Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit
https://toolkit.dobetterlabor.com

Reviewed by Erin Passehl-Stoddart, University of Oregon

One of the most pressing issues raised within libraries, archives, and museums (LAM) in the last few years is ethical labor practices for contingent workers, including term-limited, grant-funded, and unpaid positions. One website that weaves together materials that explore issues and outcomes on LAM's contingent labor is the Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit.[1] This website's audience is multidimensional, including everyone from new graduates to managers to grant writers and grant funders. Any LAM practitioner can learn something new and quickly put it into daily practice. Each resource within the toolkit offers useful tips and information, making it worth exploring the entire website.

Looking through the lens and guiding principles of power, labor, sustainability, and solidarity, the Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit collects resources developed to document and change the landscape of contingent labor in LAM. The work represented on the website was produced between 2017 and 2020, first under the auspices of the Digital Library Federation (DLF) Working Group on Labor in Digital Libraries, Archives, and Museums, and later as part of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)-funded Collective Responsibility Labor Forum.[2] The grant project team consisted of Ruth Kitchin Tillman and Sandy Rodriguez (principal investigators) and Emily Drabinski, Amy Wickner, and Stacie Williams (co-investigators). Together with the advisory board, the team included managers, activists, unionized workers, funder representatives, and current and former contingent workers representing multiple institution types and geographically dispersed across the United States—a majority which are members of marginalized and underrepresented populations.[3] The two-year IMLS-funded project, "Collective Responsibility: National Forum on Labor Practices for Grant-Funded Digital Positions," hosted two forums that brought together contingent workers, funder representatives, and LAM managers to create guidelines and best

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[1] The website is maintained by Ruth Tillman, Sandy Rodriguez, Amy Wickner, Liz Carignola, Erin Hurley, Cory Lampert, Anna Neatrour, and Cate Putirskis.

[2] This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (LG-73-18-0236). The grant was administered through the Penn State University Libraries and the University of Missouri–Kansas City University Libraries.

[3] *Collective Responsibility: Seeking Equity for Contingent Labor in Libraries, Archives, and Museums*, accessed January 9, 2021, https://laborforum.diglib.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2019/09/Collective_Responsibility_White_Paper.pdf.

practices for grant-funded positions.[4] The grant project team produced a white paper and handbook packaged together with additional LAM contingent labor resources into the toolkit.

The Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit website is organized into six sections with different audiences and stakeholders in mind. Materials created at different times by various authors and participants inform the website's layout, structure, and links out to additional sources, including an Open Science Framework (OSF) site,[5] which at times can be slightly confusing to navigate. *[Collective Responsibility: Seeking Equity for Contingent Labor in Libraries, Archives, and Museums](#)* is a white paper authored by the grant project team. The white paper is an outcome from the first forum that focuses on the experiences of grant-funded workers, captured through a pre-forum survey, facilitated discussion, and a bibliography, all available at the grant website linked out from the toolkit. The white paper serves as the framework for collective responsibility and evaluating power relationships. Two themes that emerged are "a lack of attention to the professional or personal futures of workers and workers' dependence on direct supervisors for support at every stage of contingent work."[6] Sidebars in the white paper link to various contributor blog posts that capture personal stories and emotions of contingent workers, many of whom participated in the forum.

Another resource the toolkit provides is *[Collective Equity!: A Handbook for Designing and Evaluating Grant-Funded Positions](#)*, which was a deliverable from the second forum of the IMLS grant, published in March 2020.[7] The handbook contains two documents that contain in-depth practical information. "Evaluating Project Design for Worker Equity" is aimed at both grant reviewers and those designing term or project positions. The document provides evaluative questions and a list of ways to further assess the position, which can be used as a checklist to review and provide feedback on position design. The second part of the handbook, "Recommendations to Funders: Promoting Equitable Approaches to Project Staff Design," is aimed at those who design and write grant proposals. The document provides recommended language, listed by typical grant application sections, that can be included in grant applications to demonstrate how an institution provides supportive labor conditions for term positions. The handbook also provides links to additional related documents that readers may find helpful.

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[4] *Collective Equity*, Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit, accessed January 12, 2021, https://toolkit.dobetterlabor.com/collective-equity/.

[5] Ruth Tillman, Sandy Rodriguez, Amy Wickner, and Stacie Williams (March 31, 2020). *Collective Responsibility,* Open Science Framework, osf.io/af9hz.

[6] *Collective Responsibility*, https://laborforum.diglib.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2019/09/Collective_Responsibility_White_Paper.pdf.

