
A Portrait of Canadian Fundraising Professionals – Results of the *AFP/CPRN Survey of Fundraisers 2002*

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Executive Summary

July 2003

Research Paper W|20 is available at
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Executive Summary

For many years, charitable organizations in Canada have benefited from the work of paid fundraising professionals. However, the retreat from direct program funding by governments over the past decade has made non-profit organizations more dependent on fundraising than ever before. Many established organizations with a long history of fundraising have increased their efforts, while other organizations have only recently entered into fundraising. So it is not surprising that the number of paid fundraisers has grown.

Yet, in spite of their increasingly prominent role, we know very little about the characteristics of the individuals who work in a fundraising capacity. What are the professional challenges they face, their working conditions, and their views on regulatory and legal issues?

Associations of fundraising professionals play a key role in providing their members with the tools they need to be effective professionals in their field, including promulgation and promotion of an enforced code of ethics and standards of professional practice, providing training and certification, and undertaking research relevant to fundraising practices and charitable-giving issues. In order to continue to serve the needs of fundraising professionals well, professional associations in the field need to understand what their members perceive the issues to be and what information and tools they need to be effective fundraisers working to the highest standards of the profession. Furthermore, the absence of such information poses a challenge to the development of initiatives directed toward increasing the human resource and financial capacities of the non-profit sector in Canada.

To begin to fill these information gaps, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN), in partnership with the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and with the assistance of a number of other professional fundraisers' associations in Canada, developed and fielded the *AFP/CPRN Survey of Fundraisers* in the fall of 2002. The results of that survey are summarized here. When reviewing the survey results, it is important to bear in mind that the survey sample consisted exclusively of fundraisers who were members of professional associations – this is not a census of fundraisers in Canada. Further work is needed to identify fundraisers who are not members of professional associations and determine the extent to which the survey results reported here reflect the demographic and educational characteristics, working conditions, and views of all individuals working as fundraisers in Canada.

Key Findings

Demographic characteristics

Close to 70 percent of the survey respondents were women; this is similar to the representation of women in the non-profit sector as a whole. Survey respondents were somewhat older than the average for the labour force as a whole and for managers and professionals overall. Again, this also reflects the age profile of paid employees in the non-profit sector. Educational attainment among survey respondents is very high compared to workers in the non-profit and quasi-

government sectors and compared to managers and professionals in the labour force as a whole – 70 percent have a university degree and 24 percent have a graduate or professional degree

Years of experience

While slightly more than 40 percent of respondents had 10 or more years of experience working as a paid fundraiser, 29 percent had less than five years of experience in the field. There is a relationship with organizational size – 43 percent of respondents who worked for small organizations (defined as having generated less than \$250,000 in funds raised in the previous year) had less than five years of experience as a paid fundraiser. Close to half of those who were new entrants to the field were over 40 years old. This suggests that fundraising may be at least a second career for many in the field. While further research is needed, it is also possible that some of these older entrants to the field had worked in the non-profit sector previously and became fundraisers in response to organizational needs.

Characteristics of employers

One-third of survey respondents worked for a foundation – organizations established explicitly for the purpose of raising/or disbursing funds, often linked to sister organizations like hospitals or educational institutions. The remaining two thirds worked for organizations that were not foundations.

Most workplaces were small in terms of number of employees working at the location – almost 60 percent worked in establishments where there were fewer than 25 employees. There was greater variation in organizational size when measured in terms of funds raised in the previous year – whereas 17 percent of respondents worked in establishments that had generated less than \$250,000, 22 percent worked in establishments that had generated \$10 million or more.

Fundraising was a relatively new activity for many organizations. While 15 percent of the survey respondents worked for organizations that had been in existence for less than 10 years, 24 percent of them worked for organizations that had less than 10 years of experience with fundraising. Over half of respondents worked for organizations that had been in existence for 25 years or more; 39 percent of them had employers with 25 or more years of experience with fundraising. Relatively recent organizational entry into fundraising was most evident for respondents working for organizations in the social services sub-sector.

Implementation of new fundraising strategies was widespread. Larger organizations (measured by charitable funds raised) were most likely to report having increased the number of employees engaged in fundraising. This was the case for employers in the education sub-sector and to a lesser extent, in the health sub-sector. Smaller organizations, especially in the social services and the arts, culture and humanities sub-sectors, were more likely to report having introduced new types of fundraising initiatives than having increased the number of paid employees in fundraising.

Hours, schedules and work-life balance

Long weekly hours of work, while common among survey respondents, were comparable to average hours reported by all managers and professionals in the labour force, though in both cases, the incidence was greater than for the labour force as a whole. Female respondents, however, were more likely than other female managers and professionals to report working 50 or more hours per week. Part-time employment among female respondents was very rare.

