

2.1 2020/2021 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

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 2020/21 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 2020/21 round totalling almost \$3.23million and a total of 240 applications considered for funding under this round. A panel of officers has assessed all applications against Council's adopted Guidelines and presents its recommendations to Council.

The Grants Program has taken into account the current situation with COVID-19. Due to social distancing measures in place, officers recommend funding commences on 1 January 2021, with the exception of Neighbourhood Houses and Specialist Services which have been recommended for full funding. Both Specialist Services and Neighbourhood Houses are still operating and provide a remote/digital service to the community, both have important roles in ensuring our communities stay connected, mentally well and cared for during these uncertain times.

Officers have recommended a total of \$1,770,927.65 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 also recommending to Council the establishment of a Quick Response Grant program that will assist groups to re-connect with their members and encourage community strengthening once social distancing measures are lifted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The assessment panel's recommendations fall within the available 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program budget.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel team recommendations 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 in place. 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 Assessment Panel have

recommended allocations totalling \$1,770,927.65 for the delivery of projects, events and services throughout 2020/2021.

2.1 2020/2021 MONASH COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves the in-principle allocation of the 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program budget (\$2,563,767.07), subject to the adoption of Council's 2020/21 budget, in the following way:

- a) Allocates a total of \$1,770,927.65 in financial and in-kind grant allocations to local community groups and organisations in line with the Monash Community Grants Program Policy & Guidelines; and*
- b) Notes that the majority of projects will commence on 1 January 2021, with the exception of Neighbourhood Houses and Specialist Services being given an earlier commencement date to ensure ongoing service delivery; and*
- c) Quarantines \$100,000 for the establishment of a Quick Response Grant program that will assist groups to reconnect with their members and encourage community strengthening. A report will be provided at a later stage outlining the policy and procedures for this new grant program.*

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 2020/21 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 29 October 2019, Council formally adopted the policy and guidelines for the 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program (Attachment 1). Council's policy reinforces its ongoing support and commitment to the community and community organisations.

Implementation of the 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program required all applicants to submit their applications online, via the SmartyGrants portal.

DISCUSSION

The MCGP 2020/21 opened on 28 January 2020 and closed on 28 February 2020. This offered community groups and community organisations a period of just under 5 weeks to submit an application. This was the first year trialling the new timelines of the MCGP being January-February for submissions and this was positively received by applicants.

The 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program was promoted in a number of ways, including:

- Formally advertised in the following publications
 - *Monash Leader*
 - *Neos Kosmos (Greek)*
 - *Il Globo (Italian)*
 - *Australian Chinese News (Chinese)*
- Letters and emails were sent to all current and past grants recipients
- Multiple social media posts from November 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; and
 - One-on-one meetings between officers and applicants to provide direct assistance.

As outlined in the 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program Policy and Guidelines (see Attachment 1), organisations were invited to seek funding under nine (9) grants categories:

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

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

This year a total of 240 applications were received, totalling \$3,227,543.96. The category with the highest number of applications was Positive Ageing, which makes up a substantial proportion of the funding allocation also.

All multiyear funding agreements expire on 30 June 2020 for Specialist Services, Neighbourhood Houses and Positive Ageing requiring all grant recipients to reapply in the 2020/21 round if further funding was being sought.

An assessment panel consisting of officers from across the organisation has 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 an 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 add another layer of vibrancy to our thriving community.

ALLOCATIONS

Now, more than ever, local community groups, programs and events are going to be important to reconnect and strengthen the communities in which we live. However, officers are acutely aware that this will need to take place in a timely manner and when advice from the State Government deem it safe to occur.

With this in mind, officers are recommending that funding for the 2020/21 MCGP commence on 1 January 2021, with the exception of Specialist Services and Neighbourhood Houses, which are being recommended for full funding. Both Specialist Services and Neighbourhood Houses are still operating and provide a remote/digital service to the community, both have important roles in ensuring our communities stay connected, mentally well and cared for during these uncertain times. The delay in funding from January 2021 recognises current Covid19 restrictions which do not allow for group meetings and programs.

This year a new category was introduced, 'Community Strengthening Hall Hire Only' in response to feedback from previous grant recipients. It was aimed at hall hire only users to make the process simpler and less onerous when completing the application and acquittals. This category was implemented with a three year funding agreement in place, to again, reduce the onerous task of applying each year. This grant category was received well by applicants, with 35 applications received and the feedback overwhelmingly positive.

Positive Ageing grants for seniors groups (excluding Probus) are awarded based on a formula that takes into account how many regular Monash participants are in the group (a membership list was required containing suburbs in which each member lived), how many times the group meets and the number of meals provided. The printing component is also calculated on a formula, however this year an average of their printing over the last three years is recommended. Many groups have not been using the allocation that has been granted to them previously. Probus groups are provided with in-kind hall hire and in-kind printing given the different structure of their gatherings.

It should be noted that the recommendations for Positive Ageing in-kind hall hire have a cap of \$30,000. This represents a significant saving to Council where allocations have, in the past for various reasons, exceeded the cap. Groups have worked exceptionally hard with Council officers to ensure they met the requirements of the cap.

