

„IMPROVING VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT IN  
NORDIC/BALTIC FOOD BANKS“

# NORDIC/BALTIC VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES – BEST PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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Lithuanian charitable foundation "Maisto bankas" ("Food Bank") in summer 2018 had been awarded by grant of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Grant Programme for Nordic-Baltic Non-Governmental Organisations' to implement the project "Improving volunteer management in Nordic/Baltic food banks". This project has been implemented in partnership with Estonian Food Bank "Eesti Toidup-pank" and Danish Food Bank "FødevarerBanken". The aim of the project was to share best practices of volunteer management knowledge, skills and systems applied by Nordic and Baltics food banks in order to help those hunger relief and resource recycling non-profit agencies to organize one of most important resources needed to achieve their mission – the volunteers.

Rapidly growing food banks in both Baltic and Nordic countries strongly rely on volunteer involvement in their daily operations. Volunteers drive vans collecting food, help to handle, sort and pack food in warehouses, and deliver food to social organization or needy families, help to run major fundraising event, to name but few most important areas.

During the project "Improving volunteer management in Nordic/Baltic food banks" volunteer coordinators of Lithuanian, Estonian and Danish food banks had collected and analyzed their best practices of volunteer management via organized study visits and research. The findings were put into the Nordic/Baltic volunteer management guidelines which will be disseminated among the food banks and other organizations fighting food waste and poverty in the Baltic/Nordic region as well as presented at the conference held in Vilnius in June 27, 2019.

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## 2 ABOUT BALTIC/NORDIC FOOD BANKS

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A food bank is a non-profit, charitable organization that distributes food to those who have difficulty purchasing enough to avoid hunger. The world's first food bank was established in the US in 1967, and since then many thousands have been set up all over the world. The first European food bank was founded in France during 1984. Soon after the food banks had been established in many countries of Western Europe. The European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA) was launched on 23 September 1986. Between 1988 and 1992 FEBA supported the development of food banks in Spain, Italy, Ireland followed by Portugal, Poland, Greece and Luxembourg from 1994 to 2001. The number of food banks in Europe had grew up rapidly especially after the world financial crisis to worsen economic conditions for those on low incomes.

The situation in Nordic and Baltic countries had been quite specific - until recently there had been low need for food banks due to extensive welfare systems and different traditions organizing material aid mainly via churches and other social organizations. In Lithuania first food bank was launched in 2001 as a program run by the charity "Lithuanian-US Initiatives". In 2007 the program had been transformed into the independent charitable foundation "Maisto Bankas".

Today Lithuanian "Maisto bankas" works across Lithuania collecting donated food from producers, retailers, general public and providing them to the poor through the network of social non-profit organization. "Maisto bankas" had become the largest and most recognizable Lithuanian charity. In 2018, "Maisto bankas" had collected and distributed 8174 tons of food worth of 12.9 MEUR. "Maisto bankas" runs regional offices and warehouses in 5 major Lithuanian regional centers. "Maisto bankas" receives help from nearly 2500 volunteers and participants of public employment programs. Moreover, over 8200 volunteers are recruited twice a year to help at National food collections.

In the winter of 2010, the Estonian-Dutch Charity Fund established the Estonian Food Bank "Eesti Toidupank". Tallinn food bank started operations immediately, followed by the establishment of food banks in other Estonian cities. Estonian Food Bank network operates in 13

counties of Estonia. In the two counties that do not have a food bank, food aid is distributed by a partner organization (charities). A total of about 9000 people across the country receive food aid each week through the Estonian Food Bank network.

Families receiving help are selected by local social assistance departments, and families in more difficult economic situations receive more help. In addition to giving out food aid directly to people in need, distribution is also aided by a large number of partner charity organizations. They deliver food to the people who are members of the organization or in their care. Indirect food distribution is provided also through other NGOs, such as soup kitchens where the needy are directly catered for. In Tallinn alone, each week up to 40 volunteers help transport, control, pack and distribute food to families. In addition, pre-prepared food boxes are provided to families who cannot come or pick up the food aid themselves, for example if they live further away from their county food bank. Food is also distributed to soup kitchens, social housing, shelters and social projects.



The Danish Food Bank was founded as a voluntary association in January 2008. It is the first food bank amongst the Nordic countries to not only reduce food waste systematically and on a large scale, but also provide healthy food to socially disadvantaged people. In 2013 The Danish Food Bank received 7 million euros from the Velux foundation helping the Danish food bank to expand to East Jutland and to strengthen organization's financial sustainability.

