

First batch of wage subsidies under 2022 Employment Support Scheme approved today

The Government will notify the first batch of around 45 000 employers of their successful applications for the 2022 Employment Support Scheme (2022 ESS) starting from today (May 10). Applicants can log in to the 2022 ESS website to check the amount of wage subsidy granted and the committed employee headcount during the subsidy period.

The application period of the 2022 ESS commenced on April 29. Up to 6pm today, around 150 000 applications from employers have been received with a total committed employee headcount of 1.2 million. Moreover, the Government has received about 100 000 applications from self-employed persons (SEPs) applicants.

A Government spokesman said, "Starting from today, the first batch of successful employers will receive notifications via SMS message and email. Employers will normally receive the wage subsidies of May, involving around \$2.3 billion in total, within one week after receiving the notifications. These employers have committed to employ around 300 000 employees in May. About 98 per cent of the first batch of employers receiving wage subsidies are micro- or small and medium-sized enterprises with less than 50 employees. The wage subsidies can help employers retain their current employees or even employ more staff when the business revives."

All employers in the first batch are those who had applied successfully for wage subsidies in the 2020 ESS and chosen the 2020 ESS data in setting the subsidised quota cap for their current applications.

The spokesman reminded those employers being granted wage subsidies that, as the Government will use MPF records of the subsidy months to determine whether employers have complied with the undertakings, employees and their salary information that are not shown on the MPF records will not be counted towards fulfilling the committed headcount. As a result, the relevant employers may be subject to a clawback of subsidy and penalty. Employers must:

- make timely MPF contributions for employees each month (i.e. by June 10 for contributions of May, by July 11 for contributions of June, by August 10 for contributions of July);
- (if applicable) open MPF employee accounts for new employee(s) in that month and make MPF contributions accordingly, and must not wait until the 60-day enrolment deadline to complete the account setup;
- (if applicable) open MPF employee accounts for employees aged 65 or above (if not yet opened) in that month and report the monthly wage; and

- (if applicable) make MPF contributions for casual employees (including those whose wages are paid on a daily basis) in the relevant month.

The spokesman said, "We are processing expeditiously the remaining applications so as to disburse subsidies to more applicants promptly."

The spokesman also reminded that the application period for the 2022 ESS would be closed at 11.59pm on May 12 (Thursday). Eligible employers and SEPs who wish to apply for wage subsidies should submit applications through the 2022 ESS online website (www.ess.gov.hk/en) as soon as possible.

Enquiries on applications can be made by calling the hotline at 183 6122. The service hours of the hotline in the remaining application period are as follows:

May 10 to 11: 9am to 8pm

May 12: 9am to midnight

If applicants need assistance in person, they may call the hotline to schedule an appointment with one of the following five service centres:

- Room 1501, AT Tower, 180 Electric Road, North Point
- Suite 1004, Kwun Tong View, 410 Kwun Tong Road, Kwun Tong
- Suite 601-2, 9 Wing Hong Street, Cheung Sha Wan
- Suite 2310, Metropole Square, 2 On Yiu Street, Shek Mun, Shatin
- Units 3301-3303, 33/F The Octagon, 6 Sha Tsui Rd, Tsuen Wan

The service centres will operate from 9am to 6pm in the remaining application period.