



Ottawa Food Bank

VOLUNTEER Handbook



Revised
2026

WELCOME TO THE OTTAWA FOOD BANK VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

Thank you for sharing your time and talents with the Ottawa Food Bank!

We are pleased to welcome you and sincerely appreciate the skills and commitment you bring to the organization.

Since our founding in 1984, the Ottawa Food Bank has depended on the dedication and enthusiasm of individuals like you to advance our mission of supporting residents across Ottawa with access to food. Your involvement plays a vital role in strengthening this work and the community we serve.

In the following pages, you will find information designed to introduce you to the Ottawa Food Bank and familiarize you with our programs, policies, and procedures. We encourage you to review this handbook carefully and refer to it as needed as you begin—or reaffirm—your role as a volunteer.





The Ottawa Food Bank is the central hub for food collection, storage, and distribution in Ottawa, supporting programs on the frontlines of the city’s food insecurity crisis.

We work with a network of member agencies that operate nearly 100 community food programs, including community food banks, food cupboards, meal programs, multi-service programs, children’s summer nutrition programs, and after-school snack programs.

Our work goes beyond traditional food banking. We help strengthen the network of member agencies by building capacity, providing support, and advocating for long-term, sustainable solutions to food insecurity in Ottawa.

We support our member agencies by providing the tools and resources they need to serve their communities, from food and resource development to the purchase, growth, and distribution of nutritious food and essential items, along with training and additional supports.

Volunteers are essential to this work, contributing approximately 15% of the organizational effort required to support food-insecure individuals and families across the city, making a meaningful difference in communities throughout Ottawa.

Volunteer Statement

Volunteers are a vital part of the Ottawa Food Bank’s mission – supporting our vision of healthy, accessible, and sustainable food in our community. As an organization started by volunteers, we recognize the invaluable commitment and contributions of volunteers towards building a food-secure Ottawa.



North Star Goal

By 2050, no one in Ottawa is food insecure. We have reduced the need for food banks and when food insecurity does happen, there is a community-based, holistic response.



Mission

We work in partnership to create a healthier city by empowering people, increasing access to healthy food, and advocating for systemic changes that reduce food insecurity.



Vision

Healthy, accessible, sustainable food for all.

SECTION ONE: VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

The purpose of our Volunteer Engagement Program is to support the mission of the Ottawa Food Bank by engaging individuals in a variety of volunteer positions.



The Ottawa Food Bank Volunteer Engagement Program's objectives are to:

- Support and enhance the mission of the Ottawa Food Bank
- Enhance organizational capacity and provide volunteer engagement where appropriate
- Offer relevant volunteer placements that contribute to volunteers' personal and/or professional development in a safe and positive working environment
- Raise the profile of volunteers within the organization and in the wider community
- Seek, consider, and value feedback from our volunteers
- Become a model of best practices in volunteer engagement



When volunteering, you will be guided and supported by a skilled and knowledgeable Ottawa Food Bank staff member who serves as your Volunteer Supervisor.

SECTION TWO: WORKPLACE OVERVIEW

Warehouse and Office

Location: 2001 Bantree Street, Ottawa, ON K1B 4X4

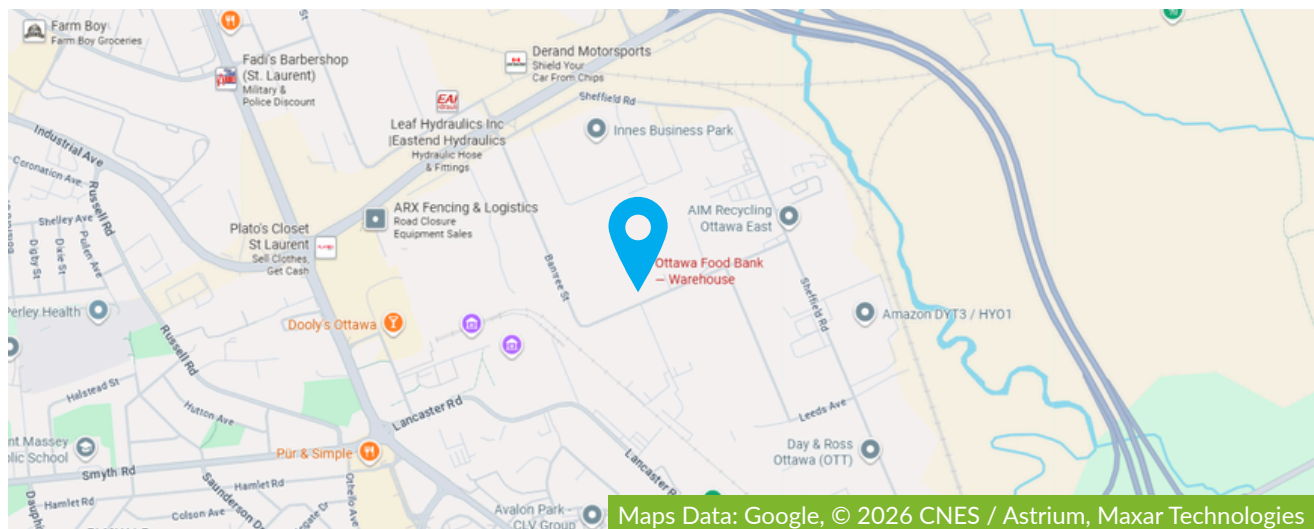
Hours: Monday to Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Parking

