




PAYING FOR PROFESSIONALISM 2025

A Report on New York City
Teaching Artist Compensation
& Employment



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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Methodology	8
Setting the Stage: “Portrait of New York State Artists” New York City-Based Teaching Artist Cohort Dataset	12
Spotlight On: The NYC Arts in Education Roundtable Teaching Artist Compensation Survey Dataset	16
How are NYC Teaching Artists Compensated?	24
Career Sustainability	31
Summary of Results	37
Discussion & Next Steps for the Field	39
Our Supporters	44
Acknowledgements	45
Appendix	47
Works Cited	49

Introduction

About the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable

The New York Arts in Education Roundtable (Roundtable) is a service organization working to improve and advance arts education. We are a community of arts education practitioners committed to sharing information, providing professional development (PD), and communicating with the public to promote the work of Teaching Artists (TAs) in schools and beyond. Since its founding in 1992, the Roundtable stands as a vital hub for thousands of arts education professionals in New York City (NYC), offering essential resources, engaging in advocacy, and fostering community.

As the main convening body for NYC's arts education community and in alignment with our five-year strategic plan, we seek to offer resources for individuals and organizations that will lead to more equitable compensation and employment practices. Prompted by learnings from our regrant initiatives and feedback from the Teaching Artist Affairs (TAA) Committee and the field at large, our team has spent over a year studying employment trends and compensation structures of NYC-based TAs. **The intention of this research initiative is to craft a comprehensive picture of the field — empowering individuals, organizations, and the field as a whole to make informed decisions that benefit NYC's arts education landscape.**

What is a Teaching Artist?

Teaching Artists are practicing, professional artists who teach and integrate their art form, perspectives, histories, and skills into a wide range of learning settings. They may be known as arts educators, culture bearers, or community artists (Teaching Artists Guild, n.d.-b). The term 'Teaching Artist' is thought to have originally been coined in the mid/late-1970s at the Lincoln Center Institute (Booth, 2015), but the history of Teaching Artistry reaches further back in time.

According to Rabkin et al (2011), the modern concept of Teaching Artistry in the United States emerged in the 1880s as part of the settlement house movement. Significantly, the settlement house movement shaped Teaching Artistry by rooting it in the values of creativity, process, individual health, and community. In the 1950s, TAs began working in schools. Most of their work was providing live performances. In the 1960s, schools broadened their engagement with TAs by working with poets (Rabkin et al, 2011).

In New York City, Teaching Artistry gained traction across art forms amidst funding reductions for arts education and massive teacher layoffs during the 1970s budget crisis (Arthur Miller Foundation, 2015). During this time, arts organizations, partnering with

Across the United States, multiple terms are used to describe Teaching Artists, including "catalysts, disruptors, advocates, relationship seekers, culture bearers, boundary pushers, [and] bridge builders" (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2022).

principals, began employing TAs to continue students' access to arts education and enrichment opportunities while helping working artists garner income to support their practice and livelihood. By the end of the 1970s, arts organizations like Young Audiences New York, ArtsConnection, Studio in a School, and Lincoln Center Institute were providing in-school arts instruction, and state arts agencies supported partnerships between school and cultural organizations (Rabkin et al, 2011). Since then, the evolution of Teaching Artistry has reflected a shift from supplemental income to a recognized profession.

Today, Teaching Artists play an essential role in the creative development of individuals of all ages, promoting innovation in the classroom and community, fostering artistic talents, and enriching learning experiences. TAs are multi-hyphenated — balancing multiple jobs and priorities while holding responsibilities and sensibilities as working artists, community-builders, educators, business owners, and more. Unlike certified arts teachers who hold initial or professional state certification in dance, theater, music, or visual arts, TAs generally do not need certification or licensure to teach in NYC, with vetting standards and professional requirements varying greatly across employing organizations. Instead, the nature and naming of TAs has remained amorphous and unique to the culture and context of their work (International Teaching Artists Collaborative, n.d.; National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2022).

State of the Field

Teaching Artists are vital contributors to New York City's cultural and educational landscape. However, their compensation and employment stability remain precarious. According to the Roundtable's 2018 report, "Paying for Professionalism: A Report on Teaching Artist Compensation in NYC," TAs face significant financial challenges — over half of the 157 surveyed TAs earned less than \$35,000 annually, below the city's living wage at the time: \$43,519 per the Economic Policy Institute (de Barros et. al., 2018; Economic Policy Institute, 2025).

The COVID-19 pandemic further magnified these issues, leading to substantial job losses within arts education organizations, which experienced a 78% reduction in artist staffing between March and June 2020 — representing over 2,100 artists, as reported by SMU Data Arts and NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (Fonner & Voss, 2020). In response, the Roundtable was proud to host the Arts Educator Emergency Relief Fund¹, regranting more than \$1 million to NYC-based TAs seeking emergency funding — the country's largest pandemic relief fund for TAs (New York City Arts in Education Roundtable, 2022). This fund awarded one-time, unrestricted grants up to \$1,000 to TAs and arts education administrators who were facing serious financial hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Across the administration of the Arts Educator Emergency Relief Fund (August 2020-March 2022), 83.3% (846 out of 1,015 awardees) were furloughed or laid off due to COVID-19 (New York City Arts in Education Roundtable, 2022). Although the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program expanded unemployment benefits to independent contractors during the

¹The Arts Educator Emergency Relief Fund was distributed in three cycles, and received funding from the New York Community Trust (including funding from the NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund in the New York Community Trust), the Booth Ferris Foundation, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, and the Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation.

height of the pandemic, this program was temporary, and many TAs were not eligible for unemployment benefits beyond the 79-week period (Pandemic Oversight, 2023). Despite setbacks and economic hardships of the pandemic, applicants overwhelmingly planned to pursue a career in arts education post-pandemic (an average of 95% across all three cycles). Applicants identified needing emergency funding to support expenses including monthly bills and utilities, loss of income, rental payments, groceries, and medical / healthcare allowances.

A mix of organizational, government, and informational structures in NYC now hold significant influence over TA pay rates and benefits, creating a complex and often unstable employment landscape. Overall payment and employment types vary greatly across employing organizations, resulting in wide disparities in compensation and uncertainty on what constitutes fair, livable wages. For employing organizations engaged in contracts with city government agencies, persistent delays in payment and the reimbursement-model of contracting can greatly impact an organization's cash flow and financial stability. Within NYC Public Schools (NYCPS) in particular, the Multi-Task Award Contract (MTAC) process enables vendors to engage in higher-level contracts within public schools. However, arts organizations regularly encounter difficulties with the lengthy, opaque contracting process and financial negotiation stage, including pressure to lower pricing structures and subsequent TA wage limitations.

These issues are further exacerbated by fluctuating city, state, and federal allocations — including the recent loss of pandemic-era American Rescue Plan Act funding and the devastating retreat from cultural funding under the new federal administration across the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Institute of Museum and Libraries Services. This precarity of government arts funding coupled with uncertainty about the future of the U.S. Department of Education ultimately creates broader concern about sustained support for arts education programs. As a result, school leaders and nonprofits may reduce engagement with TAs, delay program start dates, or cancel programs outright, leading to lost work. The frequently changing number of certified arts teachers adds another layer of complexity — as TAs are increasingly relied upon to fill gaps in arts instruction, without the same level of job security and benefits.

Given the nonlinear nature and expansive definition of Teaching Artistry, the field continues to work to find creative solutions for defining the size and scope of the TA workforce. Most recent examples include the Teaching Artist Asset Map (Teaching Artists Guild, n.d.-a) and a 2024 advocacy movement to include “Teaching Artist” as a Standardized Occupation Classification with the U.S. Bureau of Labor (Teaching Artists of the Mid Atlantic, n.d.). Previously, the Roundtable estimated that approximately 4,000 - 5,000 TAs are working across the five boroughs, however through this research initiative it has become clear that this underestimates the workforce.

According to the 2014 - 2015 CREATE NYC Plan, the Cultural Afterschool Adventures Program (CASA), administered in partnership by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and City Council, funded arts partnerships at schools that “employed 1,141 TAs in a broad range of arts disciplines” (New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, 2019). Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of organizations employing Teaching Artists

and partnering with NYC Public Schools, leading to greater competition among them. In the 2023 - 2024 school year, more than 700 arts organizations partnered with public schools, the highest number on record and nearly double the amount from the 2014 - 2015 school year (New York City Public Schools, 2024). Beyond school-based programming, TAs are also employed and working in community and other settings.²

Moreover, there is a recognized information gap, with employing organizations seeking to provide fair compensation but lacking clear benchmarks for 2025 standards. Similarly, private and public grantmakers are increasingly interested in up-to-date TA compensation data to inform funding decisions. By painting a comprehensive picture of the TA field, the Roundtable can help individuals, organizations, and the arts education sector as a whole to make informed decisions that support fair wages and sustainable careers within this essential sector.

²Examples of community and other settings include public, private, and charter schools; museums, colleges/universities; senior centers; community music schools; libraries; religious institutions; prisons; veteran centers, etc.

Methodology

Through the Roundtable's NYC Teaching Artist Compensation & Employment Initiative, we worked with researcher Gregory Youdan to perform a secondary analysis of a pre-existing dataset collected by Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) (Creatives Rebuild New York, 2025) from their "Portrait of New York State Artists" (PNYSA) (Hand & Calderon, 2024). In addition, we surveyed employing organizations and independent TAs.

Portrait of New York State Artists

CRNY launched the PNYSA survey from February to May 2022, with the goal of capturing the needs, circumstances, and experiences of artists throughout New York State. Artists applying for the CRNY's Guaranteed Income for Artists or Artist Employment Program were invited to respond to additional optional questions about their artistic practice, financial situation, well-being, pandemic experience, and views on policy and advocacy. A public version of the survey was also available for those who were not interested in or awarded funding. The survey was available in English and Spanish. In total, 13,377 artists participated in the survey (Hand & Calderon, 2024).

For the purposes of this research, the Roundtable subsetted the dataset to create a cohort of NYC-based TAs. This subset was created based on responses to: (1) Question 35 - Region, and (2) Question 2 - How do you approach your practice as an artist, culture bearer, or culture maker? In order to be included in this cohort, respondents needed to select **both** 'NYC' (as an answer to Q35) and 'Teaching or educating others is core to my practice' (as an answer to Q2). The resulting subset was a cohort of 4,571 TAs living in NYC.

While valuable information was gleaned from this cohort's responses, its dataset alone is not sufficient to craft a comprehensive picture of the current state of the TA field in NYC for the following reasons:

- The subset cohort did not explicitly identify themselves as TAs in their survey responses.
- The survey instrument lacked questions to collect detailed information on varying pay structures and pay rates for TA work.
- The data set was already 3 years old at the genesis of the Roundtable's survey project, and more recent information was required.
- The survey instrument lacked questions speaking to the nuances of the TA field.

Roundtable's Compensation Surveys

For these reasons, the Roundtable elected to launch its own research initiative. The Roundtable iteratively designed a two-pronged electronic exploratory survey. One prong was designed to collect data on individual TAs and the other on organizations that employ them. The surveys were designed to best understand the current compensation structures, practices, rates, and benefits used to pay TAs in NYC and to identify factors affecting TA employment. These survey drafts were

reviewed by a cohort of eight community reviewers who were compensated for their time as well as the Roundtable's Teaching Artist Affairs Committee.

Surveys were open for responses from November 2024 to January 2025. For all questions, participants were able to skip responding and/or respond 'I prefer not to answer' and/or 'Unsure'. The surveys were emailed to the Roundtable's mailing list, made available online, shared via social media (on Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and X) and shared via organizational partners including Dance/NYC, New Yorkers for Culture & Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Teaching Artists of the Mid-Atlantic, and Roundtable member organizations. In addition, snowball sampling was used by asking participants to share with their networks.

Individuals were invited to participate if they:

- Were employed as a Teaching Artist at any time between 2023 - present,
AND
- Taught within the five boroughs of NYC at any time between 2023 - present.

Employing organizations were invited to participate if:

- They had employed Teaching Artists at any time between 2023 - present,
AND
- At least 50% of the organization's Teaching Artist-related work was based within the five boroughs of NYC between 2023 - present.

All included respondents consented to participate in the research.

To incentivize participation, eight \$100 gift cards were raffled off to survey respondents (four to individuals, and four to organization representatives). To qualify for the raffle, participants had to submit a complete response to the survey (without skipping sections).

