



VolunteeringACT Budget Submission February 2025

VolunteeringACT Contacts:

Jean Giese
Chief Executive Officer
e: ceo@volunteeringact.org.au
p: 0439 022 398

Heather Fitt
Senior Manager – Policy & Advocacy
e: heather@volunteeringact.org.au

VolunteeringACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. VolunteeringACT pays respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their vital ongoing contribution to our lands.

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 in 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.



The [ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024 – 2034](#) (the Strategy) and [ACT Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2027](#) (Action Plan) were co - designed by VolunteeringACT and the ACT Government and released in August 2024. The Strategy provides the roadmap for our region to respond to shifting sector priorities and needs, achieve [National Strategy](#) objectives in line with ACT priorities, and foster an inclusive, ethical, and sustainable ACT volunteering ecosystem.

However, many of the activities in the Action Plan require funding to implement.

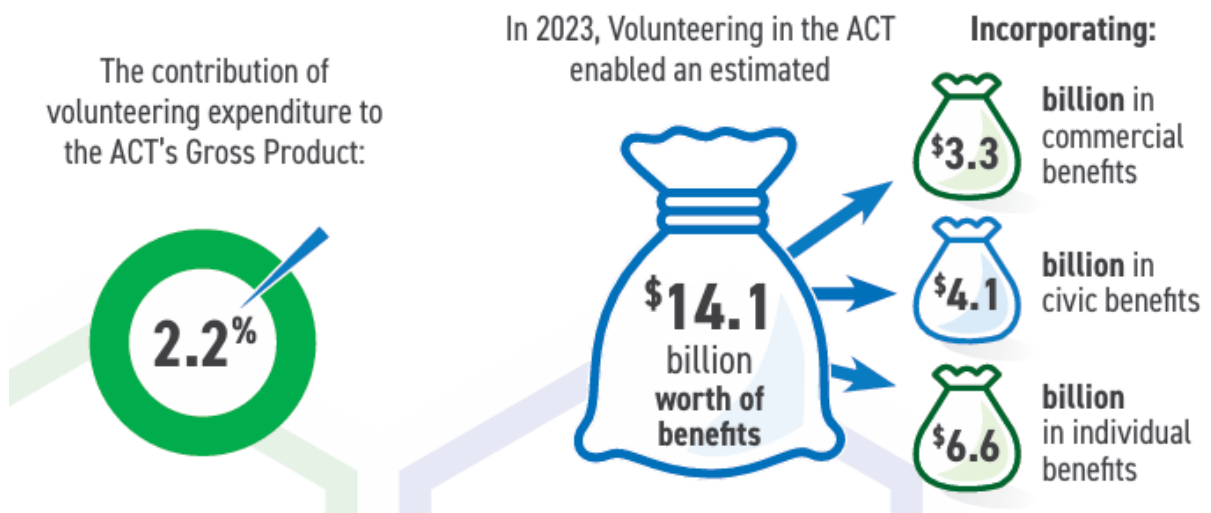
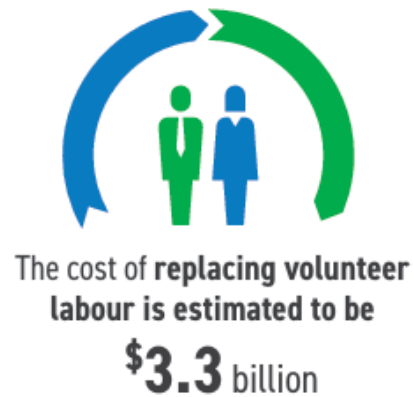
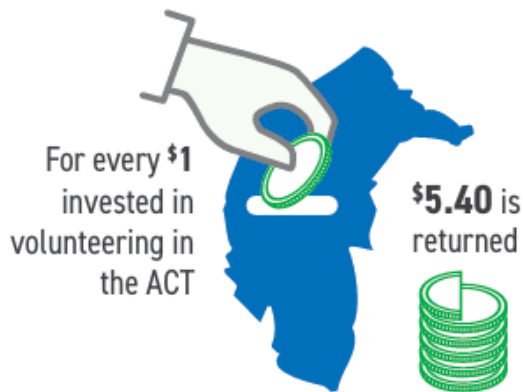
This submission highlights the **priority investment for the implementation of the Action Plan, informed by VolunteeringACT’s members** and engagement with our **Advisory Groups** in line with Action Plan Item 23: *Develop proposals to seek funding for implementation of Strategy actions and associated projects*

