

PHILANTHROPY  
AUSTRALIA

# Giving Together

The Power and Potential of Collective Giving in Australia



# Contents

Foreword	1
Key findings	2
Recommendations	6
Definition of collective giving	10
Global context	11
Reasons for joining groups	13
How participants find groups	15
Demographics	16
Causes and communities supported	22
Financial contribution and growth potential	23
Positive social outcomes for participants	28
Impact on giving practice and knowledge	29
Impact on wellbeing and skills development	30
Compounded benefits for volunteers	32
Operating models	34
Operations management	53
Enabling ecosystem	57
Critical role of volunteers	63
Challenges and opportunities	68
Conclusion	74
References	75
Appendix A: Research methodology	78
Appendix B: Collective giving groups in research	80
Appendix C: Case studies	82
Appendix D: Survey and interview questionnaires	82
Appendix E: List of figures	83

## Acknowledgement of Country

Philanthropy Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

## Authors

This research was undertaken and co-authored by Dr Elizabeth Branigan, Christine Darcas, Rebecca Moriarty and Brianna Kerr, under the executive leadership of Krystian Seibert.

## Research Steering Committee

A group of collective giving practitioners and experts from across Australia guided the work through its various stages and shaped the report recommendations. We thank James Boyd, Patricia Burke, Christine Darcas, Kristen Lark, Georgia Mathews, Lynne Umbers, Thom Calma, Rikki Andrews and Wayne Green for their dedication and contributions to the project. Brianna Kerr transitioned from the Research Steering Committee to a co-author role in January 2026, when she joined Philanthropy Australia as Director, Knowledge and Practice.

## Contributors

Deep appreciation to the 250 collective giving leaders and participants who contributed their insights through surveys and interviews. This research would not have been possible without your time and engagement. We are grateful to James Boyd and Lee Partridge for sharing the survey questions from the 2017 Creative Australia report 'Collective Giving and Its Role in Australian Philanthropy', and to Philanthropy Together for generously sharing the survey instrument used in their 2023 'In Abundance' report. Their openness and collaboration have been invaluable to this work.

## Funders

This research was made possible through the core support of Minderoo Foundation and the generous contributions of 5Point Foundation and Australian Communities Foundation.

## Suggested Citation

Branigan, E., Darcas, C., Moriarty, R., Kerr, B., & Seibert, K. (2026), *Giving Together: The Power and Potential of Collective Giving in Australia*, Philanthropy Australia.

### Lead Funder



### Supporting Funders



# Foreword

## Collective giving has expanded significantly in Australia over the past decade.

What was an emerging movement when the field was first mapped in 2017 is now an established and growing part of Australia’s philanthropic ecosystem. Today, hundreds of groups are estimated to be active across the country, engaging thousands of Australians.

This research draws on a sample of 55 of these groups. Together, they directly engage more than 11,000 people and have distributed \$76.6 million between 1999 and 2025. In their latest grant making rounds, the groups collectively gave \$9.3 million to more than 300 organisations.

However, the significance of collective giving extends far beyond its financial contributions.

The Australian Government’s Productivity Commission 2024 inquiry report, ‘Future Foundations for Giving’, highlighted collective giving as a key contributor to social capital. It creates spaces where people come together to deliberate, decide and act – strengthening the relationships, trust and civic engagement that underpin social capital; especially important at a time when trust in institutions and broader social cohesion are under strain.

The growth of collective giving in Australia is already a success story. But its significance lies not only in what it has achieved to date, but in what it could further enable: deeper peer connection and a stronger sense of community, a more diverse, democratic and participatory form of philanthropy and greater funding for the organisations working to address Australia’s most pressing challenges.

Drawing on a national sample – including 55 collective giving groups and around 250 leaders and participants – this report establishes the first extensive baseline of the field in Australia and identifies a sector at an inflection point.

The findings show that the foundations are in place: a growing network of groups, an engaged participant base, and demonstrated capacity to mobilise both financial and social capital.

**The question now is not whether the movement will continue to grow, but whether the wider philanthropic sector chooses to invest in the infrastructure and capacity needed for collective giving to realise its full potential.**



Photo courtesy of First Nations Futures.



*I hope to see the collective giving field in Australia evolve into a flourishing ecosystem that deeply strengthens communities – not just through financial contributions, but through shared purpose, trust and collaboration.*

**Collective Giving Participant**

# Key findings

## Collective giving is now an established and growing part of Australia's giving landscape.

This report shares the findings from a comprehensive research exercise that combines quantitative breadth with qualitative depth. Three primary data sources underpin the analysis:

- Leader Survey (n = 51)
- Participant Survey (n = 201)
- Leader Interviews (n = 12)

The surveys provide cross-sectional insights into participant experiences and attitudes, while the interviews offer contextualised understanding of how and why these patterns emerge.

Together, these sources enable both a field-wide perspective and a more nuanced interpretation of practice and impact. Full survey instruments and interview protocols are provided in Appendix A.

The findings show a sector mobilising notable financial resources, deepening participation in philanthropy and delivering meaningful social and civic outcomes. At the same time, collective giving remains uneven in geographic reach and constrained by low levels of public awareness and shared infrastructure. The result is a field that is highly effective in parts yet limited in others.

**Taken together, the evidence points to a movement at an inflection point: one with strong foundations, clear value and growing momentum, but without the enabling infrastructure required to fully realise its potential.**



Photo courtesy of The Funding Network.

## The key findings are:

1

Collective giving is an established and growing part of Australia's philanthropic ecosystem

Collective giving has expanded considerably over the past decade, evolving from a small, emerging movement into an established and increasingly visible part of Australia's philanthropic landscape. While Boyd and Partridge's 2017 research identified just 17 groups, today hundreds are estimated to be active across the country, engaging thousands of Australians.

Although this dataset reflects a sample rather than a census of the full field, it shows a consistent pattern of development over time. Activity was limited in the early 2000s, followed by a period of acceleration in the early 2010s, with a clustering of new groups established between 2011 and 2016. Since then, the rate of formation has stabilised, with new groups continuing to emerge each year.

2

Collective giving is mobilising significant people and financial resources

Across the 55 groups included in this research, collective giving is mobilising substantial levels of both participation and funding. **Together, these groups directly engage more than 11,000 people and have distributed \$76.6 million between 1999 and 2025. In their most recent annual grant making rounds, they collectively directed \$9.3 million to over 300 organisations, demonstrating both scale and sustained momentum.**

At the group level, 43% of surveyed groups distributed more than \$100,000 annually, highlighting that while the model accommodates small, accessible contributions, it is also capable of pooling and directing significant financial capital.

3

Individuals who participate in collective giving groups give significantly more than the typical Australian

Participation in collective giving is associated with substantially higher levels of philanthropic contribution. **The median contribution from the participant survey was \$1,000 per person per year, compared with a median tax-deductible donation of \$150 per Australian taxpayer in 2022-23 (ATO 2025).**

This effect extends beyond group giving. 34% of participants report increasing their wider financial contributions to community causes and 36% expect to do so in future. In addition, 26% report increased volunteering. Collective giving therefore acts as a gateway to deeper and more sustained civic engagement.

4

Collective giving contributes to participants' wellbeing and fosters civic participation

Participants report a range of personal benefits, including deeper engagement and a stronger sense of agency in their giving, increased knowledge and confidence, improved wellbeing and stronger community connection. **Collectively, these outcomes position collective giving as a form of civic participation that builds social capital alongside financial capital in a unique and distinct way.**

---

5

Giving circles are the dominant model of collective giving

**Collective giving in Australia is primarily organised through giving circles, which account for 87% of groups in the sample.** This structure fosters a sense of shared ownership and community, while also creating opportunities for learning, leadership development and skill-building through participation in decision-making and governance.

---

6

Collective giving groups are overwhelmingly women-led and women-driven

**Women make up 81% of participants in collective giving and they lead the field – almost all group leaders and founders are female.**

This reflects broader international trends (Loson Ceballos & Layton 2024) and aligns with recent findings in the She Gives National Research (Smith, Freeman & Meville 2026). It is both a defining feature and a distinctive strength of the sector. But it also highlights an opportunity to broaden participation, particularly among men, to expand reach and impact.

---

7

Volunteer effort is central to how the field operates

Volunteer contribution is a defining feature of collective giving in Australia. **While 50% of groups are entirely volunteer-run, even among those with paid staff – ranging from one casual employee to seven staff – 48% continue to rely heavily on volunteers.** This enables highly engaged, low cost models of participation, but also creates structural vulnerabilities, including risks of burnout, leadership turnover and constraints on scalability. These dynamics are not unique to collective giving but reflect the vital role volunteers play across civil society and the shared challenge of sustaining that contribution over time.

8

**Collective giving groups and host organisations strengthen each other**

**Around 65% of collective giving groups in Australia are hosted by an organisation, most commonly community foundations (42%).** These host organisations provide essential infrastructure – such as governance, administration, compliance and credibility – enabling largely volunteer-led groups to operate effectively. At the same time, collective giving groups create value for their hosts by building awareness, enhancing profile and positive association and supporting their broader organisational purpose, whether by increasing the flow of funds to communities or by attracting and engaging new donors.

9

**Collective giving participation is concentrated in metropolitan areas**

While funding often flows beyond cities, participation in collective giving is highly concentrated in metropolitan areas. **78% of groups in the sample are headquartered in a capital city, indicating that access to collective giving opportunities is largely urban based.**

Engagement in regional and remote communities remains significantly lower, reflecting broader structural inequities in access to philanthropic networks, infrastructure and enabling support. This geographic concentration highlights an important gap in the current landscape, but also a clear opportunity.

10

**Collective giving is constrained by structural and capacity gaps that limit its ability to scale**

Despite strong growth and demonstrated impact, collective giving in Australia remains constrained by a set of interconnected structural challenges. These include low public awareness, fragmented coordination across the field, heavy reliance on volunteer capacity and limited access to sustainable operational funding. Individually, many groups are highly effective, but these factors shape how easily they can expand participation, maintain operations and sustain momentum over time.

Together, these constraints highlight that the future growth of collective giving will depend not only on continued interest and participation, but on the enabling conditions that support it. **For collective giving to become a scalable and sustainable part of Australia's giving landscape, stronger system-level coordination and organisational capacity will be required.**

# Recommendations

## Collective giving in Australia has reached an inflection point.

The evidence shows a movement that is growing, highly effective in mobilising both financial and social capital and delivering strong participation and wellbeing outcomes.

However, this growth has occurred without coordinated infrastructure. The sector remains fragmented, uneven in geographic reach and constrained by low public awareness and limited shared capacity.

As a result, the central challenge is no longer whether collective giving will continue to grow, but how the enabling conditions for its next phase of development are established.

This report draws on the evidence to identify two complementary priorities:

- Establishing a national backbone entity to coordinate and strengthen the field
- Providing targeted core capacity funding to support group sustainability and growth

Together, these interventions address both system-level coordination and organisational-level sustainability.



Photo courtesy of Rainbow Giving Australia.

# Recommendation 1: Establish a national backbone entity

A national backbone entity would provide the enabling infrastructure required to support the next phase of collective giving in Australia. Its purpose would be to strengthen coordination, capability, visibility and learning across the field, while preserving the independence and diversity of individual groups.

The precise scope and scale of activity would be contingent on available resources and governance arrangements. However, based on the needs identified in this research, the broad functions of such an entity could include the following:

- ➔ **Connect and coordinate the field**  
Act as a central point of connection across collective giving groups, host organisations and sector stakeholders to strengthen collaboration, reduce duplication and support shared learning.
- ➔ **Build capability and support sustainable models**  
Support groups to strengthen their operations, leadership and sustainability through shared resources, peer learning and targeted guidance.
- ➔ **Increase visibility and expand participation**  
Strengthen public awareness of collective giving as a model of civic participation, supporting broader and more diverse engagement across communities and geographies.
- ➔ **Strengthen evidence, data and learning**  
Support more consistent national data collection and knowledge sharing to inform practice, investment and ongoing sector development.

- ➔ **Support and partner with host organisations**  
Work alongside host organisations, particularly community foundations to strengthen their role in enabling collective giving and reduce duplication across the system.

## Precedents

Internationally, organisations such as **Philanthropy Together** in the US demonstrate how backbone infrastructure can connect dispersed giving groups, support shared learning and expand participation at scale.

Locally, **Community Foundations Australia** provides a compelling example of coordinated, backbone infrastructure in catalysing sector growth. Targeted investment in a national peak body has strengthened the community foundation model by building capability, improving visibility, supporting new entrants and creating greater coherence across a previously fragmented field.

This coordinated approach has contributed to the expansion and maturation of the community foundations sector in Australia, demonstrating how investment in shared infrastructure can unlock significantly greater giving and community impact over time.



Photo courtesy of WoCImpact1000 (Rod Ceballos).



Photo courtesy of Five Bucks.

## Recommendation 2: Provide targeted core capacity funding for collective giving groups

**Alongside system-level coordination, collective giving groups would also benefit from direct investment to sustain and scale their operations effectively.**

Evidence from this report shows that many groups are reaching a scale at which fully volunteer dependent models often become increasingly unsustainable, particularly at critical transition points in their development. Without targeted support, this can constrain their growth and limit their long-term impact.

Targeted core capacity funding enables groups to establish strong foundations, navigate growth phases and sustain their operations over time.

Depending on a group's stage of development and specific needs, this funding could support the following:

- Staffing and coordination roles
- Technology and operational infrastructure (e.g. CRM systems, grant management platforms, communications tools, cybersecurity, data and impact measurement systems)

- Member engagement, outreach and growth activities
- Leadership development and volunteer support
- Governance, compliance, granting and reporting functions
- Strategic planning and evaluation

The intent of providing direct funding is to enable groups to move through critical growth stages more sustainably, improving both their effectiveness and their capacity to mobilise greater philanthropic capital, broader participation and deeper social impact over time.

**For funders, supporting the core operations of collective giving groups is not a substitute for ecosystem funding. It is a force multiplier.**

Direct investment enables these groups to build and grow communities of givers, mobilise additional capital and strengthen civic infrastructure by fostering trust, relationships and participation.

As they mature, their giving, networks and prosocial outcomes expand, generating compounding impact over time.

Collective giving in Australia is already delivering strong outcomes in participation, funding and civic engagement. To build on this momentum, greater system-level coordination and organisational capacity will be needed to support sustainable growth over time.

A coordinated approach combining a national backbone entity to strengthen the field, and targeted core capacity funding to strengthen individual groups, would address the key structural barriers identified in this report.

Together, these interventions would support the evolution of collective giving from a growing but fragmented movement into a more connected, sustainable and scalable component of Australia's philanthropic system.



*People will thrive if they have a sense of community and belonging. I've seen collective giving be a vehicle for that, connecting members with real issues and with each other.*

**Anonymous Comment from Leader Survey**



Photo courtesy of Schools for Impact.

# Definition of collective giving

The definition of collective giving used in this research is drawn from Philanthropy Together's 2024 report on the US collective giving landscape:



*Collective giving involves individuals pooling their resources, knowledge, and networks to support a cause (or causes) collectively chosen by the group. It typically includes shared or democratic decision-making, community connections, learning, and engagement, all aimed at achieving amplified impact and empowering communities. Central to all such giving models is the practice of collective action and the cultivation of trust, where communities unite to effect change using various resources and forms of support. A distinctive aspect of collective giving is that for many groups philanthropy implies mobilising all 5Ts: Treasure (money), Time (volunteering), Talent (expertise), Ties (relationships), and Testimony (spreading the word).*

**(Loson-Ceballos & Layton 2024: page viii)**

The definition chosen is intentionally broad and inclusive to ensure the full spectrum of collective giving models, structures and practices are captured.

As such, the typology of collective giving includes giving circles, organising for social change, collaborative giving funds, live crowd funding, community micro-granting, identity led groups and crowd granting networks.

It excludes groups established by existing organisations primarily to raise funds for themselves, except for charity-based groups that enable donors to democratically decide on the allocation of pooled funds across the charity's initiatives.

At the same time, the research reinforces what many practitioners will recognise: collective giving does not always fit neatly within fixed categories. In practice, its boundaries are fluid and responsive to context.

It is also worth noting that some forms of collective giving may not be recognised by participants as 'collective giving' in a formal sense, even though they align with the definition used in this research. This includes informal groups of friends, colleagues or community members who come together to pool resources and support shared causes or local needs. These less formal expressions are an important part of the broader collective giving landscape.

As noted in other studies on this topic, it is difficult to determine the full number and nature of these groups (Boyd and Partridge 2017:15). Rutnik and Bearman (2005) estimated that they were only able to locate one out of every two or three groups in the USA, while John (2014) described a 'tip of the iceberg' assessment of giving groups in Asia. This reflects the informal and distributed nature of many groups, which means they often go undetected.

This framing provides a practical foundation for the analysis that follows, while acknowledging the field's diversity and ongoing evolution.

# Global context



Photo courtesy of Impact100 Melbourne.

**Collective giving in Australia sits within a broader global movement that has expanded significantly over the past two decades. Understanding this wider context helps situate local developments within an international field that is both rapidly growing and continuously evolving.**

While people have been coming together for centuries to pool their resources to donate to various causes, more structured forms of collective giving emerged most visibly in the early 2000s, particularly in the USA (Bearman et al., 2017). Since then, collective giving has surged in both popularity and impact (Loson-Ceballos & Layton 2024; Philanos 2025).

The United States has experienced particularly significant and well-documented growth, with the movement expanding in both scale and influence (Krause & Layton 2024; Philanos 2025; Proulx, Akin & Barasch 2022). Between 2017 and 2023, nearly 4,000 collective giving groups mobilised 370,000 philanthropists who donated more than \$3.1 billion (Loson-Ceballos & Layton 2024: xi).

Eikenberry and Breeze (2017) have documented a similarly rapid rise of collective giving in the United Kingdom and Ireland, where giving circles have expanded donor engagement, diversified participation and encouraged more strategic and collaborative approaches to philanthropy. Their research highlights the role of giving circles in responding to austerity-driven policy contexts and in fostering more democratic, community-centred forms of giving. Giving circles in China were studied for the first time in 2022 (Jia X et al. 2022). The Shanghai United Foundation was the focus of the research who is host to 31 giving circles, the smallest with 3 participants and the largest with 500 participants. As of the end of December 2021, the total cumulative fundraising of all 23 giving circles in this study was USD1,840,729, with approximately 2,700 members involved and USD870,374 funded (Jia X et al. 2022:9). Prior to this, a broader study of giving circles in Asia was conducted, featuring 38 giving circles, out of a highly conservative estimate of 66 giving circles operating (John 2017:12,16).

**International collective giving groups have played a key role in shaping the Australian landscape, with several overseas models successfully adapted to local contexts. Among the most prominent are Impact100, The Funding Network and Awesome Foundation.**

Impact100, founded by Wendy Steele in the United States in 2001, models a giving circle approach that brings at least 100 women together, each contributing \$1,000 to a pooled fund and collectively deciding on the allocation of a \$100,000 grant to a community nonprofit. The model now includes more than 80 chapters across the world and has distributed over \$178 million in grants (Impact100 2026). In Australia, eight Impact100 chapters are known to exist at the time of writing, many of which were among the earliest structured collective giving groups established nationally. In 2002, The Funding Network was founded in the United Kingdom, using a live crowdfunding model to connect donors with small charities. Since its inception, it has helped raise over £20 million globally and has affiliates in 14 countries, including The Funding Network Australia, which is the country's largest collective giving group by dollars distributed (The Funding Network 2026).

Other models have also contributed to the diversity of the ecosystem. The Awesome Foundation, founded in 2009 in Boston, supports projects through small, untied micro-grants – typically around \$1,000 – distributed monthly by local 'trustees'. At the time of writing, six Awesome Foundation chapters have been established in Australia (The Awesome Foundation 2026).

In parallel, networks and peer-learning platforms have played a vital role in connecting and growing the field. In 2009, Colleen Willoughby, founder of Seattle's Washington Women's Foundation (WWF), helped establish the US-based, volunteer-led Women's Collective Giving Grantmakers Network – now known as Philanos (Philanos 2025). Building on this momentum, a 2013 national tour of Australia, supported by the US Embassy and organised

by the Australian Women Donors Network (now Australians Investing in Women), helped inspire new giving circles across the country, including Melbourne Women's Foundation and Women & Change in Brisbane, while strengthening existing groups such as 100 Women in Perth (AIIW 2013).

**As the global collective giving movement has grown, a number of backbone organisations have emerged to better coordinate the field and strengthen its collective impact. Organisations such as Philanos and Philanthropy Together provide shared infrastructure, research, networks and field-building support to help collective giving groups and the broader field connect, learn and grow.**

Philanthropy Together was established in the United States in 2020 in response to the rapid expansion of collective giving and the recognised need for stronger coordination across the field. Supported by major philanthropic funders, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lodestar Foundation, it has played an important role in catalysing collaboration, visibility and shared learning across the movement (Philanthropy Together, 2021).

