

2023-24 Women Empowerment Fund Guide to Application for General Projects

(I) Introduction

- 1.1 The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (hereinafter referred to as “HKSAR”) attaches great importance to women’s contribution to the community and the work of supporting women. In his 2022 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that a Women Empowerment Fund (hereinafter referred to as “WEF”) would be set up under the Women’s Commission (hereinafter referred to as “WoC”). In the coming six years starting from 2023- 24, the annual funding for the WEF will be HK\$20 million.
- 1.2 The WEF aims to empower women, regardless of their age, occupation, background, etc., to realise their full potentials in their respective arenas, ultimately achieving the goal of promoting women’s development in Hong Kong.
- 1.3 The projects under the WEF comprise general projects and thematic projects. The thematic projects of 2023- 24 refer to “Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Exchange Programme”. Details are set out in the “Guide to Application for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Exchange Programme”. This Guide is applicable to general projects only.

(II) Theme

- 2.1 The themes for the general projects include:
 - (a) assisting women in accomplishing transformations in the job market (including introduction of interview skills, job selection and training, placement opportunities, keys to entrepreneurship, etc.);
 - (b) enhancing women’s physical and mental health (including promotion of work and family life balance, stress management, mental health awareness, etc.);
 - (c) helping women to cope with different roles in family and society (such as by providing them with trainings on child and elderly care; enhancing women’s awareness of their rights, etc.);

- (d) motivating women to enhance their personal attributes, achieve full potential and reach out to help others in society (such as workshops on strengthening positive thinking, leadership skills and organisation ability, supplemented by practicing opportunities like organising volunteer activities, etc.); and
- (e) facilitating the use of new information and communication technology (including trainings on the use of common office software, mobile shooting skills, video production, etc)..

2.2 The applicant organisation may organise suitable activities according to different themes. The activities should be diversified, interactive, interesting and innovative and can be in the format of workshops, sharing sessions, talks, competitions, visits, publications, etc.

(III) Eligibility for Application

3.1 Women's groups or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) fulfilling the following criteria are eligible for submitting applications:

- (a) (i) a company incorporated under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) or under the former Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32); or
- (ii) a society established in Hong Kong under the Societies Ordinance (Cap. 151); or
- (iii) a statutory body or a body incorporated in Hong Kong by statute; and
- (b) the respective company / society / body must be of non-profit-making or charitable in nature.

3.2 If the applicant organisation is a women's group or NGO registered in accordance with the law, it must provide a certificate of incorporation/registration issued under the law and a Constitution or a Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Constitution or the Memorandum and Articles of Association submitted must include, as proof, a clause specifying that the applicant organisation is non-profit making, and/or its members shall not take any shares of its income or assets. Moreover, upon dissolution of the organisation, its members shall not take any shares of its income or assets. The applicant organisation shall also declare in the application form that it has not shared in the past and will not share during the term of the project its income or assets with its members.

- 3.3 If the applicant organisation is a charitable body registered in accordance with the law, it must provide a certificate of incorporation / registration issued under the law and a copy of documentary proof of tax exemption under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112).
- 3.4 For projects co-organised with other organisations, that co-organiser must comply with the eligibility requirement specified in paragraph 3.1 above as well. The applicant organisation must provide in the application form information about the co-organiser and clearly specify their respective responsibilities, as well as the certificate of incorporation and the Constitution or the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the co-organiser. The applicant organisation shall be responsible for all matters relating to the application. If the application is approved, the relevant funding will be disbursed to the applicant organisation. Entities that purely provide support through provision of venue or assistance in promotion will not be considered as co-organisers.
- 3.5 The WoC reserves the right to disqualify an applicant organisation and/or co-organiser on the grounds that the applicant organisation and/or co-organiser has engaged, is engaging, or is reasonably believed to have engaged or be engaging in acts or activities that are likely to cause or constitute the occurrence of offences endangering national security or otherwise the exclusion of the eligibility of the related organisation is necessary in the interest of national security, or is necessary to protect the public interest of Hong Kong, public morals, public order or public safety.

(IV) Requirements for the proposed project

- 4.1 The proposed project must satisfy the following requirements:
- (a) the project must comply with one of the themes in paragraph 2.1 above;
 - (b) the project must be non-profit-making in nature;
 - (c) all activities under the project must be carried out in Hong Kong and the target beneficiaries must be Hong Kong residents;
 - (d) to boost the effectiveness of the project, the activities would better be sustainable, empowering women through ongoing or a series of activities. Priority will be given to the project if it is scalable, i.e. it can be scaled up or expanded by replicating the successful strategies to benefit more women;
 - (e) the content of the activities should be as flexible and diverse as possible, and the applicant organisation should cover different modes and nature of activities to meet the needs of different groups of women;

- (f) performance indicators, including the methods / mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of the activities, should be set out in details in each application; and
- (g) the project must not incur any additional expenditure to the Government.

