

## **Introduction**

This report gives an outline of the characteristics of Food for all, a nonprofit organization aimed at the creation of a network of food pantries. It will provide an outline of the characteristics of the organization and its board. Furthermore, it will highlight the challenges this organization faces. This report is part 1 of a 3 part series. The other parts will handle about other parts of the organization and try to come up with solutions for the challenges faced by this organization. Combined, the three parts will provide a comprehensive overview of the organization and how they can improve in reaching their objectives.

## **Methodology**

For this report, data on the organization, as provided by the course staff, was used. It was not possible to gather data other than information contained within the document. Therefore some gaps exist in the analysis.

## **Mission and vision**

Food for all's mission and vision are as follows:

Mission: *"to address hunger through food pantries operated by member organizations."*

Vision: *"to create a dynamic network of well stocked food pantries nourishing hungry neighbors."*

## **Characteristics of the organization**

Food for all is a nonprofit organization aimed at creating a network addressing hunger through food pantries operated by member organizations. Being 31 years since its initiation, the organization now spans a coalition of over 50 independent member organizations. Member organizations are independent food pantries meeting minimum criteria in areas such as: numbers of meals served, opening hours, sanitary regulations, keeping of statistics and attending coalition meetings. Furthermore, all members are registered as nonprofits and have their own independent boards and (voluntary) staff as well as a unique culture and identity. No costs are associated with membership of Food for all.

The work of the organization is aimed at supporting member organizations by providing support, knowledge, the creation of awareness in the community on the issue of hunger. These activities are aimed at reaching overarching goals that the individual pantries could not reach on themselves. Furthermore, it strives to facilitate networking and the sharing of good practices among its members.

The organization itself consists of a board of 13 persons, 7 paid staff members and 1 volunteer. Board members serve on a voluntary basis. The organization structure is formed by the board and five standing committees, which are shown in the table on the next page.

## Characteristics of the board

The board of Food for all is the executive body of the organization. It consists of 13 persons, 3 of which have to be from member organizations. Board members serve for a term of 3 years with a 1 year waiting period between terms. Board members sit on committees which are organized along functional lines. An overview of the committees is presented in the table below.

Name of the committee	Responsibilities
Executive committee	Responsible for day-to-day operations
Governance committee	Responsible for governance decisions
Nominating committee	Nominates new board members
Personnel committee	Responsible for personnel affairs
Finance committee	Responsible for financial oversight

Within the board, the Executive Director carries substantial influence over policy making and is given the freedom of direction and managing to achieve the objectives established by the board. This is similar to other results based boards.

## Challenges facing the organizations and the board

At this point in time, Food for all faces three challenges: the need for consensus between its member organizations, the degree to which board members should be involved and the role of the executive director.

The first challenge of Food for all is to create consensus among its members. As a large coalition, Food for all is constantly balancing its activities with those provided by its member organizations. Due to the many moving parts, the different cultures of the member organizations clash on a regular basis despite their common goals. The second challenge relates to the size of the organization. Due to its small size, the Food for all board is constantly balancing between managerial and board duties. Becoming mired in managerial and operational duties the board has limited time to complete its board duties resulting in some friction between aspired and realized goals. The third challenge revolves about the relation between the executive director and the rest of the board. Due to a lack of clarity in the involvement of the executive director in the development of policy and the managing of the organization the relationship with the board is sometimes complicated. This lack of clarity forms a potential challenge if not resolved.

Besides the challenges, an opportunity exists to improve their governance model by strengthening good governance practices that further the work of the coalition and their membership along the lines as described by Gill (2005). This is why experts in the field of nonprofit governance were contacted to assist them in this process.

## Conclusion

Food for all is a small nonprofit organization that aims to increase awareness of the activities of and spread knowledge amongst its member organizations (food pantries). Made up out of 13 persons, the

board tries to create consensus amongst its members, focus more on policy rather than operations and to be on one line with the executive director. Opportunities involve the possibility of improving their governance model to further the work of the coalition and their membership.

## **References**

Gill, Mel D. (2005). *Governing for Results*. Victoria, BC, Canada: Trafford Publishing.