



VolunteeringACT
an inclusive Canberra



ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

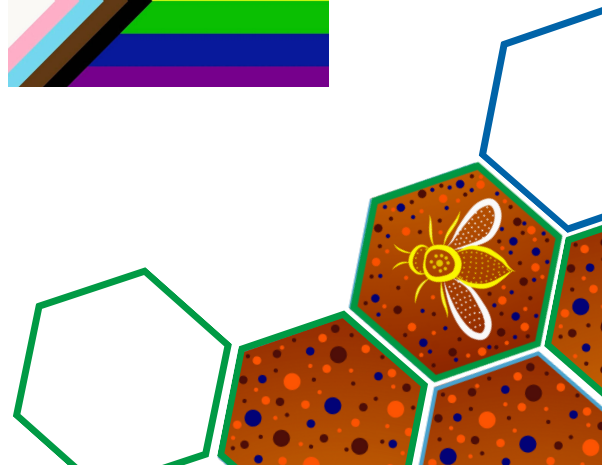
VolunteeringACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as Traditional Custodians of the Canberra Region and recognises any other peoples or families with connection to this Country. We acknowledge and respect their vital ongoing contribution to the Canberra Region. We are committed to reconciliation and will continue to walk alongside First Nations Peoples and embrace the traditions, stories and wisdoms of the oldest continuing cultures in the world.

This document was created on Ngunnawal Country.

VolunteeringACT thanks Richard Allan Jr, the artist who created the beautiful brown hexagon design throughout this document. Richard is a Ngunnawal, Kamilaroi, and Bundjalung artist.

VolunteeringACT acknowledges volunteers of all genders and sexualities, with all abilities and from all cultures. Their skills, expertise, and time are critical to delivering services and programs, and making Canberra a better place to live. We also acknowledge the contribution of the volunteer involving organisations that contribute to the health and happiness of our community.

VolunteeringACT would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to our members, Board of Directors, volunteers, volunteer managers, partners, advisors, subcommittee members, collaborators, consultants, staff members and everyone who has engaged with us during the past year. Your contribution to our organisation is highly appreciated!





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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Robyn Hendry

I am delighted to once again present the VolunteeringACT Annual Report.

This has been another busy year – like many not-for-profits – with an increased demand on our services as post-COVID ‘recovery’ impacts on the community’s ability to retain volunteers and attract back those who decided through COVID to focus on other things.

We continue to adapt to the changing community needs across the Canberra Region as we advocate for local and national policy changes, and investment, to support the volunteering sector and a more inclusive and sustainable volunteering ecosystem.



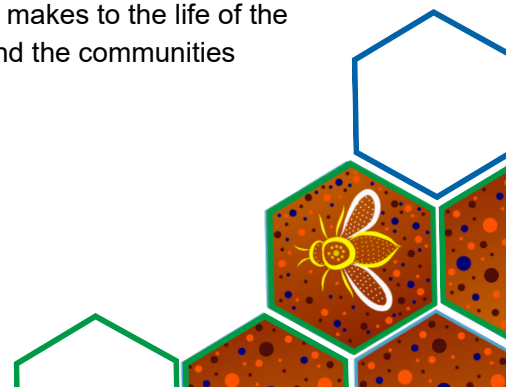
We worked with our colleagues at Volunteering Australia and the jurisdictions to contribute to the National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033 through a 12-month co-design journey to reimagine the future for volunteering. The National Strategy for Volunteering provides a blueprint for the coming years that will enable volunteering in Australia to thrive. Concurrently, we continued the co-design of the ACT Volunteering Strategy and launched our Listening Report which reflects what we have heard from volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (and those who fund and support them) and brings a local focus to the objectives of the National Strategy.

I would like to acknowledge the continued support of our funding partners in the ACT Government, and in the Australian Government through the Department of Social Services and the Department of Health.

Thank you to our sponsors and supporters in the Canberra Labor Club Group, MF & Associates, Galent Management Consulting, CDC Data Centres and Aspen Medical. And we also want to acknowledge the work of our service delivery partners – Burbirra Group, Hall and Wilcox, Synergy Law, the Australian Institute of Project Management and 180 Degrees Consulting ANU Branch.

The Board would like to thank Susan Helyar for acting as CEO during the period Jean Giese was on leave. We appreciate your steady leadership and commitment to the volunteering sector.

Finally, many thanks to our employees, volunteers and Board for the incredible work you do to enact the mission and values of VolunteeringACT, and the contribution this makes to the life of the Canberra Region and the communities we serve.



CEO'S MESSAGE

Jean Giese

I am delighted to showcase the work of VolunteeringACT through our 2022-23 Annual Report focusing on our three strategic priorities: improving inclusion in the Canberra Region, influencing change through policy and advocacy, and strengthening the sector to enable a more resilient Canberra community.

Collaboration, diversity, equity, innovation, integrity and participation are more than just a list of our values. We live and breathe these each day to achieve our vision of an inclusive Canberra.

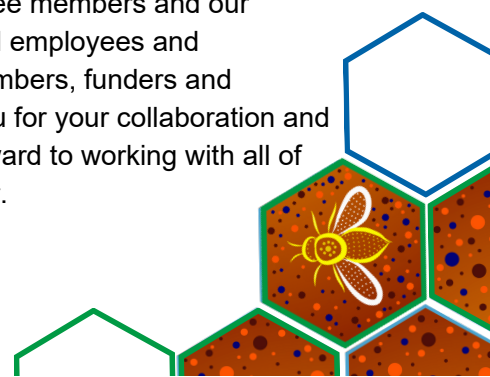
It is worth noting that VolunteeringACT particularly focussed to ensure codesign is embedded in all of the work that we do. This has been a significant shift in conceptual understanding that means every policy and advocacy space we inhabit has our team outlining where the lived experience perspective is lacking, how best to involve people in meaningful co-design, and advocating that stakeholders must fund it. To this end, I am pleased the Board re-endorsed and this year expanded our lived experience paid participation policy that is just one part of formalising how we do this within our own organisation.

Key programs like our Community Info Hub, Inclusive Volunteering Program, Canberra Food Relief Projects, and Volunteer Management Activity give us myriad ways to directly deliver services as well as to inform our role as the peak for volunteering, providing key policy and advocacy to inform the future for the Canberra Region.

