



環境及自然保育基金 ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION FUND

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Guide to Application

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Environmental Education and Community Action Projects

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Environmental Education and
Community Action Projects Vetting Sub-committee Secretariat
Environment and Conservation Fund

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) was set up by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to provide funding support for educational, research and other projects and activities in relation to environmental and conservation matters. The objectives are to promote individual behavioural and lifestyle changes to achieve sustainable development, and develop or introduce innovative technologies and practices to improve the environment and conserve resources. The key funding schemes are Community Waste Reduction Projects, Environmental Education and Community Action Projects and Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Projects.

1.1 Purpose of this Guide

This Guide provides information on the application for *Environmental Education and Community Action (EE&CA) Projects*, guidance on completing the application form, and basic requirements and responsibilities of recipient organisations of the grant. Upon approval of the funding support by the ECF Committee¹, the applicant organisation will sign an agreement with the Government undertaking to fulfil the conditions of approval specified in the approval letter as well as the Conditions of Grant in implementing the proposed project. Applicant organisations are advised to make reference to the Conditions of Grant in **Appendix I** of this Guide when preparing the project proposal and proposed budget required in the application.

1.2 Nature of EE&CA Projects

1.2.1 The nature of EE&CA Projects are educational programmes or activities mainly to enhance community awareness and knowledge of environmental issues; and/or environmental projects that mobilise individuals to take direct and positive action to improve and conserve the environment and induce individual behavioural change towards a green and low carbon lifestyle.

1.2.2 All EE&CA Projects should target at bring positive impact on the environment with measurable and tangible outcome against the objectives set for the projects, based on the objectives set for the project. Applicant organisations should identify effective and innovative means, where possible, to achieve the project objectives and minimise the environmental impacts during project implementation, including waste generation, materials and energy consumption.

1.3 Types of EE&CA Projects

EE&CA Projects are categorised in the following types:

1.3.1 Special Theme Projects

Prioritised thematic programme areas will be specified and announced by ECF Committee during the invitation for funding applications as appropriate. Special theme projects are formulated, reviewed and adjusted annually in accordance with government policies. Each special theme project has its own total annual funding allocation. In 2024-

¹ A statutory body comprising mainly non-officials, which was set up in 1994 under the Environment and Conservation Fund Ordinance (Cap. 450) to advise the Government on the use of funds.

25, the six special theme projects and their corresponding total allocations are tabulated as follows:

Themes of Projects	Funding Allocation for 2024-25 (HK\$)
Waste Reduction at Source	10,000,000
Biodiversity	10,000,000
Clean Shorelines	10,000,000
Clean Air Plan	5,000,000
Carbon Neutrality / Low Carbon Living	25,000,000
Community Waste and Single-use Plastic Reduction Promotion	15,000,000

The applicant organisation can choose only one special theme for each “Special Theme Projects” application. The applicant organisation and/or co-organisers should possess relevant professional knowledge/skills of the theme.

1.3.2 Special Grant Projects

“Special Grant Projects” accepts applications from eligible organisations which have not been granted funding support from the ECF under the EE&CA Projects funding scheme and/or other eligible organisations (e.g. schools) as specified in each round of application invitation. There are no special restrictions on the expenditure items of the relevant projects, the reference level of funding support for each expenditure item listed in **Appendix II** of this Guide does not apply to “Special Grant Projects”. The funding cap for “Special Grant Projects” is HK\$100,000.

1.3.3 General Projects

Applications that do not belong to “Special Theme Projects” and “Special Grant Projects” are regarded as “General Projects”. Applications should meet the general nature of EE&CA Projects listed in Section 1.2 above and cover one or more of the themes such as air, water, waste, food waste, noise, greening, energy and nature conservation, etc. In 2024-25, the funding allocation for “General Projects” is HK\$25,000,000.

