

# Public Policy Research Funding Scheme and Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme

## Guidance Notes

Applicants must read these Guidance Notes in conjunction with the Guidelines on Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements carefully in preparing applications. All sections of the application form must be completed with supporting documents wherever required. The English version shall prevail whenever there is any discrepancy between the English and Chinese versions.

### 1. Introduction

The Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (PPRFS) and the Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (SPPRFS) are government-financed funding schemes dedicated to supporting public policy research in Hong Kong. The two funding schemes are administered by the Chief Executive's Policy Unit (CEPU).

CEPU is set up to enhance the Government's capabilities in research and advocacy on long-term and strategic issues. Its objectives include –

- (i) to advocate for and assist in the formulation of long-term and strategic policies from a forward-thinking perspective;
- (ii) to keep abreast of national development, including directions, plans and policies, analyse and suggest areas of significance in the integration into national development, and actively participate in and contribute to the pursuit of such areas;
- (iii) to examine international relations and situations, and analyse opportunities and risks, so that the Government can seize opportunities, create a favourable environment for development, and prevent risks at the same time; and
- (iv) to grasp the sentiments of Hong Kong citizens, understand the general direction and focus of their concerns, discover factors that are conducive to social harmony and stability, and assist in decision-making directions and formulation of measures.

In addition to conducting in-house research studies, CEPU aims to build

up external policy research capacity through administering PPRFS and SPPRFS amongst other measures. In line with CEPU's scope of work, researches funded by PPRFS and SPPRFS are expected to be conducive to the achievement of the stated objectives of CEPU and in turn the development of Hong Kong.

Both PPRFS and SPPRFS aim to promote evidence-based public policy research in Hong Kong to facilitate public policy discussion and in turn enhancing policy formulation to meet the needs of society, as well as nurturing the talents required. Specifically, SPPRFS aims to support longer-term public policy research on strategic themes and research areas identified by the Government, build up research capacity and facilitate collaboration among institutions/think tanks whilst PPRFS focuses on smaller scale public policy research of shorter duration. Research studies that will inform Government's policy making process, drive changes, keep up with national development and international trends, and contribute to policy development will be considered for funding. These include applied researches that are problem-focused and solution-oriented, and forward-looking researches on strategic and long-term issues. Only research studies that have direct policy implications or relevance, and the outcomes from which can be effectively and practically translated into policy may be provided with funding. Research that are mainly academic in nature will not be funded.

Applications for PPRFS are accepted throughout the year, while applications for SPPRFS are invited once a year in general.

## 1.1 Research Areas

There are eight major themes for PPRFS, namely (a) co-operation with the Mainland; (b) land and housing; (c) economic development; (d) livelihood issues; (e) innovation and technology; (f) education and youth development; (g) environmental protection; and (h) political development and governance with 29 indicative research areas as set out at [Annex I](#). Applicants are encouraged to prepare proposals on these areas but are free to submit proposals on other research areas. The same assessment criteria shall apply to all applications received.

For SPPRFS, strategic themes and specified research areas will be identified for each year's application in light of the research needs and policy priorities of the Government. All submitted applications must fall under the specified strategic themes and specified research areas announced for each exercise. **Those falling outside the specified strategic themes and specified research areas will not be considered generally.** For 2023-24, eight strategic themes together with specified research areas as set out in [Annex II](#) have been identified. Applications for SPPRFS 2023-24 must be made under one of the strategic themes and in line with the specified research areas.

## **2. Guide to Application**

### **2.1 Eligibility**

The following persons are eligible to apply for funds under PPRFS and SPPRFS -

- (a) academics, teaching/research staff who are teaching or eligible to teach a course in undergraduate programmes or above in degree-awarding institutions of categories (A) and (B) listed below;
- (b) visiting scholars/adjunct professors/honorary professors/emeritus professors who are teaching or eligible to teach a course in undergraduate programmes or above in degree-awarding institutions of categories (A) and (B) listed below; and
- (c) public policy researchers in local non-profit making public policy research think tanks as stated in category (C) below. Principal Investigators (PIs) in this category must possess relevant public policy research experience.

The eligibility of the applicant has to be checked and confirmed by the institutions / think tanks concerned.

#### **(A) *Eight degree-awarding institutions funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC)***

- City University of Hong Kong
- Hong Kong Baptist University
- Lingnan University
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- The Education University of Hong Kong
- The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
- The University of Hong Kong

#### **(B) *Publicly-funded and self-financing local degree-awarding institutions***

- Centennial College
- Gratia Christian College
- HKCT Institute of Higher Education
- Hong Kong Chu Hai College
- Hong Kong Metropolitan University
- Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education
- Hong Kong Shue Yan University

- Saint Francis University
- School of Continuing Education, Hong Kong Baptist University
- School of Professional Education and Executive Development, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, Vocational Training Council
- The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
- The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts
- Tung Wah College
- UOW College Hong Kong
- Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education

***(C) Local non-profit making public policy research think tanks***

Think tanks under this category must be non-profit making and registered in Hong Kong with proven and recognised track records of public policy research.

## **2.2 Quotas of Applications**

There is no quota on the number of applications for an eligible institution/think tank. But the maximum number of PPRFS/SPPRFS projects that a PI can hold concurrently is two normally. The PI should be responsible for the overall management and ownership of the project. It is important that institutions/think tanks should satisfy themselves that the applications are of sufficient quality before they are submitted for consideration.

There is no limit on the number of Co-Investigator(s) (Co-I(s)) who work with the PI on the project, but each Co-I should have a clear, distinct and material role.

## **2.3 Research Mode**

Applicants are welcome to propose any innovative research mode to conduct public policy research which will facilitate mutual exchange between the Government and researchers in public policy research, thereby enabling researchers to gain more insights on policy formulation and enhancing the quality of public policy research in Hong Kong.

To enhance policy relevance of funded projects, PIs are encouraged to proactively engage government bureaux and departments and other stakeholders in the course of research, particularly when drawing up policy recommendations and disseminating project findings.

## **2.4 Project Duration**

### **2.4.1 *PPRFS***

For PPRFS, the duration of research projects will normally last from six to 12 months. Projects with a longer duration up to three years will be considered if strong support and justifications are provided.

### **2.4.2 *SPPRFS***

For SPPRFS, the duration of research projects may last from one to five years.

### **2.4.3 *Commencement of Project***

PPRFS and SPPRFS projects shall commence within three months upon the funding award or the grant shall be withdrawn. The PI shall provide sound justifications and seek the prior approval of the PPRFS and SPPRFS Secretariat for defer of project start date.

## **2.5 Funding**

### **2.5.1 *Funding Cap on PPRFS***

Given the keen competition for the limited funds available, each project under PPRFS will normally be granted HK\$1 million or below. Applicants are required to provide strong justifications for any project costing over HK\$1 million.

### **2.5.2 *Funding Cap on SPPRFS***

The funding cap for each project granted under the SPPRFS is HK\$5 million.

### **2.5.3 *Guiding Principles***

Unless otherwise approved by the Secretariat, expenditure could only be incurred during the approved project period. Expenditure incurred outside the project period could not be covered by PPRFS and SPPRFS funds.

The principle of economy and cost effectiveness of expenditure shall be observed at all times. Proper records and documentation of quotations should be kept for audit purposes.

Institutions/think tanks and PIs have the responsibilities to ensure that PPRFS/SPPRFS grants are used appropriately and reasonably within the approved scope and timeframe. The Secretariat shall not be bound to reimburse

expenditure outside the approved scope or not properly incurred. It will claw back the released fund on such items and the institutions/think tanks concerned shall return the corresponding amount to the Government. Institutions/think tanks also bear the primary responsibility for prevention, detection, and investigation of research misconduct, including but not limited to misuse of funds, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, falsification, fabrication, double-dipping and non-disclosure of similar / related research work in the application. They are strongly advised to vet the applications using anti-plagiarism software before submitting them to the Secretariat.

