

44,000 Atlantic residents volunteer in arts and culture organizations

January 17, 2007

Atlantic arts and culture organizations rely on volunteers to fulfill many roles, including serving on boards of directors, organizing events, working in gift shops and performing various administrative tasks. Without volunteer support, many arts and culture organizations would be unable to achieve their mandates. In 2004, volunteers accounted for almost 75% of the overall workforce in not-for-profit heritage organizations and over 40% in non-profit performing arts companies in Canada.

Given the importance of volunteers, a new report from Hill Strategies Research, entitled *Volunteers in Arts and Culture Organizations in Canada in 2004*, provides an important indicator of the health of the arts and culture sector and evidence of community engagement in arts and culture organizations, including organizations involved in visual arts, architecture, ceramic art, performing arts, museums, zoos, aquariums, media and communications as well as historical, literary and humanistic societies.

About 44,000 Atlantic Canadians volunteered in arts and culture organizations in 2004. The 44,000 volunteers, 2.3% of all Atlantic residents (15 or older), contributed about 5 million volunteer hours to arts and culture organizations in 2004. The 5 million hours that Atlantic residents volunteered in arts and culture organizations is equivalent to about 2,600 full-time, full-year jobs. This volunteer contribution can be valued at \$65 million.

In 2004, about 13,000 New Brunswickers volunteered in arts and culture organizations. This represents 2.0% of the New Brunswick population (15 or older), the lowest such percentage among all provinces. These volunteers contributed about 1 million hours – the equivalent of about 700 full-year full-time jobs – worth an estimated \$18 million to arts and culture organizations.

In Nova Scotia, there were an estimated 23,000 volunteers in arts and culture organizations in 2004. These volunteers contributed about 3 million hours to arts and culture organizations during the year, about the equivalent of 1,500 full-year full-time jobs. This contribution is worth approximately \$37 million.

The estimates of the number of volunteers in Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland and Labrador are not reliable.

Other key findings of the report are:

- Nearly three-quarters of a million volunteers – a record number – assisted Canadian cultural organizations in 2004;
- Territorial, Saskatchewan and B.C. residents are most likely to volunteer;
- A significant number of hours is contributed by each cultural volunteer;
- There is strong competition for volunteers from other non-profit sectors;
- Increased visibility is needed for cultural organizations to recruit more volunteers; and
- Highly educated and high income Atlantic residents are more likely to volunteer in cultural organizations than other demographic groups.

The report examines data from custom tabulations that Hill Strategies Research commissioned from Statistics Canada based on the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). This national survey questioned a very large and statistically representative sample of Canadians 15 or older (20,832 people) about their volunteer work with all types of not-for-profit organizations in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Additional information about the key findings is available below. For media interviews, please contact Mr. Kelly Hill, President of Hill Strategies Research, Hamilton, Ontario, (905) 528-8891, kelly@hillstrategies.com, www.hillstrategies.com.

Nearly three-quarters of a million volunteers assisted Canadian cultural organizations

On a national level, 729,000 Canadians 15 or older, or 2.8% of the population in this age range, contributed volunteer labour to arts and culture organizations in 2004. The 729,000 volunteers contributed a total of 88 million hours to arts and culture organizations in 2004, equivalent to about 46,000 full-time, full-year jobs and valued at about \$1.1 billion.

This represents a record number of volunteers in arts and culture organizations in Canada – higher than amounts captured in surveys conducted in 2000 and 1997. Because of changes in survey content and methodology, precise comparisons with previous data cannot be made. However, it is clear that there was an increase in volunteerism in arts and culture organizations between 2000 and 2004.

Territorial, Saskatchewan and B.C. residents most likely to volunteer

The report provides a summary of the number of volunteers in each province as well as rough estimates of the number of volunteer hours, full-time equivalent jobs, and value of volunteer labour by region. The analysis shows that residents of the three northern territories are most likely to volunteer for arts and culture organizations (3.9% of territorial residents did so in 2004), followed by Saskatchewanians (3.6%), British Columbians (also 3.6%), Manitobans (3.1%), Albertans (3.0%) and Nova Scotians (3.0%). The arts and culture volunteer rate in Ontario matched the Canadian average (2.8%). The two other provinces with reliable data have arts and culture volunteer rates below the Canadian average: Quebec (2.2%) and New Brunswick (2.0%).

Significant number of hours from each cultural volunteer in Canada

The 88 million hours contributed to arts and culture organizations represents an average of 120 hours per volunteer, which is a relatively high contribution when compared with other non-profit organizations. Religious organizations rank first, with an average of 126 hours per volunteer, followed by organizations in law, advocacy and politics (123 hours) and sports and recreation organizations (122 hours). Arts and culture organizations rank fourth, with 120 hours per volunteer, slightly more than social service organizations (117 hours) and hospitals (114 hours).

The relatively high average hours volunteered in arts and culture organizations implies that Canadians who are committed to the arts and culture provide a significant level of support.

Strong competition for volunteers

There is certainly strong competition for volunteers from other non-profit sectors. With 88 million in volunteer hours – 4.7% of total hours volunteered in all types of non-profit organizations in Canada – the arts and culture rank sixth out of 11 types of non-profit organizations. Sports and recreation organizations, social service organizations, and religious organizations each receive between 16% and 18% of all volunteer hours (respectively 361, 343 and 321 million hours). Arts and culture organizations receive fewer hours than education and research organizations (218 million hours) or development and housing organizations (115 million hours), but the same amount as health organizations (88 million hours). Organizations involved in law, advocacy and politics (75 million hours) receive slightly fewer volunteer hours than arts and culture organizations.

Increased visibility needed

Given that the most common motivation cited by volunteers is making a contribution to their community, the report recommends that the cultural sector should work to increase the visibility and perceived community impacts of cultural organizations. Given that two important barriers to increased volunteerism are that people were not asked to volunteer or did not know how to get involved, the report suggests that cultural organizations clearly demonstrate their need for volunteers and how potential volunteers can get involved. In addition, cultural organizations – if they do not already do so – should recognize that volunteering is a true exchange, with volunteers requiring interesting and challenging positions and non-profit organizations requiring that certain activities get done.

Highly educated, high income Atlantic residents more likely to volunteer

Compared with the overall arts and culture volunteer rate in the region (2.3%), some groups of Atlantic residents have relatively high arts and culture volunteer rates: those with a university degree (5.8%) and those with household incomes of \$50,000 or more (2.8%). Unlike some other jurisdictions, Atlantic men have an arts and culture volunteer rate (2.2%) that is essentially equal to women (2.3%). There is not a significant difference in volunteer rates by age.

Other factors that have an influence on individuals' appreciation of the arts and culture cannot be analyzed from this survey. For example, it is not possible to examine individuals' previous experiences with the arts, particularly arts education experiences.

Full report also available

The full report, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ontario Arts Council, is available free of charge on the Hill Strategies Research website (<http://www.hillstrategies.com>) and the websites of the funding organizations. The report is the 16th in the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series from Hill Strategies Research.