The following table articulates the financial and in-kind support that is being recommended the 2020/21 MCGP round noting that all funding agreements will commence on 1 January with the exception of Neighbourhood Houses and Specialist Services;

	Cash	Hall Hire (In-kind)	Other/Non Council Facility Hire	Facility Rental (In Kind)	Printing (In Kind)	Total
Community Strengthening	\$97,144.58	\$52,383.80	\$1,912.50	-	-	\$151,440.88
Community Strengthening Hall Only	-	\$29,595.48	\$975.75	-	-	\$30,571.23
Specialist Services	\$518,556.00	\$1,021.25	\$1,231.67	\$138,004.04	-	\$658,812.96
Neighbourhood Houses	\$61,815.00	\$1,145.46	-	\$411,260.90	-	\$474,221.36
Positive Ageing	\$69,477.60	\$287,406.22	\$9,251.00	-	\$4,285.02	\$370,419.84
Arts & Cultural Projects	\$21,012.50	\$15,030.43	\$6,030.00	-	-	\$42,072.93
Community Events	\$25,320.00	\$1,213.45	-	-	-	\$26,553.45
Major Festivals	\$15,000.00	-	-	-	-	\$15,000.00
Active Projects	\$1,855.00	-	-	-	-	\$1,855.00
TOTAL	\$810,180.68	\$387,796.09	\$19,400.92	\$549,264.94	\$4,285.02	\$1,770,927.50

All applications were assessed for full year funding to ensure a holistic view of the program could be provided. However due to COVID-19 and social distancing measures, many projects and events are not expected to proceed and officers are recommending that funding is provided for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 (January-July 2021). This has been captured in the MCGP Allocations Report (Attachment 2) as officers believe it is important that applicants see that their application was strong and provide them with encouragement to apply next year for further funding.

Whilst the recommendations within the table offer consistency there are a number of anomalies that officers would like to note;

South East Volunteers (SEV) – 2023SS0004

In 2019 Council undertook a review of SEV and the role of Council in volunteering. This review will form the basis of further investigation by officers. It is for this reason that officers recommend funding SEV for one year only to allow time for SEVs to respond and develop an implementation program in response to the findings and recommendations. Officers have recommended funding of \$95,000 and in-kind facility hire of \$41,981.48.

Monash Men's Shed – 2023SS00013

Monash Men's Shed is currently closed and not operating due to COVID-19. The funding that has been requested is to contribute to the salary of the Men's Shed Co-ordinator role. Given that

the Shed is unable to operate and this position is currently vacant, officers are recommending that this application commences funding on 1 October 2020.

Amaroo Neighbourhood House – 2023NH0015

All Neighbourhood Houses have been recommended to receive three year agreements, with the exception of Amaroo Neighbourhood House. Amaroo are being offered a one year lease, due to Council reviewing their lease document. There are complexities with their lease given the commercial nature of the Opportunity Shop that is operated at this premises. Amaroo will be invited to reapply next year for a further two year grant to bring them in line with other Neighbourhood Houses.

EVENTS

The Events component of the MCGP has been severely impacted by COVID-19 due to many of the events proposed to take place between October –December this year unlikely to occur. As demonstrated in the allocations table many of these applications have previously received funding and these events are highly regarded by Council and community alike. These organisations will be encouraged to look at the proposed Quick Response Grant program and officers will provide guidance on other grant opportunities when and if they become available.

LATE SUBMISSIONS

This year eight applications were submitted late for a range of various reasons. Each applicant was required to formally request an extension by emailing the Director of Community Services. On each occasion, the Director granted a limited extension, whilst also informing the applicant that no late applications will be accepted next year. This is consistent with the recommendations of the recent internal audit undertaken by Crowe.

Officers will work with these groups next grant round to ensure that they submit documentation within the required timelines to ensure eligibility for future funding.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

A number of service improvements have been made to the grant program this year including;

- An evaluation matrix has been developed for each category to ensure consistency in scoring
- Officer comments are recorded on the assessment sheets and represent the minutes of the officer discussions
- All late applications formally submitted a request for an extension to the Director Community Services

Another report will be presented to Council seeking endorsement from Council to quarantine \$100,000 from the unspent funds within the Community Grants budget to establish a Quick Response Grant Program. This program will assist the community to immediately respond to the impacts of COVID 19, reconnect with the community and focus on community strengthening activities when social distancing measures are lifted.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Monash Community Grants Program Policy 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 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 2020/21 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 2020/21 Monash Community 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 Monash Community Grants Program is delivered within the available budget, subject to the successful Council budget adoption at a future meeting.

CONCLUSION

The Monash Community Grants Assessment Panel recommendations 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. 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 \$1,770,927.65 for the delivery of projects, events and services throughout 2020/2021.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1	2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program Policy & Guidelines
Attachment 2	2020/21 MCGP Summary of Allocations
Attachment 3	Individual assessments for each application (Confidential)