#### **2.5.4 *Permissible Items***

Under the policy on the prevention of double benefits, PPRFS/SPPRFS grants must **not** be used to remunerate PIs and Co-I(s), or to subsidise their salaries, including honorarium, in any way, if they are receiving any forms of salary/remuneration/honorarium/allowance by public funds.

Funding support may be provided for the remuneration of research support staff, such as Senior Research Assistants, Research Assistants and Student Helpers, who assist in conducting research work and are remunerated with salary. In case where a research supporting staff is employed for several projects, his/her salary should be apportioned pro rata accordingly. The policy on the prevention of double benefits also applies to the remuneration of research support staff. The underlying principle is to ensure prudent use of public resources.

Applicants who fail to comply with the rules on the prevention of double benefits will be required to refund the Government the benefits overpaid to them with interest.

In cases where there is genuine need, funding for relief teachers may be provided so as to enable the PI concerned to allocate sufficient time for research. Relief teachers engaged for this purpose are meant to relieve the PIs of their day-to-day teaching loads and administrative burden related to teaching.

Nevertheless, it is the primary responsibility of institutions to make the best use of their resources. Hence, such funding will be provided only exceptionally. PIs have to provide detailed and reasonable justification. For details, please refer to the Guidelines on Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements for the PPRFS and SPPRFS.

PPRFS/SPPRFS grants could be used for covering the overhead expenses relating to a project at a rate up to 15% of the grant.

PPRFS/SPPRFS grants could also be used for covering the audit fee for a project, which should not exceed HK\$5,000 for projects lasting less than 36 months and HK\$15,000 for projects lasting 36 months or above.

PPRFS/SPPRFS grants must **not** be used for the procurement of equipment (other than stationery, printing, reference books, etc. that are **not** regarded as equipment). Funding may be used to purchase specialised software licenses (e.g. data analysis software like NVivo), but **not** general software licenses (e.g. Microsoft Windows & Office).

Funding requests for the provision of transportation and accommodation for general participants of dissemination events, meals, editing, proofreading and translation of reports/publications and dissemination in journals will **not** be entertained.

### **2.5.5 *Outsourcing of Research Work***

While any outsourcing or sub-contracting of research work is strictly prohibited, proposals to outsource the work of conducting opinion surveys may be accepted, subject to justifications and considerations by the Assessment Panel (see Section 3.1 below).

### **2.5.6 *Data Collection outside Hong Kong***

In principle, PPRFS/SPPRFS grants should primarily be used for undertaking research work in Hong Kong. PIs may only use the grant for data collection outside Hong Kong if this is a necessary and justified part of the research. The Assessment Panel will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the merits and justifications provided by PIs.

## **2.6 Submission of Application**

The application form, including the research proposal, must be –

- (a) endorsed by the institution/think tank concerned with signature of the person-in-charge of the organisation and official chop of the organisation; and
- (b) in the specified format and submitted to the PPRFS and SPPRFS Secretariat by email ([ppr@cepu.gov.hk](mailto:ppr@cepu.gov.hk)).

Clarifications or supplementary information from the applicant may be required whenever necessary. Applications will be processed for vetting **only** after the receipt of all relevant information, including submissions of clarifications or supplementary information.

The Secretariat reserves the right not to consider an application on grounds including that the application has been declined previously on the ground of research misconduct by PPRFS/SPPRFS or other funding agencies, or that in all

the circumstances the granting of funding to the application will be contrary to public interest.

## **2.7 Access to Third-Party Data and Research Ethics/Safety Approval**

If access to data and records from third-parties, including government department(s) or official agencies, is critical to the proposed study, the PI should provide evidence in the application form that the parties concerned have been approached for approval of access to the related data/records and if the application is approved for funding, to provide confirmation of such approval as soon as possible, and in any case before commencement of the project<sup>1</sup>.

It is the responsibility of PIs and the institutions/think tanks to ensure that the research proposals are carefully reviewed for their compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards. Ethics clearance should be sought for research involving human subjects, living animals and/or artefacts. PIs should provide relevant ethics approvals and/or safety approvals as soon as possible, and in any case before commencement of the project.

Failure to observe the above requirements will result in withdrawal of grants. In such a case, the institution/think tank concerned would need to return disbursed funds, if any, to the Government.

## **2.8 Disclosure of Information**

It is the responsibility of PIs to provide true and accurate information in the application form. Withholding or failure to disclose material information relating to the application, including but not limited to the omission of details of similar / related research work or similar / related research proposal for which other funding previously or currently applied and/or approved, may result in disqualification of the application and/or other disciplinary action. Details on how such cases will be handled and the penalty are available at the Procedures for Handling Research Misconduct available on the schemes' webpage. For the PIs' own interests, it is advisable for the PI to declare related research work even when there is uncertainty. Declaration of related proposals / projects / research work does not necessarily mean that the applications concerned will be adversely affected. The application may still be funded if the PI is able to justify the differences of the proposals / projects / research work for separate funding and the need to conduct the proposed research work despite similar research has been / will be conducted.

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<sup>1</sup> PPRFS and SPPRFs projects shall commence within three months upon the funding award.

## **2.9 Processing Time of Applications**

Generally speaking, the assessment process of applications under PPRFS and SPPRFS takes approximately six months, but the duration of which could be subject to change depending on the actual circumstances.

## **3. Assessment Mechanism**

### **3.1 Assessment Panel**

An Assessment Panel set up by the Government will consider all PPRFS and SPPRFS applications and make recommendations to the Government. The Panel is chaired by and comprises experienced academics. Please refer to the scheme's webpage for the composition of the Assessment Panel.

### **3.2 Peer Review**

Apart from Panel Readers, applications under PPRFS and SPPRFS will also be assessed by reviewers who are not members of the Assessment Panel (non-Panel reviewers)<sup>2</sup>. The non-Panel reviewers include both local and non-local experienced academics and experts. To ensure policy relevance of the research proposals, suggestions and views of relevant Government bureaux/departments will also be sought for reference by the Panel.

### **3.3 Assessment Criteria**

Research quality and the relevance of the proposal to the public policy and needs of Hong Kong are the principal criteria in assessing research proposals.

In considering a research proposal, due consideration will be given to –

- (a) research/scholarly merit including research design and methodology, novelty and innovation;
- (b) relevance and implication to public policy development in Hong Kong; the extent to which it will foster informed discussion on the relevant policy and address the needs of Hong Kong; whether the findings can be effectively and practically translated into policy from a forward-looking perspective, taking into account national development and international situation; and dissemination plan;

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<sup>2</sup> Each qualified PPRFS application will be assessed by at least 2 Panel Readers and 1 non-Panel reviewer, whereas each qualified SPPRFS application will be reviewed by the Assessment Panel and each shortlisted application will be assessed by at least 2 Panel Readers and 2 non-Panel reviewers.

- (c) feasibility and practicality of the proposal;
- (d) the capability of the applicant, including academic qualifications, research records, past research performance, and outcomes of past projects;
- (e) whether the research proposal's schedule of implementation is well-planned and practicable, and the duration is reasonable;
- (f) whether the proposed budget is prudent, realistic and cost-effective, with full justifications provided;
- (g) whether the research proposal has alternative sources of funding support; and
- (h) whether there is or likely to be a duplication of the work already or currently carried out by other groups.

### **3.3.1 SPPRFS**

Applications for SPPRFS will first be screened if they fall under the specified strategic themes and specified research areas. Research quality and the strategic relevance to the public policy development of Hong Kong are the primary considerations in evaluating SPPRFS research proposals. In considering a research proposal, besides the assessment criteria set out in section 3.3 above, the Assessment Panel will also take into account institutional support towards capacity building in public policy research (e.g. infrastructure support or matching funds), and any external funding sources and support.

