INDIANA MAIN STREET SALARY SURVEY - 2024

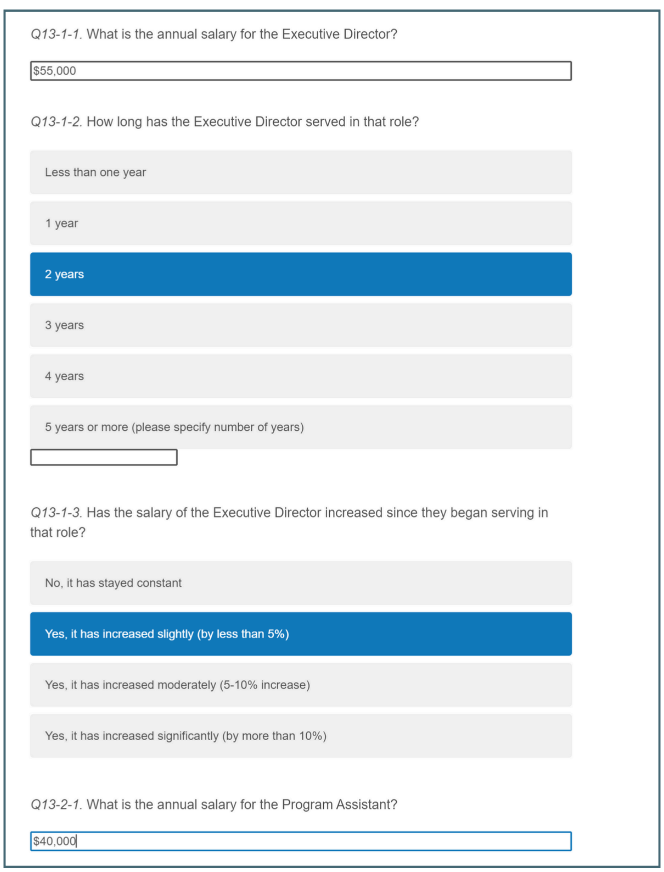
Michael Powe, Ph,D., Senior Director of Research,
Main Street America

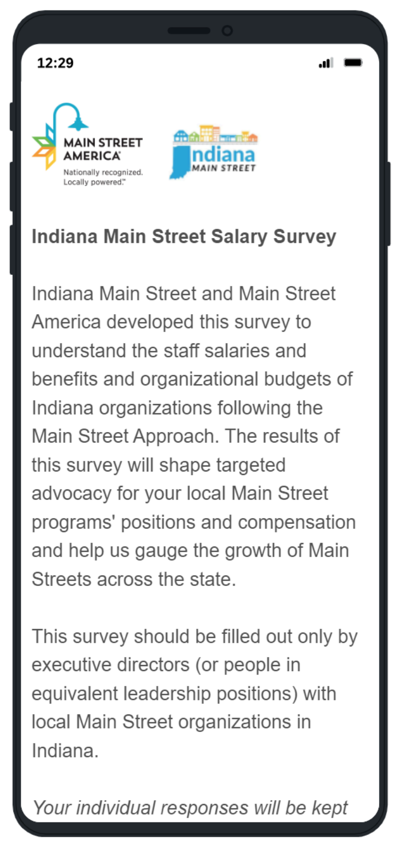
ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Main Street America developed a draft survey using a past Indiana Main Street salary survey as a foundation and made revisions based on direction from Indiana Main Street leadership.

The survey was built using the Qualtrics survey platform and distributed to all Indiana Main Street programs via email. Respondents were presented a different number of questions, depending on whether and how many paid staff they had at their organization. Given this, the length of the survey ranged between 18 questions and 36 questions.

To enrich analysis of the survey data, we pulled comparison data from four sources: the annual "Trends Survey" of program directors throughout Main Street America's national network, past Indiana Main Street salary survey results, past Pennsylvania Main Street salary study results, and IRS 990 form data for economic development organizations (EDOs) in Indiana. We were able to locate 990 forms with salary information for 71 of the 92 city and county EDOs (77%) in the state of Indiana.





