



EMERGING *Arts*  
PROFESSIONALS  
SAN FRANCISCO / BAY AREA

REGENERATIVE

*Practices*

# THE TEAM



**Stephanie Barajas (she/ella)** is a San José-based Mexican immigrant, theatre artist, photographer, and arts worker. She is a Program Officer at the Center for Cultural Innovation, where she oversees the organization's California grantmaking portfolio.



**Esther de Monteflores (she/her)** is an arts administrator and performing artist based in San Francisco. Esther has toured extensively, performing and creating work in circus, puppetry, physical theater, and freelancing in administration and theatrical company management.



**Erick Rodriguez (He/Him)** is a second-generation bilingual Guatemalan-American, artist, and educator. He serves as the Program Director for CoachArt, a national nonprofit organization that provides free arts and athletics lessons to children impacted by chronic illness.



**Hayley Sherwood (She/Her)** is a theatre artist, educator, and administrator, whose work focuses on bringing theatre to the people. She served as the Director of Programs for CO/LAB Theater Group, a company that creates theater with developmentally disabled artists.



# RESEARCH PROJECT

We define regenerative practices in the arts sector as actions that organizations, leaders, and individuals take to fuel joy, energy, and passion; resolve burnout and stress; enhance sustainability and reduce turnover in the sector; and encourage a healthy arts and culture ecosystem. Through qualitative research, we aim to understand the disconnect between the current conditions of people's work life in the arts sector and how they dream it could be.

By reframing the concept of a "dream job" to be divorced from competitive ideas of success and replaced with sustainable ideas of abundance, we surveyed artists and arts administrators, inviting them to envision new models of arts work. Survey responses will be analyzed and presented interactively with the goal of providing suggestions for how we can intentionally integrate regenerative practices into organizational culture to foster sustainability in the arts sector.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How can arts administrators integrate regenerative practices into the organizational culture to foster sustainability in the arts sector?
- What are the barriers and opportunities for arts administrators in adopting regenerative models in arts organizations?
- How can we rebuild the concept of a "dream job" to be divorced from competitive ideas of success and be replaced with sustainable ideas of care? What would it take to reimagine this? Can labor feed us, collectively, emotionally, and mentally?



# PROCESS

- Brainstorming
- Survey Development
- Network Outreach
- Data Collection
- Data Analyzing
- Recommendations

## Regenerative Practices Survey

**Welcome to our survey!**

We are a group of workers in the arts sector who are participating in a fellowship with [Emerging Arts Professionals Bay Area](#). Through this fellowship, we are doing qualitative research on the subject of the intersection of Arts and Capital. Our research aims to understand the disconnect between the current conditions of people's work life and what they want it to look like and how that could help reveal regenerative practices in the arts sector.

Regenerative practices are actions that organizations, leaders, and individuals take to fuel joy, energy, and passion; reduce burnout and stress; enhance sustainability in the sector; encourage a healthy arts and culture ecosystem.

Our research questions are:

1. How can arts administrators integrate regenerative practices into the organizational culture to foster sustainability in the arts sector?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities for arts administrators in adopting regenerative models in arts organizations?
3. How can we rebuild the concept of a "dream job" to be divorced from competitive ideas of success and be replaced with sustainable ideas of care? What would it take to reimagine this? Can labor feed us, collectively, emotionally, and mentally?

We hope you're able to carve out approximately 10 minutes to reflect on work. Yes, work as in what you do to pay the bills (and the rent, and insurance, and subscriptions, and god forbid, a night out here or there!) and work, as in, that little glimmer of passion that might still be intact because our time and effort is spent on the arts.

Feel free to complain, demand, celebrate, preach, and get into the details!

