

THE CROSSROADS OF LIVING WAGES IN AMERICAN MUSEUMS

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I. Introduction

In response to employee turnover, museums are at a crossroads in addressing labor issues, which require a rethinking of their traditional business model. Museums implementing salaries that reflect living wages in their respective regions will improve employee retention and organizational culture. The lack of living wages is an equity issue that adversely affects the field's ability to address calls for greater equity and retention. To retain a diversified museum workforce, more diversified boards can play a significant role in addressing the lack of livable wages. A broader understanding of the data on the museum workforce and the retention challenges in museums underpins the importance of this inquiry. Leaders in museums are facing considerable difficulty in not addressing the realities of the living wage issue that affects the employees of their institutions. While leaders are exploring non-wage benefits, such as additional time off or medical insurance, these benefits do not address the cost of living crisis affecting many workers who are paid low wages in the sector. A museum director on average can make \$343,000 annually, while an assistant, security guard and visitor service associate make in the range of \$36,000 to \$45,000. This great equity divide between the museum workforce and leadership has become even more pronounced by several fiscal and societal crises that have snowballed over the last three years. The 2023 recession triggered by COVID-19, the Federal Reserve's interest rate increases, and rapid inflation have made basic needs—food, housing, transportation—unaffordable for many.

Historically, the museum workforce has been sourced from a pool of wealthy candidates, individuals who have the luxury of working for low wages in the pursuit of a job that brings personal satisfaction. As NEMPAN co-president Kelsey Brow says, "In the art world, there's a lot of pressure to do the work because you love it." Museum workers have historically been made

up of employees with generational wealth, allowing them to get a foot in the door of an industry that all too often offers ridiculously low wages (Tremayne-Pengelly). Even for those with inherited wealth, inadequate compensation coupled with a lack of development prospects and poor work cultures does not represent a sustainable career path.

A survey encompassing graduates of museum studies programs from 1994 to 2017, performed by Martha Morris of George Washington University in 2019, demonstrated that most had left the museum field:

Of the individuals interviewed, all were employed in museums before deciding to move into another field. Their reasons for opting out of museum employment varied, but the majority responded that low salaries, a lack of full-time positions, and a lack of opportunities for advancement or challenging work projects motivated their exits.

Another reason was dysfunctional culture within organizations. Finally, a few noted they sought better work-life balance and benefits.

The issue of lack of appropriate living wages has been a significant factor even prior to COVID-19 initiating a disruption in the labor force.

Fast forward to 2022, a recent research report, "Art Museum Director Survey," a collaboration between the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and Ithaka S+R clearly states the dire situation facing the leadership of museums post pandemic:

Around 30 percent of directors found providing equitable compensation packages to employees in comparable positions, retaining employees/reducing turnover, developing knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees, and rewarding high-performing employees to be either extremely easy or somewhat easy. However, a larger percentage of directors

found these to be easier [sic] in 2020 than in 2022. Providing pay equity, which has become more highly prioritized by directors, fell almost 10 percentage points from 2020 to 2022, and retaining employees fell by 13 points. These two findings show that despite directors' optimism around adding employees, maintaining staff satisfaction is seen as more challenging by directors, either because of changes in employment such as higher turnover, or because directors' understandings of these activities have changed (Sweeney).

In summary, this study demonstrates that the majority of museum directors are finding difficulty in creating an employee-centered culture that adequately compensates employees, rewards high performance, and supports employee professional development.

Another survey that was administered by the American Alliance of Museums in 2021 regarding the impact of COVID-19 found:

Just over 20 percent of paid staff and students think it is unlikely they will be working in the sector in three years, with some of the biggest barriers being compensation, burnout, and a lack of opportunities for advancement. Still, two-thirds of respondents are optimistic about the future of the museum sector. When paid staff were asked to describe their financial situation: Around half (51 percent) said they had enough for basic necessities and a small amount of disposable income they could save or spend on leisure. Just under a third (32 percent) said they had enough for necessities and a fair amount of disposable income they could save or spend on leisure. 13 percent said they only had enough for necessities and were living paycheck to paycheck. 2 percent said they did not have enough for necessities and were struggling to make ends meet. Part-time staff were likely to face greater instability than full-time staff. Part-time staff were: much more

likely to indicate that they were living paycheck to paycheck (21 percent compared to 12 percent of full-time staff) less likely to indicate they have a small amount of disposable income to save or spend on leisure (40 percent compared to 52 percent). The future of the museum sector: Overall, 46 percent of paid staff think it is very likely they will be working in the museum sector in three years, slightly over one-third (34 percent) think it is somewhat likely, 12 percent think it is somewhat unlikely, and 9 percent think it is highly unlikely. Part-time staff are slightly less likely than full-time staff to think they will continue to work in the museum field. When asked what they see as potential barriers to remaining in the museum sector, paid staff identified: (i) Compensation that meets their needs/expectations (59 percent), Burnout (57 percent) and (ii) Opportunities for advancement (53 percent), and Availability of employment (51 percent).

These studies taken together show that museum leadership is unable to effectively develop compensation policies that address employee needs, and many newer entrants to the museum profession identify the lack of sufficient compensation as a barrier to their continuing to pursue a career in the sector. A staggering fifty-nine percent of the workforce express that compensation is the biggest hurdle in staying in the museum world.

II. Current museum structures create significant salary differentials

A wide gap exists between executive employees and the remainder of staff in most museums. Historically the executive positions have been filled by white males from certain socio-economic backgrounds that permitted them to rise in becoming leaders of museums given their access to the inner circles that museums can be privy to. An important segment of museum staff are docents, interns, and volunteers, who contribute greatly to the operation of museums. An intern could spend an entire year researching for an upcoming exhibit and not get paid, aside

from adding the experience to their resume. Who could survive a summer on an intern stipend of \$400 or, like most, unpaid? Unpaid internships are not a fair and equitable employment practice and have alienated many worthy up-and-coming museum study graduates who come from working or middle-class backgrounds.

A sampling of mean salaries compiled from the Association of Art Museum Directors for their salary survey of 2022 elaborates changes in the salary levels of fifty-two museum roles from 2021, showing that only five managerial positions saw decreases in compensation in this period.

