

# Distance Business Programme to open for applications from enterprises on May 18

The Innovation and Technology Commission today (May 16) announced that the Distance Business Programme under the Anti-epidemic Fund of the Government will accept applications from enterprises from 9am on Monday (May 18) until October 31.

"To support enterprises to continue their business and services during the epidemic, the Programme provides funding support through fast-track processing for enterprises to adopt information technology (IT) solutions for developing distance business. We believe various sectors in Hong Kong will benefit from the Programme," a spokesman for the Commission said.

Under the Programme, the funding ceiling is \$100,000 for each IT solution and the relevant training expenses for the employees. Each enterprise may receive total funding of up to \$300,000 to undertake a distance business project to be completed within six months. Each enterprise can submit only one application with no more than three IT solutions. The approved project cannot benefit from other government funding schemes at the same time.

The Programme covers 12 IT solution categories relating to distance business as follows:

- Online business;
- Online order taking and delivery, and smart self-service systems;
- Online customer services and engagement;
- Digital customer experience enhancement;
- Digital payment/mobile point of sale;
- Online/cloud-based financial management systems;
- Online/cloud-based human resources management systems;
- Remote document management, cloud storage and remote access services;
- Virtual meeting and conference tools;
- Virtual team management and communications;
- Cybersecurity solutions; and
- Other online/custom-built/cloud-based business support systems.

All private enterprises (excluding publicly listed companies, statutory bodies and non-government organisations funded by the Government) with a valid Business Registration Certificate, ongoing business commenced before January 1 this year and substantive business operation in the industry related to the project in the application at the time of application are eligible.

The Government has established the Distance Business Programme Vetting

Committee to oversee the implementation of the Programme. The Committee is chaired by the Commissioner for Innovation and Technology, with members from the technology and professional services sectors, academia and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. The Hong Kong Productivity Council is the Secretariat of the Programme.

The Secretariat will conduct eligibility checking and preliminary screening, and then submit the applications to the Distance Business Programme Vetting Committee for consideration. Vetting criteria include relevance of the proposed project to the applicant's business, reasonableness of the implementation details and budget, and the relevant technical capability of the service provider. To ensure fair and reasonable allocation of resources, the Programme Secretariat will process up to 10 funding applications involving services provided by the same system integrator being the service provider each week. The rest of the applications will be processed in the following week.

The Programme will accept and process applications through an online system. If an application contains all the required information and documents, the Programme Secretariat will endeavour to inform the applicant of the outcome within about 10 working days. The actual processing time will depend on the number of applications received and the complexity of the projects. To avoid delays, applicants should ensure the accuracy of the information and documents provided. The Government reminds applicants that providing untrue information or false documents in an attempt to receive funding constitutes a criminal offence and offenders may be subject to prosecution.

The Programme also provides an IT Service Providers Reference List to offer relevant market information merely for enterprises' reference. The Reference List with the first batch of IT Service Providers is available on the Programme website and will be updated regularly.

Eligible enterprises may submit applications online. Details are available on the Programme website ([u.hkpc.org/dbiz](http://u.hkpc.org/dbiz)). For enquiries, please contact the Programme Secretariat by phone on 2788 5070 during business hours (9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays)) or via email at [dbiz@hkpc.org](mailto:dbiz@hkpc.org).