# OBJECTIVES

**01**

**Understand the  
current state of  
the arts work  
sector.**

**02**

**Hear from artists and  
arts administrators  
what they would like  
to see changed.**

**03**

**Provide data-informed  
recommendations on  
how the arts work  
sector can be  
improved.**



# **SECTION 1 CURRENT REALITY ASSESSMENT SECTION**

# PARTICIPANT DETAILS

**34 Survey  
Respondents**

**7 States**

California  
Utah  
Illinois  
Washington  
Colorado  
Texas  
New York

**18 Cities**

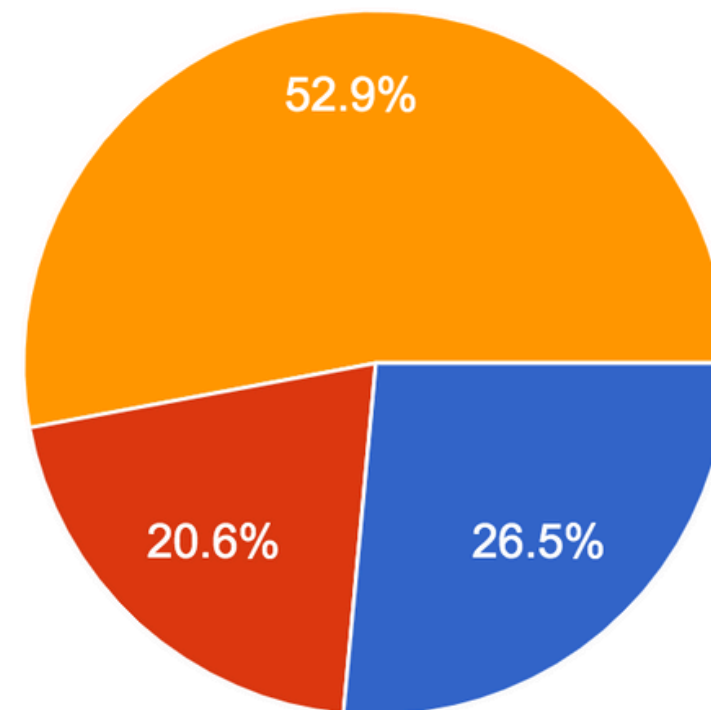
San Francisco, CA  
Oakland, CA  
San Jose, CA  
Bakersfield, CA  
Shafter, CA  
Los Angeles, CA  
Benicia, CA  
Fairfax CA  
Santa Clara, CA

Olympia, WA  
Bellingham, WA  
Denver, CO  
Draper, Utah  
Berwyn, IL  
Rockford, IL  
Austin, TX  
El Paso, TX  
New York, NY

# ARTS SECTOR ROLES

Click on the choice that best represents you.

34 responses

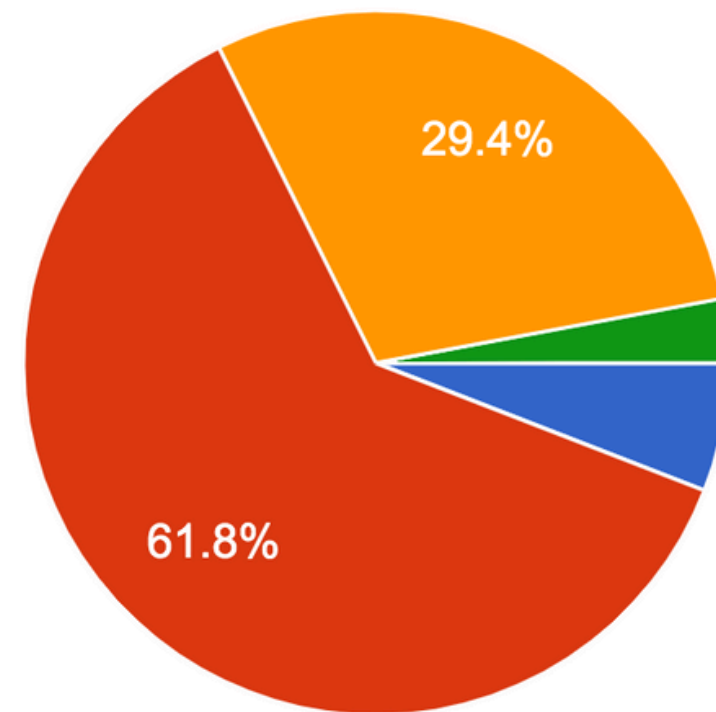


- Artist
- Arts Administrator
- Artist + Arts Administrator

# WORK SECTOR

What sector do you work in?

