

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paper 02/04

Report of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee: Recommendations on the Award of Grants from the Sustainable Development Fund

Purpose

This paper reports on the assessment of applications for grants from the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and invites Members to consider the recommendations of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee (EPSC) in respect of applications for \$500,000 or more and to advise as to which applications should be approved.

Proposal

2. We propose that –
 - (a) Members note the EPSC recommendations regarding the award of grants of less than \$500,000 as summarized at **Annex A**;
 - (b) Members note the recommendations of the EPSC with respect to the award of grants of \$500,000 or more outlined at **Annex B**, and advise as to whether these applications should be approved;
 - (c) Members note the list of applications *not* recommended for SDF grants by the EPSC at **Annex C**;
 - (d) Members endorse the Pricing Standards for the SDF at **Annex D**; and
 - (e) A second “round” of applications to the SDF be invited in June this year, with a deadline for applications of 30 September.

Considerations

Preliminary Assessment

3. Following the launch of the SDF in September 2003, the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) received 127 applications for grants totalling some \$138 million by the funding deadline of 1 December 2003. Given the large volume of applications received, as well as the large total sum of money requested (which exceeded the entire SDF allocation of \$100 million for ten years), the EPSC Vetting Committee (VC) formed three sub-groups to conduct an initial “screening” of the applications, with assistance from the SDU. Details of all applications, in the form of a “CD ROM”, have been forwarded separately to Members.

4. The VC screening criteria include: whether the nature and scope of the project are consistent with the aims of the fund; whether the project would be likely to have a significant impact on community awareness of sustainable development principles and practices; the number of participants directly involved in the project; whether partner organisations are involved; potential alternative sources of funds for the project; the viability of the proposed implementation programme; and the track record of the applicant. Where applicants sent in multiple submissions, the VC only considered the submission that had been given top priority by the applicant. Where there were similar proposals from different applicants, in terms of the nature of project and target groups, VC Members selected those that most closely matched the agreed funding criteria. As a result of the initial assessment, VC Members agreed on a “short-list” of 32 applications that were considered suitable for further detailed assessment by the SDU.

Recommendations of the VC

5. The SDU conducted a detailed assessment of the 32 applications “short-listed” by the VC Members, using the standard marking form at **Annex E**, to ensure as far as possible that the process was fair and objective. The VC further considered these assessments in detail in end January and, of the 32 shortlisted applications, recommended that: nine projects should be awarded grants, five projects should be further considered subject to clarification from the concerned applicants and eighteen projects should not be awarded grants.

Recommendations of the EPSC

6. The EPSC considered the recommendations of the VC at two meetings on 6 February and 9 March respectively. Having requested and received further information from some applicants concerned, the EPSC recommended that the **eight** projects listed at Annexes A and B be awarded grants from the SDF. For Members' easy reference, the eight projects recommended by the EPSC are -

Projects seeking grants of less than \$500,000 for Director of Administration's direct approval of funding

- “建立可持續發展社區：從綠色網絡推動成可持續發展社區”
(Establishing an SD Community: To promote SD Community through Green Networks) by Baptist Wing Lung Secondary School - **\$466,400** over a period of 14 months
- “Project S+E+E” by Veronica Luk (Individual application) - **\$232,490** over a period of 12 months

Projects seeking grants of \$500,000 or more subject to the advice of the Council for Sustainable Development

- “Education for Sustainable Development in Primary Schools” by the Centre for University and School Partnership, Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong - **\$663,500** over a period of 20 months
- “Urban Green (城市綠洲)” by Aberdeen Kai-fong Welfare Association Social Service Centre - **\$1,378,070** over a period of 36 months
- “21 世紀可持續發展社區藍本 – 灣仔版”
(“Blueprint for a 21st Century Society – Wan Chai Edition”) by St. James' Settlement Community Development Services - **\$1,306,900** over a period of 36 months
- “青年獻策:凝聚意念·持續發展” – 香港公共政策創意獎勵計劃”
(“Youth Policy: A Concerted Vision·Sustainable Development” – Hong

Kong Public Policy Innovation Scheme) by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups - **\$897,600** over a period of 34 months)

- “Transforming Our Community Heritage-Schools-Parents-Community-Professionals and Government Partnership in Enhancing Sustainable Development for Our Community” by Centre of Architectural Research for Education, Elderly, Environment and Excellence Ltd.- **\$1,285,555** over a period of 27 months.
- “Peng Chau as a Green Culture Island in Hong Kong” by Green Peng Chau Association - **\$1,522,170** over a period of 30 months.

7. A list of the 119 applications *not* recommended by the EPSC for SDF grants, including the 95 applications initially “screened out” by the VC, is at Annex C.

Revisions to the Amount of Grant Requested by Applicants

8. In recommending the eight applications at Annexes A and B, the EPSC noted that the applicants had in some cases reduced the amounts of grant requested in providing further information as requested by the Sub-committee. The EPSC considered, however, that there might be scope for further reducing project costs, in particular those for staffing and administration expenses (which constituted on average 49% and 8% respectively of proposed budgets).

9. In this context, EPSC Members noted that funds such as the Quality Education Fund (QEF), Community Investment and Inclusion Fund and Innovation and Technology Fund do not set a maximum ceiling for the staff and administration costs, recognising that projects of different types might have widely varying needs for staff support. However, the QEF does have a publicly available set of Pricing Standards that set limits for the budget cost of certain items of equipment, as well as the appropriate salaries for project staff. The EPSC proposes to adopt the standard pricing at Annex D for key budget items for SDF projects, having regard to nature and duration of these projects and taking reference from the QEF standards.

10. Applying the standards at Annex D, the SDU and the EPSC Chair have reviewed the budgets of the eight recommended projects. As a result, a total of **\$7,752,685** is required to meet the cost of these projects, of

which **\$3,665,247** is projected to be spent in financial year 2004-05.

Further Action

11. For the two applications at Annex A that have sought grants of less than \$500,000, we will seek the approval of the Director of Administration to award grants for the projects, as recommended by the EPSC. Should Members advise that the six applications for grants of \$500,000 or more recommended by the EPSC should be approved, we shall seek the approval of the Director of Administration to award grants also to these projects. Subject to the Director's approval, we shall then notify all applicants of the results of their applications. We shall also hold a press conference to announce the results of the applications. As advised by the ICAC, we shall briefly advise unsuccessful applicants of the reasons for their proposals not being approved.

Background

12. At the first Council meeting, on 1 April 2003, Members endorsed a proposal to establish the SDF by seeking the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for an allocation of \$100 million. Members agreed that the EPSC should be tasked to screen and to advise on applications for grants from the fund, and that each major application for \$500,000 or above be submitted to the Council for consideration and advice. Members further agreed that an indicative ceiling of \$10 million annually should be made available for disbursement from the fund.

Council Secretariat
March 2004