

National Strategy for Volunteering

2023–2033



National Strategy
for Volunteering

Action Plan

2024–2027



Acknowledgement of Country

The National Strategy for Volunteering acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. It pays respect to Elders past and present. The National Strategy for Volunteering recognises that community giving has been taking place in First Nations communities for tens of thousands of years. It is committed to recognising the contribution of First Nations Peoples and celebrating the power of volunteering and community giving to promote reconciliation.

Summary of Actions

#	Action	Lead stakeholders	Strategic Objectives
1	Produce and implement a survey to measure and track the volunteer experience nationally	Volunteering Australia	1.1
2	Align implementation of Play Well and the Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan with the National Strategy for Volunteering	Australian Sports Commission	1.1, 3.3
3	Establish a mechanism to channel the voice of volunteers into policy and practice	Coalition of Support, Volunteering ecosystem	1.1
4	Progress greater national consistency of working with children checks	Commonwealth Attorney General's Department / National Office for Child Safety	1.1, 1.2
5	Host forums to enhance collaboration and knowledge-sharing around inclusive volunteering	Representative bodies, Volunteering Australia	1.2
6	Increase volunteer involving organisations' understanding of their legal obligations to volunteers	Justice Connect	1.3
7	Deliver a national and ongoing Share Your Story initiative	State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteering Australia	2.1, 2.2
8	Deliver a research translation initiative to support evidence-based policy and practice	National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group, Volunteering Australia	2.1, 3.3
9	Deliver a national campaign to raise awareness of volunteering	Department of Social Services	2.2
10	Collect and publish new official national data on volunteering in Australia	Australian Bureau of Statistics	2.3

#	Action	Lead stakeholders	Strategic Objectives
11	Communicate the value and impact of volunteering	Coalition of Support, Volunteering ecosystem	2.3
12	Host a public conversation on approaches to informal volunteering and community-led volunteering	Volunteering Australia	2.4, 2.1, 2.2
13	Create new community-led volunteering partnerships	Coalition of Support, Volunteering ecosystem	2.4
14	Scope a whole of Australian Government approach to volunteering	Department of Social Services	3.1
15	Encourage alignment between state and territory volunteering strategies and the National Strategy for Volunteering	Department of Social Services	3.1
16	Establish an Employee Volunteering Community of Practice	Volunteering Australia, Co-hosting employers	3.2
17	Support the National Strategy for Volunteering by acting as a State / Territory Ambassador	State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies	3.2
18	Progress appropriate alignment of federal government funding for volunteering with the National Strategy for Volunteering	Department of Social Services	3.3
19	Develop a national volunteering passport	Volunteering ecosystem	3.3
20	Deliver a central platform of tools and resources	Volunteering Australia	3.3, 3.4
21	Establish an agenda for the future of volunteering research	National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group, Volunteering Australia	3.3, 2.1
22	Align the implementation of National Standards for Volunteer Involvement with the National Strategy	State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteering Australia	3.4, 3.3

The National Strategy for Volunteering

The National Strategy for Volunteering (2023–2033) is Australia's blueprint for a reimagined future for volunteering. It provides a ten-year roadmap to work collectively towards the National Strategy's vision: **Volunteering is the heart of Australian communities**.

The National Strategy was co-created by stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem. Across three Focus Areas, it provides a shared agenda for change underpinned by robust research and evidence.

Across Australia, volunteers, organisations and governments are using the National Strategy for Volunteering to strengthen volunteering and create opportunities to work together. Whatever your role, the National Strategy offers you a way to participate and contribute towards the ten-year movement to create a better future for volunteering.

Learn more about the National Strategy for Volunteering on the website: volunteeringstrategy.org.au



Implementing the National Strategy for Volunteering

The National Strategy for Volunteering is for everyone. It is co-owned by the volunteering ecosystem and everyone has a shared responsibility – as well as a shared opportunity – to participate in its implementation. The National Strategy's vision will be achieved through the combined efforts of stakeholders across Australia, each contributing according to their role and the opportunities available to them.