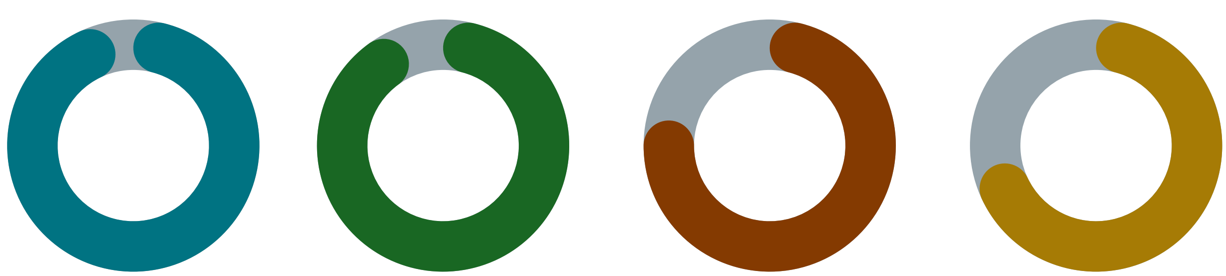
ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

We heard from 91 respondents, including 77 Main Street leaders. The survey respondents are generally representative of Main Street leaders nationwide and of Main Street programs in Indiana. The vast majority of respondents identified as non-Hispanic (98%), White (94%) women (79%). 72% had received a bachelor's or advanced degree.

The local leaders responding to the survey came from all regions in Indiana. The Southeast and Northwest regions of the state were slightly underrepresented compared to the Indiana network as a whole, and the East Central and Southwest regions were somewhat overrepresented.

Local Indiana Main Street programs are generally in small towns in the state. Nearly a quarter (23%) of the cities and towns with responding Main Street leaders have fewer than 2,500 residents, and half of all cities and towns with respondents had populations of 6,800 or less. In comparison, across all places in the Indiana Main Street network, 27% of Indiana communities have fewer than 2,500 residents. The median population of Indiana Main Street communities is 6,208.

Accredited Main Street programs are overrepresented in the survey data when compared with the Indiana network. 19% of survey respondents represented nationally accredited Main Street programs (15% of the Indiana network) and 22% represented Indiana accredited programs (15% of the Indiana network). Downtown Affiliate (ODAN) programs were underrepresented in the survey data: those programs were 55% of respondents even though they are 66% of the programs in Indiana's network.



98%
Identify as Non-Hispanic

94%
Identify as White

79%
Identify as women

72%
Earned a bachelor's or advanced degree

KEY FINDING #1 - INDIANA MAIN STREET LEADERS ARE UNDERPAID

By every metric, leaders of local Indiana Main Street programs are paid less than leaders of Indiana city and county economic development organizations (EDOs). In fact, the median salary for Indiana Main Street leaders was less than half the median for county EDO leaders.

Full-time leaders of local Indiana Main Street programs earned an average annual salary of $50,987 and a median annual salary of $50,748. One full-time executive director of an Indiana Main Street earned a salary of $70,000, and that individual was our highest paid respondent.

Meanwhile, full-time leaders of Indiana EDOs earn an average annual salary of $111,955 and a median of $107,213. The lowest paid EDO leader earned 36% more than the lowest paid Main Street leader, and the highest paid EDO leader earned nearly four times more than the highest paid Main Street leader.

Local Indiana Main Street leaders are also underpaid compared to other types of Indiana nonprofit organizations. According to nonprofit salary data gathered for the 2022 Indiana Main Street salary study, the average salary for executive directors at Indiana-based nonprofits was $74,507 in 2022 dollars, which is equivalent to $80,056 dollars in 2024--nearly 60 percent higher than the average salary as found in our 2024 survey.

