

Minutes of the 54th Meeting of the Lump Sum Grant Steering Committee

Date : 27 November 2024 (Wednesday)

Time : 3:00 p.m.

Place : Room 918, 9/F, Wu Chung House,
213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Present

Chairperson

Miss Charmaine LEE, JP

Director of Social Welfare

Ex-officio Members

Mr YIP Ka-sing, Tony

Principal Assistant Secretary (Welfare)1,
Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)

Miss CHAN Chong-lai

Assistant Director of Social Welfare
(Subventions)

Non-official Members

Mr Webster NG Kam-wah, JP

Mr Roland WONG Ka-yeung, JP

Mr Armstrong LEE Hon-cheung

Miss Vena CHENG Wei-yan

Miss CHU Lai-ling, MH

Ms Rachel LEUNG Wai-ling

Miss Alice WAN Ngai-teck

Mrs Patricia LAU

Mr Thomas CHU Sai-ming

Ms CHEUNG Lai-wah

Mr Joseph HUNG Hin-ching

Mr IP Chi-wai

Ms CHEUNG Kwok-chun

Miss Yanmi LEUNG Ho-yan

Mr SY Ching-tam

Secretary

Ms LEE Wai-ye

Chief Social Work Officer (Subventions)1,
Social Welfare Department (SWD)

In Attendance

Ms WONG Yin-yee	Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)
Ms SIT Wing-lin	Principal Social Work Officer (Information Systems & Technology), SWD
Ms LUI Ka-wing	Chief Social Work Officer (Subventions)2, SWD
Ms Joyce LUI Hor-yan	Senior Social Work Officer (Subventions)1, SWD (Acting)
Ms YUEN Yuet-yan	Senior Social Work Officer (Subventions)2, SWD
Miss Venus POON Wai-fong	Senior Social Work Officer (Subventions)3, SWD
Ms Sarah HO Chung-yan	Social Work Officer (Subventions)4, SWD
Miss Jojo LEUNG Ka-huen	Executive Officer (Subventions), SWD

Absent with Apologies

Mr Addy WONG Wai-hung, MH, JP
Miss CHOW Tsz-ki
Dr Pamela LEUNG Pui-yu
Ms WONG May-kwan
Mr Kirin LAW Tsz-yeung
Mr TSE Wah-wan

Opening Remarks

1. Chairperson Miss Charmaine LEE greeted the members and welcomed the following members/ attendees who attended the meeting for the first time:
 - (a) Miss Alice WAN Ngai-teck, Chief Executive Officer of Connecting Hearts Limited (“Connecting Hearts”);
 - (b) Mr Joseph HUNG Hin-ching, Coordinator of Hong Kong Christian Service;
 - (c) Ms CHEUNG Lai-wah, Business Director of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service;
 - (d) Ms SIT Wing-lin, Principal Social Work Officer (Information Systems & Technology) of the SWD; and
 - (e) Ms Sarah HO Chung-yan, Social Work Officer of the Secretariat.
2. The tenures of three former members, including Miss Jasmine CHAN Hoi-yan, Ms CHUNG Wai-ling and Mr Raymond LAI Kwan-ho, with the Lump Sum Grant Steering Committee (LSGSC) expired on 21 April 2024. The Chairperson thanked them for their past participation in the work of the LSGSC.
3. Six members, including Mr Addy WONG Wai-hung, Miss CHOW Tsz-ki, Dr Pamela LEUNG Pui-yu, Ms WONG May-kwan, Mr Kirin LAW Tsz-yeung and Mr TSE Wah-wan, were unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments.

