

Report to Council

Agenda item 7.1

Proposed participation in the Korea Foundation Invitation Program, April 2024

26 March 2024

Presenter: Councillor Philip Le Liu

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Councillor Phillip Le Liu to travel to South Korea to participate in the Korea Foundation Invitation Program (Program) between 31 March and 6 April 2024.
2. The Korea Foundation is an organisation affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Korea (ROK). It was established in 1991 to promote a better understanding of ROK in the international community and to foster global friendships by arranging various exchange activities with other countries.

Key issues

3. The Korea Foundation invites prominent individuals in various professional fields to participate in the Program. Councillor Le Liu has been selected and invited to participate in the 2024 program.
4. The Program will involve meetings and other relationship building activities with organisations ranging from those connected to the ROK Government, universities and private sector. The program includes visits to various sites of cultural significance and commercial and industrial importance.
5. Following the Program, Councillor Le Liu proposes to undertake additional commitments in South Korea as recommended by the ROK Consul General in Melbourne. As part of these, he proposes to meet with Jeonju City municipal representatives including the Mayor.
6. CoM's International Engagement Framework identifies South Korea as a priority destination and market. Councillor Le Liu's participation in the Program and other engagements will offer an opportunity to advance Melbourne's interests in a region which offers the following:
 - 6.1. As Australia's fourth-largest trading partner and third-largest export market in 2021-22, South Korea represents opportunities for Melbourne to connect with cities and their business communities across a range of industries and sectors including green-tech, innovation and start-ups, digital gaming and biotech. As a leader in the field of renewable energy technologies and clean hydrogen advancements in particular, Melbourne is well placed to work with leading South Korean companies such as Hyundai, KISCO and Samsung in areas like emissions reduction and decarbonisation.
 - 6.2. Melbourne's credentials as a green, sustainable city provides an advantageous platform to work with similar South Korean cities on knowledge sharing and exchange programs for mutual benefit. Municipal projects like Power Melbourne and Greenline can be conduits for collaboration which lead to business and trade outcomes when private sector companies are also invited to participate.
7. The Korea Foundation will cover the majority of costs associated with travel. It is proposed that CoM provide a small amount to cover incidentals.

Recommendation

8. That Council:
 - 8.1. Approves Councillor Phillip Le Liu's proposed travel to South Korea to participate in the Korea Foundation Invitation Program and other meetings in April 2024 at a cost to CoM of \$420.
 - 8.2. Notes that the Councillor Le Liu will prepare a report to the Future Melbourne Committee or Council within 60 days of return from travel.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 2)

Supporting Attachment

Finance

1. The costs associated with travel proposed by Councillor Le Liu will be jointly funded. The Korea Foundation will cover the majority of costs including airfare, accommodation and meals. The CoM will provide \$420 towards incidental costs.
2. Costs will be met from the existing budget allocation.

Conflict of interest

3. The opportunity to visit South Korea at the invitation of the Korea Foundation at Council expense has the potential to benefit Councillor Le Liu. Consequently, a material conflict of interest may exist. The outcome of the matter therefore has the potential to benefit Councillor Le Liu in a pecuniary form. As such, section 128(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* would appear to be engaged.

Health and Safety

4. In travelling to South Korea, Councillor Le Liu will adhere to and be guided by international health, safety and security measures including those identified by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Relation to Council policy

5. The Executive Officer Councillor Liaison has confirmed that the travel proposal accords with the requirements of the travel guidelines outlined in the Council Expenses Policy.
6. Participation in the program and building connections with officials supports the objectives underpinning Major Initiative 8 in the Council Plan 2021-25 (to review and optimise Melbourne's international relationships) and the International Engagement Framework.

Environmental sustainability

7. The carbon emission resulting from air travel will be offset with the purchase of credits.