In order to ensure the research was grounded in real-world experiences and perspectives of TAs, the Roundtable's Teaching Artist Affairs Committee was invited into the process as a panel of experts. The TAA Committee is comprised of TAs representing a diverse set of artistic disciplines, tenures in the field, and experiences in a variety of education settings. They provided important feedback and guidance throughout the research process. This expert panel commented on survey drafts, initial findings, report framework, and recommended actions.

Data Sources

This report presents and utilizes data from the following sources:

- The Roundtable's 2018 report, "Paying for Professionalism: A Report on Teaching Artist Compensation in NYC" (de Barros et. al., 2018)
- Creatives Rebuild New York's "Portrait of New York State Artists Survey" (Hand & Calderon, 2024)
- The Roundtable's 2024/2025 Teaching Artist Compensation initiative's dataset

Analyses

Prior to analysis, all data was anonymized. Both prongs of the Roundtable data were cleaned of participants who did not qualify (e.g., did not work as a NYC TA between 2023 - present) and/or did not consent to participating in the research. Data cleaning consisted of combining duplicate responses and correcting errors in the data (e.g., responding \$2 for 200 hours worked). Duplicate respondents were matched using names, emails, and IP addresses. For duplicate respondents, the Roundtable prioritized their most complete survey, which was always the most recent attempt. Any individual data point that was well outside of the typical range and was not able to be verified/corrected was excluded from analysis (e.g., \$2 for 200 hours of work). In an attempt to prioritize all data, incomplete surveys were kept and used for analysis for all data points provided.

The primary analysis for both the PNYSA data (Hand & Calderon, 2024) and the TA Compensation survey data consisted of calculating and reporting descriptive statistics including ranges, percentages, frequency, and medians. As the data was not expected to follow a normal bell-shaped distribution, the medians were selected as the best measure of central tendency. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

Open-ended responses were analyzed using Google's NotebookLM (Google, 2023) to pull out recurring themes. Freewordcloud.com (Free Word Cloud Generator, n.d.) was used to analyze the most common job titles of TAs.

Limitations of Data & Process

The Roundtable chose to use robust survey protocols wherever possible. It was understood that there is labor involved in completing a 15 - 45 minute survey, including recalling information from past years, information that respondents did not have readily available, or information that couldn't be easily measured or captured due to the nuances of the field. Moreover, it is important to mention that online surveys and recruitment protocols prioritizing digital delivery limit participation to those who have access to and are familiar with the internet. The Roundtable went in with the understanding that some participants would not answer every question and that respondents would provide information based on the time and effort they were able and willing to give to the research.

Survey instruments, while valuable for gathering data, inherently face limitations in capturing the full complexity of TA compensation and employment. The diverse range of work settings, program formats, engagement lengths, and funding sources contributes to significant variability in pay rates and employment structures, making it challenging to provide singular, definitive answers to questions about typical compensation. This inherent disparity underscores the difficulty of representing such a nuanced landscape in a standardized manner through survey methodologies alone. Additionally, the surveys relied on self-selection; that is, participants made a choice to complete the survey or answer certain questions based on a variety of factors including their familiarity and trust in the Roundtable, who sent them the survey, familiarity with the English

language, and privacy/confidentiality concerns (among others). This may have led to a self-selection by responding employing organizations who only want to report things they are doing well.

It is nearly impossible to have every TA and employing organization respond to a survey, and the resultant may be an imperfect representation of the field. At the time of publication, this project is the most recent and largest pay rate research conducted for NYC TAs. It provides much needed data, which can inspire advocacy and transparency of wages, supporting career sustainability and the ability to keep TAs working in NYC.

How to Use & Interpret this Report

This report is a tool to understand prevailing trends, disparities, and benchmarks in Teaching Artist compensation in NYC. Data is presented in aggregate to highlight broader patterns rather than individual experiences. Jargon that may be specific to the report may be found in the appendix on page 47. This report is intended to support advocacy, policy development, equitable hiring practices, and strategic planning by providing a clearer picture of the compensation landscape for TAs.

Setting the Stage: “Portrait of New York State Artists” New York City-Based Teaching Artist Cohort Dataset

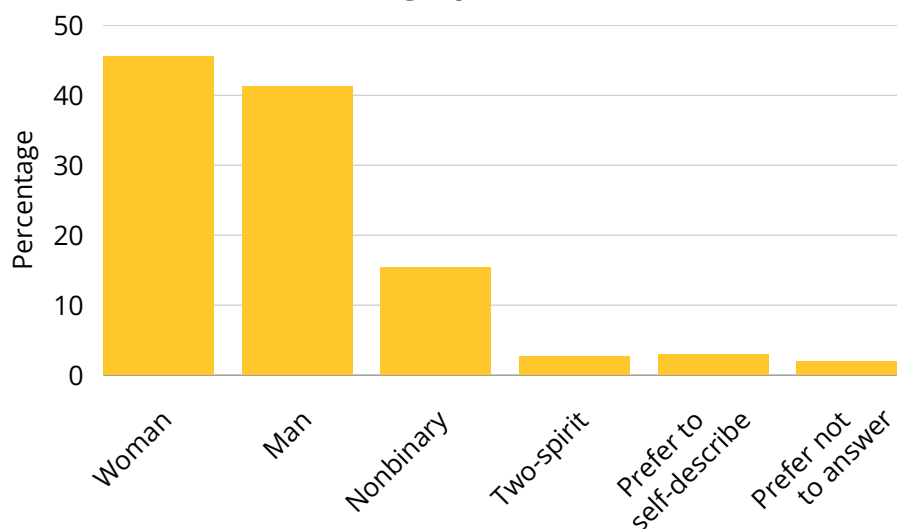
As stated above, first, the Roundtable analyzed the PNYSA dataset (Hand & Calderon, 2024) to provide additional context on the workforce’s demographics, employment status, finances, and the impact of the pandemic. The following section offers analysis of the subset of artists that the Roundtable research team determined to be most closely aligned with NYC-based Teaching Artists (referred to as PNYSA TAs).

According to the Office of the New York City Comptroller (2024), there are 23,138 artists living and working in NYC. 10,113 artists living in NYC completed the PNYSA survey (Hand and Calderon, 2024) conducted by CRNY, representing approximately 44% of the artist population living in NYC. This high response rate suggests the true size of NYC's artist workforce may be underestimated. From this group, 4,571 of the respondents to the PNYSA survey both lived in NYC and selected that ‘teaching or educating is core to [their] practice.’ Based on this data, the Roundtable now estimates that the TA workforce in NYC is likely between 9,000 - 11,000 working TAs.³

The Roundtable estimates that there is likely between 9,000 - 11,000 working Teaching Artists in NYC.³

Demographics

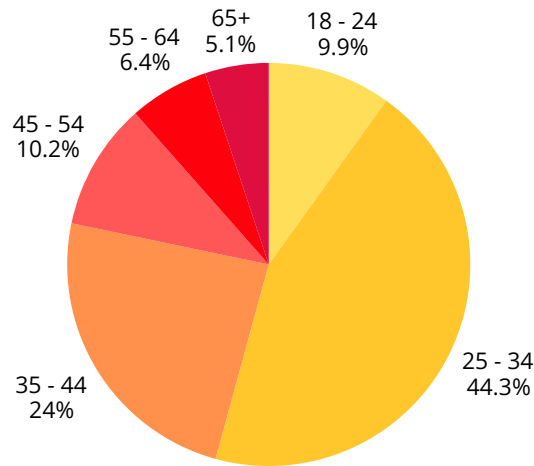
Gender Demographics from PNYSA



PNYSA respondents were allowed to select multiple gender identities. Most respondents identified as women (46%).

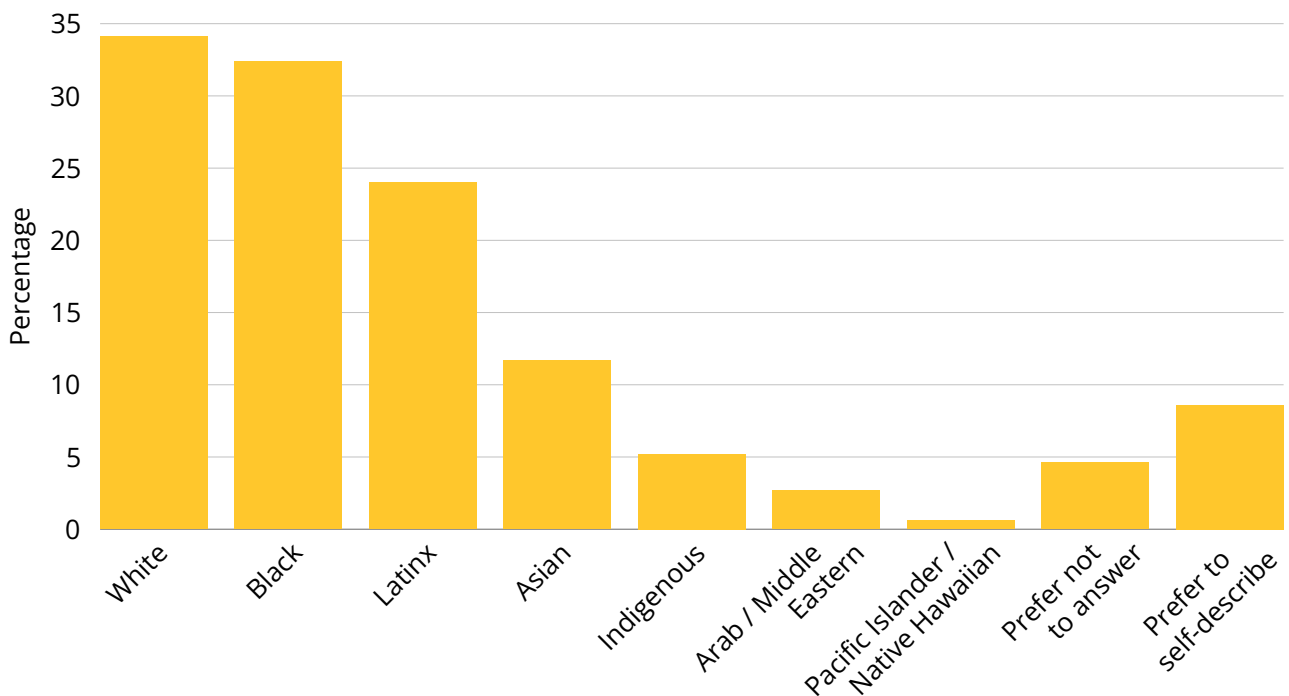
³Methodology for estimate: 10,113 is approximately 44% of the Comptroller’s estimate of 23,138 artists living and working in NYC. In the PNYSA sample, 4,571 of these NYC artists identified ‘teaching or educating as core to their practice,’ and were therefore identified as the PNYSA TA cohort. The estimate of 44% response rate of the population for the PNYSA survey was then applied to the 4,571 PNYSA TAs to arrive at the estimate of between 9,000 - 11,000 working TAs in NYC.

Age Demographics from PNYSA



With a majority of respondents aged 25 - 34 (44%), the data indicates a TA workforce that is predominantly young.

Race Demographics from PNYSA



The largest groups represented in this dataset were White (34%), Black (32%), and Hispanic or Latinx (24%).

22% of PNYSA respondents identified as an immigrant, and 10% identified as deaf or disabled.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Between March 2020 and February 2022, 92% of PNYSA TAs felt that their employment was impacted by the pandemic. 66% had freelance work, gigs and/or contracts canceled.

→ **52%** felt that the entire industry had shut down

→ **24%** were furloughed or had their hours reduced

→ **35%** were laid off or fired by employers

→ **9%** left a job or reduced hours to attend to family caregiving

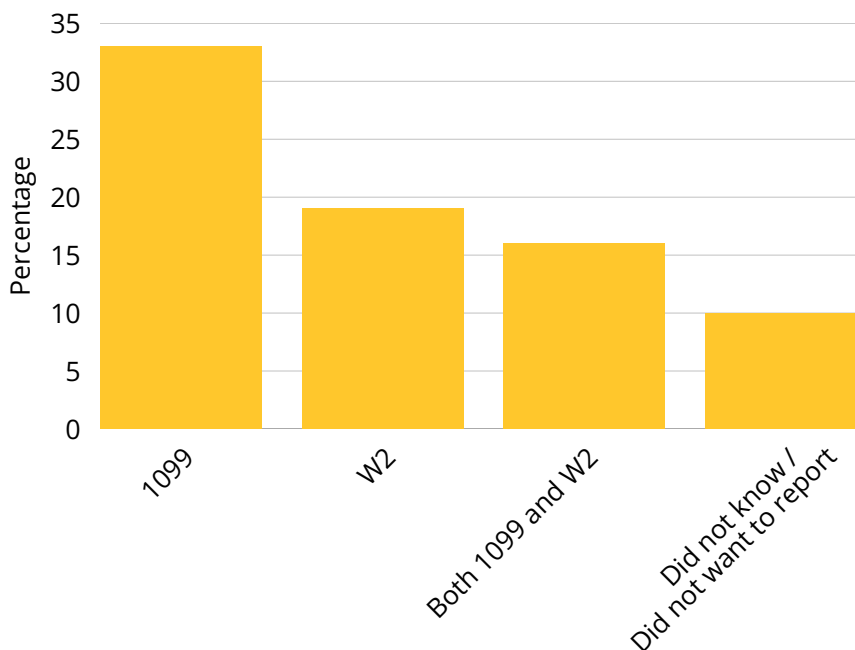
Notably, 76% of PNYSA TAs received emergency financial assistance between March 2020 and February 2022. On the upside, 29% picked up new freelance work, gigs or contracts, and 15% started a new part-time or full-time job.

