

# Issues of Compensation in the Volunteer Sector: A Salaries and Benefits Survey of Regina's Charitable Human Services Agencies

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## Introduction

For some time now the issue of salary levels in community-based agencies has been a focus of discussion among community stakeholders and at the United Way of Regina. In January 2002 the Director of Community Services at the United Way, Karen Rowan, recruited Professor Luc Thériault of the University of Regina to work with a small committee in order to develop a data collection strategy that would provide information for future discussion of the issue. The committee developed a short survey questionnaire on the basis of a previous research instrument used by the Muttart Foundation in 1998.<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire was sent by mail to Regina-based agencies in February 2002. The replies were received in March of that year and entered into an SPSS database during the month of April. In May and June, the results were analyzed and summarized in this report.

## Survey Methodology

The data presented and analyzed in this report are based on a mail survey of voluntary human service agencies from Regina and its surrounding area. Some of the agencies in this sample are member agencies of the United Way of Regina while others are registered agencies of Volunteer Regina. All of them have charitable status.

The questionnaire was designed in three basic sections (see Appendix). The first section was intended to collect some general information from the agencies regarding budgets and number of employees. The second section focused

## Acknowledgement

The author of this report would like to thank the Executive Directors from volunteer agencies in Regina who took the time to take part in the survey. Also acknowledged are Karen Rowan (United Way of Regina), Pat Clark (SCEP Centre), Shannon Jolly (Canadian Mental Health Association [Regina]), and David Sax (Catholic Family Services) for their contributions as members of the advisory committee. Doug Elliott of *Sask Trends Monitor* helped to locate the data for the Health and Social Services industry group in Saskatchewan in the Labour Force Survey of Statistics Canada. Jennifer Scullen was instrumental in designing and constructing the database for the study.

on three generic paid positions (Executive Director, Program Manager, and Support Staff) and asked for details on salaries and bonuses, hours of work, and work experience. The last section covered other types of benefits such as insurance and pension plans.

In total, 67 questionnaires were sent out and 37 usable responses were returned to the researchers. This yielded a 55 per cent response rate, which is considered good for a mail survey. Because the aggregate characteristics of all Regina-based charitable human service agencies are unknown to the researchers, it is not possible to assess precisely how representative the sample is. However, we know that there are (approximately) 90 such agencies in the city, hence the sample of 37 agencies should be fairly representative of the Regina-based *charitable* human service agencies, although not necessarily of all *nonprofit* organizations active in this sector in Regina.

## Results

### *Characteristics of the Organizations Surveyed*

Taken as a whole, the 37 agencies covered by this report have a combined annual budget of over \$24 million. Note that 7.8 per cent of this comes from the United Way or from other foundations. The bulk of the funding is, in fact, provided by different levels of government (46.5 per cent) and by a variety of other sources (45.7 per cent), including personal donations. This means that a typical agency included in the study has a total annual budget of nearly \$650,000 of which about \$50,000 comes from the United Way (and/or other foundations), \$300,000 is provided by governments, and the remaining \$300,000 by other sources. There is a large variation however in the total budgets of the agencies surveyed, with the lowest annual budget being \$71,500 and the largest \$2,379,700.

Together, these 37 agencies employ a total of 673 people, including 360 permanent full-time employees. A typical or average agency might employ something like 19 employees, 10 of which have full-time, permanent status. At least three out of four employees (77 per cent) working in these agencies are women. In most agencies (31/37 or 84 per cent) the employees are *not* unionized. Again, we find a large variance in the total number of employees since one agency has only one paid employee and another has 106.

The survey attempted to gather information on the number of volunteers used by these organizations and on the estimated number of volunteer hours they provide annually. The results show extreme variability in these areas and average figures per agency can be very deceiving.<sup>2</sup> In total, the agencies used the services of 5,688 volunteers but these are not necessarily different individuals since the same person can, and sometimes does, volunteer for several agencies. The estimated total number of volunteer hours per year is around 655,000 (just over 115 hours per volunteer per year). Assuming an average wage of

\$15/hour, this would mean that the 37 agencies surveyed in this study are contributing the equivalent of about \$9,825,000 annually to the community.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Executive Director*

The position of Executive Director is described as follows in the questionnaire:

The Executive Director is the most senior paid position in the organization and typically reports to the Board. The Executive Director is responsible for overseeing Board policy; as well as planning, budget and setting strategic directions for the organization. This position also manages the day to day decision making and functioning of the organization. Other common titles for this position include Chief Executive Officer, General Manager, or Agency Co-ordinator.