Research teams of shortlisted proposals may be invited for a selection interview, in which the research teams will present their proposal to the Assessment Panel. Government bureaux/departments concerned may also be invited to send representatives to attend the selection interview on the relevant proposals. Government bureau/department representatives are welcome to raise questions to the research teams and offer policy views and insights to the Assessment Panel to enrich the assessment process.

## **3.4 Assessment Process**

Qualified applications will undergo a very rigorous assessment process which involves the Assessment Panel and non-Panel reviewers made up of local and non-local experienced academics and experts. In deciding whether to recommend funding for an application, the Assessment Panel will take into account the comments of individual reviewers and the views of relevant bureaux/departments. The Assessment Panel will take a holistic view on the research proposal and reach a collective decision. Grants are allocated on a competitive basis (the success rate is based on the general quality of the proposals

as assessed by the Assessment Panel, and the availability of funds, in a particular year). No appeal will be entertained by the Assessment Panel unless in case of a major procedural flaw. Where appropriate, applicants are encouraged to revise their applications for re-submission.

### **3.5 Avoidance of Conflict of Interest**

To avoid conflict of interest, any member of the Assessment Panel who has any connection with an applicant, such as belonging to the same organisation (in the past or currently), should declare interest at the meeting before joining the discussion. After an interest has been declared, the Chairman of the Assessment Panel shall consider whether an actual or perceived conflict of interest has arisen and accordingly decide whether the member concerned may speak or vote on the matter, remain in the meeting as an observer, withdraw from the meeting altogether, or other appropriate action. A declaration of interests system is also in place for other reviewers to ensure that the assessments are fair and impartial.

If, for the avoidance of conflict of interest, an applicant wants to exclude a person from reviewing his or her application, the applicant should submit to the Secretariat separately the request in writing, setting out the full circumstances and justification. Such request should not be made under any section of an application which in its entirety will be sent to reviewers for assessment. In all cases, the Secretariat reserves the right of final decision on the selection of reviewers. In order to preserve anonymity of reviewers for upholding the integrity of the assessment mechanism, the Secretariat will not inform the applicant of the outcome of the decision.

## **4. Monitoring and Funding Arrangement**

### **4.1 PPRFS**

An Initial Progress Report should be submitted five months after approval of application to demonstrate good progress of the project and the research is carried out in accordance with the approved proposal. 50% of the funding for a project shall be disbursed upon approval of the project and signing of an undertaking and 30% upon acceptance of an Initial Progress Report. The remaining 20% of the funding shall be disbursed upon acceptance of a final report. For PPRFS project with duration longer than one year, the PI has to submit a Mid-Term Progress Report by the end of half of the project period. If considered appropriate by the Assessment Panel, the final payment for a project of which the revised final report is rated “unsatisfactory” may not be disbursed or disbursed in full.

## 4.2 SPPRFS

Progress Reports should be submitted at an interval as specified by the Secretariat to demonstrate good progress of the SPPRFS project and the research is carried out in accordance with the approved proposal.

For SPPRFS projects lasting 24 months or below, funding will be released in three tranches. 50% of the funding for a project shall be disbursed upon approval of the project and signing of an undertaking. 30% of the funding shall be disbursed upon acceptance of a Deliverable Progress Report to be submitted by the end of half of the project period. For monitoring purpose, Progress Reports should be submitted by the end of one-fourth and three-fourths of the project period. The remaining balance of 20% of the funding shall be released upon acceptance of a final report.

For SPPRFS projects lasting over 24 months, funding will be released in four tranches. 40% of the funding for a project shall be disbursed upon approval of the project and signing of an undertaking. 30% and 20% of the funding shall be disbursed upon acceptance of the First and Second Deliverable Progress Reports, to be submitted by the end of one-third and two-thirds of the project period respectively. For monitoring purpose, Progress Reports should be submitted by the end of one-sixth, half and five-sixths of the project period. The remaining balance of 10% of the funding shall be released upon acceptance of a final report.

If considered appropriate by the Assessment Panel, the final payment for a project of which the revised final report is rated “unsatisfactory” may not be disbursed or disbursed in full.

## 4.3 PPRFS and SPPRFS

Ongoing projects will be monitored by the Secretariat. All completed projects will be reviewed by the Assessment Panel, which will assess the effectiveness of the project by comparing the project results against its original objectives and targets as set out in the project proposal. Relevant Government bureaux/departments’ comments may also be sought.

PIs have to submit a final report (in softcopy and in both word and pdf formats) by the completion date and two colour-printed and bound hard copies of the final report upon notification by the Secretariat. PIs also have to submit a Completion Report with quantitative empirical data generated from the research, if any, (in word/excel, pdf and machine readable such as comma-separated values (CSV) formats) accompanied by an auditor’s report<sup>3</sup> within six months after the

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<sup>3</sup> The auditor’s report should be prepared by an independent certified public accountant declaring that all expenses incurred fall within the approved scope and are in line with these Guidance Notes, and (2024.01)

project completion date.

Timely submission of reports is important and reflects on the diligence and ability of the PI and the institution in managing a project. If an extension of the submission deadline is required, prior written approval should be obtained from the Secretariat. An extension of three months of the deadline for final report may be granted in justifiable cases. Further extension may be granted only under exceptional circumstances and with strong justifications.

If reports remain overdue without sound justifications or are not submitted in accordance with the required format and/or contain insufficient information, or if PIs fail to revise and resubmit as required by the Secretariat by the specified deadline, the Secretariat will consider taking follow-up action as appropriate, including but not limited to withholding payments, recovering disbursed payment, terminating the projects and rating them as “unsatisfactory” for record and taking it into account when considering new applications from the PI.

If projects are not carried out in accordance with the approved work plan (or the revised work plan as subsequently approved by the Secretariat), implementation date and period, these Guidance Notes, the Guidelines on Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements for PPRFS and SPPRFS, and terms and conditions specified by the Secretariat and/or the Government, if the PI fails to seek the Secretariat’s prior approval for any major changes, if the PI is found to have committed research misconduct, or if any of the research activities or the research report may constitute a breach of any laws applicable to Hong Kong from time to time, the Secretariat reserves the right to withhold the release of the approved fund, deduct the amount of grant, revoke the funding approval, terminate with retrospective effect from the date of PI’s departure (for change of PI) or the original project completion date (for project extension), claw back the released fund, remove the project from the list of granted projects and take other actions as appropriate.

The above cases may also be brought to the Assessment Panel for consideration whether the non-compliance should be taken into account as part of the PI’s track record in assessment of future applications; whether the PI should be debarred from making applications under PPRFS and SPPRFS for up to three years; and/or whether a financial penalty should be imposed.

#### **4.4 Public Dissemination of Final Reports**

Final reports which are rated “satisfactory” by the Assessment Panel will be uploaded onto the schemes’ webpage for public reference. For reports which are

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the Guidelines on Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements for the PPRFS and SPPRFS and any terms and conditions specified by the Secretariat and/or the Government.

rated “unsatisfactory”, the relevant PIs will be required to revise and re-submit the final reports within two months for the Assessment Panel’s re-consideration. If a revised final report is rated “satisfactory”, it will be uploaded onto the schemes’ webpage. However, if a revised final report remains “unsatisfactory”, neither the report nor its abstract will be uploaded onto the schemes’ webpage. Instead, a remark stating that “*the Assessment Panel decided that this report has not been completed according to requirements*” would appear next to the relevant project title on the schemes’ webpage. The relevant case will be brought to the attention of the President of the institution/head of the think tank concerned. The Assessment Panel will take into account the PI’s record of producing an “unsatisfactory” final report when considering future applications from the PI. The Assessment Panel may also decide to debar the PI from applying for funding for up to three years if so warranted. If considered appropriate by the Assessment Panel, the final payment for such projects may not be disbursed or disbursed in full as an additional penalty.

