



# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Updated: January 2024



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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we gather and work on Indigenous lands that are unceded territories. As a Food Bank, we are grateful for the opportunity to offer fresh and nutritious food to those in need from the land and waters that have been taken care of by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial.



## Welcome Volunteers!

*With record-breaking need, we're proud to be one of the remaining food banks that have continued registering new clients in need and keep up with the growing demand we see in our communities.*

*Year after year, we see record-breaking numbers of new clients and Agencies seeking support from the GVFB, with inflation, cost of living, chronic illness, job loss, and forced relocation as top drivers. We see parents working full-time and unable to make ends meet, in a position where they are skipping meals so that their children can eat. We see seniors and people on disability pensions whose fixed income can no longer keep pace with the cost of living.*

*After 40 years of growing demand, we are more thankful than ever for the ongoing support of our dedicated volunteers. Whatever the future might hold, our goal is to be here to support the people and Agencies in need and you make it possible to do this. From our hearts, I thank you!"*



**Message From David Long, CEO**

## Who We Are

The Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) is a registered charity that was originally set up as a temporary relief to the hunger crisis in 1983, and has grown significantly in the four decades since then. Today, the GVFB supports approximately 16,000 individuals monthly across Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster, and the North Shore, and provides food weekly to 130+ Agencies to fuel their food programs. 60% of our food goes to individuals, 40% goes to Agencies, and the food consists of 60% fresh items.



### MISSION

Providing healthy food to those in need.



### VISION

Healthy communities through fair and effective food systems.



### VALUES

Our values represent how we work with each other in service to our clients and our community.

## Get Connected

The Volunteer Handbook provides important information as you begin your volunteer journey. We encourage you to explore the GVFB website, read the [2023 Impact Report](#) and follow us on social media to learn more about your community impact.

Please share your feedback, questions, and/or concerns directly with the Volunteer Engagement team.

Don't forget to tag us on social media, as we would love to highlight your photos, videos, and posts that capture your GVFB experience!

**Email:** [volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca](mailto:volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca)

**General Inquiries:** [www.foodbank.bc.ca](http://www.foodbank.bc.ca)

**Phone:** 604-880-7073

**Head Office:** 8345 Winston Street, Burnaby, BC

**Social Media:** @VanFoodBank





## Who We Support

The GVFB supports people struggling with food insecurity. Food insecurity applies to individuals, couples and families who cannot afford the quality and quantity of food they need to avoid hunger. This can range from often having to buy low-cost/low-nutrition foods as the only option, or simply not being able to afford groceries at all because of financial challenges.



Clients are required to show government-issued ID, one piece of recent proof of address, and government-issued ID for all dependents living in the household.

Once they are registered they receive a client card they can pick up once a week. If they cannot pick up for medical reasons, they can complete a Permission to Pick Up Form.

In addition to supporting clients, we also provide food support to 130+ Agencies. The support we provide is designed to meet the needs of a variety of food programs, from small scale food banks serving up to 450 people, to monthly community kitchens. Our Agencies include housing agencies, neighbourhood houses, women's shelters, after school programs, transition houses, First Nations centres, and many others.

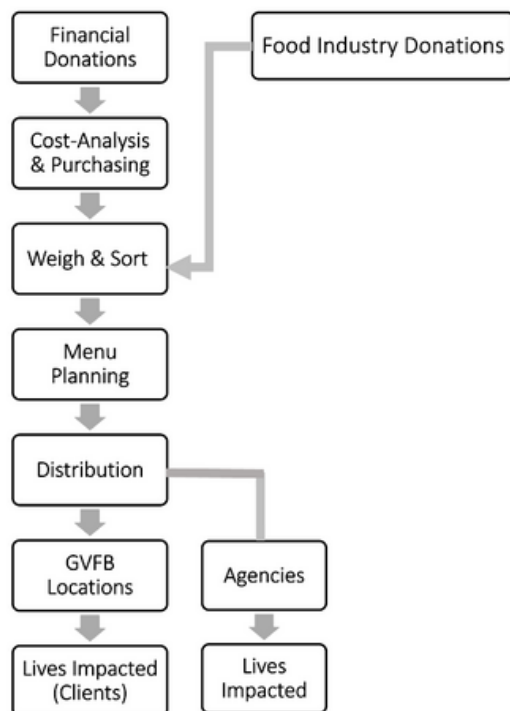


## Flow of Operations

The GVFB does not receive ongoing funding from the government and exists largely through the generosity of the public, our industry partners, and applicable grants.