Local Indiana Main Street leader salaries are competitive with salaries of Main Street leaders from some but not all other states. The 2024 Main Street America Trends Survey included information for 403 Main Street leaders across the United States, and asked executive directors to share their salaries within ranges. 56% of respondents earned less than $60,000, suggesting Indiana salaries are comparable. Meanwhile, comparison with data from a 2022 Pennsylvania Main Street Salary study indicates that the median salary in Indiana in was about 20% lower than the median salary of Main Street leaders in the Keystone State (inflation adjusted). Lastly, comparison with Indiana Main Street data from 2022 suggests that Indiana Main Street leaders have seen their median annual salary drop by 0.5% between 2022 and 2024 when adjusted for inflation.

One additional striking disparity emerges when comparing Indiana Main Street leaders with Indiana EDO leaders: the number of men versus women in leadership positions. 63% of Indiana EDO leaders present as male, compared to 20% of Indiana Main Street leaders.

INDIANA MAIN STREET LEADERS MAKE LESS THAN HALF AS MUCH AS THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNTERPARTS

$50,748
Indiana Main Street Program Leaders Median Salary

$107,213
Indiana Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) Median Salary

Indiana Main Street leader salaries are
36% LOWER
than the salaries of other Indiana nonprofit organizations

DROPPED 0.5% SINCE 2022
The median annual salary of Indiana Main Street leaders dropped 0.5% between 2022 and 2024 when adjusting for inflation.

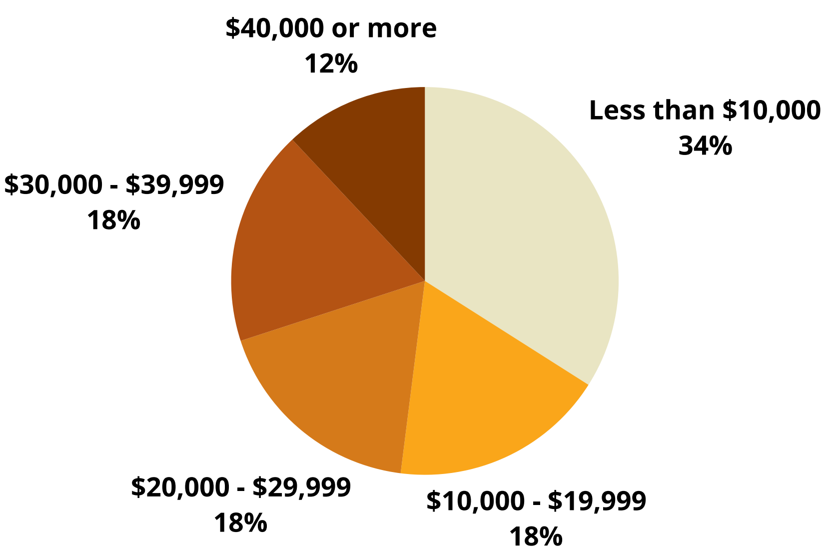
KEY FINDING #2 - INDIANA MAIN STREET ORGANIZATIONS ARE UNDERSTAFFED

83% of responding local Indiana Main Street programs reported having just one paid employee or no paid employees. More than half of responding Indiana Main Street programs reporting having no paid staff. 13% have only a single part-time employee, and 19% have a single full-time employee.

Other types of nonprofit organizations and Main Street programs in other states do not have such limited staffing. The 2022 Indiana Main Street salary study found that 96% of Indiana nonprofits have at least one full-time staff person. Pennsylvania's 2022 study of Main Street staffing and benefits found that about half of Pennsylvania programs had an executive director and at least one additional person.

38 of the 77 responding local Indiana Main Street programs (49%) have paid staff. Within those 38 programs, 68% have just one paid staff person. This is consistent with the results from the 2022 Indiana Main Street salary survey, in which 66% of Indiana Main Streets reported having a single paid staff person.

