



Berkshire/Columbia Counties
2024 Pay Equity Project

SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

PREPARED BY: Aron Goldman & Kristen van Ginhoven

**Passion doesn't
pay the rent.**





Pay Equity Coalition Members

Ancram Center for the Arts, Art Omi, Barrington Stage Company, Berkshire Art Center, Berkshire Dance Theatre, Berkshire Museum, Berkshire Music School, Community Access to the Arts (CATA), Flying Cloud Institute, Hancock Shaker Village, The Hudson Eye, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, The Mount: Edith Wharton’s Home, Susan B. Anthony Museum, Ventfort Hall, WAM Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival

Mission Statement

We hear and acknowledge the pay equity struggles of entry and mid level employees of cultural organizations and we recognize the related struggles of our cultural organizations to address this issue.

Our Coalition works together to support and transform our organizations’ efforts to improve wages and benefits through shared learning, inspiration, and accountability. We create shared knowledge and resources to advance and create public visibility for equitable compensation.

Acknowledgements

The Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project is a truly collaborative project that would not exist without meaningful guidance and contributions from: Association of Performing Arts Professionals, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Natalia Bernal, Melissa Canavan (Berkshire Immigrant Center), Sharron Frazier-McClain, Lauren Levato Coyne, Gwendolyn Hampton VanSant (Multicultural BRIDGE), Mass Creative, Erin Murphy Design, Erica Spizz (CTSB), Theatre Communications Group, Arts Administrators of Color Network, The Barr Foundation, and Liana Toscanini (Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires).

Summary, Findings, and Recommendations

Entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers in this region struggle to put gas in their cars, find decent housing, access basic healthcare, feed their families, and as a result, maintain their financial, physical, and emotional wellbeing. These challenges are more pronounced for people of color and other identity groups who have historically experienced oppression. The potential exodus of these workers from the sector and region has a destabilizing effect on institutions, diminishes artistic expression, and threatens the creative economy for which this region is internationally known.

In 2023, the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project released its first report, which dramatically tells this story with original data, the voices of workers themselves, and concrete recommendations for employers (to which Coalition members have committed themselves). 2023 recommendations can be found in APPENDIX A. The report received regional and national attention, and having grown from six to eighteen arts and culture institutions, the project is now a movement.

Our second report, released at the 2024 Pay Equity Summit at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, documents progress made, and remaining barriers from the perspectives of workers and employers. And like last year's report, a national scan of emergent research and analysis related to pay equity is also included.

While some entry- and mid-level workers responding in 2024 continue to feel their situation is unsustainable and that modest compensation increases do not alter this reality, many are noticing a wide range of financial and non-financial improvements that are making a real difference. Workers report cost of living adjustments that reflect actual cost increases, benefits expansion including health insurance for part-time workers and

retirement plan improvements. They also report the positive mental health consequences, and in turn, the palpable effect on staff morale, of conspicuous effort on the part of employers.

“At this point I feel confident in [my employer’s] steadfast progress in its pay equity initiative...This affords me a trust and comfort that allows me to focus on my work and the plans that the organization has in regards to its mission instead of working two or three other jobs on top of this one.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

Using a separate survey, employers also provided a laundry list of short-term incremental improvements for entry- and mid-level workers, and long-term planning to get to living wage goals. Employers also report organizational culture changing as a result of these measures. Improved morale leads to reduced turnover and a corresponding long-term cost reduction that can offset new costs associated with pay equity initiatives.

“Our goal is to get our minimum pay rate up to \$20 per hour. I am just starting the budgeting process for 2025, and I will model that in. I hope to make the numbers work. We know that’s just the beginning. However, I have already seen a difference in morale and teamwork in our organization. We all know we are not being paid what we are worth, but we all know we are working together to build something that will create enough income to support higher salaries.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONDENT

A more detailed inventory of employee and employer responses is contained in the full report.

Our national scan of emerging research and innovation shows that many organizations beyond the region and the arts and culture sector specifically are having similar experiences. In contrast to the notion of a “DEI backlash,” which is certainly having negative impacts, many institutions continue to make real changes and hold themselves accountable in creative ways. Some measures require significant financial commitments from employers, but many effective measures do not.

In terms of legislation and public sector support for pay equity, on July 31, 2024 Massachusetts passed a pay transparency bill requiring all employers with 25 or more employees to include salary bands on job announcements and report compensation and demographic data to help identify wage gaps by race, ethnicity, gender, and job category. This bill goes into effect on July 31, 2025. In addition, the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act signed by the Governor on August 6, 2024 allocated \$5 million to assess the feasibility of “seasonal supportive housing for the non-profit creative economy in Berkshire county.”

On September 20, 2024, the Commonwealth announced the creation of the Cultural Economy Advisory Council, explained as “public and private sector stakeholders charged with exploring policies that support artists and cultural organizations, examining ways to create economic opportunities in the arts and culture sector, and promoting cultural equity in the arts.”

Going forward, the Pay Equity Coalition will continue to meet quarterly for mutual support, to serve as a clearinghouse for practical strategies, and for mutual accountability. The Coalition will also continue to implement short- and long-term organizational pay equity strategies that are identified in this report and the 2023 Pay Equity Report, in the context of each organization’s circumstances. Beyond this function, continued expansion and progress will require multi-year public and/or private support to sustain and institutionalize the Pay Equity Project.

Contingent on additional support, the Coalition can commit to the following recommendations, and model them sector-wide:

- Continuing to implement pay equity practices within our organizations, including those named in the 2023 and 2024 Pay Equity Reports.
- Identifying one or more of the structural barriers and systems change priorities identified in Phase 2, including housing, transportation, and healthcare.
- Reporting progress made toward employer and collective systems change.
- Continuing to grow the Coalition and movement, and creatively including entry- and mid-level workers themselves in all aspects of the work.
- Documenting and inspiring additional progress toward employer and collective systems changes with a 2025 Pay Equity Report and Pay Equity Summit.

Pay equity is intrinsically valuable. But it also leads to organizational effectiveness, artistic expression that inspires, and a vital creative economy. The Pay Equity Project has come a long way towards these objectives in a short time. Join us!

To learn more, or to get involved, go to npckerkshires.org/payequity or contact Kristen van Ginhoven at kristen@kristenvanginhoven.com or Aron Goldman at aronpgoldman@gmail.com.



Gwendolyn VanSant, CEO, Multicultural BRIDGE presenting at the 2023 Pay Equity Summit

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Background, Context, and Methodology

The Pay Equity Project was born from regional and global trends that have converged, presenting insurmountable obstacles for many entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers. For decades, entry into the arts and culture sector has typically involved uncompensated or barely compensated positions in the context of the justificatory idea, “you’ve got to pay your dues...” and the romantic image of the starving artist.

The reality is much less romantic. Entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers in this region struggle to put gas in their cars, find decent housing, access basic healthcare, feed their families, and as a result, maintain their financial, physical, and emotional wellbeing. These challenges are more pronounced for people of color and other identity groups who have historically experienced oppression. Beyond the significant intrinsic harm, the potential exodus of these workers from the sector and region has a destabilizing effect on institutions, diminishes artistic expression, and threatens the creative economy for which this region is internationally known.

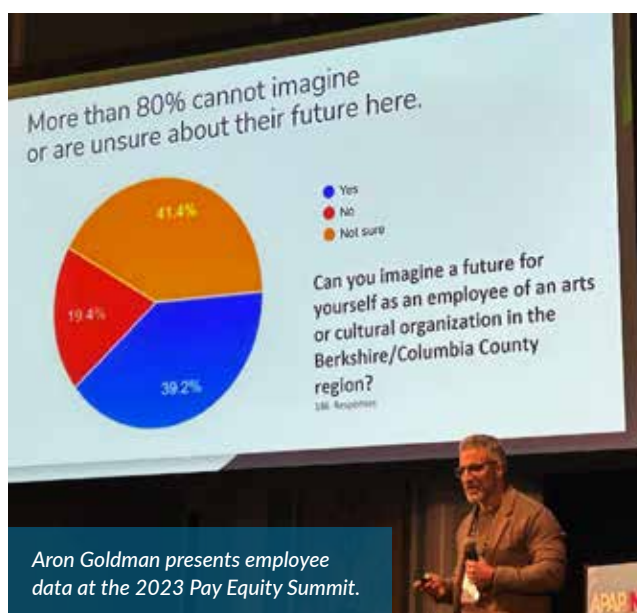
If not addressed, while not always the case, the practical reality is that it is often people with privilege (ex. race, class, gender, ability, class) and independent sources of wealth who can afford to fill entry- and mid-level positions.

In 2020, a “double pandemic” of Covid and a global racial reckoning began, and the pay equity problem reached a tipping point. Grassroots movements such as Change the Museum, an open letter to White American Theater, and Change Berkshire Culture, are just a few of the efforts that organically emerged to draw attention to this invisible underclass. At the same time, the US labor movement is enjoying a resurgence in response to similar concerns. Worsening inequity, combined with a new appetite to consider transformative approaches, meant the time was ripe for the formation of a collaborative initiative called the Pay Equity Project.

The Pay Equity Project was a capstone project conceived by some members of the 2021 Inclusive Leadership Cohort (ILC) led by Multicultural BRIDGE, a Berkshires-based organization, which was funded in part by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. The ILC is a year-long, peer-led program hosted at BRIDGE for leaders committed to equity and inclusion. During the year-long ILC program, BRIDGE provided the equity-based training, relationship building, and motivation to inspire and fuel this initiative.

Having formed the inaugural group of six arts and culture organizations committed to making change, the next step was to recruit a consultant to conduct research and compile a report conceived by the Coalition, give it structure, collaborate on the development of the mission and strategy, and help to ensure that the initiative stayed true to its equity values both in terms of impact and methodology.

Aron Goldman was selected to guide the initiative based on his combination of regional and national experience building the capacity of social purpose organizations to do bold and holistic racial equity work with an emphasis on creative inclusion.



Creative Inclusion

Centering entry- and mid-level workers themselves has been a priority from the start, using a community based participatory research (CBPR) model:

- Our original qualitative and quantitative research — including anonymous short- and long-form survey data, focus groups, and key stakeholder interviews — solicits data from workers themselves, with institutional data playing a secondary or supplementary role.
- Workers themselves have been recruited to help disseminate surveys, interpret data, contribute to recommendations and overall direction, present findings, and recruit additional workers to help.
- The Coalition includes two “affiliate technical assistance providers” who help design our inclusion strategy, access underrepresented communities, and evaluate our performance: Gwendolyn Hampton VanSant (Multicultural BRIDGE), Melissa Canavan (Berkshire Immigrant Center).
- All entry- and mid-level worker contributions to the project are compensated.

→ **The Coalition will continue to pursue additional ways, individually and collectively, to do more to creatively include entry- and mid-level workers themselves in ways that improve our work and align with our values.**

The 2023 Coalition recommendations are included in APPENDIX A and the full report is available at: npckberkshires.org/payequity



Melissa Martinez Canavan (Berkshire Immigrant Center) and Kristin Grippo (Berkshire Art Center) read quotes from entry- and mid-level workers.

Phase 1

During Phase 1, the Coalition spent twelve months conducting original quantitative and qualitative research, using a variety of approaches in order to get the most comprehensive and holistic sense of the experience of entry- and mid-level workers.

The result was a seminal Pay Equity Report, released in June 2023 at the first Pay Equity Summit at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The report combined original regional data and human-level stories with a national scan of leading edge pay equity work. The combination of the data and the event, where workers themselves shared their first-hand experience struggling to survive doing what they love, garnered significant attention locally and nationally.

