

## Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

### Supplementary Information on Proposal for Setting Up a Health and Medical Research Fund

This paper provides supplementary information in response to queries on the proposal for setting up a Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF) (LC Paper No. CB(2)258/11-12(03)) raised by Members at the meeting of the Panel on Health Services on 14 November 2011.

*Question: Whether HMRF will fund research in the private healthcare sector and, if so, how the Government would monitor the use of the research fund and publicise the the research findings to ensure that their research findings would benefit the community.*

2. HMRF aims to provide funding for health and medical research conducted by local researchers in institutions with relevant research capabilities in Hong Kong. Hitherto, such research is largely conducted by research staff in local academic institutions, particularly the two medical schools in universities, and occasionally by or in collaboration with clinical staff in the public healthcare sector. We did receive a few applications from researchers in private healthcare sector but none had been granted so far. As and when research capabilities are further developed in the private healthcare sector, researchers there may also apply to HMRF for funding for research projects that fall within the scope and theme in the same manner as all other local researchers. Such funding will be solely for expenditure directly related to research activities under the project, and will not cover any cost for service provision or general overhead.

3. All research proposals irrespective of the originating researcher and supporting institution will be subject to the same stringent two-tier peer review assessment process by both the Grant Review Board (GRB) and Referee Panel (RP) to ensure that only those having sufficient scientific merit, local applicability, value for money and that are ethically sound are supported. All research grant recipients will be subject to the same monitoring and auditing on use of research funds granted to ensure that the funds are used only for approved research activities. The principal applicant of an approved project is required to submit progress reports and certified financial statements at regular intervals. Upon completion of the project, a final report and audited account should be submitted. The final report will also be subject to the stringent two-tier peer review process. The impact of the research funding will be evaluated after completion of the study using a standardised evaluation questionnaire that

describes the research outcomes and outputs in terms of knowledge generation, capacity building, engagement with peers and the public and benefits derived.

4. Research reports of successfully completed projects will be disseminated to the community via promulgation by the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) on its website and publication in the Hong Kong Medical Journal which is distributed to relevant healthcare professionals. Researchers also often publicise their research findings through publications in peer reviewed journals, participation in conferences and symposia, and press releases to the media. The Research Fund Secretariat organizes regular grant skills training workshops to facilitate potential applicant's preparation of applying for research funds, and also organizes research symposia to recognise outstanding studies that have set a benchmark for good research and assisted the formulation of health policies, and to provide a platform for sharing by international and local researchers.

*Question: What is the breakdown of the additional cost and staff for the operation of the HMRF? What will be the rank and job functions of these additional civil service posts and NCSC positions?*

5. The current Research Fund Secretariat comprising eight staff of various levels and expertise is responsible for the overall support and administration of the existing research funds under FHB. With the increased commitment and expanded funding scope of the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF), we expect the workload of the Research Fund Secretariat will increase substantially. Specifically, the annual funding amount to be committed for research under the HMRF is expected to increase to about \$250 million per year on average (about three times the current average annual amount), and the number of applications to be received and processed is correspondingly expected to increase three-fold (from about 300 applications per year to 900 applications per year).

6. To cope with the expected increase in workload, we will augment the Secretariat by seven new non-directorate non-civil service staff supporting the operation of the HMRF on a full-time basis and three non-directorate civil servants providing executive and clerical support for the Research Office of FHB including the Research Fund Secretariat. The additional annual recurrent cost required for the operation of the HMRF is estimated to be \$9 million from 2012-13 to 2016-17. This will be absorbed by FHB's provisions. We also estimated that the direct operation cost for HMRF is about \$4 million per annum. This will be charged to HMRF. The details of the breakdown of existing and future staff composition is summarized below, and the job descriptions of the additional positions are set out at *Annex*.

	<b>Existing Research Fund Secretariat</b> (based on past experience)	<b>Future HMRF Secretariat</b> (estimates)
Staffing complement	1 Consultant <sup>1</sup> 1 Scientific Review Director <sup>2</sup> 2 Senior Grant Management/ Secretariat Executive <sup>2</sup> 3 Secretariat Executive <sup>3</sup> 1 Secretariat Assistant <sup>4</sup>	Staffing of existing secretariat plus the following additional staff:  1 Chief Scientific Review Director <sup>5</sup> 1 Chief Grant Management Executive <sup>5</sup> 2 Senior Grant Management/ Secretariat Executive <sup>2</sup> 3 Grant Management/Secretariat Executive <sup>3</sup>  The following additional civil service staff will be supporting finance and administration of Research Office of FHB including the Research Fund Secretariat:  1 Senior Executive Officer 1 Executive Officer II 1 Assistant Clerical Officer
Annual recurrent costs	\$7 million	additional \$9 million
Direct operation costs	\$1.3 million per annum on average	\$4 million per annum on average

Food and Health Bureau  
8 December 2011

<sup>1</sup> Non-civil service position equivalent to Point D1 on the Directorate Pay Scale.

