



# OXFAM AUSTRALIA NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY 2023-2028

Advancing Inclusion, Community and  
Innovation in Volunteer Engagement



**OXFAM**  
Australia

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Cover image: Sydney, Australia: Oxfam volunteer Lan with the Trailwalker medals at the 2022 Sydney Trailwalker event finishing line. Image: Patrick Moran/Oxfam Australia.

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About Oxfam:

At Oxfam Australia, we believe all lives are equal and no-one should live in poverty. Together we challenge the systems that lead to inequality, while providing aid where it's needed most. With you, our partners and communities, we are changing the world for the better everyday to relieve and eliminate poverty.

The future is equal.



## Foreword

I am pleased to present the 2023–2028 Oxfam Australia National Volunteer Strategy. This vision is the outcome of many months of work by members of the Volunteer Engagement Program Team (VEPT) and Oxfam Australia’s wider volunteer and paid workforce. As an organisation, we are pleased to present a strategy which at its heart is collaborative, ambitious and challenges the norms of volunteer engagement. Oxfam Australia operates a substantial, unique and diverse volunteer program and so it is essential to develop a resource which adequately responds to the bespoke needs of our agency and the evolving nature of the volunteer-involving sector. We believe this strategy places us in a good position to ensure volunteers and those who support them can thrive in their roles.

I wish to thank all members of Oxfam Australia’s workforce (volunteers and staff) who participated and supported the VEPT in developing this strategy. Your ideas, insights and feedback have been invaluable and enabled us to achieve our core objective of ensuring this strategy encompasses the ideas and reflections of all. I am also appreciative of each volunteer at Oxfam Australia. Your dedication to the organisation inspires us to do and be better, helps us collectively achieve our objectives, and contributes to helping Oxfam realise our mission of a just and sustainable world without the inequalities that keep people in poverty. The time and effort that volunteers generously contribute to Oxfam Australia mean we can be the impactful, substantial movement that we are today, and so we thank you for everything you do.

This strategy is dedicated to each volunteer, intern and secondee who has dedicated their time to Oxfam over our 70-year history. Many people have worked hard on this strategy and as a result, we are in a sound position to ensure volunteers can contribute to our organisation and mission in ways that embrace equity and reflect our community well into the future.

Jordan Steiner – Volunteer Engagement Lead – Oxfam Australia

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## GLOSSARY

Better Impact – Oxfam Australia’s volunteer management system

Formal volunteering – voluntary activities typically conducted through an organisation

Informal volunteering – voluntary activities typically conducted outside of an organisation setting

Micro volunteering – volunteers who contribute their time completing small, general tasks at a time and location of their choosing

OAU – Oxfam Australia

Oxglam – Oxfam Australia’s LGBTQIA+ and Allies Workforce Group

SDGs – United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

VEP – Volunteer Engagement Program

VEPT – Volunteer Engagement Program Team

VIO – Volunteer-involving organisation

Voices – Oxfam Australia’s supporter newsletter



## Executive Summary

The Volunteer Engagement Program Team is pleased to present the Oxfam Australia National Volunteer Strategy 2023–2028, the fourth volunteering vision developed by our organisation. This iteration aims to serve as the primary resource which outlines our aspirations for volunteer engagement over the next five years. This strategy builds on the work of Oxfam Australia’s previous strategies (2001, 2008 and 2014), which promoted the agency’s longstanding and active history with volunteerism. Importantly, it also outlines how Oxfam Australia will engage with volunteerism meaningfully and purposefully in the future. This strategy comes at a pivotal time, as many volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) continue to require an unprecedented ask for volunteers, whilst at the same time reckoning with a decline of nearly two million formal volunteers across the country since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. <sup>1</sup>

This strategy has been developed consultatively to include the input of as many voices as possible. We gathered feedback from volunteers and Oxfam Australia’s paid workforce who engage (or have previously engaged) with the Volunteer Engagement Program through two surveys conducted in 2022. We received a combined total 40 responses from both surveys and then built on the ideas developed and strengthened key messages through our strategy visioning workshops, which were held in February 2023 in Melbourne and online.

We wanted this strategy to be informed by evidence. To ensure we achieved this, we completed a review of current trends in the volunteer-involving sector. We consulted nearly 20 resources which were fundamental to assisting us in affirming data and messages gathered in our internal data as well as aiding us in developing a well-rounded and in-depth understanding of community trends.

This strategy demonstrates volunteers will continue to assist Oxfam Australia in achieving our operational and strategic objectives and contribute tangibly to helping Oxfam realise a world without the inequalities that keep people in poverty. It emphasises that we must continue to embrace inclusion as a core principle, to ensure all people are empowered to join and work alongside us to achieve our objectives. Volunteerism is a fundamental means of ensuring the community is connected to our organisation and work, so we must consider the public when engaging with volunteer initiatives to encourage wide-ranging engagement in Oxfam Australia’s work. Finally, we determine flexibility and innovation must be present in volunteer activities so we can ensure our program accounts for current and future trends in the sector and community as it relates to innovative ways of working.

We outline this vision to promote Oxfam Australia as an inclusive, innovative and adaptable organisation. We aim to foster a place of welcoming where people can bring their best and authentic selves to contribute their time, and we aim to enable an environment where people can dedicate their time in a way that is flexible and convenient.

# OUR VISION FOR VOLUNTEERING AT OXFAM AUSTRALIA

1. We seek to enable our program to foster inclusivity at its heart, to equitably provide opportunities for all people in the Australian community to contribute to our mission.
2. We want volunteers to connect with our mission, work and people. We aspire for our National Volunteer Program to be an effective and purposeful conduit between the agency and the public to enable meaningful engagement and collaboration.
3. We seek to embrace innovation and flexibility as core operating principles to respond to the changing conditions present in society and the volunteer-involving sector.



## Volunteer Engagement at Oxfam Australia

Volunteers have been an important part of our identity and history for 70 years. From our beginnings as an entirely volunteer-led organisation in our capacity as Food for Peace Campaign, then Community Aid Abroad, to the present day as Oxfam Australia, volunteers have enabled us to enhance the capacity of the organisation to make a tangible and long-lasting impact. We have done this alongside our partners, supporters, and the community to challenge inequality and injustice, and alleviate poverty through long-term development, and in times of humanitarian emergency around the world. We estimate that between January 2013 and May 2023 at least 520,000 formal volunteer hours have been contributed through our office, events, community and Oxfam Australia Trading volunteer programs, with a total estimated financial value of AUD \$18.1 million.



**Volunteers have contributed to Oxfam Australia and our mission for 70 years**



**And in the last decade, contributed at least 520,000 volunteer hours**



**The estimated financial value of volunteering during this period is AUD \$18.1m**

The engagement of volunteers is championed and facilitated by a dedicated Volunteer Engagement Program Team, which is responsible for managing Oxfam Australia's national program. The Volunteer Engagement Program is responsible for the delivery of the following key functions:

1. Setting the strategic direction for the agency concerning volunteer, intern and secondee engagement across Australia.
2. Facilitating effective volunteer opportunities across the agency.
3. Leading agency engagement with the volunteer-involving sector, peak bodies, and external stakeholders in matters relating to volunteer engagement.
4. Providing high-level strategic advice to the organisation and relevant stakeholders as it relates to the engagement of volunteers through the provision of tools, resources, training, and support.
5. Responsibility for the development of impact measurement tools and resources which demonstrate the significant contributions volunteers make to Oxfam Australia.

The Volunteer Engagement Program contributes to enabling meaningful and positive engagement between the public and our work through well-defined and impactful volunteering opportunities.

## The current state of Oxfam Australia's Volunteer Engagement Program

Oxfam Australia operates a substantial national volunteer and internship program with volunteers and interns were based in six states and territories across Australia in 2023. Volunteers complete a wide range of tasks across our organisation, with roles categorised into one of three streams:

### OFFICE VOLUNTEERS



Oxfam Australia engages 30 – 40 volunteers, interns, and secondees who complete ongoing work with different functions. Volunteers assist with research, administration, project management and legal support. Office volunteers are engaged on a flexible basis, either in an ongoing role, or as part of the Micro Volunteering Program.

### EVENT VOLUNTEERS



Oxfam Australia engages event volunteers to support large-scale events throughout the year, such as Oxfam Trailwalker which is held across Australia, and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival Gala. Oxfam Australia typically engages about 600–700 volunteers on an annual basis to support the delivery of these events.

### COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS



The agency engages with several community groups external to the organisation who generously support Oxfam Australia and our work. Groups engage volunteers to support their operations, such as Adelaide Charity Books, which engages 130 volunteers as well as the Western Australia Fair Trade Shop in Perth, who engage 15 volunteers.

The program is also responsible for overseeing the agency's partnership with CareerTrackers, a for-purpose organisation which supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary students undertake multi-year paid internship placements. Oxfam Australia has supported over 15 placements across the agency since 2017.

The organisation's volunteer program has seen a stable level of growth since 2021. In 2022, the office and virtual volunteer stream of the program developed 51 new volunteer, internship and secondee positions.

The program was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a reduction of one-third of office volunteer roles, a suspension of Oxfam Trailwalker events for two years, and a significant impact on in-person volunteering operations. During this time, the program embraced innovation with the introduction of online and flexible volunteering for many volunteer roles. This initiative enabled the agency to reach a wider demographic of the public, including people who may reside in rural areas, those who may work full-time, or people who may experience barriers to accessing formal volunteer opportunities.



## Sector trends and research

In the following section, an analysis of current trends in volunteer-involving organisations will be presented as well as an analysis of responses from Oxfam Australia's internal stakeholders as part of the strategy development consultation process.

### The decline in volunteer participation across Australia

Many VIOs began experiencing a decline in volunteer numbers before 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this. Between 2018 and 2019, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission reported 200,000 fewer people were volunteering at charities in Australia. The number of people volunteering in Australia decreased further, by nearly 1.9 million people up to April 2022. <sup>2, 3</sup>

The sector experienced difficulties with attracting new volunteers to roles as we progressed into the third year of the pandemic. In a 2022 Volunteering Australia survey, 83% of respondents (VIOs) indicated there remains a need for more volunteers in the immediate future. <sup>4</sup> Many organisations have had to innovate and adapt to an ever-changing environment, whilst responding to an increased demand in service delivery and contending with ongoing financial challenges. <sup>5</sup>

There are also several societal factors which are influencing volunteer participation across the nation. The cost-of-living crisis, the ever-changing nature of how (and where) people work, and a decline in the number of people having disposable time to volunteer, are more recent trends which will have an impact on volunteerism in Australia. SEEK Volunteer reports volunteer applications have been trending downward by 25% year-on-year (and at the time of reporting, were the lowest in four years). <sup>6, 7</sup>

### THE DECLINE OF FORMAL VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA

**200,000**

Fewer people volunteering at charities in the two years before the pandemic

**1.9 MILLION**

Fewer Australians volunteering formally up to April 2022

**83%**

Of charities indicated they required more volunteers immediately in a 2022 survey

**25%**

Fewer applications for volunteer roles year-on-year

## Flexible, sporadic, and informal volunteering

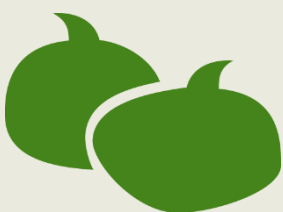
The pandemic impacted how people contribute their time through volunteering, which has contributed to VIOs embracing greater flexibility. The *2020 State of Volunteering Victoria Report* highlighted that of organisations surveyed, 62.5% of their volunteers indicated they would prefer a flexible volunteering arrangement.<sup>8</sup> The way the Australian public engages in paid work has also changed since the beginning of the pandemic, with many organisations (including Oxfam Australia) pivoting to embracing a more flexible way of working.<sup>9</sup> The above trends may result in a larger number of people in the community, particularly people who have struggled engaging with volunteer opportunities in the past, engaging with VIOs on a more regular basis.

**‘62.5% of volunteers indicated they would prefer a flexible volunteering arrangement’ – Volunteering Victoria**

There has been a change in the way Australians contribute their time in an informal or ad hoc capacity. Informal volunteering has always been present in the community but increased at the beginning of the pandemic.<sup>10</sup> Volunteering Australia highlighted the most common forms of informal volunteering support provided in recent years include providing emotional support, providing transport, and supporting people with home maintenance.<sup>11</sup> Spontaneous volunteering (i.e., contributions completed on an ad hoc basis) have also become a prevalent way for people in the community to volunteer, particularly following a major disaster event or as part of disaster resilience work. Recent events such as the 2020 Black Summer Bushfires, as well as recent flooding events in Northern New South Wales, Southeast Queensland and Victoria demonstrate the significant scale in which volunteers contribute to responding to disasters and assist with re-building communities across the nation.<sup>12, 13, 14</sup>

Informal and spontaneous volunteering is welcomed and encouraged as a means for people to contribute to the community on a more (often) localised level, but it is difficult for peak volunteering bodies to track accurate data or demonstrate impact as contributions are often recorded on a limited basis. As a result of the rise in informal volunteering, there has been a perception that volunteering formally through an organisation may result in increased requirements to complete significant compliance tasks, which may be why formal volunteering has struggled to return to pre-pandemic levels.<sup>15</sup>

## INFORMAL VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRALIA



Volunteers have said they want more flexibility in their roles



Contributions on the rise (particularly in times of disaster)



Difficult to track time and impact contributions

## Volunteering can contribute to Australia's social and economic recovery

Recent years have demonstrated volunteering is an essential activity which can contribute to the enhancement of communities and the economy. As Australia continues to recover from the ongoing effects of the pandemic, the effective engagement of volunteers can be a major contributor to future growth and recovery of the nation.

Many communities experienced a decline in human interaction due to the pandemic, and this contributed to people engaging with volunteering to connect with others at a time of increased isolation. Social connection was identified as a top motivation for volunteering in both the State of Volunteering Victoria Report, (34.7% of respondents) as well as the State of Volunteering Queensland Report (34%).<sup>16, 17</sup> A Volunteering Tasmania study indicated 76% of volunteers contributed their time within 50 kilometres of their home, and the desire to connect with communities was enhanced during the pandemic.<sup>18</sup> Volunteering has also been identified as an opportunity for people in communities where they may struggle to connect with others (as is the case for many recently arrived migrants), to increase community connections and prevent social isolation.<sup>19</sup>

There also is a correlation between the benefits of volunteering and economic development. A 2015 Volunteering Western Australia study found for every dollar invested into volunteering, AUD \$4.50 were returned to the community.<sup>20</sup> The linkages between volunteering and economic growth were present before the pandemic. In 2019, the value of volunteering (both financial and non-financial sector value) was estimated to be AUD \$58.1 billion in Victoria, with the value of voluntary hours estimated to be worth AUD \$19.4 billion of that figure.<sup>21</sup> Volunteering Queensland similarly estimated the value of voluntary contributions in 2020 across the state at approximately AUD \$84 billion.<sup>22</sup> Volunteering can contribute to less visible benefits as it relates to economic growth in the future.

### APPROXIMATE 2019 AUD VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING IN:

**VICTORIA = \$58.1 BILLION**

**QUEENSLAND = \$84 BILLION**

The abovementioned Volunteering Western Australia study emphasises this in further detail in that:

- The expenditure associated with volunteering enabled an estimated 26,000 full and part-time paid positions (resulting in an estimated tax benefit of AUD \$410 million in Western Australia)
- The value of resources which support volunteering (in 2014) was estimated to be worth AUD \$1.9 billion in Western Australia
- The economic value of the net productivity premium in 2014 was estimated to be AUD \$9.4 billion surplus for workplaces whose employees engaged in a volunteering role
- The estimated value of civic benefits generated because of volunteering which in 2014 was estimated to be worth AUD \$19.9 billion in Western Australia<sup>23</sup>

## What may define Volunteer Engagement in the future?

It is anticipated there will continue to be a significant demand for volunteer engagement at Oxfam Australia in the future.

The ability for organisations to embrace flexibility as a core feature of engaging volunteers will be fundamental in a world where people generally have less time and capacity to dedicate their effort to a cause of their choice. We anticipate initiatives such as our Micro Volunteering Program, which involves volunteers dedicating their time to smaller, ad hoc tasks will become a more attractive and mainstream form of volunteer engagement. Oxfam Australia developed our Micro Volunteering Pilot in 2022, becoming one of the first VIOs in Australia to incorporate micro volunteering as a formalised part of a volunteer program.

We finally envisage volunteers will want to engage with a program whereby they can tangibly recognise a deeper understanding of the impact they are making to our organisation and the world. We have seen an increased demand for the need to demonstrate financial and non-financial forms of impact measurement reporting in the last few years as well as an uptick in prospective volunteers engaging with our organisation due to a strong alignment of personal values.



VIOs need to become more flexible in program delivery



Micro Volunteering will become more prominent



VIOs need to clearly demonstrate volunteer impact



Melbourne, Australia: Social Engagement Volunteer, Michele (right), and Ngapa Activation and Engagement Volunteer, Anoushka (left). Image Aimee Han/Oxfam.



## Research from Oxfam Australia

As part of the development of this strategy, internal engagement was conducted with the workforce to ensure this strategy is inclusive of voices within the organisation. The following trends were identified as part of this process. These were gathered through informal consultation, surveys, and workshops over three months in late 2022 and early 2023.

Volunteers overall indicated they were satisfied in their roles. Of those surveyed, every volunteer recorded a positive response to the following question:

*'How would you generally rate your experience as a volunteer at Oxfam?'*

Volunteers said they wanted to contribute their time as they 'believed in our mission and wanted to contribute to eliminating barriers that keep people in poverty', (33%), 'wanted to upskill', (29%), or 'join an organisation with aligned values', (25%). Volunteers were also asked if they were interested in a particular focus of OAU's strategic work; responses were evenly split across the organisation's four pillars (First Peoples, Climate, Gender, and Economic Justice), however, volunteers indicated that they were slightly more likely to have an interest in Oxfam's global humanitarian work.

Members of Oxfam Australia's paid workforce who completed the December 2022 Stakeholder Survey believed volunteers make a positive impact to Oxfam Australia and our mission. Just over two-thirds of respondents were staff who either currently engage or have previously engaged a volunteer within the previous five years. Staff indicated their primary motivation to engage a volunteer was:

- To enhance team capacity (33%)
- To assist with completing a bespoke piece of work (19%)
- To provide an opportunity for someone to upskill (15%)

When asked the same question, but of the benefits of engaging volunteers at an organisation-wide level, answers were consistent, with staff indicating that:

- (Volunteers) enhance our organisational capacity (26%)
- Assist with completing a bespoke piece of work (19%)
- Assist us with achieving our strategic objectives (18%)

Oxfam Australia's paid workforce indicated the greatest area of improvement for our Volunteer Engagement Program would be to enhance recognition initiatives and make ongoing improvements to the recruitment and onboarding process. It should be noted that 70% of respondents believed Oxfam Australia recognises volunteer contributions either 'really well' or 'well' and staff rated the quality of the organisation's recruitment and onboarding process on average as 8.7/10. The same cohort rated the quality of services provided by the VEPT as 9.7/10, which indicates that according to the surveyed cohort, the workforce is overwhelmingly satisfied with the program.



Volunteers surveyed who complete an office or 'traditional' volunteer role (i.e., engaged on the same day/time each week) increasingly found a flexible time commitment more favourable. This sentiment is shared by staff who completed the survey, with flexible volunteering scoring 14% higher than traditional forms of volunteering when asked the question:

*"What type of engagement would you be most supportive of as a volunteer manager currently?"*

Oxfam Australia staff also found micro volunteering a favourable option, with 35% of respondents feeling the Micro Volunteering Pilot (now Program) was the most impactful initiative the VEPT had implemented in the last five years, (behind the introduction of online volunteering).

Respondents also felt there should be greater connection between the paid and unpaid workforce, possibly through the development of mutually beneficial professional opportunities. Volunteers indicated they would like to engage with more opportunities professionally (such as networking or learning) to develop a deeper understanding of Oxfam Australia and our work. Volunteers also consequently referenced they would like to develop a more well-rounded understanding of our organisation or become more engaged in our programs and advocacy work.



Adelaide, Australia: Bob and Paulette volunteer at the Adelaide Oxfam Charity Bookshop, a community group which has been supporting Oxfam Australia and our work for nearly 50 years. Image Aimee Han/Oxfam.

## Big ideas on the future of volunteering at Oxfam Australia

As part of the strategy consultation process, Oxfam Australia's workforce was asked to submit 'big ideas' on what the future of volunteering may look like at the organisation. The VEPT developed 15 initiatives based on submissions which were then presented at our visioning workshops for participants to consider. A brief overview of a few ideas which received the most positive responses can be found below.



- 1. Formalised incorporation of volunteer engagement in operational and strategic planning:** Workshop participants responded well when asked if volunteer engagement should be more formally incorporated into team planning processes. Several participants suggested this should be considered by all teams to assist with the capacity enhancement and as an opportunity for staff to develop people management skills. Participants also argued the tone should be set from the top by senior management championing the engagement of volunteers as well.
- 2. Volunteer mentorship program:** the development of a program, which supported the people who have faced barriers to participating in volunteering or engaging with the international development sector, was well-received.
- 3. Establishment of an internal 'buddy' program:** participants responded well to the idea of creating a 'buddy program' which would comprise new starter volunteers paired with another person to act as a 'friendly face'.
- 4. Volunteer awards:** the formalisation of Oxfam Australia's recognition program was identified as an idea to promote a more connected program. The idea of developing recognition awards was identified as one specific potential action by participants.
- 5. Expanding community engagement:** survey and workshop participants suggested OAU promote volunteer engagement more actively in the broader Australian community specifically to raise awareness of our work.

## Visions for the future: strategic focus areas

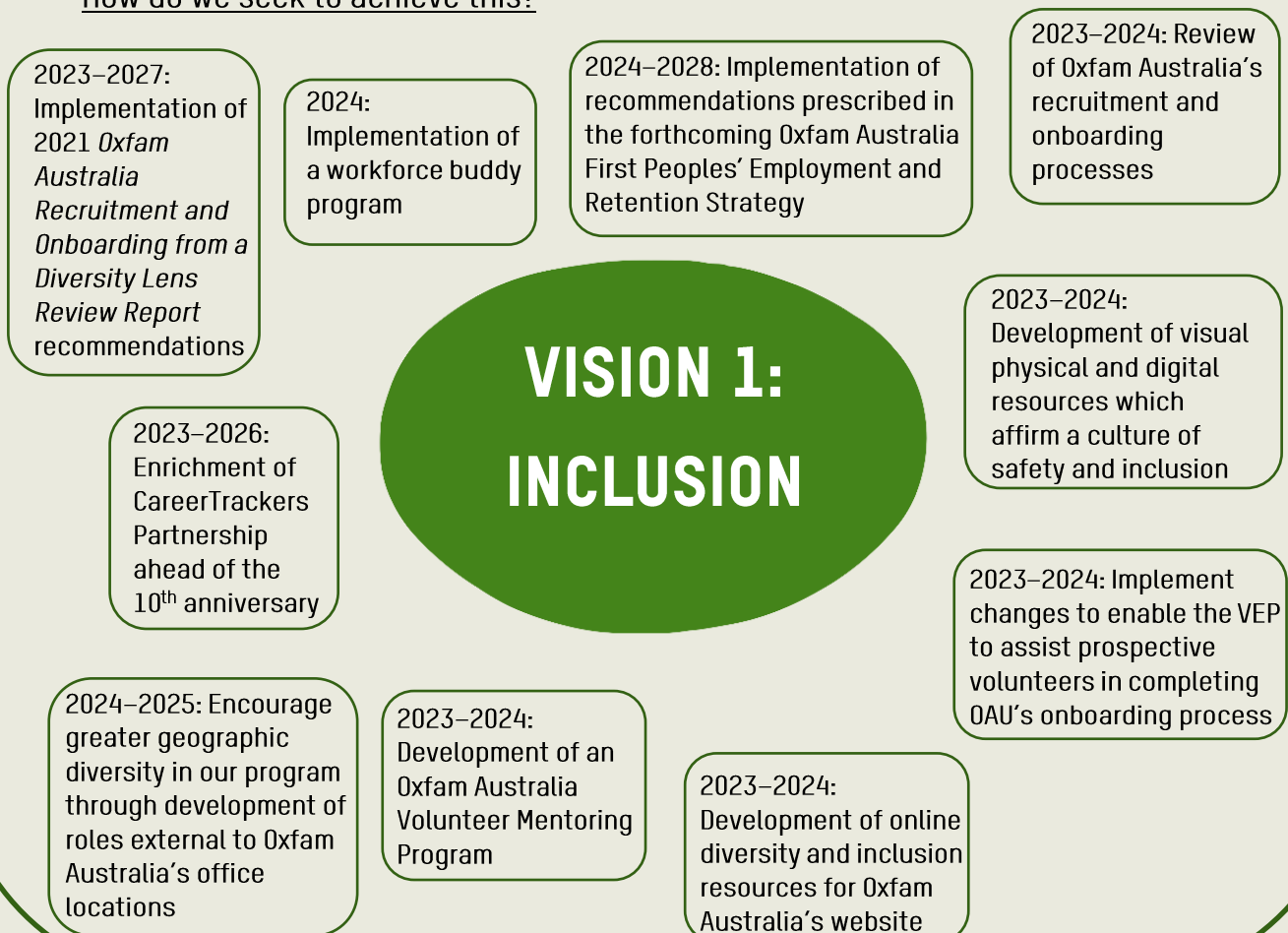
The 2023 – 2028 Oxfam Australia National Volunteer Strategy outlines a vision for how the organisation will engage with best-practice in volunteer engagement and accounts for the future of volunteering in an ever-changing world. This section will outline how as an organisation we aim to embrace a future which aligns with our key identified themes of inclusivity, community and innovation.

### **VISION 1 - (INCLUSION): WE SEEK TO ENABLE OUR PROGRAM TO FOSTER INCLUSIVITY AT ITS HEART, TO EQUITABLY PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR MISSION.**

#### Why is this a priority?

Inclusion is at the heart of our values, identity and mission to realise a just and sustainable world without the inequalities that keep people in poverty. We aspire to ensure volunteering opportunities are afforded equitably to everyone and ensure all people can thrive and bring their best and authentic selves when contributing their time and energy to our work. Oxfam Australia seeks to enable an environment where everyone can volunteer safely and positively, acknowledging there are people in the community who experience barriers to engaging in voluntary work for a variety of reasons. We believe as an organisation we are at our best when we include and listen to all people who seek to make a difference within the agency.

#### How do we seek to achieve this?



## DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION – VISION 1

RECOMMENDATION	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIMELINE
1.1 – Complete a review of Oxfam Australia’s recruitment and onboarding processes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake research on best practices in volunteer recruitment/onboarding processes</li> <li>2. Review current internal processes and identify areas to enhance our processes based on research and feedback</li> <li>3. Implement changes and commit to an annual review to account for future trends and needs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. December 2023</li> <li>2. February 2024</li> <li>3. April 2024 (and then annually until 2027)</li> </ol>
1.2 – Implement changes to enable the VEP to assist prospective volunteers in completing OAU’s onboarding process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amend settings on Better Impact (Oxfam Australia’s volunteer management system) to account for changes</li> <li>2. Amend any relevant user guides and templates</li> <li>3. Review after six months of implementation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. January 2024</li> <li>3. June 2024</li> </ol>
1.3 – Implementation of a workforce buddy program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop communications and visual resources and scope interest from Oxfam Australia’s workforce</li> <li>2. Implement a pilot for a period of six months and review and evaluate impact at its conclusion</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. February 2024</li> <li>2. March-September 2024</li> </ol>
1.4 – Implementation of recommendations prescribed in the forthcoming Oxfam Australia First Peoples’ Employment and Retention Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consult with relevant teams upon completion of the strategy to determine specific actions</li> <li>2. Review implementation of recommendations</li> <li>3. Work alongside teams to implement year 1 recommendations and annually review future recommendations during the life of the strategy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Early-2024</li> <li>2. Mid-2024</li> <li>3. Late-2024 (then annually each year during the life of the strategy)</li> </ol>
1.5 – Development of an Oxfam Australia Volunteer Mentoring Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan for how the mentorship program will be structured given our organisational context</li> <li>2. Develop a formal terms of reference</li> <li>3. Determine uptake with Oxfam Australia’s workforce</li> <li>4. Run the pilot for four months and complete an evaluation into impact at its conclusion</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. December 2023</li> <li>2. February 2024</li> <li>3. March 2024</li> <li>4. April-August 2024</li> </ol>
1.6 – Development of visual physical and digital resources which affirm a culture of safety and inclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working alongside groups such as Oxglam (OAU’s LGBTQIA+ Workforce Group), we will identify our capacity to source and procure a range of visual resources in line with budgetary considerations</li> <li>2. Source and install resources in our office and prominent online locations</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. February 2024</li> </ol>

## DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION – VISION 1

RECOMMENDATION	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIMELINE
1.7 – Development of online diversity and inclusion resources for Oxfam Australia’s website	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alongside colleagues, collectively identify resources which may need to be developed</li> <li>2. Complete scoping research of actions/initiatives completed by other organisations</li> <li>3. Develop an authentic diversity statement which reflects our organisational culture and values</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023 – onwards</li> <li>2. March 2024</li> <li>3. September 2024</li> </ol>
1.8 – Enrichment of CareerTrackers Partnership ahead of the 10 <sup>th</sup> anniversary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affirm our commitment to an expanded number of placements through the delivery of five or more placements per calendar year</li> <li>2. Expand storytelling initiatives and develop profiles and stories to share with the community</li> <li>3. Develop and deliver an impact report which outlines outcomes delivered from our partnership</li> <li>4. Develop initiatives for alumni to re-connect with the agency such as through opportunities, engaging in Oxfam Australia’s First Peoples Program work or other advocacy activities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. December 2023 – onwards</li> <li>2. April 2024</li> <li>3. December 2024</li> <li>4. January 2026</li> </ol>
1.9 – Implementation of the 2021 <i>Oxfam Australia Recruitment and Onboarding from a Diversity Lens Review Report</i> recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate progress on prescribed recommendations</li> <li>2. Evaluate recommendations considering potential changes to OAU’s updated recruitment process</li> <li>3. Create a resource which will measure progress on prescribed resources and prescribed actions to address outstanding recommendations</li> <li>4. Create a new iteration of the report to ensure we are accounting for updated considerations</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. March 2024</li> <li>2. July 2024</li> <li>3. By December 2025</li> <li>4. By 2027</li> </ol>
1.10 – Encourage greater geographic diversity in our program through development of roles external to Oxfam Australia’s office locations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete research on how volunteers from regional and rural areas can engage in opportunities</li> <li>2. Engage with local and community groups through the promotion of volunteer opportunities which can be completed remotely, and work with interstate Oxfam Australia staff to develop opportunities</li> <li>3. Market initiatives such as the expanded Micro Volunteering Program as a means for people located outside of major cities to participate in volunteering</li> <li>4. Engage with OAU’s volunteer cohort to collectively identify existing pain points, and indicators to improve the volunteer experience and social engagement</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. May 2024</li> <li>2. October 2024</li> <li>3. January 2025</li> <li>4. February 2025</li> </ol>



## VISION 2 – (COMMUNITY): WE WANT VOLUNTEERS TO CONNECT WITH OUR MISSION, WORK AND PEOPLE. WE ASPIRE FOR THE NATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM TO BE AN EFFECTIVE AND PURPOSEFUL CONDUIT BETWEEN THE AGENCY AND THE PUBLIC TO ENABLE MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

### Why is this a priority?

We aspire to foster effective partnerships with the public by developing meaningful opportunities which connect people to our organisation and work. We also seek to ensure our internal volunteer community are well connected and supported, and that we are providing a well-rounded and purposeful experience with the agency through professional and social opportunities.

### How do we seek to achieve this?

## VISION 2: COMMUNITY

2023–2024: Enhanced engagement with Oxfam Australia volunteer-involving community groups

2024: Expansion of storytelling and impact demonstration activities

2024–2025: Explore how Oxfam Australia can recognise volunteer contributions externally

2023–2024: Delivery of volunteer information sessions to prospective volunteers

2023–2024: Encourage greater engagement of Oxfam Australia's paid workforce to participate in the program

2024: Development of additional social and professional opportunities for volunteers and Oxfam Australia's paid workforce

2023–2025: Foster greater connection with Oxfam Australia's Event and Community Volunteer cohorts

2023–2028: Enhancement of a positive volunteer culture through the embedding of volunteer engagement in strategic and operational planning considerations and championing of the program by management

2023–2024: Develop section-specific resources which outline how teams can engage more authentically with Oxfam Australia's volunteer cohort

