

Less Appealing ASPECTS OF THE JOB

LOW PAY IS AN ISSUE

Even though the former executive directors all claimed to have loved their jobs and said they were very glad to have held their positions, they pointed out many problems. Poor salaries are a problem, both for executive directors and other staff. Emerging leaders felt strongly about low salaries and the problem of not being paid what you are worth.

“I took a dramatic decrease in my salary when I became executive director, and when I left, I was offered a job making \$150,000 a year.” (former executive director)

“Why shouldn’t we make a decent amount of money doing what we are doing? We work really hard, we consider ourselves professionals, so why shouldn’t we have salaries that reflect that?” (emerging leader)

LIMITED RESOURCES

In many organizations, the lack of resources means working under less-than-optimal conditions. For others, there is no money for staff development, emergencies, or serendipitous opportunities.

“When I took this job, after working for a university, I said, now I work for a real nonprofit. Now I have to worry [that] if the copier breaks down, can I afford a new one.” (former executive director)

“We are constantly challenged by technology, constantly challenged by [the] inability to provide proper training so [that] employees can do their jobs well. It’s very frustrating.” (former executive director)



LONG HOURS

Most of the former executive directors said they regularly worked seventy or more hours a week, and some finally burned out on the job. Emerging leaders, watching their organization heads following the same path, questioned whether they would want a job that makes such demands.

“I enjoyed the variety of what I did, but it . . . got to the point where it was just too much. I had young teenage children. I just could not continue with the hours.” (former executive director)

“Some people just don’t have the stamina and the desire to be in that kind of role. That’s really a big barrier. You need to commit 90 percent of your life to the institution. At certain points [in] your life—if you’re a person who’s married and is going to have a family—are you going to want to be away from your child, away from your spouse, that amount of time?” (emerging leader)

Board members were less likely to see long hours as an unsolvable problem, saying it was up to the executive director to make sure there is adequate staff to handle the work.

“Good managers have to know when and what to delegate. They need to not be expected to do everything. They need to know they have someone on their staff who can do the different jobs.” (board member)

“Of course, many organizations don’t have the luxury of having people at those desks to delegate to, but that’s where the strategic thinking comes in.” (board member)