

For discussion
on 10 July 2020

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Anti-epidemic Fund 2.0: Job Creation Scheme and Matching Grant Scheme for Skills Upgrading

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the progress of the implementation of the Job Creation Scheme and the Matching Grant Scheme for Skills Upgrading under the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF 2.0) measures.

Background

2. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved on 18 April 2020 an injection into the Anti-epidemic Fund to provide funding for a second round of relief measures targeted at eligible individuals and businesses hard hit by the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and various anti-epidemic measures introduced by the Government. Among the various measures under AEF 2.0, Civil Service Bureau (CSB) co-ordinates the implementation of the Job Creation Scheme and the Matching Grant Scheme for Skills Upgrading with other bureaux and departments (B/Ds).

Job Creation Scheme

3. To relieve the worsening unemployment situation due to the epidemic and the anti-epidemic measures, \$6 billion has been earmarked under AEF 2.0 to create 30 000 time-limited jobs in the public and private sectors in the coming two years for people of different skill sets and academic qualifications, including seasoned professionals and fresh graduates. Each job placement normally lasts up to 12 months while extension of duration beyond 12 months will be considered based on the merits of individual cases.

4. As at end June 2020, the planning of around 20 000 jobs (including around 13 500 jobs in the Government and around 6 500 jobs in the non-governmental sector) has reached an advanced stage. Among them, around

700 jobs have been filled, while the recruitment of around 7 000 jobs is ongoing. The planning and recruitment of the remaining time-limited jobs will be conducted by phases in the coming two years.

Jobs to be Created in Government

5. The time-limited jobs to be created in the Government include Non-Civil Service Contract positions, manpower requirements under government service contracts (for example, agency workers or outsourcing workers so engaged), and manpower required under consultancy contracts, etc. For those time-limited jobs to be created by procurement of services from private consultants or contractors through contractual arrangements, they would in turn trigger the demand for additional manpower in the private sector, thus creating more job opportunities in private firms.

6. Among the 13 500 time-limited government jobs in the pipeline, the major categories of jobs are as follows -

- (a) technical and non-skilled workers, for example, contract survey officers and technical officers for inspecting drainage pipes in targeted domestic buildings, as well as labourers and gangers for carrying out grass cutting and miscellaneous cleansing duties;
- (b) cleansing and supporting staff;
- (c) staff providing administrative, executive and clerical support;
- (d) staff for carrying out COVID-19 related duties, for example, staff involved in quarantine operations;
- (e) venue helpers, horticultural helpers and staff involved in environmental protection-related duties;
- (f) legal consultants and practitioners; and
- (g) information technology (IT) staff for strengthening IT support for various B/Ds and their new initiatives.

7. To facilitate and expedite the recruitment of around 300 time-limited Executive Service Assistants (ESAs) (equivalent to civil service Executive Officer II) and around 430 Support Service Assistants (SSAs) (equivalent to civil service Assistant Clerical Officer) to be employed by various B/Ds, CSB is co-ordinating the central recruitment exercises of ESAs and SSAs. The time-limited ESA positions were open for application in mid to late June 2020 while the recruitment for SSAs will be launched in August 2020. CSB will help in conducting the recruitment interviews and shortlisting of candidates. Successful applicants will be deployed to the relevant B/Ds to take up the time-limited ESA and SSA positions for providing the necessary administrative,

executive and clerical support.

Jobs to be Created in the Non-governmental Sector

8. B/Ds are engaging their stakeholders, such as public or quasi-government bodies, professional bodies and trade associations under their respective sectors, with a view to formulating the plan of job creation in the non-governmental sector. Focus will be particularly placed on those industries the development of which has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. Among others, around 3 000 time-limited jobs will be created under the following three schemes the application periods of which have already commenced –

- (a) Development Bureau has launched a subsidy scheme for private companies to employ graduates and assistant professionals from the engineering, architecture, surveying, town planning and landscape architecture streams with a view to providing them with the necessary working experience to attain the relevant professional qualifications. The application period of this scheme has commenced on 19 June 2020.
- (b) Environment Bureau has launched a subsidy scheme for private companies and organisations to employ graduates from environmental-related disciplines with the objective of nurturing talents in the fields of environmental protection work. The application period of this scheme has commenced on 26 June 2020.
- (c) Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau has launched a scheme to subsidise private companies and startups involved in Fintech-related business in Hong Kong to employ additional staff. The application period of this scheme has commenced on 2 July 2020.

10. Other time-limited jobs being planned for creation in the non-governmental sector include jobs to be provided under a new scheme to be administered by the Financial Services Development Council to provide job opportunities in the financial services sector, and jobs to be provided by the Housing Authority for the inspection of drainage systems and pipes in subsidised sale flats and rental housing estates, etc.

Matching Grant Scheme for Skills Upgrading

11. As regards the Matching Grant Scheme for Skills Upgrading, a funding commitment of \$100 million has been approved for the Scheme. The Scheme aims at providing training funds on a matching basis to relevant statutory bodies, industry associations and related bodies for organising training programmes to upgrade the skills of individuals in various sectors, especially those hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, so that they will be better equipped with enhanced skills to tide over the present economic downturn and prepare for the economic turnaround.

12. Eligible applicants, which will be suitable bodies identified by each Policy Bureau, will be invited to submit applications to run training programmes for sector-specific or general skills upgrading. The duration of the programmes should not normally exceed 12 months. For the matching ratio, to provide more incentives for relevant bodies to run the programmes and for individuals in various sectors to participate in the programmes, we intend to cap the matching basis at 3:1, subject to a ceiling of \$2 million. For a proposed training programme to be approved by the Government, applicants have to demonstrate that the proposed programmes could help individual trainees to upgrade their skills and enhance their competitiveness, and in turn enhance the skills and productivity of the workforce. We will be launching the Scheme by inviting the relevant bodies to submit applications through the Policy Bureaux.

Other Related Measures

13. As announced by the Financial Secretary in his 2020-21 Budget Speech, the Government will offer about 5 000 short-term internship placements for young people in the current financial year. These placements, some of which have already commenced or will commence shortly, will cover a wide range of work fields in around 80 B/Ds and public organisations.

14. On civil service recruitment, there will be over 10 000 civil service job openings in the current financial year for replacing retirees and filling new posts to be created in the 2020-21 Estimates. These job openings, covering civilian and disciplined services grades, span across around 60 B/Ds.

Next Step

15. We will continue to work with relevant B/Ds in implementing the aforementioned measures with a view to providing more job opportunities and upgrading the skills of individuals in the relevant sectors so as to help them to tide over the present economic downturn and to prepare for the economic turnaround.

Advice Sought

16. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
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