
Highwire Improv

Community First

All Community Meeting - July 2nd, 2024

Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome and Core Values
 2. Updates from January - June 2024!
 3. Goals and Plans for July - Dec 2024!
 4. Volunteer Opportunities
 5. Open Q&A
 6. Jam!
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Mission

Highwire Improv's mission is to steward a community of artists committed to growth, collaboration, joy, and justice — in Baltimore and around the world — through improvisational theater.



Core Values

Transparency

Clear, honest information helps everyone work better together!

Safety

Physical, psychological, and artistic safety for everyone.

Community

Here to serve the collective good, we all win together!

Action

An imperative to make changes, solve problems, and iterate.

Updates from Jan-June!

Programming

- We finally aligned out seasons with the actual calendar year!
- Thanks to continued audience growth, we were able to increase our in-person performer pay to \$45/set. Season 14 and 15 were our largest yet by number of shows and total attendance!
- We've now had over 250 unique teams/shows perform with Highwire
- We started our First Friday residency at Sky Stage in Frederick, Md.
- Our month-long Pride celebration culminated with four shows at Fells Point Corner Theater featuring stand-up, improv, storytelling and drag!

	Shows	In-Person Attendees	Avg. In-Person Audience	Payments to Performers	Highwire Margin
Season 14 (Jan-Mar)	17 in-person 36 online	460	28.6	\$2,475	-\$88
Season 15 (Apr-Jun)	24 in-person 37 online	469	20.4	\$3,597	-\$694



Education

- As of tomorrow, we'll have **27** instructors who have gone through the [*Impromiscuous Inclusion in Improv*](#) training!
- Thanks to a generous grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, we have been able to run **16 free** intro to improv workshops for **101** students, in **10** different neighborhoods!
- We've run **8** workshops from visiting instructors!
- We've expanded our core curriculum to 3 levels, added musical improv and sketch comedy, and have reached over **80** students!



Grants

Highwire Improv has continued to build out a more robust grant application process. Join us in the Slack channel #grants or reach out to learn more!

2023 Grants

- **Wins** - MSAC Creativity Grant (\$4,000), CCBC Elite 10 Accelerator (\$2,500)

2024 Grants

- **Wins** - MSAC Professional Development Grant (\$1,300)
- **Pending** - Bank of America Foundation (\$4,000), Project Restore (via Federal Hill Main Street) (\$40,000)

Website

At the end of March, board member Cory Anotado launched our new website!
Featuring brand new navigation, SEO optimization, and improviser and team pages!

Highwire Improv Improviser



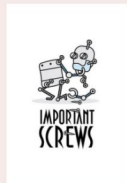
Barry Wright III

Barry Wright (he/him) is an improviser, teacher, and technology professional. He is a co-founder of Highwire Improv and currently serves as President of the Board. He has trained in improv since 2017, including at Highwire Improv, Baltimore Improv Group, Hoopla Impro, and in numerous online workshops. He performs with many ensembles including Improv Jeopardy, Topiary, Important Screws, Whatever This Is, Sandcats, and Dreamweaver. Barry lives with his wife Kristen and their three cats and is always happy to chat about improv or start a Google Doc.

Teams



Invention Hour with Professor Science



Important Screws



Sandcats



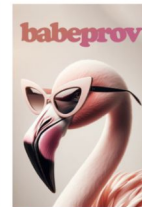
Whatever This Is



All In, Pitches!



