

Item 3.

Grants and Sponsorship - Food Support Grants

File No: S117676

Summary

On 26 June 2023, Council endorsed a Lord Mayoral Minute which requested that the Chief Executive Officer investigate options for financial support for food relief organisations and, where relevant, other community-based initiatives that provide access to low-cost food including cooperatives and mutual aid groups, which are operating in the City of Sydney and report back to Council.

On 21 August 2023, Council approved the Food Support Grant Guidelines and the budget of \$4.5 million over three years for the provision of the Food Support grants.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, food shortages were experienced across Australia, with those most impacted including people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, social housing tenants, people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, older people, international students and temporary visa holders.

Local food relief organisations have reported the current cost-of-living crisis has led to demand for food relief being higher than during the Covid-19 pandemic. Households struggling to pay their bills are forgoing food to pay for housing, health and heating.

The resulting new Food Support grants support projects and programs that improve access to affordable, healthy, safe and culturally appropriate food and essential items for our diverse communities.

On 23 August 2023, the City opened this grant program to applications, with applications closing on 20 September 2023.

A total of 32 eligible applications were received for the Food Support grants. This report recommends a total of 12 grants to a total value of \$1,500,000 in cash and \$6,912 in value-in-kind for payment in the 2023/24 financial year.

All grant recipients will be required to sign a contract, meet specific performance outcomes and acquit their grant. All figures in this report exclude GST.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the cash and value-in-kind recommendations for the Food Support grants as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council note the applicants who were not recommended in obtaining a cash grant or value-in-kind for the Food Support grants as shown at Attachment B to the subject report;
- (C) Council note that all grant amounts are exclusive of GST;
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer agreements with any organisation approved for a grant or sponsorship under terms consistent with this resolution and the Grants and Sponsorship Policy; and
- (E) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to correct minor errors to the matters set out in this report, noting that the identity of the recipient will not change, and a CEO Update will be provided to Council advising of any changes made in accordance with this resolution.

Attachments

Attachment A. Recommended for Funding - Food Support Grant

Attachment B. Not Recommended for Funding - Food Support Grant

Background

1. The City of Sydney's Grants and Sponsorship Program supports initiatives and projects that build the social, cultural, environmental and economic life of the city. To achieve the objectives of the Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050: Continuing the Vision, genuine partnership between government, business and the community is required.
2. The provision of grants and sponsorships is a mechanism to further the aims identified in the City's social, cultural, economic and environmental policies. In this way, the City and the community act collaboratively to achieve the goals of Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision.
3. During the Covid-19 pandemic, food shortages were experienced across Australia, with those most impacted including people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, social housing tenants, people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, older people, international students and temporary visa holders.
4. The City responded by investing \$3.1 million in food relief between 2020 to 2022 and worked with over 60 businesses and community organisations to make sure our diverse communities had access to the essentials of daily life.
5. Local food relief organisations have reported the current cost-of-living crisis has led to demand for food relief being higher than during the Covid-19 pandemic. Households struggling to pay their bills are forgoing food to pay for housing, health and heating.
6. Food relief organisations rely on a mix of surplus and discounted food to ensure they meet the nutritional requirements of the people they serve. They also need transport, storage and equipment to collect and deliver the food at a low temperature in accordance with food safety requirements.
7. However, as demand on their services increases, government funding and personal donations for food relief organisations are down, resulting in significant funding shortfalls and an inability to meet demand.
8. Food relief organisations within our local area urgently need funding and support so they can meet the increasing demand for food relief as the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact our communities.
9. On 26 June 2023, Council endorsed a Lord Mayoral Minute which requested that the Chief Executive Officer investigate options for financial support for food relief organisations and, where relevant, other community-based initiatives that provide access to low-cost food including cooperatives and mutual aid groups, which are operating in the City of Sydney and report back to Council.
10. On 21 August 2023, Council approved the new Food Support grants guidelines, providing an additional \$1.7 million each year for the next three years to 30 June 2026 to support food relief organisations and other community-based initiatives in the provision of food relief to our diverse communities. This \$1.7 million includes \$1.5 million cash each year for three years for the grants and \$200,000 operating expenditure each year for three years for staffing and administration.
11. The Food Support grants focus on supporting projects and programs that improve access to affordable, healthy, safe and culturally appropriate food and essential items for our diverse communities.