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

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT

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

FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT

Subsequent to the report release and summit, the Pay Equity Project was covered by almost every regional media outlet (see MEDIA COVERAGE section below). The Project has also been recognized nationally. An article written by Aron Goldman, “Passion Doesn’t Pay the Rent: Why the Arts Must Embrace Pay Equity,” appeared in the Nonprofit Quarterly (7/25/23), and project co-leads Kristen van Ginhoven and Aron Goldman were invited to present the Pay Equity Project at two national conferences: Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP) conference in New York City, and the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) conference in Chicago.

This work – the Coalition formation, research and report release, and the summit – constituted Phase 1 of the Pay Equity Project.

In January 2024, Kristen van Ginhoven, formerly artistic director at WAM Theatre, joined Aron as project co-lead, contributing her leadership, oversight, and deep regional knowledge and relationships.

Since the initial summit, the Coalition has grown to 18 (and counting) organizations. At the time of publication, the Coalition members are: Ancram Center for the Arts, Art Omi, Barrington Stage Company, Berkshire Art Center, Berkshire Dance Theatre, Berkshire Museum, Berkshire Music School, Community Access to the Arts (CATA), Flying Cloud Institute, Hancock Shaker Village, The Hudson Eye, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, The Mount, Edith Wharton’s Home, Susan B. Anthony Museum, Ventfort Hall, WAM Theatre, and Williamstown Theatre Festival.

The full Coalition meets quarterly. In addition to project updates, the time is used as an active exchange of pay equity questions, challenges, and strategies among members. Committees are occasionally formed for specific tasks suited to a smaller group. Committees have included summit planning, mission/vision/values, and media.



Janis Martinson (Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center), Aron Goldman, (Project Co-Lead), and Kristen van Ginhoven (Project Co-Lead) present at the annual Association of Performing Arts Professionals.

Phase 2

Phase 2, which began in June 2023, has three priorities:

Board Road Show

One lesson from Phase 1 was that boards of trustees for arts and culture organizations share the equity values championed by the project, but often lack awareness of the circumstances of the least paid workers within the organizations they preside over. This dramatic gap in understanding is addressed with a 30-minute presentation and discussion led by Kristen and Aron, using data visualization and a powerful video of entry- and mid-level workers describing their own circumstances. Over 20 organizations have experienced the presentation (some live, some virtual), including some associations of organizations. In every case, participants were struck by the data and stories, and motivated to find ways to make short- and long-term improvements.

The 2024 Pay Equity Summit

The second annual summit in September is an opportunity to showcase the progress made by individual employers who are actively implementing the 2023 recommendations. We will also present follow up research and analysis (including the release of this report), and build momentum for the regional pay equity movement.

Collective Systems Change

The Coalition has had substantive discussions with elected officials and regional stakeholder institutions. The goals of these discussions are to present our findings and identify opportunities at the systems level to collectively make change. Discussions have been held with a wide range of people invested in collective systems change including: 1Berkshire, Berkshire Black Economic Council, Berkshire United Way, Community Foundation of Western MA, MA State Representatives John Barrett, Tricia Farley-Bouvier and Smitty Pignatelli, MA State Senator Paul Mark,

Mass Creative, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Massachusetts Nonprofit Network, Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, and visits in Washington D.C. to the offices of our federal representatives. In each meeting three areas of collective systems change have been identified as having cross sector challenges: health care, transportation and housing. In turn, regional elected representatives and other stakeholders have referred us to several emerging and ongoing efforts to address these barriers, including:

- Micro-transit
- Artisan housing
- Pooled healthcare

The Coalition is committed to continued conversation with elected officials and other advocacy organizations to explore proposals related to housing, healthcare, and transportation which could substantially impact the lives of entry- and mid-level cultural workers, and to use our voices and positions to advocate for solutions in concert with others. One example of future impact is the Affordable Homes Act, signed by the Massachusetts Governor on August 6, 2024, which included \$5,000,000 for seasonal supportive housing for the non-profit creative economy in Berkshire County.

We recognize that collective systems change in these sweeping areas is work that goes beyond our specific Coalition but understand that we can meaningfully contribute by strongly advocating for the needs of our sector and our vital entry- and mid-level workers.

Phase 3

Phase 3, which begins with the release of this report, is uncertain. The Pay Equity Project has grown rapidly, and accomplished a lot with minimal resources. At a minimum, the Coalition will continue to meet quarterly for mutual support, to serve as a clearinghouse for practical strategies, and for mutual accountability as individual organizations continue to work to implement pay equity changes. Beyond this function, continued expansion and progress will require multi-year public and/or private support to sustain and institutionalize the Pay Equity Project.

Institutional funding will also allow the Coalition to:

- Advance the advocacy and collective systems change priorities identified in Phase 2. The Coalition could determine the viability of each opportunity and mobilize the resources of Coalition members to pursue them;
- Continue to grow the Coalition and movement, and model creative inclusion; and
- Produce a third annual pay equity summit and report for 2025.

The expectation of Coalition members are as follows:

- Join the quarterly meetings where there is an active exchange of pay equity questions, challenges, and strategies among members.
- Promote pay equity efforts, as appropriate to each member organization or as the cohort agrees, with our boards, peer organizations, funders, policy makers, and the media.
- Actively implement employer-level and collective recommendations from our pay equity report.
- Commit to staff and board participation and engagement in quarterly gathering, annual pay equity summits, and other opportunities.
- Join with the cohort on a variety of private and public grant opportunities to support the movement, individual Coalition members, and entry- and mid-level workers themselves.
- Contribute a nominal amount as a symbolic gesture to demonstrate commitment and solidarity (cohort members contribute between \$500 and \$2,500).



Employee Survey Findings

The 2024 Pay Equity Project Follow Up Survey for Entry- and Mid-Level Employees yielded 51 responses representing 46 different position titles (though many were similar) at 27 different organizations. Respondent roles are spread among typical nonprofit functions: administration, finance, facilities, development, and programs.

The first Pay Equity project survey for entry- and mid-level employees in 2023 (which yielded 181 responses) was intended to gather as many details as possible about the experience and status of workers using both quantitative and qualitative data in order to establish a clear baseline. For the second survey just one year later, it would be hard to quantify meaningful improvements for individuals; therefore we used two open-ended questions to collect a smaller number of responses that offered richer first-hand testimony about experiences and perspectives that may indicate structural improvements, trends, strategies, and other insights.

Question #1:

Has any aspect of your compensation or benefits improved in the past year or so in a way that has helped you or your family survive or thrive? Please provide specific examples.

61% of respondents reported meaningful improvements to their cash and non-cash compensation, including:

- Cash raises and bonuses
- Retirement plan options (401K, IRA)
- Health and dental insurance, sometimes without an employee contribution, and sometimes for part-time workers
- Health Savings Account (HSA) option
- Increased PTO (including Covid leave)
- Hybrid work policy

- Ability to negotiate salary
- COLA that conforms to inflation rates, and sometimes beyond
- More opportunities for paid work during the off-season
- Overtime pay
- Mileage reimbursement
- Professional development

While most of these improvements have concrete budget implications for employers, several do not. And all of these measures tend to have secondary benefits for employers in terms of job satisfaction, morale, organizational culture, performance, and retention. Beyond the intrinsic value, these benefits also have significant positive budget implications for employers, despite being more difficult to calculate.

“At this point I feel confident in [my employer’s] steadfast progress in its pay equity initiative...This affords me a trust and comfort that allows me to focus on my work and the plans that the organization has in regards to its mission instead of working two or three other jobs on top of this one.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

At the same time, pay equity continues to be an urgent priority. 31% of respondents reported that their total compensation did not improve, and in some cases, declined. Several cited measures that could appear to be improvements, but respondents felt they were not, including:

- Ad hoc bonuses in place of permanent raises
- COLA increases that did not match inflation
- Conforming to state law minimum wage rates
- Nominal raises that still fall well short of the MIT Living Wage Calculator and basic family needs, or do not reflect experience and years of service

Others cited the lack of employer contributions to health insurance and furloughs.

Several respondents reported being new to their positions, and therefore could not comment on institutional improvements. But some reported compensation improvements as a result of changing employers, and one respondent explained that their move was inspired by the Pay Equity Project specifically:

“As a result of the Pay Equity survey, I chose to leave my former employer and take a position with a different arts organization. The pay inequity that was revealed and not amended was too difficult to manage, so I left my former position. I make \$6,000 more in my new position, which still can be difficult when compared to the amount of hours I work, but I am not struggling to pay bills in the way I was before.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

The percentage of respondents who did and did not report improvements does not add up to 100% because several respondents did not report either, or cited both improvements and declines.

Question #2:

Please share any additional insights, perspectives, questions, needs, or ideas for making change at the employer or sector level.

Respondents offered several additional barriers, including:

- Employees classified as exempt and not receiving overtime pay*
- No breaks*
- Job insecurity
- Regional wage disparities (e.g., eastern Massachusetts, Hartford)
- Employer reliance on 1099 workers (consulting basis personnel), exempting employers from insurance obligations
- Lack of affordable housing

*Note: Depending on circumstances, these may be in violation of employment law.

Respondents had several ideas for improvements, including:

- Collective sector-wide health insurance plan negotiation
- “Equity assessment” budget line on top of regular state arts funding
- Regular performance reviews that determine salary increases (and control “job creep”)
- Increase worker inclusion in the Pay Equity Project, including the audience for the annual summit, so that mandates are coming more conspicuously from entry- and mid-level workers themselves
- Unionization
- Pay ratios between CEOs and entry-level workers should be tracked, reported, and reduced
- Gym reimbursement (particularly important during winter)

One insight from a respondent about work/life balance captures the range of benefits that pay equity presents:

“If you know you're getting highly paid for each hour, two frames of mind can come out of it. Firstly, you may feel more of an instinctual need to spend each moment working to your highest capability and efficiency, out of respect for what your high wage says about the quality of work expected. Secondly, higher wages mean a person has more freedom to potentially work fewer hours and still sustain their lives (4-day work week, 6-hour work day, etc.). This could mean the highly paid worker would be more likely to fill those fewer hours more efficiently, instead of stretching out the workday with distractions to make ends meet.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

Finally, the actual words from three other respondents help make pay equity issues real:

“I recently turned down a job offer in Hartford that would almost double my salary to do a fraction of the work. Why? Because I believe that we can start to close the gap. I enjoy and appreciate where I live, where I work, and the community here. I want to stay. The truth is if we do not do something, people like me with almost 20 years of my career here in the Berkshires will not be able to afford to stay.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

“I make 40K — the company just made me non-exempt—so overtime will be a thing, I'm genuinely scared I won't have a job, or they will eek around having to increase my pay come January 1. I'm a single mom and I don't know how long I can live in debt. I'd love to learn more about this and will get a babysitter for Sept 25th — thank you.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

“I make \$42,500 per year, no benefits and don't get paid overtime. I usually don't get any breaks during the day — not even a lunch”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

Several respondents also expressed their gratitude and encouragement for the Pay Equity Project:

“Keep doing what you are doing.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

“I believe in this project and am happy to participate.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

“Thank you.”

ANONYMOUS EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONDENT

See APPENDIX B for the complete set of verbatim employee survey responses.

Employer Survey Findings

The 2024 Pay Equity Project survey for employers yielded responses from 19 organizations with annual budgets ranging from \$120,000 to \$22 million.