Employment Status

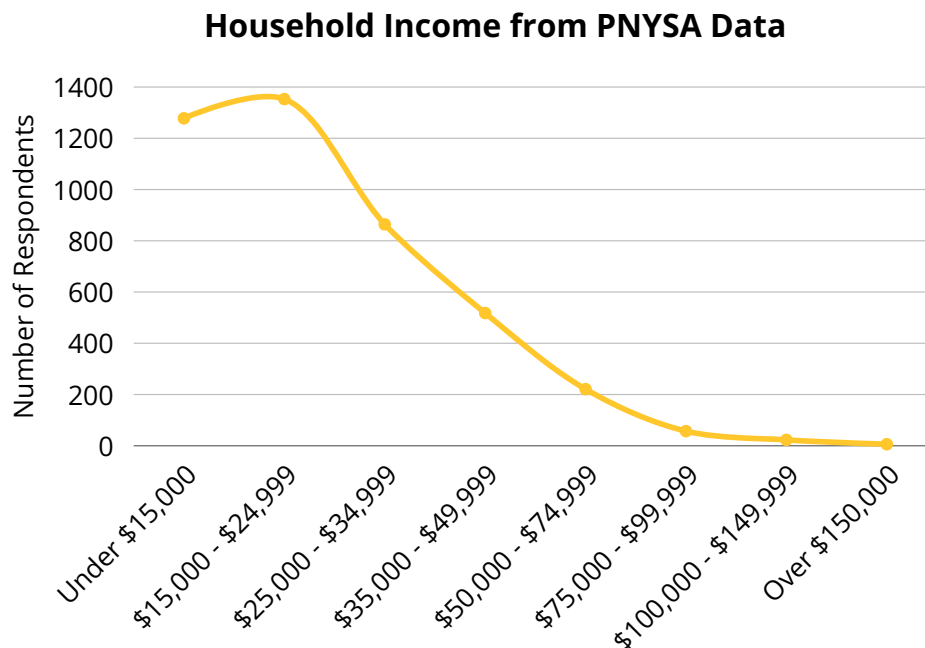
When asked how they earn money, participants were allowed to select as many options as applied to them. While the 2018 Paying for Professionalism report advised transitioning away from 1099 employment (de Barros et. al., 2018), it was the most prevalent employment category for PNYSA TAs. More than half (54%) of individuals reported engaging in a variety of temporary work arrangements, such as gigs and contracts. A smaller portion held one or more part-time jobs (37%) or a full-time position (7%), while 9% were primarily or entirely financially supported by family. Only 21% reported earning 100% of their living through their artistic practices, which included their TA work for this sample. 26% reported being currently unemployed (at the time of surveying in 2022).

26% of PNYSA TAs reported being unemployed in 2022, at the time of surveying.

Employment Types from PNYSA Data



Finances



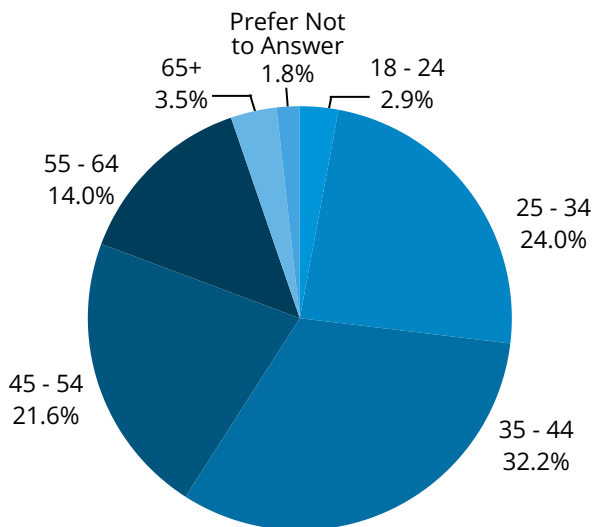
65% of PNYSA respondents reported having a household income under \$75,000. For context, the median household income in NYC in 2023 was \$76,577 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-a).

Only 3% of the 4,571 artists sampled rated their financial stability as stable, with less than 1% rating it as extremely stable. 64% of the artists sampled rated their financial stability as unstable (41%) or extremely unstable (23%), with an additional 31% percent rating their financial stability as fluctuating. Only 16% reported having access to other sources of income/financial stability apart from income generated through jobs. Furthermore, 18% of artists sampled reported not having health insurance, compared to 5.8% of the population of NYC that is reported to lack healthcare coverage according to the US Census Bureau (n.d.-a).

The PNYSA (Hand & Calderon, 2024) TA cohort offers a larger sample size of NYC-based TAs than the Roundtable’s 2018 Paying for Professionalism dataset (de Barros et. al. 2018) and the most recent 2024/2025 Roundtable dataset. The large dataset helps to craft a deeper understanding of the state of the TA field in NYC. To investigate the nuances of Teaching Artistry in NYC, the Roundtable conducted its own survey. In contrast to the PNYSA dataset, the Roundtable’s survey is limited to self-identified TAs and employing organizations. In the next section, we will discuss the results of the Roundtable’s survey.

Age

Age Ranges Reported by Teaching Artists



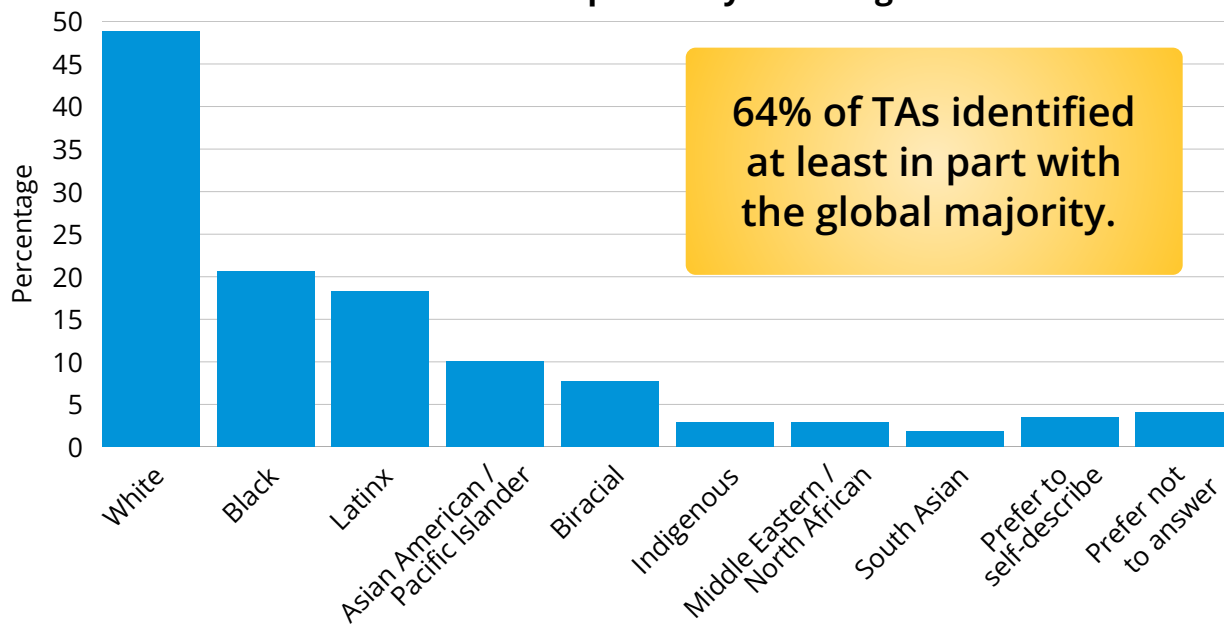
"It's physically taxing to be a visual arts TA – carrying materials is cumbersome and near impossible in certain situations without assistance. This affects older TAs as it is physically taxing."

— Visual Arts Teaching Artist

The age of TAs ranged from 18 - 74 years-old, with 78% between the ages 25 and 54. The largest group was 35 - 44 at 32%, which parallels the 2018 Paying for Professionalism data, in which the largest majority was between 31 - 40 years old (de Barros et. al.,2018). The demographic data, while roughly consistent with typical workforce age distributions, exhibits a skew towards a younger cohort across the Roundtable and PNYSA samples (Gumber & Sullivan, 2022). This may be explained by extensive travel requirements, low likelihood of benefits, and physical demands detailed by survey participants.

Race/Ethnicity

Races & Ethnicities Reported by Teaching Artists



64% of TAs identified at least in part with the global majority.

Participants were allowed to select all identities that applied to them. 64% identified at least in part with the global majority. This is an increase from 31% of those identifying with the global majority in the Roundtable’s 2018 Paying for Professionalism data (de Barros et. al.,2018). The largest ethnicities represented were White (49%), Black (21%), and Latinx (18%), which parallels the PNYSA sample (Hand & Calderon, 2024). Although no sample is perfect, the Roundtable sample is roughly representative of NYC’s racial demographics (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-b).

Immigrant Status

22% of TAs identified as immigrants. For context, the demographic profile of NYC indicates that approximately 38% of its residents are immigrants (Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, 2023). The Roundtable survey data may exhibit a potential bias due to its exclusive administration in English, potentially underrepresenting non-English speaking TA populations within the city. Concerns related to information-sharing among immigrant communities may also factor into the lower response rate.

Disability

Within the Roundtable TA cohort, 13% self-identified as having a disability. These figures are consistent with data from the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, which indicates that 11% of NYC’s total population identifies as having a disability (Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, n.d.).

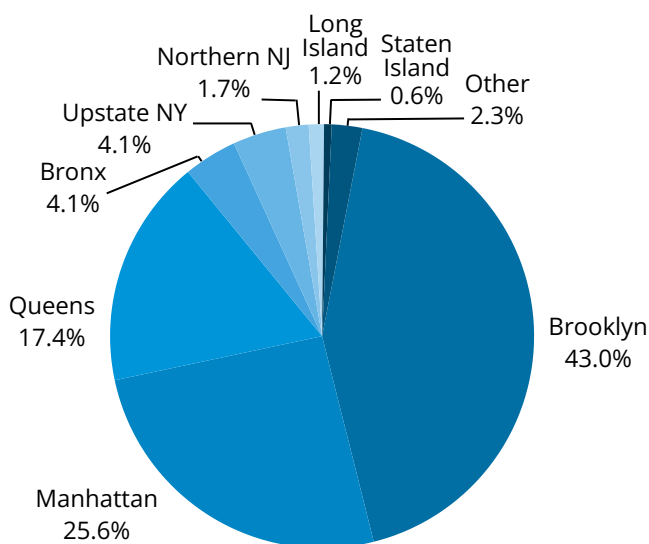
Education

More than half (51%) of TAs received a master’s degree, with an additional 40% receiving their bachelor’s. This totals to 91% of the sample having completed some level of higher education, compared to 41% of the NYC population having a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-b). The TA workforce is a highly educated group compared to the NYC workforce.

Residence Location

Teaching Artists living across the tri-state area responded, with most living in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens, respectively. Although TAs reported living in each of the five boroughs, less than 1% of TAs surveyed reported living on Staten Island.

Residence Locations Reported by Teaching Artists



79% of TAs did not feel that their TA work sufficiently supported or fully supported their ability to live in or near NYC.

* Where Do Teaching Artists Work?