Fundraising plays a vital role in generating donations. We host annual fundraising events such as the Foodstock Fundraising Festival and the Fore for Food Golf Tournament, as well as participate in larger campaigns like CBC Day and BC Thanksgiving Food Drive.

Staff supports each function of the organization, from fundraising and menu planning to distributing food on the front line. Therefore, each volunteer shift is led by a staff member who will provide training and support. See the flow chart below to learn more about how donations get distributed.



## Reporting to Staff On Site

Volunteers will be oriented, trained, and supported by GVFB staff on every shift. Currently, there are 70+ staff across all departments ranging from development and communications to operations and finance.

Staff are also onsite to communicate organizational policies, determine the flow of operations, delegate tasks, and create a positive experience for everyone. Together, staff and volunteers help create healthier communities!

## Food Distribution and Waste

60% of the food distributed by the GVFB goes to individuals at four locations across our catchment area: Vancouver, Burnaby, and the North Shore. We support an ever-growing average of 16,000+ lives a month, 25% of whom are children, and 20% are seniors.

The remaining 40% of the food distributed goes to our network of Agencies.

Food that does not meet our distribution standards is composted through three different methods:



General food items that are spoiled, rejected, or unsafe to consume will be composted and picked up by Waste Collective.



After sorting through fresh and dry donations, food that cannot be used will be redirected to ReFeed turning it into healthy livestock feed, organic fertilizers, and soil amendments.



items that are damaged, expired and packaged are sent to Fraser Valley Renewables to produce renewable natural gas and high-nutrient compost.

Other materials, such as cardboard, hard plastic, and glass, are also recycled. All GVFB waste gets sent to the Burnaby location before disposal.





# Volunteer Experience

## Volunteer Community

The GVFB is supported by individuals, as well as community, corporate, and school groups. Over 1,000 registered volunteers support our various departments: Agencies, Warehouse, Distribution, Events, Finance, and Development. This diverse, generous, and dedicated volunteer community ranges from high school students looking to gain experience to retirees interested in building new social connections.

The top three motivations for volunteering with the GVFB are:

- **Opportunity to give back to the community.**
- **Socialize and make new connections.**
- **Gain school hours and/or work experience.**

## Volunteer Engagement Team

The Volunteer Engagement Team (VET) is responsible for posting the monthly volunteer schedule based on the organization's operational needs. We are also responsible for communicating program changes, developing volunteer policies, hosting in-person orientations, providing additional support and feedback to volunteers, and organizing special events.

The VET aims to prepare volunteers for their shifts before arriving on site. Feedback about your volunteer experience is most welcomed and encouraged.

## Evaluation and Feedback

We are committed to providing volunteers with a positive and fulfilling experience. We encourage you to share feedback about your involvement and satisfaction by completing our biannual feedback survey. Based on feedback results, the volunteer team will better understand service gaps and continue to improve its overall program. Volunteers are also welcome to contact [volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca](mailto:volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca) or 604-880-7073 with questions or concerns.

## Volunteer Portal

The GVFB uses an electronic volunteer management system called Better Impact. As a volunteer you will access the schedule through My Impact page.

This platform allows us to review volunteer applications, share opportunities, highlight special events and connect the GVFB to its hardworking community of volunteers.



My Impact can be accessed on a desktop or laptop computer. You can also download the app on Android and IOS devices.

## Conflict Resolution

The GVFB promotes and supports an empowering conflict resolution approach that is resolved with open dialogue, respect, direct communication, kindness, and mutually satisfying outcomes. We encourage the active resolution of conflicts at the earliest opportunity.