12. The Food Support grants prioritise projects that:
 - increase access to affordable, healthy, safe and culturally-appropriate food;
 - increase community skills in sourcing and preparing healthy food;
 - improve supply, storage and delivery of healthy food for our diverse communities;
 - increase resourcing of essential food services for our diverse communities; and
 - increase access to affordable internet and data to support community access to food support services.
13. The Food Support grants provide support for food services projects under two tiers:
 - (a) Tier 1 – Small scale projects
 - (i) Cash funding up to \$250,000 per year is available, for a one-year program or multi-year funding (up to \$250,000 per year for up to three years); and
 - (ii) Applicants can apply for up to \$100,000 worth of capital expenditure, equipment purchase or other resources.
 - (b) Tier 2 – Large scale projects
 - (i) Cash funding up to \$750,000 per year is available, for a one-year program or multi-year funding (up to \$750,000 per year for up to three years); and
 - (ii) Applicants can apply for up to \$150,000 worth of capital expenditure, equipment purchase or other resources.
 - (c) Value-in-kind in the form of venue hire fee waiver is also available to both tiers.
14. The Tier 1 and Tier 2 grants were open to not-for-profits. Tier 1 was also open to individuals or unincorporated community groups auspiced by a not-for-profit that is eligible to apply in its own right. For profit organisations, including small businesses, were not eligible for these grants.
15. On 23 August 2023, the City announced the Food Support grants as being open for application on the City's website with grant applications closing on 20 September 2023.
16. Information about the grant (such as application dates, guidelines, and eligibility criteria) was made available on the City's website. Email campaigns were utilised to target interested parties who have applied previously for grants at the City or who have expressed an interest in the City's programs.

Grants assessment process

17. The City's Grants and Sponsorship Program is highly competitive. Applications that are not recommended have either not scored as highly against the assessment criteria as the recommended applications or have incomplete or insufficient information. The City's Grants and Sponsorship team provides feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
18. The assessment process includes advice and recommendations from a suitably qualified assessment panel. The applications are scored against defined assessment criteria for each grant as well as the integrity of the proposed budget, project plan, partnerships, contributions and connection to the local community and industry sectors.
19. The assessment criteria for the Food Support grants are:
 - evidence of the need for the project or program and proposed outcomes;
 - capacity and experience of the applicant to deliver the project or program;
 - demonstrated connection and benefit to the local area and community;
 - how the project delivers against the funding priorities; and
 - evidence of the project or program having direct engagement with our diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, young people, older people, people with disability, international students, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women, LGBTIQ+ communities and low-income earners.
20. Applicants to the Food Support grants – Tier 2 are also assessed against the following additional assessment criteria:
 - evidence of partnerships with local community organisations and networks.
21. The assessment meeting for the Food Services grants was held on 7 November 2023. The assessment panel consisted of City staff from the City Business and Safety, Indigenous Leadership and Engagement, Direct Services and Homelessness Teams.
22. The total funding requested from grant applicants exceeded the total budget and the assessment panel has thoroughly reviewed all grant applications, supporting documentation and budget information to determine the appropriate level and length of funding given the scope and scale of the proposed project.
23. The recommended grant applicants for this grant round reflect the broad range of organisations critical to creating a strong, responsive and collaborative food relief network within our local government area. They include organisations with the demonstrated capacity and experience to supply and distribute emergency food relief with respect and dignity to our diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse, young people, people with disability, social housing residents and people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
24. A number of local organisations that currently provide food relief services in place have received funding to support the upgrade of existing kitchen and dining facilities so they can provide ongoing support for our priority communities.

