



ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION FUND

環境及自然保育基金



Guide to Application



Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Projects

(Updated 13 Apr 2017)

Secretariat, Environment and Conservation Fund
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) and the Woo Wheelock Green Fund (WWGF) have been set up by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Government) and the Wheelock & Co. (Wheelock) respectively. The purpose is to provide funding support for educational, research, technology demonstration and other projects and activities in relation to environmental and conservation matters, as well as community waste reduction projects.

1.1 Purpose of this Guide

This Guide provides guidance on application for funding *Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Projects* and describes the basic requirements and responsibilities for recipient organizations. Upon approval of funds by the ECF Committee¹, recipient organizations will sign an agreement with the Government undertaking to observe the conditions of using the allocated grant and the approved budget.

1.2 Objective of ECF/WWGF

The objective of the ECF/WWGF is to promote individual behavioural and life style changes to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development. More specifically, the WWGF aims to support action projects, which are result-oriented and will make a real difference to the environment in Hong Kong. These changes should lead to *but not limited to*:

- conservation of biological diversity with particular reference to marine conservation;
- improvement in air quality;
- reduction in noise pollution;
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- improvement in water quality; minimization of waste generation and promotion of the 3R (reduce, re-use and recycle) concept; and
- sustainable use of energy.

1.3 Nature of Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Projects

Environmental Research and Technology Demonstration projects should have contributions in a direct and practical way towards environmental improvement and conservation of the local environment and should not be too theoretical in nature. They include the introduction and development of new technologies, such as technology on waste minimization and recycling.

For technology demonstration projects in particular, projects should promote and encourage the adoption of technologies by different sectors in Hong Kong. The benefits must accrue to one or more industries, and not just to individual companies. Successful projects should be

¹ A statutory body, which comprises mainly non-officials, was set up in 1994 under the Environment and Conservation Fund Ordinance to advise Secretary for the Environment on the use of funds. Under the Ordinance, the Secretary is the trustee responsible for the administration of the Fund.

publicised so as to disseminate the results of completed projects and to ensure widespread adoption of the technologies by relevant sectors.

International conferences should facilitate exchange of best practices, expertise and experience on environmental and conservation issues and raise Hong Kong's profile as a leading green city.

1.4 Priority Research Themes

The ECF Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee (the Vetting Subcommittee) established under the ECF Committee will identify priority research themes normally on a bi-yearly basis so as to focus resources to build knowledge and talents on areas of priority. However, whenever the Vetting Subcommittee considers that there is a need to review and revise the priority research themes, or to revise the validity duration of the list, the Vetting Subcommittee may initiate a review. The priority research areas for April 2016 to March 2018 are given in *Appendix 1*. The priority themes aim to be indicative of research themes whose merits have been affirmed by the Vetting Subcommittee. Applications for research projects outside the scope of priority research themes would still be considered on individual merits.

Priority will be given to projects or studies whose outcome will have potential for general application in the fields concerned to enhance performance in environmental protection as well as contribute to environmental protection and nature conservation.

In this regard, the project applicant, particularly those involving large project sum, should engage the relevant stakeholders (e.g. potential users or beneficiaries of study results) to solicit their input and support for the project. For example, if the project involves technologies that may be adopted in environmental industries, the project proponent should preferably obtain an expression of interest from the relevant trade/industrial groups to ascertain that the technologies under study may likely be adopted in their operations if the project confirms the viability and feasibility of the technologies. Where possible, the project proponent should have in place a continuing engagement and regular dialogues with the stakeholders during the project to ensure the application of study results.

1.5 Administration

Administration of grants for Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Projects is undertaken by the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat.

2. GUIDE TO APPLICATION

2.1 Who may apply?

Local non-profit making organizations (e.g. universities, green groups, community bodies, schools) or groups formed under registered non-profit making organizations in Hong Kong are eligible to apply.

2.2 What are the funding limits?

Funds may be granted for full or partial support of projects. For each research and / or technology demonstration project, the amount of funding sought should not exceed HK\$2,500,000, regardless of the duration of the proposed project. Exceptional consideration for a budget exceeding HK\$2,500,000 may be given if only the Vetting Subcommittee is satisfied that the application is exceptionally meritorious with outcomes highly beneficial for improvement of the local environment.

There are three levels of application and the respective vetting procedures are specified under 2.5:

Level of Application	Total Project Value
1	Up to HK\$500,000
2	Over HK\$500,000 and up to HK\$2,000,000
3	Over HK\$2,000,000

The ceiling of an international conference to be held in Hong Kong is normally HK\$500,000 or 70% of the total actual expenditure, whichever is the less.

2.3 What is the duration of each project?

The project duration for each project should normally be not more than three years, unless there are very strong justifications which warrant a longer project period.

2.4 How to apply?

Invitation for applications will be issued once every year, normally in the first quarter of the year. Details of the invitation including the closing date and timeframe for proposal evaluation and issue of results will be announced through the ECF website at <http://www.ecf.gov.hk>.

Applicants have to fill out an application form which can be obtained from -

ECF Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat
5/F Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong
Tel: 2835 1719 and Fax: 2827 8138
E-mail : rtdc@epd.gov.hk

Softcopy of the application form can be downloaded from the ECF Internet homepage at: <http://www.ecf.gov.hk>

The application form should be endorsed by the applicant organization with signature of the Person-in-charge of the organization and official chop of the organization. Duly completed applications, in both hard copy and soft copy (Microsoft Word format), should reach the Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat at 5/F Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong **before 6:00 pm** on the application closing date as specified in the announcement of invitation. Applications submitted by mail must be postmarked not later than the application closing date. In case a Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above is in force for any duration between 12:00 noon and 6:00 pm on the application closing date, the application closing time will be extended to 6:00 pm on the next working day.

In each round of application, any individual person can submit not more than one application for research or technology demonstration project and one application for conference project in the capacity of principal investigator of an applicant organization. Any principal investigator can concurrently hold, in the capacity of principal investigator, up to a maximum of two ECF research or technology demonstration projects and one conference project.

