

National Strategy for Volunteering

2023–2033

Volunteering With Vision

Getting Started with the National Strategy for Volunteering

From tens of thousands of years ago through to today, people across Australia have been giving their time to help others. When you choose help people outside of your close family or household without being paid for your time, you are part of what we call **volunteering**. Volunteering can go by many names: *helping, kinship, community, giving, service*, and some people don't have a name for it at all.

There is a **plan to create a better future for volunteering** called the National Strategy for Volunteering – **and you can be part of it**. The National Strategy for Volunteering is a ten-year plan running from 2023 to 2033 to make volunteering the heart of Australian communities. It can help you share your story, apply for funding and grants, work with others, set goals for the future, and recruit and lead volunteers. It's **freely available**, there's **no registration required**, and **you can choose when, how and how much** you want to be involved.

Volunteering is as Diverse as Our Communities

People volunteer in different ways. Some people volunteer at the same time and place every week, while others choose to volunteer on specific days for events, festivals or religious celebrations. Lots of people volunteer without a schedule, giving their time when they see someone who needs help.

Many volunteers apply to join an organisation that they want to support, like a charity or club. Volunteering also takes place outside of organisations. You might volunteer by yourself, with a group of people from your community, over the internet, with an organisation, or you might combine multiple ways to volunteer.

People volunteer for lots of different reasons: to practice their faith, help friends and neighbours, care for country, support a cause they believe in, recover from fires or floods, out of respect for elders in the community, or just because they feel it's the right thing to do.

The National Strategy for Volunteering is for everyone. Whatever volunteering looks like to you, **you can be part of a national movement** by using the National Strategy for Volunteering in your community.

The National Strategy for Volunteering is Here to Help You

In 2022, people across the country came together to create a plan for the future of volunteering in Australia. This plan is called the National Strategy for Volunteering and its ten-year Vision is that **volunteering is the heart of Australian communities.**

The National Strategy for Volunteering is **freely available** and **co-owned**, which means it belongs to everyone. We all have an opportunity to be part of the National Strategy for Volunteering and work together to create a better future for volunteering in Australia.

There are **many ways to be part of the National Strategy for Volunteering** and use it to strengthen volunteering in your community. People have used the National Strategy for Volunteering to:

- Share the story of volunteering and celebrate its impact
- Help apply for grants and funding
- Recruit and support volunteers
- Make plans for the future of their community, organisation or team
- Create new networks across communities
- Contribute to new research, or learn from existing research projects
- Set up partnerships with other groups in their area

The National Strategy for Volunteering can be **flexibly used in any type of volunteering** and you might find a different use that benefits you, your team or your community.

Since its launch in 2023, the National Strategy for Volunteering has seen governments, organisations, communities and individuals getting involved. Many have also made commitments to take action in the future. Together, these commitments make up a three-year action plan called **Action Plan 2024 – 2027**. There are **opportunities for you to join in** and help make volunteering the heart of Australian communities.

Through the National Strategy for Volunteering, we can all help create a better future for volunteering. Find out more by visiting volunteeringstrategy.org.au

Using the National Strategy in Your Community

There are lots of ways to be part of the National Strategy for Volunteering and use it to strengthen volunteering in your community. This guide will help you:

- Learn more about the National Strategy for Volunteering
- Use Strategic Objectives to make plans
- Be part of Action Plan 2024 – 2027
- Use the National Strategy for Volunteering to talk about your local impact
- Create new partnerships and connect with others

Learn More About the National Strategy

The best way to get started with the National Strategy for Volunteering is to learn a little more about it.

The **National Strategy for Volunteering (2023–2033)** is a ten-year blueprint for a reimagined future for volunteering in Australia. It is the first National Strategy for Volunteering in a decade, providing a strategic framework for enabling safe, supported, and sustainable volunteering.

You can find the full National Strategy for Volunteering document on the website:

volunteeringstrategy.org.au

The National Strategy for Volunteering was created with input from many different people involved in volunteering through a process called **co-design**. This led to a unifying Vision that **volunteering is the heart of Australian communities**. To achieve this Vision, the National Strategy for Volunteering has:

- **Three Focus Areas**, which include the aims of the National Strategy for Volunteering
- **Eleven Strategic Objectives**, which detail the work required to achieve the aims
- A **ten-year timeline** with a first-year **Establishment Phase** followed by **three Action Plan Phases**



Focus Areas

Volunteering affects all our lives and can take many different forms. To cover this wide range of activities, the National Strategy for Volunteering has three Focus Areas that each target a different aspect of volunteering.

