

## **STUDY: RECESSION TAKES TOLL ON MUSEUM WORKERS**

Listening Post Project Survey Reveals Economy's Impact on Nonprofit Sector

WASHINGTON, DC (July 15, 2010) —Nearly 40 percent of nonprofit organizations — and 53 percent of museums — lack adequate staffing to deliver programs and services. According to a national survey released yesterday by the Nonprofit Listening Post Project at Johns Hopkins University, “Recession Pressures on Nonprofit Jobs,” arts and culture organizations have been particularly hard hit by the nation’s economic downturn. The American Association of Museums is a partner in the Listening Post Project. .

The survey results reflect findings from previous studies by both the Center for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins and AAM. In a previous Listening Post survey, 34 percent of nonprofit organizations reported eliminating staff positions and 41 percent postponed filling new positions during the six months between September 2008 and March 2009. In a January 2010 study from AAM entitled *Service Despite Stress*, more than two-thirds (67.1%) of museums reported at least moderate financial stress in 2009. For 8.4% of museums the stress level was *severe* (defined as “bad, but I have seen worse in the previous 5 years”) and for 17.8% the financial stress was *very severe* (defined as “the very worst I have seen in at least 5 years”). At the same time, attendance increased at a majority of museums in 2009.

“This important study from the Johns Hopkins Listening Post Project confirms what we have heard anecdotally, from all types of museums and in every region of the country,” said AAM president Ford W. Bell. “Namely, that America’s museums are being asked to provide more services to a public hungry

for them, including voids created by cuts in local governments' budgets, all without the adequate resources to do so.”

Workforce reductions are only part of the story. Nonprofits have been forced to take additional actions that impact their own workers and reduce their ability to deliver critical programs and services. Among responding organizations, over the recent six-month period covered by the new survey:

- 49 percent “refined job descriptions,” often a euphemism for increasing employee workloads and assigning the responsibilities of laid-off staff to remaining employees.
- 39 percent implemented a salary freeze.
- 36 percent postponed filling new positions.
- Other nonprofits in the survey increased staff hours (23 percent), cut or reduced benefits (23 percent), increased non-program work for program staff (12 percent), and reduced wages (12 percent).

Changes in employment varied significantly by field. Organizations in two of the six fields covered in the survey (elderly services and community and economic development) reported overall employment growth, the former by 0.6 percent and the latter by 5 percent. This was likely a result of continued economic recovery program spending. In contrast, nonprofit theaters reported job reductions of 6 percent. The remaining three fields that participate in the Listening Post Project also recorded reductions — museums (-1 percent), orchestras (-3 percent), and children and family service organizations (-0.7 percent).

“The pressures on nonprofits have accelerated and are clearly taking their toll,” noted Lester Salamon, report author and director of the Center for Civil Society Studies. “Organizations have shown enormous resilience and commitment to their critical missions, but this has come at a price.”

The full report “Recession Pressures on Nonprofit Jobs” is available online at <http://ccss.jhu.edu>.

### **About the Listening Post project:**

The Listening Post Project is a collaborative undertaking of the Center for Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies, the Alliance for Children and Families, the Alliance for Nonprofit Management, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the American Association of Museums, Community Action Partnership, the League of American Orchestras, Lutheran Services in America, Michigan Nonprofit Association, the National Council of Nonprofits, and United Neighborhood Centers of America. Its goal is to monitor the health of the nation's nonprofit organizations and assess how nonprofits are responding to important economic and policy changes. Support for the Listening Post Project has been provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Surdna Foundation.

### **About AAM**

The American Association of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. With more than 17,000 individual, 3,000 institutional and 300 corporate members, AAM is dedicated to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past, present and future. For more information, visit [www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org).

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