

*Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation*

# Survey of Executive Directors in the Nonprofit Arts

November 2001

## Results

- ❖ This **anonymous** statewide study of nonprofit arts executive directors was conducted by the Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation with the assistance of the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago.
- ❖ Funding for this survey was granted by the Chicago Community Trust.

***Please tell us about your professional development and career path.***

Unless asked to write in a response, please circle the letter or number that best represents your answer.

**1. When did you begin your first salaried job in the nonprofit arts?**

1990s: 42%  
1980s: 32%  
1970s: 21%  
1960's: 3%  
2000: 1%

**2. What were you doing before you entered the nonprofit arts field?**

Student: 26%  
For profit business: 23%  
Other: 18%  
Teacher/academic: 15%  
For profit arts: 14%  
Public/govt sector: 5%

**3. What was your first type of job in the nonprofit arts field?**

Administrative staff: 40%  
Other: 22%  
Artist/performer: 16%  
Artistic director: 8%  
Fundraising/development: 5%  
PR/community relations: 5%  
Executive director: 5%

**4. How many total years have you worked in the non-profit arts?**

Less than 5 years: 5%  
5 to 10 years: 15%  
11 to 15 years: 19%  
16 to 25 years: 36%  
26 or more years: 25%

**5. How long have you been in your current Executive Director position?**

Less than 2 years: 17%  
2 to 4 years: 20%  
5 to 7 years: 16%  
8 to 10 years: 13%  
11 to 15 years: 11%  
More than 15 years: 23%

**6. Are you the founding Executive Director of your current organization?**

Yes: 32%  
No: 68%

**7. How many previous Executive Director positions have you held?**

None: 76%  
One previous: 11%  
Two previous: 10%  
Three previous: 3%

**8. Have you ever served as an Acting or Interim Executive Director in your career?**

Never 66%

1 time	32%
2 times	1%
3 or more times	1%

**9. Were you working at your current organization before you became the Executive Director?**

Yes	38%
No	62%

**9A. If yes, what was your position in your organization immediately prior to becoming Executive Director?**

Associate Director	13%
Board member	13%
Program Director	13%
President/Founder	13%
Mgr/Managing Dir.	13%
Development Director	3%
Director of Finance/Admin	3%
Other	29%

**9B. If no, where were you working previously?**

Larger nonprofit (arts)	26%
For profit business	19%
Same-sized nonprofit arts org.	17%
Education	17%
Smaller nonprofit arts org.	7%
Public sector	2%
Other:	12%

**10. Have you ever held a management position outside of the nonprofit arts?**

Yes	48%
No	52%

**10A. If yes, in what kind of organization or business have you managed?**

Very varied, answers include: Banking credit officer, Business Development Manager, Corporate communications, Direct Sales, For-profit dinner theatre, Governmental Affairs Department - Multinational Business, Independent bookstore, Magazine publishing/bookstore/printing company, Nonprofit social action group, Radio station, Various large departments in city government, Very responsible volunteer leadership positions in Junior League and other organizations

**11. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important were these factors when you decided to take your current job as Executive Director? (not important at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (very important)**

Mission of the organization	4.8
Doing work that “gives back” to the community	4.3
Desire for a career in the arts	4.1
Artistic reputation of the organization:	4.0
Professional development	4.0
Salary	2.9
Staff and/or board members I knew at the organization	2.8
Benefits	2.6
Having volunteered for the organization before I was hired	2.0

**12 What advice would you give to someone who said that they wanted to follow a similar kind of career path to yours?**

Top answers: Mission/passion/don't do it for the money: 20%; Get experience (as opposed to training): 20%; Work hard/Be prepared to work long hours: 14%; Get formal training: 13%.

*Please tell us about your professional training and support network as an Executive Director.*  
Unless asked to write in a response, please circle the letter or number that best represents your answer.

