



**The Australasian Council on
Open and Digital Education**

Annual Report 2025

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

2025 was a defining year for ACODE, as we strengthened our governance and structure through constitutional change, a broadened membership scope, and the adoption of our first By-Laws.

We became employers, recruiting a new Senior Executive Officer who directly supports ACODE on a full-time basis, and Nicole Poole commenced in April. Previously, we had 'borrowed' our Executive Officer from a member institution, but a dynamic sector and complicated arrangements identified this as a continuity risk that we needed to address.

Highlights of 2025 included the launch of our work on a new benchmark in accessibility (Benchmark 10), and we held our ninth Learning Technologies Leadership Institute (LTLI) in August. We saw growth in attendance at our monthly TEL Talks, and we hosted three workshops with excellent attendance. We worked closely with organisations with which we have Memoranda of Understanding to support the THETA Conference in May, and the International Council of Distance Education Conference in November. ACODE representation was invited to participate in several panels, including a collaboration with ASCILITE to discuss generative AI. We also saw increased engagement among our Pacific-based members and can be proud of being truly international in our approach. ACODE remains committed to ensuring our general workshops and presentations are free of charge to institutional members (and staff employed by them), representing financial and professional development value.

I am so grateful to the ACODE community, which extends beyond the executive to our sector and vendor networks, our LTLI faculty and alumni, and to our valuable members who contribute, share and provide feedback to us. We are a better organisation for your engagement, and you all play a vital role in shaping the future of technology-enhanced learning.

We are looking forward to consolidating our sustainability and support strategy in 2026, and we will continue to ensure that our role in supporting the tertiary sector is valuable and recognised.

Thank you all for your continued support and engagement.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, which appears to be 'Kate Ames'.

Professor Kate Ames
President, ACODE

GOVERNANCE

Constitutional Change

In 2025, we refined our business and governance processes with a firm eye on business continuity and sustainability. As we are all aware, the university sector is dynamic. Mergers in South Australia reduced two universities to one, and some institutions indicated financial constraints may impact on membership decisions. In the meantime, we have consistently received requests from non-university higher education providers to be considered for membership, and have had to deny requests for full-membership.

As our business model is dependent on institutional fees and cannot be supplemented with individual fees, we sought to review membership options and proposed a constitutional change to include vocational institutions as full members. This reflects harmonisation discussions within Australia and New Zealand in particular, and also the increasing innovation in educational technology beyond universities.

We started the consultation process in 2024, and at a Special Meeting in May 2025, passed this change unanimously after multiple rounds of feedback, and commitment to include assurances and checks and balances within newly established by-laws. A huge thanks to everyone involved who provided feedback and engaged with the process. We are confident ACODE will be stronger for it.

Administrative Change

As part of our business continuity review, we also identified risks associated with 'loaning' our Executive Officer from universities, which have been prone to restructuring and position reviews. With member support, we ceased the agreement with CQUniversity and the University of Canberra, and established processes to employ a Senior Executive Officer directly with ACODE. After an external recruitment process, Ms Nicole Poole was employed full-time to support our members and the Executive. This arrangement has provided transparency and stability to ACODE.

Committee Change

During 2025, our Executive Member Lynnae Venaruzzo had to step down formally from her committee responsibilities for personal reasons. We sought an interim replacement via an external vote. Gordon Cunningham had been successful and was appointed to Lynnae's position formally for the remainder of her term (six months). We are very grateful to Lynnae for her amazing service and thank Gordon for his enthusiasm to step into this important role. We also welcomed Alanieta Lesuma-Fatiaki, University of the South Pacific, who was voted onto the Executive Committee in 2025. Ala's enthusiasm to drive Pacific engagement was felt throughout the year, and we are looking at furthering institutional engagement in 2026.

WORKSHOP SERIES

In 2025, ACODE held three workshops – ACODE 93 (Accessibility), ACODE 94 (Merging Universities) and ACODE 95 (GenAI).

ACODE 93 - Accessibility and Technology Enhanced Learning, 20 March 2025, hosted by the University of Auckland [54 Registrations]

ACODE 93, hosted on 20 March 2025 at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland, brought together sector leaders to explore the evolving landscape of accessibility in technology-enhanced learning.

