COLLECTIVE EQUITY!

A HANDBOOK FOR DESIGNING AND EVALUATING GRANT-FUNDED POSITIONS

Outcomes of the *Collective Responsibility* National Forum on Labor Practices for Grant-Funded Digital Positions

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018-2020, the Institute of Museum and Library Services-funded Collective Responsibility project (LG-73-18-0236-18) designed and led two meetings bringing together contingent workers, funder representatives, and LAM management to create guidelines and best practices for grant-funded positions. Its outcomes include the white paper Collective Responsibility: Seeking Equity for Contingent Labor in Libraries, Archives, and Museums and this handbook intended to shape the language and practice around the development and review of positions created through grant funding. We anticipate expanding these outcomes into a broader toolkit which gathers additional resources developed by the community.

The white paper describes our methodology for centering contingent worker experiences, shares the results of our survey on the experience of contingent laborers in positions created through grant-funding, delves into themes and responsibilities which arose from the forum, and develops outcomes and next steps for the work of the Collective Responsibility project. Building from the white paper and conversations at the second forum, the initial two documents in the handbook are concrete recommendations for changed practice.

Overview

The handbook contains the following:

Evaluating Project Design for Worker Equity, a one-page document intended for use by those who want to support better positions in the field but are unsure how to thoroughly review and provide feedback on position design. It is intended as a tool to empower both grant reviewers and those designing project positions. It includes questions to ask, resources for evaluation, and the principles which shape the evaluation. Although focused on positions created through grant-funding, it can be used to review any contingent, term position.

Recommendations to Funders: Promoting Equitable Approaches to Project Staff Design provides granting organizations with concrete application guidelines and recommended language that signal the critical importance of equitable and supportive labor conditions for contingent workers in grant projects. The document addresses each section of a conventional grant application and recommends where appropriate language should be used.

Related Documents, a bibliography of recommendations, bills of rights, and guidelines for better labor practices in libraries, archives, museums, and academia.

EVALUATING PROJECT DESIGN FOR WORKER EQUITY

Position Design

Why it is important: Grant funds should not exacerbate cycles of institutional short-termism nor should they reinforce the precarity of work or otherwise harm individual workers.

Questions to ask:
- Are multiple part-time positions used to be doing the work of one full-time position?
- Are positions appropriate to a temporary project or should they be funded by the institution as part of the core mission with ongoing needs?
- Is the salary equitable with the cost of living for the geographic region, work being done, and credentials required?
- Are the position's benefits and classification equitable within the institution and sector?
- Does the position fit into the organization chart? Are there clear lines of reporting, preferably with a single supervisor who understands the parameters of the position? Does the proposal describe how the worker will be integrated into the organization?

How to assess (assume the worker may have dependents and student loans):
- MIT Living Wage Calculator livingwage.mit.edu
- United for ALICE unitedforalice.org

Commitment to Worker Growth

Why it is important: Grants are investments in staff development alongside other outcomes.

Questions to ask:
- Will workers be acknowledged appropriately for their contributions, for instance through a credit line on a project website or publication co-authorship?
- Will workers hired to complete the project have the opportunity/funding to present this work at professional conferences or other venues?
- Will workers have resources (time and funding) to pursue professional development relevant to completion of the project and progress in their own professional growth?
- Are workers provided with sufficient structured mentoring opportunities?
- Have the applicants identified specific areas of growth or skill development workers are anticipated to gain by completing the project?
- Has the institution committed to support worker transitions into future positions?

How to assess:
- Do existing project reports, white papers, or previous projects by the institution demonstrate commitment to the values stated in the application?
- Have individuals who participated on grants or in early career/graduate student positions at the organization moved into more secure or permanent positions?

RECOMMENDATIONS TO FUNDERS: PROMOTING EQUITABLE APPROACHES TO PROJECT STAFF DESIGN

The following statements and questions are suggested additions to notices of funding opportunities (NOFO) and grant application guidelines. By incorporating these statements and questions, which focus on the experiences and support of contingent workers, granting organizations can signal against the further exploitation of contingent, grant-funded laborers and encourage more ethical labor practices at grantee institutions.

Introductory Section or Program Description

To shift perception of program purpose, consider adding this or a similar statement to the program's description to bring the experiences of workers into focus alongside project outputs.

- This program seeks to build capacity by supporting project staff and promoting professional development and mentorship to all members of the project team.

Project Narrative

Questions and prompts such as the following can be added to proposal narratives to encourage the thoughtful inclusion of equitable labor practices throughout project design. It may be appropriate to require or encourage a preliminary position description for any grant-funded positions that includes some of the information below.

- Describe the quality of training and mentoring to be provided for grant-funded staff.
- For any staff hired on this grant, provide a justification for the salary range, job classification, and benefits offered, and explain any differences from the salaries, classifications, and benefits of permanent staff.
- Temporary grant-funded positions should not be used to meet ongoing operational needs. For any new positions created for the grant, explain why the position responsibilities are appropriate for a temporary project.
- How will the project support and benefit all project staff, through compensation, benefits, professional development opportunities, and immersion in the activities of the institution?
- What affordances—including work space location, communication venues and practices, available equipment, on-boarding support, etc.—will ensure that new employees assigned to the project are set up for success in their work?
- Describe how the project staff will be supported during the end-of-project transition, including job search assistance, paid time off and flexible scheduling to secure continuing employment, accommodation in project plan, etc.

Budget Narrative

In order to provide clearer justification for budget items earmarked for the cost of employment, the following prompts are suggested for inclusion in the budget narrative of the proposal.

- Provide a 1-2 sentence explanation of what is included in the fringe rate. This explanation must include a high-level description of what benefits are afforded to the grant-funded staff.
- Detail how requested travel and professional development funding will support staff beyond the PI.

Risk Assessment

Not providing equitable support for project staff poses a significant risk for turnover and gaps in institutional knowledge and skills.

- Address how the project will further project staff retention by providing equitable opportunities for mentorship, training, professional development, and immersion.

Post-Award Report

Including the following prompts in a template for final reports emphasizes the importance of documenting and acknowledging the contributions staff made to a project, providing staff with appropriate support and professional development, and assessing staff turnover.

- Provide a list of names, positions held, and current contact information for all workers involved in the completion of the project.
- Describe the opportunities you provided to project staff for training, mentorship, public speaking, immersion in institutional activities, and project outreach. In the list of resulting publications, conferences, workshops, or presentations, note where contingent project staff and students served as co-authors or presenters.
- Explain any discrepancies of more than 5% between the salary and fringe in the application budget for each position and actual salaries and fringe benefits of each worker hired to complete this project.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

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