**13. How prepared were you to carry out the following administrative duties when you first became an executive director?** (not at all prepared) 1 2 3 4 5 (very well prepared)

Leadership skills					4.1
Program implementation					4.1
Advocacy for the organization's mission					4.0
Community/public relations			3.9		
Marketing			3.7		
Board relations			3.6		
Promoting diversity			3.6		
Financial oversight and budgeting			3.5		
Fundraising			3.5		
Personnel management			3.4		
Policy development			3.4		
Strategic planning			3.3		
Technological skills		2.8			
Labor relations		2.6			

**14. How important have each of these sources of training and support been to you in your ongoing development as an Executive Director?** (not important at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (very important)

On-the-job training					4.3
Input from management team/work colleagues					4.1
Peer networking					4.0
Input from my Board of Directors				3.7	
Professional associations			3.5		
College training			3.5		
Topical workshops and conferences			3.1		
Mentoring			3.0		
Executive coaching or management consultants		2.8			
Graduate training		2.5			
Information on the internet		2.3			
Internships		1.9			
Post-graduate management coursework		1.9			

**15. Overall, what do you think is the single most helpful type of training or expertise for executive directors in the nonprofit arts today, and why?**

Top answers: Experience/on-the-job training: 25%; Mentors: 15%; Board development/Organizational development: 13%; Financial training: 10%; Marketing/Communications training/skills: 7%; Networking: 3%.

**16. On a scale of 1 to 5, how effectively are you able to meet the demands of your executive director position?**

(not at all effectively) 1 2 3 4 5 (very effectively)

Mean: 4.2

3	6%
4	67%
5	28%

**17. In your current position, have you been formally evaluated by (circle all that apply):**

Board	29%
Staff	4%
Outside evaluator/consultant	1%
Board and your staff	17%
Board and an outside evaluator/consultant	3%
Board/Staff/Consultant	3%
Never been formally evaluated	43%

**18. If yes, how would you describe the effect of formal evaluation in your organization (circle all that apply)?**

Useful	45%
Very useful	33%
Not useful	10%
Unsure	10%
Detrimental	0%

**19. If you have not been formally evaluated, do you think that a formal evaluation would help improve your performance?**

Yes	79%
No	21%

**20. In your career, have you ever been discriminated against by your staff, Board, or constituency on the basis of your:**

Gender	26%
Age	17%
Career background	17%
Educational background	11%
Race/ethnicity	9% (=65% of non-white respondents)
Sexual orientation	7%
Class background	1%

**20A. If you answered Yes to any of the above, please explain.**

"Discrimination is too strong a word, but there are different expectations for a woman ED . . .My authority is more questioned, [but] I am often expected to be 'nice' . . ."

"Male corporate types can look upon female nonprofit arts professional as less serious . . ."

"I am a relatively young administrator and most of my staff is older . . ."

**21. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the overall skill level of your Board?**

	(not skilled)	1	2	3	4	5	(highly skilled)
Mean:	3.6						
	2	9%					
	3	40%					
	4	35%					
	5	16%					

**22. On a scale of 1 to 5, how effectively do you and your Board of Directors collaborate in the following areas?**

Financial	3.9
Advocacy	3.9
Strategic planning	3.7
Fundraising	3.4
Policy development	3.3
Community/PR	3.3

Personnel management	2.8
Program implementation	2.8
Labor relations	1.9

**23. Overall, what change in your relationship with your board do you think would best improve your effectiveness or the success of your organization?**

Top responses: Board needs to do more fundraising: 22%; Stronger Board, more leadership: 14%; Board needs more commitment, involvement: 12%.

**24. Does your agency have an Artistic Director or similar artistic leadership position?**

Yes 57%

No 43%

*If no, please skip to the next section (#27).*

**25. One a scale of 1 to 5, how effectively do you and the Artistic Director (or equivalent) collaborate in the following areas?**

Mean: 3.8

Advocacy	4.2
Program implementation	4.2
Artistic decision-making	4.1
Community/PR	3.8
Board relations	3.8
Strategic Planning	3.6
Fundraising	3.4
Policy Development	3.4

**26. Overall, what change in your relationship with your artistic director do you think would best improve your effectiveness or the success of your organization, and why?**

Most common answer is that the relationship is very good. Some wish to improve communication, have more time to strategize together.

***Please tell us about your job satisfaction.***

Unless asked to write in a response, please circle the letter or number that best represents your answer.

