

Grants and Sponsorship - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund

File No: S117676

Summary

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 Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision, genuine partnership between government, business and the community is required.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund is open all year for applications until the annual budget is exhausted.

This report considers 18 eligible applications for funding under the 2025/26 round. Four grants are recommended for a total cash value of \$119,600 from the 2025/26 financial year budget. If all 4 are approved, this budget will have been exhausted for the year 2025/26.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the cash recommendations for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund program as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council note the applicants who were not recommended in obtaining a cash grant for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund program, 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 finalise, 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 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund

Attachment B. Not Recommended For Funding - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund

Background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration fund

1. On 8 July 2025, the City announced the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund was open for applications on the City's website, with the program category open all year round, until the budget was exhausted.
2. Information on this grant program (such as application dates, guidelines, and eligibility criteria) was made available on the City's website. The City actively promoted the grant programs through the corporate website, content marketing, e-newsletters, paid and organic social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn), and AdWords. Email campaigns were utilised to target interested parties who had applied previously for grants at the City or who had expressed an interest in the City's programs.
3. As per the Grants and Sponsorship Program Guidelines, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund program is dedicated to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, groups and organisations and is open to eligible not-for profit organisations, incorporated associations, corporations, co-operatives, partnerships, sole traders, trustees of a trust and an individual or unincorporated community group auspiced by an eligible not-for-profit organisation or corporation.
4. Six eligible applications were received from for-profit organisations and sole traders through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund but none were recommended for approval.

Grants assessment process

5. 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 team, upon request, provides feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
6. The assessment process includes advice and recommendations from a suitably qualified assessment panel. For this program the panel consists of members of the First Nations Leadership team and Aboriginal staff members. The applications are scored against defined assessment criteria for each grant program as well as being assessed against the integrity of the proposed budget, the project plan, partnerships, contributions and connection to the local community and industry sectors.
7. The assessment criteria for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund are:
 - evidence of need for the project
 - demonstrated connection or benefit to, and engagement with, the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities in the planning and delivery of the project or program
 - capacity and experience to deliver the project or program

8. Applicants who requested more than \$20,000 in cash per year are also assessed against the following additional assessment criterion:
 - how the project or program delivers against the funding priorities
9. The assessment meeting was held on 10 April 2026.
10. Once assessed, application recommendations are decided by Council, and approved applicants are awarded a contract which includes conditions that must be adhered to and acquitted against.
11. It is expected that all successful applicants will work cooperatively with relevant City staff throughout the project for which they have received funding.
12. All grants are recommended on the condition that any required approvals, permits and development consents are obtained by the applicant.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund

13. The applications recommended for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund program are outlined in Attachment A to this report.
14. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration fund budget is set out below:

Total budget for 2025/26	\$500,000	
Less: Total cash committed to previously approved applications	\$380,400	
Total cash available in 2025/26	\$119,600	
Number of eligible applications this allocation	18	
Number of grants recommended	4	
2025/26	Cash	VIK
Total requested	\$679,769	Nil
Total recommended	\$119,600	Nil
Cash amount remaining for allocation in 2025/26	\$0	

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

15. 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 program is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - the recommended grant projects in this report contribute to community development and support active participation in civic life. They empower the community to address issues that matter to them and drive projects to create a more inclusive and resilient city

Organisational Impact

16. The grants 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.

Risks

17. This recommendation is within the City's risk appetite, which states:
 - (a) We make decisions that align with our corporate objectives, policies and strategies and are committed to conducting our activities in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations and relevant industry standards.
 - (b) We foster a culture of ethics, integrity and responsible behaviour across our organisation. By creating a strong ethical foundation, we aim to minimise the likelihood of reputation-damaging incidents and enhance our ability to respond effectively when challenges arise.
 - (c) The City has a responsibility to ensure that it has sufficient resources in the short, medium and long term to provide the levels of service that are both affordable and considered appropriate by the community.

Social / Cultural / Community

18. The City's Grants and Sponsorship Program provides the City with a platform to support cultural, economic, environmental and social initiatives from the communities and business, within the local area.

Financial Implications

19. There are sufficient funds allocated in the 2025/26 Grants and sponsorship budget to support the recommended grants.

Relevant Legislation

20. 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.
21. Section 356(3)(a) to (d) is satisfied for the purpose of providing grant funding to for-profit organisations and delegating the granting of financial assistance because:
 - (a) the funding is part of the following program:
 - (i) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration Fund
 - (b) the details of the program were included in the Council's adopted operational plan for financial year 2025/26
 - (c) the program's proposed budgets do not exceed 5% of Council's proposed income from ordinary rates for financial year 2025/26
 - (d) this program applies to a significant group of persons within the local government area.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

22. The funding period for the programs is for activities taking place 12 months from the project start date. Contracts will be developed for all successful applications after Council approval to ensure their funding is released in time for projects to commence by 1 July 2026.

EMMA RIGNEY

Executive Director City Life

Kate Butler, Grants Coordinator