Late or incomplete applications or applications not submitted in accordance with the format prescribed in this Guide or in the application form **will not be processed.**

2.5 What are the vetting procedures?

The ECF Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee established under the ECF Committee will consider Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Other Projects. The Vetting Subcommittee comprises ECF Committee members, government representatives and co-opted members from various sectors of the community. It can approve grants up to HK\$2,000,000 for a project. For applications exceeding HK\$2,000,000, the recommendations of the Vetting Subcommittee have to be endorsed by the ECF Committee.

The following steps will be taken after a funding application for Environmental Research and/or Technology Demonstration project is received –

- Step 1: Upon receipt of an application, the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat will send an interim reply to the applicant acknowledging receipt of the application. A project reference number will be given to each application for identification purpose. The project reference number should be quoted in all future correspondence. Where necessary, the applicant will be requested to provide clarification or supplementary information.
- Step 2: Before the Vetting Subcommittee considers the application, the Secretariat will seek views from relevant government departments and/or external assessors on the project proposal as appropriate:

Level 1 Applications:

1. Relevant government departments will be invited to comment on the

- project proposal.
2. The principal investigator will be invited to provide response to any requests for clarifications, response or additional information as appropriate.
 3. The relevant government departments' comments and the principal investigator's responses together with the project proposal will be considered by the Vetting Subcommittee.

Level 2 Applications:

1. Relevant government departments will be invited to comment on the project proposal.
2. At least two external assessors will be invited to assess the project proposal.
3. A **“double-blind” system** (i.e. identity of both assessors and applicants will not be disclosed to each other) for external assessment of funding applications is adopted.
4. The principal investigator will be invited to provide response to any requests for clarifications, response or additional information as appropriate.
5. All the comments (from relevant government departments and external assessors) and responses of the principal investigator together with the project proposal will be considered by the Vetting Subcommittee.

Level 3 Applications:

1. Relevant government departments will be invited to comment on the project proposal.
2. At least two external assessors will be invited to assess the project proposal.
3. In view of the project scale, the identity and experience of the principal investigator and co-investigator will be presented to the external assessors to facilitate assessment of the capability of the project team. However, the identity of the external assessors will not be disclosed.
4. The principal investigator will be invited to provide response to any requests for clarifications, response or additional information as appropriate.
5. All the comments (from relevant government departments and external assessors) and responses of the principal investigator together with the project proposal will be considered by the Vetting Subcommittee.
6. The principal investigator will be invited to make a presentation of the project proposal to the Vetting Subcommittee for consideration.

Step 3: For Level 1 & Level 2 Applications:

The Vetting Subcommittee will either approve the application, reject it or request the applicant to provide further information. The grant of approval may be subject to conditions prescribed by the Vetting Subcommittee. The Vetting Subcommittee will also consider the budget, and where necessary,

amend the budget details and set ceilings for individual expenditure items.

For Level 3 Applications:

The Vetting Subcommittee will either recommend the application for consideration by the ECF Committee, reject it or request the applicant to provide further information. The grant of approval may be subject to conditions prescribed by the Vetting Subcommittee or the ECF Committee. The Vetting Subcommittee or the ECF Committee will also consider the budget, and where necessary, amend the budget details and set ceilings for individual expenditure items.

- Step 4: For applications for which further information is required from the applicant, the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat will circulate the applicant's responses to the Vetting Subcommittee members. Members will make a final decision either at the forthcoming meeting or by sending in their views to the Secretariat.
- Step 5: The ECF Committee will consider Level 3 Applications, i.e. those seeking a budget above HK\$2,000,000.
- Step 6: The Vetting Subcommittee / ECF Committee Secretariat will inform applicants of the results after the completion of assessment of all applications for research and/or technology demonstration projects.
- Step 7: The Secretariat will upload information on the approved projects on the ECF website.

The following steps will be taken after a funding application for Conference project application is received –

- Step 1: Upon receipt of an application, the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat will send an interim reply to the applicant acknowledging receipt of the application. A project reference number will be given to each application for identification purpose. The project reference number should be quoted in all future correspondence. Where necessary, the applicant will be requested to provide clarification or supplementary information.
- Step 2: Before the Vetting Subcommittee considers the application, the Secretariat will seek views from relevant government departments on the project proposal.
- Step 3: The principal investigator will be invited to provide response to any requests for clarifications, response or additional information as appropriate.
- Step 4: The relevant government departments' comments and the principal investigator's responses together with the project proposal will be considered by the Vetting Subcommittee.

- Step 5: The Vetting Subcommittee will either approve the application, reject it or request the applicant to provide further information. The grant of approval may be subject to conditions prescribed by the Vetting Subcommittee. The Vetting Subcommittee will also consider the budget, and where necessary, amend the budget details and set ceilings for individual expenditure items.
- Step 6: For applications for which further information is required from the applicant, the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat will circulate the applicant's responses to the Vetting Subcommittee members. Members will make final decision either at the forthcoming meeting or by sending in their views to the Secretariat.
- Step 7: The Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat will inform applicants of the results after the completion of assessment of all applications for conference projects.
- Step 8: The Secretariat will upload information on the approved projects on the ECF website.

Note for Applicants: Decisions of the Vetting Subcommittee / ECF Committee in respect of approvals of applications and conditions of grants will be final.

