similar jobs and taking into account increased responsibilities, I was told the number I asked for ([x]k) was more than my manager made. This was greatly upsetting, knowing that many of my colleagues in manager level positions work second jobs to make ends meet. We all work so hard and we make the [organization] the great place that it is and it’s appalling that we aren’t properly compensated for everything we all do.

Unfortunately, to make up for years of being underpaid organizations like mine would have to totally revamp their processes and increase pay dramatically. Paying someone so little puts them into a perpetual state of worry, unease and hopelessness. Financially, chronic low wages create a situation that isn’t easily remedied by a small COLA or small percentage raise over 5 years.

Thank you for your responses, and for the important work you do. Please add any comments or feedback regarding this survey.

Very necessary to start putting a spotlight on arts + culture organizations. Salaries, Part-time hourly rates, and no benefits are choking the sector.

Happy to contribute some feedback. Thanks for doing this work!

When I left my position at that job it took 3 people (two part time positions and one full time position plus an independent contractor) to replace me, I was literally doing the job of 3 people. I had begged the board of directors and administrators to hire me support staff. [When ill] I was expected to use all my accrued days off to pay myself for my recovery and nobody picked up any of my work while I was absent. They let it pile up during my recovery. I’m a dedicated steward of the arts and I have worked for and with many of the major institutions in both regions. Most of them treat their employees this way.

Thanks for asking!

I answered as a freelancer which can be like a part timer in some respects but still doesn’t encompass the entire story — but I wanted to input my experience in case it is of help. If it isn’t, I suggest creating a survey that includes the short-term contracted workers that many arts orgs hire seasonally or on a show by show basis. I imagine those stories and feedback will be of great use.

Thank you for pursuing this study

Thank you for facilitating this survey. Our area thrives because of the arts, cultural, and educational offerings in our county, and low pay is problematic for retaining great staff.

Greatly support this initiative! Thank you for your time and efforts to make it happen.

Thank you all!

Thank you for the work you’re doing.

I do not know if salaries are any higher 12 +years after I left this job but I doubt it. Working conditions were unpleasant as I was treated worthless [redacted]. Too many unpaid hours, jobs piled on, not paid for doing what I was hired for. [Redacted.] I wouldn’t recommend this type of job as you are not considered valuable but really you are what keeps the company running.

You should add a question about length of job you are referring to or questions about how many weeks a year you are employed in the local cultural sector at that rate. For arts orgs the salary can look livable but if you only earn that for 5-8 weeks and then go to a job paying 1/3rd of it you are only getting part of the picture. Would also be work asking if the salary is influenced by union CBAs.

A living wage in the Berkshires is over \$20. Employers should pay it.

This is SUCH an important topic. I'm in a great place now, compensated well in a senior role, but that was only possible because I was willing (and able) to take the jobs that paid less, and work multiple jobs for years, to establish a foundation for myself. I hope that this does not continue to be the case

Thank you for the opportunity to fill this out! :)

Thank you :)

Thank you.

Thanks for seeking input on all this, I appreciate your work and the conversations it will spark!

I hope it helps. My coworkers and I are incredibly knowledgeable and educated and taken advantage of.

I so appreciated the article in the Eagle and knowing that this issue is being addressed. It's high time! THANK YOU!

Please feel free to contact me if you need further input or clarification.

Thank you for conducting this survey and for doing this work. It is so important. Seeing this action being taken, and driven by a funder, is heartening. I admire the nonprofits who are participating – it says so much about your priorities and the care you have for workers. I do not believe that nonprofits will fully adopt equitable practices without pressure from funders. Please consider making fair and equitable compensation a funding eligibility requirement.

Clear policies about how to be reimbursed for qualifying expenses, making sure that reimbursement levels are at or beyond minimum standards (these often lagged way behind), and identifying a way to acknowledge projects and time periods when extensive hours were required were not part of my early years; and I am not sure they to the degree in which they are clear to those on staff today.

It seems that employees expect opportunities to appear without greater visitation, more demand. On the other hand, some grant money that is raised SHOULD go to higher wages for lowest wage workers

Thanks for doing this work!

While I agree that compensation needs to be increased, support for the cultural companies that employ us also needs to be increased. Because of my position I know how strapped my company truly is and believe that were it possible they would offer me more in compensation. Covid is an ongoing issue for the arts both in interacting with each other and the potential for emergency shutdowns should an [employee] test positive. All of that has an economic impact, from weekly testing costs to hiring extra [staff] to the cost of [redacted] losing all the potential revenue that would have been. Pretending that everything has gone back to "normal" is just sticking our collective heads in the sand thinking.

Thank you for allowing me to fill this out

NA

Very happy to see this conversation being had.

I'm sorry that I'm unable to provide more information – I would be very easily identified by providing the name of my organization, even with the limited information listed in the survey, as the organization is very small. I'm concerned that answering things in more detail could negatively impact my employment, but I still felt compelled to participate even in this limited manner. Hopefully you can understand regardless.

I'd like to note that I'm disabled, but this is thankfully not an issue within my current organization. However, this has been something that has been an issue at another arts organization in the area [redacted], which is part of the reason they're a former place of employment.

Thank you for your hard work – best of luck!

Thank you for researching this topic.

All answers in this survey were answered as they would be at the time of this position.

I answered this survey as I would have at the time of this position.

Thank you for organizing this survey. I hope change is able to come of it.

I am concerned about the confidentiality of the survey but at this point I'm so dejected by my current circumstances that I'm not afraid of retaliation. The paranoia inherent in that statement says it all.
