

Building Your Own Talent Bench

- Amanda Hickman – Interim Executive Director, AIR
- Kelsey McConnell – Program Director, Classical California
(formerly USC Radio Group)
- Abby Goldstein – President, PRPD

About AIR



AIR's is a talent network made up of independent producers, engineers, journalists, storytellers, and editors who are committed to making great work for public radio and podcasts.

AIR has cultivated and connected mission-driven storytellers across the U.S. and around the world since 1988. We are committed to expanding the ecosystem where audio storytellers can do their best work and to providing our members with the skills and resources they need to advocate for fair compensation and build thriving careers.

AIR has a deep history of collaborating with stations and newsrooms to produce excellent and innovative local stories through Localore Labs. Our mentorship and fellowship programs help independents get the support they need at pivotal moments in their career. Our research on fair pay and fair practice forms the foundation of our work on equity. Our transformative education platform, SoundPath offers online workshops and classes that continue to shape the field.



You Need a Bench

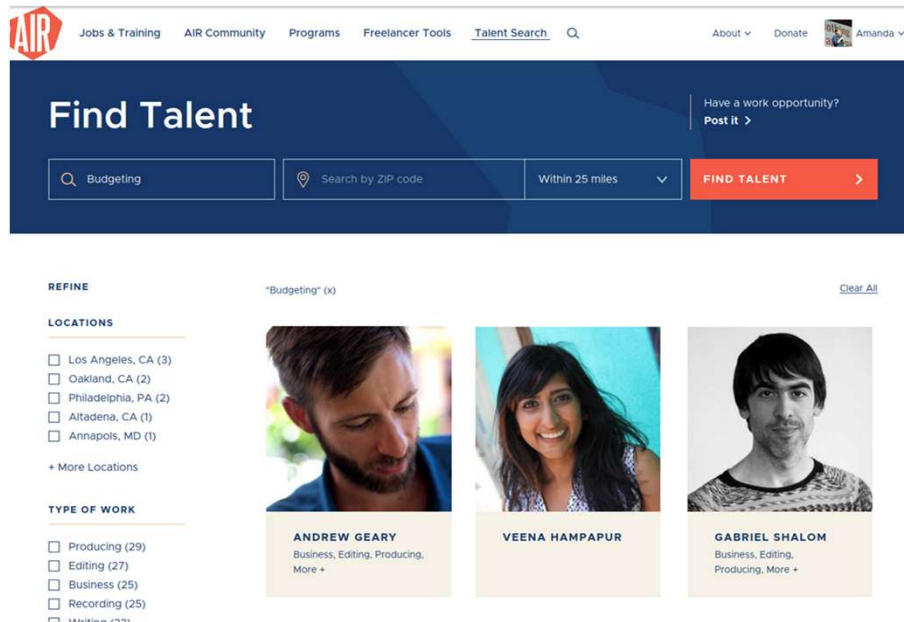
Hiring starts with building a community.

https://bit.ly/dei_coalition_hiring



Talent at all Levels

AIR's **Talent Directory** is an incredible catalog of producers, reporters, engineers, editors, and business-side expertise. We aren't just reporters, but there are a lot of those in our network.



The screenshot shows the AIR Talent Directory search page. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Jobs & Training, AIR Community, Programs, Freelancer Tools, Talent Search (active), About, Donate, and a user profile for Amanda. The main heading is "Find Talent". Below it are search filters: a text input with "Budgeting", a location input with "Search by ZIP code", and a dropdown menu set to "Within 25 miles". A red "FIND TALENT" button is on the right. To the left of the results is a "REFINE" sidebar with "LOCATIONS" (Los Angeles, CA (3), Oakland, CA (2), Philadelphia, PA (2), Altadena, CA (1), Annapolis, MD (1), + More Locations) and "TYPE OF WORK" (Producing (29), Editing (27), Business (25), Recording (25)). The results show three profiles: Andrew Geary (Business, Editing, Producing), Veena Hampapur, and Gabriel Shalom (Business, Editing, Producing, More +).



<https://airmedia.org/talent>

Our newsletter is a great way to find folks, too.

casper@airmedia.org



Pay Fair Rates

[Jobs & Training](#)[AIR Community](#)[Programs](#)[Freelancer Tools](#)[Talent Search](#)[About](#)

Rate Guide: Day Rates

This guide is part of a larger research project on radio and podcasting rates. See [all of AIR's work on rates](#) for a complete guide.

★ This guide was posted in **September 2019** and has not been updated since. We recommend referring to the Federal [Cost of Living Adjustment](#) or the [Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator](#) to adjust for inflation.

TYPE

Compensation

SKILLS

Reporting

Producing

Contract Review

Establishing a Day Rate

When you're estimating costs for a project it often makes the most sense to use a day rate to come up with a rate for the overall project.

Based on AIR's research into prevailing salaries paid to reporters, editors and producers with full time staff jobs at podcast production shops and radio stations, we've established the following recommendations for minimum fair and equitable day rates.

These rates don't reflect every independent producer's experiences or expectations. Many independents in broadcast and podcasting charge significantly more per day, some are used to working for significantly less. These rates assume that a freelancer is able to work for pay most work days and don't account for time spent pitching and negotiating between commissions.

These rates represent what we believe is fair. However, many public radio stations are paying freelance contributors significantly less than this. If



Setting Expectations



Jobs & Training AIR Community Programs Freelancer Tools Talent Search Q About ▾

Rate Guide: Engineering, Sound Design and Music

This guide is part of a larger research project on radio and podcasting rates. See [all of AIR's work on rates](#) for a complete guide.

