



The Living Wage and Non-Profits



“By joining the Living Wage Employer program we aim to take part in a larger movement to demonstrate how, even in the non-profit sector, employers and employees benefit from increasing the minimum wage.”

-221A Artist Run Centre Society,
Vancouver

Of the certified Living Wage Employers in BC, 20% are non-profit organizations, and 48% have 10 or fewer employees.

What is a living wage?

A living wage is the hourly amount that each of two parents, both working full time, would need in order to afford basic expenses like food, clothing, rent, and child care. Living wages for communities across BC are re-calculated annually by the Living Wage for Families Campaign and our local partners.

Social benefits of the living wage

Many BC families are struggling to make ends meet. Inequality is growing and poverty persists. One in seven of our neighbours live in poverty, and many of them work at low-wage jobs.

While paying a living wage also has business benefits, like improved employee productivity and morale, there are wide social benefits of a living wage:

- **Engaged, inclusive communities:** Employees working one living wage job, rather than multiple low-wage jobs to make ends meet, have more time to spend with their families and engage in community and civic life.
- **Vibrant local economies:** Low income earners tend to spend proportionally more of their income than those with much higher incomes, because those with low incomes have more essential spending needs. Those with lower incomes also tend to spend more money locally, strengthening small and community-focused businesses. These businesses in turn buy local services like marketing, accounting and cleaning.
- **Decreased health care and social services costs:** Families living in poverty are more vulnerable to poor health and use more health care resources. Poverty costs BC residents over \$1.2 billion annually in health care costs, and at least \$9 billion annually in overall costs to society.
- **Changing how we think about the value of work:** In our society, those who make a lot of money are idolized and those who work in low-wage, “unskilled” jobs are looked down upon. In reality, low-wage work is valuable as it contributes to all of us enjoying clean, safe, and vibrant communities. Paying the living wage - a credible, standardized calculation - changes the conversation from who “deserves” a decent wage to how much it actually takes to live in a community, as neighbours.

Become a Living Wage Employer

Living Wage Employers commit to paying their staff and contractors their local living wage each year, through a combination of their base wage and/or the hourly value of non-mandatory benefits they may offer. They also mandate that external service providers on major contracts pay their staff a living wage in turn. The Living Wage for Families Campaign has an online benefits calculator to help you determine how the living wage can work for you.

“We value the commitment and dedication of our employees who give so much of themselves to people in our community impacted by crime and trauma. Being a Living Wage Employer is one way we can recognize the great work of our employees.”

- Greater Victoria Police Victim Services, Capital Region District

Living wage tips for non-profits

- **The commitment:** Becoming a certified Living Wage Employer is a simple process: first, submit your application, which will be reviewed by our Employers Committee. Once certified, submit a short recertification form once a year confirming your ongoing commitment to meeting the program requirements.
- **Exempt staff:** Casual or ad-hoc employment of fewer than 120 hours of work per year can be exempt from your living wage policy.
- **Students and interns:** If you have students, interns, or other trainees that do work for you, they can also be exempt from your living wage policy as long as the number of these staff does not total more than 20% of your workforce.
- **Social enterprises:** We recognize that social procurement (or purposeful purchasing) from social enterprises that are providing supported employment to individuals with barriers to labour market participation is another way to address poverty. If your organization houses or manages a social enterprise, or works with social enterprises, contact us to discuss how to make your living wage policy work for you.
- **Granting agencies:** More and more granting agencies, such as the Vancouver Foundation, are becoming Living Wage Employers. When you apply for funding from these agencies, you can submit a budget that includes a living wage for your staff knowing that your higher budget will be accepted and respected.



“By paying a living wage, we are able to attract and retain highly qualified staff to support and work with the clients and communities we serve. We know that when employees feel that they are valued and fairly compensated for their work, everybody benefits. We continue to see increased productivity, high morale and excellence of service.”

- Kootenay Career Development Society, Nelson

Contact us to learn more.
www.livingwageforfamilies.ca