



YOUTH ISSUE – BRIEFING

TO: CHIEF MINISTER

DATE: 06/12/2015

FROM: DANIEL MURDOCH

TOPIC: FUNDING FOR YOUTH PROJECTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Northern Territory Government:

1. Establish a new innovation fund which has flexible funding guidelines for events and activities that are outside the norm.
2. Improve access and promotion of support and/or training to assist applicants in requesting grant funding.

BACKGROUND

As a young person growing up in the Northern Territory (NT), boredom can be a real problem. Many young people feel there is nothing interesting or different to do after school or on the weekends. This is still consistent today as my own brothers who are in school constantly whinge about the lack of activities that are available to them. I have witnessed friends turn to drug use and excessive alcohol abuse in order to fill their weekends with something exciting. Seeing close friends waste their potential after using these substances led me to investigate why youth feel this way and also what community organisations can do to improve this situation for youth in the NT.

When I reflect on my own experience growing up, I realise I was lucky to develop an interest in sport and later on, finding small community organisations that I could share ideals with. I believe that it is only this that has curbed me from falling into bad habits of using drugs or committing offences. Each weekend I had somewhere to be. I had football in the morning and basketball in the afternoon – I didn't have a chance to engage in illegal behaviour. This could have been very different if I hadn't found a place in sporting groups and clubs. It is my belief that a lot of youth issues stem from the disenfranchising of youth.

Young people are vulnerable, and are still learning, and are open to both positive and negative influences. It is at this age it is advantageous for youth to be engaged with the community in order to help benefit them to succeed. Community groups and organisations can assist in this process if their fundraising potential is active.

There is funding available in the youth sector, however a lot of it is not accessible to youth. I am wondering why we don't see smaller organisations making a difference



on the ground. Is their capacity to achieve funding a problem? Are they thinking laterally about funding sources? Do they have the skills and capacity to apply for government grants?

This report aims at identifying the issues for individuals and small organisations to obtain youth focused funding and the challenges they face sourcing funding opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

The NT is well known for having a young population. In fact, we are the youngest population of any other Australian jurisdiction (McDonald, 2014). The median age in the NT as of June 2014 was 31.8 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). As well as having the youngest population compared to the Australian median, the NT has the highest rate of population turnover in Australia (Morgan, 2011), which can mean that young people are moving around a lot. The young population of the NT need programs that include a wide range of aspects such as: health, wellbeing, leadership, safety and community involvement. Local community youth organisations provide logistics, structured content and event management and they provide support for young people. This is only possible if adequate funding is available.

Many small organisations within the youth sector rely on various types of funding to operate. Some of the different types of funding include:

- A. Government grants
- B. Private sector support
- C. Donations
- D. Sponsorship
- E. In-kind support

When small organisations and young individuals apply for financial support, they should consider the link between the project and the funding body's objectives in order to improve their chances of obtaining funding. Government grants are accessed through a formal application process. Applicants can be successful or unsuccessful, and may be fully or partially funded. Most Government grants must be applied for under a particular category. An example of this is the 'Youth Vibe Holiday Grant' which is managed by Office of Youth Affairs (OYA). These grants are for projects during the NT school holidays – June/ July, and December/ January. National Youth Week Grants are for events and activities scheduled in April. OYA also offers funding through Quick Response Grants (QRG) that can be accessed at any time. QRGs are for youth-related events and personal development programs.

Within the NT Government, there are other grants that are specialised for sport, arts and recreation, animal welfare, multicultural events among others. These grants may not fund diverse networking events for young people and other innovative programs that do not fit within the 'norm'. This leaves a large gap where innovative ideas may become missed opportunities when they do not meet any of the specific grant criteria.



RESEARCH AND MAJOR FINDINGS

To understand what experiences individuals and organisations are having in obtaining funding, I carried out the following research actions:

1. A survey was conducted with 129 young people responding.
2. A practical exercise that showed the challenges organisations face when seeking funding for innovative projects.
3. Face to face consultation held across a broad range of community organisations to discuss their experiences obtaining funding for projects.

SURVEY

An online survey was distributed in July 2015 to Territory youth aged between 15 and 25. The survey asked about their experiences with NT youth organisations and the responses included the following:

- It was clear that the majority of youth surveyed are involved in a community activity at least once a week, whether it be sport volunteering or attending community groups.
- Out of the 129 people who completed the survey, only three respondents said they are not involved in a community activity throughout the week. This shows the willingness of most youth to get involved with community groups.
- A majority of the organisations listed on the Youth NT website were known. All respondents claimed they would consider being a part of an organisation run by youth for youth.
- 111 respondents believed that there are not enough events for youth during the week. This suggests that only a small number of local community organisations apply for grants and this limits how many events are held.
- 75% of the respondents said that they attended a local event for youth that has been supported by a government department in the past year. This shows that youth are aware of grant funding awarded by government.
- 95% of the respondents stated that they attended at least one workshop in schools run by external organisations. This suggests there maybe scope for more youth organisations to assist in delivering workshops within school settings.



