

For discussion on
19 November 2018

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Commendation Schemes for Civil Servants

Purpose

This paper introduces to Members various commendation schemes for civil servants.

Background

2. There are various commendation schemes for civil servants. These schemes aim to motivate civil servants to provide quality public service and sustain their exemplary performance. The commendation schemes include the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Honours and Awards System, the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme, the Commendation Letter Scheme, and the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme.

Details

(I) The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme

3. The Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") organises the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme ("the Award Scheme") on a biennial basis. The Award Scheme aims to recognise the exceptional achievements of departments and teams in providing quality service, to promote a customer-focused culture in the civil service, to inspire innovation, and to share experience in pioneering public service improvement.

4. The 2019 Award Scheme will start soon. We will provide details of the Award Scheme to all Bureaux/Departments ("B/Ds") shortly to invite their participation. Awards under the Award Scheme are presented at three levels, namely –

- (i) the **Inter-departmental Partnership Award** for quality services provided to the public through collaboration among departments;
- (ii) the **Departmental Awards**, comprising the Service Enhancement Award and the Best Public Image Award, for departments' exceptional achievements in continuous service enhancement and promoting positive public image; and
- (iii) the **Team Awards**, comprising the General Public Service Award, the Specialised Service Award, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award, the Crisis/Incident Support Service Award, and the Internal Service Award.

5. Except the Best Public Image Award which offers Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes only, there are Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes and a Meritorious Award for each award category. Special Citations will also be presented to recognise those participating departments and teams with outstanding achievements in areas such as application of innovation and technology, interactive communication with the public, etc.

Public Engagement

6. The Award Scheme greatly emphasises participation of the private sector, the public and the community leaders. The Inter-departmental Partnership Award, the Departmental Service Enhancement Award and the Team Awards adopt a rigorous two-stage adjudication process. Seasoned managers from various service industries, including technology, retail, telecommunications, banking and insurance, hospitality, property management, transportation, public bodies and utilities, are invited to serve on the boards of examiners. These examiners conduct the first stage of assessment, comprising interviews with participating departments and teams, and screening of written submissions. The involvement of private sector practitioners enhances the objectivity of the assessment process and facilitates benchmarking with the private sector. It also helps to promote exchanges between the public and private sectors on quality customer service and related standards. At the first stage of assessment, the boards of examiners will select the winners of Meritorious Awards and Special Citations. They will also shortlist finalists under each award category to compete for the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes in the final adjudication.

7. We invite Members of the Legislative Council to serve as Chairpersons of the Final Adjudication Panels. The Panels also comprise District Council members, representatives from professional organisations, staff side members of the Central Consultative Councils and officials from CSB. The short-listed departments and teams will be required to give a presentation and to answer questions from the Panels. Based on the merits of the entries, the Panels will decide on the winners for the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes.

8. For the Best Public Image Award, all Members of the Legislative Council and District Councils and a random sample of members of the public are invited to vote in an anonymous survey. The survey is administered by an independent professional research company. The winning departments will receive trophies/plaques and prize money to be used for staff welfare purposes, and the winning teams will receive gift coupons to be shared by team members. In addition, we will issue letters of appreciation to members of the winning teams and record in their personal files their contribution.

Publicity and Learning

9. We have started the preparatory work of the coming Award Scheme and it is expected that a prize presentation ceremony will be organised in the fourth quarter of 2019. The services of the winning departments will be widely publicised in the media. In addition, we will produce a TV programme and a video series capturing the efforts, commitment, pro-activeness and innovation of civil servants at the frontline and behind-the-scene who go the extra mile in providing quality public services. These videos will be broadcast through different channels, including the CSB Facebook Page, YouTube channel “Public Service Excellence@Gov”, the thematic website on service excellence, Hong Kong Education City webpage and some government venues. Moreover, we will continue to collaborate with the Education Bureau in organising a School Promotion Programme to introduce to the young generation the exemplary government services and contribution made by the civil service to society. We will also organise seminars for the winning teams to share with colleagues their experience and insights, and suitable exemplary services will be developed into case studies for training civil servants.

(II) HKSAR Honours and Awards System

10. This is a community-wide honours recognition system. Civil servants who make great contribution to the civil service can also be nominated for awards under the system. Over the years, many civil servants have been recipients of the Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Disciplined Services and ICAC Awards, Medals of Honour and Chief Executive's Commendations. In 2018, a total of 108 civil servants were awarded under this system. Amongst them, 85 received various awards and 23 received the Chief Executive's Commendation for Government/Public Service. A full list of recipients is published every year. The Chief Executive presents awards to recipients in the presence of relatives and friends invited by them as guests at a ceremony held at the Government House each year.

