

## 2.1 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM 2021/22 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 Monash 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 2021 and 30 June 2022. This round will open for applications on Thursday 28 January 2021 and close on Thursday 4 March 2021. All applications will be administered online via Smarty Grants.

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

The 2021/22 Monash Community Grant Program is anticipated to have a total budget allocation of \$2,596,520.49, subject to the adoption of the 2021/22 Council operational budget in June 2021.

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

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

## 2.1 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM 2021/22 POLICY & TERMS OF REFERENCE

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council:*

- 1. Adopts the 2021/22 Monash Community Grants Program Policy, noting the service improvements; and*
- 2. Adopts the Terms of Reference for the 2021/22 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 Monash 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, results from the recent audit of the program by Council's appointed auditor Crowe and through alignment with Council's current strategic direction.

### **BACKGROUND**

The 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;

The 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 that these community groups and organisations do to strengthen community connection and build resilience.

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 eligible 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).

To be considered for funding, all projects and/or services must be consistent with Council’s strategic plans and policy positions. The MCGP is a competitive, fair and equitable funding program and 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 2021/2022 Grant round;

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
Letter sent to groups notifying them of the date the grants program will open, the information session times and grant guidelines	November 2020
‘Invitation to Apply’ emails sent to all previous applicants	11 January 2021
Advertising Campaign	19 January - 2 March 2021
Applications Open For Submissions via SmartyGrants	28 January 2021
Grant Information and Application Support Workshops	1 - 18 February 2021
Applications Close for submissions via SmartyGrants	4 March 2021
Pre-eligibility Checks of Applications	9 - 12 March 2021
Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel meetings	15 March - 1 April 2021
Community Grants team prepare budget, recommended allocations and report for Council	6 - 28 April 2021
Report to Council <i>Subject to the adoption of Council 2021/22 Budget</i>	25 May 2021

In principle successful and unsuccessful letters sent to groups <i>Noting that the decision is subject to the adoption of the 2021/22 Budget at Council's June meeting</i>	27 May 2021
Funding Agreements available for all successful 2021/22 Grant Recipients	1 July 2021

### ***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. Subject to State Government recommendations these may be run online via Zoom or in person at the Civic Centre. These sessions will run regularly throughout the application open period between 28 January and 4 March 2021.

- **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. 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.

### ***Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel***

To ensure that Council's grants program is transparent and equitable, it is reviewed every three years by Council's appointed internal auditor, Crowe. As with any audit, benchmarking and best practice policies are relied upon to ensure that Council's grant program is efficient and transparent.

Crowe undertook an independent review of the processes and practises related to the Community Grants program earlier this year. A recommendation was made to dissolve the MCGP Evaluation Panel in its previous form which was accepted by Council at its meeting on 28 April 2020.

The Monash Community Grant Evaluation Panel is replaced by the Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel that will consist of three Council officers, with additional advice provided by other officers dependent on their area of expertise. This will provide 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 their role in the Monash Community Grants Program delivery.

Commencing in March 2021, Council officers will convene a series of Assessment Panel meetings.

Once the Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel has reviewed all grant requests a Council Report will be prepared and submitted at the May 2021 Council meeting, seeking Councils consideration and endorsement of the Assessment 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 2021/22 Council Budget in June 2021. Following the budget adoption, all approved grants recipients will be formally advised and that Funding Agreement documentation will be available online through SmartyGrants.

### ***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 and Community Strengthening) 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 feedback from exhibiting artists that food is often provided as part of their exhibition launch, Arts & Cultural Projects Grants can now include catering for these events, excluding alcohol (to a maximum of \$500);
- 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. There are currently no groups in this category that receive more than \$10,000 in hall hire, with the average allocation \$2,330.89;
- As per the audit recommendations the MCGP will no longer be accepting late submissions under any circumstances, the closing time for the grant program will be widely communicated and the community will be aware that no late submissions will be accepted.

### ***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;

- Monash Loneliness Framework 2020-2025;
- 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 2021/22 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 2021/22 Monash Community Grant Program is anticipated to have a total budget allocation of \$2,596,520.49, subject to the adoption of the 2021/22 Council operational budget in June 2021.

### **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.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

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

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

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