

Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged and its Dedicated Portion for implementing After-school Learning and Support Programmes open for new round of applications

The Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (PFD) managed by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) is inviting the 15th round Regular Portion applications and the eighth round Dedicated Portion applications for implementing After-school Learning and Support Programmes starting from today (December 29). Welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and eligible primary and secondary schools are encouraged to submit proposals.

The Government set up the PFD in 2005 to promote tripartite partnership among the welfare sector, business corporations and the Government for helping the disadvantaged. The Government provides matching grants with regard to the donations made by business partners to support welfare NGOs in running social welfare projects. Up till now the Government has injected a total of \$1.2 billion into the PFD. Apart from a commitment of \$800 million for the Regular Portion of the PFD to help the disadvantaged, the remaining \$400 million has been earmarked for the Dedicated Portion. Since its launch in 2015, the Dedicated Portion has been actively promoting the "Citizens-Business-Government-School" collaboration to implement more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families to facilitate their whole-person development.

Taking into consideration the local economic downturn and its impact on the disadvantaged, the SWD has extended a special measure taken in the previous two years to raise the ceiling of grants by 50 per cent, that is, the ceiling of grants for each Regular Portion project is raised from \$2 million to \$3 million and that for each Dedicated Portion project from \$3 million to \$4.5 million, to allow room for welfare NGOs and schools to provide services for the benefit of more disadvantaged persons. In addition, to enable NGOs and schools to launch different projects at different stages, two deadlines are set for both the Regular Portion applications and the Dedicated Portion applications. The second deadline for both types of applications is October 31, 2022.

A spokesman for the SWD said that in the earlier 14 rounds of Regular Portion Applications of the PFD, matching grants totalling over \$520 million were approved for 214 welfare NGOs to implement a total of 1 076 welfare projects sponsored by over 1 700 business organisations, benefiting more than one million disadvantaged persons. The first seven rounds of Dedicated Portion Applications attracted a favourable response. About \$280 million in matching grants have been approved for 436 after-school learning and support

projects so far. Over 400 business organisations have participated in the projects, benefiting more than 130 000 primary and secondary students.

Summaries of the two applications are as follows:

	The 15th Round Regular Portion Application	The Eighth Round Dedicated Portion Application
Eligible applicants	Bona-fide charitable welfare NGOs having tax-exempt status under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bona-fide charitable welfare NGOs having tax-exempt status under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112) • Public sector primary and secondary schools including government schools, aided schools and caput schools, and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme
Contents of the projects	Social welfare projects for the disadvantaged	After-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families
Application guides and forms	SWD homepage: www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_supportser/sub_partnership	SWD homepage: www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_supportser/sub_dedicatedportion
Deadline for applications	June 30, 2022 (first deadline) and October 31, 2022 (second deadline)	April 29, 2022 (first deadline) and October 31, 2022 (second deadline)

Details of the Regular Portion and the Dedicated Portion of the PFD are available on the SWD homepage: www.swd.gov.hk. For enquiries about the applications, please contact the Secretariat of the PFD during office hours on 3468 2718 or 3468 2710, or by email to pmpfd@swd.gov.hk.

[Summer STEM Internship Scheme well received by universities and business community](#)

A spokesman for the Innovation and Technology Commission said today (December 29) that the STEM Internship Scheme had attracted over 2 500 university students and more than 1 300 companies or organisations to join this summer. According to the findings of the surveys conducted by participating universities (see Annex), the Scheme received high commendations from the universities, interns and employers.

Most students upon completion of their internships have gained a better understanding of the innovation and technology (I&T) field and will consider pursuing their careers in I&T in the future. Moreover, it is the first time

that students under the Scheme joined internships conducted in the Mainland and overseas, thanks to the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic during part of the summer vacation this year. As well, almost all participating employers considered that the job performance of their interns had met or even exceeded their expectations and plan to join the Scheme again. This survey reflects that the universities and business community recognised the positive results of the Scheme, which has fully met the expectations of students and companies or organisations.

The majority of the participating companies are small and medium-sized enterprises or start-ups from various business sectors, mostly information technology, biotechnology, electrical and electronic engineering, financial services and the construction industry. The internship positions offered cover various I&T elements, such as programme coding, web design, big data analytics, cloud computing, machine learning, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, digital marketing, biotechnology and supply chain technologies.

Participating universities found that the Scheme provided the chance for employers to allow more I&T-related internship places, offering students the opportunity to apply their STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) knowledge in the workplace and understand the I&T culture and work environment at an early stage. Furthermore, the Scheme has helped companies and organisations, small enterprises in particular, hire good quality STEM students. In view of the popularity and effectiveness of the Scheme, most of the participating universities continue to implement the Scheme in winter this year.

"The STEM Internship Scheme was first launched in summer 2020 to encourage students to experience I&T-related work and foster their interest in an I&T career in the future. It provides students with internship opportunities and assists companies in recruiting suitable I&T talents. It supports the nurturing of new blood in I&T, thereby enlarging the local I&T talent pool. We look forward to participation from more students and employers in the Scheme," the spokesman for the Innovation and Technology Commission said.