Today "FødevarerBanken" are based in Copenhagen, Aarhus and Kolding, they deliver surplus food to organizations working with socially disadvantaged people located in the region of Zealand, Lolland-Falster, central Jutland and the southern part of Denmark. The Danish food

banks receive fresh surplus of food from producers, warehouses and wholesales. 6 days a week “FødevarerBanken” volunteers collect and redistribute the food to organizations working with socially disadvantaged kids, young people and adults.



The food banks had been launched in other countries of the region, too. In Norway, the first food bank was opened in Oslo in 2013, later food banks were established in Tromsø, Bergen, Trondheim, Rogaland, Sørlandet and Vestfold, another one is opening in Innlandet by the end of the year. In Latvia, food bank "Paēdušai Latvijai" is a food program led by the Latvian Samaritan Association. In Sweden, first food bank was set to open in Swedish capital by the charity Stockholm Stadsmission (Stockholm City Mission). There are new initiatives of launching pilot food bank projects in Finland and Iceland, food banks appear in neighboring countries (Russia, Belarus) too.



*The project „Improving volunteer management in Nordic/Baltic food banks“ is funded by:*

### 3 VOLUNTEERING AT THE FOOD BANKS

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Across the Europe, some food banks operate on the "front line" model, giving out food directly to the hungry, while others operate on the "warehouse" model, supplying food to intermediaries like food pantries, soup kitchens and social organizations/charities. The charter of European Food Banks Federation states that one of the central food banking principles is that food banks are predominantly run by volunteers. Normally, volunteers should constitute no less than 90 percent of food banks human resources.

Since food banks are still new type of organizations in the Baltic/Nordic region, it is not easy to build base of long term devoted volunteers. In contrary, at the phase of rapid development there is temptation to construct main food bank's activities around salaried professionals. Yet this had been proved as not sustainable model – only way of reduce financial cost and burden for daily operations of collecting and distributing surplus food to the needy is to lean on volunteers donating their precious time and energy.

Nordic countries are notorious for high involvement of volunteers in civic organizations, including environmental and social service providers. Baltic countries used to be known as lagging behind – during two decades some 10-15 percent of population had been involved in any voluntary activities. Past years had demonstrated rapid growth of population's involvement in voluntary activities, but this involvement has short-term and rather informal.



In Nordic countries, many food bank volunteers are older persons, often retired. In Baltic countries, in the contrary, elderly is least participating in formal voluntary activities – most of volunteers are rather young or middle-aged individuals. Younger volunteers tend to serve shorter and switch to try other organizations/causes more often than older people. Co-operating food banks had examined their best practice and knowledge of recruiting older volunteers, building sustaining volunteer communities and ensuring their longer commitment in order to achieve stable increasing collection of surplus food to be delivered to feeding the needy.

Implementing the project “Improving volunteer management in Nordic/Baltic food banks” volunteer coordinators of Lithuanian, Estonian and Danish food banks had collected and analyzed best practices of volunteer management. In order to do so, three study visits had been organized to take a close look at organizing voluntary work at Lithuanian, Estonian and Danish food banks, available volunteer surveys and research on volunteering practices had been reviewed – major insights we put into these guidelines. The Nordic/Baltic volunteer management guidelines will cover subjects of coordinating volunteers helping with surplus food recovery, creating supportive voluntary work environment, organizing volunteer training and quality management, and recruiting volunteers for major fundraising events.



## 4 COORDINATING VOLUNTEERS

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One of most important guarantees of successful food bank volunteer management is recruited volunteer coordinator, if possible full-time paid staff member. In case of all three Estonian, Danish, and Lithuanian food banks, the function of volunteer coordination is assigned to the salaried personnel. In some cases, depending on the size of a food bank and on the number of food bank volunteers, the volunteer coordination may carry other functions. Yet in case of full-day warehouse operations, the volunteer coordination requires full-time attention and business. In many cases at the food bank there are two or more volunteer shifts per day, often there is high volunteer turnover, thus in order to cope with intensive work-stream and ensure swift moving of warehouse good, full-time volunteer coordinators are employed in each local or regional branches/food banks as well as national volunteer coordinator is required.