The workshop opened with onsite networking, followed by formal welcomes from Dr Steve Leichtweis, ACODE President Professor Kate Ames, and University of Auckland Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Professor Simon Holdaway.

The program featured a series of expert presentations examining accessibility from strategic, operational, and standards-based perspectives. Professor Kate Ames delivered a keynote on the realities of accessibility in contemporary learning environments, asking, “*How accessible are we really?*” Professor Cathy Stinear, University of Auckland, followed with insights into institutional strategies and frameworks supporting equitable learning design, while Darren Britten from Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) provided a national perspective on accessibility initiatives.

Later in the afternoon, Professor Stephen Marshall (Victoria University of Wellington) explored the role of benchmarks and standards, noting that “there are many to choose from,” prompting discussion on what constitutes an effective benchmark for accessibility.

A major component of the workshop was collaborative engagement. Participants—both onsite and virtual—worked in six groups using Padlet to review draft benchmark sections and identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities. This group activity culminated in a report-back session, reinforcing shared priorities and sector-wide alignment.

The day concluded with closing remarks from Professor Ames, summarising key themes and reinforcing ACODE’s commitment to advancing accessible, technology-enhanced learning across the Australasian higher education sector. We all came away more committed than ever to promote accessibility awareness and standards in our institutions.



ACODE 94 - *Digital Learning Ecosystems for Tomorrow*, 17 July 2025, hosted by the University of Adelaide [114 Registrations]

The ACODE workshop “Digital Learning Ecosystems for Tomorrow” was held on 17 July 2025 at the University of Adelaide. The event brought together higher education leaders, technology specialists, and learning and teaching practitioners to explore how institutions can design and evolve digital learning ecosystems that effectively integrate people, data, and technology to support future learning environments.

The workshop opened with welcome remarks from Kate Ames (ACODE President) and Jennie Shaw from the University of Adelaide. A keynote session by Travis Cox examined the development and implementation of the University of Adelaide’s learning ecosystem, highlighting the institutional processes involved in selecting and integrating digital learning technologies.

A panel session featuring Amy Martin (Queensland University of Technology), Anna Stack (University of Technology Sydney), and Gordon Cunningham (Curtin University) explored how institutions can align organisational capabilities, data strategies, and digital infrastructure to achieve meaningful learning impact. This was followed by a presentation from Andrew Mulcahy on the CAUDIT MortarCAPS Higher Learning Data Standard, which addressed sector-wide approaches to improving interoperability and data exchange across educational technologies.



In the afternoon, Carlos Dominguez Ortega from Torrens University presented a case study reflecting on the institution’s growth and the evolution of its digital learning ecosystem. Participants then engaged in a collaborative Learning Ecosystem Scenario Activity led by the ACODE Executive team, allowing attendees to apply concepts from the day to practical institutional scenarios and strategic planning discussions.

The workshop concluded with participant reflections and networking opportunities. Overall, the event highlighted the importance of strategic alignment, data standards, cross-institutional collaboration, and thoughtful technology integration in developing sustainable and effective digital learning ecosystems for the future of higher education.

ACODE 95 - *Running as fast as we can: Reflecting on Artificial Intelligence's impact on curriculum, pedagogy, student experiences and learning environments*, 14 November 2025, hosted by the Victoria University of Wellington [171 Registrations]

Our final workshop for the year was held on 14 November 2025 at Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington. The event brought together educators and technology leaders to explore the rapidly evolving role of artificial intelligence in higher education and its implications for teaching, learning design, and institutional practice.

The workshop began with an exploration of AI technologies and emerging pedagogical approaches, presented by Associate Professor Simon McCallum, which highlighted how AI tools are influencing teaching practices and the design of learning activities. This was followed by a session featuring student perspectives, where Francesca Benocci and Stella McIntosh discussed how students are using AI and the implications for learning experiences and expectations.