Teaching Locations & Travel

New York City TAs teach across the tri-state area, including in all five boroughs. Within NYC, 83% of TAs reported teaching in Manhattan, closely followed by 75% in Brooklyn. While Queens and the Bronx had robust TA presences, with 61% of TAs working in Queens and 59% in the Bronx, the lowest TA presence was in Staten Island; only 19% of TAs reported working there. TAs reported weekly round-trip commuting times of up to 15+ hours, with a median of three to five hours per week. TAs are commuting anywhere from 31 minutes to over two hours round-trip per TA job, with a median commuting time between one hour and one hour 30 minutes. However, the spread across travel times was fairly evenly distributed. The impact of these long commutes can often be made more physically taxing with TAs transporting class-related materials and equipment.

42% of TAs reported commuting 1.5 hours or longer for a TA job.

Teaching Time

Teaching Artists reported teaching time ranging anywhere from 0 - 5 hours per week to over 40 hours per week, with a median range of 6 - 10 hours per week. TAs most commonly spend 3 - 5 hours per week on planning.

Class Delivery Method

The TA and organization survey responses align to show that most TA work is happening in-person. 96% of organizations hire TAs to teach in-person, 31% hire TAs to teach virtual synchronous classes (e.g., live on Zoom), and 28% hire for hybrid classes. Pre-recorded classes do occur but are less frequent (8%).

* Who Do Teaching Artists Work For?

72 organizations employing 2,321 TAs were included in the study. The organizations ranged from having 1 - 111+⁵ full-time employees (total full-time employees, not just TAs), with a median range of 1-10 full-time employees per organization. Most organizations (60%) employing TAs are based in Manhattan and serve the five boroughs. However, Staten Island is potentially underserved, with only 51% of the surveyed organizations serving the borough as compared to over 85% serving all the other boroughs.

52% of TAs reported working at three or more organizations, with five respondents working at 10 or more organizations.

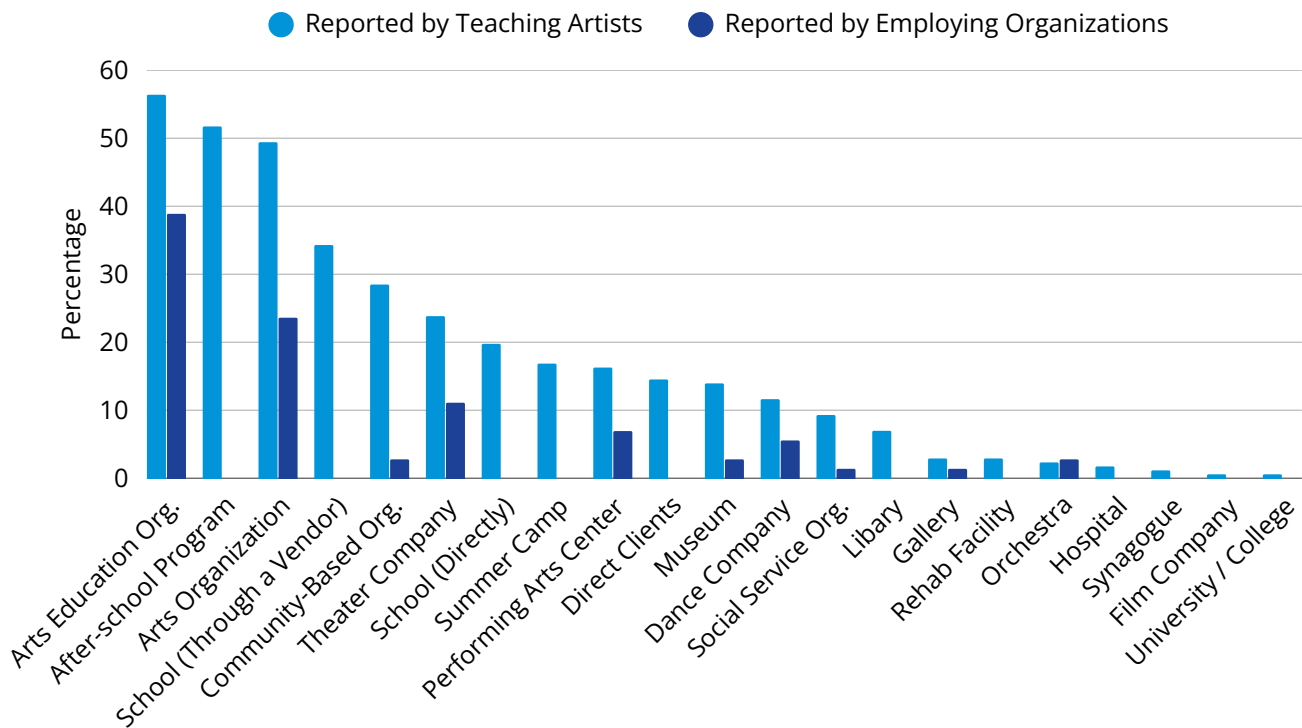
⁵The survey question for organizations regarding employee hiring status included response options to select from a list, rather than an option to fill in the blank with a specific number. Hence, the higher end of this data point ends in a +.

“The structure of hourly teaching artist pay and juggling multiple part-time teaching artist jobs is not something I can afford to sustain into the next decade of my life.”
 — 25-to-34-year-old Teaching Artist

95% of these employing organizations operate under a 501(c)(3) nonprofit structure, with 74% founded between 1975 and present day. Unsurprisingly, the highest concentration of organizations (40%) reported being founded between 1975 - 1990, a likely direct response to the impact of NYC’s fiscal crisis which resulted in arts teacher layoffs and sparked the slow retreat of arts in academics starting in the late-1970s (Arthur Miller Foundation, 2015). The reported annual budget size for employing organizations ranged from \$25,000 to over \$10M, with a median range of \$1M - \$2M.

Types of Employing Organizations

Organization Types Employing Teaching Artists

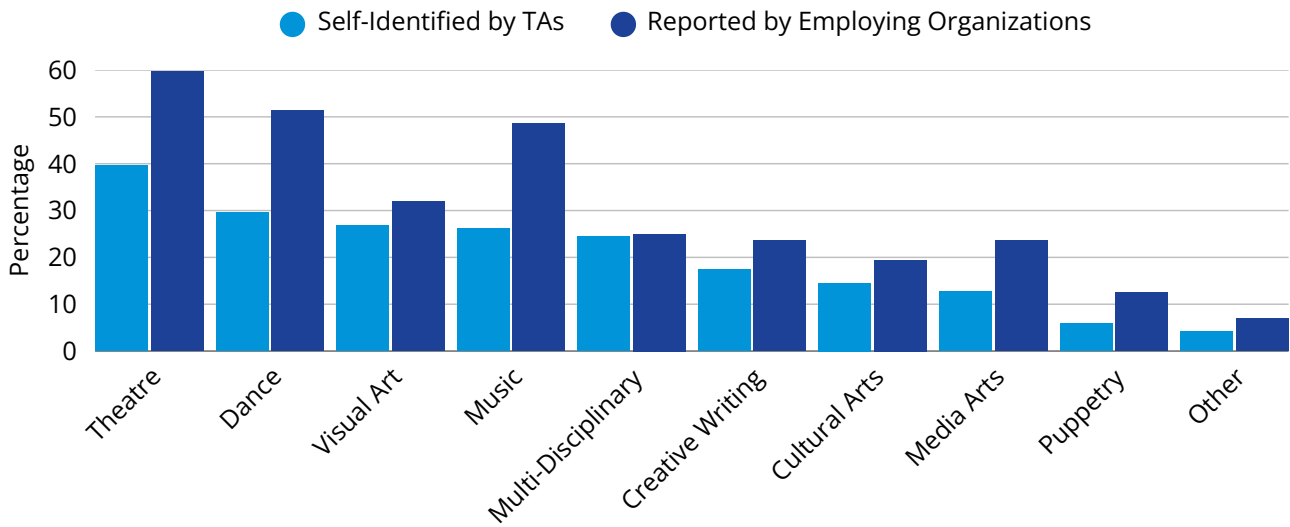


The wide array of organizations employing Teaching Artists underscores the expansive nature and reach of the TA ecosystem.

Artistic Disciplines

The Roundtable sample included TAs from a wide range of artistic disciplines. The employing organizations reported hiring TAs from a wide range of artistic disciplines, with the top three disciplines being theatre, dance, and music, respectively. 49% of TAs reported teaching more than one discipline, an increase from the 35% reported in the Roundtable’s 2018 Paying for Professionalism Report (de Barros et. al.,2018). Considering that the number of certified arts teachers in NYC Public Schools is lowest for theatre and dance relative to other artistic disciplines (New York City Public Schools, 2024), it is logical that TAs would be most represented in these areas to help mitigate potential gaps in access to instruction.

Teaching Artists Disciplines

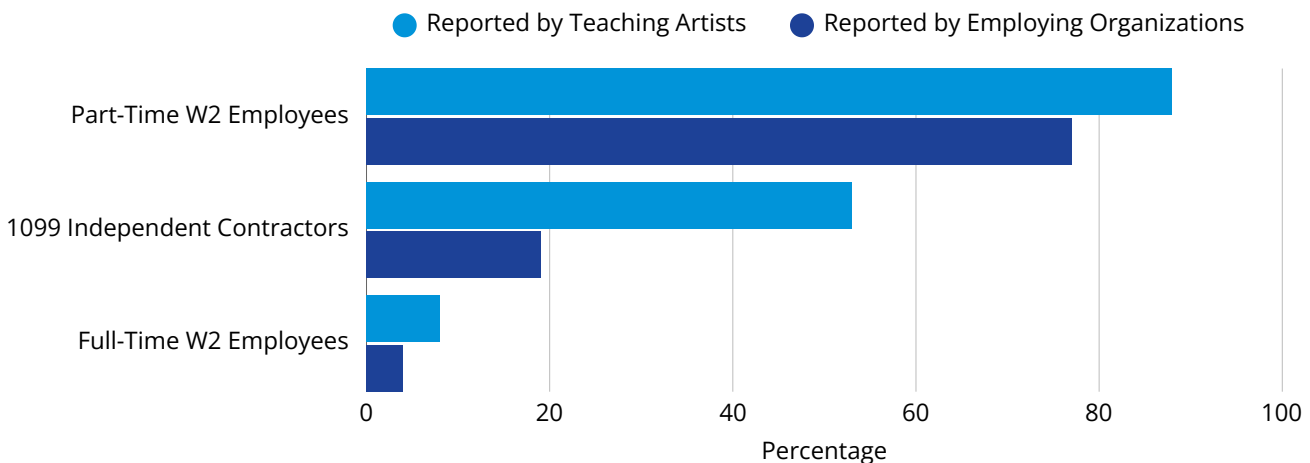


Employment Status

Teaching Artist work is unique in that it takes place in a variety of educational spaces and in an equally diverse array of formats and engagement lengths. Given that TA work may take shape in a range of configurations, the way in which TAs are compensated and categorized as employees also varies.

From the sample of individual TAs, 88% reported working as a part-time W2 employee, 53% reported working as a 1099 independent contractor, and 8% reported working as a full-time W2 employee.

Teaching Artists Employment Classifications



While part-time W2 employment appears to be the most prevalent employment structure for TAs, it's clear that the workforce is frequently navigating multiple employment statuses which may impact their access to benefits. Although an exact comparison cannot be drawn based on the framing of the 2018 Paying for Professionalism survey questions, the 2025 responses imply a decrease in the percentage of organizations employing independent contractors. This could translate to more TAs who may be entitled to certain employee benefits based on their status as W-2 employees.

Self-Employed Teaching Artists

48 of the surveyed TAs identified as being self-employed, with 73% of this cohort using a sole proprietorship model. A sole proprietorship is a type of business structure where a single individual owns and operates the business. It is the simplest and most common form of business ownership. Self-employment is a tax status requiring TAs to pay self-employment taxes, which would otherwise be covered by the employing organization regardless of how pay rates are set.

Self-employed TAs reported that pay rates were primarily set by employing organizations, with TAs only setting their own rate 24% of the time. As such, self-employed TAs reported a wide range of confidence or lack of confidence in setting their own rates. When self-employed TAs are able to set their own rates, the most common factors they take into account are duration of the program, planning time, and administrative time. Only 34% of self-employed TAs who set their own rates include non-teaching time in their base rate. As a result, their compensation does not account for the full breadth of the work that goes into their Teaching Artistry. More resources and training are needed to help TAs build pricing structures that reflect the true cost of their programs.

How are NYC Teaching Artists Compensated?

To better comprehend TA compensation trends, the Roundtable sought to understand the types of professional engagements and compensation types (inclusive of “base pay rate” and additional compensation types/rates).