- **Individual Potential and the Volunteer Experience**

This Focus Area is about the individual. Is their volunteering enjoyable and meaningful? Are they volunteering safely? Is there anything that makes it harder for them to volunteer?

- **Community and Social Impact**

The second Focus Area is about communities and the role of volunteering within them. What does volunteering look like to different people and communities? Do we celebrate the impact of volunteers? Are there other ways to volunteer that aren't recognised enough? What do communities need?

- **Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive**

This Focus Area talks about the large systems, processes and groups that affect volunteering. This includes leadership, funding and other resources, government policies and volunteer management.

These three Focus Areas allow the National Strategy for Volunteering to have targeted goals and actions for different areas of volunteering, as well as to have a useful framework for volunteers, leaders, researchers and people working with other strategies.

Strategic Objectives

The National Strategy for Volunteering has eleven Strategic Objectives, split across its three Focus Areas. Strategic Objectives are targeted goals for the future that are designed to help achieve our shared Vision that volunteering is the heart of Australian communities.

Focus Area	Strategic Objective	Outcome
Individual Potential and the Volunteer Experience	1.1 Focus on the Volunteer Experience	Volunteers have a meaningful and enriching experience, feel valued, and know how their contribution makes a difference.
	1.2 Make Volunteering Inclusive and Accessible	Volunteering is inclusive and accessible to everyone on their terms.
	1.3 Ensure Volunteering is Not Exploitative	Volunteers are engaged safely and ethically, with supports in place to protect their safety, interests, and wellbeing.

Focus Area	Strategic Objective	Outcome
Community and Social Impact	2.1 Diversify the Understanding of Volunteering	Volunteering is respected and supported in all its forms through an expanded understanding of different cultural interpretations and expressions.
	2.2 Reshape the Public Perception of Volunteering	A comprehensive understanding of volunteering is embedded in Australia's public consciousness.
	2.3 Recognise the Inherent Value of Volunteering	Volunteering is recognised and supported as an activity with inherent value and for its role in facilitating individual and community outcomes.
	2.4 Enable a Community-Led Approach	Communities are the primary drivers of how volunteering influences their future.
Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive	3.1 Make Volunteering a Cross-Portfolio Issue in Government	Governments are consistently considering the needs of volunteers and supporting volunteering through comprehensive policy settings and investment.
	3.2 Build Strong Leadership and Shared Accountability	Volunteering is advanced through a common agenda, underpinned by strong leadership, shared accountability, and genuine collaboration.
	3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment	Volunteering is supported across Australia by common infrastructure and continuous strategic investment.
	3.4 Recognise the Importance of Volunteer Management	Strong volunteer engagement practices and the role of Leaders of Volunteers are acknowledged as critical and appropriately supported.

Using Strategic Objectives to Make Plans

The eleven Strategic Objectives are a great starting point for anyone who would like to use the National Strategy for Volunteering in their team or community.

Not sure how to get started? Here is a **step-by-step guide** that can help:

1. Browse the Strategic Objectives and read their summaries
2. Think about your current needs and future goals. Make a note of the Strategic Objectives that talk about these topics
3. Pick which Strategic Objectives you would like to focus on (*even if it's just one!*)
4. Visit the National Strategy for Volunteering website and download the full document to find more information on the Strategic Objectives you chose
5. Think about how the Strategic Objectives can help you with your current needs or future goals in volunteering
6. Briefly write draft plans for actions you want to take, funding you'd like to apply for, or other teams you'd like to connect with
7. Develop these plans further with members of your team or community
8. Take action and get involved!

Remember – the National Strategy for Volunteering has many supporters across Australia. Look for people with similar experiences or goals; there might be an opportunity to work together on a project in your community

Tips

- For more information, look at the research linked under each Strategic Objective in the full National Strategy for Volunteering document, or the actions for that Strategic Objective in Action Plan 2024 – 2017
- Steps **2** and **3** could be part of a workshop with other members of your team or community. You can ask questions about current needs and future goals, such as:
 - *If you could change one thing about volunteering in our team or community, what would it be?*
 - *What do we want our team or community to be doing more in one year, three years and ten years? What do we want to be doing less?*
 - *Are there gaps in our team's experiences or skills, or in how we do things?*
 - *Which Strategic Objectives are most relevant to our volunteering and goals?*

National Strategy in Action

Here is an example of how the National Strategy for Volunteering and its Strategic Objectives can help you make plans to strengthen your community.