VolunteeringACT seeks the following funding to implement the ACT Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2027:

	FY 2025-26:	FY 26 – 27:	FY 27-28:	over 3 FYs
Priority 1: investigate the feasibility of the Volunteering Passport	\$72,000	\$103,000	\$107,000	\$282,000
Priority 2: supporting grassroots organisations to make volunteering experiences inclusive positive and organisationally compliant	\$280,000	\$300,000	\$370,000	\$950,000
Priority 3: Monitoring Implementation of the Action Plan through member and government engagement, delivery and reporting	\$120,000	\$135,000	\$150,000	\$405,000
Priority 4 (a): Continuing time series data collection through State of the Sector Report	\$80,000	\$105,000	\$54,000	\$239,000
Priority 4 (b): broaden evidence through research on volunteering experience particularly for missing cohorts	\$182,000	\$192,000	\$212,000	\$586,000
Total for all initiatives	\$734,000	\$835,000	\$893,000	\$2,462,000

Overview

Volunteers are an essential workforce, the foundation of community well-being and drivers of \$14.1 billion in value to the ACT community. The 2024 ACT State of Volunteering Report provides clear evidence on the economic and social benefits of volunteering to the region:



The Report also highlighted the out-of-pocket expenses volunteers incur, on average \$12.76 for every hour they volunteer which is a significant cost for some and a barrier for others. Further, the estimated replacement labour cost of volunteering in our region of \$3.3 billion is more than two-thirds of the cost of the entire ACT public sector.

2024 election campaign commitments from ACT Labor

During the **2024 ACT election campaign**, ACT Labor Spokesperson for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Ms Orr, committed to working with VolunteeringACT and our members to support the realisation and implementation of the Action Plan (letter dated 30 September). Additionally, Labor committed to:

improve data governance, collection, sharing, analysis and reporting (emphasis added).

These include the ACT Government improving the way the ACT Working with Vulnerable People Scheme is administered as well looking at more ways volunteering impacts can be included within relevant ACT data collections. ACT Labor if elected will continue to support these actions.

The Action Plan also contains a commitment to investigate what volunteers and Volunteer Organisations may need from a future volunteer passport with VolunteeringACT as the lead on this. ACT Labor recognises the potential of a passport and if elected will support volunteering in our community by ***prioritising the investigation of a volunteering passport*** (emphasis added) in collaboration with VolunteeringACT. We will work with VolunteeringACT to explore options for the develop a volunteering passport to make it easier and quicker for volunteers to sign up to volunteering activities and ensure that volunteering organisations can provide the best support they can to volunteers.

Labor's priority at present is supporting the implementation of the Strategy and the Plan (emphasis added) ... While ACT Labor will be prioritising the realisation and implementation of agreed actions, we are open to considering additional commitments as part of any future action plans to support and realise the Strategy.

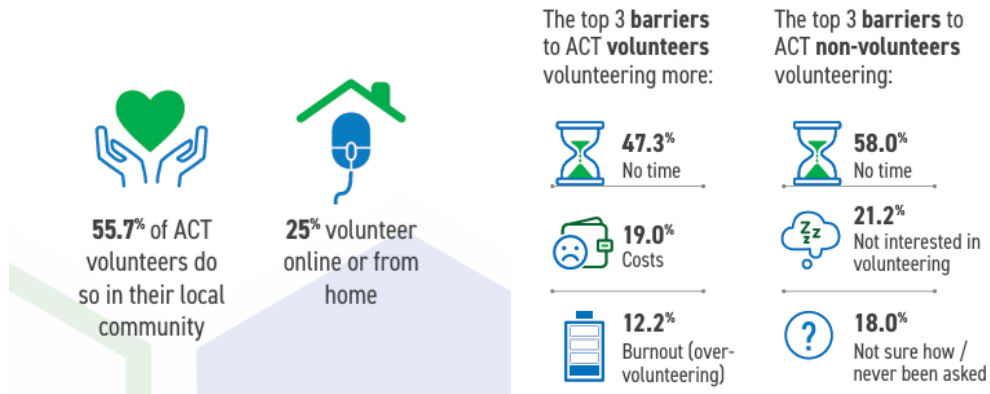
To give full effect to the Strategy, fully realise the changes detailed in the Action Plan, and implement best practice, **additional funding is required** for particular action items against each of the Action Plan's Focus areas.