The STEM Internship Scheme provides university students in STEM disciplines with internships of at least four consecutive weeks with a monthly allowance of \$10,500 for up to three months in every academic year. To enhance the flexibility of the Scheme for covering a broad spectrum of business sectors, an internship place is regarded as I&T-related as long as its actual work contains I&T elements. Interested students and employers may contact the participating universities. Details of the Scheme are available at the website of the Innovation and Technology Fund (www.itf.gov.hk/en/funding-programmes/nurturing-talent/stem-internship-scheme).

New grading standards under Mandatory Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme to fully take effect soon

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department today (December 29) announced that the new energy efficiency grading standards for single package type room air-conditioners, dehumidifiers and compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) under the Mandatory Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme (MEELS) will be fully implemented on December 31. The new standards aim to encourage suppliers to introduce more energy-efficient models and help consumers select such products.

Starting from December 31, single package type room air-conditioners, dehumidifiers and CFLs must bear energy labels in compliance with the new energy efficiency grading standards before they are supplied to the local market. The prefix "U2" will be added to the reference number on the new energy label.

The implementation of the new energy efficiency grading standards is expected to bring an energy saving of about 300 million kilowatt hours per year, which is equivalent to an annual reduction of carbon emissions by about 210 000 tonnes.

The Code of Practice on Energy Labelling of Products was revised last year with the energy efficiency grading standards for the aforementioned three products raised by about 35 per cent. A grace period of one year will end tomorrow (December 30).

For more information about the MEELS and the new energy efficiency grading standards, please visit the thematic website of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (www.emsd.gov.hk/energylabel).

Fatal traffic accident in Yuen Long

Police are investigating a fatal traffic accident in Yuen Long this morning (December 29) in which a 75-year-old woman died.

At around 8.31am, a light goods vehicle (LGV) driven by a 42-year-old man was travelling southbound along Wang Lok Street. When turning right to Ma Wang Road, the LGV reportedly knocked down the 75-year-old woman who was crossing the road.

Sustaining head injury, the woman was rushed to Pok Oi Hospital in unconscious state and was certified dead at 9.06am.

The LGV driver was arrested for dangerous driving causing death and is being detained for further enquiries.

Investigation by the Special Investigation Team of Traffic, New Territories North is underway.

Anyone who witnessed the accident or has any information to offer is urged to contact the investigating officers on 3661 3800.

[New round of applications under Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education opens](#)

The Education Bureau (EDB) announced today (December 29) that the 2021/22 round of applications under the Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education (ESGS) is open.

Launched in December 2020, the ESGS provides financial support for eligible self-financing post-secondary education institutions to develop and enhance programmes that meet market needs but require high start-up costs. It also helps alleviate the institutions' need to fully recover the set-up costs from tuition fees, thus relieving the financial burden on students.

In the 2020/21 round of applications, six out of 22 applications were approved with a total grant of about \$137 million. Details of the approved projects are as follows:

Institution	Project	Approved grant (in million)
Caritas Institute of Higher Education (CIHE)	CIHE Physiotherapy Integrated Clinical Education Centre	33.2
Hong Kong College of Technology	Cybersecurity for the Smart Technology Era	19.4
Hong Kong Metropolitan University	Establishment of Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Medical Laboratory Science Programme	40.8

Hong Kong Shue Yan University	Development of Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Arts, Culture and Technology Degree Programme	16.4
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong	FinTech Literacy Enhancement	19.1
UOW College Hong Kong	Upgrading Teaching and Learning Facilities and Resources to Support A New Programme – Bachelor of Maritime Services and Operations Management (Hons)	8.6

"The approved projects under the inaugural round of applications of the ESGS covered a wide range of sectors, including allied health, financial, art and innovative technology, as well as maritime studies, which are conducive to catering for the keen manpower demand of the relevant industries. The ESGS also aims to help institutions better develop their own strengths and niche areas, strengthening strategic co-ordination between institutions. The EDB will maintain close liaison with relevant institutions with a view to making best use of the resources of the ESGS and launching the relevant programmes as soon as practicable," a spokesman for the EDB said.

Applications for the 2021/22 round are invited from now until April 20, 2022. Independent non-profit-making education institutions offering full-time locally accredited local self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes are eligible to apply. These institutions include:

1. Hong Kong Metropolitan University;
2. approved post-secondary colleges under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320); and
3. post-secondary institutions registered under the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279).

The ESGS covers both the development of new programmes and the enhancement of existing ones. It supports projects of the following nature, with a view to enhancing the teaching and learning in designated academic areas:

1. significant development/enhancement of programme curriculum and pedagogies;
2. recruitment/professional development of faculty members and teaching staff;
3. procurement/upgrade of market-standard equipment/facilities to meet academic and professional requirements;

4. provision of new/improvement to existing discipline-specific campus facilities/infrastructure; and
5. other relevant discipline-specific expenditure areas that are in alignment with the objective of the scheme.

The Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education will advise on the comparative merits of the proposals received under the ESGS, and make recommendations to the Secretary for Education. Funding for each proposal will generally be subject to a cap of \$42 million.

Further details of the ESGS and the approved projects can be found at www.cspe.edu.hk/en/esgs.html.