



# Youth Volunteering Toolkit for Support People



# Acknowledgements

VolunteeringACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the 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 community and are committed to reconciliation. We 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.

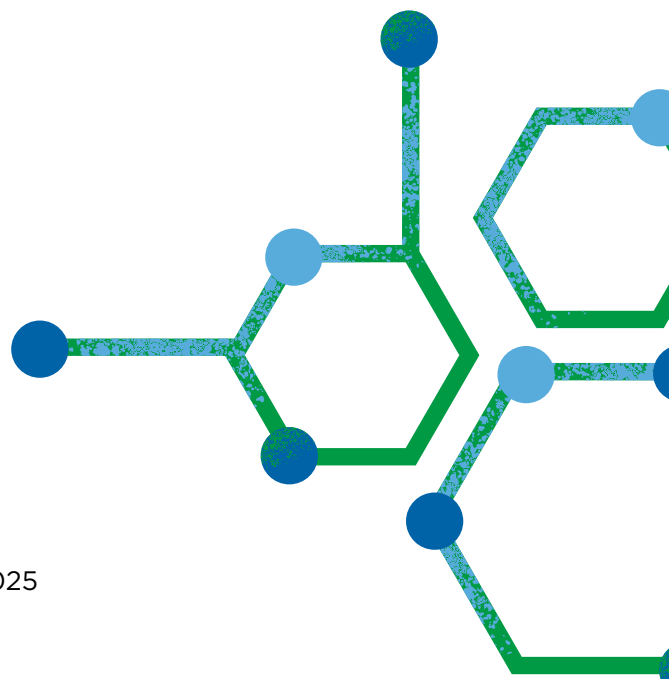
VolunteeringACT also acknowledges people of all abilities, genders, and sexualities, and from all cultures. Their skills, expertise, and time are critical to delivering services and programs, and making Canberra a better place to live. We also acknowledge the contribution of the volunteer involving organisations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



This resource was developed by VolunteeringACT with input from many key stakeholders who are listed on page 53 and was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

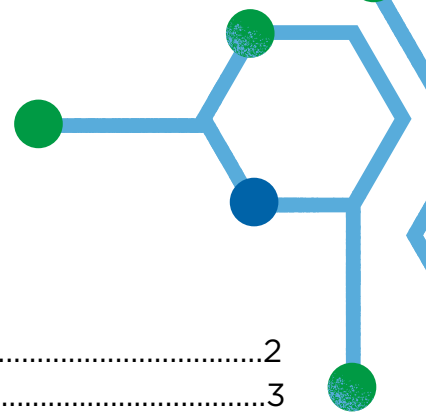


**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**





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# Introduction

## In this section

- Youth volunteering toolkits overview
- Definitions
- Volunteering and young people
- Young people and intersectionality
- The role of support people
- The role of a volunteer manager



# Youth volunteering toolkits overview

VolunteeringACT has designed three toolkits, all of which aim to support and enhance youth volunteering. In each toolkit you'll find information, links, resources and templates aimed at that audience. The design of these toolkits was supported by VolunteeringACT's Youth Volunteering Working Group. This group is made up of young people, volunteer managers, parents and youth support workers.

## Youth volunteering toolkit for volunteer managers

This toolkit is to provide advice, information and resources for volunteer involving organisations and volunteer managers looking to engage young people in volunteering. We know that young people may face additional barriers to engaging in volunteering, and require additional support, coaching, and guidance.

## Youth volunteering toolkit for support people (this toolkit)

This toolkit is to assist support people to consider whether volunteering is something that would enrich the life of the young person/people they support, and to provide advice, information and resources to help them along this journey.

## Youth volunteering toolkit for young people

This toolkit is for any young person who is interested in volunteering. It can also be useful for young people who are already engaged in volunteering.

*Image credit: NSW Youth Parliament*



# Definitions

## How we define children and young people

Under the Children and Young People (Employment) Standards 2011:

- A 'child' is a person under the age of 12, and
- A 'young person' is a person between the ages of 12-17.\*

Access Canberra, under the Working With Vulnerable People scheme, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and the ACT Child Safe Standards defines a 'child' as anyone under the age of 18.

Throughout this toolkit, you will be provided with information about the different supports, engagement methods, and work condition requirements for different age groups.

*\*The Children and Young People (Employment) Standards 2011.*

## How we define support people

For the purposes of this toolkit, support people include anyone who provides support to young people. For example, teachers, school administrators, parents, career advisors, support workers, community groups/clubs, experienced volunteers, sporting groups/clubs, university/school groups/clubs, church and faith-based groups.



### Templates and Resources

At the end of this toolkit, there are templates and resources available for support people.

Look out for this box throughout the toolkit for references to handy templates and resources aligning to each subject.

Click the link, scan the QR code or go to the referenced page number to see the resource.



# Volunteering and young people

Many young volunteers and young people not yet volunteering have identified lack of information, lack of transport, lack of support, and school/work obligations as key reasons they have not yet started volunteering or are not volunteering more.\* Because of this, they may struggle to find volunteering roles that appeal to them, or face age restrictions. Below are some top tips for supporting young people in volunteering.

## Provide clear information

Providing accurate and clear information is an important part of the process. Additional information on how to volunteer can be found on [VolunteeringACT's website](#), or in the 'Youth Volunteering Toolkit'.



## Time management

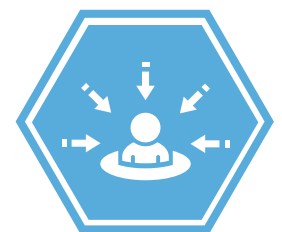
Realistically identify how much spare time the young person has available to volunteer, ensuring that volunteering does not interfere with school, training, or work.



One-off event volunteering opportunities are a great option for young people with limited availability. If the young person is under the age of 15, their volunteering should not exceed 10 hours per week.\*\*

## Person-centered approach

Every individual is different. When supporting a young person to volunteer, work with them and ensure they have as much autonomy and choice as possible.



*\*These key reasons were identified through VolunteeringACT's consultation with over 200 young people in 2024 and 2025*

*\*\*The Children and Young People (Employment) Standards 2011.*

## Missing out on a role

Just like when applying for a paid job, applying for a volunteer role does not necessarily guarantee the position.



For some, this may even mean not hearing back from the organisation at all. This can be challenging, confronting, or disheartening for many young people.

It is important to have realistic expectations and patience when supporting young people to find a volunteering opportunity. It may take some time to find the right fit.



### Resources

In the templates and resources section, you'll find scripts for supporting young people when navigating missing out on a role (page 42).