25. In addition, given the recommended grant applicants have strong community connections it has been identified that they are best placed to support the City in addressing period poverty within our local area and will be able to utilise part of this grant funding to provide essential items including menstrual care products to those who need them.
26. All recommended grant applicants will be required to join the food relief network which is coordinated by City staff and aims to build a strong, responsive and collaborative network of food relief service provision. Through this network City staff will gain a better understanding of how these organisations engage and support our diverse communities through the delivery of food relief services.
27. City staff will undertake targeted focus groups to gain an understanding of our diverse communities' experience in accessing food relief services and identify emerging needs.
28. Therefore, it is critical that the total budget for the Food Support grants is not expended in the first funding round to ensure that funding remains available for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years so that the City can respond to the emerging food relief needs of our diverse communities.
29. Once recommended applications are approved by Council, a contract is developed which includes conditions that must be adhered to and acquitted against.
30. All successful applicants will be required to work cooperatively with relevant City staff and other organisations within the food relief network throughout the project for which they have received funding.
31. All grants and sponsorships are recommended on the condition that any required approvals, permits and development consents are obtained by the applicant.

Food Services Grants

32. The applications recommended for the Food Services Grants are outlined in Attachment A to this report.
33. The Food Services Grants budget is set out below:

Total budget for 2023/24	\$1,500,000
Total cash available	\$1,500,000
Total number of eligible applications this allocation	32
Total cash value requested from applications	\$7,682,148
Total value-in-kind support requested from applications	\$7,236
Total number of applications recommended for cash support	12

Total amount of cash funding recommended for payment in 2023/24 (Future-year funding recommended for payment in 2024/25 - \$575,000) (Future-year funding recommended for payment in 2025/26 - \$600,000)	\$1,500,000
Total amount of value-in-kind support recommended for 2023/24 (Future year funding recommended for 2024/25 - \$17,900) (Future year funding recommended for 2025/26 - \$26,623)	\$6,912
Cash amount remaining for payment in 2023/24	\$0

34. The Food Support Grants will open to new applications in the 2024 Summer Round, with the \$925,000 cash funding remaining in the 2024/25 budget.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment – Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

35. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This grant is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- Direction 6 – An equitable and inclusive city – this grant will contribute to community development by empowering the community to address issues that matter to them and drive projects to create a more inclusive and resilient city.
 - Direction 7 – Resilient and diverse communities – this grant will strengthen the capacity of local community organisations and residents to respond to emerging needs, contributing to improved wellbeing and improved access to the essentials of daily life for our diverse communities which improve social connections and embrace a safe city.

Organisational Impact

36. The grants and sponsorships contract management process will involve key staff across the City of Sydney. Identified staff set contract conditions and performance measures for each approved project, and review project acquittals, which include both narrative and financial reports.

Social

37. The Food Support grants provide the City with a platform to support projects and programs from the communities and organisations within the local area.

Financial Implications

38. On 26 June 2023, Council endorsed a Lord Mayoral Minute which requested that the Chief Executive Officer investigate options for financial support for food relief organisations and, where relevant, other community-based initiatives that provide access to low-cost food including cooperatives and mutual aid groups, which are operating in the City of Sydney and report back to Council.
39. On 21 August 2023, Council approved funding for the 2023/24 grants, including \$1.5 million for the grants and \$0.2 million for the costs associated with staffing and administration be funded with \$1.0 million from the General Contingency Fund and \$0.7 million from the CEO Contingency.
40. For 2024/25 and 2025/26, the Food Support grants will form part of the City's Grants and Sponsorship Program and will be referenced within the Operational Plan for these years, and allocated within the next iteration of the Long Term Financial Plan.

Relevant Legislation

41. Section 356 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.
42. Since the program is only open to not-for-profit organisations and individuals or unincorporated community groups auspiced by a not-for-profit that is eligible to apply in its own right, there was no requirement under the Local Government Act 1993 to place the grant guidelines on public exhibition.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

43. The funding period for the Food Services grants for financial year 2023/24 is for activity taking place from late December 2023 to November 2024. Contracts will be developed for all successful applications after Council approval to ensure their funding is released in time for projects starting in late December 2023.

Public Consultation

44. During August 2023, a briefing session took place where stakeholders were notified about the grants and how to apply:
 - (a) An online briefing session for food relief organisations was held on 22 August 2023. A total of 21 attendees participated in the session.

EMMA RIGNEY

Director City Life

Alana Goodwin, Grants Program Coordinator