For the purposes of this survey and report, ‘base pay rate’ was defined as the standard rate of compensation offered to TAs at an organization, excluding any additional bonuses, earnings, or benefits they may offer or compensate for separately. For the context of this study, ‘per workshop’ refers to being paid a fee per individual workshop, class or gig; ‘per residency’ refers to being paid a fee per total engagement, including all classes/workshops over a set period of time.

How Are Teaching Artists Paid?

The following table demonstrates the most common compensation models as reported by both employing organizations and individual TAs:

Teaching Artist Payment Types

	Hourly	Per Workshop	Per Residency	Per Day	Per Half-Day	Per Student ⁶	Salary
As reported by Teaching Artists	77%	55%	27%	24%	10%	4%	8%
As reported by Employing Organizations	73%	41%	10%	14%	7%	0%	11%

The most common method of payment reported was hourly (77%), differing from the Roundtable’s 2018 Paying for Professionalism survey (de Barros et. al., 2018), where per workshop/class was the most common method of payment (54%). Some organizations reported using a tiered system of payment, offering different rates depending on the task and/or project-specific compensation models. Other payment methods TAs reported included stipends.

⁶Denotes payment per student in addition to base pay rate, with 3 out of 4 TAs reporting pay per student over a set minimum number of students, and all having a guaranteed base pay if no students were to show up.

Base Pay Rates

The following two tables demonstrate the base pay rates for each category of the most common compensation models. Of particular note is the wide discrepancy in pay range for hourly, per workshop, per residency, per day/half-day, and salaried pay.

Base Pay Rates Reported by Teaching Artists

	Range	Median Range or Value	Hourly Equivalent Median
Hourly	\$15 - \$270	\$50 - \$80 ⁷	N/A
Per Workshop	\$25 - \$2K	\$117 - \$173	\$100 - \$145
Per Residency	\$50 - \$8K	\$1250 - \$1800	\$54 - \$78
Per Day or Half Day ⁸	\$75 - \$1.5K	\$200 - \$300	\$50 - \$65
Per Student ⁹	\$5 - \$7	\$7	N/A
Salary	\$26K - \$70K	\$43K	N/A

Base Pay Rates Reported by Employing Organizations¹⁰

	Range	Median Range or Value	Hourly Equivalent Median
Hourly	\$26 - \$200+	\$81 - \$85	N/A
Per Workshop	\$51 - \$1K+	\$151 - \$175	\$138 - \$158
Per Residency	\$251 - \$4.5K	\$2.5K - \$3K	\$117 - \$230
Per Day	\$126 - \$600	\$301 - \$325	\$56 - \$108
Per Half Day	\$126 - \$350	\$176 - \$200	\$70 - \$113
Salary	<\$30K - \$80K	\$60K - \$70K	N/A

⁷The 2018 Paying for Professionalism survey reported that NYC TAs made an average hourly base pay of \$60/hour, still within the median range identified within our more recent survey (de Barros et. al., 2018).

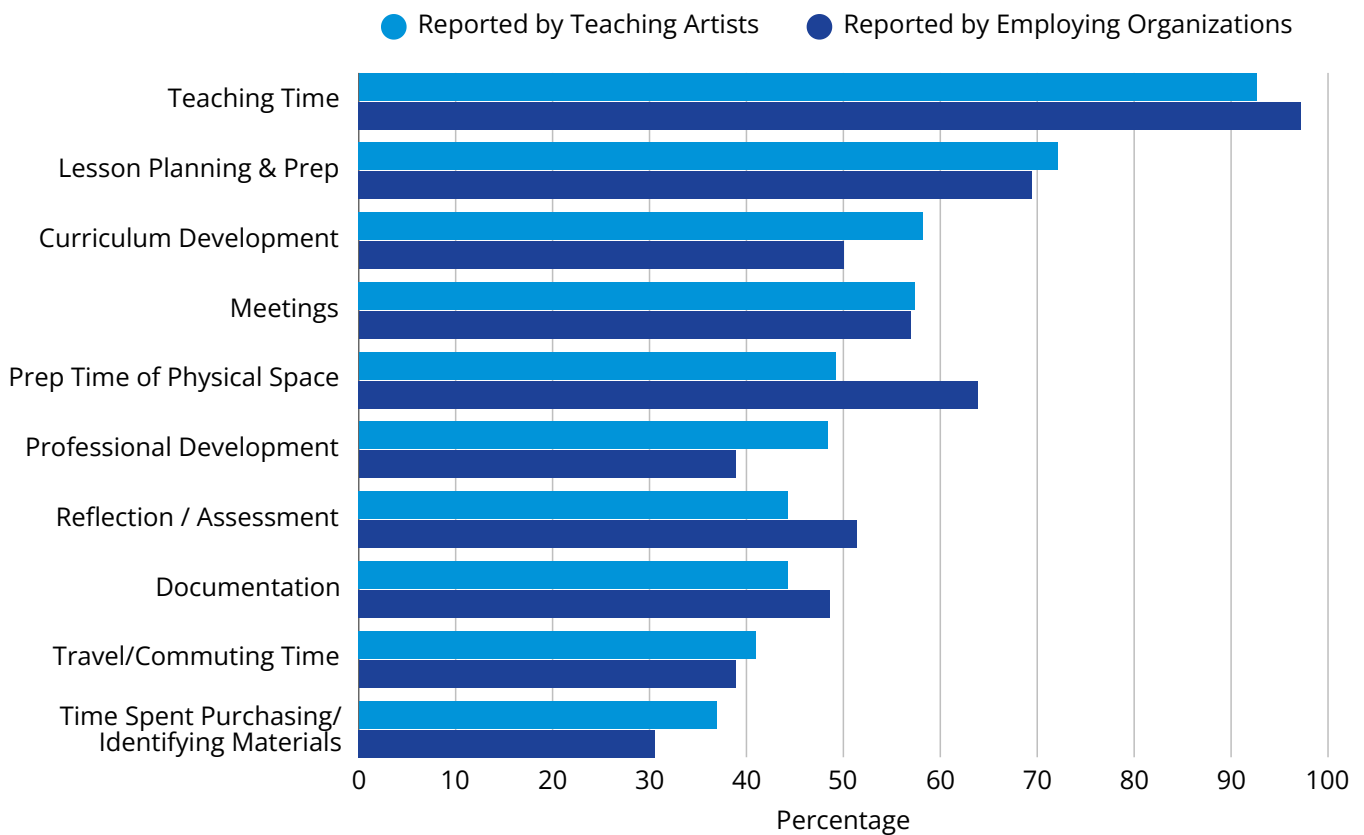
⁸Responses to Per Day and Per Half Day rates were inconsistent across the survey. Some TAs reported their Per Day rate as being based on 1 hour of work or their Per Half Day rate as being based on 8 hours of work. As a result of this variation and lack of clarity in responses, the Per Day and Per Half Day results for individual TAs were combined — similar to the 2018 Paying for Professionalism Report (de Barros et. al., 2018).

⁹Payment per student in addition to base rate.

¹⁰No organizations reported paying TAs per student. Additionally, the hourly equivalent from employing organizations is likely high and biased due to a small sample size in each category (e.g., per workshop) and the probability that only higher paying organizations responded to the survey.

What's Included in Base Pay?

Tasks Compensated Within Base Pay¹¹



Rate Variation by Delivery Method

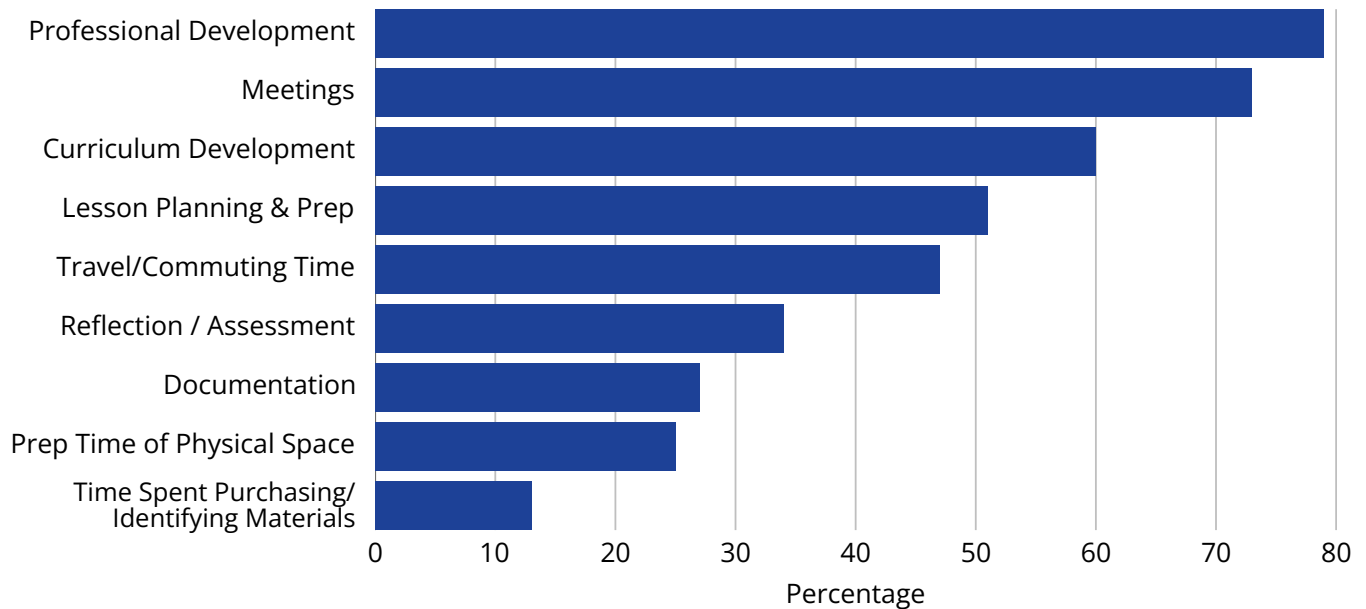
47% of employing organizations reported paying the same rate for virtual and in-person classes. 6% reported paying a higher in-person rate, and 2% reported paying a higher rate for asynchronous classes. 30% of self-employed TAs charge the same rate for in-person and virtual classes, whereas 36% charge more for in-person classes.

Additional Compensation

Beyond their base pay rates for TAs, some organizations reported offering additional compensation for tasks outside the initial scope of work. Although what's included in base pay rate varies by organization, the chart below shows the percentage of employing organizations that report offering additional compensation for the following tasks outside of their base pay rate. Note that some organizations may not report additional compensation for these items because they are already included in their base pay rates.

¹¹See the appendix on page 47 of this report for explanation of the categories used in this chart.

Tasks Compensated in Addition to Base Pay Reported by Employing Organizations



The following table demonstrates the reported rates paid by organizations that compensate TAs separately/additionally for any of the categories of work below. While some organizations assign an hourly rate for these tasks, others offer a flat fee to TAs regardless of time spent on the task. A flat fee was most commonly given per engagement or per gig across all categories.

Additional Compensation Rates Reported by Employing Organizations

Tasks Being Compensated:	Hourly Range	Hourly Median	Flat Fee Range	Flat Fee Median
Attending Professional Development	\$15 - \$85	\$30	\$30 - \$850	\$100
Meetings	\$15 - \$85	\$30	\$17 - \$130	\$70
Curriculum Development	\$16 - \$100	\$30	\$30 - \$500	\$138
Documentation	\$16 - \$85	\$30	\$20 - \$170	\$33
Lesson Planning & Prep	\$16 - \$86	\$30	\$20 - \$300	\$100
Travel / Commuting Time	\$6 - \$85	\$40	\$6 - \$350	\$25
Reflection / Assessment	\$15 - \$120	\$60	\$25 - \$170	\$100
Prep Time of Physical Space	\$15 - \$100	\$30	\$25 - \$170	\$75
Time Spent Purchasing/Identifying Materials	\$16 - \$100	\$70	\$100 - \$170	\$135

Of the selections listed in the chart on the prior page, both individual TAs and employing organizations most often reported additional compensation for meetings, attending professional development, curriculum development, and lesson planning. Not included in the chart but of note, 94% of employing organizations reported purchasing materials for their TAs, and 71% reimbursed TAs for materials purchased.

Organizations reported additionally compensating for travel/commuting based on travel duration (most commonly starting at 75 - 90 minutes), grant-specific compensation, as well as trips to hard-to-reach areas (e.g. Staten Island).

When self-employed TAs charge in addition to their base pay rate, the top three items they reported charging for were time spent attending professional development sessions, curriculum development, and prep time of physical space and materials. In the Roundtable's 2018 Paying for Professionalism report (de Barros et. al., 2018), the top categories that were additionally compensated for were curriculum development and travel.

Wage Transparency

The Roundtable regularly receives inquiries regarding TA compensation rates from organizations seeking benchmarks for developing their pay structures and substantiating compensation levels in grant proposals and government contract negotiations. By sharing data gathered through this survey, we aim to enhance and normalize wage transparency within the field, thereby facilitating the establishment of fair compensation benchmarks and greater standardization. Wage transparency (the practice of openly sharing compensation details) is known to reduce wage gaps and promote fairness and equity in pay at an organization. Only 43% of employing organizations indicated that they have a stated commitment to wage transparency, whether that is an internal commitment for staff/employees only, or a publicly shared external commitment.

What Benefits Are Offered to Teaching Artists?

10% of TAs reported not having any health insurance, compared to 18% in the PNYSA sample (Hand & Calderon, 2024) and 5.8% of the population of NYC (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-a). However, only 6% of TA survey respondents with health insurance received it through an employer. The most common health insurance sources reported were the Affordable Care Act/Healthcare Marketplace/Exchange (37%), Medicare/Medicaid/Veterans Affairs (33%), and partner/spouse/significant other (20%).

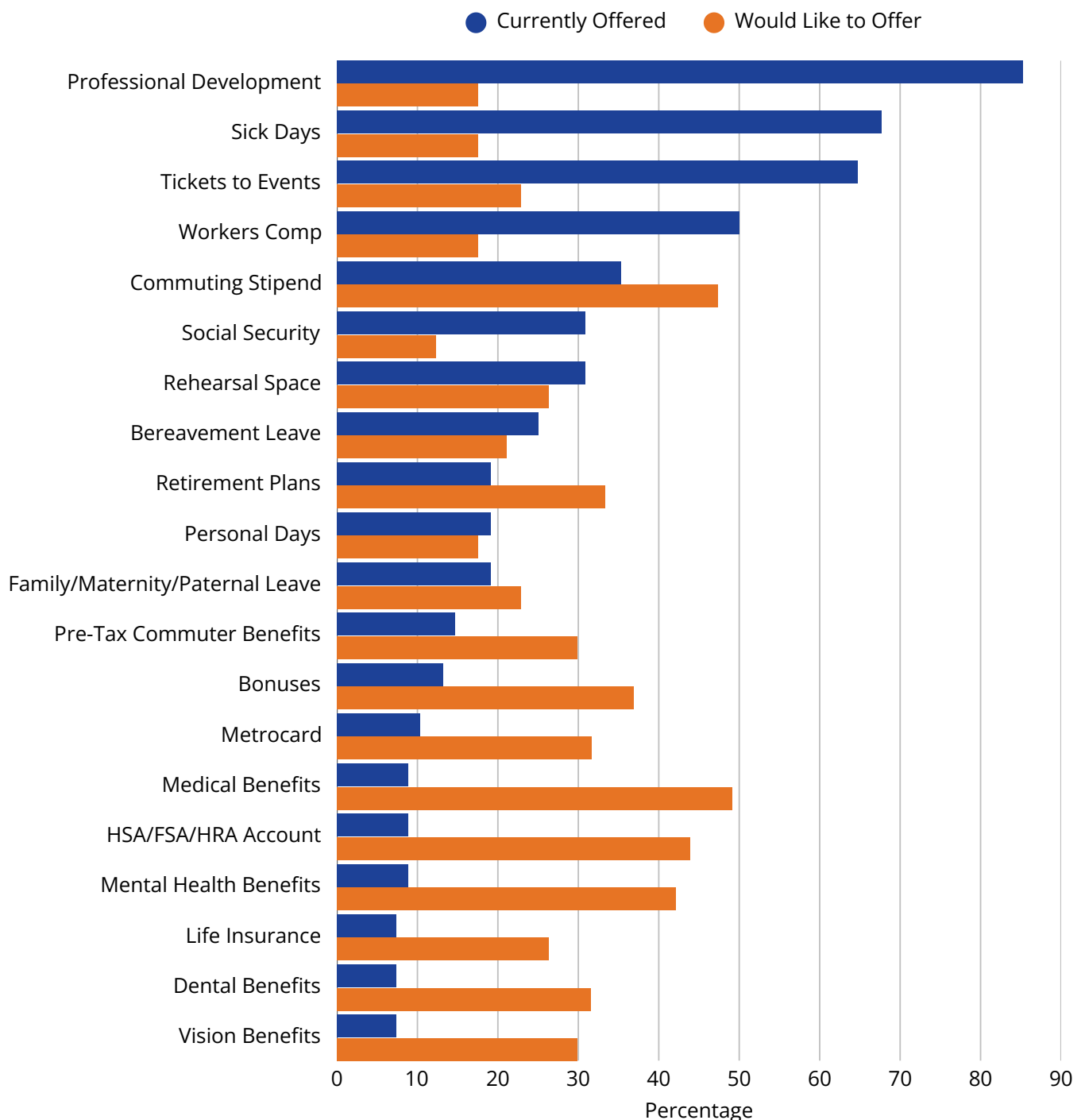
Recognizing the inherent discrepancies between our current healthcare system and prevalent TA employment models,

Although 88% of TAs reported having health insurance, only 6% receive their health insurance through an employer.

understanding the nuanced challenges TAs face in accessing benefits was a primary impetus for this research. Concurrently, the Roundtable has observed an increasing number of organizations seeking recommendations to support healthcare access for this part of the creative workforce. 28 organizations in the current sample who do not currently offer medical benefits reported the desire to do so.

“Health insurance for TAs is the biggest concern I have. This is why I maintain another [full-time] job.”
 — Part-Time Teaching Artist

Benefits Offered to Teaching Artists Reported by Employing Organizations



Reported barriers to providing benefits included limited and inconsistent funding, the part-time nature of the majority of their TA positions, insurance carrier restrictions, and the high organizational cost to providing benefits — especially for small organizations with limited administrative capacity. As U.S. insurance companies often require a minimum number of weekly work hours for employees to qualify for medical coverage, this poses a challenge for organizations employing TAs in typically part-time, seasonal positions. This structural barrier in the healthcare system makes it difficult for organizations to offer comprehensive benefits to TAs unless they commit to full-time models. Factors that would enable organizations to provide better benefits include increased, consistent, and sustainable funding, especially funding specifically allocated for TA compensation and benefits, portable benefits, collective models, and/or unionization.

Career Sustainability

Tenure & Career Longevity

In addition to being a highly educated workforce, TAs have significant teaching experience and tenure in the field. The sampled TAs have been teaching anywhere from less than two years to over 20 years, with a median of 11-15 years of teaching experience. 44% of TAs reported spending at least 8 years at a single organization, and 12% have spent 18+ years at a single organization.

21% of TAs reported they have been teaching for more than 20 years!

Despite some of the barriers to TA sustainability outlined in this report, 58% of TAs envision themselves continuing to work as a TA throughout their careers, compared to 23% of 2018 Paying for Professionalism survey respondents (de Barros et. al., 2018). The increase in percentage indicates a growing sustained commitment to the field of Teaching Artistry by its workforce. Conversely, 41% reported being either unsure or did not envision themselves continuing to work as a TA. This may be linked but not limited to: access to fair pay, access to benefits, consistency of work, unpredictable streams of income, physical toll of labor disproportionately affecting TAs that are older and/or have a disability, and opportunities for growth or advancement within the field.

"I'd like to work just as a Teaching Artist. The one thing that is preventing me from going there entirely, is the fact I do not get health insurance. I'd prefer to be a salaried employee as a teaching artist for the organization, with a contract that states the amount of residencies/days I will do, and receive benefits and health insurance. I will need to leave my profession of 22 years in order to have children so I can get proper insurance."

— 35-to-44-year-old Teaching Artist

Employment & Job Security

Job security, equitable pay, and career sustainability are major concerns for the longevity of the TA field. While 81% of TAs reported having confirmed TA work within the next three months from the date of their response, the sampled TAs commonly cited barriers such as financial instability due to low compensation, inconsistent work, a lack of job security, and burnout due to the demanding nature of the work as obstacles to continuing a career as a TA.

These factors, along with hurdles like difficulty obtaining benefits, limited career growth opportunities, and inconsistent work often split over multiple organizations (which are often themselves under-resourced), are harsh realities TAs face. As such, many TAs end up transitioning into therapeutic and wellness professions, formal education roles (i.e. in-school certified teacher, higher education, etc.), and/or arts administration. TAs reported that

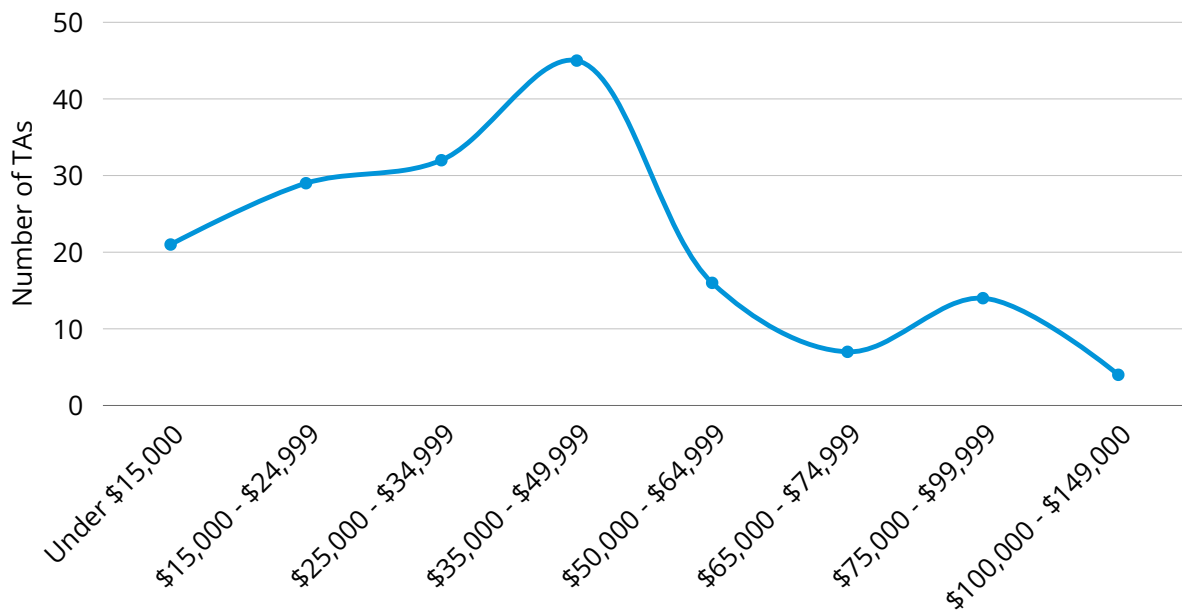
receiving higher compensation to match the increased cost of living and better access to benefits would greatly improve their career sustainability. Without decisive action to address the challenges posed, these systemic issues will continue to create substantial barriers to long-term career sustainability.

“Working [as] a Teaching Artist is increasingly unsustainable for me. [The field needs] to figure out a structure that makes it sustainable... to stay in the field, I need health insurance, job security, and retirement benefits. Without those, I am looking to leave the field.”

