

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1794/04-05

(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

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Panel on Commerce and Industry

Minutes of meeting

held on Tuesday, 17 May 2005, at 2:30 pm

in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP
Hon SIN Chung-kai, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC

Member absent : Hon CHIM Pui-chung

**Public officers
attending** : Agenda Item IV

Mr Anthony WONG, JP
Commissioner for Innovation and Technology

Mr Brian LO
Assistant Commissioner for Innovation and Technology
(Funding Schemes)

Mr YEUNG Tak-keung
Assistant Commissioner for Innovation and Technology
(Policy and Development)

Agenda Item V

Mr Gordon LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce, Industry
and Technology (Commerce and Industry)

Ms Karen LO
Chief Executive Officer
Commerce and Industry Branch
Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau

Agenda Item VI

Mr M J T ROWSE, JP
Director-General of Investment Promotion

Miss Clara TANG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce, Industry
and Technology (Commerce and Industry)

Ms Ophelia TSANG
Associate Director-General of Investment Promotion

Clerk in attendance : Miss Polly YEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (1)3

Staff in attendance : Ms Debbie YAU
Senior Council Secretary (1)1

Action

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V Review of the effectiveness of the Professional Services Development Assistance Scheme (PSDAS)

LC Paper No. CB(1)1496/04-05(04) -- Information paper provided by the Administration

29. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology (Commerce and Industry) (PASCIT(CI)) briefed members on the findings of a review on the effectiveness of the Professional Services Development Assistance Scheme (PSDAS).

Effectiveness of the scheme

30. Mr Ronny TONG enquired whether feedback on the completed PSDAS projects had been obtained from participants of the activities held as well as the clients of the professional services concerned. In response, PASCIT(CI) referred to paragraph 14 of the Administration's paper (CB(1)1496/04-05(04)) in which it was reported that surveys had been conducted on the participants of PSDAS projects, and a great majority of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the projects or deliverables. To enhance external competitiveness, some local professional bodies had organized capacity-building programmes such as inviting overseas experts to introduce the latest developments, such as new technology or know-how, in the relevant professions. To achieve a multiplier effect, the contents of these activities were reproduced in compact discs for use among the local professional community. However, PASCIT(CI) pointed out that while the professional services sectors considered the knowledge very useful in enhancing their external competitiveness, they might not be able to apply a new technology to local use immediately. As such, obtaining feedbacks from the clients of the concerned professionals might not be an appropriate way of gauging the effectiveness of the PSDAS projects because the service clients had not yet benefited from the local professionals' new technology or know-how. In addition, there were also practical difficulties in obtaining feedbacks from the professional service clients in a scientific manner and strictly in accordance with survey methodology.

Application procedures

31. Mr SIN Chung-kai expressed his support for PSDAS. Noting that since August 2003, the invitation for applications had been increased from two to three rounds a year and urgent applications (if justified) would be accepted any time, he suggested that to facilitate application by professional bodies, consideration should be given to accepting funding applications throughout the year. Mr SIN enquired about the practical difficulties, if any, of accepting four to six rounds of applications each year.

32. In response, PASCIT(CI) pointed out that the professional services sectors considered the existing practice of calling for three rounds of applications a year and accepting urgent funding applications with sufficient justification appropriate. Indeed, experience had shown that the lead time taken by the professional bodies to decide to take forward a project and apply for assistance under PSDAS had tied in quite well with the application cycle. PASCIT(CI) further advised that to enhance cost-effectiveness, the number of calls for applications was limited so that the Vetting Committee could convene meetings to consider the applications, and the Administration had tried to avoid approval by circulation. Nevertheless, the Administration would monitor the situation and review the number of calls for applications each year if necessary. In this regard, the Chairman agreed that applications for assistance under PSDAS should not be vetted and approved by the Vetting Committee through circulation.

33. Mr Jeffrey LAM noted that each applicant, including individual universities, could submit no more than two applications in each round. Since research institutes from different faculties/departments of the same university did not have an independent legal person status, they were all counted under the same legal person of their respective universities. Mr LAM considered the current restriction inappropriate and suggested that it should be lifted. In his view, the Vetting Committee was in a position to consider all applications and strike a balance when giving its approval.

34. In response, PASCIT(CI) said that the limit on the number of applications was to ensure that more eligible professional bodies could benefit from PSDAS, and that the Administration would monitor the situation and consider relaxing the restriction if necessary. In reply to the Chairman's enquiry, PASCIT(CI) advised that as at 30 April 2005, among the 240 applications received under PSDAS, 124 of them had been rejected because of different reasons, such as the beneficiaries falling out of the ambit of the Scheme, the proposed activities being considered to be not cost-effective, etc.

Conclusion

35. The Chairman considered that PSDAS, which aimed at enhancing the professional standards and external competitiveness of the professional services sectors and operated on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis, a useful scheme, and invited the Administration to consider members' suggestions with a view to further improving the implementation of the Scheme and gauging the cost-effectiveness of the Scheme. She requested the Administration to revert to the Panel in the next legislative session on members' proposals. In addition, while agreeing that applications under PSDAS should be prudently assessed, the Chairman urged that consideration should be given to supporting worthwhile projects having regard that currently, the Scheme had a balance of some \$50 million, and asked that more details about the reasons why some applications had been rejected be provided after the meeting.

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