

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2007

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2007.

Background

2. The Administration is committed to upholding high standards of performance and conduct in the Civil Service. Maintaining a clean, effective and dedicated Civil Service is essential in ensuring the continued stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. To maintain an environment in which civil servants are motivated to deliver quality service that meets the rising expectations of the community, we need a fair commendation system that would help induce proactive and sustained exemplary performance from civil servants.

3. Organized by the Civil Service Bureau since 1999 at approximately biennial intervals, the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award (hereafter referred to as the “Scheme”) is one the four commendation schemes applicable to civil servants¹. The Scheme aims to recognize the achievements of civil servants in customer service, promote a quality service and customer-focused culture in the civil service, and encourage departments and staff to pursue continuous improvement in the delivery of public services. Awards under the Scheme are presented at three levels, namely -

¹ The other three commendations schemes are: the Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR with awards granted by the Chief Executive to individual civil servants with exceptional merits; the Secretary for the Civil Service (“SCS”)’s Commendation Award Scheme with SCS giving recognition to individual civil servants with outstanding performance; and the Commendation Letter Scheme with commendation letters issued by Heads of Department to individual civil servants with meritorious service.

- team awards for service enhancement in specific service areas such as the application of technology and innovation;
- departmental awards, comprising the Service Enhancement Award and the Best Public Image Award; and
- inter-departmental Partnership Award for quality services to the public through collaboration among government departments.

The 2007 Scheme

4. Launched in late 2006, the 2007 Scheme elicited a very positive response with about 130 entries from 49 bureaux and departments (representing about 70% of bureaux and departments service-wide). This demonstrated a high awareness of continuous enhancement in service quality and wide support for the Scheme in the civil service.

Public Engagement in the Implementation of the Scheme

5. While the levels of award for the Scheme in 2007 were similar to those in the previous years (i.e. as outlined in paragraph 3 above), unique in the 2007 Scheme was the much increased participation of the private sector as well as public and community leaders in the organization of the Scheme and the adjudication process.

6. The 2007 Scheme was co-organized with the Hong Kong Management Association and sponsored by the Hong Kong Chinese General Chamber of Commerce. More than 30 seasoned private practitioners from different fields, including finance, hospitality, transportation, property management, etc., accepted our invitation to serve on the boards of examiners for the Service Enhancement Award and team awards. These practitioners helped conduct the first stage assessment which included screening of written submissions, site visits to departments and interviews with participating departments. Their involvement enhanced the objectivity of the assessment process and facilitated benchmarking with the private sector. It also significantly enhanced the interaction between the public and the private sectors on quality customer service and related standards.

7. Apart from this, four Members of the Legislative Council² participated in the adjudication as Chairpersons of four Final Adjudication Panels. The membership of these Panels comprised District Council members, representatives from professional organizations³, members of the four Central Consultative Councils⁴ and senior officials from the Civil Service Bureau; and their key tasks were to meet the representatives of the short listed bureaux and departments for presentations and questions, and to decide on the merits of the participants. To decide on the winner for the “Best Public Image Award”, a sample of more than 2,400 members of the public, all Members of the Legislative Council and District Councils were invited to vote in a survey to select three departments with the best image. Members of the Legislative Council and District Councils also voted for the “Partnership Award”.

Publicity and Dissemination

8. To underline the importance of quality service, to give recognition to the outstanding achievements of the winning teams and departments, and to enable the public to know of these achievements, a prize presentation ceremony was held at the HK Convention and Exhibition Centre in September 2007. The ceremony was attended by over 600 guests and civil servants. The event attracted widespread media coverage and highlighted the work of civil servants for the community’s attention. To let the public know more about the exemplary performance of the winning departments and teams, two half-hour TV documentaries and five short videos were produced and broadcasted on television and trains, and supplements were published in seven newspapers.

9. To inspire other departments and civil servants to emulate the best practices of the winners of the Scheme for continuous improvement, experience-sharing seminars were held for the winning teams and departments to exchange experience and share good practices. Practitioners from the private sector also spoke at these seminars to promote cross-fertilization of ideas.

² They were the Hon Margaret Ng, the Hon Howard Young, the Hon Tam Yiu-chung and the Hon Li Fung-ying.

³ These professional organizations included the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, the Hong Kong Management Association and the Hong Kong Association of Customer Service Excellence.

⁴ These Consultative Councils were the Disciplined Services Consultative Council, the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council, the Police Force Council and the Senior Civil Service Council.

10. In addition to the above, the reasons for the success of the award-winning departments and teams are being developed into training and self-learning materials for further dissemination in the civil service. A video series capturing the lesser-known, behind-the-scene efforts and commitment of civil servants who participated in the Scheme has been produced. The videos, which cover a wide range of themes such as enhancement of food safety, maintenance of slopes, breeding of endangered species, provision of support networks for cancer patients and single fathers, etc, will be broadcasted through different channels including government websites, public waiting areas in government venues and schools, etc, to enable the public to better understand the work of civil servants.

Review and Way forward

11. A review of the 2007 Scheme was conducted in October 2007 via a questionnaire to all participating departments. The feedback received was very positive. The respondents generally considered that the Scheme had served the important purpose of recognizing the efforts of civil servants, boosting staff morale and encouraging staff to sustain their quest for service excellence. They were particularly appreciative of the extended publicity following the award presentation to help enhance their image and enable members of the public to better understand their work. The respondents supported the continuation of the Scheme.

12. The Civil Service Bureau will continue to organize the Outstanding Service Award Scheme and further improve the Scheme. It will work towards sustaining the momentum that the 2007 Scheme has created and making the Scheme a community event with wide public participation.