There are two ways to take action to support the National Strategy for Volunteering and both are vital to its implementation:

1. Stakeholders may participate in coordinated actions outlined in the three-year Action Plans. These are co-designed by the volunteering ecosystem and provide the structured action necessary for each phase of the National Strategy. The Action Plans include actions with specific leading stakeholders who are responsible for their progression, as well as accessible opportunities for other members of the volunteering ecosystem to participate. Actions will be tracked through the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
2. Stakeholders may also take action independently outside the three-year Action Plans, aligning their work with the National Strategy for Volunteering. The National Strategy includes three Focus Areas and 11 Strategic Objectives that support its vision. These can be used by any member of the volunteering ecosystem to guide their activities and enhance their volunteering outcomes, working towards the National Strategy's unifying goals. Stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem have applied the National Strategy for Volunteering to their volunteering practice. This form of action, alongside the three-year Action Plans, is essential to achieve the National Strategy's vision.

Three-Year Action Plans

To support implementation, the National Strategy for Volunteering outlines 11 Strategic Objectives and a phased approach, including three Action Plans. The Action Plans provide structure for the coordinated projects and initiatives required in its three-year phase of the National Strategy. The suite of actions give clarity to the volunteering ecosystem on the commitments made by leading stakeholders, as well as accessible opportunities to participate.

Each Action Plan is co-designed by the volunteering ecosystem, identifying highest-priority initiatives for the upcoming three-year Action Plan phase. Commitments are sought from leading stakeholders, including governments, peak bodies and volunteer involving organisations. These commitments are complemented by open, accessible actions, presenting opportunities for stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem to contribute to the implementation of the National Strategy regardless of role or resourcing.

Actions will be progressed over the three-year timeline of the Action Plan phase. Each leading stakeholder is responsible for planning the resourcing, execution and timing of their actions within the three-year Action Plan. Completion dates will differ between actions, with some having the opportunity to be delivered early in the three-year period.

In the course of progressing their committed actions, leading stakeholders will identify the most appropriate form for that action to take. Actions vary in scope: some reference existing initiatives in the volunteering ecosystem, while others call for new resources, networks or campaigns to be delivered at the national level. Leading stakeholders will develop further detail on how to best implement their actions and this may include reviewing relevant initiatives in the volunteering ecosystem (past and present) to learn, collaborate or adapt.

Action Plans are an important facet of the National Strategy's implementation, providing clarity, guidance and new opportunities for collaboration for the volunteering ecosystem.

Co-Design Process

In keeping with the principles of the National Strategy, Action Plan 2024-2027 has been co-designed with the volunteering ecosystem. This process saw wide engagement from hundreds of volunteering stakeholders across Australia. It included:

A review of co-design outputs from the Development Phase

6 national online public workshops

25 one-on-one consultations

6 state and territory level workshops

Altogether, the volunteering ecosystem contributed 1,600+ ideas for actions to implement the National Strategy. These were analysed to identify key themes, then developed into actions through a series of workshops with the Establishment Design Team. This team was comprised of over 30 members of the volunteering ecosystem, each representing a different stakeholder and perspective.

The co-design process produced more than 50 candidate actions for implementing the National Strategy for Volunteering, representing a mix of new initiatives, local initiatives that could be expanded to a national audience, and some initiatives that are already underway. To refine the Action Plan, the Establishment Design Team also outlined key criteria to test and prioritise actions, ensuring that each is appropriate for the first three-year Action Plan.

The candidate actions that emerged from this co-design process were presented to leading stakeholders in the volunteering ecosystem whose support would be necessary for implementation. With their feedback, actions were tested and refined to ensure their practicality and value for the volunteering ecosystem. The resulting list – Action Plan 2024-2027 – is the first wave of coordinated actions needed to make volunteering the heart of Australian communities.

Action Plan Criteria

The Action Plans assist the implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering by providing a mechanism for coordinated action, demonstrated commitment and new opportunities for collaboration. In the course of implementing the National Strategy, there will be many forms of action across the volunteering ecosystem – including action outside the scope of the three-year Action Plans.

As part of the co-design process, the volunteering ecosystem determined criteria for candidate actions to ensure they are valuable, transformative and appropriate for inclusion in Action Plan 2024-2027.

These are split across two categories: **individual criteria**, which each action must meet, and **collective criteria**, which must be met by the suite of actions overall.

Individual Criteria

- **Outcome-focused and aligned:** initiatives need to align with one or more of the National Strategy Strategic Objectives.
- **Co-designed ethos:** initiatives need to have emerged from the consultations and co-design process.
- **Change-focused:** initiatives need to involve a change to policy or practice.
- **Measurable and accountable:** initiatives need to be able to demonstrate a contribution to outcomes.
- **Timely:** initiatives need to be relevant to the timing of Action Plan 2024-2027.
- **Nationally significant:** initiatives in the Action Plan need to either demonstrate a commitment to sharing learning across the nation, or be national in reach or scale.