The keynote session by Professor Danny Liu from the University of Sydney examined the future of curriculum in an AI-enabled world, emphasising the need for curriculum redesign that incorporates AI literacy, authentic assessment, and new forms of knowledge creation.

In the afternoon, Dani Logan-Fleming from Torrens University presented on fostering innovation in higher education, encouraging institutions to actively experiment with AI technologies while supporting staff capability and organisational culture change. Participants then engaged in a hybrid group discussion on academic integrity and AI, led by Professor Stephen Marshall, Stella McIntosh, and Robert Stratford, exploring strategies for integrating AI into learning while maintaining integrity and transparency.

Later sessions highlighted practical institutional implementations, including a case study by Matt Poole from the University of Auckland on deploying an AI assistant to support student services. The workshop concluded with a collaborative discussion led by Dr Ratna Selvaratnam and Dr Steve Leichtweis from the ACODE Executive on institutional approaches to introducing AI into learning technologies, including policy considerations and emerging sector practices.

Overall, the workshop provided a forum for critical reflection and practical exchange on the opportunities and challenges of AI in higher education. Key themes included curriculum transformation, student engagement with AI, academic integrity, institutional governance, and the need for collaborative sector-wide responses to rapidly advancing technologies.



TEL Talks

In 2025, ACODE continued the initiative of monthly TEL Talks with an increase of 76% attendance on average. These one-hour sessions continued to provide an opportunity for staff employed by our member institutions to share ideas informally and learn through connection. There was strong engagement across a range of crucial TEL topics. Over the course of the year, we hosted discussions on:

- 7 February: *Programmatic Assessment* - 18 Attendees
- 14 March: *Preparing Academic Staff for the Integration of AI Technologies in Teaching and Learning Practices* - 54 Attendees
- 4 April: *The New World of Academic Integrity and Assessment Re-Design* - 109 Attendees
- 2 May: *Video in Education: Sharing Practice and Experience with Students, Staff, and Systems in the Age of Gen AI* - 51 Attendees
- 6 June: *Curriculum Transformation: Implications for Learning Technologies* - 54 Attendees
- 4 July: *Exploring the relationship between supporting experiential learning (including WIL) and edtech systems* - 36 Attendees
- 1 August: *Emerging Technologies: A Human-Led, Tech Powered Tool Evaluation Framework* - 65 Attendees
- September: *Cancelled*
- 3 October: *From LTLI to the Pacific: Leadership, Learning, and Technology in Conversation* - 32 Participants
- 7 November: *GenAI as a Virtual Team Member* - 36 Attendees

The TEL Talks are now firmly embedded into ACODE's calendar, and we are grateful to those who engaged this year. They are not recorded, which provides an opportunity for attendees to engage in open and transparent discussion about issues that are impacting them in their workplace, and share practice as a professional community.

ENGAGEMENT

As a sector-representative body, ACODE executive staff are actively involved with a range of organisations to assist with benchmarking, policy discussion and feedback, and identify and provide professional development opportunities for our member institutions. The purpose of engagement is to increase access to networks and information-sharing for our member institution staff. Key events were as follows:

THETA 2025

THETA is Australasia's leading biennial IT conference for professionals working in higher education and research and eResearch, THETA is held every two years, and ACODE is a co-organiser alongside the Council of Australasian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT) and the Council of Australasian University Librarians (CAUL). This year's event was hosted in Perth, and the theme was 'Winds of Change'. To support the event, all ACODE executive staff supported the delivery of the conference, assisting as members of organising committees, panel and paper reviewers, and panel chairs. Those who attended would be aware of the size of this conference, which is one of the major education technology/learning and teaching events on the Australasian calendar.

MOU with MortarCAPS

We engaged in a Memorandum of Understanding with MortarCAPS, ensuring ACODE's inclusion in the discussion and development of higher learning data standards to support technical and program portability in higher education.

AI and Online Engagement in Higher Education

ACODE collaborated with ASCILITE on a HERDSA panel featuring ACODE President Professor Kate Ames, ASCILITE President Professor Michael Cowling and educational psychologist Professor Jason Lodge (University of Queensland). The panel explored "Plugged In & Switched On: AI-Powered Possibilities for Online Engagement in Higher Education" addressing the growing integration of artificial intelligence in online learning environments.