(III) The Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme

11. Through this civil service-specific scheme, each year the Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS"), on behalf of the Government, gives recognition to selected civil servants on a service-wide basis for their consistently exemplary performance. To qualify for an award under the scheme, a civil servant should have had outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. The target number of recipients per annum is 100. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries or Heads of Departments/Grades. Recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee comprising representatives of CSB and other bureaux/grades.

12. The awards are presented by SCS at a ceremony held annually, in the presence of guests invited by the recipients and representatives from their B/Ds. Each award recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a gold pin. For those award recipients who have 20 or more years of service and have not enjoyed government sponsored travel outside Hong Kong before, they will receive a travel award as well. The award is granted on a one-off basis and in the form of an accountable travel allowance¹. A record of the award granted will be made in the personal files of the recipients to show appreciation of their exemplary performance. In 2018, there are a total of 100 recipients from 34 B/Ds.

¹ The rate of the travel allowance, the mechanism for revising the rate and the way in which the travel allowance is granted to the recipient are the same as those of the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award mentioned in paragraphs 15 and 16 of this paper.

13. We invite the media to cover the ceremony and to interview some of the award recipients. In addition, we publicise the achievements of the award recipients through various channels, such as the Civil Service Newsletter and departmental newsletters. We also produce videos featuring the outstanding services of some of the award recipients and upload them to the website and Facebook page of CSB for public viewing.

(IV) The Commendation Letter Scheme

14. This scheme is administered at the bureau/departmental level. Under the scheme, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments may issue commendation letters to civil servants who have provided consistently outstanding service for at least three consecutive years; or have made significant contribution towards enhancing the efficiency or the image of their B/Ds; or have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition. Nominations may be made all year round and they are considered by a commendation committee set up by individual B/Ds under the chairmanship of a directorate officer. Same as the practice of the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme, a record of the commendation letter issued will be made in the personal files of the recipients. In 2017, about 2 700 commendation letters were issued by B/Ds.

(V) Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme

15. The Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme aims at recognising long and meritorious service of serving civil servants. All local non-directorate officers with a continuous service of 20 years or more, and who have a track record of consistently very good performance and have not received any government travel award before, are eligible for consideration for the grant of an award. The award is granted on a one-off basis and in the form of an accountable travel allowance. The rate of the travel allowance is revised on 1 April each year with reference to the rate of change in package tour charges in the Consumer Price Index (C) in the past 12-month period ending February. The rate of the allowance in 2018-19 is \$24,320 per person. The number of awards for each year is determined on the basis of one award for every 27 officers meeting the service requirement (quota ratio of 1:27). In 2018-19, there are a total of about 2 530 awards.

16. Under the previous arrangement, if the selected officer is married and will be travelling with his/her spouse, the same travel allowance will be granted for the spouse. Some members suggested in previous meetings of the Panel that the Government should enhance the scheme so that awardees can nominate a friend or family member as their travelling companion to receive the same allowance. We have actively considered the suggestion and agreed that enhancing the scheme would offer greater flexibility. As such, we will, from 2019-20 onwards, improve the award scheme by relaxing the restriction on travelling with spouse only. Awardees can flexibly nominate a travelling companion to receive the same travel allowance.

(VI) Other Supporting Measures to Boost Morale of Civil Servants

17. Due to rising public expectation, civil servants are subject to a great deal of pressure when carrying out their daily duties. We fully acknowledge our obligation to render support to colleagues to help them perform their work and cope with stress. To this end, we will continue to make full use of the award schemes to give recognition to good performance for boosting staff morale, and publicise the exemplary performance of civil servants with a view to driving home the message to the public that civil servants are serving the community with commitment and professionalism and hence deserve respect.

18. We will also continue to provide civil servants with training on customer service, building resilience and managing emotional wellness to help enhance their skills, knowledge and mindset for serving the public. CSB has commissioned professional bodies to provide hotline counselling service on stress management to help staff cope with stress arising from work and other personal problems. The service, available to staff from some 60 B/Ds, includes telephone and face-to-face counselling and referral services. Separately, about 10 departments provide their staff with their own counselling services.

19. Since a progressive and motivated workforce is pivotal to effective service delivery, we attach great importance to fostering partnership between the management and staff at all levels. We will continue to promote candid exchanges between the management and staff sides at both the central and departmental levels with a view to establishing closer working relationship and fostering mutual trust and respect. SCS visits individual departments frequently to keep abreast of their latest achievements and emerging challenges faced by them as well as to exchange views directly with frontline staff on issues

of concern, and appropriate follow-up actions are taken to address their concerns. Departmental management has also been encouraged to engage staff, particularly frontline staff, in the formulation and execution of policies so as to promote partnership between the two sides and foster a sense of belonging among staff.

Civil Service Bureau
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