VolunteeringACT published its first Reconciliation Action Plan this year and I am proud to be the RAP Champion at VolunteeringACT. As outlined in our Reflect RAP, we have engaged an indigenous consultant to advise us in appropriate, respectful, mutually beneficial approaches to working with First Nations Peoples.

I would like to thank our 189 members who are the core of our organisation. Our network of volunteer involving organisations and volunteer management professionals ensure our strong collective voice for volunteering in the ACT.

I want to thank our skilled and dedicated Board of Directors and committee members and our dedicated and talented employees and volunteers. To our members, funders and stakeholders thank you for your collaboration and partnership. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.



Welcome to our 2022-23 Annual Report

VolunteeringACT is the peak body for volunteering. We also provide community information in the Canberra Region, and we are a service provider of programs for people experiencing disadvantage and isolation, people with disability, and people needing support for mental wellness. Through our activities, we improve inclusivity, enable sustainable volunteering, and create a more resilient Canberra community.

Throughout our work, we aim to foster quality of life and an inclusive Canberra by enabling participation and connection.

We proudly advocate for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations in the Canberra Region. We also represent the interests of 189 members.

Nothing you will see in this Annual Report would have been possible without the talent, commitment and innovation of our Board of Directors and staff members, paid and voluntary. VolunteeringACT is devoted to continuing to be an inclusive and people-focused organisation.

Board of Directors

Robyn Hendry Chair
George Brenan to 04/04/23, former Deputy Chair
Helen McKenna Deputy Chair and Treasurer
Bobbi Campbell – from 16/06/23
David Maywald – from 22/11/22
Dianne O'Hara – to 14/02/23
Jayne Curnow
Kim Kachel
Lee Maiden
Sajid Hassan – from 27/09/22

Company Secretary

Jean Giese



Strategic Priorities

VolunteeringACT proudly continues working to help grow thriving volunteer communities by enabling participation, inclusion and connection, while we also advocate for a more resilient Canberra community. Our strategic priorities drive every decision:



Improve inclusion in the Canberra Region

We foster inclusion by reducing barriers to participation in volunteering and access to community information.



Influence change through policy and advocacy

We drive the development of evidence-based policy as the lead advocate for volunteering in the Canberra Region.



Strengthen the sector to enable a more resilient Canberra community

We are the trusted experts in volunteering and community information in the Canberra Region and we strategically invest in capability and capacity building to strengthen the sector and enhance outcomes for our stakeholders and the community.

Our values

Innovation



Collaboration



Integrity



Participation



Diversity



Equity



Our members

At 30 June 2023

- 2XXfm
- Abbeyfield Australia
- Abbeyfield Garran Inc
- Abundant Water Inc
- ACT Corrective Services
- ACT Disability, Aged and Carers Advocacy Service
- ACT Emergency Services Agency
- ACT Fencing Association
- ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc
- ACT Parks and Conservation Service
- ACT Rescue & Foster (ARF)
- ACT Volunteers in Policing
- ACT Wildlife
- ACTCOSS
- Active Canberra
- Adria Village
- Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Association ACT
- Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT
- Annecto Canberra
- ANU Student Life
- Arthur Wilks OAM
- Artsound Incorporated
- Association of Parents & Friends of ACT Schools
- Australian American Association - Canberra Division
- Australian Centre for Service Learning
- Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation
- Australian National Botanic Gardens
- Australian National Eisteddfod
- Australian Network for Plant Conservation Inc
- Australian National University – Student Experience and Career Development
- Australian Red Cross ACT
- Australian War Memorial
- BaptistCare NSW/ACT
- Barnardos Canberra Australia
- Basketball ACT
- Belconnen Arts Centre
- Belconnen Dog Obedience Club
- Beryl Women Inc.
- Better Hearing Australia - Canberra
- Blue Gum Community School
- Brumbies
- Bush Heritage Australia
- Calvary Regional Offices ACT
- Canberra and Region Visitors Centre
- Canberra Blind Society
- Canberra College of Piping and Drumming
- Canberra Hospital and Health Services
- Canberra Hospital Foundation
- Canberra International Music Festival
- Canberra Railway Museum
- Canberra Region Rugby League
- Cancer Council ACT
- Canteen ACT & SNSW Division
- Capital Football
- Capital Nordic Walking Community Outreach
- Capital Region Community Services
- Communities at Work
- Community Connections Inc
- Community First Development
- Community Services #1
- Conservation Council Act Region Inc
- Council on the Ageing (COTA ACT)
- Covenant Care
- Currie Crescent Community Centre
- Cystic Fibrosis ACT
- Dementia Australia - Australian Capital Territory
- Domestic Animal Services
- Doris Womens Refuge
- Eastlake Football Club
- Epilepsy ACT
- Ethnic Broadcasters Council Of The Act (Cms Radio)
- Events ACT
- Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform
- Family Drug Support
- Fearless Women
- Fortem Australia (ACT)
- Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra Inc
- Geoscience Australia
- Ginninderra Catchment Group Inc
- Girl Guides NSW, ACT & NT
- Goodwin Aged Care Services
- Greening Australia Capital Region
- Greyhound Connections Inc.
- Grind to Ground
- Hammondcare (ACT)
- Hands Across Canberra
- Hartley Lifecare Inc
- Havelock Housing Association
- Hilltops Community Hub
- Inclusive Volunteering Program
- Indigenous Reading Project
- Intellectual Disability Rights Services
- IRT Group