Why it is highly recommended to have a salaried volunteer coordinator? Firstly, volunteers are one of the largest food bank's resources. For example, at Lithuanian food bank during the year 2018 the value of estimated volunteer working hours was worth of 251 thousand euros. Thus the role and the duty of volunteer coordinator is secure and responsibly maintain this important organizational resource.

Secondly, volunteers must to have one single gateway through the food bank's organization. Food bank volunteers must to know the person who is directly supervising and assisting them, who is available to provide support and help to meet various challenges the volunteers face in the organization on the daily basis. It is our joint finding and agreement, that salaried staff member is best capable to ensure volunteers will be provided guidance, advice and assistance directly when needed without delays.

What are typical responsibilities of food bank volunteer coordinator? To start with, it is volunteer recruitment. As it is already mentioned, in food banks as well as in many other social organizations there is quite high volunteer turnover. Therefore certain strategies for new volunteer recruitment can be recommended to be constantly applied:

- when arranging publicity or social advertising campaigns, there is a good chance to emphasize voluntary nature of the food bank and at each occasion call for new volunteers;
- it is highly useful to communicate regularly advertisements calling for volunteers using social media channels;
- most food banks periodically organize special volunteers recruitment events such as “open door days”, neighbor community meetings and likewise;
- food banks are in favorable position to act as propagators of volunteering and philanthropy, building a reputation of prominent and effective venue for volunteering, thus appearing among the first choices for those who consider to donate their time for voluntary activities;
- it is very productive to collaborate on permanent basis with socially responsible business corporations, public sector institutions, various social organizations and schools asking their employees, members and clients to spend some time at food banks warehouses or events volunteering.

For successful food bank volunteer recruitment the proper volunteer induction is crucial. Each new coming volunteer should attend an introductory course where the following subjects concerning the food bank should be presented:

- the food bank and its mission,
- organizational structure and its main operations;
- food bank’s organizational culture, code of conduct, rules regarding the complaint and appeal;
- standard volunteer job descriptions;
- general volunteer rights and obligations;
- guidelines of volunteer job training, both introductory and on site;

- volunteer career opportunities;
- food bank's volunteers community building measures, internal communication platforms and events.



While the volunteers' introductory course can be organized using video presentation, via webcast or providing printed materials to be read by potential volunteers, the live direct presentation would be the major advantage - being present at the event where volunteers get to know each other and can directly communicate with volunteer coordinator receiving answers on spot. Such introductory training events are important meeting points and serve as beginning of building viable food bank volunteer communities.

As it is regarding the food bank volunteer training, it is essential that all new coming volunteers pass the training on their job site. Training on spot by supervised learning-and-doing significantly increases volunteers' capacities and self-reliance, which is very important since it increases volunteers' satisfaction and prevents the feeling of "freshmen's" confusion at work.

Next - volunteer allocation at the food bank's workplace. Food bank volunteer coordinators should arrange volunteer work schedules ensuring that all volunteer job positions (at the warehouses and food transportation) are properly filled. Food bank volunteer coordinators should be also responsible for an effective communication with the volunteers regarding all matters that might concern them about their work processes, regulations and requirements, and expected results.

Another important function of food bank volunteer coordinators is providing volunteer support. The Volunteer coordinator should provide guidance for the volunteers then necessary. It is crucial for food bank volunteer coordinators to keep volunteers updated on important organizational news, main events, milestone achievements, and any ongoing changes via social media, e-mail, using any other communication channels, or directly. Food bank volunteer coordinators also should regularly provide feedback to volunteers regarding their work results and quality, and the impact to the whole organization achievements. Finally, the volunteer coordinator should regularly organize volunteers' group meetings thus ensuring that they have chance to give their feedback so that the voice of volunteers is heard in the organization.



Talking about the volunteer activity monitoring, the food bank volunteer coordinators should supervise and control volunteer attendance and absence. It is important to give individual feedback to volunteers when they do not show up to work as agreed. This way the food bank sustains integral organizational culture of trust and personal responsibility. Food bank volunteer coordinators are responsible of monitoring and evaluating volunteers' performance quality. Volunteers are entitled to receive an adequate feedback as they come to help the food bank with an intention of being useful and helpful, thus they must be confident that their efforts actually contribute to achieve food banks mission and results to rescue food and eradicate poverty and malnutrition. In case the volunteer's performance is for some reason poor and not satisfactory, the volunteer's natural interest is to be aware of that and try to improve it as much as possible.