Declaration of Interests

4. The Secretariat reminded members of the need to make a full disclosure of their interests in the event of any potential conflict of interest in matters placed before the LSGSC. Some members, despite being board or staff members of relevant non-governmental organisations, could still speak on the issues insofar as sector-wide policies were concerned.
5. Before the meeting, the Secretariat received the declaration from members Miss Alice WAN Ngai-teck and Miss CHU Lai-ling, as Chief Executive Officer and Secretary of Connecting Hearts, respectively. They would not participate in the discussion on Mainland exchange tours under agenda item 3, as Connecting Hearts was commissioned by the SWD to organise the “Thousands of Hong Kong Social Workers Exploring the Motherland” series of exchange tours. However, they could remain in the meeting since the agenda item, which was intended to report on work progress, would not involve funding approval or project recommendations.

Agenda Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

6. The Secretariat circulated the draft minutes of the 53rd meeting to members on 21 May 2024, and received no proposed amendments before the deadline. The minutes of the 53rd meeting were confirmed. [Post-meeting note: The minutes of meeting were uploaded to the SWD’s website on 2 December 2024.]

Agenda Item 2 – Matters Arising

Paragraphs 12 to 15 of the Minutes of Last Meeting – Progress of the Amendments to the Social Welfare Services Lump Sum Grant Subvention Manual (the Manual)

7. The SWD reported on the progress regarding amendment of the Manual. Highlights were as follows:
 - (a) After further consulting members on the revised Manual at the 53rd meeting, the SWD immediately followed up with proofreading and updating the information in the Manual, and prepared related smart tips to help governing board members and staff of non-governmental organisations operating subvented welfare services (NGOs) grasp the key points of the Manual.
 - (b) On 16 August 2024, the SWD sent the Manual to NGOs via email for them to preview and familiarise themselves with its content. Taking into account members’ suggestions in the last meeting, the SWD informed NGOs that the revised Manual would officially take effect on 1 October. On 30 September, the SWD also sent the smart tips for the Manual to NGOs via email.
 - (c) The Manual and the smart tips had been uploaded to the SWD’s website for easy browsing and downloading by NGOs. The SWD would update the Manual and

the smart tips in a timely manner based on the latest information issued from time to time.

- (d) On 19 November 2024, the Secretariat also sent the Manual and the smart tips to all members via email for reference.

8. The Chairperson invited members to note that a member of the public had submitted views by email on 15 October 2024 to the LSGSC regarding a provision in the Manual concerning the SWD's right to terminate subvention to NGOs.

- (a) The SWD replied on 13 November 2024. Highlights of its follow-up actions were reported as follows:

- The member of the public primarily focused on a provision in the Manual stating that the SWD may immediately terminate subvention in the event that a service operator had engaged or was engaging in acts or activities that were likely to constitute or cause the occurrence of offences endangering national security or which would otherwise be contrary to the interest of national security. The individual expressed concerns about how the Government would help affected service users after terminating the subvention to an NGO.
- The SWD emphasised in its reply that it had always attached importance to the well-being of service users. In the event that an NGO became unable to continue providing services for any reasons, the SWD would invariably maintain close liaison with the relevant NGO, and make appropriate arrangements to ensure continued services for the service users.

- (b) The SWD proposed that members should consider directing the Secretariat to refer future public enquiries or views submitted to the LSGSC regarding the Lump Sum Grant (LSG) to the SWD for direct handling and response in accordance with the provisions in the Manual.

9. Members supported in principle that the Secretariat should refer public enquiries or views regarding the LSG to the SWD for direct handling and response. However, they suggested that the Secretariat should report enquiries involving important matters at meetings to keep members informed of public concerns. The SWD responded that it would follow up on and directly respond to LSG-related enquiries in accordance with the Manual and issued guidelines. For enquiries involving important matters, the SWD would consult and report to members as needed in a timely manner.

Agenda Item 3 – Progress of Implementation of the Dedicated Fund

10. The SWD reported on the progress of implementation of the Dedicated Fund as presented in LSGSC Paper No. 3/2024. Highlights were as follows:

- (a) Since late 2023, the SWD had been gathering views from the sector on the establishment of the Dedicated Fund through various channels, including attending a consultation forum on the Dedicated Fund, and seeking comments

from the LSGSC, Social Welfare Advisory Committee, Joint Committee on Information Technology for the Social Welfare Sector and the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services. The Dedicated Fund was launched in late May 2024.