- 4.2 The WEF will provide funding for one-year projects and two-year projects. The successful applicant (hereinafter referred to as “funded organisation”) must commence and complete the one-year and two-year projects (hereinafter referred to as “funded projects”) within 12 months and 24 months respectively from the effective date set out in an Approval Letter of Funding Allocation (hereinafter referred to as “Approval Letter”) issued by the WoC.
- 4.3 In terms of recruitment and publicity, the funded organisation should endeavour to recruit women participants through various open channels.
- 4.4 For its own protection, the funded organisation should take out an appropriate insurance plan for the funded project, including but not limited to employees’ compensation, public liability insurance covering all risks (with coverage for occupiers’ liability), to meet any claims arising from or in connection with the funded project.
- 4.5 The applicant organisation shall not seek other government funding for the same project. After acceptance of the WEF funding, the funded organisation shall not accept any other forms of sponsorship, including funding or in-kind sponsorship (except for rental of Government premises with fee waiver in accordance with the established rental guidelines), from the Government for the same funded project throughout its whole term.
- 4.6 In general, the project can accept sponsorships and donations in cash or in kind. Under no circumstances is the applicant organisation allowed to seek and/or accept donations that may, in the opinion of the WoC, be in direct conflict with the policies and interests of the WEF or any Government bureau or department (including but not limited to donations and/or sponsorships from businesses involving tobacco, alcohol, advocacy of gambling and obscenity, etc.). If the WoC considers the acceptance of donations by an applicant organisation inappropriate, it will not consider the application concerned.
- 4.7 If the applicant organisation needs additional funding to meet the costs of activities which exceed the funding cap or to cope with expenditure items which are not approved, it may commit internal resources and/or apply for financial assistance from outside the Government and/or charge the participants, provided that the details are included in the budget in the application form. To avoid duplication of resources, the WoC will not approve an activity which has already

secured funding from other sources. If the application result of other funding sources has yet to be known at the time of submission of application to the WoC, the applicant organisation must inform the WoC of the concerned result within 7 days upon receipt of the result. If the applicant organisation wishes to apply for funding from parties other than the Government after the application is approved or during the implementation of the funded project, written approval from the WoC must be obtained. If the applicant organisation fails to comply with the requirements, the WoC may revoke the funding. If the applicant organisation has secured funding from other sources, the WoC may revoke or reduce the approved funding amount.

- 4.8 The applicant organisation should accord priority to conduct physical activities in order to enhance the effectiveness of the funded project.
- 4.9 The applicant organisation must appoint an officer-in-charge of the project to oversee the implementation of the project, monitor the funding to ensure its proper use in accordance with the approved budget, adhere to the principle of economy in the use of funds, liaise with the WoC Secretariat (hereinafter referred to as “the Secretariat”) and report on the progress or performance of the project.

(V) Application for Funding

5.1 Application Procedures and Deadline for Submission

- 5.1.1 The WoC will conduct two rounds of applications each year, in the second and fourth quarters of each year approximately. There is no limit on the number of applications each eligible applicant organisation may submit, provided that it can demonstrate the ability to complete each project.
- 5.1.2 For the first round of applications for 2023-24, applicant organisation must submit either paper or electronic application to the Secretariat **on or before 5:00 p.m. on 7 July 2023.** **Late applications will not be accepted and will not be carried forward to the next round of application.**

(a) Paper application

The application form can be downloaded from the WEF website (www.wef.gov.hk). Applicant organisations are required to submit the documents (i) to (iii) below by post or in person to the Secretariat:

- (i) the original application form and the budget form which are completed, signed and stamped;
- (ii) one soft copy each of the completed application form (in MS Word

format) and the budget form (in MS Excel format) saved on USB (Note: the information contained therein must be the same as that in (i) above, and **the printed version shall prevail in matters concerning the application**); and

(iii) documentary proof that the applicant organisation and co-organiser (if any) meet(s) the eligibility requirements set out in paragraph 3.1.

