

2.1 MONASH QUICK RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM EVALUATION (D21-266288)

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the 2020/21 Quick Response Grants program (QRG) outcomes.

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.

The 2020/21 Quick Response Grants Program was open to applications from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. Council received a total of 54 applications from a wide range of community and cultural groups and individuals. Of these, 22 projects were successful in receiving funding and were delivered to the Monash community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2020/21 Quick Response Grants program was funded from the existing 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program budget, with an allocation of \$135,000. A total of \$71,722 was awarded to successful applicants.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The 2020/21 QRG program was delivered to the community at a time when many other community programs had been cancelled or severely impacted by COVID 19 restrictions. The 2020/21 QRG program enabled valuable projects to be delivered that would not otherwise have been possible through the annual MCGP funding, and demonstrated how resilient, adaptive and caring the Monash community has been during this challenging time.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the successful outcomes of projects funded through the 2020/21 Quick Response Grant program to a total of \$71,722

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present Council with an overview of the 2020/21 Quick Response Grants Program (QRG) outcomes.

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 local community groups and artists to remain agile and innovative as they respond to the impacts of COVID-19.

DISCUSSION

The 20/21 Quick response Grants Program was open to applications from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. Council received a total of 54 applications from a wide range of community and cultural groups and individuals including sports clubs, multicultural community groups, performing arts groups, artists, neighbourhood houses and other not-for-profit organisations.

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.

Of these 54 applications, 22 projects were successful in receiving funding. A Summary table of reported outcomes for all projects is attached (See Appendix 1).

COVID 19 has greatly affected the Monash arts and cultural community, with participation in creative activities and events being significantly impacted by the lockdowns. To support the arts in Monash, the eligibility criteria for the QRG enabled individual artists with an ABN to apply. In contrast to the Annual MCGP program, seven applications were from individual artists and 50% of successful applications were for creative or arts-based projects.

A high level of innovation was seen across all projects. Due to the requirement that projects be delivered within a COVID safe environment, community groups and artists developed and trialed new ideas and learnt new skills to deliver their projects online or in a new format. This also resulted in community members learning new skills by participation in these activities. Many participants commented that they would like to continue with similar activities and services in the future. This capacity building of community and cultural groups will have a lasting impact on the Monash community.

A total of 3220 Monash residents participated directly in these 22 projects, in the form of collaboration with artists, performers and filmmakers, social engagement and discussion at workshops, or in the receiving of benefits from services and assistance. A further 1000 residents are estimated to have viewed or experienced the artworks, films and stories that these programs generated. At least six projects will continue to benefit the community directly in the future. An example is the Street Pantry at Notting Hill Neighbourhood House, which will continue to provide food donations to vulnerable residents experiencing food insecurity with support from the NHHN community.

The snap lockdowns in February and May/June had a detrimental impact on some projects. Some projects were re-scheduled multiple times, and two projects were not able to be completed within the Program timeframes. These two projects are currently fully planned and ready to be delivered, and applicants will be able to re-apply through the 2021/22 QRG program when restrictions have eased and delivery becomes possible.

Written feedback gathered by grant recipients was overwhelmingly positive. Some examples of comments provided by participants are:

“Mary was so engaging, the activities were age appropriate and my daughter really enjoyed them. It was great to see the growth mind-set coming through” – *Parent of participant in ‘Sunny Saturdays’ with Mary Walker.*

“Thank you to you and the Monash council for the three Art Journaling workshops. I enjoyed myself and learnt some new skills” – *Participant of ‘Zoom Art workshops’ with Tasmina Khan Majles.*

“I was truly delighted in receiving the final version of the video of my story. What an excellent effort from all of you. My friends and family have been eagerly waiting to see the video and I know they will really enjoy it. It was a wonderful experience for me to see what was involved in making the video. You all wanted to make sure everything was perfect and it is!” – *Participant of ‘Spin a Yarn’ with Black Hole Theatre.*

“I wasn’t really sure going into the workshops what they would be like or what we would do. But I found it didn’t really matter. The team running the workshops just created a really open, fun and safe environment for people to share and talk about their vulnerabilities. Just being able to listen to these, and have a chance to share my own, often through exercises (like the poem exercise), felt really relieving, fun and made me zoom out a bit on my own life. I’d love to do this kind of practice once a week, it’s so rewarding to connect in this way. Especially for someone who finds there is less and less of this out there. Thx ponycam” – *Participant of ‘Anything You Can Do’ with Pony Cam.*

“The laughter and new connections was the best part. People were so welcoming and generous with each other. You don’t see this at the supermarket!”, “I am 77 years old but I still like this. It is very, very good for seniors to do. Brain training. Thanks council.”- *Participant of Clayton Community Drum Circle with Peter Vadiveloo.*

“The connection and joy among the group was palpable. There are few opportunities to participate in anything like this, something so positive, and we need it to continue!” – *Participant of Clayton Community Drum Circle with Peter Vadiveloo.*

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 enabled 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 2020/21 Quick Response Grants program was funded from the existing 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program budget, with an allocation of \$135,000. A total of \$71,722 was awarded to successful applicants.

CONCLUSION

The 2020/21 QRG program was delivered to the community at a time when many other community programs had been cancelled or severely impacted by COVID 19 restrictions. The 2020/21 QRG program enabled valuable projects to be delivered that would not otherwise have been possible through the annual MCGP funding, and demonstrated how resilient, adaptive and caring the Monash community has been during this challenging time.