

2.4 2020/21 MONASH QUICK RESPONSE GRANTS PROGRAM RECIPIENTS

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of successful applications to the Quick Response Grant program (QRG).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

Monash Council is committed to supporting the community to adapt positively to the challenges of COVID-19. The Quick Response Grants were designed to support the adaptation and continuation of local community groups and individual creative efforts to help build community resilience, cohesion and connectedness during and after the pandemic.

One application was assessed during the period of 13 - 27 January 2021 and funding of \$4,750 has been awarded to one successful application.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Quick Response Grants program is funded from the existing 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program budget. The Quick Response Grant program has an allocation of \$135,000, of which \$4,750 has been allocated in this period. Including these decisions the total allocations made to date are \$54,822, with a remaining budget for the program of \$80,178.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The Quick Response Grants successful recipients for the period 13 – 27 January 2021 are presented to Council within the available budget, recognising the implications on future Council budgets given the impact of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures currently in place.

These projects have demonstrated how resilient, adaptive and caring the Monash community is during this challenging time.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the successful application that has been funded through the Quick Response Grant program during the period 13 – 27 January 2021 to a total of \$4,750.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of successful applications to the Quick Response Grant program (QRG).

BACKGROUND

Monash Council is committed to supporting the community to adapt positively to the challenges of COVID-19. The Quick Response Grants were designed to support the adaptation and continuation of local community groups and individual creative efforts to help build community resilience, cohesion and connectedness during and after the pandemic.

Monash Council has one of the largest community grant programs in Victoria and is proud of its commitment in supporting and valuing the dedicated community groups and organisations within our municipality. The establishment of a Quick Response Grant Program has enabled Council to continue to support the local community groups and artists to remain agile and innovative as they respond to the impacts of COVID-19.

As per the Guidelines that were endorsed at Council on 9 June 2020 the process is as follows:

- Applications will be submitted via SmartyGrants from 1 July 2020 until the allocation has been exhausted
- Applications will be assessed by an internal Council Officer Panel
- Applicants will receive a response from Council within four weeks of the application being received
- Once receiving notification of a successful application, applicants must commence the project within four weeks and complete by 30 June 2021
- All successful applications will be formally acknowledged at the next applicable Council meeting

DISCUSSION

The current COVID-19 pandemic has posed many challenges for Council and community alike, both from an operational and economic perspective. Council is acutely aware of the importance of many of our community groups and the role that they play in combating social isolation and loneliness amongst our community members.

The establishment of a Quick Response Grant Program (QRG) has enabled our community to apply for a once-off grant of up to \$5,000 for a project that demonstrates innovation in response to the impact of COVID-19 on their group and our local community.

It is important to note that Quick Response Grants were developed for the community to provide innovative ways to respond to the issues that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 and are not to be a duplicate of an existing program, whether funded through MCGP or other avenues.

The QRG have been promoted through multiple Monash platforms, including:

- Monash Bulletin
- Monash social media – Facebook, Instagram and twitter
- As part of a mail out to current grant recipients
- Art & About e-newsletter
- Sustainability e-newsletter

The grants opened on 1 July 2020 and will remain open until the allocation of \$135,000 is exhausted.

One application was received via the SmartyGrants portal for the period 13 – 27 January 2021. Applications were assessed by an internal officer assessment panel.

The assessment criteria consisted of the following:

1. Addresses an evidence-based community need or opportunity
2. Demonstrated response to the impacts of COVID-19 on an organisation/community
3. The number of Monash residents that will benefit
4. The capacity of the organisation/community/individual to undertake the project
5. Budget expenditure

An evaluation matrix was developed, taking into consideration the guidelines, ensuring the applications were considered and assessed in an equitable and transparent way. This provided the assessment process with rigour and consistency.

A total of **\$4,750** has been awarded to one successful application, outlined in the table below. This amount was determined by the project, amount and specific items requested in the application budget.

Recipient	Project Name	Amount Awarded
Melbourne String Academy	Virtual Music Connect	\$4,750.00
	Total	\$4,750.00

Details of this project is as follows:

Melbourne String Academy (2021QRG0059) – \$4,750.00

Virtual Music Connect (VMC) is a community outreach pilot program initiative of the MSA that seeks to address two issues arising from Stay-at-Home restrictions; increased social isolation for residents of aged care facilities, and the loss of opportunities, income, and a sense of purpose for musicians. Through the program, musicians connect and engage with underserved and

vulnerable communities, specifically residents of elder care facilities. Events are streamed live via on-line video platforms.

The pilot programs consist of a presentation component: approximately 40 minutes of music performance interspersed with approximately 20 minutes of explanation. The presentation is followed by a question and answer session with the artistic director serving as facilitator. Audience members interact with the artists directly, ask questions, and discuss the music with the artists and each other.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Monash Quick Response Grants program is a subset of the Monash Community Grants Program Policy that has been implemented with the intention of supporting the Council Plan as well as A Healthy & Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan and other relevant strategic documents.

The Program encourages community connectivity and participation, as well as focusing Council's support on the groups most in need. The MCGP Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it meets the changing needs of both Council and the community.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Monash community sector has a rich history of innovation and promoting community participation. The establishment of a Quick Response Grant will enable many community groups to respond effectively and innovatively to the impact that COVID-19 has had on their members and local community.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The 2020/21 Monash Quick Response Grants Program addresses the four key themes: freedom, respect, equality and dignity of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Quick Response Grant program has an allocation of \$135,000, of which \$4,750 has been allocated in this period. Including these decisions the total allocations made to date are \$54,822 with a remaining budget for the program of \$80,178.

CONCLUSION

The Quick Response Grants successful recipient for the period 13 – 27 January 2021 are presented to Council within the available budget, recognising the implications on future Council budgets given the impact of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures currently in place.

This project has demonstrated how resilient, adaptive and caring the Monash community is during this challenging time.