

## **2.4 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM POLICY & TERMS OF REFERENCE** (KJ; D19-405342)

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### ***PURPOSE***

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of both the Monash Community Grants Program Policy and the Terms of Reference for the Community Grants Program Evaluation Panel.

#### ***KEY CONSIDERATIONS***

The Monash Community Grants Program (MCGP) has been a major source of funding of the Monash Community since 1995. The program aims to:

- develop partnerships between Council and community groups to achieve Council's strategic directions;
- direct resources to both the emerging and specific needs of disadvantaged groups;
- develop a positive approach to the resolution of local social issues;
- support local groups, activities and community connectedness; and
- support community organisations to develop skills and increase community participation.

The MCGP primarily provides funding for small to medium sized projects, events and initiatives that respond to the social, cultural, recreational and economic needs of Monash residents.

The next round of the Monash Community Grants Program will fund activities occurring between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021. This round will open for applications on Tuesday 28 January 2020, closing on Friday 28 February 2020. All applications will be administered online via Smarty Grants.

#### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The 2020/21 Monash Community Grant Program is anticipated to have a total budget allocation of \$2,596,520.49, subject to the adoption of the 2020/21 Council operational budget in June 2020.

#### ***CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION***

It is recommended that Council endorses the Monash Community Grants Policy and the Terms of Reference for the Community Grants Program Evaluation Panel.

## 2.4 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM POLICY & TERMS OF REFERENCE (KJ; D19-405342)

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council:*

- 1. Adopts the 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program Policy, noting the service improvements; and*
- 2. Adopts the Terms of Reference for the 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Each year Council provides funding to local organisations and community groups through the Monash Community Grants Program (MCGP). The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the revised Monash Community Grants Program Policy and the Terms of Reference for the Community Grants Program Evaluation Panel. This report seeks to summarise the funding principles and program framework outlined in the Policy and the associated governance considerations.

The MCGP Policy has been informed by learnings from previous funding rounds, best practice benchmarking with other Councils delivering similar grants programs, feedback from grant recipients and through alignment with Council's current strategic direction.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Monash Community Grants Program (MCGP) has been a major source of funding to the Monash community since 1995 and aims to:

- a) develop partnerships between Council and community groups to achieve Council's strategic directions;
- b) support local groups, activities and foster community connectedness;
- c) support community organisations to develop skills and increase community participation;
- d) direct resources to address the needs of both emerging and disadvantaged groups; and
- e) develop a positive approach to the resolution of local social issues;

These community grants primarily provide funding for small to medium sized projects and initiatives that respond to the social, cultural, creative and recreational needs of the Monash community.

### **DISCUSSION**

The Monash Community Grants Program (MCGP) has been running annually since 1995. The MCGP has been delivered in its current programmatic format since 2014/15, when Council transitioned the grants program to a financial-year funding model. At the same time, Council implemented the SmartyGrants grant management system, enabling online applications and administration of funding.

Each year, community-based organisations operating within the City of Monash are invited to apply for funding to support their projects, activities, events and/or services.

All applications must meet eligibility criteria; the most significant of which relate to the organisation type, community participation, alignment with Council's objectives, location of funded project and insurance coverage. A full list of eligibility criteria is outlined in the MCGP Policy (Attachment 1). The MCGP Policy is revised into guidelines for all potential applicants to access on our website, in hard copy at libraries and service centres. All past applicants will receive an email link to the MCGP Guidelines (Attachment 3).

The MCGP allows for cash and/or in-kind grants to be allocated across nine (9) funding categories:

- Community Strengthening;
- Community Strengthening Hall Hire Only;
- Specialist Services;
- Neighbourhood Houses;
- Positive Ageing;
- Arts and Cultural Projects;
- Community Events;
- Major Festivals; and
- Active Projects.

Details of each of the categories' objectives, assessment criteria and types of funding available are outlined in the MCGP Policy (Attachment 1). It is important to note that a new category is being proposed this year 'Community Strengthening Hall Hire Only'. The proposed Community Strengthening Hall Hire Only category is in response to feedback from groups that both the application and acquittal process is extensive for those that seek hall hire only, this category will enable those seeking hall hire only to fill out a less complex application and acquittal form.