- (b) The SWD had incorporated many suggestions from the sector while formulating the details of implementation of the Dedicated Fund, including:
- Streamlining application procedures, enabling NGOs to submit e-applications, and introducing flexibility in the timing and frequency of applications to allow NGOs to apply at their own pace according to their operational and development needs;
 - Allowing NGOs to allocate up to 40% of the places in training programmes to non-subsented staff members, as well as opening online training programmes to staff from other NGOs that do not operate subsented welfare services, with a view to supporting the sustainable development of the social welfare sector and enhancing overall service quality;
 - Exempting NGOs from conducting cost apportionment when implementing projects through the Dedicated Fund;
 - Waiving the requirement for NGOs to bear 15% of the cost for implementing information technology (IT) projects, and extending the scope of funding to cover IT facilities, as well as the upkeep/ maintenance/ enhancement of IT systems and cloud services required for the development/application of relevant IT systems, and the hiring of IT staff or other professionals for project management and supervision, etc. The Dedicated Fund would also allocate additional funding to cover administrative expenses for NGOs responsible for coordinating applications for the joint development of common IT systems, so as to promote synergy and effective use of resources;
 - Commissioning intermediaries with relevant experience and networks (e.g. Connecting Hearts) to assist in organising Mainland exchange tours, enabling NGOs to arrange for their staff to participate directly; and
 - Earmarking funds from the Dedicated Fund for NGOs to apply for organising Mainland exchange tours, national studies programmes, and specified training. These funds would not be counted against agency-based funding, allowing agency-based funding to focus on meeting the individual development/ operational needs of NGOs.
- (c) To help NGOs better understand the specific details and application arrangements for the Dedicated Fund, particularly regarding applications for IT projects, the SWD organised a briefing session on the Dedicated Fund and a sharing session under the Experience Sharing Platform for IT Projects of the Social Welfare Sector in July 2024. In addition, four exchange sessions for management personnel from a total of 116 small and medium-sized NGOs were held between August and September, to enhance their knowledge of IT/ data security, IT project

planning and management, and to provide information on suppliers of cloud services, IT services and products for procurement/ tendering, as well as reference materials from other related websites.

- (d) The SWD announced the application details for Specified Training Programmes on 8 November 2024, and invited NGOs to apply for additional funding to conduct training programmes in 2025 that aligned with the training themes specified by the SWD.
- (e) As at 15 November 2024, the SWD had received applications for a total of 32 projects from 18 NGOs, including 14 staff training projects, 14 IT projects, three national studies programmes and one Mainland exchange tour. The total amount of funding requested was approximately HK\$16 million. Of these, 10 projects, with total funding of more than HK\$3.3 million, had been approved.
- (f) Commissioned by the SWD, the Connecting Hearts organised the “Thousands of Hong Kong Social Workers Exploring the Motherland” series of exchange tours, which arranged about 700 participants in total to visit Chaozhou and Shaoguan in May and November 2024 respectively. Participants gave positive feedback on the exchange tours, commenting that the tours helped broaden their horizons, facilitated interaction and exchanges with Mainland social welfare organisations, and enhanced their understanding of the Mainland’s welfare services and latest developments. The third Mainland exchange tour was scheduled to visit Guangzhou in December 2024, and was expected to have around 300 participants.
- (g) The SWD would monitor the approved projects and use of funds through various means to ensure NGOs utilise the Dedicated Fund appropriately.