Free parking is available for volunteers in the parking lot directly in front of the 2001 Bantree Street warehouse.

Public Transit

Our location can be reached by OC Transpo bus routes **47** and **42**. The nearest bus stops are **Bantree and Sheffield (#7314)**, **Bantree and Old Innes (#4047)**, and **Bantree and Innes (#7854 and #8530)**. For current bus routes and schedules, refer to OC Transpo’s travel planner before your visit.



Volunteer Lounge

Volunteers working onsite may use the Volunteer Lounge, which includes:

- Complimentary coffee, tea, and water
- Coatroom to store your coat and outdoor boots during your shift
- Lockers (locks provided or bring-your-own)
- Free Wi-Fi

Off-Site Volunteering

Volunteer activities also take place in the community, including at the Community Harvest farm and special events. Location and event details are confirmed upon registration.



SECTION THREE: VOLUNTEERING AT THE OTTAWA FOOD BANK

Individuals are motivated to volunteer and support the Ottawa Food Bank for a variety of reasons. We welcome and benefit from volunteers whose motivations, talents, and interests are diverse.

Ottawa Food Bank volunteers can expect to experience one or more of the following:

- The opportunity to contribute knowledge, skills, and experience towards making a genuine difference for those experiencing food insecurity in our city
- Useful training, orientation and activity in a variety of settings, acting as meaningful work experience
- The opportunity to join the Ottawa Food Bank community and be included in events, activities, and updates
- Investing in the community while meeting and working with a diverse group of supporters
- Fulfilling high-school, college, university hourly volunteering commitments in a meaningful way



Volunteer Program Roles



Volunteers

Volunteers are individuals who give their time, without compensation, in support of the Ottawa Food Bank. A volunteer may take on one or more volunteer opportunities that support the Ottawa Food Bank's vision and mission.



Volunteer Supervisors

Volunteer supervisors are the Ottawa Food Bank employees who directly supervise volunteers and volunteer activities.

As the point of contact for volunteers, Volunteer Supervisors:

- Work with the Volunteer Engagement Team (VET) to create volunteer job descriptions
- Ensure a safe, healthy and respectful work environment
- Provide directions and orientation
- Provide resources and support to perform volunteer duties
- Provides updates if/when a volunteer activity changes
- Provides constructive feedback and support for the volunteer's work

SECTION FOUR: THE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT TEAM (VET)

The VET is responsible for ensuring the program meets the needs of both the organization and the volunteers.

The VET is also responsible for implementing supporting policies and procedures in consultation with the Ottawa Food Bank's Director of People and Culture.

Core Responsibilities

- Recruits, screens, and orientates volunteers for all volunteer positions.
- Creates and maintains volunteer position descriptions in collaboration with the Manager/Coordinator of Volunteer Engagement and Supervisors of Volunteers.
- Maintains volunteer records and schedules active volunteers, including overall program administration.
- Works with staff to support their supervisory roles and promote effective volunteer engagement.
- Communicates with staff and volunteers regarding issues, opportunities, and anything related to volunteering.
- Tracks feedback and data, providing metrics and analysis to inform program improvements.
- Ensures volunteers are included and recognized within the Ottawa Food Bank.
- Provides support to volunteers as required.
- Facilitates corporate and group volunteer engagement to strengthen community involvement.
- Strategically engages the volunteer program in support of the Ottawa Food Bank's mission.



SECTION FIVE: ESSENTIAL VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Volunteers at the Ottawa Food Bank are vital in supporting the organization's mission and are expected to act with professionalism and integrity.