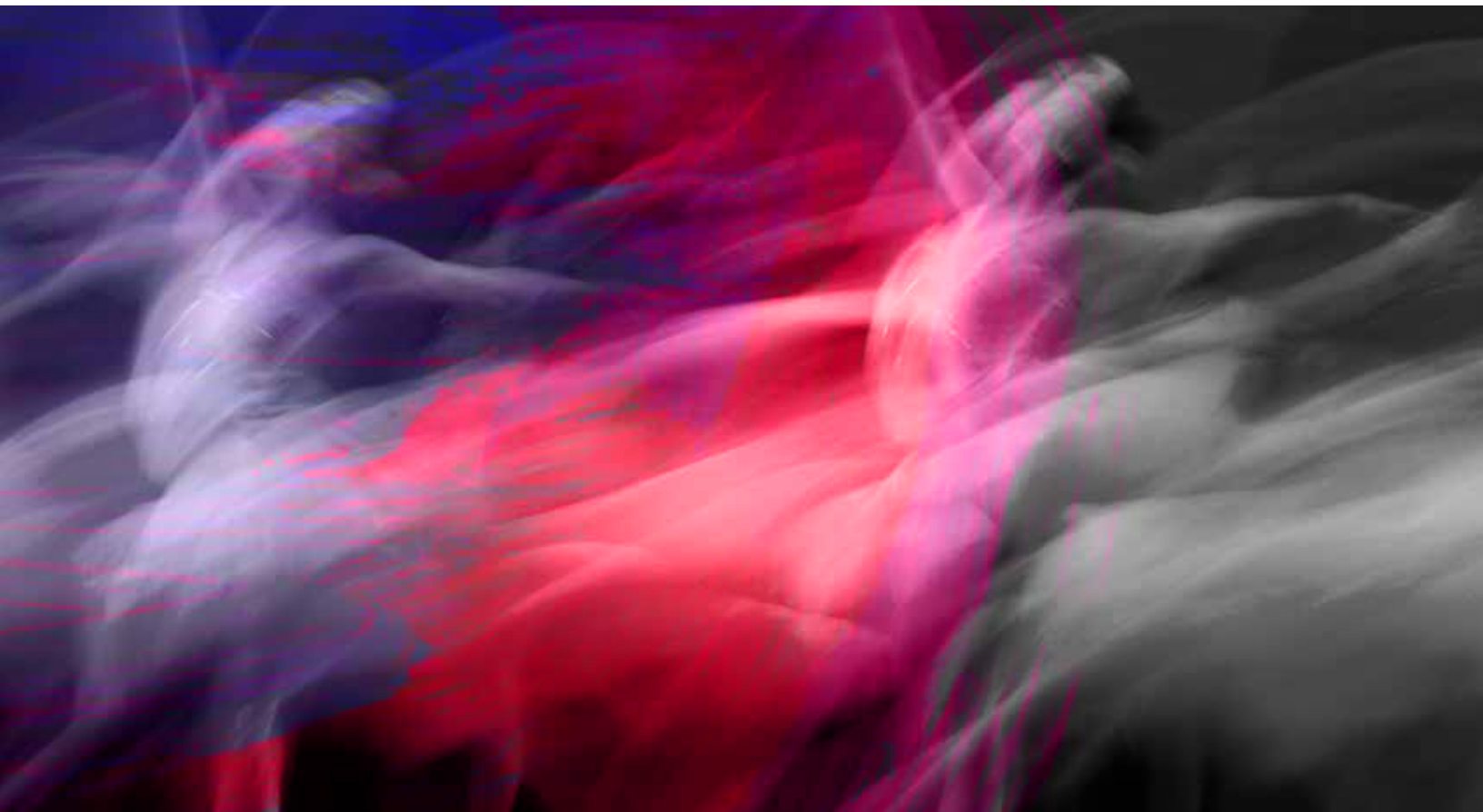
All but one organization reported having taken steps to advance pay equity within their organization, and in most cases, organizations implemented multiple tangible changes for entry- and mid-level employees including:

- Raised minimum wages from the legal minimum by three dollars per hour.
- Raised salaries to match evolved job responsibilities, reviewed annually.
- Flexible schedules.
- Revised program plans based on actual personnel costs when workers are supported.
- Conducted a full compensation review/audit and market salary benchmarking led by outside expert.
- New policy that establishes uniform annual COLA increases based on a percentage of the salary of the second-highest paid employee.
- Organization-wide anonymous staff survey to understand if employees feel they are being paid fairly for the work they do, including wages and benefits, and soliciting ideas for changes that would have the most impact.
- Brought salaries of veteran staff up to the levels of their new-hire counterparts.
- New health insurance that is more affordable for workers and provides better coverage.
- Health insurance provided to all full-time employees.
- Added health insurance family plan.
- Eliminated employee health insurance premium.
- Expanded full health insurance coverage to 30 hours/week staff, made several positions full-time, including teaching artists.
- 50% reimbursement for health insurance deductibles.
- Added or improved dental insurance.
- Contracted with an outside HR firm to expand advising on benefits and to give employees access to HR experts to answer questions about health insurance and other benefits.



The staff of Art Omi, 2024

- Provided monitors and remote keyboards for home use to promote ergonomic work habits when working from home.
- Implemented monthly in-person staff lunches.
- Developing an improved employee handbook to provide better transparency and better reflect organizational current culture.
- Created a bank for sharing unused healthcare leave and, when possible, have provided wellness grants.
- Increased paid time off (PTO).
- Unlimited PTO policy.
- Expanded bereavement policy.
- Institutionalized a one-week Restorative Week at the close of the program/budget year.
- 4% COLA.
- Expand 401K program to seasonal and part-time workers.
- Employer pays 100% of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act (PFMLA) withholding cost (beyond the 55% that is required by law).
- Increased 401K employer match.
- Introduced cost-free disability plus life insurance.
- Introduced CORE Empowerment Retirement plan.
- Introduced monthly technology and phone stipend.
- Job postings now give numeric pay range.
- Diversity policies and goals included in job postings.
- Increased overtime to reflect actual hours worked.
- Expanded housing for seasonal employees.
- Paid cultural competency/anti-harassment training required of all employees.
- Advocated for pay equity support from the chamber of commerce and the National Small Business Association (NSBA), and proposed that the Pay Equity Project be represented on the Board of the NSBA.
- Joined the Pay Equity Coalition.
- Invited Pay Equity Project representatives to present to the board.



Additional Insights from Employers

For many employers, immediate conformity with the MIT Living Wage Calculator isn't possible. In those cases, incremental increases, and transparent and inclusive planning to get to living wage levels can be effective, while increasing morale, retention, and overall organizational culture. According to one employer:

“Our goal is to get our minimum pay rate up to \$20 per hour. I am just starting the budgeting process for 2025, and I will model that in. I hope to make the numbers work. We know that's just the beginning. However, I have already seen a difference in morale and teamwork in our organization. We all know we are not being paid what we are worth, but we all know we are working together to build something that will create enough income to support higher salaries. And in the meantime, we love what we do, and each other!”

EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONDENT

IRS 990 and PC forms are commonly used to access compensation numbers for the highest paid professionals, but there is no requirement to disclose compensation numbers for the lowest paid employees. This survey, in a small way, is the data for the rest of us. One employer explains that if this data were more available, employers could more effectively benchmark their compensation: “It would be very helpful in setting our rates and benefits to not fall behind our peers.”

The regional cost of living and healthcare cost are cited as structural barriers to livable wages:

“The issues we are facing are high healthcare costs to meet MA minimum requirements and difficulty fundraising to meet the rising cost of living locally.”

EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONDENT

In addition to medical plans, collectively managed retirement plans were identified as a need. One barrier is that plans that cover employees living in multiple states (Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York are all commutable for many regional employers) are even more expensive.

Pay equity is intrinsically valuable, and the right thing to do. But inequity is also the biggest threat to employers' survival, their ability to advance their missions, and the vitality and sustainability of artistic expression:

“Advancing pay equity is utterly essential for our survival as individual organizations and as a sector. Our organizations can't deliver on our missions without top-quality people: to attract and retain talent, and to build organizations that reflect the communities we serve, we need equitable, fair compensation that enables people to build a life. I am deeply grateful for the work of the Pay Equity Coalition in bringing these issues to light and advocating for change across our community.”

EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONDENT

Another opportunity identified by employers to make meaningful upstream systems changes is to urge regional funders to think differently about grantee program and community impact by appreciating the human infrastructure that is required to create and sustain impact.

“Get foundations – specifically banks – to understand that our big expense and most critical asset is our staff! Please fund staff time!”

EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONDENT

Partly as a result of lessons learned during the Covid pandemic, funders are already loosening restrictions and administrative overhead expectations. And while funder resources are limited, increasing personnel allocations and using different budget evaluation criteria are opportunities. At a more structural level, thinking differently about payout rates, spending down, exceeding CRA (Community Reinvestment Act) requirements, and funding endowments for grantees are all also opportunities for funders to have an impact on pay equity among grantees.

With a brief remark, one employer alludes to a number of barriers and opportunities:

“It takes a long time to get board buy-in.”

EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONDENT

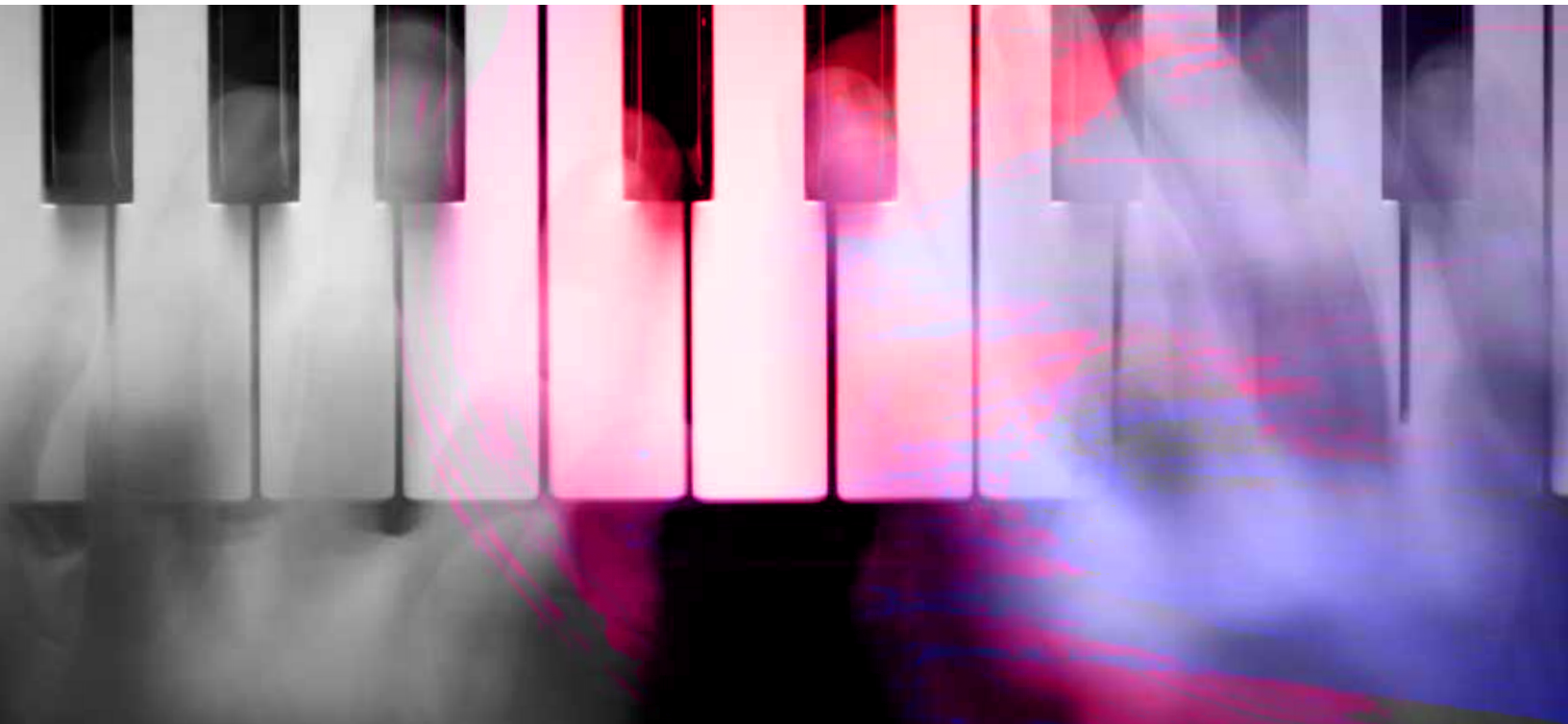
The 2023 Pay Equity Report, and the significant number of conversations with regional boards of trustees since the release of that report, have revealed a profound and consequential culture gap between boards and employees (particularly at the entry levels). The bedrock values commitment to

equity is reliably in place among board members, but the first-hand awareness of the urgent and existential struggles of workers, and the impact of these struggles on the entire organization, is too often conspicuously absent. In addition to a strong motivation to contribute, board members often come with different experiences and assumptions. Using the Pay Equity Project “Board Road Show” to build awareness with direct, creative, and humanizing approaches has had a dramatic and palpable impact. In turn, boards are more able to set overall priorities for the institutions they oversee, and help generate financial, political, and other external support in service of pay equity.