As this research shows, Australia has now reached a similar inflection point.

This global context highlights both the scale and diversity of collective giving, while underscoring the importance of shared infrastructure and field-building support in catalysing the potential of the Australian field.

# Reasons for joining groups

The top two most cited reasons for joining a collective giving group in Australia are:

**76%**

of respondents joined to increase the impact of their donations by pooling resources with others

**51%**

joined for connection, to build relationships with people who share similar values and identities

Increasing impact was the most significant driver, reported by 76% of participants. This aligns with findings from Philanthropy Together's US study, where it was also the most cited reason (85%) (Loson-Ceballos & Layton 2024:51).

Connection was the second most common motivation, with around half of respondents (51%) seeking opportunities to engage with others who share their values. This aligns with findings from Redbridge (2022) that highlight the social dimension of giving, with 74% of respondents strongly agreeing that giving to a good cause strengthened their sense of community.



Photo courtesy of Five Bucks.

**Together, these findings highlight the distinctive dual appeal of collective giving: it offers both the potential for greater impact and opportunities for meaningful connection with others.**

While support for a specific cause area remained important (46%), it was less prominent than impact and connection. This suggests that, for many participants, the experience of collective giving is more important than the causes ultimately funded.

What brings people to collective giving today is much the same as what has attracted participants historically: regardless of when they joined, the opportunity to have greater impact, connect with others and support causes they care about consistently ranked as the top three motivators. These drivers have enduring appeal and should continue to shape how collective giving is positioned and delivered.

## A second tier of motivations provides further insight into participant engagement.

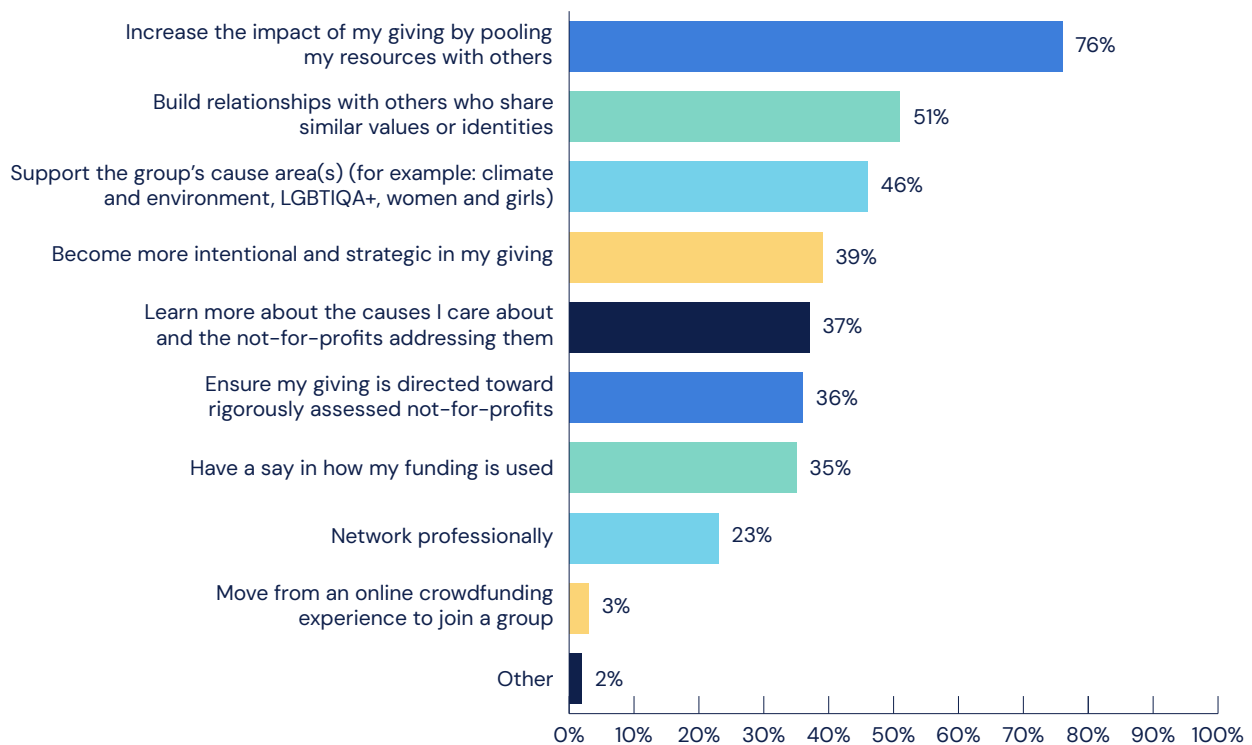
Having a say in funding decisions, learning more about causes, ensuring donations are directed effectively and professional networking are all cited as reasons for joining, but at lower levels than the primary drivers of impact, connection and cause.

In a comparable US study, wanting to adopt a more strategic approach to giving was a motivator for 79% of respondents while a lower proportion at 39% cited this reason in this research (Loson-Ceballos & Layton 2024:51).

Notably, while democratic decision-making is a defining feature of collective giving, it appears to be less influential as an initial motivator, suggesting it may be more strongly valued as part of the experience of participation than as a reason for joining.

Interestingly, participants who joined a group more recently (<2 years) place greater emphasis on networking professionally compared with longer-term participants (10+ years).

**Figure 1: Participant motivations for joining their first collective giving group (Participant Survey)**



n = 175. Respondents could select multiple options.

# How participants find groups

**Positive word-of-mouth has been, and continues to be, the most powerful driver of participation with 56% of respondents joining a group for this reason.**

Further, when 'other' responses were analysed, most related to word-of-mouth and peer referral. This indicates that collective giving remains highly network-driven, with growth largely occurring through personal relationships.

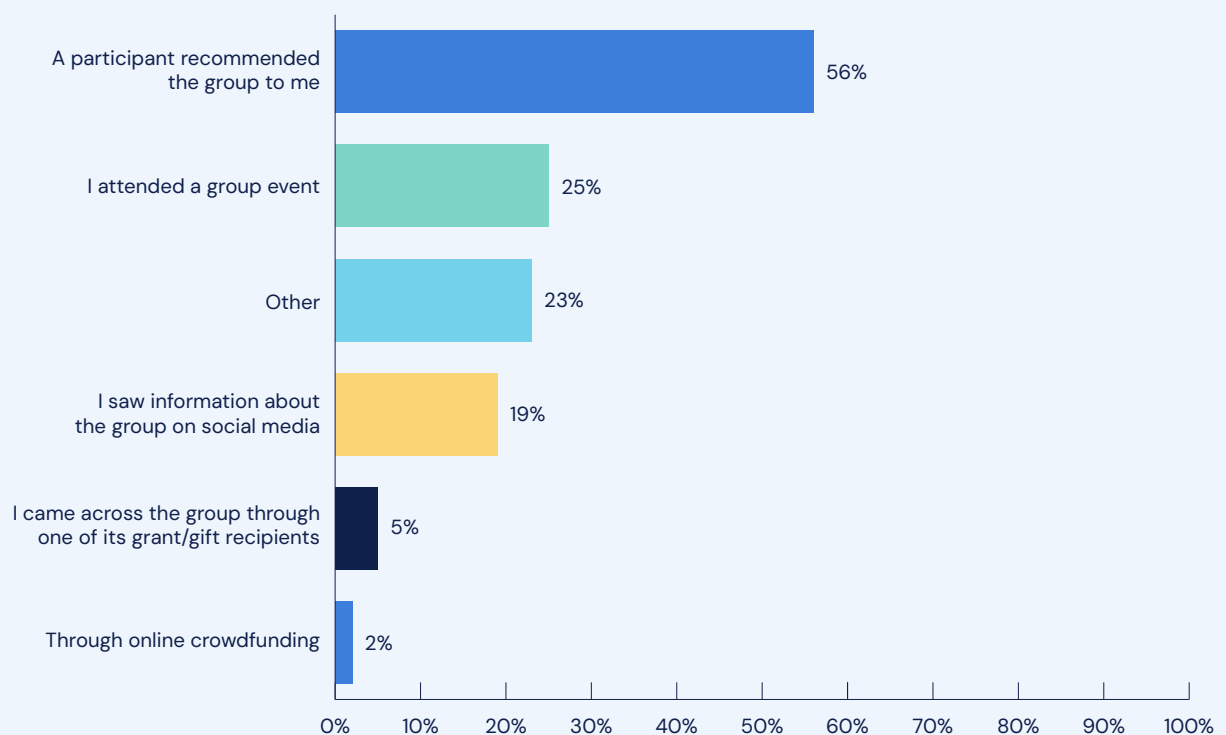
**Events are the second most common pathway into collective giving (25%).** Experiencing a group's work firsthand – often within a community of like-minded participants – can be a strong motivator for joining, offering both visibility of impact and a sense of the group's culture.

There is relatively little distinction between how newer and longer-term participants are introduced to collective giving. However, one notable exception

is the growing role of social media. Among those who joined a collective giving group in the last two years, 28% learned about it through social media, compared to 8% of those who joined 10 years ago. While still secondary to relational pathways, this suggests that digital channels are becoming an increasingly important entry point, expanding how people encounter collective giving without displacing the importance of personal connection.

**This reliance on peer advocacy is both a strength and a structural constraint. It enables trust-based, self-reinforcing growth but also means collective giving remains highly dependent on existing networks for visibility.** As a result, awareness beyond these networks remains limited, restricting broader diffusion. The challenge for the sector is therefore not only sustaining word-of-mouth growth but also widening awareness beyond it.

**Figure 2: How participants were introduced to their first collective giving group (Participant Survey)**



n = 175. Respondents could select multiple options.

# Demographics

This section provides an overview of the demographic profile of collective giving groups captured in this research. Understanding where groups are located and who participates in them offers important context for identifying both current strengths and areas for future growth.

## Geography

The headquarters of collective giving groups in the sample were predominantly located in metropolitan (capital city) areas, accounting for 78% of all groups.

78%

headquartered in capital cities

While this partly reflects where Australia's population is concentrated, it also mirrors longstanding disparities in philanthropic investment and access to services outside major cities. This concentration highlights an opportunity to grow collective giving in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Across the states, groups were relatively evenly distributed among the larger jurisdictions, with the highest proportions based in NSW (29%), SA (25%), Victoria (24%) and WA (18%). A smaller share were headquartered in Queensland (4%). No groups in this sample were headquartered in the ACT, NT or Tasmania.



Photo courtesy of NRCF Women's Giving Circle.

Importantly, where a group is based does not necessarily reflect where its funding reaches.

39%

give beyond their home state

13%

give internationally

While most groups are headquartered in metropolitan areas, 39% reported making grants beyond their home state or territory, including 13% that give internationally. This suggests that the impact of collective giving often extends well beyond the communities in which groups are based.

## Age

**Collective giving groups include participants across a range of age groups, though participation is most concentrated in mid-life cohorts. The most prominent age group is 41 – 65 years.**

Among leaders, 35% reported that this group makes up 'more than half' of their participants, 18% reported it comprises 'half', and a further 3% said it represents 'all' of their group. This pattern is consistent with findings with the 2017 research which found the 'majority of members in most groups were in the 41 – 65 years of age range' (Boyd & Partridge 2017:22).

Participation is lower among younger and older cohorts. In relation to younger participants, 68% of leaders indicated that those aged 18 – 40 years make up 'less than half' of their group. A similar pattern is evident for older participants, with 59% reporting that those aged 65 years and older comprise 'less than half' of their group.

Participants under 18 years are the least common age group overall. However, where they do participate, they often make up the entire cohort of a group (for example, Young Impact100 WA and Schools for Impact).

The potential for these programs to shape long-term giving behaviours in Australia

is significant. This is supported by the Raising Generous Humans (Samek 2025) report, that found generosity is learned and reinforced over time, with community playing a key role in shaping the norms children internalise about giving.

**Qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with collective giving leaders further highlight that participation is often reinforced through social reference points, with individuals more likely to engage when they see others in their own life stage actively involved in giving.**



*Students have more power than we sometimes realise. We're not too inexperienced to contribute meaningfully. In fact, our fresh perspectives, our energy and our willingness to challenge the status quo might be exactly what's needed.*

**Testimonial from Student Participant, Schools for Impact**



Photo courtesy of Circle of Friends Australia.

## Case Study: Young Impact100 WA



### Youth-focused giving program building empathy through hands-on collective philanthropy

Young Impact100 WA was established in 2014 by Paul and Sophie Chamberlain, alongside other Impact100 WA members, who wanted to raise their children with a strong sense of generosity and awareness of community needs. They adapted the Impact100 model to create a program that introduces children to collective giving in an engaging and age-appropriate way.

The program runs annually across September and October and is coordinated by two Impact100 WA volunteers. It includes a launch day, fundraising period, grants day and concludes at the main Impact100 WA grants celebration.

The launch day combines learning and connection, with activities such as 'speed-friending' and sessions on kindness, philanthropy and fundraising. Role-playing helps children practice asking for support, while a previous grant recipient shares the impact of funding, linking the children's efforts to real outcomes.

During the fundraising phase, each child is encouraged to raise at least \$100 through activities such as baking, craft sales or sponsored events, often supported by parents.

On grants day, coordinators select three finalist organisations from the broader Impact100 WA shortlist, based on relevance to young participants. Children work in groups to explore each organisation, create simple materials such as posters and develop a pitch presented to their peers. This collaborative process builds understanding and gives children a sense of ownership.

Voting mirrors the adult model, with each child placing a pebble in the jar for their preferred organisation. The program culminates at the main grants event, where participating children announce their recipient and present the grant. Funding is typically around \$4,000 in untied support and is awarded as a surprise. Past recipients include Lionheart Camp for Kids and Sam's Spares.

Impact100 WA is a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation (ACF), though the youth program manages its own finances. The program is intentionally kept to 20–30 participants, reflecting capacity, with interest in recruiting new coordinators.

Young Impact100 WA provides a practical entry point into philanthropy, helping children understand community needs, pool resources and make shared decisions, while building lifelong habits of giving.

## Case Study: Schools for Impact



### School-based program embedding collective giving to develop future changemakers

Impact100 Sydney launched Schools for Impact in 2022 to foster giving and community awareness among young people through a school-based model. The idea emerged when members involved their teenagers in grant making activities and observed strong curiosity about social issues that was not being developed in their everyday learning.

Since then, the program has grown to include 10 schools across Greater Sydney, engaging around 700 students. In its first year, it received local council seed funding to develop accessible learning materials and trial the fundraising and granting process with a small number of schools. In the following years, the program expanded, introduced an inter-school summit and refined its delivery, generating increasing interest through word of mouth.

Students are encouraged to raise \$100 each. The total funding pool is then divided equally, with each student allocated a 'credit card' amount. Drawing on its due diligence expertise, Impact100 Sydney selects four nonprofit finalists. The program culminates in an inter-school summit where students hear pitches, participate in a Q&A and decide how to allocate their funds across the finalists.

Equity underpins the model. Students are not excluded if they cannot meet the \$100 target, and schools participate regardless of how much they raise. The program is open to public, private and Catholic schools, with all participants treated equally.

Initially delivered by volunteers, the program expanded significantly after two foundations funded a part-time Program Coordinator, improving its reach and consistency.

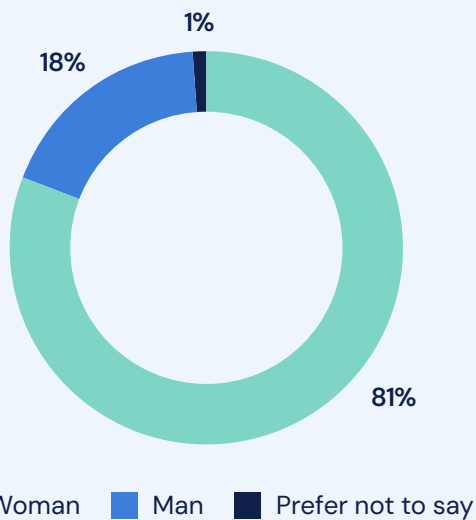
Evaluation data shows strong outcomes. Students report increased understanding of social issues, greater motivation to act and a stronger sense of community connection. The program also fosters peer learning and attracts an even gender balance – notable in a sector that often skews female.

Looking ahead, Impact100 Sydney is refining the model before expanding further. It is strengthening student co-design, supported by a newly established student advisory board, and exploring ways to engage regional schools. The long-term goal is to develop a scalable model that builds the next generation of informed and engaged givers.

## Gender

Collective giving in Australia is strongly women-led. 81% of respondents identified as women, 18% as men and 1% preferred not to say.

**Figure 3: Gender identity of collective giving group participants (Participant Survey)**



n = 165

This gender profile is a defining feature of the sector and closely shapes its culture, participation patterns and leadership structures. It also aligns with broader international gender trends in collective giving (Loson-Ceballos & Layton 2024) and recent Australian evidence from the She Gives National Research:



*Women consistently told us they like to give together, and women embedded in giving networks show greater confidence, collective influence and intention to give more. Nurturing the networks and platforms that enable women to experience giving together, and mobilising around shared interests, can lead to accelerated impact. Community foundations and collective giving networks, so influential during the She Gives campaign, are proven models for the effectiveness of inclusive, collaborative approaches to giving. By investing in convening and coordination as core infrastructure, and by growing and normalising collective giving models, the sector can translate the joy women feel when giving collaboratively into more giving, enabling positive social change at the scale women around Australia have told us they are ready to lead.*

**(Smith, Freeman & Melville 2026, p.16)**

Further, in Australia, women are poised to inherit and control a significant share of the nation's \$5.4 trillion wealth transfer over the next 20 years (JBWere 2024b:3).

In this context, collective giving represents an important mechanism through which women are already participating in and shaping philanthropy at scale. Understanding this dynamic is therefore critical to understanding the future trajectory of giving in Australia, including how participation pathways, infrastructure and engagement strategies may need to evolve over time to support them.

## Income

Participants in collective giving groups generally reported relatively high levels of financial comfort. Overall, 71% described themselves as 'living comfortably on present income', while 20% reported 'getting by on present income'. A smaller proportion of 6% indicated that they were finding it difficult or very difficult to live on their present income. These findings are broadly consistent with Boyd & Partridge (2017), where 80% reported 'living comfortably', 17% 'getting by', and 3% 'finding it difficult' or 'very difficult'.

However, there are notable differences across age groups. Among participants aged in their 20s–40s, 33% described themselves as 'just getting by on present income', suggesting comparatively higher levels of financial pressure within this cohort.

This points to an important opportunity for collective giving to consider more inclusive entry points. Flexible contribution levels and non-financial pathways to participation (such as volunteering, skills-sharing or advocacy) may enable broader and more diverse engagement, particularly for younger participants or those experiencing financial constraints.

**Together, these findings point to a collective giving landscape that is established but not yet fully representative, offering clear opportunities for broadening participation across geography, age, income and gender over time.**



Photo courtesy of The Funding Network.

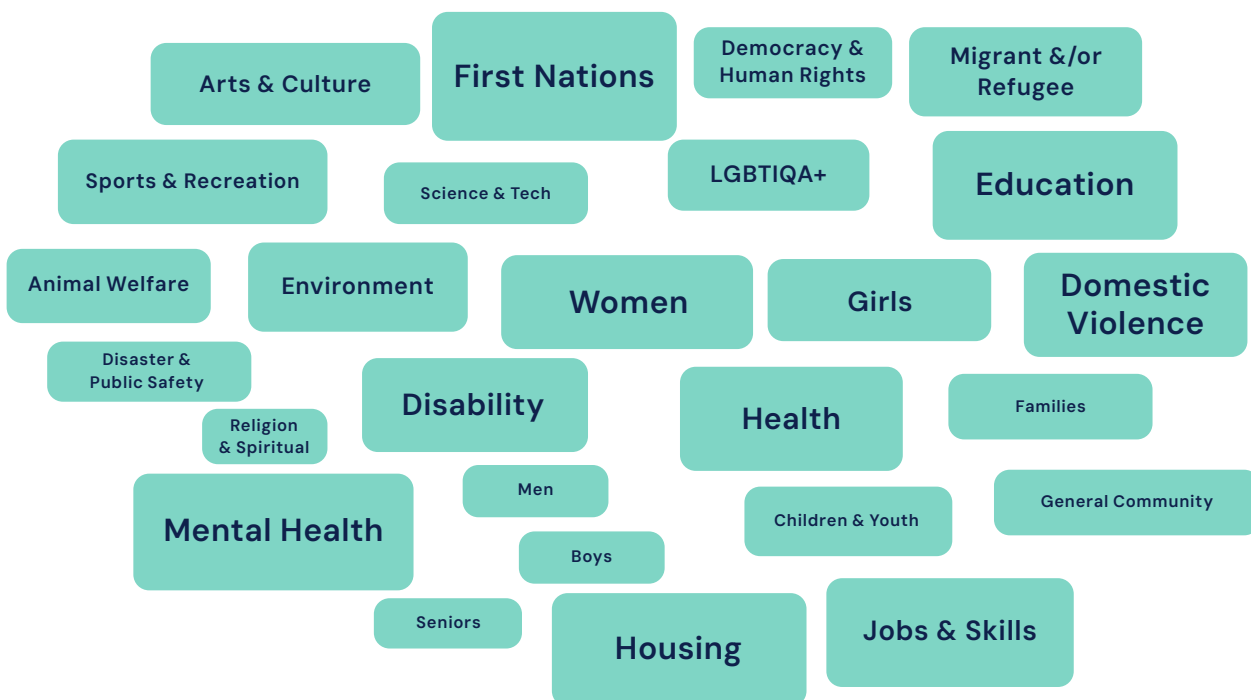
# Causes and communities supported

Leaders of collective giving groups were asked about the cause areas and communities supported through their giving. The findings show a broad and overlapping range of priorities, reflecting both community need and the diverse interests and values of members.

