

2.2 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM POLICY & TERMS OF REFERENCE

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

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 Assessment 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 2022 and 30 June 2023. This round will open for applications on Thursday 27 January 2022, closing on Thursday 3 March 2022. All applications will be administered online via Smarty Grants.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total annual allocation for the Monash Community Grant Program is \$2,572,837, subject to the adoption of the 2022/23 Council operational budget in June 2022. At its meeting in May 2021 Council supported an ongoing allocation of \$60,000 from this budget to deliver the Quick Response Grant Program.

The 2022/23 Monash Community Grant Program is anticipated to have a total budget allocation of \$2,512,837.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

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

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Endorses the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program Policy, noting the service improvements; and*
- 2. Endorses the Terms of Reference for the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Assessment 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 Assessment 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

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. Due to the impacts COVID-19 has had, and will continue to have, on the Monash community it is more important than ever for Council to continue supporting the work these community groups and

organisations do to strengthen the community, build resilience and provide opportunities for arts and culture.

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 the 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 and hard copies can be requested. All past eligible applicants will receive an email link to the MCGP Guidelines (Attachment 3) in November.

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

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

Details of each of the categories’ objectives, assessment criteria and types of funding available are outlined in the MCGP Policy (Attachment 1).

To be considered for any funding, projects, services and events 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

The following program timelines are proposed for the 2022/23 Grant round;

MILESTONE	DATE
Program Guidelines made available online	November 2021
‘Invitation to Apply’ emails sent to all previous applicants	10 January 2022
Advertising	17 January - 3 March 2022
Applications Open for Submissions via SmartyGrants	27 January 2022
Grant Information and Application Support Workshops	1 - 18 February 2022
Applications Close for submissions via SmartyGrants	3 March 2022
Pre-eligibility Checks of Applications	8 - 11 March 2022
Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel meetings	14 March - 31 March 2022

Community Grants team prepare budget, recommended allocations and report for Council	4 - 28 April 2022
Presentation to Council by the Grants team on recommended allocations	TBA (May 2022)
Report to Council	31 May 2022
In principle successful and unsuccessful letters sent to groups	1 June 2022
Funding Agreements available for all successful 2022/23 Grant Recipients	1 July 2022

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 Grants 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. Subject to State Government COVID - 19 restrictions at the time these may be run online via Zoom or in person. These sessions will be scheduled to run over a three week period in early-mid February 2022 to encourage prospective applicants to begin applications early and avoid rushed, last minute submissions.

- **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, however the request for an interpreter will also be available in the formal assistance sessions. The delivery of this assistance will also be subject to State Government recommendations at the time and could be in person, via online platforms or on the phone.

- **Effective Grant Writing Workshops:**

Due to the success of two effective grant writing workshops that were held as part of the 2021/22 MCGP these will again be made available to prospective applicants. These workshops build the capacity and confidence of community members and have proven to increase the quality of the applications received from previous recipients. The sessions will be conducted by an external facilitator who will tailor the workshops to the requirements of the MCGP. At least one Council officer will also be in attendance to add further insight, information and answer questions relating to the program. Two sessions are scheduled to be held via Zoom on 7 and 17 February 2022.

Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel

The Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel consists of three Council officers, with additional advice provided by other officers dependent on their area of expertise. This model provides consistency and transparency across the entirety of the program and specialist insight for specific categories to ensure equitable funding outcomes. This report seeks endorsement of the Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel Terms of Reference (Attachment 2), which guides the governance of the Assessment Panel and its role in the Monash Community Grants Program delivery.

Commencing in March 2022, Council officers will convene a series of Assessment Panel meetings to review all grant requests. A report will be submitted to the May 2022 Council meeting seeking endorsement of the MCGP Assessment Panel's funding recommendations. It is important to note that Councillors will be invited to attend a briefing session(s) on these recommendations prior to the Council meeting to ensure there is an opportunity to ask detailed questions in relation to the Panel's 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 2022/23 Council Budget in June 2022. Following the budget adoption, all approved grants recipients will be formally advised and Funding Agreement documentation will be available online through SmartyGrants.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

The annual review of the MCGP has been undertaken by officers and has included other areas of Council which support the grants process including Halls, Arts, Culture and Events and Community Strengthening. In addition, the review has taken into consideration the feedback provided by groups and organisations.

Included in the review process, as requested by Council at its May 2021 meeting, was an investigation on three points of eligibility within the program:

1. Significant cash reserves
2. Fundraising, and
3. Definitions of religion/cultural programs and events.

The proposed service improvements that have been included into the 2022/23 MCGP are:

- Include a question on the application form asking if the applying organisation holds more than \$50,000 or less than \$1,000 in cash (as according to their most recent balance sheet being provided). If yes further information will be sought as to why.
- Change the name of the "Community Strengthening – Hall Only" category to "Hall Only", and make it a stand-alone category, rather than a sub-category of Community Strengthening.
- Include an exception to the fundraising eligibility criteria for local service clubs (such as Lions and Rotary clubs) that do not have links to Gambling Venues or Electronic Gaming Machines to apply for in-kind hall hire up to \$1,300 for one off fundraising

event per annum. The beneficiary of the fundraising must be in Monash and nominated in the application form. This will only be available as a one-year agreement in the Hall Only category.

- Amend the faith and political related ineligibility criteria into two separate points as outlined:
 - *“That is held for political purposes or seeks to influence a person’s political beliefs”;*
 - and
 - *“That is held for specific religious purposes or seeks to proselytise or influence a person’s religious beliefs (this does not include community celebrations of annual calendar religious festivals or events)”*
- Develop a Frequently Asked Questions document to provide further clarification to applicants on all areas of the program (Attachment 4).

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 2021-25, 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 2021-2025;
- Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025;
- Monash Loneliness Framework 2020-2025;
- The Public Health Approach to Gambling Policy; and
- The Gender Equity Strategy.

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 2022/23 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

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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 2022/23 Council expects to allocate \$2,512,837 in community grants through the Monash Community Grants Program 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 community organisations, local agencies and service providers, utilising their expertise, with the aim of delivering services in response to community need.

The 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program will open for application submissions from Thursday 27 January 2022 and close on Thursday 3 March 2022.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program Policy

Attachment 2: 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel Terms of Reference

Attachment 3: 2022/23 Monash Community Grant Program Guidelines – DRAFT

Attachment 4: Monash Community Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions – DRAFT