

ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024 - 2034

First Progress Report

2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Health and Community Services Directorate and VolunteeringACT acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

We value volunteers of every gender, sexuality, ability and culture, as well as the contributions of volunteer involving organisations to our community's well-being.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS	5
Focus Area 1: Individual Potential and Volunteer Experience.....	5
Focus Area 2: Community and Social Impact	8
Focus Area 3: Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive	9
NEXT STEPS.....	10

ACT VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY

Progress Report 2025

INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is the heartbeat of a connected, compassionate, and resilient Canberra. The [ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024–2034](#), launched in August 2024, set out a bold vision to foster an inclusive, ethical, and sustainable volunteering ecosystem across the Territory. This first annual progress report marks a significant milestone in that journey—highlighting the collective efforts of government, community organisations, and volunteers to bring the Strategy to life. Over the past year, we have seen meaningful progress across all three focus areas: enhancing individual volunteer experiences; amplifying community and social impact; and strengthening the conditions for volunteering to thrive. This report reflects not only the achievements made but also the deep commitment to building a volunteering culture that is accessible, celebrated, and enduring.

The *ACT Volunteering Strategy* is informed by the three focus areas of the [National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033](#), providing a strong two-way link and opportunities for reciprocal learning to achieve national and ACT priorities, objectives, and outcomes. Under each focus area ACT-specific strategic outcomes to be achieved over the life of the Strategy have been identified.

The [Action Plan 2024-2027](#) sits under the *ACT Volunteering Strategy* and describes the work and the commitments to support the focus areas of the Strategy and improve the volunteering landscape in the ACT. The plan contains actions for each of the three focus areas under the ACT Volunteering Strategy:

1. Individual Potential and Volunteer Experience
2. Community and Social Impact
3. Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive.

SUMMARY OF FOCUS AREAS

This section highlights the work undertaken in the first year of implementation of the Action Plan.

Focus Area 1. Individual Potential and Volunteer Experience: Volunteering is safe, inclusive, accessible, meaningful, and not exploitative.

STRATEGIC OUTCOME AREA	THE STEPS WE WILL TAKE
1.1: More ACT community members are engaged in meaningful and enjoyable volunteering in a way that works for them.	1. Review and update any relevant Whole of Government policies that refer to volunteers i.e. Second Jobs and Volunteering.
	2. Develop advice and guidelines specifically on Voluntary Community Leave and promote via whole-of-government communications.
	3. Promotion of volunteering opportunities with large scale ACT events – such as Floriade, Enlighten and National Multicultural Festival.
	4. Investigate more ways we can help people use volunteering to upskill, connect with others, and enhance wellbeing.
	5. Carry out research into youth and student volunteering in the ACT.
	6. Establish respectful ongoing connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to hear their views on volunteering and what they would like from volunteer programs.
	7. Expand collaboration with the ACT's CALD communities to learn from their volunteering practices.

STRATEGIC OUTCOME AREA	THE STEPS WE WILL TAKE
1.2: ACT volunteers are free from exploitation, and their participation in volunteering does not result in direct financial loss.	8. Develop further tools for volunteers and Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs) to support key governance requirements and standards.
	9. Develop and adapt volunteer and volunteer management training, resources, and toolkits to respond to changing needs, including more informal volunteering.
	10. Expand the roll out of VolunteeringACT's core training program.
	11. Investigate what volunteers and VIOs might need from a future ACT Volunteer 'Passport' scheme.
1.3: ACT volunteers feel safe and supported in their roles and volunteering environment.	12. Look into how to improve information sharing and development of resources regarding the WWVP Scheme in partnership with Access Canberra.
	13. Develop an Ethical Volunteering Framework including induction guidelines and share with the ACT volunteering ecosystem.

Key achievements under Focus Area 1: Individual Potential and Volunteer Experience

This focus area includes initiatives aimed at enhancing awareness, participation, and support for volunteering across the ACT Public Service (ACTPS) and the broader community.

A new factsheet is being developed to inform all ACT Public Service (ACTPS) staff about their entitlement to paid Community Service Leave. This leave, as outlined in ACTPS Enterprise Agreements, allows employees to participate in three distinct types of community service activities. Once completed, the factsheet will be distributed through internal communication channels to raise awareness and encourage greater uptake (Actions 1 and 2).

The Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) led a targeted communications campaign to promote volunteering opportunities for the National Multicultural Festival. This campaign was delivered across ACT Government-owned websites, Facebook and Instagram pages, and email newsletters. As a result, 215 volunteers contributed over 1,670 hours of service (Action 3).

A similar communications effort supported volunteer recruitment for the 2025 Reconciliation Day event. This included cross-directorate promotion via the Events ACT mailing list and social channels, and internal ACTPS-wide newsletters (Action 3).

Volunteering opportunities for Floriade and Enlighten were also promoted through ACT Government channels such as the Events ACT website and social media platforms. Additional outreach was conducted via external platforms including the VolunteeringACT website, GoVolunteer, and SeekVolunteer (Action 3).