(b) Electronic application

Applicant organisations are required to fill in the application form on the Government e-Form website (<https://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/hab014/en/>) and upload the electronic files of the required supporting documents according to the specified format and requirements¹. After submitting the e-Form, **the applicant organisation should print out Part F of the e-Form – “Declaration”, sign and affix the chop of the organisation and submit it to the Secretariat by post or in person within 7 days after submission of the e-Form. If the applicant organisation does not provide the required and clearly visible supporting documents on time or does not submit the original signed “Declaration”, the application will not be considered.**

5.1.3 For applications submitted by post, the postmark date on the envelope shall be the date of application. Applicant organisation should ensure that sufficient postage is affixed before posting so as to avoid unsuccessful delivery of application. Any underpaid/unpaid mail items will be returned or disposed of by the Hongkong Post. **Late applications and applications submitted by email or by fax will not be considered.** If a Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or Typhoon Signal No.8 or above is issued by the Hong Kong Observatory between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on the closing date of application, the application deadline will be postponed to 5:00 p.m. on the next working day.

5.1.4 It is the responsibility of the applicant organisation to ensure that the application form and relevant documents submitted are complete and accurate. The application will not be considered if the application form is not duly completed, or the applicant organisation fails to submit all the required documents and information set out in this Guide and the application form.

¹ The applicant organisation shall prepare electronic files of the required supporting documents in accordance with the following requirements:

- (i) the files should be stored in JPG, JPEG, PNG, PDF, XLS or XLSX format;
- (ii) the documents contained in the files should be clearly visible (resolution of 200 dpi or above); and
- (iii) the e-Form supports the uploading of 10 files with a total capacity of 10 MB. If the total number or capacity of files to be uploaded exceeds the maximum, the files should be merged or compressed beforehand.

If necessary, the WoC will request the applicant organisation to provide clearer originals of the files or supporting documents for application vetting.

- 5.1.5 The Secretariat may request the applicant organisation to provide supplementary documents and information and/or seek clarification from the applicant organisation in relation to the application submitted. The applicant organisation shall reply to the Secretariat in writing within the specified period. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered by the WoC without further notice.
- 5.1.6 The currency must be denominated in **Hong Kong dollars**. The applicant organisation must provide details of each activity under the proposed project in the application form to facilitate vetting.
- 5.1.7 All submitted application documents and materials, whether accepted or not, will not be returned to the applicant organisation. The applicant organisation should make its own copies of these documents for record purposes.

5.2 Notification of Application Results

- 5.2.1 Under normal circumstances, applicant organisation will be notified of the results of the application in writing within three months after the application deadline. Under no circumstances shall an application be deemed to be successful unless and until the applicant organisation had been notified in writing by the WoC that the application is successful.
- 5.2.2 The WoC reserves the right to announce the application results and to disclose the list of funded organisations, the names of the funded projects, the funding amounts and other related information without the prior consent of any applicant organisation.

5.3 Acceptance of Funding

- 5.3.1 If the proposed project is approved, the WoC will issue an Approval Letter and Rules for Implementing General Projects and Using Allocated Fund (hereinafter referred to as “the Rules”) to the funded organisation. The funding amount and the approved budget will be stated in the Approval Letter. Funded organisation must organise the funded project and use the funds in accordance with the project details stated in the application form, the requirements set out in the Approval Letter and the Rules, and all instructions, terms and conditions issued by the Government/WoC from time to time in relation to the WEF. Otherwise, the WoC has the right to revoke the funding and the funded organisation must refund the whole amount involved.

- 5.3.2 If the applicant organisation accepts the funding and agrees to abide by all the terms and conditions (including this Guide) set by the WoC in respect of the WEF, it should return a signed Acceptance Advice of Funding Allocation (hereinafter referred to as “Acceptance Advice”) and documents specified by the WoC within the specified period set out in the Approval Letter and commence the activities within three months from the effective date quoted on the Approval Letter.
- 5.3.3 The WoC may withdraw the funding approval at any time before it receives a signed Acceptance Advice from the funded organisation. **If the WoC has not received a signed Acceptance Advice and the relevant documents from the funded organisation by the end of the specified period stated in the Approval Letter, the WoC will consider that the funding is not accepted by the applicant organisation.**

5.4 Withdrawal of Application

- 5.4.1 A funded organisation may inform the WoC in writing to withdraw the application within 14 days from receipt of the Approval Letter. Such withdrawal is irrevocable.
- 5.4.2 On receipt by the WoC of the notice of withdrawal, any approval, conditional approval or approval-in-principle previously issued by the WoC shall cease to be valid.

(VI) Assessment of Applications

6.1 Assessment Panel

- 6.1.1 A working group (hereinafter referred to as “WG”) is set up under the WoC to assess eligible applications and make recommendations on funding allocation.
- 6.1.2 The offer of an advantage to members of the WoC or the WG with an intention to influence the outcome of the application is an offence under the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap. 201). Any such offer by an applicant organisation or its directors, employees, agents, consultants, contractors and other personnel who are in any way involved in the project will render the application invalid and not acceptable for further consideration, and the WoC has the right to cancel or terminate the grant to the applicant organisation if funding has already been approved for the application.