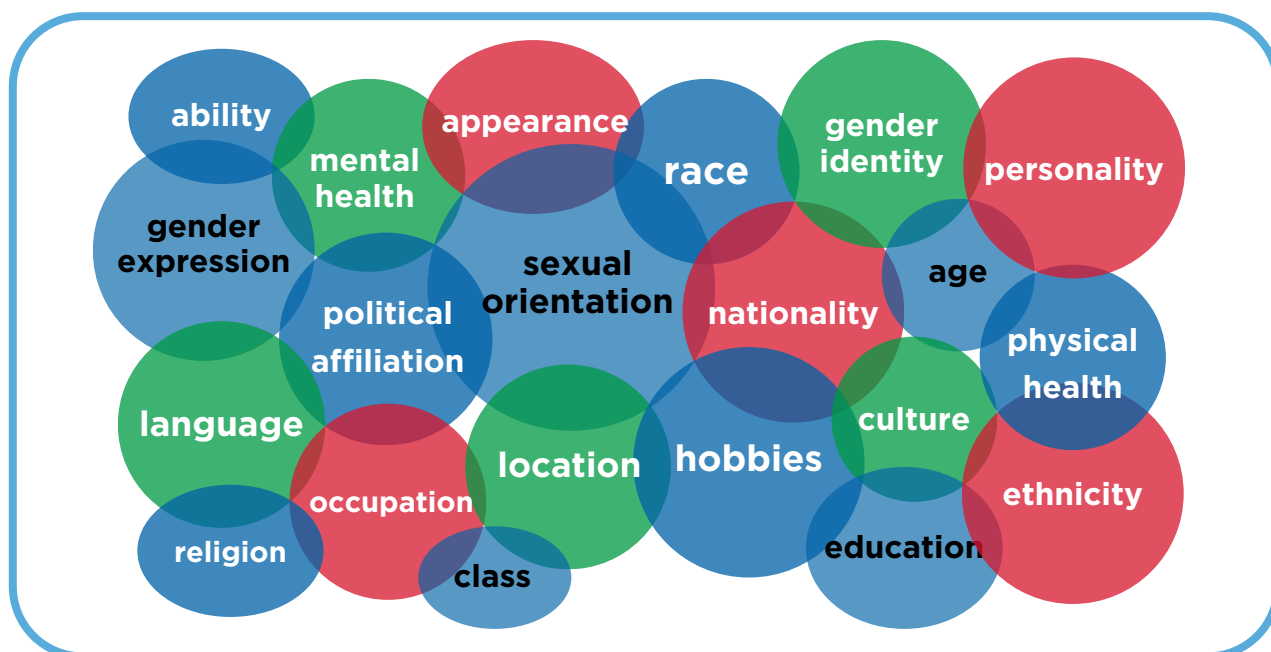
You'll also find the 'Volunteer readiness checklist' which will help you work with the young person to prepare for volunteering (page 44).

*Image credit: 2025 Volunteering Expo*



# Young people and intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to different, but overlapping aspects of a person's identity. These different aspects contribute to each person's unique strengths and life experiences but can also expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination or marginalisation.



An individual's age, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, language, religion, ability, and background can all play a role in the types of volunteer roles they prefer. These aspects of their identity can affect their interests, passions, life experiences and relationships.

They may wish to connect with people who have similar identity traits through volunteering, or to support people who have faced similar forms of discrimination.

Young people may also experience barriers when accessing volunteering, and it is important to acknowledge how intersectionality can affect this. While it is not the individual's responsibility to overcome these barriers on their own, understanding their identity and how this interacts with society more broadly can empower them to advocate for themselves.

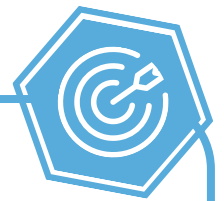
It is useful to talk with the individual about their identity and intersectionality as they prepare to volunteer, noting of course that volunteers have the right not to share their personal and private information with support people or the organisation they are volunteering for. Sharing information about their identity should always be the volunteer's choice and not a requirement or obligation.

# The role of support people

Support people play a critical role in the lives of young people. Balancing the young person's need for help with allowing them to learn new skills is vital.

Thank you for supporting young people to volunteer in their communities.

Teachers, school administrators, career advisors, youth support workers, parents, caregivers and other support people are an essential resource to ensure young people can access volunteering safely and meaningfully.



## Resources

In the templates and resources section, you'll find answers to the most commonly asked questions from young people (page 42).

If you have questions that are not answered in this toolkit, please reach out to VolunteeringACT via [info@volunteeringact.org.au](mailto:info@volunteeringact.org.au)

*Image credit: SpringOut Festival*





# The role of a volunteer manager

Volunteer managers play an important role in directing projects, programs and events. Volunteer managers are responsible for recruiting, selecting, onboarding, managing and developing their volunteers.

Once a young person has been successful in finding a volunteer role, their volunteer manager will be a key contact and support throughout their volunteering journey. It's important for young people to understand how they will engage with their volunteer manager, and what supports the volunteer manager can offer.

Young people should feel comfortable in going to their volunteer manager with any questions, concerns, issues, ideas or feedback. As a support person, make sure the young person you are supporting is aware of this, knows who their volunteer manager in the organisation is, and how to engage with them.

## **Supports available**

A volunteer manager can support their volunteers through:

- Asking what supports the volunteer may need when they onboard
- Helping the volunteer find the right role in the organisation
- Answering questions and giving clear information and onboarding process.
- Providing regular check-ins
- Listening to feedback.

## **Volunteer safety**

It is the responsibility of a volunteer involving organisation to provide a healthy and safe working environment for all staff, including volunteers. If a volunteer is feeling unsafe, or if they identify a hazard or potential hazard, they should alert the volunteer manager immediately.

## **Conflict and feedback**

Just as in any work environment, there are times when conflict may arise. It is important that volunteers and volunteer managers have clear communication about all aspects of their work, including any conflict. A support person may be invited to attend a meeting alongside a young person. The role of a support person in this scenario is to aid and assist the young person to understand the objectives of the meeting. Usually, the role in this situation is as an observer not a participant.

Volunteers should follow the policies and procedures of the organisation in relation to conflict resolution, and volunteer managers will be able to support them through this.

It is also important that volunteers are open to giving and receiving feedback, either positive or negative. Remember that constructive feedback is not something to be afraid of; it is a valuable tool which allows all of us to learn!

# Strategies and Standards

## In this section

- The ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034
- The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
- The ACT Child Safe Standards



# The ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034

VolunteeringACT and the ACT Government co-designed the ACT Volunteering Strategy 2024-2034 and ACT Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2027. These documents were informed by community expertise and insights from the State of the Volunteering in the ACT Report 2024 and were released in August 2024.

The ACT Strategy builds on the National Strategy for Volunteering (2023-2033) which was released in early 2023. The National Strategy provides a strategic framework to enable safe, supported and sustainable volunteering in Australia over the next 10 years. All state and territory governments are developing a local response for progression of National recommendations and actions.\*

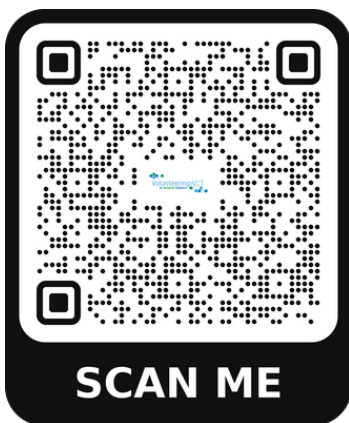
The ACT Volunteering Strategy provides this local response and a clear roadmap for our region to achieve National Strategy objectives in line with ACT priorities, and foster an inclusive, ethical and sustainable ACT volunteering ecosystem.

The ACT Volunteering Strategy has three key focus areas:

- Individual potential and volunteer experience
- Community and social impact
- Conditions for volunteering to thrive

For the next section of this toolkit, we will explore how support people can support young people to volunteer in line with each of these three key focus areas.