Our members

At 30 June 2023

- Karinya House
- Karralika Programs Inc
- Koomarri
- Lake Ginninderra College
- Landcare ACT
- Libraries ACT
- Lids4Kids
- Lifestream Christian Fellowship
- Little Oak Sanctuary
- Lucky Stars Sanctuary
- Marymead CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn
- Multicultural Communities Council Of Illawarra Incorporated (MCCI)
- Menslink
- Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
- Mental Health Foundation ACT
- Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT)
- Meridian Incorporated
- Mosaic Life Care - Canberra
- Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
- Narrabundah Early Childhood School
- National Arboretum Canberra
- National Capital Authority
- National Folk Festival
- National Gallery of Australia
- National Library of Australia
- National Multicultural Festival
- National Museum Of Australia
- National Opera
- Nationsheart Christian Community
- Navitas English AMEP ACT
- Neighbourhood Watch ACT
- North Canberra Hospital (Previously Calvary Public Hospital)
- Northside Community Service
- Orange Sky Australia (ACT)
- Outward Bound
- Palliative Care ACT
- Parentline ACT
- Parkinson's ACT
- Pedal Power
- Pegasus - Riding for the Disabled
- Perinatal Wellbeing Centre
- Playgroup ACT
- Print Handicapped Radio of ACT
- Prisoners Aid ACT
- Project Independence
- Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre Inc
- Questacon Volunteer Explainer
- Rise Above Capital Region Cancer Relief
- Ronald McDonald House Charities ACT & South East NSW
- Roundabout Canberra
- RSI & Overuse Injury Association
- RSL LifeCare (ACT)
- RSPCA ACT
- Safe Shelter ACT
- Sanctuary Aus
- Scout Association of Australia, ACT Branch
- SEE-Change Inc
- Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT
- Serve Gate
- Sharing Places Inc
- SHINE for Kids
- Soldier On
- St Andrew's Village
- St John Ambulance ACT
- St John's Care
- St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
- Ted Noffs Foundation
- Tender Funerals Canberra Region
- Tennis ACT
- The Food Co-op Shop and Cafe
- The Mill House Ventures Limited
- The Salvation Army (ACT)
- The Smith Family (ACT)
- Toora Women Inc
- Tuggeranong Arts Centre
- Tuggeranong Community Council (TCC)
- UN Women Australia
- Unitingcare Kippax
- Unity College Australia
- University of Canberra - Student Support Services
- Urban Parks and Places Volunteering - TCCS
- Victim Support ACT
- Victims of Crime Assistance League (ACT) Inc
- Warehouse Circus Inc
- Warrigal
- Wellways Australia Ltd
- Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC)
- Woden Community Service
- Women With Disabilities ACT
- Woodlands and Wetlands Trust
- Worldview Foundation
- YFU Student Exchange (ACT)
- Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Youth for Human Rights

“ It is so helpful to have somebody to call for advice about volunteering and inclusion that is hard to find by myself. Thank you for your expert advice and support, I feel like you explain things in a way that just makes sense. ”

- Member feedback -



“ We value our relationship with VolunteeringACT. Improvement and growth cannot be made without valuable feedback and input. We always reach out when we need additional guidance to support our volunteering program. ”

- Member feedback -



We are improving inclusion in the Canberra Region

The 2022-23 financial year was an important one for VolunteeringACT programs. During this period, our work has been influential in the volunteering sector and in the Canberra community by reinforcing inclusion, connecting people experiencing disadvantage to local service providers, engaging more actively with First Nations communities, advocating for people with diverse abilities, and breaking down perceived barriers that would otherwise prohibit more holistic volunteering engagement.

Inclusive Volunteering Pathway to Employment Program

The Inclusive Volunteering Pathways to Employment Program (IVPTEP) supports people living with disability or mental health conditions to learn new skills and gain experience through volunteering, leading to paid and meaningful employment.

The program also collaborates with organisations to make workplaces more inclusive, enabling them to involve individuals with diverse abilities and backgrounds.

Throughout this year, we have continued to deliver the program in partnership with The Centre for Volunteering (NSW) and Volunteering Tasmania.

Increased interest in the program highlights its benefits for people with disability or mental health conditions who commit to volunteering to gain skills for future employment opportunities.

During this year, the program team offered ongoing support to participants and also advised volunteer involving organisations on how inclusion builds greater connectivity and tangible benefits across the wider community.

A key element of the program is the Inclusive Volunteering Workshop for Organisations that discusses all aspects of an inclusive volunteering program, misconceptions, perceived barriers, and how best to integrate inclusive awareness and best practices into day-to-day operations within a volunteer involving organisation.

Feedback from attendees highlights the value of the content, networking with peers to contribute to safe and frank conversations.

58 

**new participants
joined the program**

173 

**volunteer involving
organisations were
involved with the program**



Case study

A participant reporting multiple barriers joined the Inclusive Volunteering Pathways to Employment Program looking to connect with the community. He advised “I want to feel valued” and started his journey by participating in the program workshops: Intro to Volunteering, and Wellbeing and Boundaries. As he had a support worker available to him for most days of the week, he was very open to almost any volunteering role, if it was interactive with people, community-based and was as part of a team. We reached out to an organisation that had all those requirements and more. This participant started with Grind to Ground as a driver transporting coffee

waste from two to three cafes per week to the Grind to Ground base to start the process of making compost. This participant now volunteers with Grind to Ground twice a week and visits more than 10 cafes per week across his shifts. The Grind to Ground team and the cafes he visits report he is always on time, has a smile and chats with the staff, and has a laugh with them and boosts morale when he visits. This participant has demonstrated he is more than capable of completing his tasks and the program team are only in contact every couple of months as the volunteering partnership has succeeded.

Canberra Food Security Projects

VolunteeringACT is proud to lead food security projects in the Canberra Region with the vision of ensuring food security for all Canberrans. These projects were designed and scoped with food and emergency relief providers and submitted via a joint budget process on behalf of the (then) Canberra Relief Advisory Committee which we also chaired. This year, we have delivered three key projects: the data project, the communications strategy, and the establishment of the Food Relief Network.

The data project aims to capture data from food relief services being provided across the Canberra Region to facilitate evidence informed decision-making regarding food security in the ACT.

During this year, we brought together a working group of representatives from across the sector to procure a service provider to develop a database and datawarehouse. The group developed a scope of what was required and worked with Community Data Solutions (the provider) to create the database, achieving the first milestone of the project.

We also established a Communications Working Group with representatives from across the food relief sector to develop a communications strategy to promote food relief service provision across the Canberra Region. The group engaged the marketing consultancy agency Neon Logic, who led a codesign project with representatives from the sector to develop the strategy. The strategy was released in March 2023. We continue to chair the Communications Working Group, working together to fulfil the strategy and promote food relief services across the Canberra Region.