*Fatima and Ken help organise people to cook and serve food for their community's weekly free meals program. They read the National Strategy for Volunteering and decide that they would like to celebrate the positive impact their community is making as part of **Strategic Objective 2.3: Recognise the Inherent Value of Volunteering**.*

Fatima and Ken spend most of their time contacting people and don't have a process to track the impact of their community's volunteering. They reach out to local colleges and universities to talk about working together on a student project. Together, Ken, Fatima and the students find out how many people are served food, the number of hours given by the community and the value of providing a meal to a person in need.

Ken shares this information with the community and they host an event to celebrate the positive impact of volunteering. He begins sharing updated information with local volunteers each month to give a better understanding of how their volunteering helps people. Ken notices that some new community members have heard about the meal program from other volunteers and have turned up to help.

Through her local volunteering peak body, Fatima hears about new government funding to support communities. She uses the information about her community's impact to apply. Fatima also mentions the National Strategy for Volunteering and other Strategic Objectives they would like to work towards if the funding application is successful.

*By using the National Strategy for Volunteering in their community, Ken and Fatima successfully worked towards **Strategic Objective 2.3: Recognise the Inherent Value of Volunteering**. Along the way, they also contributed to:*

- **1.1 Focus on the Volunteer Experience**
- **2.1 Diversify the Understanding of Volunteering**
- **2.4 Enable a Community-Led Approach**

And, if their funding application is successful, Fatima and Ken may have the resources to also work towards these Strategic Objectives:

- **3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment**
- **3.4 Recognise the Importance of Volunteer Management**

Action Plan 2024 – 2027

People across Australia are using the National Strategy for Volunteering to take action to support volunteering in their communities. Some of these actions are part of **three-year Action Plans**. The National Strategy for Volunteering will have three Action Plans and each one is **co-designed** to identify what the most important actions for a better future for volunteering.

The first Action Plan is called **Action Plan 2024 – 2027** and was released in 2024. It has:

- 22 actions designed to achieve the National Strategy for Volunteering's Vision and Strategic Objectives
- Commitments from government departments and agencies, volunteering peak bodies, researchers and other organisations
- Opportunities for you to take action and get involved

Action Plans are a great way to see what others are doing and get inspiration for what you can do to strengthen volunteering within your community. Across the 22 actions, there is something for everyone.

Action Plan 2024 – 2027 is an important step in the ten years of the National Strategy for Volunteering, but it's not the only way to be involved. Many groups choose to take action outside of the Action Plans, working on independent projects that fit the needs of their team or community.

The National Strategy for Volunteering can only be achieved through the collective effort of people taking action across Australia. Anything you can do to strengthen volunteering is important, whether it's big or small, local or national, part of an Action Plan or something done independently.

You can download Action Plan 2024 – 2027 through the National Strategy for Volunteering website: volunteeringstrategy.org.au

Getting Involved with Action Plan 2024 – 2027

Want to know how you can take action to support volunteering? **Action Plan 2024 – 2027 is a great place to start**. It has 22 actions and lots of ways for volunteers, groups and communities to get involved. Look for the **Supporting action** column and **Volunteering ecosystem** actions for suggestions on what you can do.

Here's a step-by-step guide to help you use the Action Plan:

1. Read through the actions of Action Plan 2024 – 2027
2. Think about your current needs and future goals. Make a note of the actions that could help you with them
3. Look at the **Supporting actions** and **Volunteering ecosystem** actions for suggested ways to get started
4. Pick which actions you would like to focus on
For actions led by a peak body, government department or agency, or another organisation, check that group's website or the National Strategy for Volunteering website for updates
5. Briefly write draft plans for actions you want to take and what this could look like for your group, community or team
6. Develop these plans further with members of your team or community. Depending on the action you are taking, you may want to contact the **Lead stakeholders** and ask for guidance
7. Take action and get involved!

Tips

- Each action helps achieve one or more Strategic Objective. If you have looked at which Strategic Objectives are the most relevant to you, check which actions have these Strategic Objectives listed and use these as a starting point
- Action Plans run for three years and some actions may be delivered before others. You may need to check if the action you want to support is ready for you to join in. If you are unsure, contact the National Strategy for Volunteering team using the website
- At the end of the Action Plan 2024 – 2027 document, there is a list of other actions that were proposed during the co-design process. These are all ideas for actions that would help achieve the National Strategy for Volunteering. Read through the proposed actions and feel free to use any that suit your needs!