## **5. Presentation of Results**

PIs will be invited to present research findings to the Government as appropriate.

## **6. Intellectual Property Rights and Use of Project Data**

All PIs and Co-I(s) shall grant for the benefits of the Government, its authorised users, assigns and successors-in-title an irrevocable, non-exclusive, perpetual, transferrable, sub-licensable, royalty-free and worldwide licence to use the Results. Such licence to use shall include the right to (a) copy the Results in any format and in any medium; (b) upload the Results including the final report of the research onto the schemes’ webpage and make available copies thereof to the public; (c) issue copies of the Results to the public including publishing the Results or any part thereof in reports, publications and/or publicity materials; (d) circulate the Results to bureaux and departments of the Government, statutory bodies and other organisations/parties for reference; (e) playing and showing the Results or any part thereof in the public; and (f) making an adaptation of the Results or any part thereof. In relation to any part of the Results to which PIs and Co-I(s) are not empowered to grant the licence aforesaid, PIs and Co-I(s) undertake to procure at their sole costs and expenses the grant of such rights for the benefits of the Government, its authorised users, assigns and successors-in-title by the relevant third party Intellectual Property Rights owners. In all instances, the copyright of PIs and Co-I(s) will be duly acknowledged.

PIs and Co-I(s) warrant to the Government that -

(i) the provision of the Results in performing the research project, the use or

possession by the Government, its authorised users, assigns and successors-in-title of the Results or any part thereof for any of the purposes contemplated by the application form/Guidance Notes/Guidelines on Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements does not and will not infringe any Intellectual Property Rights and any other rights of any persons.

- (ii) in respect of any materials used by PIs and Co-I(s) in the performance of the research project and in respect of which any Intellectual Property Rights are vested in a third party, PIs and Co-I(s) shall have obtained the grant of all necessary clearances for themselves and their authorised users, and the Government, its authorised users, assigns and successors-in-title authorising the use of such materials for any of the purposes contemplated by the application form/Guidance Notes/ Guidelines on Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements.

“Intellectual Property Rights” means patents, trade marks, service marks, trade names, design rights, copyright, domain names, database rights, rights in know-how, new inventions, designs or processes and other intellectual property rights whether now known or created in future (of whatever nature and wherever arising) and in each case whether registered or unregistered and including applications for the grant of any such rights.

“Results” means any output arising from applications approved under the PPRFS and SPPRFS including articles, papers, presentations, summaries, publications, statistics, videos and reports.

Five years after completion of the research project, the quantitative empirical data generated from the research would be uploaded onto the schemes’ webpage for data archiving. Users of the data sets archived will be required to acknowledge the research team and the Government. Such sharing of project data among the public policy community would facilitate the development of evidence-based public policy research in Hong Kong. Empirical datasets provided in CSV format will also be uploaded onto DATA.GOV.HK five years after completion of the research project.

## **7. Liability**

Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in Results from projects funded by PPRFS and SPPRFS do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Notwithstanding the provision of the grant by the Government, or the compliance by the PI and the institution/think tank with the conditions of such grant, the PI and institution/think tank shall remain solely liable for all costs,

liability or damages relating to the project and the publication of such work.

## **8. Research Integrity**

The Assessment Panel and the Secretariat attach great importance to research integrity and all researchers are expected to observe the highest standard of integrity in preparing research proposals and conduct of researches. Researchers should adhere to good practices adopted widely by the research community in the conduct of research and observe the research integrity policies and ethical guidelines of the relevant institutions/think tanks. Researchers applying for or in receipt of PPRFS/PPRFS funding are required to strictly follow all the rules and guidelines and fulfil all the requirements set out by the Secretariat. It is the responsibility of the researchers to seek clarification from the Research Office of their affiliated institutions/think tanks when there is any doubt or uncertainty about the requirements. Institutions/think tanks are required to report immediately to the Secretariat any suspected research misconduct in relation to PPRFS/SPPRFS applications and PPRFS/SPPRFS-funded projects. All cases of suspected research misconduct will be handled seriously and fairly in accordance with the Procedures for Handling Research Misconduct available on the schemes' webpage.

## **9. Use and Handling of Personal Data**

Details on the use and handling of personal data are set out in [Annex III](#).

**PPRFS & SPPRFS Secretariat**  
**January 2024**

**Public Policy Research Funding Scheme  
Indicative Research Areas**

**Co-operation with the Mainland**

**Code**

- |           |   |           |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Harnessing the Opportunities and Meeting the Challenges Arising from the Implementation of the National Five-Year Plan</b>   | <b>C1</b> |
| 1a.       | <i>Complementing the National “Dual Circulation” Strategy</i>   |           |
| 1b.       | <i>Advancement of Hong Kong’s Comparative Strengths: International Financial, Transportation and Trade Centres, and Centre for International Legal and Dispute Resolution Services</i>                              |           |
| 1c.       | <i>Creating New Edge for Hong Kong: International Innovation and Technology Hub, International Aviation Hub, Centre for International Cultural Exchange, and Regional Intellectual Property (IP) Trading Centre</i> |           |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA)</b>   | <b>C2</b> |
| 2a.       | <i>Hong Kong Linking Up the GBA and the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)</i>  |           |
| 2b.       | <i>Co-operation with GBA Airports and/or Cities to Entrench Hong Kong’s Leading Position in Air Cargo</i>   |           |
| 2c.       | <i>Hong Kong’s Roles and Contributions to Make the GBA a World-leading Innovation Hub in China</i>  |           |
| 2d.       | <i>Connectivity and Flow of People, Goods, Capital and Information in the GBA</i>   |           |
| 2e.       | <i>Studying, Working and Living in the GBA</i>  |           |
| 2f.       | <i>Hong Kong – Macao collaboration</i>  |           |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Belt and Road Initiative</b>   | <b>C3</b> |

**Land and Housing**

- |           |   |           |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| <b>4.</b> | <b>Land and Housing Supply</b>  | <b>C4</b> |
| 4a.       | <i>Supply of Housing Land and Residential Premises</i>  |           |
| 4b.       | <i>Optimal Utilisation of Agricultural Land in the New Territories</i>                                      |           |
| 4c.       | <i>Feasible Proposal on Tackling Partitioned Room/Subdivided Unit Problem by Using Transitional Housing</i> |           |
| 4d.       | <i>Balance between Land Development and Conservation</i>  |           |
| 4e.       | <i>Expediting Development Process to Quicken Housing Delivery</i>   |           |
| 4f.       | <i>Tackling Ageing Buildings and Facilitating Urban Transformation</i>                                      |           |

- 4g. *Increasing Land Supply to Meet Future Economic Growth and/or Social Needs*
- 4h. *Balance between Liveability and Housing Production in Town Planning and Management*
- 4i. *Future Demand for Commercial/Office Floorspace and a Preferred Office Land Development Strategy in Hong Kong under the New Normal*

## **Economic Development**

### **5. Regional Co-operation and Development C5**

- 5a. *Opportunities for Hong Kong under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership*
- 5b. *Economic Relationship and Prospects between Hong Kong and ASEAN Countries*

### **6. Diversification of Hong Kong's Economic Base C6**

- 6a. *Recycling Industry*
- 6b. *Re-industrialisation*
- 6c. *Industry Positioning/Key Drivers for Sustainable Growth of Another Core Business District in Kowloon East*
- 6d. *Innovation and Technology Development*
- 6e. *Creative Industries - Promoting the Use of Cultural IP*
- 6f. *Effectiveness of the Industrial Building Revitalisation Scheme in Kowloon East*