6.2 Assessment Criteria and Process

6.2.1 The WoC will only consider applications that satisfy all the eligibility criteria set out in this Guide and the application form. The WoC will consider and determine the applications according to the factors set out below:

- (a) the background of the applicant organisation (including co-organisers) (e.g. whether the applicant has organised activities of a similar scale and nature before and whether its track record and performance are satisfactory);
- (b) the contents of project and implementation arrangements
 - (i) whether the concepts, objectives and contents of all the activities of the proposed project are in line with the purpose and themes of the WEF;
 - (ii) whether the content is substantive, in-depth and innovative (including the objectives, details, frequency, format of each activity, etc.);
 - (iii) the design, organisation and arrangement (including whether the activities are well organised and take into account the different needs of the target beneficiaries; how the organisation matches its resources to achieve synergy, whether the activities are sustainable and extendable, etc.);
 - (iv) the feasibility and overall arrangement (including publicity plan and administrative support, etc);
- (c) financial arrangements
 - (i) whether the budget is well thought out and prudent, whether the proposed income and expenditure items are reasonable with justifications, whether the project is cost effective, etc.;
 - (ii) other sources of funding (including internal funding from the organisation, other funding sources, sponsorships and donations in cash or in kind);
 - (iii) the level of participation fee charged (if any);
- (d) target beneficiaries and promotion (including the profile of target beneficiaries, promotion and implementation strategies, recruitment procedures and mechanisms, assessment criteria and number of beneficiaries);
- (e) the expected outcomes, key performance indicators, methods / mechanisms for measuring performance and evaluating effectiveness of the project, etc.;
- (f) the risk assessment and contingency plan (a risk assessment shall be conducted and a comprehensive contingency plan in response to unexpected situations shall be formulated for the implementation of the project); and

(g) other factors which the WoC may consider relevant.

- 6.2.2 In general, projects that involve only interest classes or similar activities will be given lower priority.
- 6.2.3 According to the factors set out above, not every eligible project in each round will be approved and not every activity under the approved project will be granted funding. If a project is not granted funding, the application will not be carried forward to the next round of application automatically.
- 6.2.4 In assessing applications, where necessary, the WoC may take into account comments on the proposed project made by relevant Government bureaux/departments and professionals in relevant fields from their perspectives, and also the track record of the applicant organisation in implementing projects under other funding schemes administered by the Government.
- 6.2.5 The WoC reserves the right to disclose the information provided by the applicant organisation to a third party for the purpose of assessing the application.
- 6.2.6 The WoC may prescribe additional terms and conditions based on actual needs and may stipulate specific terms and conditions on the use of approved funds on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.2.7 The WoC has no obligation to accept or support any submitted application. The decisions on the approval of application and level of funding shall rest with the WoC. **The decision made by the WoC is final and absolute and cannot be disputed by the applicant organisation.**

(VII) Funding Allocation

7.1 Funding Criteria

- 7.1.1 **The funding cap for each one-year or two-year project is \$400,000 and \$800,000 respectively.** The amount of funding approved for individual projects is determined on a case-by-case basis. The final funding amount shall be as deemed reasonable by the WoC, regardless of the amount sought.
- 7.1.2 When drawing up the budget, applicant organisations must list out each expenditure item and its breakdown in details. The proposed expenditure items must meet the actual needs, be detailed, reasonable and properly justified. The amount sought must be supported by evidence, prudent and pragmatic.

- 7.1.3 The funding provided by the WEF shall not be used for the following expenditure items: costs for maintaining the applicant organisation's (including the co-organiser's) own operation or administration (including but not limited to costs for setting up or refurbishing the organisation's office; costs involved in the decoration, repair and maintenance of its building and office facilities; rent and rates; telephone, fax and broadband charges; utility charges for water, electricity and town gas; general administrative and office expenses; and entertainment and travelling expenses incurred by the applicant organisation's administrative staff), purchase of durable assets (e.g. equipment, devices, furniture, etc.), purchase of non-expendable items (e.g. various types of memory cards), improvement of the applicant organisation's own equipment or services, procurement of prizes and guest souvenirs in the form of cash or cashable items (e.g. gift cheque), production of goods to be sold, transportation allowance paid to participants for attending the activities, purchase of uniforms for participants and staff (including volunteers), and other expenditure items which will not bring direct benefit to participants.
- 7.1.4 The staff costs of full-time/part-time staff who serve the participants of the funded project for their direct benefit, costs for renting equipment and venue (except for renting the applicant organisation's own venue), as well as other one-off non-recurrent direct expenditure (such as costs of the auditor's report, expenses on consumables, and publicity expenses for the funded project) may be included in the budget of the proposed project.
- 7.1.5 To encourage more women to participate in the funded projects, the WoC will also consider subsidising the applicant organisation's expenses in organising children activities which are beneficial to their mind and body (such as arranging class activities for children) and providing child care services for women participants during the implementation of projects.
- 7.1.6 The applicant organisation shall ensure that the staff costs of full-time/part-time staff who serve the participants of the funded project for their direct benefit (including the expenses for overtime allowance for existing staff and Mandatory Provident Fund contributions for hiring staff arising from the implementation of the projects) shall not exceed 30% of the total approved budget for the activities of the project. The actual funding amount will be adjusted according to the total approved funding amount of the project and shall not exceed the above-mentioned ceiling.
- 7.1.7 The applicant organisation shall ensure that its proposed budget meets the following requirements:
- (a) the total amount of publicity expenses (including expenses for the kick-off or