Finally, mirroring the messages from workers themselves, the need for safe and affordable transportation is observed by employers too:

“Staff have remarked about the cost of transportation in the area, and I wonder what other organizations are doing to address this? We have not found a solution as of yet.”

EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONDENT



Three Employer Profiles

This section includes in-depth profiles of three Coalition member organizations and their experience implementing pay equity strategies.

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

Jacob's Pillow has made pay equity a high priority. The organization has made many meaningful changes with buy-in from both the staff and board. The practical changes have had the cumulative effect of increasing morale, strengthening organizational culture, reducing turnover, facilitating recruitment, and helping the organization generally run more smoothly.

One of the biggest changes was a new compensation policy approved in December 2022. The policy was the result of many conversations, input from all levels of staff and the board, and outside consultants. Salary increases as a result of the new policy are taking place over a three-year phase-in period.

Jacob's Pillow Deputy Director A. J. Pietrantone explains that "salary averages and medians are important reference points, but individual situations still have impact. We need the flexibility to accommodate individual situations to ensure that everyone has the ability to do their best work and take care of themselves. Our new compensation policy explicitly allows for that."

Jacob's Pillow's strategic plan states that, in order to be a "people-centered organization," the welfare of artists, audiences, and the staff must all be priorities. One example is that decisions around program schedules and the costs of program delivery include a consideration of hardship on staff. Ignoring short term costs in this area can lead to more significant longer-term costs. Jacob's Pillow recently shortened the length of its main summer festival from ten to nine weeks partly based on these considerations. The mandatory six-day work week policy for this period

was also eliminated and transitioned to an as-needed element. The staff was pleased, morale increased, the festival ran more smoothly, audience numbers increased, and the overall quality of programming was enhanced.

Another tangible development is the creation of a formal human resources department and its expansion to four full-time staff over the past five years. This department includes a director of strategic initiatives, people and culture, whose job is to understand staff needs, identify equity challenges, monitor wellness and workplace satisfaction, and help facilitate an inclusive process to make changes.

The values that are the foundation of pay equity are based in the organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) steering committee. The advisory committee meets twice per month, with representation from every department (including seasonal staff), and all members receive additional compensation for their service.

One guiding principle Pietrantone uses to explain his approach to pay equity at Jacob's Pillow is to be transparent and be available. After adoption of the policy, he met with each employee to discuss their



role and where they fit into the structure. He also regularly shares information about the organization's financial position, including earned revenue, fundraising, and expenses so that everyone can have a sense of challenges and trade-offs, and in turn, contribute to realistic solutions.

Housing and health care are seen as structural barriers for most entry- and mid-level employees. Jacob's Pillow has its own residential buildings, accommodating 110 seasonal employees and rents Airbnbs for another twenty or so employees. Jacob's Pillow is interested in discussing options for a collective arts worker housing initiative; and while is pleased with its health coverage, sees a pooled health insurance plan as a possibility to reduce costs and improve the quality of care for employees and worth exploring.

In the end, Pietrantone emphasizes that "pay equity is an emerging field, involving a degree of creativity and experimentation that can't happen without values-driven, trust-based relationships that are continuously nurtured. Pay equity can be very technical, but it all starts there."

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center

The Mahaiwe was already paying close attention to pay equity as it crafted its 2020 budget, making a commitment to increasing pay beyond inflation-indexed COLA (cost-of-living adjustments) and using internal and external benchmarks to recognize comparable levels of responsibility and experience. Within that context, Executive Director Janis Martinson's 2021 participation in the Inclusive Leadership Cohort (ILC) led by Multicultural BRIDGE coalesced organizational priorities with emerging social movements and provided the support of a group of six organizations similarly focused on pay equity.

One lightbulb moment for Martinson was seeing industry-wide salary data presented at an Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP) conference in early 2022. An assessment of pay structure according to level of responsibility revealed that increasing responsibility leads to only nominal compensation improvements until an employee reaches the highest levels of the organizational chart. As Martinson puts it, "That's a long time to wait when



someone can't make ends meet." There may be a lot to do to improve nonprofit salaries generally, but it was clear to her that those at the bottom and in the middle were stagnating the most.

Some immediate fixes were within reach. Increasing paid time off for part-time staff was a cost-free opportunity with immediate benefits to morale. Cost of living adjustments (COLA) were made with an affirmative emphasis on the lowest paid employees, rather than flat percentage increases. At one mid-year point during the epidemic, salaries were adjusted upward by a flat amount across the board. At other points, pay was adjusted to stay ahead of inflation, and the lowest paid employees received the highest COLA adjustments by percentage. This approach centered equity values without large increases to employer costs while having a significant positive effect on compensation for the lowest paid employees.

To address health insurance coverage for part-time and full-time employees, colleagues in the Pay Equity Coalition helped the Mahaiwe find an insurance broker who understood their objectives and was able to creatively find options for the organization to do more for employees without breaking the budget. The result was a new health care plan from the same provider with greater coverage for more employees. Deductibles were higher, but savings on the cost of the plan were sufficient to allow the Mahaiwe to reimburse 100% of deductibles and further provide additional insurances, including dental, life, and short- and long-term disability.

Thinking big picture, there has also been lots of work on process and structure. Salary bands have been created that replace the traditional "compensation comparability" logic – the idea that industry averages can be assumed to be sufficient – with a standard that, according to Martinson, has a starting wage "above the regionally-specific MIT Living Wage Index." In addition, all searches include the appropriate salary band, and the hiring process has incorporated

many new equity practices, including trained hiring committees and behaviorally based scoring rubrics that help to minimize individual preference in favor of objective measures.

In terms of changing organizational systems and culture, Martinson emphasizes the importance of ongoing commitment. The Mahaiwe developed a Theory of Compensation that was adopted by the board and shared with the staff. Pay equity was also incorporated into the five-year strategic plan. Martinson explains that a philosophical commitment to pay equity is crucial, but "when you write it down, it takes on a new life. And when it's on the agenda at board meetings, and there are explicit annual benchmarks, you hold yourselves accountable collectively."

When asked if these strategies have an impact on staff morale, organizational culture, turnover rates, recruitment, and overall productivity and effectiveness, Martinson says "Absolutely. Long-term commitment to these issues signals that this is an organization where employees are important, valued, and considered."

For Martinson, "Pay equity is clearly the right thing to do for both the employee and the organization."



Grounds crew at The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home

The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home

The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home, was inspired by the 2023 Pay Equity Summit to conduct an internal audit of its pay rates.

An anonymous survey of year-round and seasonal staff was conducted to gauge overall satisfaction regarding compensation. The survey had a 50% response rate, and highlights from the 31 respondents include:

- 39% disagreed that they are paid fairly for the work they do.
- 43% disagreed that their rate of pay is fair compared to similar work at peer organizations.
- 35% disagreed that they are satisfied with their compensation package.

In response, The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home raised salaries for all seasonal docents and visitor's services staff by 7% and increased starting pay rates from \$15 to \$17-18 per hour. In addition, The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home instituted a wage correction to bring the compensation of longer serving employees with similar responsibilities in line with more recent hires. The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home quantified the pay equity gap and increased the salaries of longer serving employees by an average of 11.9%. The organization also reinstated merit increases separate and apart from COLA increases to keep pace with rising living costs and inflation.

As part of the internal audit, The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home also conducted a major review of its benefits package, which resulted in increased annual vacation, holiday, and sick time as well as a change in health insurance provider. Similar to the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home engaged a healthcare broker who conducted a comprehensive health census that qualified the organization for a more favorable plan.

Switching providers reduced monthly premiums by 16%, deductibles were reduced from \$1,500 to \$1,000 for individuals and from \$3,000 to \$2,000 for families. Out-of-pocket limits were reduced from \$8,750 to \$3,500 for individuals and \$17,500 to \$7,000 for families. The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home was able to apply the savings in individual premiums to increase the employer-covered portion of premiums for staff with a family plan. The employer and employees both saved money.

In terms of organizational structure, a new board level "Human Resources and Compensation Committee" was created with the goal of increasing board awareness and support of The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home's pay equity efforts. In late October, early November 2024, The Mount will solicit responses to a second anonymous compensation survey to ascertain if overall satisfaction levels have increased.

Staff perceptions are important inputs for compensation decisions but equally critical is a review of salary data regionally and by sector. The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home takes into consideration the MIT Living Wage Calculator for the Berkshires, and various cultural sector surveys conducted by the New England Museum Association and the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires. But this salary data is often several years out of date. Going forward, The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home hopes to work with Pay Equity Coalition colleagues to share salary data and strategies to improve pay equity both internally and county wide. The organization looks forward to ongoing sessions for Coalition members to pose questions; share challenges, strategies and solutions; and build solidarity. The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home will continually engage in internal and external pay equity audits and challenge itself to do more, confident that pay equity serves both employees and the organization.

National Benchmarking

Since the release of the first Pay Equity Report in June 2023, relevant new research and data has become available, practitioners have deployed novel approaches to pay equity, and there have been important systems level and policy changes related to pay equity. This section attempts to capture these developments and their implications for the Berkshire/Columbia Counties Pay Equity Project.

2023 Compensation Study by Third Sector New England (TSNE)

Source: Valuing Our Nonprofit Workforce 2023: A Compensation and Benefits Survey of Nonprofits in New England and Adjoining Communities, TSNE, March 2024

TSNE's 2023 compensation study addresses many of the pay equity concerns identified by entry- and mid-level workers in the region that the Pay Equity Project represents.

Of the 210 organizations throughout New England who responded to the survey, only 22 are arts and culture organizations, and only 24 are in Western MA and Litchfield County, Connecticut. (TSNE does not serve New York State.) Another important qualification is that this data, some of which is based on impression, is sourced entirely from employers rather than entry- and mid-level workers themselves. Nonetheless, these numbers offer a broad picture of, and reference point for, sector standards and trends.

The national "DEI backlash" phenomenon may not be as prominent in New England, though some employers are likely to be more cautious. On the other hand, some respondents could be overstating their real commitment to DEI, satisfying some of the criteria below in a performative way. For example, discussion, policies, working groups, task forces, and training are process indicators rather than outcomes indicators. They bode well but in no way ensure meaningful impact.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Practices

- 88% of organizations have done some work on DEI practices, from discussion to fully implemented policies.
- Among these organizations, 50% have an internal working group or task force.
- Most of these groups were established between 2020 and 2022.
- 68% of organizations that have worked on DEI practices plan to provide DEI-related training for staff in 2023; 52% plan to provide DEI-related training for their boards.

