



Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

Network Project Retrospective Creating Equitable Pay Workplaces: The Pay Equity Project NETLab

Program Overview

This Network's "Creating Equitable Pay Workplaces: The Pay Equity Project" NETLab aimed to begin the process of creating systems change and sustainability around pay equity in the Jewish human service sector using a networked and collaborative approach. The Pay Equity Project was supported by the SRE Network (Safety, Respect, Equity) and The Network's Center for Innovation and Research (NCIR).

Agencies were invited to submit an application of interest. Once enrolled, 2-3 participants from each member agency were able to participate. Team participants included a c-suite or director-level staff, member of the human resources team or volunteer leadership. Four member agencies, including nine professional staff, participated in the program.

The Network contracted with the Gender Equity in Hiring Project (GEiHP) to facilitate six learning sessions for a cohort comprised of the four member agency teams to identify pay equity and compensation concerns and the challenges and opportunities facing each agency. Teams were also matched with peer agencies for independent, partnered study to deepen learning.

Program Components

The goals of the NETLab sessions were to:

- Understand the meaning and impact of pay equity and why disparities exist
- Identify the challenges to achieving pay equity
- Articulate the process necessary to achieve pay equity in their agency
- Design an agency roadmap for achieving pay equity

Cohort Learning, April-June 2023:

Each team participated in 6 three-hour sessions from April-June 2023. All participants worked together online in an immersive environment engaging in a variety of different learning modalities to identify pay equity and compensation concerns and the challenges and opportunities facing each agency. In addition, they also identified agency-specific goals and determined how impact could be measured. Finally, they developed cross-agency relationships that strengthened their individual capacity to learn from each other's experience.



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Peer/Partner Learning, April-June 2023:

Teams were matched with peer agencies for independent, partnered study to deepen both relationships and focused learning in between sessions, based on various affinity recommendations.

One-on-One Consultations, July 2023:

Teams were offered 2 full hours of individual coaching and consultation to ask specific questions, receive concrete and direct support and feedback, and refine their learning to reach their goals. This was designed to prepare teams for their own design process by identifying obstacles, opportunities, and issues of sustainability.

Participating Agencies

Agencies participated in teams of 2-3 participants, including representatives in roles such as c-suite or director-level staff, human resources, and volunteer leadership. Four member agencies, including nine professional staff, participated in the program:

- Jewish Family & Children's Service of Philadelphia
- Jewish Family Service of Greater Harrisburg
- Jewish Family Service of Richmond
- Jewish Social Service Agency of Metro Washington

Program Evaluation and Learnings

Success and short-term impact were measured through internal conversations, spot checks during group learning, one on one dialogue, satisfaction surveys, individual and team interviews, focus groups and sharing a roadmap for moving towards pay equity. The Gender Equity in Hiring Project (GEiHP) conducted midpoint and summative internal evaluations with participants and gathered specific data to support this evaluation. In addition, The Network's Center for Innovation and Research (NCIR) solicited feedback from participants on this cohort-learning opportunity.

All participants reported a powerful and somewhat challenging learning experience that helped to deepen their understanding not just of the broader issues of pay equity in their organizations, but more importantly, the ways in which language is understood and used around equity and how equity is defined in a broader context. Some examples include:

- Identifying challenges around the financial, organizational, and human conditions that might get in an organization's way in the moment or into the future.
- Articulating the philosophical conditions that might help an organization to succeed right now, such as resilience, open-mindedness and actual vs. perceived vs. desired interest in alternatives.



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- Describing some of the human conditions and biases that might interrupt this process, such as communication, conflict, and self-awareness

Conclusion and Next Steps

A recurrent theme that emerged in discussions, both in the group cohort learning and one on one consultation sessions was that “integrity and equity matter.” This is a vital component of the work that was done, namely that “our organizational practice with our employees must match the values we espouse with our constituents.” All the participating organizations by and through their mission seek integrity for their constituency and are aspiring toward organizational and personal alignment.

What was learned was that while acknowledging the importance of pay equity for their agencies, making this a priority among many competing priorities has been difficult for agencies.

The events of October 7 radically shifted the capacity of participating agencies to engage in this project. Where typically human service agencies are stretched thin meeting the needs of their constituencies, October 7 shifted their emotional and physical capacity. They not only needed to address ongoing community issues but also now the urgent new issues arising from the impact of the crisis in Israel. They could not contemplate anything outside of the urgent and important work before them.

The overload faced by organizational leaders (ranging from CEOs to CHROs in a variety of capacities) meant that they were not able to avail themselves of the final round of coaching and did not have the time to complete all follow up work. This was due to a number of factors: the multiplying mental health needs of colleagues, clients, other Jewish communal organizations’ staff and clients, college students, Israelis living in the community and other community members; the need to help arriving Israelis displaced by the Israel-Hamas war; and the need to cope with their own emotional stress from the events of October 7. Every agency included staff directly impacted as well as constituents, board members and community members. In addition, the cognitive overload borne by the staff added an immeasurable burden that is still affecting their work now months later.

Direct impacts on this project included an inability to prioritize the completion of this project, schedule all consultations, complete the planned/desired first draft roadmap, or to participate in all evaluative dialogues and/or complete all evaluative surveys. Indirect impacts on this project included a shelving of prior plans to engage in specific pay equity processes, including (agency dependent) salary banding, pay audits and other data analyses and/or collections, as well as reports of a shelving of dialogue about salary increases for various categories of employees (for example, home healthcare workers or therapists).