Chromatic Theatre created the following *Project Field Notes*
as part of their Balancing Act Level UP! Pilot Project.

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Chromatic Theatre

BALANCING ACT

Chromatic Theatre
Level UP! Compassion Fund Pilot
Project Field Notes

The following notes were written by team members at Chromatic Theatre in 2024 after completing their Level UP! Pilot Project.

Project focus: Providing maternity leave funding for a part-time employee.

Project inspiration: The project was inspired by the lack of financial parental leave support across the country, especially for contract workers. Though Chromatic Theatre is a small company, we wanted to live up to our care-based values and find a way to provide financial support for a staff member who was on maternity leave.

Planning and implementation

Planning was relatively easy. One of our staff members inquired about the possibility of maternity leave well before applications opened for the next *Level UP!* cohort. When I learned about *Level UP!*, maternity leave coverage seemed like a great fit for the Compassion Fund funding stream. We assessed how much our staff member would typically earn during her leave and applied for funding as close to that amount as possible. In the end, we received $2,000—less than we had requested, but still a meaningful contribution to our staff member's financial well-being during this time in her life.

For implementation, we had a conversation with the staff member about the best way to provide the funding. She preferred to receive it as a lump sum, so following her needs, we sent the full amount directly to her.

Key conversations

The most important conversation we had was with our staff member, ensuring we had her consent before applying for Level UP! and confirming that she had what she needed within the support we were able to provide. We also spoke with our board to make sure they were informed and supportive of the project.

Within the Level UP! initiative, we had great conversations during meetings with other arts organizations about their care projects. These conversations inspired us to think creatively about expanding our own organizational practices by thinking outside the box to provide additional care services for our contract artists.

Language

In our language, we wavered between "maternal leave" and "parental leave." We chose "maternal leave" based on our staff member's gender but recognize that in the future, we will likely adopt the gender-neutral term "parental leave."

Sustainability

The sustainability of our project will depend on individual needs—both for staff members and contract artists. As a small organization, our funding remains precarious, so we often have to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. However, as we grow as an organization, this project and our conversations with other arts organizations have reinforced our commitment to care-based values. We aim to consistently prioritize care-based initiatives in our overall planning.