closing ceremony) should not exceed 10% of the total approved budget for the activities of the project;

- (b) the amount of honorarium payable to an instructor/guest/speaker of the activity shall not exceed HK\$330 per hour;
- (c) the total number of hours of each training course should not be less than 8 hours;
- (d) in general, venues of which hire charges could be fully waived or are more affordable (e.g. community halls or community centres) shall be given priority in choosing the venue of the project. For an activity held in the funded organisation's own venue, the hire charges will not be funded;
- (e) if the proposed project involves a district or territory-wide competition, each prize shall not exceed HK\$500 and the maximum amount approved for prizes for each competition shall be HK\$2,000, and no prizes in the form of cash or items redeemable for cash (e.g. gift cheque) shall be included;
- (f) each prize for a booth game or similar activity shall not exceed HK\$20 and the maximum amount approved for prizes for each booth activity shall be HK\$1,500, and no prizes in the form of cash or items redeemable for cash (e.g. gift cheque) shall be included;
- (g) administrative expenses shall not exceed 10% of the total approved budget for the activities of the project. In general, administrative expenses include administrative costs incurred in the implementation of the project, such as photocopying costs, transportation costs for delivery of materials (which must be incurred directly from the project activity and must be calculated on the basis of using the least expensive means of transportation in each case), etc.;
- (h) miscellaneous and contingency expenses shall not exceed 10% of the total approved budget for the activities of the project. In general, miscellaneous expenses include the design and printing of participant certificates, goodies and light refreshments as an incentive for participants, etc. The guidelines for these expenses are as follows:
 - (i) the value of each goodie for participants shall not exceed HK\$20, and the maximum amount approved for each activity is HK\$500; and
 - (ii) to ensure the proper use of public funds, the funded organisation should not use the WEF funding to cover meal expenses. However, in view of

the needs of individual activities (e.g. outdoor activities), the funded organisation may provide an appropriate amount of light refreshments for the participants. Such expenses shall be subject to a ceiling of HK\$59 per person per day per activity, and shall not exceed 10% of the total approved budget for the activities of the project. This arrangement is applicable to performers, volunteers, guests and participants who participate in the activity for three consecutive hours or more (excluding preparation and transportation time for the activity);

- (i) if the activity of the funded project lasts for five consecutive hours or more (excluding preparation and transportation time for the activity) and the activity costs generally involve meal expenses (e.g. day camp), the funded organisation's meal expenses for participants of the activity shall not exceed HK\$76 per person per day and 10% of the total approved budget for the activities of the project. This requirement also applies to accompanying staff (including volunteers). When formulating the budget, such expenditure item shall be listed as an independent item. Besides, the organisation shall not claim expenses on light refreshments for the same activity; and
- (j) For projects with final funding amount exceeding \$50,000, the funded organisation shall submit a financial report with the accounts audited and an Auditor's Report issued by an independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA) or Auditor. The expenditure ceiling of hiring service from a CPA or an Auditor is determined according to the total approved funding amount for the activities of the project, as set out below:

Total approved funding amount for activities (HK\$)	Ceiling of hiring service from a CPA or an Auditor (HK\$)
Below \$200,000	\$8,000
\$200,000 – \$499,999	\$12,000
\$500,000 – \$800,000	\$16,000

7.1.8 The following types of projects will **not** be funded:

- (a) activities which are not cost-effective, benefiting only a small number of people while spending a lot of money;
- (b) activities of a purely recreational/entertainment nature, such as parades or carnivals;
- (c) physical exchange activities outside Hong Kong;
- (d) dining and travel activities;
- (e) projects that may give undue credit or publicity to an individual, an organisation or a political party or association;

