

Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme 2025-26 opens for applications

The Chief Executive's Policy Unit (CEPU) today (March 5) announced that the Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (SPPRFS) 2025-26 is open for applications between now and April 23, 2025.

The SPPRFS is aimed at encouraging local think tank experts and scholars (including universities and civil society think tanks) to apply their expertise to conduct evidence-based research on key public policy issues, and to facilitate the knowledge transfer of research findings to policy considerations, serving as a channel for the Government to tap the public policy research expertise of society. In light of the policy priorities of the Government, six strategic themes have been identified for the SPPRFS 2025-26. They are: (a) Development Opportunities from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; (b) New Quality Productive Forces; (c) Integrated Development of Education, Technology and Talents; (d) International Financial, Shipping and Trade Centre; (e) Integrated Development of Culture, Sports and Tourism; and (f) Elderly and Healthcare Services.

Applications for the SPPRFS must be made under one of the above specified strategic themes and be in line with the specified research areas. Those falling outside the specified strategic themes and specified research areas will not be considered generally. Each SPPRFS project may be granted a maximum of HK\$5 million and last from one to five years.

Separately, the major themes and indicative research areas of the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (PPRFS), which is also administered by the CEPU, have been updated having regard to Hong Kong's current and long-term development as well as the need for research on various social issues. While applications for the SPPRFS are accepted at specific times each year, the PPRFS focuses on research studies of shorter duration and smaller scale with applications accepted throughout the year. Applications for the PPRFS will be vetted, and notifications of the results will be issued by batch.

Assessments for the SPPRFS and PPRFS will be conducted by an Assessment Panel, which comprises experienced academics and professional experts. The Assessment Panel will also take into account comments from external reviewers who are experienced academics and professional experts during the assessment process. To ensure the policy relevance of the research proposals, views of relevant government bureaux/departments will also be sought for reference by the Panel. A declaration of interests system is in place to ensure that the assessments are fair and impartial.

Research quality and relevance to public policy needs are the primary

considerations in evaluating research proposals under both Schemes, including the reasonableness of the research proposal, the research team's capability, the cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget, and whether the research findings can be effectively translated into practicable policy recommendations.

For details of the SPPRFS and PPRFS, including eligibility criteria, research areas, assessment mechanism, application method and other related information, please visit the CEPU's website (www.ceph.gov.hk/en/PRFS).

Remarks by SLW on Productivity Enhancement Programme

Following are the remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, on the Productivity Enhancement Programme at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (March 5):

Reporter: Good morning, Mr Sun. Will the 7 per cent funding cut to social welfare organisations affect their services? And also, you had a meeting with the representatives on Monday, did they propose any suggestions to share their financial burden with the Government?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: Thank you. Under the Productivity Enhancement Programme just announced by the Financial Secretary in his Budget, all envelope holders, including me, have to deliver by the year 2027-28 a cumulative reduction of 7 per cent. That means I have to work together and discuss with the 170-odd NGOs (non-governmental organisations) to make sure that we can deliver that target. In coming up with our proposal, I have tried my very best to absorb the farthest possible reduction through the Social Welfare Department.

But given the magnitude of the reduction, it is just not possible for the department itself to absorb all the reduction, so we have to come up with a proposal. In coming up with the proposal, again we are guided by the principle that we should provide help as far as possible to the small and medium NGOs, so that the cut is much moderate. Instead of a 7 per cent cumulative cut, we have absorbed 4 per cent. Altogether, for the small and medium NGOs, they will face a cut of 3 per cent by the year 2027-28.

However, for large NGOs, there is not much we can help. They have to reduce their budget by 2027-28 by 7 per cent. But at the same time, we are trying our very best to, first of all, provide a much longer period for them to manage and hold their reserve, so firstly, they can make better use of that reserve to get through the more difficult years. And secondly, over cost apportionment, we are providing more flexibility. The first round of

relaxation has just been announced.

And also, we are going to review each and every Funding and Service Agreement (FSA). The purpose is to provide more flexibility to reduce reporting and supervision, but of course, this is subject to the principle that it is not going to affect the benefits of their users. So I am pretty confident after the meeting on Monday that we are more or less on the same page. We are working together. We are facing a budget cut, but at the same time, because of the more flexible use of reserve and also the efforts we are making to provide more room for them to make better use of their resources, we should be able to deal with that together. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)

Correctional officers stop person in custody from committing suicide by hanging

â€œCorrectional officers stopped a 49-year-old male person in custody from committing suicide by hanging in Tai Lam Correctional Institution today (March 5).

At 3.10am today, correctional officers found the person in custody attempting suicide by hanging with a bedsheet tied to the grille bars of his dormitory. The officers immediately called for reinforcements to rescue and provide first-aid treatment to him. The person in custody was found unconscious at the time and was subsequently sent to a public hospital for further treatment. The case has been reported to the Police.

A spokesman for the Correctional Services Department said, "The department uses all possible measures to prevent persons in custody from attempting suicide or self-harm. These measures include administrative arrangements, improvement of institution facilities, staff training and first-aid services."

The person in custody was sentenced to imprisonment for the offence of theft in February 2025.

Red flags hoisted at Stanley Main Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (March 5) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (March 5). The arrangements will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

The following road closure and traffic diversions will be implemented from 50 minutes before the start of the first race for day racing, or from 6pm onwards for night racing:

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed, except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside the HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Traffic along eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road, except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be

diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and

– Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

B. Traffic arrangements before the conclusion of race meeting

The following road closure and traffic diversions will be implemented from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

1. Road closure

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside the HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of the HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of the HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

2. Traffic diversions

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be

prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm for day racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm for night racing respectively.

All vehicles parked illegally during the implementation of the above special traffic arrangements will be towed away without prior warning, and may be subject to multiple ticketing.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.