

2.2 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM 2022/23

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Council regarding financial and in-kind (facility use/hall hire and printing) allocations to community groups and organisations for the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program (MCGP).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

Monash Council has one of the largest community grant programs in Victoria and Council is proud of its commitment to supporting and valuing the dedicated community groups and organisations within our municipality.

The value and interest placed on Council's Community Grants Program is high, with the quantum of funding requests considered in the 2022/23 round totalling approximately \$2.8 million resulting in 222 applications being considered for funding. Of these, 97 were new applications, with a total value of \$882,096.03, and 125 applications were already committed as part of multi-year agreements awarded in 2020/21 and 2021/22, with a total value of \$1,954,371.95. A panel of Council officers has assessed all applications against the endorsed guidelines and presents its recommendations to Council.

The allocated program budget for the MCGP is \$2,572,837 and the Panel has recommended a total of \$2,447,917.07 for cash and in-kind allocations to community groups and organisations. This funding will support the delivery of projects and services across the Monash community.

Officers are seeking endorsement from Council for an increase in the allocation to the highly successful Quick Response Grant (QRG) program during 2022/23. The QRG has a current allocation of \$60,000 and officers are requesting an increase to \$100,000, with any residual MCGP budget also allocated to the QRG.

Officers also seek to promote Mental Health First Aid Training grants or training to assist sporting clubs to meet the requirements of the Active Monash Sports Club framework, totalling \$6,000, available from the surplus funds provisionally allocated to Active Projects.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Assessment Panel's recommendations fall within the available 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program budget.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel recommendations are presented to Council within the available budget. Each application was assessed in accordance with the Monash Community Grants Program Policy, utilising a category specific matrix to ensure a fair and equitable process. The Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel has recommended allocations totalling \$2,572,837 for the delivery of projects, events, services and the QRG program throughout 2022/23.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves the in-principle allocation of the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program budget (\$2,572,837), subject to the adoption of Council's 2022/23 budget, in the following way:

- a) Allocates a total of **\$2,447,917.07** in financial and in-kind grant allocations to local community groups and organisations in line with the Monash Community Grants Program Policy & Guidelines.*
- b) Allocates **\$100,000** and any residual MCGP budget for the continuation of the successful Quick Response Grant program to enable Council to continue assisting the community throughout the funding year.*
- c) Allocates **\$6,000** to provide funding for Mental Health First Aid training, or training to assist sporting clubs to meet the requirements for the Active Monash Sports Club Framework, on application.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Council regarding financial and in-kind (facility use/hall hire and printing) allocations to community groups and organisations for the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program (MCGP).

BACKGROUND

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 Monash Community Grants Program provides significant financial and in-kind support to Monash community groups and community organisations with the aim of -

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

At its meeting on Tuesday 26 October 2021, Council formally adopted the policy and guidelines for the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program (Attachments 1 and 2). Council's policy reinforces its ongoing support and commitment to the community and community organisations through the MCGP.

Implementation of the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program required all applicants to submit their applications online, via the SmartyGrants portal.

DISCUSSION

The 2022/23 MCGP opened at 9am on Thursday 27 January, 2022 and closed at 2pm on Thursday 3 March, 2021. This offered community groups and organisations a period of five weeks to submit an application.

The 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program was promoted in a number of ways, including:

- Formally advertised in the following publications
 - *Monash Bulletin*
 - *Neos Kosmos (Greek)*
 - *Il Globo (Italian)*
 - *Australian Chinese News (Chinese)*
- Emails were sent to all current recipients and past grant applicants
- Multiple social media posts from December to February
- JC Decaux advertising throughout the municipality

Officer support to applicants included:

- Multiple application and information Support Sessions held throughout February.
- Over the phone support to answer questions and provide clarification on the application process.
- One-on-one meetings between officers and applicants to provide direct assistance.

Council organised two free Effective Grant Writing Workshops which were held in February as part of a commitment to continuous improvement and building the capacity of groups by assisting prospective applicants to develop stronger applications. These sessions were hosted by the City of Monash on Zoom and facilitated by Debby Maziarz with a total of 31 participants.

As outlined in the 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program Policy and Guidelines (see Attachments 1 and 2), organisations were invited to seek funding under nine grants categories:

1. Community Strengthening
2. Hall Only
3. Specialist Services
4. Neighbourhood Houses
5. Positive Ageing
6. Arts & Cultural Projects
7. Community Events
8. Major Festivals
9. Active Projects

This year a total of 222 applications were received and considered, totalling \$2,836,467.98, across all categories. Of these, 97 were new applications, with a total value of \$882,096.03, and 125 applications were already committed as part of 3-year agreements awarded in 2020/21 and 2021/22, with a total value of \$1,954,371.95.

The category with the highest number of new applications was Community Strengthening, with 33 applications. This is consistent with the number of applications received in this category in 2021/22.

