



## **About the Thrive! Employer Recognition Program (TERP)**

Thrive!'s Employer Recognition Program has different tracks for living wage employers and aspiring living wage employers. Whereas living wage employers already pay living wages, aspiring living wage employers have this as a goal, and make progress toward paying living wages over the course of the program. Details follow.

### **Program Goals**

The Thrive! Employer Recognition Program aims to:

- Reward employers currently providing or aspiring to provide the living wage rate
- Connect consumers to employers providing or aspiring to provide the living wage rate
- Provide employers with tools and incentives to increase workers' pay to the living wage rate
- Promote a just and sustainable economy

*Participating in the Thrive! Employer Recognition Program is a great way for local employers to set themselves apart in our community, to promote the fact that they acknowledge the value of their employees, and to be rewarded by local consumers who understand the value of a living wage.*

### **Benefits of Recognition**

- "Living Wage Employer" or "Aspiring Living Wage Employer" certificate and window decals to display at your place of business
- Your events, promotions, and sales highlighted on the La Plata County Thrive! Living Wage Coalition Facebook and Twitter Pages, electronic newsletter, and printed lists
- Publicity through advertisements in local media
- Special profile of your business on the Thrive! website
- Participation in press conferences and Thrive! events promoting the Employer Recognition Program and recognized employers
- Membership in a growing network of local employers dedicated to building a more sustainable economy

### **Eligibility Criteria for Recognition**

- Employer's business is located in La Plata County, Colorado and must employ at least one person.
- Endorse the Thrive! Living Wage Principle: "All workers should be paid a living wage."
- Compliance with health, safety, labor, and other laws. Employers may be denied recognition if health/safety violations, violation of labor statutes, or violation of other rights are brought to our attention.

**Recognized Living Wage Employers must meet the following criteria:**

- Pay all full and part-time, non-living-wage-exempt employees the living wage rate as calculated by Thrive! Living Wage Coalition (currently \$13.25/hour) or equivalent with basic needs benefits, tips, or commission.
  - An employer may offset the living wage rate by providing benefits that address basic needs (health insurance, food, and transportation). The wage rate and value of these benefits must total at least \$13.25/hour. If you offer these benefits, please contact Thrive!'s Employer Recognition Program Coordinator at [terp.thrive@gmail.com](mailto:terp.thrive@gmail.com) for the specific program requirements.
  - Non-living-wage-exempt employees who receive tips or commission must receive the living wage rate every pay period by adding wages and tips or wages and commission.
  - The following employee categories are exempt from the living wage for TERP purposes: An apprentice, an intern, a temporary or project-based employee working no more than 45 days per year, a minor working fewer than 35 hours per week, a new hire whose probationary period does not exceed 90 days, or an AmeriCorps member.
- Post a "Living Wage Recognition Information" poster provided by Thrive! in an area highly visible to employees and near required Colorado labor law poster.
- Notify Thrive! Living Wage Coalition immediately if no longer able to pay living wages.
- Understand that employees may have questions or concerns about the program. Further, it is important that employers agree not to take retaliatory action against employees raising questions or concerns. If questions or concerns about the program are raised, Thrive! will follow a set of protocols to obtain the information necessary to determine the appropriate response. If an employer is found not to be paying a living wage and is unable to adjust their wages, Thrive! will remove them from our recognition list in a non-public manner.

***Aspiring Living Wage Employers (not yet paying the living wage rate) must meet the following criteria:***

- Develop a written plan within 6 months for increasing wages to the living wage rate (currently \$13.25/hour), or equivalent with basic needs benefits, tips, or commission, for all employees who are not exempt from earning the living wage. Thrive! offers referrals to the Southwest Colorado Small Business Development Center at Fort Lewis College for up to **5 hours of free consultation** to help Thrive! Aspiring Employers develop a plan to pay the living wage rate.
  - An employer may offset the living wage rate by providing benefits that address basic needs (health insurance, food, and transportation). The wage rate and value of these benefits must total at least \$13.25/hour. If you offer these benefits, please contact Thrive!'s Employer Recognition Program Coordinator at [terp.thrive@gmail.com](mailto:terp.thrive@gmail.com) for the specific program requirements.

- Non-living-wage-exempt employees who receive tips or commission must receive the living wage rate every pay period by adding wages and tips or wages and commission.
  - The following employee categories are exempt from the living wage for TERP purposes: An apprentice, an intern, a temporary or project-based employee working no more than 45 days per year, a minor working fewer than 35 hours per week, a new hire whose probationary period does not exceed 90 days, or an AmeriCorps member.
- Make progress toward paying the living wage rate to all full and part-time, non-living-wage-exempt employees. Progress will be reviewed by Thrive! at *one year* from recognition. If no progress has been made, the aspiring living wage employer shall meet with the Small Business Development Center for consultation. Progress will also be reviewed by Thrive! at eighteen months and two years from recognition.

### **How to Apply for Recognition & Pay Application Fee**

1. Complete the appropriate online application form:
  - “TERP Application for Living Wage Employers” OR
  - “TERP Application for ASPIRING Living Wage Employers”

Both forms can be found at <http://www.thrivelaplata.org/get-recognized.html>.