**27. On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with your current job as Executive Director?**

(not at all satisfied)    1    2    3    4    5    (very satisfied)

Mean: 4.1

1	1%
2	1%
3	21%
4	39%
5	37%

**28. On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with your total compensation package?**

(not at all satisfied)    1    2    3    4    5    (very satisfied)

Mean: 3.5

1	5%
2	15%

3	26%
4	34%
5	20%

**29. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important have these factors been to your satisfaction in your current job as executive director?** (not important at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (very important)

Mean: 4.2

Mission of the organization	4.8
Relationships with colleagues	4.5
Relationships with donors	4.5
Relationships with staff	4.5
Engagement with art	4.4
Engagement with community	4.3
Professional growth	4.2
Relationship with board	3.9
Salary	3.5
Benefits	3.0

**30. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much has your current job as Executive Director met your expectations of what the role would demand?** (not much at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (very much)

Mean: 4.1

2	7%
3	16%
4	38%
5	39%

**Please briefly explain:**

1) I knew what I was in for; 2) More stress/time than I imagined; 3) More fundraising than I imagined; 4) More diverse skills needed than I imagined.

**31. What are two things you like most about your current job as Executive Director?**

Mission/the art, connecting to community, flexibility, challenge, working with staff/artists/board.

**32. What are the two most frustrating things about your current job as Executive Director?**

Finances/fundraising: 50%; Staff problems: 40%; Overworked/stress: 36%; Board conflict/complacency: 23%.

**33. To what degree are these factors adversely affecting you in your current position?**

Mean: 2.8

Finances	3.6
High stress/long hours	3.4
Funding requirements	3.0
Audience	3.0
Fundraising	2.8
Personnel problems	2.8
Isolation	2.7
Low compensation	2.5
Conflict with the Board	1.8

**34. Please tell us in your own words what you need as an executive director that you can't seem to get. What one or two things would make your work more satisfying?**

1) Better Board (includes fundraising and planning), 2) More money, 3) Better quality staff, 4) More time, 5) More staff/an assistant, 6) More networking/peer contact, 7) Better space, 8) Better technology.

***Please tell us about your succession plans.***

Unless asked to write in a response, please circle the letter or number that best represents your answer.

**35. Who would you say made the decision to hire you?**

Board of directors	38%
Board committee	25%
Founder	14%
Chair of the board	9%
Other	8%
Previous Executive Director	3%
Influential board member	2%
Not sure	2%

**36. How much longer do you imagine that you'll stay in your current position as Executive Director?**

Less than 1 year	8%
1-2 years	21%
3-5 years	40%
5-10 years	19%
more than 10 years	31%

**37. Do you plan to retire upon leaving your current position as Executive Director?**

No	73%
Yes	27%

*If yes, please skip to question #40.*

**38. On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely is it that your next job will be in the following areas:**

(not likely at all)	1	2	3	4	5	(very likely)
Nonprofit arts					4.1	
Consult/freelance			3.5			
Nonprofit			3.5			
Government		2.6				
For-profit arts		2.4				
For-profit business		2.3				

**39. If the nonprofit arts field is at all likely for you, what is most likely to be your next job?**

Executive director	46%
Consultant	23%
Artistic director	13%
Program director	3%
Director of Finances/Admin	3%
Director of Development	3%
Marketing director	3%
Other	8%

**40. Again, if the nonprofit arts field is at all likely for you, where are you most likely to work next?**

Bigger organization	61%
Same organization	19%
Similar size organization	11%

Smaller organization 9%

**41. Does your organization have a succession plan in place?**

No plan 76%  
Yes, informal plan 18%  
Yes, formal plan 5%

**42. Have you identified one or more persons on your staff with the potential to be the future executive director of your organization?**

No 63%  
Yes 37%

**42A. IF YES, does that person know that you've identified them as having that potential?**

Yes 64%  
No 36%

**43. How much influence do you expect to have over the selection of your successor?**

Participate in selection: 54%  
Nominate successor: 17%  
No influence: 8%  
Nominate successor and veto power: 8%  
Nominate successor and participate in selection: 5%  
Veto power: 0%  
Other: 8%

