

ITEM 4. COMMUNITY SERVICES GRANT - SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL - WELCOME TO SYDNEY PILOT PROJECT**FILE NO: S116523****SUMMARY**

Settlement Services International is a key stakeholder in refugee resettlement in Australia. Settlement Services International is the largest of the agencies in NSW that receive Commonwealth funding under the Humanitarian Settlement Services Program and Settlement Services Program. Settlement Services International also leads the NSW Settlement Partnership, a consortium of 22 organisations delivering settlement services and programs for newly-arrived refugees and migrants in their first five years in Australia. Settlement Services International also co-chairs the NSW Government's Joint Partnership Working Group, which is coordinating settlement activities for newly-arrived Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

At its meeting on 14 September 2015, in response to a Minute by the Lord Mayor, Council resolved that the Chief Executive Officer should 'continue to work with Settlement Services International to confirm what financial or in-kind support the City could provide to help incoming refugees and provide a report back to Council'.

Settlement Services International has submitted a Community Services Grant application to the City for a volunteer-based refugee welcome pilot project titled 'Welcome to Sydney' (W2Sydney). The amount requested is \$100,000 cash, and value-in-kind equivalent to \$1,500 for hire of community venues. The pilot project will engage a group of 20 City of Sydney residents as volunteer Welcome Ambassadors. Ambassadors will introduce refugees and their families to Sydney through activities such as attending free and low cost facilities and cultural activities and walking tours.

The funding will enable Settlement Services International to engage a project manager with expertise in refugees and resettlement to design a pilot program, recruit volunteer and refugee participants, develop and deliver training for volunteers, meet costs of activities for participants, provide ongoing support and advice to participants during the program and provide overall project management. A program evaluation will inform future delivery options, which may include replicating the program in the City, in collaboration with refugee organisations, and making the program available to other local governments.

The application has been assessed against the City's Community Services Grant Program. It was found to strongly align with the following key outcomes of the program:

- increased involvement and engagement by communities in community life; and
- increased numbers of people feeling a strong sense of social wellbeing.

The project is consistent with the City's Social Sustainability Policy – A City for All and supports the policy's principles, in particular that Sydney is a welcoming, socially connected city that embraces diversity. The City's 2016 Community Wellbeing Indicators report shows that 88.3 per cent of the City's residents agree it is a good thing for society to be made up of people from different cultures and communities. It also shows that 49.6 per cent of residents feel part of the community (a measure of community connectedness). Through engaging both the City's residents and recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers, the program seeks to contribute to maintaining positive perceptions of diversity in our community and improve community connectedness among participants.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve a one-off cash grant of \$100,000 (plus GST) and value-in-kind up to \$1,500 for the use of the City's community venues (subject to availability) to Settlement Services International for the Welcome to Sydney pilot project; and
- (B) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer a grant agreement with Settlement Services International for the project.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

BACKGROUND

1. Settlement Services International is the largest not-for-profit humanitarian settlement organisation in Australia and provides services in the areas of humanitarian settlement, accommodation, employment readiness, asylum seeker assistance, small business start-up support, foster care and disability support in NSW. Settlement Services International also leads the NSW Settlement Partnership consortium, which comprises 23 organisations that work together to deliver the Commonwealth-funded Settlement Services Program to new migrants, humanitarian entrants and refugees.
2. In 2015-16, Settlement Services International assisted over 8,600 people through their Humanitarian Settlement Service and Status Resolution Support Service. Settlement Services International endeavours to prepare clients for social and economic independence by linking them to volunteers, social and recreational activities, work readiness programs, affordable private housing and basic healthcare, and by supporting them through case management to develop skills and knowledge that will allow them to live independently. Since August 2016, Settlement Services International has assisted over 5,000 new arrivals settle in Sydney.
3. Settlement Services International also has an established volunteer training and linkages program, with a team of over 300 volunteers, which provides friendship and practical support for recently arrived refugees, humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers. Volunteers can get involved in a variety of activities to help newly-arrived refugees and asylum seekers, such as:
 - (a) helping people to become more familiar with their local area;
 - (b) assisting with transport education;
 - (c) assisting with excursions and social activities designed to help individuals and families in the early stages of resettlement;
 - (d) accompanying individuals to essential appointments;
 - (e) linking individuals with relevant community organisations and events; and
 - (f) practising English conversation.
4. Settlement Services International has submitted a Community Services Grant application for \$100,000 to implement a volunteer-based refugee welcome pilot project titled 'Welcome to Sydney' (W2Sydney). Settlement Services International has also requested value-in-kind of \$1,500 for the use of the City's community venues.
5. The project proposes to recruit, train and support a group of 20 City-based volunteer Refugee Welcome Ambassadors. The ambassadors will be linked with individual refugees and their families and provide a program of welcoming activities over several months, which will include but not be limited to orientation to free and low cost facilities and cultural activities in the city, tours of local landmarks, museums, galleries and libraries, walking tours, familiarisation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history and shared meals in unique locations.

