



**13.1 LOCAL FESTIVALS FUND - REVISED GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER: KYLIE BENNETTS, GENERAL MANAGER, CITY GROWTH AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY**

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**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide Councillors with the proposed amended eligibility criteria and guidelines for Council's 'Local Festivals Fund' (the Fund).

**2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Fund aims to encourage and assist Not-For-Profit organisations and community groups to develop small to medium scale local neighbourhood festivals or events to celebrate the City's community spirit, identity, arts and culture.
- 2.2 The Fund has a maximum of up to \$10,000 available per project. This fund is intended for seed and development funding and applicants are encouraged to seek out other sources of sponsorship to complement the support of Council.
- 2.3 The Fund is informed by the Council Plan and the Health and Well Being and Events strategies.
- 2.4 The City of Port Phillip aims to plan, attract and direct events to ensure our city is welcoming, healthy, safe and vibrant for all. It is commonly recognised and accepted that events bring a wealth of benefits to a community, from health and wellbeing of residents through to economic development for local businesses, cultural vibrancy and social engagement. To date the Fund has been managed using the guidelines and eligibility criteria as outlined in **Attachment 1**.
- 2.5 A review of the Fund was recently undertaken by officers, following the receipt of multiple enquiries on the administration of the latest funding round. The outcome of this review was the cancellation of this round of funding. While this was a difficult and regrettable decision and officers apologise for the service response on this occasion, in light of this review, it was deemed the most appropriate way forward given the need to ensure confidence in the allocation of public funds.
- 2.6 This report responds to key aspects of the findings of this review including revised guidelines and eligibility criteria as outlined in **Attachment 2**. If endorsed by Council, officers will facilitate calling of the next round of funding as soon as possible.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

- 3.1 Notes the findings of a review undertaken into the latest round of the Local Festivals Fund.
- 3.2 Rescinds the previous Local Festivals Fund guidelines and eligibility criteria as outlined in Attachment 1.
- 3.3 Endorses the revised guidelines and eligibility criteria for the Local Festivals Fund as outlined in Attachment 2 and authorises the CEO to make any minor editorial amendments required to finalise this document that do not alter its substantive intent.



- 3.4 Appoints Councillor \_\_\_\_\_ to the Local Festivals Fund Assessment Panel.
- 3.5 Requests officers proceed with advertising the first round of quarterly funding for the 2021/2022 financial year utilising the revised guidelines.

#### 4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 The Fund is open to local Not-For-Profit organisations and businesses; that demonstrate a clear understanding of the factors that contribute to a successful and COVID safe community festival.

##### Review

- 4.2 Council received multiple enquiries on the latest funding round. Following receipt of these officers undertook a review.
- 4.3 Amongst other things, through this review officers examined the timeline of events of this funding round; the terms of reference for the Fund to determine whether the assessment of applications had been undertaken in line with these, whether approval was undertaken by the appropriate delegate and any previous audit activity in this area to determine whether audit findings had been fully implemented or whether an audit of the Fund may be required.
- 4.4 This review found amongst other things that the composition of the assessment panel did not align with the terms of reference; inconsistencies between the terms of reference and Council's formal delegations; provisional notification had been provided to an applicant prior to sign-off (a repeat audit finding) and a review of the Fund had not occurred prior to advertising a further funding round (audit finding had been made to review the funding criteria). Officers believe it is a reasonable expectation that this audit finding should have been implemented prior to advertising a further funding round.
- 4.5 As part of normal operating practice, given the concerns raised, officers discussed the matter of the Fund at an Assembly of Council held on 5 May 2021 and outlined the findings of the review undertaken. Officers sought the views of Council, including whether they wished to consider the Fund in its entirety in the Chamber. Council advised a preference for the matter to be addressed under delegation. Council provided feedback on the matter and precedent in other grant application considerations. It was clear from this discussion that the criteria were ambiguous and did not meet the expectations of Council.
- 4.6 As a result of this review, the most recent funding round was cancelled until the audit actions could be properly implemented to meet the intent of the funder (Council) and the grants process could be administered appropriately. This difficult decision was undertaken based on the need to ensure there is confidence in the allocation of public funds.

##### Review of Guidelines

- 4.7 Considering the above a key finding was the need to review the current guidelines of the Fund.
- 4.8 Two Assemblies of Council were held to discuss the guidelines and gain feedback from Councillors. Through these briefings feedback was sought on a range of items including the purpose and intent of the fund, eligibility criteria, assessment process and panel.



4.9 Key changes made to the guidelines outlined in **Attachment 2** include: -

- 4.9.1 Greater clarification of eligibility criteria and the term 'festival';
- 4.9.2 Stronger and earlier assessment of an applicant's eligibility by the assessment panel;
- 4.9.3 Appeal rights for groups who may have been determined as ineligible and a clear process to follow in these circumstances;
- 4.9.4 A timeframe by when applicants can expect to hear from Council of the success or otherwise of their application to improve customer service;
- 4.9.5 Inclusion of a Councillor representative on the assessment panel, as is the case with other grant programs in the arts and cultural space.

## 5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 Consultation occurred with Council as the funder of this grant. Feedback and the experiences of some applicants was also considered in reviewing these criteria.

## 6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No legal and risk implications have been identified.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 \$135,000 has been allocated in the 21/22 budget to provide funding to the Fund. The proposed changes to the eligibility criteria and assessment processes will not have any financial impact.

## 8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 No environmental impact has been identified.

## 9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 The revised guidelines and assessment criteria will allow a broad section of the community to apply to the fund, enabling a wide range of Festivals to be supported.

## 10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 The Local Festivals Fund is one of several streams of predominantly Arts funding that applies to Direction 4 – Vibrant Port Phillip.

## 11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### 11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 Upon Council endorsing the revised guidelines and eligibility criteria they will be uploaded to Council's website and shared with potential applicants. This will take place within the two weeks following endorsement.

### 11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 The revised guidelines and eligibility criteria – along with the announcement of a new round of funding – will be promoted via Council's communication channels including *Diversity*, Social Media and Council's website.



# MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 7 JULY 2021

## **12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST**

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

**TRIM FILE NO:** 32/01/138

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1. Attachment 1 - Local Festivals Fund Recovery Grants 2020-21  
Original Guidelines and Criteria**
- 2. Attachment 2 - Local Festivals Fund Guidelines and Criteria  
17.6.21**