2.6 What are the vetting criteria?

The following broad criteria are used in assessing the merits of individual applications:

- (1) Projects must contribute to the overall environment of Hong Kong, raise environmental awareness of the local community, or mobilise the community to take action to improve the environment.
- (2) The benefits must accrue to the local community as a whole, and not just to individuals, a single private organization or a consortium of private companies.
- (3) Projects must be non-profit making in nature.
- (4) In considering a project proposal, due consideration will be given to:-
 - (a) the benefits that it will bring to Hong Kong's environment, ecology, flora and fauna etc., or the extent to which it will enhance the environmental awareness of the local community;
 - (b) whether there is a demonstrable need for the proposed project;
 - (c) whether the proposed project's schedule of implementation / milestones is well-planned and practicable, and the duration is reasonable;
 - (d) the technical and project management capability as well as past performance of the applicant (including both the applicant organization and its principal investigator), including the effectiveness of their past projects, their ability to comply with the funding conditions and satisfactory track record;

- (e) whether the proposed budget is prudent, realistic and cost-effective, with full justifications for every expenditure item;
 - (f) whether the planned deliverables as well as technology transfer and dissemination plan for dissemination and promotion of the project deliverables are clearly defined and implementable;
 - (g) whether the technology and other products to be delivered under the project have the potential to be widely adopted or utilized;
 - (h) for conference projects, whether the proposed conference can effectively facilitate exchange of best practices, expertise and experience on environmental and conservation issues and raise Hong Kong's profile as a leading green city;
 - (i) whether there is or likely to be a duplication of the work already or currently carried out by other groups;
 - (j) whether the proposed project should more appropriately be funded by other sources; and
 - (k) whether the proposed project has alternative sources of funding support.
- (5) A competition-based mechanism will be adopted for assessment of applications. Taking into account the nature of projects to be supported under the funding scheme as set out in paragraph 1.3 of this Guide, as well as the factors mentioned in paragraph 2.6 (1) to (4) above, the Vetting Subcommittee will consider the suitability of each application for ECF support under this funding scheme, and assess and select the most meritorious applications for funding support based on the following vetting criteria:
- (a) merits and contributions to environmental protection and conservation, including the deliverables and outcomes expected to be derived from the project (assessment weighting: 60%); and
 - (b) project feasibility and track record of applicant (assessment weighting: 40%).
- (6) It is the responsibility of the applicant, in submitting an application, to provide relevant and sufficient information to demonstrate that the proposed project fall within the scope of the funding scheme as set out in paragraph 1.3 in this Guide, and could meet the criteria in (1) to (5) above.

2.7 Avoidance of Conflict of Interests

To avoid conflict of interest, members of the Vetting Subcommittee and ECF Committee who are directly or indirectly related to a proposed project or to the applicant/sponsoring/co-organizing organizations, or belong to the same institution (including from departments of a university/organization), shall disclose it to the Vetting Subcommittee. Moreover, members who are themselves part of the team submitting an application, or have close relationship with

an applicant, or have any other direct personal interest in the project should withdraw himself from the meeting venue when the deliberation takes place, apart from declaring interest.

2.8 When will I know the results?

Details of the timeframe for proposal evaluation and issue of results will be announced through the ECF website at <http://www.ecf.gov.hk> together with the invitation for applications. Normally, results of applications would be available towards the end of the year or in the early months the following year.

2.9 Withdrawal of application

The applicant can write to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat to withdraw an application at any time before an agreement is signed with the Government.

To avoid undue delay in processing applications, when feedback/response from a principal investigator is not received within two weeks, the Secretariat will write to inform the principal investigator that if no further feedback/response is received within another one week, the application will be considered as withdrawn and the processing of the application will be terminated.

2.10 Can I resubmit my application?

Applicants may resubmit their unsuccessful applications in subsequent invitation exercises. These applications, together with other new applications received, will be considered on equal footing. In completing the application form for a re-submitted application, the applicant should set out clearly the differences of the resubmitted application, if any, vis-à-vis the previous one.

3. APPLICATION FORM

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 Applicants should read the “Guide to Application” carefully, and provide the details of the proposed project in a clear and concise manner. Additional pages may be attached to the form if necessary. Applicants should provide the best and fullest information in their applications, and the Vetting Subcommittee is not obliged to request for additional information from applicants.
- 3.1.2 Applicants should ensure that all required information is submitted with the application form. All sections of the application form should be completed with supporting documents wherever required. Where the information sought is not applicable or not available, please fill in “NA”.
- 3.1.3 The application, using the prescribed application form, must be typed or printed on both sides of a paper and submitted in both hard and soft (Microsoft Word format) copies. The original hard copy should be endorsed by the application organization with signature of the Person-in-charge of the organization and official chop of the organization. Any application not submitted according to the requirements prescribed above will be considered as incomplete application and will not be further processed.
- 3.1.4 Applicants should use separate application forms for research / technology demonstration projects and conference projects.
- 3.1.5 Acknowledgment will be sent to the applicant after receipt of an application by the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat.

3.2 Sections of the Project Proposal

3.2.1 Data Sheet

This section serves as a summary of an application. Once approval is granted to an application, the information given by the applicant in this section will be put on ECF’s homepage for public access. If the organization does not wish certain information to be released, please forward its request and justifications upon submission of the application to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat.

The application should be endorsed by the applicant organization with signature of the Person-in-charge of the organization and official chop of the organization.

Applications from universities should be made through the Research Office of the respective universities, i.e. there should be a covering letter from the Research Office to the Secretariat of the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat. The Research Office should inform the Secretariat of the Vetting Subcommittee as soon as the principal investigator ceases to be a full-time employee with the universities, or ceases to be eligible to serve as principal investigator as detailed below.

The Research Office should ensure that only academic staff members whose conditions of employment meet all the following requirements would serve as principal investigators of ECF-funded research, technology demonstration and conference projects:

- (a) they have a full-time² appointment in the institution proper³ of the institution;**
- (b) they are in Staff Grades from Professor to Assistant Lecturer;**
- (c) they are primarily engaged in and spend at least 80% of their time in degree or higher degree work at the institution proper; and**
- (d) their salary is wholly funded⁴ by the institution.**

The Research Office should, in submitting the university's applications, confirm the eligibility of their principal investigators.

Visiting staff will only be eligible if they have a full-time appointment in the institution covering at least one year or the duration of the project whichever is the longer. Staff supported by external research grants⁵ are not eligible.

The Person-in-charge should either be the principal investigator of the project who would provide responses to the comments on the application or head of relevant academic department/office. There should be the official chop of the relevant academic department/service units of the universities.

3.2.2 Content of Project Proposal

3.2.2.1 Project Title

A project title, in both English and Chinese, has to be provided for each application.

3.2.2.2 Duration of Project

Give the duration of project and the planned project commencement and completion dates. For applications for conference projects, please also provide the dates when the conference would be held.