To support Canberrans living with dementia, all volunteers participating in Events ACT major events received Dementia Virtual Reality training. This initiative aligns with the ACT Disability Strategy and the Age-Friendly City Plan, aiming to enhance event accessibility (Action 3).

Additionally, a panel discussion on volunteer management was presented at the Enlightened Events Sector conference in March 2025. Panellists included representatives from the National Folk Festival, National Multicultural Festival, and Enlighten. The session featured a Q&A with the events industry, focusing on improving volunteer engagement and delivering meaningful outcomes for both organisers and community members (Action 3 and 4).

VolunteeringACT's Inclusive Volunteering Pathways to Employment Program continues to be tailored to create meaningful opportunities for people with disability or mental health conditions. By fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, the program enables participants to build confidence, gain valuable experience, and move closer to employment. It also works with organisations to actively remove their barriers to involving volunteers with disability and mental health conditions (Action 4).

In 2025, a new initiative for school leavers with disability and/or mental health conditions was piloted through a partnership between VolunteeringACT and the ACT Education Directorate. Collaborating with three ACT schools, the initiative provides students with hands-on volunteering experiences alongside classroom-based training. These activities help students develop work-ready skills and foster a deeper understanding of community engagement (Action 4).

The formation of a Youth Volunteering Working Group enabled the co-design of three toolkits in collaboration with young people, families, educators, and youth service providers. These toolkits aim to inspire youth participation in volunteering and offer practical support. Each toolkit includes a rich mix of resources such as templates, links, and guidance for young volunteers, their support networks, and volunteer managers (Actions 4 and 5).

The 2025 Volunteering Expo hosted by VolunteeringACT in March attracted over 900 attendees and featured more than 60 volunteer-involving organisations. The event received positive feedback from both stallholders and participants as a valuable platform for organisations to promote their volunteering opportunities, build networks and for individuals to explore new ways to contribute to their community (Action 4).

VolunteeringACT significantly expanded its training offerings in 2025, delivering a total of 51 training sessions—a 24% increase from the previous year. These sessions supported both volunteer managers and volunteers, covering topics such as evidence-based best practices in retention, recognition, management, and program design. Volunteers were introduced to key concepts including Wellbeing and Boundaries in Volunteering. A total of 696 participants attended the sessions, a 55% increase from the previous year. This growth reflects VolunteeringACT's commitment to strengthening volunteer engagement and capacity across the sector (Action 9 and 10).

Finally, Access Canberra continues its collaboration with ACTCOSS and VolunteeringACT, using established forums to regularly share updates and information about the Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) scheme. Access Canberra has also launched a new website featuring enhanced content about the WWVP scheme. This updated information was developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including ACTCOSS and VolunteeringACT, to ensure it meets community needs (Action 12).

Focus Area 2. Community and Social Impact: The diversity and impact of volunteering is articulated and celebrated.

STRATEGIC OUTCOME AREA	THE STEPS WE WILL TAKE
2.1: The ACT volunteer workforce is seen and heard, valued, and fully recognised for the far-reaching positive impacts of volunteering.	14. Investigate ways to connect more volunteering data to other relevant ACT data collections including the ACT Wellbeing Framework.
	15. Coordinate the State of Volunteering Survey in the ACT every three years and share findings with the ACT volunteering ecosystem.
	16. Continue to recognise volunteering through ACT Government awards.
	17. Develop a communications plan about volunteering and the positive difference it makes to our region.
	18. Promote the importance of volunteers during ACT Volunteering Week.
2.2: Volunteering stories, experiences and impacts are well-documented and widely shared across communities, to improve how we highlight and celebrate them.	19. Raise public awareness of the importance of the National Strategy for Volunteering and how this is being progressed in the ACT.
	20. Build the capability of VIOs to improve their data collection on volunteering and understanding of data governance processes.

Key achievements under Focus Area 2: Community and Social Impact

This focus area includes initiatives aimed at capturing data and highlighting the importance of volunteers in our community.

The ACT Government is continuing to collect information on volunteering through the Living Well Survey in the ACT Region survey, conducted by the University of Canberra. This survey provides detailed insights into volunteering activity and contributes to the ACT Wellbeing Dashboard by tracking changes in volunteering over time. Conducted annually, and more frequently if major events impact volunteering patterns, the survey captures key measures such as the percentage of people who have volunteered in the past 12 months, those who used to volunteer but haven't in the past year, and those who have never volunteered. It also gathers data on the types and frequency of volunteering activities. The most recent survey was completed in January 2025 and is expected to be published in late 2025. The survey will next be undertaken during the later part of 2025 – early 2026 (Action 14).

The importance of environmental volunteerism was highlighted through work of the City and Environment Directorate. The Directorate supports flagship volunteer programs of ParkCare, Urban Parks and Places, Waterwatch and Frogwatch. Other initiatives supporting this outcome included: hosting an annual volunteer thank-you event; volunteer training to equip volunteers with skills, confidence, and recognition that affirm their role as essential contributors to community and environmental outcomes; and providing grant opportunities through Community Zero Emissions Grants and Community Garden Grants programs.