Accessibility and Inclusive Learning

ACODE co-delivered an Accessibility Panel, "Access Granted" in collaboration with the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE). The panel featured ACODE President Professor Kate Ames, Dr Janet Bulumaris Rangou (Western Pacific University), Dr Mark Nichols (ICDE President), and Darren Britten (Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training). The panel, in keeping with ACODE's focus on accessibility benchmarking, examined accessibility frameworks and assistive technology initiatives in distance and online education.

Regional Policy Advocacy

ACODE President Kate Ames contributed to the ICDE Educational Policy Forum, collaborating with regional leaders including Ralph Springett (Flexible Learning Association NZ), Rajni Chand (Commonwealth of Learning), Dawn Marie Gilmore (Open Distance Learning Association of Australia), and Linda Sissons. This forum strengthened advocacy for Oceania's distance and flexible learning priorities at the international policy level.



2025 ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute (LTLI)

The 2025 ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute (LTLI) was held from 17–21 August 2025 at the Mantra Mooloolaba Resort on the Sunshine Coast and brought together 42 participants from 18 higher education institutions and three vendors. The program aimed to support emerging leaders in Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) during a period of significant change in the higher education sector, including post-pandemic reforms, institutional restructuring, and increasing interest in technologies such as AI.

The institute featured eight faculty members and a director, who delivered presentations on leadership, technology trends, career development, and TEL strategy. Participants worked in seven teams on a central scenario-based activity called “Making the Case”, where they developed and presented a strategic proposal addressing the challenges of merging institutions with different TEL systems while integrating emerging technologies such as AI.

The program combined:

- Faculty presentations
- structured group work sessions
- peer collaboration and mentoring
- networking and social activities
- final team presentations evaluated by faculty and peers.



The “Magnificent Seven” team won the final presentation challenge for their strong digital ecosystem proposal and supporting materials.

Participation and Support

The event was supported by sponsors including PebblePad, TechnologyOne, All the Ducks, Stackle, and FeedbackFruits, whose involvement helped enhance the program and introduce new tools such as peer-review and group evaluation systems.

Administrative and technical support from ACODE staff and volunteers played a significant role in the event’s success. Feedback from participants was extremely positive, with an overall satisfaction rating of 4.8 out of 5, the highest result achieved by the Institute to date.

Participants highlighted two main strengths: access to experienced faculty, including mentorship and leadership insights, and peer collaboration and networking, which allowed participants to work closely with colleagues from across the sector.

The immersive case-based approach was also valued as a realistic and practical leadership development experience. Participants were encouraged to engage with artificial intelligence as a “partner” or member of the group, which generated thoughtful conversations and encouraged creativity and innovation between discussions about cases for use and ethical practice.

Suggestions for improvement included more structured networking opportunities, clearer guidance and supporting materials for the case study, additional practical content such as financial planning for large projects, stronger alignment between presentations and group tasks, and improvements to venue accessibility and logistics. The ACODE executive will consider feedback to strengthen future LTLI programs, including the 2027 institute.

Despite ongoing challenges in the higher education sector, the ACODE LTLI continues to be a highly valued professional development initiative, helping cultivate the next generation of TEL leaders. The strong participation, high satisfaction ratings, and continued institutional support demonstrate its importance in strengthening leadership capability across the sector. We would like to acknowledge the leadership of Professor Michael Sankey (Director) and Travis Cox (Deputy Director), and Faculty:

- Professor Kate Ames, President, ACODE
- Professor Dominique Parrish, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Torrens University Australia
- Professor Kylie Readman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education and Students), University of Technology Sydney
- Professor Stephen Marshall, Director of Centre for Academic Development, Victoria University of Wellington
- Professor Giselle Byrne, Provost, Massey University
- Mr Peter Nikolettatos, Industry General Manager of Education and Adjunct Professor, Technology One/La Trobe University
- Associate Professor Trish McCluskey, Associate Professor and Director of Digital Learning, Deakin University

The opportunity to access knowledge and share ideas with sector leaders in an intensive format is very rare, and we are incredibly proud of our ability to offer the LTLI to such a high standard. Preparations have already started on the 2027 LTLI.