3.2.2.3 Nature and Purpose of Project

In clear and specific terms, state how the project will make a clear and positive contribution to environmental protection, environmental improvement, or conserving the environment in Hong Kong. For technology demonstration project, clear indication should be made regarding how the specific environment-related technologies could be

² Part-time staff and staff holding honorary appointments are excluded.

³ Excluding schools/ arms of continuing education and professional training and other analogous outfits.

⁴ Staff who are receiving income from paid appointments outside the institution do not satisfy this requirement.

⁵ These grants are normally awarded for a designated purpose.

promoted or demonstrated to the relevant sector in Hong Kong for adoption.

For conference projects, state clearly the purpose of the international conference and how it could raise Hong Kong's profile as a leading green city.

3.2.2.4 *Demonstrable Need for the Project*

Give details on whether there is a demonstrable need for the project and whether similar projects have been undertaken in the past or at present. Also provide a list of all related researches (both planned and completed).

3.2.2.5 *Name of Applicant Organization*

Give the name of applicant organization in Chinese and English, which must be a local non-profit making organization or a group formed under a registered non-profit making organization in Hong Kong.

It is the responsibility of the applicant organization, in submitting an application, to provide relevant and sufficient information to demonstrate that it is a local non-profit making organization or a group formed under a registered non-profit making organization in Hong Kong.

3.2.2.6 *Details of Team Members*

Give details of the principal investigator and any co-investigator(s), and records of the principal investigator in undertaking similar projects. The C.V. of the principal investigator and co-investigators (if any) should be submitted but each should not be more than two pages long. Also provide details on the full composition of the project team including any other supporting staff to be involved, the role of each project team member, and give full justifications.

3.2.2.7 *Role of the applicant organization*

State the role the applicant organization will play in organizing and implementing the project. Projects in which the applicant organization does not make a major contribution will not be eligible for funding support.

3.2.2.8 *Details of other co-organizing/ assisting/ supporting/ sponsoring bodies for the proposed project*

Give details of other co-organizing/ assisting/ supporting/ sponsoring bodies as well as their role in the proposed project.

3.2.2.9 *Project Details*

State the target group, the anticipated number of participants, and record of applicant in implementing similar or other environmental projects. For technology demonstration projects, state the target sector in Hong Kong and the estimated size of the sector.

For **studies intended to be carried out in phases**, the results and findings of supported earlier phase projects should be submitted to the Research Projects Vetting Subcommittee before funding applications for projects of subsequent phases would be considered. **The benefits and contributions of earlier phase projects to environmental protection and conservation will be taken into account in considering the funding applications for subsequent phase projects.** The Vetting Subcommittee is not obliged to approve funding for any subsequent phase projects.

3.2.2.10 *Method of implementation of project*

State clearly the implementation method to be employed and show how this could help achieve the purpose of the project. For studies involving the use of **questionnaire surveys** to collect information or data, **a copy of the questionnaires to be adopted, or a detailed framework of such questionnaires, should be provided together with the application.**

3.2.2.11 *The Workplan and Timetable*

- (a) Workplan - Give a detailed workplan describing the various activities that will be carried out under the project.
- (b) Timetable - Give a timetable showing the length and sequence of the various activities in the project.

3.2.2.12 *Expected Benefits of the Project*

- (a) Deliverables – Give quantitative and qualitative results of the project
- (b) Publicity/technology transfer plan - Give detailed plan on publicity/technology transfer of the project deliverables. **Workshops or seminars should be organized specifically to disseminate the results and findings of the project.**

Applicant organizations should state clearly and in detail the planned deliverables as well as publicity or technology transfer plan in their project proposals. Upon completion of project, evaluation should be made to assess the effectiveness and achievements of the project against the original project objectives as well as the planned deliverables and publicity and / or technology transfer plan and,

where applicable, against performance indicators including, but not limited to –

- (i) number of headcounts, schools, students, companies, buildings or households participating in the programmes;
- (ii) number of volunteers recruited or trained;
- (iii) number of local community organizations involved;
- (iv) types and quantities of recyclables collected;
- (v) quantities of refuse reduced or electricity saved;
- (vi) number of research papers published;
- (vii) technologies transferred to practitioners;
- (viii) media coverage on the programmes; and
- (ix) increase in environmental awareness (by conducting pre- and post- project questionnaire survey with participants).

3.2.2.13 *Budget for the Project*

The application should provide a detailed budget for the project. Each income and expenditure item should be reasonable, realistic and sufficiently broken down. All expenditure items must be incurred between the commencement and completion dates of the project with supporting receipts (original). **[Note for applicants: Once an application is approved, the recipient organization will be responsible for any increase in cost arising from inflation or unforeseen requirements. Requests for budget variations after the approval of the application which involve additional funding will normally not be considered.]**

Please also study carefully the following funding criteria when preparing the budget.

For research and/or technology demonstration projects

(a) Manpower

- (i) The applicant organization is expected to have the ability to supervise and the expertise to undertake a proposed project. Hence, no funding support will be given for additional supervisory/administrative staff, the hire of professional advisor or training course for staff of the organization for undertaking the project.
- (ii) Funding for research assistants/project supporting staff may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (iii) Funding will *not* be given for remunerating the principal investigator or co-investigators.

(iv) Funding for research supporting staff may be considered. *(Please refer to Appendix 2 for the funding scale for research support staff.)*

(b) **Equipment and Consumables**

Funding for purchase of equipment and consumables will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(c) **Others**

(i) Funding support for one representative of the research team to attend one overseas conference to present the results of the project will be considered. *(Please refer to the Appendix 3 for the funding scale, coverage and reporting requirement.)*

(ii) Requests for funding support for contingency items will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(iii) Funding for production of practical and promotional guides such as that on green lifestyle, energy efficiency, eco-tours and nature conservation may be considered. Details of publication arrangements and relevant budget should be provided in the application proposal for overall assessment.

(iv) Funding for website design and maintenance costs may be considered.

(v) Funding for publication of results will **not** be supported, unless this forms an essential part of the project. However, other expenditure proposed for dissemination of and publicizing project results may be considered.