### **7. City Branding C7**

- 7a. *Promoting Hong Kong and Rebuilding Local and Overseas Confidence*
- 7b. *Arts and Culture, Sports and Major Events*
- 7c. *Domestic and International Tourism*
- 7d. *Heritage Conservation*

## **Livelihood Issues**

### **8. Poverty and Inequality C8**

- 8a. *Strategies to Tackle Poverty and Inequality*
- 8b. *Social Mobility and Inter-generational Poverty*
- 8c. *Inequalities Among New Immigrants/Ethnic Minorities*

- 9. Ageing Population** **C9**
- 9a. *Old-age Income Security*
  - 9b. *Economic and Social Participation of Elderly People*
  - 9c. *Promoting Intergenerational Support and Solidarity*
  - 9d. *Ageing in Place: Policies and Practices*
  - 9e. *Dying in Place: Policies and Practices*
  - 9f. *Building Age-friendly Living Environments*
  - 9g. *Silver-hair Market*
  - 9h. *Active and Healthy Aging Policies*
  - 9i. *Green Burial*
  - 9j. *Family Carers*
  - 9k. *Portability of Social Welfare Benefits*
- 10. Labour and Employment** **C10**
- 10a. *Statutory Minimum Wage*
  - 10b. *Female Participation in the Workforce*
  - 10c. *Elderly Participation in the Workforce*
  - 10d. *Retirement Protection and Progressive Retirement Practices*
  - 10e. *Skills for the Future and Local Workforce Transformation*
  - 10f. *Occupational Safety and Health*
  - 10g. *Conditions of Work (Remote Working and Flexible Working Arrangements, etc.)*
  - 10h. *Immigration and Emigration: Nature, Impacts, Problems to Individuals, Families and Society; and Prospects of Talents and Professionals Attraction and Retention*
  - 10i. *Long-term Unemployment and Underemployment*
- 11. Family Policies and Children’s Welfare** **C11**
- 11a. *Fostering a Supportive Environment for Forming and Raising Families (e.g. Access to Affordable and Quality Childcare, Family-friendly Employment Practices, Gender Equality in Families, etc.)*
  - 11b. *Impact of Housing, Childcare Services, Long Working Hours and Other Factors on Fertility Rate*
  - 11c. *Family and Family Related Issues*
  - 11d. *Children’s Rights, Wellbeing and Child Protection*

- 12. Building an Inclusive Society** **C12**
- 12a. *Social Inclusion of New Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities*
  - 12b. *People with Disabilities*
  - 12c. *Students with Special Education Needs*

- 13. Health** **C13**
- 13a. *Long Term Care Financing*
  - 13b. *Primary Care and Services*
  - 13c. *Medical-Social Collaboration*
  - 13d. *Biotechnology Development and Bioethics*
  - 13e. *Public Support and Participation for Control of Communicable Diseases*
  - 13f. *Telehealth and Telemedicine*
  - 13g. *Post-COVID 19 Pandemic Era*
  - 13h. *Development of Chinese Medicine*

- 14. Transport** **C14**

**Innovation and Technology**

- 15. Information and Technology in Education** **C15**
- 15a. *E-learning under the New Normal*
  - 15b. *Risks and Opportunities Brought about by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) to Education*

- 16. Technology, Innovation and Creativity** **C16**
- 16a. *Policies to Support Digital Transformation: Digital Currency, Robotics Process Automation, Blockchain, AI, etc.*
  - 16b. *Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG)*
  - 16c. *Entrepreneurship and Innovation*
  - 16d. *Supporting Emerging Industries: Policies Change and Evolution*

- 17. Technology in Transport** **C17**
- 17a. *Application of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in Tackling Traffic and Transport Problems in Urban Areas*
  - 17b. *Application of ICT in Enhancing Connectivity and Walkability in Urban Areas*

## **Education and Youth Development**

### **18. Education C18**

- 18a. *National Education*
- 18b. *STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, Mathematics) Education*
- 18c. *Media Literacy Education*
- 18d. *Vocational and Professional Education and Training*
- 18e. *Developing Hong Kong as a Regional Education Hub*

### **19. Youth Development C19**

- 19a. *Effective Youth Development Programme and Evaluation*
- 19b. *Building Multiple Education and Employment Pathways*
- 19c. *Youth Entrepreneurship*
- 19d. *Youth Engagement in Community and Public Affairs*

## **Environmental Protection**

### **20. Air Quality C20**

- 20a. *Air Quality Monitoring*
- 20b. *New Energy Vehicles*

### **21. Waste Management C21**

- 21a. *Resources Recovery*

### **22. Green Building C22**

### **23. Ecological Conservation C23**

- 23a. *Promoting Conservation of Private Land with High Ecological Value*
- 23b. *Engaging the Non-governmental Sector (in particular Business Sector) in Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity*

### **24. Water Quality C24**

### **25. Climate Change and Energy C25**

### **26. Sustainable Consumption and Green Living C26**

<b>27.</b>	<b>Countryside Conservation</b>	<b>C27</b>
27a.	<i>Collaboration with Other Cities in the GBA to Support Cultural, Green/Ecological, Historical and Heritage Conservation and Eco-recreation Development</i>	

**Political Development and Governance**

<b>28.</b>	<b>Governance, Administration and Public Engagement</b>	<b>C28</b>
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<b>29.</b>	<b>Social Media in Governance</b>	<b>C29</b>
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<b><u>Others</u></b>		<b>C30</b>
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**Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (SPPRFS)  
Strategic Themes (2023-24)**

	<b><u>Code</u></b>
1. Development Opportunities from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area under the National 14th Five-Year Plan	<b>SG01</b>
2. The Third Generation Internet (Web3)	<b>SG02</b>
3. Public Sector Reform	<b>SG03</b>
4. Achieving Carbon Neutrality	<b>SG04</b>
5. Hydrogen Economy	<b>SG05</b>
6. Sustainable Development of Elderly Care Service under an Ageing Population	<b>SG06</b>
7. Healthcare Innovations in the Post-COVID 19 Pandemic Era	<b>SG07</b>
8. Education	<b>SG08</b>

**Important Note:** Applications for SPPRFS 2023-24 must be made under one of the strategic themes and in line with the specified research area(s). Those falling outside the specified strategic themes and specified research area(s) will NOT be considered generally.

## SG01 - Development Opportunities from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) under the National 14th Five-Year Plan

### **Background**

The GBA includes nine municipalities in Guangdong, as well as the two Special Administrative Regions (SAR) of Hong Kong and Macao. The development of the GBA is a key national development strategy in the country's reform and opening up in the new era. Its objectives are to further deepen cooperation amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, and to promote coordinated regional development to achieve "win-win" outcome for all.