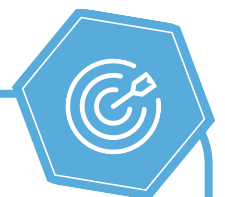
*\*National Strategy for Volunteering (2023-2033)*



## Resources

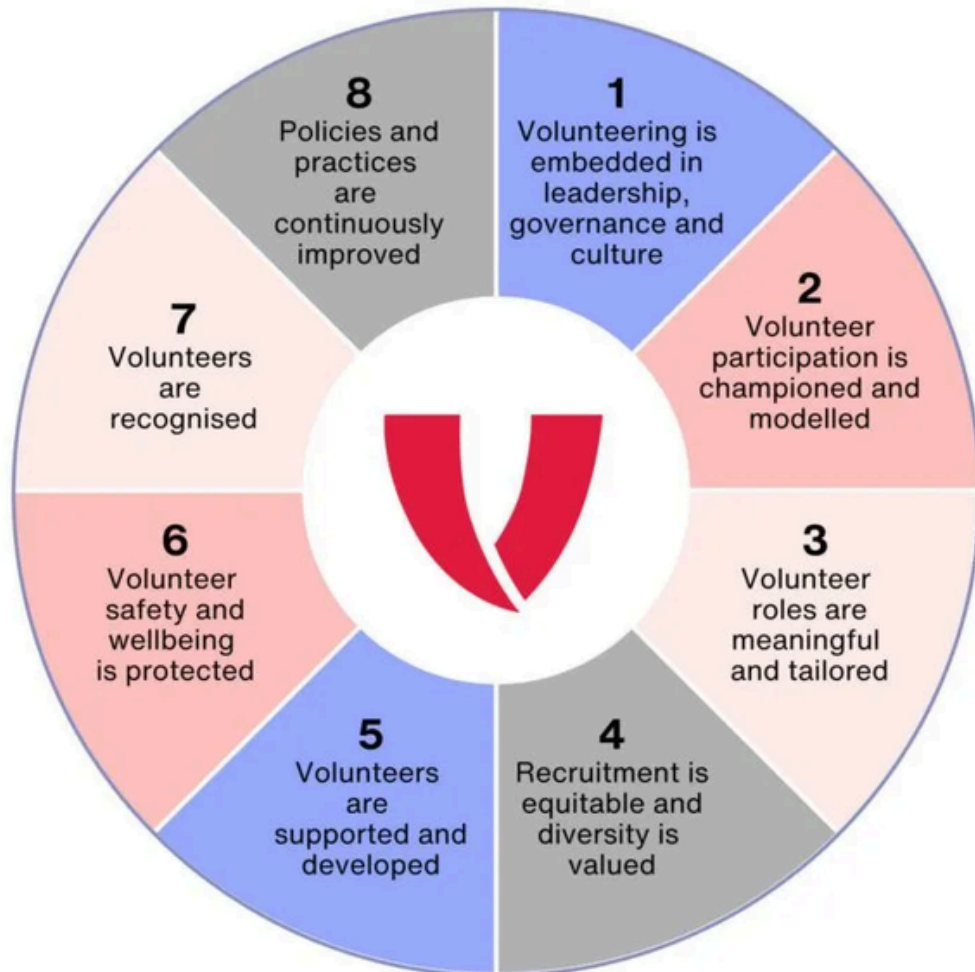
Scan the QR code to view the ACT Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan.

If you'd like more information, please reach out to us via [policy@volunteeringact.org.au](mailto:policy@volunteeringact.org.au)



# The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

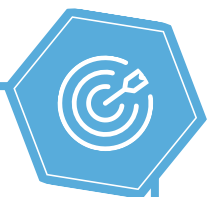
The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement provide guidance for volunteering in Australia. They form a best practice framework, to help organisations engage volunteers. Organisations implementing best practice volunteer management use the National Standards as a guide.



**SCAN ME**

## Resources

Scan the QR code to access more information on the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement including translated versions and promotion material.





# The ACT Child Safe Standards

The ACT Child Safe Standards are part of the ACT Government's ongoing commitment to improving the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, and increase their protection from harm and abuse. The ACT Child Safe Standards align with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

There are ten Standards, that are all equally important for organisations to be aware of, consider and begin implementing before engaging young volunteers.

Organisations must apply the Child Safe Standards in a way that is culturally safe and inclusive for all children and young people, including by respecting and valuing diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The ten ACT Child Safe Standards are:

- Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and are taken seriously.
- Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
- People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
- Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- An organisation's implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- An organisation's policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

As you support young people to volunteer, when engaging with organisations you can ask them if they are aware of the Child Safe Standards and ask how they are being implemented.



## Resources

Scan the QR code to access resources on implementing the Child Safe Standards. These resources include self-assessment tools, checklists, information sheets, promotional products and training.



# Individual potential and volunteer experience

## **In this section**

- Benefits of volunteering for young people
- Upskilling, training and development
- Background checks
  - Working with Vulnerable People cards
  - National police checks
- Identifying volunteering opportunities
- Volunteering: a step by step guide
- Safety in volunteering
- Parental consent and supervision
- Duty of care
- Work conditions and hours for young volunteers
- Self care and avoiding burnout.



# Benefits of volunteering for young people

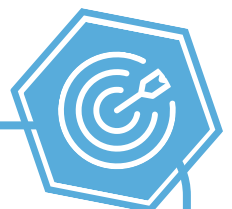
Many young people are aware of the benefits of volunteering for the community. However, they may not be aware that volunteering also holds many benefits for them both personally and professionally, including but not limited to:



- Opportunity to meet new people and make friends
- Improve mental wellbeing
- Increase confidence and self-esteem
- Free training and skill development
- Increase employability
  - Experience on their CV
  - Opportunity for references
  - Gain relevant work experience
- Develop communication and engagement skills
- Exposure to new environments and experiences
- Opportunity to discover their own potential
- Explore new career pathways

There are many ways to help young people understand the opportunities that volunteering has for them. It can be communicated through interactive workshops, one on one conversations, information sessions or peer mentoring.

When looking for opportunities, young people should aim to find an opportunity that aligns with their values and their motivations, to ensure they get the most out of their experience.



## Resources

In the Templates and Resources section you'll find a 'Benefits of volunteering poster'. You can display this poster in your home, school or work environment to promote volunteering (page 47).

# Upskilling, training and development

Volunteering is an excellent opportunity for young people to receive free training, development, mentoring, coaching, and skill development.



## **Teamwork and collaboration**

Volunteering exposes young people to diverse groups of people. Working with people from a variety of backgrounds develops understanding, empathy and improves collaborative skills.



## **Multitasking and problem solving**

Often volunteering projects and programs present unforeseen challenges. The ability to adapt to change is a great skill to develop.



## **Communication**

Volunteering always requires good communication, no matter the role or environment. Learning how to work in complex situations or even becoming more comfortable in a work environment can be helpful in developing communication skills.



## **Networking**

Volunteering provides opportunities to meet new people and connect. This can be helpful both personally and professionally. It can support young people to meet new peers and mentors, and even get references or find out about job opportunities.



## **Leadership skills**

There are a range of volunteer roles available to young people, and often organisations will place more experienced volunteers into mentoring roles for newer volunteers. Volunteering can provide good leadership models, as well as opportunities for young people to step into leadership roles in a supported environment.



## **Training**

Volunteering offers on-the-job experience, but some organisations may also provide opportunities for official training and qualifications such as First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) and Food Safety.



# Background checks

## Working with Vulnerable People cards

The Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) scheme aims to reduce the risk of harm or neglect to vulnerable people. If individuals have regular contact with vulnerable people while volunteering, they will need to do this background check.\*

This involves applying for the card online, providing identification documents and then, if successful, receiving a WWVP card in the mail.