This year we also established the Canberra Food Relief Network. The Network brings together food pantries and food relief services from across the Canberra Region to share resources, ideas

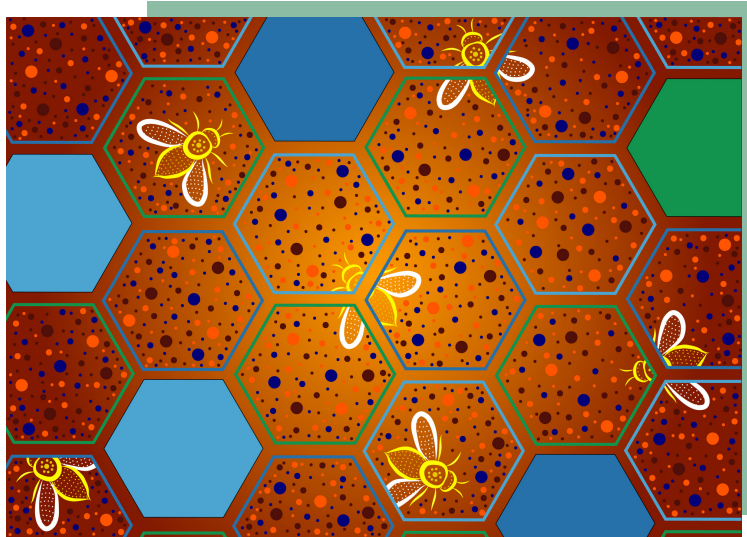
and best practice approaches. The meetings have been well attended and have enabled new collaborations and strengthened communication between emergency food providers.

VolunteeringACT now chairs the Food and Emergency Relief Advisory Committee (an evolution of the Canberra Relief Network Advisory Committee). This provides advice and advocacy to relevant Ministers and the ACT Government in relation to addressing food insecurity in the Territory and identifies and develops opportunities for community, government and corporate partnerships and collaborations that drive more effective and supportive food and emergency relief structures.

We are committed to reconciliation

Our work towards reconciliation continues to be a key priority for VolunteeringACT. During this year we commissioned Ngunnawal, Kamilaroi and Bundjalung artist, Richard Allan Jr to create an artwork for VolunteeringACT.

This artwork was revealed at our Annual General Meeting in November 2022 and has been used since then as an integral part of our brand identity. Richard has explained his design: "Volunteers, just like bees, are all hard workers and all of them need to do their specific job to make the team run smoothly. The bee has been around for around 140 million years. Just as the world needs bees to thrive, so does Canberra need volunteers. They are both essential and make the world a more beautiful place".



Our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia in December 2022, and we are currently working on an Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. During this year we also partnered with First Nations consultant Karen Demmery who provides guidance and advice and is a member of our Reconciliation Working Group.

With Karen's expertise we produced ['A Guide to Meeting the Cultural Needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers'](#). This guide provides practical insight to assist volunteer involving organisations to build relationships with First Nations Peoples and communities and has been well received in the sector. Our Reconciliation Working Group continues to meet regularly as part of our ongoing commitment to reconciliation.



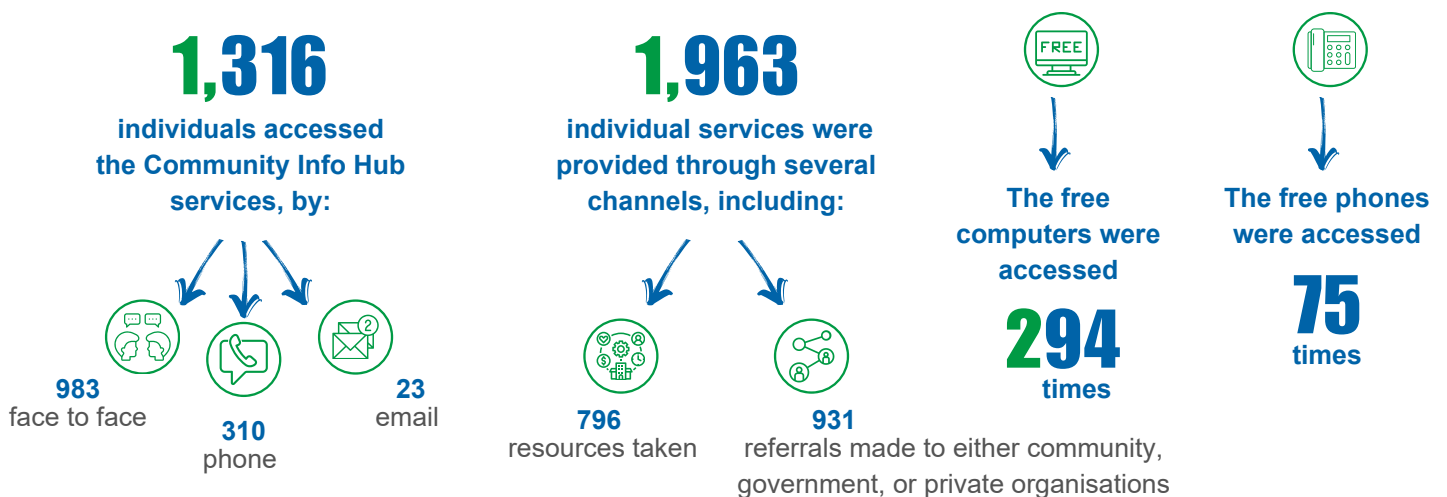
Scan here to access the guide

Community Info Hub

VolunteeringACT's Community Info Hub connects people with services, events, and training opportunities that encourage community participation. Accessible through multiple channels - in-person, phone, via email, and online via the ACT Community Directory and Diary - the Info Hub is an accessible, welcoming and central point of contact for the Canberra community.

Visitors to the Community Info Hub are linked to appropriate information and services through an inclusive, visitor-centred approach from both staff and volunteers. People also can access public computers, printing and scanning services, and public phones, all available for use free of charge.

One of the computers is now equipped with a microphone and is set up for speech to text, which has removed barriers for some service users living with disabilities, reading and writing difficulties, language barriers or low computer literacy.



The central location of the Community Info Hub makes it a stable point of connection for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. This year, our staff members and volunteers provided information and support for 134 individuals who identified themselves as having no stable residence.

In addition to seeking information about free meal services, short-stay accommodations and accessing computers, many of these visitors were looking for positive face to face interaction and a safe space to be listened to, which the Hub also provides. This reinforced the reliance on the Hub for social support, connection and positive interaction.