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

In May/June 2015 I participated in a road trip from Darwin to Alice Springs and back engaging with young people on local issues. Through this I experienced firsthand the challenges for young people and small organisations when developing and implementing events with limited funding. I discovered that funding is crucial to the success of an event. Events can be run but the quality of the outcome can be jeopardised significantly if the funds are insufficient.

The road trip visited thousands of school students, who had the opportunity to meet the Australian United Nations Youth Representative. Young students were able to voice their concerns on the international stage through anonymous letters and online messages. Having the Australian United Nations Youth Representative visit regional youth in these remote areas was a positive and valuable experience. This required countless hours of organizing by Timika King, Sarah Tam-Perez and I. All with no incentives for us but the vision to allow youth where ever they are in the NT, to reach their full potential. I discovered that the secret to successful organisations is the selflessness and commitment of volunteers, leaders and mentors.

The road trip in the NT allowed the Australian United Nations Youth Representative to engage with young people who live in some of the most remote and disadvantaged areas of the country. On this trip we visited senior schools in the NT from Alice Springs to Darwin, stopping along the way in Tennant Creek, Elliott and Katherine. We engaged with about 1000 students by having workshops and discussions on the topic 'what changes would make the world and their communities better'.

When looking for funding options, I found that activities like the road trip do not easily fall under any existing government grants eligibility and funding guidelines. As the road trip was outside the school holiday period, the only OYA grant option was the Quick Response Grant which is capped at \$2000 for organisations. The trip cost just over \$2000 and that was no luxuries – we slept on the side of the road in free camps to cut costs. Trips to engage regional areas cost money but can be done. For this exercise, I choose not to apply for a QRG, but instead I sought private funding through sponsorship from Mt. Todd Mining and personal contributions were made by road trip participants.

DISCUSSIONS WITH ORGANISATIONS

It can be hard for small organisations with limited resources to manage the day to day running of events and activities, while also applying and maintaining funding. I found that looking for government and non-government grants was difficult. Determining which grants were suitable is very time consuming and the government grants website was somewhat useful, however lacks a search function that may have helped me seek funding for unusual sources beyond the youth sector.

The lack of knowledge on how to apply for grants and how to write the applications is a struggle I have had in the past. I received help from more experienced people at



UN Youth but if I was in a newly formed organisation the grant would have not been successful. Lana Sobieralska Chair of the Red Cross Youth Advisory Committee, stated that "small youth groups only chance of success is to become part of a larger organisation for the knowledge around grants. There is so much potential for small events if training can be provided."

The use of information and application writing sessions can be an inconvenience to small organisations due to their busy nature. However, these opportunities are a great initiative to give organisations the skills to apply for grants and promote more applications. In writing applications there can be great challenges without having help of a well-established organisation behind you. No one wants youth or small organisations to miss out on opportunities. Supporting young people and small organisations to develop this skills in this area will make a large will encourage more funding applications, and in turn, more youth related activities.

Multicultural Youth Northern Territory (MyNT) funds Kaleidoscope, a weekend event where young people can develop skills to get projects and ideas off the ground. The program includes workshops on how to apply for grants and how to identify which grant is the best fit for your situation and needs. Unfortunately this event is limited to one weekend of the year and, in my experience, there are no specific workshops any other time that help with applying for grants and sponsorship. Kaleidoscope receives some funding through OYA and other government sources.

Grant programs usually have a point of contact such as a Grants Officer to help organisations through the application process. This may not be utilised to its full potential as there is a perception with young people and small organisations that seeking help will negatively impact the competitiveness of their application. This is because the contact person is usually from the office that evaluates the applications. For young people, government and non-government organisations can be intimidating. This is where peer to peer learning such as Kaleidoscope is successful for youth. The grant programs could also have a designated section online to help the applicant understand the grant guidelines and seek the relevant help. The use of an example would be helpful and not affiliating the help with the particular office, for example instead of emailing oya@nt.gov.au change it to youthgranthelp@nt.gov.au. These are only small changes which could make a large difference.

Online sites with grants could expand to have a specialised section that is dedicated to find help in applying for government and non-government grants. This lack of education and information impedes on the ability to write successful applications. As a member of many youth groups and organisations in the Darwin area, I have been through the process of applying for funding and have been both successful and unsuccessful. There is definitely a skill that has to be learnt in order to be successful. Addressing the criteria can be the hardest part as you have to know what the panel is looking for. When I have spoken to other organisations and groups they have also found it difficult when first starting to apply for grants. There are many different forms and grant types that pay different amounts. There have been many organisations that have applied for the wrong grants or don't fit under any particular grant. This is where the Quick Response Grant is good but it is limited to \$500 for a person or \$2000 for



an organisation. Even after you have had a successful event previously it is still regulated which means that events are unable to grow if they are successful as the funding under the quick response grant is limited.