Regarding applications received in other annual categories:

- Arts & Cultural Projects and Community Events saw a slight drop from 2021/22, reflecting the continued uncertainty in the arts community and event planning as the community emerges from the impacts of the pandemic;
- Major Festivals had the same number of festivals applied for as in 2021/22; and
- Active Projects saw a drop from the previous year, with only one application received.

All current multi-year funding agreements for Hall Only, Specialist Services, Neighbourhood Houses and Positive Ageing that were approved in 20/21 are in place until 30 June 2023. Additional applications were received for the Hall Only and Positive Ageing categories, with some requesting to supersede current agreements, some applying in a new category and others applying for the first time.

An assessment panel consisting of officers from the Community Services directorate assessed all applications against Council's endorsed policy and guidelines. An evaluation matrix was utilised for each category to ensure that the applications were considered and assessed in a fair, equitable and transparent way. This ensured the assessment process had rigour and consistency. Additionally it enables valuable feedback to be provided to applicants on their application.

Each category of the MCGP attracts diverse and varied applicants, this variance encourages a range of projects, events and festivals to exist within Monash and adds another layer of vibrancy to our thriving community.

ALLOCATIONS

After the disruption caused by the pandemic since March 2020, local community groups, programs and events are more important than ever to reconnect and strengthen the communities in which we live. These local community organisations offer a vital way for members of the Monash community to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and build community connections that are so important for mental and social health.

Despite the remaining COVID uncertainty at the application stage that resulted in a slight reduction of applications received, the funding allocations that have been recommended by the Grants Assessment Panel are consistent and in-line with those from 2021/22.

The MCGP allocates both financial and in-kind support across all categories, with the exceptions being Major Festivals and Active Projects offering financial support only, Hall Only offering only venue hire and Positive Ageing being the only category offering in-kind printing.

Positive Ageing grants for seniors groups (excluding Probus) are based on a formula that takes into account how many regular Monash participants are in the group (a membership list containing suburbs in which each member lived was submitted and verified), how many times the group meets and the number of meals provided. The printing component is also calculated on a formula. Probus groups are encouraged to apply in this category however are not eligible for the cash component, only venue hire and in-kind printing.

An additional \$210 cash payment per year to cover the costs of a ZoomPro subscription was offered to current recipients and applicants to the Positive Ageing and Hall Only categories in 2021/22. In 2022/23 this will again be provided to those groups who previously nominated to receive the additional payment and to ensure fairness across these categories was also offered to new applicants in 2022/23.

The table on the following page outlines the financial and in-kind support that is being recommended the 2022/23 MCGP round by the Grants Assessment Panel.

	Cash	Hall Hire (In-kind)	Other/Non Council Venue Hire	Facility Rental (In Kind)	Printing (In Kind)	Zoom	Total
Community Strengthening	\$191,671.00	\$61,437.77	\$1,290.00	-	-	-	\$254,398.77
Hall Only	-	\$116,614.57	\$3,316.50	-	-	\$5,460.00	\$125,391.07
Specialist Services	\$521,282.00	\$2,168.66	\$2,463.33	\$138,004.04	-	-	\$663,918.03
Neighbourhood Houses	\$69,365.00	-	-	\$411,260.90	-	-	\$480,625.90
Positive Ageing	\$155,625.20	\$598,609.49	\$15,244.50	-	\$3,976.94	\$5,670.00	\$779,126.13
Arts & Cultural Projects	\$35,320.00	\$27,532.17	\$8,330.00	-	-	-	\$71,182.17
Community Events	\$27,175.00	-	-	-	-	-	\$27,175.00
Major Festivals	\$44,100.00	-	-	-	-	-	\$44,100.00
Active Projects	\$2,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,000.00
TOTAL	\$1,046,538.20	\$806,362.66	60,644.33	\$549,264.94	\$3976.94	\$11,130	\$2,447,917.07

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

A number of service improvements were made to the grant program this year:

- An additional question on the application form asking if the applying organisation holds more than \$50,000 or less than \$1,000 in cash (as per its most recent balance sheet being provided). If 'yes' further information was then sought as to why.
- The category name "Community Strengthening – Hall Only" was changed to "Hall Only", to make it a stand-alone category, rather than a sub-category of Community Strengthening.
- An exception to the fundraising eligibility criteria for local service clubs that do not have links to Electronic Gaming Machines (such as Lions and Rotary clubs) to apply for in-kind hall hire up to \$1,300 for one fundraising event. This is only available as a one-year agreement in the Hall Only category.
- Separating the Faith and Political related eligibility criteria to two separate points.
- A Frequently Asked Questions document was developed to provide further clarification to applicants on all areas of the program.

Officers will undertake a thorough review of the MCGP in July/August to identify if any further service improvements should be made to the program for 2023/24. The findings from this review will be included in the 2023/24 MCGP report to be endorsed by Council at the October 2022 meeting.