6. The grant funds will enable Settlement Services International to engage a project manager with expertise in refugees and resettlement to design the pilot program, recruit volunteer and refugee participants, develop and deliver training for volunteers, meet costs of activities for participants, provide ongoing support and advice to participants during the program and provide overall project management. Settlement Services International will contribute in-kind resources to support development of the training program, operate an advisory committee and conduct the program evaluation.
7. The application has been evaluated against the City's Grants and Sponsorship Policy and Program Guidelines and is recommended for support under the City's Community Services Grant Program. The application is consistent with the aims of the program, including:
 - (a) delivering community programs or projects that support sustainable communities and contribute to a connected, liveable, inclusive and engaged city; and
 - (b) trialling innovative services or establishing a program that addresses an unmet need for City of Sydney residents, workers and visitors.
8. It also strongly aligns with the following key outcomes of the program:
 - (a) increased involvement and engagement by communities in community life; and
 - (b) increased numbers of people feeling a strong sense of social wellbeing.
9. Through its extensive work with recently arrived refugees and resettlement programs, Settlement Services International has identified that community acts of welcome and social inclusion are very powerful tools for cultural transition and longer term integration into Australian society. W2Sydney will provide a unique and innovative opportunity for newly arrived refugees and their families to connect and engage with their new home city and the broader Sydney community, outside of their immediate settlement area. In most cases, this is Western Sydney. In particular, the project aims to build diverse, cohesive and connected communities by linking city-based volunteers, who may not otherwise have an avenue to connect, with newly-arrived refugees and their families. The purpose of these connections will be to develop friendship, cross cultural dialogue, mutual understanding and awareness, and to facilitate people's access to facilities, services, open spaces and activities. The value of ensuring that refugees feel welcome and a sense of belonging in the cultural, financial and historical heart of Sydney is considerable, even though they may not actually live here.
10. This is consistent with the principles of the City's Social Sustainability Policy – A City for All, in particular that Sydney is a welcoming, socially connected city that embraces diversity. The City's 2016 Community Wellbeing Indicators report shows that 88.3 per cent of the City's residents agree it is a good thing for society to be made up of people from different cultures and communities. It also shows that 49.6 per cent of residents feel part of the community (a measure of community connectedness). Through engaging both the City's residents and recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers, the program seeks to contribute to maintaining positive perceptions of diversity in our community and improve community connectedness among participants.

11. The outcomes of the program's evaluation will inform future options for delivery of the program. This may include developing a program manual or 'how to' guide that would enable the program to be delivered by others, including by City staff, in collaboration with refugee organisations. It could also be made available to other local governments. It is expected that the cost of future implementation of the program would be significantly reduced compared to the initial pilot as program development, design and evaluation costs would be reduced. The project will be delivered in partnership with the City. City staff will support the recruitment of community volunteers; assist to identify appropriate low cost and no cost activities, events and venues for the participants; and help to develop and implement an evaluation framework for the project.
12. In recognition of the City's support, appropriate acknowledgements will be negotiated.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

13. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This project is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies – the proposed project addresses social cohesion, diversity, inclusion and community connectedness, by training, supporting and linking community volunteers with newly-arrived refugees.
 - (b) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships – the proposal offers an opportunity for the City to partner with a major not-for-profit humanitarian organisation, which directly benefits refugees and asylum seekers and enhances the City's reputation as a Refugee Welcome Zone. The proposal also offers residents the opportunity to play a role in welcoming refugees and asylum seekers to the City of Sydney.

Organisational Impact

14. This project will be delivered within existing operational plans and resources. The grant will be administered by the City's Grants team in accordance with the guidelines and conditions set out for the Community Services Grant Program.

Social / Cultural / Community

15. The City has an important role to play in promoting inclusive and welcoming communities and has been a Refugee Welcome Zone since 2005. This project is consistent with the vision and principles stated in the City's Social Sustainability Policy, particularly that of Sydney as a welcoming, inclusive city that embraces diversity.
16. The project will build community connection, capacity and resilience through volunteering and fostering connections between City residents, local agencies and culturally diverse communities, in particular, newly-arrived refugees.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

17. It is proposed that cash funding of \$100,000 is allocated over two financial years from the Community Services Grant Program budget as follows:
- (a) 2016-17 – \$50,000.
 - (b) 2017-18 – \$50,000.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

18. In accordance with section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993, no public notification of the proposed financial assistance is required, because Council would be providing the financial assistance to Settlement Services International, a not-for-profit registered charity.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

19. Settlement Services International proposes to conduct the project for 12 months from April 2017 to April 2018.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

20. Settlement Services International has consulted with City of Sydney Social Programs and Services staff in the development of the application and will be establishing an advisory committee to steer the development of the project. Representatives of Welcome to Australia, the Sydney Alliance, local refugee support organisations and individuals with refugee backgrounds will be recruited to the committee.

ANN HOBAN

Director City Life

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