

For discussion on
17 November 2014

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award and other commendation schemes for civil servants

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme and three other commendation schemes for civil servants.

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 to 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 general public, we need a fair commendation system that would help motivate proactive and sustain exemplary performance from civil servants.

3. There are four commendation schemes applicable to civil servants. They are the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme which aims to provide recognition on a department/team basis and three other award schemes which are designed to recognise commendable performance of individual civil servants. These schemes are briefly described in the paragraphs below.

(I) The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme

4. Since 1999, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has been organising the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme (the Award Scheme) on a biennial basis. The objectives of the Award Scheme are to recognise the efforts of departments and teams which provide excellent service, to promote a customer-focused culture in the civil service, and to inspire departments and civil servants to emulate the best practices of award-winning departments and teams for continuous improvement in the delivery of public service.

5. The 2015 Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme (the 2015 Award Scheme) is now underway. We have announced the Scheme to all bureaux/departments (B/Ds) in November 2014 to invite their participation. Awards under the Scheme are presented at three levels, namely –

- the Inter-departmental Partnership Award for quality services to the public through collaboration among departments;
- the Departmental Awards, comprising the Service Enhancement Award for B/Ds' achievements and continuous efforts in service enhancement, and the Best Public Image Award; and
- the Team Awards, comprising the General Public Service Award, the Specialized Service Award, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award, the Crisis/Incident Support Service Award, and the Internal Service Award.

Public Engagement

6. The 2015 Award Scheme continues to emphasise the participation of the private sector, the public and community leaders in the adjudication process.

7. The Inter-departmental Partnership Award, the Departmental Service Enhancement Award and the Team Awards adopt a rigorous two-stage adjudication process. We will invite seasoned practitioners from different service industries to serve on the boards of examiners, which are tasked to conduct the first stage assessment, comprising screening of written submissions and interviews with participating departments and teams. The involvement of private sector practitioners helps enhance the objectivity of the assessment process and facilitate benchmarking with the private sector. It also helps promote exchange between the public and private sectors on quality customer service and related standards. The boards of examiners will shortlist entries for the final adjudication to be held in June 2015, and to select winners of Meritorious Awards and Special Citations on “Innovation”, “Integrity Management” and “Responsiveness to Customer Needs” (the last citation is newly introduced for the 2015 Award Scheme).

8. Members of the Legislative Council and District Councils, representatives from professional organisations, staff side members of the Central Consultative Councils and senior officials from CSB will be invited to serve on the final adjudication panels. The panels will conduct the second stage assessment, which requires the short-listed departments and teams to give a presentation and answer questions from the panels. Based on the merits of

the presentation, the panels will decide on the winners for the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes.

9. For the Best Public Image Award, a sample of randomly selected members of the general public, and all members of the Legislative Council and District Councils will be invited to vote in a survey to select the department with the best public image. The top three departments will be awarded with the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes respectively.

Publicity and Dissemination

10. In order to underline the importance of quality service, to give recognition to the outstanding achievements by the winning departments and teams and to inform the public of such achievements, a prize presentation ceremony of the 2015 Award Scheme will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in September 2015. In addition, the awards will be recorded in the personal files of the civil servants concerned to register their contributions to winning the awards.

11. To inspire other departments and civil servants to emulate the best practices of the winners of the 2015 Award Scheme, seminars will be held for the winning departments and teams to exchange experience and share good practices. In addition, the factors contributing to the success of the winners will be developed into training and self-learning materials for further dissemination in the civil service.

12. To let the public know more about the exemplary performance of the winning departments and teams, a one-hour TV programme will be produced by the Radio Television Hong Kong and broadcast on television, and supplements will be published in three newspapers. A video series capturing the lesser-known, behind-the-scene efforts and commitment of civil servants in serving the public will also be produced. These videos will be broadcast through different channels, including waiting areas of government venues, government web portals, and other social media channels such as the Youtube, to help the public better understand the work of civil servants. We will also arrange talks and visits to schools and different community groups to introduce exemplary government services.

(II) HKSAR Honours and Awards System

13. This is a community-wide honours recognition system and is not limited to civil servants. Each year, members of the general public and public officers (including civil servants) are nominated for various honours or awards

having regard to their contribution to Hong Kong and their public and community service. The recipients of the different types of awards (e.g. Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Disciplined Services¹ and ICAC Awards, Medal of Honour and Chief Executive's Commendations) are decided by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of the Honours and Non-official Justices of Peace Selection Committee comprising government officials, Executive Council members and eminent community leaders. An average of around 120 civil servants received awards under this system annually for the past five years, including around 40 who received the Chief Executive's Commendation for Government/Public Service and around 50 who received various Disciplined Services Awards. The full list of recipients is published every year. The Chief Executive presents the award to each recipient, in the presence of guests invited by the recipients, at a ceremony held in Government House each year.

(III) The Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme

14. Through this civil service-specific scheme, each year the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS), on behalf of the Administration, gives recognition to selected civil servants on a service-wide basis for consistently exemplary performance. To qualify for an award under the scheme, a civil servant should have provided outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. The number of recipients per annum is targeted at 80, which may be relaxed for exceptionally deserving cases. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments/Grades. The recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee, comprising representatives of CSB and other bureaux/grades.

15. The awards are presented by SCS at a ceremony held annually, in the presence of guests invited by the recipients and representatives from their B/Ds. Each award recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a gold pin. For those award recipients who have 20 or more years of service and have not enjoyed government sponsored travel outside Hong Kong before, they will also receive a travel award. If the award recipient is married, the travel award will also cover the spouse, provided that he/she travels with the award recipient. The awards are recorded in the personal files of the recipients to show appreciation of their exemplary performance. In 2014, there are a total of 81 recipients from 33 B/Ds.

¹ The award recipients are officers of the six major disciplined services, namely Hong Kong Police Force, Fire Services Department, Immigration Department, Customs and Excise Department, Correctional Services Department and Government Flying Service.

16. To commend exemplary services of the award recipients, we invite the media to cover the ceremony and to interview some of the award recipients. In addition, we publicise the achievements of the award recipients through various internal communication channels such as the Civil Service Newsletter and departmental newsletters.

(IV) The Commendation Letter Scheme

17. This scheme is administered at the bureau/departmental level. Under the Commendation Letter Scheme, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments may issue commendation letters to civil servants who have provided consistently outstanding service for at least three consecutive years; or have made significant contribution towards enhancing the efficiency or the image of their B/Ds; or have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition. Nominations may be made all year round and they are considered by a commendation committee set up by individual B/Ds under the chairmanship of a directorate officer. Same as the practice of the SCS' Commendation Award Scheme, the awards are recorded in the personal files of the recipients. An average of around 1 900 recipients received commendation letters annually for the past five years.

Conclusion

18. Award schemes are useful management tools to give recognition to good performance, to boost staff morale and to encourage further improvements in the delivery of public service. We will continue to make use of them judiciously.

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

Civil Service Bureau
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