Funds may be granted for full or partial support of projects. ***Applicant organisations should take into account the amount of funding caps and funding allocations available for different scales and themes of projects when preparing budget proposals for their projects.***

Each EE&CA Project should normally last for not more than 24 months, unless with justifications accepted by or as required by the ECF Committee for specific reason(s). For “Special Grant Projects”, the project period should not be more than 12 months.

1.4 Administration

Administration for EE&CA Projects is undertaken by the EE&CA Projects Vetting Sub-committee (the Vetting Sub-committee) Secretariat (the Secretariat) to the ECF Committee.

1.5 **Assistance on Application**

For each round of new application, the Secretariat will organise briefing session(s) for organisations to understand the application requirements. For any questions regarding the application, organisations may contact the Secretariat (Tel.: 2835 1234).

2. SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL SECURITY

- 2.1 By submitting an application for a ECF project, the applicant organisation shall acknowledge and undertake to comply with the following clauses: -
- (a) notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Guide and/or the agreement signed between the recipient organisation and the Government in respect of any ECF project, the Government reserves the right to disqualify the recipient organisation on the grounds that it has engaged, is engaging, or is reasonably believed to have engaged or be engaging in acts or activities that are likely to cause or constitute the occurrence of offences endangering national security or otherwise the exclusion of the organisation from future applications is necessary in the interest of national security, or is necessary to protect the public interest of Hong Kong, public morals, public order or public safety.
 - (b) the Government may immediately terminate any agreement with the recipient organisation upon the occurrence of any of the following events:
 - (i) the recipient organisation has engaged or is engaging in acts or activities that are likely to constitute or cause the occurrence of offences endangering national security or which would otherwise be contrary to the interest of national security;
 - (ii) the continued engagement of the recipient organisation or the continued implementation of any ECF project is contrary to the interest of national security;
or
 - (iii) the Government reasonably believes that any of the events mentioned above is about to occur.
- 2.2 Applicant organisation is required to sign an agreement on safeguarding national security by completing **Appendix I** of the application form for each application. An application will be considered **invalid** if the Appendix is not duly signed and submitted along with the application.

3. GUIDE TO APPLICATION

3.1 Who may apply?

Local *non-profit making organisations* (e.g. community bodies, green groups, schools and tertiary institutions, etc.) are eligible to apply for EE&CA Projects.

Eligible applicant organisations should provide the following document(s), whichever is applicable, to support their eligibility as a local non-profit making organisation. Please refer to the following guidelines (if applicable) for the relevant supporting document requirements:

(a) Local tax-exempt charities

Local tax-exempt charities refer to organisations which are exempted from tax under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112). When submitting an application, the applicant organisation must provide:

- (i) a copy of the letter issued by the Inland Revenue Department on tax-exemption under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112);
- (ii) a copy of the organisation's registration document;
- (iii) a copy of the organisation's Articles of Association; and
- (iv) a list of the principal persons-in-charge and their positions.

(b) Local registered and non-profit-making organisations

When submitting an application, the applicant organisation must provide:

- (i) a copy of the certificate of incorporation issued by the Companies Registry pursuant to the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) or the former Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32); or a copy of the certificate of registration pursuant to the Societies Ordinance (Cap. 151);
- (ii) a copy of the organisation's Articles of Association (which must include clauses prohibiting the distribution of the organisation's profits or properties amongst its members upon dissolution; and its objects and powers shall not include the distribution of profits to members); and
- (iii) a list of the directors/office-bearers and their positions.

3.2 How to apply?

3.2.1 The start and closing dates for receiving applications for each round of invitation will be announced on the ECF website (<https://www.ecf.gov.hk>). Applications² can be submitted online, in person, by post or by email.

- (a) The person-in-charge of a project proposal should be the **Head or Deputy Head of the applicant organisation**.

² Application for "Clean Shorelines Small Scale Projects" or "Special Grant Projects" should be submitted through specific paper-based application forms titled "Environmental Education and Community Action Projects – Small Scale Project on Clean Shorelines" or "Environmental Education and Community Action Projects - Special Grant Project" respectively (available at: <https://www.ecf.gov.hk/en/application/index.html>).