Source: Third Sector New England, 2024



Additional data relevant to pay equity in this sector and region include:

- Voluntary turnover rates were 17% on average in 2023 (similar in 2010, 2014, and 2017). Tracking voluntary turnover rates, and being able to compare the rate over time and among peer organizations, is one good proxy for organizational culture, morale, perceptions of equity, as well as a way to help show the cost of NOT investing in pay equity.
- Of the respondents reporting part-time employees, 66% do not offer insurance benefits for this group.
- 50% indicate that part-time employees are eligible for health insurance benefits as long as they work a minimum average number of hours per week (on average, 25 hours per week), while 6% make benefits available to all employees regardless of the number of hours worked.
- Annuities (e.g., 401K, IRA): In 12% of the organizations, only the employee contributes, and in 3%, only the employer contributes.
- Of the 476 individuals in the survey holding the 10 highest paying jobs, 77% are white and 23% are people of color. Of the 2,207 individuals in the survey holding the 10 lowest paying positions, 25% are white and 75% are people of color.



Percentage of employers who said this was at least one contributor to turnover:

- Jobs with higher pay elsewhere: 48%
- Stress/burnout: 25%
- Career change: 22%
- Jobs with more competitive benefits elsewhere: 15%
- Dissatisfaction with leadership/management: 12%
- Geographic move for affordability reasons: 7%
- Dissatisfaction with organizational culture: 7%
- Job in the private sector: 6%

Percentage of employers that:

- Have an “Internal Job Equity” policy: 30%
- Adjusted compensation based on that policy in the last 12 months: 47%
- Include both pay and employee benefits in public job announcements: 69%
- Do not compensate for extensive overtime: 35%
- Do not pay a premium for bilingual skills: 85%
- Report that paying a living wage is a strategic priority: 86%

Among employers who report that living wages are a priority, here is how they pay for it:

- Additional fundraising: 75%
- Absorb with already-existing resources: 52%
- Budget reallocations, not including layoffs: 26%
- Increasing income from programs and services: 6%
- Organization already pays at or above the living wage: 3%
- Budget reallocations, possibly including layoffs: 2%

Independent Sector and United for ALICE Collaboration

Source: "Financial Insecurity in the Nonprofit Workforce," 9/10/24, [Independent Sector and United for ALICE](#)

Independent Sector collaborated with United for ALICE to understand poverty and hardship for nonprofit workers. Instead of minimum wage, federal poverty rates, or the MIT Living Wage Calculator, the reference point for this analysis is ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. This population is above the federal poverty line, but still struggles to afford basic needs and often does not qualify for public assistance. According to the United for ALICE Wage Tool, an hourly wage of \$17.75 per worker is needed to support a family of three (two workers and one child) in Berkshire County. \$15.96 per hour per worker is required in Columbia County.

The ALICE Household Survival Budget (FIGURE 1) is broken down by area and helps demonstrate the range of expenses that are necessary for survival.









22% of nonprofit workers nationwide fall below the ALICE threshold, which for many arts and culture employers in this region, is still considered insufficient and inequitable.

Disaggregating the data, the story gets worse. Only looking at the "Arts/Recreation" sub-sector, 32% of workers are below the ALICE threshold. While 17% of white workers are below the ALICE threshold, 34% of Hispanic workers are below the threshold and 35% of Black workers are below the threshold.

3% of chief executives are below the threshold, 12% of managers are below the threshold, and 34% of workers who are neither chief executives nor managers are below the threshold. 17% of workers who are between 45 and 64 years old are below the threshold, but 37% of workers under the age of 25 are below the threshold. 33% of workers with disabilities are below the threshold.

FIGURE 1 ALICE Household Survival Budget

See enlarged table in APPENDIX C.

	ALICE Household Survival Budget	Average Monthly Costs, One Adult and One School-Age Child, 2022		
		El Paso County, TX	Franklin County, OH	Alexandria City, VA
 Housing	Fair Market Rent (40 th percentile) for an efficiency, one-bedroom, or two-bedroom apartment (based on family size), adjusted in metro areas using the American Community Survey (ACS) Sources: ACS metro housing costs; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$702	\$974	\$2,158
 Child Care	Cost for registered Family Child Care Homes for infants (0–2 years), preschool-age (3–4), and school-age children (5–12) Source: State agency responsible for child care reporting (e.g., Child Care Aware of Washington, Maryland Family Network)	\$173	\$328	\$484
 Food	USDA Thrifty Food Plan by age, with county variation from Feeding America Sources: Feeding America; U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	\$701	\$788	\$999
 Transportation	Operating costs for a car (average daily miles by age, cost per mile, license, fees, and insurance), or public transportation where viable Sources: AAA, Federal Highway Administration, The Zebra (car); Consumer Expenditure Survey (CEX) (public transportation)	\$543	\$527	\$332
 Health Care	Health insurance premiums based on employer-sponsored plans plus out-of-pocket costs for households with \$40,000–\$69,999 annual income by age, weighted with the poor-health multiplier. For the ALICE 65+ Budget, cost of Medicare Parts A and B, out-of-pocket costs, plus average out-of-pocket spending for the top five chronic diseases as reported by CMS. Sources: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS); CEX (health); Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)	\$515	\$392	\$455
 Technology	Basic broadband internet at home and a smartphone plan with unlimited data for each adult in a household Source: Consumer Reports	\$86	\$86	\$86
 Miscellaneous	Cost overruns estimated at 10% of the budget, excluding taxes, to cover one-time unanticipated costs within the other categories	\$272	\$310	\$451
 Taxes	Federal, state, and local taxes owed on the amount of income to cover the Survival Budget, as well as tax credits, including the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) Sources: Internal Revenue Service; Tax Foundation	\$344	\$506	\$988
Monthly Total		\$3,336	\$3,911	\$5,953
Annual Total		\$40,032	\$46,932	\$71,436
Hourly Wage Needed to Support the Household Survival Budget*		\$20.02	\$23.47	\$35.72

* Full-time hourly wage represents the wage needed at 40 hours per week to support the annual total.



Berkshire Art Center Executive Director Lucie Castaldo speaking at the 2023 Pay Equity Summit

2024 Nonprofit Compensation Practices & Benchmarking Report

Source: Career Blazers' "2024 Nonprofit Compensation and Benchmarking Report"

Career Blazers points out that 42% of nonprofits report having conducted or plan to conduct an equity audit (FIGURE 2). However, quality varies and some audits may be more performative. High quality audits make equity challenges concrete, identify structural barriers, and point the organization toward responsive structural solutions.

Pay Equity feels like an external obligation rather than a core value internally if there is insufficient institutional grounding in DEIB (DEI and several other similar acronyms are used somewhat interchangeably). This visual provides a good list of factors that reflects commitment and determines the success of DEIB within an organization (FIGURE 3). The report also claims (crediting Glassdoor) that workers and job candidates are increasingly demanding a meaningful DEIB strategy.

Note: While the insights are interesting, very little information is available regarding the data sources and methodology used by Career Blazers.

FIGURE 2 Pay Equity | Compensation Analysis

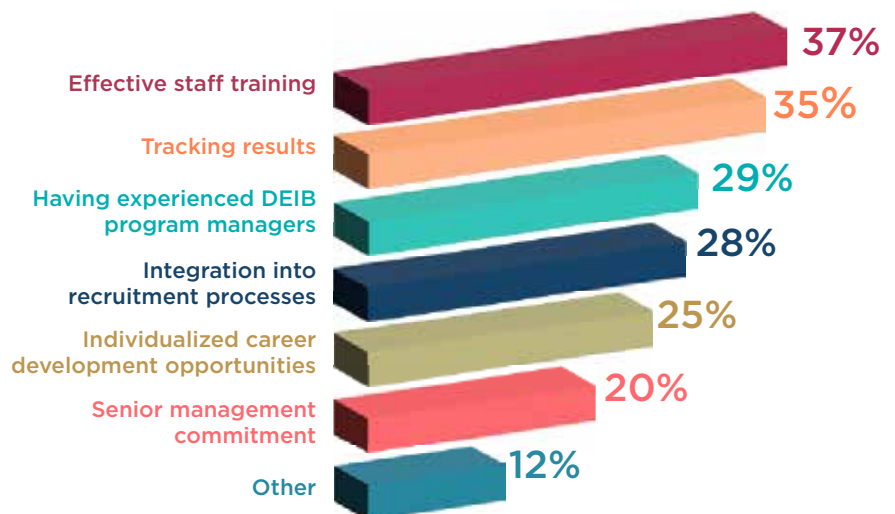
A significant increase in the number of organizations conducting pay equity audits has been reported over the past two years as pay transparency demands have grown. A pay equity audit not only shows leaders where inequities exist in your company, but done well, can help you identify systemic issues that are the root cause of inequity.



FIGURE 3 Status of DEIB Strategies | Challenges Encountered when Implementing DEIB Strategies

Despite the turbulence in DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging) efforts in 2023, a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging remains critical to employee recruiting, acquisition, engagement, and retention. As an increasing number of organizations have DEIB programs in place, focus has turned to integration and accountability of program efforts. Candidates want to know if a DEIB program is in place and how you are measuring progress. According to Glassdoor, "76% of candidates and workers set a diverse workforce as a key factor when evaluating job offers."

Respondents identified all that apply.



State of Black Nonprofits

Source: *Giving Gap's "State of Black Nonprofits Report 2024"*

According to Giving Gap's "State of Black Nonprofits Report 2024," even Black nonprofit professionals in leadership positions need additional jobs to get by (FIGURE 4). According to the 2023 Pay Equity Project survey data, 56% of entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers (14% of whom reported being BIPOC) report having additional jobs. According to Giving Gap, almost the same exact percentage of Black nonprofit leaders nationally also have additional jobs.

Restorative Compensation: Moving from Theory to Practice

Source: *"Restorative Compensation: Moving from Theory to Practice,"* Richael Faithful and Mala Nagarajan, *Nonprofit Quarterly*, 2/27/24

The rationale for this analysis is that many organizations with equity-centered missions and equity-centered external programming and community impact also have internal systems and culture that are not aligned with these values. A conspicuous lack of pay equity is one example.

The authors claim that these internal systems and culture derive from a broader neoliberal approach to business efficiency and prioritization of short-term profit (typically referred to as "surplus" in the nonprofit sector) over other considerations like equity. Exploitation has thus been normalized in many parts of the nonprofit sector, and a "culture of professionalism" has become a neutral or positive sounding veil for many of these practices and assumptions. Without being mindful and vigilant, we are all prone to emulating this culture, unable to imagine an alternative.

The two authors share their experience as Borealis Philanthropy fellows, engaging progressive organizations to understand the priorities and mix of perspectives around pay equity. The authors highlight the complex social psychology among workers, who

FIGURE 4 Do you work an additional job to supplement your income?

Some participants who responded "other or I don't want to say" were retired from other jobs or doing occasional engagements (not full-time jobs) for additional income.

Out of 168 respondents, 153 filled out both of the above questions: 55.9% of those who work full-time reported working an additional job to supplement their income.

100% of part-timers and 85.7% of less than part-timers/volunteers also work an additional job to supplement income.

Works additional jobs	61%
Doesn't work additional jobs	31%
Other	8%

naturally tend to compare their current positions and compensation to their former positions, their colleagues, and peer organizations.

One recommendation that could be applied to employers in this region is that conversations about money, which have traditionally been perceived as taboo or even illegal, must be normalized. Some examples are increased transparency regarding salary bands, and including salary ranges in all job announcements. This can be seen as part of a trend that organizations need to have more open conversations about historically uncomfortable topics related to race and equity generally.