Survey respondents were also more likely than the labour force as a whole to report working in the evenings and/or on the weekends. This is a reflection in part of the nature of the work of this occupational group, with special events often taking place outside normal working hours. Job demands also play a role. Two thirds of respondents reported that their jobs were very hectic, just over half reported that their jobs were very stressful, and about 45 percent said that their jobs left them little time to get things done.

Both schedule of work and working overtime offer the potential for conflict between work and personal lives. Indeed, the percentage of respondents reporting that their jobs allowed them to balance their work and family, at 59 percent, was much lower than for the labour force as a whole (75 percent) and for other managers and professionals in the labour force (71 percent).

Salaries and benefits

As one would expect, salaries tended to be higher for respondents in more senior positions. But that being said, about one-third of CEOs earned no more than \$60,000 annually and almost one-quarter of Directors of Development earned less than \$50,000 at the time of the survey.

Earnings tended to be higher for respondents who worked for a foundation and for those working for organizations with the highest revenues raised in the previous year. Among those working for organizations with revenues of less than \$250,000, over one third earned less than \$40,000. Differences across sub-sectors are also apparent, with close to half of respondents working for organizations in the social services and the arts, culture and humanities sub-sectors reporting earnings of less than \$50,000.

To a certain extent, these differences reflect ‘ability to pay’ and, consequently, how effectively organizations can attract and retain experienced workers for these positions. In fact, further analysis shows that less experienced respondents tended to work for the smaller organizations and for organizations in the social services and the arts, culture and humanities sub-sectors. More experienced respondents tended to be employed by larger organizations, with longer experience with fundraising.

With respect to access to non-wage benefits, survey respondents compare very well to the Canadian average. About three-quarters of respondents reported having a pension plan/employer contributions to an RRSP and about 80 percent had supplemental health and dental benefits, percentages that are well above the average for the labour force as a whole. Again, the incidence of benefit coverage was lower for respondents working for small organizations, especially in the arts, culture and humanities sub-sector.

Education, training and professional development

In addition to completion of post-secondary studies, often including completion of one or more university degrees, many survey respondents reported that they had completed, or were working toward completion of further formal training leading to professional certification in fundraising. Overall, about half of respondents had completed, or soon would, a formal program of study leading to professional certification. Given the experience-related requirements for certification, very few respondents who had less than five years of experience in the field had completed certification; the percentage with professional certification rose with years of experience.

Respondents also participated in other professional training. About two-thirds had taken a course on leadership, team building or communication, 43 percent had taken a course on fundraising ethics, and about 46 percent had taken a course on government regulation or legislation regarding fundraising.

Overall, 63 percent of respondents agreed that they got the training they needed to do the job effectively. Agreement with this statement rose with years of experience. At just over 50 percent, respondents in small organizations and those in the arts, culture and humanities sub-sectors were least likely to agree that they got the training they needed to do the job effectively. Similarly, satisfaction with training opportunities available to them was highest for those working for larger organizations. Satisfaction with training opportunities was lowest for those employed in the social services and the arts, culture and humanities sub-sectors.

Overall, two thirds of respondents reported that there was job- or career-related training they had wanted to take in the previous year, but which they had not taken. Respondents were similar to the Canadian labour force as a whole in that the most common reason for not taking training they wanted was because they were too busy at work. But, compared to the Canadian average, much higher percentages of respondents cited high course costs as a barrier to training.

Integration of fundraising with other functional areas

Respondents were asked to report on their perceptions of the boards of directors of their organizations. This is inherently a subjective question that will reflect the extent of direct contact that a respondent has with board members.

Respondents employed by foundations were much more likely than others to have positive assessments of their boards – 62 percent of respondents working for foundations agreed that board members had realistic expectations of fundraising activities compared to 45 percent of respondents in other types of organization. The same relationship is evident with respect to perceptions of the involvement, support and knowledge of board members. Similarly, respondents working for organizations with more years of experience with fundraising and for larger organizations (measured by revenues generated) also had more positive perceptions of board members. These respondents were also more likely to report that their organization had formal policies and procedures that addressed a wide range of issues relating to fundraising.

In contrast, respondents working for smaller organizations and organizations with relatively few years of experience with fundraising and often employing new entrants to the field were more likely to report that board members had unrealistic expectations of fundraising activities and were unsure of how to provide support to fundraising staff.

These results suggest that many smaller non-profit organizations are further down the learning curve with respect to fundraising and that board members have not necessarily been recruited with their skills as fundraisers in mind. Such organizations also have further to go in integrating fundraising with other functional areas in the organization and in developing formal policies and procedures governing fundraising activities undertaken by the organization.