Using the National Strategy to Talk About Impact

Volunteering affects all of us and its positive impact can be seen across the nation. You can use the National Strategy for Volunteering to help you talk about the impact of volunteering in your communities. This is very useful for:

- **Motivating current volunteers** by letting them know the difference they made in other people's lives
- **Connecting with new people** who would like to volunteer, letting them know more about your mission and impact
- **Raising awareness** of volunteering and its benefits
- **Applying for funding** and resources, giving examples of the work you do and how you could do more

Not sure how to get started? Here are some steps you can take:

1. Think about the volunteering that you or others in your team do and how it helps people. You may want to think about this alone or talk about it with a group of people. It can help to ask questions like:

Does the volunteering help people, animals, the environment, or something else?

Does the volunteering help everyone, or does it focus on a specific group?

Can you describe what your volunteering achieves in one sentence?

What does a really good day of volunteering look like?

Is there a moment you are most proud of?

What could happen if the volunteering stopped?

What do you do to make sure you or others have a good experience while volunteering?

Has volunteering changed your life, or the lives of others who volunteer?

2. Look through the eleven Strategic Objectives of the National Strategy for Volunteering and their outcomes
3. For each Strategic Objective, think about if you or volunteers in your community help achieve that Strategic Objective and its outcome
Are there any stories or statistics that could help you talk about it?
4. If you are applying for funding or support, go back through the Strategic Objectives and think about what you could do if you had more resources or a larger team
5. Using all this information, write down how you or others in your community are helping to achieve the National Strategy for Volunteering
You may want to write it two ways: a short version for regular updates or sharing over the internet, and a long version for reports, formal letters or grant applications

Now that you have a way to describe the positive impact of volunteering, you can use it to celebrate volunteering and recognise its value. You can do this through a **newsletter**, **social media**, an **event**, **awards**, funding **applications**, or through **meetings** with politicians, governments or community leaders.

Tips

- Throughout the year, there are special days and events that celebrate volunteering. Think about what you can do to get involved! These include National Volunteer Week (*in May*), International Volunteer Day (*5 December*) and International Volunteer Managers Day (*5 November*). There may be events in your local area and other important dates for the type of volunteering that happens in your community
- The National Strategy for Volunteering is full of research about volunteering, recent trends and its impact. Some of these can help you talk about volunteering
- If you want more information on how to talk about the impact of volunteering, you may want to reach out to volunteering peak bodies, education groups (such as colleges, universities or TAFE), or an organisation that has done something similar
- Peak bodies, government departments and politicians may be able to help you find out about grants that are available in your area

Other Ways to Get Involved

There are so many ways to be part of the National Strategy for Volunteering – and you might find something new that hasn't been done before!

Here are some more tips on how to join in and help make volunteering the heart of Australian communities:

- There is a national network of groups who support the National Strategy for Volunteering called the **Coalition of Support**. You are welcome to join and pledge your support. You can find more information and register through the National Strategy for Volunteering website: volunteeringstrategy.org.au
- Check if there are **local, state or territory volunteering strategies** in your area. If there is, it will likely be focused on the needs of your region
- You can **find other networks of volunteers** by contacting your volunteering peak body, local volunteering support service or local government
- **Reach out to other communities** to create new networks and share information. For example, if you practice a faith, is there a similar group who share your faith in a

different area? Or a nearby group with a different mission that you could form new bonds with?

- Use important dates and milestones to **share your culture** and the way you volunteer with people outside of your network. Sharing stories, skills and experiences makes volunteering links stronger between communities
- **Invite people to join you** in your volunteering, such as friends, co-workers or family members
- You might notice an organisation or community that shares your values, does good work or volunteers in a way that you think is helpful. **Reach out for a chat** and see if there are any opportunities to learn or work together

A Better Future for Volunteering

This guide has shown you how the National Strategy for Volunteering can help you and your community.

No matter how you give your time to help others, or what you like to call it, it is something that touches all of our lives and brings us together. The National Strategy for Volunteering lays out a shared Vision for a better future for volunteering.

Together, we can create a better future for our communities and for volunteering.

A future where more people volunteer more often. Where volunteers feel respected and know their contribution makes a difference. Where volunteering is valued and properly considered in policy settings, service design, and strategic investment. Where diversity in volunteering is recognised, celebrated and supported. Where people individually and collectively realise their potential for creating thriving communities.

Where **volunteering is the heart of Australian communities.**