11. Members expressed and exchanged views on the progress of implementation of the Dedicated Fund. Highlights were summarised as follows:

Overall Comments and Application Situation

- (a) Members thanked the SWD for making adequate preparations for implementing the Dedicated Fund and for widely adopting suggestions from the sector and various committees to ensure that the Dedicated Fund meets the needs of the sector.
- (b) Members noted that the sector had responded positively to the implementation of the Dedicated Fund, and thanked the SWD for providing extensive support to the sector.
- (c) Members expressed concern about the application situation of small and medium-sized NGOs and suggested that the SWD provided assistance according to their needs. The SWD responded that it had maintained close contact with

small and medium-sized NGOs and provided them with appropriate consultation services and assistance.

- (d) Some members enquired whether any joint applications and ineligible applications had been received. The SWD indicated that no ineligible applications had been received so far, but some IT project applications might take time to process pending submission of supplementary information from the NGOs. In addition, while the SWD had not yet received any joint applications, some NGOs had made enquiries about related matters and expressed preliminary interest in submitting joint applications.

IT Projects

- (e) Some members expressed concern that since NGOs in general (especially small and medium-sized ones) lacked experience in managing IT projects and had limited IT knowledge, they were likely to encounter challenges during the application, tendering and specification confirmation processes, resulting in failure in project completion or under-performance of the functionalities of the project deliverables.
- (f) Some members suggested that the SWD share with NGOs information, such as common issues encountered and important points to note during application, as well as examples of successful applications, etc., to help them better understand the application process. Some members suggested that the SWD provide NGOs with reference materials, such as specifications/ tender documents, to help with the preparation of IT projects, as well as training and follow-up support for approved projects, and disburse funds to NGOs in phases based on the progress of implementation of the approved projects.
- (g) Some members proposed releasing data space or organising sharable data for joint development projects.
- (h) The SWD provided the following consolidated response:
 - To prevent failure of completion of IT projects, the SWD had already implemented measures, including requiring NGO applicants to prepare clear work assignment briefs, setting specific development milestones for each project to facilitate progress monitoring, and regularly sharing information with NGOs on how to write specifications/ relevant documents.
 - Regarding the fund disbursement arrangements for IT projects, the SWD disbursed funds to NGOs in phases based on project progress. If an NGO indicated in the interim report that the project had yet to begin or the implementation progress was below 30% of the project milestones, the SWD reserved the right to withhold fund disbursement for the project in subsequent years, so as to ensure proper use of the Dedicated Fund.

- When processing applications for IT projects, the SWD would assess the scope and procurement plan of each project, and provide advice and support to individual NGO applicants through meetings. NGOs could also contact the SWD's Information Systems and Technology Branch directly for assistance.
- The SWD would, from time to time, hold IT project experience-sharing sessions to disseminate relevant information, such as the agencies currently providing IT project consultation services.
- The NGO IT Information Portal (Information Portal) on the SWD's website contained relevant information for NGOs' reference, including the list of contractors of the Standing Offer Agreement for Quality Professional Services, the list of providers of IT products compiled by the Digital Policy Office, as well as information related to procurement/ tendering, etc. Following the launch of the Dedicated Fund, the SWD added the latest information on the Dedicated Fund and guidelines for completing the IT Project Application Form to the Information Portal to assist NGOs in planning and submitting applications for IT projects. The SWD would consider sharing information about approved projects with NGOs after consolidating more cases.
- The SWD encouraged NGOs to develop/ enhance their IT systems in accordance with their scale and operational needs by making good use of the Dedicated Fund, and to submit joint applications for IT development projects to achieve synergy and optimise resource utilisation. Regarding data sharing, the SWD reminded NGOs to comply with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

Staff Training and Mainland Exchange Tours

- (i) Some members suggested that the SWD should regularly report to the LSGSC information on national studies programmes and Mainland exchange tours, such as funding approved, the number of beneficiaries and progress of implementation, etc.
- (j) Some members proposed to consider organising more targeted Mainland exchange tours based on different staff ranks and job nature so as to better address the needs of NGO staff at different levels..
- (k) Some members expressed hope that NGO staff who participated in Mainland exchange tours would hold sharing sessions to share about their experiences and insights gained.
- (l) Some members suggested updating the training themes of specified training programmes to address issues of public concern.
- (m) The SWD's consolidated response was as follows:

- The SWD would report to the LSGSC in a timely manner on the progress of implementation of the Dedicated Fund (including national studies programmes and Mainland exchange tours), and provide information/ statistics on approved projects and fund utilisation.
 - The primary objective of Mainland exchange programmes was to enhance participants' understanding of national affairs, particularly social welfare services. Since these tours were targeted for social workers and welfare staff from NGOs with similar work backgrounds and training needs, the SWD believed that the exchange programmes could effectively meet the participants' needs.
 - The SWD pointed out that Connecting Hearts would provide relevant protocols and sample itineraries for NGOs' reference upon accumulating more experience in organising Mainland exchange tours. This would enable NGOs to organise their own tours based on their development needs.
 - The SWD encouraged NGOs and their staff participating in Mainland exchange tours to share their learning outcomes and experiences through various platforms/ channels with their own staff as well as those from other NGOs, and to promote practical application of their observations and knowledge, thus benefiting one another. Moreover, Connecting Hearts would hold large-scale sharing sessions for participants of Mainland exchange programmes to share about their experiences and insights gained.
 - Regarding the specified training programmes, the SWD would timely update and announce the training themes that aligned with the Government's policy objectives and welfare service needs, in order to meet changing service needs.
12. The SWD expressed gratitude to members for their support and valuable input regarding the Dedicated Fund. The SWD would take all members' recommendations into consideration to continuously improve the operation of the Dedicated Fund and provide appropriate support to NGOs, assisting them in completing project applications in a more flexible and efficient manner. In response to members' concerns about small and medium-sized NGOs, the SWD acknowledged that these NGOs might need additional support, and would explore ways to provide appropriate assistance that better suit their needs.

Agenda Item 4 – Any Other Business

Updating the Terms of Reference of the LSGSC

13. The Secretariat invited members to note that the terms of reference of the LSGSC required updating following the implementation of the newly revised Manual on 1 October 2024. The main change was the removal of members' role to steer NGOs' implementation of the Best Practice Manual, as its contents had been incorporated into the Manual.

Social Welfare Sector's Visit to National Security Exhibition Gallery

14. The SWD reported on the “Secretary for Labour and Welfare Visiting the National Security Exhibition Gallery with Chairpersons of Social Welfare Organisations” event:
- (a) A thematic gallery on national security was set up in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on 6 August 2024 to raise public awareness about safeguarding national security and to promote national security education in the community.
 - (b) To further showcase NGOs’ dedication to safeguarding national security, the LWB and the SWD, in collaboration with Connecting Hearts, would organise the “Secretary for Labour and Welfare Visiting the National Security Exhibition Gallery with Chairpersons of Social Welfare Organisations” event on 10 December 2024. The SWD had already extended email invitations to chairpersons of NGOs’ governing boards. In addition, the SWD requested NGOs to actively encourage and facilitate staff to visit the National Security Exhibition Gallery.

Other Enquiries

15. Some members enquired about the progress of the Funding and Service Agreements (FSAs) review. The SWD pointed out that it had been systematically reviewing multiple FSAs since 2022-23, during which it maintained close liaison and direct communication with the concerned NGOs, addressing their enquiries/ comments and considering their constructive suggestions. By the end of September 2024, the SWD had reviewed over 340 FSAs, and the progress was satisfactory. Meanwhile, individual service branches simultaneously initiated more in-depth service reviews for specific service types, such as residential child care services, sheltered workshops and integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, and integrated home care services (ordinary cases), etc. Individual NGOs could contact the SWD directly for any enquiries about the details of FSA provisions.

Date of Next Meeting

16. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. Members would be notified of the date of the next meeting in due course.

Social Welfare Department
December 2024