BENCHMARKING

In 2025, building on from our successful launch of Benchmark 9 – Learning Spaces in 2024, we progressed the development of a benchmark in accessibility. We commenced initial broad discussions at ACODE 93, which focused on accessibility. We sought levels of interest, which were high, and pulled together an Accessibility Benchmarking Working Group that comprised members of our ACODE educational technology, learning and teaching, and accessibility community. Darren Britten, well known to many in Australia for his work with the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) joined the Working Party, providing valuable insight into common issues encountered across the sector.

The group met regularly throughout 2025, led by Professors Stephen Marshall and Kate Ames, and Dr Steve Leichtweis.

Benchmark 10 – Accessibility will be formally launched in 2026, providing a valuable framework for self-assessment of technology, policy, and physical space accessibility as it pertains to learning and teaching.

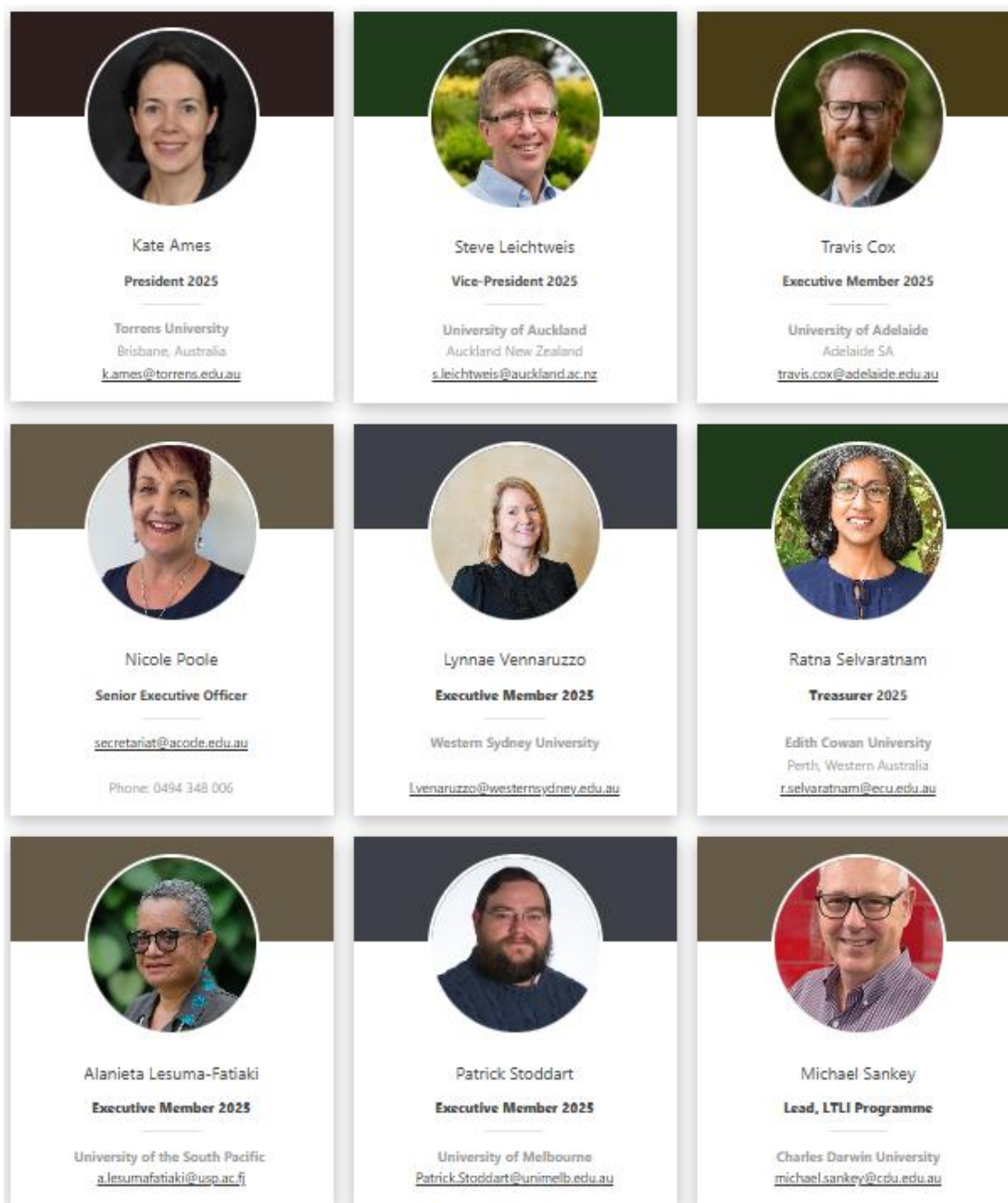
Our sincere thanks to everyone involved.