WWVP cards are free for volunteers. Volunteers under the age of 16 are not required to hold a WWVP card under the scheme, but there is no age limit for applying for one. Once approved, this card will last for 5 years and can be used across multiple organisations and volunteering roles.\*

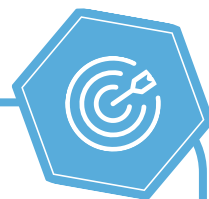
Depending on the nature of the role, the organisation may still require individuals to have a WWVP card, even if they are under 16 or volunteering irregularly.

While not all volunteering roles require a WWVP Card, having one will provide young people with access to more volunteering opportunities.

If a WWVP Card is required for the volunteering role, the volunteer will be required to have the card on them during their volunteering activity.\*

More information on WWVP cards can be found on Access Canberra's website.

*\*Working With Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011.*



### Resources

Scan the QR code to access VolunteeringACT's guide to help you navigate background checks.

## WWVP Card – Application process

Young people may require support to apply for a WWVP Card.

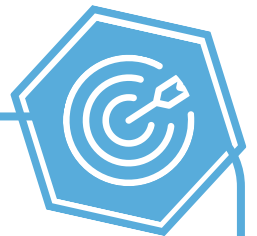
Below is the process for applying for the card:

- Complete the application form [online](#).
  - Provide personal details and select identity documents.
  - Make sure to select the ‘volunteer’ option. This registration is free for volunteers.
- Visit an [Access Canberra Service Centre](#) to show them the identity documents.
  - Once the application is submitted, Access Canberra checks the applicant’s background and criminal history. This may take anytime between 4-6 weeks.
  - If successful, they will receive their new WWVP card in the mail.
  - For more information on WWVP cards, you can visit [Access Canberra’s website](#), or scan the QR Code below.



### Resources

Scan the QR code to visit the Access Canberra website and begin the process of applying for a Working With Vulnerable People Card.



*Image credit: National Multicultural Festival 2024*



## National police checks

A national police check is a background check of an individual's criminal history across all states and territories in Australia. Many jobs in healthcare, education and financial services industries may require a national police check as part of the application process, especially if the role involves:

- Financial responsibilities
- Driving
- Engaging with vulnerable populations such as older people, children, or people with disabilities.

If the young person you are supporting to volunteer wants to engage in these types of activities, they may be required to complete a national police check with the organisation. This will involve providing them identification documents like a birth certificate or proof of age card.

In the ACT, if an organisation requires a national police check of a volunteer under the age of 18, they require written parent or guardian consent.



### Resources

Scan the QR code to access VolunteeringACT's guide to help you navigate background checks, and understand inter-jurisdictional differences.

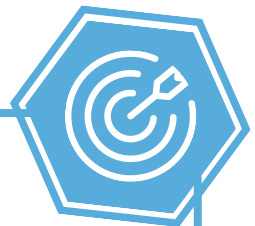


# Identifying volunteering opportunities

It is important for young people to choose a volunteering opportunity that works for them. Everyone has different needs, interests, skills, experience, goals, availability, and supports and/or adjustments.

There are so many volunteering opportunities available, which can be overwhelming for any young person. Taking a planned and thought-out approach can help them through the process and avoid wasting time.

The following step-by-step guide will help support a young person in identifying the kind of volunteering they want to do and how to achieve it.



## Resources

Scan the QR code to visit VolunteeringACT's volunteering opportunity page, to browse available volunteer activities.

Select **'Young adults 18-24'** or **'Younger volunteers, under 18'** in the 'good for' filter, to find opportunities suitable for those age groups.

*Image credit: Holycross Tuckerbox*



# Volunteering: a step-by-step guide

## Step 1 - Identify areas of interest

Work with the young person to identify the areas they are interested in or passionate about. This may be an area they have a passion for, an area they already have skills and experience in, or an area they are looking to gain skills and experience in.



## Step 2 - Identify availability

Volunteering opportunities can be one-off, short term or long term. Work with the young person to identify what time commitment they are willing to make.

They will need to consider what school or work obligations they already have, as well as other family or community commitments. This way they can choose to only apply for roles that fit within their availability. It can also be a good idea to have conversations with them about wellbeing and boundaries, ensuring that they are not over-committing themselves.



## Step 3 - Location and transport

Identify how far the young person is willing to travel for the role. This may involve driving themselves, getting a ride from friends or family, or catching public transport. Travel might incur costs depending on the policies and procedures of the volunteer involving organisation.



## Step 4 - Identify potential barriers

Consider if there is anything that may make it difficult for the young person to volunteer? This may include cost, transport, school or other commitments.

Depending on their age, young volunteers may also require parental consent before starting to volunteer.



If a young person has a disability and/or mental health condition, they may be eligible to receive additional support from VolunteeringACT through the [Inclusive Volunteering Program](#).

### Step 5 - Search for a role that fits

Use VolunteeringACT's website to browse available volunteering opportunities. Through the search portal you can select 'young adults, 18-24' or 'younger volunteers, under 18' in the 'good for' section. This will allow the young volunteer to explore options available to them.



### Step 6 - Apply for the role

The young person can apply directly for each opportunity listed on [VolunteeringACT's website](#).



### Step 7 - Connect with the organisation

The young person may need to wait a few weeks before hearing back from the organisation. If they haven't heard back within two (2) weeks, they can consider reaching out to the organisation through an email or phone call. If they are unsuccessful in being chosen for the role, they can repeat step 5 onwards.



### Step 8 - Begin the onboarding process

If the young volunteer is chosen for the role after connecting with the organisation, they can begin the onboarding process.



#### Resources

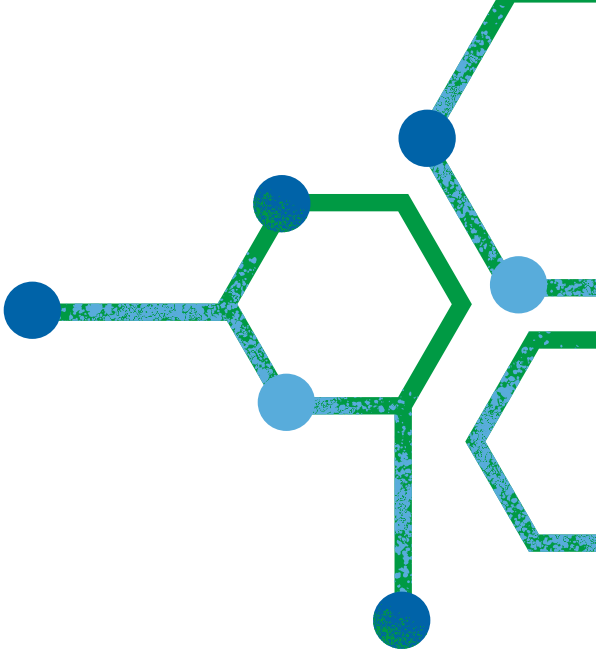
In the templates and resources section, you will find a 'Volunteering: A step by step guide poster' (page 46).

You'll also find a template 'Volunteer Plan', which you can use to work with young people in identifying their goals, interests and track the roles they've applied for (page 48).