(b) Applicant organisations may complete and submit an application by filling in the electronic application form at the GovHK website (<https://eform.one.gov.hk/form/epd005/en>) **before 6:00 pm on the application closing date** as specified in the announcement of invitation. Applicant organisations are advised to download a soft copy of the application for record.

(c) Alternatively, applicant organisations may download or obtain the application form from –

- The ECF website (<https://www.ecf.gov.hk>)
- EE&CA Projects Vetting Sub-committee Secretariat
Address : 5/F Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong
Tel. : 2835 1234
Fax. : 2827 8138
E-mail : ecf@eeb.gov.hk
- By email (Email address: ecf@eeb.gov.hk)

Duly completed application form together with any supplementary/supporting documents **must be submitted** to the Secretariat **before 6:00 pm on the application closing date** as specified in the announcement of invitation by the following means – In person, by email or by post (Address: 5/F, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong).

For applications submitted by post, the postmark should be dated on or before the application closing date. Otherwise, it will be regarded as late application. In case Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above is hoisted, or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal / Extreme Weather Condition announced by the Government is/are in force for any duration between 12:00 noon and 6:00 pm on the application closing date, the application closing time will be postponed to 6:00 pm on the next working day.

3.2.2 For electronic applications submitted via the GovHK website as specified in section 3.2.1(b) of this Guide or applications submitted by email as specified in section 3.2.1(c) of this Guide, submission of the hard copy of the duly completed application form is not required.

3.2.3 For paper-based applications, the application form should be typed or printed on both sides of the paper. Both original hard copy and soft copy (“Word” format) of the application form should be submitted.

3.2.4 If necessary, the applicant organisation should provide original copy of the supporting documents for verification upon request by the Secretariat, and provide additional information when necessary.

3.2.5 **Late or incomplete applications, and applications not submitted in accordance with the format or requirements prescribed above will not be processed.**

3.3 **How long will the approval process normally take?**

The application and approval processes will normally be **completed within 6 months** after the closing of the application deadline, which consists of the following key steps-

- Step 1: Upon successful submission of the application, the applicant organisation will receive an acknowledgment notice. The Secretariat is not obliged to, contact the applicant organisation to obtain further details on missing documents or incomplete information, and any incomplete application forms will not be processed.
- Step 2: The application will be vetted by the Vetting Sub-committee and be recommended to the ECF Committee. The applicant organisation may be requested to provide further information and/or give a presentation, if necessary.
- Step 3: The ECF Committee will approve / reject applications and decide the amount of grants. The ECF Committee may adjust the budget proposed by the applicant organisation, set ceilings for individual expenditure items and prescribe approval conditions when approving the amount of grants for the projects.
- Step 4: The Secretariat will notify applicant organisations of the decisions of ECF Committee in respect of project approval and conditions of grant which **shall be final**.

3.4 **Is there a limit to the number of projects I may undertake?**

Under normal circumstances, application(s) submitted by an applicant organisation with two on-going projects under the same funding scheme will not be approved.

3.5 **Can I withdraw my application after submission?**

Yes, the applicant organisation may write to the Secretariat to withdraw an application at any time before an agreement is signed with the Government.

3.6 **Can I re-submit my application for the next round of application?**

Yes, the applicant organisation may revise and improve their proposal submitted in previous unsuccessful application, and re-submit it in subsequent rounds of applications. In the re-submission, the applicant organisation may set out the differences between the revised proposal and the previous one for consideration. All applications, including resubmitted applications and new applications, received during any round of applications will be considered on equal footing.