34 responses

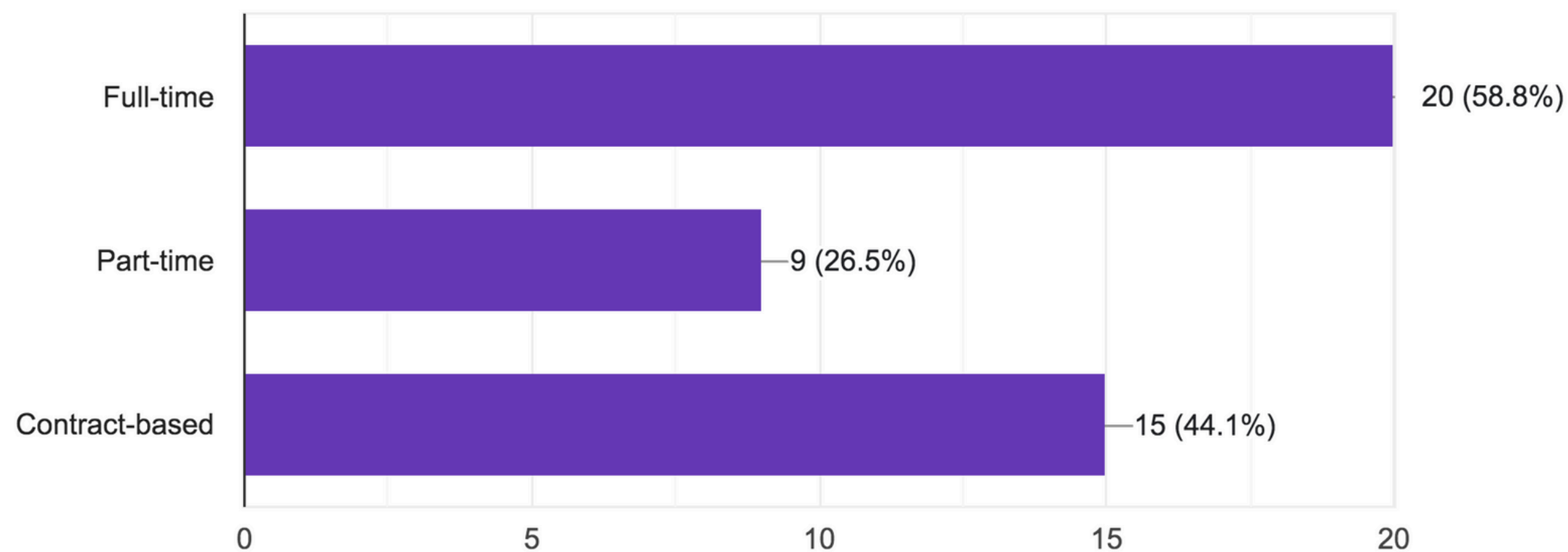


- For-profit
- Non-profit
- Both for-profit & non-profit
- Not sure

# ROLE TYPE

Is your arts sector employment full-time, part-time, or contract-based?

34 responses





# **SECTION 2**

## **IF STATEMENTS**

### **ANALYZING SECTION**

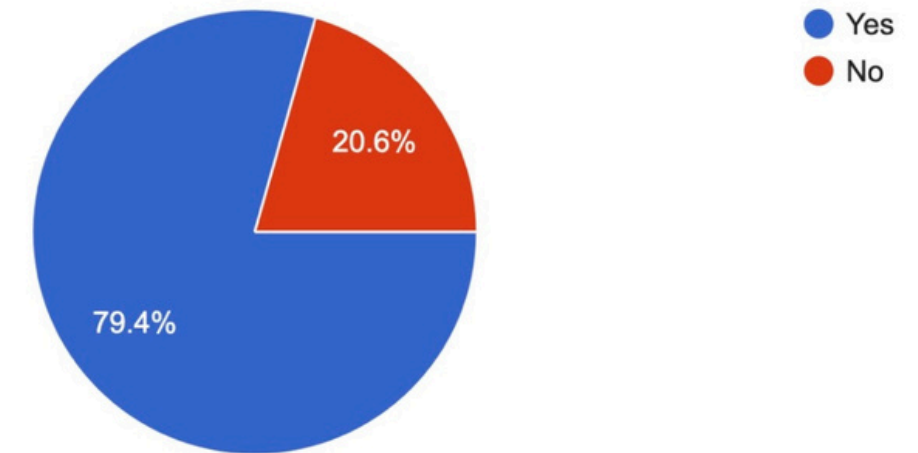
Respondents differed in their answers to the question, "If money were no object, would you work?", indicating that at least a fifth of participants interpreted "work" and "create" as distinct concepts.