Finally, the volunteer career. The Volunteer coordinator must guide the food bank volunteers along their path in the organization. Some volunteers possess more initiative or advanced capabilities than the others, thus volunteer coordinator should be prepared to notice and interpret various behavior signals and offer new advanced tasks to satisfy ambitious and urge to grow professionally.

We had already mentioned the importance of arranging volunteer community building events. Volunteer coordinator should organizes get-together meeting so that food bank volunteers have a chance to get to know each other, build new friendships, celebrate together important occasions, and solidify personal relations. One of most important benefits of volunteering is belonging to the network of like-minded friends and colleagues, thus such events are a great way to create it.



## 5 VOLUNTARY WORK ENVIRONMENT

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Enabling and healthy working environment is essential to keep satisfaction of the volunteers who work in a food bank. Safe and stable work environment is especially important for retention of the volunteers and making sure the food bank volunteers are satisfied with their work conditions. Comfortable working environment is as important for volunteer as it is for staff and other members of the food bank community.

At the Danish food bank, the volunteers are recruited on the same grounds as salaried employees - the volunteers pass job interviews with the volunteer manager, they are expected to follow guidelines provided in the volunteer handbook, they must attend mandatory courses on heavy lifting and food safety. Moreover, food bank volunteers can be warned or even their contract might be terminated if they fail to follow their voluntary job requirements. In exchange, food bank volunteers have the same rights as the salaried members of the staff - e. g. at the Board of the Danish food bank three seats are reserved exclusively for volunteers to make sure that food bank volunteers equally participate in organization's decision making.

In order to ensure a safe, healthy, and stable work environment for the food bank volunteers, it is essential to focus on three particular areas: working conditions, rest conditions, and exercising organizational influence.

Speaking of the working conditions for food bank volunteers, it is recommend to observe the following regulations: mandatory wearing of safety shoes, compulsory wearing of the food bank special clothing (jackets, pants, and reflective vests), mandatory usage of protective gloves, mandatory courses on heavy lifting and food safety.

The guiding principle the volunteer working environment at the food bank should be "freedom and responsibility!" When we refer to this principle "freedom and responsibility", it is understood as volunteer's responsibility to plan and organize his/her working day with maximum attention and care. This means a volunteer has agreed to deliver donated food to recipients within an arranged time, ensure that food safety is observed in tact during his/her drive and be dressed adequately (in the food bank clothing). Other volunteers' functions: they are responsible

for taking breaks when needed, driving safely, lifting heavy food correctly, thus a volunteer is expected to act responsibly and in accordance with his/her physical and mental strength.

Concerning the resting conditions, it is recommended that the same approach (“freedom and responsibility!”) should be observed by the volunteers when planning and taking breaks. It is expected that food bank volunteers will work in shifts not longer than 4 hours, after which free meals would be offered. During the shift reasonable breaks should be organized, volunteers should be able to use comfortable spaces designated for short breaks water, hot beverages and snacks should be offered, and appropriate sanitation facilities.



As it is regarding the organizational influence, we recommend that the food banks should observe the following suggestions:

- food banks should ensure an equal access for the volunteers to top decision making of an organization (e.g., seats in the board, advisory board or any other management level

depending on structure of the organization, designated for volunteers exclusively) in same terms and conditions as it is provided to paid staff employees;

- food banks should arrange monthly volunteer community meetings, where volunteers could decide on the meeting agenda themselves;
- food banks should ask the volunteers to select one person to whom they should bring forward their subjects of concern, complaints or pleas.



## 6 VOLUNTEER TRAINING

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Trained and confident food bank volunteers are one of the most important preconditions when it comes to the satisfaction of the personnel. It is food bank's responsibility to make sure volunteers get the adequate equipment and training to perform the required tasks confidently. In Lithuanian food bank, volunteers enroll the training before they are actually enter the workplace at any volunteering position. Some volunteering positions are filled after volunteers graduate training in group sessions, some positions – e.g. volunteer drivers - require training supervised by the individual mentors.

What are the advantages of volunteer training? First of all it is gained volunteer confidence performing designated tasks. When a food bank volunteer is instructed properly regarding what he/she is expected to do, his/her performing satisfaction increases. On the contrary, when a food bank volunteer happens to be left on his/her own to figure out how the work is supposed to be completed, such experience may cause unnecessary stress and disappointment.



