

Pilot Information Technology Development Matching Fund Scheme for Travel Agents

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who are eligible to apply for the Pilot Information Technology Development Matching Fund Scheme for Travel Agents (Pilot Scheme)?

All small-and medium-sized travel agents which have obtained and hold a valid travel agent's licences under the Travel Agents Ordinance (Cap. 218), have substantive travel agent business in Hong Kong and employ fewer than 50 persons in Hong Kong are eligible to apply for the Pilot Scheme.

2. What are related enterprises?

Related enterprises, i.e. enterprises registered as different businesses under the Business Registration Ordinance (Cap. 310) but having the same individual(s) holding 30% or more ownership, will be treated as one single enterprise for the purpose of calculating the aggregate number of approved projects and the aggregate funding amount (i.e. subject to the funding ceiling of each approved project at HK\$100,000). Applicants are required to declare in the application form as to whether any of their related enterprises have applied for or received funding under the Pilot Scheme at the time of application.

3. How much funding can a travel agent applicant apply for? Is there any restriction on the number of funding applications that can be submitted by a travel agent applicant?

Where an application for funding is successful ("approved project"), the Government will fund a maximum of 50% of the total approved cost of the project or HK\$100,000 (whichever is lower). The applicant will have to contribute no less than 50% of the total approved cost of a project in cash. **Since the launch of the enhancement measures of Pilot Scheme on 1 July 2018, the maximum number of approved projects for each eligible travel agent is two projects, one of which must serve the purpose(s) of adopting the electronic levy system and/or strengthening the security of the travel agent's information technology system.**

4. How much time does a project need to be completed?

Each approved project shall be completed within 12 months.

5. Can a travel agent applicant apply for funding for a project under the Pilot Scheme and other government funding schemes at the same time?

Projects or specific parts thereof that have received or will receive funding from other Government sources, or sponsorships or donations from sources other than the Government are not eligible for funding under the Pilot Scheme.

6. Is a project which has already commenced or been completed eligible for funding under the Pilot Scheme?

Travel agent applicants are required to submit a proposal before commencement of the project. Projects or specific parts thereof that have already commenced or been completed are not eligible for funding under the Pilot Scheme.

7. Can information technologies not included in the Guide to Application be accepted for funding?

The examples of information technologies stated in the Guide to Application are for reference only. The Vetting Committee of Pilot Scheme may also consider such other types of information technology that can help the small- and medium-sized travel agents to enhance their productivity and service quality and strengthen their competitiveness in local or overseas markets.

8. What expenses are not covered by the funding?

Funding provided by the Government shall not be used to subsidise the daily or routine operating expenditures of the applicant (e.g. salaries of existing staff, general administrative and office expenses, advertising expenses, etc.), office rental/renovation expenses, utility expenses, entertainment expenses, meal expenses, capital financing costs of mortgages, interest loans or overdrafts, credit assurance fees for transactions, legal fees associated with legal actions such as those against trademark infringement, payment of tax, and any unspecified costs (such as sundry and contingency expenses).

9. Will the TIC publicise the information of subsidised projects?

The information of subsidised projects will be posted on the TIC website (www.tichk.org → “Industry Subsidy Schemes” → “IT Matching Fund”) for easy reference for travel agents and members of the public.

10. What is the composition of the Vetting Committee?

The Vetting Committee is composed of the representatives from the travel industry, information technology experts, independent persons from outside the travel industry and representatives from Government departments.

11. How can members of the Vetting Committee avoid conflicts of interest?

To avoid conflicts of interest, members of the Vetting Committee and the Secretariat are required to declare their general pecuniary interests on appointment and annually thereafter, in addition to declaring any conflicts of interest that may arise from any particular application. Where appropriate, the Chairman of the Vetting Committee may request the members/staff concerned to refrain from participating in the deliberation and vetting of the relevant application.

12. Does an applicant need to attend meetings of the Vetting Committee to explain its project and answer questions raised by members of the Committee?

In general, applicants are not required to attend meetings of the Vetting Committee.

13. How long will it take before the result of an application is made available?

In general, after the application forms and all supporting documents have been received by the Secretariat, the travel agent applicants will normally be informed of the vetting results within four months after the closing date of each round of applications concerned.

14. What are the criteria to be met by the travel agent grantee before receiving the grant?

Disbursement of the approved amount of funding to the travel agent grantee will normally be made upon: (i) the successful implementation of the project and production of the project deliverables by the completion date specified in the funding agreement or by such other date as the Secretariat may approve in writing; (ii) the due compliance with the funding agreement; (iii) within three months after the completion of the project or by such other date as the Secretariat may approve in writing, the submission of the Completion Report and the audited accounts to the satisfaction of the Secretariat and in accordance with the requirements set out in the Guide to Application; (iv) the submission of proof showing that the grantee has duly made the cash contribution which matches the funding on a one-for-one basis, together with the Completion Report and the audited accounts mentioned above; and (v) the grantee must still hold a valid travel agent's licence at the time of disbursement of the approved funding by the Secretariat.

15. Can an applicant resubmit an application which has been rejected before?

An application that has been rejected may be resubmitted only if it has been revised substantially or it is supported by new proof to address the issues of concerns raised by the Vetting Committee or the Secretariat. A resubmitted application will be treated as a new application and will be subject to the same vetting procedures.

16. Can the funding be used for purchasing hardware after the enhancement of Pilot Scheme?

Since the launch of the enhancement measures of Pilot Scheme on 1 July 2018, funding provided by the Government shall be used for: (i) purchase, rental or subscription of customised equipment/hardware, software and technological services or solutions that form an essential part of the project; and (ii) purchase, rental or subscription of off-the-shelf/readily available equipment/hardware, software and technological services or solutions that form an essential part of the project. Subscription-based technological services or solutions (e.g. cloud-based services) may be permitted for funding support for up to 12 months irrespective of the completion of other project deliverables, provided the cost to be incurred only covers the project duration. In general, the costs of such

equipment/hardware/software/services or solutions should constitute no more than 50% of the project cost.

17. Is there any difference on the procurement requirement after the enhancement of Pilot Scheme?

After the enhancement measures of Pilot Scheme, for every procurement of equipment, hardware, software, information technology services or solutions or other products or services in relation to or for the purposes of the project, with the aggregate amount: (i) not exceeding HK\$50,000, the grantee shall invite at least two suppliers/service providers/consultants/contractors, which can provide such equipment or products or services, for written quotations and accept the lowest bid; (ii) exceeding HK\$50,000 but not HK\$300,000, the grantee shall invite at least **three** suppliers/service providers/consultants/contractors, which can provide such equipment or products or services, for written quotations and accept the lowest bid; or (iii) exceeding HK\$300,000 but not HK\$1.4 million, the grantee shall invite at least five suppliers/service providers/consultants/contractors, which can provide such equipment or products or services, for written quotations and accept the lowest bid.