This section outlines the expectations for all volunteers.

Volunteer Eligibility

Individuals interested in volunteering with the Ottawa Food Bank must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age at the time of participation
- Volunteers are required to create and manage their volunteer profile online
- Volunteers are required to accept a liability waiver
- Volunteers must be available to participate in activities within the Ottawa–Gatineau area.
- Volunteers must pre-register to attend a volunteer activity
- Volunteers must be able to understand and fully meet the requirements of their assigned volunteer role, and work independently or, where possible, by making appropriate arrangements to volunteer with a support assistant
- Groups of volunteering youth, under the age of 18 years, are required to attend with 2 adult volunteering supervisors
- Depending on the volunteer opportunity, individuals may be required to attend a volunteer information/orientation session and relevant training sessions

Role as an Ambassador

Volunteers are encouraged to share general information about the Ottawa Food Bank and its work with friends and family, including personal volunteer experiences. These first-hand accounts offer valuable insight into the organization's impact on the community.

It is important to note that volunteers do not represent the Ottawa Food Bank in an official capacity unless explicitly tasked. All requests for official information, including media inquiries, must be directed to the Ottawa Food Bank's communications team.

Commitment

The Ottawa Food Bank volunteer program does not have a minimum length of service commitment. We attempt to be flexible with scheduling, whenever possible, in support of the operational needs of the organization. We rely on a combination of regular weekly, occasional, corporate and community groups and one-time volunteers.

Respect

The Ottawa Food Bank is committed to maintaining a welcoming, respectful, and equitable environment. Any concerns regarding respectful treatment should be reported promptly to the Supervisor of Volunteers or the VET.



Attendance

Volunteer contributions are essential to the Ottawa Food Bank's daily operations at the warehouse, office, farm, and during special events. Punctuality for scheduled shifts is expected, and any shifts that cannot be attended should be cancelled in advance. Cancellations made through the online volunteer system help ensure that others can participate and needs are met.

Repeated absences without proper cancellation can result in a reassessment of volunteer status by the VET. The Ottawa Food Bank reserves the right to withdraw access to volunteer activities if necessary.



Confidentiality

Volunteers at the Ottawa Food Bank may hold positions of trust and are expected to maintain the confidentiality of all organizational information, including client and donor data encountered during volunteer activities. Participation in select roles requires agreement to a confidentiality clause in addition to the one included in the volunteer waiver. Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Questions or concerns regarding confidentiality should be directed to the VET.



Conflict of Interest

Volunteers are expected to avoid any actions that conflict with the best interests of the Ottawa Food Bank. Soliciting donations for other causes, personal endeavours, or businesses while representing the organization is not permitted.



Dress Code

As representatives of the Ottawa Food Bank, volunteers are expected to maintain a casual but professional appearance. Clothing featuring derogatory language or logos is not permitted. Role-specific dress requirements will be outlined in the various position descriptions. For safety reasons, closed-toe shoes are required in the Warehouse and on the Community Harvest Farm.



Photo Policy

Volunteers may appear in photos or videos taken during Ottawa Food Bank activities. A media release waiver is included in the volunteer registration process; however, participation in photos/filming remains optional.



System Use

Certain volunteer roles may require access to the Ottawa Food Bank's computers, network or systems. These tools must be used only for work-related tasks.

Volunteers may also be granted access to organizational systems on their personal device when appropriate. Volunteers are expected to ensure Ottawa Food Bank information is kept confidential and avoid using these platforms for personal use and/or storage.

Role-Dependent Policies and Training

Certain volunteer roles will require additional policies, standards of practice and training, reflected in the various position descriptions, such as:

Cash Handling Policy	Link2Feed Training	Remote Work Policy
Repackaging Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Training	Home Delivery Program Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs)

Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation

We strive to recognize our volunteers on a consistent basis through the daily efforts of the VET and Volunteer Supervisors, volunteer spotlight articles, social and annual events like National Volunteer Week and the annual Volunteer Impact Report.

Volunteer Feedback

To ensure a positive and effective volunteer experience, we regularly survey our individual, corporate group, and special event volunteers. As a volunteer, you also have the right to ask for feedback from your volunteer supervisor on your performance within your role.

Validation of Hours

After a verified shift at the Ottawa Food Bank, volunteers may have their hours validated by a member of the VET. However, to receive a signed letter of reference, you must have volunteered at the Ottawa Food Bank for an extended period and formed a close working relationship with your immediate supervisor.

