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Friday, August 7, 2009

Pittsburgh nonprofit CEO pay beats U.S. average

Pittsburgh Business Times - by [Patty Tascarella](#)

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In Pittsburgh, the average compensation of nonprofit CEOs last year was \$184,302, the seventh highest in the country, according to a recent study.

That's well above the national average of \$158,075, which rose a surprising 6.1 percent from the previous year, the biggest jump in the five-year history of **Charity Navigator's** annual CEO Compensation Study.

The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit watchdog examined the most recent IRS Form 990s from 5,448 midsize to large U.S.-based nonprofits in its database.

"Most people will be shocked to see these numbers in a recession," said Charity Navigator CFO Sandra Miniutti, who anticipated a hike along the lines of the previous year's 2.5 percent. "But it's important to

realize that nonprofits' financials often lag."

Since nonprofits have a flexible schedule on filing, some data is from 2007, and many set salaries with the beginning of their fiscal year July 1, which last year occurred before the stock market's wild fluctuations.

Since then, some nonprofit leaders, because of the economic downturn, have taken salary cuts. WQED Multimedia CEO George Miles Jr., who voluntarily took a 30 percent reduction, said it was an easy decision.

"If you're in the middle of a recession and you're expecting employees to hunker down, you have to lead by example," Miles said. "If you're asking folks to make sacrifices, you have to make sacrifices."

The study did single out the highest-paid executive per category, and former **Pittsburgh Foundation** CEO William Trueheart drew the top dollars nationwide in the Human Service sector.

Trueheart, who retired from the top job at the Pittsburgh Foundation in September 2007, received \$1.18 million, more than triple his compensation the previous year. John Ellis, Pittsburgh Foundation vice president of communications, said the amount was a package that included Trueheart's salary "plus a significant amount of deferred compensation, which had built up over a period of time during his tenure with the organization."

Charity Navigator provided a list of the 10 highest paid Pittsburgh nonprofit leaders in its database. Charity Navigator's database represents a sample of local nonprofits and is not inclusive. Nine of the 10 also appeared on last year's list. All 10 were above the region's average of \$184,302.

The organizations with active top executives on the list were contacted to find out if the

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economic downturn has affected present compensation. The [Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra](#), [Carnegie Mellon University](#), [Pittsburgh Cultural Trust](#) and [United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh](#) all froze wages for the current year. Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh eliminated bonuses.

Robert Teeter, president and CEO of Greensburg-based [Teeter Associates](#), which consults to nonprofits, was surprised at the jump in salaries.

"That isn't what I've heard, talking to people here and there," Teeter said. "Most were frozen or 3 percent. I can't figure out why the national average was 6 percent, because it doesn't match what's going on. Keeping things as tight as they can is the message we're hearing."

The Pittsburgh average was even more surprising to Teeter. He suggested that salaries at "a few large places in Pittsburgh," such as hospitals, universities and big arts organizations, "distorted" the local average.

"People we know heading very large agencies with 500 employees are not making \$184,000," Teeter said. "It's more like \$100,000 and most of what we're seeing is salaries in the \$70,000 to \$80,000 range. Maybe there were a dozen (very large salaries) at the top distorting it."

But Kate Dewey, principal of nonprofit consultants [Dewey & Kaye](#), part of Downtown-based [McCrorry & McDowell](#), expected salaries to rise.

"In order to recruit the talent you need to run a nonprofit means finding someone who not only knows their area and where it's going, but is able to manage it well and is savvy around fund development," Dewey said.

But she believes many already have or will adjust salaries because of the recession. Many of the organizations in the Charity Navigator study had July 1 fiscal years and set salaries before the stock market plunged, she said. "It depends on the size of the organization, but I do think you'll see a number that are flat or have a slight adjustment downward."

National numbers

Highest paid nonprofit leaders by city:
Average 2008

- | City | CEO compensation |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. New York | \$220,735 |
| 2. San Diego | \$218,738 |
| 3. Boston | \$195,535 |
| 4. Dallas | \$194,642 |
| 5. Chicago | \$189,224 |
| 6. Cleveland | \$188,322 |
| 7. Pittsburgh | \$184,302 |
| National Average | \$158,075 |

Source: Charity Navigator, compiled from the most recent available nonprofit financial reports

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