While many groups focus on core social and community outcomes – including education, health, housing and mental health – the results also indicate a strong emphasis on equity and inclusion, with significant support directed toward women and girls, First Nations communities, people with disability and people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

The overlap across multiple cause areas also suggests that many collective giving groups take an intersectional approach to addressing social issues.

**Figure 4: Cause areas and communities supported by collective giving groups (Leader Survey)**



**Figure description:** Word size reflects the relative proportion of survey respondents identifying each cause area or community group. Categories are broadly aligned with ACNC charity subtypes. Respondents could select multiple areas.

# Financial contribution and growth potential

Across the 55 groups included in this research sample, a total of \$76.6 million was donated and distributed between 1999 and 2025. In their most recent rounds of grant making, these groups collectively directed \$9.3 million to more than 300 organisations.

## Summary of sample group:

55 groups

>11,000  
participants

**\$76.6M**  
between 1999–2025

**\$9.3M**  
>300 grants  
in one year

This dataset represents a sample rather than the full population of collective giving groups in Australia. As such, it is not possible to reliably extrapolate these figures to estimate total national giving or participation. Further research would be required to build a comprehensive national picture. However, even within this sample alone, the scale of giving demonstrates that collective giving is already making a meaningful financial contribution.

## A distinct and increasingly significant component of Australia's organised philanthropy

There is substantial variation in the scale of giving across the sample. Annual distributions range from \$4,000 to \$2.25 million, with a median distribution of \$94,000 in the most recent grant making period.

**At the group level, 43% of surveyed groups distributed more than \$100,000 annually. In addition, a proportion (17%) reported distributions on par with or exceeding the average Private Ancillary Fund (PAF) annual distribution of \$363,999 in 2022–23 (McGregor-Lowndes, Balczun & Williamson, 2025:8).**

This comparison is notable given that PAFs represent a long-established and formalised structure within Australian philanthropy. The fact

that some collective giving groups operate at comparable levels of annual distribution suggests that, while highly variable in size, the model is not limited to small-scale giving. Rather, it is emerging as a distinct and increasingly significant component of organised philanthropy, operating alongside more traditional structures.



Photo courtesy of Groundswell.

## Collective giving participants demonstrate higher levels of generosity

At the individual level, participation in collective giving is associated with substantially higher levels of financial contribution.

While not all groups require a minimum donation, most do, with minimum contributions starting from approximately \$100 per year. The median contribution reported by participants is \$1,000 per person per year, compared to a median tax-deductible donation of \$150 per Australian taxpayer and \$94 in workplace giving in 2022–23 (ATO 2025).

Importantly, this higher level of giving appears to extend beyond contributions within the collective giving group itself. Rather than substituting for existing giving, participation is associated with increased overall engagement.



Photo courtesy of Five Bucks.

**34%**

of participants reported increasing their financial giving beyond their collective giving contributions

**26%**

reported increased volunteering

**36%**

expect to increase their financial giving and/or volunteering in future

These findings suggest that collective giving can act as a catalyst for broader civic participation, strengthening both financial and non-financial contributions. In this way, it may function as a gateway to deeper and more sustained engagement with philanthropy.

## Untapped potential within a high capacity but under-engaged system

The financial contribution of collective giving must be understood within the context of Australia's broader philanthropic landscape.

At present, the scale of collective giving remains modest relative to overall giving. The \$9.3 million distributed annually by groups in this sample sits alongside an estimated \$14.8 billion in donations and bequests to registered charities in Australia in 2024 (ACNC 2026:6). This comparison highlights both the current gap in scale and the significant potential for growth.

### Despite high levels of wealth, participation in philanthropy in Australia remains limited:

- Australia ranks second globally for median household wealth, yet total giving represents only 0.8% of GDP, below countries such as the United States (2.1%) and New Zealand (1.84%) (JBWere 2024b:9)
- Only 27.81% of taxpayers made a tax-deductible donation in 2022–23, contributing an average of 0.76% of taxable income (McGregor-Lowndes, Balczun & Williamson 2025:3)
- Among higher-income Australians, engagement is also uneven, with only 53% of those earning \$1 million or more claiming a tax deduction for giving (McGregor-Lowndes, Balczun & Williamson 2025:5)
- Just 1% of inheritances are directed to charity, significantly below levels in the United States and United Kingdom (JBWere 2024b:3)
- Professional advice remains an underutilised enabler of giving, with over 60% of financial advisers, lawyers and accountants rarely or never raising philanthropy with their clients, despite their critical role in shaping financial decisions, structuring wealth and guiding intergenerational transfer (Ruting 2026).

Together, these indicators point to a systemic gap: while capacity is high, giving is not yet consistently integrated into financial decision-making or wealth transfer practices. For many Australians, philanthropic giving remains occasional rather than routine. In this context, collective giving offers a practical pathway to strengthen participation.



Photo courtesy of Young Impact100 WA.

## The role of collective giving in unlocking participation

In this context, collective giving offers a practical pathway to strengthening participation by addressing key behavioural and structural barriers.

By enabling people to give in social, visible and participatory ways, collective giving:

- lowers informational and identity barriers to entry;
- reinforces giving behaviours through peer networks; and
- creates shared norms and reference points for participation.

These features position collective giving as a mechanism not only for increasing total giving, but for broadening and deepening engagement across the population.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the significance of collective giving lies not only in its current financial contribution, but in its potential to reshape participation in philanthropy over time, supporting a shift from episodic giving toward more sustained, collective and embedded practices.



Photo courtesy of NRCF Women's Giving Circle.

# Positive social outcomes for participants

Across the participant cohort, collective giving is associated with measurable shifts in how individuals engage with philanthropy and their communities. These impacts extend beyond financial contributions, influencing knowledge, confidence, social connection, wellbeing and broader civic participation.

Together, these outcomes highlight the role of collective giving not only as a mechanism for mobilising resources, but as a model for strengthening social capital and deepening individual engagement in community life.



Photo courtesy of The Funding Network.

# Impact on giving practice and knowledge

At an individual level, participation in collective giving is contributing to more informed, deliberate and impactful philanthropic behaviour.

69%

of participants have a greater awareness of the work of not-for-profits

55%

of participants have a greater understanding of the cause areas they care about

53%

of participants felt more informed and deliberate in their personal giving

48%

of participants had a greater understanding of not-for-profit needs

Qualitative findings reinforce these results. Participants often described entering collective giving with limited experience or confidence in philanthropic giving and subsequently developing a clearer understanding of social issues and how to support them. This increased confidence enabled many to grow, and more intentionally direct, their contributions.

**The research also suggests that, at a group level, collective giving groups are reshaping conventional funding practices.**

Qualitative findings indicated that many groups:

- Supported organisations and projects with general operating support, indicating a shift away from more restricted funding approaches to trust-based practices;

- Gave to organisations and projects that they considered would otherwise struggle to attract funding through conventional philanthropic channels;
- Prioritised organisations with leadership that reflects the communities they serve, demonstrating a strong emphasis on lived experience.

These findings are consistent with evidence from the United States, which suggests that collective giving groups 'give differently', particularly in relation to whose leadership is prioritised, how decisions are made and the degree of flexibility and trust embedded in grant making (Loson-Ceballos & Layton, 2024; Krause & Layton, 2024).



*We trust that the people on the ground doing the work understand locally led solutions. If they believe in them, we believe in them, too.*

**Barbie-Lee Kirby, Executive Director,  
First Nations Futures**



*I think it's crucial for people with lived experience and cultural knowledge to play a major role in making decisions about what's best for their communities. I honestly believe philanthropy can do this. It's just about wanting to, and being able to, create the space for that to happen.*

**Raisera McCulloch, Founder,  
Indigenous Giving Circle**

# Impact on wellbeing and skills development

## Impact on wellbeing

Collective giving contributes positively to participant wellbeing, reinforcing a sense of purpose, connection and personal efficacy. It also provides an element of enjoyment, highlighting that giving can be both meaningful and rewarding.

- 71% of participants felt they could make a difference
- 59% of participants indicated they had fun while giving with others
- 59% of participants have expanded and strengthened their personal and professional networks
- 42% of participants reported a stronger sense of purpose



*We wanted to make giving feel optimistic and fun. Encouraging people to give from a place of hope rather than grief or guilt and, importantly, to do it with others; to remind them they are not alone in a world that can often feel overwhelming.*

**Brianna Kerr, Founder, Five Bucks**



*People will thrive if they have a sense of community and belonging. Our giving circle is a vehicle for that. I love how it connects members with the real issues that women and girls face in our community and how they are hearing and seeing the impact of the part they're playing in community.*

**Amy Colli, Coordinator,  
Northern Rivers Community Foundation  
Women's Giving Circle**



*It's always wonderful to see circle members get together, meet, discuss, chat and brainstorm, especially when we bring some of our grant recipients into the room to tell their stories. That makes the importance of the causes we're supporting and our effect on communities real. And it brings joy, gratitude and excitement to this work that we're doing.*

**Stephen Pfeiffer, Grants Manager,  
Groundswell**



*When we set out, we didn't anticipate what Schools for Impact would do for student mental health. But we've seen a great benefit for kids who come into the program feeling hopeless about the world around them then feel like they have tools and knowledge to make a difference in the world. They develop this real sense of empowerment and connection.*

**Corinne Kemp, Co-Chair Impact100  
Sydney**

## Impact on skills development

Beyond wellbeing, participation in collective giving also supports skill development.

- 21% of participants developed their leadership skills
- 20% of participants developed new professional skills

Qualitative evidence further suggests that some participants have transitioned into roles within the philanthropic sector or advanced their careers through the networks and experience gained through collective giving.

These outcomes demonstrate that collective giving can function as a platform for both personal and professional development, contributing to the development of skills and capability within the not-for-profit sector.



Photo courtesy of The Funding Network.

# Compounded benefits for volunteers

Participants who volunteer within their collective giving groups report consistently stronger outcomes across both giving practice and wellbeing than those who do not volunteer.

## Giving practice and knowledge

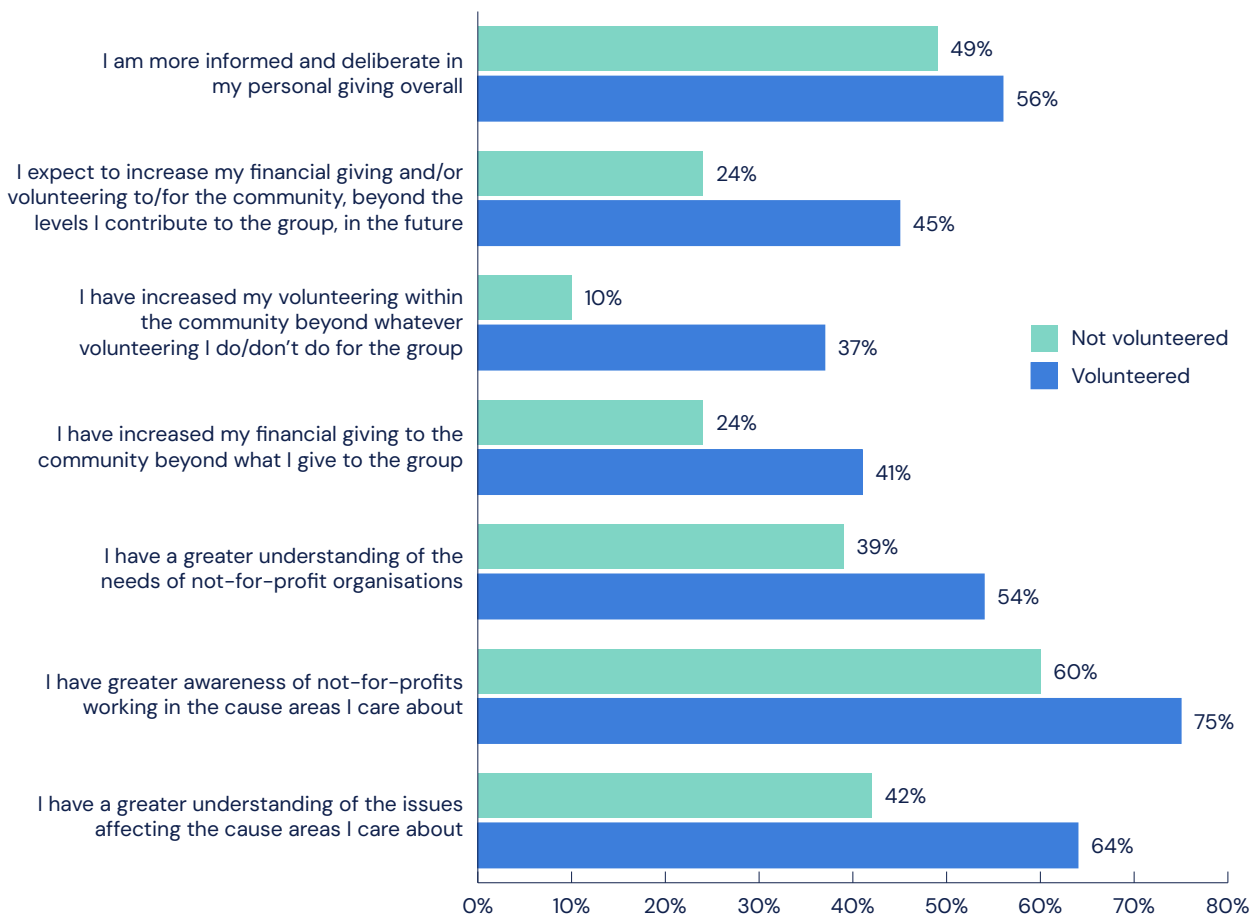
Compared with non-volunteers, volunteers are more likely to report the following:

- ➔ Greater awareness of not-for-profit work (75% of volunteers vs 60% of non-volunteers)
- ➔ Greater understanding of the cause areas they care about (64% vs 42%)
- ➔ Feeling more informed and deliberate in their personal giving (56% vs 49%)

- ➔ Greater understanding of not-for-profit needs (54% vs 39%)

These findings suggest that volunteering strengthens participants' understanding of community needs and increases their confidence and capability as givers.

**Figure 5: Practice and knowledge changes experienced by participants if they volunteered for a collective giving group or not (Participant Survey)**



n = 175. Respondents could select multiple options.

## Wellbeing and skills development

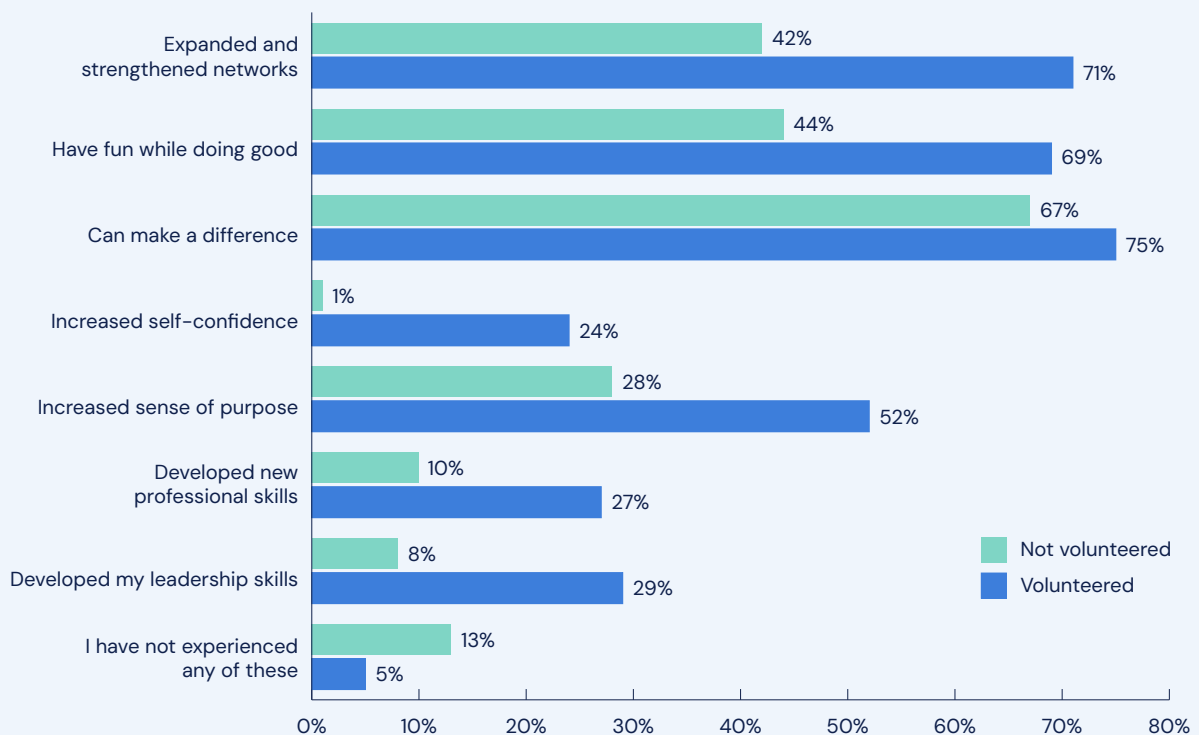
Differences in wellbeing outcomes between volunteers and non-volunteers are even more pronounced.

The largest difference relates to social connection, with volunteers +29 percentage points more likely than non-volunteers to report expanded and strengthened networks.

The smallest, though still meaningful, difference relates to participants feeling that they can make a difference, with volunteers +8 percentage points more likely than non-volunteers to report this outcome.

Overall, the findings indicate that volunteering not only deepens giving behaviours, but also strengthens participants' sense of connection, belonging and personal agency.

**Figure 6: Wellbeing and skill changes experienced by participants if they volunteered for a collective giving group or not (Participant Survey)**



*n = 175. Respondents could select multiple options.*

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that collective giving has a meaningful and multi-dimensional impact on participants.

Beyond increasing both financial and non-financial contributions, collective giving strengthens participants' confidence, knowledge and capability to give effectively, while also enhancing wellbeing and social connection.

Importantly, these benefits are evident across a broad range of participants, including those who do not volunteer, but are consistently amplified among those who do.

**By strengthening giving behaviours, building giving agency and fostering social connection, collective giving contributes to the development of social capital and supports more engaged, informed and connected communities.**

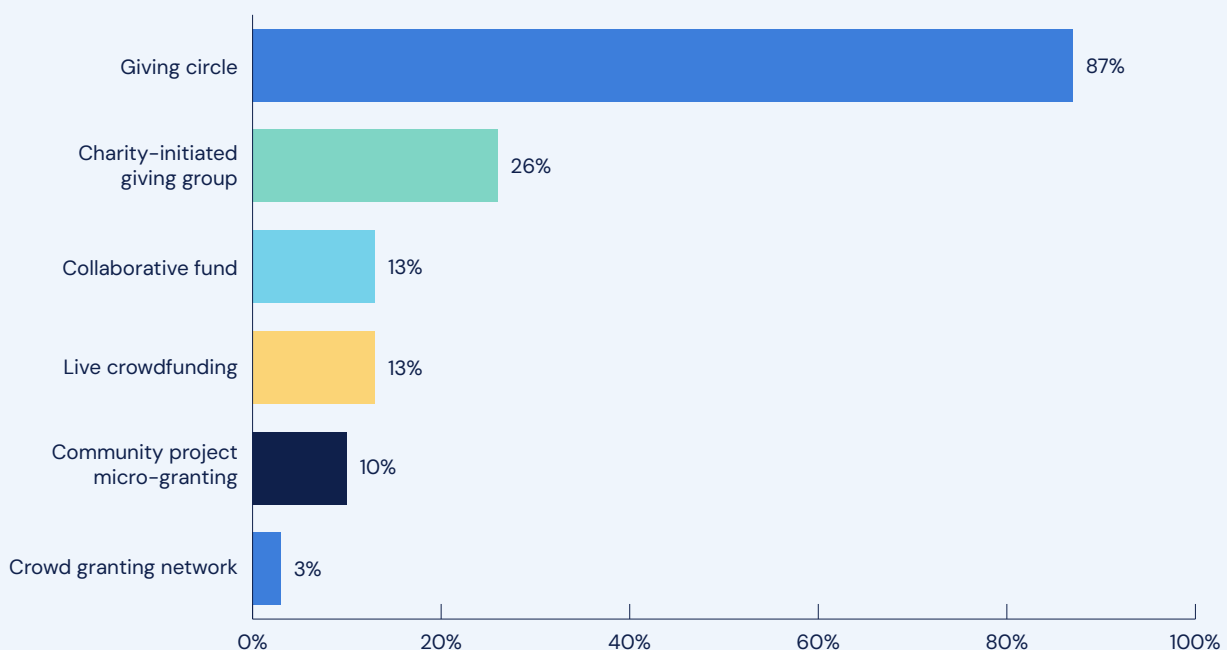
# Operating models

In the Leader Survey, respondents were asked to identify the operational models that best describe their group. These included established Australian models, such as giving circles and collaborative funds, as well as additional models identified in the Patterns in Tapestry Report (Krause & Layton 2024:30). Respondents could select multiple categories, reflecting that many groups combine elements of different models in practice.

## Overview of operating models

- **Giving circle:** a member-based model where participants pool financial contributions over time and collectively decide how funds are distributed. Typically includes ongoing engagement, learning and shared decision-making
- **Live crowdfunding:** an event-based model in which individuals gather to hear pitches and make funding commitments in real time. Participation is generally open rather than membership based
- **Collaborative fund:** a pooled fund supported by larger contributions (often \$5,000+ annually) from individuals and/or institutions, with more formal governance and a strategic, longer-term funding approach
- **Crowd granting network:** a group that meets regularly (e.g. quarterly) to pool modest contributions and collectively decide which organisation receives funding at each gathering. Participation is often open or rotating
- **Community project micro-granting:** a model focused on small-scale grants for community-led, creative, or early-stage initiatives, often outside traditional nonprofit structures
- **Charity-initiated giving group:** a model established by a charity in which donors pool funds and collectively decide how funding is allocated within that organisation's programs or projects

Figure 7: Collective giving group operating models in the sample (Leader Survey)



n = 39. Respondents could select multiple options.

Alongside these structural models, some groups described orientations that shape how and why they give. Two key orientations emerged:

- ➔ **Belonging through identity:** giving grounded in shared identity (e.g. cultural background, gender or faith), with decision-making shaped by lived experience and community connection
- ➔ **Organising for social change:** giving focused on advancing equity and structural change, often prioritising root causes and power dynamics

Within the sample, 8% identified with a belonging-through-identity orientation and 10% with a social change orientation. These are not standalone models, but lenses that influence how different structures operate in practice.

While many groups draw on more than one model, each has distinct features. The following sections outline how these models operate in practice and the distinct roles they play in the broader ecosystem.



Photo courtesy of Indigenous Giving Circle.

## Giving circles

Giving circles are the most prevalent model in Australia, with 87% of respondents identifying as one. At their core, giving circles pool contributions over time and bring members together to decide collectively how funds are distributed.

This structure supports more than financial pooling. Regular participation creates opportunities for shared learning, leadership development and skill-building, while fostering a sense of ownership and community among members.

The model is also highly adaptable. Since Boyd & Partridge's foundational (2017) research, giving circles have evolved into a flexible framework that accommodates a wide range of approaches. Variation is evident across:

- ➔ **Contribution levels:** from low-barrier models (e.g. Five Bucks at ~\$5 per week) to higher-value models (e.g. Impact100 at ~\$1,000 per year)
- ➔ **Decision-making structures:** from full member voting to delegated committees or advisory panels
- ➔ **Funding focus:** from responsive, member-led giving to sustained focus on causes or communities

Operational arrangements also differ. Some groups operate independently, while others are hosted within community foundations, charities or institutional partners such as QIMR Berghofer (Josephine Circle), People First Bank Foundation (Women and Change), and Australian Philanthropic Services (The Purpose Fund).

Taken together, this flexibility helps explain the dominance of the giving circle model, enabling it to operate across diverse communities, contribution levels and philanthropic goals.

## Case Study: Impact100 Melbourne



### **Pioneering giving circle demonstrating resilience and adaptation in volunteer philanthropy**

The introduction of the Impact100 giving circle model in the 2010s marked a significant moment in the development of structured collective giving in Australia. The model – bringing together at least 100 donors, each contributing \$1,000 to fund a \$100,000 grant – had gained traction in the United States as an accessible and high-impact form of philanthropy.

After meeting members of Impact100 Sonoma in California in 2011, supported by a Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA) research scholarship, James Boyd introduced the model to Australia. New chapters soon emerged across several states. While initially framed as a women’s model, chapters were open to all individuals.

Impact100 Melbourne was one of the earliest Australian chapters, launching in 2013. Its early major grants played an important role in strengthening recipient organisations. For example, the River Nile Learning Centre (RNLC), a volunteer-run organisation supporting immigrant African women, used its initial \$100,000 grant to employ a Director. This provided critical operational leadership and stability, enabling the organisation to grow. The relationship also extended beyond funding, with an Impact100 Melbourne committee member joining RNLC’s board and later becoming its Chair.

Over time, the group experienced challenges typical of volunteer-led initiatives. As members’ careers progressed and personal responsibilities increased, including caring for children or ageing parents, capacity shifted. This highlighted the importance of succession planning and the ongoing challenge of recruiting volunteers with the time and skills to lead. The group continued to make grants, though at reduced levels.

These pressures were compounded by COVID-19. In response, Impact100 Melbourne, together with its host organisation, Greater Melbourne Foundation (GMF), deliberately paused to reflect on its model and learn from others facing similar challenges.

This period informed a relaunch in 2025, with more realistic expectations around growth and volunteer capacity. GMF has taken a more active role, providing administrative and venue support, promoting the group internally and externally, and introducing it to potential donors.

Impact100 Melbourne’s experience highlights both the potential and fragility of volunteer-led collective giving. Its decision to pause, adapt and relaunch demonstrates an ability to respond to changing conditions, while also underscoring the important role community foundations can play in sustaining and strengthening such models.

## Case Study: Five Bucks



### Low-cost giving circle engaging younger donors through community and voting

Founded in 2024 by Brianna Kerr, Five Bucks is a giving circle that brings members – known as ‘buckaroos’ – together to pool donations and collectively decide which organisations to fund.

The model is designed to lower barriers to participation, with members contributing just \$5 per week. In doing so, Five Bucks has addressed a challenge many organisations face: engaging younger donors in regular giving.

Before launching, Brianna surveyed 159 people aged 23–36 to better understand their attitudes towards philanthropy. The research showed that giving was often sporadic and deprioritised. Key barriers included distrust of organisations, compassion fatigue, uncertainty about impact and the belief that small contributions make little difference. However, more than 80% of respondents expressed a desire to give more and felt financially able to do so.

Five Bucks was created to unlock this latent interest. It gained early traction, supported by a deliberately optimistic brand designed to make giving feel accessible and positive. Six months after launch, a \$5,000 contribution from a private donor enabled a multi-day co-design workshop on Cockatoo Island, where 20 members helped shape the organisation’s identity and approach.

The model has since grown to more than 700 members, skewing distinctly younger. Its simplicity is central to its appeal – a low weekly contribution, automated payments and a clear collective purpose. The giving circle structure amplifies individual donations, builds community and increases confidence in funding decisions.

Five Bucks focuses on two interconnected areas: strengthening social foundations and protecting the ecological ceiling, inspired by Doughnut Economics and reflecting younger donors’ interest in addressing interconnected social and environmental issues.

Structurally, it operates as a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation (ACF), providing governance, administrative and grant making support. In 2025, Five Bucks distributed \$62,000 in grants, with \$124,000 planned for 2026. Funding decisions are made by the community through a shortlisting process followed by preferential voting.

Entirely volunteer-run, Five Bucks is exploring how to sustain and grow its model, including developing additional giving pathways and potentially securing core funding. It demonstrates how thoughtful design and collective participation can activate a new generation of donors.

## Live crowdfunding

Live crowdfunding represents 13% of groups in the sample but accounts for a disproportionately large share of funds raised annually. For example, The Funding Network (TFN) distributed \$1.18 million in 2025, compared with a median of \$94,000 across all groups in the Leader Survey.

This model is typically structured around live events where charities present to an audience, and participants make funding commitments in real time. Participation is open, allowing individuals to engage without ongoing membership or long-term commitment.

The immediacy and visibility of the format can generate strong momentum, enabling significant funds to be raised within a single event, with additional giving often occurring after the event.

Live crowdfunding therefore plays a distinct role within the philanthropy ecosystem: it is particularly effective at mobilising large amounts of funding quickly, engaging new donors and raising visibility for featured organisations.

Alongside membership-based models, it contributes to a diversified collective giving landscape in which different models perform complementary functions.



Photo courtesy of The Funding Network.

## Case Study: The Funding Network



### Live crowdfunding events mobilising donors and funding grassroots organisations

The Funding Network (TFN) was established in the UK in 2002 to host live crowdfunding events where charities present their work to potential supporters. In 2013, Lisa Cotton, alongside UK co-founder Steve Lawrence AO, introduced the model to Australia. Since then, TFN has grown into Australia's largest collective giving group, raising around \$32 million to support more than 630 programs.

TFN Australia began with three pilot events in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. At the time, there was uncertainty about whether Australian donors would be comfortable making public pledges in a live setting, with initial targets set at around \$10,000 per organisation. The success of these early events demonstrated the viability of the model and its ability to engage new donors.

With support from TFN UK and early corporate partners, TFN expanded nationally. It established a paid team and now delivers approximately a dozen events each year across multiple cities. Leadership continuity has supported this growth. Kristen Lark, involved since the pilot phase, has progressed from General Manager to become TFN's third CEO.

TFN events are open to all, with no membership requirement. At each event, three grassroots organisations present their work. After pitching, they leave the room while attendees make pledges, called out publicly and guided by a host who builds energy and momentum. Participants can also choose to give privately, online or not at all.

For participating organisations, TFN offers more than funding. Events provide early-stage capital, increased visibility, new networks and improved fundraising capability, often helping organisations build confidence and unlock future support.

Despite its success, TFN faces ongoing operational challenges. Delivering events at scale requires significant administrative effort, including managing pledges, reporting, marketing and donor engagement. While TFN retains a capped portion of funds raised to support these costs, sustaining operations remains a key consideration.

TFN demonstrates how a simple, scalable model can mobilise large numbers of donors and create a shared, high-energy giving experience that supports grassroots organisations.

## Collaborative funds

Collaborative funds also represent 13% of groups and are distinguished by higher contribution levels, typically ranging from \$5,000 per year to \$65,000 over three years, and up to \$500,000 for one group (Leader Survey).

These higher entry points enable the formation of larger pooled capital, supporting more strategic and coordinated approaches to funding.

Collaborative funds generally operate with formal governance structures, with decision-making often delegated to advisory committees, steering groups or professional staff. Funding strategies are typically developed over longer time horizons.

Rather than focusing solely on discrete annual grants, these funds often adopt the following:

- multi-year funding approaches
- thematic or portfolio strategies
- coordinated responses to complex challenges

This positions collaborative funds as a model oriented toward system-level impact, complementing more participatory and engagement-focused models such as giving circles.



Photo courtesy of NRCF Women's Giving Circle.

## Case Study: Groundswell



### Tiered climate giving model linking everyday donors to systemic impact

Founded in 2020 by climate advocates Clare Herschell, Anna Rose and Arielle Gamble, Groundswell enables everyday people to support effective climate solutions without feeling overwhelmed by the scale and complexity of the challenge.

Its starting point was the Community Giving Circle (CGC) designed to meet donors at different levels of readiness and capacity. There is no minimum contribution to join and all members have equal voting rights over how pooled funds are distributed. Reflecting the importance of First Nations knowledge in climate solutions, membership is free for First Nations participants, an approach that has attracted more than 60 members.

In response to feedback from these members, Groundswell launched Caring for Country in 2022, a collective giving initiative supporting First Nations-led climate justice solutions. The model was guided by a paid advisory committee of First Nations leaders with expertise in community-led approaches. Applying trust-based philanthropy, donors contributed with the understanding that the advisory group determined how funds were allocated.

In 2024, Groundswell introduced the Major Giving Circle (MGC), supported by Stephen

Pfeiffer. Initially a CGC member, he became deeply engaged in climate philanthropy and committed to three years of core funding. He also helped design the MGC to engage high-capacity donors and support more systemic change.

The MGC is a hybrid model, combining features of giving circles and collaborative funds. Around 20 members each contribute \$50,000 annually and collectively decide funding allocations, supported by expert advisory input and staff. This structure enables larger-scale, strategic funding while maintaining donor participation.

Six years on, Groundswell has grown into a sophisticated, tiered organisation with around 500 members and more than \$7 million raised. Its funding supports advocacy to stop coal and gas expansion, accelerate renewable energy and advance climate justice.

Groundswell has five paid staff, with operating costs covered by private donors, many of whom began as CGC members. Like many organisations, it continues to face challenges securing multi-year funding and expanding its donor base, while ensuring staff can focus on climate work rather than ongoing fundraising.

## Crowd granting networks and community project micro-granting

Representing 3% (crowd granting networks) and 10% (community project micro-granting) of the sample, these models operate at a smaller scale but play a distinct role within the ecosystem.

Both are characterised by the following:

- lower contribution thresholds
- lighter governance structures
- flexible and accessible participation

Crowd granting networks bring participants together regularly (e.g. quarterly) to pool modest contributions (around \$100 per year, based on the Leader Survey) and collectively decide where funds are directed.

Community project micro-granting focuses on small-scale, community-led initiatives, often supporting grassroots ideas, creative projects and early-stage efforts that fall outside traditional nonprofit structures.

The emphasis in both models is on accessibility, immediacy and local engagement, rather than scale or formalisation. As a result, they function as low-barrier entry points into philanthropy, particularly for first-time donors, younger participants, or communities where philanthropic engagement is still emerging.



Photo courtesy of Five Bucks.

## Case Study: The Awesome Foundation



### Decentralised micro-grants enabling local creative community-driven ideas to flourish

The Awesome Foundation is a decentralised global giving network founded in 2009, built on a simple premise – advancing ‘the interest of awesome in the universe’ through small, community-led micro-grants. The model has expanded internationally through independently run local chapters that support projects promoting creativity, experimentation, connection and community impact.

In Australia, the network includes six chapters across New South Wales and South Australia: Adelaide, Sydney, Fleurieu, Lake Macquarie, Lower Hunter and Newcastle. Most chapters operate through a collective contribution model, where 10 or more trustees contribute \$100 per month to create a \$1,000 grant pool.

Chapters determine what qualifies as ‘awesome’ locally, awarding grants directly to individuals or groups for projects that reflect their community’s interests and priorities. In Adelaide, the model has been adapted to include two funded trustee positions, enabling people without the financial capacity to contribute to still participate in decision-making.

The structure is intentionally lightweight. Chapters operate autonomously with minimal administrative requirements, informal decision-making processes and no ongoing

reporting obligations. This enables funds to be distributed quickly and with limited barriers.

Since launching in Australia, the chapters have distributed significant funding to grassroots initiatives. In New South Wales, Awesome Sydney (established 2011) has granted more than \$160,000, Awesome Newcastle (2015) over \$120,000, and Awesome Lake Macquarie (2019) around \$60,000. Awesome Lower Hunter, launched in 2025, has distributed \$4,000 to date.

In South Australia, Awesome Adelaide (established 2014) has contributed approximately \$120,000, while the Fleurieu chapter, established in 2020, has distributed around \$60,000.

Beyond the grants themselves, chapters also provide non-financial support, including mentorship, volunteering and connections that help ideas grow.

The model’s flexibility allows it to operate effectively across both metropolitan and regional contexts. By prioritising trust, accessibility and speed, the Awesome Foundation enables communities to support early-stage, experimental and highly localised ideas that may not align with traditional funding structures.

## Charity-initiated giving circles

A notable development in the Australian landscape is the emergence of charity-initiated giving groups.

In this model, a charity establishes a giving group in which donors pool funds and collectively decide how resources are allocated across a defined set of projects within the organisation.

Across the sample, these groups have collectively distributed \$9.6 million since founding, including \$1.2 million in the most recent year, representing 13% of the \$9.3 million distributed by all groups in that period.

This model combines elements of collective giving, such as pooled contributions and participatory decision-making, with more traditional donor engagement structures. However, unlike other models, funding is directed internally, aligned with the host organisation's mission and strategic priorities.

As such, charity-initiated groups illustrate how collective giving principles are being adopted and adapted within institutional settings.



Photo courtesy of Groundswell.

## Case Study: WoImpact1000



### Collective giving model advancing self-determined funding by Women of Colour

WoImpact1000 was initiated by Women of Colour Australia (WoCA) as a long-term philanthropic initiative grounded in the principle of 'Philanthropy by Women of Colour, for Women of Colour.' It aims to mobilise 1,000 Women of Colour across Australia, each contributing \$1,000 annually, to collectively raise \$1 million per year by 2035.

While it draws on the language and spirit of collective giving – shared purpose, solidarity and pooled resources – WoImpact1000 is not a traditional giving circle. All contributions are directed to Women of Colour Australia (WoCA), and only founding donors help guide how funds are used to advance WoCA's mission, reflecting a more centralised decision-making model than in many collective giving approaches.

At its core, the initiative is a form of trust-based philanthropy that shifts both resources and decision-making power. Rather than positioning Women of Colour as beneficiaries, it reframes them as contributors, funders and decision-makers. In doing so, it challenges traditional philanthropic structures and redistributes power within the system.

The model is explicitly framed as an act of collective self-determination. It seeks to build a sustained funding base that supports

leadership development, advocacy, scholarships and the often unseen 'work behind the work' required for long-term impact – including organisational capacity and systems change efforts.

Designed as a 10-year initiative, WoImpact1000 reflects a deliberately long-term approach. Its ambition is to steadily grow participation towards its 2035 target, building a national network of Women of Colour actively resourcing structural change.

Unlike many collective giving models, governance and distribution are embedded within the recipient organisation. Funds are not separated from decision-making; instead, they flow directly into WoCA, a community-led organisation accountable to those it serves. This integrated structure reinforces trust and alignment between funding and impact.

The initiative also represents a deliberate narrative shift – moving away from deficit-based framings and recognising Women of Colour as active architects of philanthropic systems and resource distribution.

WoImpact1000 demonstrates how collective giving and trust-based philanthropy can be combined to support long-term, community-led change.

## Identity and social change orientations

Belonging through identity and organising for social change describe how groups give, rather than how they are structured. These orientations can sit across multiple models, including giving circles and collaborative funds.

Groups centred on identity bring together participants with shared cultural, gender or faith-based connections. Decision-making is grounded in lived experience and community priorities, with the defining feature being who is centred in the process of giving and impact.

Groups oriented toward social change focus on longer-term structural outcomes, often applying an explicit equity or justice lens. This may include prioritising root causes, addressing power imbalances and supporting systemic change.

While relatively small in number, these approaches demonstrate how collective giving can strengthen representation, voice and agency within philanthropy, shaping not only where funds go, but how decisions are made.



Photo courtesy of Rainbow Giving Australia.

## Case Study: Circle of Friends Australia



### Volunteer-led circles providing direct relational support to refugees

Circle of Friends Australia (COFA) was established in 2002 by Australians visiting the Woomera and Baxter Detention Centres in South Australia. While initially supporting refugees and asylum seekers in detention, the group recognised that many people faced significant hardship after release, often without the support needed to settle into the community.

They continued assisting individuals and families and began forming local 'circles of support' across Adelaide. In its early years, COFA was auspiced by the Australian Refugee Association (ARA), enabling tax-deductible donations. In 2013, it became an independent charity governed by a management committee focused on governance and donor engagement.

COFA is distinctive within Australia's collective giving landscape. It operates as a decentralised, volunteer-led network focused on direct support to individuals rather than grant making. Today, there are around 25 active circles across Australia, varying in size from a handful to several dozen members.

Funds are directed towards practical needs that support independence and stability, including rent, utilities, education, emergency assistance, family reunification and essential items such as laptops or driving lessons. Volunteers

also provide hands-on support, including accompanying people to appointments, navigating Medicare requirements linked to visa conditions, resolving service provider issues and assisting with course enrolments.

Circles operate autonomously. While leaders meet every two months to share insights, each group determines how it raises and distributes funds. Decision-making is consensus-based, with participants agreeing collectively rather than relying on majority vote. Revenue depends on each circle's ability to attract donors, run fundraising activities and in some cases, secure grants.