2. Pay application fee using the online payment link (“Donate” button) at <http://www.thrivelaplata.org/get-recognized.html>.

Beginning in spring of 2017, Thrive! instituted a graduated application fee, based on number of employees, for employers applying for initial certification or recertification. This was done to aid in maintaining the staff and infrastructure needed to support Thrive!’s Employer Recognition Program. However, if the application fee poses a hardship for your business or organization, please contact the Program Coordinator to discuss other options.

**Payment of the application fee does not guarantee certification. If your application is approved for certification/recertification, this fee will not be required again for approximately 2 years upon submission of another application for recertification, if you choose to recertify. The application fee is as follows:**

- **Not-for-profit (nonprofits, faith communities, etc.): \$50** (equivalent of \$25 per year)
- **1-10 Employees: \$50** (equivalent of \$25 per year)
- **11-25 Employees: \$75** (equivalent of \$37.50 per year)
- **26-50 Employees: \$100** (equivalent of \$50 per year)
- **51 or more Employees: \$150** (equivalent of \$75 per year)

### **Initial Application**

An employer may submit an initial application at any time. **The Thrive! Recognition Committee reviews applications for initial recognition three times per year, in March, July, and November.** Initial Thrive! Living Wage or Aspiring Living Wage Employer Recognition is valid for between 20-28 months at the living wage rate at which an employer is recognized (see next paragraph). The application is considered confidential and privileged information. It shall only be available to Thrive! staff, Thrive! volunteers including the Recognition Committee, and the Thrive! Steering Committee. No copies shall be made or distributed.

### **Recognition Renewal**

To continue participation in the Thrive! Employer Recognition Program, Thrive! Living Wage and Aspiring Living Wage Employers must complete a recognition renewal form every two years. Renewal reviews are held annually in July. Living Wage Employer Recognition is valid for two years, except for the initial recognition period. Depending on when an employer is initially recognized, the initial recognition period is not necessarily two years, but no less than 20 months. See the Renewal Table below.

<b>Initial Month of Recognition Approval</b>	<b>Living Wage Recalculation (annually)</b>	<b># Months to come into compliance with updated living wage rate before renewal</b>	<b># Of months of initial recognition</b>	<b>Recognition Renewal Deadline</b>	<b>All following Recognition Renewals</b>
July 2019	June 2020	12	24 months	July 1, 2021	2 years
November 2019	June 2020	12	20 months	July 1, 2021	2 years
March 2020	June 2021	12	28 months	July 1, 2022	2 years
July 2020	June 2021	12	24 months	July 1, 2022	2 years

The living wage rate is calculated annually in June by Thrive! Living Wage Coalition. Thrive! will notify recognized employers of any updated rates annually after recalculation is complete and employers will be given at least one year to comply with the updated rate before their Recognition Renewal. Thrive! will send Recognition Renewal forms prior to expiration of employer's recognition period.

### **Example:**

November 2019: Business A is recognized as a Living Wage Employer.

June 2020: The **living wage is recalculated** and all recognized businesses are **informed**.

July 2021 (12 months later): Business A is required to **pay the June 2020 updated living wage rate**.

July 2021: Business A applies for **Recognition Renewal** at the June 2020 rate.

The initial recognition period (November 2019-July 2021) was 20 months. After this initial recognition period, Business A will always Renew in July every two years with notification 12 months prior in order to raise wages, if necessary, to meet the updated living wage rate.

### **Definitions**

**Living Wage:** Amount that a single individual must earn hourly to pay for basic necessities (housing, food, childcare and transportation) without public or private assistance.

**Living Wage Principle:** “All workers should be paid a living wage.”

**Apprentice:** Individual learning a trade, art, or skill by practical experience under skilled workers in exchange for work.

**Intern:** Student or graduate in a professional field gaining supervised practical experience in exchange for work.

**Temporary/Project-based Employee:** An “as needed” employee working intermittently and no more than 45 days in a calendar year.

**Minor:** Individual under the age of 18.

**New Hire:** An employee within their first 90 days of employment during which time the employee and employer are evaluating each other.

**AmeriCorps member:** An employee of the federal government in a service position through one of the following programs: AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps VISTA, or AmeriCorps State and National.

**TERP Living-Wage-Exempt Employee:** An apprentice, an intern, a temporary or project-based employee working no more than 45 days per year, a minor working fewer than 35 hours per week, a new hire whose probationary period does not exceed 90 days, or an AmeriCorps member.

**TERP Non-Living-Wage-Exempt Employee:** Full or part-time employee who does not fall into the living-wage-exempt category as defined above.

**Independent Contractor:** Contractor working as and when required, not regularly, and paid on a freelance basis. Must receive a 1099 form. **Independent Contractors paid an hourly rate and consistently working over 8 hours a week must make \$1.22/hour more than the current living wage rate to qualify for inclusion in the program.** The additional wage requirements are meant to cover individual tax requirements.

**Tipped Employee:** An employee consistently relying on tips for a portion of their income.