Job Satisfaction, job tenure and job turnover intentions

Respondents to the survey were a dedicated group, with attitudes about and commitment to the organization and to the job all being very high. Overall, satisfaction with a number of job dimensions tended to increase with organizational size. This was the case for the job in general, pay and benefits, access to training, the ability to meet career goals, and job security. In fact, the percentage of respondents working for large organizations agreeing that their chances for career advancement within the organization were good was two-and-a-half times that of respondents working in the smallest organizations. Clearly the ability of small organizations to meet the employment and career needs of employees is an issue.

About one quarter of respondents reported that they were dissatisfied with their pay. Respondents with less than five years of experience as a paid fundraiser were most likely to be least satisfied with pay, job tasks, ability to meet career goals, and training opportunities.

Survey respondents were less satisfied with their ability to achieve work-life balance (59 percent agreeing they were able to balance their work and personal lives) than other working Canadians (75 percent) and than managers and professionals in the labour force as a whole (71 percent). Dissatisfaction with work-life balance was slightly higher for women compared to men. The lowest-ranking job satisfaction dimension was workload – only about half of respondents reported that they were satisfied with this dimension of their work. There was relatively little variation on this point across organization size, type, or years of experience as a paid fundraiser.

Among new entrants (less than five years of experience) only half were certain or fairly certain they would still be working as a fundraiser in five years and 59 percent thought that the field would be attractive to young people. As one might expect, respondents with more years of experience had more positive views on fundraising as a career. There is a strong association with organizational size – respondents working for the smallest organizations were very uncertain regarding their longer term employment prospects with their employer, were less likely to be certain they would still be working as a fundraiser in five years, and were less likely to think that fundraising would be an attractive career option for young people.

There is evidence of a considerable degree of job mobility among survey respondents. The percentage of respondents who had had one or more other employers in the previous three years

was especially high in the arts, culture and humanities sub-sector, at 65 percent, and more than half of respondents working for organizations in the social services and health sub-sectors reported having had one or more other employers in the previous three years.

At least three broad factors were associated with job turnover intentions. The first relates to earnings – two-thirds of those planning a job change within the past year reported that it was to earn a higher salary. Others were motivated by career considerations – 48 percent were seeking more interesting or challenging work and 40 percent were looking for better opportunities for career advancement. The third set of reasons related to the quality of the work environment – 46 percent of those who had planned to change jobs cited frustration with the work environment, 36 percent cited a lack of recognition, and almost 30 percent said that it was because they faced unrealistic expectations or that their workplace was unsupportive.

Views on selected policy issues

As noted earlier, associations of fundraising professionals provide a range of services, among them training and certification programs, fundraising codes of ethics, and information and research on best practices. An important motivation for undertaking the survey was to collect information from respondents on their views on issues facing the profession, information that is needed by associations as they continue to develop programs that meet the needs of practitioners.

Views on most policy issues did not vary much by organization size, with two notable exceptions. First, respondents working for the largest organizations in terms of revenues generated through fundraising were more likely to agree that there is a need to establish standard rules for calculating and reporting fundraising costs. Second, only 56 percent of those working for the smallest organizations reported that they knew where to go for guidance if faced with an ethical question or dilemma; this compares to 69 percent of those who worked for the largest organizations.

Respondents also cited concerns about issues relating to the ethics of some fundraising practices. The question posed in the questionnaire was very broadly stated, however, and further research is needed to provide more detailed information on what issues need to be addressed specifically.

Close to 60 percent of those with several years of experience in the field felt that individuals entering the fundraising profession should be required to complete a core set of fundraising courses. Overall, close to three-quarters of respondents agreed that individuals employed as fundraisers should be required to register and abide by an ethical code of conduct and that that code of conduct should be established by an association of fundraising professionals, rather than by government.

A focus on small fundraising units

For this analysis, respondents were divided into two groups – those working for organizations where there were at most two individuals working as fundraisers (small shops) and those working where there were three or more employees working as fundraisers (large shops). Given their specialized nature, respondents working for foundations, as consultants, and in religion

were excluded from the analysis. Overall, 36 percent of respondents were included in the analysis.

The great majority of respondents who worked for organizations that had raised less than \$250,000 in the previous year worked in small fundraising shops; virtually all who worked for the largest organizations (more than \$4 million in funds generated in the previous year) worked in large units. The largest shares of small shops were found in the arts, culture and humanities sub-sector (52 percent) and social services (44 percent). Almost 40 percent of respondents who worked in small shops were employed by organizations with less than 10 years of experience with fundraising. Small shops were also more likely than large ones to consist of respondents who were recent entrants to the field. Respondents with more experience were more likely to be working in large fundraising shops.