Survey participants unanimously answered "yes" to the question, "If money were no object, would you create?"

Were we to conduct this survey again, we would add in the question, "How do you define work?", to better understand the responses.

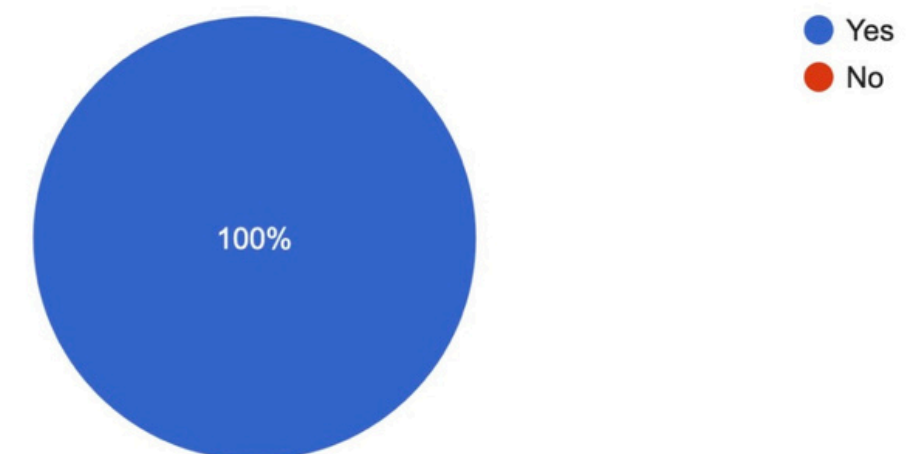
If money were no object, would you work?

34 responses



If money were no object, would you create?

34 responses



**"If money were no  
object, tell us how you  
would pursue your  
work as an artist or arts  
administrator."**



A word cloud visualization of responses to the survey question. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the most frequent words being 'work' and 'time'. Other prominent words include 'create', 'space', 'community', 'art', 'studio', 'artists', 'residencies', 'build', 'creative', 'focus', 'money', 'help', 'artist', 'object', 'feel', 'spend', 'things', 'projects', 'write', 'pursue', 'arts', 'process', 'working', 'love', and 'supporting communities'. The words are in various colors (blue, green, purple, pink, orange) and sizes, indicating their frequency.

work  
time  
create  
space  
community  
art  
studio  
artists  
residencies  
build  
creative  
focus  
money  
help  
artist  
object  
feel  
spend  
things  
projects  
write  
pursue  
arts  
process  
working  
love  
supporting communities

[illegible]



# THEME: COMMUNITY

Respondents brought up activities that they would pursue around community.

When money is no object, the focus can shift outward beyond meeting individual needs for survival.

- *"I would be able to dedicate more time to supporting other creatives and my local community."* - Contract-based Artist/Arts Administrator in Los Angeles, CA
- *"I would focus on workshop organizing and facilitation for community members especially mothers and children."* - Artist in San Jose, CA
- *"I would create culturally relevant events that provide cultural pride and a sense of belonging for communities."* - Non-profit Arts Administrator in Denver, CO

# THEME: TIME & SPACE

For many participants the most valuable thing they would gain from not having to worry about money is time. Respondents dreamed of dedicating more time to reflection, spending more time with their families, and being able to focus on one project at a time.

- *"...dedicate time to pause and build deeper equity and accountability and understanding and care."* - San Francisco, CA
- *"I would spend more time with my parents."* - Full-time Arts Administrator in San Jose, CA
- *"Competition is not a problem, it's the lack of time and need for money."* - Artist/Arts Administrator in San Francisco, CA
- *"I would get myself a designated studio space."* - Artist in Brooklyn, NY

Survey respondents would also seek out more physical space dedicated to making art and engaging community. Artist residencies were frequently cited as valuable experiences (combining time and space) that many were interested in participating in more often.