This generic description is described as a “good” or “fair” match by 97 per cent (all but one) of the agencies surveyed.

The Executive Directors of the agencies surveyed have an average age of 46 and 70 per cent of them are women. They are very well educated, since more than three out of four (78 per cent) have a B.A. degree or higher level of education. In fact, about one out of five Executive Directors (22 per cent) has a postgraduate university degree. (Note that, among the Executive Directors, the education level is not correlated with the salary.)

On average, the Executive Directors in our sample have been in their current positions for six years and have worked in the community service sector for just over 17 years. Generally, they supervise directly between eight and 10 employees. Their positions specify a standard work week of 37 hours but they report actually working about 43 hours a week.

The lowest annual salary reported for a full-time Executive Director is \$15,300 and the highest is \$69,400. The typical entry level salary is just below \$40,000 and the average annual salary of an Executive Director is approximately \$42,000. Typically, the salaries have been reviewed and adjusted nine to 12 months previously. In one extreme case, however, we found that the salary had not been reviewed or adjusted for more than 15 years! The payment of bonuses (based on performance or other criteria) to Executive Directors is not a very common practice as only seven of 37 agencies (19 per cent) report such annual payments, ranging between \$400 and \$1,200. In a majority of cases, the bonuses are paid in the winter (December).

### *The Program Manager*

The position of Program Manager is described as follows in the questionnaire:

This is a paid position typically reporting to the Executive Director or an equivalent position. This position is typically responsible for managing a program, service or function for the organization.

This generic description is described as a “good” or “fair” match by 94 per cent of the responding agencies.

The Program Managers of these agencies have an average age of 42 and 87 per cent of them are women. They are well educated, since 66 per cent of them have a B.A. degree or higher level of education; however, only a few of them (six per cent) have a postgraduate university degree.

On average, the Program Managers in our sample have been in their current positions for six years and they have worked in the community service sector for just over 10 years. Generally, they supervise directly between three and six employees.

Technically, the Program Managers have a standard work week of 35 hours but they actually report working about 36 or 37 hours a week.

The entry level salary for a Program Manager is just below \$30,000 and the highest salary reported is around \$50,000. The average annual salary of a Program Manager is around \$31,000. Typically, the salaries have been reviewed and adjusted 11 to 12 months previously. Again, in one extreme case, we found that the salary had not been reviewed or adjusted for more than 15 years! The payment of bonuses (based on performance or other criteria) to Program Managers is not a common practice as only six of 37 agencies (16 per cent) report such annual payments, ranging between \$100 and \$1,000 and averaging around \$500. These bonuses are paid in the winter or the fall.

### *The Support Staff*

The position of a member of the Support Staff is described as follows in the questionnaire:

This is a paid position that offers clerical or database support within the organization. Typical responsibilities include clerical support to ED and program staff, office management, and reception duties.

This generic description is described as a “good” or “fair” match by 93 per cent of the responding agencies; however, the proportion of agencies answering “good” is only 37 per cent. Hence, the match or fit with the generic description proposed is not as close as seems to be the case for the Executive Directors and the Program Managers.

The Support Staff members of these agencies are generally in their mid- to late thirties (average age of 38), and almost all of them (98 per cent) are women (one man or two per cent). Only seven per cent have a B.A. degree and none has a graduate degree. Still, three out of five (77 per cent) have some form of postsecondary education or training.

The Support Staff members in our sample have been in their current positions for about three or four years on average and they have worked in the community sector for five or six years. They usually do not supervise directly any employees.

Support Staffers positions offer a standard work week of 37 hours but staffers report working closer to 38 hours a week.

The entry level salary for Support Staff is generally around \$22,000. The highest salary we found is about \$36,500 and the lowest reported is \$12,000. The average annual salary is about \$25,000. Typically, the salaries have been reviewed and adjusted nine to 12 months previously. Again, in one entrance case, we found that the salary had not been reviewed or adjusted for more than 15 years! The payment of bonuses (based on performance or other criteria) to Support Staffers is not a common practice as only seven of 37 agencies (19 per cent) report such annual payments. They range between \$100 and \$600 and average around \$375. These bonuses are paid in the winter or the fall.

