

Youth Entrepreneurship Sharing Session cum Kick-off Ceremony for New Funding Schemes under Youth Development Fund held (with photos/video)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, officiated at the Youth Entrepreneurship Sharing Session cum Kick-off Ceremony for the New Funding Schemes under the Youth Development Fund today (March 22). He commended corporates and organisations which have participated or organised relevant youth entrepreneurship projects and announced the launching of new funding schemes by the Youth Development Fund (YDF) and new projects of the Space Sharing Scheme for Youth (SSSY).

At the Kick-off Ceremony, Mr Cheung reviewed the progress and achievements of the Government's initiatives in supporting youth entrepreneurship. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) established the YDF in 2016. The YDF has provided financial assistance for nine non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the first round of applications to support about 100 youth start-up projects, covering innovation and technology, retail, professional services, catering and other industries. About 190 young entrepreneurs were supported by the YDF.

As for the SSSY, since its launch in 2017, seven properties have commenced operation and are running in full swing, supporting young entrepreneurs from sectors including innovation and technology, creative industries, digital media and social enterprises, as well as young artists working in the entertainment and media art industries. Each shared space is thoughtfully designed by the property owners and operating agencies to provide working space at concessionary rental and a wide spectrum of entrepreneurial support to help young people start their own businesses.

Moreover, the Hong Kong United Youth Association, in collaboration with the HAB and using its own resources, launched a pilot scheme in late 2018 to encourage young Hong Kong people to utilise entrepreneurial bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Seven teams of youth entrepreneurs have been selected so far to settle in the entrepreneurial bases in Shenzhen.

Mr Cheung expressed his gratitude to all property owners and operating agencies participating in the SSSY for fulfilling social responsibilities through concrete action, through which young Hong Kong entrepreneurs and artists have been able to enjoy quality working space and support services at concessionary rental for unleashing their creativity and expanding their businesses. Mr Cheung announced that five projects would be rolled out under the SSSY, with three property owners having just confirmed their partnering operators/operation models, and two property owners having recently decided to support the scheme.

He said, "The Government will carry on with the tripartite partnership among the community, the Government and the business sector and actively liaise with property owners and NGOs interested in joining the scheme, so as to create more opportunities for youth innovation and entrepreneurship."

Mr Cheung said that one of the eight policy measures introduced by the Central Government for taking forward the development of the Greater Bay Area is to encourage youth innovation and entrepreneurship. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government endeavours to provide room for development, subsidies and support measures for young Hong Kong talents in innovation and entrepreneurship, with a view to developing the Greater Bay Area as a world-class international platform for innovation and entrepreneurship. In view of the announcement in the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address to make an injection into the YDF, the Youth Development Commission (YDC) has decided to roll out two new funding schemes thereunder. Details are as follows:

(1) Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area: The funding scheme consists of two components, namely entrepreneurial support and incubation services, and start-up capital. The services component aims to subsidise NGOs in Hong Kong to offer deeper, broader, more specific and sustainable entrepreneurial support and incubation services for young Hong Kong people, including helping them settle in youth innovation and entrepreneurship bases in Hong Kong and Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. The funding limit for each service project is \$1 million per year and for a maximum of three years. For the start-up capital component (previously known as the Entrepreneurship Matching Fund under the YDF), it aims to provide youth start-ups with seed funding through subsidising NGOs and requiring the NGOs to provide matching funds, thus further addressing the youth start-ups' initial capital needs when starting businesses in Hong Kong and Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. The matching ratio is 3:1. The ceiling of the government subsidy for each NGO applicant is \$4.5 million, to be matched with \$1.5 million of funding from the NGO. Each start-up may receive a capital subsidy of up to \$600,000, comprising \$450,000 of government subsidy and \$150,000 of matching contribution from the NGO.

(2) Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area: The scheme aims to subsidise eligible NGOs in Hong Kong to organise short-term experiential programmes at the innovation and entrepreneurial bases in Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, with a view to enriching Hong Kong young people's understanding of the entrepreneurial bases in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, as well as the relevant policies and supporting measures on innovation and entrepreneurship in the Mainland. This will in turn assist the young people to consider settling in the relevant entrepreneurial bases and starting businesses therein in the future. The funding limit for each experiential programme is \$700,000.

The two funding schemes under the YDF are now inviting applications from eligible NGOs. The application period will close on May 30, 2019. Details of the schemes and the application guidelines have been uploaded to the YDC's website (www.ydc.gov.hk/ydf/en).