Secondly, it is important to fully ensure the consistency in food bank volunteer activities. Volunteers who have attended had the same training courses, certainly will be performing their tasks in the cohesive manner. The achieved results will be a consistent process in any field where volunteering is applied in the food bank.

Also it is very important to maintain standard volunteer work quality. Food banks mostly handle the donated food that is close to expiration date meaning - if delayed this food may become unsuitable for human consumption. The task of food banks personnel is to make sure that the donated food is safely handled within a short time span that is available for the distribution to final beneficiaries. Therefore the Volunteer training is essential for fulfilling our obligation to distribute the food suitable for consumption.

Baltic/Nordic food banks found that it is recommend following topics to be covered while organizing volunteer training:

- overview of the food bank volunteer tasks including particular volunteer position;
- appropriate outfit and work clothes which are provided by an organization;
- labor safety and proper usage of an equipment;
- instructions concerning the appropriate and effective fulfilment of volunteer's job responsibilities;
- general rules of working time, rest breaks, catering for volunteers, storage of personal belongings etc.

It is recommended that food banks would have prepared detailed volunteer job description for each standard volunteer position. It is found useful reinforcing training principles and helps the food bank volunteers to obtain much better understanding of the work they are going to be involved in. Standard food bank volunteer job description should include:

- goals of a particular volunteer's position;
- list of specified tasks;
- a person (usually a food bank's staff member or a senior volunteer) who is responsible a volunteer and to whom volunteer reports;
- training that is required for this position;

- kind of commitment is expected (the length of the shift, the number of monthly shifts expected).
- the description of the work place and the equipment provided.
- the necessary qualities of a volunteer working in a particular position.
- what does a Food Bank have to offer/the benefits of volunteering.



## 7 VOLUNTEERS AND FOOD BANKS MAJOR EVENTS

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One of very important aspects of food bank development where volunteers' role is crucial – large special fundraising events. In Estonia, the Charity Dinner is food bank's central fundraising event requiring at least 100 recruited volunteers. In Lithuania similarly important is charitable telethon with its final concert broadcasted live on national TV. In both Estonia and Lithuania National Food Collections are organized every year, where thousands of volunteers participate helping to raise food for deprived people.

Largest food banks events	Number of volunteers	Frequency
National Food Collection	1000 in Estonia 8000+ in Lithuania	Semi-annual
Charity Dinner	100 in Estonia	Annual
Charity Concert	500+ in Lithuania	Annual

In Estonia, the charity gala dinner "Feed the Children" is a good example of an event that has immense importance for the food bank network. Money raised during the dinner helps fund the food bank network's development and growth.

"Feed the Children" is a 100% volunteer-based event and brings no cost for The Estonian Food Bank. Everything that is needed for organizing the dinner, including all raw food ingredients, printed materials, premises, art for the auction and other services, are donated by the event sponsors and partners.



There are around 100 volunteers engaged in organizing this event. This includes the highly professional core organizing team that was hand-picked by Kristjan Peäske, the main organizer, restaurateur and volunteer of the year 2018. The organizing team consists of restaurateurs, food industry professionals, people from communication- event organizing- and design agencies. This team puts together the whole event, beginning with a concept for each year's dinner to securing the best chefs and artists for the evening. The food bank's staff works closely with the main organizing team and helps achieve communication and social marketing campaign goals. On the night of the event, the gourmet dinner is prepared by a few of Estonia's best restaurants' chefs with their teams, who all take part in the event as volunteers. The food is served to the guests by best servers from well-known restaurants in Estonia. Among the serving staff you can find volunteering their time and skills also Estonia's best sommeliers or restaurant owners themselves. Recruiting and managing these skilled servers is done by a volunteer, who

is a professional staff manager in a restaurant. The gala dinner is followed by after-party which is organized solely for all the volunteers, to thank them for their dedication and hard work. This is truly a community coming together. People from different parts of food industry come together to help support The Estonian Food Bank's mission.