- *"My favorite time for creation has been during artist residencies..."* - Olympia, WA
- *"I would take time off to do artist residencies."* - Full-time Artist/Arts Administrator
- *"As an administrator, create a residency. As an artist, do more residencies."* - Artist/Arts Administrator in San Jose, CA

# THEME: UNAFFECTED BY COMPETITION

Many of those surveyed expressed that competition didn't much affect their work and output. Some respondents pointed to their full-time jobs or their city's arts sectors as explanations for the lack of competition they felt in making or funding their work in the arts.

- *"Competition is never a thought or factor in my work today. There is enough room for everyone and their dreams."* - Part-time Arts Administrator in Berwyn, IL
- *"I've never worried about others around me, even those that are competition. So, I think I'd keep pushing along."* - Oakland, CA
- *"Competition is not something that holds me back artistically, and maybe that is a privilege of where I live and create, and also of a lack of a driving ambition. I am happy in my corner of the world, and there seems to be room for all of us to create here."* - Artist/Arts Administrator in Bellingham, WA
- *"[R]ight now my personal goals about competition are minimal to non-existent. [T]his is because I do not have to rely on the profitability of my art to live."* - Artist/Arts Administrator in San Jose, CA



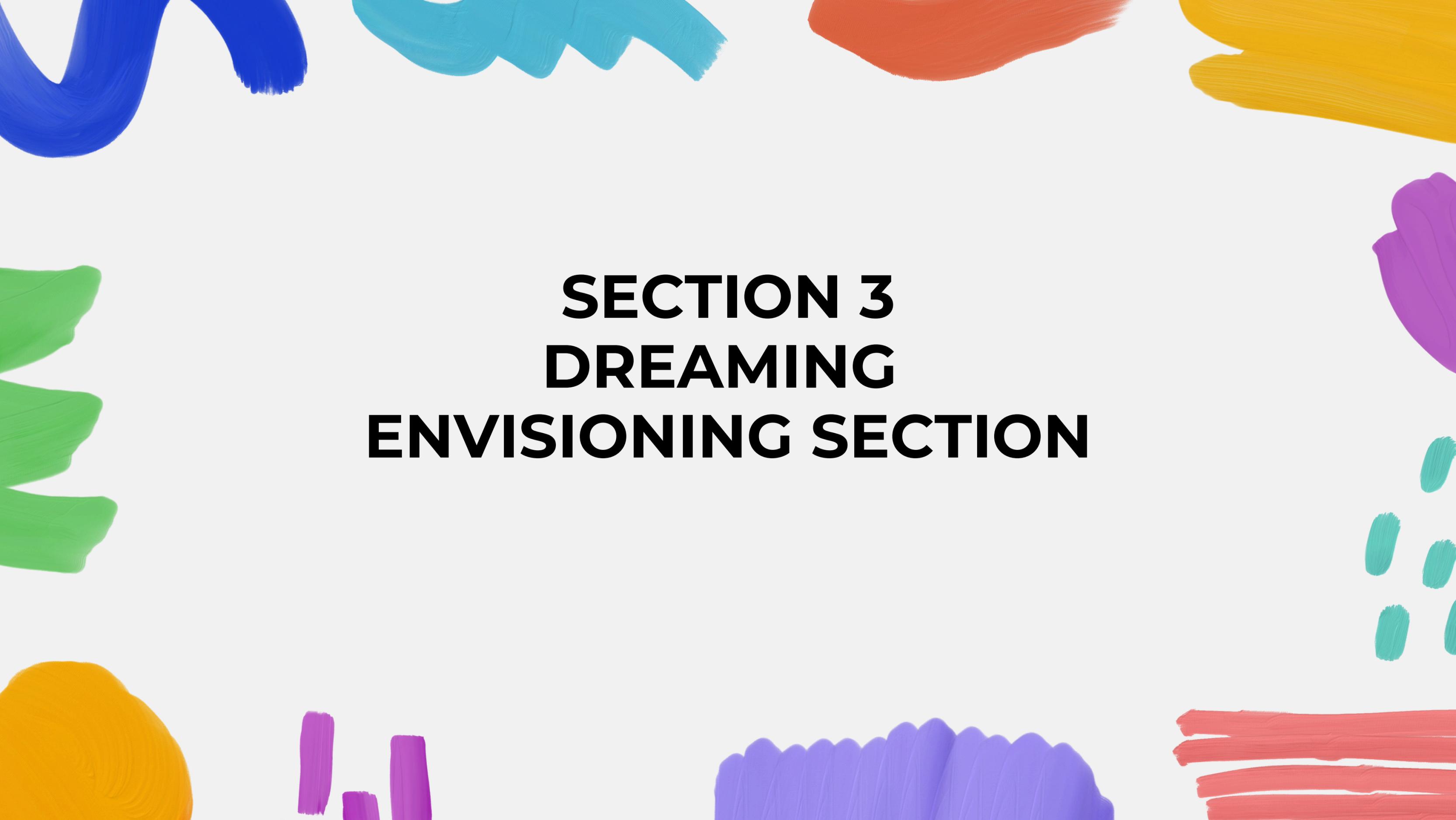
# PERSPECTIVE & RECOMMENDATION

## **1. Include operational grants for individuals in funding offerings.**

Operational grants are needed at the individual level (not only at the organizational level). Funding operational grants for individual artists and arts workers that can be used towards securing studio space can create a baseline from which those in the arts sector can conduct their work.

## **2. Opportunities for focused time for creative work, through artist residencies/arts work retreats, are deeply appreciated, and participants should be paid for their participation.**

Paid artist residencies should be a priority for organizations looking to support the arts ecosystem. Those working in the arts sector are looking for more residency opportunities and can find themselves held back from participating by financial concerns. A focus on providing paid residencies would alleviate the financial strain of stepping away from paid work to attend.