To enhance the level of support and provide the Canberra community with up-to-date and essential community information, VolunteeringACT published seven Community Info Guides that offered information on the following:

- Emergency and Food Relief
- Free Meals, Laundry, and Showers
- Legal Services
- Short-stay Accommodation

VolunteeringACT also published a guide to services operating over the Dec 2022/ Jan 2023 holiday period and the closure period of other services. These guides continue to be very popular resources in our community.

The guides raise awareness of what assistance is available for members of the public in the Canberra Region in different areas. We also worked closely to disseminate the Community Info Guides among other community services to make copies of the guides available for their service users. This ensures that people who access one service get information about other services that may be able to support them.

The ACT Community Directory platform underpins VolunteeringACT's Community Information Services. Through this platform, community organisations, sporting clubs, cultural, hobby and interest groups promote their services, programs, and events. Currently, the ACT Community Directory lists 2,024 community organisations and interest groups, delivering over 3,320 services and programs within the Canberra Region.

This information database is easily accessible to the public through multiple channels. During the reporting period, there was a total of 215,889 listings visited, an increase of 23.4% over the previous financial year.

The ACT Community Directory enhances the capacity of government and non-government organisations to support the ACT community via referrals and creates the information knowledge base for VolunteeringACT's Community Info Hub.

The ACT Community Diary, on the other hand, provides an events calendar for directory-listed organisations to share details of upcoming events, exhibitions, festivals, training, and meetings. Along with tourist and local entertainment information, members of the public can discover community events and opportunities, broadening their awareness and involvement in their local community. On any given day, the Diary will have many different events occurring across the region, helping to keep the Canberra community active and engaged.



Case study

A visitor had travelled from Queensland to Canberra to participate in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander celebration but unfortunately ended up experiencing homelessness and isolation with no way to return home. When she first visited the Community Info Hub, the staff were able to help her connect with crisis support services and food services while also researching a way for her to travel home. She continued to visit the Hub on various occasions throughout her time in Canberra, each time supported by Hub staff to contact services to apply for assistance.

The Community Info Hub staff were able to negotiate with a service that arranged travel for her to return to Queensland. The visitor later contacted the Hub to report that she had returned home safely and was incredibly grateful for the lifeline provided by the staff.





We are influencing change through policy and advocacy

VolunteeringACT drives the development of evidence-based policy as the lead advocate for volunteering and community information services in the Canberra Region. We are committed to ensuring the perspectives and expertise of volunteers, volunteer involving organisations and volunteer leaders informs development of public policy and contributes to achievement of positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Throughout 2022-23, the external policy landscape impacting on and intersecting with volunteering continued to expand, and we began to see volunteering being considered in an increasing number of strategic conversations, across several workstreams, and within key national and state/territory government portfolios.

This was an exciting shift to see, but it presented us with new challenges on how to stay across the large number of new and emerging policy themes as they occurred, while remaining responsive to the policy issues impacting on volunteer involving organisations in our region. This led VolunteeringACT to invest more resources in expanding our policy and advocacy capabilities to keep pace with these changes. This year, VolunteeringACT consulted with a wide range of stakeholders to shape collective responses to several formal policy submissions and reflect views from our jurisdiction including:

- **ACT Disability Strategy Consultation**
- **Australian Government: Treasury Department Measuring What Matters Consultation**
- **ACT Multicultural Advisory Council Terms of Reference Consultation**
- **ACT Budget 2023-2024**



Scan each QR code to access the policy submissions

Our submissions were informed by the experiences of organisations in our membership and networks, and our experiences of engaging with and delivering services to people living with mental ill health, people with multiple/complex needs (including with a dual diagnosis of substance misuse and mental ill health), and people with disability, including psychosocial conditions.

VolunteeringACT also contributed to several national policy submissions and position papers made by Volunteering Australia and continued to represent the ACT on several working groups and via codesign processes to ensure the priorities and needs of the ACT volunteering sector were reflected in national strategic policy conversations.



ACT Volunteering Strategy: bringing the volunteering sector together

Throughout the year we continued to support Volunteering Australia to develop Australia's first National Strategy for Volunteering (NSV) in 10 years, launched in February 2023. VolunteeringACT was a member of the NSV Core Design Team and contributed to the design process over several months, providing key insights from the ACT and representing the issues being faced by our sector and region.

The launch of a national strategy helped us reshape our consultation with the ACT volunteering sector and ongoing partnership work with ACT Government to advocate for investment to develop an ACT Volunteering Strategy.

VolunteeringACT also continued to build on existing data and intelligence to understand the needs and priorities of the ACT volunteering sector and to help inform the case for an ACT Volunteering Strategy to be funded through the 2023-24 ACT Budget process.

Throughout that period, we pulled together ACT volunteering sector insights from the last two years, held several consultation sessions to examine the National Strategy, identified areas of alignment between National Strategy objectives and ACT priorities, and ran an open expression of interest process asking for sector representatives to form an interim ACT Strategy governance structure and advisory mechanism.

