

Item 2.

Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship - Diversity Council Australia - Counting Workplace Culture

File No: X027391

Summary

Diversity Council Australia, in partnership with the University of Sydney Business School, has submitted an application to the City's Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship program for support to conduct a research project.

The aim of this research project is to develop an evidence-based tool for Australian organisations to 'count culture', that is, to define, measure and report on the degree and breadth of cultural diversity in Australian workforces and leadership teams.

The Diversity Council Australia is the lead independent, not-for-profit peak body for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Its recent research indicates that workforce cultural diversity is associated with organisational performance and innovation.

While culturally diverse talent working in Australia are recognised as ambitious and capable, they are under-represented in leadership ranks relative to their representation in the wider community. This failure to fully capitalise on cultural diversity represents a missed opportunity for Australian organisations in both the public and private sectors.

Currently, there is no nationally consistent approach for Australian employers to define, measure and report on workplace cultural diversity. Current approaches are informed by varied and inconsistent definitions of workplace cultural diversity, typically measured by country of birth, ancestry and languages spoken. This research project aims to improve employers' understanding of workplace cultural diversity and assist in removing systemic barriers that prevent culturally diverse people from advancement and leadership roles in Australian organisations.

The City's commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace was recognised when the City was awarded the 2019 Australian HR Award for Best Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Program. However, there is still more to do to ensure that all people have the same access to employment, development and advancement. Participation in this project will support our continuing leadership role in workplace diversity and inclusion.

The City of Sydney serves a highly diverse community and is at the forefront of initiatives to embrace diversity and inclusion. This research project is aligned with our strategic directions in Sustainable Sydney 2030, the Social Sustainability Policy and People Strategy, and with our Equal Employment Opportunity objectives. Having an inclusive and diverse workforce will assist the City in making decisions and providing services that reflect the needs of our diverse communities.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve a cash sponsorship of \$40,000 (excluding GST) and venue hire fee waiver up to the value of \$5,000 (excluding GST) to Diversity Council Australia Limited to conduct the proposed "counting culture" research in partnership with the City of Sydney; and
- (B) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer a sponsorship agreement in relation to the sponsorship described in (A) above.

Attachments

Nil.

Background

1. The City has various strategies and action plans relating to workplace cultural diversity, namely A City for All: social sustainability policy and action plan 2018-2028, the People Strategy 2019-2021 and the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2021.
2. A City for All includes commitments to take a public leadership role within the broader community through leading by example as an employer committed to social justice and inclusion. A strategic priority of the People Strategy relates to harnessing diversity to enable performance and innovation, and the Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan outlines the City's commitment to cultural diversity in the workplace.
3. Robust workforce data is critical for the planning and monitoring of diversity and inclusion initiatives. However, there is no nationally consistent approach for Australian employers to define, measure and report on workplace cultural diversity. Current approaches are informed by a poor definition of what cultural diversity is, typically measured by country of birth, ancestry and languages spoken.
4. The Diversity Council Australia is the country's national independent not-for-profit peak body promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The Diversity Council Australia provides unique research, events and programs, resources and expert advice across all diversity dimensions to a community of member organisations.
5. This research project will assist the Diversity Council Australia to promote a national conversation about cultural diversity in workplaces, which is something of importance to the communities and businesses served by the City of Sydney.
6. Participating in this research will give the City of Sydney an opportunity to be involved in focus groups and surveys, which will provide an insight into the lived experiences of City staff, and also contribute to a nationally important tool to improve diversity outcomes in all organisations.
7. The research aims to:
 - (a) raise awareness of the benefits of cultural diversity in the workplace, including at the leadership level;
 - (b) encourage Australian organisations to measure, monitor and report on workforce and leadership cultural diversity;
 - (c) provide an evidence-based practical tool that can be used to measure and report on workforce and leadership cultural diversity; and
 - (d) profile sponsors as employers of choice for diversity and inclusion.
8. The Diversity Council Australia aims to address this by conducting an extensive audit of national and international scholarship, policies, practices and approaches; developing a national tool-kit to guide business, government and non-government organisations in discussing cultural diversity in a meaningful and respectful manner; and developing a list of questions which will meaningfully measure cultural diversity in Australian workplaces.

9. Following a project pilot, a first of its kind model to meaningfully define and measure cultural diversity will be developed. With an ultimate aim to develop a nationally and internationally recognised approach to 'counting culture' in the workplace, this will enable effective and relevant measures and reporting mechanisms for diversity in Australian organisations.
10. The research is aligned with the City's Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship program which supports the exchange of ideas and knowledge, strategic research and the showcasing of local expertise, and encourages dialogue on local and global issues. Under the program, eligible projects can be supported to a maximum of \$40,000 cash per annum and applications can be received throughout the year.
11. Participating in the research will give the City of Sydney the opportunity to:
 - (a) collaborate with industry leaders such as former Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Tim Soutphommasane, who is currently the Director of Cultural Strategy at University of Sydney;
 - (b) gain access to the revised Diversity Atlas tool and report developed by Cultural Infusion which seeks to develop awareness and skills to embrace diversity;
 - (c) take part in employee focus groups and surveys;
 - (d) co-brand as industry leaders in a new initiative in the public sector; and
 - (e) participate on the research panel.
12. The assessment panel has recommended granting the full sponsorship amount of \$40,000 cash and \$5,000 value in kind for venue hire for the Launch Event requested by the Diversity Council Australia as the project contributes to the following Knowledge Exchange sponsorship program outcomes:
 - (a) adoption and implementation of best-practise approaches by organisations and individuals; and
 - (b) improved capacity in organisations and individuals to develop socially just and resilient communities.

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 sponsorship is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City - Participation in this program will position the City of Sydney as a leader in the area of cultural inclusion.
 - (b) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies - This sponsorship will encourage a national conversation about diversity in the workplace. It will also build awareness in the business sector and general community of the benefits of cultural diversity, including at the leadership level, and additionally, encourage Australian organisations to measure, monitor and report on workforce and leadership cultural diversity.
 - (c) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City - The findings of the report will be presented at a launch event of the project which around 300 people are expected to attend. Many of these people would either be residents of the City of Sydney, or work for businesses in the City.

Risks

14. Diversity Council Australia are seeking a total sponsorship of \$130,000 from their network, and have so far secured \$70,000 (including this sponsorship). If the Diversity Council Australia is not able to reach their funding goal, the scope of the project may be reduced or the intended start date delayed. If the grant is awarded, Diversity Council Australia will be required to enter into an agreement governing the grant on terms satisfactory to the City.

Budget Implications

15. This report recommends a total sponsorship amount of \$40,000 (excluding GST) cash. The grant will consist of two payments: \$35,000 (excluding GST) in the 2019/20 Financial Year and \$5,000 (excluding GST) in the 2020/21 Financial Year, upon receipt of an acquittal report and research outcomes.
16. There are sufficient funds within the 2019/20 Knowledge Exchange Grants and Sponsorship budget and the forward commitment of \$5,000 will be included in the next iteration of the City's Operating Budget.

Relevant Legislation

17. Section 356 (1) of the Local Government Act 1993. Section 356 (1) of the Local Government Act 1993 provides that "a council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions".

Critical Dates / Time Frames

18. Subject to Council approval, the program is expected to start formal planning in March 2020.

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