Collective Criteria

- **Inclusive:** all stakeholders in the volunteering ecosystem have an opportunity to participate in the National Strategy for Volunteering.
- **Collaborative:** some initiatives need to provide opportunities for collaboration.
- **Comprehensive:** all Strategic Objectives need to have associated actions.
- **Sustainable:** initiatives need to consider sustainability into the future, and the range of actions needed to secure ongoing sustainability of the National Strategy itself.

During the co-design process, over 1,600 ideas for action were suggested. Some of the suggested actions require foundational work or further development and were not included in Action Plan 2024-2027. Many other suggested actions call for initiatives or services that are already present within the volunteering ecosystem. This provides an opportunity to expand the reach of existing services and infrastructure. The breadth and diversity of existing activity that takes place across the volunteering ecosystem is also a vital part of achieving the objectives of the National Strategy for Volunteering.

How to Use Action Plan 2024-2027

Action Plan 2024-2027 outlines a set of co-designed actions designed to address priorities for the implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering. The Action Plan identifies lead stakeholders who bear responsibility to progress the action. It also includes supporting actions: opportunities for others in the volunteering ecosystem to flexibly contribute to Action Plan 2024-2027 and the implementation of the National Strategy.

There are actions to progress each of the National Strategy's eleven Strategic Objectives and opportunities for everyone in the volunteering ecosystem to participate.

The **Action** and **Overview** columns describe the commitments made by lead stakeholders. Each action contributes to the Strategic Objectives of the National Strategy and these are identified in the **Strategic Objective** column. The **Supporting action** column provides opportunities for other stakeholders to participate in the action taken by the lead stakeholder, to contribute to its success or take similar action within their volunteering practice. The stakeholder groups identified in the **Supporting action** column may choose whether to contribute and which opportunities offer the most value. This column includes opportunities for volunteers, volunteer involving organisations, researchers, the media, technology providers, governments, employers and volunteer-enabling organisations, such as peak bodies and volunteer support services.

Action Plan 2024-2027 is complemented by other documents from the Establishment Phase of the National Strategy for Volunteering:

- **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

This document is a guide to measuring progress of the National Strategy for Volunteering. It includes an Outcomes Framework, which outlines how progress of each outcome will be measured, and guidance for reporting on the inputs, outputs and processes associated with implementation of the National Strategy.

- **Governance Blueprint**

This provides a framework for oversight of the implementation and evaluation of the National Strategy for Volunteering. It identifies the governance processes and systems required to ensure the National Strategy is implemented effectively, efficiently and in a way that achieves its aims.

- **Model for Shared Accountability**

The Model is a framework that provides guidance on how stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem can work together to implement the National Strategy for Volunteering. It is designed to jointly promote accountability and learning by outlining roles and processes for stakeholders taking part in the National Strategy.

Glossary

State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies

This is a network of organisations that lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering at the state and territory level. The State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies are the Centre for Volunteering (NSW), VolunteeringACT, Volunteering Queensland, Volunteering SA&NT, Volunteering Tasmania, Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering WA.

Coalition of Support

The Coalition of Support is a network of stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem who have made a public commitment to implementing the National Strategy for Volunteering. This commitment takes many forms, reflecting the diverse nature of volunteering and the broad applications of the National Strategy. Action Plan 2024-2027 includes initiatives designed to be led by participating Coalition of Support members. Stakeholders can continue to sign up as Supporters through the Coalition of Support to demonstrate their commitment to the National Strategy.

Volunteering ecosystem

There is an ecosystem within volunteering. It is a network of relationships between all individuals and groups who participate in, support or have an interest in volunteering. The actions of these stakeholders influence and support each other, ultimately contributing to the collective viability and recognition of volunteering in Australia.

FOCUS AREA 1

Individual Potential and the Volunteer Experience

Volunteering is inclusive and accessible, allowing everyone to express themselves and contribute to causes and activities they care about.