[7] The handbook was authored and revised by participants in the Collective Responsibility Labor Forum, members of the Digital Library Federation Working Group for Labor in Digital Libraries, and community commenters.

A third resource aimed at granting agencies, grant writers, and grant reviewers is *"Do Better" –Love(,) Us: Guidelines for Developing and Supporting Grant-Funded Positions in Digital Libraries, Archives, and Museums*, developed in support of the ethical creation of contingent positions. The guidelines were initially drafted by a subgroup of the DLF Working Group on Labor in Digital Libraries, Archives, and Museums in 2017, which later underwent public comment and was influenced by the Collective Responsibility Labor Forum.[8] Informed by the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) Core Values and the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, the guidelines provide supporting definitions and examples towards equitable position design. Sections include prioritizing full-time, benefitted positions; assigning equitable classification status, pay rate, and benefits; providing adequate institutional support for worker growth; considering how project deliverables support and benefit contingent workers; and supporting grant-funded positions transitioning from grant projects into new positions or the workforce. The *Do Better* guidelines provide precise points that those developing grant-funded or contingent positions should consult to design equal, supportive positions at all levels.

The toolkit continues to be an evolving resource and features two additional resources published during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Talking About Contingency At Work" began as part of the Collective Responsibility Labor Forum and is currently a joint project with the Archival Workers Emergency Fund organizing committee of SAA.[9] This resource is a set of role-playing scenarios from different perspectives (contingent workers, managers with varying levels of internal network power, non-contingent managers with varying levels of internal network power, and non-contingent workers), including tactics and actions. Each of the five scenarios includes a list of homework/pre-work, script creation, and recommended post-conversation actions. Overall this is an informative role-playing resource that offers a roadmap for difficult conversations about power differentials associated with contingent work. The second latest addition is the "COVID-19 Emergency Resources for Contingent LAM Workers," which provides a list of LAM-specific emergency funds designed to assist workers who have been laid off, furloughed, or otherwise lost income due to the pandemic. There is additional educational information on this topic, including petitions, organizing information, and a bibliography of documents tracking staff impacts across LAM.

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[8] Contributors in alphabetical order: Hillel Arnold, Dorothy J. Berry, Elizabeth M. Caringola, Angel Diaz, Sarah Hamerman, Erin Hurley, Anna Neatrour, Sandy Rodriguez, Megan Senseney, Ruth Tillman, Amy Wickner, Karly Wildenhaus, and Elliot Williams.

[9] Contributors include Collective Responsibility Steering Committee members (Elizabeth M. Caringola, Erin Hurley, Cory Lampert, Anna Neatrour, Cate Putirskis, Sandy Rodriguez, Ruth Kitchin Tillman, and Amy Wickner) and Collective Responsibility breakout, DLF Labor Working Group, and Archival Workers Emergency Fund contributors (Alison Clemens, Courtney Dean, Carady DeSimone, Jesse Hocking, Jen Wachtel, Stacie Williams, and others).

As someone who has served as an archivist, a LAM administrator, a contingent worker, and a grants development librarian, I view the Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit to be essential reading. This resource will resonate with LAM audiences including everyone from archivists developing grant proposals and projects that include contingent workers; managers and administrators who oversee grants or other term projects; professionals considering applying to term and contingent positions; and grant agencies. Most of the resources are short, powerful documents created to change the way institutions and funders design and evaluate projects that include contingent labor by injecting equitable thinking and practices into action. These resources can be utilized to think about everything from enacting small, immediate steps toward equitable labor practices to large institutional framework changes. The content in many of these documents will sometimes ask uncomfortable but necessary questions about local practices and project prioritization to elicit honest feedback about how an institution views and supports contingent and term labor.

In practice, LAM professionals and administrators frequently must work within institutional policies that are not aligned with the guiding principles found in the toolkit or certain professional values. Often, there is a tension between reaching the goals outlined in these resources and human resources obstacles and policies. This makes the resources found in the Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit that much more relevant, timely, and valuable in designing grants and other work that includes contingent labor.

The grant project team, authors, contributors, and participants have successfully gathered, documented, and created meaningful and thoughtful materials to guide discussions and move the needle on normalizing new best practices for the grant application and evaluation process. Their collaborative work across LAM is to be applauded. If implemented by enough professionals into regular project planning, grant applications, and reviews by grant agencies, the toolkit will create real, positive change. As the LAM fields engage in conversations and actions to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion into their professions, the materials found in the toolkit provide the voices and perspectives of contingent workers and a roadmap to encourage tough conversations within our institutions. As the authors state throughout their resources, creating change in contingent positions is a collective responsibility. Readers will feel a call to duty after engaging with the Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit.