



Compensation and Staffing News March 2021

Benefits Tune-up Month!



UUA Office of Church Staff Finances Mission

Guided by the values of our faith,
we equip congregations for excellence as employers
and their staff for financial competence and well-being.

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Budgeting and Staffing for Multi-Platform Ministries

Many of us are eagerly awaiting the day when we can be together in person. But it won't be like "flipping a switch." In the months ahead, some activities will be easier and safer to do in person than others and, for a variety of reasons, you'll be continuing some online options even after onsite gatherings are possible. The term "multi-platform" encompasses the variety of ways that congregations can offer programming online and in-person.



As congregations plan for the post-pandemic era, we are offering some initial guidance in a new LeaderLab article, [Budgeting and Staffing for Multi-Platform Ministries](#). We've included excerpts here and encourage you to read the full article.

Budgeting

An environment of uncertainty makes it challenging to plan. In putting together your budget, you will need to make reasonable assumptions and estimate costs. Keep in mind your mission and how to center the needs of the most vulnerable members of your community. Two strategies that congregations have used over the past year:

1. Budget for less than a year at a time. (For example, budget for July through December in the spring, January through June in the fall).
2. Create two, or even three, versions of the budget.

Before plunging into specifics, you'll want to consider key questions about mission, decision-making, orientation to technology, and more. See [Multi-Platform: Choose Your Own Adventure](#).

Your budget is likely to reflect changes or additions in some of these categories: technology, structural improvements, outdoor infrastructure, safety and hygiene, and personnel. See [Budgeting and Staffing for Multi-Platform Ministries](#).

Staffing Considerations

We all know about "other duties as assigned." Yes, we expect staff to be adaptable. And given the high value we put on growth and learning in Unitarian Universalism, it is no surprise that many congregational staff are not only willing but eager to develop their skills and contribute to their congregations in new ways

over time.

But when responsibilities are added, the staff member and their supervisor should have a conversation about workload, priorities, and training needs. Is this a temporary assignment or likely to be long-term? Does the staff member have the tools to do what is being asked of them? What other tasks can be dropped to free up time? Are the new responsibilities generally in line with their regular work scope and purpose – or is this adding a whole new dimension to their role?

Be sure you are building in the staff time needed for research and decision-making, as well as training and cross-training. As we adjust to another new normal, everything will feel harder and take longer than usual, so account for some reduced bandwidth and the need for staff to take time off. For staff who are truly working "above their pay grade" on a sustained basis, revisit their job descriptions and pay rates.

These are complicated times. [Valuing Your Staff During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) was written last spring to promote care for staff – as important now as ever.

You'll find more on these topics in [Budgeting and Staffing for Multi-Platform Ministries](#).

Bringing Their Own Devices?



With many staff working from home over the past year, we've gotten more than a few questions about "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) policies and issues.

Is it clear to employees what equipment you, as the employer, are providing for staff – especially those who are working primarily from home? If you supplied a phone, computer, and printer to an office staff member who is now working from home, do you make those same items available or is the staff member expected to use their own? If a staff member needs to use any of their own equipment to do their work, check your assumptions. Not everyone has a printer or ultra-fast internet at home, for instance.

Smaller organizations, like congregations, might want to think more about reimbursement policies than about robust BYOD policies. For instance, you can create a policy that provides a monthly reimbursement for staff to help cover their costs of internet and cell phone service, along with an annual reimbursement allowance for equipment replacement. Such reimbursements avoid taxation and help your congregation manage costs. Pay attention to equity. Policies should work well for those likely to be most in need of them. Do you reimburse based on a percent of actual costs or a set amount per employee? Is the reimbursement different for part-time versus full-time staff? These are policy elements to consider.

Please remember that any items paid for through an employee's [professional expense line](#) are owned by the congregation. (The staff member can purchase the item at its residual value upon departure, if agreeable to the congregation.)

If you are creating a BYOD policy, here are some issues to consider:

- Who is responsible for fixing technical problems?
- Who buys the software? What happens to the software when the employee leaves? (Does the license expire?)
- How are file backups and security handled?
- How are important work-related documents and emails saved on employees' devices so that they can be accessed by others if and when necessary?
- If an employee's device is lost or stolen, who pays? (Typically it would be covered through the employee's own insurance.)

You will find additional guidance in [BYOD Policies: What Employers Need to Know](#), an article from the Society for Human Resource Management.

Benefits Tune-up Month In Review

About 120 professional and lay leaders participated in our first-ever Benefits Tune-up Workshops last month! If you weren't able to join us, look for the Benefits Tune-up Help Session (48-minute video) on our [Benefits Tune-up Workbook](#) page.

The Church Staff Finances team welcomes your follow-up questions and concerns.



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