— Brooklyn-based Teaching Artist

Finances

Annual Individual Gross Income Reported by Teaching Artists

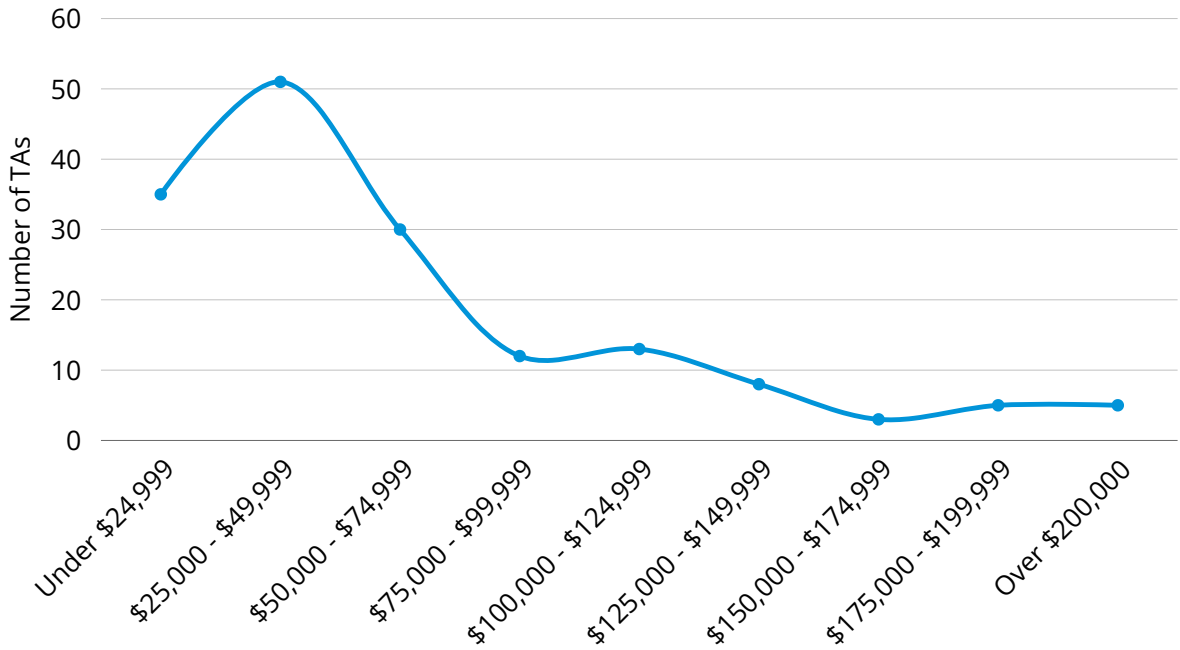


The data strongly suggests that aligning financial compensation with the increased cost of living is critical in creating a sustainable career in Teaching Artistry. According to our most recent survey, TAs reported 2023 individual gross income ranging from under \$15,000 - \$150,000, with a median of \$35,000 - \$50,000. This remains alarmingly consistent with findings from the 2018 Paying for Professionalism report (de Barros et. al.,2018), where 75% of surveyed TAs reported a total annual income of \$45,000 or less (inclusive of all sources), despite a 28% increase in the cost of living over the past seven years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Respondents reported that nearly half (47%) of their individual gross income comes from TA work.

The household income reported by TAs in the Roundtable's survey ranged from under \$25,000 to \$200,000+, with a median of \$25,000 to \$49,000¹². While the median household income in NYC in 2023 was \$76,577 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-a), 68% of TAs reported having a household income under \$75,000 (consistent with PNYSA findings in Hand & Calderon, 2024). This troubling finding underscores concerns about TA's ability to work and live in NYC.

¹²10 participants preferred not to provide household income, which is what caused the median household income range to start below the individual income range.

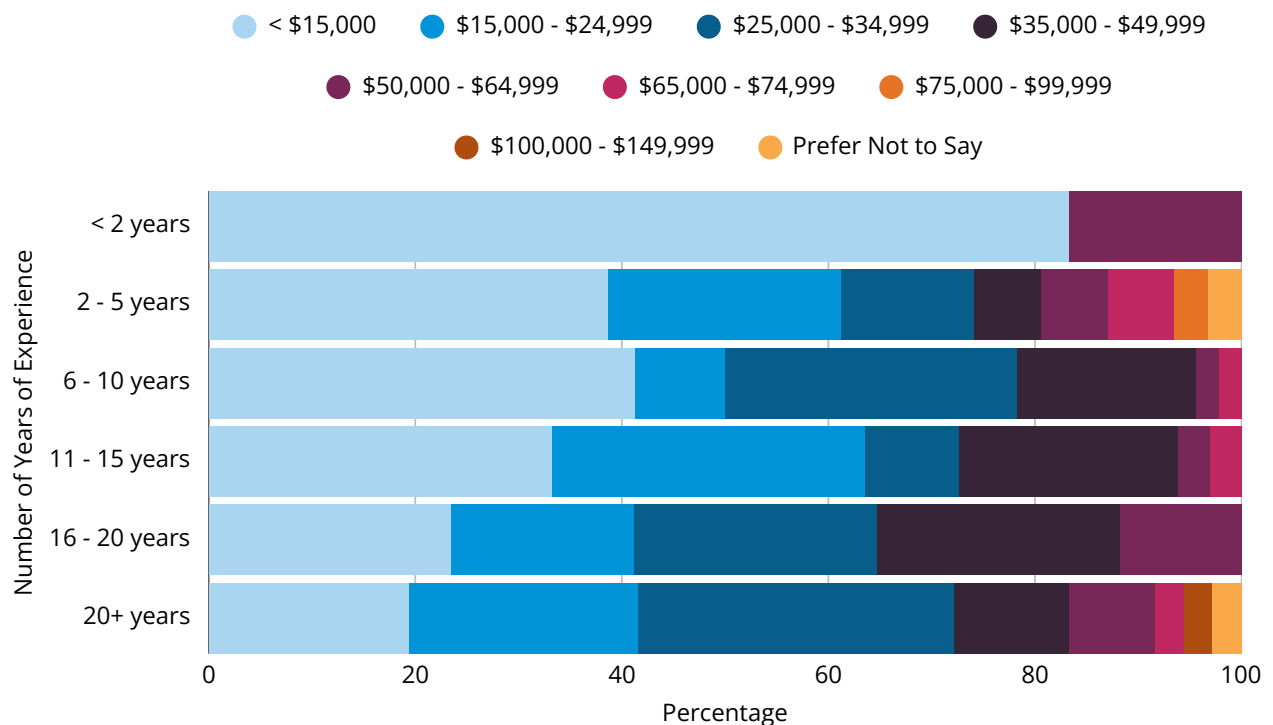
Annual Household Income Reported by Teaching Artists



The Roundtable sample showed that the two most common additional sources of income outside of Teaching Artistry were administrative work (27%) and artistic practice beyond Teaching Artistry (65%), which paralleled the 2018 Paying for Professionalism report (de Barros et. al. 2018).

21% of TAs reported their household income as less than \$25K.

Annual Income from Teaching Artist Work by Years of Experience



The number of years spent as a Teaching Artist and the income earned from TA work vary significantly. Overall, a general trend indicates that more experience in the field correlates with higher income from TA work. However, it is inconclusive if this is the direct result of increased work hours, increased pay rates, or a greater volume of work engagements.

Most commonly, Teaching Artists believed that their TA work only somewhat helped to sustain their artistic practice. However, given that many TAs indicated their artistic practice serves as a main source of supplemental income, we posit that the interwoven nature of their ‘Artist’ and ‘Teaching Artist’ identities is fundamental to their ability to sustain a livelihood in New York City. This highlights a key theme and takeaway regarding the different ways professionals in the cultural sector perceive the relationship between their artistic practice and Teaching Artistry, often embracing a multi-hyphenate identity to navigate the economic realities of living in NYC.

Contracts & Requirements

The contracting practices for TAs across the field also varied. While 59% percent of TAs reported having a contract at all of their employing organizations, 11% of TAs reported not having a contract¹³ at any of their employing organizations, and 14% of employing organizations reported not using a contract with their TAs. Although New York is an at-will state, this reveals a potential area for improvement — ensuring that all professional engagements are defined with the clarity and mutual understanding a contract provides.

Maintaining an active artistic practice appears to be a relevant consideration for some TA employers. Survey findings indicate that 17% of employing organizations require their TAs be actively working artists, with an additional 19% having a partial requirement. Notably, 42% of TAs reported that at least some of their employing organizations have this expectation.

Raises & Pay Transparency

Pay raise practices also contribute to the overall picture of TA compensation in NYC. 78% of TAs reported receiving raises during their TA careers. Among these, 50% indicated that raises were due to an increase in all TA rates at their organization, while 38% received merit or tenure-based raises, and 11% cited other factors like self-advocacy and inflation. Looking ahead, 40% of sampled TAs expect that over the next two years their pay rates will increase.

In contrast, a notable 22% of TAs reported not receiving a raise during their TA career, compared to 25% in the 2018 Paying for Professionalism report (de Barros et. al., 2018). The persistent percentage of TAs not receiving raises highlights ongoing disparities across the workforce. Compounding this, 20% of TAs reported actually receiving pay cuts from organizations.

“Doing the survey made me realize that in the nearly 20 years that I’ve worked as a Teaching Artist in NYC, I have never been given a raise. I never really thought about it before, but now I’m stunned - and frankly a bit appalled that I have never brought this up before with the organizations I’ve worked for.”

— Visual Arts Teaching Artist

¹³For the purposes of this report, the term ‘contract’ is used broadly to encompass not only formal contracts, but letters of agreement, memorandum of understanding, and hire letters.

According to employing organizations, 77% reported offering raises to their TAs. Of those organizations, 43% provide merit or tenure-based raises, 21% raise all TA pay rates at the same time, and 13% offer raises due to other reasons including availability of funds, credential/degree attainment, and cost of living adjustments. Employing organizations' raises are most commonly offered every other year.

The data on pay raise practices highlights inconsistencies in compensation growth within the field. On one hand, it reveals a positive trend in that a significant majority of TAs have experienced pay increases. On the other hand, the variation in the reasons for these raises, in addition to the reported prevalence of pay cuts from respondents, highlight areas of concern regarding the financial growth potential for NYC TAs.

Career Mobility

Trends in career mobility related to the field of Teaching Artistry speak to the viability of long-term sustainability, the value placed on TAs within institutions, and the extent to which compensation structures support professional growth and retention.

64% of employing organizations reported having upward mobility opportunities for TAs, which included administrative/management positions, PD facilitation, and curriculum/content development. However, only 25% of individual TAs saw room for promotion or upward mobility within the TA career path. To the TAs that did see room for upward mobility, those opportunities included administrative/management positions and curriculum/content development, but many also reported wanting more consistent teaching opportunities, increased pay, and/or salaried positions.

In contrast, there are TAs who do not consider moving to an administrative role as an opportunity for advancement or promotion within the TA field, but rather a lateral move away from Teaching Artistry, often spurred by the need for more consistent pay. Instead, they may see advancement within the TA field more so as access to opportunities that honor and facilitate a deepening of artistic, community, or pedagogical practice and acknowledge the value of experience. This could include advancement within an organization by becoming a 'Lead Teaching Artist,' 'Master Teaching Artist,' or 'Senior Teaching Artist,' (titles provided by employing organizations and TAs).

"As I invest my time and energy into my teaching artist career, I envision having the security of knowing that my merit and achievements within the organization would allow me to build a sustainable, long-term part-time career. It's important to me to feel confident that I won't face periods of unemployment due to a lack of opportunities. Additionally, I would love the chance to develop my own program in experimental theater teaching, focusing on fostering social change and justice through creative design."

— Brooklyn-based Teaching Artist

Factors Affecting Views on Employing Organizations

The analysis uncovered several factors which influence how a TA may view their employing organizations. These factors included compensation, PD opportunities, perceived appreciation/respect for employed TAs, communication, benefits, and scheduling.

These factors occurred on a spectrum; that is to say that organizations with more comprehensive compensation packages and better benefits who communicated well and respected their TAs were viewed in a better light than the inverse. Organizations who are able to respond to these factors favorably are helping to increase sustainability and career longevity while decreasing burnout for their TAs.

“My organization's rates are among the highest in the city for my field, which communicates to me that they value the work I do and are trying to stay in line with the cost of living in NYC.”

— Manhattan-based Teaching Artist

Summary of Results

Based on the survey results, we can identify some field-wide practices that are supporting Teaching Artists in New York City and some areas for improvement.

What is Supporting Teaching Artists in NYC?

Based on the survey results and existing research, NYC demonstrates the following positive aspects and practices in its engagement with TAs:

- **Growing Recognition and Compensation for Non-Instructional Time:** Some organizations are acknowledging and compensating TAs for crucial work beyond direct instruction, such as administrative tasks, lesson planning, and curriculum development.
- **Increased Part-Time W2 Employment:** We suspect a positive trend in the percentage of TAs employed as part-time W2 employees compared to previous surveys. This opens the possibility for more TAs to have certain employee benefits based on their W-2 status.
- **Widespread Use of Contracts:** A significant majority of organizations (86%) utilize contracts for their TAs. This provides a clear framework for Teaching Artist work expectations, engagements, and compensation.
- **Provision of Professional Development:** Some employers are providing access to PD opportunities. This is recognized by TAs as a valuable benefit.
- **Increasing Wage Transparency:** A notable percentage of organizations (43%) have a stated commitment to wage transparency, which is appreciated by TAs and contributes to professionalization.
- **Valuing and Respecting Teaching Artists:** Many TAs reported feeling valued and respected by their employing organizations, indicating positive workplace relationships and practices.

“What I really appreciate about the organization I work with is their transparency regarding compensation. They make everything crystal clear...”