The authors also recommend a maximum ratio of 2.5:1 between the highest and lowest paid employees. This ratio exceeds the 5:1 ratio established by the [Pay Equity Standards](#) initiative that was highlighted in the 2023 Pay Equity Report. In this region, even the highest paid employees are not highly paid compared to the heads of organizations in other regions and sectors. This fact makes ratios less relevant and helpful as a tool for increasing entry- and mid-level salaries.

The authors propose a new way of thinking, with different assumptions, called Restorative Compensation. The approach attempts to replace an often unconscious “extraction” psychology with the idea of a “consensual exchange,” and replacing a “dominance” culture with a “liberatory” culture.

More practically speaking, the authors propose some steps including:

- Establish the fundamental idea that “we all start as equals” by creating a “base pay.”
- Additional compensation can then be added to the base according to criteria (including nontraditional criteria) collectively and inclusively established.
- Set a formal pay ratio that is right for your organization.
- Don’t make salary bands bigger for higher paid positions (allowing for excessive compensation at the top).

1Berkshire’s Berkshire Blueprint 2.0

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

1Berkshire’s “The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0: A Shared Economic Vision and Plan for Action,” released in 2019, represents the creative economy and arts the arts and culture sector prominently, and features founding Pay Equity Project Coalition member Community Access to the Arts (CATA).

A five-year update of the Blueprint was released in 2024 (FIGURE 5) and includes the Pay Equity Project as a Progress Point for the Creative Economy and Culture cluster, one of six clusters that “play an integral role in the collective prosperity of the Berkshires going forward.” Aligning with our collective systems work, advocacy for seasonal housing is included as a progress point; healthcare and transportation are highlighted as a future focus for the cluster, as is the need for continued focus on Pay Equity.

FIGURE 5 The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0: Five-Year Benchmark

See enlarged pages in APPENDIX C.



Black Artists in Vermont

Source: "How Are We Doing? Understanding What It Takes for Black Artists to Thrive in Vermont," submitted to the Vermont Department of Public Health by [Clemmons Family Farm](#), May 2024.

This three-part analysis employs community based participatory research (CBPR) to provide an extremely thorough, human-level, and original picture of a sample of Black artists in Vermont. The analysis references financial stability, and the sense of empowerment and control and reduced anxiety that pay equity can bring. But the real strength of the analysis is a breakdown of other psycho-social factors that contribute to and can help track overall wellbeing. Land/space, mentorship, community, housing, transportation, childcare, healthcare, social change agency are identified by respondents as critical. In fact, profound struggles in these areas may obviate incremental increases in income. The research also explores the increased challenge posed by living in a predominantly white community, and in turn, the particular psychic and practical benefits that Black-led nonprofits offer.

This research does not look at artists as employees per se, but the concepts and methodology are valuable, unique, and transferable in many cases.

Frances Perkins Workplace Equity Act (H.4109)

Source: "Governor signs wage equity bill," [Massachusetts Municipal Association](#), 8/1/24

On July 31, 2024, the Frances Perkins Workplace Equity Act (H.4109) was signed into law by Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey. The law requires all employers with 25 or more employees to include salary bands on all job announcements, and for employers with more than 100 employees to submit demographic data to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development in order to help identify pay equity gaps by race, ethnicity, gender, job category, and salary band.

Affordable Homes Act Bill (H.4138)

Source: [Governor Maura Healey Signs Most Ambitious Legislation to Address Housing Costs in State History](#)

On August 6, 2024, Governor Maura Healey signed into law the The Affordable Homes Act, which will support the production, preservation and rehabilitation of more than 65,000 homes statewide over the next five years. Included in the act were allocations specific to Berkshire arts and culture organizations:

- \$100,000 for feasibility study of St. Martin Hall at Shakespeare and Company in Lenox.
- \$100,000 for a site identification feasibility study for artist housing for Barrington Stage Company and Berkshire Theatre Group in Pittsfield.
- \$5,000,000 for seasonal supportive housing for the nonprofit creative economy in Berkshire County.

Massachusetts Cultural Economy Advisory Council

On September 20, 2024, the creation of the Cultural Economy Advisory Council was announced, explained as “public and private sector stakeholders charged with exploring policies that support artists and cultural organizations, examining ways to create economic opportunities in the arts and culture sector, and promoting cultural equity in the arts.”

According to Economic Development Secretary Yvonne Hao, arts and culture organizations “support small businesses and arts entrepreneurs, add jobs, and make our state one of the best places to live.”

Council Appointees

Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council

Members:

- Yvonne Hao, Secretary of the Executive Office of Economic Development (Co-Chair)
- Kate Fox, Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (Co-Chair)
- Michael Bobbitt, Executive Director, Massachusetts Cultural Council
- Tiffancy Allecia, Executive Director, Springfield Creative City Collective
- Luke Blackadar, Deputy Director, Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston

- Representative Mindy Domb, House Chair, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development
- Magie Gaipo-Scott, Senior Director, Government Affairs & Legal Affairs, Museum of Fine Arts Boston
- Deborah Hall, Executive Director, YWCA of Central Massachusetts
- Candace “Lee” Heald, AHA! New Bedford
- Joyce Linehan, Assistant to the President for Special Projects, Massachusetts College of Art and Design
- Senator Paul Mark, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development
- Ming Min Hui, Executive Director, Boston Ballet
- Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Peabody Essex Museum
- Emily Ruddock, Executive Director, MassCreative
- Lindsey Schmid, Director of Marketing, 1Berkshire
- Annis Sengupta, Director of Arts and Culture, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Chad Smith, President and Chief Executive Officer, Boston Symphony Orchestra
- Julie Wake, Executive Director at Arts Foundation of Cape Cod

Findings, Recommendations, and Commitments

While some entry- and mid-level Berkshire/Columbia Counties arts and culture workers continue to feel their situation is unsustainable and that modest compensation increases do not alter this reality, many are noticing a wide range of financial and non-financial improvements that are making a real difference. Workers report cost of living adjustments that reflect real cost increases, benefits expansion including retirement plan improvements. And they also report the positive mental health consequences, and in turn, the palpable effect on staff morale, of conspicuous effort on the part of employers.

Employers are also institutionalizing a laundry list of short-term incremental improvements for entry- and mid-level workers, and long-term planning to get to ambitious living wage goals. There is also emerging evidence that organizational culture is changing as a result of these measures. Improved morale leads to reduced turnover and a corresponding long-term cost reduction that can offset new costs associated with pay equity initiatives.

A national scan of emerging research and innovation shows that many organizations beyond the region and the arts and culture sector specifically are having similar experiences. In contrast to the notion of a “DEI backlash,” which is certainly having a negative impact in some parts of the country and society, many institutions continue to make real changes and hold themselves accountable in creative ways. Some measures require significant financial commitments from employers, but many effective measures do not.

Going forward, the Coalition will continue to meet quarterly for mutual support, to serve as a clearinghouse for practical strategies, and for mutual accountability. The Coalition will also continue to implement short- and long-term organizational pay equity strategies as detailed in this report and the 2023 Pay Equity Report, while modeling creative inclusion grounded in its equity values.

Beyond this function, continued expansion and progress will require multi-year public and/or private support to sustain and institutionalize the Pay Equity Project.

Contingent on substantial additional support, the Coalition can commit to the following recommendations, and model them sector-wide:

- Moving forward collectively on one or more of the structural barriers and systems change priorities identified in Phase 2: housing, transportation, and healthcare.
- Reporting progress made toward employer and collective systems change.
- Continuing to grow the Coalition and movement, and creatively including entry- and mid-level workers themselves in all aspects of the work.
- Documenting and inspiring additional progress toward employer and collective systems changes with a 2025 Pay Equity Report and Pay Equity Summit.

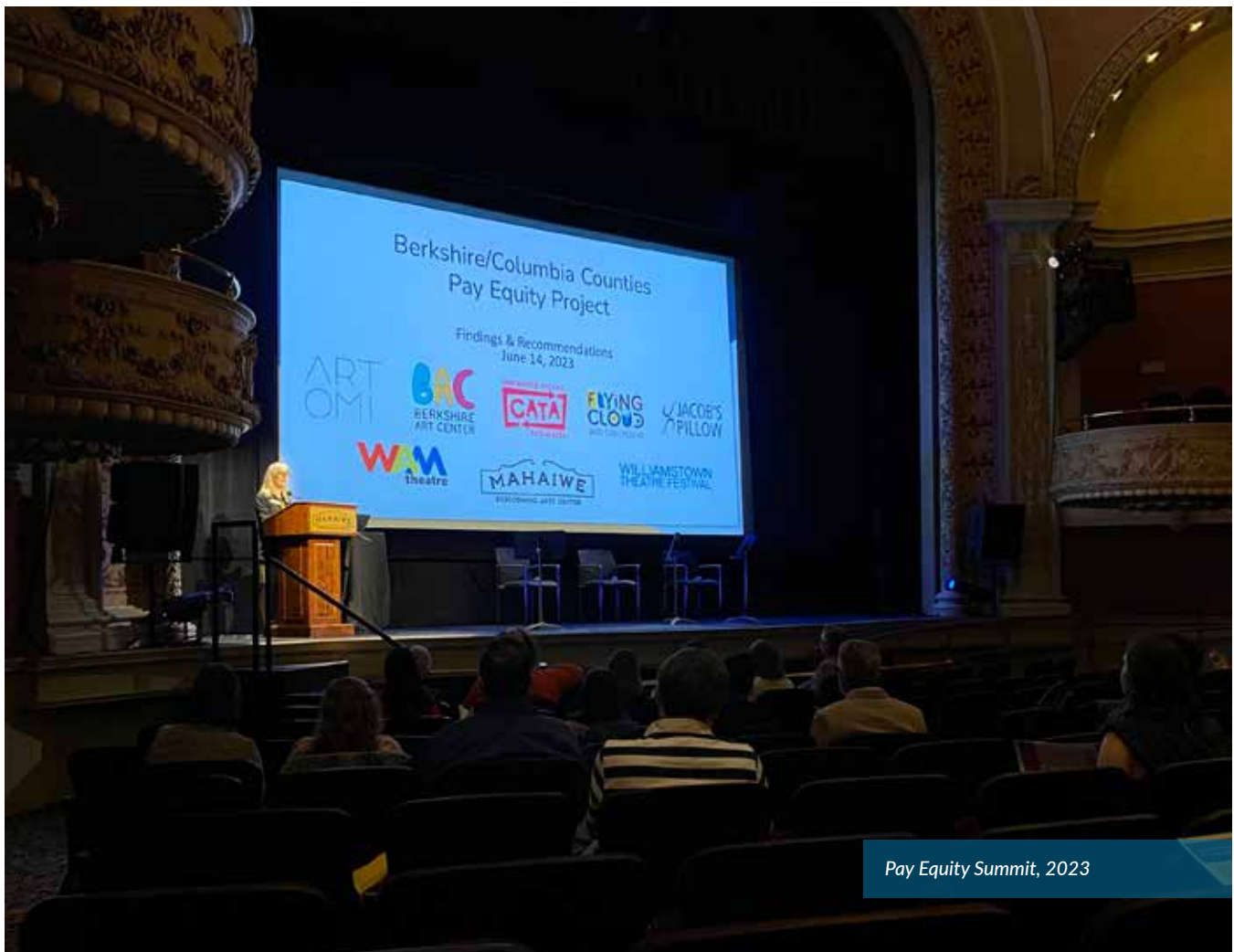
Conclusion

Pay equity is intrinsically valuable. But it also leads to organizational effectiveness, transformative artistic expression, and a vital creative economy.

The Pay Equity Project has come a long way towards these objectives in a short time. As momentum builds, it is now possible to imagine pay equity evolving from an abstract ideal to a real expectation for arts and culture organizations in Berkshire and Columbia Counties and well beyond.