4. GUIDE TO PREPARE PROJECT PROPOSAL

4.1 General

The following factors should be considered in preparing a project proposal for the funding application -

- 4.1.1 The project must contribute to improving the overall environment of Hong Kong, raising the environmental awareness of the local community, and/or mobilising the community to take action to improve the environment.
- 4.1.2 The benefits must accrue to the local community, and not be limited to individuals, a single private organisation or a consortium of private companies.
- 4.1.3 The project must be non-profit making in nature.
- 4.1.4 The project proposal should demonstrate the following -
 - (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 genuine need for the project;
 - (c) whether the programmes of the project proposal can bring about positive impact in the longer run and processes innovative elements;
 - (d) whether the project echoes the Government's policies and programmes in environmental protection;
 - (e) the knowledge, technical capability and resources possessed by the applicant organisations, including their community network, as well as their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance;
 - (f) the track record (whenever applicable) and project management capability of the applicant organisations, including, past experience in project implementation, ability in delivering the planned project outcomes or benefits, compliance with the funding conditions and past documentation submission records under ECF project(s) (including preparing decent regular progress reports, auditor's statements);
 - (g) whether the project duration is reasonable and the schedule of implementation is well-planned and practicable;
 - (h) whether the proposed budget is prudent, realistic and cost-effective, with every expenditure item well justified;
 - (i) whether the proposed activities will minimise the generation of waste themselves;
 - (j) whether the project has received other sources of funding support;

- (k) whether the project should more appropriately be funded by other sources;
- (l) whether there is or likely to be duplication of the work already or currently being carried out by other organisations or government departments;
- (m) if recurrent expenditure is incurred, whether the project has potential to become self-sufficient after a period of time; and
- (n) if it is an application for extension of an ongoing or a completed project, whether the project shows enhancement/improvement in different aspects such as adding new elements, improving performance, and/or optimizing the project, etc. and diminishing reliance on the ECF funding support without compromising the project performance. Normally, the same project will not be approved for extension more than twice.

4.2 How applications are assessed?

Based upon the criteria listed in sections 4.1.4 (a) to (n) above, the Secretariat adopts the following marking scheme to evaluate the merits of the applications and sort the applications according to their marks attained for consideration of the Vetting Sub-committee.

Assessment Criteria	Scoring Weight (Percentage of Total)#		
	Applied Amount of Funding		
	<=HK\$500,000	>HK\$500,000 <=HK\$2,000,000	>HK\$2,000,000
Quality of the proposed project	60%	55%	50%
Effectiveness of the proposed project	25%	25%	25%
Capability and track record of the applicant organisation*	15%	20%	25%

If the proposed project fails to score half or more of the relevant scoring weight in any of the assessment criteria (for example, a project applying for a funding amount of HK\$2,500,000 fails to get 25% of the total score in "Quality of the proposed project"), then the application will not be considered for funding.

* Including capability and track record of the organisation itself and/or the project team.

5. GUIDE FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

5.1 General

- 5.1.1 All sections of the application form should be completed. Where the information sought is not applicable or not available, please fill in “NA”. Additional pages may be attached to the application form if necessary. Incomplete applications or applications not submitted in accordance with the format/requirements as prescribed in section 3.2 will not be processed.
- 5.1.2 Where supporting documents are required in the application form, please ensure that all required information is submitted with the application form in the fullest manner. The Secretariat is not obligated to contact the applicant organisations for missing information or clarification, and would proceed with the vetting on the basis of the information submitted.
- 5.1.3 Applicant organisations are welcome to contact the Secretariat if they are not clear about any of the information or document required in the application form before submitting the applications.
- 5.1.4 Applicant organisations should make reference to the Conditions of Grant in **Appendix I** of this Guide when preparing the project proposal and proposed budget required in the application.

5.2 Sections of the application form

5.2.1 Section A – Data Sheet

- 5.2.1.1 This section serves as a summary of an application. Once approval is granted to an application, the information given by the applicant organisation in this section may be put on the ECF website for public access. If the applicant organisation does not want any of the information in this section to be released, please provide justifications to the Secretariat with the application.