The biennial Environmental Volunteers Conference, co-hosted with Landcare ACT, provided meaningful engagement opportunities for the volunteer community. The conference featured peer-led field visits and a collaborative conference day, enabling volunteers to share insights, build connections, and receive recognition from peers, staff, and the broader community.

Volunteering was further recognised and promoted through ACT Government awards across directorates, as well as through coordinated campaigns during Volunteering Week. These efforts included outreach via social media, newsletters, and internal staff communications. The Volunteering Expo received similar promotional support, with additional visibility through digital screens in ACT Libraries and the ArtsACT newsletter (Actions 16 and 18).

VolunteeringACT conducted a targeted social media and media engagement campaign during National Volunteer Week 2025 to recognise ACT volunteers and the contribution they make to the ACT community (Action 18).

To further enhance the profile of volunteering in the ACT, a dedicated communications strategy was developed by VolunteeringACT to highlight the positive impact of volunteering, enhance volunteer recognition, and raise public awareness of the National Strategy for Volunteering and its local implementation (Actions 17 and 19).

Focus Area 3: Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive: The right conditions are in place for volunteering to be effective and sustainable.

STRATEGIC OUTCOME AREA	THE STEPS WE WILL TAKE
3.1: The importance of volunteers, volunteer managers and VIOs is considered in relevant ACT government strategic planning, service design, and delivery.	21. Continue to meet the Volunteering Strategic Advisory Group to guide VolunteeringACT's ongoing implementation of the Strategy.
	22. Hold an annual roundtable with key stakeholders to guide and review implementation of the ACT Volunteering Strategy.
	23. Develop proposals to seek funding for implementation of Strategy actions and associated projects.
3.2: ACT Volunteers and VIOs have strong links with each	24. Set up an ACT Government Volunteering Networking Group for ACTPS staff working in ACT Government Volunteer Programs.

other, collaborate well and regularly share good practice.

25. Engage with Ministerial Councils to promote participation in volunteering.

26. Investigate what volunteers and VIOs need to help them connect with each other and work together more.

Key achievements under Focus Area 3: Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive

This focus area includes activities linking volunteers, volunteer managers and ACT Government together.

In mid-2025, VolunteeringACT refreshed the membership of their Volunteering Strategic Advisory Group, bringing together 13 organisations for the first meeting in early July. This group represents a diverse mix of government agencies and organisations with varying levels of volunteer involvement and operational reach, both locally and nationally. Notably, two of the members are from organisations that are entirely volunteer run, offering valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by such groups (Action 21).

VolunteeringACT and the Health and Community Services Directorate successfully facilitated the first Annual Roundtable, bringing together key government and volunteering organisations. This event served as a platform to guide and review the implementation of the ACT Volunteering Strategy Action Plan, fostering collaboration and shared accountability (Action 22).

Since the release of the Action Plan, VolunteeringACT has invited ACT Government Volunteer Program Coordinators to attend VolunteeringACT's monthly networking meetings. ACTPS volunteer coordinators are actively participating and providing positive feedback on these events as a valuable forum for building professional relationships and enhancing inter-agency collaboration (Action 24).

Collaboration with the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism has helped promote volunteering opportunities at the National Multicultural Festival (Action 3 and 25).

The Health and Community Services Directorate will continue to support VolunteeringACT to engage with Ministerial Councils ensuring sustained outreach and inclusion (Action 25).

NEXT STEPS

Volunteering is an activity that cuts across and supports numerous sectors, including core aspects of Australian Government and ACT Government portfolios. Achieving the vision for volunteering in the ACT requires a cross-sector, whole-of-community, and whole-of-government approach to implementation.

The Health and Community Services Directorate and VolunteeringACT will work together to implement the Strategy and its Action Plans. HCSD will coordinate implementation across ACT Government directorates. VolunteeringACT will work across the volunteering sector and maintain buy-in from volunteer-involving organisations for a cross-sector implementation approach, comprising of representatives from a range of volunteering sub-sectors.

As the First Action Plan enters its second year, more work will need to be done to ensure the Strategy is realised. Key focus areas include:

- Expanding collaboration with the ACT's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities to learn from their volunteering practices (Action 7).

- Developing and adapting volunteer and volunteer management training, resources and toolkits to respond to changing needs, including more informal volunteering (Action 9).
- Continuing work with Access Canberra on how to improve information sharing and development of resources regarding the Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Scheme (Action 12).
- Developing an Ethical Volunteering Framework including induction guidelines and sharing with the ACT volunteering ecosystem (Action 13).
- Continuing to investigate ways to connect more volunteering data to other relevant ACT data collections including the ACT Wellbeing Framework (Action 14).
- Investigating what volunteers and VIOs need to help them connect with each other and work together more (Action 26).

Collaboration with colleagues from across the volunteering ecosystem, including volunteers themselves, will be key to implementing the second year of the *ACT Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan*.