#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
1	Produce and implement a survey to measure and track the volunteer experience nationally	<p>Volunteering Australia will collaborate with researchers to produce a volunteering experience survey aligned with the National Strategy. This survey may use a new methodology or an existing survey may be identified as being in alignment with the National Strategy. Once produced, the survey will be made freely available for use across the volunteering ecosystem for volunteer involving organisations to measure and track the experience of volunteers they engage.</p> <p>Results may optionally be submitted to create a growing databank of survey results to track national trends, strengthen volunteer management practices and inform research projects.</p>	Volunteering Australia	<p>Researchers Contribute to the design of the volunteer experience survey to ensure it is underpinned by a robust methodology.</p> <p>Volunteer involving organisations Use the survey to better understand the volunteer experience within your team and compare these results to like-for-like data nationally.</p> <p>Volunteer-enabling groups <i>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteer Resource Centres, Volunteer Support Services</i> Share the survey to encourage its use and grow its dataset.</p> <p>Consider adapting future surveys to align with the experience survey's methodology to produce comparable findings.</p>	1.1 Focus on the Volunteer Experience
2	Align implementation of Play Well and the Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan with the National Strategy for Volunteering	The Australian Sports Commission will lead implementation of Play Well – Australia's sport participation strategy, and the Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan in alignment with the National Strategy for Volunteering to enhance the sport volunteer experience.	Australian Sports Commission	<p>Sport Volunteer Coalition Provide expert advice and guidance on the implementation of the Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan. Promote the value of volunteering in sport and foster collaboration.</p> <p>Volunteering Australia Continue collaboration with the Australian Sports Commission to support strategic alignment and realise benefits for the volunteering ecosystem.</p>	1.1 Focus on the Volunteer Experience 3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
3	Establish a mechanism to channel the voice of volunteers into policy and practice	Participating Coalition of Support members and stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem will convene Volunteer Advisory Committees that ensure the voice of volunteers can directly shape implementation of initiatives in the volunteering ecosystem. Through these Advisory Committees, volunteers can be empowered to provide feedback on policies, the volunteering experience and ways to strengthen volunteering outcomes.	Coalition of Support Volunteering ecosystem	Volunteers Participate in Volunteer Advisory Committees within your group, local area or a volunteer-enabling organisation, such as a peak body. Advocate for Volunteer Advisory Committees or similar bodies to be created within your group, sector or local area, if they are not currently in place.	1.1 Focus on the Volunteer Experience
4	Progress greater national consistency of working with children checks	Attorney General's Department / National Office for Child Safety Working with children check reforms are progressing under Measure 3 of the First National Action Plan of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030 . Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies are working together through the National Strategy's Information Sharing Working Group to improve national consistency of working with children checks, and will consider volunteers working with children, including where this aligns with the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Principles for Child Safe Organisations • Australian Government's vision for the care and support economy sectors 	Commonwealth Attorney General's Department / National Office for Child Safety	State and Territory Governments Continue participation with the Information Sharing Working Group and ensure that the perspective of volunteers is considered in future work on working with children checks.	1.1 Focus on the Volunteer Experience 1.2 Make Volunteering Inclusive and Accessible

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
5	Host forums to enhance collaboration and knowledge-sharing around inclusive volunteering	Representative bodies with a focus on inclusion and accessibility will be supported by Volunteering Australia to establish a national roundtable forum focusing on volunteering. This will provide an ongoing, accessible opportunity to share knowledge on emerging issues, barriers affecting volunteering and methods to make volunteering more inclusive. The issues raised and opportunities for progress will be shared with the volunteering ecosystem.	Representative bodies for marginalised or underrepresented groups Volunteering Australia	Peak bodies and other groups that represent or support marginalised or underrepresented groups Attend forums to share knowledge, build networks and provide insight into the barriers affecting volunteering and how these may be addressed. Volunteering practitioners and volunteer-enabling groups <i>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteer Resource Centres, Volunteer Support Services</i> Use the resulting information shared at forums to identify opportunities to make volunteering more inclusive and accessible.	1.2 Make Volunteering Inclusive and Accessible
6	Increase volunteer involving organisations' understanding of their legal obligations to volunteers	Justice Connect will deliver a suite of training and resources for volunteer involving organisations and volunteer managers on their legal obligations for volunteers. This initiative will equip volunteer involving organisations to legally and safely recruit and manage volunteers, ensuring volunteers are protected and that volunteers understand their rights and responsibilities.	Justice Connect	Volunteer involving organisations Adapt onboarding processes for new volunteers to include resources and training outlining legal obligations to volunteers. Volunteer-enabling groups <i>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteer Resource Centres, Volunteer Support Services</i> Share the resources and training with networks to promote their use. Consider including these resources in workshops and training programs.	1.3 Ensure Volunteering is Not Exploitative

FOCUS AREA 2

Community and Social Impact

Volunteering is recognised and celebrated for the critical role it plays in bringing together and nurturing flourishing and resilient communities.



