



What's the state of training for museum gallery teachers in 2024?

David Bowles,

Rachel Ropeik,

and Rebecca Shulman

have a combined 57 years of experience in museum teaching. We are a team of Gallery Education experts who build strategies and workshops to help keep museum educators at the forefront of current practice.

In November 2023 we asked **leaders of Gallery Education programs** across the country to share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations with us.

This is what we learned.



David Bowles

Rachel Ropeik

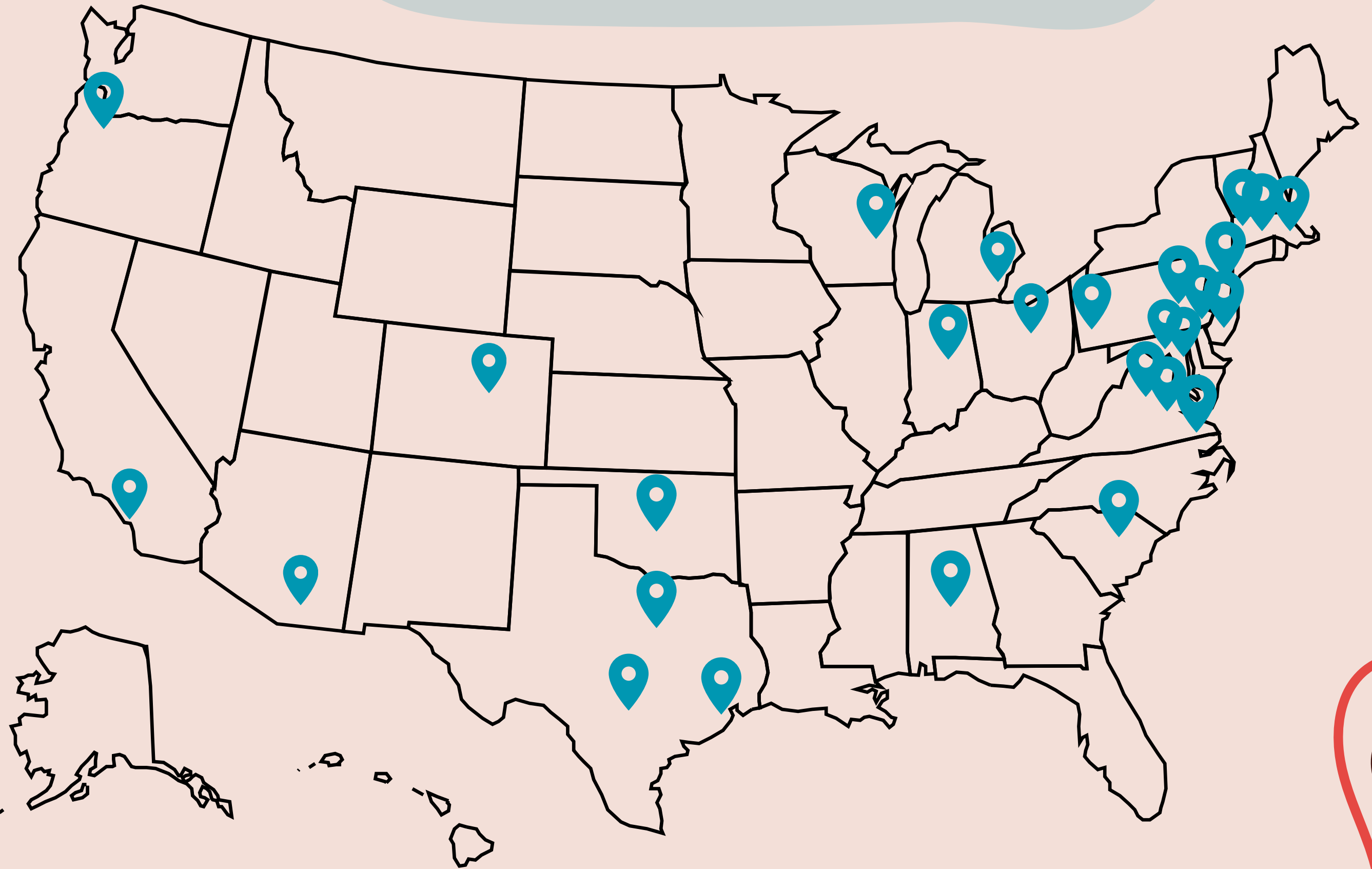
Rebecca Shulman



Who responded?