Join us!

To learn more, or to get involved, go to npcberkshires.org/payequity or contact Kristen van Ginhoven at kristen@kristenvanginhoven.com or Aron Goldman at aronpgoldman@gmail.com.



Pay Equity Summit, 2023

Other Resources

Links with paywalls are underlined in pink.

Salary Data

[MIT Living Wage Calculator](#)

[Pay Equity Standards](#)

[Association of Art Museum Directors “2023 Salary Survey”](#)

[2023 Nonprofit Organizations Salary and Benefits Report \(Nonprofit Times\)](#)

2023 Pay Equity Project

[First-hand testimony of 2023 Entry/Mid Level Workers from survey responses \(video\)](#)

[Full June 2023 Pay Equity Summit event \(video\)](#)

[2023 Pay Equity Project Report](#)

Articles

[When nonprofit staff are paid so low they qualify for their org’s services, Vu Le, Nonprofit AF, 5/14/24](#)

[The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle: Does Overhead Spending Really Impact Program Outcomes?, Hala Altamimi and Qiaozhen Liu, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 11/28/21](#)

[I see the nuance in Mass MoCA labor dispute, Jenny Wright, Berkshire Eagle, 3/15/24](#)

[Nonprofit Theaters Are in Trouble. Lawmakers Are Proposing Help. Michael Paulson, NY Times, 4/9/24](#)

[Key Policy Wins Secured for Creative and Cultural Sector, Bethann Steiner, Mass Cultural Council, 3/4/24](#)

[Be an #ArtsHero \(intersectional grassroots campaign comprised of Arts & Culture workers, Unions\)](#)

[In-person theater is back. A lost generation of artists chose not to return with it, Ashley Lee, LA Times, 3/24/22](#)

[\\$5000, Ife Olujobi, Dramatists Guild, 12/1/23 \(personal testimony about compensation advocacy\)](#)

[A week in the life and wallet of an artistic director in the rural Northeast, Jenna Clark Embrey \(curator\), 10/4/23. Bills, Bills, Bills is a monthly series of anonymous money diaries from theatre workers.](#)

[Does Funding Better Salaries and Benefits Improve Nonprofit Impact? Here’s What We Know, Dawn Wolfe, Inside Philanthropy, 11/28/23](#)

[Arts Administrators of Color Network](#)



Arts Administrators of Color Network pay equity media campaign

Media Coverage

Arts and Culture Pay Equity: A Movement Gains Momentum, Aron Goldman and Erika Hawthorne, Nonprofit Quarterly, 10/24 (*forthcoming*)

Pay Equity moves from vision to reality, Kate Abbott, BTW Berkshires, 9/12/24

Paying Arts Workers Equitably Improves Lives for Everyone, Janis Martinson, Barr Foundation, 9/11/24

Low wages leave US arts workers with few prospects, Barbara Reina, The Art Newspaper, 11/24/23

High culture, low pay – Local arts groups push for change, Kate Abbot, BTW Berkshires, 9/11/23

Passion Doesn't Pay the Rent: Why the Arts Must Embrace Pay Equity, Aron Goldman, Nonprofit Quarterly, 7/25/23

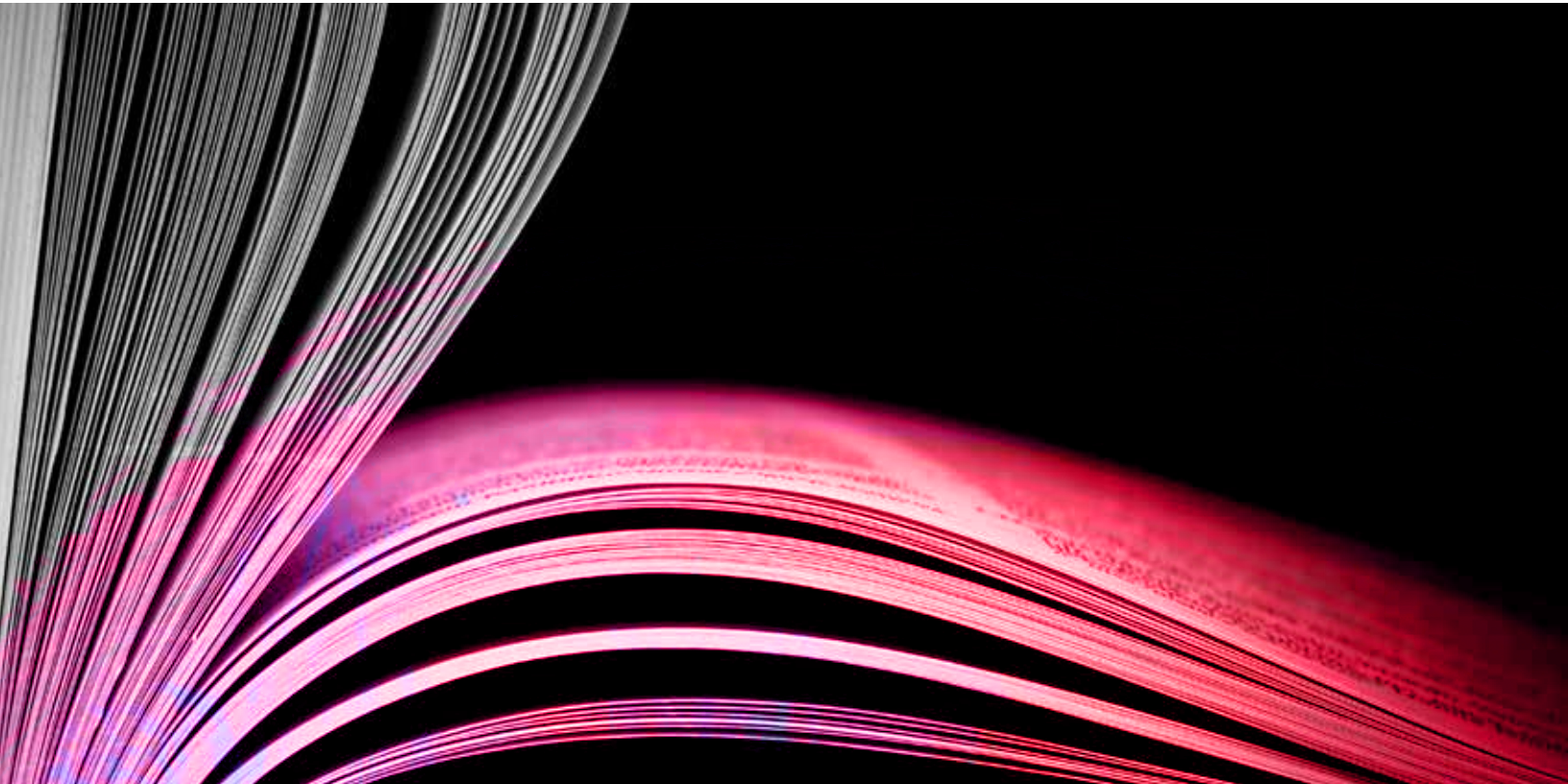
Pay Equity Study Calls For Better Compensation in Arts Sector, Brittany Polito, iBerkshires.com, 6/24/23

Study: Deep divide in pay, benefits and opportunity for staff at Berkshire County arts organizations, Carrie Healy, New England Public Media, 6/22/23

New Study Reveals the Overworked and Underpaid 'Invisible Underclass' Behind Berkshires Curtains, Heather Bellow, The Berkshire Eagle, 6/19/23

Passion doesn't pay the rent: Berkshire/Columbia Counties arts sector report reveals pay disparities, Shaw Israel Izikson, The Berkshire Edge, 6/15/23

New study on pay equity for Berkshire, Columbia county arts workers unveiled in Great Barrington, Josh Landes, WAMC Northeast Public Radio, 6/14/23



Appendix A: 2023 Pay Equity Project 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 40-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
 - 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.



Kristen Van Ginhoven speaks as Janis Martinson listens at the Pay Equity Project's presentation in June 2023 at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center. Press photo courtesy of WAM and the Mahaiwe.

Photo by David Dashiell

Appendix B:

Employee Survey Responses

In July 2024, the Pay Equity Coalition designed and disseminated a brief online survey to entry- and mid-level arts and culture workers in Berkshire and Columbia Counties. 51 individuals responded to the survey, and these are the verbatim responses to the two open-ended questions.

Question 1:

Has any aspect of your compensation or benefits improved in the past year or so in a way that has helped you or your family survive or thrive? Please provide specific examples.

Part-time hourly rate was increased from \$17 to \$18.

Our staff was given a bonus last year so we are actually set to earn less this year. I feel the bonus approach was a way to avoid a permanent raise.

Acceptance of hybrid work – 50% in office/50% at home – has helped many employees balance work with home life a little easier. Allows me personally to take a morning walk some days and to do "thinking" tasks like writing at home where I can focus.

I am brand new to this organization but the full covered benefits package was a large incentive to taking the job.

For the first time since 2018, I was given the ability to negotiate my hourly wage – while I do not feel it has gone up enough to reflect my experience and years of service at this specific org (which has high turnover) I hope this kind of opportunity arises again. (Still not renewed to full time unfortunately.)

We now offer a retirement plan and health insurance.

Yes, I received a raise at my year mark and we received a bonus.

We now have a retirement plan, but I don't make enough to contribute anything but the least amount they allow. They started offering health insurance, but it is too expensive for me to afford so I declined it, but then I got kicked off of MassHealth and was told I had to enroll in the company plan.

The company insurance is not good. I've used it twice for basic visits and have been billed crazy amounts for copay.

I have changed employers and moved up in position. I am now making significantly more, with an incredibly generous benefits package. I now have security I never thought possible working in the nonprofit world. I live comfortably and can save money to hopefully purchase my first home in the next five years.

I received a raise, and my employer is paying a higher percentage of my health insurance premium.

No changes.

I received a 4% COLA and better health insurance. I know several of my peers received wage adjustments outside of the COLA.

I received a \$3 raise; it helps a little, but finances are still very tight.

No change.

My employer's HSA contribution has helped immensely with what is an otherwise substandard health insurance package. They have told us this is likely to go away.

No change.

My employer continued to pay increases beyond cost of inflation, and benefits have been increased.

I am new to the organization, though the benefits package is a great relief and far more comprehensive and supportive than any I've been offered at other positions in the Berkshires. This is no small thing!

I received a few more hours during the off season.

My medical package now includes dental.

I now have an opportunity to contribute to a matching simple IRA, and I now have paid holidays and a dental plan.

There has been an across-the-board raise for all represented employees, which positively impacted me (even though it was only a small raise).

I received a raise that helped offset rising inflation. Dental insurance was provided as well and that definitely helps.

As a result of the Pay Equity survey, I chose to leave my former employer and take a position with a different arts organization. The pay inequity that was revealed and not amended was too difficult to manage, so I left my former position. I make 6K more in my new position, which still can be difficult when compared to the amount of hours I work, but I am not struggling to pay bills in the way I was before.

After asking for a raise, I received one (\$40,000 salary to \$45,000 salary). However, it is still difficult to feel like I am able to save and plan for my future with this salary.

I received a pay increase of 2%.

No change.

I have had to start paying for health insurance.

There was an unexpected (and significant) bonus along with some extra health insurance benefits.

My pay was raised to the Massachusetts State Minimum livable wage. This helps me better afford food and housing in this area. In addition, the arts organization I work for lets me reserve a heated space within the building on a regular basis for very little rent. This supports me a lot in my work in my independent business.

We're operating in the red and sometimes my payment is deferred.

A cost of living allowance raised my salary by 2%.