Mean salaries compiled from the Association of Art Museum Directors salary survey of 2022			
Position	Salary 2022	Salary 2021	Change in Salary
Museum Directors	\$343,600	\$320,600	Up
Deputy Director	\$185,500	\$177,200	Up
Chief Operating Officer	\$209,500	\$183,700	Up
Chief Curator / Director of Curatorial Affairs / Curator A	\$158,500	\$150,200	Up
Director of Development / Development A	\$153,000	\$142,500	Up
Director of Finance / Finance A	\$151,700	\$158,700	Down
Director of External Affairs	\$129,000	\$137,400	Down
Director of Information Systems / Chief Information Officer	\$131,500	\$126,300	Up
Chief Conservator / Conservator A	\$126,500	\$124,000	Up
Human Resources Director	\$125,700	\$112,800	Up
Director, Planned Giving / Institutional Giving	\$105,800	\$112,600	Down
Senior Curator / Curator of Special Collections Area / Curator B	\$107,500	\$106,300	Up
Curator of Exhibitions / Curator C	\$99,100	\$99,400	Down
Senior Conservator / Conservator B	\$98,900	\$96,900	Up
Marketing Director	\$99,200	\$98,000	Up
Director of Education / Curator of Education / Education A	\$94,400	\$88,500	Up
Facilities Director / Building Manager / Operations Manager	\$97,900	\$90,000	Up
Systems Manager / Technology Director / Director of New Media	\$97,500	\$88,500	Up
Director of Finance / Finance B	\$87,700	\$85,900	Up
Engineering Manager	\$89,900	\$88,300	Up

Editor / Director of Publications	\$94,100	\$87,500	Up
Head Librarian / Librarian A	\$83,600	\$81,900	Up
Grant Manager / Institutional Giving Manager / Development B	\$79,000	\$78,800	Up
Associate Curator / Curator D	\$77,100	\$76,200	Up
Public Relations Officer	\$79,200	\$75,900	Up
Web Manager	\$74,200	\$75,600	Down
Chief of Security	\$81,200	\$75,000	Up
Exhibition Designer	\$75,500	\$74,400	Up
Associate Conservator / Conservator C	\$73,200	\$71,000	Up
Registrar A	\$72,500	\$70,800	Up
Museum Store Manager	\$70,100	\$68,500	Up
Chief Preparator / Preparator A	\$67,900	\$66,700	Up
Special Events Manager	\$67,400	\$65,000	Up
Assistant To Director	\$65,600	\$64,800	Up
Photographer	\$66,700	\$64,600	Up
Development Associate / Development C	\$64,200	\$63,000	Up
Associate Librarian / Librarian B	\$63,600	\$62,900	Up
Graphic Designer	\$61,200	\$60,200	Up
Associate Educator / Educator B	\$61,200	\$60,200	Up
Assistant Curator / Curator E	\$60,000	\$59,600	Up
New Media Manager	\$59,200	\$57,900	Up
Associate Registrar / Registrar B	\$59,000	\$58,900	Up
Associate Librarian / Librarian C	\$51,700	\$55,800	Down
Assistant Registrar / Registrar C	\$51,900	\$52,300	Down
Assistant Educator / Educator C	\$52,000	\$51,100	Up
Volunteer Coordinator	\$55,000	\$50,400	Up
Associate Preparator / Preparator B	\$50,900	\$49,100	Up
Curator Assistant	\$50,300	\$48,500	Up
Membership Assistant	\$46,800	\$46,300	Up
Education Assistant	\$45,700	\$41,700	Up
Museum Security Officer / Museum Security Guard	\$39,700	\$39,300	Up
Visitor Services Associate	\$36,800	\$31,600	Up

Of note, janitorial, department assistants, store employees, hourly workers, and many other vital museum employees' salaries are not listed in this research. To elaborate on salary disparities between various departments and roles, Sarah Marsom, a heritage resource consultant, and labor advocate, summarized the issues as follows: "Salary disparities impact career paths, staff retention, and impacts quality of work/ quality of candidates when looking to pay vacancies."

National Emerging Museum Professionals Network ex-board co-president, Sierra Van Ryck DeGroot, suggests regarding addressing disparities through an equity versus equality lens:

I think that the conversation has been going on from the beginning. Equality is nice, but equity is what we are really looking for. Acknowledging that all workers deserve the same pay across the board is a start, but any additional skilled labour, such as translations, coding, design, etc., deserves additional compensation. The burn and churn of programming and education staff in the sector is disappointing and the field is incredibly small, so it does get around to those of us here for a moment who is treating their staff in those areas well and who isn't. It has been a sore point for many who do this work because they are skilled in it and love it, but there is limited advocacy work around making this change.

A changing labor market may be pushing museums to reconsider worker pay and benefits as they rehire workers. Layoffs during COVID-19 affected even the most endowed institutions of a \$100 million plus, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Guggenheim New York, the Whitney New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Greenberg, ArtNews, Ramos, Apollo). In 2022, museums found themselves at a crossroads in hiring practices in not paying living wages and working harder to retain or reinstate laid-off workers.

Nearly half, or 47 percent, of 710 museum directors surveyed by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and Seattle-based research firm Wilkening Consulting, said they plan to rehire and/or increase staff size throughout the rest of the year. “Like many other areas of society, the museum field is unlikely to ever return to the exact same way we operated pre-pandemic. Depending on how the pandemic continues to evolve and the

financial support museums are able to secure, we're hoping to see our field bounce back financially in three to five years," Laura Lott, AAM president and CEO, said via email. More than half (56 percent) of museums recruiting for job openings reported difficulty filling open positions, primarily in guest services, admissions, frontline, and retail roles, as well as facilities maintenance, security, and education (Gural, Forbes).

This data confirms the pay gaps between managerial and frontline roles and between education and other specialist roles within museums. Research also shows that most museum employees must have additional jobs to be able to sustain expenses. "I have heard too many stories of museum workers having one, two, three-plus jobs to sustain themselves in addition to their museum work. It's horrifying." Van Ryck DeGroot's declaration is also supported by labor specialist Sarah Marsom, whom, from numerous years in the cultural sector echoes these facts:

I know cultural sector employees who have had to live in their car; I know some that drive for Uber Eats or DoorDash; I know some who work retail to supplement their income. There are people in this field who have to leave due to their inability to provide a sustainable income for themselves.

Pay differentials and inadequate pay for some roles in museums has become a form of salary compression which is defined by *Indeed* as "pay compression happens when differences in compensation among employees don't reflect their experience, skills or responsibilities." This can lead to practices that give rise to pay inequity. Hence, having salaries published in surveys and open job postings could assist the alleviation of salary compression and give a bargaining tool for staff that experience compression. The AAMD salary survey can assist in comparing the various director, manager or assistant positions, to see possible disparity amongst the roles when

it comes to the requirements for those positions. Salary transparency in nonprofit museums could be one of the solutions.

Boards have a duty and need to be held accountable for making sure staff are paid appropriate living wages, as they do for a director's salary; they oversee executive directors who make the decisions on wage increases. A more diverse and equitable board would also likely be more sensitive to the matter.

The Art/Museum Salary Transparency 2019 document began by Michelle Millar Fisher, curator of Contemporary Decorative Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, is an example of how employees are responding to the frustration about the lack of transparency and equitable pay in museums. Millar Fisher opined about the matter with Elaine Velie of *Hyperallergic*: "In terms of salary transparency, knowing what the pay grade or salary level is before you apply for a job ensures that you know that you can afford to pursue that career (or agitate for raising wages to a fair level)."

The National Emerging Museum Professionals Network, led at the time by co-president Sierra Van Ryck deGroot and regional director Jesse Dutton-Kenny, prevailed with their persistent communication with the American Alliance of Museums, to publish salaries on job openings listed on their site, which implemented it as official policy in November 2022. The birth of the National Emerging Museum Professionals Network came to fruition "when the organization broke off from AAM in the early 2010s and became its own 501c3 [and has been] committed to salary transparency since then" (Van Ryck DeGroot). Now museum job seekers or employees throughout the country and abroad have an awareness of pay scales at various institutions. Of note, in California and New York State, it is law that job openings have salary ranges.