#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
7	Deliver a national and ongoing Share Your Story initiative	<p>Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies will collect and promote stories of volunteering, focusing on the positive impacts of volunteering, the importance of volunteering to communities, and different forms of volunteering across Australia.</p> <p>This will complement existing efforts made at the state and territory level by linking them, increasing consistency and enabling further sharing of stories nationally. It will also expand the reach of existing programs that collect and share volunteer stories by connecting these programs with new audiences through the National Strategy.</p>	<p>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies</p> <p>Volunteering Australia</p>	<p>Volunteers Contribute your volunteering story to the campaign to share why you volunteer and the impact volunteering has had in your life.</p> <p>Volunteer involving organisations With their permission, collect stories to submit on behalf of the volunteers you engage.</p> <p>Deliver a similar program within your team, sharing stories that recognise and celebrate the important role volunteers play in your organisation.</p> <p>Media Engage with volunteering peak bodies, volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to identify and share stories.</p> <p>Celebrate milestones and key dates such as National Volunteer Week, International Volunteer Day and International Volunteer Manager Day by sharing volunteering stories.</p>	<p>2.1 Diversify the Understanding of Volunteering</p> <p>2.2 Reshape the Public Perception of Volunteering</p>

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
8	Deliver a research translation initiative to support evidence-based policy and practice	<p>The National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group will lead an initiative that aims to translate contemporary research on volunteering into practical insights. This will include a series of review papers, which will integrate and summarise existing research on volunteering.</p> <p>This initiative, with administrative and project management support from Volunteering Australia, aims to support evidence-based policy and practice by connecting practitioners to research through accessible research summaries, communications, events, or other forums.</p>	<p>National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group</p> <p>Volunteering Australia</p>	<p>Researchers When submissions open, submit an expression of interest to participate in the initiative and share your research with the volunteering ecosystem.</p> <p>Volunteering practitioners <i>Including leaders and managers of volunteers</i> Apply research papers' findings to strengthen your volunteering practice with recent research and developments in best practice.</p>	<p>2.1 Diversify the Understanding of Volunteering</p> <p>3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment</p>
9	Deliver a national campaign to raise awareness of volunteering	<p>Department of Social Services will lead the design and delivery of an awareness-raising campaign centred on volunteering. This campaign will communicate the benefits of volunteering and help to connect potential volunteers with roles available in the ecosystem.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services</p>	<p>Volunteer-enabling groups <i>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteer Resource Centres, Volunteer Support Services</i> Promote the awareness campaign to your networks. Work with them to prepare relevant volunteering roles and processes to maximise the campaign's impact.</p> <p>Volunteer involving organisations Follow the campaign and check if your volunteering roles, processes and goals are designed to maximise its benefits for your volunteering practice.</p>	<p>2.2 Reshape the Public Perception of Volunteering</p>

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
10	Collect and publish new official national data on volunteering in Australia	The Australian Bureau of Statistics will resume regular collection and publication of data on volunteering through the General Social Survey. This will produce policy-relevant official data on volunteering, updated to align with the Strategic Objectives of the National Strategy for Volunteering, and collected and published annually. The revised General Social Survey will include a module on volunteering, which is being updated to reflect contemporary data needs of the volunteering ecosystem in the context of the National Strategy for Volunteering.	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Volunteering Australia Contribute to the revision of the General Social Survey's module on volunteering.	2.3 Recognise the Inherent Value of Volunteering
11	Communicate the value and impact of volunteering	Participating Coalition of Support members will commit to regularly report on the contributions made by volunteers to their organisation, government body or community. This may occur through annual reports, newsletters or specific volunteer focused impact reports. The contributions made by volunteers to service delivery, organisation sustainability and community connectedness will be recognised and celebrated.	Coalition of Support Volunteering ecosystem	Volunteer involving organisations and other groups that benefit from volunteer contributions Seek out examples of how to communicate the impact and value of volunteering. Using these, start sharing the impact of volunteering to your team, department, agency, organisation or network.	2.3 Recognise the Inherent Value of Volunteering