(vi) Funding for patent fee will **not** be supported, unless this forms an essential part of the project.

(vii) Funding for reprinting of existing leaflets or education materials will **not** be supported, unless they form an essential part of the project.

(viii) Expenses on educational materials and computer softwares may be considered on the condition that the educational materials and computer softwares are essential.

(ix) For applications from NGOs (including green groups) without receiving government subventions, general administrative and overhead costs incurred from the project will be considered, subject to a cap of 10% of the total approved grant or actual expenditure, whichever is the less. (Note: the applicant organization should

declare in the application form whether it receives government subventions or not. The Secretariat may request the applicant for relevant supporting documents where necessary.)

- (x) For projects involving recurrent expenditure, the applicant organization has to demonstrate that such expenses will be of a specified finite duration or that the project will become self-financing after a certain period of time.

For international conferences to be held in Hong Kong

Please refer to Appendix 4 for the acceptable expenditure items. Funding for purchase of equipment will normally not be considered.

3.2.2.14 *Other sources of funds (both confirmed and being applied for)*

The availability of alternative funds will be taken into account when your application is considered. In case the applicant organizations have sought / obtained private sponsorship to cover budget items not to be funded by the ECF, the organizations should include details of the sponsorship in the Application Form (Section A Item 3 under Declaration and Section B Item 14) for the Vetting Subcommittee's consideration. In case there are any changes to the sponsorship after the project is approved, for example when the recipient organization has sought / obtained private sponsorship to support items not funded by the ECF or to top up items that are partly funded by the ECF, the changes have to be submitted to the Vetting Subcommittee for consideration.

The Vetting Subcommittee would consider whether the sponsorship would constitute any conflict of interests, and whether the sponsorship might cause any potential liability or damage to the image of the ECF, etc. It would be up to the organizations concerned to agree with their sponsor(s) on how to use the sponsored fund and how to handle the unspent balance of the sponsorship.

3.2.2.15 *Estimated revenue generated from the project*

Estimated revenue gains from the project, e.g. sales of publications and registration fees for conferences, should normally be deducted from the amount of grant applied for. State how this will be used to offset the project's cost. If this is not possible, full explanation should be given.

3.2.2.16 *Recurrent income of project (if applicable)*

State how income derived will be used to further the project's aims.

3.2.2.17 *Procurement of Capital Items, Goods and Services*

In case an applicant organization intends to procure capital items (including minor works and equipment), goods or services from a company/organization/individual without following the open procurement process stated in paragraph 4.9.1 below, please provide details, justifications and its relationship with the company/organization/individual.

3.2.2.18 *Record of previous applications*

State record of previous applications which are either supported or rejected by ECF, and the amount approved and received for the successful applications.

3.2.2.19 *Other relevant information in support of the application*

Letters of support from **collaborating parties** should be provided. (Note: Recommendation letters from non-collaborating parties are not required.)

3.2.3 Nomination of External Assessors

Principal investigators of **Level 2 and Level 3 Applications** are required to nominate at least **5 external assessors** in the proposal for consideration by the Vetting Subcommittee. The nominated list of external assessors will be helpful in assisting the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat to identify independent experts to evaluate the proposals. In nominating external assessors, the principal investigators and co-investigators are required to declare their full relationship with the nominated assessors, for fairness and transparency. Any undeclared relationships that have existed between the principal investigators and co-investigators and the external assessors, and subsequently come to the attention of the Vetting Subcommittee will be treated seriously and will affect the principal investigators' and co-investigators' future chance of getting financial support from ECF.

3.2.4 Details of first-time applicants (if applicable)

For applicant organization which applies to the ECF for the first time, please provide the following information –

- (a) background information of the organization;
- (b) information about key members of the organization and the person-in-charge of the project;
- (c) experience in conducting environmental researches; and
- (d) documentary proof of the organization's non-profit making status, e.g. registration under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance that qualifies the organization for tax exemption.

4 CONDITIONS FOR THE USE AND ALLOCATION OF FUND

4.1 Contractual Requirements

For each project for which funds have been approved, the recipient organization has to sign an agreement with the Government and comply with all the terms of the agreement.

4.2 Use of Funds

4.2.1 The allocated funds shall not be used as payments to individual members of the public as a financial reward for their participation in the activities associated with the project. For research projects, Research Assistants may be hired.

4.2.2 The benefits must accrue to the local community as a whole, and not just to individuals, a single private organization or a consortium of private companies.

4.3 Disbursement and Reimbursement of Funds

4.3.1 The recipient organization will receive between 25-50% of the grant upon approval depending on the cash flow requirement and nature of the project. Upon the submission of each half-yearly progress report together with a statement of account, the recipient organization may apply for a further disbursement if it could prove that the previous payment has been mostly spent or that further disbursement is required for undertaking the project as scheduled. The last 10% of the grant will normally only be released after completion of project subject to submission of a completion report and a final research report (stipulating the project objectives, research methodology and summarising all the research work and findings of the project) together with a statement of accounts for the project endorsed by the Vetting Subcommittee / ECF Committee and/or Wheelock, as appropriate, in accordance with the requirement specified in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 below. The Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat will agree with the recipient organization a schedule of payment.

4.3.2 All revenue received, irrespective of whether it has been declared in the proposal, must be defrayed against the actual expenditure before calculating the amount to be reimbursed as final payment.

4.3.3 Amount to be reimbursed for individual items of the budget will not exceed the approved amount for that item.

4.3.4 The grant could be reduced on a pro-rata basis in the following circumstances:

- (a) the scope and/or activities of the project are changed;
- (b) the actual frequency of activities (e.g. seminars) is less than proposed;
- (c) the number of participants is less than proposed and the grant allocated is according to the number of participants;
- (d) the number of publications (e.g. leaflets) is less than that proposed; or
- (e) the duration of project is reduced.