While an increasing number of museums now publish salaries, institutions such as the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Menil Collection, do not publish salaries like other peers, arguably working against their status as equal opportunity employers by putting the onus on potential employees to be well researched in their worth and aware of cost-of-living wages for the area the museums are in. Museums are not alone in this practice. The performing arts sector mimics the transparency practices of museums; large organizations, such as the Kennedy Center, Emerson Colonial Center, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, include salaries in their job postings, while smaller institutions, such as True Colors Theater and Baltimore Center Stage, rarely do so.

III. Museums must address the cost-of-living crisis

Implementing living wages based on the prevailing labor market conditions and inflation in their regions and publishing competitive salaries and wages to avoid the constant turnover of employees is imperative for museums and other arts and cultural institutions to retain staff. Society benefits from museums retaining their staff, as these institutions support and contribute to restaurants, housing, local businesses, taxes, social security, and Medicare in the geographic area in which the museum operates. Data on cost of living and salary transparency, such as the MIT Living Wage Calculator, can be used as a model for assessing compensation levels for positions based on living wages. MIT defines their Living Wage Calculator as:

The living wage model is an alternative measure of basic needs. It is a market-based approach that draws upon geographically specific expenditure data related to a family's likely minimum food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities (e.g. clothing, personal care items, etc.) costs. The living wage draws on these cost elements and the rough effects of income and payroll taxes to determine the

minimum employment earnings necessary to meet a family's basic needs while also maintaining self-sufficiency (MIT Living Wage Calculator.)

Once applied, it can demonstrate which museums are acknowledging the cost-of-living wages in their area. Below are some samplings of job postings with salary rate with the MIT Living Wage Estimate Calculator being used to determine whether living wages are being offered for the position in that area:

Full-Time Job Posting Description and Location	Salary	Museum Net Assets per 990 Form or Financial Report 2020 or 2021	MIT Living Wage Calculator One Adult Only	MIT Living Wage Calculator One Adult and 1 Child	MIT Living Wage Calculator two-adult home with one child and one adult working
Website Content Manager, The San Francisco Museum of Modern, San Francisco CA	\$76,841 - \$81,334	\$736,279,605	\$64,090	\$125,687	\$111,553
Associate Director of Individual Giving and Events, Mississippi Museums of Art, Jackson MS	\$55,000 - \$65,000	\$7,998,794	\$33,498	\$62,984	\$63,465
Director's Office Assistant, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago IL	\$49,430 - \$61,680	\$194,091,422	\$38,306	\$73,208	\$68,537
Preventive Conservator, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore MD	\$50,500 - \$60,500	\$234,163,733	\$36,477	\$74,494	\$69,379
Museum Executive Director, Southeast Museum, Brewster NY	\$30,000 - \$40,000	\$109,531	\$52,863	\$96,867	\$83,431

These findings demonstrate ways that museums can determine whether their compensation matches living wages for their community. Their net assets are also a reflection of

the institutions at hand, which are available to all to research through tax filings. One can notice that if the employee is the sole breadwinner in a household that encompasses dependents, that employee's salary rate, most of the time, will not suffice and they might have to take on additional jobs and or rethink a career. This could cause alienation of a diverse pool of candidates who might opt out.

A research report performed by Ithaka SR in 2018 confirms:

If museums fail to diversify staff and programming to tell and display the full range of American stories, art museums will increasingly find themselves in the unsustainable position of presenting culture from a conspicuously narrow frame of reference. They are at growing risk of reinforcing a culturally exclusionary narrative that has long underpinned social and economic inequities in the United States (Sweeney).

Museums with large net assets that claim to have equitable, inclusive, and accessible environments might have to rethink whether they are living up to the wording of their vision and mission statements. Not only are they often not providing living wages for their employees, but they also do not consider the educational requirements that they ask of their candidates, which carry heavy student loans. Findings published in a 2021 report about art administrators' compensation by the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture with the Center for Business and Management of the Arts at Claremont Graduate University confirms:

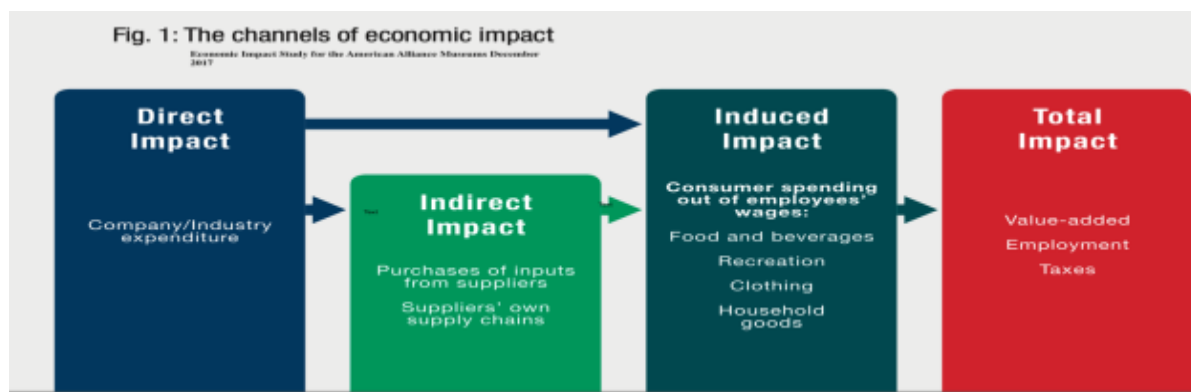
Two-thirds of entry-level respondents reported carrying some kind of debt, most commonly student loans, followed by debt for housing, transportation, business, or health. Average student debt was \$32,724, and varied significantly according to education level, race, and age. More BIPOC respondents carry student debt, but their average debt was about half of what it was for White respondents. Visibility of BIPOC

arts administrators, especially in leadership roles, is seen as a critical. Transparency of compensation, benefits, and working conditions is needed for both accountability and to help people searching for entry-level jobs in arts administration make informed decisions (Krieger and Mauldin).

The same applies to cultural workers in other parts of the cultural sector, like the performing arts, where salaries are not enough to sustain the cost of living.

Posted salaries for job openings in the performing arts are often lacking as well, as most non-operational staff, such as performers and set hands, are often contract workers and therefore often hold multiple jobs to be able to pay the bills. Of note, in-house salary transparency is starting to flourish in certain organizations, such being the case at True Colors Theatre, as voiced by Brandall C. Jones, connectivity director. Yet, in the bigger picture, alienation again comes to mind.

Possible solutions that museums must address is true transparency in publishing salaries for all job openings, ensuring that they reflect living wages for the region they are in. Funders (such as government or foundations) must ask if living wages are being met at the museums since most of the staff reside in the community and give back to the community through taxes, shopping, dining etc.