COFA is one of the few groups in this research to have received a bequest, enabling multi-year support, particularly for rent for asylum seekers at risk of homelessness.

A key challenge is reliance on older volunteers. While highly committed, changes in life stage, health or caring responsibilities can affect continuity and require ongoing recruitment.

COFA aims to attract younger volunteers, expand its supporter base and build connections with like-minded organisations. It demonstrates how collective giving can operate at a deeply local and relational level, mobilising shared resources to meet immediate settlement needs.

## Case Study: Rainbow Giving Australia



### Sophisticated multi-channel funding model advancing LGBTQIA+ community-led impact

Rainbow Giving Australia (RGA) is one of Australia's most advanced collective giving organisations, centred on LGBTQIA+ communities. It was established in 2024 through the merger of GiveOUT and the Aurora Group, combining two established initiatives with complementary strengths.

GiveOUT originated in 2016, when LGBTQIA+ advocates launched The Channel, a giving circle supporting queer communities. Inspired by the success of GiveOUT Day in the United States – a one-day online crowdfunding campaign – the group adopted and rebranded the model in Australia. At the same time, the Aurora Foundation, founded nearly 30 years earlier by LGBTQIA+ leaders in Sydney, provided grants to NSW-based organisations and ran the Aurora Ball as its primary fundraiser.

Recognising their shared goals and complementary capabilities, the two organisations merged following a detailed strategic planning process. Across their combined history, they have raised almost \$4.5 million through a range of fundraising mechanisms.

RGA now operates two grant programs. Amplify Pride provides up to \$60,000 annually in untied funding to support larger, strategic initiatives

addressing systemic issues. Ignite Pride offers smaller, untied grants of up to \$20,000 for grassroots and place-based projects. Applications for both streams are assessed together by a working group of LGBTQIA+ individuals, including board and staff, who apply due diligence and prioritise queer-led organisations supporting under-resourced communities. Funding decisions are made through a consensus process and endorsed by the Board and co-funders.

Alongside grant making, RGA runs several national campaigns. GiveOUT Day features more than 130 organisations on a shared platform, enabling donors to give directly, with matched funding arranged by RGA. Sweat with Pride is a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign where participants commit to daily physical activity.

RGA operates with a small paid team supported by volunteers. Its development has been supported by key partnerships and funding, including Australian Communities Foundation, the Arcus Foundation, and major Australian funders such as Snow Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund. The Hashim Bequest also contributed to Aurora's growth and the eventual merger.

RGA's success is also driven by strong digital capability and its ability to engage younger donors, particularly those aged 18–40, through accessible participation and a vibrant, inclusive brand.

## First Nations leadership

Collective giving models that centre First Nations leadership highlight approaches in which funding decisions are grounded in community-defined priorities, cultural knowledge and lived experience.

These models often involve intentional shifts in decision-making power, placing authority with those closest to the issues being addressed and redistributing influence through trusted relationships.

They provide important insights for the broader philanthropic sector, particularly in relation to self-determination, participation and trust-based philanthropy. They also illustrate how collective giving can support more inclusive and community-led approaches to resource allocation.



Photo courtesy of Indigenous Giving Circle.

## Case Study: First Nations Futures



### Trust-based First Nations-led model redistributing wealth for long-term change

Kaytetye woman Rona Glynn-McDonald and Djugun man Louis Mokak founded First Nations Futures (FNF) in 2023 in response to the significant underfunding of First Nations communities, with only 1.5% of philanthropy going to organisations serving First Nations people and just 0.9% reaching First Nations-led organisations.

While at university, they witnessed the stark inequality of wealth distribution in Australia and the vastly different life outcomes shaped by background and access to resources. Motivated by this, they set out to create a First Nations economic justice organisation that challenges traditional funding systems and redistributes wealth to community-led initiatives.

Despite being newly established, FNF has grown rapidly, building a community of more than 750 donors and distributing over \$720,000.

Its model is intentionally ambitious. FNF commits to multi-year funding of \$40,000 annually for each community partner, First Nations-led organisations delivering locally driven initiatives. With 10 community partners, this requires at least \$400,000 in annual grant funding, alongside operating costs, including two paid staff.

Funding comes from several sources. Around 12 philanthropic organisations provide core or pooled funding, some supporting operations, others funding redistribution. This requires significant relationship management and distinguishes FNF through its structured fundraising approach.

Individual donors also contribute through the Impact Fund, giving anywhere from \$20 to \$20,000, with all funds directed to community partners. An endowment, supported by a major trust, provides an additional source of income.

FNF exemplifies trust-based philanthropy. Funding is untied and multi-year, allowing partners to focus on long-term outcomes rather than ongoing fundraising. Decisions are not donor-led, instead, a committee of around 10 First Nations people with lived experience determines allocations. The application process is intentionally low-burden, involving a short survey and informal engagement.

Looking ahead, FNF plans to grow its number of community partners and expand staff capacity. It also aims to build awareness of First Nations economic justice and demonstrate how collective giving can amplify individual contributions. Expanding corporate partnerships and exploring new fundraising approaches are key priorities for diversifying revenue.

## Case Study: Indigenous Giving Circle



### Indigenous-led giving model shifting decision-making power to communities

After more than a decade working in philanthropy, Pacifica woman Raisera McCulloch observed a persistent imbalance: Indigenous communities were often under-supported and rarely entrusted with flexible, self-determined funding. She became increasingly focused on how power in philanthropy could shift so that those closest to community need would guide funding decisions.

This resolve deepened in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd and the global conversations on racial justice. Raisera recognised that many people wanted to respond but lacked a trusted and effective way to do so.

In response, she founded the Indigenous Giving Circle (IGC) in 2020. Its purpose is not only to pool funds, but to create a safe, community-centred space where Indigenous issues can be understood and acted upon. Central to the model is a deliberate shift away from traditional donor-grantee hierarchies, authority rests with Indigenous leadership rather than funders.

IGC includes both members and non-member donors. Members contribute regularly without a minimum donation, but do not vote on funding decisions. Instead, allocations are determined by Indigenous representatives with lived

experience and community knowledge. Non-member donors can contribute to the pooled fund or direct their donation to selected recipients. This approach reflects trust-based philanthropy: once funds are granted, recipients retain full autonomy over their use.

Around 18 months after establishment, IGC became a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation (ACF), providing administrative and compliance support.

To date, IGC has supported several initiatives, including the Wiiyaan Story Project on Bundjalung Country, the First Nations Women's Fund, and an annual Indigenous Arts Grant supporting musicians and artists. It has also funded individuals directly, such as a \$30,000 grant to an Elder who had long provided pastoral care within Aboriginal communities, largely at personal cost.

Like many collective giving groups, IGC faces capacity constraints. As a volunteer-led initiative, and with Raisera balancing full-time work and motherhood, growth is limited by the ability to recruit and retain volunteers.

Looking ahead, Raisera aims to build a small, committed volunteer base, expand the donor network and explore corporate support. She is also considering a council grounded in Indigenous knowledge and eldership to strengthen governance as the organisation grows.

Taken together, these models illustrate a diverse and evolving collective giving landscape. While they differ in structure, scale and approach – from highly participatory giving circles to strategic collaborative funds and event-based crowdfunding – they share a common emphasis on pooling resources and engaging donors more directly in the funding process.

This diversity enables collective giving to reach a wide range of participants, from first-time donors seeking accessible entry points to more experienced philanthropists pursuing strategic

and system-level impact. It also allows the model to respond to different community contexts, funding needs and forms of participation.

The inclusion of identity-led, social change-oriented and First Nations-led approaches further highlights how collective giving can shift not only how funds are distributed, but who participates in decision-making and how priorities are defined.

As a result, collective giving is not a single model, but a flexible and expanding set of practices – one that is increasingly capable of strengthening participation, broadening representation and contributing to a more inclusive and responsive philanthropic system.

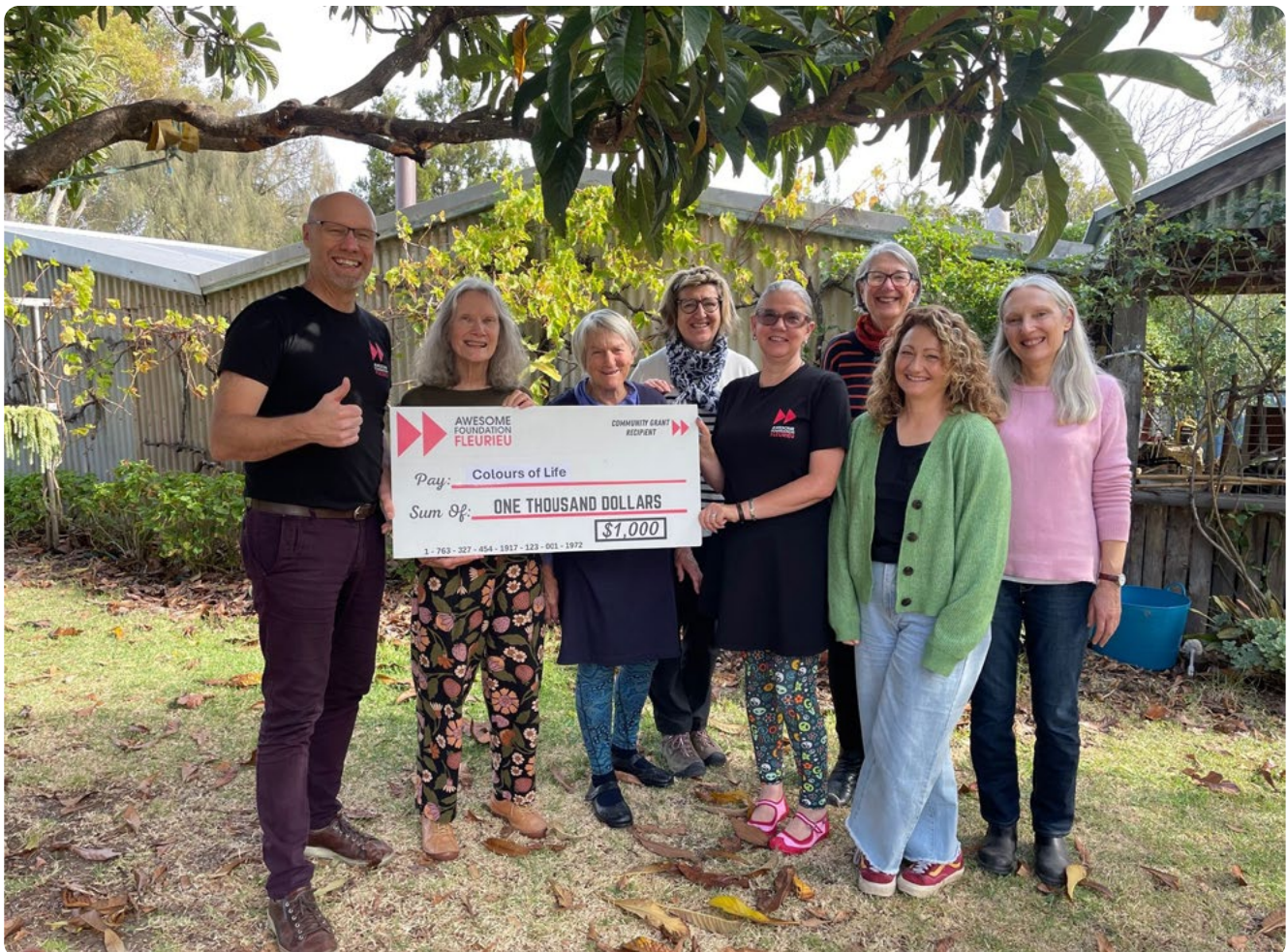


Photo courtesy of The Awesome Foundation.

# Operations management

**Collective giving groups operate across a wide range of organisational models, sizes and levels of ambition. As a result, their operational approaches vary significantly.**

At one end of the spectrum are small, volunteer-led groups with minimal administrative infrastructure. At the other are more formalised organisations with established governance, paid staff, multiple programmatic activities and more sophisticated use of technology systems.

These differences shape how groups manage costs, generate revenue and deliver activities beyond grant making. Some operate with very low overheads, directing all participant contributions to grants and relying entirely on volunteer effort. Others draw on a broader mix of revenue sources, including additional member contributions, philanthropic funding and corporate partnerships.



Photo courtesy of Indigenous Giving Circle.

## Operating costs

Operating costs vary widely and are influenced by factors such as group size, structural complexity, funds under management and overall operational ambition.

At the lower end, smaller groups typically incur minimal costs, often limited to basic expenses such as bank fees and light catering for events or meetings. Core functions – including donation receipting, grant selection, grant payments, website maintenance, participant engagement and event coordination – are frequently managed entirely by volunteers.

However, smaller size does not always equate to lower costs. Some membership-based groups managing substantial pooled funds, particularly collaborative funds, may incur higher expenses associated with professional staffing and more formal governance structures.

At the other end of the spectrum, costs tend to increase as groups scale or expand their activities. Leaders report that growing donor numbers, larger or more frequent events, and more complex communication and payment systems all increase operational demands. These factors often require more sustained capacity and, in some cases, paid staffing.

Resourcing decisions are closely tied to engagement priorities. Groups must balance investing in existing participant experience, recruiting new donors, and building relationships with partners and the communities they support. Findings from the qualitative research suggest that groups actively adjust their operational focus across these areas to manage available resources.



Photo courtesy of Impact100 Melbourne.

### Common cost categories

- Technology platforms for payments, communications and customer relationship management (CRM)
- Venue hire and catering for events
- External professional services (e.g. branding, website development, legal advice)
- Staff wages (e.g. participation stewardship, grant administration, assessment, financial processing)
- Host organisation fees (e.g. community foundation service charges)
- Credit card processing and insurance

### Emergence of paid staff

Volunteers are the primary drivers of collective giving groups, however the introduction of paid staff also represents an important mechanism for sustaining and scaling collective giving groups, as a complement to the contribution of volunteers (see also 'Critical Role of Volunteers').

- 50% of groups report having some paid staff
- The median number of staff is 1.8
- 80% of groups have two or fewer staff, with the largest reported team comprising seven people

For groups with paid staff, roles are typically broad and multi-functional. On average, staff cover four of the six key functional areas: general administration, fundraising, grant making, membership communications and stewardship, financial management and marketing.

**Notably, 22% of groups report staff covering all six functions, reflecting both the operational breadth of collective giving and the intentionally lean staffing models across the sector, given resource constraints.**



*I've been motivated to provide capacity funding [to collective giving groups] because I've seen how much difference it makes when people have the space and support to lead with care rather than urgency. When organisations aren't constantly under financial strain, teams can focus on relationships, good judgement and staying true to their purpose. In my experience, that kind of stability builds confidence and resilience, particularly for volunteer led groups carrying a lot of responsibility with limited resources.*

**Paul Wheelton AM CGSJ, Chairman,  
Wheelton Foundation**

## Sources of operating revenue and resources

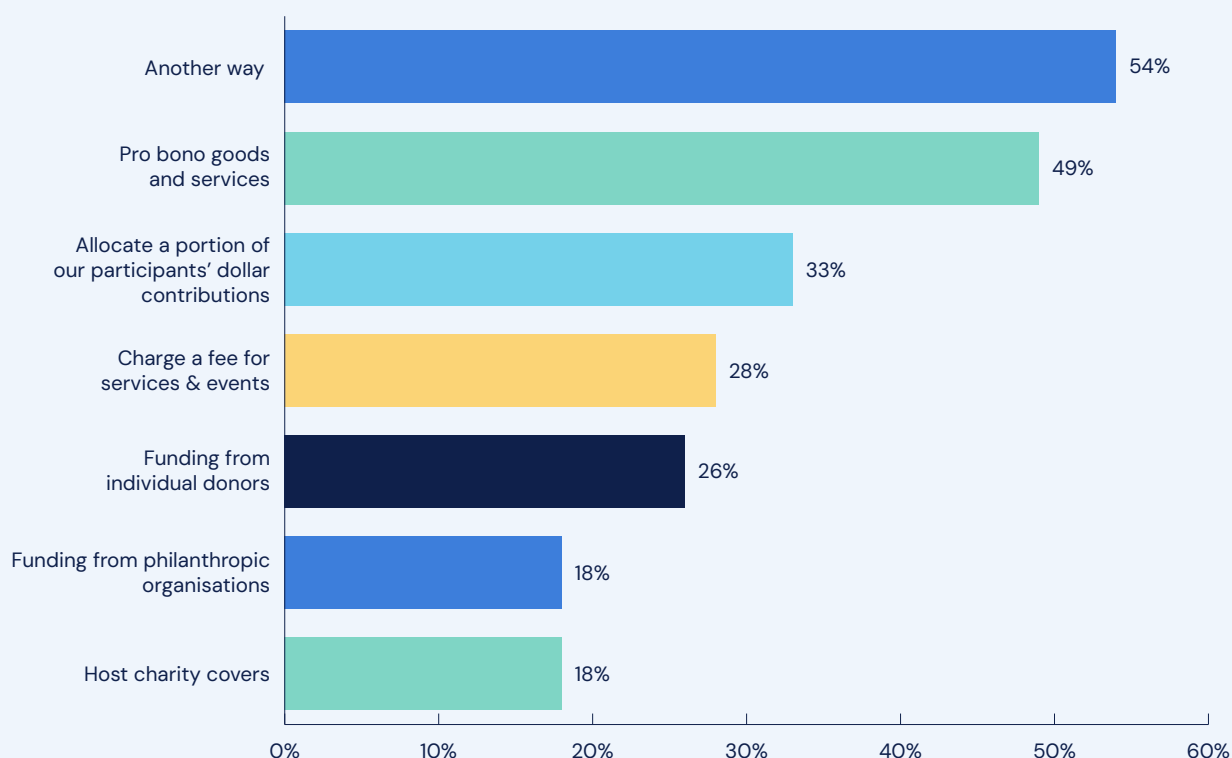
Collective giving groups draw on a diverse mix of funding and in-kind support to resource their activities. Most do not rely on a single revenue stream, instead combining participant contributions, earned income and external support.

- 49% depend on pro bono goods and services (e.g. venue space, catering, branding, website design)
- 33% allocate a portion of participant contributions to operations
- 28% charge for attendance at some or all events

- 26% receive philanthropic funding from individual donors
- 18% receive funding from philanthropic organisations
- 18% rely on their host organisation to cover costs

The largest proportion (54%) selected 'another way', reflecting a wide range of additional approaches, including volunteer contributions, membership or service fees, leaders personally covering costs and income generated through social enterprise activities.

**Figure 8: How collective giving groups cover their operating costs (Leader Survey)**



*n = 39. Respondents could select multiple options.*

Qualitative findings highlight the important role of philanthropic funding at different stages of development. For some groups, it supports foundational infrastructure such as payment platforms and websites. For others, it enables staffing, strengthens participant engagement and sustains ongoing operations.

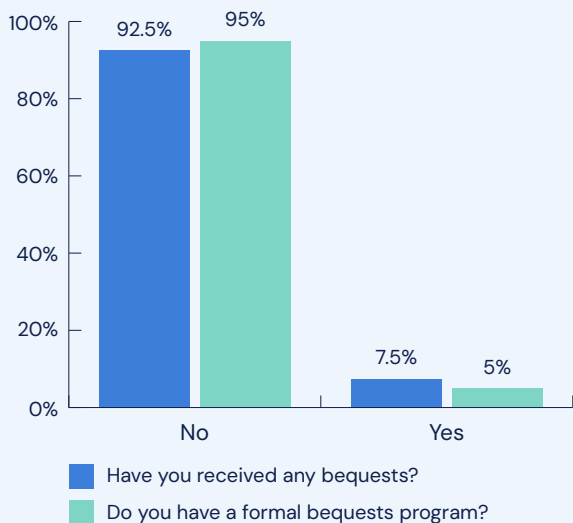
### Bequest programs

Some collective giving groups are beginning to explore bequests as a longer-term mechanism for financial sustainability. While still limited, this represents an emerging area of interest.

**Currently, 7.5% of groups receive bequests and 5% operate formal bequest programs.**

For those that do, such as Rainbow Giving Australia and Circle of Friends of Australia, bequests have provided meaningful contributions, reducing operational pressure and supporting expanded activity.

**Bequests and bequest programs in collective giving groups (Leader Survey)**



n = 40

This suggests an untapped opportunity, particularly given that the return on investment for bequests is estimated to be six times higher than average fundraising returns (JBWere 2024b:3), with funds often being unrestricted.

However, leaders report that the time, expertise and technical capacity required to establish bequest programs are significant barriers. This is compounded by the relatively low proportion of Australian bequests directed to charity (approximately 1%) (JBWere 2024b:3).

### Endowment funds

Endowment funds are used by some groups to support financial stability and long-term sustainability, although their role varies depending on strategy and capacity.

For some groups, endowments act as a reserve to be drawn upon during periods of reduced income or to support specific initiatives. For others, particularly those with long-term goals, endowments are intended to generate ongoing funding over time. In some cases, sufficiently large endowments can also contribute to operational income.

