Funding Programme of Research Projects on Equal Opportunities 2020/21

Guide to Application

Introduction

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is a statutory body responsible for implementing the anti-discrimination legislation of Hong Kong to promote diversity and equal opportunities for all. The EOC administers the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO), Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) and Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) to eliminate discrimination based on sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability, family status and race. We are committed to promoting equality of opportunities irrespective of sex, disability, family status and race.

Please refer to the EOC website for a brief introduction on the four ordinances: www.eoc.org.hk.

Objectives

Following the success of the first and second rounds of "The Funding Programme of Research Projects on Equal Opportunities" (the Funding Programme) carried out in 2013/14 and 2017/18 respectively, EOC is launching the third one in 2020/21 which continues to encourage eligible academics and organizations (please refer to "Eligibility") with inspiring ideas to undertake innovative research projects. It is hoped that the funded research projects would aim at working towards the elimination of discrimination falling within the scope of the four anti-discrimination ordinances and promoting the principles of these ordinances.

Under the Funding Programme 2020/21, **only one batch of applications will be accepted.** Preference will be given to those projects on one or some of the following work priority areas listed in the EOC Strategic Plan 2020 – 2022:

- Foster an environment free from sexual harassment
- Tackle pregnancy discrimination
- Remove educational barriers faced by students with special education needs
- Advance equal employment opportunities of and enhance accessibility to goods, services and facilities for persons with disabilities
- Encourage employers to provide workplace flexibility and support for employees with family and caring responsibilities
- Protect breastfeeding women from discrimination
- Ensure equal education opportunities for ethnic minorities
- Promote equal employment opportunities for ethnic minorities

- Promote equal access to goods, services and facilities by ethnic minorities

To avoid overlapping, potential applicants interested in research projects that aim to promote equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientation or transgendered persons, or seek to provide support services for sexual minorities may consider applying for the Equal Opportunities (Sexual Orientation) Funding Scheme operated by the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB). The research projects funded under the EOC's Funding Programme would not duplicate those under the CMAB's Funding Scheme.

List of research projects funded by the Funding Programme 2013/14 and 2017/18 and their deliverables can be found at the EOC website:
https://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/graphicsfolder/showcontent.aspx?content=funding%20programme%20of%20research%20projects%20on%20equal%20opportunities%202017/18

Two Components of Research Projects: Research and Follow-up Non-research Activities

As well as a research component, a new feature of follow-up non-research activity component is implemented under the Funding Programme 2020/21.

I. Research Component

All research activities of the funded research projects, including but not limited to conducting literature review, collecting and analyzing data, and preparing mid-term progress and/ or research reports, must be carried out and completed within 12 months after commencement of the research projects.[1] The maximum amount of funding to be granted for the research component of each project is HK$50,000.

II. Follow-up Non-research Activity Component (Optional)

To make a wider social impact of the research findings, a new and optional component of follow-up non-research activities is introduced in the Funding Programme 2020/21. Based on the research findings, successful applicants are highly encouraged to carry out follow-up activities for relevant stakeholders, such as workshops, seminars, training sessions and so on. Any of these activities must be carried out and completed within 15 months after commencement of the research projects. An additional maximum amount HK$10,000 will be funded for follow-up non-research activities of each project.

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[1] A presentation of research findings in a press conference is expected to be held by the applicant within 1 month after obtaining EOC's endorsement of the research report.

Application Details

I. Eligibility

1. To ensure quality of the research projects, applicants should be restricted to those with proper credentials and adequate support, including applicants from established not-for-profit educational bodies, registered not-for-profit organizations with track record on equal opportunities related work and academics attached to universities and other degree-awarding institutions in Hong Kong.

2. The applicant must be the organizer of the research project.

3. Joint application (i.e. application jointly made by two or more applicants) is allowed, but a principal applicant must be identified and be responsible for matters relating to the application.   All applicants making joint applications should state clearly their respective responsibilities in the application form.

4. For each project, the applicant must (a) appoint a person-in-charge who will be responsible for overseeing the organization of the research project and, if applicable, the follow-up non-research activities, monitoring the proper use of funds, liaising with the EOC, preparing financial and publicity/ activity reports and giving a presentation of the research findings in a press conference and (b) identify a leader of the research team[2] who will be responsible for conducting the research project, preparing a research report and giving a presentation of the research findings in a press conference.

II. Other Requirements

1. Proposed research project should meet the objectives of the Funding Programme and not be of a fund-raising, profit-making, commercial, religious or political nature.

2. Research projects which have been completed or in progress at the time of making the application will not be considered.

3. Before the application is approved, should the applicant want to change the Person-in-charge of the proposed research project, it should notify the EOC immediately.

4. After the application is approved, the applicant should notify the EOC immediately should it want to change the Person-in-charge of the funded research projects.   The EOC reserves the right to withdraw the approval.   After the commencement of the funded research projects, a refund may be requested if the EOC does not approve the application for change of Person-in-charge.

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[2] Leader of the research team might or might not be affiliated with the principal applicant or joint applicant.

5. If the Person-in-charge leaves the affiliated organization, the EOC would continue to fund the approved research project as long as the organization originally affiliated by the Person-in-charge agrees to continue appointing the latter person as the Person-in-charge.

