

# Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme 2021-22 opens for applications

The Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (PICO) today (June 29) announced that the Strategic Public Policy Research (SPPR) Funding Scheme 2021-22 is open for applications between now and August 31.

The SPPR Funding Scheme, together with the Public Policy Research (PPR) Funding Scheme, both managed by the PICO, are two of the most well-established government-financed funding schemes dedicated to fostering and supporting evidence-based public policy research by higher education institutions and think tanks in Hong Kong. Applications for the SPPR Funding Scheme are invited once a year while those for the PPR Funding Scheme are accepted throughout the year. The total annual provision for the two schemes is around \$30 million.

Four new strategic themes have been identified for the SPPR Funding Scheme 2021-22, namely (a) Development Opportunities from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) under the National 14th Five-Year Plan; (b) "Dual Circulation" and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in Synergy with the Belt and Road Initiative; (c) Healthcare Innovations in the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Era; and (d) Waste Management in the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Era. The former two themes seek to promote research efforts on how best Hong Kong can capitalise on the opportunities available under the National 14th Five-Year Plan and GBA development having regard to the city's positioning supported by the Central Government in the national development blueprint. The latter two seek to encourage innovation and technologies to improve Hong Kong's preparedness and response to public health crises and waste management challenges in the light of lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The remaining 10 themes are carried over from the past year, namely (a) Belt and Road Initiative: Economic and Trade Co-operation Zones; (b) Big Data/Smart City; (c) Innovation and Technology/Artificial Intelligence/Re-Industrialisation; (d) Alternative Procurement Models for Major Infrastructure Projects; (e) Developing Green Finance in Hong Kong; (f) Consolidating Hong Kong's Position as an International Logistics Hub; (g) Transitional Housing; (h) Children, Youth and Family Development; (i) Ageing Population; and (j) Manpower Supply and Development.

A sum ranging from \$3 million to \$5 million may be granted to each successful SPPR project. The duration of research projects will normally last from three to five years. Projects with a shorter duration will be considered if strong justifications are provided.

Assessments will be conducted by an independent Assessment Panel which comprises experienced academics. The Panel will determine the assessment

criteria and details of the two funding schemes. Applications will be assessed by the Panel, as well as local and non-local reviewers who are academics and experts outside the Panel. To ensure policy relevance of the research proposals, suggestions and views of relevant government bureaux/departments will also be sought for reference by the Panel. A declaration of interests system is in place in the Panel to ensure that the assessments are fair and impartial.

Research quality and the strategic relevance to the public policy development of Hong Kong are the primary considerations in evaluating research proposals under the SPPR Funding Scheme. Other factors that will be taken into account by the Panel include deliverables of the research, the research team's capability, the feasibility and practicality of the proposal, the implementation schedule, and the proposed budget. Institutional support towards capacity building in public policy research (e.g. infrastructure support or matching funds) and any external funding sources and support will also be taken into consideration.

Separately, the major themes and indicative research areas of the PPR Funding Scheme have also been updated having regard to Hong Kong's current and long-term development as well as needs for research on various social issues. After updating, there are eight major themes with 28 indicative research areas. While applications for the PPR Funding Scheme are accepted throughout the year as mentioned above, the results of each batch of applications will be announced on a quarterly basis.

For details of the SPPR Funding Scheme and PPR Funding Scheme, including eligibility criteria, themes, composition of the Assessment Panel, the application method and other related information, please visit PICO's website ([www.pico.gov.hk/en/PRFS](http://www.pico.gov.hk/en/PRFS)).