Request for OSGeo funding - FOSS4G SotM Oceania Travel Grant Program 2019

See: https://wiki.osgeo.org/wiki/FOSS4G_Travel_Grant_Programme_Cookbook

Following the success of our inaugural Travel Grant Program (TGP) in 2018, FOSS4G SotM Oceania is offering an expanded TGP for 2019, aimed at enabling attendance for people who are disadvantaged by economic circumstances and/or geography.

Oceania is a vast region, with a highly distributed population, a large proportion of which is in small, lesser-developed countries. Travel to regional centres in Australia and New Zealand is difficult and expensive; a flight from a remote part of the region can easily cost over NZD$2500, and visas are also costly. New Zealand and Australia also have disadvantaged communities, notably Indigenous communities, which are often in remote areas and with little economic opportunity.

There is a strong need in this region for this type of program, and there are clear economic and social benefits of spreading open geospatial knowledge to those who stand to gain the most.

Funding request

To support this program, we are requesting support from the OSGeo Travel Grant Fund in the amount of USD $2500. We are pleased to confirm we are prepared to more than match OSGeo's contribution with our own funds. Initially, our cash contribution (NZD$6300 or USD$4300) is 75% sourced from our 2018 surplus, with the remainder targeted for 2019 fundraising.

Our 2019 fundraising efforts will include direct contributions from sponsors and attendees, surplus sponsorship funds, and contributions from Government and NGOs. We are optimistic that we will meet and exceed our modest target, so we hope to expand our grant program as available funds materialise. We hope that OSGeo's contribution will act as a 'seed' for other funders, such as NGOs and government grants.

We wish to share TGP costs between the local organising committee (LOC) and OSGeo's travel grant fund. The anticipated budget is laid out below:

	NZD	USD**
LOC ticket contribution*	6500	4400
LOC cash contribution	6300	4300
OSGeo cash contribution	3700	2500
Total	**16500**	**11200**

* The value above (NZD$6500) is based on foregone revenue, so represents the actual impact on our budget, assuming the conference ticket would otherwise go to a paying attendee.

**Currency conversion rate at 2019-04-14 is approximately 1 NZD = 0.68 USD

The LOC will provide free conference and workshop registrations to TGP grantees. TGP grantees will generally be expected to generate partial funding via employers, local sponsorship, crowd support, or personal financing.

Number and size of grants

Initially, the LOC wish to offer approximately 10 grants supporting travel. This is not a fixed strategy; we will reallocate the budget depending on the applicant pool. Depending on the success of our fundraising drive, we may be able to expand the program by offering more grants in this round, or running a second, targeted round.

Given limited funding and diverse financial needs, we plan to offer grants in 3 tiers. These are subject to change depending on demand and available funding. Eligible costs include transportation, accommodation, and visa costs.

New for 2019 is the introduction of a higher level of financial support for a small number of grants. This is meant to address the significant disadvantage faced by residents of some of the most remote and economically disadvantaged countries in the world.

Tier	Support offered	# of grants *	Est. budget
1	- Free conference & workshop registration - Up to NZD $2000 to assist with eligible travel expenses	2	NZD $4000 2 registrations
2	- Free conference & workshop registration - Up to NZD $1000 to assist with eligible travel expenses	6	NZD $6000 6 registrations
3	- Free conference & workshop registration	2	2 registrations

* Number of grants available will depend on actual costs. For example, travel for TGP recipients from near Wellington will be much less expensive than travel from distant parts of Oceania.

Selection criteria

As a general set of guidelines, successful TGP applicants:
● are resident in the Oceania region
● would find it difficult to attend without funding assistance
● can demonstrate experience/interest in open geospatial
● belong to an underrepresented community, and their presence will contribute to diversity amongst conference attendees
● is in a position to add value to their own community

We intend to follow, approximately, the same process we used last year:
● One selection committee member will act as chair. This person will communicate with grantees as they submit, clarifying any doubts about their applications, and opening a channel of communication.

- At the close of the submission period, the chair will prepare an anonymised spreadsheet of eligible submissions, and lead a discussion with the selection committee about the assessment criteria and process, to ensure the group is working collaboratively.
- The selection committee will undertake a period of review and scoring, using agreed criteria. This will, hopefully, indicate a clear consensus on most of the grants. The committee will meet and discuss any marginal choices, and agree on a final set of grants.
- The chair will communicate with grantees and confirm the uptake of the grants, and work with grantees to facilitate travel planning, including securing appropriate visas, as needed.

Selection committee

Grantees will be selected by a Selection Committee, currently consisting of:

- Kim Fitter
- John Bryant
- Greg Lauer
- David Garcia
- Adam Steer
- Jonah Sullivan

Some of us were involved in our 2018 TGP, and some of us are new to the committee; we hope this will provide a good balance between continuity and new perspectives. Australia and New Zealand are well-represented by this group, so we are working to invite additional committee members from Pacific Island countries to increase regional diversity, particularly drawing on those who were recipients of last year's travel grants.

Further information

Accommodation: We're actively researching options for accommodation near the conference venue. We hope to be able to find low cost options, and we'll facilitate communication between TGP attendees so they can choose to share accommodation if they wish. Generally, Wellington and New Zealand are very safe by global standards, and we will do what we can to make sure attendees have access to safe transport and accommodation.

How will grants be paid, and by whom: This will depend highly on the grant recipient's specific circumstances. It is often not convenient or even possible to do standard bank transfers. Last year we worked with grantees to ensure a smooth delivery of funds on arrival at the conference, and will address this in a similar fashion in 2019.