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
12	Host a public conversation on approaches to informal volunteering and community-led volunteering	Volunteering Australia will launch an initiative that collates and presents contemporary evidence and promotes examples of informal volunteering happening across Australia. This will include a project to identify policy learnings, applications for volunteering practice and recommendations on how to support informal volunteering.	Volunteering Australia	<p>Informal volunteers and community leaders Contribute to the initiative by sharing your story of volunteering and its role within your community.</p> <p>Researchers Share research on informal volunteering and best practice to support it.</p> <p>Volunteering practitioners and volunteer-enabling groups <i>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteer Resource Centres, Volunteer Support Services</i> When available, apply the recommendations of how to support informal volunteering to your volunteering practice.</p>	<p>2.4 Enable a Community-Led Approach</p> <p>2.1 Diversify the Understanding of Volunteering</p> <p>2.2 Reshape the Public Perception of Volunteering</p>

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
13	Create new community-led volunteering partnerships	Participating Coalition of Support members will identify opportunities to work with communities on volunteering projects of mutual benefit. Focusing on gaps in their volunteering engagement, Coalition of Support members will identify potential partnerships with communities associated with their region or service focus. These partnerships will have a focus on co-creating tailored volunteering opportunities or initiatives that enhance community outcomes.	Coalition of Support Volunteering ecosystem	<p>Community leaders Identify needs and opportunities within your community and potential roles for volunteering in community-led solutions. Reach out to volunteer involving organisations to discuss common goals and volunteering roles or projects that may help achieve them.</p> <p>Local Government Areas and volunteer-enabling groups <i>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, Volunteer Resource Centres, Volunteer Support Services</i> Foster partnerships between communities and volunteer involving organisations by identifying groups with common goals and suitable volunteering roles or projects.</p>	2.4 Enable a Community-Led Approach

FOCUS AREA 3

Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive

Volunteering has intentional and sustainable leadership, investment, policy conditions, and partnerships, which provide the critical foundation for long-term impact.



#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
14	Scope a whole of Australian Government approach to volunteering	Department of Social Services will investigate opportunities to progress a whole of Australian Government approach to volunteering and the National Strategy for Volunteering. This includes exploring what mechanisms can be used to support collaboration and knowledge-sharing across portfolios that are impacted by volunteering.	Department of Social Services	<p>Department of Health and Aged Care and Australian Sports Commission Work with Department of Social Services to investigate opportunities to progress a whole of Australian Government approach to volunteering, including exploring mechanisms to support collaboration and knowledge-sharing across portfolios that are impacted by volunteering.</p> <p>Other government departments and agencies Participate in the scoping action and resulting committees, groups or other bodies that help progress a whole of Australian government approach to volunteering.</p>	3.1 Make Volunteering a Cross-Portfolio Issue in Government

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
15	Encourage alignment between state and territory volunteering strategies and the National Strategy for Volunteering	Department of Social Services will engage with state and territory governments through the Cross-Jurisdictional Community of Practice to encourage alignment between national, state and territory volunteering strategies.	Department of Social Services	<p>State and Territory Governments Increase alignment by continuing participation in the Cross-Jurisdictional Community of Practice. Using the National Strategy as a common framework, review existing state volunteering strategies or progress new state and territory volunteering strategies where active strategies are not in place.</p> <p>Volunteer involving organisations, Local Government Areas and Peak Bodies Investigate alignment of local, sector-specific or organisational volunteering strategies with the National Strategy for Volunteering.</p> <p>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies Provide advice to support efforts made by State and Territory Governments to increase alignment of volunteering strategies.</p>	3.1 Make Volunteering a Cross-Portfolio Issue in Government

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
16	Establish an Employee Volunteering Community of Practice	In partnership with employers, Volunteering Australia will establish a national network of stakeholders engaged in employee (or corporate) volunteering to foster knowledge-sharing, new partnerships and continual development. Using the National Strategy for Volunteering as a framework, Volunteering Australia will guide the Community of Practice towards a self-sustaining model of shared responsibility and peer support.	Volunteering Australia Co-hosting employers	Employers Join the Employee Volunteering Community of Practice. Apply its recommendations to your employee volunteering programs.	3.2 Build Strong Leadership and Shared Accountability
17	Support the National Strategy for Volunteering by acting as a State / Territory Ambassador	State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies will promote and support the implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering, including its interface with state and territory volunteering strategies. This will guide and encourage stakeholders to participate in National Strategy initiatives. It will also provide a local lens and contact point for stakeholders, including formalised links with the coordinating body of the National Strategy for Volunteering.	State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies	State and Territory Governments and volunteer involving organisations Engage with your state or territory volunteering peak body to build networks and participate in local efforts to implement the National Strategy for Volunteering.	3.2 Build Strong Leadership and Shared Accountability