Ask Aunt Bernadette



Babeprov



Bad Karaoke Experience



Big Worm



Block Party



Brad's Dad



Breakfast Schnitzel



Cake Walk



Carbon Copy



Cassette Files

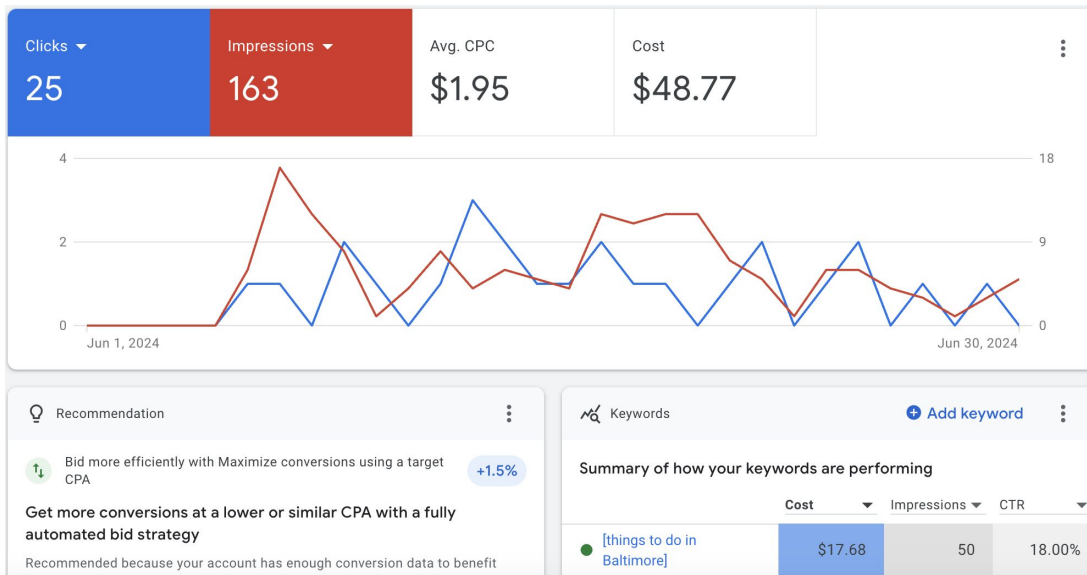


Charmers Duo

Google Ads

With the new website, we were able to implement Google Analytics, and setup Google Ads (using some of the seed money from the CCBC Elite 10 Program).

In addition to helping us reach new audience members and students, these ads drive traffic to our applied improv pages, already resulting in a conversion of a \$5,000 sale!



Rust Belt Tour... Northwest Classage... and...

Board member Brian James O'Connell has been on the road spreading the good word of Improv through three tours:

- The Rust Belt Tour: Northeast Leg
- The Rust Belt Tour: Midwest Leg
- The Northwest Classage

So far reaching 10 cities, hundreds of students, and laying the groundwork for an ongoing instructor tour system!



Baltimore Holy S#!T

Launched our first ever comedy / history tour! Modeled off of the success of Front Porch Improv's 'Savannah for Morons' we hope for this to be the start of a lasting entertainment brand that supports Highwire!

Three more tours are scheduled this year:
8/15, 9/12, 10/10



Marketing Stats

	Dec 2022	July 2023	Dec 2023	July 2024
Facebook Followers	1,083	1,203	1,300	1,432
Instagram Followers	1,009	1,155	1,272	1,505
TikTok Followers	0	32	60	131
YouTube views	40,427	48,702	51,548	54,829
YouTube subscriptions	662	691	704	726
Email List	–	631	957	1,266

Year to Date 2024 Financials

Income - **Expenses** = **Net Income**
\$45,409.19 - **\$40,473.36** = **\$4,935.83**

Top Categories

Donations: \$14,787.89
Applied Improv: \$10,851.70
Show Tickets: \$8,773.66
Core Classes: \$5,690.55
Grants: \$2,411.98
Workshops: \$1,925.00

Top Categories

Instructor Payments: \$22,494.78
Venue Fees: \$6,761.20
Performer Payments: \$4,962.42*
Training: \$1,354.80
Merch: \$1,330.46
Insurance: \$1,252.00

(for comparison) Year to Date 2023 Financial Details

$$\text{Income} - \text{Expenses} = \text{Net Income}$$
$$\text{\$41,617.31} - \text{\$32,917.42} = \text{\$8,699.89}$$

Donations:

- \$16,194.28

Interest:

- \$1.56

Classes and Workshops

- \$1,717.56

Tickets:

- \$9,995.44

Applied Improv

- \$7,783.00

MSAC Grant

- \$4,000.00

Reimbursals

- \$642.97

Performer Fees

- \$4,963.41

Instructor Fees + Travel

- \$11,178.21

Software, Bank, Office Fees

- \$2,386.84

Marketing

- \$2,678.45

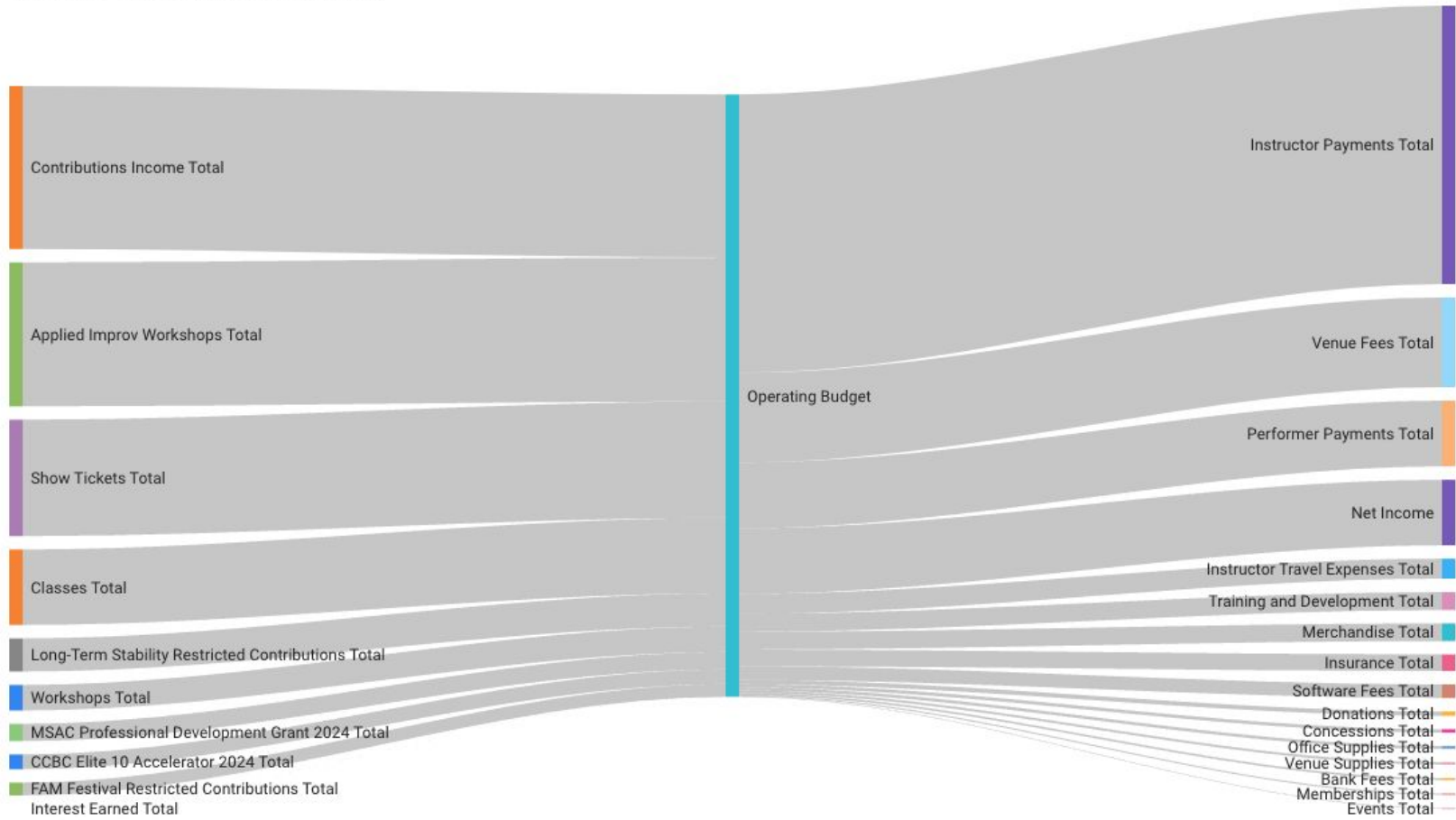
Venue Fees

- \$8,294.51

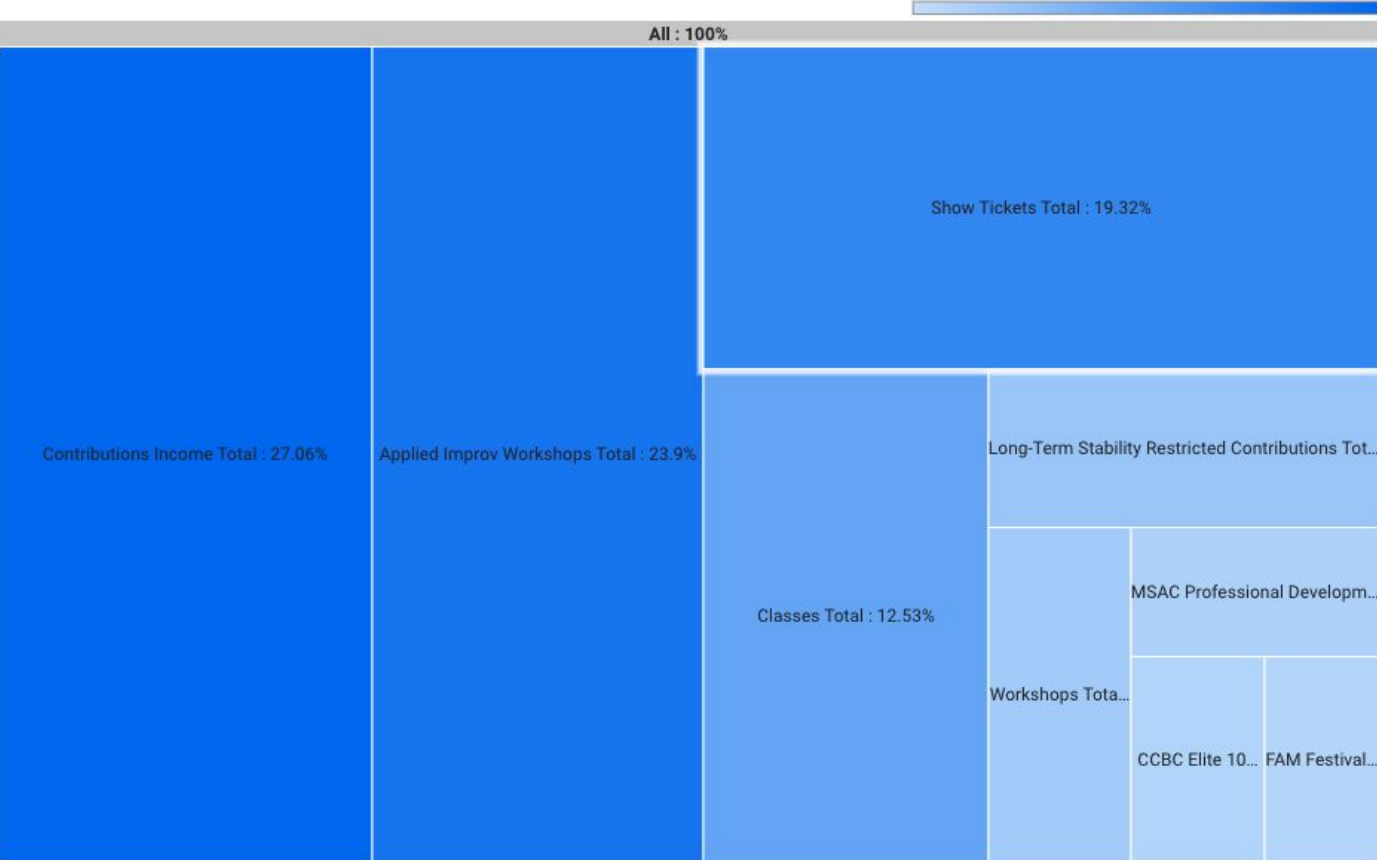
FAM Festival Expenses

- \$2,400.00

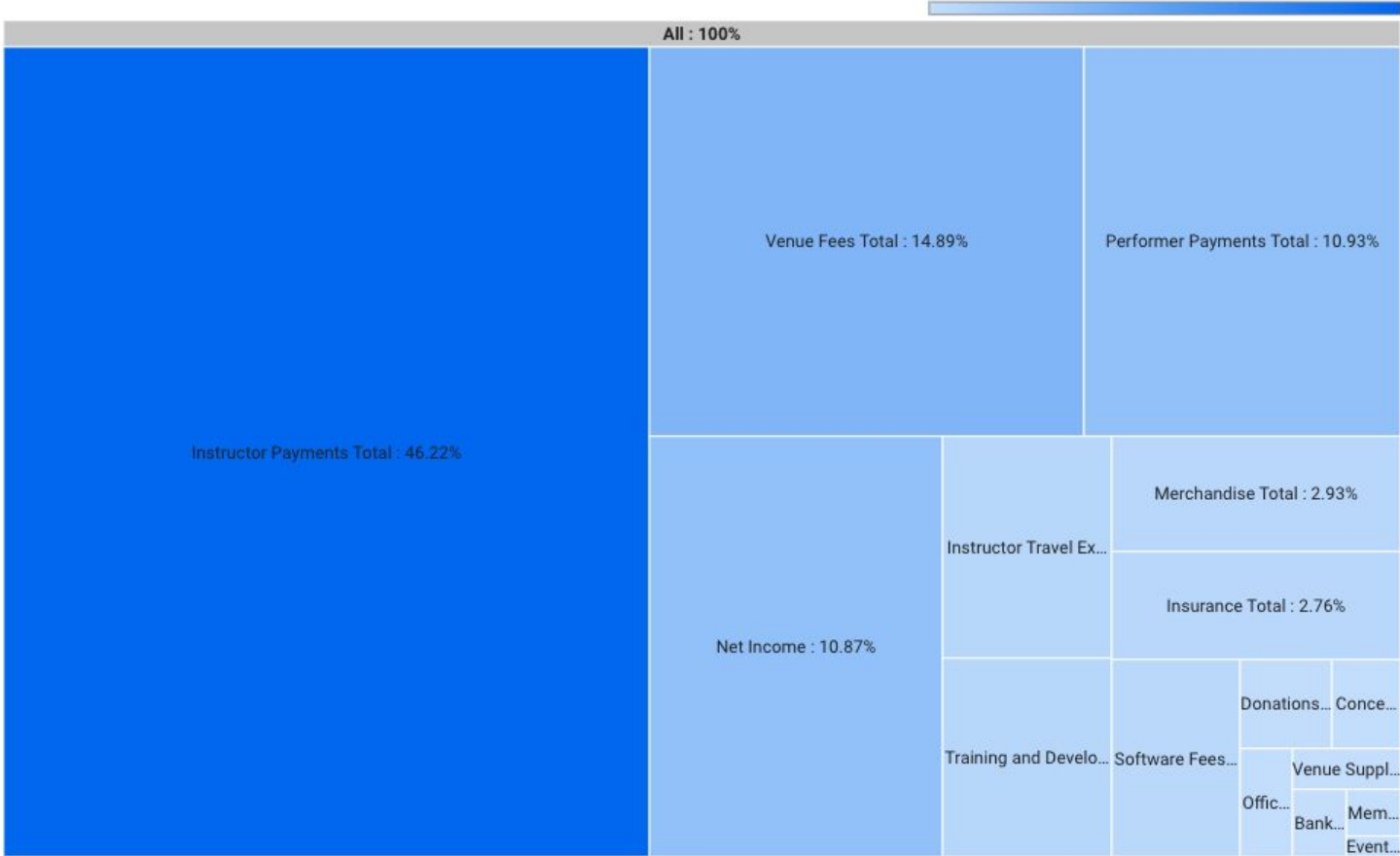
Highwire 1H24 Financial Summary



Income Sources - 1H24



Expenses - 1H2024



What's Coming in July-Dec

Strategic Priorities for the Board

The Board recently discussed how to focus our efforts on new developments (above and beyond current programming) for the remainder of 2024 - these are:

Build Repeatable Grant Process	Build a Repeatable Program for Seniors
Build a Financial / Development Strategy	Build Mobile Streaming Tech Package
Scale Baltimore Holy S#!T	Host Fundraising / Social Events
Artistic Committee Evolution	Review and Update Code of Conduct
Education Committee Evolution	Build an Improv Safety 'Toolbox'
Instructor Portal Refresh	Front of House and Host Procedures

Financial and Development Strategy

The first step we're taking towards this is to develop clear narratives for the work we do which roll up to our mission. This will allow us to clearly categorize and communicate where we ask for money and where we are applying money.

We believe we can be among the most #transparent and easy to understand non-profits, which is a point of differentiation. For example:

Narrative	Example Program
Improv Can be the Most Accessible, Inclusive Form of Art	Free Intro to Improv Workshops
Play-Based Training Can Level the Playing Field	Applied Improv for Workforce Reentry
Improv, in Baltimore, can Be World-Class Entertainment Available to All	Operating Support for Venue Fees
Applying Improv can Drive Economic Development	Applied Improv at Universities

Events!

We are hoping to start planning more regular events, including fundraisers and community gatherings/ performance events.

For fundraisers, we want to structure these events to achieve their main purpose (raising funds) while still involving our community. We're currently considering an annual gala-type gathering, but with a more casual vibe or theme that would allow us to include community members for more interactive performances. Perhaps an improvised carnival?

In the realm of community events, we want to explore options to allow our community to come together, hang out and do some improv.

Programming

- Season 16 will feature 44 in-person teams and 30 online teams.
- We have 22 in-person shows scheduled at seven different venues
- We will have our first Lou Room doubleheader in August with shows at 7 and 9 p.m.
- In addition to all our great Baltimore teams, we will host performers from Frederick, Md., Washington, D.C., State College, Pa., and Philadelphia.
- Season 17 will include some time off for holidays so we may not be able to schedule all teams. The Board is working on a plan to make those decisions.
- We are developing plans for a new program to help people create their own shows.

The Highwire Greenhouse

The Highwire Greenhouse will provide support for the development of new shows that go beyond a standard improv team. Like the show production process at The Hideout Theater in Austin, Texas, the Greenhouse will aid creators from developing the idea to casting your show, culminating with a live performance during a Highwire show.

We will solicit ideas during Season 16 for one show to debut in Season 17. We will meet with the producer to help develop the idea and support auditions and practices.

This program is designed for special thematic shows, especially narrative improv formats inspired by existing TV or movie projects. More details will be announced soon.

Education and Artistic Committees

As we continue to expand both our education and performance programming, we will work with the community to further our approach across a few areas:

- Developing post-Fundamentals classes (Skill Modules, Form Modules)
- Developing programs for students between classes or after classes for further reps, practice, support for team formation.
- Scheduling team submissions when demand exceeds stage time available.
- We plan to develop committees beyond the Board members to ensure a fair and representative group helping to make these decisions.

Volunteers

Please reach out to the Board if you want to help volunteer for events or with other tasks. The Board is currently discussing the best ways to recognize the work done by volunteers.

Ways to help:

Hosting Shows: We are building a guide to help people with hosting

Front-of-House: Each show could use assistance with checking people in and managing the space. We are also building a how-to guide for this

Online Tech: We can always use help managing the Zoom for online shows on Monday or Tuesday nights or Sunday afternoons

Anything else: What else are you good at or interested in? Let us know!

Thank You!
Time for Q&A

Meet the Board



Kristen McKenzie



Brian Shea



Katie Overbey



Geoff Taylor (*emeritus*)



Barry Wright



Cory Anotado



Brian James O'Connell