A finding published in 2017 by the American Alliance of Museums illustrates the impact of employment by the museum sector:

But beyond this cultural impact, the museum sector is also essential to the national economy — generating GDP, stimulating jobs, and contributing taxes. These economic effects can be measured using a standard technique known as economic impact analysis. This kind of analysis measures not just the direct (operational) contribution of the museum sector but also the impact that is felt as its activities ripple out across the economy. This includes, for example, the impact generated as museums makes purchases from a wider supply chain, known as the indirect impact. It also measures the effects that are felt in the wider consumer economy as employees in museums and their supply chains spend their wages on things like meals in restaurants or going to the gym (known as the induced impact). Each of these economic channels can be quantified in terms of a contribution to GDP, jobs, and the amount of tax revenue that is generated for all levels of government.

If institutional funders are interested in supporting economic opportunity and equity, then they could request that museums sign a living wage pledge or support living wages through philanthropic and public investment.

There are many arguments about why living wages in museums remain elusive. Many would claim that most museums do not have the budget to allocate additional funds for salaries. It is also said that endowments used for operational costs fluctuate and cannot be relied on during recessions, and donors are resistant to giving to operational funding. Others argue that living wages cannot be given out overnight and need time to be absorbed which can take years to implement in thoughtful steps. Yet, some executive directors who at times are restricted in

allocating living wages have produced alternate benefits such as extra time off, free parking, retirement plans or health benefits for part-time workers as well.

However, compensation plans, endowment campaigns that incorporate funding for more equitable compensation, publishing salaries, living wage pledges, and many other strategies are available to museum leadership in addressing these challenges. Solutions to the arguments against living wages in museums are available; in fact, there are many. Museums can create salary endowments with a diverse portfolio to support the organization during a recession or inflation period. Donors could support the funding of living wages as some endowments already exist to support executive director salaries, such is the case for the Baltimore Museum of Art. These approaches can alleviate the need for assistance from government in downturns and be more efficient in the long term. Operational grants geared toward salaries should be investigated by educating those funders about the vital importance of funding beyond programing. A new movement of trust-based philanthropy that emerged during COVID-19 can be beneficial for the donor and recipient: “Trust-based philanthropy encompasses grantmaking practices that lessen the burdens on grantee organizations and improve the relationship between funders and their grantees. Most of these have long been considered good philanthropic practices” (Stanford PACS).

Paying living wages to employees of museums is a societal benefit to all. It brings spending in local communities, gentrification in parts that might have had economic loss due to people moving out, increases in public school attendance, and more taxpayer money for the city to use towards, education, garbage collection, infrastructures, and additional jobs in museums and its community.

IV. Institutional case studies of emergent practices proven successful

An innovative case study showing novel approaches to addressing living wages comes from the Baltimore Museum of Art, which developed a strategy, "Endowment for the Future," in 2021 to be funded and enacted over three years. As the strategy articulates:

Securing, and in many cases, increasing staff salaries is the most expansive focus area of the BMA's Endowment for the Future. Once fully realized, every staff position will be evaluated through the lens of pay equity and increases will be rolled out incrementally to achieve competitive market rates, including further raises for hourly workers. The BMA is aiming to raise nearly \$40 million during the next 24-30 months for this effort.

Prioritizing this frequently overlooked aspect of museum finance recognizes the contributions of the BMA's existing staff and will also allow the museum to attract and retain a diverse workforce into the future (Baltimore Museum of Art).

Recognizing the financial considerations of moving toward living wages is essential for museums, the BMA's approach addresses these financial realities and has developed a campaign strategy to invest in its employees as part of a wider strategy to support organizational sustainability. However, on the flipside, the endeavor has proven to be lacking in support as most funders do not understand this approach, which is untraditional in the museum world. Most non-museum entities assume that people work in museums for the love of the arts and do not care about the salaries, as they come from wealthy backgrounds. Michael Holland, an ex-museum professional, opines: "To what extent are museums financially dependent on hiring people who bring along a supplemental income to offset their lower pay? With a steady supply of people who would love to work in a museum and don't have to worry so much about their earnings, museums may not have much incentive to raise salaries."

Success can and has been found in pay equity initiatives by educating boards in the importance of living wages for the region they dwell in, as demonstrated by the Filoli House and Garden in Woodside, CA. Kara Newport, CEO of Filoli explained this achievement in an AAM article in 2022:

But what we found, as we did more research, was that avoiding an increase in salaries would likely end up costing us anyway, in the long run. The Society for Human Resource Management has estimated that companies spend approximately forty-two days and \$4,129 per hire. Applied to Filoli's dramatic 2019 turnover rate of 50 percent, or twenty-nine employees, this direct cost would have been about \$120,000 and 1,218 lost business days. This year, we completed a professional market comparison using CompTeam, which reaffirmed that our commitment to a living wage was aligned with our regional and national markets and provided more information on professional positions which will lead to further compensation adjustments this year. The study results allow us to be fully transparent on salary ranges for each position and develop plans for staff professional development to advance within their tier. We have received the 2022 living wage calculation for our area, and it is up from \$28 to \$30.81 an hour, which we will be matching in our compensation plan. Already, we have experienced a difference in our staff since implementing the plan. Our turnover rate has gone from 50 percent in 2019 to 8 percent this year.

Ms. Newport also confirmed in an interview that:

We added twelve new staff in 2022 and are adding five new staff in 2023, and several gardens and similar attractions in our area have gone to a living wage minimum,

including Gardens of the Golden Gate. And I know it is in discussion at San Diego Botanical Garden and Lotusland in Santa Barbara.

These results demonstrate the ways in which compensation plans, informed by data, can support employee retention, and attract new employees, thereby strengthening the workforce of cultural institutions. An administrator should look at this case study, which rethought programming and exhibitions to allocate funds for living wages and apply it in one's institution. It has been proven to be an uncomplicated policy that can be applied by cutting certain programs that tend to lose money as patrons do not attend them and allocate budgets to salaries and funding programs that are profitable monetarily by proven data of attendance and revenue. The cutting of certain programs can be implemented within a brief timeline compared to setting up operational endowments for salaries that can take years to come to fruition, as those funding apparatuses are dependent on finding funders.

Case studies beyond U.S. borders also show living wage strategies and approaches in museums. The Brunel Museum in London, United Kingdom has secured living wage accreditation as a small organization of eight employees and their website shares further details about their commitment to living wages:

The Museum has been an accredited Living Wage employer since June 2021. To retain Living Wage status, organisations must implement the increase by 14 May 2023 at the latest. However, the Brunel Museum has chosen to make the change now in order to help its lowest paid staff deal with the cost of living crisis. We're not a huge organisation with huge resources but this is one change we can make now in order to make a real immediate difference in the lives of our workforce (McAlpine).

As members of the "Living Wage Foundation," they must adhere to a set of values that include and choose to go further than the government minimum wage and pay a real living wage based on the cost of living. The Brunel Museum provides another example of an institution that made this wage shift without reliance on a special endowment fund. Institutions can transition to policies that adhere to living wage models like the one brought forth by the Living Wage Foundation. Of note, most museums in the United Kingdom used to rely very heavily on government funding, but in recent years (even prior to 2020) have “suffered numerous funding cuts over recent years, and many generate the lion’s share of their income themselves. Chief among these is the Tate, which supplies 75 percent of its funding through its own efforts” (Artforum). Museums in the United Kingdom are undergoing the same issues as most museums in the United States when it comes to funding. No one is immune to government cuts of funds when a country undergoes high inflation or a recession.