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
18	Progress appropriate alignment of federal government funding for volunteering with the National Strategy for Volunteering	Over the course of the three-year Action Plan phase, Department of Social Services will aim to align funding criteria for volunteering initiatives and grants with the National Strategy for Volunteering. This action can help increase consistency across different initiatives and incentivise strategic planning in volunteering.	Department of Social Services	State and Territory Governments, Local Governments and other funders Investigate alignment of funding criteria with the Strategic Objectives of the National Strategy to promote strategic planning and greater cohesion nationally.	3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment
19	Develop a national volunteering passport	Across the volunteering ecosystem , relevant stakeholders will progress the development of a national volunteering passport: a national online platform that supports volunteer engagement by hosting personal details, credentials and volunteering contributions. This will promote efficiencies and alignment by providing a common platform for volunteers. Efforts across the volunteering ecosystem to develop a national volunteering passport are currently operating in parallel, involving many stakeholders. Over time, these will inform each other and work towards compatible, common approaches.	Volunteering ecosystem		3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
20	Deliver a central platform of tools and resources	Volunteering Australia will align the Volunteering Gateway, a new national online portal to curated tools and resources, with the National Strategy to help support volunteer involving organisations in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers.	Volunteering Australia	<p>Volunteering technology providers Consider aligning your product or service with the Volunteering Gateway for inclusion in the portal and greater exposure to the volunteering ecosystem.</p> <p>Volunteering practitioners <i>Including leaders and managers of volunteers</i> Use the Volunteering Gateway to access tools and resources to support your volunteering practice, or contribute existing resources for wider use.</p>	<p>3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment</p> <p>3.4 Recognise the Importance of Volunteer Management</p>
21	Establish an agenda for the future of volunteering research	<p>The National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group and Volunteering Australia will co-lead the development of a project to identify key priorities for volunteering research, in consultation with the research community and practitioners in the volunteering ecosystem.</p> <p>The research agenda will: identify a high-level list of priority areas for future research, be closely aligned with the National Strategy for Volunteering, and aim to outline the research needed to support its implementation. This could be used by researchers to align existing or developing projects with national priorities and may be adapted over time to respond to emerging needs and opportunities.</p>	<p>National Strategy for Volunteering Research Working Group</p> <p>Volunteering Australia</p>	<p>National Volunteering Research Network, other researchers and State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies Contribute to the development of the research agenda to identify priority topics to support effective implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering.</p>	<p>3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment</p> <p>2.1 Diversify the Understanding of Volunteering</p>

#	Action	Overview	Lead stakeholders	Supporting action	Strategic Objective
22	Align the implementation of National Standards for Volunteer Involvement with the National Strategy	<p>The State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies will embed the National Strategy for Volunteering into National Standards training and resources to ensure consistency. This may take the form of an additional module or resource that focuses on the National Strategy for Volunteering within the context of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, or it may see the National Strategy being embedded throughout the National Standards resources where appropriate.</p> <p>As the owners of the National Standards, Volunteering Australia will provide ongoing guidance and support national consistency.</p>	<p>State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies</p> <p>Volunteering Australia</p>	<p>Volunteering practitioners <i>Including leaders and managers of volunteers</i></p> <p>Implement the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement within your volunteering practice to strengthen your engagement of volunteers and use of the National Strategy.</p>	<p>3.4 Recognise the Importance of Volunteer Management</p> <p>3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment</p>

Other Proposed Actions from Co-Design Process

The co-design process for Action Plan 2024-2027 saw wide engagement across the volunteering ecosystem. The resulting 1,600+ suggested actions included a wide variety of means to achieve the National Strategy's vision. This reflects the diversity of participants engaged in the co-design process, including people who volunteer outside organisations, as well as volunteering practitioners with strong knowledge of volunteering infrastructure (such as funding arrangements, the services offered by peak bodies, implementation of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and the like).

The outputs of the co-design process were reviewed by the National Strategy for Volunteering team and the Establishment Design Team, comprised of 30+ members across the volunteering ecosystem. This review produced dozens of suggested actions in addition to those included in Action Plan 2024-2027. These actions can be broadly separated into two categories: actions that reflect existing services and activities in the volunteering ecosystem and actions which can be considered for future Action Plans or progressed independently.