However, not all groups pursue this approach. Some deliberately choose not to establish endowments, citing a preference to direct all available funds to immediate community needs, limited surplus capital, and concerns about perceptions of holding funds rather than distributing them.

**Together, these factors highlight that operational sustainability is shaped not only by internal capacity, but by access to external resources and support.**

# Enabling ecosystem

**Beyond internal operations, groups are also shaped by external systems and relationships that enable their work.**

Collective giving groups operate within a broader ecosystem of enabling infrastructure that supports how they are established, resourced and sustained. This infrastructure is not centralised, but distributed across host organisations, corporate partners and technology systems.

Together, these elements shape operational capacity and influence how effectively groups can deliver both grant making and broader engagement activities.



Photo courtesy of Five Bucks.

## Host organisations

Research highlights the central role of host organisations in lowering barriers to entry and supporting sustainability by providing core operational services (Lozon-Ceballos & Layton 2026:7).

**In Australia, 65% of groups are hosted, most commonly by community foundations (42%).**

Circle of Friends Australia represents a distinctive model in the landscape as a charity that operates a network of around 25 giving circles, demonstrating how collective giving can be scaled through a central charity.

The remaining 35% operate without a host organisation. Their legal and organisational structures were outside the scope of this research.

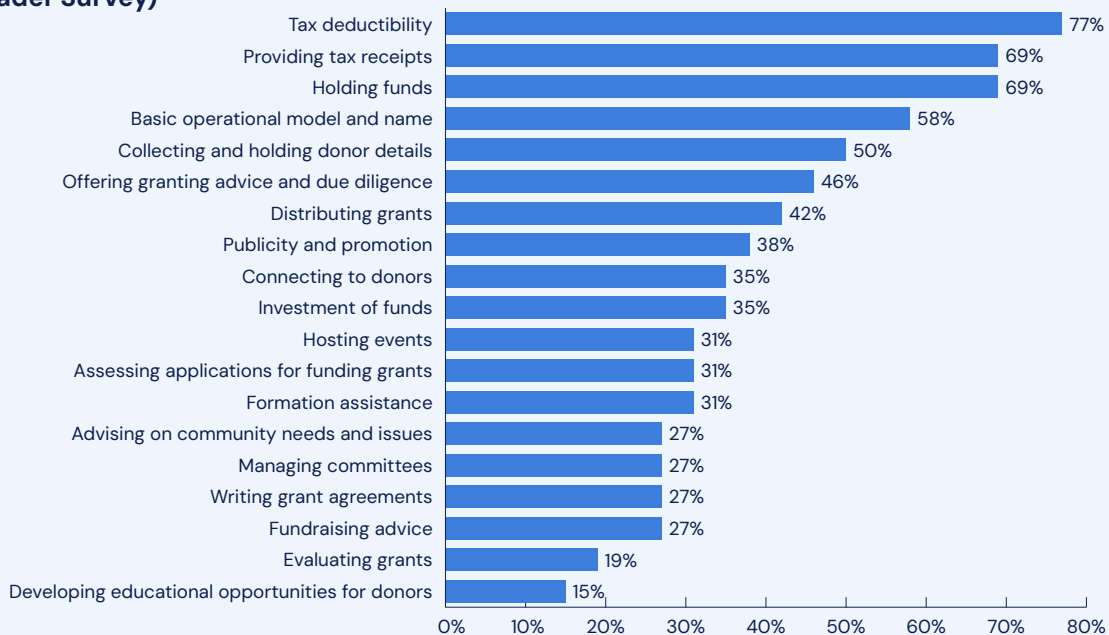
Host organisations typically provide the following:

- Compliance, governance and financial infrastructure
- Administrative support
- Grant making support and advice
- Publicity and promotion
- Donor connections and event hosting

These forms of support enable collective giving groups, particularly those that are volunteer-led or operate with lean staffing, to manage complex operational requirements and function effectively. Even groups with paid staff often continue to rely on host organisations for key infrastructure and support.

Australian Communities Foundation hosts the largest number of collective giving groups in the country.

**Figure 10: Services and supports host organisations provide collective giving groups (Leader Survey)**



n = 26. Respondents could select multiple options.

## Importantly, this relationship is reciprocal rather than one-directional, with both host organisations and collective giving groups benefiting in complementary and reinforcing ways.

Qualitative findings, consistent with Boyd and Partridge's research a decade ago (2017:25), highlight that collective giving groups create significant value for their host organisations. They increase visibility and profile, strengthen community engagement and expand access to new donor networks. In doing so, they support the host organisation's broader purpose, whether by increasing the flow of funds to communities or by deepening participation in philanthropy.

Hosting arrangements therefore do more than enable collective giving groups to operate and grow. They also provide host organisations with new pathways to engage communities, activate networks and extend their impact.



Photo courtesy of The Funding Network.



*Collective giving groups and their host organisations are strongest when they see themselves as true partners. Hosts provide the trusted infrastructure, governance and expertise that enable groups to operate with confidence, while giving groups bring energy, community connection and new donors into philanthropy. Together, they create spaces for shared learning and collective action that inspire more people to get involved in giving.*

**Andrew Binns, CEO,  
Australian Communities Foundation**

Community foundations in particular are experiencing strong growth across Australia (Philanthropy Australia, 2025), creating a unique opportunity for closer alignment between collective giving and place-based philanthropic infrastructure. As this part of the ecosystem expands, there is significant potential for collective giving to grow alongside it, extending participation and strengthening philanthropic activity, particularly in regional and rural areas.

## Case Study: Northern Rivers Community Foundation Women's Giving Circle



### Regionally embedded women's giving circle backed by community foundation infrastructure

The Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF) established its Women's Giving Circle in 2021 after a board member saw how the Impact100 model could drive change while strengthening community connection. The circle aims to support grassroots initiatives helping women and girls across the Northern Rivers overcome inequality and disadvantage.

The model is distinctive in two key ways. First, it is regionally focused, serving the Northern Rivers' seven local government areas. Second, it is embedded within NRCF, creating a highly integrated approach. The foundation provides core operational support, including financial management, payment systems and marketing.

A part-time Coordinator, working one day a week, leads membership engagement and event delivery, which are central to the circle's learning and community-building approach. The group also benefits from pro bono support from a local, female-led PR firm that has assisted with branding and communications. Volunteer involvement is otherwise limited and task-specific.

Membership is currently women-only, reflecting a deliberate focus on empowering women to direct funding towards issues affecting women. The 170 members come from diverse

backgrounds, with ages ranging from 30 to over 80, though most are between 45 and 65. Professions include farmers, hairdressers, nurses, corporate professionals and retirees.

Members contribute \$1,000 per year, as a lump sum or in instalments, with 50% of funds directed into the Northern Rivers Women's Fund endowment, ensuring long-term impact. The remaining funds support annual grants. In 2025, the circle awarded four grants of \$20,000 each. Non-members can also contribute to the endowment.

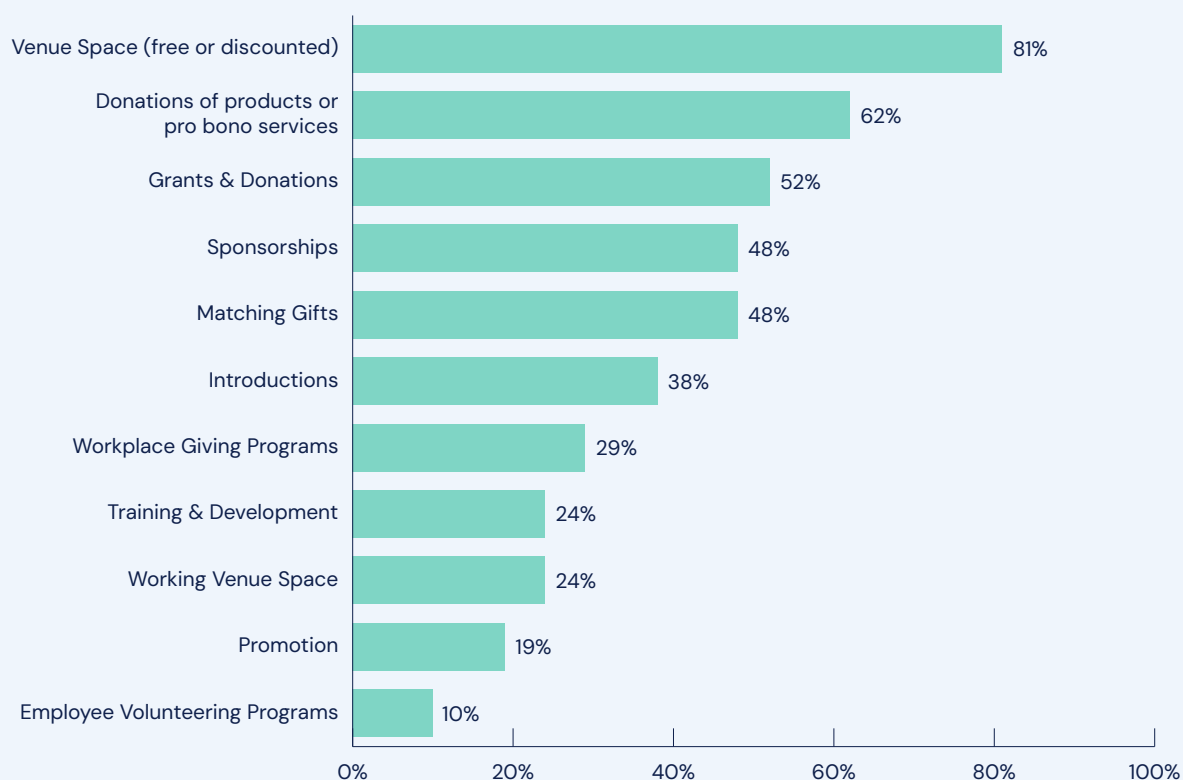
The granting process follows a giving circle model, with members voting on shortlisted organisations. However, voting takes place prior to the awards event based on detailed information, rather than live pitches. This approach is designed to reduce pressure on applicants.

Looking ahead, the circle aims to attract younger members while managing steady growth. It is also considering expanding staff capacity to sustain its model.

## Corporate partnerships

Corporate engagement is a significant source of external support, with 53% of groups receiving some form of corporate contribution.

Figure 11: Corporate support for collective giving groups (Leader Survey)



n = 21. Respondents could select multiple options.

The most common form of support is free or discounted venue space (81%), reducing event costs and supporting participation. Corporates also contribute the following:

- Pro bono goods and services (62%) (e.g. legal, accounting, marketing, technology)
- Direct grants and donations (52%)
- Sponsorships (48%)
- Matching gifts (48%), which can also incentivise participation

A smaller proportion of support focuses on capability-building and network activation:

- Introductions to networks (38%)
- Training and development (24%)
- Promotion (19%)

Despite this breadth, 47% of groups do not receive corporate support. Qualitative findings suggest access is often dependent on personal networks, indicating an opportunity for more structured and accessible pathways to corporate engagement.

## Technology

Technology plays a central role in day-to-day operations, supporting communication, engagement, payments and grant making. However, it also introduces ongoing costs and capability requirements.

All groups report using technology to some extent:

- 10% use it extensively
- 44% use it a lot
- 31% use it a moderate amount

There is no strong relationship between technology use and group size, age or grant volume. Differences are more closely linked to staffing models.

Volunteer-run groups are more likely to use technology at lower levels and less likely to adopt tools such as virtual meeting platforms (60% vs 90%) and survey tools (35% vs 65%). They are also less likely to use emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Groups with paid staff are generally better positioned to adopt and maintain more advanced systems.

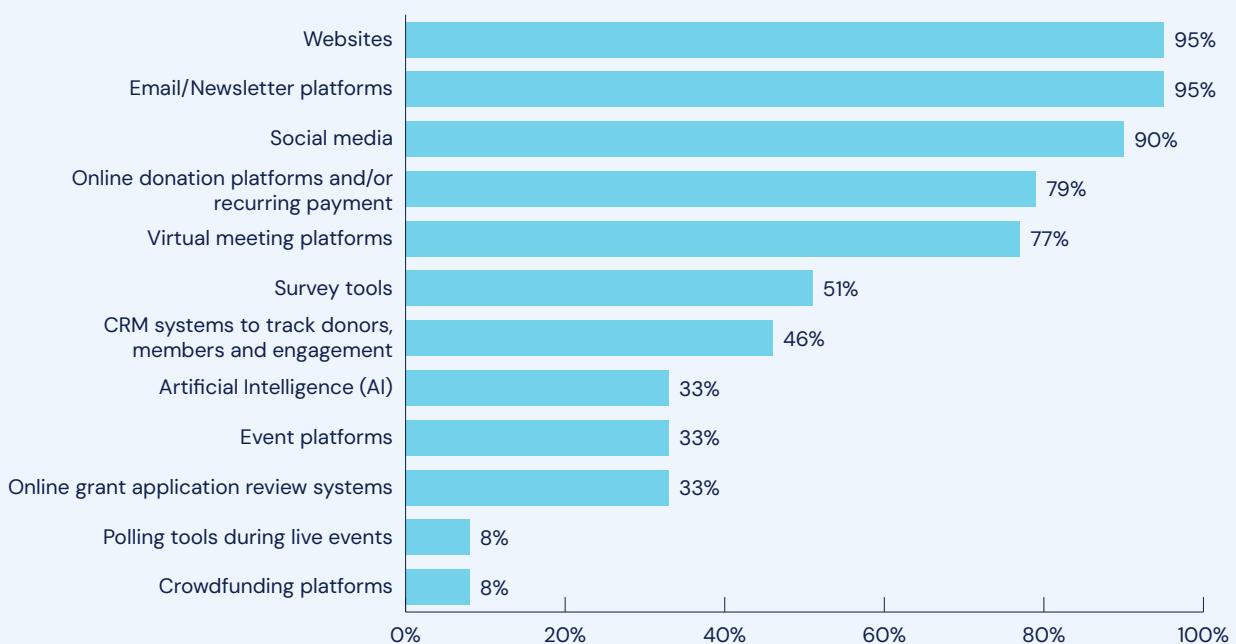
Most groups rely on a core digital infrastructure:

- Email/newsletters (95%)
- Websites (95%)
- Social media (90%)

Beyond this, usage becomes more varied. Payment systems in particular range from simple to complex, often scaling with the number of donors and events.

Qualitative findings indicate mixed appetite for further adoption. Some groups prefer to maintain simple systems, while others would like to expand their use of technology, but face constraints related to capability or stable personnel.

**Figure 12: Technology use in collective giving groups (Leader Survey)**



n = 39

# Critical role of volunteers



*You can't have a successful collective giving group without passionate, dedicated people who put the time into doing it. The groups that have the longest-term success have core people who are very passionate about what they're doing and the communities they live in.*

**Thomas Lopez,**  
Fund and Client Services Lead,  
Australian Communities Foundation

Volunteers are fundamental to the functioning and sustainability of Australia's collective giving movement.

In the Leader Survey, 50% of groups identified as entirely volunteer-operated

Among groups with paid staff, 48% report remaining volunteer-dependent

This highlights that volunteer contribution is not only central to smaller or early-stage groups but continues to underpin operations even as groups grow and formalise.



Photo courtesy of WoCImpact1000 (Rod Ceballos).

## Volunteering and age

Volunteering participation among collective giving participants varies by age, with lower rates among those in their 20s, 30s and 40s compared with older cohorts (see figure below). This pattern aligns with national findings from Volunteering Australia (Biddle et al. 2022:21).

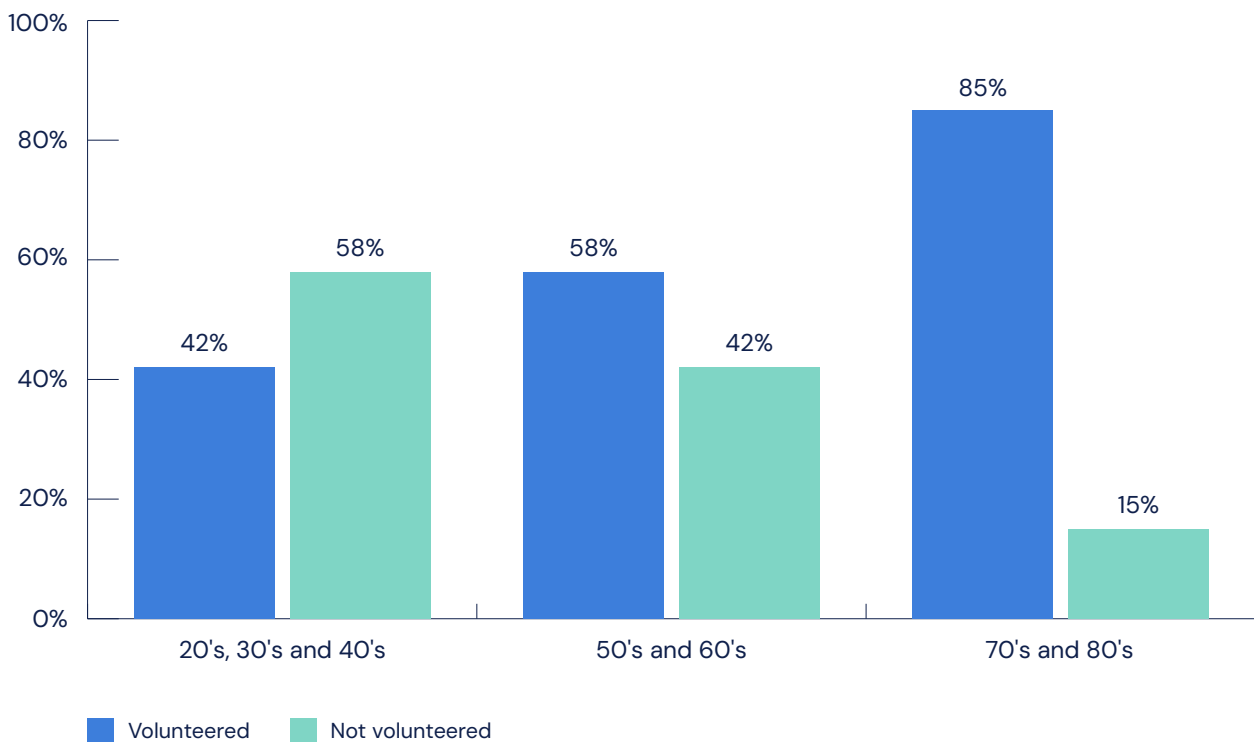
Time constraint is identified as the primary driver of these differences. Work and family responsibilities, particularly for those aged 35–44, significantly limit available time for volunteering (Biddle et al. 2022:12). While being in paid employment is associated with a higher likelihood of volunteering overall, this likelihood decreases as working hours increase, reinforcing the relationship between time availability and participation (Biddle et al. 2022:24).

Financial pressures also play a role. 25.5% of those aged 18–34 cite financial reasons for not volunteering, compared with 16.7% of those aged 35–54 and 9.3% of those aged 55 and over (Biddle et al. 2022:38).

Taken together, these findings suggest that differences in volunteering rates are driven primarily by capacity constraints rather than willingness to participate. Younger cohorts often face greater time and financial pressures, while older cohorts tend to have more discretionary time available.

Despite these differences, both cohorts are important to the sustainability of collective giving. Younger participants represent a pipeline of future leaders, while older participants provide a more consistent and readily available volunteer base.

**Figure 13: Participant volunteering by age range (Participant Survey)**



n = 159



Photo courtesy of The Awesome Foundation.

## Volunteering as a core operating model

Volunteer contribution is a primary mechanism through which collective giving groups maintain lean operating models and low overhead costs.

Among the 59% of participants who reported volunteering, the majority (60%) serve as committee members, undertaking core operational responsibilities such as grant assessment, communications and event management.

Smaller proportions reported more senior or foundational roles.

- 18% as committee chairs
- 8% as founders
- 5% as CEO, Executive Officer or Administrator

This distribution indicates that while leadership roles are important, the bulk of operational delivery is carried out by volunteers drawn from the broader participant base.

Qualitative insights also point to the value of discrete, task-based volunteering opportunities, which can enable participation from individuals with limited time availability.

## Sustaining volunteer capacity

Reliance on volunteer contributions is a defining strength of collective giving, but it requires ongoing attention to ensure sustainability over time.

Volunteer availability is shaped by changing personal and professional commitments, which can shift unpredictably. When this occurs, responsibilities may be redistributed among remaining volunteers or adjusted to reflect available capacity, which can influence the pace and scope of group activities.

These dynamics highlight the importance of designing roles and structures that are adaptable and responsive to participants' availability, supporting continuity without over-reliance on a small number of individuals.

