



LEARNINGS

& RECAP

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

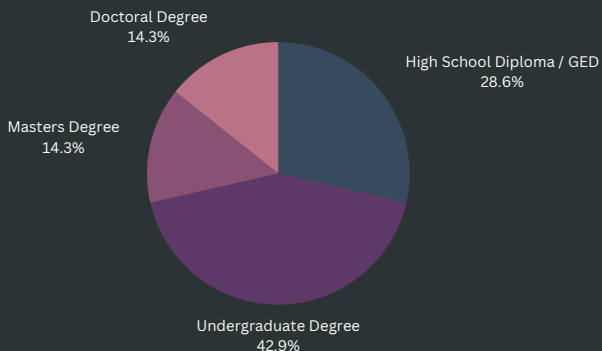
Studio ATAO's Hospitality Worker Town Halls are a nationwide series to foster dialogue, solidarity, and liberation for hospitality workers. We aim to document & amplify workers' recommendations for a more equitable industry.

At each Town Hall, we ask the same three questions to aggregate & analyze responses at a local, regional, and national level.

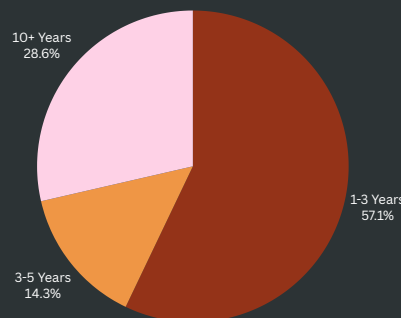
DEMOGRAPHICS

Over the course of 2022-23, we have heard from over 50 frontline workers across Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles. *Below is the breakdown of demographics specific to New York City.*

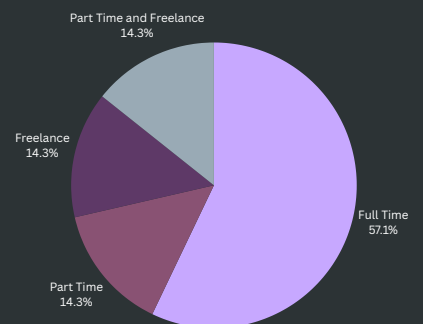
Highest Level of Education



Tenure in Industry



Employment Status



Note: Participants are all currently in non-managerial roles at their workplaces.

QUESTION 1

How is **conflict** addressed in your workplace, and what **mediation process** exists, if there is one?



100% of participants were frustrated with **informal processes** that led to & exacerbated conflicts at the workplace.

- 1 Lack of training to address conflict left inexperienced employees to navigate relationship fallouts without a holistic strategy or support.

"All the focus & blame is on the individuals & what they didn't do well, not structural components that led to conflict in the first place [like] broken equipment, scheduling miscommunication, or overly complicated menu items."

- 2 No formal channels for feedback created more secrecy & guilt, leading to burnout & turnover.

"The person you need to resolve conflict with is often the person causing the conflict."



Participants desired **transparent communication & formal policies** on conflict, such as:

- Clear channels for feedback & reporting
- Anonymous tip lines for workers
- Third-party support (e.g., mediation) to safeguard against potential retribution

QUESTION 2

What is one thing that needs to happen for you to **feel good** about staying at your **current workplace**?



All participants expressed a desire for more **flexibility, autonomy, and trust** at the workplace.

- 1 Formal policies are necessary to offer workers support structures in times of need & crisis.

"Build emergency funds into the annual budget. Consider your employees' needs & humanity when creating a budget. Plan for unexpected changes that can happen to anyone, not just management."

- 2 Concentrating decision-making power at the top alienates & disenfranchises workers.

"Break down toxic & secretive hierarchies. Decisions should not be made without input from staff. Workers deserve agency to make the best decisions for themselves."



Participants also stressed **expanded benefits & career advancement opportunities**, such as:

- Paid Breaks and Paid Time Off
- Mental Health Days
- Bereavement Leave
- Sick and Medical Leave
- Career Planning and Mentorship Opportunities

QUESTION 3

What does **accountability mean to you**?
What accountability system would you want to see implemented at your workplace?



100% of participants voiced enthusiasm for standardized systems of accountability meant in the context of their workplace, and its implications for the community & wider industry.

- 1 Establishing organizational values & processes to evaluate if behaviors align with stated values.
- 2 Setting time for ongoing discussions on what "community" means to that organization, and what its responsibilities are to that community.
- 3 Redistributing power to allow all workers to give upwards feedback & challenge existing practices & behaviors without fear of retribution.

"Hold open forums & listening tours...routine check-ins with staff should be a top priority for management as proactive care work."

"Accountability is an ongoing practice, not just an apology. Stop gaslighting by acknowledging harm & validating workers' experiences."



Participants expressed a desire for systems of accountability that expansively included customers, vendors, and other external parties.

IDEAS FOR MOVING FORWARD



Open an anonymous box or form for staff to share feedback, slowly building towards safe communication practices at the workplace.



Establish practices of flexibility in how staff can take PTO & sick leave. Encourage collaboration in finding ways to care & cover for each other instead of working from a place of shame.



Invest in team-building exercises that promote trust & empathy amongst staff members, as well as communications skills to express individual needs without aggression, guilt, or shame.



Build pathways to share learnings with staff & other industry leaders, like cross-training the team and conflict mediation policies that have proven successful.



Create space for idea sharing among the team by hosting open-forum discussions. Be willing to experiment with trial periods for new ideas & processes within the business.



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