6. All activities of the proposed research projects should be carried out in Hong Kong.

7. Proposed research projects must have no recurrent cost implication for the EOC.

8. All successful applicants must complete the research activities and, if applicable, follow-up non-research activities within the timeline(s) stated in the research proposal, otherwise EOC may withdraw sponsorship and require the successful applicants to immediately repay all or any funds already provided to them. **Request for extending the time limit for implementation of individual activities will not entertained**, unless with very strong justifications.

9. Upon completion of the research project, funded organization should deliver the following:

    ● A research report in either English **or** Chinese with an executive summary in bilingual (English **and** Chinese) format
    ● A presentation of the research findings in a press conference to be held at the venue provided by the applicant
    ● A financial report
    ● All receipts of reimbursed expenses
    ● A publicity/ activity report
    ● A mid-term progress report for research projects lasting more than 6 months

10. Funded organizations are required to start the approved projects before mid-December 2020.

III. Application Procedures and Deadline for Application

1. Only one application can be submitted by each principal applicant.

2. Deadline of the application is: **1 September 2020 (Tuesday) 5:00pm**.

3. Applicants should deliver the following documents to the EOC Office at 16/F., 41 Heung Yip Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong (Attention: Policy, Research and Training Division) by post or in person on or before the application deadline:

    ● An original copy of the completed application form plus two duplicated copies

- Three copies of the research proposal[3] (i.e. Part B of the Application Form)
- Documentary proof of eligibility to apply
- Other relevant support documents, if any

4. Completed application form and details of the proposed research projects in either English or Chinese are accepted.

5. Date on the postmark should not be later than the deadline. Late application or application with incomplete details will not be considered.

6. For the purpose of considering the applications, the EOC may request applicants to submit additional or supplementary information.

7. All submitted applications, whether accepted or not, will not be returned.

IV. Notification of Results

1. Under normal circumstances, applicants will be notified of the result of the application in writing no more than three months after the application deadline.

2. The EOC's decision on the result of the application shall be final.

3. The EOC reserves the right to announce the application results and to disclose the list of the successful applicants, the research projects funded, the amount of funding and other information of the funded research projects.

Assessment of Application

Applications will be evaluated by Members of Policy, Research and Training Committee of the EOC and EOC staff, whose conflict of interests (if any) is required to be declared prior to the assessment. Approval of applications is based on the following criteria:

- Applicant's knowledge of the proposed research topic

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[3] For applicants wishing to implement a research component of the proposed project only, the research proposal might include but not limited to: (1) the background, scope and specific objectives of the proposed research project, (2) the research design and methods of data collection, (3) the work schedule of the research component, (4) the expected social impacts of the research project, (5) the budget plan with breakdown of costs for each item and (6) CVs of the person-in-charge and leader of the research team (1-2 page for each person). As for applicants opting for implementing any follow-up non-research activity, as well as items (1) – (6) stated above, information about (7) the title and specific objectives of the proposed activity, (8) its contents (such as scale, nature, target participants, etc.), (9) the expected added value of the activity to achieve goals of promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination, (10) the work schedule of the activity and (11) the budget plan with breakdown of costs for each item should be provided. Excluding the CVs, please limit the writing to 12 A4 pages.

- Innovation and social impact of the proposed research project

- Track record and experiences of the applicant and the research team in delivering research projects

- Qualifications of the person-in-charge and the leader of the research team

- Applicant's capacity to engage and mobilize manpower or other types of resource to complete the proposed research project

- Cost-effectiveness of the proposed research project

In addition, the proposed projects should meet the objectives of the Funding Programme and address the needs of the society. Applicants are expected to clearly explain how the proposed projects will help eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

Funding Limit

1. The maximum amount of funding to be granted for the research component of each project is HK$50,000.

2. An additional maximum amount HK$10,000 will be funded for follow-up non-research activities of each research project (if opt for).

Funding Requirements and Procedures

1. The EOC will not fund any project which accepts sponsorship or any kind of financial support from a third party.

2. Applicants may provide funding from their own sources to meet part of the total actual cost of the project. If any, applicants shall set out clearly in the application form the amount of funds to be provided by them.

3. Funding will be administered by providing an advance of 50% of the approved fund for launching the research projects and residual 50% or balance of fund for completion. If there is unused funding after the research project is completed, it should be returned to the EOC with the financial report.

4. **Funded organizations will normally be required to settle the approved budget expenditure on a reimbursement basis.**

5. Funded organizations should submit all receipts within two months after the completion of the research projects. Late submission will not be entertained. The EOC will release the balance of funds after reviewing all the deliverables and receiving all receipts. The EOC may request a refund if the funded organization fails to complete the proposed research project and/ or submit any of the deliverables.

6. Funds should be expended according to the approved itemized budget. If any of the itemized expenses exceed 10% of the original estimate, the organization concerned should submit an explanation to the EOC in writing, and request for advance approval from the EOC.

7. Funded organizations shall accept liabilities for all deficits arising from the project. They shall be responsible for the shortfall in order to complete the project.