CONCLUSION

Existing grant programs and their procedures were investigated and the problems identified were the barriers perceived by applicants in seeking advice and help and restrictions placed by the grant guidelines. This study utilised face to face discussions, online surveys and a case study to collect supporting data. Solutions were identified through discussing the issues with youth in different situations and to brain storm these solutions to lead to the most appropriate and achievable recommendations. Some solutions had already been successfully tested, possibly on a smaller scale.

Problems in receiving support for obtaining funding were evident where youth were attempting to establish small events/ programs that struggled to get off the ground. They need help and support not only to gain government grants but also in how to approach businesses for funding and achieve a funding spread from many sources.

The survey results show that young people are aware of youth sector organisations and would attend their events. This suggests there is opportunity for small organisations to develop their event management capacity for peer to peer based programming and bring this variety to participants who are likely and willing to attend.

Grant application writing guides and workshops run by youth that have grant application writing skills could greatly improve the quality and success of applications for funding to government and also to non-government sources. This would be likely to increase the sustainability of small local organisations and opportunities to establish new organisations for young people. In my experience within youth organisations, writing skills training is not well promoted. Workshops specifically aimed at youth project funding from both government and non-government sources would greatly improve the capacity for individuals and youth organisations to successfully access funding available, and could be achieved with minimal extra expense. Improved online publicity for these workshops is readily available through the Northern Territory Government online grants directory and the websites of funding bodies.

The availability of different grants with more open criteria such as less focus on restrictions on when and where events can be presented could help reduce perceived issues regarding bias in support for funding specific events and programs, or not, in regard to their geographical location. This may allow more creative funding applications in some areas which previously had few programs or events succeeding in gaining funding. Similarly, if it is possible to limit the extent of funding level capping on the current government grants this may allow some successful events to be resourced to grow.



I suggest funding to departments to distribute in grants should not be based on program location but should primarily address need and engagement benefits. For example, urban projects that could be presented in regional locations could benefit if departments were able to offer this project funding to other organisations. An 'innovation fund' that is allowed more flexibility in the funding guidelines could allow for more innovative ideas to have an opportunity to get off the ground. The provision for innovation as priority criteria in the guidelines does already exist in some grant programs and can be further explored as a good opportunity for funding innovative new ideas and projects that have not been done in the past. A funding panel of youth could assist in making this happen.

Previous versions of the Northern Territory Government grants listed online lacked any integration between different categories and departments. It would be a great benefit for this online directory to offer more interactive searches to make searching for appropriate government funding an easy experience. The recently launched online directory listing Northern Territory Government grants and community support at www.grants.nt.gov.au has improved search functions and the improved presentation of this site particularly the 'community category' enables youth to search across topic areas rather than within department constraints. There is still further scope for this site to provide guidance on what grants a potential event may fit under.

Through this study it has become apparent that current procedures and availability of grants to meet set objectives is regularly evaluated. Further review of grant program processes and the promotion of both funding and the advisory support for grant applicants could benefit from the involvement of youth in recommending how they utilise funding programs and providing advice or trialling of changes to assist young people and their organisations access funding opportunities for the presentation of youth engagement activities.

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Appendix Survey distributed

Impact of Northern Territory Organisations

This is an independent research of regional organisations and government agencies within the Northern Territory

Where do you live?

- Darwin
- Palmerston
- Alice Springs
- Katherine
- Nhulunbuy
- Tennant Creek
- Wadeye
- Jabiru
- Yulara
- Elliott
- Daly River
- Other:

In a typical week, about how many times do you do activities outside of school hours?

e.g. Playing sport, volunteering, going to community groups

- Never
- 1-2 times a week
- 2-4 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- 6+ times a week

How much of an impact do you feel these organisations have had on you?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No Impact High Impact

How useful were the volunteer training sessions at our organization?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Useless Useful



What groups are you an active part of?

e.g. sports teams, community groups, organisations

What government departments have you seen having an affect on your community?

- Alice Springs Youth Hub
- Children, Youth and Families
- Office of Youth Affairs
- Education and Children's Services

Have you ever heard of any of the following organisations in the Territory?

- Army Cadets - Australian Defence Force
- Australian Air Force Cadets - Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)
- Australian Red Cross - Youth Action Committee.
- Cadets - St John Ambulance
- Camp Quality
- Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians
- City of Darwin Council Youth Advisory Group (YAG)
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Girl Guides NT
- GRIND
- Headspace Top End Youth Reference
- IMPACT
- Junior Police Rangers
- Lions Youth Club (Leo Club) Nightcliff
- Multicultural Youth NT (MyNT)
- Palmerston Inspiring Youth Group (YIP)
- Scouts NT
- SMILE Youth Group
- United Nations Youth NT
- Youth Advisory Group
- Young Endeavour Youth Scheme
- Youth For Christ
- Young Professionals Network NT (YPN NT)
- Other:

Would you consider being apart of an organisation run by youth for youth?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No



Would you like more government funding to go into youth run events?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Any other comments or recommendations for government or local organisations in relationship to youth?

Send me a copy of my responses.