*National Multicultural Festival 2023*



*National Multicultural Festival 2025*



*Canberra City Care*



*National Arboretum Canberra*



*Floriade 2025, EventsACT*

# Safety in volunteering

## What safe volunteer organisations look like

Volunteers have the right to a healthy and safe volunteering environment, just like any paid employee. When supporting a young person to find a volunteering role, it's important to look for an organisation that prioritises volunteer safety and wellbeing, and promotes and upholds children and young people's rights.

To help you identify if it is a safe organisation for young people, consider asking the following questions:

1. Does your organisation have volunteer personal accident insurance?
2. Does the insurance cover volunteers under the age of 18?
3. Does your organisation offer buddying or mentoring for new volunteers?
4. Does your organisation know about the Child Safe Standards?
5. Do young people have a voice in your organisation?

## Safe communication

Volunteers of any age deserve respect and should be communicated with in a safe way. Safe communication ensures that young volunteers feel respected, supported and protected while interacting with their supervisors, peers, and community members.

Before they begin volunteering, young people should be made aware of their responsibility to communicate clearly, effectively and safely.

This may involve:

- Using appropriate language
- Avoiding inappropriate jokes
- Maintaining professional boundaries with clients, service users, and staff.



### Resources

Scan the QR code to learn more about the ACT Child Safe Standards Scheme.





# Parental consent and supervision

Volunteers under the age of 15 must receive written consent from their parent or guardian. Some organisations require parental consent for all volunteers under the age of 18.\*

Young volunteers may require parental consent for:

- Beginning a volunteer role and completing onboarding paperwork such as a position description or volunteer agreement
- Media and photography consent.

Parents and guardians should also be provided with the contact details of a person at the organisation that they can contact if they have questions and be notified of any changes to the young volunteer's role.\*\*

## Duty of care

If you are a support worker of a young person wanting to volunteer, a conversation with the prospective organisation is required to gain a clear understand of duty of care boundaries. Support workers should be clear of duty of care boundaries for an organisation before encouraging a young person to volunteer with that organisation.

*\*The Children and Young People (Employment) Standards 2011.*

*\*\* Engaging and Working with Youth Volunteers Guide, Justice Connect, 2024.*

*Image credit: Volunteering workshop at St Edmunds College*



# Work conditions and hours for young volunteers

Each state and territory has legislation that sets out specific legal obligations that apply to the working conditions of children and young people.

Under the Children and Young People (Employment) Standards 2011, a ‘child’ is a person under the age of 12, and a ‘young person’ is a person between the ages of 12-17.\*

## Maximum volunteering hours per age group

Volunteers under 15 years old can undertake light work for up to 10 hours per week; this should be suitable for the physical, emotional and developmental competency of the child or young person.\*

As well as weekly hour limits, some age groups also have daily hour limits.\*\*

- Ages 0-3, maximum of 3 hours per day.
- Ages 4-12, maximum of 4 hours per day.
- Ages 12-15, maximum of 6 hours per day.

A child or young person may not volunteer for more than one shift per day, with a 12 hour gap between shifts.\*

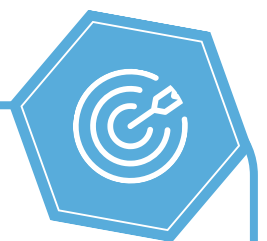
Volunteers aged 15-17 do not have any weekly or daily limits on hours, but volunteering cannot disrupt school arrangements. Volunteers of any age should not be contributing more than 16 hours per week at any one organisation, and must be provided with adequate breaks.\*

*\*The Children and Young People (Employment) Standards 2011.*

*\*\*Engaging and Working with Youth Volunteers Guide, Justice Connect, 2024.*

## Resources

In the templates and resources section, you’ll find a volunteer hour tracking template, which will help you to keep track of volunteer hours and ensure they remain in line with compliance requirements (page 45).



# Self care and avoiding burnout

Volunteering can be exciting, fun, and incredibly rewarding, but it's easy for a young person to overcommit or neglect self-care when they are passionate about making a difference.

Below are some tips for how to talk with a young person about looking after themselves as a volunteer.

## 1. Help the young person know their limits:

The young person should set boundaries of how many hours they can realistically commit to each week or month and say no when needed.

## 2. Talk about balancing volunteering with other priorities:

Young people are often juggling shifting priorities such as school, work, hobbies, family, and friends. Volunteering is important, but it's also important to maintain balance. Young people can use a calendar to plan and avoid overcommitting.

## 3. Empower them to ask for support:

No one volunteer can be expected to do or know everything. If the young person needs help, support, or even changes made to the role they should ask their volunteer manager, supervisor/s, or team members. Knowing when to ask for help is an important life skill to develop as young people prepare to enter the workplace.

## 4. Help set boundaries:

If volunteering is affecting a young person's health, studies, relationships or other important priorities, it might be time for them to consider taking a break.

### Reminder

No-one can pour from an empty cup.  
Taking care of yourself means you'll be a better support person in the long run; energised, motivated, and ready to keep making an impact.



# Community and social impact

## In this section

- Recognising young volunteers
- Volunteer stories





# Recognising young volunteers

## Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region

Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region are the premier recognition event for volunteers in the Canberra Region organised by VolunteeringACT. This event makes stories of spirit, kindness, innovation, inclusion, and resilience visible to our whole community. The awards are held in recognition of International Volunteer Day, celebrated on 5 December annually.

*Image credit: 2024 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region*



The awards has a dedicated category for young volunteers of the Canberra Region.

VolunteeringACT understands the importance of empowering the next generation of volunteers, and the 'Young Volunteer of the Year' Award is one way to recognise the efforts, dedication and passion of young volunteers.

*Image credit: 2024 Young Volunteer of the Year, winner, Casey*



# Volunteer stories

Many young people benefit from hearing the success stories of other young volunteers. Support people can use the volunteer stories on the next few pages to promote the benefits of volunteering.



## **Tell us your stories**

Share a success story with us of a young volunteer doing great things in our community



[comms@volunteeringact.org.au](mailto:comms@volunteeringact.org.au)

## **Nominate a young volunteer**

Nominate a young volunteer or volunteer team (aged between 12 and 25) who have shown outstanding dedication to volunteering within the Canberra Region. For more information, email us!



[events@volunteeringact.org.au](mailto:events@volunteeringact.org.au)



## **Resources**

The templates and resources section has a template 'Volunteering Journal' where young people can reflect on their experiences, what they've learned, and what they've achieved (page 50).



## VOLUNTEER STORY: ISHA



Isha started volunteering when she was 8 years old.

She started volunteering, inspired by her parents who encouraged her to 'put good out into the world.'

“ —

They supported me, whether by arranging transport or providing meals at odd hours. Their example inspired me to get involved from a young age. As a child, I learnt about the importance of making the world a better place and how young people can create change. Mahatma Gandhi's quote, 'Be the change you wish to see in the world,' really stuck with me, and ever since, I've been eager to lend a hand.

- Isha







Isha has volunteered with a range of organisations supporting community development, youth, and other vulnerable groups. She's done everything from fundraising to management to hands-on volunteering.

*"Volunteering has given me so much. On a personal level, it provides a sense of fulfilment, valuable skills, and a feeling of belonging. It's given me the opportunity to explore areas I wouldn't have otherwise considered, and I've met many lifelong friends through volunteering. It's also helped me feel more confident and strengthened my connection to my community. The joy of knowing you've helped someone or seeing the smile on their face after supporting them is truly unmatched. I have met so many people through volunteering that I never would have otherwise and learnt so much about the unique experiences we all have."*



Isha believes young people have a huge role to play in the community.

