

For discussion on
16 November 2015

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 other commendation schemes for civil servants.

Background

2. The Government 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 to meet the rising expectations of the general public, we need a fair commendation system that would help motivate and sustain exemplary performance of civil servants.

3. There are various commendation schemes for civil servants. They are the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme which aims to provide recognition on a departmental/team basis and several schemes which recognise meritorious 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, Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) has been operating the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme (“the Award Scheme”) on a biennial basis. It aims to recognise the efforts of departments and teams which provide exemplary service, to promote a customer-focused culture in the civil service, and to inspire innovation and continuous enhancement of public services.

5. Awards under the Award Scheme are presented at three levels, namely –

- the Inter-departmental Partnership Award for quality services provided to the public through collaboration among departments;

- the Departmental Awards, comprising the Service Enhancement Award for departments' 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.

6. The 2015 Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme (the 2015 Award Scheme) attracted a positive response with 116 entries from 33 Bureaus/Departments ("B/Ds"), most of them providing direct services to the public. There were Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes, and a Meritorious Award for each award category (except the Best Public Image Award). In response to some panel members' suggestion¹ to recognise achievements of individual teams in understanding and responding to changing needs of customers, a new special citation for "Responsiveness to Customer Needs" was introduced in team awards in the 2015 Award Scheme. In addition to this new special citation, the 2015 Award Scheme continued to feature two special citations, namely the Special Citation for Innovation and the Special Citation for Integrity Management.

Public Engagement

7. The 2015 Award Scheme continued to emphasise participation of the private sector as well as public and community leaders in the adjudication process.

8. As in previous years, we engaged the Hong Kong Management Association to co-organise the 2015 Award Scheme to enhance interaction between the public and private sectors. A total of 33 seasoned managers from different service industries, including retail, telecommunications, banking and insurance, hospitality, property management, transportation, public bodies and utilities, were invited to serve on boards of examiners. These examiners conducted the first stage assessment, comprising interviews with participating departments and teams, and screening of their written submissions. The involvement of private sector practitioners enhanced the objectivity of the assessment process and facilitated benchmarking with the private sector. It also helped promote exchange between the public and private sectors on quality customer service and related standards. At this first stage assessment, the boards of examiners selected the winners of Meritorious Awards and Special Citations. They also identified the finalists under each award category to compete for the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes in the final adjudication.

¹ The suggestion was made by members at the meeting of the Panel of Public Service held on 18 November 2013.

9. We invited four members of the Legislative Council² to serve as Chairpersons of four Final Adjudication Panels. The Panels also comprised District Council members, representatives from professional organisations³, staff side members of the Central Consultative Councils⁴ and senior officials from CSB. The short-listed departments and teams were required to give a presentation and to answer questions from the Panels. Based on the merits of the entries, the Panels decided on the winners for the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes.

10. For the Best Public Image Award, a random sample of more than 2 400 members of the public and all Members of the Legislative Council and District Councils were invited to vote in an anonymous survey to select the department with the best public image. The top three departments were awarded with the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes respectively. The survey was administered by Consumer Search Hong Kong Limited, an independent professional research company.

11. The list of winners of the 2015 Award Scheme is at the Annex. Winning departments and teams received trophies, plaques and prize money to be used for staff welfare purposes or gift coupons to be shared by team members of the winning entries. In addition, we issued letters of appreciation to civil servants involved in winning teams and recorded in their personal files their contribution to winning the awards.

Publicity and Learning

12. In order to underline the importance of quality service, to give recognition to outstanding achievements by the winning departments and teams, and to inform the public of such achievements, a prize presentation ceremony was held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on 4 September 2015. The ceremony, officiated by the Chief Executive, was attended by about 600 guests and civil servants. To further recognise the commendable efforts of all award winners, a one-hour TV documentary produced by RTHK was broadcast on TVB Jade and RTHK TV 31 on 26 September 2015. The event and the award winning services were widely publicized in the media and this helped further enhance the community's understanding of the work of civil servants.

13. To enable the young generation to better understand the exemplary services provided by the Government, CSB is collaborating with Education Bureau in organising a School Promotion Programme. About 75 school talks/visits to government facilities have been planned for more than 20 000 students from about 110 primary and secondary schools in the 2015/16 School Year.

² They were the Hon POON Siu-ping, Hon KWOK Wai-keung, Hon IP Kin-yuen and Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong.

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

⁴ They were the Disciplined Services Consultative Council and the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council.