Please immediately notify a GVFB staff member if you experience concerns while volunteering onsite.

## Dismissal

Volunteers of the GVFB are expected to follow the Volunteer Code of Conduct. Volunteers may be dismissed from their volunteer duties for the following reasons:

- Unwillingness to accept direction and decisions made by GVFB staff.
- Violence or inappropriate physical contact that could be perceived as actual or threatened violence.
- Using inappropriate or abusive language directed at an individual related to the person's gender, gender identification, sexual orientation, racial background, religion, or physical ability.
- Visible intoxication and/or unsafe behaviour deemed contrary to the mission, vision, and values of the GVFB.
- Theft, including falsification of GVFB records.

## Resignation and Reactivation Accounts

Volunteers can resign from the GVFB by notifying the Volunteer Engagement team in writing, either electronically or by letter.

Accounts that have not logged at least one shift within 12 months will be archived due to inactivity. This helps with planning and recruitment. Contact the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca](mailto:volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca) to re-activate your profile.

Due to ongoing operational changes, volunteers who have not supported the organization within two years must complete a virtual orientation refresher that reviews expectations, volunteer opportunities, and GVFB policies.

Additionally, you will be required to submit a new Criminal Record Check (CRC). CRCs are valid for five years.

## Volunteer Responsibilities

The GVFB believes that safety is the responsibility of everyone. Volunteers must take reasonable precautions to ensure their safety and follow safety procedures directed by onsite staff. Volunteers will be given a brief overview of safety procedures at their designated volunteer sites before their shift begins.

- If an injury occurs during your volunteer shift, volunteers must seek first aid and inform staff immediately.
- Volunteers must inform staff of witnessed incidents or unsafe situations.
- Practice safe lifting or ask for help.
- No phones or headphones during your volunteer shift.

### Volunteer Safety

Volunteers are not insured under WorkSafe BC at any of our volunteer sites. The Disclaimer and Waiver of Liability must be reviewed and agreed upon during the initial Volunteer Application process and before volunteering onsite.

All near misses, incidents, or concerns are to be reported to a GVFB staff person. Please note that you have a right to refuse unsafe work.

Each GVFB site has P.P.E. gear available for volunteers, such as reflective vests, steel toe covers, masks, and disposable gloves.



Food Distribution volunteers help in the parking lot to ensure clients, staff, and other volunteers are safe while entering and leaving the distribution site. They provide directions, guide pedestrians, set up designated disabled parking spots, and are the first point of contact for most clients.

Food Distribution volunteers must be at least 18 years old and feel comfortable and confident speaking with the public.

**Reflective vests are provided and required to be worn at all sites where machinery is present. Additionally, no running, head phones or cell phones are allowed on the warehouse floor.**

## Volunteer Expectations

<b>Respect</b>	We believe everyone has the right to be treated with patience, understanding, dignity and respect; be treated equally, a safe physical and emotional space. The Respect Policy can be found on My Impact page or by emailing <a href="mailto:volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca">volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca</a> .
<b>Attendance</b>	Arrive on time and commit to the entire duration of the shift. During your shift, everyone is required to wear flat, closed-toe shoes and comfortable clothing. Depending on the role and season, additional layers or items may be needed, such as sunglasses, a hat, and sunscreen.
<b>Cancellation Policy</b>	You can cancel up to 24 hours before a shift starts. Event shifts require 48 hours' notice. Visit My Impact page to cancel your shifts. Contact the Volunteer Engagement Coordinator for last-minute cancellations. See Individual Cancellation Policy on page 9.
<b>Photography</b>	Photos and videos are not allowed at sites without GVFB approval, and consent from clients and volunteers. Client privacy is important to us. Thank you for your help in protecting their confidentiality.

## Volunteer Requirements and Policies

### Minimum Age

The minimum age to volunteer at the GVFB for safety reasons is 15, and a signed Youth Consent form is required by the parent/legal guardian for all youth under 18. Depending on the role, further age restrictions may apply. For example, the minimum age to volunteer in Agencies is 16, and Distribution is 18.