- (f) projects that are intended for the exclusive or personal/organisational benefit of an individual/organisation, such as performances for the organisation's annual events;
- (g) projects that disburse a fixed amount of cash allowance and/or cash relief;
- (h) projects that are launched for profit-making, fund-raising, commercial, religious or political purposes;
- (i) projects that are organised, co-organised or co-hosted by Offices of Legislative Council Members or District Council Members, political parties or related groups;
- (j) projects that receive sponsorship or donations in cash or in kind from companies selling tobacco or hard liquor, or from organisations which are the service or equipment contractors of the projects;
- (k) projects, in the opinion of the WoC, which are likely to constitute or cause the occurrence of offences endangering national security or which would otherwise be contrary to the interest of national security;
- (l) projects that conflict with the policies and interests of any Government bureau or department; or
- (m) projects that relate to training courses already covered under the Capacity Building Mileage Programme.

7.2 Disbursement of Funds

- 7.2.1 To assist the funded organisation in meeting the initial costs and liquidity requirements of the project, the WoC may, upon written application by the funded organisation, consider releasing an advance of not more than 50% of the approved amount upon confirmation of acceptance of the funding by the funded organisation.
- 7.2.2 The funded organisation may apply once for partial reimbursement of up to 90% of the total approved amount, irrespective of whether it has already received advance payment, before completion of the project. When applying for reimbursement, the funded organisation must submit an updated financial report and verified receipts for expenses for consideration.
- 7.2.3 The WoC will make a lump sum reimbursement or pay the remaining balance after deducting the advance payment or partial reimbursement already made to the funded organisation after the completion of the project. The funded organisation should submit the request for reimbursement within two months from the completion of project or before a specified date (whichever is earlier). Otherwise, the funding will be withdrawn after the specified date without further notice.

- 7.2.4 Subject to the funded organisation's compliance with the terms and conditions prescribed by the WoC (including but not limited to those in this Guide, the Approval Letter and the Rules) and the implementation of the funded project to the WoC's satisfaction, the WoC's acceptance of documents provided by the organisation on the funded project's deliverables such as final report, financial report, progress report (if applicable), independent auditor's report (if applicable) and any other additional reports and/or documents as requested by the WoC regarding the funded project, the WoC will disburse the funding to the funded organisation.
- 7.2.5 Expenditure incurred before the formal approval of the project in writing by the WoC (i.e. before the effective date as stated in the Approval Letter) will not be reimbursed.
- 7.2.6 Unless the WoC approves otherwise, expenditure incurred after the completion of the funded project, except for expenditure items which by its nature must be incurred after such completion (such as the expenditure on preparing the independent auditor's report), will not be funded by the WoC.
- 7.2.7 The funding for the funded project will be disbursed on an **accountable basis**. If the actual expenditure is less than the approved funding amount, only the actual amount of expenditure will be reimbursed by the WoC. Moreover, the actual amount reimbursed by the WoC will also depend on the actual number of activities organised. If some of the activities cannot be conducted as planned, the funding amount may be reduced proportionally regardless of the actual expenditure. Furthermore, if the outcome of the funded project fails to meet the specified performance indicators (e.g. insufficient participants) and the funded organisation fails to provide a reasonable explanation (failure to recruit eligible participants will not be regarded as a reasonable explanation), the WoC reserves the right to reduce the funding amount or cancel the reimbursement.
- 7.2.8 Expenditure incurred outside Hong Kong will not be reimbursed.
- 7.2.9 The funded organisation may charge a reasonable fee from participants. Irrespective of whether it has so declared in the application, the funded organisation shall utilise all income in the first instance before the funding under the WEF is used to meet project expenses. The same arrangement shall apply to sponsorship, cash donations and other funding sources of income. All records pertaining to the receipt of income shall be kept for seven years after the completion of the project for the WoC's inspection as and when necessary.
- 7.2.10 In any case, any unspent advance payment must be returned to the WoC at the time of submission of the financial report.

- 7.2.11 All expenses should be prudent, pragmatic, economical and cost effective. The funded organisation shall use the funding in accordance with the approved budget attached to the Approval Letter and for the sole and exclusive purpose of implementing and completing the funded project directly. Any expense outside the approved budget is not reimbursable.
- 7.2.12 The WoC reserves the right to cancel or reduce the approved funding for the funded project if the WoC considers that the funded organisation has used the approved funding or any part thereof for any purpose other than the specified purposes.
- 7.2.13 The WoC reserves the right to make the final decision on whether or not to disburse the funding. The final funding amount shall be as deemed reasonable by the WoC.

