

# IBM's Corporate Service Corps and The Global FoodBanking Network

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## Highlights

- IBM's new system has improved Mérida's storage capacity, resulted in shorter waiting periods for families and communities receiving food, and enabled a faster delivery system that has reduced payroll
  - The number of food donors more than doubled in Mérida —to more than 260 — and the number of financial donors increased from three to 10
  - In Toluca, a new business plan resulted in a 41 percent increase in food donors and an increase of 15,000 people fed each month
  - An increase of 40 new food donors were secured in Barranquilla along with several improvements in business operations that will impact many food banks throughout Colombia
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When people volunteer for food banks and soup kitchens, one normally thinks of serving dinners, lugging boxes and cooking meals. However, what if volunteers could use their professional skills to help food distribution networks on a much larger scale?

That is what has happened in a program at IBM designed to apply employees' expertise to governments, NGOs and small businesses throughout the developing world. IBM's Corporate Service Corps addresses a number of societal needs, ranging from health and education to utilities and social services. Over the last few years, teams of IBM's top talent employees have put their expertise to work for food programs throughout Latin America, including Argentina, Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador. Participants made a substantial impact, helping food networks to distribute more food funded by more donors to more organizations, ultimately feeding more people in Latin America.

IBM launched its Corporate Service Corps (CSC) in 2008 primarily as a vehicle for leadership development and corporate social responsibility. Teams of eight to 15 members work pro bono with volunteers, government, business, and civic leaders in emerging markets to help address high priority issues with societal significance.

Inspired by the U.S. Peace Corps, the CSC program has sent more than 2700 IBMers from nearly 60 countries to serve on over 1000 projects in 37 countries. The program is directly aligned with IBM's core value of innovation that matters by harnessing advanced technologies and problem-solving expertise in tackling some of the world's most pressing challenges.



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— Stanley Litow  
IBM Vice President of Corporate Citizenship  
and Corporate Affairs

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Teams of IBMers around the world work online for three months preparing for each project. The team takes up residency in country for one month to work with a beneficiary organization to develop recommendations for both immediate and long term impact. The feedback from the beneficiaries and partners served by CSC teams has been overwhelmingly positive and appreciative. “We’re changing the way people see IBM,” says Stanley Litow, IBM Vice President of Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs. “They now see us as a company that provides services and solves critical problems.”

One particular success story has been the **Global FoodBanking Network**.

The project was initiated in 2013 at the suggestion of The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN), an international nonprofit organization that fights world hunger by creating and supporting food banks around the world. One of the ways GFN helps food banks get more food to more people is by connecting member food banks with good corporate citizens who want to engage on a local level. In a story of “the right people in the right place at the right time”, GFN knew that IBM CSC was evaluating opportunities in Mexico while the national food bank network in Mexico (Bancos de Alimentos de Mexico or BAMX) was looking for ways to help its food bank in Mérida collect and distribute more food to people in need.

Soon after the project’s completion, GFN President and CEO Jeff Klein reported to IBM that nearly all of the CSC team’s recommendations were being implemented. When the Mérida food bank director Trino Molina presented details of the CSC project and the tangible recommendations they received at a conference of BAMX food banks across Mexico, it was incredibly well received. In fact, the presidents of five other BAMX food banks inquired about opportunities to pursue their own project with CSC. “The IBM CSC project at the food bank in Mérida lit the fuse of replicability,” explained Klein. “The interest it generated led to our partnering with CSC on food bank projects in two more Mexican cities and in three more Latin American countries.” The projects included: Toluca (July 2014) and Monterrey (May 2015) in Mexico; Guayaquil, Ecuador (September 2014), Barranquilla, Colombia (October 2014), and Mendoza, Argentina (April 2015).

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GFN President and CEO

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GFN is now regularly quantifying the effect of CSC engagements on food distributed, hungry people served and other key metrics indicative of a growing impact (by the food banks) on their communities. “We’ve created a template for reporting every six months in order to quantify the impact of CSC projects as food banks proceed with implementation of CSC team recommendations,” explained Klein. The results are a validation of best practices and have been shared at conferences of food bank networks in Mexico. They will also be shared soon at similar conferences in Colombia and Argentina. “Within these networks, there is a strong desire to replicate food bank successes influenced by IBM CSC teams,” said Klein.