**SECTION 3**  
**DREAMING**  
**ENVISIONING SECTION**

[illegible]

**“Imagine we didn't live  
in the society we  
currently occupy, what  
would a "dream job"  
look like for you?”**



# TIME

## CURRENT SOCIETY

**“ I would have better freedom around working hours and hybrid hours (right now I have to get to my desk by 9:30am otherwise I get marked late, which results in a penalty, and I have to get permission to leave before 5:30; I get one WFH day a week which I have to get special permission to switch around) ”**

Full-Time Arts Administrator and  
Contract-Based Musician based in  
San Jose, CA

## DIFFERENT SOCIETY

**“ In a different kind of world, my dream job would be slower, more creative, and less tied to survival. I’d have the freedom to travel, experiment, and take on bold, collaborative projects without worrying about funding or burnout. Compensation and care would be a given, not something to fight for. I’d work in a culture that values rest, risk-taking, and community, where my identity doesn’t shape how I’m treated. I’d feel free, supported, and genuinely excited about what I get to create. ”**

Full-Time Arts Administrator based  
in El Paso, TX

# COMMUNITY

## CURRENT SOCIETY

“Everyone within the collective is excited for the next project to take off, building around it and happy to see each other...”

Part-time Artist and Part-time  
Administrator based in Benecia, CA

## DIFFERENT SOCIETY

“I don't dream of a perfect JOB, but I believe that if all our basic needs are met, we will VOLUNTARILY provide our time and labor. Labor appears in every facet of our lives and is not inherently bad/exploitative; capitalism has just forced us to disconnect our labor from our humanity. In my "dream job", I would be able to determine for myself how I can contribute - without feeling like my livelihood depended on it.”

Contract-based Artist and Arts  
Administrator based in Los Angeles

# HEALTH

## CURRENT SOCIETY

“Benefits - 100% covered comprehensive, medical, dental, and vision insurance. Employer-matched retirement contributions (if not more!). Ample \$\$ to support customized staff professional development and learning opportunities. Unlimited PTO! Extensive PAID maternal and paternal leave!”

Contract-based Artist and Arts Administrator based in Los Angeles

## DIFFERENT SOCIETY

“Lots of time outdoors in the sun. Native gardens, edible gardens. A space for all to gather.”