(VIII) Project Implementation

8.1 Monitoring of Project

- 8.1.1 The funded organisation should obtain the prior written approval from the WoC for any changes to the funded project. If the funded organisation fails to conduct the project as planned and prior approval from the WoC is not obtained, the WoC reserves the right to revoke the funding and require the funded organisation to refund the amount received (if any) within one month.
- 8.1.2 In the event that a project activity is cancelled, the funded organisation shall immediately notify the Secretariat in writing, stating the reasons for cancellation. The WoC will only approve the reimbursement of expenses paid by the funded organisation in organising the activity if it is satisfied that there are genuine and reasonable grounds for the termination of the activity during the preparation period, and the amount will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. No reimbursement will be made if the WoC considers that the termination of the activity is the responsibility of the funded organisation, e.g. due to negligence on the part of the funded organisation.
- 8.1.3 The WoC reserves the right to reduce the funding amount proportionally based on the reduced scope and scale of activities under a funded project where prior written approval has been given by the WoC. The WoC has the absolute right to decide on the final funding amount to be approved.

- 8.1.4 The funded organisation shall ensure that the activities under the funded project will not be held in conjunction with any activities that are not under the funded project.
- 8.1.5 The funded organisation shall submit a final report, photographs (saved on USB) or video (if any), promotional materials, publications, a summary report on participants' responses to questionnaires of each activity and any other relevant information (e.g. audio-visual materials, sound recordings) to the WoC within two months after the completion of the project or by the specified date.
- 8.1.6 If the final funding amount is \$50,000 or below, the funded organisation shall submit a financial report on income and expenditure with all original receipts duly certified by the officer-in-charge of the project or the authorised person. For projects with final funding amount exceeding \$50,000, the funded organisation shall submit a financial report with the accounts audited and an Auditor's Report issued by an independent CPA or Auditor. The Auditor's Report shall state that all the expenditures on the project to be disbursed are permissible under the funding allocated by the WoC and the use of the funding complies with the terms and conditions of the Rules. The funded organisation is not required to provide receipts of expenditure items of the funded project but such receipts should be kept for seven years for the WoC's vetting where necessary. The expenses on the preparation of an audited report may be considered as one of the expenditure items of the funded project.
- 8.1.7 If the funded organisation fails to provide the required reports or compile the reports in accordance with the WoC's requirements, the WoC will mark the records accordingly for future reference on assessing that organisation's applications for other funding. The WoC also has the right to revoke the funding. If the funding is revoked, the funded organisation must refund the amount involved within one month (if any).
- 8.1.8 For two-year projects, apart from the report upon completion of the project, the funded organisation is required to submit a progress report every six months from the approval of funding. All progress reports should be submitted within one month after each six-month period.

8.2 WoC Visit

- 8.2.1 The WoC may appoint authorised representatives to participate in any sessions of the activities of the funded project as observers. The WoC will normally inform the funded organisation of the arrangement of visit, but the WoC can also conduct the visit without prior notice.

- 8.2.2 The funded organisation should inform the Secretariat of the date, time and venue of the activity under the funded project in writing at least 14 days prior to the activity. The WoC has the right to revoke the funding if the funded organisation fails to comply with this requirement.
- 8.2.3 The funded organisation is required to brief the WoC and/or its WG on the progress of the project as and when necessary in accordance with the Secretariat's arrangements. The WoC may appoint a third party organisation to assess a funded project. The funded organisation shall assist and facilitate the relevant assessment.

8.3 Others

- 8.3.1 The funded organisation shall uphold the principles of openness, fairness, competitiveness and value for money in procuring goods and services with the funding.
- 8.3.2 Publications and audio-visual productions funded by the WEF must not infringe the copyrights or intellectual property rights of others and should not be used for sale. The funded organisation shall be responsible for any claims or liabilities incurred. If the funded organisation intends to include or use materials created by others, prior approval from the copyright owner must be sought.
- 8.3.3 The funded organisation shall ensure that the various requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) are complied with when collecting the personal data of the participants of the funded project.
- 8.3.4 The funded organisation shall seek each participant's consent for disclosing the personal data provided by the participants on the enrolment form of the project activities to the Secretariat. The Government/the WoC may use the data in conducting questionnaires, assessing research, organising training or sharing sessions, implementing the operation of the WEF, monitoring the performance of the funded organisation, meeting the requirements to make disclosure under the requirements of any law, and any other matters related to the above purposes.
- 8.3.5 Photographs or video clips submitted by the funded organisation may be posted on the website(s) of the WoC and/or the WEF and/or used in other activities organised by the WoC. The funded organisation should ensure that all stakeholders agree to and are aware of the arrangement.
- 8.3.6 During the project period and/or following the completion or termination of a funded project, the funded organisation may be invited to attend the WoC's meeting/sharing sessions to present its funded project's progress and/or outcome so as to gain experience for future reference. Furthermore, the WoC may from

time to time invite and/or request the funded organisation to attend activities which they deem appropriate (including but not limited to development training, seminars, etc). If invited, the funded organisation shall delegate representative(s) to attend and participate in the meeting/sharing sessions/activities.