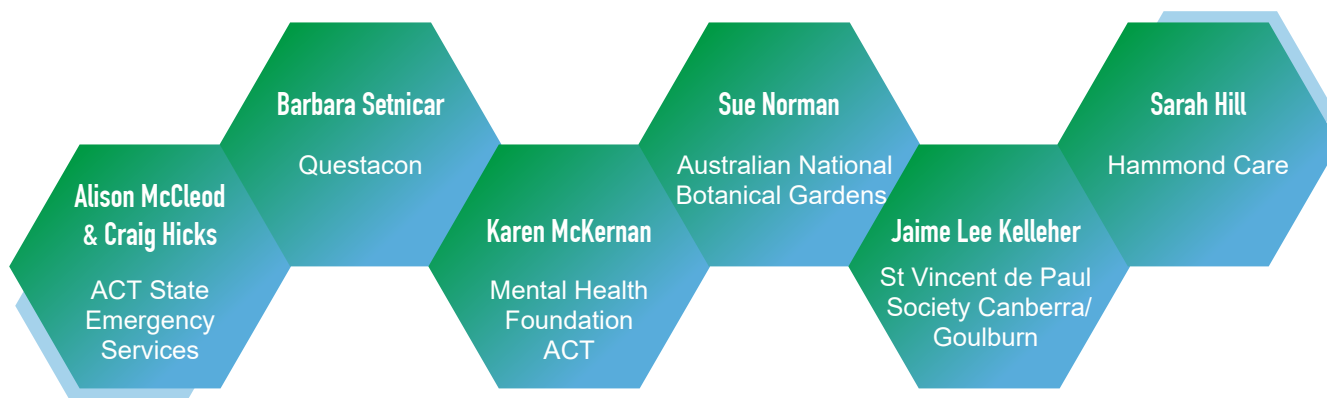
In May 2023, VolunteeringACT reached two important milestones in our Strategy development work: the launch of our Listening Report, [Canberra's Volunteering Landscape 2021-2023](#), and establishment of the ACT Volunteering Strategy Advisory Group (VSAG). The Listening Report consolidated two years of feedback and intelligence gathered from our members and wider networks and reflects the core issues, priorities, and strategic objectives for the ACT Volunteering sector with actions and solutions. This was endorsed by the ACT Volunteering Sector, the Community Services Directorate of ACT Government, and Emma Davidson MLA (ACT Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services).



Scan here to access the report

To date, the Listening Report has informed our ACT Strategy development and implementation process, our regular ongoing policy/advocacy work, and the work of VSAG. The VSAG was established in May 2023 and has been meeting bi-weekly since then to help steer our Strategy development work. The Group has representation from several volunteering sub-sectors including: community welfare and support, environmental, mental health, tourism and cultural institutions, emergency services and disaster response, aged care, and social support.

We feel incredibly fortunate to have a group of highly engaged and committed people giving up their time alongside their already busy roles, and we could not have progressed any of this work without their generosity in sharing their insights, expertise, and innovative ideas on what the ACT's volunteers, volunteer involving organisations and leaders need from an ACT Volunteering Strategy. We are delighted to be able to recognise and celebrate their vital contribution to our Strategy work.



“ Being involved in the Volunteering Strategy Advisory Group (VSAG) has been such a positive experience for me. I have enjoyed connecting and learning from colleagues across the sector and also the opportunity to provide insights and feedback on behalf of my organisation and the volunteers and volunteer managers who make up our organisation. ”

Jaime Lee Kelleher

Volunteer Services Manager, St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn

We value codesign work

Collaboration and active listening are fundamental to VolunteeringACT's work. This year, we have continued working with different cohorts through a codesign approach to advocate for a more inclusive and diverse volunteering sector.

Our codesign project with our Newly Arrived Migrants Advisory Group aims to raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering for newly arrived migrants and CALD communities, as well as for volunteer involving organisations to understand the benefits of involving volunteers from these communities.

Over the past 12 months, the Advisory Group has worked with their communities and drawn on their own experience to identify existing barriers for volunteers from a newly arrived migrant background. During the next phase of work, the Advisory Group will engage broader and more diverse networks to participate in this codesign work, designing solutions to identified barriers.

Our Inclusive Volunteering Pathway to Employment Program is also enhanced by the guidance and advice of the Inclusive Volunteering Advisory Group. As this program operates over three jurisdictions, including ACT, NSW and Tasmania, the group is formed by community members from each of those states/territories, contributing their lived experience, expertise and knowledge, as well as program staff representatives.

During this year, the Inclusive Volunteering Advisory Group undertook a codesign project to develop a feedback resource for participants to complete, presented through an online form and an easy read format. For us, collecting feedback in a way that is appropriate and meaningful to the person providing it, and to the person or organisation receiving it, is extremely important.

The collaboration and leadership that enabled this project to reach its conclusion within the 12-month timeframe is a testament to the communication, collaboration and connectivity of all participants in achieving such a relevant feedback methodology for all concerned.



Representation

VolunteeringACT is represented on a range of committees, forums, groups, and taskforces, and uses these opportunities to influence jurisdictional and national decision-making processes, policies, strategies, program design, and implementation/action plans that are of interest to and/or impact on our sector. Some of these included:

- Food and Emergency Relief Network Advisory Committee (Chair)
- Industry Strategy Steering Group
- Joint Community Government Reference Group
- ACTCOSS Peaks Forum
- ACTCOSS Community Leaders Forum
- ACTCOSS Justice Reform Group
- ACTCOSS Human Resources Peer Network
- ACTCOSS Community Facilities Meetings
- Canberra Business Chamber Kindred Member Meetings
- National Volunteering Peaks CEO Network (Chair)
- National Policy Group
- Social Recovery meetings
- CASP Networking Meetings
- Northern Region Networking Meetings
- RecNet Reconciliation Network Meetings
- ACT Community Sector NAIDOC Committee
- Mental Health Community Coalition Leadership Group



We are strengthening the sector to enable a more resilient Canberra community

Throughout 2022-23, we continued to deliver our work to build sector capability and improve practice through the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA), funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. The VMA is a national collaboration between volunteering peak bodies delivering a consistent approach to volunteer management excellence. It enables organisations to expand their reach and enhance volunteer experiences for everyone. VolunteeringACT has led and supported several national and jurisdictional projects under the VMA throughout 2022-23. Key highlights included:

- Codesign and consultation work with First Nations Peoples and Newly-Arrived Migrants.
- Delivering key capability-building events such as the Volunteering Symposium, which engaged 125 volunteers and volunteer managers.
- Contributing to several themed working groups.

Projects included identifying barriers to volunteering, designing and coordinating a survey to assess volunteer involving organisations online accessibility, planning and development of the National VMA MarComms Strategy and consistent messaging, progression of VMA learning and development objectives, the refresh of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (NSVI) and development of the new VMA Performance Management and Evaluation Framework.

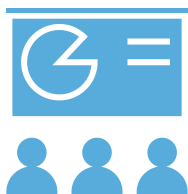
Through the VMA this year, VolunteeringACT has worked in partnership with other state and territory peak bodies to share insights, learnings and examples of best practices, resulting in the development and sharing of nationally consistent online tools, resources, and training to help improve access and participation in volunteering for people of all backgrounds, abilities and across locations.