We heard from
staff at 36
different
museums across
20 states in the
USA.

We know this is not a scientifically
significant number of respondents.
The trends were telling, nevertheless.



[David Bowles](#)

[Rachel Ropeik](#)

[Rebecca Shulman](#)

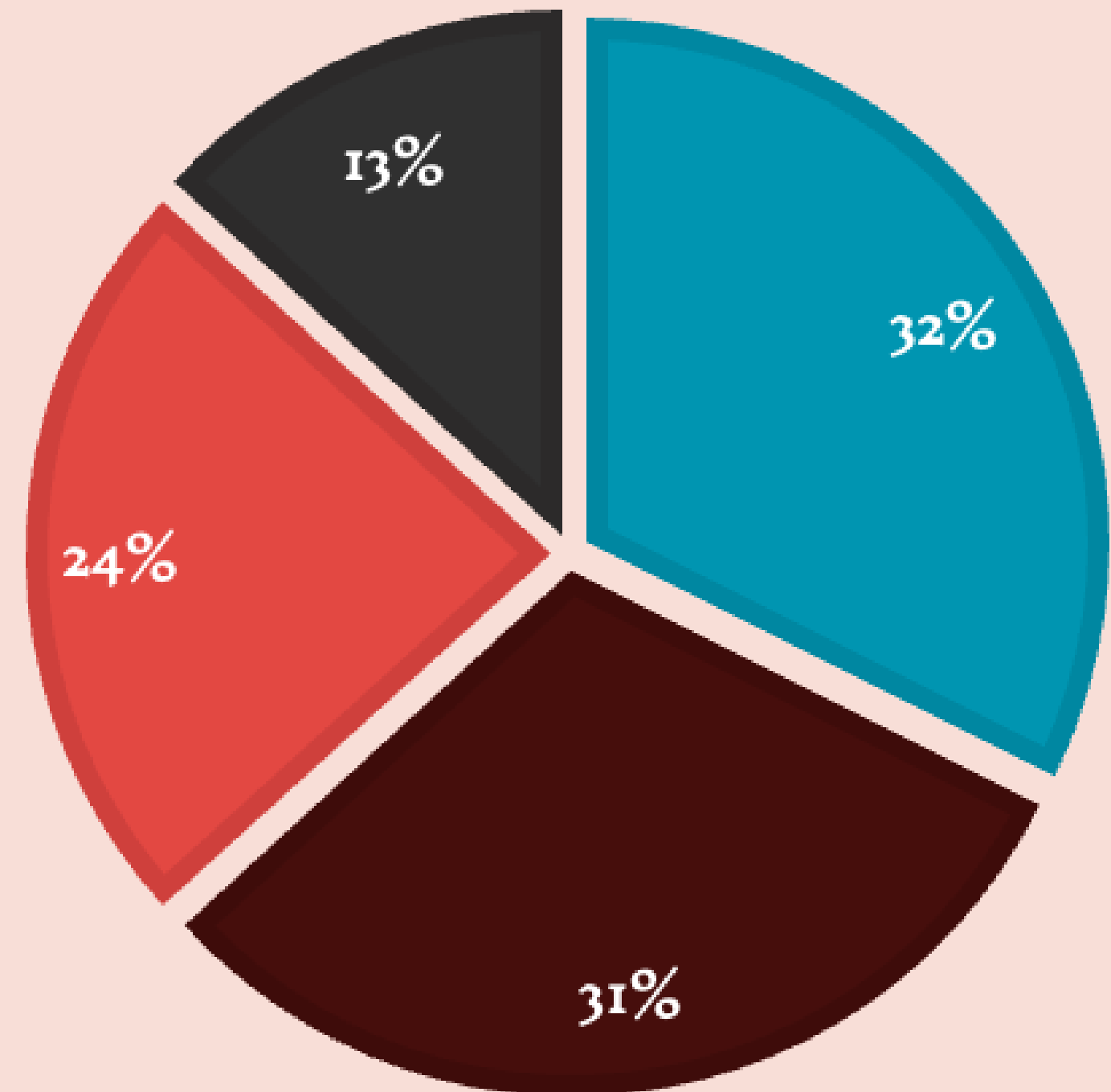
Most museums rely on many different types of educators.

