

Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme invites new round of applications

The Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) is inviting a new round of applications starting today (June 1) from non-profit-distributing organisations such as professional bodies, trade and industrial organisations and research institutes.

The PASS, with a total allocation of \$200 million, aims at funding non-profit-making industry-led projects to increase exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong's professional services and external counterparts, promote relevant publicity activities, and enhance the standards and external competitiveness of Hong Kong's professional services.

The maximum grant under the PASS for each approved project is \$3 million or 90 per cent of the total eligible project cost, whichever is lower. A wide range of professional services, such as accounting, legal and dispute resolution, architecture, engineering, healthcare, information and communications technology, design and technical testing and analysis, are eligible for the PASS. Sector-specific projects and cross-sectoral projects are both welcome. Expenses directly incurred for implementing a project, such as manpower costs, venue and set-up costs, production and promotion costs, and the project team and active participants' travel and accommodation costs outside Hong Kong, are typically eligible for funding support under the Scheme. Funding support may also be provided for travel and accommodation costs incurred by participants of relatively longer professional internship or attachment programmes outside Hong Kong which are funded by the PASS.

Up to the end of May 2021, more than 70 projects have been funded under the PASS, including activities in and outside Hong Kong. The activities include capacity-building programmes for enhancing the standards of local professionals, such as training programmes, workshops and study tours; outreach and promotional activities for showcasing the strengths of Hong Kong's professional services, such as roadshows, promotional seminars and participation in exhibitions outside Hong Kong; exchange activities for deepening interaction between Hong Kong professionals and their external counterparts, such as visits to other economies and international conferences and seminars held in Hong Kong; and research projects on potential external markets for Hong Kong professional services and development of best practice guidelines and manuals for professionals. In view of the latest pandemic situation, suitable flexibility will be provided to grantees for implementing their projects. Details about the PASS and its funded projects are available at www.pass.gov.hk/en/home/index.html.

The PASS receives applications all year round and they are processed on a quarterly basis. The deadline for the new round of applications is August 31, 2021. A briefing session will be held in June 2021 for organisations

interested in applying for PASS funding. For registration for the briefing session or other enquiries, please contact the PASS Secretariat at 3655 5418 or pass@cedb.gov.hk.

Meanwhile, as announced in "The Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address", funding of \$50 million has been set aside for a new programme under the PASS, namely the Professionals Participation Subsidy Programme (PSP), to subsidise major professional bodies' participation in relevant exchange, promotion and professional standard enhancement activities organised by the Government, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices. The aim is to encourage Hong Kong professional services sectors to step up the promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edge and professional services to the Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and overseas markets after the pandemic situation has stabilised. While details of the PSP activities can only be finalised after the pandemic situation has stabilised and the associated travel restrictions have been relaxed, some preliminary information about the PSP and some tentative activities being planned has been uploaded to the PASS website. Updates and further details will be announced in due course.