QUICK RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM

At its meeting in June 2020 Council endorsed the establishment of a Quick Response Grant program (QRG) with a budget of \$135,000. The basis for this grant program was to enable the Monash community and Council to remain adaptive and agile in response to COVID and ensure that groups could continue to meet and bring the community together. This program was proven to be extremely successful. The QRG Guidelines are attached (attachment 4).

Endorsement was provided from Council in May 2021 that the Quick Response Grant Program remains as an open grant program for 2021/22 and beyond with an annual budget of \$60,000 from the overall MCGP budget.

The QRG program provides an opportunity for groups or individual artists whose idea, program, or issue falls outside of the normal grant round and currently have no other alternative to apply for funding through Council. This ensures that Council is continuing to remain adaptive and agile to community needs and that any money distributed to community groups is still bound by guidelines, rigour and the necessary financial requirements to acquit a grant successfully.

Assessors have recommended that a number of unsuccessful applicants to the 2022/23 MCGP further develop their projects with the view to applying for a QRG in 2022/23 as their projects were focused on supporting community connection however needed further information or assistance from Council officers to ensure the project's success. Due to the popularity of the QRG Program and this expected increase in 2022/23 applications,

officers request that an additional \$40,000 and any residual funds from the MCGP budget be allocated to the QRG program.

Officers will continue to assess the grants as per the current structure and provide a report to Council each month, after each assessment period has been completed.

The total budget that is requested for the QRG for 2022/23 is \$100,000 and any residual funds allocated from within the available budget.

ACTIVE PROJECTS

The Active Projects category is the only category in the MCGP that is available for sport clubs. Clubs are able to apply for up to \$2,000 cash funding on an annual basis for projects that add value to the existing club activities by creating a more inclusive and sustainable club.

This is the only category in the MCGP that has a specified amount allocated to it, with \$8,000 of the program budget provisionally allocated for Active Projects.

The past three years have seen a total of six applications received in this category, with five receiving funding. 2020/21 saw one application received and successful. In 2021/22 four applications were received, with three of these successful. This year, for 2022/23, only one application was received and has been recommended the full available funding of \$2,000.

The successful application is to provide mental health first aid training to members of one of Monash's football clubs. This funding will enable the club to have a Mental Health First Aid Officer for each of their 12 teams.

The past two years have had a large impact on mental health within the community and sports clubs are well placed to be a first point of contact to offer assistance.

To utilise the additional \$6,000 quarantined for this category officers recommend making available three \$2,000 grants for other Monash sports clubs to replicate the recommended project by providing Mental Health First Aid training, or to provide funding for training that will assist with meeting the requirements of the Active Monash Sports Club Framework.

These grants will be made available through a simple application process through SmartyGrants that will be open until the allocation is exhausted.

A review of the criteria and effectiveness of this category will be included in the program-wide review that will be undertaken in July/August.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Monash Community Grants Program Policy has been implemented with the intention of supporting both the 'Council Plan' and the 'Health & Wellbeing 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 is reviewed regularly 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 in promoting community participation and civic engagement. The contribution of community organisations in developing, coordinating and managing the many activities funded by the Monash Community Grants Program is well recognised and respected by Council.

The 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program funding facilitates community groups operating in Monash to draw on this legacy and continue their social and cultural activities and community services.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program addresses the four key themes: freedom, respect, equality and dignity of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

GENDER EQUITY ASSESSMENT

A gender impact assessment has not been undertaken on this program at this time. However the application form asks all applicants if and how their project will address gender inequality. It is anticipated that a full GIA will be undertaken in 2022/23 to ensure that the program is reflective of Council's gender equity commitments.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program is delivered within the available budget, subject to the successful adoption of Council's budget at its June meeting.

MCGP Budget	\$2,572,837.00
2022/23 MCGP Recommended Allocations	\$2,447,917.07
Proposed 2022/23 Quick Response Grant Program	\$100,000.00
Proposed Mental Health First Aid Grants	\$6,000.00
Total Allocated	\$2,553,917.07
<i>Total Residual</i>	<i>\$18,919.93</i>

CONCLUSION

The Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel recommendations are presented to Council within the available budget. Each application was assessed in accordance with the Monash Community Grants Program Policy, utilising a category specific matrix to ensure a fair and equitable process. The Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel has recommended allocations totalling \$2,572,837.00 for the delivery of projects, events, services and the QRG program throughout 2022/23.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program Policy
- Attachment 2 2022/23 Monash Community Grants Program Guidelines
- Attachment 3 2022/23 MCGP Summary of Allocations
- Attachment 4 2022/23 Quick Response Grants Guidelines
- Attachment 5 Individual assessments for each application (Confidential)*

*Tabled at Briefing for Councillors' information. Will not form part of the Council Report.