

Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme to accept applications from next Monday

â€‹To alleviate the manpower shortage across different sectors, the Chief Executive in Council has earlier endorsed the enhancement of the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS). After consulting the Labour Advisory Board (LAB), the Labour Department (LD) will launch the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) next Monday (September 4) and begin accepting applications on the same date.

The Chief Executive in Council endorsed on June 13 recommendations to introduce sector-specific labour importation schemes for the construction and transport sectors (sector-specific labour importation schemes), as well as enhancing the coverage and operation of the SLS by the following measures to relieve the manpower shortage problem in other sectors:

- (1) suspending the general exclusion of 26 job categories (Annex 1) as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from the SLS for two years; and
- (2) enhancing the dissemination of application information to employers, streamlining the procedures for processing applications and refining the workflow of consultation with the LAB.

A spokesman for the LD said, "The other key requirements of the SLS, including the four-week local recruitment and consultation with the LAB for each screened-in application, will remain unchanged. To reflect its enhanced features, the SLS will be renamed as the ESLS and open for applications from next Monday."

After consulting the LAB, the LD will implement the following enhancement measures:

- (1) Enhance dissemination of application information to employers

â€‹The LD will organise five briefings for employers in September to explain the information needed for submitting applications, points-to-note and the flow of applications, as well as answering questions on the spot. Please refer to Annex 2 for details. The LD will continue to organise briefings for employers from time to time and publicise information of common posts, including their median monthly wages, for the reference of employers.

- (2) Streamline verification of application information

At present, after each application is screened in, Labour Inspectors of the LD will liaise with the applicant employer to arrange an inspection of its office premises and intended workplaces of the imported labour to verify relevant information. The LD will replace inspection visits by Labour Inspectors with desktop checks, and with verification by telephone or in

writing with the applicant employers as appropriate.

(3) Enhance local recruitment arrangements of labour importation applications

Upon commencement of the four-week local recruitment for job vacancies which have passed the screening under the ESLS, the LD will send details of the job vacancies to LAB members and the relevant trade unions for their referral of suitable local job seekers to apply for relevant posts during the local recruitment period.

(4) Refine workflow of consultation with the LAB

At present, the LD circulates recommendations supplemented by a case write-up on each SLS application to LAB members for views every month. To help LAB members grasp the key points of applications and recommendations, the LD will present the recommendations in a tabulated form in place of providing a case write-up.

(5) Enhance information dissemination at briefings on employment rights

To protect imported workers' employment rights and benefits, employers must arrange and grant paid leave to each imported worker for attending a briefing on employment rights within eight weeks upon his/her arrival in Hong Kong to ensure that they understand their rights and benefits of working in Hong Kong. The LD will collaborate with trade unions on distributing their information leaflets at the briefings, so as to provide more channels for imported workers to seek assistance and make enquiries. LAB members or trade union representatives referred by them may also join the briefings to convey messages about employment rights to imported workers.

After launching the above enhancement measures, the LD will strive to complete the processing of an application within three months after it passes the screening under the ESLS.

If the prospective imported workers are Mainland residents, employers under the ESLS must recruit the imported workers through the foreign labour service co-operation enterprises approved by the relevant Mainland authorities. Moreover, apart from providing accommodation in Hong Kong, employers are allowed under the ESLS to (i) provide imported labour with accommodation on the Mainland; or (ii) let imported labour reside in their residential premises on the Mainland. The relevant arrangements are in line with those under the sector-specific labour importation schemes.

Interested employers can submit to the Supplementary Labour Division (SLD) of the LD the completed application forms together with the required documents from September 4. The SLD is located at Room 929, 9/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon. Applications submitted under the SLS before September 4 and still under processing will continue to be processed by the LD in accordance with the enhancement measures of the ESLS.

The ESLS does not accept applications for importation of labour of industries and job categories covered by the sector-specific labour

importation schemes and the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes.

The application form of the ESLS, details of the briefings for employers, etc, are uploaded onto the webpage of the LD (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/plan/iwESLS.htm). For enquiries, please contact the SLD of the LD at 2150 6363.