

TERRITORY FAMILIES, HOUSING & COMMUNITIES

Northern Territory Sport Volunteer Action Plan

2023-2025



Executive summary

The Northern Territory Sport Volunteer Action Plan 2023-2025 (the Plan) highlights volunteering’s vital role in the sport participation environment.

Every day, people across the Northern Territory (the Territory) volunteer in important roles that deliver sport* participation opportunities in their communities, towns and regional areas. Volunteers provide the vital workforce driving sport organisations.

The Plan outlines how the Northern Territory (NT) Government will support sport organisations ongoing positive recognition, education, training and other forms of assistance, proven to improve volunteer recruitment and retention and contribute to making sport more sustainable.

In recognition of the importance of sport volunteers, the Plan will focus on supporting key stakeholders through three key volunteer workforce-related areas:

- **promotion** of volunteering benefits, achievements and resources
- **support** the design and delivery of volunteer resources and initiatives
- **grants** to fund volunteer activities.



* In the context of the Plan, the term 'sport' is inclusive of active recreation and 'sport organisations' refers to deliverers/providers of sport and active recreation, including peak bodies, associations, clubs, regional councils and Aboriginal corporations.

What is volunteering?

Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain¹. Volunteers may receive a payment that is made in the course or furthermore of an activity done as a private recreational pursuit or hobby².

Why is volunteering in sport important?

The power of sport to produce positive economic, health and social outcomes is well understood. Sport is commonly recognised as a key part of the Australian identity and could not have become firmly embedded without the support of volunteers³.

Without volunteers, Australian sport would struggle to exist. Volunteers are the backbone of local sporting organisations, freely contributing their time, knowledge and efforts for the benefit of participants and the local community through a myriad of roles every week across the country⁴.

Without volunteers, the cost of participating in sport would increase significantly and detrimentally impact levels of participation and subsequently the wellbeing of millions of Australians.



\$4 billion

Estimated value sport volunteers provide to the Australian economy per year

Who volunteers in sport?

Around 12 million Australians participate in some form of sport-related activity every year, with most participation occurring through clubs, associations or venues managed and run by volunteers. Sport participation is more than playing, with many taking on essential non-paying jobs or roles such as administrators, coaches, officials and other non-playing roles⁵.

An estimated 3.1 million Australians each year over the age of 15 take up non-playing roles in sport, with 2.9 million of these participants considering themselves volunteers⁵.

The most common non-playing sport volunteer roles in Australia are⁵:

1. coach, instructor, trainer or teacher
2. official
3. other key support personnel including:
 - » administration or committee member
 - » team manager or coordinator
 - » general/miscellaneous
 - » medical support or health and safety.

Regardless of the actual role a volunteer undertakes, the Plan will target three specific volunteering categories.

- 1. Casual volunteer** – those who undertake informal roles assisting with one-off duties and tasks.
- 2. Committed volunteer** – those who undertake more formal roles on a regular basis.
- 3. Progressive volunteer** – the committed volunteer who is seeking further development and/or leadership opportunities.

Who is volunteering in sport?

The most common non-playing roles in sport are coach and officials, followed by administrators and team managers.