V. Unionization at Museums

Museums are unionizing at a rapid historical rate, as reported in the *New York Times* and other outlets: U.S. Museums See Rise in Unions Even as Labor Movement Slumps (Small, New York Times.) Tom Seymour confirms: “Unionising [sic] efforts were already taking place before Covid, but the pandemic has sent the figures into overdrive. According to the Union Membership and Coverage Database, 13% of museums were unionised [sic] in 2020. While this figure appears low, it was actually the highest level since 2013.”

Yet, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2022 unionization rate (10.1 percent) across different sectors is the lowest on record and has declined by 10 percentage points since 1983, the first year where comparable union data is available. In 1983, the union membership rate was 20.1 percent and there were 17.7 million union workers.

But in the museum world, a growing number of museum unions are increasingly becoming a tool in salary negotiations that can lead to living wages in the museum sector. Museums that have long been unionized have developed policies that enable employees to seek fair and competitive compensation:

At MoMA, which has been unionized for years, there are a range of grade levels and titles. Everyone gets guaranteed increases and step raises, but base salaries depend upon level of responsibility, years of service, etc. In addition, the contract explicitly allows employees to ask for additional, discretionary merit increases (Jewish Museum Union Local 2110 UAW).

Unions can create hostility, as well, as they often require that all employees become members. Unions can be costly when negotiating on both sides: time, lawyer fees, unpaid wages, "union dues are 2% of your regular (gross) wages (excluding overtime) deducted from your paycheck" and no guarantee of salary increases while negotiation occurs (Jewish Museum Union Local 2110 UAW).

Museums, such as Tacoma Museum of Art, Tacoma WA, the; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus OH; and Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia PA, are or underwent long negotiations that cost revenue and livelihoods as well.

Other fields in the cultural sector have long had unionization, and it is particularly prevalent, though not universal, in the performing arts. What, then, can be learned from cultural workers in the performing arts regarding unions and living wages and possibly be applied to museums? Unions can support arts workers in obtaining living wages from institutions, but this comes with a direct cost to individual workers. In a discussion with Heather Dornian, principal,

Alberta Ballet in Canada, Dornian discussed this tension in her experience with a union as follows:

Our Union does its best to get as much remuneration as possible. We typically have the cost of living as a factor in finding the percentage of pay increases from season to season. As well, our retirement savings plans and other monetary benefits are meant to reflect the current cost of living. As for striking, we don't. Here is the language we have in our collective agreement: "Equity shall not cause, authorize, or sanction, nor will it permit its members to cause or take part in any strike during the term of the Agreement. The Ballet shall not lockout the Artist during the term of the Agreement." Overall, during negotiations we save the money-talk until the end and really try to push for as many monetary benefits as possible. The one-time joining fee is \$1,000. My company covers that cost upfront and the dancer has a deduction from their paycheck [sic] for basically the first half of the season to pay it back. I'm unsure what amount per cheque, but I do recall it was enough when I first joined that I really missed having that extra bit each pay period. I pay \$90 bi-annually as well as have a percentage (2.25%) taken out of each paycheck [sic], in which we are paid bi-weekly. Canadian tax law allows for us to claim all of these expenses on our taxes which helps lower our taxes or often create a refund.

For the services that we get from the Union, sometimes I find that it costs too much. Many of the same conflicting sentiments emerge regarding unions as a positive factor for museum employees because of the individual costs that are shared by unionized members of museums and other cultural organizations.

VI. Conclusion

Museums implementing salaries that reflect living wages in their respective regions will improve employee retention. Current museum structures create significant salary differentials between executive employees and the remainder of staff. Most museum employees are required to have higher education qualifications and yet are often paid less than the living wage matrix for the geographical location in which they work and in a manner that is inconsistent with their educational level. These factors also alienate a population that does not come from wealth and cannot permit themselves to live on the wages museums are offering. In a current environment in which equity in the museum sector is being discussed with urgency, compensation could stand to play a significant role in allowing a wider cross-section of the population to pursue museum careers.

To support change, the cost-of-living crisis in pay rates must be researched by museum administrators through the study of living wages in their respective regions. Incorporating this information into planning (be it a two-to-five-year implementation policy that can come to fruition) will allow museums to respond to economic pressures and avoid the constant turnover of employees that has become indicative of the sector.

Museum leaders must realize why their employees are unionizing at such a rapid historic rate compared to other sectors where unions are declining. Instead of confrontation, transparency, an open dialogue, and exchange of ideas must be had between employees, leadership, and boards if the museum world is to continue and thrive; a failure to do so will result in the museum sector being known as a field that exploits and alienates brilliant minds and stewards of arts and culture—past, present, and future.

Boards can take a particularly key role in implementing living wages for museums, as they represent the community the organizations reside in and have a fiduciary duty for the

sustainability of all parts of an institution, including the compensation of employees, one of the most vital assets of any institution. Fred Bidwell—a board member of Cleveland Museum of Art, Visiting Committee member of the Allen Memorial Art Museum, and Board Chair of Assembly for the Arts—sums the responsibilities that museums have towards their workforce:

Museums do need to reflect on the way they've treated their own employees and make changes there. I think there's been an assumption that museums, by definition, are wonderful places and people should just love working there and that you don't really have to pay people that much because the personal reward should somehow compensate. That's naive, that's arrogant, and it's incredibly unfair, and particularly distasteful in an environment where, especially many of the larger museums, are coming out of the pandemic more financially sound than they were going into the pandemic. That's reprehensible if they're not sharing that with their staff, and not rewarding their staff, particularly considering the stress that the staff is being put under, especially in this more fraught environment, where public expectations are way higher than they used to be. So you can't just keep treating the staff the same. You have to recognize that they're in the front line, they're doing really important work, and they need to get paid for it (Hope&Dread).

Museum directors must develop new operational approaches supported by their boards. Sarah Arison—president of the Arison Arts Foundation, Vice-Chair of the board of MoMA PS1, and a trustee of MoMA—expresses the museum director role: “Moderating and mediating between everybody involved. Making sure that everybody's voice is heard and that everybody is united around the mission of the organization; making sure that that is the focus, and hopefully the

director has the strength to really be the one who's making sure everybody at the table is heard.”

(Hope&Dread)

Arts and culture uplift, inspire, and educate and yet many cultural institutions, particularly museums, are currently being indicted by their employees for the ways in which they devalue their employees with a lack of living wages. Change in this area is among the reforms that museum administrators can make to improve organizational culture and a societal divide. Museum employees are constituents whose voices must be heard.