4.3.5 Any item not on the approved list of budget items will not be reimbursed.

- 4.3.6 Income derived from the project during the project period, including sales of output and interest income generated from cash in hand for the project, should be ploughed back into the project account.
- 4.3.7 Any unspent balance of the grant shall be returned to the ECF and/or WWGF within two months after the completion of the project.
- 4.3.8 **Income derived from the project after the project period**, including sales of output, **should be returned to ECF and/or WWGF for offsetting part or whole of the project's cost**. Failure to report and return such income to ECF and/or WWGF will render the organization ineligible for future funding support.

4.4 Project Interest

- 4.4.1 The ECF and/or WWGF funds shall be paid into a risk-free interest-bearing account opened with a licensed bank.
- 4.4.2 Interest incomes generated from the ECF and/or WWGF funds and other receipts for a project have to be reasonably apportioned to the project and no negative interest should be charged to the project. The use of interest is subject to the approval of the Vetting Subcommittee and/or Wheelock, and in no circumstances should the interest earned be applied for other uses outside the project.
- 4.4.3 The recipient organization may be required to compensate the Government for loss of interest income if the ECF and/or WWGF fund is not properly handled. Where necessary, the Government and/or Wheelock will initiate legal action for suitable remedies.

4.5 Progress and Completion Reports and Independent Evaluation

- 4.5.1 Ongoing projects are monitored and completed projects are reviewed by the Vetting Subcommittee. For projects lasting more than six months, project teams have to submit half-yearly progress reports with information on financial position of their projects together with receipts for the expenses to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat within one month from the end date of each reporting period. For projects receiving a grant more than HK\$300,000 and lasting more than 18 months, recipient organizations are required to submit, once every 12 months, a statement of accounts audited by certified public accountants (practising) within the meaning of section 2 of the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap 50) to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat and/or Wheelock. Except for the first disbursement, all disbursements will be subject to satisfactory performance and progress of the project.
- 4.5.2 Within two months of completion of the project or before the date specified in the agreement, recipient organizations have to submit a completion report with attachment of a statement of accounts to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat (for projects receiving a grant more than HK\$300,000, the statement of accounts should be audited by certified public accountants (practising) within the meaning of section

2 of the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap 50)). If an extension of the submission deadline is required, approval should be obtained from the Secretariat.

- 4.5.3 All progress reports and completion reports should be submitted in such format as prescribed in the Progress/Completion Report Form.
- 4.5.4 For Level 2 and Level 3 research and technology demonstration projects receiving a grant over HK\$500,000, the principal investigator should submit a final research report for independent evaluation. The Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat would invite one independent evaluator on completion of the project. The independent evaluator will be provided with the final report and the original approved project for evaluation on the overall effectiveness of the project. After that, the principal investigator will be invited to present the project findings to the Vetting Subcommittee or the ECF Committee as appropriate. The Vetting Subcommittee or the ECF Committee will assess the success or effectiveness of the project by comparing the project results against its original objectives and targets as set out in the project proposal. Project teams may also be required to complete post-implementation review on the effectiveness of the projects.
- 4.5.5 Unsatisfactory performance will affect the organization's future chance of getting funding support, and the organization's management will be informed.

4.6 Statement of accounts

- 4.6.1 Within two months of completion of the project or before the date specified in the agreement, project teams have to submit a complete statement of accounts, attached to the completion report, to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat. If an extension of the submission deadline is required, approval should be obtained from the Secretariat.
- 4.6.2 For projects receiving a grant of or below HK\$300,000, the grant received must be shown in a complete statement of accounts, together with the original copy of invoices and receipts. Auditing will not be required, but the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat and/or Wheelock, as appropriate, reserves the right to check all financial records kept by the recipient organization relating to the use of the grant.
- 4.6.3 For projects receiving a grant more than HK\$150,000, the funds should be kept in a separate account opened with a licensed bank to facilitate the checking of all financial record by the government and auditor as and when necessary;

For projects receiving a grant more than HK\$300,000 -

- (a) The statement of accounts attached to the completion report must be audited by certified public accountants (practising) within the meaning of section 2 of the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap 50), providing assurance that the audited accounts properly presented the financial position and that the conditions of grants are met;

- (b) For projects lasting more than 18 months, recipient organizations are also required to submit a statement of accounts audited by certified public accountants (practising) to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat once every 12 months.
- (c) The statement of accounts as required above must be submitted in the prescribed format specified by the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat. Essentially the actual expenses and reference numbers of individual receipts under each approved budget item should be clearly indicated.

4.6.4 For universities, the funds should be kept by the finance offices and there is no need to open a separate account with a licensed bank. Regardless of the amount of the grant involved in a project, a statement of accounts certified by the finance office of the university will be acceptable.

4.7 Intellectual Property Rights Arising from Projects and the Use of Project Results

- 4.7.1 Unless negotiated otherwise between the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat and/or Wheelock and the recipient organization, the recipient organization will solely own all intellectual property rights arising from the research and technology demonstration project.
- 4.7.2 The recipient organization is required to grant unconditionally and irrevocably to the Government and/or Wheelock the right to publish results, findings and any other information provided in the application, progress report, completion report and other publications or publicity material.

4.8 Publicity of Project Events & Results

- 4.8.1 Project teams should try to publicize the project results or any events related to the project through publications, conferences and exhibitions etc. **Workshops or seminars should be organized specifically to disseminate the results and findings of the project.** Project teams should also provide information about the events such that the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat might conduct spot checks on the proposed activities.
- 4.8.2 Project teams should notify the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat of the project results before publicizing them. Copies of publications or publicity material produced under the project must be made available to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat within one month after the completion of the project.