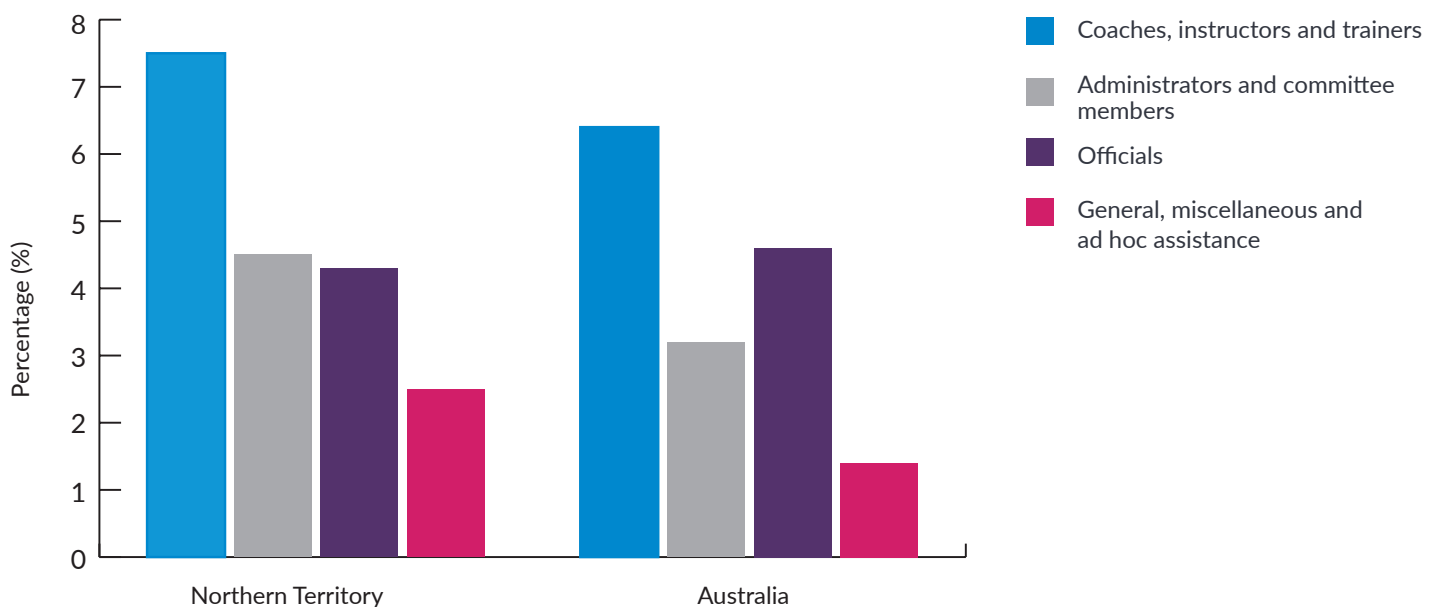
Coaches and officials are more likely to be men, while team managers are more often women.

Our youngest coaches and officials (aged 15-17) are more likely to be paid than older volunteers.

Number of people who participate in sport in Australia, 2022		
	Adults (15+)	Children 0-14 (organised out-of-school only)
Participate in any organised sport	8.5 million	3.4 million
Participate in any sport-related activity	12.9 million	Not measured
Participate in any sport or non-sport-related physical activity	18.8 million	3.5 million

Number of people involved in sport through non-playing roles in Australia, 2022	
	Adults (15+)
Volunteer in sport	2.9 million
Take on a non-playing role in sport	3.1 million
Take on a non-playing role in any sport or non-sport related physical activity	3.3 million

Sport volunteer participation per capita in the Northern Territory and Australia, 2022



A snapshot of sport volunteering in Australia

Of the Australian population aged 15 years and over, 14.3% participated in unpaid sport volunteer work during 2022.

The three main reasons provided for volunteering in sport was:

1. to help others in the community (53% of volunteers)
2. personal satisfaction (46%)
3. personal or family involvement (46%)⁶.

In 2020, 25% of Australians aged 15 years and over participated in unpaid voluntary work through an organisation. The most common types of organisations for which people volunteered were those relating to sport and active recreation (31%), religious groups (23%) and education and training (18%)⁶.

Nationally⁵:

- there are an estimated 4.1 million sport volunteer roles
- 3.3 million Australians aged 15 years and older are sport volunteers
- there are four broad types of volunteers: players or ex-players, family members of players, self-improvers, and the community minded

- the top three sport volunteering roles are coaching (including instructors, etc.), officiating (referees, umpires, etc.) and administrators (e.g. committee members)
- volunteering is higher in outer regional/remote areas than inner regional areas and major cities
- volunteering is most popular between the ages of 15 and 54 years of age, with a higher representation of men (55%) than women (45%)
- coaching rates increase with age from 15 years (49%) to 34 years (58%) while officiating rates decline from age 15 (57%) to 34 (32%). Administrators increase steadily from 15 years (4%) to 34 years (16%) to 55 year and older (36%)
- volunteer involvement is related to the popularity of sports participation, with the top three volunteering sports being football (soccer), Australian football and basketball for men, and netball, football (soccer) and basketball for women.



