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Conducting Fundraising Campaigns Tops the List of Most Important Investments for Charities

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Conducting Fundraising Campaigns Tops the List of Most Important Investments for Charities

Toronto, ON – Most (71%) Canadians ‘agree’ (25% strongly/47% somewhat) that ‘charities play an important role in society as a change agent to address needs not being met by government or the private sector’, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. In fact, just one in ten (10%) ‘disagree’ (93% strongly/7% somewhat) with this premise, while 19% neither agree nor disagree. In contrast, just 13% ‘agree’ (3% strongly/10% somewhat) that ‘charities do not make much difference’, while most (71%) ‘disagree’ (34% strongly/37% somewhat) that they don’t make a difference.

Likely functions of the fact that most believe charities have value, seven in ten (70%) Canadians say they’ve made a financial donation to charity or a non-profit organization in the past twelve months, with Albertans (79%) and Atlantic Canadians (78%) being the most likely to say so, followed by those living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (76%), British Columbia (74%), Ontario (70%), and Quebec (56%). Those over the age of 55 are most likely (83%) to have donated, followed by those aged 35 to 54 (67%) and 18 to 34 (58%).

Most Canadian donors give to more than one cause, some giving to six or more (14%). Most give to 2-3 (43%) or 4-5 causes (18%), while just one quarter (24%) of the 70% who have made a donation only give to one charity.

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Topping the list of why Canadians give is a desire to help those in need (44%). Other reasons include knowing the charity does good work (34%), wanting to give back to the community (23%), that it's the right thing to do (22%), that the charity has a good reputation (22%), a gift in memoriam (19%), it feels good (18%), to support friends/family (18%), and for a tax receipt (18%). One in ten (11%) say they donate because they've been personally affected by what the charity does, that they've benefited from those services and want to give back (11%), and that it's a part of their religious beliefs (9%).

Only a minority (48%) 'agrees' (8% strongly/40% somewhat) that 'most charities in Canada have the plans and resources – human, physical, financial and technological – to satisfactorily carry out their mandates'. Nearly one quarter (23%) 'disagree' (5% strongly/18% somewhat) that they have these needed resources, while three in ten (28%) don't know either way.

Canadians have some strong opinions about how charitable organizations should operate:

- Nine in ten (91%) 'agree' (50% strongly/41% somewhat) that 'charities should have a strategic plan for how they intend to achieve their objectives'.
- Most (86%) 'agree' (40% strongly/46% somewhat) that 'charities that address similar issues should work together and share plans and resources'.
- Eight in ten (82%) 'agree' (34% strongly/48% somewhat) that 'charities should strive to maintain a certain level of standards by measuring their performance and comparing themselves to benchmarks'.

Similar to private and public sector organizations, charitable sector organizations have administrative costs to run their operations. Thinking about which areas are most important for charities to invest in to carry out their mandates, conducting fundraising campaigns

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(mailings, special events, planned giving efforts, etc) rises to the top of the list (54%). This activity is followed by regulatory compliance (40%), infrastructure investments (35%), salaries (20%), or cash reserves (15%). One in four (23%) don't know which of these functional areas should be a top-priority investment for charities.

While a majority (78%) of Canadians are closer to the opinion that 'not-for-profits need to spend less money on administration and more on the causes they support', two in ten (22%) more closely align with an opposite point of view, 'supporting the idea of a not-for-profit organization using their donation to attract and retain well-trained, experienced management to lead the organization effectively'. In fact, three quarters (74%) believe that 'charities should spend resources on more innovative ways to increase donations', while just one quarter (26%) are close to the opinion that 'charities should continue to spend resources on traditional ways of fundraising'.

Interestingly, only 15% of Canadians 'strongly agree' that, 'in general, charities have enough staff dedicated to fundraising to achieve their objectives', while another 43% somewhat agree. One quarter (25%) 'disagree' (4% strongly/21% somewhat) that they do, while 18% don't know.

Eight in ten (83%) of Canadians need to know a charity's purpose before they donate, and a similar proportion (79%) say it's important to know if their donation made an impact.

However, just one in three (34%) are actually aware if the charities they support have gotten closer to achieving their objectives.



Two in three (63%) 'agree' (15% strongly/48% somewhat) that 'the charities they support should invest in education tools such as pamphlets, brochures, publications, etc, that show their impact on the community they serve and the cause they support'.

A strong majority of more than nine in ten respondents (95%) believe that charities should follow an ethical code, seven in ten (69%) have been made aware of an ethical code used by a charity they have supported. In fact, three in ten 'agree' (6% strongly/24% somewhat) that they would 'continue to donate to a charity if they knew it used professional fundraisers that receive a percentage of donations as part of their compensation' – although this is a contentious area as a majority (63%) 'disagrees' (38% strongly/25% somewhat) that they would continue their support.

By a considerable margin, more Canadians agree than disagree that charities in Canada act responsibly with the donations they receive (57% agree vs. 21% disagree), that they are trustworthy (55% agree vs. 18% disagree), and that they are well-managed (54% agree vs. 22% disagree). In addition, more Canadians agree than disagree that charities in Canada act responsibly with the donations they receive (57% agree vs. 21% disagree), that they are trustworthy (55% agree vs. 18% disagree), and that they are well-managed (54% agree vs. 22% disagree).

Almost two thirds (65%) say fundraisers offer accurate portrayals of their organizations (23% often, 42% sometimes), and almost six in ten (58%) say they offer useful information (15% often, 43% sometimes). A minority of less than four in ten (12% often, 26% sometimes) say that fundraisers are important in making decisions about where to donate their money.



Six in ten Canadians believe charities do a good (47%) or excellent (14%) job of thanking donors for their gifts. Less than half (45%) agree with the statement that not receiving a thank-you message would decrease their likelihood of giving in the future (14% strongly agree, 31% somewhat), while the majority of Canadians disagree with this statement (30% somewhat disagree, 22% strongly disagree).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between November 15-30, 2011, on behalf of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. For this survey, a sample of 1,027 adults from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error.

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