Yes, I was given a COLA adjustment for each of the last two years and it has helped us keep up with rising costs.

I am a new employee but am happy with the compensation and benefits provided thus far. I was happy to see that the vacation time for new employees was increased from two weeks to three weeks.

Yes, I have taken advantage of free dental care.

No, the improved compensation that was received in the form of a 2% pay raise this past July does nothing to help with the increase in cost of living when it pertains to rent, food, utilities, and other necessities.

The COLA for FY24 increased my hourly wage by over a dollar. My position also became full-time last year.

Yes. I received a COLA adjustment at the start of our new fiscal year and bonuses both at year's end and at our highest volume period of our program year. This has been especially meaningful in helping my family put money in savings. We also shifted to a 401k plan with a high employer match from our previous retirement benefit, which so far has been a meaningful and positive change.

I received a cost of living increase about 6 months ago.

I now receive compensation for overtime worked, paid mileage, additional time off for covid illness that was not deducted from sick leave, and a stipend for professional development

Question 2:

Please share any additional insights, perspectives, questions, needs, or ideas for making change at the employer or sector level.

We need a conversation of how bonuses do NOT help level the playing field.

Companies which don't adequately respect (or pay) their "bottom-level" workers have high rates of turnover – which costs more in the long run.

What if on a sector level, we combine forces to negotiate better health insurance rates?

I make \$42,500 per year, no benefits and don't get paid overtime. I usually don't get any breaks during the day – not even a lunch.

I make 40K – the company just made me exempt – so overtime will be a thing. I'm genuinely scared I won't have a job, or they will eek around having to increase my pay come January 1. I'm a single mom and I don't know how long I can live in debt. I'd love to learn more about this initiative and will get a babysitter for sept 25th – thank you.

I recently turned down a job offer in Hartford that would almost double my salary to do a fraction of the work. Why? Because I believe that we can start to close the gap. I enjoy and appreciate where I live, where I work, and the community here. I want to stay. The truth is if we do not do something, people like me with almost 20 years of my career here in the Berkshires will not be able to afford to stay.

Keep doing what you are doing.

Museum and other nonprofit/cultural institution workers in Berkshire County should all consider unionizing for better pay, working conditions, benefits and other positive workplace impacts on them and their coworkers!

Providing health care, retirement plans, and clear employee review and opportunities for raises seems to be the next phase for smaller nonprofits in the area. It's amazing that MassHealth has such great coverage, but I am hoping for more options in the future for small nonprofits to help offset the costs of employee healthcare.

Salary transparency within an organization is important, so it can be ensured that folks of similar positions are being paid equitably.

Can the funds that states get for funding the arts have some % to help with salaries or benefits?

I think one thing that gets overlooked with raising wages is employee efficiency and the quality of their work. When paid more, there is a certain pay level beyond which an employee may put more effort into each hour spent working.

If you know you're getting highly paid for each hour, two frames of mind can come out of it. Firstly, you may feel more of an instinctual need to spend each moment working to your highest capability and efficiency, out of respect for what your high wage says about the quality of work expected. Secondly, higher wages mean a person has more freedom to potentially work fewer hours and still sustain their lives.

Health care, affordable housing, and higher wages are needed for this area.

Arts employers must build sustainable infrastructure, and rise to the level of other employers in the county and across the nation. This means paid time off, sick time, and actual benefits that can sustain people in both the short and long term. Too many arts organizations just employ people as 1099 or just barely a step above.

I think entry- and mid-level workers should be included more in the discussion to increase the potential for lasting and empowered change. At the summit last year I perceived the attendees to be almost entirely the people in positions of power in the organizations who attended and engaged in the discussion unless they were a worker invited to share their story. Including more of the folks whom this most affects in the broader discussion would help increase awareness and help hold arts organization leadership more accountable to be transparent, update their workers, and prioritize making changes.

I believe in this project and am happy to participate. But, because I work part-time, and my job involves many different tasks that are due in a timely manner, I often struggle to meet my employer's needs over my own personal needs. I hope by bringing these issues to light, things can improve for all arts organizations but also for employees in whatever sector they work in!

Where I live in the Berkshires, housing is very costly and also very scarce. I would love to see employers taking more action in community movements for affordable housing or providing housing assistance for both renters and home-buyers alike, especially for low-to-mid income employees.

Housing is expensive and every bit of compensation helps.









At this point I feel confident in my employer's steadfast progress in its pay equity initiative. Based on all the work already done and any stated future plans, I believe that positive growth for even more equity will continue. This affords me a trust and comfort that allows me to focus on my work and the plans that the organization has in regards to its mission instead of working two or three other jobs on top of this one.

Yearly cost of living pay raises are a must.

Appendix C: Enlarged Figures

ALICE Household Survival Budget

Source: "Financial Insecurity in the Nonprofit Workforce," 9/10/24, Independent Sector and United for ALICE

	ALICE Household Survival Budget	Average Monthly Costs, One Adult and One School-Age Child, 2022		
		El Paso County, TX	Franklin County, OH	Alexandria City, VA
	Budget Item Description and Sources			
 Housing	Fair Market Rent (40 th percentile) for an efficiency, one-bedroom, or two-bedroom apartment (based on family size), adjusted in metro areas using the American Community Survey (ACS) Sources: ACS metro housing costs; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$702	\$974	\$2,158
 Child Care	Cost for registered Family Child Care Homes for infants (0–2 years), preschool-age (3–4), and school-age children (5–12) Source: State agency responsible for child care reporting (e.g., Child Care Aware of Washington, Maryland Family Network)	\$173	\$328	\$484
 Food	USDA Thrifty Food Plan by age, with county variation from Feeding America Sources: Feeding America; U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	\$701	\$788	\$999
 Transportation	Operating costs for a car (average daily miles by age, cost per mile, license, fees, and insurance), or public transportation where viable Sources: AAA, Federal Highway Administration, The Zebra (car); Consumer Expenditure Survey (CEX) (public transportation)	\$543	\$527	\$332
 Health Care	Health insurance premiums based on employer-sponsored plans plus out-of-pocket costs for households with \$40,000–\$69,999 annual income by age, weighted with the poor-health multiplier. For the ALICE 65+ Budget, cost of Medicare Parts A and B, out-of-pocket costs, plus average out-of-pocket spending for the top five chronic diseases as reported by CMS. Sources: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS); CEX (health); Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)	\$515	\$392	\$455
 Technology	Basic broadband internet at home and a smartphone plan with unlimited data for each adult in a household Source: Consumer Reports	\$86	\$86	\$86
 Miscellaneous	Cost overruns estimated at 10% of the budget, excluding taxes, to cover one-time unanticipated costs within the other categories	\$272	\$310	\$451
 Taxes	Federal, state, and local taxes owed on the amount of income to cover the Survival Budget, as well as tax credits, including the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) Sources: Internal Revenue Service; Tax Foundation	\$344	\$506	\$988
Monthly Total		\$3,336	\$3,911	\$5,953
Annual Total		\$40,032	\$46,932	\$71,436
Hourly Wage Needed to Support the Household Survival Budget*		\$20.02	\$23.47	\$35.72

* Full-time hourly wage represents the wage needed at 40 hours per week to support the annual total.

1Berkshire's Berkshire Blueprint 2.0: Five-Year Benchmark

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

Creative Economy and Culture



SUMMARY

Creativity and cultural engagement runs deep across the Berkshires, both historically and in contemporary contexts. From time-tested historic institutions, to industry disruptive catalysts for change, this cluster offers a uniquely diverse array of challenges and opportunities. With a deep bench of entrepreneurialism intrinsic to the creative economy and culture, as well as generally progressive adoption of improved practices around supporting diversity and inclusion, this cluster has not only remained a vital economic driver for the region, but also an opportunity for role modeling agility and adaptability. With approximately 5,500 jobs across the region, and a growing slate of industry partners, this cluster pushes the needle on inspiring economic growth, while fostering a quality of life in the Berkshires unlike anywhere else.



PROGRESS POINTS

- An influx of new leadership across arts and cultural organizations in the region offers new energy and opportunities.
- Collaboration across cluster participants proved vital throughout the pandemic.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work has become increasingly integrated into both organizational operations, and performance and artist selection, reaching more diverse audiences, and broadening the visitor profile.
- Increased public art countywide includes murals like those in North Adams and Pittsfield, monuments like the Susan B. Anthony (Adams) and Elizabeth Freeman (Sheffield), and public performances like Berkshire Busk (Great Barrington).
- Legacy institutions across the region have undertaken generational development and redevelopment efforts, restoring existing, and building future facilities.
- MASS MoCA undertook a one-year grant effort in partnership with the Barr Foundation to investigate opportunities that further the holistic goals of the institution and how it can facilitate deeper economic development.
- Williamstown Theater Festival's "WTF IS NEXT," a preview of a renewed format that focuses on a high-impact, program-dense period committed to fostering community and deepening connections through a broadened concept of theater.
- Studio 9 at Porches launched, offering a unique event space for world-class performance, recording, and engagement that pairs well with the region's growing festival portfolio.
- Shakespeare and Company launched an RFP to invite new mission-aligned tenancy on their expansive campus, resulting in Berkshire Film and Media Collaboratives planning for a production and educational facility on-site.
- The Pay Equity Project is underway, a coalition shining a light on the lived experiences of cultural sector workers and actions needed to further improve the ways in which cultural institutions recruit, sustain, and support their staff with the potential to inform the cultural sector on a national scale.
- Seasonal housing has become a major impediment for meeting performer and visitor needs, prompting altered approaches, planned large-scale investments, and advocacy for seasonal community designations in the Commonwealth.



CREATIVE ECONOMY AND CULTURE



EMERGING MOMENTUM

- Cultural institutions are seeking to invest broadly in regenerative technology and infrastructure.
- Hancock Shaker Village has leveraged its water resources as a revenue generator, creating improved operational sustainability.
- The Clark Art Institute has embraced its outdoor spaces as core to its mission, restoring wetlands to support migratory birds and constructing trail systems across the campus.
- Ongoing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) work remains paramount at all levels of organizations, and requires sustained investment to implement DEIB practices.
- Efforts to address the gap in seasonal and workforce housing have been advanced through advocacy. Berkshire Theater Company and Barrington Stage Company are working to address this gap in the central Berkshires, while the Clark Art Institute is pursuing property conversion to the north.
- The Pay Equity Project continues to work on building its coalition, while also looking at ways to tactically implement their initial recommendations.
- Cultural institutions are embracing and engaging other clusters more actively, such as using artificial intelligence, and the linking of arts and culture with outdoor recreation opportunities, creating new points for engagement and growth.
- Diversification of audiences has become a priority effort by many institutions.
- New entities have come to fruition, but would benefit in their early operations from being embraced and bolstered by the long-standing regional institutions.



FUTURE FOCUSES

- Collective focus on how to sustain and grow visitor traffic amidst changes in visitor habits.
- Resources for creative industry growth and facilities, like MASS MoCA's creative campus approach, will help build mission-aligned commercial tenancy and create sustainable revenue generation for campuses with space to spare.
- Transportation for workforce and seasonal visitors traveling to and from institutions needs support. Advocacy efforts should leverage 1Berkshire's 2020 Transportation Management Association study, and examine increased transportation capacity and the value loss to institutions when their workforce and visitors cannot reach them.
- Health insurance availability and affordability is an increasing challenge to cultural institutions and nonprofits in attracting and retaining employees. Pooled insurance options should be investigated.
- With Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative's project, the regional film industry deserves focus. Improved state tax incentives, access to a 24 million person drive market, and connections to major metropolitan areas have primed the Berkshires for film industry growth which could offer other organizations new conduits to earned revenue.
- Pay equity must be a key priority and maintain pace with continued increases to regional cost of living.