Food Support Access

The Ottawa Food Bank is not a direct emergency food service provider. Volunteers and members of the public seeking food support are referred to their local community food bank, in line with the organization's equitable service policy.

Volunteer Conflict Resolution

The Ottawa Food Bank aims to resolve conflicts collaboratively. If a challenge arises, it should first be addressed directly with the individual involved. If unresolved, the matter should be reported to the Volunteer Supervisor or, if needed, the VET.

Equipment Use and Product Handling

Administrative volunteers must be trained before using office equipment such as mail machines, photocopiers, and phone systems. Volunteers in food sorting or Community Harvest roles may not operate warehouse or farm equipment unless professionally licensed and approved. Unauthorized removal of products from the warehouse or farm, or property of the Ottawa Food Bank, is strictly prohibited.

Right to Refuse Work

The Ottawa Food Bank is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all volunteers.

Volunteers have the right to refuse any task or assignment if they believe:

- they are not adequately trained or qualified to perform the task;
- the task poses a risk to their health or safety, or the safety of others; or
- the task exceeds their personal physical, emotional, or mental capacity.

Volunteers are encouraged to promptly inform a staff member if they have concerns about an assigned task. The Ottawa Food Bank will work with the volunteer to address the concern and, where possible, identify alternative tasks.

No volunteer will be penalized, disciplined, or disadvantaged for exercising their right to refuse work under these circumstances.

To report unsafe working conditions or concerns to the Ottawa Food Bank's Joint Health and Safety Committee email JointHealthSafetyCommittee@ottawafoodbank.ca.

Volunteer Dismissal

The Ottawa Food Bank reserves the right to terminate an individual's volunteer participation in the volunteer program with or without cause.

Before dismissal, the VET may take the following steps in consultation with the Volunteer Supervisor:

- Provide constructive feedback
- Implement corrective actions or re-training
- Reassign volunteer roles

Immediate dismissal will occur in cases involving:

- Disrespectful or threatening behavior
- Impairment while volunteering
- Disregard for health and safety protocols
- Theft or intentional damage of property



Conclusion of Volunteer Commitment

Volunteers who wish to conclude their involvement with the Ottawa Food Bank are asked to notify a member of the VET. As part of the off-boarding process, staff may ask for feedback on your volunteer experience and an invitation to complete an exit survey. This information is utilized to address any concerns and improve overall volunteer experience.

SECTION SIX: OTTAWA FOOD BANK POLICIES

Violence, Harassment and Bullying

The Ottawa Food Bank maintains a zero-tolerance policy for violence, harassment, bullying, and abuse of authority. Any incidents must be reported to the Volunteer Supervisor or the VET and may be escalated to the Director of People and Culture. Corrective actions may include training, reassignment, discipline, or dismissal. Refer to the full organizational policy for more details.

Health & Safety

A safe work environment is a shared responsibility. Hazards or safety concerns must be reported immediately. Volunteers have the right to know about risks and to refuse unsafe work. Concerns are reviewed by the Joint Health and Safety Committee. Volunteers must follow all organizational safety protocols. Refer to the full organizational policy for more details.

Emergency Procedures

In emergencies, call 911 and notify the Volunteer Supervisor. Follow staff instructions. First aid kits are available at reception, in the warehouse, the first aid room, the farm, and with the events team. An AED is located at reception. Certified First Aid/CPR staff are listed near first aid stations.

Contact

General and individual volunteer inquiries:

volunteer@ottawafoodbank.ca

Group volunteer inquiries:

groupvolunteering@ottawasfoodbank.ca

Phone: 613-745-7001

Accessibility

The Ottawa Food Bank complies with the AODA and provides role-specific training. Reasonable accommodation is offered, and alternative roles may be explored when required.

Situational Safety Protocols

- **Warehouse:**
 - Follow staff instructions
 - Stay in designated areas
 - Wear closed-toe shoes
 - No earphones or cell phone use in the warehouse
- **Community Harvest Farm:**
 - Follow staff instructions, especially in a severe weather event
 - Stay in designated areas
 - Wear weather-appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes
 - Bring sunscreen, bug spray, water, and a hat
- **Special Events:**
 - Follow staff or venue safety instructions
 - Do not handle cash without prior cash handling policy training

Incident Reporting

Injuries or accidents must be reported to supervising staff, who will complete an incident report for review by the Joint Health and Safety Committee. Witnesses may also be asked to provide additional details.