new ED for the next contract in 2022,” Galarraga said.

work-from-home policies, while also leaving room for larger conversations with the current staff, such as pay increases and more formalized comp time, flex time, and "The current contract extension allows us to put in place some greater supports for new ED’s input — something that would have postponed an agreement indefinitely.

outgoing Executive Director to not make any long-term commitments without the willing or able to commit to any big changes beyond the next fiscal year.

Galarraga and her bargaining teammates agreed that it made sense to push new adjustments made during the pandemic, there was a need for long-term improvement in areas of flexible work time, working remotely, and compensatory time.

The negotiation process began with a goal of bringing up the lowest paid workers to a minimum level and equalizing existing workers into appropriate levels. In the wake of negotiations, said he was able to hit the ground running just one week after beginning New Private Sector Staff Rep Chris Thomas, hired by Local 1180 in the midst of the pandemic and lack of funding stability. We were able to keep things going in the short run, and once the economy picks up, we will be able to negotiate a full-length contract in 2022.”

"Though the organization was not in the financial position to increase compensation as much as we would have liked, I am really proud that we were able to boost the pay for our lowest paid members by 12.5%. I am also really pleased that we were able to formalize policies like comp time, which had been applied unevenly in the past and were not clearly written out in our employee handbook. I think we made major progress in creating equity in our organization. I look forward to seeing how much farther we can go in our next contract,” Galarraga said.

The contract includes raises ranging from 6.8% to 12.5% depending on a workers’ prior level; new hires will have a minimum salary; existing employees’ salaries will always be higher than new hires; and secured release time for union representatives to attend union trainings. Some of the other issues were achieved by contract while others were negotiated into the manual. O’Malley said a few remaining issues could not be resolved and will be subject to ongoing Labor-Management Committee negotiations.

“I am proud to report that we achieved all of our goals so far,” O’Malley said. “Overall, the bargaining was a great success considering the backdrop of the pandemic and lack of funding stability. We were able to keep things going in the short run, and once the economy picks up, we will be able to negotiate a full-length contract in 2022.”

New Private Sector Staff Rep Chris Thomas, hired by Local 1180 in the midst of the negotiations, said he was able to hit the ground running just one week after beginning his new position. “Thankfully John had this all under control long before I got here so I could join the bargaining sessions that were in progress and know that Local 1180 and the ESYNYC team had already made significant progress.”

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THE CENTURY FOUNDATION RATIFIES FOUR-YEAR CONTRACT

Local 1180 members at The Century Foundation (TCF) ratified a four-year contract on Sept. 13, 2021, that runs from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025.

Minimum salaries will be $58,500, an increase from the previous $51,500. The minimum salary will be pegged to the percentage raise negotiated for each year. All salaries will go up by 2.5% for each of the four years of the contract. The first increase was retroactive to July 1, 2021. In addition, all eight Local 1180 TCF members who were employed at the time of ratification should have received their annual bonus of $650 on July 1, 2021. That annual bonus will increase by the same yearly percentage as salaries.

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The Century Foundation is a progressive, independent think tank that conducts research, develops solutions, and drives policy change to make people's lives better. They pursue economic, racial, and gender equity in education, health care, and work, and promote U.S. foreign policy that fosters international cooperation, peace, and security. TCF is one of the oldest public policy research institutes in the country.

O’Malley said that in addition to the financial aspects of the negotiations, the team also was able to resolve issues regarding access to personnel files, job descriptions and the ability to confer over any changes, improve workflow direction, and maintain the integrity of the organization’s mission.

OSF RESTRUCTURING IMPACTS STAFF & LEADS TO LOW MORALE

As part of Open Society Foundations major restructuring, the grant maker is offering a voluntary buyout package with wide-ranging benefits to most staff, and plans to follow up with layoffs if necessary, according to an FAQ provided to staff members and two staff sources.

Local 1180, which represents 257 members at OSF, said they have been told that morale is very low amid the changes. With several hundred staff members already having left the nonprofit, remaining staff are concerned for their job security and the potential shifts in workload following the departures.