Local Indiana Main Street staffing is limited in other important ways. The results of the 2024 survey show an uptick in the percent of local Main Street leaders who also lead another organization and a drop in the percent of leaders who work for Main Street full time. In the 2022 survey, 8% of local executive directors led multiple organizations and 86% worked for their local program full time. In 2024, 20% were leading multiple organizations and 68% were working for Main Street full time.



Non-Executive Indiana Main Street Staff Salaries (FT and PT)

51% OF INDIANA MAIN STREET PROGRAMS HAVE NO PAID STAFF

ONLY 16% OF INDIANA MAIN STREETS HAVE A STAFF PERSON IN ADDITION TO THEIR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

20% OF INDIANA MAIN STREET EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS LEAD MULTIPLE ORGANIZATIONS

32% OF INDIANA MAIN STREET LEADERS ARE PART-TIME

52% OF INDIANA MAIN STREET SECONDARY STAFF WERE PAID LESS THAN $20,000 IN 2024

KEY FINDING #3 - INDIANA MAIN STREET ORGANIZATIONS LACK ADEQUATE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

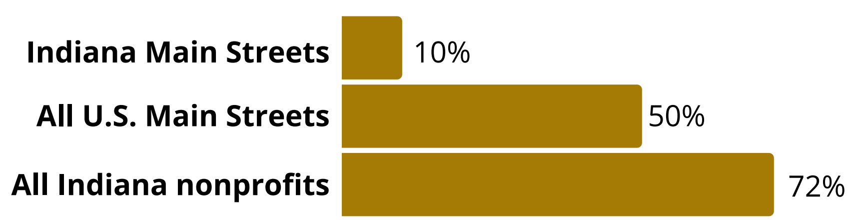
According to the 2024 survey data, only 23% of local Indiana Main Street programs provide any employment benefits to their paid employees. Only 10% of responding local Indiana Main Street leaders reported having health, dental, or vision insurance offerings, and only 10% of respondents reported having a retirement plan offering. Paid vacation days were provided to employees of 23% of responding Main Street programs.

Benefit offerings from local Indiana Main Street programs declined since 2022. The 2022 Indiana Main Street Income and Salary report indicated that half of all surveyed Indiana Main Street organizations offered paid time off or separated out vacation, sick, and personal time, and that 17% of all Indiana Main Street organizations offered a retirement plan.

Local Indiana Main Street program benefit offerings pale in comparison with other Indiana-based nonprofits organizations. The 2022 Indiana Main Street Income and Salary report indicated that 85% of all Indiana nonprofit organizations offer paid time off or separated out vacation, sick, or personal time, 66% offer retirement offerings, and 72% offer health insurance benefits.

Indiana Main Street benefit offerings are also lesser than rates of benefit offerings for Main Streets in other parts of the country. A 2022 study from the Pennsylvania Downtown Center indicated that 22% of Pennsylvania Main Street programs had a health insurance offering, and the 2024 Main Street America nationwide Trends Survey indicated that half of all Main Street programs offer a medical insurance benefit, 41% offer retirement support, and 81% offer paid vacation or paid holidays.

One positive comparison can be drawn from the 2022 Indiana Main Street Income and Salary report. In 2022, only 6% of Indiana Main Street programs offered a health insurance plan and 8.6% offered a health insurance stipend--even less than the 10% of Indiana Main Street programs offering such a benefit in 2024.



Health Insurance Benefit Offerings

10% OF INDIANA MAIN STREET PROGRAMS OFFER HEALTH, DENTAL, OR VISION INSURANCE BENEFITS

10% OF INDIANA MAIN STREET PROGRAMS OFFER A RETIREMENT PLAN BENEFIT

LESS THAN 25% OF INDIANA MAIN STREET ORGANIZATIONS OFFER PAID VACATION DAYS

HALF OF ALL MAIN STREETS NATIONALLY OFFER A MEDICAL INSURANCE BENEFIT

KEY FINDING #4 - THERE REMAIN REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIANA MAIN STREETS

Local Indiana Main Street organizational budgets vary widely, but the median annual operating budget for nationally accredited Main Street (NAMS) programs in Indiana is 36% higher than the median across the Main Street America network. Detailed data on revenue sources, however, indicates that several potential revenue sources are not giving to Indiana Main Streets.