Strategy Focus Area 1: Individual Potential and Volunteer Experience

The **first focus area** of the ACT Volunteering Strategy, drawing on the National Strategy, concentrates on **Individual Potential and Volunteer Experience**.

1. Investigating options to develop a Volunteering Passport (Action Plan Item 11)

Finding the right volunteering activity is important for both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs). The [State of Volunteering Report](#) told us that:



A ‘**Volunteering Passport**’ would potentially **address the costs of volunteering** for individuals who are currently volunteering by reducing the burden on individual volunteers and the organisations that support them.



Funding is needed for the scoping and design of a potential pilot and will ensure that the project draws on national and international experiences, consults with a broad range of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) and develop the requirements for a pilot passport scheme.

VACT’s Budget Priority 1 Investigate Volunteer Passport

FY 2025-26:	FY 2026 – 27:	FY 2027-28:	over 3 FYs
\$72,000	\$103,000	\$107,000	\$282,000

Strategy Focus Area 2: Community and social impact

The **second focus area** of the ACT Volunteering Strategy, drawing on the National Strategy, concentrates on **Community and social impact**.

2. Building grassroots organisations' capabilities to manage volunteer programs and meet regulatory and compliance requirements (Action Plan Items 8 & 10)

Volunteering covers all areas of public life in Australia, with volunteers involved in many different domains from art and culture, environment and climate change, health and wellbeing, food and emergency relief, aged care, disability and mental health, as well as sports, education and major events.

We also know that many **grassroots community organisations** are entirely volunteer run with very **limited or no funding** (government or other such as philanthropic). These Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) are often at the forefront of identifying and responding to the emerging needs of their communities and neighbourhoods, at a time when demand for highly localised services is rising, but funding – especially for volunteer programs – is not. The **ability of these grassroots** or micro volunteer involving **organisations to meet regulatory and compliance requirements** and provide safe and inclusive volunteering experiences **varies considerably**.

VolunteeringACT has consulted with many of these organisations to assess their needs and identify ways to build their capability for longer-term sustainability. These organisations would benefit from membership, support and training offered through VolunteeringACT but are unable to afford even the base level of VACT membership.

Funding will enable an expansion of VACT's core training program to these smaller/micro VIOs to support them to operate as effectively as they can and meet minimum regulatory requirements (Action Plan Items 8 & 10) and the [National Standards for Volunteering](#). It would further enable the development and adaptation of VACT's volunteer management training, resources and toolkits to respond to changing needs, including more informal volunteering (Action Plan 9). Funding would cover engagement with micro VIOs, membership and training, and individualised support for 20 organisations in year one, expanding to a further 20 organisations in each of years two and three.

VACT's Budget Priority 2 Building grassroots' organisations capabilities

FY 2025-26:	FY 2026 – 27:	FY 2027-28:	over 3 FYs
\$280,000	\$300,000	\$370,000	\$950,000

Strategy Focus Area 3: Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive

The **third focus area** of the ACT Volunteering Strategy, drawing on the National Strategy, concentrates on **Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive**. Government, VACT and volunteering involving organisations have responsibility to implement this focus area. Actions include work by the ACT Government to better support volunteering through the establishment of networks and better connections with Ministerial Advisory Councils. VACT’s role is to also advocate for the sector and ensure the experiences of VIOs and volunteers are heard and included in all government policies and programs and the ongoing implementation of the Strategy.