Actions that reflect existing services and activities in the volunteering ecosystem

Throughout the co-design process, some participants called for access to resources, networks and other initiatives that are already present in the volunteering ecosystem. When these actions were consistently called for it revealed that there is an opportunity to link audiences between the National Strategy for Volunteering and the groups who coordinate these existing initiatives. Alternatively, that the existing initiative is inconsistently applied across Australia, which presents an opportunity to examine how these initiatives may be implemented more widely to provide a more consistent experience nationally.

- Activities currently undertaken by State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies and other volunteer-enabling organisations:
 - Advocacy for volunteers at the state, territory and local level
 - Opportunities for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to participate in advocacy campaigns
 - Wider celebration of volunteering milestones, commemorative days and National Volunteer Week
 - Access to resources to enhance volunteering recruitment, retention, onboarding and recognition
 - Methods to measure and value volunteering
 - Programs that log existing volunteer management knowledge and expertise to accrue points and credentials
 - Training on volunteer management
- Actions that are currently being carried out by some organisations, jurisdictions and governments, but have not been progressed consistently across the nation:
 - Having a dedicated ministry or portfolio for volunteering
 - Auspicing arrangements between corporations and volunteer involving organisations, including access to administrative services, insurance, technology and working spaces
- Volunteers and their contributions being included in workforce strategies, annual reports and organisational strategies
- Alignment of awards that recognise and celebrate volunteer contributions
- Managers of volunteers receiving pay and working conditions commensurate with their responsibilities, applicable income award and peers
- Tertiary education courses on volunteer management
- Volunteering leave being offered to paid workers, and roles offered by volunteer involving organisations to match the availability of volunteering leave
- Volunteering to be included in the curriculum for schools, including careers classes, holiday volunteering, and partnerships between volunteer involving organisations and schools
- Links between volunteer involving organisations and tertiary education institutions, with student projects directly benefiting volunteer involving organisations and their mission
- Free or discounted checks for volunteers, such as working with children checks
- Implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement within a volunteer involving organisation

Actions that can be considered for future Action Plans or Progressed Independently

Some actions were developed that may be suitable for future years of the National Strategy for Volunteering, or independent action outside of Action Plan 2024-2027. These may require further discussion with relevant stakeholders, feasibility studies and other foundational work to be carried out first, or their timing may align more strongly with later years of the National Strategy.

- Development of a national gap assessment tool focusing on volunteer inclusion, accessibility and diversity
- Additional tools and resources to improve accessibility and inclusion
- New national funding streams and grants, including:
 - Upgrades for premises to improve accessibility
 - Changes to volunteer role design to improve accessibility
 - Grants focused on innovation and strategic planning in volunteering
 - Community-led funding programs focused on developing volunteering programs and opportunities tailored to the needs of communities
- Funding for technology hardware and software licences for volunteer involving organisations
- Changes to existing funding arrangements nationally, including:
 - Expanded and more consistent duration for volunteer funding from governments
 - Creation of a 'community dividend' that enhances the value of volunteer involving organisations in proposals and tenders
 - Funding to be pegged to the Consumer Price Index or other measures that reflect increasing costs
- Creation of a geographic map of communities and the volunteer support services available to them, to identify areas of greatest and least support
- Producing a report on the accessibility of volunteering insurance, with recommendations to improve access
- Creation of a core volunteering insurance plan that is available across multiple insurers, or through umbrella arrangements via peak bodies and governments
- Establishment of a National Volunteering Research Centre
- Establishment of National Volunteering Awards
- Development of a volunteering strategy for the Northern Territory

- Establishment of a national volunteer ambassador position
- Creation of an open-source data standard for volunteering information used in online platforms, including personal data, expressions of interest, volunteering roles and rosters
- Consistent provision of fall-back options for digital services, such as in-person services alongside online portals and paper forms
- Investigation of service-learning programs and their applicability to student volunteering and employee volunteering programs
- Priorities for future policy development:
 - Options for expanded protections for volunteers, with consideration given to the expansion of protections currently available to paid workers to include volunteers, the establishment of a Volunteering Ombudsman, and nationally-consistent grievance procedures for volunteers
 - Impact of volunteering expenses being eligible for tax deductions and greater access to GST exemptions for volunteer involving organisations
- Nationwide approach to volunteer management peer support
- Nationally-consistent methodology for calculating the value and impact of volunteering