### Criminal Record Check

All individual volunteers are required to complete the CRC form. This is a free process offered through the GVFB. Once received, this form will be sent by the Volunteer Engagement team to the Ministry of British Columbia to be reviewed and processed. CRC applications will need to be renewed every five years.

Should you be requested by the Ministry to complete additional fingerprinting, the GVFB will reimburse you

for the cost. Please keep the receipt and submit it directly to [volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca](mailto:volunteer@foodbank.bc.ca).

If the Ministry flags your CRC, we will ask that you discontinue your volunteer duties until the GVFB receives a clearance letter.

### Cancellation Policy

Volunteers are an integral part of the GVFB and help to maintain our organization's operational flow; we require all volunteers to be familiar with and adhere to our Volunteer Cancellation policy.

We require a minimum of 24 hours notice so that there is an opportunity to fill your shift. You can remove a shift from your schedule on My Impact page up to 24 hours before the shift. If you need to cancel less than 24 hours before your shift starts, we require you to contact the Volunteer Engagement Coordinator directly.



Event-specific shifts require at least 48 hours' notice. For cancellations within 48 hours of your scheduled shift, please contact our Community Events team through either of the following methods:

- Email: [events@foodbank.bc.ca](mailto:events@foodbank.bc.ca)
- Text/Phone: (604) 619-3634



## Missed Shifts

- 1st “no-show” – the volunteer team will email you about your missed shift and ensure you are aware of our cancellation policy.
- 2nd “no-show” – the volunteer team will reach out via phone to check in about your missed shift and remind you of our cancellation policy.
- 3rd “no-show” – the volunteer team will pause access to your My Impact account until there is further conversation and a clear commitment to following the Volunteer Cancellation policy.

Continued missed shifts without adequate notice will lead to permanent termination of volunteer duties.

## Volunteer Recognition

We are committed to celebrating volunteers based on their generous contributions. As an active volunteer, you have the opportunity to receive volunteer swag, a confirmation letter, and a reference letter based on hours and shifts completed.

You can also attend our annual social event during National Volunteer Week and have the chance to receive one of the GVFB volunteer awards for the ‘Most Volunteer Hours Donated’ or ‘Most Volunteer Shifts Completed.’

## Volunteer Accomplishments

You will receive a volunteer t-shirt once you have completed five shifts. Staff members will hand out the shirt during your next shift. We encourage volunteers to wear the shirts while they volunteer, however it is not mandatory. Additional accomplishments will be recognized throughout the year.

## Letter of Confirmation and Reference Letter Requests

Volunteering is a great way to gain transferable skills for school and work. We provide reference letters after the completion of 80 hours or a confirmation letter after 3 hours. Letters must be requested through the Volunteer Engagement team. Please provide at least 48 business hours' notice.

## We do not provide:

- verbal references
- reference forms supplied by other organizations
- reference letters to anyone who has not volunteered at the GVFB for 12 months or longer.

## Volunteer Appreciation

Volunteer efforts are also highlighted on social media platforms such as Instagram and in our quarterly newsletters. It is important for us to connect volunteers across different locations and showcase the impact with the broader community.



## Volunteer Opportunities

Once accepted, you can access various opportunities across our organization, from direct food distribution to community events. Opportunities are based on operational needs, and therefore, some roles may not be offered year-round.

### Administration

Support a variety of departments at the Burnaby Head Office. Volunteer roles include reception, inbound and outbound data entry, and other temporary projects. These shifts require volunteers to work independently and complete training shifts onsite.

Staff on site: Depends on the role



### Agencies

Experience the Vancouver and Burnaby Markets as they provide weekly pick-up opportunities for our Agencies. Agencies can access fresh food from our coolers and freezers, and they also have access to staple non-perishable items. Volunteers support by maintaining the flow of foot traffic, rotating products, and restocking shelves to ensure they can access healthy options for their programs.

Staff on site: Agencies Operations Lead and Associate



### Community Engagement

Community events are held throughout the year to promote the GVFB, educate the public about what we do, and generate donations. Events range from golf tournaments (Fore for Food) and grocery campaigns to festivals and seasonal events like Foodstock. Volunteers support the Community Engagement Team with setting up and taking down materials, collecting 50/50 funds, promoting the GVFB at an information booth, and so much more!