The need for a Northern Territory Sport Volunteer Action Plan

Celebrating the contribution volunteers bring to sport, while attracting more volunteers, and better supporting those already involved is important to ensure sport remains vibrant.

The world is constantly changing and the sport sector continues to be impacted by family and work commitments, the competition that technology presents for an individual's free time, and a desire for flexible access to sport experiences⁷. However, change brings opportunities to transform the traditional methods of identifying, recruiting, training and retaining volunteers.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that 88% of Australian volunteers are already in paid employment for 42 to 48 hours a week⁸. It is critically important therefore, that organisations who rely on volunteers create positive cultures and nurture their ongoing involvement. If sport organisations expect to grow and sustain their volunteer workforce, they need to invest in and establish strategies that foster and maintain supportive volunteering environments.

Key issues impacting sport volunteering in the Territory

Key issues impacting the delivery of sport, identified by Territory stakeholders during sector consultation from 2021-2023⁷, include:

- the number of volunteering roles and responsibilities required across sport
- individuals having multiple volunteer commitments
- regular volunteer turnover
- knowledge of and access to subject matter detail, and the regulation and compliance required to perform volunteer roles
- limited or no organisational strategies, initiatives or resources targeting volunteer recruitment and retention
- the limited capacity of sport to deliver Territory-wide volunteer training and development support.

The impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

It has been widely reported nationally that COVID-19 affected volunteering involvement in sport, primarily due to mandated lock down periods. It was predominantly south-east Australia that was impacted. Fortunately, the Territory experienced only minimal setbacks, mainly with delayed competition start dates, localised community activities and some intra-Territory and interstate competition cancellations. With the required protocols and systems to manage sport through COVID-19 outbreaks now established, any future implementation of these measures should be less burdensome on volunteers.

The Northern Territory Sport Volunteer Action Plan 2023-2025

This Plan outlines how the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department), through the Sport, Recreation and Strategic Infrastructure (SRSI) team, including Community Sport Officers, will work with sport organisations to improve volunteering support. Specifically, SRSI will support stakeholders to work effectively and collaboratively to improve recruitment, development, recognition and retention of sport volunteers.

While the Plan focusses on developing and supporting the volunteer sport workforce, it's initiatives contribute to the Northern Territory Sport and Active Recreation Strategic Plan 2021-2025 goals of:



Active Participation – Territorians participate regularly in sport and active recreation to improve their health and wellbeing



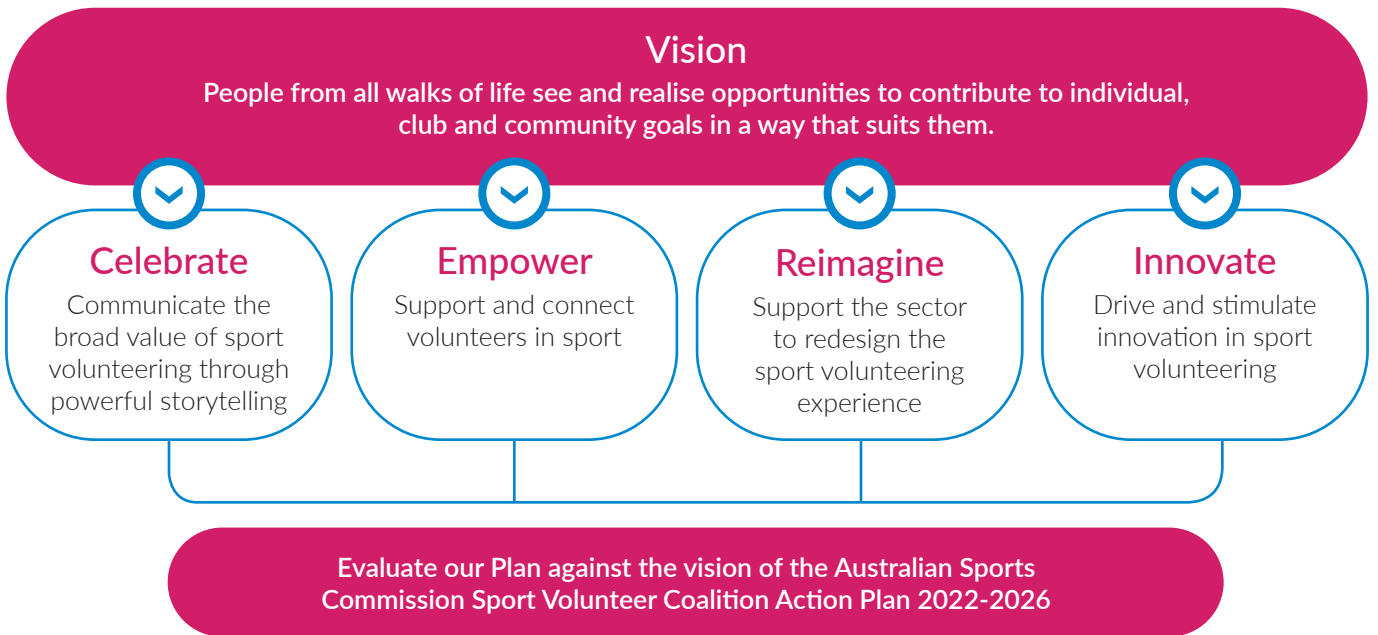
Achievements – across sport and active recreation are celebrated and inspire the community