2023: Establishment of award initiatives to celebrate excellence in volunteering

## DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION – VISION 2

RECOMMENDATION	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIMELINE
2.1 – Enhanced engagement with Oxfam Australia volunteer-involving community groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consult with volunteer-involving community groups to determine how OAU can provide future support</li> <li>2. Develop a dialogue with existing university groups and work to implement agreed initiatives</li> <li>3. Enable greater connection between community groups and the organisation by sharing resources (where possible) and engage with groups in-person to enable effective relationships to flourish</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. December 2023</li> <li>2. March 2024</li> <li>3. November 2024</li> </ol>
2.2 – Establishment of award initiatives to celebrate excellence in volunteering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scope how other organisations complete effective volunteer recognition activities</li> <li>2. Develop resources to encourage participation in recognition activities and launch awards as part of International Volunteer Day celebrations</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. December 2023 (and then annually after)</li> </ol>
2.3 – Develop section-specific resources which outline how teams can engage more authentically with Oxfam Australia's volunteer cohort	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify how volunteering can contribute to the work of Oxfam Australia's five organisational sections</li> <li>2. Share resources and encourage each section to contribute to the effective engagement of volunteers</li> <li>3. Develop a one-page resource outlining how OAU's paid workforce can engage with our volunteer cohort</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. January 2024</li> <li>3. March–July 2024</li> </ol>
2.4 – Explore how Oxfam Australia can recognise volunteer contributions externally	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify how VIOs engage with similar initiatives</li> <li>2. Explore how OAU can effectively recognise and communicate excellence in volunteering to external audiences</li> <li>3. Develop a Volunteer Recognition Plan for OAU to engage with external recognition programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. September 2024</li> <li>2. November 2024</li> <li>3. April 2025</li> </ol>
2.5 – Encourage greater engagement of Oxfam Australia's paid workforce in the program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver refreshed volunteer manager modules</li> <li>2. Undertake additional team-specific engagement to encourage new volunteer opportunities and develop additional resources which exemplify benefits of volunteering at OAU</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. February 2024</li> </ol>
2.6 – Delivery of volunteer information sessions to prospective volunteers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with colleagues in the OAU Fundraising &amp; Resource Growth team to determine the best format for the development and delivery of sessions</li> <li>2. Create sessions and market to the community in 2024</li> <li>3. Review effectiveness of sessions and make amendments before permanent implementation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. During 2024</li> <li>3. August 2024</li> </ol>

## DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION – VISION 2

RECOMMENDATION	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIMELINE
2.7 – Expansion of storytelling and impact demonstration activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete research into how effective storytelling is completed at other VIOs</li> <li>2. Enable a greater presence of volunteer stories in key strategic resources (such as the Annual Report), Volunteer e-News and Voices</li> <li>3. Develop a refreshed plan which outlines how the program will engage with social media and other external mediums throughout each year</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. January 2024</li> <li>2. June 2024</li> <li>3. November 2024</li> </ol>
2.8 – Development of additional social and professional opportunities for volunteers and Oxfam Australia’s paid workforce	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete research into what other organisations/workplaces may be doing to build an internal community</li> <li>2. Engage with volunteers and staff further to scope what activities may be most beneficial</li> <li>3. Implement a suite of new activities, building on existing work with the Ngapa Activation Team</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. April 2024</li> <li>2. August 2024</li> <li>3. November 2024</li> </ol>
2.9 – Enhancement of a positive volunteer culture through the embedding of volunteer engagement in strategic and operational planning considerations and championing of the program by management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with colleagues to enhance workforce engagement in the program</li> <li>2. Establish a network of ‘champions’ at OAU who will help set tone, enable positive messaging, and advocate for an impactful volunteer engagement culture</li> <li>3. Consult with the workforce to determine how to account for volunteer engagement as a consideration for operational and strategic planning and implement measures which will see volunteer engagement accounted for in all operational planning boards</li> <li>4. Re-orient work in relation to culture and operational planning ahead of OAU’s forthcoming Strategic Plan in 2025</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. March 2024</li> <li>2. April 2024</li> <li>3. July 2024</li> <li>4. September-2025 onwards</li> </ol>
2.10 – Foster greater connection with Oxfam Australia’s Event and Community Volunteer cohorts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify focus areas with the OAU Fundraising team to enhance engagement with volunteers and alumni through the development of an engagement plan</li> <li>2. Commence implementation of agreed initiatives</li> <li>3. Engage in relationship building and storytelling, with regular Event and Community volunteers to enable meaningful recognition and engagement</li> <li>4. Work alongside OAU’s Fundraising &amp; Resource Growth team to collectively plan for how to engage event volunteers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. December 2023</li> <li>2. January 2024</li> <li>3. April-May 2024</li> <li>4. January 2025</li> </ol>

## **VISION 3 – (INNOVATION): WE SEEK TO FURTHER EMBRACE INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY AS CORE OPERATING PRINCIPLES TO RESPOND TO THE CHANGING CONDITIONS PRESENT IN SOCIETY AND THE VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING SECTOR.**

### Why is this a priority?

The volunteer-involving sector is currently undergoing significant change as non-profit organisations respond to a decline in volunteer numbers, the demand for more flexible volunteer opportunities, the cost-of-living crisis, and an unpredictable economic climate. To remain an organisation which is at the forefront of best practice in volunteer engagement, we seek to embrace continuous innovation and flexibility as core operating principles in our work.

### How do we seek to achieve this?

2023-2024: Enhancement of social impact in reporting, storytelling and impact measurement indicators

2023-2028: Relate the program to the Sustainable Development Goals

2023-2025: Review technology requirements to enable a more innovative volunteer program

2023: Creation of new special projects volunteer role to assist with work relating to strategy objectives

## **VISION 3: INNOVATION**

2023-2024: Expansion of the Oxfam Australia Micro Volunteering Program

2023-2024: Micro Volunteering Program as a pipeline to increase volunteer numbers

2023-2028: Enhancement and formalisation of Oxfam Australia's internship program

2023: Increase workforce capacity of the Volunteer Engagement Program

2023-2026: Scope possibility of accommodating informal volunteering in the national program

2023-2025: Evaluate re-commencing meaningful corporate volunteering opportunities

## DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION – VISION 3

RECOMMENDATION	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIMELINE
3.1 – Expansion of the Oxfam Australia Micro Volunteering Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Activate OAU's workforce with micro volunteering and promote flexible forms of volunteering in internal engagement activities through activities such as a lunch &amp; learn</li> <li>2. Include a dedicated section on micro volunteering on the 'Volunteer with Us' page</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. January 2024</li> </ol>
3.2 – Micro Volunteering Program as a pipeline to increase volunteer numbers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider how to encourage greater capacity in the Micro Volunteering Program</li> <li>2. Trial engaging volunteers as a means for people to gain experience in our organisation and potentially transition to a more specialised role</li> <li>3. Encourage the development of new tasks to enable the potential for the talent pool to grow</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. March 2024</li> <li>3. May 2024</li> </ol>
3.3 – Creation of new special projects volunteer role to assist with work relating to strategy objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a position description which aligns to best practice, take the role to market and recruit a successful candidate within three months of the strategy's implementation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> </ol>
3.4 – Increase workforce capacity of the Volunteer Engagement Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider how the VEPT will increase capacity</li> <li>2. Engage with relevant teams to advance any decision made concerning staffing measures ahead of the 2024/25 FY budget process</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. October 2023</li> <li>2. December 2023</li> </ol>
3.5 – Relate the program to the Sustainable Development Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete research to determine how other VIOs are engaging with the SDGs</li> <li>2. Complete research to determine which SDGs can be related specifically to our organisation and program</li> <li>3. Develop a resource on how we will engage with the SDGs as part of our strategic and operational work</li> <li>4. Develop action items and institute a formalised review process to ensure progress</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. February 2024</li> <li>2. April 2024</li> <li>3. October 2024</li> <li>4. February 2025-onwards</li> </ol>
3.6 – Enhancement of social impact in reporting, storytelling and impact measurement indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete research into how the sector is engaging with social impact as a concept</li> <li>2. Explore innovative ways for our program to inform stakeholders on how social non-financial indicators contribute to our operations</li> <li>3. Develop a resource which outlines how non-financial forms of impact can contribute to our work</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. November 2023</li> <li>2. December 2023</li> <li>3. June 2024</li> </ol>



## DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION – VISION 3

RECOMMENDATION	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIMELINE
3.7 – Review technology requirements to enable a more innovative volunteer program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review technology requirements for the program and research best practice in the use of technology in volunteer engagement</li> <li>2. Present a plan which includes sector research and requirements as it relates to advancing digital literacy in volunteer programs</li> <li>3. Engage in initiatives which will enhance digital literacy of OAU's volunteer cohort and include this as a metric to evaluate the success of the VEP</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. September 2024</li> <li>2. December 2024</li> <li>3. June 2025</li> </ol>
3.8 – Enhancement and formalisation of Oxfam Australia's internship program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop resources which will support with the placement of 125 interns between 2023 and 2028</li> <li>2. Identify how placements can support the needs of OAU. Engage in planning to develop future prospective placements on a regular or annual basis</li> <li>3. Strengthen relationships with tertiary institutions so to reach a wide talent pool of prospective applicants for internship placements</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. June 2024</li> <li>2. August 2024 (and annually after)</li> <li>3. May 2025</li> </ol>
3.9 – Scope possibility of accommodating informal volunteering in the national program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scope how VIOs engage with informal volunteering and identify how this might apply to OAU. Develop a proposal by the end of 2024</li> <li>2. Work alongside teams to determine how we can engage with OAU's activist network, event volunteers and Oxfam Community Groups</li> <li>3. Explore how we can effectively measure contributions, record management and impact measurement for informal volunteers</li> <li>4. Implement an informal volunteering initiative as a trial for a period of six months</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. May 2024</li> <li>2. November 2024</li> <li>3. February 2025</li> <li>4. Late-2025 until mid-2026</li> </ol>
3.10 – Evaluate re-commencing meaningful corporate volunteering opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigate how OAU previously engaged with corporate volunteering and complete research on best practice in engaging with corporate volunteers</li> <li>2. Develop a plan which will outline how we will engage with corporate volunteering and engage with teams to collectively implement ideas and plans</li> <li>3. Develop a resource pack annually which will outline corporate partners' impact on OAU</li> <li>4. Enhance relationships with existing and new partners to promote uptake of new opportunities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. March 2024</li> <li>2. September 2024</li> <li>3. February 2025</li> <li>4. October 2025</li> </ol>

## Conclusion

We have outlined an ambitious strategy for how Oxfam Australia will advance effective volunteer engagement into the future. The COVID-19 pandemic compelled both volunteers and VIOs to become resilient and adaptable to an ever-changing world, one where there is a demand for innovation and non-profit organisations to thrive. The 2023–2028 Oxfam Australia National Volunteering Strategy outlines our vision for how we aim to respond to the current conditions and enable volunteering to remain an impactful part of the organisation. This strategy reflects our values and culture, and places the agency in a good position to ensure that we continue to enable effective volunteer engagement well into the future.

Through the collaborative identification of three key themes: inclusion, community, and innovation, we believe we are well placed to enable volunteering to thrive into the future and encourage a meaningful, engaging, and impactful experience for both volunteers and those people who support them. To fulfil the recommendations prescribed in this resource, we have outlined a comprehensive vision on how we will implement key features of this strategy and how we will keep ourselves accountable to ensure we keep to our timeline and innovate in the future. Over time as we respond to the ever-changing nature of the sector, we envisage this strategy will continue to evolve and develop as we progress throughout the timeline, so it is important to emphasise that recommendations prescribed in their current form will evolve.

We have developed this vision to enhance the experience of volunteers, their managers, our workforce, and the community who we engage with every day. It is our hope volunteers feel empowered to bring their best and whole selves to our organisation, to do so with the confidence that they are making an impact and difference to Oxfam and our work and to feel welcome and connected to our mission. We aspire for volunteers to engage with their role and our organisation on their own terms, and importantly, in a way that enables them to thrive and grow as changemakers and as valued members of our workforce.

## Endnotes

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