Guidelines for the Use of Funding

I. General

1. Fixed assets: Funds allocated to the project should not be used for purchasing fixed assets, for example, computers or furniture.

2. Purchase of materials, equipment and services: Funded organizations should adhere to the following procedures when purchasing materials and services:

   - Obtain more than one quotation for an individual item which costs more than $1,000 or service which costs more than $6,000
   - Contact at least 3 vendors/contractors if an individual item costs more than $10,000
   - Generally the funded organization should choose the lowest quotation

3. Overhead charges or administrative top up: The EOC will not fund overhead charges or administrative top up.

4. Insurance: The EOC encourages the organization to purchase third party insurance for the project.

5. Souvenirs: For better use of resources, souvenirs should not be included as expenses in the proposed budget.

II. Research Component

1. <u>Allowance for staff responsible for data collection and preliminary data analysis</u>: The EOC generally will not subsidize the salary expenditure of the funded organization. However, special consideration may be given to short-term or temporary workers employed on a one-off basis. If a worker is already employed by the organization and not a special recruit for the funded research project, the EOC will not provide funding for any extra allowances. Please note that fringe benefits (including sickness allowance, rest days and statutory holidays, annual leave, MPF contribution, etc.) should be granted to short-term or temporary workers working for the approved research projects in line with the provisions in the Employment Ordinance and any local laws.

2. <u>Press Conference</u>: Every funded organization is required to organize and host a press conference for the release of the research findings to the general public via the media. The venue should be provided by the funded organization. Under normal circumstances, the EOC will not subsidize the rental cost of the venue for the press conference.

III. Follow-up Non-research Activity Component

1. <u>Publicity</u>: The subsidy provided by the EOC for publicity generally should not exceed 15% of the approved budget of the follow-up non-research activity component.

2. <u>Allowance for instructor(s)/ speaker(s)</u>: Funded organizations may recruit instructors or invite speakers from external organizations for conducting workshops/ seminars/ training sessions for participants of the follow-up non-research activities. The maximum allowance/ honorarium for each instructor/ speaker is HK$400 per hour.

3. <u>Allowance for staff responsible for organizing the activities</u>: The EOC generally will not subsidize the salary expenditure of the funded organization. However, special consideration may be given to short-term or temporary workers employed on a one-off basis. If a worker is already employed by the organization and not a special recruit for the funded research project, the EOC will not provide funding for any extra allowances. Please note that fringe benefits (including sickness allowance, rest days and statutory holidays, annual leave, MPF contribution, etc.) should be granted to short-term or temporary workers working for the approved projects in line with the provisions in the Employment Ordinance and any local laws.

4. Allowance for renting venue(s): Funded organizations may rent venue(s) for conducting workshops/ seminars/ training sessions for participants of the follow-up non-research activities.   To save costs for renting a venue for workshops/ seminars/ training sessions, funded organizations are advised to look for and book free/ low-cost venue well in advance.

IV. Others

1. Budget plan(s): To ensure prudent use of public resources, applicants are advised to provide brief explanations for expenditure items listed in the budget(s).

Points to Note

1. **Successful applicants should keep close contacts with the EOC, to enable the EOC to keep abreast of the progress of the research projects.**

2. Successful applicants should be responsible for complying with the provisions of the intellectual property laws of Hong Kong.   On collecting personal data for the research projects, the funding organizations are also liable for complying with the provisions of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.   Special care should be taken to collect information from those aged under 18 and from vulnerable groups, e.g. persons with intellectual disabilities.   The funded research project shall be performed in compliance with all applicable laws, enactments, orders, regulations, codes of practice and other relevant instruments.

3. Successful applicants should indemnify the EOC in full against all claims, demands, actions, costs, expenses, losses and damages arising from or incurred or paid by the EOC as a result of or in connection with breach of any warranty in relation to the activities of the research projects.

4. The copyright for the funded research projects should be shared between the funded organization and the EOC.   When publication is made, the EOC as the funding organization should be acknowledged.

5. Funded organizations shall grant, allow and undertake to assign to the EOC the unrestricted right to inspect, use, reproduce or adapt any material, matter or product made

in the course of or consequent upon the sponsorship herein in any form or manner for any lawful purpose or business of the EOC. Funded organizations shall warrant that the EOC has full and proper right, and authority to do so.

6. If funded organization is not able to carry out the approved research project, the EOC has the right to request a refund from the organization.

7. If there are significant changes to the details of the funded research projects (including the change of the Person-in-charge, the change of the leader of the research team, the change of research design, the adjustment of sample size, etc.), the Person-in-charge of the research project should advise the EOC of the changes in writing. If the EOC is not satisfied with the explanations, it has the authority to rescind the approval and request the organization concerned to refund the EOC.

Briefing Sessions and Enquiries

1. The EOC will hold two briefing sessions on 16 June 2020 (in Cantonese) and 19 June 2020 (in English) to enable applicants to have a better understanding of the Funding Programme. Interested parties shall complete the enrollment form, which can be downloaded from EOC's website and return it by email to EOC **on or before 11 June 2020**.

2. For enquiries about the application, please call 2106 2255 and/ or email at prtdevent@eoc.org.hk.