

**Business Facilitation Advisory Committee
Wholesale and Retail Task Force**

Integrated Services to Support SMEs

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the integrated services provided by SME centres and the setting up of “SME ReachOut” to support local enterprises, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs)¹.

“Four-in-One” Integrated Services of SMEs Centres

2. There are four SME centres, namely the Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs (SUCCESS) under the Trade and Industry Department (TID), the SME Centre under the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), SME One under the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) and TecONE under the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC). To strengthen support for SMEs and to raise SMEs’ awareness of the various funding schemes, the Government has consolidated the services of the four SME centres in October 2019 to provide "four-in-one" integrated services and has instituted a one-stop referral system. Enterprises can obtain business information, funding schemes information, advisory services, etc. at any service point. The SME centres also organise various seminars and workshops from time to time, and provide the following specialised services to enterprises.

(i) *SUCCESS under TID*

- (a) Provide information on government licenses or permits for running different types of businesses and starting a business in Hong Kong; and

¹ SME is defined as any manufacturing business which employs fewer than 100 persons in Hong Kong; and non-manufacturing business which employs fewer than 50 persons in Hong Kong.

- (b) “Meet-the-Advisors” Business Advisory Services (BAS) – arrange meetings with experts for free advice in various areas, including starting up a business, marketing, legal, accounting matters, etc.

(ii) *SME Centre under HKTDC*

- (a) Provide comprehensive services in export marketing;
- (b) Transformation Sandbox (T-box) programme – help SMEs upgrade and transform in the four areas of branding, e-commerce, manufacturing and supply chain solutions and new markets;
- (c) Provide information and free business consulting services on the Mainland market, including market overview, government regulations, customs declaration, taxation, etc.; and
- (d) Organise business matching and exchange activities.

(iii) *SME One under HKPC*

- (a) Offer support related to information technology, digital transformation, technical solutions, as well as business management and financing through seminars and training workshops; and
- (b) Provide tailored solutions to SMEs at their different stages of business development.

(iv) *TecONE under HKSTP*

- (a) Provide information on various funding schemes and in-depth advisory services, in particular technology-related programmes under the funding schemes of HKSTP or the Government, including professional guidance on the application of the funding schemes; and
- (b) Offer business matching and business support services to partner companies and startups in Science Park, InnoCentre and Industrial Estates.

3. We have been adopting a proactive approach in reaching out to SMEs. TID and the four SME centres have organised or participated in over 30 briefing sessions and seminars which attracted over 15 000 participants. Representatives of the administrators of the relevant funding schemes have also joined the activities to provide on-site consultation to participants.

4. In view of the COVID-19 outbreak, the four SME centres have promptly re-engineered their mode of delivering services to SMEs, including providing information on various relief measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund and enhancements to various government funding schemes through webinars, websites and emails to major trade and industrial organisations. Since the launch of the four-in-one integrated services in October 2019 and up to end October 2020, the four SME centres have handled over 80 000 enquiries.

SME ReachOut

5. To step up support service for SMEs on funding applications, a dedicated service team entitled “SME ReachOut” has commenced operation since January 2020 to help SMEs identify suitable funding schemes and provide direct support to SMEs who wish to apply for funding schemes through face-to-face or online meetings. As at end October 2020, SME ReachOut has handled more than 4 300 enquiries via phone, email or in-person; arranged over 30 outreach activities including visits to various chambers, business organisations, co-working spaces, as well as commercial and industrial buildings; and conducted more than 10 seminars/webinars to provide SMEs with information on various funding schemes.

6. With the support of the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) and TID, SME ReachOut organised two virtual exhibitions, namely the “Fund Fair GO Online” in April 2020 and “Fund Fair Everywhere 2020” in August 2020 to promote government funding schemes through a series of webinars, virtual booths, online chats and consultation sessions.

7. To further broaden the outreach network, the four SME centres and SME ReachOut will make use of social media and other communication platforms to enhance SMEs' awareness of the available support services and to boost the utilisation of government funding schemes.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

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