## Volunteer transitions

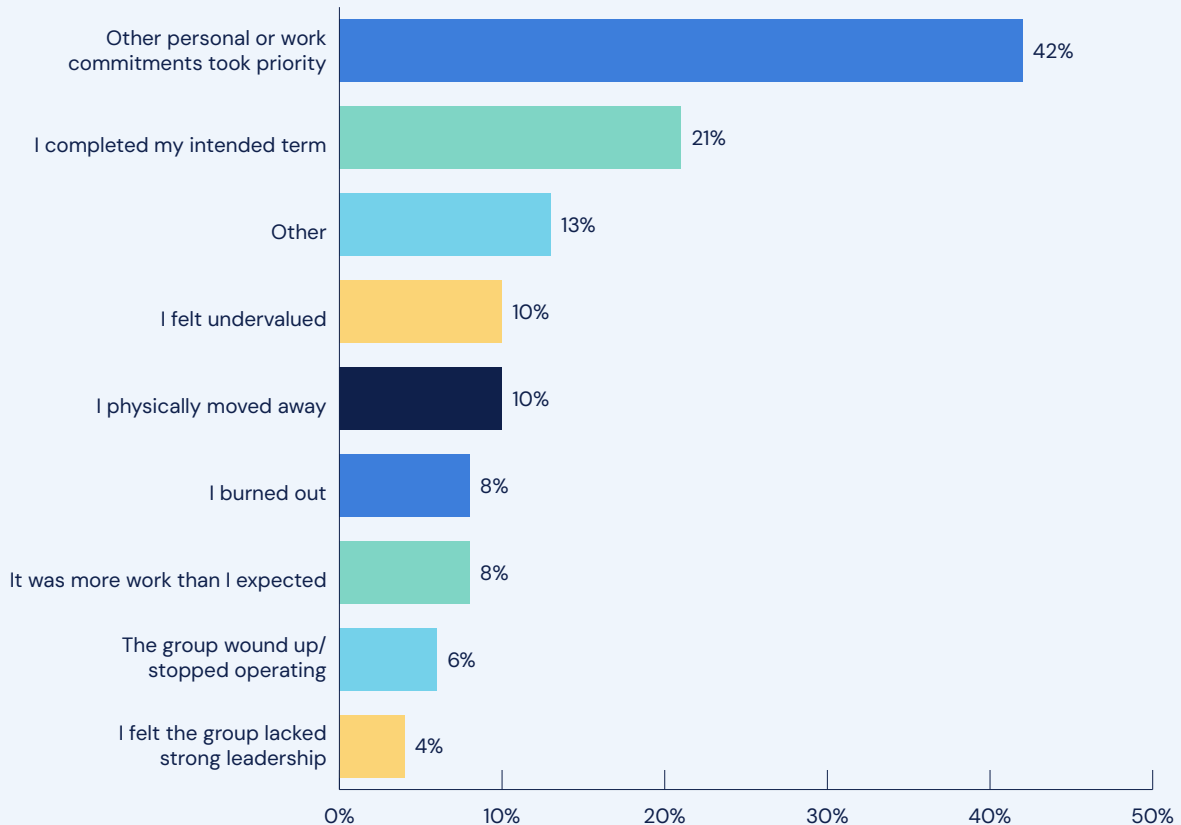
Changes in volunteer participation are most commonly linked to capacity rather than dissatisfaction with the collective giving model.

While 21% of volunteers reported completing their full term, the largest proportion (42%) cited competing personal or work commitments, including relocation, as the primary reason for stepping back.

Other reasons, such as feeling undervalued, workload exceeding expectations, or burnout, were reported less frequently. Additional 'other' responses included transitioning to other groups or projects, changes in group structure, or moving into paid roles.

Although each of these represents a smaller proportion of responses, collectively they highlight the importance of supporting a positive and sustainable volunteering experience. At present, responsibility for volunteer coordination and support often sits with volunteers themselves, which can limit the extent to which these factors are addressed in a structured way.

**Figure 14: Reasons for discontinuing volunteering for a collective giving group (Participant Survey)**



n = 52. Respondents could select multiple options.

## Succession and leadership continuity

Sustained engagement is often strongest among founders and long-term volunteers. While this contributes to continuity and institutional knowledge, it can also create challenges in transitioning leadership roles where similar levels of commitment are difficult to replicate.

As a result, individuals may remain in leadership positions longer than intended, with implications for both personal capacity and organisational resilience. Qualitative findings also point to the importance of managing expectations around time commitment, particularly given fluctuations in volunteer engagement across different periods.

These dynamics highlight the value of structured approaches to succession and leadership

development, including pathways to identify, support, and prepare future leaders.

They also suggest a potential role for targeted resourcing, such as short-term funding or paid support during transition points, particularly where operational complexity exceeds what can reasonably be sustained through volunteer effort alone.

**Together, these findings highlight that sustaining volunteer capacity is central to the continued strength of collective giving. With the right structures and support in place, predominantly volunteer-driven models can remain both resilient and highly effective over time.**



Photo courtesy of NRCF Women's Giving Circle.

# Challenges and opportunities

As collective giving matures, the conditions required to sustain and scale the field are becoming clearer.

The evidence presented in this report highlights a movement that is growing, effective in mobilising both financial and social capital, and generating strong participation and wellbeing outcomes. However, this growth has largely occurred without coordinated infrastructure. The field remains fragmented, uneven in geographic reach, and constrained by low public awareness and limited shared capacity.

As a result, the central question is no longer whether collective giving will continue to grow, but how the enabling conditions for its next phase of development can be strengthened.



Photo courtesy of Impact100 Melbourne.

## Key challenges

When asked about the most significant challenges they face, collective giving leaders identified a consistent set of pressures related to recruitment, volunteer capacity, leadership continuity and financial sustainability. Top six challenges when combining 'very significant' and 'significant' responses:

- 1 Recruiting new donors
- 2 Difficulty recruiting or retaining skilled, compatible volunteers
- 3 Volunteer fatigue or burnout
- 4 Insufficient funds to hire paid staff
- 5 Leadership transition challenges
- 6 Covering ongoing operational costs

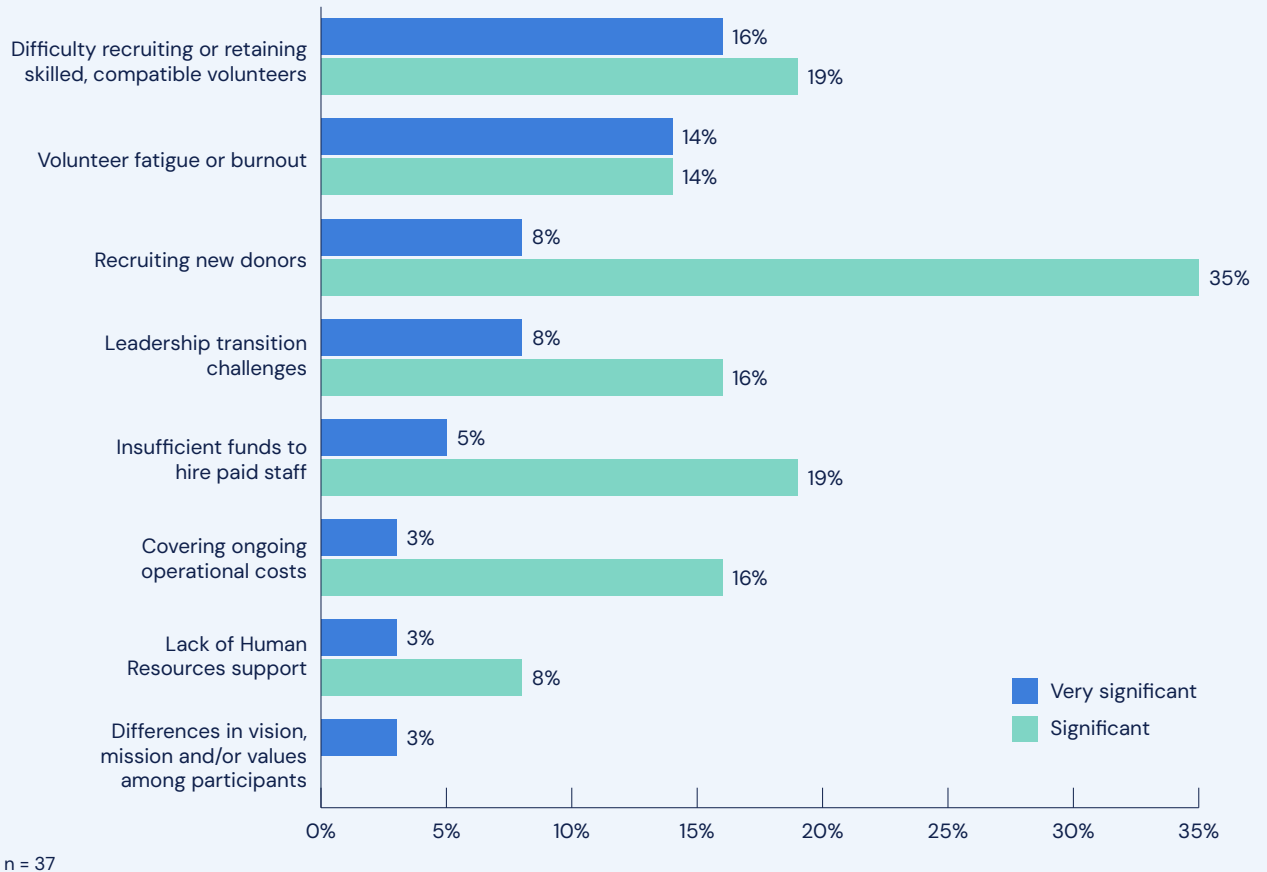
Qualitative responses reinforce these findings, particularly in relation to awareness. While word-of-mouth is effective for reaching donors and funding partners, leaders consistently identified broader visibility as a key constraint on growth.



*If we can all band together and promote awareness of collective giving across Australia, that would really help.*

**Henrietta Wighton, Chairperson,  
Circle of Friends**

**Figure 15: Significant challenges for collective giving group leaders (Leader Survey)**



**Taken together, these findings point to system-level pressures rather than isolated organisational challenges, suggesting the need for a more coordinated, system-level response.**

Many groups operate with limited financial resources and rely on a small number of highly engaged volunteers to sustain activity over time.

This is reflected in future priorities: 27% of leaders ranked 'continuing as they are' in their top three priorities, while 38% identified leadership transition as a priority. These dynamics highlight the ongoing effort required to maintain operations, manage growth and ensure continuity.

## Persistent challenges over time

These findings are not new. Boyd and Partridge's (2017: 33) research identified a similar set of structural and operational challenges, many of which continue to shape the field today.

- **Barriers to establishment:** early-stage groups face complexity in navigating legal and tax frameworks, selecting appropriate structures and building awareness of collective giving. Many also found it difficult to clearly articulate their value proposition within a crowded charity landscape. These foundational challenges remain evident, particularly for newer groups
- **Volunteer reliance:** volunteers are critical drivers of collective giving groups, but their contribution can be strained by factors including workload pressures, reliance on pro bono support and limited administrative infrastructure. As they did in 2017, these constraints affect efficiency, responsiveness and communication and remain a defining feature of the field today, as many groups continue to operate with lean capacity while seeking to grow
- **Covering costs:** tensions between maximising funds distributed (often targeting 100%) and funding operational costs are also still evident. This continues to create challenges for long term sustainability.

**The continuity of these findings over time suggests that the challenges facing collective giving are structural rather than transitional and therefore require coordinated, system-level responses.**

## High-impact solutions identified

Leaders were also asked to identify actions that would have the greatest impact on strengthening collective giving in Australia.

When combining 'impactful' and 'very impactful' responses, four priority areas emerge.

1. A media campaign to raise awareness (72%)
2. A national online donations portal listing collective giving groups (70%)
3. Start-up funding for new groups (69%)
4. Inspirational speaking tours about collective giving (67%)
5. A national support entity providing materials and infrastructure (66%)

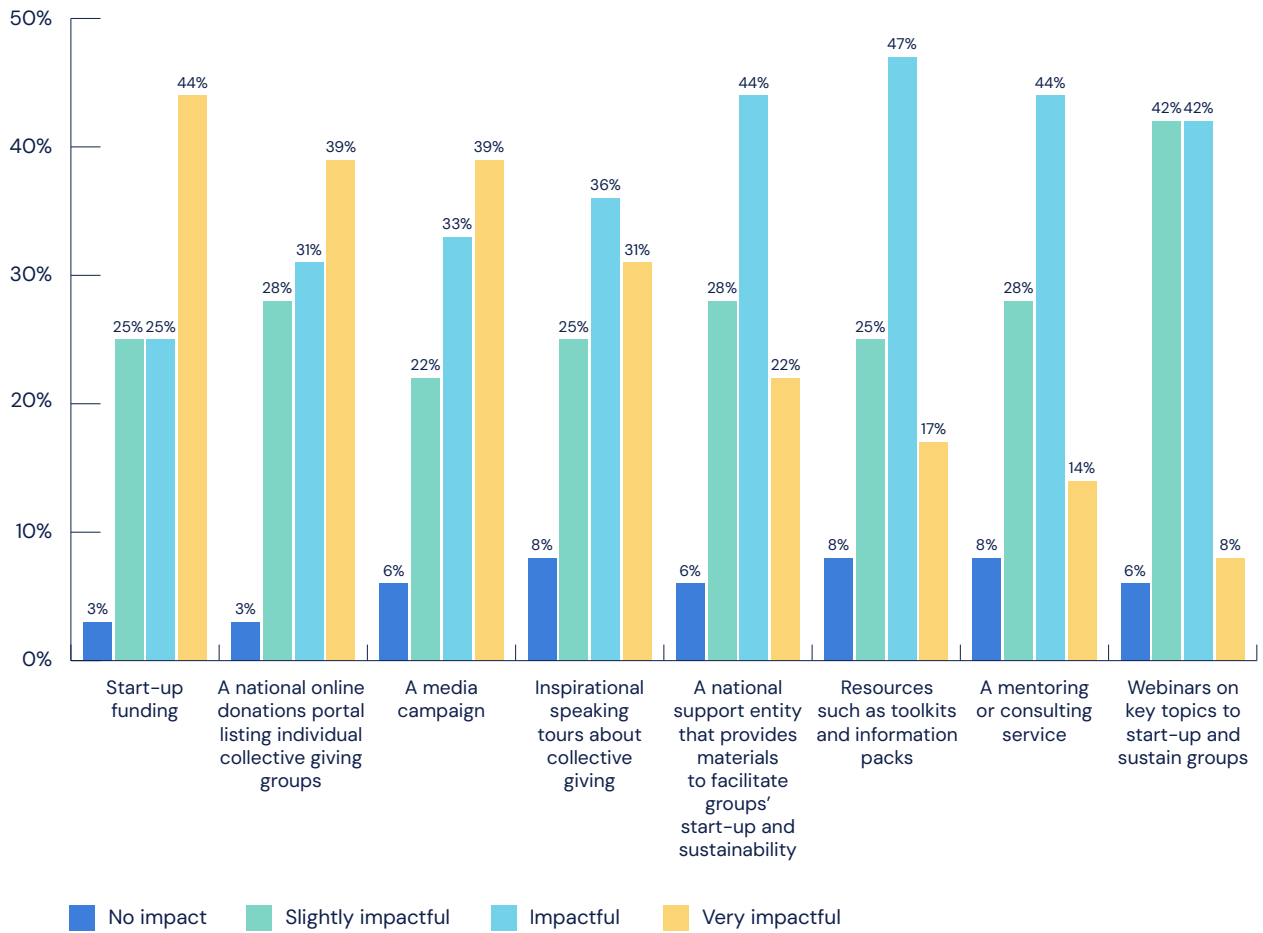
Additional suggestions included matched funding campaigns, scale-up funding for established groups, and greater visibility through media and public platforms.



*I don't think there is one thing that will 'make the difference'. It is a matter of doing a number of things in unison.*

**Anonymous Comment from Leader Survey**

**Figure 16: Perceived impact of different ideas to grow collective giving in Australia (Leader Survey)**



n = 36

These priorities closely align with the challenges identified earlier. Awareness-building and centralised platforms respond directly to recruitment challenges, while start-up and scale-up funding address capacity constraints at different stages of development.

## The role of shared infrastructure

The strong support for a national backbone entity reflects a consistent theme across both this research and Boyd and Partridge's 2017 report. While collective giving groups are locally driven and highly adaptable, the field lacks the coordinated infrastructure required to support its next phase of development.

As identified in the 2017 report, a central organisation could act as a point of coordination, information and connection, supporting both the establishment of new groups and the ongoing functioning of existing ones (Boyd and Partridge 2017, p.37). Proposed functions included a national register, shared resources, and support for navigating legal structures, fundraising and organisational development. Many of these remain relevant in 2026.

The current findings identified priorities such as a national support entity (66%), a national donations portal (70%) and increased visibility through coordinated awareness-building efforts (72%). Taken together, these point to a clear demand for shared infrastructure that strengthens coordination, capability, visibility and learning across the field.

A national backbone entity, as outlined in Recommendation 1, would respond directly to these needs. In practice, this could include the following.

- Connecting and coordinating collective giving groups, host organisations and sector stakeholders
- Building capability through shared tools, resources and peer learning
- Increasing visibility and expanding participation through coordinated national efforts
- Strengthening data collection, evidence and knowledge sharing
- Partnering with host organisations to enhance, rather than duplicate, existing infrastructure

In a field characterised by diversity and decentralisation, such an entity would not replace local leadership, but enable it to operate more effectively at scale.

The importance of this enabling layer is reflected in sector perspectives:



*Collective giving is one of the most powerful ways to engage people in philanthropy, but movements don't grow without infrastructure. If we are serious about scaling collective giving in Australia, we must invest in the backbone: the technology, talent and coordination that enable groups to operate sustainably and focus on impact.*

**Kristen Lark, CEO, The Funding Network**



*Large foundations could invest in building the collective giving field. This could look like money for groups to connect, money for groups to learn together and from each other, money for groups to share resources, money for leadership development. That's sharing power and civic duty.*

**Georgia Mathews, Director, Rainbow Giving Australia**

The continued relevance of the 2017 findings, combined with strong support in the current data, suggests that investment in shared infrastructure is a critical unlocking mechanism, not only for improving coordination, but for enabling collective giving to expand its reach, participation and overall impact.

## The role of direct funding

Alongside system-level coordination, the evidence highlights the importance of direct, targeted investment in the operational capacity of collective giving groups themselves.

While this was not explicitly included as a survey option, qualitative responses consistently pointed to the need for resourcing that supports groups across different stages of development. Leaders reflected on the importance of practical 'know-how' (e.g. governance models, operational plans), access to aligned people, and financial support to establish and sustain operations.

These insights align with broader findings across the report. Many groups operate with lean structures, significant volunteer reliance and limited financial reserves, particularly during periods of growth or transition. As explored in earlier sections, this can constrain the ability to expand participation, introduce paid roles, invest in systems, or maintain continuity over time.

Targeted core capacity funding, as outlined in Recommendation 2, directly addresses these pressures. It enables groups to do the following:

- Build foundational infrastructure in early stages
- Navigate key transition points (e.g. from volunteer-only to hybrid staffing models)
- Strengthen member engagement and recruitment
- Invest in systems, governance and operational effectiveness

**Importantly, for funders, supporting the core operations of collective giving groups is not a substitute for ecosystem funding. It is a force multiplier. By strengthening the operational foundation of collective giving groups, it enables them to mobilise more donors, pool more capital and deepen their impact over time.**



*It's not retention that's the challenge for a volunteer-run group like ours, it's having the capacity to reach and serve new members. If more investment went into helping groups grow their membership, the increase in donors and impact would be enormous. People want to give together, they just need to know we exist.*

**Genevieve Fraser, Co-Founder and Chair, Women & Change**

These insights reinforce that sustaining and scaling collective giving is not solely about increasing participation, but about ensuring groups have the capacity, infrastructure and support required to convert participation into sustained impact.

**Addressing these two dimensions in tandem is critical. Without coordination, growth remains fragmented. Without capacity, it remains constrained.**

# Conclusion

## Collective giving in Australia has moved from emergence to establishment.

What was once a small and loosely connected set of experiments is now a growing and increasingly significant part of the philanthropic landscape, engaging thousands of Australians and mobilising substantial financial and social capital.

This report has shown that collective giving is delivering value on multiple fronts. It is increasing participation in philanthropy, deepening engagement among donors, and contributing to stronger social connection, civic participation and wellbeing. It is also demonstrating the capacity to mobilise meaningful funding for community organisations across a diverse range of causes and approaches.

At the same time, the findings point to a sector that is still in formation. Collective giving in Australia remains heavily volunteer-dependent, uneven in its geographic reach, and constrained by low levels of public awareness and shared infrastructure. While individual groups are often highly effective, the system lacks the coordinated support required to enable sustained growth and long-term resilience.

