

Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme invites new round of applications after enhancements

With a number of new measures introduced to enhance its operation and user-friendliness, the Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) is inviting a new round of applications starting today (March 2) 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.

A number of enhancement measures have been incorporated since December 2019 which include (a) disbursing PASS grants up front on a lump sum basis to all smaller-scale projects of shorter duration; (b) reducing the number of quotations required for lower-cost items; and (c) extending funding support for travel and accommodation costs incurred for attending PASS-funded events outside Hong Kong to participants with active roles in such events (e.g. speakers and panellists) and participants taking part in relatively longer PASS-funded professional internship or attachment programmes.

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. The PASS covers a wide range of professional services, including accounting, legal and dispute resolution, architecture, engineering, healthcare, information and communications technology, design and technical testing and analysis. 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's travel and accommodation costs outside Hong Kong are typically eligible for funding support under the Scheme.

The PASS funds a variety of projects. Up to the end of February 2020, some 60 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. 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 May 31, 2020.

A briefing session will be held in mid-April 2020 for organisations interested in applying for PASS funding. Details of the briefing will be uploaded to the PASS website in due course. For registration for the briefing session or other enquiries, please contact the PASS Secretariat at 3655 5418 or pass@cedb.gov.hk.