

LCQ20: Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme

Following is a question by the Hon Lillian Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, in the Legislative Council today (May 21):

Questions:

The Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme (the Programme) of the Home Affairs Department seeks to provide funding support for eligible organisations to set up or expand social enterprises (SEs) to help enhance the self-reliance of socially disadvantaged groups. According to the Guide to the Programme, the funded SEs are required to become commercially sustainable after the end of the funding period. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information on the Programme in each of the past five years: (i) the amount of funding approved, (ii) the names of the organisations or groups which applied for the setting up or expansion of SEs, (iii) the services provided by and the service targets of the funded SEs as well as (iv) the types of socially disadvantaged groups employed by them, (v) the numbers of applications approved and (vi) rejected, and (vii) the reasons for the applications being rejected;
- (2) whether the Government has followed up on the funded SEs' commercial sustainability after the end of the funding period of the Programme; if so, of the details (including the number and names of SEs which failed to become commercially sustainable in the past five years); if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether the Government has regularly assessed the operation of the SE projects funded by the Programme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government has been supporting the development of social enterprises (SEs) through the implementation of the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme (ESR Programme) since 2006. The ESR Programme provides seed grants for eligible organisations to set up or expand SEs, with a view to creating job opportunities for upgrading the skills of the socially disadvantaged groups, or providing them with products and services to meet their specific needs so as to help them enhance self-reliance and integrate into the community.

In response to the Hon Lillian Kwok's question, our reply is as follows:

(1) Details on approved projects funded under the ESR Programme since 2020 by year, including the amounts of funding approved, the numbers of approved projects together with the names of the applicant organisations, their types of services, service targets and categories of employees, as well as the numbers of rejected applications, are set out in the Annex.

All eligible applications are assessed by the ESR Advisory Committee (ESRAC). The ESRAC mainly comprises non-official members from the business sector, SEs and the professional sector. In vetting the applications, the ESRAC will consider the nature, operation model and viability of the proposed business, the implementation methodology, budget of the project, etc, and in particular, whether the project can meet the objectives of the ESR Programme, that is, to create job opportunities for the socially disadvantaged groups for enhancing self-reliance, and will become self-financing and sustainable after the funding period. The major reason for the unsuccessful applications was that the applicants failed to satisfy the above considerations.

(2) and (3) Approved SE projects funded by the ESR Programme will receive their grants in phases over a funding period of three years. During the three-year funding period and the subsequent three-year monitoring period, the grantees are required to submit progress reports to the Home Affairs Department (HAD) regularly, which allows the Government to monitor the operation of the projects concerned, including the utilisation of the grants, the employment of socially disadvantaged groups and the financial status of the project. The HAD will also communicate or meet with or visit the officers in charge of the approved projects from time to time to assess the progress and performance of the projects. In the past five years, a total of 80 funded SE projects continued their operation during the monitoring period, whereas seven SEs terminated their businesses within the three-year monitoring period following the lapse of funding period due to various reasons, such as sales performance affected by the pandemic, rental/tenancy issues or turnover of staff. The details are as follows:

Year	Grantee	SE Project
2020	Joyful (Mental Health) Foundation	Joyful Market (Tin Shui Wai Shop) [Second-hand clothing store]
	Christian Action	Kowloon City Community Sales Outlet [Eco-friendly second-hand shop]
	The Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council	Good Kitchen [Food factory]
	Oxfam	Oxfam Shop [Fair trade retail store]

2021	The Free Methodist Church of Hong Kong	Fantastic Cafe (Tuen Mun Branch) [Western restaurant]
2022	S.K.H. St. Christopher's Home Limited	Healtholic [Health product shop]
2024	Forever Peace Foundation Limited	Cleaning Power [Cleaning service company]