Staff on site: Community Engagement Coordinator, Community Engagement Assistant, Team Leads





## Food Distribution

Directly distribute food at one of our three locations: Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster. Distribution provides one-on-one interaction with food bank clients who need weekly food support. Volunteer duties include line management, distribution of food, managing recycling and other tasks as needed. Each shift requires volunteers to work together and provide healthy food to those in need.

Staff on site: Distribution Coordinators



## Warehouse

Support the Operations department and experience the dynamic GVFB Warehouse. Each shift varies to support our daily needs. Volunteer duties can include assembling nutrition program packs, date and quality checking donations, building orders, and assisting with general warehouse cleaning. Sign up to see behind-the-scenes of the GVFB!

Staff on site: Sort Coordinators



## Food Donations

To support these communities, we receive safe, pre-consumer, quality food from businesses such as farms, food wholesalers, large chain distribution warehouses, retail stores, and grocers. Some examples of these industry donations are:

- Excess/overage of crops from BC farms
- Direct donations from retailers with food that is close to best before date
- Direct donations from warehouses that has not yet hit the retail shelves, most of it perishable, fresh and nutritious
- Food that has been frozen on or before its best before date

After much consideration, as of January 2021, we are no longer accepting food collected from food drives.

This decision applies to fresh food and non-perishables of all kinds. We made this decision for three reasons:

- **Unhealthy Food Donations** – the food we distribute is packed with nutrition, and our menus are dietician-designed; most of the food we receive from food drives is neither.
- **Labour Intensive** – the support required for food drives is labour-intensive and an inefficient use of volunteer hours.
- **Better Buying Power** – we can buy more and better food with our buying power (averages 2:1) because of our industry partnerships and the volume of food we purchase.

## Guideline for Food Sorting

Donations are sorted and packed by volunteers at the GVFB Warehouse. Once items are palletized and tagged, they are stored in racking until distribution. Therefore, it is important to carefully check the overall condition and date listed on each item.

All volunteers should be familiar with the definitions of Best Before dates and Expiry dates. Please review the following definitions that only apply to unopened items.

### Best Before Date

This date is set by the manufacturer to assure the customer of the product's freshness and quality. If stored properly the unopened product can be safely consumed past this date. Manufacturers create BBDs to indicate when they believe the food should be BEST consumed before the flavour, texture, or appearance might change.

However, most foods are safe and nutritious to eat for varying periods well after their BBD when they are properly stored, such as canned goods, dry goods, yogurt, eggs and much more! This information could be listed on the item as Best Before, Use by, or B.B./M.A.

### Expiry Date

Items with Expiry dates must not be packed or distributed past their date. This specific date is based on the nutritional content and when it is no longer consumable. This information could also be listed as EXP. Very few foods have expiry dates; baby formula and baby food are examples of food that expires and are unsafe to consume afterwards.



## Food Quality

If the date is acceptable then you must inspect the overall condition of the product. This includes the label, seal, dents and any additional red flags such as rust, bulging, and mold. Please familiarize yourself with the following images and examples:

Labels	Accepted	Rejected
Torn but include the full ingredients		
Moldy paper or plastic		
Dents		
Shallow dent with soft edges		
Sharp dents along the seam		
Deep dents that crease or cause sharp corners		
Side dents with sharp points at either end		
Side dents that deform the bottom of the can		
Seals		
Outer packaging is open but the inner bag is sealed		
Inner seal, tamper resistant tape, or connecting link is missing or broken		
Food is leaking under the rim		
Additional Red flags		
Insects or animal feces found inside the product or on the packaging	Homemade goods	Bulging or swelling
Unusual product separation	Alcoholic beverages	Cracks or chips in plastic or glass
Mold on the outside or inside of a product or packaging		





*We appreciate your time and dedication to making a difference in our communities. With your support, we can provide healthy food to those in need sustainably into the future!*



*Providing healthy food to those in need.*





