

ART POST VOLUNTEERING



Project Period	February - June 2025
Project Amount	\$14,550

Executive Summary

The Genus Inc project focused on building a high-quality, inclusive volunteer engagement framework through integrated training, mentoring, policy development, and strategic governance.

Operating under the Art Post initiative, the organisation aimed to create culturally responsive and creatively fulfilling volunteer roles that support vulnerable and underrepresented communities, including First Nations peoples, neurodiverse individuals, and those with lived experience of marginalisation.

The project significantly enhanced volunteer induction, strengthened role clarity, improved interpersonal and cross-team collaboration, and embedded long-term governance and HR practices.

The creative-based mentoring model fostered personal growth and psychological safety, while the cultural awareness sessions provided volunteers with a stronger foundation for inclusive, trauma-informed engagement.

The Genus Inc has strengthened its operational capacity and cultural responsiveness, building a replicable model that combines governance best practice with lived-experience leadership and volunteer innovation.

The result is a more connected, confident, and values-driven community of volunteers ready to scale impact across the wider Far North Queensland region.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The design and delivery of four tailored volunteer workshops.

The rollout of a six-week peer-led mentoring program, and the development of a comprehensive suite of internal documentation—including an updated Volunteer Handbook.

A newly developed Mentoring Handbook.

These initiatives were supported by multiple advisory group meetings and informed by ongoing reflection journals, survey tools, and formal evaluation processes.

KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Six Week Peer Mentoring Program

The six week peer mentoring program served as the centre piece of the project and was structured through a co-designed series of reflective sessions.

12 mentors

13 mentees

The program promoted active listening, ethical communication, conflict navigation, and peer learning. Participants engaged in individual check-ins, group facilitation exercises, and creative collaboration.

Qualitative feedback indicated significant improvements in interpersonal confidence, leadership capacity, and team cohesion.

Participants described the space as “safe,” “non-hierarchical,” and “empowering.” Many shared that they felt more confident contributing to team environments and more connected to the organisation's mission and each other.

Governance and Operational Strengthening

Through facilitated advisory meetings and consultation with leadership and external consultants, The Genus Inc updated its Terms of Reference, operational policies, and board documentation.

These changes included clearer delegation of authority protocols, refined governance responsibilities, and improved documentation of internal practices.

This process ensured greater alignment between policy and practice, enhancing both volunteer experience and organisational confidence.



Tailored Workshop Series

Four bespoke workshops were delivered to over 20 volunteers and staff, covering the following core areas:

Customer Service & Client Interaction:

Delivered by an external facilitator, this session used role-play to equip participants with skills for managing complex client dynamics with empathy and professionalism.

Cultural Awareness:

This session provided volunteers with essential knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages, and community protocols. Participants reported increased cultural humility and confidence in navigating cross-cultural settings.

Creative Expression:

A session grounded in art-based practices that encouraged participants to explore identity, belonging, and lived experience. This workshop doubled as a tool for wellbeing, self-awareness, and team cohesion.

Team Building:

Structured activities and reflective exercises aimed to foster trust, communication, and shared purpose across departments.

All sessions received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with many volunteers highlighting how these trainings supported not just their work, but their personal development.

Volunteer Engagement and Support Structures

A new Volunteer Handbook was developed alongside a detailed Mentoring Handbook, both of which were informed by advisory group input, lived experience feedback, and best practice research.

These resources outlined volunteer rights and responsibilities, introduced trauma-informed practices, clarified supervision and reporting structures, and embedded cultural safety as a core organisational value.

These documents were complemented by revised role descriptions and governance tools that enhanced volunteer onboarding, streamlined internal processes, and ensured clarity for both staff and volunteers around accountability and expectations.

INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Personal Development Enhances Retention

Volunteers who participated in soft skills training and mentoring reported higher satisfaction, improved wellbeing, and greater likelihood of long-term commitment. The inclusion of personal development—especially peer-led mentoring—proved crucial in maintaining morale, boosting confidence, and establishing meaningful roles beyond administrative support.

Documentation as Cultural Infrastructure

The rollout of clear, inclusive, and practical governance materials—especially the Volunteer and Mentoring Handbooks—was a turning point in formalising organisational culture. These documents became anchors for trust, communication, and volunteer onboarding. Volunteers expressed greater clarity about their roles and rights, and staff reported improved consistency in engagement practices.

Trauma-Informed and Culturally Safe Practice is Foundational

The Indigenous Cultural Awareness workshop revealed a strong appetite for deeper education in this area. The program reaffirmed that cultural safety must be embedded not only in frontline volunteer work but also in internal culture, leadership, and governance. Volunteers expressed a desire for continued learning on First Nations engagement and trauma-informed care.

Peer Mentoring Builds Psychological Safety

The peer-led mentoring program's success demonstrated that flattening hierarchies and allowing space for vulnerability improves group cohesion and long-term trust. Volunteers appreciated being seen as equals and recognised the space as an opportunity for healing, growth, and skill development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrate Mentorship into Volunteer Lifecycle

Mentorship should become a permanent, recurring element of the volunteer lifecycle. New volunteers can be paired with trained mentors upon induction, with optional quarterly group sessions. The mentoring structure has proven effective for confidence-building, leadership development, and retention.

Formalise Ongoing Workshop Calendar

Soft skill workshops—including cultural awareness, creativity, and client engagement—should be scheduled annually as part of volunteer development. These cost-effective sessions contribute significantly to morale and reinforce inclusive values.

Annual Review of Documentation

A rotating schedule of governance and operational reviews is recommended to ensure continuous improvement. This includes HR policies, onboarding materials, and board charters. Feedback loops with staff and volunteers should be incorporated into the revision process to keep content relevant and user-friendly.

Expand Cultural Awareness Training to Governance Level

To deepen the organisation's cultural safety commitment, extend Indigenous Cultural Awareness training to include board members and executive leadership. Embedding these values at all levels ensures consistency, respect, and culturally safe decision-making.

CONCLUSION

The Art Post Volunteering project has delivered substantial outcomes across governance, volunteer training, and organisational culture. Through a deliberate investment in mentoring, inclusive documentation, and creative learning, the organisation has strengthened its capacity to attract, retain, and support volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

Volunteers now operate within a clearer, safer, and more culturally attuned framework that balances structure with creativity.

Staff and board members are equipped with the tools to lead confidently, while the community benefits from more consistent and respectful service delivery.

The project has laid the foundation for expansion, positioning Art Post as a sector leader in inclusive, values-based volunteer engagement.

The work will continue into the July–December period, with scale-up plans underway and further partnerships to be explored across regional and remote areas of Queensland.