Australian Scholarships Foundation (ASF) is Australia’s only national, independent not-for-profit (NFP) organisation solely focused on funding and facilitating scholarships for the education, training and development of NFP board members, staff and volunteers.

ASF works with 25 education partners including 15 universities to make scholarships available in a growing range of leadership, management and governance training programs.

Including postgraduate university courses, short executive education, workshops and mentoring programs.

Areas offered include leadership, governance, finance, human resource management, project management, marketing and technology.

In 2014 ASF awarded its inaugural flagship scholarship, the Fulbright Professional Scholarship in Non-Profit Leadership, sponsored by the Origin Foundation. This was a world first.

ASF’s website includes an online database of all scholarships available to the NFP sector: www.scholarships.org.au.

ASF exists to strengthen and increase the overall effectiveness of the not-for-profit sector through education, training and development opportunities.

Not-for-Profit Sector Snapshot

About 600,000 NFPs in Australia are fulfilling a range of crucial societal roles which strengthen Australia’s social and economic fabric. The NFP sector in Australia is growing rapidly and those 60,000 NFPs identified as economically significant contribute 3.5 per cent of GDP ($57 billion), employ over 1 million people and a further 5 million volunteers additionally contribute in unpaid work ($15 billion).

ASF’s Model

- ASF is a deliberately lean, “near virtual” organisation, with significant investment in its IT Platform.
- ASF’s Scholarship Management Platform enables efficient processing of thousands of applications. Over 5,000 applications have been processed over four years.
- ASF collaborates with education partners to offer co-funded scholarships opportunities which results in a highly leveraged model for funders.
- $1 donated = $5 scholarship value

Measuring Impact

ASF is partnering with the Centre for Social Impact (UWA) and the Origin Foundation to pioneer a new methodology measuring the impact of scholarships on NFP effectiveness. This research will continue past the current project into 2017, as UWA have successfully secured an ARC grant to further this research. The overarching goal is to increase the funding of education and training in the NFP sector by demonstrating the benefit.
Since 2008 ASF has awarded scholarships worth over $4m to directors and staff of over 1700 NFP organisations nationwide. Last year ASF awarded 500 scholarships worth $1.1m. Many of the scholarships are oversubscribed up to five times. Opportunities are promoted via a database of over 20,000 NFP managers and directors, and via the website which attracts over 100,000 visitors per year.

ASF’s Track Record

Some of ASF’s partners include Australian-American Fulbright Commission, Australian Catholic University, Edith Cowan University, Deakin University, Kaplan Online Higher Education, Swinburne University, University of Melbourne, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, University of Western Australia, Australian Institute of Company Directors, CPA Australia, the Governance Institute, Harvard Club of Australia, Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia, Institute of Community Directors Australia.

Gael Evans-Barr, Public Health Coordinator, Cancer Council Queensland, Scholarship for Deakin University - MBA Residential Units

“Thank you ASF and supporters, your hard work and ongoing support is making a dramatic difference to many organisations and employees in this much needed sector. Being awarded a scholarship to attend a Deakin Residential in order to aid the completion of my MBA was a wonderful opportunity. One that both my employer and I would not have been able to deem financially viable in ordinary circumstances. I would like to sincerely thank ASF for their work supporting those employed in the not-for-profit sector.”

The Need for Education and Training

The Productivity Commission reviewed the Australian not-for-profit (NFP) sector and identified the lack of key competencies as a major obstacle for its long-term viability. Its seminal report in 2010 recommends increasing the scale and quality of governance, leadership, and management capacity of NFPs so they can sustain and maximise their contribution to society. Many NFPs simply do not have the capacity to fund professional education and development for their people. Yet with deepening constraints on funding, the changes in the regulatory environment and the expectations from funders and the public to not invest in “administration costs”, NFPs are in need of access to education and training more than ever before.