An "Outline Development Plan for the Development of the GBA" (ODP) was promulgated in February of 2019 setting out the key guiding principles and policy directions for the all-round development of the GBA up to 2035. Hong Kong is named in the ODP as one of the four "core cities" to drive the coordinated regional development in the GBA. In March 2021, the National People's Congress approved the "Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" (the 14th Five-Year Plan), which is the blueprint and action agenda for the social and economic development of the country in the next five years. In this blueprint, Hong Kong's competitive strengths as international financial, transportation and trade centres as well as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region have continued to be recognised for advancement, while new impetus has been awarded to, namely, an international innovation and technology hub, an international aviation hub, an East meets West centre for international cultural exchange and an intellectual property trading hub. On high-quality GBA development, one of the objectives is to establish a brand of quality exchanges among the young people of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this strategic theme should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. 14th Five-Year Plan and the related strategic development plans of the nine Guangdong municipalities within the GBA:  
Research should focus on the development plan of several (or all) individual Mainland cities of the GBA, while opportunities in specific economic sectors could be examined especially where the relevant municipality has unique potential for significant development in the 14th Five-Year Plan period and beyond, and in which Hong Kong businesses have expertise to offer, leading to sustainable and economically viable partnerships with win-win results for relevant parties.
2. Hong Kong as an intellectual property (IP) trading hub:  
This is the first time the Mainland authorities have rendered support for Hong Kong to be developed into an IP trading hub in the national development blueprint. It would be useful to review Hong Kong's strengths in the IP regime, identify how we can contribute to the national development and map out the strategies in areas including talent recruitment and capacity building to establish Hong Kong's leading position.
3. Possible areas of Hong Kong's contributions towards the promotion of vibrant cultural development in the GBA, hence also enabling various sectors of the cultural and creative industries of Hong Kong to seize opportunities arising from this development:  
Chapter 8.2 of the ODP calls for "Jointly Developing a Cultural Bay Area". Specific hardware (Hong Kong Palace Museum, Xiqu Centre, etc.) and software (HK International Film & TV Market, HK Book Fair, etc.) items in Hong Kong have been highlighted. The

National 14thth Five-Year Plan raises the support for Hong Kong to develop into a hub of arts and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world. In-depth study on the potential of the Hong Kong cultural and creative industries in the context of the GBA development, identification of the expertise that they can contribute, as well as areas and ways in which they may collaborate with partners in other GBA cities could provide useful reference for the stakeholders in leveraging the enormous opportunities of GBA development.

4. Opportunities for Hong Kong young people in the context of the GBA development:  
Various policies and support measures have been rolled out by the HKSAR Government as well as the Mainland authorities to help Hong Kong young people understand and seize the opportunities of GBA development. The focus of such policies/measures have also expanded from opportunities for further study and start-ups to employment in private and more recently public institutions in the Mainland cities of the GBA. Research on the medium term effect of such measures, such as through longitudinal studies over a 3-to-5-year period, could provide a comprehensive picture that could help policy makers identify gaps (if any) and corresponding enhancement measures for young people better understand what is available to them.
5. Enhancing understanding of Hong Kong residents in the Mainland cities of the GBA:  
At present, many Hong Kong residents are residing in the Mainland cities of the GBA for work, studies, or retirement. It would be useful if systematic and/or longitudinal studies could be carried out to assess the size of Hong Kong residents in different Mainland cities of the GBA, their needs, the considerations surrounding the choice they made, and the policies or measures that are most useful to them, etc. This might assist policy makers to consider what further measures could be taken for the benefit of the Hong Kong residents living therein, and to facilitate others who are considering the option of residing in the Mainland cities of the GBA to make an informed decision.

## SG02 - The Third Generation Internet (Web3)

### **Background**

Web3, also known as the decentralised web, is a new iteration of the World Wide Web which incorporates concepts such as decentralisation, blockchain technologies, and token-based economics. The Financial Secretary has announced in the 2023-24 Budget Speech to allocate \$50 million to expedite the Web3 ecosystem development.

Web3, currently in its start-up period, has the huge potential of bringing about new applications and fresh opportunities, and even disrupts the mode of business operation. While we are seizing the opportunity to spearhead innovation development and to realise the benefits of Web3, we should also be mindful not to compromise the rights and interests of individuals and the society as a whole.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this strategic theme should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. Web3 developments in Mainland and overseas countries including policies and strategies, development plans, governance and legal frameworks, supporting infrastructures, and industry facilitation measures, etc.; their relevancy and applicability to Hong Kong and how Hong Kong could ride on or integrate with these developments to enhance our competitiveness
2. Current development of Web3 in Hong Kong and the opportunities that could be brought to the society and the business sector
3. Social and economic impact of Web3 development, including but not limited to issues related to privacy, governance, national security, accessibility, etc.
4. Talent development needs for Web3 having regard to Hong Kong's position in the Greater Bay Area

### **Expected Project Duration**

It would be desirable for researches under this strategic theme to be completed within two years with a view to generating findings and policy recommendations in a timely manner for the Government's reference.

## SG03 - Public Sector Reform

### **Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to the Government and heightened the public's expectation on public services delivery. Prompt response and adaptation to changing needs, rapid deployment of digital technologies and accelerated provision of e-government services to meet the demand of citizens and the trade have become the norm. As we approach the post-pandemic era, it is an opportune time for the Government to re-think and identify reform areas to make the public sector more efficient, integrated, responsive and resilient.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this strategic theme should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. Rising public expectations are putting pressure on the Government to provide joined-up government services that cut across the conventional organisational and geographical boundary. In response, how can government bureaux and departments connect and break organisational/ information silos or geographical constraints to meet the citizens' needs? How to design the governance and service models? What services are the potential candidates to be included under a pilot scheme on joined-up government services? How can government bureaux and departments build the capability to pave the way in providing joined-up government services?
2. Recent development of IT infrastructure and application of other innovations and technologies are transforming the way the Government works and the way the Government interacts with citizens and the trade. With a number of IT infrastructure already/soon to be in place (such as the iAM Smart platform, next generation government cloud infrastructure, big data analytics platform and consented data exchange gateway) and latest advancement in technology (such as the various NLP and generative artificial intelligence technologies as in ChatGPT), how can the Government leverage these platforms and tools to reap greater benefits from sharing, utilising and analysing data with a view to improving service delivery and supporting evidence-based decision making?
3. With a paradigm shift from a process-driven to outcome-based approach, what changes will be required in terms of institutional/ governance structures, service delivery model, resources allocation mechanism and enabling technology, etc. of the Government? What are the associated challenges and implications? How to tackle them?
4. To enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness and make Hong Kong a better place for doing business and living, what regulatory reforms (including but not limited to de-regulation) do we need? What are the facilitating measures required to foster economic development and maximise the benefits for the trade and the community?

### **Expected Project Duration**

It would be desirable for researches under this strategic theme to be completed within two years with a view to generating findings and policy recommendations in a timely manner for the Government's reference.

## SG04 - Achieving Carbon Neutrality

### **Background**

Combating climate change is an important issue across the globe. To align with the country's commitment to have carbon peak before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, Hong Kong would strive to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 and reduce Hong Kong's total carbon emissions from the 2005 level by half before 2035.

The "Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050" published in October 2021 set out four major decarbonisation strategies, namely "net-zero electricity generation", "energy saving and green buildings", "green transport" and "waste reduction". These strategies aim to tackle the three major sources of carbon emissions, namely electricity generation (about 60%), transport (about 20%) and waste (about 9%), and lead Hong Kong towards carbon neutrality.

It is a challenging task to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Other than the policy initiatives mentioned above, it also requires participation of all sectors in the community to promote a low-carbon lifestyle.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this strategic theme should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. Strategies for enhancing awareness and participation of young people and minorities in climate actions
2. Strategies for mobilising the business community to develop and implement decarbonisation plans for different sectors

## SG05 - Hydrogen Economy

### **Background**

Hydrogen is an important green energy carrier for the global transition to sustainable energy and a vital component of achieving zero-carbon emission economies. Many countries, including China, have released hydrogen economy blueprints in recent years to map out the strategies to broaden and bolster the use of hydrogen to replace fossil fuels. The Government issued the “Climate Action Plan 2050” and set up an Inter-departmental Working Group to oversee the use of hydrogen as fuel in Hong Kong.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this strategic theme should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. Hong Kong’s priority areas for using hydrogen to meet local needs
2. How can policies facilitate the use of hydrogen in Hong Kong?
3. What is the social and economic impact of using hydrogen in Hong Kong in the medium to long term?
4. How can Hong Kong leverage the use of hydrogen to develop new business opportunities?