Who's teaching in museum galleries?

- Part-time Staff: 22 (**only** PT staff: 5)
- Full-time Staff: 21 (**only** FT staff: 3)
- Volunteers/Docents: 16 (**only** volunteers: 3)
- Contractual / Freelance: 9









Of the 36 museums represented in our survey, only 11 said that they relied exclusively on one group to lead tours.

Of these 11, only three depended solely on volunteers.

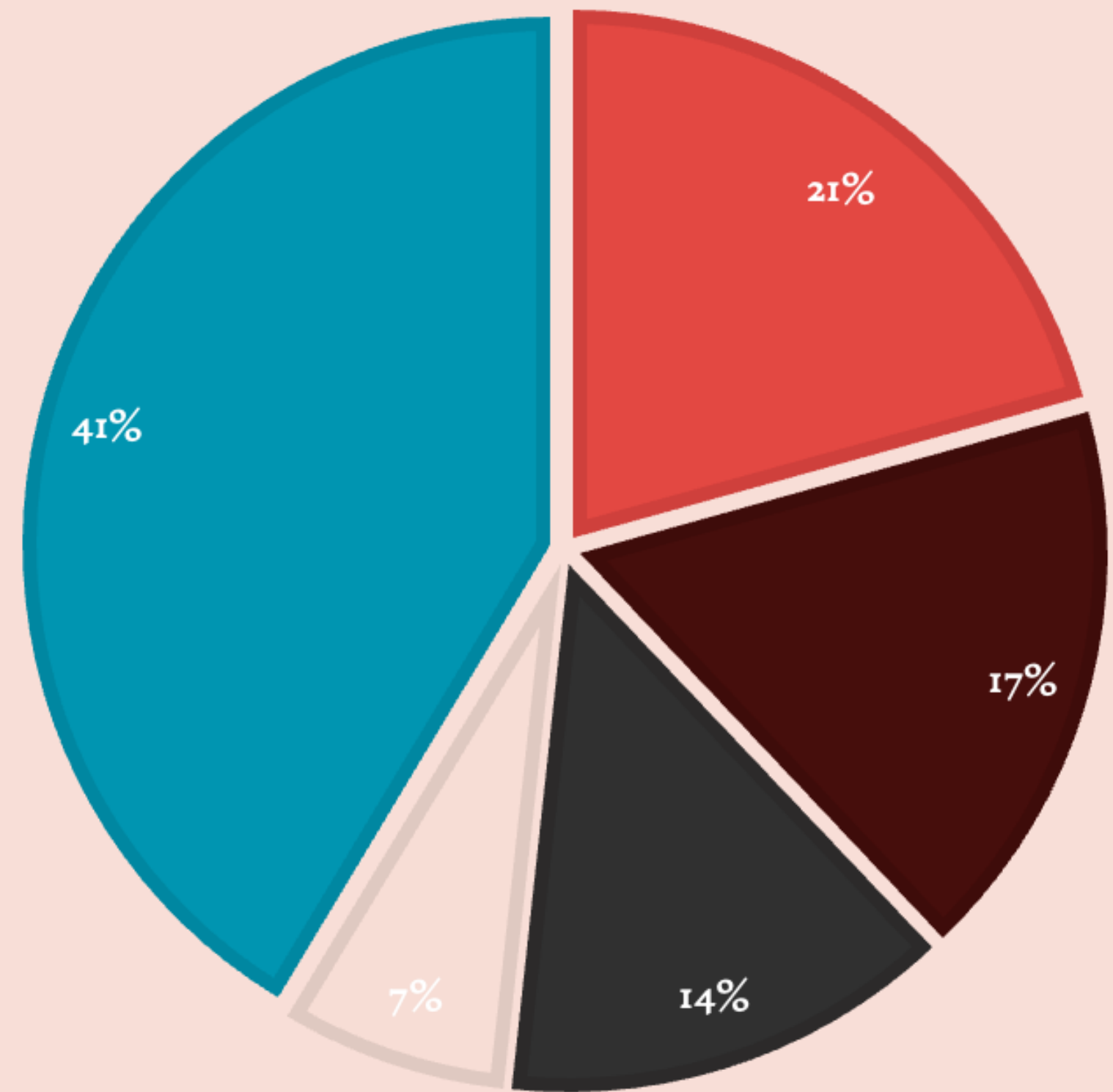
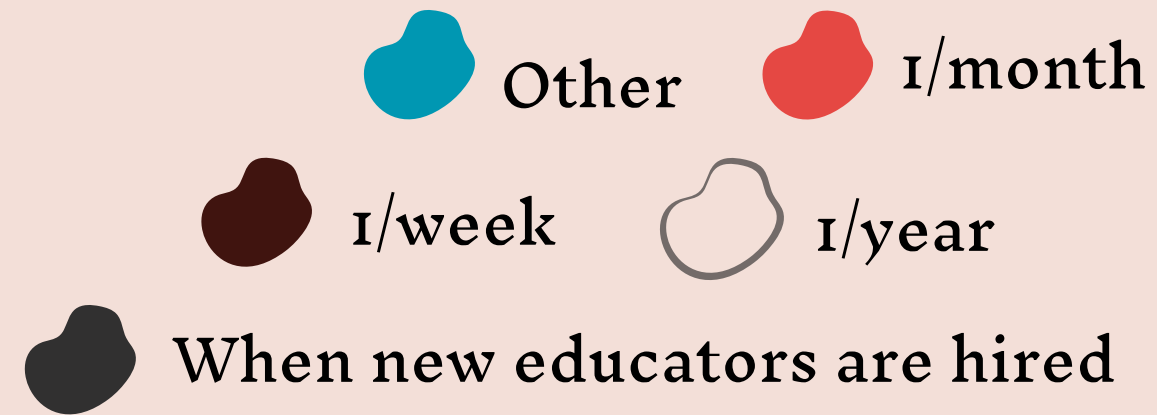