We have built capability within the volunteering sector through our training programs. This year:

We trained

439

participants



We shared over

5,000

tools and resources



Across

28

training sessions



Introduction to Volunteering training had the highest attendance, followed by our Wellbeing & Boundaries training, and Essentials for Volunteer Managers training.

These sessions helped participants better understand what volunteering is and what it involves. They also received practical tools to support volunteer managers in implementing a robust volunteering program within their organisation. Feedback received has been positive: 95% of attendees across all our training sessions expressed that training supported their understanding of the subject. On average, attendees reported they had increased their capability by 32%.

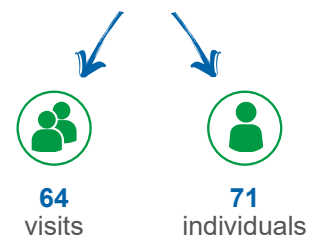
VolunteeringACT also assists individuals looking to volunteer or find a volunteer role that suits their needs. This year:



We also offered volunteering support at our Community Info Hub through different channels: face-to-face, over the phone, or through email inquiry. Online information is also available.

VolunteeringACT supports organisations in the Canberra Region with the whole suite of volunteer management in social recovery situations, as we are responsible for coordinating spontaneous volunteers under the ACT Community Recovery Plan. There are currently 1,632 Canberrans registered in the Emergency Volunteering Database to stand up when they are needed.

Community Info Hub provided volunteer referrals for



VolunteeringACT is a member-based organisation that works with members to support inclusive, ethical and sustainable volunteering in the Canberra Region. We provide members with resources, training programs, capability-building events, networking opportunities and ongoing support to help improve their volunteering programs.

Over the year, we welcomed 31 new members from various sectors, including sports, health, education, homelessness, environment, youth, aged-care and animal welfare. Currently, we have 189 member organisations, many of whom contribute to our work by providing valuable input on advocacy and practice issues relevant to the sector. We are grateful to all our members for their continued engagement and support.

“ It was engaging, well presented and relevant. I came away with tips to implement immediately in our organisation ”

- 2023 Volunteering Symposium attendee -

“ Inclusive, comprehensive, great snacks. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable presenters. The atmosphere was great. Made it easy to share and learn ”

- Essentials for Volunteer Managers attendee -

“ The depth of information was presented in a practical way, including relevant legal regulations/frameworks for volunteer rights and responsibilities ”

- Essentials for Volunteer Managers attendee -



Events

Volunteer Manager of the Year Award 2022

The Volunteer Manager of the Year Award aims to elevate the profile of volunteer management as a profession. Through this event, we celebrate the exemplary leadership and impact of volunteer managers and coordinators in our region. The 2022 Awards had six nominations, with one winner and one highly commended. The ceremony hosted 23 attendees representing different sectors.

- Volunteer Manager of the Year winner: **Mahmoud Hakim**
- Volunteer Manager of the Year Highly Commended: **Emma Dryden**



Volunteering Awards 2022

We celebrated International Volunteers Day 2022 at our Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region. Awarding outstanding volunteers was our way of celebrating the dedication, passion and impact of Canberra's volunteers. The 2022 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region, was held on Wednesday 7 December and received 78 nominations across nine categories. There were seven highly commended recipients and nine winners. The Volunteering Awards was a successful event attended by Canberra volunteers, volunteer managers, community leaders, change-makers and representatives of the Canberra community.

- Volunteer of the Year Award: **Deborah Martin, Tjillari Justice Aboriginal Corporation**
- Canberra's Choice Award: **Leesa Ffrench, Rise Above – Capital Region Cancer Relief**
- Volunteer Leadership Award: **John Butcher, ACT Parks and Conservation Service**
- Innovation Award: **Share the Dignity ACT Team**
- Inclusion Award: **Chris Van Reyk, Community Services #1**
- COVID 19 Relief and Resilience Award: **ACT State Emergency Service Volunteers**
- Senior Volunteer of the Year Award: **Angela Brown, Musculoskeletal Australia**
- Young Volunteer of the Year Award: **Alexandra Banks, Roundabout Canberra**
- Volunteer Team of the Year Award: **Indigenous Reading Project Engagement Team**



National Volunteer Week 2023

National Volunteer Week is a national annual event that occurs in May to celebrate the work and impact of volunteers. National Volunteer Week 2023 took place from Monday 15 May to Sunday 21 May 2023. The theme for 2023 was “The Change Makers”.

VolunteeringACT ran two key events during National Volunteer Week:

- 2023 Volunteering Symposium
- 2023 Volunteering Expo



Volunteering Symposium 2023

Held on Tuesday 16 May, during National Volunteer Week 2023, the Volunteering Symposium 2023 was a successful event with 125 attendees. For the first time, the Volunteering Symposium was also open to, and free of charge for, volunteers.

Inclusion was a core theme of the sessions with guest speakers from HelpingACT, Roundabout Canberra, Women with Disabilities ACT, ACT Emergency Services Agency, St Vincent De Paul, MIEACT, Justice Connect, Humanitarian Settlement Program and Burbirra.

80% of attendees stated that the Symposium increased their capability to comply with legal requirements, and 94% rated the event either 'Excellent' or 'Very Good'.



“I have taken something away from each session that I will introduce in my organisation”

“Very inspiring with practical tools to take into our work”

- Volunteering Symposium attendee feedback -



Volunteering Expo 2023

The Volunteering Expo is held every year for volunteer involving organisations to showcase their work and attract new volunteers. It also allows for the Canberra community to learn about and connect with the range of volunteering opportunities, as well as have the opportunity to make a positive impact in the Canberra Region.

The Volunteering Expo 2023 was held on Saturday 20 May at Campbell High School, showcased 47 exhibitors and had more than 365 attendees. We created a new activity called #VolunteeringAtFirstSight, which showcased volunteering roles that people could fall in love with at first sight.

This promotion involved exhibitors providing activities for attendees to do in order to see what it is like to volunteer for that organisation and help visitors fall in love with volunteering. Overall, the feedback on the Volunteering Expo 2023 was very positive, with 75% of attendee survey respondents rating the Expo as 'Excellent' and 100% of exhibitors wanting to join us again for the 2024 Volunteering Expo.



“The Expo was a very engaging environment to learn about programs in the community”.

“People don't know where to start with volunteering; this is a great way to expand your idea of what's available”.