<sup>2</sup> Non-civil service position equivalent to Senior Executive Officer level.

<sup>3</sup> Non-civil service position equivalent to Executive Officer I/II level.

<sup>4</sup> Non-civil service position equivalent to Assistant Clerical Officer level.

<sup>5</sup> Non-civil service position equivalent to Chief Executive Officer level.

**Job Descriptions of Additional Staff for Proposed HMRF Secretariat**

**Non-Civil Service Staff in Direct Support of HMRF Operation**

Post/ Rank	Job Description
Chief Scientific Review Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Supervise all grant review process and scientific matters for projects under HMRF</li><li>● Formulate and update thematic priorities, providing scientific support to the Research Council (including all related subcommittees / panels) and the Grant Review Board</li><li>● Oversee funding support in other formats under HMRF such as setting up of facilities, developing research capacity or fellowship schemes</li></ul>
Chief Grant Management Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Oversee the grant management process, all finance matters and administrative matters related to the HMRF and HCPF</li><li>● Supervise grant management matters covering contractual agreement for funded projects, monitoring the progress of all funded projects, initiate timely interventions for problematic cases, ensuring the proper submission of all deliverables, and updating of the internal procedures, namely the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)</li><li>● Manage finance matters including the overall accounting of the HMRF and HCPF and payment to funded grants</li><li>● Supervise administrative matters for all grants related publicity and publication matters (such as forums, symposiums, grant skills training workshops), website of the research fund secretariat, training of new administrative staff, information management, as well as other general administrative tasks.</li></ul>
Senior Secretariat Executive (Fellowship Scheme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Manage funding support under the HMRF in other formats including fellowship scheme, setting up of facilities and development of research capacity</li><li>● Communicate with experts for assessing, monitoring and evaluation of approved projects</li><li>● Make recommendation and provide scientific inputs on approved projects for Chief Scientific Review Director consideration</li></ul>

Post/ Rank	Job Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitor the progress and deliverables of fellowship scheme</li> </ul>
Senior Grant Management Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support the CEO (Grant Management &amp; Administration) on all the grants administration works for the HMRF</li> <li>● Communicate with local and overseas referees for approved and completed projects</li> <li>● Work in an independent manner (e.g. in the assessment of individual projects) and make recommendations for CEO (Grant Management &amp; Administration)'s consideration.</li> <li>● Monitor the progress and deliverables of funded projects</li> </ul>
Secretariat Executive (Grant Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Liaison with researchers</li> <li>● Follow up the recommendation of the SEO who reviews the projects, and assist in communicating with outside parties such as researchers, committee members and referees</li> <li>● Supervise the logistical arrangement for open call grant applications such as Research Council and Grant Review Board meetings and maintain the database of referees</li> </ul>
Grant Management Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitor the progress of each project and take necessary actions in compliance to the SOP</li> <li>● Flag up potential problematic cases for further deliberation at senior level</li> <li>● Maintain the database of funded projects and the Research Fund Secretariat website, and support the management of funds under management of the secretariat in general</li> </ul>
Secretariat Executive (Fellowship Scheme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Liaise with local and overseas referees and research institutions</li> <li>● Assist grant review for open call applications and fellowship scheme by arrangement various meetings</li> </ul>

**Civil Service Staff in Support of Finance and Administration of Research Office of FHB (including Research Fund Secretariat)**

Post	Job Description (partial)
Senior Executive Officer (Finance & Administration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Support all the financial and administration works of the Research Office including the research funds and consultancy engagement</li><li>● Ensure grants are disbursed as per contractual agreements</li><li>● Oversee projects accounts and ensure procedural compliance with government standard</li><li>● Devise financial reports and cash flow estimates</li></ul>
Executive Office II (Finance & Administration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Assist the monitoring of approved projects under Research Office and keep track the submission of various reports in compliance to the SOP</li><li>● Assist the evaluation of completed projects by inviting overseas referees' inputs and arrangement various meetings</li></ul>
Assistant Clerical Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Provide clerical support for all aspects of grant related activities and consultancy studies managed by the Research Office</li></ul>

Food and Health Bureau

8 December 2011