Part-time Artist based in San Jose, CA

“I would wake up and dance my booty off outside with a bunch of queer people. :)”

Contract-based Artist based in Brooklyn, NY

“Nature nature nature. Water! Joy, love, security, growth, excitement, safety, understanding, peace, care, play, equity, belly laughs, big exhales, fat tears on soft shoulders, compassion, hospitality. Abundance.”

Contract-based Artist + Administratos based in San Francisco, CA



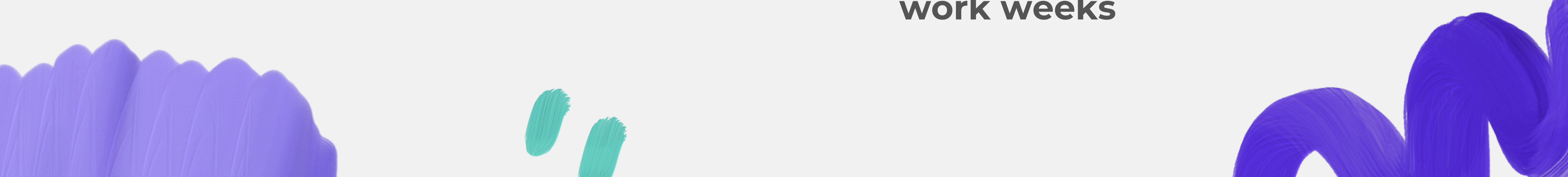
# CURRENT SOCIETY - THEMES

**Community:** A sense of responsibility and connection to the community in which the work takes place, peers/coworkers, audiences, and impacted groups alike

**Respect for Self / Sustainability:** One's identity need not be evaluated based on their output and meeting expectations at work doesn't mean sacrificing any other part of your life

**Benefits / compensation -** People want to get paid...and well! They want benefits...that matter!

**Less Time Working - Working** hybrid to cut commutes, starting later in the day, working less and being paid for the same amount of time, 4-day work weeks



# CURRENT SOCIETY - QUOTES

**Community:** *“Everyone within the collective is excited for the next project to take off, building around it and happy to see each other,” “I would feel empowered to serve my community and responsible to their dreams”*

**Sustainability:** *“Devoid of the expectation to wear yourself down for the “benefit” of an institution,” “I would feel that just because I love my job doesn’t mean I don’t get to have a life outside of it. I would feel that I’m not making an incredible sacrifice, especially a financial one,” “Dream job means having agency/autonomy/ownership of my time,” “I want to feel calm, proud and excited to step into my work space”*

**Compensation + Benefits:** *“Making enough to survive and thrive, take care of my family and kin, redistribute wealth, pay off debts and invest in the future, and a bit for some play and fun. Comprehensive benefits for healthcare and childcare, matched retirement contributions, connections to supportive services” “Compensation - wages that keep up with the rate of inflation! annual cost of living adjustment that is tailored to the specific locality. PAY TRANSPARENCY IS A MUST. Equitable pay tiers!! Or flat compensation (or adjusted depending on each person's needs).*

**Less Time Working -** *I would have better freedom around working hours and hybrid hours (right now I have to get to my desk by 9:30am otherwise I get marked late, which results in a penalty, and I have to get permission to leave before 5:30; I get one WFH day a week which I have to get special permission to switch around)*



# DREAM SOCIETY - THEMES

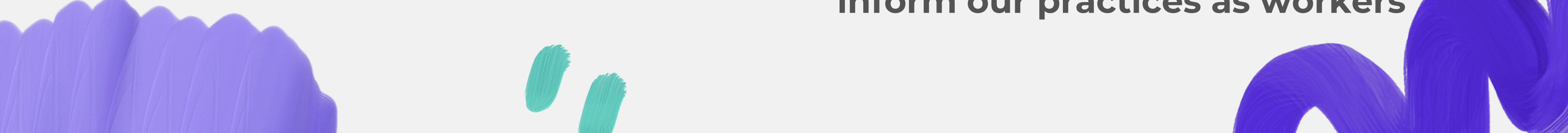
**Time:** Folks not only work less but, more importantly, slow down in the work they do

**Art Everywhere:** Work would be focused on public, free consumption. Respondents are eager for their work to be for and of the people.