The metrics being tracked include the number of recommendations implemented, average increase in kilograms of food distributed each month, increase in the number of people fed each month, increase in the number of financial and food donors, and how each food bank is viewed within its community as reflected in surveys and media coverage, among others.

The Mérida food bank engagement was the bellwether project and reflects how CSC teams adapt to meet the needs of clients. After the first week of 12-hour days interviewing donors, staff, and beneficiaries, and examining warehouse operations, the two-member IBM CSC team wanted to expand the scope of the project to meet the food bank’s needs. This included an inventory and process management system for efficiency, a target of increasing the future capacity to distribute food by a substantial amount within two years, increasing the number of food and financial donors, and developing a communications plan to increase awareness, donations and volunteer workers.

Some highlights of the impact of IBM’s CSC project on the Mérida food bank include:

- IBM’s new system has improved Mérida’s storage capacity, resulted in shorter waiting periods for families and communities receiving food, and enabled a faster delivery system that has reduced payroll
- The development of a communications plan to keep internal and external audiences better informed
- Mérida is now viewed by donors, beneficiaries, employees and volunteers as more efficient and professional
- The number of food donors more than doubled to 260

GFN's Senior Vice President of Network Development Chris Rebstock explains that "CSC's impact has enabled food banks to improve and streamline overall operations that have facilitated the increased numbers of beneficiaries, donors, volunteers, food collected, and people served". Here are some of the highlights of how other food banks have benefitted from the impact of the work of IBM's CSC teams:

**Toluca Food Bank (Mexico).** The food bank hired a social media manager, created a communication plan and reached out to the community with news about its work. This resulted in a 41 percent increase in food donors, an increase of 15,000 people fed each month (140,000), and a 12.5 percent increase in average kilograms of food distributed monthly.

**Barranquilla Food Bank (Colombia).** There was an increase of 40 new food donors, a document was developed describing roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers, a work-flow schedule for food collections has resulted in increased productivity, two people were hired to input and upload information on social networks, and the Asociación de Bancos de Alimentos de Colombia (the national network for food banks in Colombia) and the Barranquilla food bank are developing a toolkit to help other Colombian food banks benefit from the CSC project.



*Figure 1: Barranquilla visit*

**Guayaquil Food Bank (Ecuador).** The food bank has implemented a new online, modernized inventory and accounting system, increased the monthly amount of food distributed to the needy by 63 percent, developed a marketing and communications function, launched a campaign (Kilos of Love) to expand its revenue base through donations, and secured an alliance with a major retail food donor. The enthusiasm is not just limited to the food banking experts as several of the IBM employees that served on these CSC food banking projects have returned to their homes in the US, Turkey and India to begin working with their local food banks with the intent of sharing their CSC learnings with their local communities.

**Mendoza Food Bank (Argentina).** This project was just completed in late May and at this time the food bank is implementing these key recommendations: establishing a program to manage the volunteer process, hiring a marketing and communications director, creating a web page and mobile app, partnering with top donors to kick off a brand messaging campaign to increase visibility, making tactical investments in technology, and developing a marketing plan to increase the donor base.

The GFN food banking experts are excited about the extended reach achieved by IBM's Corporate Service Corps to replicate its inaugural project with the Mérida food bank in six projects across Latin America. It's a story of collaboration among the private, public, and volunteer sectors. "And IBM's involvement through CSC reinforces the message that every company has the ability to mobilize its resources to help make the world better," said GFN President and CEO Klein. "IBM is a best-in-class corporate citizen. If a non-food company like IBM can figure out how to get involved in addressing problems like hunger around the world, others will surely take notice and we hope follow IBM's lead."

**For more information:**

For more information on the Corporate Service Corps program, visit [ibm.com/corporateservicecorps](https://ibm.com/corporateservicecorps)



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