*The Benefits Offered*

The last part of the survey attempted to obtain information about the prevalence of different types of benefits offered to employees in the agencies studied. We are pleased to report that the package of benefits offered is fairly extensive in most cases as can be seen in Table 1:

**Table 1: Benefits Offered**

Type of Benefit	Proportion of Agencies Offering
Compassionate Leave	92%
Paid Professional Development	89%
Extra Vacation Benefits	85%
Group Life Insurance	80%
Dental Care Benefits	78%
Disability Insurance	78%
Health Care Benefits	69%
Pension Plan (various types)	59%
Same Sex Partner Benefits	58%
Accident Insurance	57%
MEAN BENEFIT INDEX (x/10)	6.2 / 10

The benefits most frequently available are *compassionate leaves*, *paid professional development* benefits and *vacation weeks* over the legally mandated three weeks per year. The benefits that are least frequently available are the *accident insurance*, *same-sex partner benefits* and a *pension plan*.<sup>4</sup> Overall in this sample the availability of benefits is good as indicated by an average score of 6.2 out of 10 on the cumulative benefit index. (This index has a range of zero to 10.) An agency offering none of the benefits listed in the above table gets a score of zero and an agency that offers all of these benefits gets a score of 10.<sup>5</sup>

We asked questions about the percentage of contributions paid by employees and employers on the pension plans and group life schemes. Due to confusion in the wording of these questions, the answers provided are not reliable enough to form the basis of an informed analysis.

## **Discussion**

Governments are the most important sources of funding for the agencies surveyed, but the reliance of these agencies on public funds in this study (47 per cent) is lower than the 69 per cent figure reported in the Muttart survey. Of course, great care should be taken when making comparisons with that earlier study. It had a much larger sample of 455 agencies, covered two provinces (Alberta and Saskatchewan) instead of just one city, and included agencies with various areas of focus (e.g., Arts & Culture, Sport & Recreation, etc.), not just human service agencies.

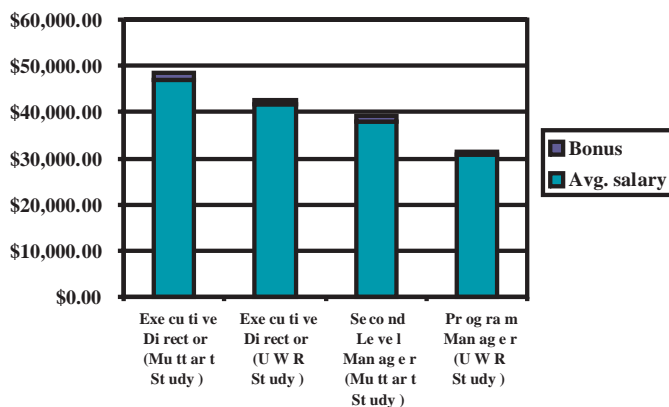
The generic descriptions offered in the questionnaires are found to match very closely the actual positions existing in the agencies, although this is less true for the Support Staff than for the Executive Directors and Program Directors. Nevertheless, this result strengthens belief in the validity of the study.

One interesting point to note is that Executive Directors report actually working several hours (about six) every week over their normal standard week, while the Program Managers and Support Staff actually work only one or two hours more than their standard work week. This tendency for the Executive Directors to work several extra hours per week was also found in the Muttart study.

Both studies found that the Executive Directors have been in their current positions for about six years but the number of years of experience in the sector reported in the Muttart study (12 years) is a little lower than the 17 years we are reporting. The results of the two studies regarding the levels of experience of the Program (or second level) Managers are very close.

The average salaries reported in our study are generally lower than those found in the Muttart study for both the Executive Directors and the Program Managers as can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 2:

**Figure 1: Average Annual Compensation**



**Table 2: Compensation Offered**

	# of Respondents	Average Salary	# of Respondents	Average Bonus
Executive Director (Muttart Study)	143	\$46,800	36	\$1,672
Executive Director (UW Regina Study)	28	\$41,737	7	\$ 900
Second Level Manager (Muttart Study)	91	\$38,036	18	\$1,102
Program Manager (UW Regina Study)	26	\$30,772	6	\$ 512

Again, we must be cautious in interpreting this difference and should not take it as indicating that levels of compensation are declining. Perhaps several Alberta-based agencies in the Muttart sample had very large budgets enabling them to provide better compensation or agencies outside the human services sector may have different compensation levels .

Compensation levels vary considerably within Regina’s voluntary human service agencies and the factor that has the greatest impact on compensation levels seems to be the size of the agency budget. This was also found to be true in the Muttart study.