"Our impression so far is that very few within the organization, including our members, managers, and senior staff, are happy with the process," said Local 1180 President Gloria Middleton. “We are concerned on multiple fronts with the restructuring process, which seems well intentioned, but poorly executed.”

OSF staff shared concerns that the departures could reduce diversity at the Foundation and contribute to long-standing equity issues since the majority of the people leaving are women or people of color. The Open Society Foundations, founded by George Soros, are the world’s largest private funder of independent groups working for justice, democratic governance, and human rights. They provide thousands of grants every year through a network of national and regional foundations and offices, funding a vast array of projects.

Local 1180 has represented OSF since 2016 and ratified its first contract in 2018. The union is now working with remaining staff to protect the jobs of its members, secure packages for those who aren’t interested in OSF’s new direction, and maintain the integrity of the organization’s mission.
National Audubon Society workers vote to join CWA Local 1180

National Audubon Society’s headquarters staff voted overwhelmingly in favor of forming a union, the latest milestone for the environmental labor movement, and now 132 workers will become part of the CWA Local 1180 family.

On Sept. 23, workers at Audubon’s national headquarters voted in an official National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election, capping the workers’ year-long effort to secure stronger health care, job security, and a voice at the table for all workers regardless of race, gender, or background. Audubon workers in New York, Washington, D.C., and remote offices will join Local 1180, which will represent them in upcoming contract negotiations. Audubon workers add to the growing number of conservationists and climate activists paving the way for a stronger alliance between labor and environmentalism.

Audubon employees began organizing to form a union after facing two rounds of layoffs last year, including one on Earth Day, and having the cost of their health care increased during the pandemic. Workers also pointed out that all major decisions at Audubon have been made behind closed doors by those at the top, and that the direction of the organization has veered toward chasing expedient grant money.

The election follows Audubon workers’ previous attempts to have management voluntarily recognize their union. Last May, in a card check led by U.S. Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA), a majority of Audubon’s 400-person national staff voted in favor of forming a union. However, Audubon management, led by President and interim CEO Dr. Elizabeth Gray, refused voluntary recognition. Workers again tried to negotiate in good faith by offering to hold an expedited election through a third-party arbiter so long as Audubon committed to a neutrality agreement, but management declined, forcing workers to file for an election with the NLRB.

“This union isn’t just a win for workers, it’s a win for the birds as well,” said Shyamlee Patel, a Finance Associate at Audubon. “The protections provided by a union will give us the peace of mind in our personal and work lives so that we can focus on the original mission of Audubon that we are all passionate about: protecting birds and their ecosystems.”

Local 1180 Organizer Leslie Fine and former Open Society Foundations Shop Steward Renata Peralta, along with other CWA staff, worked to help Audubon employees build the power to win their union.

“Despite every obstacle thrown in our path, we prevailed because we knew what we were fighting for was just and critical to advancing Audubon’s mission,” said Maddox Wolfe, a Campaign Manager at Audubon. “We overcame geographical distance and brought together workers from all corners of the country. When management hired a union-busting law firm, we were undeterred. Today’s victory is a clear-cut example of how powerful workers can be when they are united and stand firm in their beliefs.”

Further fueling the drive to organize was Audubon’s toxic culture that created countless barriers in the workplace, primarily for women and employees of color, and was confirmed by an independent audit. Audubon is one of many environmental organizations grappling with its racist history. Workers there viewed a union as their best opportunity to address those concerns.

“An increasing number of non-for-profit groups are coming to realize the value in organizing and becoming unionized,” said Local 1180 President Gloria Middleton. “They see labor as a way to gain a voice, a seat at the table, and gain control and authority over their own work spaces. The values and beliefs of unions are much the same as what employees of nonprofits promote themselves, regardless of what the nonprofit is about.

“We welcome members of the National Audubon Society to our Local 1180 family,” Middleton said. “They join the growing number of other nonprofits that are seeing an explosion in popularity and coming to realize that the backing of a union voice is a positive in a movement that is gaining steam.”