*"We bring energy and fresh perspectives to community issues. There are emerging challenges that impact us in unique ways, and new methods of volunteering that we are often at the forefront of. By getting involved, young people can help build a stronger, more inclusive and connected community while shaping the future in ways that matter."*

Isha's advice for young people is: "just go for it!"



*"Volunteering has so many benefits, both personally and professionally, while allowing you to make a real difference to the community, brick by brick. Don't hesitate to put your hand up and give it a go, and don't be afraid to ask for help or support if you need it. Volunteers aren't employees, so different rights and expectations apply. It's important to enjoy the experience, learn from it, and pace yourself to avoid burnout. Take it as an opportunity to give back and grow at your own pace."*





## VOLUNTEER STORY: JOSH



Josh is 20 years old and started volunteering when he was 16 years old, with the YMCA.

Volunteering was an opportunity Josh used to discover his passions, gain practical experience, and meet amazing people.

“

The first big experience I had volunteering was with Youth Parliament, including an amazing week spent in Sydney at Parliament House supporting young leaders. I first became involved in Youth Parliament as a participant myself, and now I've had the chance to give back as a volunteer.

- Josh





*"I distinctly remember handing out R U Ok? Day cookies at the Wagga Marketplace (where I grew up). It was so special to be involved in a cause that is so important, and that I am so passionate about. I loved having the chance to put a smile on the faces of passers-by and check in with them."*

Josh loves to do all kinds of volunteering from working with kids, people experiencing homelessness, and young leaders. He has found volunteering to be a way to connect with the world around him and be a part of the community.

*"Ours is a society where the default setting is to keep your head down. Unless we choose to engage, we somehow manage to wander through city streets and busy functions whilst remaining in our own world. The best thing young people can do is be the generation that lifts their heads up (something that I need to work on myself!). One way to do this is to volunteer!"*

Josh's advice for people thinking of volunteering:

*"Just do it! Give it a go, and if you don't like it – try a different kind of volunteering. Try to do something that helps others and suits your interests. Volunteering has definitely helped me to get into university, and land a few jobs along the way, but more than anything else, it has taught me who I am and what I believe in."*





# Conditions for volunteering to thrive

## In this section

- Support services for young people
- Support available through VolunteeringACT



## Support services for young people

There are many services across the Canberra Region that focus on providing support and resources to young people.

To find additional supports and information, visit [My Community Directory](#). To use the directory, type your location into the search bar, and browse available services in the 'categories' section.

'Youth services' is a dedicated category that includes general youth services, accommodation services, crisis and emergency services, youth employment and training services, and youth information and counselling.

### My Community Directory

My Community Directory is a website to find community services and events in the ACT and surrounding regions.



Another useful site is the Youth Coalition of the ACT's [Connect Services directory](#). To find services using this site, click the 'discover' button and browse the listed services, or use the search function to find a specific service based on the service type, or the age and/or gender of the young person who is seeking information.



### CNCT - Youth Coalition

CNCT has been developed for young people aged 12-25 to connect with the support, resources and services they need in the ACT. This site is useful to find a local youth community, program, or service.

# Support available through VolunteeringACT

## Community Info Hub

The Community Info Hub provides information on services and supports, clubs and groups, events and activities in the Canberra region. From disability support, children's services, environment groups, to arts, hobby and interest groups, sporting and cultural clubs and legal services support, the Community Info Hub can help you find the information you need.

Young people can visit the Hub and be supported by our staff to find a volunteer role. This includes free phone and computer use, as well as help from staff in how to use VolunteeringACT's website and role search portal.

📍 Griffin Centre, 20 Genge Street, Canberra 2601

☎ 02 6248 7988

## Training: Introduction to Volunteering

VolunteeringACT runs regular information and training sessions relating to volunteering.

The Introduction to Volunteering training session covers:

- What is volunteering?
- The benefits of volunteering
- Volunteer rights and responsibilities
- How to find the right volunteering role for you

🕒 2 hours

💰 Free

📍 Alternately run face to face or online

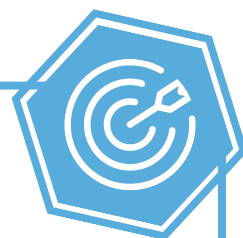
VolunteeringACT runs these sessions regularly both online and face to face. The sessions can also be run in schools or for community groups.

If you'd like VolunteeringACT to run a session for your school or community group, feel free to reach out to [info@volunteeringact.org.au](mailto:info@volunteeringact.org.au).



### Resources

Scan the QR code to visit VolunteeringACT's events and training page on the website.



## Inclusive Volunteering Program

The Inclusive Volunteering Pathways to Employment Program helps to reduce and remove barriers to volunteering and employment for people living with disability and/or mental health conditions.

The Program supports participants to engage in volunteering as a pathway to employment. Through the Program, participants are matched with meaningful volunteering roles that help build the skills, experience, and confidence needed to work towards employment goals.

Visit VolunteeringACT's website to find out more about the Program and how to become a participant or refer a friend.

### The Program works with participants who:

- are living with disability and/or a mental health condition **and**
- are seeking employment **and**
- are interested in volunteering



### RESOURCES

Scan the QR code to find out more about the Inclusive Volunteering Pathways to Employment Program.







*National Multicultural Festival 2024*



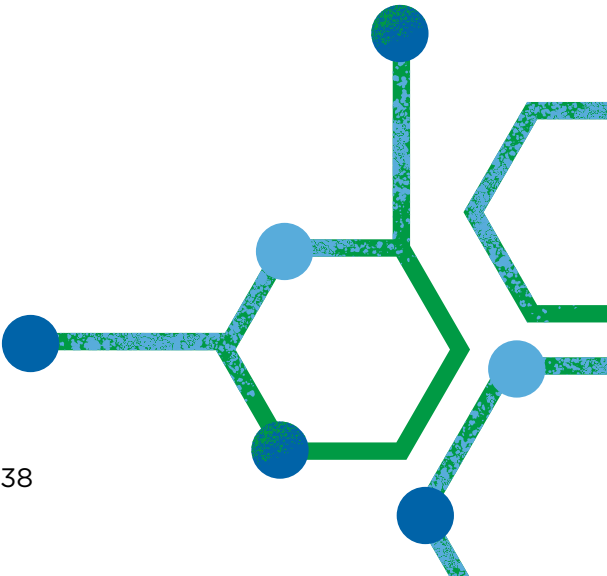
*TEDxCanberra 2025*



*Vinnies Roadhouse*



*Mental Illness Education ACT, Fun Run*





# **Templates and Resources**



## Scripts for supporting young people when they miss out on a role

Use these scripts as guidance to have conversations with young people who are keen to volunteer, but may not have found the right role yet.

### 1. You've got this

Not being chosen for a volunteering role does not mean failure, or that you're not capable of volunteering. There are many possible reasons why you weren't chosen, some of which may be out of your control. It doesn't have to be the end of your volunteering journey. 85% of volunteer involving organisations in the Canberra Region need more volunteers and there will be another role out there for you!

### 2. Nobody got back to them

Some volunteer involving organisations experience high rates of interest in a volunteering role and find it difficult to respond to every person. Other organisations will forget to remove an advertisement for a volunteering opportunity after they've selected a candidate. Sometimes expressions of interest just go to the spam folder. If you haven't heard back from the organisation within two (2) weeks and you're passionate about the role, you can reach out to the organisation through their website or on the phone to check in.