The future trajectory of collective giving will depend not only on continued grassroots energy, but on how effectively these structural gaps are addressed. In particular, the evidence points to the importance of strengthening both system-level coordination and organisational-level capacity. Together, these enable collective giving groups to operate sustainably, expand participation and translate engagement into long-term impact.

Collective giving is already delivering impact. The opportunity now is to ensure it is supported to realise its full potential, not only as a mechanism for funding, but as a powerful model of participation, connection and shared responsibility within Australian communities.

When participants reflected on their hopes for the future, their perspectives reinforce this broader vision:



*A shift toward normalising philanthropic giving regardless of the size of the gift. Magnifying the power of collective giving even if the amounts are small.*

**Anonymous Comment from Participant Survey**



*If we all take ownership of what is happening in our community and contribute in some way then there will be better outcomes for everyone. Collective giving groups are a great way to empower people to start the giving journey.*

**Anonymous Comment from Participant Survey**



*A bigger pool of philanthropists and more kindness.*

**Anonymous Comment from Participant Survey**

These reflections speak to a future in which giving is more widely shared, more visible and more deeply embedded in everyday life. With the right conditions in place, collective giving has the potential not only to grow as a philanthropic model, but to help shape a more participatory and connected Australia.

# References

- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (2026), **Australian Charities Report – 12th Edition**, accessed June 2026, [www.acnc.gov.au/tools/reports/australian-charities-report-12th-edition](http://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/reports/australian-charities-report-12th-edition)
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (2025), **Australian Charities Report – 11th Edition**, accessed May 2026, [www.acnc.gov.au/tools/reports/australian-charities-report-11th-edition](http://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/reports/australian-charities-report-11th-edition)
- Productivity Commission (2024), Future Foundations for Giving, Inquiry report no 104, Canberra, accessed April 2026, [www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/philanthropy/report](http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/philanthropy/report)
- Australians Investing in Women (2013), **Annual Report 2013**, accessed April 2026, [www.aiiw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AWDN5\\_annualreport\\_2013.pdf](http://www.aiiw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AWDN5_annualreport_2013.pdf)
- Australians Investing in Women (2020), **Highlights of the Past Decade**, accessed April 2026, [www.aiiw.org.au/news/highlights-of-the-past-decade/](http://www.aiiw.org.au/news/highlights-of-the-past-decade/)
- Australian Tax Office (2025), **Individuals statistics for Taxation statistics 2022–23**, accessed May 2026, [www.ato.gov.au/about-ato/research-and-statistics/in-detail/taxation-statistics/taxation-statistics-2022-23/statistics/individuals-statistics](http://www.ato.gov.au/about-ato/research-and-statistics/in-detail/taxation-statistics/taxation-statistics-2022-23/statistics/individuals-statistics)
- Baker, Christopher, Jo Barraket and Aurora Elmes, with Alexandra Williamson, Wendy Scaife and Marie Crittall (2017), **Philanthropy and philanthropists. Giving Australia 2016** report series commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Melbourne, Victoria: Centre for Social Impact Swinburne University of Technology, The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Queensland University of Technology and the Centre for Corporate Public Affairs. Accessed May 2026, <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/101305/>
- Bearman, J., Carboni, J., Eikenberry, A., & Franklin, J. (2017), **The landscape of giving circles/collective giving groups in the U.S.**, Collective Giving Research Group, accessed May 2026, <https://johnsoncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Giving-Circles-Research-Full-Report-WEB.pdf>
- Biddle, N., Boyer, C., Gray, M., & Jahromi, M. (2022), **Volunteering in Australia: The Volunteer Perspective. Volunteering Australia**, accessed May 2026, <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf>
- Boyd, J. & Partridge, L. (2017), **Collective Giving and Its Role in Australian Philanthropy**. Melbourne, Australia: Creative Partnerships Australia. Accessed May 2026, <https://apo.org.au/node/99806>
- Eikenberry A.M., & Breeze B. (2017), **Growing Philanthropy through Giving Circles: Collective Giving and the Logic of Charity**. Social Policy and Society. 2018; 17(3): 349–364. doi:10.1017/S1474746417000124
- Impact100 (2026), **Our Impact**, accessed May 2026, <https://impact100global.org/our-impact/>
- JBWere (2024a), **The growth of Women and Wealth**, accessed May 2026, [www.jbwere.com.au/campaigns/growth-of-women-and-wealth](http://www.jbwere.com.au/campaigns/growth-of-women-and-wealth)
- JBWere (2024b), **The Bequest Report**, accessed May 2026, [www.jbwere.com.au/campaigns/bequest-report](http://www.jbwere.com.au/campaigns/bequest-report)
- Jia X, Cai G, Tong Q, et al. **An Emerging Way of Giving? Giving Circles in China**, THE CHINA NONPROFIT REVIEW, 2022, 14(1): 2. doi.org/10.26599/TCNR.2022.0000002, accessed June 2026, [www.sciopen.com/article/10.26599/TCNR.2022.0000002](http://www.sciopen.com/article/10.26599/TCNR.2022.0000002)

John, R. (2014), [Virtuous circles: the growth of collective philanthropy in Asia](https://www.alliancemagazine.org/magazine/issue/march-2014/), Alliance for philanthropy and social investment worldwide. 19(1), p.20–21, accessed May 2026: [www.alliancemagazine.org/magazine/issue/march-2014/](https://www.alliancemagazine.org/magazine/issue/march-2014/)

John, R. (2017) [Circles of influence: The impact of giving circles in Asia](https://www.issuelab.org/resources/33232/33232.pdf), Asia Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy (ACSEP) in National University of Singapore. (2017): 1–86. Accessed June 2026, [www.issuelab.org/resources/33232/33232.pdf](https://www.issuelab.org/resources/33232/33232.pdf)

Krause, I., & Layton, M. D. (2024), [Patterns in the Tapestry: A Typology of Collective Giving Groups](https://johnsoncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/patterns-in-the-tapestry-a-typology-of-collective-giving-groups.pdf). Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University and Philanthropy Together. Accessed May 2026, <https://johnsoncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/patterns-in-the-tapestry-a-typology-of-collective-giving-groups.pdf>

Loson-Ceballos, A., & Layton, M.D. (2024), [In abundance: An analysis of the thriving landscape of collective giving in the U.S.](https://johnsoncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/in-abundance-an-analysis-of-the-thriving-landscape-of-collective-giving-in-the-u-s.pdf) Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University and Philanthropy Together. Accessed May 2026, <https://johnsoncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/in-abundance-an-analysis-of-the-thriving-landscape-of-collective-giving-in-the-u-s.pdf>

Loson-Ceballos, A., & Layton, M. D. (2026), [Rooted In Community: The Infrastructure Powering Collective Giving](https://johnsoncenter.org/resource/rooted-in-community-infrastructure-report/). Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University and Philanthropy Together. Accessed May 2026, <https://johnsoncenter.org/resource/rooted-in-community-infrastructure-report/>

Madden, Kym, Scaife, Wendy, & McGregor-Lowndes, Myles (2005), [Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia: Summary of Findings](https://eprints.qut.edu.au/61389/). Commonwealth of Australia, Australia, accessed May 2026: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/61389/>

McGregor-Lowndes, Myles; Balczun, Marie & Williamson, Alexandra (2025), [Tax-deductible giving in 2022– 23. ACPNS Current Issues Information Sheet 2025/1](https://philanos.org/collective-giving-grantmaking). Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, QUT, Brisbane. Accessed May 2026, <https://doi.org/10.5204/rep.eprints.258641Philanos> (2025), [What is Collective Giving Grantmaking?](https://philanos.org/collective-giving-grantmaking) Accessed May 2026: <https://philanos.org/collective-giving-grantmaking>

Philanthropy Australia (2025), [DGR tax reforms to bring 'new era' for community foundations](https://www.philanthropy.org.au/news-and-stories/dgr-tax-reforms-to-bring-new-era-for-community-foundations), accessed May 2026, [www.philanthropy.org.au/news-and-stories/dgr-tax-reforms-to-bring-new-era-for-community-foundations/](https://www.philanthropy.org.au/news-and-stories/dgr-tax-reforms-to-bring-new-era-for-community-foundations)

Philanthropy Together (2021), [How a Study on Giving Circles Led to the Launch of Philanthropy Together](https://johnsoncenter.org/blog/how-a-study-on-giving-circles-led-to-the-launch-of-philanthropy-together/), accessed May 2026, <https://johnsoncenter.org/blog/how-a-study-on-giving-circles-led-to-the-launch-of-philanthropy-together/>

Proulx, J. D. E., Akin, L. B., & Barasch, A. (2022), [Let's Give Together: Can Collaborative Giving Boost Generosity?](https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640221074699) Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 52(1), 50–74. Accessed May 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640221074699>

Redbridge (2022), [Community Case](https://www.philanthropy.org.au/about-us/publications/philanthropy-australia-community-case-december-2022/). Report by Redbridge for Philanthropy Australia, accessed May 2026, [www.philanthropy.org.au/about-us/publications/philanthropy-australia-community-case-december-2022/](https://www.philanthropy.org.au/about-us/publications/philanthropy-australia-community-case-december-2022/)

Ruting, B., (2026), **Unlocking Generosity – the potential gains from expanding access to advice on charitable giving**, Report for the Minderoo Foundation and the Edward Alexander Foundation. Accessed June 2026, <https://cdn.minderoo.org/assets/documents/unlocking-generosity-feb-2026.pdf>

Rutnik, T. A. & Bearman, J. (2005), Giving Together: A National Scan of Giving Circles and Shared Giving: the Guidebook to Giving Circles, Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers.

Samek, A. (2025), **Raising Generous Humans**, National Center for Family Philanthropy. Accessed May 2026, [www.ncfp.org/resources-tools/raising-generous-humans](http://www.ncfp.org/resources-tools/raising-generous-humans)

Smith, M., Freeman, N., Melville, B. (2026), **She Gives: Growing Women’s Giving in Australia**, the She Gives campaign of Noble Ambition. Accessed May 2026, <https://shegives.com.au>

The Awesome Foundation (2026), **Chapters**, accessed May 2026, [www.awesomefoundation.org/en](http://www.awesomefoundation.org/en)

The Funding Network (2026), **About Us**, accessed May 2026, [www.thefundingnetwork.com.au/about-us/](http://www.thefundingnetwork.com.au/about-us/)

# Appendix A

## Research methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative breadth with qualitative depth in an under-researched field. Surveys provide cross-sectional insights into participant experiences and attitudes, while interviews offer contextualised understanding of how and why these patterns emerge.

This approach enables triangulation, strengthening the credibility and internal validity of findings through the corroboration of results across methods. It also reflects a pragmatic research paradigm, using the most appropriate tools to generate actionable insights into real-world questions.

Due to the absence of national census data on collective giving groups in Australia, the analysis focuses on descriptive findings rather than inferential or predictive statistics.

### Data collection methods

#### Instruments

Full survey instruments and interview protocols are provided in Appendix D.

- Leader Survey (n = 51)
- Participant Survey (n = 201)
- Leader Interviews (n = 12)

#### Sampling approach

A snowball sampling method was used. Respondents were recruited through Philanthropy Australia and the communication channels of collective giving organisations.

#### Participant Survey

Conducted between September and November 2025, the participant survey included 30 questions designed to capture baseline data on:

- Experiences with collective giving;
- approaches to philanthropy;
- attitudes toward giving;
- knowledge of charities; and
- engagement and participation patterns.

#### Leader Survey

Also conducted between September and November 2025, the leaders survey comprised 65 questions focused on group operations, challenges, and strategic perspectives.

#### Leader Interviews

Twelve structured interviews were conducted, each lasting up to 90 minutes. Interviews followed a customised protocol of 10 core questions, each with two or three sub-questions, allowing for both consistency and depth of exploration.

## Data analysis

### Quantitative analysis

Survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics in NVivo. Responses from both surveys were aggregated where appropriate. Many items used Likert scales to measure agreement; in reporting, higher scores indicate stronger agreement, while lower scores indicate weaker agreement.

### Qualitative analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using NVivo. A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify recurring patterns, key themes and notable insights.

### Reporting of percentages

Percentages in this report are calculated in three main ways.

- The proportion of respondents who answered a given question
- The proportion selecting a specific response among those who answered the question
- The proportion of a defined sub-group selecting a specific response

## Ethics

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical protocols of the [Australian National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines](#) and the [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#). All participants were informed of the research purpose and data protection protocols. Any individuals quoted directly have reviewed and approved their contributions.

## Appendix B

# Collective giving groups in research

This appendix lists the collective giving groups present in the sample and their sub-groups. Please note, not all sub-groups participated in the surveys. The list below outlines the name of the collective giving group, the region where their operations are headquartered and a link to their website where available.

10 x 10 Philanthropy and chapter groups  
Australia-wide: [www.10x10philanthropy.com](http://www.10x10philanthropy.com)

100 Women (WA): <https://100women.org.au>

Ballarat Women's Fund (VIC):  
[www.ballaratfoundation.org.au/ballarat-womens-fund](http://www.ballaratfoundation.org.au/ballarat-womens-fund)

Circle of Friends Australia Inc. (COFA) and giving circles (SA): <https://cofa.org.au>

Circle of Friends 111

Circle of friends 115 Family Reunion

Circle of Friends SA no 27

Circle of Friends Willunga

Circle of Friends Emergency Circle 110

Circle of Friends C7 Blackwood Hills

Circle of Friends C9 Nathan's Events

Circle of Friends C17 Family Nonaz

Circle of Friends C25 Kensington

Circle of Friends C92 Job's Café

Circle of Friends C106 Job's Café

Circle of Friends C108

Circle of Friends C113 Lesley's Circle

Circle of Friends C114 Circle of Hope

Circle of Friends C121 SOS for Refugees

Circle of Friends C127 Afghan Emergency

Circle of Friends C129 Family MF

Circle of Friends C130 Fleurieu Refugee Support Group

Circle of Friends C131 Mellita

Circle of Friends C132 Empowerment Network

Circle of Friends C133 Palestine in Magill

Circle of Friends C134 Zafar Ali

Circle of Friends C135 Gaza Support

Circle of Friends C136 Louie's Circle

Circle of Friends C137 Polly's Circle

Denmark Baroque (Community Foundation Musicians' Fund WA):

<https://dcfwa.org.au/musicians-fund>

Directors Giving Circle

(Southwest Community Foundation WA):

[www.southwestcommunityfoundation.org](http://www.southwestcommunityfoundation.org)

Discovery Circle (South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute):

<https://sahmri.org.au/support-us/discovery-circle>

First Nations Futures (VIC):

[www.firstnationsfutures.com](http://www.firstnationsfutures.com)

Fitted for Work Giving Circle (VIC):

<https://fittedforwork.org/elementor-9342>

Five Bucks (VIC): <https://fivebucks.au>

Give Together (NSW): [www.givetogether.com.au](http://www.givetogether.com.au)

GoGo Girls (VIC)

Groundswell Giving (NSW):

[www.groundswellgiving.org](http://www.groundswellgiving.org)

---

### Impact100 groups

Impact100 Fremantle (WA):

[www.fremantlefoundation.org.au/impact100-fremantle](http://www.fremantlefoundation.org.au/impact100-fremantle)

Impact100 Melbourne (VIC):

[www.greatermelbournefoundation.org.au/impact100melbourne/about/impact100](http://www.greatermelbournefoundation.org.au/impact100melbourne/about/impact100)

Impact100 SA: [www.impact100sa.org.au](http://www.impact100sa.org.au)

Impact100 Sydney (NSW):

[www.impact100sydney.org.au](http://www.impact100sydney.org.au)

Impact100 Sydney North (NSW):

[www.impact100sydneynorth.org](http://www.impact100sydneynorth.org)

Impact100 Tasmania:

<https://impact100global.org/chapters/tasmania-australia>

Impact100 WA: [www.impact100wa.org.au](http://www.impact100wa.org.au)

Arts impact WA: [www.artsimpactwa.org](http://www.artsimpactwa.org)

Schools for Impact (NSW):  
[www.impact100sydney.org.au/schoolforimpact](http://www.impact100sydney.org.au/schoolforimpact)

Women and Change Inc (QLD):  
[www.womenandchange.com.au](http://www.womenandchange.com.au)

Young Impact SA: [www.impact100sa.org.au](http://www.impact100sa.org.au)

Young Impact WA:  
[www.impact100wa.org.au/youngimpact](http://www.impact100wa.org.au/youngimpact)

---

Indigenous Giving Circle (NSW):  
<https://indigenousgivingcircle.raiselysite.com>

Mannifera Collective Limited (VIC):  
<https://mannifera.org.au>

Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre,  
Marnin 500 group (WA): <https://mwrc.com.au>

Melbourne Women's Foundation (VIC):  
<https://melbournewomensfoundation.org>

Meridian Global Foundation (WA):  
[www.meridianglobal.org](http://www.meridianglobal.org)

Nature Impact Collective (VIC):  
[www.natureimpactcollective.org.au](http://www.natureimpactcollective.org.au)

Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF)  
Women's Giving Circle (NSW):  
<https://nrcf.org.au/womens-giving-circle>

P500 (VIC): [www.geelongfoundation.org/p500](http://www.geelongfoundation.org/p500)

Pilgrims 100 (Jesuit Mission SA):  
<https://jesuitmission.org.au>

Rainbow Giving Australia (VIC):  
<https://rainbowgiving.org.au>

Ripples Giving Circle (NSW):  
<https://raise.org.au/fundraising/raise-ripples-giving-circle>

SA Women for Women (SA):  
[www.sawomenforwomen.net](http://www.sawomenforwomen.net)

Society of Women Leaders, Red Cross (NSW):  
[www.redcross.org.au/swl](http://www.redcross.org.au/swl)

Supporting Youth in NSW

Swinburne Philanthropy and Social Investment  
Alumni Fund (SPSIA VIC)

The Awesome Foundation and chapter  
groups Australia-wide:  
[www.awesomefoundation.org/en/chapters](http://www.awesomefoundation.org/en/chapters)

The Big Feed Giving Circle (NSW):  
[www.thebigfeed.org.au/givingcircle](http://www.thebigfeed.org.au/givingcircle)

The Funding Network Australia (TFN NSW):  
[www.thefundingnetwork.com.au](http://www.thefundingnetwork.com.au)

The Josephine Circle @ QIMR Berghofer  
(QLD): [www.qimrb.edu.au/support-us/the-josephine-circle](http://www.qimrb.edu.au/support-us/the-josephine-circle)

The Purpose Fund (NSW):  
[www.thepurposefund.com](http://www.thepurposefund.com)

Women of Colour Australia (WoCA),  
WoCImpact1000 (NSW):  
<https://womenofcolour.org.au/wocimpact1000/>

Women's Environmental Leadership  
Australia (WELA) Giving Circle (VIC):  
<https://givingcircle.wela.org.au>

## Appendix C

# Case studies

This appendix lists the collective giving groups who participated in the case studies in alphabetical order.

- Circle of Friends Australia
- First Nations Futures
- Five Bucks
- Groundswell
- Impact100 Melbourne
- Indigenous Giving Circle
- Northern Rivers Women's Giving Circle
- Rainbow Giving Australia
- Schools for Impact
- The Awesome Foundation
- The Funding Network
- WoCImpact1000
- Young Impact100 WA

---

## Appendix D

# Survey and interview questionnaires

[Click here](#) to access a supplementary document containing the questionnaires for the Leader Survey and Participant Survey, as well as the interview question guide for the Leader Interviews used in this research.

# Appendix E

## List of figures

This appendix provides a list of figures included in the report, presented in order of appearance.

- Figure 1: Participant motivations for joining their first collective giving group (Participant Survey)
- Figure 2: How participants were introduced to their first collective giving group (Participant Survey)
- Figure 3: Gender identity of collective giving group participants (Participant Survey)
- Figure 4: Cause areas and communities supported by collective giving groups (Leader Survey)
- Figure 5: Practice and knowledge changes experienced by participants if they volunteered for a collective giving group or not (Participant Survey)
- Figure 6: Wellbeing and skill changes experienced by participants if they volunteered for a collective giving group or not (Participant Survey)
- Figure 7: Collective giving group operating models in the sample (Leader Survey)
- Figure 8: How collective giving groups cover their operating costs (Leader Survey)
- Figure 9: Bequests and bequest programs in collective giving groups (Leader Survey)
- Figure 10: Services and supports host organisations provide collective giving groups (Leader Survey)
- Figure 11: Corporate support for collective giving groups (Leader Survey)
- Figure 12: Technology use in collective giving groups (Leader Survey)
- Figure 13: Participant volunteering by age range (Participant Survey)
- Figure 14: Reasons for discontinuing volunteering for a collective giving group (Participant Survey)
- Figure 15: Significant challenges for collective giving group leaders (Leader Survey)
- Figure 16: Perceived impact of different ideas to grow collective giving in Australia (Leader Survey)