## **SG06 - Sustainable Development of Elderly Care Service under an Ageing Population**

### **Background**

The Government adopts “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up” as the policy direction for elderly services. The Social Welfare Department ascertains an elderly person’s need for long-term care services through the Standardised Care and Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services (SCANMES). Frail elderly persons assessed to be having service needs can receive subsidised community or residential care services. At the moment, there are about 60 000 elderly persons receiving subsidised community care and support services (which the Government bears around 95% of the service costs) and about 30 000 elderly persons are receiving subsidised residential care services (which the Government bears over 90% of the service costs). In addition, there are about 30 000 elderly residing in non-subsidised residential care places, of which about 60% are recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and their home fees are paid by CSSA. The expenditure on elderly services has been continuously on the rise with Government’s concerned recurrent expenditure in 2023-24 at an estimate of around \$15 billion, representing an increase of 184% over the actual expenditure ten years ago (i.e. in 2013-14).

Notwithstanding the above, the peak of ageing population in Hong Kong has yet to arrive. Number of people aged 80 or above (i.e. those who are most in need of long-term care services demographically) is 310 000 in 2013, 390 000 in 2023, 650 000 in 2033 and 1.1 million in 2043. In terms of the sustainable development of elderly services, we are facing –

- (a) **Financial sustainability:** SCANMES focuses on the long-term care needs of individuals. Elderly persons who are assessed to be having service needs can apply for subsidised elderly services regardless of their financial situation. Most of the subsidised services are provided at a flat rate, with fees charged on users unrelated to the costs of services and not adjusted over the years to reflect inflation or improvements in service quality.
- (b) **Manpower sustainability:** declining birth rate and rising educational level has caused a significant reduction in low-skilled workforce locally. Not enough young people to take care of the older generations results in a structural problem for manpower in elderly services. For ageing in place, inexpensive foreign domestic helpers are already playing an important role by acting as the primary carers for over 20% of elderly persons requiring long-term care at home. For institutional care services, there have been thousands of job vacancies for years, and yet, only residential care homes are allowed to import limited number of care workers (which is subject to a ceiling ratio to local staff), with salary level pegged to the local rate. As there will be more and more elderly people require various community or residential care services, the problem of supply and cost of manpower are becoming increasingly acute.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this strategic theme should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. **Improving the financial sustainability of subsidised elderly services:**  
To study the impact of maintaining existing subsidised elderly services on recurrent Government expenditure in the next 20 years, to make recommendations on funding and/or fee-charging model of various elderly services, and to suggest implementation details (e.g., phased introduction of the recommendations in different service units, fee arrangements for existing service users and those waitlisted). Employing quantitative and other research

methods, the study should analyse short-, medium- and long-term impacts of its recommendations on demand for subsidised services and Government's finances, response of key stakeholders, challenges faced and the corresponding mitigation measures. The study can also explore how to change the current balance of subsidised to non-subsidised services by attracting more financially capable elderly to use non-subsidised services, and the feasibility and effectiveness (in quantifiable terms) of developing a silver hair economy so that the market may share part of the demand for elderly services.

2. Improving the manpower sustainability of elderly service sector:

To project the number of each type of staff required by the sector, its overall impact on Hong Kong's labour market and the corresponding manpower expenditure in the next 20 years, on the presumption that the existing policies (such as funding and fee-charging models, professional qualification and/or entry requirement of concerned staff, labour policy, etc.) remain unchanged. The study can make recommendations on how to improve sustainability of manpower for the sector (e.g., increasing the supply or reducing the demand for particular types of staff, replacing staff types with insufficient labour supply with the ones that are more abundant, importing labour from neighbouring areas, etc.) and set out implementation options. Employing quantitative and other research methods, the study should analyse the impact of its recommendations on Hong Kong's overall manpower resources and economy, examine the responses of key stakeholders, as well as the challenges faced and the corresponding mitigation measures.

3. Encouraging elderly persons to retire in the Mainland municipalities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA):

Employing quantitative and other research methods, the study may analyse key factors affecting Hong Kong elderly's choice of place to retire, investigate the situation of elderly persons of different age groups and service needs currently living in GBA cities, examine HKSAR Government's policies and measures on cross-border retirement, and Mainland municipal governments' policies and measures targeted at or applicable to Hong Kong elderly, etc.. The study may also analyse the real and the perceived difficulties facing elderly persons who retire across the border, and using this as a starting point to make recommendations on how to encourage more elderly persons to retire in GBA cities. The study should include projection on number and demographic characteristics of Hong Kong elderly choosing to retire in GBA in future, the impact of its recommendations on the projection, the impact of cross-border retirement on government expenditure, the development of the elderly service industry in Hong Kong and the overall economy of Hong Kong, etc.

## SG07 - Healthcare Innovations in the Post-COVID 19 Pandemic Era

### **Background**

Hong Kong's healthcare system, similar to those in many other developed countries, is facing major challenges brought about by a rapidly ageing population and the associated increasing prevalence of chronic diseases. The Government is determined to step up efforts to promote individual and community involvement, enhance co-ordination among various medical and social sectors, and strengthen district-level primary healthcare services. Pending a major shift to primary healthcare, healthcare has also been identified as a target area by the Government in driving innovation and technology in Hong Kong. The convergence of biotechnology, information technology, engineering and nanotechnology offers more effective means for preventing, diagnosing, treating and monitoring diseases. Successful R&D in biomedical technology would not only raise the healthcare standard in Hong Kong, but also develop related industries and contribute to the wider world.

The high human and economic costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic make it more important than ever to rapidly accelerate and scale healthcare innovations. For example, the benefits of telehealth are more widely recognised when healthcare institutions cannot maintain normal operations owing to disease control concerns. Mobile-enabled technologies have been deployed to monitor quarantined individuals and to trace close contacts. The ability to rapidly expand the capacity to care for COVID-19 patients can only be made possible with innovations in services, processes, and business and delivery models.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this strategic theme should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. Innovative healthcare services delivery models, including enhanced medical-social collaboration and sustainable healthcare financing
2. Enhancing development of primary healthcare in Hong Kong
3. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, how to make use of health technology/informatics/innovations to improve Hong Kong's preparedness and capacity to respond to infectious disease outbreak, including anti-epidemic measures such as monitoring, contact tracing and quarantine, the ability to meet the surge capacity in laboratory testing, the ability to meet the capacity challenges and provide continuity of care by public hospitals, etc

## SG08 - Education

*Note: There are three topics under this strategic theme. Applicants may choose to cover one, two or all three topic(s) in the proposal.*

### **I. Enhancement of Well-being, Contentment (獲得感) and Happiness (幸福感) of Students and Teachers**

#### **Background**

COVID-19 pandemic has brought tremendous challenges to the education sector. Intermittent suspension of face-to-face schooling, implementation of online or blended learning, wearing of face masks and so on have impact on not only learning and teaching (particularly language learning), but also on the physical, mental and social well-being of teachers and students, particularly the cross-boundary students. The education community has been demonstrated resilience, agility and creativity in responding to the changes. As Hong Kong resumes normalcy, the education sector must reflect and capitalise on the lessons learned whilst seeking to bridge gaps and progress fast.

Among the greatest concerns are the enhancement of mental and social well-being of our students and teachers, who are still adjusting themselves after the prolonged COVID pandemic. There have been reports of instances of inter-personal conflicts and tension, mental health issues and even lingering suicidal attempts. As Hong Kong aspires to become “Happy Hong Kong”, we would also like to promote healthy and happy school with enhanced physical, mental and social well-being, as well as a deeper sense of contentment and happiness, preferably driven by intrinsic rather than extrinsic factors. The four modes of happiness in the Chinese culture, i.e. “自得其樂，知足常樂，助人為樂，苦中作樂” may also be references.

