

Latest progress of Arts and Culture Sector Subsidy Scheme under Anti-epidemic Fund

A spokesperson for the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) said today (September 8) that the \$150 million Arts and Culture Sector Subsidy Scheme, which was established under the Anti-epidemic Fund, has disbursed subsidies to the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), nine major performing arts groups, the Hong Kong Arts Festival Society, 34 grantees of the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme, 14 venue partners of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Hong Kong Maritime Museum, Le French May, and tenants of the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre and of the arts space under the HKADC, to assist them to tackle the difficulties arising from the COVID-19 epidemic.

Under the Arts and Culture Sector Subsidy Scheme, the HAB has entrusted the HKADC to implement the \$50 million Support Scheme for Arts and Cultural Sector, covering performances and activities affected by the epidemic from January 29 to June 30, projects not funded by the HKADC and freelancers. As at September 4, the Scheme had dispersed subsidies to each of the 42 organisations receiving year grants from the HKADC and the 497 HKADC and non-HKADC funded projects/activities, as well as more than 3 000 freelancers.

The HAB earlier engaged the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong (Barwo) as well to collect details of the affected professional Cantonese opera performances in the period from January 29 to June 30, and disburse subsidies to the practitioners of various categories, both members and non-members of Barwo included, involved in the performances. Furthermore, the professional Cantonese opera performances in the period from June 19 to July 14 were also sponsored to settle part of the pay for the frontline practitioners and anti-epidemic measures.

As at September 4, taking into account different schemes, the Government had disbursed around \$124 million to about 860 arts groups/projects as well as more than 5 100 individual arts workers (individual arts workers may receive the subsidy from different organisations).

The LCSD has closely communicated and discussed with arts groups and artists during the epidemic in the hope of offering flexibility for their performances, such as looking into the feasibility to postpone or broadcast recorded performances and to adjust the expected attendance rate for programmes, the estimated income and the LCSD's sponsorship amount. The LCSD also offered ticket cash refunds for events organised or sponsored by the LCSD and by other hirers cancelled due to closure of venues arising from the epidemic situation to lower their administrative expenses.

When considering the arrangements for venue reopening and audience

seating, the LCSD will make reference to the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I), as well as consult the health department for professional advice in order to reopen the performance venues in a gradual and orderly manner. The LCSD is proactively exploring arrangements for reopening performance venues for rehearsals and online shows, including withholding live audiences and implementing anti-epidemic measures within the performance venues (such as wearing masks).