The employees working in the agencies studied are usually female (approximately 77 per cent), with a lower proportion of women found among Executive Directors. For the Executive Directors, we found significant differences in entry level (minimum) and average actual salaries between men and women in favor of men.<sup>6</sup> The mean entry level salary for female Executive Directors is \$34,370 compared to \$46,440 for males. The mean Executive Director's salary is \$38,060 for women and \$50,930 for men. These differences cannot be explained by differences in education levels, years of experience (in the current position or in the sector), the numbers of employee directly supervised, or even the total number of employees in the agency as we found no significant differences between men and women in these areas.<sup>7</sup> The key factor seems to be the size of the agency's budget. As previously mentioned, agencies with larger budgets pay higher salaries to their Executive Directors. A comparison shows that male Executive Directors led agencies with an average annual budget of \$938,580 compared to only \$471,410 for female Executive Directors.

Another finding that is consistent with the results of the Muttart study is that bonuses, while not widespread, are nevertheless paid to nearly 20 per cent of Executive Directors and over 15 per cent of Program Managers.

The benefits packages offered by most agencies are found to be relatively extensive, except that fewer than six agencies out of 10 offer a pension plan. Offering a pension plan seems difficult for agencies with smaller budgets as the presence of a pension plan is strongly related to the size of the agency's total budget.<sup>8</sup> The average total budget of agencies offering a pension plan is \$873,700 compared to only \$281,600 for agencies not offering a pension plan.

When looking at comparable benefit information between this study and the one conducted for the Muttart Foundation, we find a lower proportion of agencies offering benefits in the Regina study. This is perhaps not surprising as the Muttart report noted that Saskatchewan responding agencies were less likely to provide benefits than those from Alberta. The most striking difference is found for accident insurance – offered by 78–80 per cent of reporting agencies in the Muttart study, versus only 57 per cent in the Regina sample. The only identifiable benefit that is more frequently offered by the Regina-based agencies studied here is the pension plan (59 per cent in this study versus 52 per cent in the Muttart study).

### *Comparisons Outside the Sector*

We tried to see, more generally, how the results we found could be compared with Labour Force Survey<sup>9</sup> (LFS) data for selected paid employees in Saskatchewan. It is not possible to make a precise match of occupations from available Statistics Canada data. However, after some discussion, it was agreed that, as a proxy for equivalent occupations, we would look at employees in the Health



and Social Services industry group who are also in the Social Sciences, Government Services, and Religion occupation group.

For that comparison group, LFS data were found to be remarkably close to those of our study in terms of average age, gender, work experience in current position (tenure), and education level for both the Executive Directors and the Program Managers.

As can be seen by looking at the last column on the right of the summary table appearing in the Appendix, the standard and typical work weeks of the comparison group (37 and 43 hours) are almost the same as those found in this study for the Executive Directors. The average salary for the comparison group (\$38,400) is situated just between the average salaries of the Executive Directors (\$41,700) and that of the Program Managers (\$30,700) in our study.

The average working experience in the current position for the comparison group (7.6 years) is also very similar to that found for the Executive Directors (6.8 years) and the Program Managers (6.4 years) in the Regina agencies surveyed here. The educational level of the comparison group is similar to that for the Program Managers (around 65 per cent with a university degree), but a little inferior to the relatively impressive result found for Executive Directors (78 per cent with university degree and 22 per cent with postgraduate education). Finally, the proportion of women found in the comparison group is very close to that found among the Executive Directors (72 per cent vs. 69 per cent) in this study. The average age of respondents from the comparison group (43) is between the average age of the Executive Directors (46) and the average age of the Program Managers (42) in our study.

Hence, this comparison group would appear to be the right one to select for tracking any change over time using the baseline information provided by this study for Regina-based charitable human service agencies.

## **Conclusion**

The agencies in this survey are primarily reliant on the various levels of government for funding. The contribution to the community they make is considerable, as indicated by not only the services provided but also the volunteered time added to that service and by the economic impact of the wages paid to employees.

The charitable human service sector in Regina is mostly led and staffed by women who work extra hours every week. These employees are from the “boomer” or “tail-boomer” (in the case of the support staff) generations and therefore middle-aged. Unfortunately, many are not covered by a pension plan, particularly those in agencies with smaller budgets. The senior staff in these agencies is well educated, especially at the Executive Director level, and has significant experience in the sector.