★ This guide was posted in **October 2019** and has not been updated since. We recommend referring to the Federal [Cost of Living Adjustment](#) or the [Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator](#) to adjust for inflation.

Though radio transmitters have been broadcasting for more than a century, the emerging podcast industry is disrupting traditional models of audio production. Experienced audio engineers, recordists, sound designers, and composers all bring vital skills that can make a big difference in the sound and quality of any show, however the final audio is distributed.

In addition, experienced professionals who bring skills honed on other productions can provide an unbiased editorial ear, and are often able to improve a project long before production gets underway.

A Brief Glossary

In many cases the roles described here overlap and any one show's needs will vary. Most independent producers do their own recording and they often expect to do their own initial dialog edits. Some sound designers compose original scores. Some do all the mixing and scoring for a show.

TYPE
Compensation

SKILLS
Mixing
Sound Design
Scrubbing and Audio Editing
Scoring
Producing
Field Recording
Budgeting
Audio Engineering



Jobs & Training AIR Community Programs Freelancer Tools Talent Search Q

Rate Guide: Editing and Content Strategy

This guide is part of a larger research project on radio and podcasting rates. See [all of AIR's work on rates](#) for a complete guide.

★ This guide was posted in **December 2019** and has not been updated since. We recommend referring to the Federal [Cost of Living Adjustment](#) or the [Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator](#) to adjust for inflation.

Everyone needs an editor. Yes, even you. Good editors bring an experienced ear to the whole story, and that can make a world of difference.

And even if you know precisely what you're doing, you also need someone with an experienced eye on the big picture. On some shows that's the executive producer and it's a full time role. Other shows bring in a consultant to lay solid groundwork and then step back after the first few episodes are out the door. Often, newcomers to the space turn to experienced editors in search of guidance that looks a lot more like content strategy or operations. We cover this group of experts under "consulting" below.

In this, the last in our 2019 rate guide series, we cover the roles of editing and consulting, and share the current market rates we found in our research.

Though these two roles are very different in practice, we've included them

TYPE
Compensation

SKILLS
Story Editing
Budgeting



<https://airmedia.org/tools/all-our-rate-guides>

What is fair?

⊘ Don't assume! ☑ Do discuss

? How long do you expect to have an exclusive on the story?

? Will the reporting include travel? How should the producer file travel expenses?

? Who is responsible for fact checking?



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the AIR website with links: Jobs & Training, AIR Community, Programs, Freelancer Tools (underlined), Talent Search, and About. The main heading is "Guide to Fair Practice for Working with Independent Audio Professionals". To the right, under "TYPE", it lists "Contracts and Fair Practice". Under "SKILLS", it lists "Logistics and Coordination" and "Contract Review". The text below the heading states: "Originally created June 1999, revised March 2015, July 2019, September 2020. Last revised by AIR staff in October 2021." The main body text explains that AIR, the Association of Independents in Radio, offers this guide to define ethical standards and contract guidelines for members and the wider audio community, including independent producers, journalists, podcasters, audio and story editors, sound designers, composers, and mix engineers. It also states that the guide exists to ensure that working professionals across the industry have a clear understanding of current best practices, a shared vocabulary, and clear expectations to support communication and sustainable collaboration over time. Finally, it mentions that AIR periodically revises the guide (most recently in 2019 and 2020) to reflect changes in the fast-evolving audio landscape, particularly as podcasting continues to grow as a vibrant, in-demand medium for audio work.



<https://airmedia.org/tools/guide-to-fair-practice>

Why Are We Doing this?

Our research shows that our hosts are a key reason for our success, driving audience loyalty and associated fund-raising, and setting us apart in the competitive environment.

Our current stable of hosts includes multiple colleagues approaching (or past) retirement age. Regardless of age, our host line-up doesn't reflect the diverse audience we serve, and few have the digital skills needed to connect with audiences who increasingly use digital platforms to engage with us.

Lack of a next-gen host pool is a national radio system-wide issue. With impending retirements, and no one in the national host 'pool', we face losing a key competitive advantage: our storytellers. Since we can't 'hire' hosts, we need to 'make' hosts.

The Host Trainee Program at a Glance:

Selection Criteria

Passion for music + Storytelling ability + Digital savvy + Diversity in coverage areas

Six Month Course in all aspects of classical public radio hosting

Vocal delivery & dynamics
Telling a story in 30 seconds
Writing for radio
Promoting station content
Extending time spent listening
Fundraising
Broadcast hardware and software
Pronunciations
Understanding our audience (what they want/expect, how they use radio)
Connecting to time of day
Being local

They also create digital content for the "Classical California" brand and represent the station at local events.



How's It Going & What's Next?

First two trainees - Brisa Siegel and Suraj Partha. Both contracts extended for another 6 months. Soon we'll start recruiting for Bay Area trainees.

Suraj filled his first shift in February and was given his own overnight shift in March. He also has one web series in production.

Brisa is scheduled to start an overnight shift soon. She also has videos in production and will be representing the station as the bilingual MC at the Festival of Books at the end of the month.

Brisa and Suraj met major donors at a virtual "Behind the Mic" event and created a lot of enthusiasm for the program and the future of the station.



QUESTIONS?

Please get in touch!

- Amanda Hickman – amanda@airmedia.org
- Kelsey McConnell – kmccconnell@kusc.org
- Abby Goldstein – agoldstein@prpd.org