- 8.3.7 Participants of activities may be invited to share their views on their participation in the funded project with the mass media; participate in activities mentioned in paragraph 8.3.6 above and/or participate in other activities organised by the WoC. The funded organisation shall assist in arranging the relevant activities.

(IX) Important Notes

- 9.1 Before submission of the application, the applicant organisation shall confirm all the information provided is true, complete and accurate. The Government reserves the right to pursue legal action if it is found that the applicant organisation has submitted wrong or false information or withheld any material information.
- 9.2 The Government shall not in any circumstances be liable for making any compensation to an applicant organisation.
- 9.3 The funded organisation must abide by the terms set out in this Guide, the Approval Letter and the Rules, and all conditions issued by the Government/the WoC in writing from time to time in relation to the WEF. Otherwise, the WoC has the right to revoke the funding and the funded organisation must refund the advance payment or disbursed amount received.
- 9.4 Under any circumstances, the Government shall not be liable for any claims, demands or liabilities arising from a funded project. The funded organisation must bear any legal liability arising from the funded project at its own.
- 9.5 The funded organisation shall comply with all applicable laws and statutes of Hong Kong (including but not limited to The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (hereinafter referred to as “the Hong Kong National Security Law”)) in carrying out the funded project. It is the responsibility of the funded organisation to obtain all approvals and licences that are necessary for carrying out the funded project and to ensure that, during the implementation of the funded project, all activity contents and formats, information produced, shown and/or distributed in relation to the activity (e.g. publicity materials, audio/visual productions, questionnaires, messages, etc.) are in compliance with the Basic Law and all laws and statutes applicable to Hong Kong, including the Hong Kong National Security Law. For the avoidance of doubt, the funded organisation will

not be exonerated from any legal liability by virtue of the WoC's funding of the project. The HKSAR Government reserves the right to hold the organisation accountable for all losses and liabilities arising from breaches of this Guide, the Rules and any other laws and statutes on the part of the organisation.

- 9.6 If the funded organisation is found to be in breach of the terms in this Guide or any other Hong Kong laws and statutes (including but not limited to the Hong Kong National Security Law) after the WoC's disbursement of approved funds, the WoC may exercise the right to require the funded organisation to return the disbursed funds to the WoC and cancel the disbursement of the remaining funds.
- 9.7 The Government shall in no circumstances be liable for any losses and/or responsibilities incurred in the funded project. The funded organisation shall be responsible for any losses and responsibilities incurred in the funded project and shall make up the shortfall to complete the funded project at its own.
- 9.8 If the funded organisation is found to have failed to use the funds in good faith, to have failed to enforce the terms of the grant or to have committed any default, including failure to comply with the project arrangements set out in the application (except for changes agreed in advance by the WoC) and the terms and conditions of this Guide, Approval Letter and the Rules without providing a reasonable explanation, the WoC shall have the right not to disburse the funds and the organisation has to refund the full amount of the funds received (if any) immediately. In addition, the WoC will keep a record of the organisation's conduct and the organisation's future funding applications will be affected.

(X) Not a Binding Agreement

- 10.1 Nothing in this Guide shall constitute a contract. Notwithstanding anything provided in other paragraphs of this Guide, no binding agreement will be made between the Government and the funded organisation unless and until an agreement is duly executed by all parties thereto.
- 10.2 This Guide sets out the details and arrangements of the general projects under the WEF. If there is any inconsistency or ambiguity between the Chinese and the English versions, the Chinese version shall prevail.
- 10.3 The Government and the WoC shall have the right to prescribe and revise from time to time the details of funding as they see fit in the light of individual funding applications. No objection can be made by the funded organisation.

10.4 The content of this Guide may be reviewed and updated based on actual operational experience. Subsequent amendments will be promulgated via the WEF website (www.wef.gov.hk) and/or by the Secretariat.

(XI) Enquiries

11.1 For enquiries about the applications of General Project, please contact the Implementation Team of Women Empowerment Fund of the Secretariat:

Address : Home and Youth Affairs Bureau
4/F Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai,
Hong Kong
Email : wef@hyab.gov.hk
Telephone : 2835 2172

Women's Commission
May 2023