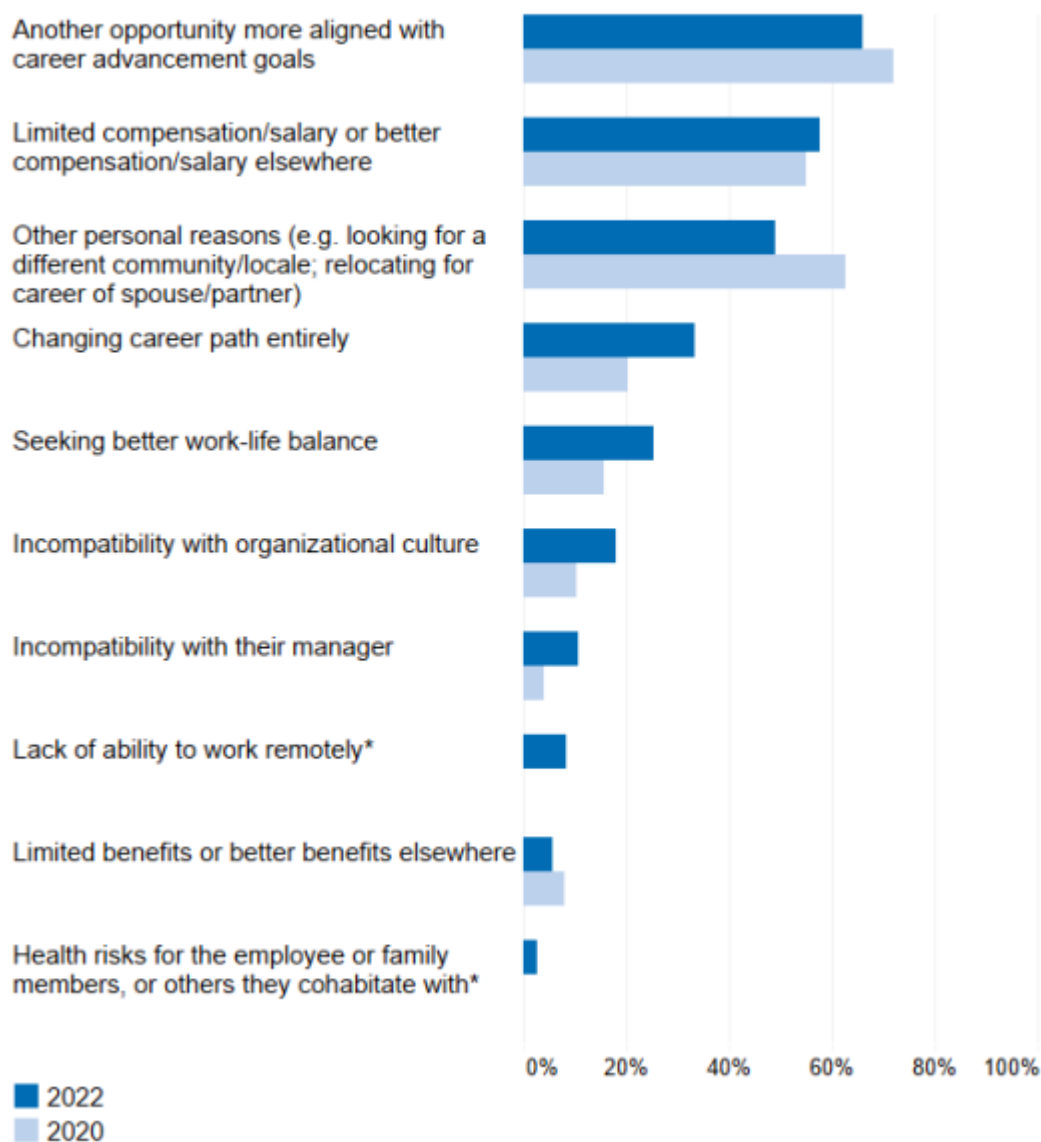
APPENDIX

A. Art Museum Director Survey 2022 Documenting Change in Museum Strategy and Operations

Figure 18: Presently, in staffing positions in your museum, how easy or difficult are each of the following? Percentage of directors that selected “extremely easy” or “somewhat easy” and “extremely difficult” or “somewhat difficult,” 2022 and 2020.^[12]



Figure 19: What are the top reasons employees voluntarily leave your museum? Please select all that apply. Percentage of directors that selected each item, 2022 and 2020.

