

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Funding Scheme for Women's Development

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on the latest development regarding the Funding Scheme for Women's Development (the Funding Scheme) launched by the Women's Commission (WoC) in 2012-13.

Background

2. WoC was set up in 2001 and is tasked to promote the interests and well-being of women in Hong Kong. Over the years, there have been calls from the women's groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and District Councils (DCs) for WoC to provide funding support for them to carry out projects conducive to women's development. There is also a need for WoC to establish closer ties and rapport with these bodies through, for example, organising activities and projects in partnership with them.

3. Empowerment of women is an integral part of the three-pronged strategy¹ adopted by WoC in fulfilling its mission of "enabling women to fully realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life". In response to the continual request on funding support as stated in paragraph 2 above and to facilitate the organisation of programmes which can develop the capacities of women and empower them to contribute to society, a pilot Funding Scheme for Women's Development (the Pilot Scheme) was launched by WoC in 2011-12. The Working Group on Collaboration (WGC) under WoC was charged with the responsibility to administer the Pilot Scheme, including invitation and approval of applications, and drawing up the assessment

¹ The other two are the provision of an enabling environment and public education.

criteria and funding guidelines, etc.

Pilot Funding Scheme

4. Under the Pilot Scheme, \$500,000 was allocated by WoC to five umbrella women's groups including Hong Kong Federation of Women, Kowloon Women's Organisations Federation, Hong Kong Island Women's Association, Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities and Hong Kong Women Development Association. To create synergy among these groups towards a common objective so as to maximize the benefits of the Pilot Scheme, WoC decided that the theme of "Women's Leadership Training" should be adopted and that programmes which develop women's talents and encourage them to become community leaders should be organised.

5. The Pilot Scheme was completed in February 2012. It was noted that a wide variety of projects including seminars, visits and workshops, etc. relevant to the theme of "Women's Leadership Training" had been organised under the Pilot Scheme. According to the evaluation surveys completed by participants of the programmes, most of them found the programmes satisfactory and useful. They also agreed that the programmes had widened their horizons and offered them the opportunities to serve the community. The umbrella women's groups, being the organisers of the programmes, had also provided very positive feedback on the Pilot Scheme.

6. In view of the success of the Pilot Scheme, WoC decided to regularise the Funding Scheme in 2012-13. Noting the wide network covered by the eighteen DCs and their familiarity and knowledge of local women's groups, WoC decided that it should collaborate with the DCs in implementing the Funding Scheme.

The Funding Scheme 2012-13

7. With funding support from the Labour and Welfare Bureau, a total of \$2 million has been set aside in 2012-13 for WoC to implement the Funding Scheme. Subsequent to the discussion at the WoC

brainstorming session held in March 2012 and the follow-up discussion by WGC, it was decided that for the \$2 million, WoC would be responsible for allocating \$1 million to women's groups or relevant NGOs in organising regional and territory-wide activities (i.e. the WoC stream). For the remaining \$1 million, each of the eighteen DCs would be allocated \$53,000 for distribution to women's groups and NGOs in organising district level activities (i.e. the DC stream). The Chairmen and Vice-chairmen of the DCs were consulted on the proposal at the meeting with WoC Chairperson held on 17 May 2012. All of them expressed support for the proposal, with some undertaking to inject additional DC funds to enhance the scale of the projects in their respective districts.

8. WoC considered that in Hong Kong, women live longer than men on average. Despite the longer average life expectancy of women, their health is subject to the challenges of various problems unique to them as a result of their biological differences such as childbirth and menopause. Besides, stress and the responsibility of a family carer and poor grasp of health information also constitute obstacles and threats to women's health. Subsequent to the deliberations of WoC in March and May 2012, it was decided that the theme of "Women Wellness" should be adopted for the Funding Scheme in 2012-13. Programmes aiming to promote and enhance the physical and mental well-being of women would be considered under both WoC and DC streams.

9. Same as the arrangement for the Pilot Scheme, it was agreed that WGC would continue to administer the Funding Scheme. To ensure consistency between the WoC and DC streams, detailed assessment criteria and funding guidelines were drawn up by WGC for adoption under both streams.

Latest Development

10. Invitation letters and information on the Funding Scheme were issued to all women's groups and NGOs, and uploaded onto the WoC website in May 2012. As a result, 28 applications were received under

the WoC stream and the total amount of funding applied for was \$2,207,251. In accordance with the funding guidelines and assessment criteria for the Funding Scheme, WGC considered all the applications and approved 20 of them with a total amount of \$1,055,175. Projects approved included a myriad of activities such as workshops and seminars aiming to arouse participants' awareness of physical and mental health, sharing sessions and exhibitions, competitions and publications promoting women's wellness, etc. While the target beneficiaries are mostly women in general, some projects focus on helping the grass-root women, working mothers, and ethnic minority women, etc. The projects would be carried out from July 2012 to February 2013.

11. As for the DC stream, WGC noted that some of the DCs have endorsed the funding applications from local women's groups or NGOs while others are inviting applications and would consider them in due course. WGC will liaise with the DCs concerned and monitor development. All successful applicants under both the WoC and DC streams are requested to submit progress reports and final reports in October 2012 and February 2013 respectively to WGC for consideration. Information gathered from the progress reports would be exhibited at the WoC Conference² to be held on 20 December 2012 in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Way Forward

12. WGC would continue to monitor the development of the Funding Scheme and evaluate its effectiveness after receiving the reports as stated in paragraph 10 above. The funding guidelines will also be refined taking into account the experience gained in processing the applications, as well as the feedback received from DCs. WGC would keep in view development and report to WoC again as appropriate.

² To provide a platform for the women's groups and stakeholders to discuss issues related to the development of women, WoC organises large-scale conferences every three to four years. The next conference will be held on 20 December 2012. A task force convened by the Chairperson of WoC has been set up to organise this conference.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Working Group on Collaboration
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