To be considered for any funding, projects/services must be consistent with Council's strategic plans and policy positions. The MCGP is a competitive, fair and equitable funding program. All applications are assessed on their individual merit however not all applications received can be funded, as typically, the total value of funding requests received via the MCGP far exceed the available program budget.

### ***Program Timelines***

At its meeting in July 2019 Council approved the following program timelines for the 2020/2021 Grant round;

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
Letter sent to groups notifying of the timeline change	August 2019
Reminder letter sent to groups notifying them of the date that the grants program will open, the information session times and grant guidelines	November 2019
'Invitation to Apply' letters sent to all previous applicants	13 January 2020
Advertising Campaign	20 January 2020 – 21 February 2020

Applications Open For Submissions via SmartyGrants	28 January 2020
Grant Information and Application Support Workshops	3 February 2020 – 24 February 2020
Applications Close for submissions via SmartyGrants	28 February 2020
Pre-eligibility Checks of Applications	2 March 2020 – 6 March 2020
Monash Community Grants Team prepare officer assessments and recommendations to present to the Community Grants Evaluation Panel	10 March 2020 – 9 April 2020
Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel meetings <i>Grant Allocations recommended</i>	16 April 2020 – 23 April 2020
Report to Council <i>Subject to the adoption of Council 2020/21 Budget</i>	26 May 2020
In principle successful and unsuccessful letters sent to groups <i>Noting that the decision is subject to the adoption of the 2020/21 Budget at Council's June meeting</i>	27 May 2020
Funding Agreements sent to all Successful 2020/21 Grant Recipients	1 July 2020

### **Support for Applicants**

All potential applicants will be able to seek direct assistance from Council officers in the following ways:

- Information and Application Support Sessions:**  
 Support sessions are open to all potential applicants to attend. The sessions are an opportunity for potential applicants to speak with officers from the MCGP team, discuss their grant ideas and seek advice on eligibility, alignment with Council priorities and guidance for project planning and application preparation. The sessions are also designed to support community groups with the online component, assisting applicants to complete the online application forms via Smarty Grants. These sessions will run regularly throughout the application open period between 28 January and 28 February 2020.
- One-on-one Assistance:**  
 On request, applicants can make an appointment with MCGP officers to discuss their proposed application. This option is particularly suitable for applicants who would prefer the support of an interpreter or may require other assistance.

### **Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel**

Council will determine the Councillor membership of the 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel during the annual process for the allocation of Council committees, anticipated to occur in December 2019.

This report seeks endorsement of the Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel Terms of Reference (Attachment 2), which guides the governance of the Evaluation Panel and their role in the Monash Community Grants Program delivery.

Commencing in April 2020, Council officers will convene a series of Evaluation Panel meetings (2-3 as required) and provide administrative support to the Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel throughout the entire evaluation process.

Once the Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel has reviewed all grant requests (taking into consideration the officer assessment of each application), the Evaluation Panel will submit a Council Report at the May 2020 Council meeting, seeking their endorsement of the Evaluation Panel's funding recommendations.

### ***Advice to Applicants***

Following Council endorsement of the panel recommendations, all applicants will receive advice of the outcome of their application, whether successful or unsuccessful. If successful, this initial advice is to be considered 'in-principle' funding, pending adoption of the 2020/21 Council Budget in June 2020. Following the budget adoption, formal Funding Agreement documentation will be sent to all approved grants recipients.

### ***SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS***

An annual review of the MCGP has been undertaken by officers and incorporated areas of Council impacted by the grants process (Halls, Arts and Culture, Community Strengthening and Finance) and also taken into consideration the feedback provided by groups and organisation to officers and Councillors.