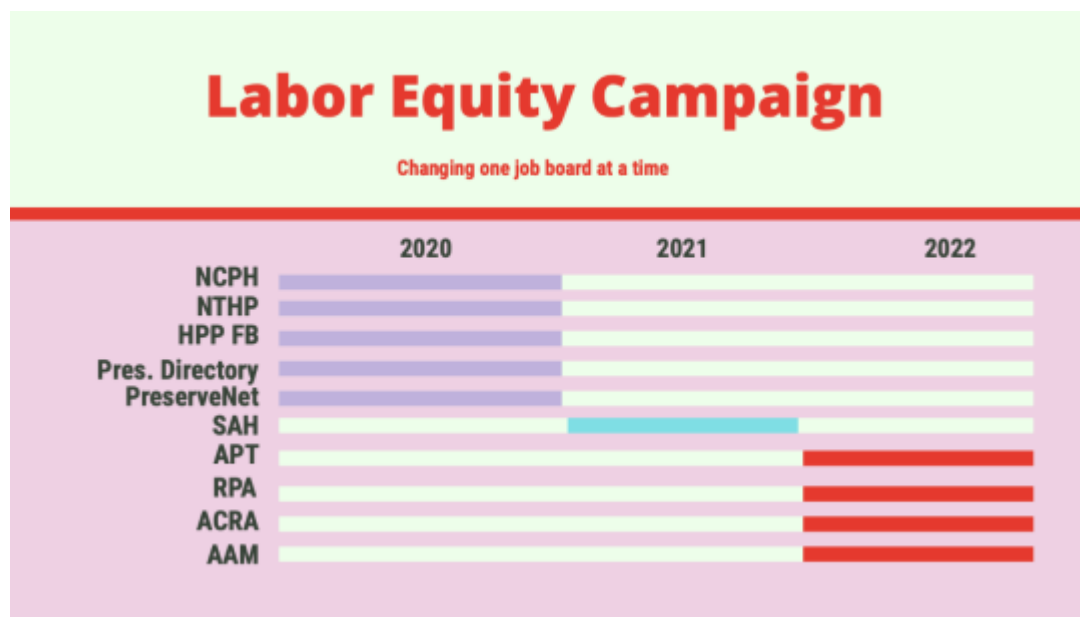


*Item not asked in 2020

B. Equity in Pay + Pay Transparency Accountability Tracker

Equity in Pay + Pay Transparency Accountability Tracker				
Hide fields	Filter	Grouped by 1 field	Sort	...
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of Organization Hosting Jobs Board	Link to Jobs Board/List...	Salaries Posted?	Posting Unpaid Internships?
SALARIES POSTED?				Summary
▼ No Count 14				
1	American Alliance of Museums	https://aam-us-jobs.care...	No	Yes
2	Association of South Dakota Museums	http://southdakotamuseu...	No	Yes
3	Collections Stewardship	https://www.collectionsst...	No	Yes - but with a disclaimer
4	Florida Association of Museums	https://www.flamuseums...	No	Yes
5	Hawai'i Museums Association	https://www.hawaiimuseu...	No	Yes
6	HireCulture/Mass Cultural Council	https://www.hireculture.or...	No	Yes
7	Idaho Association of Museums	https://www.idahomuseu...	No	Yes
8	Iowa Museum Association	https://www.iowamuseum...	No	Yes - but with a disclaimer
9	Kentucky Museum and Heritage Alliance	https://kymuseums.org/re...	No	Yes
10	Louisiana Association of Museums	https://lamuseums.org/jo...	No	Yes
11	Minnesota Association of Museums	http://www.minnesotamu...	No	Yes
12	Museum Savvy	https://museumsavvy.co...	No	Yes
13	Nevada Museums Association	http://nevadamuseums.or...	No	Yes
14	Oklahoma Museums Association	https://www.okmuseums...	No	Yes
SALARIES POSTED?				
▼ Optional Count 9				
15	Association of Academic Museums and Galleries	https://www.aamg-us.org...	Optional	Yes - but with a disclaimer
16	Association of Art Museum Curators	https://www.artcurators.o...	Optional	Yes
17	California Association of Museums	https://www.calmuseums...	Optional	Yes
18	Connecticut League of History Organizations	https://clho.org/Employm...	Optional	Yes
19	New York Foundation for the Arts	https://www.nyfa.org/clas...	Optional	Yes
20	Virginia Association of Museums	https://www.vamuseums...	Optional	Yes
21	West Virginia Association of Museums	https://www.museumsofw...	Optional	Yes
22	Western Museums Association	https://westmuse.org/job...	Optional	Yes - but with a disclaimer
23	Words of Mouth	https://www.wordsofmout...	Optional	Yes
SALARIES POSTED?				
▼ Required Count 44				
24	American Association for State and Local History	https://jobs.aaslh.org/	Required	Yes - but with a disclaimer
25	American Cultural Resources Association	https://acra-crm.org/jobs/	Required	Yes
26	Association for Preservation Technology	https://www.apti.org/job-...	Required	No
67 records				

Screenshot of the Equity in Pay + Pay Transparency Accountability Tracker

C. Sarah Marsom Findings

What the acronyms mean: National Council on Public History, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Historic Preservation Professionals Facebook, Preservation Directory, Preservenet, Society of Architectural Historians, Association for Preservation Technology, Register of Professional Archaeologists, American Cultural Resources Association, American Alliance of Museum (AAM's change had me using my audience/network to provide supporting activism to ongoing museum campaigns). Provided by Sarah Marsom.

D. Job Descriptions Openings and Living Wages



POSITION: Associate Director of Individual Giving and Events

REPORTS TO: Director of Development

STATUS: Full-time, Exempt

Job Summary

Reporting to the Director of Development, the Associate Director is responsible for cultivating relationships with individual donors, developing, and implementing strategic plans and fundraising strategies for enhanced growth and retention of members.

Additional duties include planning and executing all donor engagement events that support and enhance the Museum's capacity to grow its audience and expand its base while maintaining a clear view of how each project supports MMA's mission.

A list of essential job functions is below. This list is not designed to be a comprehensive itemization of every activity, duty, or responsibility that may be encountered. Activities, duties, and responsibilities may be changed, added, or eliminated at any time with or without notice.

Essential Functions

- Identify fundraising opportunities that align with MMA's mission statement, and work with staff to create donor engagement initiatives
- Maintain and develop strong relationships with current and previous donors, and actively work to identify and acquire a diverse donor base that supports MMA's annual programming; work with the development team to engage and attract new donors to meet giving and fundraising objectives
- Develop an annual appeal calendar with a minimum of three campaigns each year that successfully engage new and current donors through mail, email, and social media
- Professional interaction and assistance with donors (via phone, computer and face-to-face)
- Produce, from conception to completion, all donor, volunteer, and fundraising-related events ("special events") for the Museum, with an eye toward stewarding donors; some of those events include donor and volunteer appreciation events, panels, symposia, private dinners, etc.
- Produce the Museum's annual spring benefit gala
- Communicate clear and concise expectations for every event to staff, security, auxiliary staff, vendors, and volunteers in a timely manner, then lead and execute detailed, timebound plans for events
- Conduct timely post-event assessment reports for quality control

- Cultivate new relationships and expertise in professional event fundraising for continuous education and improvement to enhance the Museum's event and donor operations
- Liaise with the curatorial, public programs, and education teams on donor cultivation and solicitation opportunities
- Establish and manage information tracking processes; update Customer Relation Management (CRM) software, and generate Development reports (sponsors, major donors, individuals, lapsed donors)
- Acknowledge cash and in-kind donations
- Provide prospecting and donor research to Development Committee, Director of Development and MMA Director to gain and attract new donors
- Attend internal and external meetings, and community events as required
- Work with development staff to establish annual projections and fundraising goals
- Work to prepare annual budgets and track costs for events and donor engagement
- Work with other Museum staff to ensure smooth operation of the Museum's daily programs and events
- Abide by all Museum policies and procedures, perform required administrative tasks in an accurate and timely manner
- Represent the Museum with the highest level of integrity and enthusiasm, work positively with colleagues and the public.
- Perform other related duties as assigned

Competency

- A Bachelor's degree preferred
- Experience with donor stewardship, fundraising, and event planning
- Excellent written and oral communication skills that are effective with a diverse range of audiences
- Prior experience in a database management as well as knowledge of CRM database required; Blackbaud's Altru experience preferred
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Products & Microsoft Teams
- Ability to maintain a high level of confidentiality
- Highly organized, meticulous, and detail-oriented
- Collaborative, with good leadership qualities
- Receptive to constructive feedback and willing to work as part of a team
- Personable, warm, courteous, and respectful
- Able to apply good judgment to a variety of situations

Expected Hours of Work

This is an exempt position that works 40-hours a week. Some weekends and evenings are required to support Museum exhibitions, events, and programs.

Salary Range

\$55,000 - \$65,000

Living Wage Calculation for Jackson, MS

The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an **individual** in a household must earn to support his or herself and their family. The assumption is the sole provider is working full-time (2080 hours per year). The tool provides information for individuals, and households with one or two working adults and zero to three children. In the case of households with two working adults, all values are **per working adult, single or in a family** unless otherwise noted.

The state minimum wage is the same for all individuals, regardless of how many dependents they may have. Data are updated annually, in the first quarter of the new year. State minimum wages are determined based on the posted value of the minimum wage as of January one of the coming year (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). The poverty rate reflects a person's gross annual income. We have converted it to an hourly wage for the sake of comparison.

For further detail, please reference the [technical documentation here](#).