Partnerships – are agile, responsible and focused on optimising the collective impact of Territorians participating regularly in sport and active recreation.



The Plan also champions the Australian Sports Commission Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan 2022-2026³ that seeks to celebrate, empower, reimagine and innovate sport volunteering in Australia.



The Plan is informed by published research and contemporary best practice examples of developing and supporting the sport volunteer workforce from grassroots through to elite levels. Sector-wide consultation involving peak sporting bodies, active recreation organisations, local government, community and regional councils, as well as regional workshops across Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs informed the content⁷.

The Plan is designed to support all non-playing volunteer roles a sport organisation requires, with a specific focus on strategies that influence the key areas of coaching, officiating, and administration and governance. Within these roles, strategies will be tailored according to whether the person is involved as a casual, committed and/or progressive volunteer.

A key focus will be supporting Territory sport organisations' capabilities to identify, develop and implement better systems and processes that improve recruitment, development, recognition and retention of their volunteer workforce.

The Plan will support stakeholders through three specific volunteer workforce-related areas:



Promotion of volunteering benefits, achievements and resources



Support the design and delivery of volunteer resources and initiatives



Grants to fund volunteer activities.

To be effective, the Plan will require a commitment from sport organisations to best practice volunteer management and development.

Success measures

The Plan sets out deliverables and success indicators for each workforce-related focus area that will be monitored and reported on each year.

Execution of the Plan will also directly contribute to outcomes under the Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework (the Framework), which monitors improvements in the wellbeing of Territorians through increased connection to community and involvement in community events. Specific measures from the Framework that link to the Plan include:

- proportion of people volunteering
- proportion of people who belong to an organised group
- percentage of adults who reported participating in an organised community activity in the last 12 months.

In addition, the Territory will contribute to the Australian Sports Commission Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan 2022-2026 by supporting the sharing of national data on sport volunteering through the national AusPlay survey and identify and contribute to new research priorities for the National Sport Research Agenda.

Volunteer workforce promotion

Promotion of volunteering benefits, achievements and resources.