4.9 Procurement of Capital Items, Goods and Services

- 4.9.1 The recipient organization should exercise utmost prudence in procuring capital items (including minor works and equipment), goods or services for the project and must adhere to the following procedures unless the Vetting Subcommittee agrees otherwise –

- (a) For every procurement the aggregate value of which is HK\$5,000 or below, quotations from suppliers are not required.
 - (b) For every procurement the aggregate value of which is more than HK\$5,000 but less than HK\$10,000, quotations from at least two suppliers should be obtained.
 - (c) For every procurement the aggregate value of which is HK\$10,000 or more, but less than HK\$500,000, quotations from at least three suppliers should be obtained.
 - (d) For every procurement the aggregate value of which is HK\$500,000 or more, open tendering should be used.
- 4.9.2 The recipient organization should select the supplier that has submitted the lowest bid. If the lowest bid is not selected, full justifications must be given and prior agreement must be obtained from the Vetting Subcommittee.
- 4.9.3 In case of an applicant organization intends to procure the items from a company/organization/individual without following the open procurement process in paragraph 4.9.1 above, it has to provide details, justifications and its relationship with the company/organization/ individual in the application form. If the application is approved, subsequent approval from the Vetting Subcommittee will not be required.
- 4.9.4 In the case of universities, they may adhere to their established/current standard procurement procedures.
- 4.9.5 All quotations and tendering documents should be kept for inspection by the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat and/or Wheelock.

4.10 Title of Capital Items, Education Materials and Computer Softwares

The title of capital items (including minor works and equipments), education materials and computer softwares procured with the fund will remain with the Government and/or WWGF during the project period. Upon satisfactory completion of the project, the title of the items may be changed to the recipient organization on a case-by-case basis.

4.11 Acknowledgement of Support and Disclaimer

- 4.11.1 The source of funding (both the name and logo of the ECF and/or WWGF) must be acknowledged in all publicity material resulting from the project.
- 4.11.2 The logo of ECF and/or WWGF may be used and printed onto the following categories of publicity material with a view to promulgating the contribution of the funds. Examples of publicity materials include publicity leaflets/posters/banners; reports and publications of project outcome; and advertisements on paper and electronic media.

- 4.11.3 Use of the name and logo for other purposes is subject to the prior approval of Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat and/or Wheelock.
- 4.11.4 In no circumstances shall the name and logo of ECF and/or WWGF be used for publicity for commercial interest or other purposes which may damage the image and/or cause any liability to ECF and/or WWGF.

4.12 Suspension/Termination of Funding Support

- 4.12.1 The Vetting Subcommittee and/or Wheelock may suspend/terminate support for a project under the following circumstances -
- (a) if the project does not commence within one year of the approval of the grant and no reasonable explanation has been given;
 - (b) the Vetting Subcommittee and/or Wheelock consider that the project has not progressed satisfactorily and no reasonable explanation has been given;
 - (c) the principal investigator or project team leader leaves the recipient organization prior to the completion of the project and there is no one available who has been involved in the project and considered suitable by the Vetting Subcommittee and/or Wheelock to take over the role of principal investigator or project team leader; or
 - (d) if the recipient organization fails to comply with the funding conditions as set out in this Guide and/or in the agreement and no reasonable explanation has been given.
- 4.12.2 In each of the above cases of suspension/termination, the Vetting Subcommittee shall give one month notice to the recipient organization, stating the reasons for the suspension/termination. In cases of suspension, the recipient organization should demonstrate that measures have been taken to rectify the problems and change the unsatisfactory situation before the Vetting Subcommittee will lift the suspension. In cases of termination, the balance of the grant or any funding given in advance shall be returned to the ECF and/or WWGF. The Vetting Subcommittee and/or Wheelock will consider possible redeployment of the capital items, education materials and computer softwares acquired for the project.
- 4.12.3 Any suspension or termination of a project will affect the organization's future chance of getting financial support from ECF and/or WWGF, and the organization's management will be informed.
- 4.12.4 The ECF and/or WWGF shall be entitled to be refunded by the recipient organization of some or all of a grant which has been used other than in accordance with the terms of the approved project.
- 4.12.5 Any major changes to the project must be approved by the Vetting Subcommittee and/or Wheelock. Such major changes include:-

- (a) revision to the objectives and/or content;
- (b) change of team leader/principal investigator;
- (c) transfer of project to another organization; or
- (d) deferral of project completion date.

Substantial changes to, or new budget items for, the project's approved manpower plan would be considered by the Vetting Subcommittee on a case-by-case basis. Full justifications should be provided to substantiate the request.

- 4.12.6 The Vetting Subcommittee and/or Wheelock may suspend/terminate funding support for the project if the project is being carried out under any of the above circumstances without prior approval.
- 4.12.7 Any proposed minor changes to a project should be submitted to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat for processing.

4.13 Others

- 4.13.1 The ECF Committee, the Environmental Campaign Committee, their Subcommittees and secretariats, Wheelock, and Government shall have no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or other liabilities arising from the projects.
- 4.13.2 The Secretary for the Environment may at any time, if he considers fit, amend or add to the above conditions, without prior notice to recipient organizations.
- 4.13.3 Recipient organizations should take due account of the need to **minimize waste and be more environmentally friendly** in implementing ECF-supported projects particularly conference projects and in the use of ECF grants in general.

Important Note:

The recipient organization is obliged to adhere to a high standard of integrity and spend the funds in an open, fair and accountable manner. Recipient organization is advised to observe the Best Practice Checklist issued by the Corruption Prevention Department of the ICAC namely "Strengthening Integrity and Accountability – Government Funding Schemes Grantee's Guidebook" as well as the "Integrity and Corruption Prevention Guide on Managing Relationship with Public Servants" which can be downloaded from the following hyperlinks of the ICAC website –

http://www.icac.org.hk/filemanager/en/Content_1031/GranteeBPC.pdf

http://www.icac.org.hk/filemanager/en/Content_1031/ps.pdf

http://www.icac.org.hk/filemanager/en/Content_1031/quick-ps.pdf

**Priority Research Themes
(from 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2018)
[with some potential research topics for illustrative purposes]**