The proposed service improvements that have been included into the MCGP Funding Guidelines are:

- In response to those groups only seeking halls a new category has been included; Community Strengthening Hall Hire Only to allow for a less complex process in both the application and acquittal process. Applicants will be able to apply for up to 3 years of funding;
- In response to feedback from groups that food is often what brings people together Community Strengthening Grants can now include catering (to a maximum of 15% of the total budget);
- Positive Ageing applications will be capped at \$4,000 in cash and will be exempt from any further financial reductions that may be applied to the MCGP during the panel assessment phase to present a balanced budget;
- In recognition of the rising costs of running events and the value that can be added to these events with a more realistic budget contribution. Community Events to have a cap of \$7,000 applied, an increase from \$5000;
- Arts and Cultural projects will have a \$10,000 cap for hall hire applied; previously no cap was recorded for this category and by applying a cap it ensures consistency across the program. If groups receive more than \$10,000 in hall hire, Council Officers will work with these groups over a three year period to find a more sustainable model for the delivery of their program;
- To ensure increased transparency applicants financial and budgetary components of their application will now be scored and have a weighting applied;
- In response to groups and organisations submitting multiple applications in the same category, which confuses the priorities for these organisations, applicants will now only be able to submit one application per category across the grant program. For example, groups can apply for Community Strengthening, Positive Ageing and an Event. If more than one

application is submitted in the same category the subsequent applications will be deemed ineligible. It is hoped that by limiting applicants to one application per category that we will get the very best application from that organisation. For larger organisations, who for example, in the past have submitted multiple Community Strengthening applications, we would be encouraging these applicants to put forward an innovative and integrated series which will build the capacity of the community as opposed to holding isolated activities. By limiting it to one application per category organisations and groups now need to determine which is their preferred and strongest application to submit. Category financial caps will still apply;

- Printing is still available to Positive Ageing applicants, however for those that have received printing in the past 3-year agreement, a formula will be applied that will provide them with the average that they have used over this time period. This is in response to groups applying for printing, being allocated printing however not using their full allocation; and
- Active Projects Grants will be able to apply for up to \$2,000.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The provision of the Monash Community Grants Program Policy (Attachment 1) is based on Council's values and strategic objectives outlined in the Monash Council Plan 2017 – 2021, in particular "*An Inclusive Community*".

Monash Council has a proud history of working in partnership with community-based organisations to meet the needs of local residents and to deliver positive community outcomes. To further strengthen this partnership approach, as per the Monash Community Grants Program Policy framework, organisations seeking funding will be required to demonstrate how their project/initiative will support key Council strategies including but not limited to:

- The Council Plan 2017 - 2021;
- A Healthy And Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017-2021;
- The Public Health Approach to Gambling Policy 2016-2020; and
- The Gender Equity Strategy 2015-2020.

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The social implications of the Monash Community Grants Program are significant. Grant funding will:

- Strengthen a sense of community by facilitating cultural and artistic activities, stakeholder participation, recognition of diversity, cultural heritage and social cohesion;
- Provide support for community services to support the diverse needs of our Monash community (e.g. children and families, young people, elderly people and people with disabilities), and facilitate the accessibility of community services;
- Strengthen community health and well-being through public safety initiatives and facilitate participation of community members in healthy lifestyles and community festivals; and
- Foster education and skills development by supporting the number and quality of education options for the community in life-long learning opportunities.

In response to the needs of local services, Council has maintained its priority of supporting agencies and groups that are locally focussed and responsive to municipal needs.

**HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS**

The 2019/20 Monash Community Grants Program is entirely consistent with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. In particular, the program supports:

- freedom of expression;
- peaceful assembly and freedom of association;
- taking part in public life; and
- cultural rights.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The 2020/21 Monash Community Grant Program is anticipated to have a total budget allocation of \$2,596,520.49, subject to the adoption of the 2020/21 Council operational budget in June 2020.

**CONCLUSION**

The Monash Community Grants Program is a major community development and capacity building program for the Monash Community that recognises and supports the voluntary and community sector in Monash.

In 2020/21 Council expects to allocate \$2,596,520.49 in community grants to enable local organisations and community groups to deliver programs and activities, promoting wellbeing and social inclusion and produce arts and cultural activities for Monash residents to participate in. Council will allocate these funds under the Monash Community Grants Program Policy. This program enables Council to support and work collaboratively with local agencies and service providers, utilising their expertise, with the aim of delivering services in response to community need.

The 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program will open for submission of applications from Tuesday 28 January 2020 and close on Friday 28 February 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Attachment 1:** Monash Community Grants Program Policy

**Attachment 2:** Monash Community Grants Evaluation Panel Terms of Reference

**Attachment 3:** Monash Community Grant Program Guidelines