DELIVERABLES		
Initiatives	Actions	Success Indicators
Engagement with sport and active recreation organisations on advocacy and promotional campaigns.	Collect information and stories from sport and active recreation organisations and develop a promotional campaign that highlights the value of sport volunteering to the Territory	Annual marketing and media campaign conducted and evaluated.
Identify and share best practice examples of volunteer recruitment, development, recognition and retention.	Contribute to and share national program information regarding best practice examples of volunteer recruitment, development, recognition and retention. Work together to map volunteer recruitment, development, recognition and retention.	PSBs and regional councils have volunteer, recruitment, development, recognition and retention strategies.
Share local and national stories about positive volunteer practice, achievements and experiences in sport.	Establish the NT Sport Volunteer Ambassadors Program (SVAP) that will identify and capture uplifting individual and organisation focussed sport volunteering stories to share through online channels. Ambassadors will be invited to support mentoring initiatives in their volunteer skill areas.	The NT SVAP is established. The number of Ambassadors engaged in mentoring initiatives.
Territory wide volunteer recognition plan including events, forums, media content and organisation best practice volunteer endorsement.	Explore ways to deliver volunteer recognition opportunities in the town centres outside of Greater Darwin. Continue to recognise volunteers at the annual NT Sports Awards.	Territory wide nominations to recognise volunteers at the annual NT Sports Awards.
Ongoing links and work with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) on volunteering initiatives.	Support and share the ASC's formal recognition program that enables sport volunteers to showcase their skills when applying for scholarships, apprenticeships and other employment opportunities.	Territory nominations for the ASC's formal recognition program, including the annual Australian Sport Performance Awards run by the Australian Institute of Sport.

Volunteer workforce support

Design and delivery of volunteer resources and initiatives.

DELIVERABLES		
Initiatives	Actions	Success Indicators
Establish processes to assist with identifying gaps and requirements for developing specific volunteer workforce plans.	Collaborate with PSBs, active recreation organisations and regional stakeholders to establish a process to commence workforce profiling, needs forecasting and gap analysis.	PSBs are able to identify gaps and requirements for the development of volunteer workforce plans.
Resources are readily available, accessible and tailored to the needs of volunteers.	Conduct an environmental scan of sports volunteer development resources to develop an online 'one stop shop' to easily access best practice resources.	Online access to best practice volunteer resources.
Present accessible learning and development programs suitable to the Territory volunteer workforce.	Develop a suite of learning and development workshop modules suitable for Territory based non-playing sport volunteer roles accessible.	SRSI suite of supplementary learning and development programs for Territory non-playing sport volunteer personnel.
Engage with the relevant sectors in order to engage with youth to encourage volunteering and participation pathways within sport.	Meet with sports, youth groups, and the secondary and tertiary education sector to identify programs to encourage youth engagement in sport volunteer roles.	Increase in youth engaged in sport volunteer roles by sports. Links with existing youth development programs.
Establish networks across the Territory that consider local volunteer needs, recognition and support.	Develop peer support networks for sport volunteer roles, and work with local government to establish similar networks for funded regional stakeholders.	Peer support networks for sport volunteers established.



Volunteer workforce grants

Grant funding for volunteer activities.

DELIVERABLES		
Initiatives	Actions	Success Indicators
Grant funding is available to establish best practice volunteer recruitment, development, recognition and retention initiatives/strategies.	Review existing volunteer development grant programs and, in consultation with stakeholders, implement any proposed changes to ensure funding is available to support best practice volunteer recruitment, development, recognition and retention.	The recruitment and retention rate of volunteer participants in sports who participate in the Plan's programs.
Implementation and support of pathways and performance areas that involve coaches and officials.	Manage an annual PSB Volunteer Grant Program with identified PSBs to optimise development of coaches and officials.	The PSB Volunteer Grant Program with PSBs is delivered and monitored.
Ensure whole of Territory investment to support volunteers is considered, captured and reported.	Review existing regional and remote funding and, in consultation with stakeholders, implement any proposed changes that ensure funding is available to support volunteer education, training and recognition support initiatives for their communities.	Grant funding is available to establish best practice volunteer development initiatives in regional and remote areas.

References

1. Volunteering Australia Project: The Review of the Definition of Volunteering (July 2015).
2. Australian Taxation Office, Statement by Supplier, 30 June 2017.
3. Australian Sports Commission Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan 2022-2026.
4. The Future of Sport Volunteering, April 2021, Australian Sports Commission.
5. Volunteers in Non-Playing Roles, AusPlay April 2023, Australian Sports Commission.
6. General Social Survey, June 2021, Australian Bureau of Statistics.
7. SRSI Sector Consultation Meetings 2021-2023.
8. Sport and Physical Recreation: A Statistical Overview (2012), Australian Bureau of Statistics.