There were few differences between those in small and large units in terms of intrinsic rewards associated with their jobs – in both cases, the vast majority of respondents cared about the fate of the organization, were proud of it, and were committed to the organization and to their jobs. There were also few differences in their ratings of satisfaction with the job in general, with the schedule of work, with their job tasks, and with the number of hours, with the great majority of respondents being satisfied with all of these dimensions.

The largest contrasts were with respect to extrinsic rewards: respondents working in small shops were less likely to agree and more likely to disagree that their pay was good, benefits were good or their job security was good. They were especially likely to disagree that their chances for career advancement in the organization were good. Respondents working in small shops were also less likely to agree that they have the training they need to be effective in their jobs, that they receive mentoring/coaching, that they have clear guidelines as to what is required of them in their jobs, or that there are clear goals and objectives for their jobs. They also tended to think there was not adequate staff to do the job.

Respondents working in large shops tended to be much more positive regarding their longer-term career prospects, both with their current employer and as a fundraising professional. The majority of those working in small shops, however, were uncertain as to whether they would be working for their current employer in five years time; close to one-third were uncertain as to whether they would still be working as a fundraiser; and only slightly less than 60 percent were certain that fundraising would be an attractive career option for young people in the future.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey results suggest that the labour market for fundraising professionals in Canada is a segmented one. At one end of the spectrum are highly experienced fundraising professionals, many of whom work for organizations that have a long history of participating in fundraising activities, well-developed fundraising units, and boards of directors who are well-versed in the role of fundraising in their organization and the role they should play in support of that function. Levels of satisfaction with pay, working conditions, and training opportunities tend to generally be relatively high for this group.

At the other end of the spectrum are individuals who work for small organizations, often on their own or with one colleague at most. Many of these individuals and the organizations they work for are relatively new to fundraising and so there is little opportunity to learn from more experienced colleagues. Levels of satisfaction with pay, working conditions, opportunities for training, and job security are significantly lower than those found among more experienced fundraisers working in the larger, more mature organizations. Often, individuals working in this segment of the fundraiser labour market lack the training to know how to be effective in their jobs, do not have clear guidelines as to what is expected of them, and do not know where to go for advice and guidance.

Last, given their size, small organizations have limited ability to offer their employees opportunities for career advancement. Therefore, as new entrants gain experience and are ready to progress in their careers, they must look outside of their current employer for new opportunities. Thus, over time, more experienced employees tend to migrate to the more mature part of the non-profit sector, while smaller employers once again recruit new entrants.

This segmentation parallels the “cleavage” in the non-profit sector between small and large organizations noted by Scott (2003).

Associations of fundraising professionals already actively address the need for widely accessible information, guidance and training for practitioners in the field and provide a variety of services to address those needs. Our recommendations build on those efforts, encouraging their expansion where they already exist or their implementation where they do not.

We encourage the profession to continue to develop and expand outreach efforts aimed at small organizations and new entrants to the field in particular. Such outreach efforts should also be directed to boards of directors that have had little experience with fundraising methods and strategies. Members of associations of fundraising professionals can themselves seek out opportunities to sit as members of the boards of non-profit organizations in order to act as mentors for board members and for the organization as they work to develop their fundraising capacity. Training is also essential, especially for new entrants to the field and for small organizations. The profession should focus on the development of training programs that are affordable and easily accessible.

Employers in the non-profit sector have a critical role to play as well. They need to deepen their understanding of best practice with regard to human resource management and work to develop positive and supportive work environments that incorporate a range of intrinsic and extrinsic job rewards.

Finally, organizations in the non-profit sector face a number of common challenges. Sector councils have proven to be effective mechanisms that allow common challenges to be addressed collectively. We therefore recommend that the federal government establish a non-profit sector council that would focus on identifying the human resource needs and challenges faced by organizations in the sector. When establishing such a non-profit sector human resource council, it is important that the vital contribution that professional associations, like those made up of fundraising professionals, make both to their membership and to the sector as a whole be

recognized and that they be regarded as essential partners in the design and implementation of a non-profit sector human resource council.

Future research needs

The *AFP/CPRN Survey of Fundraisers 2002* marks a major step forward in improving our understanding of human resource issues faced by fundraising professionals, who are a critical component of the non-profit sector labour force. More research is needed, both to further advance our understanding of the fundraising profession and to add to the base of knowledge about other occupational groups working in the sector.

In particular, qualitative studies of selected organizations could provide more detailed understanding of the human resource challenges being faced by non-profit sector organizations. Work needs to be done as well to identify the characteristics, work experiences and training needs of individuals working as fundraisers but who are not affiliated with a professional association.

Finally, on-going research is needed to identify the skill and training needs of workers in the non-profit sector, the key elements that determine job satisfaction, and the patterns and trends respecting recruitment and retention, all of which have implications for the longer-run stability of the non-profit sector in Canada.