

CANBERRA FOOD RELIEF SERVICE PROVIDER SNAPSHOT 2026

In December 2025, VolunteeringACT surveyed service providers across the ACT who supply essential food support to people in Canberra. These organisations range from large charities to small volunteer run street pantries with no formal funding. This snapshot reflects responses from 23 organisations, acknowledging that the broader food relief ecosystem extends beyond this group. It summarises major insights into their funding, costs, unmet demand and the challenges faced by both providers and service users.

Food relief demand in 2025



Food relief providers that were surveyed support, on average, **390 households** each per month

Some organisations are supporting up to **96 households per day**.

Growing demand



9% of organisations surveyed reported that their demand had **doubled** in the last 12 months

61% of organisations reported a **25% increase** in people accessing their services compared with 2024.

High levels of unmet need



All organisations surveyed stated that clients require **more food than they are able to provide**

91% of organisations are aware of clients trying to access food when they are not open.

Spending on food



In 2025 the average amount of money each organisation spent on food per month was \$8,672, a **47% increase** from 2024

94% of organisations reported that they purchase food through supermarkets where they have to **pay retail prices**.

All organisations reported that they **must purchase food** as donations alone are not enough.

Funding sources



70% of organisations surveyed report their current **funding is insufficient to meet demand**

Only 30% of ACT food relief organisations surveyed receive **government funding**.

61% rely on fundraising and philanthropic contributions to be able to continue to operate.



Operational challenges for organisations



The **top five** challenges reported by organisations were

1. **Insufficient food** to meet demand
2. **Lack of volunteers**
3. **Rising cost** of food
4. Limited **funding**
5. Managing **psychosocial hazards** for staff and volunteers

Challenges faced by clients



The **top five** challenges affecting clients reported by organisations

1. Physical and mental **health challenges**
2. **Homelessness** or insecure housing
3. **Financial hardship**
4. Underemployment or **unemployment**
5. **Loneliness** and social isolation



Across the organisations that responded to the survey, **997 volunteers** supported food relief efforts in 2025 to keep their doors open.



“We cannot provide 4 large families with the quantities of food they need”
Canberra Food Relief Network member

“Our food pantry operates from a very small space, which significantly limits our capacity to store food and essential items. While demand continues to increase, our physical space and resources restrict our ability to expand the service to a broader community at this time.”
Canberra Food Relief Network member