So the question is - how to recruit hundreds or even thousands of volunteers for the large food bank's events, such as the National Food Collection? In Lithuania, the task to attract and coordinate the volunteers to participate in National Food Collection is divided among the food bank and more than 350 charities. To do so it is first of all recommended to consider mediation. The food bank should take a role of mediator between charities and retailers, since it is needed to negotiate with retailers building the list of participating shops/venues. Food bank's role is to assign particular shops to concrete charities, where the volunteers will work inviting clients to donate. The size of the assigned shop must naturally meet charity's capability to recruit enough volunteers and to distribute the donated food to their beneficiaries. Usually one charity is selected to work in single venue, but sometimes it can be entrusted several shops based on the assumption that it is possible to ensure the sufficient number of attending volunteers, capability to meet event quality standards.

Speaking about the volunteers' recruitment, it is suggested that the food bank organizes a nationwide communication campaign, including measures to call for volunteers using social media, TV, outdoor advertising, merchandising, etc. On the other hand, partnering charities are also expected take over responsibility to recruit their own volunteers to work at the particular shop(s) they have been assigned to. There several target groups where food banks and charities turn in order to look for the volunteers. They often approach schoolchildren who usually come in groups. Pupils usually love to take part at national food collection, they enjoy working in supermarkets distributing flyers, approaching to people asking them to donate food for the poor. In some counties (Lithuania including) schools require that schoolchildren at certain age have to spend certain number of hours performing community service. Thus National Food Collection is a very convenient and enjoyable way to do this task.

Another source of recruiting volunteers for the food bank event such as national food collections – the beneficiaries of the food aid. Recruiting volunteers among turning at food aid recipients is more common among those charities which operate homeless shelters, rehabilitation centers, children day care centers etc. Beneficiaries of the food aid are particularly motivated since the food donated during national food collection is very valued, participation at the food collection is considered as attractive activity for their own community and team building.

Food banks also approach local communities and churches hoping that their members will come to help at the food collections and other large events. Another important source is corporate volunteers - some corporations allow their employees to spend a particular amount of working hours volunteering on their choice. Also, corporate teams of volunteers are keen on volunteering and using large food bank events for team building purposes.



What are key elements for preparing the national food collections? First of all, food banks well in advance organize training sessions inviting new partner charities as well as experienced national food collection participants to present the concept of the National Food Collection event, discuss novelties in organizing, and explain fundraising process at the shop as well as donated food distribution. The food collection volunteer roles are clarified, the training participants receive basic knowledge of the customer service standards. The transparency and accountability issues are covered, too, including communication of the collection results, presenting events marketing materials explaining its usage, instructions regarding the paperwork required by the law or just to guarantee sound organizational transparency. During such training session participating charities are provided with flyers, posters, small gifts for donors, and outfit of the event (T-shirts, aprons etc.).

Very important aspect of running national food collections is volunteer coordination. Participating charities and volunteer teams must be promptly instructed how they should properly coordinate volunteers during the event. At each shop food bank or participating charity should appoint the volunteer coordinator who should always be present during entire event at the store to manage the volunteer team. Volunteer coordinator usually instructs the volunteers prior starting their shifts, assigns individual tasks and roles, and makes sure the volunteers change their roles during the shiftwork in order to prevent aggravation and sustain the motivation. The volunteer coordinator ensures that a sufficient number of volunteers is gathered, motivates them, gives the feedback and reports to the food bank or participating charity.



Performance quality monitoring. Food bank's volunteers-inspectors visit the selected shops (sometimes using secret client method) after checking the quality they provide their evaluations by filing monitoring forms prepared in advance. Each year after the national food collection is over, food banks provide a feedback to participating charities based on inspection reports.

The question might be raised - what is the reason at national food collection delegating roles and tasks to other social organizations? One of these reasons is greater geographical outreach. Without assistance of partnering social organizations, the food banks would be able to perform the National food collection only in the cities/towns where they are physically present and operating. By assigning food collection functions and tasks to other charities, Lithuanian food bank can ensure that the National food collection takes place in 70-100 towns all around the country turning this event into truly national. Moreover, such delegation allows to increase dramatically the amount of donated food. This way more deprived people can be provided with this food especially in the most remote areas.

National food collections are of immense importance raising public awareness about food banks issues, food waste, malnutrition and poverty. Thanks to vast network of organizations and volunteers involved in national food collections, the message of the food bank's mission is spreading widely by making it visible in literary every corner of the country. Thanks to national food collections, Lithuanian food bank rapidly became most known and recognizable non-governmental organization in the country. Needless to say, that such public outreach and high visibility helps to also attract more volunteers also for daily food bank's activities. Interestingly, high publicity of this event attracts political attention and support – national food collections are often honored by visits of country Presidents, Prime Ministers, notorious politicians and other well-known VIP public figures.