The compensation levels in the sector vary considerably among agencies and are primarily dependent upon total agency budgets, rather than on the education or experience levels of staff members. We noted that salaries tend to be significantly different between male and female Executive Directors because agencies led by men have generally much larger budgets than agencies led by women. The compensation levels found in this survey are a little lower than those found in the Muttart study, but comparable to the compensation provided to Saskatchewan residents working in a similar occupational category according to Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey.

**Appendix 1**  
**SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

	<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Program Manager</b>	<b>Support Staff</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>*Equivalent Occupation</b>
Average Budget				\$649,600	
Average Number of Employee (Total)				18.7	
– F.T.				9.7	
– P.T				6.5	
– Casual				6.5	
– FTE				12.3	
Average Age of Staff (Estimated)				36.8	
% of Women (approx.)				77%	
% Unionized				16.2%	
Average Number of Volunteers				158 <i>Median:</i> 49.5	
Average number of Volunteer hours per year per agency				19,265 <i>Median:</i> 2,712	
Good/Fair Match to Position Descriptions	97.2%	93.8%	93.4%		

Average Standard Workweek (hours)	36.5	34.3	36.6		37.2
Average Typical Workweek (hours)	43.3	35.7	37.6		43.2
Average Entry Level Salary	\$37,994	\$27,560	\$22,323		
Average Salary	\$41,737	\$30,772	\$24,709		\$38,400
Average Maximum Salary	\$45,204	\$33,223	\$27,060		
Salary Review	1 Year Ago (Median )	1 Year Ago (Median )	1 Year Ago (Median )		
Salary Adjustment	9.5 Months Ago (Median )	11 Months Ago (Median )	9 Months Ago (Median )		
Average Bonus	\$900	\$512	\$362		
Time of Year Bonus Paid	Winter	Winter or Fall	Winter or Fall		
Average Experience (Current Position)	6.8 Years	6.4 Years	4.1 Years		7.6 Years
Average Experience (in Sector)	17.2 Years	11.3 Years	5.9 Years		
% with B.A.-level Education or above	77.8%	65.6%	6.7%		64%
Average Number of Supervised Positions	10.1	5.7	0.3		
% of Women	69.4%	86.7%	96.7%		72%
Average Age	45.7	42.1	38.5s		43

*Source:* Survey questionnaire (N=37) and Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS).

*Note:* A precise match of occupations is not possible from available Statistics Canada data. As a proxy for equivalent occupations, employees in the Health and Social Services industry group who were also in the Social Sciences, Government Services and Religion occupation group were chosen. These statistics from the

Labour Force Survey of Statistics Canada were computed and prepared by *Sask Trends Monitor*.

## FOOTNOTES

1. KPMG (1998) *What's It Worth? A study of compensation paid in charitable organizations in Alberta and Saskatchewan*. (Edmonton: The Muttart Foundation.)
2. The average (or mean) number of volunteers per agency is 158 but the median value is 50. Note that the mean is computed by adding up the values of several observations and dividing by the number of observations. The median represents the value of the "middle" case in a rank-ordered set of observations.
3. Using an approximate Saskatchewan average weekly earning of \$600 (*Sask Trends Monitor*, April 2002) and dividing it by 40 hours gives us a \$15/hour rate. On this, see: Ross, D. (1994), *How to Estimate the Economic Contribution of Volunteer Work*. (Ottawa: Voluntary Action Directorate – Department of Canadian Heritage.)
4. The pension plan is often not offered by agencies with small budgets.
5. There is one agency in the sample offering none of these benefits and, at the other end of the spectrum, six agencies offering nine of the 10 benefits listed. No agency offers all 10 benefits. The median score on the index is 7/10.
6. Comparing men and women using an ANOVA (analysis of variance) technique we find  $F = 10.10$ , d.f. = 1 ( $p < 0.01$ ) for the minimum (entry level) salary and  $F = 7.87$ , d.f. = 1 ( $p < 0.01$ ) for the average salary.
7. Although male Executive Directors do tend to lead agencies employing a somewhat larger staff.
8. Comparing the total budgets of agencies with and without a pension plan using an ANOVA technique we find  $F = 14.68$ , d.f. = 1 ( $p < 0.001$ ). With ANOVA we can investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference in the means (e.g., for the same variable between two groups).
9. Statistics Canada's LFS is a monthly telephone survey of approximately 5,000 Saskatchewan residents providing information about the characteristics of adults and their labour market activities.