

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.4

Coronavirus Response Community Grants Program

Council

Presenter: Alison Duncan, Director Community Services

28 April 2020

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to recommend that as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic Council allocate \$200,000 from unspent funds in the 2019-2020 budget towards a Coronavirus Response Community Grants Program.
2. The Community Use of Town Hall Sponsorship (CUTHS) program cannot continue to financially support organisations to hold events in Melbourne Town Hall or Meat Market, North Melbourne during the pandemic. All successful grant recipients and those who have applied have been informed that the program has been suspended and the matter will be revisited in the new financial year.
3. This leaves \$175,000 of unspent funds in the CUTHS program. This amount together with \$25,000 from the Community Services branch operational budget would provide a Coronavirus Response Community Grants program to support not-for-profit organisations and community groups to assist local communities.
4. A broad range of community organisations and management have shared concerns that vulnerable community members may be at heightened risk of hardship as a result of COVID-19. Some community members are also withdrawing from contact with essential support services resulting in increased loneliness and isolation. Social distancing requirements and a lack for some, of connection to publically accessible WiFi is affecting others. There are also those who are choosing to ignore distancing requirements putting others at risk.

Key issues

5. It is proposed that grants of up to \$5,000 can be used for the purchase and distribution of essential food supplies and material aid as well as to encourage innovative ways to reduce social isolation and build community connection while reinforcing the importance of social distancing.
6. In exceptional circumstances, including where an organisation is able to demonstrate having spent their grant received and more funds are required, greater than \$5,000 could be allocated.
7. Requests for grants will be considered by Council Officers if an organisation or community group meets the following criteria:
 - 7.1. Located within the City of Melbourne or provides services within the municipality.
 - 7.2. Directs support to residents of the City of Melbourne.
 - 7.3. A not-for-profit organisation or recognised community group with proven engagement with high need individuals and vulnerable communities.
 - 7.4. An organisation that does not have pre-existing debt or non-compliance issues with any grant, contract, or tender with the City of Melbourne.
 - 7.5. Has an ABN.
8. Councillor Beverley Pinder and Councillor Jackie Watts as Chair and Deputy Chair, respectively of the People City Portfolio will provide strategic input prior to Council Officers assessing applications.

Recommendation from management

9. That Council allocates \$200,000 from its 2019-20 budget to establish a Coronavirus Response Community Grants program in response to the declared coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to support not-for-profit organisations and community groups to assist local communities.

Attachments

1. Support Attachment (Page 3 of 3)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. No direct legal issues arise from the recommendation from management.

Finance

2. Council will allocate \$200,000 from the 2019-20 budget, \$175,000 being from the Community Use of Town Hall Sponsorship budget and \$25,000 from the Community Services Branch budget, to establish a Coronavirus Response Community Grants program in response to the declared coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to support not-for-profit organisations and community groups to assist local communities.
3. The 2019-20 budget will not be impacted as a result of the recommendation.

Conflict of interest

4. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

5. In developing this proposal, no health and safety issues or opportunities have been identified, however the health and safety of community members are supported by the provision of the proposed small grants.

Stakeholder consultation

6. No consultation has been developed in recommending this grants program to Council. It is however feedback from community groups and individuals of the hardship being experienced during this coronavirus pandemic that has had officers initiate the recommendation to Council. The grants program will be socialised on the City of Melbourne website and via Council's extensive networks across the community sector.

Relation to Council policy

7. The City for People goal in Council's 2017-21 Council Plan includes the following outcomes which are the objectives of this grants program:
 - People feel welcomed and included
 - People are safe
 - People are healthy and well

Environmental sustainability

8. Assessment of grant applications will be cognisant of the environmental impact of the proposed activity for which the grant is being sought.