3. Monitoring Action Plan Implementation (Action Plan Items 21, 22 & 25)



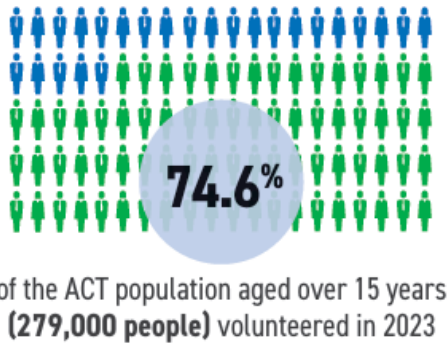
The roadmap for volunteering in the Territory is an exciting starting point to recognising and supporting volunteers and the volunteer involving organisations. We need to ensure volunteering is safe, inclusive and reflective of the diverse community in which we live. We also need to ensure that the ACT Government with VolunteeringACT monitor and learn as this Strategy is implemented.

Funding will ensure annual progress is monitored and there is shared accountability for implementing the Action Plan in full (Action Plan Item 22). This strategic investment will ensure lessons are learned and implementation is calibrated according to the context at the time through the provision of expert advice (Action Plan Item 21). It will also enable Ministerial Councils to be kept across the Strategy (Action Plan Item 25) and contribute to raising awareness on the importance of volunteering to the well-being of individuals and the Canberra community as a whole.

VACT’s Budget Priority 3 Monitoring Implementation

FY 2025-26:	FY 2026 – 27:	FY 2027-28:	over 3 FYs
\$120,000	\$135,000	\$150,000	\$405,000

4. Broaden evidence base on volunteering experiences



In 2023, ACT volunteers contributed
63.7 million hours
On average, ACT volunteers spend
19 hours per month volunteering



a. Continue State of Volunteering Report (Action Plan Items 14, 15 & 20)

We know that Canberrans volunteer and have documented baseline evidence in the 2023 [ACT's State of Volunteering Report](#) is powerfully demonstrates this effort. But currently there is **no ongoing funding to continue this data set**, and **no funding to capture the diversity of experiences and the impact of volunteering for both individuals and the community as a whole**. Failure to fund an ongoing dataset will create gaps in the evidence of the ACT volunteering experience. And as a jurisdiction, we **lack data on the breadth of volunteering and the characteristics of the volunteering sector**.



Funding priority actions under this focus area will build the evidence base on volunteering, drawing from the 2023 baseline and strengthen the data capabilities across the volunteering sector (Action Plan Items 14, 15 & 20). This will assist in providing ongoing information on the impact of volunteering from an individual, VIO and broader Territory perspective.

2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total over 3 years
\$80,000	\$105,000	\$54,000	\$239,000

Funding for these action items will provide resources to engage with ACT Government colleagues, particularly from the Wellbeing Framework team, build capacity of VolunteeringACT members and other VIOs, and engage with other Volunteering Peak Bodies and Volunteering Australia to undertake preparatory work on the next State of Volunteering Survey.

- b. Undertake research with priority communities to understand different experiences of Volunteering (Action Plan Items 5 & 7)

We know that volunteering takes different forms of expression in different communities.

An **expanded understanding of volunteering is needed** to reflect the Territory’s diversity and ensure all forms of volunteering are recognised, supported and celebrated. To **expand collaboration with the ACT’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities** and to learn from their volunteering experiences and practices, funding is needed to undertake consultations, gather best practice nationally and internationally, and ensure this knowledge informs government policies and program development and implementation.

The ACT has a rich and diverse population with many people who were born overseas calling Canberra home. However, currently the voices from different **culturally and linguistically diverse communities are missing**, as are the voices and experiences of **students and young people** (Action Plan Items 5 & 7). To address these priority groups, more specific research and learning from communities is needed.

2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total over 3 years
\$182,000	\$192,000	\$212,000	\$586,000

Funding for these action items will provide resources to undertake research and engagement with students, young people and different cultural communities within the ACT (Action Plan Items 5 & 7). This exercise will provide evidence of different experiences and understandings of the volunteering experience and strengthen the breadth of data available for these priority cohorts.

About VolunteeringACT

VolunteeringACT is the peak body for volunteering and provides community information services in the Canberra Region. Our Vision is for an inclusive Canberra that values volunteering and connection as central to wellbeing and a thriving community.

We deliver inclusive services and information that connect people with their community and enables participation. We lead the design and delivery of high quality, safe, ethical and sustainable volunteering. We also deliver programs for people experiencing disadvantage and isolation, people with disabilities, and people needing support for mental wellness.

VolunteeringACT is part of the National Network of Volunteering Peak Bodies in Australia.