Name	Institution
Stephen Marshall	Victoria University of Wellington
Kate Ames	Torrens University
Steve Leichtweis	University of Auckland
Justin Wylie	CQUniversity
Ratna Selvaratnam	Edith Cowan University
Amelia Dowe	University of Tasmania
Rachel Anderson-Smith	Victoria University of Wellington
Brett Challacombe-King	Victoria University of Wellington
Audrea Warner	University of Auckland
Stephen Horsley	University of Auckland
Gavin Smith	Western Sydney University
Hermy Llacuna	Western Sydney University
Darren Britten	ADCET
Suzanne Carter	University of Melbourne

ACODE 2025 EXECUTIVE

The ACODE Executive comprised the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Senior Executive Officer and four Executive Members, each with a two-year term of office. Beginning from 1 January.

No officer served more than two consecutive terms in the same position, and terms are staggered where possible.



We would also like to thank Gordon Cunningham, who stepped into an acting executive position for the year.

INCOME AND EXPENSES

Australasian Council on Open and Digital Education

ABN: 64 939 648 740

Income statement

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	2025 \$	2024 \$
Income		
ACODE Membership Fees	132,000.00	122,000.00
Interest	11,932.60	11,300.70
LTLI Income	82,796.34	32,909.08
	226,728.94	166,209.78
Expenses		
Advertising	-	2,713.93
Auditor's Remuneration	4,500.00	3,600.00
Bank Charges	820.76	1,175.64
Benchmarking Summit 24	-	8,563.71
Computer Expenses	955.35	1,651.42
Conference Fees	112,931.80	11,539.47
Depreciation	4,196.27	747.31
Employee Entitlements - Holiday Pay	6,224.36	-
Gifts in lieu of payment	-	268.81
Honorariums & Gifts	30,181.19	-
Insurance	2,978.36	2,609.09
LTLI Meeting & Travel Expenses	31,719.90	28,031.59
Printing, Postage & Stationery	535.27	1,438.19
Publications DOI	-	200.00
Salaries & Wages	68,615.35	-
Service Fees - Executive Officer	48,273.00	91,112.79
Staff Training & Welfare	15,825.96	29,797.09
Subscriptions	2,030.04	604.64
Superannuation Contributions	11,664.62	-
TEL Award Winning Payment	2,000.00	10,000.00
Telephone & Internet	221.84	966.62
Web Site Maintenance	7,329.91	9,408.77
	351,003.98	204,429.07
Net loss	(124,275.04)	(38,219.29)
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	437,077.18	475,186.47
Retained earnings at the end of the financial year	312,802.14	436,967.18

Audited financial statements highlight that 2025 was a transition year regarding wages and salary in particular. Reconciliation payments were required to CQUniversity and the University of Canberra to balance their accounts, reflected in 'Service Fees'. Contractor fees were also incurred in relation to LTLI for the Director, Conference Organiser and technical support. These expenses will reduce in the future due to the full-time appointment of the Senior Executive Officer, and establishment of a volunteer Director role. Subscriptions increased as ACODE was required to self-fund core business platform expenses, previously supported through institutional-based employment.

Overall, ACODE is financially strong and in a position to provide ongoing support to members.

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