	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORK)		
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children
Living Wage	\$16.12	\$31.45	\$39.22	\$49.84	\$25.91	\$31.83	\$36.76	\$40.03	\$12.78	\$17.61	\$21.83
Poverty Wage	\$6.53	\$8.80	\$11.07	\$13.34	\$8.80	\$11.07	\$13.34	\$15.61	\$4.40	\$5.54	\$6.67
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

Typical Expenses

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

	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORK)		
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children
Food	\$3,926	\$5,795	\$8,707	\$11,540	\$7,198	\$8,966	\$11,564	\$14,071	\$7,198	\$8,966	
Child Care	\$0	\$5,862	\$11,723	\$17,584	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,862	
Medical	\$3,150	\$9,384	\$9,394	\$9,319	\$7,033	\$9,394	\$9,319	\$9,472	\$7,033	\$9,394	
Housing	\$8,865	\$10,798	\$10,798	\$13,375	\$9,235	\$10,798	\$10,798	\$13,375	\$8,865	\$10,798	
Transportation	\$5,477	\$9,851	\$12,045	\$14,484	\$9,851	\$12,045	\$14,484	\$15,530	\$9,851	\$12,045	
Civic	\$3,074	\$6,107	\$6,821	\$9,300	\$6,107	\$6,821	\$9,300	\$7,395	\$6,107	\$6,821	
Other	\$4,253	\$7,420	\$8,755	\$9,610	\$7,420	\$8,755	\$9,610	\$10,749	\$7,420	\$8,755	
Required annual income after taxes	\$28,877	\$55,347	\$68,375	\$85,344	\$46,975	\$56,911	\$65,206	\$70,723	\$46,604	\$62,773	
Annual taxes	\$4,652	\$10,079	\$13,213	\$18,322	\$6,926	\$9,298	\$11,265	\$12,548	\$6,556	\$10,465	
Required annual income before taxes	\$33,529	\$65,426	\$81,587	\$103,666	\$53,901	\$66,210	\$76,471	\$83,271	\$53,160	\$73,238	

SM

Museum Executive Director

Southeast Museum

Brewster, New York, United States (On-Site)

15 days ago


[Apply Now](#)

Description

About the Institution: Established in 1963, the Southeast Museum offers exhibits on the history of the Town of Southeast, including the early American Circus, the Harlem Line Railroad, the Tilly Foster Mine, the Borden Milk Condensery, and the Croton Reservoir System.

In addition, the museum presents various changing exhibits, drawing on its extensive collection of antique farm and household implements, quilts, clothing and assorted Americana reflecting 19th century material culture.

Job Description: The Executive Director reports directly to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Southeast Museum.

The Executive Director serves as the chief administrative officer for all museum activities while providing conceptual leadership to the Board of Trustees and museum staff through specialized knowledge of the museum and nonprofit management. The Executive Director is also responsible for implementation of the policies formulated by the Board of Trustees.

Specific Duties:

The Executive Director is responsible for supervising and coordinating museum staff, consultants, volunteers and contracted workers.

The Executive Director, in collaboration with the museum staff and Board of Trustees and, is responsible for initiating, planning, coordinating, publicizing and implementing all exhibition programs, workshops, fundraising activities, public outreach and membership drives. The Executive Director will review educational programming planned by the Museum Educator.

The Executive Director is responsible for professional practices of the museum, including acquisition, collections care, research, interpretation, and presentation. The Executive Director will work closely with the Curator, particularly to improve the presentation of the Museum's ongoing exhibits and the condition of the Museum's collections storage facilities.

The Executive Director is responsible for identification of grant opportunities, grant writing, and the completion of all grant-reporting requirements.

The Executive Director is responsible for monitoring the overall condition of the museum facilities and

Job Information

Job ID: 67657701

Workplace Type: On-Site

Location:
Brewster, New York, United States

Company Name For Job: Southeast Museum

Position Title: Museum Executive Director

Job Function: Director/Administration

Job Type: Full-Time

Job Duration: Indefinite

Min Education: BA/BS/Undergraduate

Min Experience: 1-2 Years

Required Travel: 0-10%

Salary: \$30,000.00 - \$40,000.00 (Yearly Salary)

Living Wage Calculation for Putnam County, New York

The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an **individual** in a household must earn to support his or herself and their family. The assumption is the sole provider is working full-time (2080 hours per year). The tool provides information for individuals, and households with one or two working adults and zero to three children. In the case of households with two working adults, all values are **per working adult, single or in a family** unless otherwise noted.

The state minimum wage is the same for all individuals, regardless of how many dependents they may have. Data are updated annually, in the first quarter of the new year. State minimum wages are determined based on the posted value of the minimum wage as of January one of the coming year (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). The poverty rate reflects a person's gross annual income. We have converted it to an hourly wage for the sake of comparison.

For further detail, please reference the [technical documentation here](#).

	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORKING)		
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children
Living Wage	\$25.65	\$48.87	\$65.13	\$87.64	\$34.92	\$41.67	\$46.55	\$53.06	\$17.46	\$26.20	\$34.19
Poverty Wage	\$6.53	\$8.80	\$11.07	\$13.34	\$8.80	\$11.07	\$13.34	\$15.61	\$4.40	\$5.54	\$6.67
Minimum Wage	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20	\$14.20

Typical Expenses

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

	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORKING)	
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child
Food	\$4,559	\$6,729	\$10,111	\$13,402	\$8,359	\$10,413	\$13,429	\$16,341	\$8,359	\$10,413
Child Care	\$0	\$17,758	\$35,516	\$53,274	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$17,758
Medical	\$3,207	\$8,487	\$8,497	\$8,422	\$6,666	\$8,497	\$8,422	\$8,575	\$6,666	\$8,497
Housing	\$24,860	\$28,827	\$28,827	\$36,366	\$25,303	\$28,827	\$28,827	\$36,366	\$25,303	\$28,827
Transportation	\$4,470	\$8,040	\$9,831	\$11,821	\$8,040	\$9,831	\$11,821	\$12,675	\$8,040	\$9,831
Civic	\$2,882	\$5,725	\$6,394	\$8,719	\$5,725	\$6,394	\$8,719	\$6,933	\$5,725	\$6,394
Other	\$4,339	\$7,570	\$8,932	\$9,804	\$7,570	\$8,932	\$9,804	\$10,966	\$7,570	\$8,932
Required annual income after taxes	\$44,449	\$83,268	\$108,240	\$141,939	\$61,794	\$73,026	\$81,153	\$91,987	\$61,794	\$90,784
Annual taxes	\$8,893	\$18,392	\$27,226	\$40,356	\$10,836	\$13,652	\$15,672	\$18,387	\$10,836	\$18,201
Required annual income before taxes	\$53,342	\$101,660	\$135,466	\$182,295	\$72,630	\$86,677	\$96,825	\$110,374	\$72,630	\$108,985

E. Union Statistics Museums

NEWS RELEASE

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



For release 10:00 a.m. (ET) Thursday, January 19, 2023

USDL-23-0071

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UNION MEMBERS — 2022

The **union membership rate**—the percent of wage and salary workers who were members of unions—was 10.1 percent in 2022, down from 10.3 percent in 2021, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. The number of wage and salary workers belonging to unions, at 14.3 million in 2022, increased by 273,000, or 1.9 percent, from 2021. However, the total number of wage and salary workers grew by 5.3 million (mostly among nonunion workers), or 3.9 percent. This disproportionately large increase in the number of total wage and salary employment compared with the increase in the number of union members led to a decrease in the union membership rate. The 2022 unionization rate (10.1 percent) is the lowest on record. In 1983, the first year where comparable union data are available, the union membership rate was 20.1 percent and there were 17.7 million union workers.

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