**44. How much influence would you like to have over the selection of your successor?**

Participate in selection: 60%  
Nominate successor: 12%  
No influence: 8%  
Nominate successor and veto power: 6%  
Nominate successor and participate in selection: 5%  
Veto power and participate in selection: 2%  
Veto power: 2%  
Other: 6%

**45. How difficult do you expect it to be for your organization to find a successor for you?**

(not at all difficult) 1 2 3 4 5 (very difficult)

Mean: 3.5

1 8%  
2 11%  
3 28%  
4 31%  
5 23%

**45A. Please note one or two problems that you anticipate your successor will face.**

From the 54% that rank difficulty 4 or 5: Funds/fundraising: 40%; Understaffing/staff conflict: 20%; Leadership transition/confidence of constituency: 17%; Need for wide knowledge/experience: 13%; Low salary: 13%; Workload: 10%; Board conflict: 6%.

***Please tell us about your nonprofit organization.***

Unless asked to write in a response, please circle the letter or number that best represents your answer.

**46. Where is your organization located?**

Loop area 35%  
Near North side 27%  
Far North side 11%

South side	8%
Outside metro area	7%
West side	5%
North suburbs	4%
Western suburbs	4%
Southern suburbs	0%

**47. What is the primary discipline of your organization?**

Multi-disciplinary	17%
Other	16%
Theatre	16%
Music	15%
Arts education	11%
Visual arts	8%
Dance	7%
Arts service	5%
Literature	3%
Presenting organization	3%

**48. When was your organization founded?**

Pre-1900	5%
1900-1940	5%
1941-1960	8%
1961-1980	43%
1981-1990	26%
1991-2001	12%

**49. How many paid full-time staff does your organization employ?**

1-2	5%
3-6	5%
7-12	8%
13-20	43%
20-40	26%
more than 40	12%

**50. What is the annual operating budget of your organization?**

Less than \$100,000	8%
\$100,000 - 499,999	21%
\$500,000 - 999,999	18%
\$1,000,000 - 4,999,999	39%
\$5,000,000 - 9,999,999	11%
More than \$10,000,000	3%

**51. Is there anyone on your paid staff besides you with responsibilities for human resource management?**

Yes	62%
No	38%

**52. Is there anyone on your paid staff besides you with responsibilities for fundraising?**

Yes	62%
No	38%

**52A. IF YES, what is that person's job title?**

Development director (90%)

**53. Do you have a person on staff who acts as your “number two person,” the equivalent of an Associate Director, Deputy Director, or Assistant Director?**

Yes	54%
No	46%

***Please tell us about yourself.***

We would like to collect demographic data for analytical purposes. Please be assured of the anonymity of your responses.

**54. What is your age?**

under 30	3%
30-39	22%
40-49	21%
50-59	37%
60-69	17%
70 and above	0%

**55. What is your gender?**

Female	61%
Male	39%

**56. What is your race/ethnicity?**

White	85%
African American	9%
Other	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%
Latino/a	1%
Middle Eastern	0%
Native American	0%

**57. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?**

High school	5%
Undergraduate	45%
Masters	37%
Doctorate	12%

**58. Please list all college degrees earned with discipline (e.g. BA in Sociology)**

**59. What is your current annual salary (excluding benefits and other non-monetary compensation)?**

Less than \$25,000	3%
\$25,000 - 39,999	17%
\$40,000 - 59,999	25%
\$60,000 - 74,999	13%
\$75,000 - 99,999	25%
\$100,000 - 124,999	4%
\$125,000 - 149,999	7%
more than \$500,000	5%

**60. What is the current approximate value of your non-salary compensation, including such items as bonuses, tuition, retirement contributions made by your organization, living and transportation costs, special insurance benefits, etc.?**

\$0 - 5,000	51%
\$5,000 - 9,999	19%
\$10,000 - 19,999	19%
\$20,000 - 29,999	5%
\$30,000 - 39,999	1%

more than \$40,000      1%  
not sure                    4%

**61. Is your salary your sole household income?**

No      70%  
Yes     30%

**62. Do you have any final thoughts on leadership in the arts, whether based on your own experiences or your impressions of the field as a whole?**

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