

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Think City Launches Grants Programme for Recovery and to Boost Creative Economy as First Step in Building Creative and Cultural District in Kuala Lumpur

KUALA LUMPUR, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021 - Think City, an urban impact organisation, has launched the Downtown Kuala Lumpur Grants Programme to enable communities to participate in the recovery and transformation of the historic centre of Kuala Lumpur into a creative and cultural district.

The programme, open for submissions from today till October 31, 2021, is rooted in the spirit of recovery from the pandemic and is part of a long-term strategic plan to activate the creative economy within the heritage district, inviting individuals and organisations to submit projects to empower and improve quality of life for various communities, develop new experiences in the city centre through innovative content, and to transform and revitalise spaces with creative solutions.

Open to individuals and organisations, the programme is aligned with the larger vision laid out in the Kuala Lumpur Creative & Cultural District Strategic Masterplan — a plan developed in partnership between the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur or DBKL) and Think City, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture and the National Heritage Department.

The first of two cultural-based economic recovery programmes by Think City supported by the Malaysian government through an allocation in the Budget 2020, this programme is focused on Downtown Kuala Lumpur (Downtown KL), while the other, to be launched soon, will have a national focus.

Think City Managing Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed said that the grants programme has been launched in the spirit of building back better, amidst the struggle against the economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

“As the National Recovery Programme takes its course, we believe that the time is right for the citizens of Kuala Lumpur and beyond to begin seeding projects that, when realised, could collectively aid in the long-term recovery and resilience of Malaysian cities.

“This programme aims to empower individuals or organisations in Downtown KL to bring their projects to fruition and enable them to play an active role in building back better—giving them the opportunity to realise enhancements to existing projects or operations. We also hope that potential applicants will consider how they can elevate the surrounding communities so that they too can rise from this pandemic and inspire the community to be resilient to future challenges,” he said.

“We are looking for projects that will strengthen, transform and add value to the Downtown KL area and its communities. In view of the uncertainty we live with due to the pandemic, we will be seeking projects that can be manifested either physically, digitally or in a hybrid format to ensure a wider scope of opportunity for applicants.”

Hamdan explained that the grants programme is one of the first steps, mandated by government stakeholders, to birth a creative and cultural district in the heart of Kuala Lumpur.

“Over the past decades, Downtown KL has hollowed out due to the migration of administrative centres, businesses and residents to other suburbs and districts within Greater Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley. This has created some imbalances in the diversity of residents and businesses, gaps in inclusivity, unused and neglected buildings and public spaces, the decline of traditional trades and negative perceptions of safety, among other issues.

“We have been working with the Kuala Lumpur City Hall to revitalise the area with placemaking, community engagement, baseline studies and laneway improvement projects, while DBKL has launched many programmes for the district, including the River of Life programme, greening, and affordable housing, among others. The local business community has also begun a renaissance in the area with many culturally-strong and innovative ideas.

“That said, revitalising Downtown KL together with the community, and deploying existing assets such as historical landmarks and heritage buildings, its green belt and world class transportation system can reactivate lost opportunities in the area and realise our vision for the Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District, which has the potential to contribute significantly to the country’s economy,” he said.

Datuk Seri Haji Mahadi Che Ngah, Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, said that the grants programme is in alignment with the Kuala Lumpur City Hall’s plans for recovery and the longer-term plan to transform the historical city centre into a district powered by the creative economy.

“The recovery and sustainability of Kuala Lumpur has been a key concern for us in light of the current pandemic. As we actively deploy planned initiatives to improve the city, as well as Covid-response programmes to provide immediate relief to communities, it is heartening to see that there is bigger-picture support available in the form of grants to the public, such as the Downtown KL Grants Programme, which is aligned with other government grants and subsidies aimed at national recovery.

“The Downtown Kuala Lumpur Grants Programme will support our vision of activating the creative economy in Downtown KL to form a thriving and vibrant district, and I encourage the communities in Downtown KL, many of whom have been deeply affected by the pandemic, to take advantage of these opportunities to build back better and form a more sustainable future for the city in the longer term,” he said.

The mayor added that the road to the nation’s recovery could be significantly boosted with collective efforts involving the public, private and people sectors.

“The Downtown Kuala Lumpur Grants Programme is but one step in the journey towards national recovery. As the programme operates on a co-investment principle, I would like to call upon other stakeholders and potential funders or investors from the various sectors to come together to support this grant, to help Downtown KL community members realise their projects, or by collaborating with Think City to augment the funding power of the grants programme. It is with this spirit of solidarity that I hope we will find a speedier recovery,” Datuk Mahadi said.

The Downtown KL Grants Programme is open for submissions from September 20 to October 31, 2021. Applicants may submit proposals for projects in the areas of:

Business Renewal - Helping existing businesses or organisations grow through initiatives that speed up recovery and provide long-term sustainability to create a more vibrant Downtown KL;

Community Resilience - Empowering and enabling communities in Downtown KL by providing them with avenues and necessary tools that facilitate community development, inclusivity and participation; and

Space Rejuvenation – Invigorating and bringing new life to dilapidated buildings around Downtown KL by reviving, refurbishing and repurposing them to preserve urban heritage, and elevate liveability and visitor appeal.

Project types may include publications, digital content, space activation projects, community programmes, capacity-building, vocational training or innovative educational programmes, and entrepreneurial programmes.

Under the *Space Rejuvenation* theme, projects could include the adaptive re-use of existing buildings to bring new life and purpose, the management and activation of underutilised spaces, and green building interventions.

Applicants may be individuals or organisations who can apply for projects of any value, provided the proposals reflect significant sustainable impact to Downtown KL. The programme does not provide full funding for projects; applicants are encouraged to seek co-investment for their projects.

Submissions are open for six weeks, after which, proposals will be evaluated for an eight-week period by a technical advisory panel comprising key experts in the areas of urban revival, social resilience, arts and culture, urban greening, and heritage conservation, among others, with final approvals by the Think City Board.

Further information and application forms are available at: www.thinkcity.com.my/downtownKL.

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About Think City

Think City is an urban impact organisation dedicated to making cities more liveable, resilient and sustainable. We are a consultancy, project delivery partner, institute and venture builder, providing urban policy thinking, management and implementation of urban solutions in Malaysia and beyond. Adopting a community-first, evidence-based approach, Think City focuses on four main areas: Placemaking, Resilience, Analytics and Conservation. Established in 2009 to spearhead urban regeneration in George Town, we have now expanded our work nationwide, implementing projects that enhance the environment, economy, culture, arts and heritage, and resilience of cities. For more, see www.thinkcity.com.my.

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