### 3. Feedback

It's okay to ask the volunteer manager or organisation for feedback. This will help you to identify ways to improve your application in future and shows the organisation your interest.

### 4. Self-assessment and improvement

Consider how you could tweak or refine your approach. Is there any more information you could have provided in your application?

### 5. Network and connect

Attending organisation events and information sessions or following organisations on social media can be a great way to hear about upcoming volunteering opportunities.

**The following pages are information, activities, and tools for young people to aid them in having a successful volunteer journey.**



## Frequently asked questions

Below are some questions that VolunteeringACT is frequently asked by young people about volunteering. The responses may be useful for support people to use in responding to young people.



### **Is there a minimum age to start volunteering, do I need to wait until I'm 18?**

There is no minimum age to start volunteering and you don't need to wait until you are 18 to start! However, some organisations have age limits of 16+ or 18+ due to the nature of the work they do, or their insurance coverage. When applying for volunteering opportunities, make sure to check if there are age restrictions. Make sure that your volunteering doesn't interfere with school, and if you are under 15, that you don't exceed 10 hours per week.



### **Can volunteering help me get a job?**

Absolutely! Volunteering is a great way to get experience, training and build your skills. It can also help you to get references, and employers love to see volunteering on your CV.



### **What do I need to have to start volunteering?**

You will need an email address, so the organisation can reach out to you and send you any onboarding paperwork. Some volunteering roles also require background checks like Working With Vulnerable People cards, but not all do. You will also need time to complete the application, the onboarding process and the volunteering activity itself.



### **How do I find a volunteering opportunity?**

You can use [VolunteeringACT's website](#) to browse and apply for volunteering roles. Some organisations also list volunteering opportunities on their own websites. Make sure to select the '**Young adults, 18-24**' and/or '**Younger Volunteers, under 18**' in the 'good for' section, to find opportunities suitable for your age groups.



### **Do I need any special skills or experience to volunteer?**

Not often. Some volunteering roles require specialised skills or experience, but most organisations will provide all the necessary information and training on the job.

## Frequently asked questions



### **How much spare time do I need to have to volunteer?**

It varies. Some opportunities are one-off events and will only require a few hours, while others require a regular weekly or fortnightly commitment. Make sure to choose something that fits your schedule.



### **Are there costs involved in volunteering?**

No. Volunteering is free and there should be no cost to you. However, you may need to cover fees like public transport or fuel to get to the volunteering activity.



### **Will I get paid for volunteering?**

No, volunteering is unpaid. The definition of volunteering is “time willingly given for the common good, without financial gain.” (Volunteering Australia, 2015). Through volunteering you will gain valuable experience, connections and personal satisfaction. Some volunteers might receive gifts during end of year celebrations or National Volunteer Week, but not all volunteers do.



### **What do I do if I don't like the role or it's too hard?**

Speak with your volunteer manager, they may be able to adjust your role or provide support. As a volunteer you do have the right to say no or to leave the volunteering role at any time. Just make sure if you decide to leave a volunteering role, let your volunteer manager know.



### **Can I volunteer with my friends?**

Many organisations allow group volunteering, especially for events. Check with the organisation to see if they can accommodate you and your friends.



### **What is the difference between volunteering, an internship and work experience?**

Volunteering, internships and work experience are all examples of unpaid work. Internships and work experience/student placements are mandatory parts of an education or training course, whereas volunteering is done by your own choice and not a requirement. In some instances, internships can also be paid opportunities.

## Volunteer readiness checklist

**This checklist is to help you prepare for volunteering.**

☐

I know what kinds of volunteering areas I'm interested in.

---

☐

I have checked what background checks I may need for the type of volunteering I want to do (such as Working With Vulnerable People).

---

☐

I have checked what other requirements may be necessary for the type of volunteering I want to do, including considering up-front costs involved – which may be reimbursed (such as up to date vaccinations).

---

☐

I know what I want to get out of my volunteering, including what skills or experience I want to gain.

---

☐

I know what availability I have and how much time I can commit (including thinking about what other commitments I have such as work or school).

---

☐

I have transport available to get me to and from my volunteering role.

---

☐

I have considered if any costs might be involved in my volunteering role (such as public transport to get there).

---

☐

I have thought about what additional supports I might need to volunteer.

---

☐

I have an email address the volunteer manager can use to communicate with me.

---

☐

I have identified my strengths and what I think I bring to the role.

---

☐

I've discussed my intention to volunteer with my friends, family, or mentor/s.

---

☐

I am ready to show up reliably and give it my best effort!

---

### Volunteer hour tracking template

Some young people may wish to track their volunteering hours as part of their personal development, or for a program where volunteer hours are required, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. This template can support young people to ensure their hours do not exceed the recommended amount and help them record their progress.

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**VOLUNTEER MANAGER CONTACT:** \_\_\_\_\_

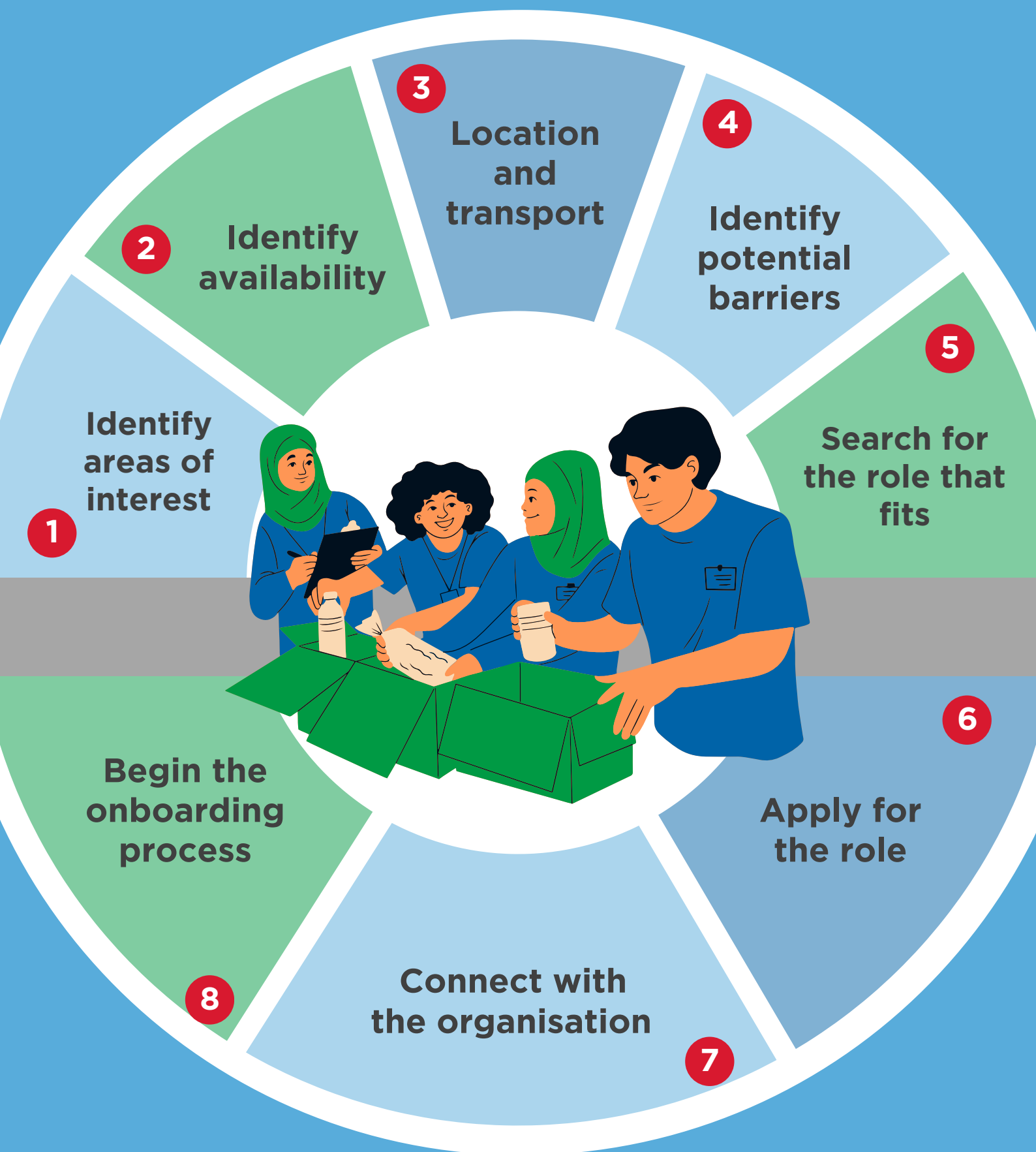
Date	Hours volunteered	Organisation	Role/description of activity	Supervisor signature