14. Moreover, a video series capturing the lesser-known, behind-the-scene efforts and commitment of civil servants going the extra mile in serving the public is being produced. In addition to broadcasting the video in over 300 government venues, non-government organisations of different community groups, the video are available for viewing through our thematic website on service excellence (<http://www.servicexcellence.gov.hk>), Youth Portal, Hong Kong Education City website and a brand new YouTube channel, namely “優質公共服務 Public Service Excellence@Gov”. This helps us to reach a wide spectrum of online audiences.

15. To inspire other departments and civil servants to emulate good practices of award winners, we will also organise seminars in early 2016 to provide a learning platform for the winners to share with colleagues their experience and insights in providing quality services to the public.

Review

16. A review of the 2015 Award Scheme was conducted in September 2015 via a questionnaire survey to all participating bureaux/departments. The feedback received was very positive. The respondents generally considered that the Scheme had helped raise staff morale, enhanced team spirit, gained public recognition for their outstanding achievements and encouraged continuous improvement in the delivery of public services. They were particularly appreciative of the prize presentation ceremony and highly welcomed the use of multiple channels for promoting their services. The continuation of the Award Scheme received strong support.

17. CSB plans to organise the Award Scheme again in 2017. CSB will build on the experience accumulated over the years and continue to involve the Legislative Council, District Councils, business sector and community in the adjudication process.

(II) HKSAR Honours and Awards System

18. This is a community-wide honours recognition system and civil servants, having regard to their contribution to the civil service, can also be nominated for awards under the system. Over the years, there are civil service recipients of Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Medals of Honour and Chief Executive’s Commendations, in addition to Disciplined Services⁵ and ICAC Awards which are civil service-specific categories. In 2015, a total of 97 civil servants were awarded under this system. Amongst them, 14 received the Chief Executive’s

⁵ Award recipients are officers of the six major disciplined services, namely Hong Kong Police Force, Hong Kong Fire Services Department, Immigration Department, Customs and Excise Department, Correctional Services Department and Government Flying Service.

Commendation for Government/Public Service and 53 received the 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 at Government House each year.

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

19. Through this civil service-specific scheme, each year the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS), on behalf of the Government, 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 had outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. The number of recipients per annum is targeted at 80, which may be relaxed for deserving cases. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries or Heads of Departments/Grades. Recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee comprising representatives of CSB and other bureaux/grades.

20. 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. The award is an accountable and one-off travel allowance⁶. If the award recipient is married, his/her spouse will also be granted the same travel allowance, 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 2015, there are a total of 84 recipients from 33 B/Ds. To enhance the scheme, we will increase the target number of awards from 80 to 100 annually commencing from 2016-17.

21. To publicise the exemplary services of award recipients, we invite the media to cover the ceremony and to interview some of the 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

22. This scheme is administered at the bureau/departmental level. Under the 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

⁶ The rate of the travel allowance and the mechanism for revising the rate are the same as those of the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award mentioned in paragraph 23 of this paper.

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's 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 in the past five years. In 2014, about 1 900 commendation letters were issued.

(V) Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme

23. The Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme aims at recognizing long and meritorious service of serving civil servants. All local non-directorate officers with a continuous service of 20 years or more, who have track records of consistently very good performance and have not received any Government travel award before, are eligible for consideration for the grant of an award. The award is granted on a one-off basis and in the form of an accountable travel allowance. The rate of the travel allowance is revised on 1 April each year with reference to the rate of change in package tour charges in the Consumer Price Index (C) in the past 12-month period ending February. The rate of the allowance in 2015-16 is \$26,050. If the selected officer is married and will be travelling with his/her spouse, the same travel allowance will be provided to the spouse.

24. The number of awards for each year is determined based on a quota ratio. Since 2014-15, the quota ratio has been improved from one award for every 30 officers meeting the service requirement (1:30) to 1:27. As a result, the number of awards per year is increased by 10%. In 2015-16, there is a total of about 2 440 awards, of which about 240 awards are due to the improvement measure.

(VI) Other Major Measures to Boost Morale of Civil Servants

25. Civil servants are facing growing challenges in their day-to-day performance of duties arising from rising expectation of the general public. In addition, frontline staff also have to handle difficult customers from time to time. We fully acknowledge our obligation to render support to colleagues to help them deliver their work and cope with stress. To this end, we will continue to make full use of the award schemes to give recognition to good performance for boosting staff morale, and publicise the exemplary performance of civil servants with a view to driving home the message to the community that civil servants are serving the community with commitment and professionalism and they deserve respect.