**If our needs are met, we'll want to offer our labor:** Labor isn't inherently bad, it's just been exploited.

**The “self” feels served, prioritized and celebrated:** Dream jobs seem to be in deeper service of the self, pouring energy into our own creation and focused less on consumption.

**Return to Nature:** We have much to learn from nature and having time to explore it would inform our practices as workers



# DREAM SOCIETY - QUOTES

**Time** - *"I would not feel overwhelmed or always in a rush, my dream job would be slower, more creative, and less tied to survival., I would take time for quiet and relationship building versus living by funding deadlines., I'd have time to reflect, be present, and actually enjoy the work., I would work fewer hours and I would have days off to enjoy life."*

**Art Everywhere**- *"arts and artists acknowledged as valuable and necessary, I would be painting everywhere, allowing others to help and learn to create and share that power of art with as many as I could"*


**If our needs are met, we'll want to offer our labor:** *"I don't dream of a perfect JOB, but I believe that if all our basic needs are met, we will VOLUNTARILY provide our time and labor. Labor appears in every facet of our lives and is not inherently bad/exploitative; capitalism has just forced us to disconnect our labor from our humanity. In my "dream job", I would be able to determine for myself how I can contribute - without feeling like my livelihood depended on it."*

**The "self" feels served, prioritized, and celebrated** - *"dreamy dream job" would be solely for me and the ways that I thrive and wish to challenge myself as an artist"*

**Return to Nature:** *"Lots of time outdoors in the sun. Native gardens, edible gardens. A space for all to gather. "*



# **PERSPECTIVE & RECOMMENDATION**

1. **Work smarter, not harder**
  2. **Go outside**
  3. **Turn your attention to the  
public/community**
  4. **Invest in higher salaries and  
better benefit packages to  
sustain employment**
- 

**“How would you  
measure success and  
satisfaction in your  
"dream job"?”**

**“How has your  
perception of a "dream  
job" changed over  
time?”**

affirmation housing sustainability wellness trust healthcare mentorship time parenting funding care values schedule equity rest abundance boundaries compassion balance rejuvenate support burnout family flexibility access compensation humane belonging curiosity wages collaboration thriving community



# THEME: FLEXIBILITY & WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Respondents deeply desire flexible schedules, humane workloads, and environments that honor personal time, family, and rest. Many tied these values directly to combating burnout and fostering sustainability.

- *“In my dream scenario, I work four days a week and have a three-day weekend to rest, see art, and rejuvenate.”*
- *“I don’t feel like I have to choose between being a parent and being an artist.”*
- *“Work-life balance is not a dream, it’s a necessity.”*

# THEME: SUPPORTIVE, COLLABORATIVE, AND VALUES-ALIGNED WORK CULTURE

Participants envision working within organizations and networks that are collaborative, affirming, and grounded in shared values.

Trust, transparency, and equity were key recurring ideas, along with the need for mentorship, compassion, and healthy conflict resolution.

- *“I’m surrounded by people who care about each other’s wellbeing, not just output.”*
- *“There is trust in our leadership and in one another.”*
- *“We hold each other accountable with care and curiosity.”*

# THEME: ABUNDANT RESOURCES & EQUITABLE COMPENSATION

Dreams centered on abundance—of money, time, space, and access—highlighted how deeply scarcity mindsets have shaped current realities.

Respondents dream of sustainable wages, healthcare, housing support, and funding models that don't pit peers against one another.

- *“I am not worried about rent, food, or healthcare. My basic needs are met.”*
- *“Compensation reflects the value of my labor, not just what the market says I’m worth.”*
- *“I’m not in competition with other artists for crumbs—we all thrive.”*



# PERSPECTIVE & RECOMMENDATION

**1. Pilot regenerative work models that include flexible schedules, four-day work weeks, and intentional rest periods.**

These pilot programs can serve as test beds to assess the impacts of flexibility on productivity, morale, and retention, especially for caregivers and those at risk of burnout.

**2. Develop organizational frameworks grounded in collective values, care, and equity.**

This includes revising leadership and HR practices to include mentorship, shared decision-making, conflict transformation, and culturally responsive accountability structures.

Thank you!