Annual operating budgets for Indiana Main Street organizations hinge on whether the organization is accredited (whether by Indiana Main Street or Main Street America) or not. The median annual operating budget for local Indiana Main Street organizations at the downtown affiliate (ODAN) and "Aspiring IAMS" levels was $28,000, while the median annual operating budget for Indiana accredited or nationally accredited organizations was $125,000.

For the sake of good points of comparison, we focus our analysis on nationally accredited Main Street (NAMS) programs in Indiana. According to 2022 Indiana Main Street data, the median operating budget for a NAMS program was $154,825, or $166,355 in 2024 dollars. The nationwide Main Street America Trends survey indicates that the median budget of nationally designated programs is roughly $150,000. Meanwhile, our current survey data indicates the median budget for NAMS programs in Indiana is $204,737.

However strong the budget data seems for NAMS organizations in Indiana, the breakout data on revenue sources shows that no NAMS programs raised any revenue from realtors, universities, or religious organizations, and that no NAMS programs raised more than 5% of their annual budget from tourism entities, foundations and endowments, economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, or utility companies.

EIGHT SOURCES OF REVENUE CONTRIBUTED LITTLE OR NO MONEY TO NATIONALLY ACCREDITED MAIN STREET PROGRAMS IN INDIANA

$150,000
Median budget of designated Main Streets across the Main Street America network

$204,737
Median budget of nationally accredited Main Street programs in Indiana

$28,000
Median budget of downtown affiliate Main Street programs in Indiana

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1 - SALARY AND BENEFITS OFFERINGS FOR INDIANA MAIN STREET LEADERS MUST MOVE TOWARD PARITY WITH INDIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS.

Without competitive compensation or benefits, local Indiana Main Street organizations will struggle to attract and retain qualified leaders. Given the level of commitment and care it takes to be an excellent Main Street executive director, local Main Street boards should explore every option for increasing salary and benefits packages.

RECOMMENDATION #2 - LOCAL MAIN STREET PROGRAMS SHOULD PUSH ON REVENUE SOURCES THAT AREN'T CONTRIBUTING TO MAIN STREET BUDGETS.

While the data from this salary study generally indicates that local Indiana Main Street budgets have grown in recent years and may exceed the budgets of programs in other parts of the country, we also see evidence that revenue from some sources is extremely limited. Local Main Street leaders could benefit from revisiting their outreach and development efforts with financial institutions, tourism entities, foundations and endowments, universities, chambers of commerce, utility companies, and other local entities.

RECOMMENDATION #3 - FORM COALITIONS WITH OTHER MAIN STREET COORDINATING PROGRAMS AND MAIN STREET AMERICA TO COMPARE DATA, BUILD BENEFITS COLLECTIVES, AND WORK TOWARD STRONGER LOCAL CAPACITY, BETTER COMPENSATION, AND MORE ROBUST BENEFIT OFFERINGS.

This study benefited from secondary sources of salary and budget data, including Indiana Main Street's 2022 Income and Salary Report, the Pennsylvania Downtown Center's 2022 Manager's Salary Survey, Main Street America's 2024 Trends Survey, and analysis of tax forms from Indiana-based economic development organization. Additional comparative data points would likely further bolster the case for salary parity and could shine a light on opportunities for more robust healthcare, retirement, and paid time off benefits. The compensation, benefits, and tenure challenges felt in Indiana communities are felt in other parts of the nationwide Main Street network, and it seems likely that new solutions could emerge from focused collaboration on these issues.