- (a) **Climate Change - Adaptation and Mitigation**
[e.g. co-benefits of air pollution and climate change mitigation; energy efficiency, energy audit and use of low carbon energy; green transport technologies such as electric vehicle; turning waste to energy technologies; carbon emissions measurement, reporting benchmarking and disclosure; ecosystem and wildlife adaptation; etc.]
- (b) **Biodiversity, Conservation, and Geo Conservation**
[e.g. taxonomic studies of native species; ecological monitoring studies; impacts of and control on invasive alien species, biology and ecology of native species; ecosystem services, vulnerability of biodiversity to climate change; Geopark-related science popularisation methods; etc.]
- (c) **Waste Reduction and Recycling**
[e.g. technology in handling food waste in urban setting; studies on how Government support for waste reduction and recycling would be effective and successful; etc.]
- (d) **Air Quality**
[e.g. air quality and public health; air quality and exposure in the urban environment; air quality and economic studies; regional air quality in Hong Kong - Pearl River Delta; air quality and key pollution sources and atmospheric processes (land and marine transport included); secondary air pollutants; community air monitoring in the urban environment; etc.]
- (e) **Water Quality**
[e.g. water quality and public health; regional water quality - Pearl River Delta, waste water treatment technology, marine refuse, marine ecology; etc.]
- (f) **Construction Noise - Prevention and Mitigation**
[e.g. mobile noise barriers; quieter construction equipment; quieter methods for general construction and building demolition works; domestic renovation noise reduction, etc.]

[Note: The above priority themes aim to be indicative and applications for research projects outside the scope of priority research themes would still be considered on individual merits.]

Appendix 2

Funding Scale for Research Supporting Staff (Section 3.2.2.13 (a) (iv))

Student Research Assistant (Undergraduate)	<u>Maximum</u> HK\$50 per hour
Research Assistant II (Recent first degree graduate with little or no work experience)	<u>Maximum</u> HK\$14,330 per month (for full time staff only)
Research Assistant I (First degree graduate with some experience or master's degree holder with no working experience)	<u>Maximum</u> HK\$17,760 per month (for full time staff only)
Senior Research Assistant (Master's degree holder with working experience or above)	<u>Maximum</u> HK\$28,450 per month (for full time staff only)

Remarks: The funding scale may be adjusted by the Environment and Conservation Fund Committee as and when necessary. Please refer to the Internet homepage of the Environment and Conservation Fund Committee (<http://www.ecf.gov.hk>).

Coverage and eligibility for Researcher's Attendance to Overseas International Conference (Section 3.2.2.13 (c) (i))

1. **Eligibility** – For each ECF supported research or technology demonstration project, only **one person** would be funded to attend **one** overseas international conference for presenting the results of the project throughout the whole project period irrespective of the duration of the research project.
2. **Coverage** – A ceiling of **HK\$15,000 per head per project** would cover airfare (economy class) direct to and from the conference held outside Hong Kong (including airport taxes), conference registration fee, subsistence allowance including accommodation (for a period beginning one day before the start of the conference and ending one day after the end of the conference for up to a maximum number of 7 days) and public means of transport between the nearest international airport and the place of conference.
3. **Principle of no double-benefit** – Academics with conference grants from local universities or research institutes or conferences organizers/sponsors would not be funded by ECF for attending the same conference.
4. **Application procedures** – The proposed attendance to overseas international conferences should be included in the funding proposals when the project proponents submitted the ECF projects application to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat.
5. **Disbursement of funds** – Funds will be granted only on **reimbursement basis** according to actual payment made. Expenses claims, accompanied by original receipts and supporting documents, must be submitted together with the next progress report or completion report as appropriate.
6. **Supporting documents for funds disbursement** – Documentary evidence issued by the conference organizer(s) confirming that the acceptance of paper or poster for presentation at the conference; official conference announcement or invitation letter indicating the dates and venue of the conference and amount of the registration fee.
7. **Reporting** – A brief report on the conference and a copy of the paper or poster (with the title clearly stated) which has been presented at the conference must be submitted to the Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat together with the next progress report or completion report as appropriate.
8. **Absence from funded conference trips** – Grant holders who are subsequently unable to attend the conference due to change of personal circumstances (except for medical reasons with medical certificates) or visa delay/denial will not be reimbursed for the pre-paid conference fees or other associated cancellation charges.

Funding cap and list of acceptable expenditure items for International Conferences to be held in Hong Kong (Section 3.2.2.13)

Recipient organizations should take due account of the need to **minimize waste and be more environmentally friendly** in implementing ECF-supported projects particularly conference projects and in the use of ECF grants in general.

1. **Funding cap** – normally \$500,000 per conference or 70% of the total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. The Vetting Subcommittee will consider applications above the ceiling on a case-by-case basis.
2. **Themes and scope** – To be decided by the ECF Committee or the Vetting Subcommittee from time to time.
3. **Application Period** – Applicants should allow sufficient time for processing of applications for conference projects, taking into account the timing of each round of invitation for applications, and the timing when results would be announced. Expenditure for approved projects could only be incurred between the approved commencement and completion dates of the project.
4. **Other sources of funds** – Applicants must state in the application form other sources of funds including sponsorship from other organizations or government departments, registration fees and/or private sponsorship.
5. **Acceptable expenditure items:**
 - (a) **Venue Setup** – including rental payment (for all activities other than opening/closing ceremony), set up and decoration, backdrop, rental payment of venue, PA system, etc.
 - (b) **Subsidy to Invited Speakers** – expenditure on accommodation and airfare (economy class) for invited speakers. In exceptional circumstances where a higher class of air passage is proposed, the applicant should provide full justifications in his application.
 - (c) **Registration Fees** – Full subsidy may be considered for local post-graduates/students presenters.
 - (d) **Production of Conference Materials** – including brochures, conference booklets and publications.
 - (e) **Production of Exhibition Panels**
 - (f) **Engagement of Project Coordinators/Assistants for the conference**
 - (g) **Publicity** – including items such as banners, posters, leaflets, postage, etc.
 - (h) **Opening/Closing Ceremony** – including invitation cards, set up and decoration,

backdrop, rental payment of venue, PA system, etc.

- (i) **Transportation** – including hire of coach, hire of van/lorry for transportation of materials.
- (j) **Insurance for Third Party Liabilities** – Funding support will be based on the basic requirements.
- (k) **General Expenses** – including engagement of event management consultant, stationery, films and film development, video tapes, website development and maintenance, simultaneous interpretation/translation, light refreshment for ceremonies and conferences, etc.