Supervisors tend to be fairly dissatisfied with their tour programs, especially those not taught by paid staff.

- Programs taught exclusively by staff had the highest satisfaction levels.
- Programs taught by only full time staff had higher satisfaction levels than those taught partly or fully by part time staff.
- Programs taught only by volunteers had the lowest satisfaction levels

Overall average		3.36
Only FT staff		4
PT or FT staff		3.88
Only PT staff		3.8
Includes FT staff		3.63
Includes contractual educators		3.33
Includes volunteers		3.25
Only volunteers		3

Supervisors generally ranked satisfaction with teaching in their galleries fairly low: the average was 3.36 out of 5.



The frequency of gallery educator trainings varies widely from museum to museum.

- 14 museums reported they held trainings at least monthly.
- 12 museums said they held trainings no more than 4 times per year.
- 6 museums said they had no regularly scheduled training sessions at all.

Museums feel more comfortable with certain training topics than others.



participatory activities
(26 of 36 museums)

object information &
inquiry strategies
(21 of 36 museums)

play-based learning
(11 of 36 museums)

facilitating brave
conversations
(8 of 36 museums)

experimental teaching
strategies
(7 of 36 museums)



It's a moment of change for gallery educator programs in many directions.

"We did [have regular trainings] but are currently in a transition."

"Due to staff turnover, [holding] regular [trainings] has been difficult."

"We stopped during COVID and are trying to get back on track."

"We sunset our decades-long docent program in early November 2023 and are now transitioning to a 100% paid staff model for K-12 tours. Our public tour programs, launching soon, will continue using both paid and volunteer staff and will likely have regularly recurring trainings."

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Some museums are looking to use this moment to reinvigorate and improve their programs.

“This is my first year at a new institution, so I might be a little jaded. Currently, I don't believe the training includes much of what is listed above.”

“I would like ... to have more intensive trainings and pull together the team more cohesively.”

Where can we go from here?

In these data we see a professional field in the midst of great change.

We also see opportunities for new approaches to building supportive, sustainable communities of practice with healthier work/life balance.

If this resonates with you, let's talk!

Schedule a free 30-minute conversation with us to chat about the state of your gallery education program, and how we can help.

Join us on May 16, 2024 for **SEED: Baltimore**, a lively full-day workshop, which will be followed by 6 monthly virtual sessions, supplemented with a resource library of tested materials available for your use.



Baltimore
May 16, 2024

<https://seed-baltimore.paperform.co>