- Volunteering Expo attendee feedback -



Volunteers are the core

Volunteers play a critical role in our organisation, as we would not exist without them. Volunteers give their time, knowledge and experience to support our Community Info Hub, our main office, across our inclusive programs, lived experience advisory committees, our Board of Directors, and subcommittees.

As an example, the Community Info Hub would not operate without the support of the Community Engagement volunteers. The team of 20 volunteers are rostered to staff the Community Info Hub desks each week, with the support of paid employees.

The estimated value of the work of the Community Engagement volunteers is an in-kind contribution of \$149,791 per year. In 2023, we welcomed 12 new volunteers at the Hub with abundant life experience and diverse skills.

Over the reporting period, many volunteers used experiences and skills they gained by volunteering to find employment and achieve their personal goals. Hub staff are developing an ongoing work experience opportunity in collaboration with a VolunteeringACT member organisation. This collaboration aims to provide on-site work experience for newly arrived migrants.

VolunteeringACT is very lucky to be supported by wonderful and talented volunteers. We want to express our immense gratitude for the important work that our volunteers do every day.



“Volunteering has transformed me holistically, given me a lot of self-confidence. I like the volunteers and staff, how caring and humble everyone is. A friendly atmosphere that lets you know about the community and become a part of the community”.

- Suhas

“I have become more confident looking for a paid job and can give useful information to people around me. I gained ongoing experience to improve my customer-focused, communication, analytic and problem-solving skills”.

- Angie



Engagement

Throughout the year, VolunteeringACT has worked actively to grow our communications presence and improve our reach, information dissemination, and overall engagement across the Canberra Region. This has resulted in the following outcomes:

- VolunteeringACT website usage significantly increased during this financial year.

We had

336,067 
page views this year

107 per cent increase

We had

50,102 
website users

27 per cent increase

- Social media followers across all platforms have increased, with the exception of Twitter. This may be due to the global trend by many users departing the platform.

-  Facebook followers increased from 4561 to 4721 (an increase of 3.5 per cent)
-  Instagram followers increased from 1290 to 1376 (an increase of 6.6 per cent)
-  LinkedIn connections increased from 357 to 500 (an increase of 40 per cent)
-  Twitter followers decreased from 2002 to 1973 (a decrease of -1.4 per cent)

This increase in followers has had a positive flow on impact throughout the year via interactions between followers, through more sharing of posts, and more reactions to and further discussions on those posts. This has been helping to widen our reach, increase engagement levels, and keep volunteering stories and issues more in the public consciousness.

During this period, VolunteeringACT has taken a new direction with our media engagement, with the aim of building stronger relationships, raising the profile of the activities of the volunteering sector, and improving/expanding our communications and information dissemination reach across different media platforms.

This has resulted in the following outcomes:

- 28 instances of direct media contact, including building relationships with new contacts/outlets.
- An expanded presence across different types of media channels, including features via specific news articles, radio interviews and TV interviews.
- A greater diversity of featured content, with an increase in sharing stories of impact.
- Increased facilitation of input and media engagement directly with individual volunteers/volunteer groups.



Partners

Thank you to our sponsors, supporters, funders and partners.

- ACT Government
- Burbirra Group
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Health
- Canberra Labor Club Group
- MF&A, a Fujitsu company
- Galent Management Consulting
- Aspen Medical
- Hall and Wilcox
- Synergy Law
- 180 Degrees Consulting ANU Branch
- Australian Institute of Project Management
- CDC Data Centres

Financial Review 2022–23

Financial Commentary 2022–23

VolunteeringACT achieved a surplus of \$115,773. The surplus generated during this period will increase our capital reserves, reinforcing our financial stability and ensuring our ability to seize strategic opportunities in the realm of policy development, community-based initiatives, and organisational growth. These investments will further empower our mission to strengthen volunteering and community information in the ACT.

Execution of Our Mission

VolunteeringACT remained steadfast in our commitment to fulfill our mission. All activities were executed in strict accordance with our grant agreements. Notably, projects and programs surpassed their respective work-plan deliverables, underscoring the exceptional dedication and collaborative efforts of our team members and our valued partners within the volunteering involving organisations and the broader community sector.

Diversified Income Sources for Enhanced Sustainability

Our financial sustainability received a substantial boost during this fiscal year. We achieved growth in income derived from non-government sources, including donations, training, events, consultancies, and memberships, surpassing the previous year's figures. This diversification of revenue streams is a testament to our resilience and adaptability as an organisation.

Navigating Future Challenges

Looking ahead to 2023-24 and beyond, we recognise the evolving landscape and the importance of maintaining our commitment to excellence. As the labour market continues to tighten, our primary focus will be on retaining valued staff members and attracting new talent. We aim to strengthen our reputation as a rewarding workplace dedicated to community enrichment and professional growth.

In conclusion, the 2022-23 fiscal year has been marked by financial prudence, operational excellence, and a relentless pursuit of our organisational goals. We remain committed to delivering high-quality outcomes and fostering a sustainable future for VolunteeringACT. The audited financial statements are available in their entirety on our website.

Key indicator	2023	2022	Variance
Cash			
Cash received	\$2,704,024	\$2,652,464	↑ \$51,561
Cash spent	\$2,478,443	\$2,228,811	↑ \$249,631
Cash surplus (deficit)	\$225,582	\$423,652	↓ -\$198,071
Closing bank balance	\$2,800,355	\$2,574,774	↑ \$225,582
Profitability			
Income	\$2,618,468	\$2,585,639	↑ \$32,829
Expenses	\$2,502,695	\$2,313,302	↑ \$189,393
Profit (loss)	\$115,773	\$272,337	↓ -\$156,564
Balance Sheet			
Current Assets	\$2,846,297	\$2,630,127	↑ \$216,170
Current Liabilities	\$1,491,911	\$1,653,089	↓ -\$161,178
Working Capital	\$1,354,386	\$977,038	↑ \$377,348
Working Capital Ratio	1.9	1.6	↑ 0.32
Assets	\$2,954,939	\$2,920,103	↑ \$34,836
Liabilities	\$1,596,837	\$1,677,774	↓ -\$80,937
Net assets	\$1,358,102	\$1,242,329	↑ \$115,773

