



WELCOME!

RADICAL IMAGINATION:  
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO THRIVE?

WE'LL GET STARTED IN JUST A MOMENT...

# WHAT IS PAY EQUITY?

**Pay Equity is compensating workers without discrimination.**

# IN YOUR SMALL GROUP, PLEASE:

- **Get settled (~5 min)**
  - Introduce yourselves (names, pronouns, one sentence: what brings you to this conversation tonight?)
  - Identify a Shepherd (to guide the conversation) and a Scribe (for the slide!)
- **Discuss (~20 min)**
  - What does it look/feel like to THRIVE? (~5 min)
  - What concrete action steps could be taken to move closer to this experience of thriving? (~15 min)
- **Distill (~5 min)**
  - Identify a spokesperson to shareback with the full group 3 of your biggest and boldest ideas (maybe at least one is free/low cost?)

# BREAKOUT GROUP 1

*Please use the space below to capture notes, talking points, brainstorming from your group's discussion*

**What does it look/feel like to THRIVE?**

- **Has anyone experienced thriving?**
  - **University teaching and collaboration - some things are thriving in creative ways, but not making enough money to not have other jobs.,**
- **Getting paid enough is a must for a thriving situation.**
- **There are not many folks in the Chicago theatre community who are thriving. Folks are often coveting the jobs at universities, because it gives the freedom to go freelance. But are people getting college degrees to do a hobby? Are we describing a real job? Even the most successful scenic designers are teaching university to make financial sense.**

**What concrete action steps could be taken to move closer to this experience of thriving?**

- **Making less theatres –**
- **a theatre focuses on making one play - guaranteed that everyone involved gets the resources and time they need – maybe less product is the answer**
- **Reallocation of funding**
- **Reducing the production/material costs for the sake of paying the workers more.**
- **Public funding model/subscriber base like public radio. Member funded.**
- **Consolidating resources.**
- **How to offset the cost of the space – sharing houses**
- **Resist making unhealthy choices in scheduling for the sake of saving money.**
- **Take opportunities to try and fail in other areas of creative practice.**

# BREAKOUT GROUP 1, con't

*Please use the space below to capture notes, talking points, brainstorming from your group's discussion*

What does it look/feel like to THRIVE?

- Which job of our multiple jobs are we thriving at? Are we also getting rest and relaxation?
- What changes when there is no job security? (gig bases/ hobbling jobs together – no benefits or health insurance. No economical sense.)
- TIME. Being able to turn off the computer and turn off the email, to turn away from everything and not feel like you have to hustle or be on call.
- Paid Time off and Healthcare!
- Great collaborators, confidence in the result.
- To not have a day job! To thrive just doing the thing, not teaching to supplement!

What concrete action steps could be taken to move closer to this experience of thriving?

- Find places to fail
- Create financial stability — living wage is the minimum.
- Access to benefits and retirement that allows artists to plan for their future.
- Examine the cycle of academia into the industry, and present alternative routes.
- Encourage young theatre artists to explore other ideas and mediums.
- Create space to experience other things, or make more money with no stigma attached to your absence.

# BREAKOUT GROUP 1, con't

*Please use the space below to capture notes, talking points, brainstorming from your group's discussion*

What does it look/feel like to THRIVE?

- Being valued by other artists.
  - WHERE DOES THE FUNDING COME FROM?  
Consumer end/value for the art.
    - Longer runs?
    - Sliding scale ticket prices
- The ability to make art independent of whether or not it is going to “succeed”.
- The ability for projects to fail
- Freedom from the commerce of art

What concrete action steps could be taken to move closer to this experience of thriving?

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# BREAKOUT GROUP 2

*Please use the space below to capture notes, talking points, brainstorming from your group's discussion*

## What does it look/feel like to THRIVE?

- Having more than your work that feeds you
- Having more than enough to meet your basic needs
- Not living in fear, being able to ask questions, not being worried about adverse consequences to asking about your needs
- Not feeling alone, like you have to sink or swim by yourself
- Feeling valued as a contributor in your workplace and in your community
- Having a community of care around you
- Having space to explore without having any answers
- Work is a joyful, creative, nurturing place
- Life feels integrated
- Being able to show up whole - bring all of yourself to work

## What concrete action steps could be taken to move closer to this experience of thriving?

- Create inclusive spaces
- Right-sizing workloads, being realistic about what you can and cannot do; Ensure work (goals, ideas) stays human not abstract
- Flexibility in work spaces, styles, and schedules
- Advocating for help and resources
- Opening space for dialogue
- Sharing resources (ex. bookkeeper shared between multiple orgs)
- Create forums for sharing passion for the work/art
- Resource-sharing agency - people (lawyers, admin, etc.) dedicated to working with artists on a part-time basis
- Creative work is valued equally across the sector, agreed income
- Valuing play and experimentation at work

# BREAKOUT GROUP 3

*Please use the space below to capture notes, talking points, brainstorming from your group's discussion*

What does it look/feel like to THRIVE?

- Self care rituals
  - *developed during WFH*
  - *Self care rituals went away when at the office*
- Your life is your own
- When someone else can do your work/back up system
  - *The pressure if you can't be there or you fail that the company suffers*
- Freedom to follow passions and choose what you do, be self-guided
- Take the time that you *need*
- Benefits and insurance
  - Knowing that your physical and mental health is valued
- “More money would be good” - Melissa Peck, 2022
- Compensation and productivity are separate ideas
- Not constantly having to *prove* your value
- Family/Life Planning doesn't revolve around your work's needs

What concrete action steps could be taken to move closer to this experience of thriving?

- Don't tailor the person to the job, but tailor the job to the person
  - People/talent centered organizational structures
- Prioritize personal development in the culture of the organization
- Identify over-extensions
  - What positions don't have back up?
  - Where do we need more capacity
- Get rid of/call out “false urgency”
- Give processes/timelines space or padding
  - Release the idea of “not being efficient” or “wasting time”
- Allow and build in reflection periods
- Rethink project management/staff meetings as checking in on capacity/how expectations /not a check list of accomplishing tasks.
- Practice when it's not hard
  - Example shifting work schedule to nights/weekends when not in tech
- Time is compensation
  - If you can't compensate someone with more money, can you compensate them with more times
- Respect time, end on time, clear and consistent with meeting beginnings and ends



# BREAKOUT GROUP 4

*Please use the space below to capture notes, talking points, brainstorming from your group's discussion*

What does it look/feel like to THRIVE?

- Basic needs, predictable pay, on time pay
- Everyone has their own thriving threshold, customize to meet different artists
- Bring to the arts the things that for profit sector takes for granted
- Enough money to share it with the people I care about
- Clear boundaries around what a position requires
- How do growing organizations stay clear around each person's responsibilities?
- Beware of a one size fits all model of compensation and boundaries
- Being part of something where everyone is doing well in their own unique way.
- Room to grow, not capitalistic perpetual growth model but room to find your best place.

What concrete action steps could be taken to move closer to this experience of thriving?

- Research how much people need to be paid, definite the scope of the problem
- Research and discuss what each person needs beyond pay to thrive.
- Get organized so freelancers do not get forgotten
- Transparency internally and externally, take time to educate (board and other stakeholders) what stipend pay looks like compared to time spent on a project. Help those making decisions, make INFORMED decisions.
- Understand the organization's capacity
- What level of transparency is appropriate/achievable? Is there a way we can educate and discuss this information respectfully?
- Try to build relationships around trust around money, de-silo the conversations. Network of conversations.



**THANK YOU!!!**