**TOTAL HOURS VOLUNTEERED:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### NOTES AND REFLECTIONS



# Volunteering: A step-by-step guide



# Benefits of volunteering



**Get started today!**

  
**VolunteeringACT**  
an inclusive Canberra 

## Volunteering plan

### How to use this plan

This template will help a young volunteer plan and organise their volunteering journey. Young people can use it to set goals, identify opportunities, and reflect on progress.

### About you

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies/interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Skills/strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

### Goals



Why I want to volunteer:



What I hope to achieve:



Short term goal:



Long term goal:



Skills or experiences I want to gain through volunteering:



## Exploring opportunities

Research online to find volunteering opportunities that might align with your skills, interests and goals.



### Opportunity 1

Organisation:  
Role:  
Requirements:  
Location:  
Time commitment:

- ☐ Applied
- ☐ Heard back from organisation about the role
- ☐ Interviewed/met with volunteer manager

Conclusion/result: \_\_\_\_\_



### Opportunity 2

Organisation:  
Role:  
Requirements:  
Location:  
Time commitment:

- ☐ Applied
- ☐ Heard back from organisation about the role
- ☐ Interviewed/met with volunteer manager

Conclusion/result: \_\_\_\_\_



### Opportunity 3

Organisation:  
Role:  
Requirements:  
Location:  
Time commitment:

- ☐ Applied
- ☐ Heard back from organisation about the role
- ☐ Interviewed/met with volunteer manager

Conclusion/result: \_\_\_\_\_







## Volunteering journal

This template will help you to reflect on your volunteering experiences, what you like, what you've learned, and what you've gotten out of it.

This journal belongs to: \_\_\_\_\_

### Starting your volunteering journey



What is your motivation for volunteering? What made you start? What do you want to get out of it?



Reflections on your first day/experience of volunteering



Who have you met? Who has inspired you? Have you made a new friend or got a new mentor?



## Choosing your own adventure!

Take a moment to explore the insights gained from your volunteering experiences and the impact it has made on your personal and/or professional growth.



What have you learned about the place/s you volunteer?



What made you choose this organisation/opportunity?  
What do you like about it?

**Page 2/3: Volunteering journal**



## Personal growth

Things you learned, people you met and skills you've gained etc.  
Think graphics that represent your skills, photos of you doing new things, new friends etc.

Have you learned any new skills? Have you experienced any challenges?



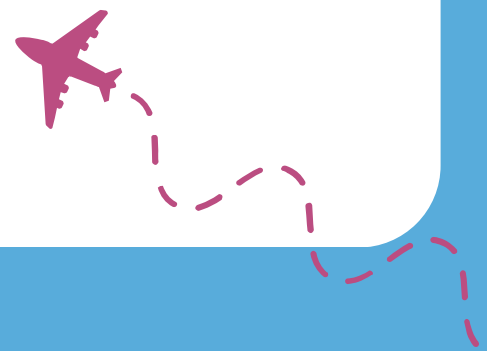
What has been your favourite part of volunteering so far?



What tips do you have for other people looking to volunteer? Would you recommend it? What would you say to somebody interested in trying volunteering for the first time?



**Page 3/3: Volunteering journal**



## Volunteer rights and responsibilities

Unlike paid staff, volunteers are not covered by award or workplace agreements. However, they do have rights protected by legislation.

### As a volunteer you have the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe environment
- Not be discriminated against
- Be covered by insurance
- Be given accurate information about the organisation
- Be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses
- Be given a copy of the organisation's volunteer policy, or any policy that affects your work as a volunteer
- Not fill a position previously held by a paid worker
- Not do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes (such as a strike)
- Have a job description and agreed working hours
- Have access to a grievance or complaints procedure
- Be provided with onboarding or orientation
- Have your personal information dealt with in accordance with the Privacy Act
- Be provided with the necessary training to do a job
- Say no and to leave at any time.

### As a volunteer you are responsible to:

- Be punctual and reliable
- Notify the volunteer manager or organisation if you are unable to attend your volunteering shift, if your availability changes, or if you're no longer interested in volunteering
- Notify the organisation of any potential hazards, dangerous situations or incidents
- Follow the organisation's policies and procedures
- Deal with complaints in an appropriate manner
- Respect the rights and privacy of others
- Carry out the duties in your volunteer position description, including training.





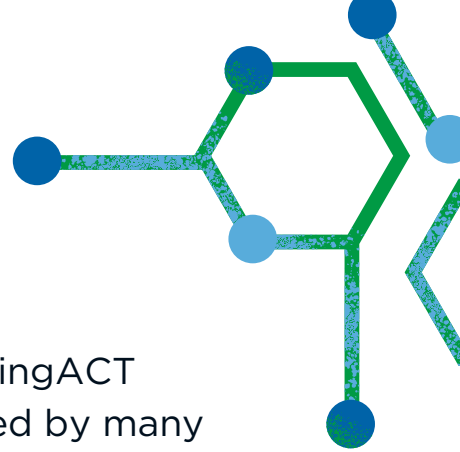
# Building this toolkit

This toolkit was co-designed with the VolunteeringACT Youth Volunteering Working Group and reviewed by many amazing and dedicated people and groups.

Thank you to the young people, and people working with young people, who took the time to review this toolkit and provide feedback.

This includes Maria, Matthew, Casey, Lily M-C, Isha, Ellie, Mijica, Lily H, Ella, Iliana, Rylie, Leaf, Kia, Jon, Ell, Travis, Jordan, Kathleen, Roanne, Chloe, Mick, Natalie and Rosanne.

We'd also like to thank Synergy Law, Keystone Australia, and the Children and Young People Commissioner's office.





**Get in touch!**



**VolunteeringACT**

02 6251 4060

[www.volunteeringact.org.au](http://www.volunteeringact.org.au)

**Community Info Hub**

20 Genge Street, Canberra 2601

02 6248 7988

[info@volunteeringact.org.au](mailto:info@volunteeringact.org.au)

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@volunteeringact