26. Moreover, we will continue to provide training to civil servants on customer service, building resilience and managing emotional wellness to help

enhance their skills, knowledge and mindset for serving the public. CSB has commissioned professional bodies to provide hotline counselling service on stress management to help staff cope with stress from work and other personal problems. The service, available to staff from some 60 B/Ds, includes telephone and face-to-face counselling and referral services. Separately, about 10 departments provide their own counselling services to their staff.

27. We will continue to promote candid exchanges between the management and staff sides at both the central and departmental levels with a view to establishing closer working relationship and fostering mutual trust and respect. SCS regularly meets with Heads of Departments and visits departments to better understand the work challenges confronting the departments and to exchange views with the staff sides on issues of concern, and appropriate follow-up actions are taken to address their concerns. Departmental management has also been encouraged to engage staff, particularly frontline staff, in the formulation and execution of policies so as to promote partnership between the two sides and foster a sense of belonging among staff.

28. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper and offer comments.

Civil Service Bureau
November 2015

**Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2015
List of Award Winners**

(I) Inter-departmental Partnership Award

Gold Prize	Food and Environmental Hygiene Department*, Hong Kong Fire Services Department Hawker Assistance Scheme in Fixed-pitch Hawker Areas to Enhance Fire Safety
Silver Prize	Architectural Services Department*, Development Bureau Transformation of the Former Police Married Quarters Site on Hollywood Road into a Creative Industries Landmark
Bronze Prize	Leisure and Cultural Services Department*, Architectural Services Department Construction Project of Ko Shan Theatre New Wing
Meritorious Award	Hong Kong Police Force*, Electrical & Mechanical Services Department, Government Flying Service Unified Digital Communications Platform

**coordinating bureau/ department*

(II) Departmental Awards**(A) Departmental Service Enhancement Award**

	Large Department Category	Small Department Category
Gold Prize	Hong Kong Fire Services Department	Companies Registry
Silver Prize	Social Welfare Department	Hong Kong Observatory
Bronze Prize	Environmental Protection Department	--
Meritorious Award	Hong Kong Police Force	Planning Department

(B) Best Public Image Award

Gold Prize	Hong Kong Fire Services Department
Silver Prize	Hong Kong Police Force
Bronze Prize	Hong Kong Observatory

(III) Team Awards

	General Public Service Award	Regulatory/ Enforcement Service Award
Gold Prize	Leisure and Cultural Services Department Legends of the Giant Dinosaurs	Hong Kong Fire Services Department Enforcement Elites
Silver Prize	Lands Department GIS Projects Section, Land Information Centre, Survey and Mapping Office	Hong Kong Police Force Police Tactical Unit Headquarters
Bronze Prize	Electrical & Mechanical Services Department Airport Air Conditioning Team	Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency Default Section
Meritorious Award	Housing Department Estate Revitalisation in Ping Shek Estate	--
Special Citation (Responsiveness to Customer Needs)	Housing Department Estate Revitalisation in Ping Shek Estate	Hong Kong Police Force Police Tactical Unit Headquarters
Special Citation (Innovation)	Hong Kong Fire Services Department Path-finding Adventure Project (PAP)	Hong Kong Fire Services Department Enforcement Elites
Special Citation (Integrity Management)	Drainage Services Department Happy Valley Underground Stormwater Storage Scheme	Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency Default Section

(III) Team Awards (Cont'd)

	Specialised Service Award	Internal Service Award	Crisis/ Incident Support Service Award
Gold Prize	Hong Kong Police Force Yau Tsim District – Project Gemstone	Hong Kong Police Force Hong Kong Police College – Emotional Fitness Training Water Supplies Department Tuen Mun Hydropower	Hong Kong Police Force Inshore Patrol Sub-unit, Marine North Division
Silver Prize	Drainage Services Department Ecological Preservation Team	--	Hong Kong Police Force Psychological Services Group
Bronze Prize	Hong Kong Observatory Weather Forecasting Service Team	Hong Kong Police Force Identification Bureau - Fingerprint and Palmprint Livescan System	Hong Kong Police Force Small Boat Division, Marine Region
Meritorious Award	Correctional Services Department Psychological Services Section 1	Hong Kong Fire Services Department Serve with Heart	Hong Kong Fire Services Department Nip It in the Bud!
Special Citation (Responsiveness to Customer Needs)	Correctional Services Department Psychological Services Section 1	Hong Kong Fire Services Department Serve with Heart	Hong Kong Police Force Psychological Services Group
Special Citation (Innovation)	Hong Kong Fire Services Department A Life-saving Invention	Water Supplies Department Tuen Mun Hydropower	Hong Kong Police Force Inshore Patrol Sub-unit, Marine North Division