The Education Bureau has been implementing various measures in and outside classrooms towards these ends, such as promoting values education (e.g. having a grateful heart and treasuring what we have), launching the “Active Students, Active People” Campaign, just to name a few. It is timely to examine some local and international good practices on how best to promote healthy and happy schools in Hong Kong.

#### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this topic should be conducted on the following area(s):

##### **1. Healthy and happy schooling / Building better schools and teachers**

- The well-being and level of contentment/happiness of our students and teachers towards their school life, and any room for enhancement;
- Factors that affect students’ physical, mental, emotional and social fitness (e.g. physical activities, sleep, nutrition and stress management); and
- Room for enhancement in promoting the well-being and contentment of students and teachers in terms of values, skill-sets and capabilities, etc. (e.g. gratitude, resilience, risk-taking, perseverance) to respond to, and get prepared for, changes, adversities, crisis and contingencies.

## 2. Community engagement and uniformed group

- Impact of community engagement/ volunteering service and uniformed group on students' values, sense of responsibilities, citizenship, sense of belonging towards Hong Kong.

## 3. Role of parent/family on students' well-being and sense of contentment/happiness

- Good practices on parent education and parent-school co-operation to promote the well-being and happiness of students and teachers.

## II. Mode of Learning and Teaching under the New Technological Age

### Background

The rapid development in education technology (EdTech) and digitalisation of education (數字教育) (e.g. the third generation Internet (Web3), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT)) has been enriching the learning and teaching experiences. On the other hand, there are risks and concerns that excessive or improper use of technology may harm the core value of education (e.g. some universities forbid students from using ChatGPT, a natural language processing tool driven by AI technology, for assignments, considering that would be an act of plagiarism and hinder students' learning).

### Specified Research Area(s)

Researches under this topic should be conducted on the following area(s):

#### 1. Knowledge generation/ Boundaries of learning & teaching and schooling

- Role and positioning of schools and teachers in education (e.g. knowledge transfer, facilitator or life coach of students), against the backdrop of the wider utilisations of EdTech in schools and classrooms; and
- Strategies and measures on the use and promotion of AI in education so as to leverage its potential in education while ensuring its ethical and equitable use.

#### 2. Qualities and competencies students require in future

- Core skills, competencies, values and attitudes necessary for students being the agents of change and keeping up with the pace and wide application of EdTech.

#### 3. Pedagogical goals schools and educators should require

- How schools and educators collaborate to ensure the education system/ curriculum/ pedagogies are responsive and relevant to the future needs of youths.

## III. Sustainable and balanced ladder of talent development & training

### Background

Lifelong learning is not only associated with individuals' employability but also the long-term economic development of a city. Lifelong learning is on a top agenda of OECD, UNESCO, the European Union and countries with high-performing education system (e.g. Finland, Australia and Singapore). Since OECD made its commitment to lifelong learning in 1996, there has been growing interest in lifelong learning.

Besides, a successful economy should possess a pool of skilled talent of various expertise. Apart from attracting talents from overseas, Hong Kong could boost the supply of local talent of different expertise fronts.

### **Specified Research Area(s)**

Researches under this topic should be conducted on the following area(s):

1. Overseas practice and experience of other regions/ countries on lifelong learning
  - Draw reference to regions/ countries (e.g. Finland, Australia and Singapore) which have versatile opportunities for lifelong learning.
2. Development of micro-credentials and a holistic ladder of sustainable development & training of talent
  - Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences (e.g. a short online course). The implementation could offer a flexible, targeted while structured way to promote lifelong learning through acquisition and updating of skills throughout life, regardless of people's starting points and education levels (even students still in school age could be applicable).
3. Benchmarking of our youths' skills relevant to local and national policies and against the international standard
  - Research on the existing level of Hong Kong youths' skills in literacy, numeracy, digital and global competency (e.g. bachelor degree graduates) and benchmark with the required skill sets necessary for local, national and international development as well as future skill sets for projection.
4. Technical/Application-focussed post-secondary colleges/universities
  - The existing programmes offered in the UGC-sponsored institutes, are a blend of applied courses and academic courses. To develop a balanced pool of local talents with various expertise fields, it is worth exploring the development of post-secondary institutes focusing on technical and professional programme and relevant research and development to support the rapid development of the Innovation and Technology (I&T) industry, thereby supporting Hong Kong to upkeep its role as an international I&T hub.
5. Factors affecting decisions on lifelong education and a holistic ladder of balanced development & training of talent
  - Research on whether gender, family, ethnicities and socio-economic background are factors affecting decisions on lifelong education in Hong Kong and implications (if any) on the talent pool as a whole.
  - Examine any differences in the skill levels of people by gender, family and socio-economic background, and the challenges they face, and recommend a holistic plan to facilitate people (including students, youths, middle-aged, retirees, etc.) to engage in lifelong education.

**Handling of Information and Personal Data Contained in  
Public Policy Research Funding Scheme &  
Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme Application**

**Purpose of Collection of Data**

1. Information and personal data contained in your application will be used by the Secretariat and/or the funding body for the following purposes:

- (a) processing of application, including but not limited to determination of your eligibility, verification of information provided in the application, avoidance of duplicate funding, identification of reviewers; and other purposes related to the application;
- (b) assessment of the merits of the research proposal which you have submitted for funding support; and
- (c) administration of the funding schemes, including but not limited to compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research in relation to the use of public funds, project monitoring, promotion, publicity and dissemination.

2. The provision of information and personal data in the application is voluntary. However, failure to provide sufficient and correct information and personal data as required in the application form and in accordance with the Guidance Notes of the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme and Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme may result in the application not being processed.

**Transfer and/or Disclosure of Data**

3. Information and personal data in your application, or copies of which, will be transferred and/or disclosed to the Assessment Panel, non-Panel reviewers, government bureaux/departments, research funding agencies and parties relevant and necessary for the purposes as stated in paragraph 1 above; and may also be published on the schemes' website and DATA.GOV.HK as appropriate.

**Handling of Your Information and Data**

4. Your research proposal including your personal data (e.g. CVs) will be handled with care by the Secretariat and/or the funding body. Staff of the Secretariat and/or the funding body, members of the Assessment Panel, non-Panel reviewers, and other parties who may be involved in the processes described in Paragraph 1 above will be allowed access to the data on a need-to-know basis but they will be placed under a duty of confidentiality to the Secretariat and/or the

funding body. Information so collected will not be used for any other purposes. If you want to exclude any individuals from access to your research proposal, you should inform the Secretariat separately when you submit your application. The Secretariat does not accept research proposals that are classified “confidential” by the Principal Investigators. It also reserves the right to stop processing or reject any applications if the applicants’ requests render it impossible for the applications to be adequately assessed.

5. When the Secretariat obtains non-Panel review on assessment on your research proposal, the reviewers will be made aware of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance in Hong Kong.

#### Physical Retention of Applications

6. Applications that are funded will be retained at the Secretariat and/or the funding body for periodic review of progress and final assessment of the research investigation and outcome.

#### Right of Access to Personal Data

7. Notwithstanding the arrangement described above, nothing in this note will affect your legal right to request access to data held by the Secretariat and/or the funding body about you or your research proposal and to update or correct such data. Nevertheless, the Secretariat and/or the funding body reserves the right to charge a reasonable fee for the processing of any such request(s).

#### Further Information

8. All requests for access to data or correction of your personal data or for information regarding policies and practices and kinds of data held by the Secretariat and/or the funding body should be made in writing, by post, email or fax, addressed as follows:

Secretariat of the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme and  
Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme  
Chief Executive’s Policy Unit  
26/F Central Government Offices  
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar  
Hong Kong  
Email: [ppr@cepu.gov.hk](mailto:ppr@cepu.gov.hk)  
Fax: 2524 2706