— Brooklyn-based Teaching Artist

What Improvements are Needed for Teaching Artists in NYC?

While TAs are clearly an essential and actively engaged part of the arts and education sectors, the report findings underscore significant challenges related to inconsistent employment, inadequate compensation, and limited access to benefits — ultimately impacting the sustainability of the profession overall.

- **Unpredictable Wages and Employment:** The prevalence of part-time and independent contractor employment models highlights the project-based and often inconsistent nature of the work. While offering flexibility for both artists and organizations, this model

frequently translates to financial precarity for TAs, who juggle multiple part-time roles to piece together a living. The wide range of reported pay rates further emphasizes the lack of standardization within the field, making it difficult for both TAs and organizations to establish and expect fair compensation.

- **Inconsistent Pay Raises:** Pay raises remain inconsistent, with a significant portion of Teaching Artists (22%) and employing organizations (23%) reporting not receiving or offering a raise, respectively. For those receiving a raise, it's unclear if the increase in pay is substantial enough to offset the rising cost of living. This challenge is further compounded by the Multi-Task Award Contract (MTAC) process with NYC Public Schools. These agreements lock organizations into set pay rates, only allowing increases every few years that are strictly in line with the Federal Bureau of Labor statistics. This forces organizations striving to increase Teaching Artist pay to potentially take a loss or further subsidize programs beyond their existing contributions.
- **Unrecognized/Uncompensated Labor:** Despite most organizations compensating for work outside of teaching hours, a crucial point of discussion is the often uncompensated or under-compensated time spent by TAs on essential tasks beyond direct instruction, such as planning, preparation, curriculum development, travel, and administrative duties. This 'hidden labor' significantly erodes the effective hourly rate and contributes to the feeling of being undervalued and financially strained. Additionally, TAs may shoulder significant physical labor when transporting materials essential to their work — creating challenges especially for those who are disabled, aging, or simply unable to carry everything needed across long commutes.
- **Limited Access to Benefits:** The disparities in access to essential benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans are also significant challenges. With only 6% of TAs receiving health insurance through their employer, the reliance on the Health Insurance Marketplace, federal/state health insurance programs, spouses, or other non-employer-sponsored options for the majority of TAs underscores both systemic issues and the lack of comprehensive support. Of the employing organizations who did not currently offer these benefits, 28 organizations indicated wanting to offer medical benefits and 19 indicated wanting to offer retirement. However, limited/inconsistent funding, imposed thresholds of hours worked, and high organizational costs of administering benefits remain barriers.

"I hope that more doors can open up so [Teaching Artists] can make enough money to live in NYC and save for retirement."

— 55-to-64-year-old Teaching Artist

Discussion & Next Steps for the Field

Funding

One recurring theme, inconsistent funding, is the primary barrier to improved compensation and benefits for TAs. Inconsistent funding is a city-wide issue that requires broader attention and advocacy. The field needs swift action from government, philanthropic, and arts leaders. Instead, at the time of writing, the retreat from federal cultural funding, threatened changes to government health insurance policies, rigid school procurement policies that prevent substantial pay rate increases, and persistent delays in local government payment and contracting stand to further impact the field. We recommend advocacy and increased, sustained funding for the arts so that employing organizations can provide stability, consistent wages, and benefits to TAs.

Research

Ultimately, our field must acknowledge the fundamental need to reconcile the immense value that TAs bring to NYC's cultural and educational ecosystem (Rabkin et. al., 2011) with the often-overlooked and insufficiently compensated nature of their work. Addressing this imbalance is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the profession and the continued value and enrichment TAs bring to communities city-wide. Research initiatives, like these surveys and the resulting report, aim to shed light on these issues, raise visibility of this occupation, and advocate for systemic change alongside more equitable practices in the field.

Career Development

U.S. workers often look for career trajectories which include wage increases over time and/or benefits that reward long tenures. The findings here provide no conclusive evidence that TAs' wages increase over the course of their careers. In addition, they do not necessarily receive benefits, even if they have a long tenure at an organization. In place of wage increases or benefits, some TAs and employing organizations acknowledge the value of professional development. However, PD is not enough to support most workers' long-term career goals compared to wage increases or benefits. The field can benefit from thoughtful interventions that consider TAs' long-term career trajectories.

The findings of this survey provide no conclusive evidence that TAs' wages markedly increase over the course of their careers.

Next Steps

The NYC Arts in Education Roundtable's Teaching Artist Compensation & Employment Research Initiative underscores a significant commitment to understanding and improving the landscape for Teaching Artists in NYC. To help unpack the ways in which different constituencies within the broader arts education ecosystem can take action, we've created the following matrix intended to offer suggested ways to advance the field. While the chart identifies a few key stakeholder groups, among many more that exist, we encourage readers to pursue what resonates with them and continue to brainstorm ways in which you can effect change for the Teaching Artist workforce:

		Teaching Artists	Employing Organizations	Arts Service Organizations	Philanthropy	Government	General Public
Advocate for Increased & Dedicated Funding	Lobby city, state, and federal government agencies to maintain and increase funding allocations for arts workers and arts education programs.	●	●	●		●	●
	Prioritize general operating support in grantmaking and consider fair, equitable compensation for TAs as part of the grantmaking criteria.				●	●	
	Offer public and private multi-year funding cycles to provide greater stability for arts organizations and the TAs they employ.				●	●	
	Ensure that arts service organizations are adequately resourced to drive advocacy campaigns, coalition-build, educate, organize, and provide support for TAs and the arts/education sectors.			●	●	●	
Establish Fair & Transparent Compensation Standards	Utilize this report to develop and/or promote recommended rates for TAs within employing organizations, taking into account cost of living, raises, experience level, and 'hidden labor'.	●	●	●	●	●	
	Adopt tiered pay scales and/or wage increase policies as a means to recognize and reward tenure in the field.		●	●			
	Promote pay transparency by issuing contracts and communicating compensation structures for different types of work.		●	●			

		Teaching Artists	Employing Organizations	Arts Service Organizations	Philanthropy	Government	General Public
Ensure Equitable Compensation for All Work-Related Time	Advocate for policies that underscore the need to compensate TAs for all work-related time, including planning, preparation, curriculum development, meetings, and administrative tasks, at fair and commensurate rates.	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Develop guidelines for travel compensation for TAs, such as mileage reimbursement or public transportation stipends, especially for long commutes.		●	●			
	Ensure all posted TA job descriptions include compensation information in line with New York City law.		●	●			
	Share resources and provide training to help self-employed TAs build pricing structures that reflect the true cost of their programs.	●		●	●	●	
Expand Access to Benefits	Conduct and/or participate in a feasibility study on establishing a pooled benefits program that can offer affordable health insurance, retirement plans, and other benefits to TAs, regardless of their employment status or the size of the employing organization.	●	●	●	●	●	
	Explore options for prorated benefits to part-time TAs based on their hours worked.	●	●	●	●	●	
	Start a grant program to fund a portable benefits pilot program and financial security tools, including classes and access to pro bono or low-cost financial advisors (Creatives Rebuild New York, 2024).			●	●	●	
	Establish emergency medical grants to offset healthcare costs for part-time and independent TAs lacking employer-sponsored health insurance.			●	●	●	

		Teaching Artists	Employing Organizations	Arts Service Organizations	Philanthropy	Government	General Public
Address Funding & Contracting Inequities	Advocate for reforms in contracting with city agencies to ensure timely payments, accessible contracting processes, and fair per-class rates that reflect the true cost of programming.	●	●	●		●	●
	Streamline NYCPS' MTAC process, including revising the application and negotiation procedures to reduce redundancy, establish clear timelines and expectations, enable annual wages updates, and better understand the labor costs associated with arts vendor contracting compared to other vendors.					●	
	Fund the administrative costs associated with providing fair compensation and benefits to TAs.		●	●	●	●	
Promote Professional Development & Career Advancement	Support ongoing PD opportunities for TAs to strengthen their artistry, pedagogy, administrative, and leadership skills.	●	●	●	●	●	
	Fund and/or create peer learning networks for TAs to connect, share best practices, troubleshoot challenges, and learn from each other.	●	●	●	●	●	
	Equip TAs with the skills to secure funding and broaden viability for their own projects through training on grant-writing, fundraising, marketing, portfolio development, and business operations.			●	●	●	
	Support the creation and growth of mentorship programs within the TA field that provide space to learn about advancement including and beyond administrative roles.		●	●	●	●	
	Advocate for the inclusion of Teaching Artist as a distinct occupation code within the Standardized Occupation Classification at the US Bureau of Labor to formally recognize the position in federal tax code in line with its increased professionalization and enable an accurate count of the workforce.	●	●	●		●	●

		Teaching Artists	Employing Organizations	Arts Service Organizations	Philanthropy	Government	General Public
Foster Inclusion & Collaboration	Facilitate open dialogue and collaboration within the arts education ecosystem to address the challenges and opportunities across the field.	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Acknowledge the right of TAs to organize and collectively bargain for improved wages, benefits, and working conditions.	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Share examples of exemplary TA employment and compensation policies to promote learning and adoption of best practices.	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Create and share inclusive practices for supporting TAs with the handling of instructional materials, including strategies for on-site material storage, transport, and setup.	●	●	●			

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work collaboratively to create a more equitable, sustainable, and thriving ecosystem for Teaching Artists in NYC, ensuring that these highly-skilled cultural and educational practitioners are fairly compensated and supported for their invaluable contributions.

Our Supporters

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Appendix

Artist: Someone who regularly engages in artistic or cultural practice to: express themselves with the intention of communicating richly to or sharing with others; pass on traditional knowledge and cultural practices; offer cultural resources to their communities; and/or co-organize and co-create within communities toward social impacts. Artists aspire to sustain themselves through their practice and maintain a commitment to continuing their practice. Artists can work both individually and collaboratively, and/or as educators within their field of practice.¹⁴

Additional Compensation: Term describing pay for tasks or work beyond/outside of an organization’s base pay rate for TAs. This may include (but is not limited to) additional pay for items like travel/commuting, attending meetings, attending PD, developing curriculum, completing documentation, etc.

Attending PD (Professional Development): Hours spent by TAs in training, workshops, seminars, etc. that improve or advance their professional skills and pedagogy.

Base Pay Rate: The standard rate of compensation offered to Teaching Artists at an organization, excluding any additional bonuses, earnings, or benefits they may offer or compensate for separately.

Curriculum Development: Time spent planning and designing workshop, residency, and/or class content.

Documentation: Time spent on record-keeping outside of teaching time (grading, attendance, reports, etc.).

Global Majority: People of the Global Majority refers to Black people, Indigenous people, Brown people, Latinx peoples—particularly Indigenous and Afro-Latinos —Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, the Inuit communities/Alaska Natives, Native Americans, Arabs, Western Asians/Middle Easterners with dark skin, North Africans, Southeast Asians, South Asians, East Asians, Africans with dark skin, and biracial and multiracial people who are mixed with one or more of the above, and people and groups who can’t access white privilege.¹⁵

Lesson Planning & Prep: Time spent on individual lesson planning and lesson preparation outside of what is covered in base pay rate.

Meetings: Time spent attending any meetings outside of what is covered in base pay rate (e.g. staff meetings, planning meetings, progress updates, parent meetings, etc.).

Per Residency: Pay structure wherein a Teaching Artist is paid a fee for the complete teaching engagement, including all classes/workshops over a set period of time.

¹⁴Definition used in ‘Portrait of New York State Artists’ (Hand & Calderon, 2024).

¹⁵Definition used in “Who Are People of the Global Majority and Why It Matters” (Hawthorne, n.d.).

Per Workshop: Pay structure wherein a Teaching Artist is paid a fee per individual workshop, class, or gig.

Prep Time of Space: Time spent preparing and/or cleaning up the teaching space outside of teaching hours.

Purchasing Materials: Time spent purchasing necessary materials for lesson preparation and delivery.

Reflection/Assessment: Time spent reflecting on and/or assessing student work, class or residency progress, etc.

Self-Employed: For the purposes of this survey, self-employment was defined as a TA being paid through their own business (e.g., 501(c)3, LLC, S-Corp, etc.).

Teaching Artist: Teaching Artists are practicing, professional artists who teach and integrate their art form, perspectives, histories, and skills into a wide range of learning settings. They may be known as arts educators, culture bearers, or community artists.¹⁶

Travel / Commuting: Time spent traveling to/from teaching sites.

¹⁶Definition from "What is a Teaching Artist?" (Booth, 2009).

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