Through partnership in organizing national food collections and other large common events, food bank and charities strengthen their mutual relations, which open possibilities for cooperation in daily Food bank's activities re as well as other projects. Lithuanian food banks charity concert "Pasidalink" each year demands recruitment of 500 volunteers – this amount is

would be difficult to collect by the food bank alone, thanks to partnering of charitable organizations large groups of event volunteers are provided by them.

There could be also some possible disadvantages of delegating tasks and functions to other organizations. For instance, the lower quality of volunteer work could possibly happen, that means that additional measures of monitoring of control may be necessary. The greater is the number of volunteer managers, the wider is the scope of interpretation of volunteers' performance quality standards. Some charities may be comfortable applying lower standards than are agreed and set up for the national food collection execution at the grass-root level; therefore, preventive performance quality monitoring is needed and recommended in order to ensure consistency and standard execution. Another risk is concerning joint reputation. Single fraud case would affect reputation of hundreds of participating organizations, food banks included. Dishonest behavior of volunteers recruited by partner organization may cause significant damage to entire cause which might on short and medium terms reduce the donors trust and cause decrease of resources. Thus it is extremely important to apply all possible means of ensure transparent operation and controlled performance quality through training, signing declarations, inspections etc.



## 8 VOLUNTEER SURVEYS

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Food banks heavily rely on voluntary engagement, thus it is important that food bank volunteers are satisfied with the work and feel acknowledged for what they do, in order to keep up the motivation for volunteering. A method for measuring the satisfaction of the volunteers is doing a survey among the volunteers.

The survey should consist of questions investigating the motives and reasons for volunteering, but also provide opportunity for the volunteers to add comments or suggestions. In order to get the most reliable answers, the survey may be conducted anonymously, making the volunteers feeling safe in answering truthfully. Advantageously the survey is formed as a questionnaire, which allows several people to attend the survey, and to answer the questions anonymously.

Key-points when creating and conducting a survey:

- it is essential to consider how the questions are formed in order to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretation;
- make sure it is possible to answer the questions anonymously, in attempt to make the volunteers feel safe about telling the truth;
- base the questions on the purpose of the investigation;
- questions with multiple-choice answers makes it simple and easy for the volunteers to complete the survey;
- think about what you want to do with the results and how you can use them to improve the conditions for the volunteers, if that is the purpose of the survey.

Lithuanian and Danish food banks had surveyed their volunteers identifying what motivates different individuals belonging to different social segments (age, occupation, gender, income) becoming and staying food bank volunteers, how they evaluate their experience of volunteering at food bank, what helps them to stay or makes them leave volunteering. The surveys had an attempt to analyze their key characteristics, identifying most typical portrait of

potential food bank volunteers. It appeared that most likely the food bank potential volunteer would be educated woman in her 40s, who is driven and motivated by an urge to help people and make the world better place to live. Yet in reality there are considerable difference – while Danish food bank would be preferred by older male volunteers, Lithuanian food bank would be more attractive to younger female volunteers. The reasons for difference may dwell in different layers of cultural traditions or the way voluntary work is organized and framed by the food recovery and redistribution processes in any given food banks. The surveys were completed in national languages, the reports with survey findings could be presented upon the request at participating food banks.



## 9 CONCLUSIONS

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To conclude, we had attempted to overview major issues and challenges that Nordic/Baltic food banks face recruiting and managing volunteers as vital resource to recover surplus food and provide it to most deprived people in our countries. These volunteer management guidelines had discussed coordination of volunteers working in main areas of food handling and delivery, creating supportive environment for voluntary work, organizing volunteer training and ensuring proper quality performance, and bringing volunteers to help organizing food bank's major fundraising events.

Volunteer management issues were also discussed in the conference "Strengthening the community of volunteers" how?" held in Vilnius on June 27, 2019. The conference participants had discussed volunteer management challenges, possibilities to develop and nurture national and regional traditions of voluntarism as one of very important forms of philanthropic behavior ensuring greater welfare and safety within our societies.

These Baltic/Nordic volunteer management guidelines will be disseminated to the networks of collaborating social organizations working in the region in order to encourage them to adapt best available practices and methods, apply provided tips on volunteer management into their daily activities.