5.2.1.2 *Name of Applicant Organisation and Particulars of the Person-in-charge*

Provide the name of the applicant organisation, which must be a local non-profit making organisation, or a school, or a group formed under a local non-profit making organisation, and also the particulars of the person-in-charge in English and Chinese.

5.2.1.3 *Project Title*

State the project title in both English and Chinese, starting with “Environment and Conservation Fund” and “環境及自然保育基金資助” respectively.

Note: The ECF Committee reserves the right to request a recipient organisation to change the project title of an ECF-funded project as

deemed necessary to avoid duplication and confusion in the source of funding.

5.2.1.4 *Brief Description of the Project*

Give a brief account of the project in not more than 500 words.

5.2.2 **Section B – Project Proposal**

5.2.2.1 *Project Theme*

Indicate the theme of project and choose only one special theme for each “Special Theme Projects” application.

5.2.2.2 *Duration of the Project*

State the commencement and completion dates.

5.2.2.3 *Objectives of the Project*

In clear and specific terms, state how the project will enhance public environmental awareness, promote understanding of way(s) to improve and protect the environment, or mobilise the community to take action, etc.

5.2.2.4 *Scope of Work of the Applicant Organisation in the Project*

State the scope of work to be performed by the applicant organisation in the project. A project of which the applicant organisation does not make a major contribution will not be eligible for funding support.

5.2.2.5 *Details of Other Assisting/Supporting/Sponsoring Bodies of the Project*

Give details of other assisting/supporting/sponsoring bodies.

5.2.2.6 *Details of Implementation Plan of the Project*

State clearly the content to be employed, including how the plan can help to achieve the objectives of the project. Please provide the following information in particular -

- (a) Target district(s), target group(s) and anticipated number of participants in activities;
- (b) Method(s) in recruiting participants and the selection criteria; and
- (c) Work schedule and activity summary - To be presented, chronologically, with a table to show the dates, venues and contents of activities that will be carried out under the project and the respective expected number of participants.

Note: Normally, no funding will be supported for activities which start before approval is given.

5.2.2.7 *Other Information*

- (a) Method(s) in promoting the activities;
- (b) Publication and production of educational material(s) (if any);
- (c) Details of Speaker/Tutor of Seminar(s)/Workshop(s) (if any); and
- (d) Other details (if any).

Note: Applicant organisations are encouraged to upload activity materials to the Internet to avoid printing and photocopying and consider innovative communication channels with the public.

5.2.2.8 *Innovative Elements of the Project and its Difference(s) from Similar Type Projects*

In clear and specific terms, state the innovative elements of the project and its difference(s) from similar type projects, for example, method of implementation, location, target participants, theme and types of recyclables, etc.

5.2.2.9 *Expected Benefits of Project*

- (a) Output and outcomes - Set out performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation of output and outcomes. Examples of the performance indicators are -

Quantitative results:

- the number of participating schools, students, students, housewives, etc.;
- the number of volunteers recruited and/or trained; and
- the number of local community organisations involved.

Qualitative results:

- awareness of key information about a topic and environmental protection knowledge to be learnt by the participants;
- desire, interest, motivation, orientation or perception towards a topic of the participants; and
- behavioural change of the participants.

- (b) Monitoring and evaluation mechanism - Upon completion of a project, evaluation(s) should be made to assess the effectiveness of the project, where applicable, against the original project objectives. Therefore, applicant organisations should set out the project output and outcomes and indicate the relevant information to be collected by completing Appendix II of the application form. The project output and outcomes will be one of the key considerations in vetting projects. Project evaluation should be made to assess the effectiveness of the project with reference to the original project objectives upon project completion. In addition, an activity assessment should be conducted by means of a set of pre-activity and post-activity questionnaires of a selected activity for each project.

Note: Failure in meeting any output and outcomes indicators may affect subsequent applications. The Vetting Subcommittee may request the recipient organisation to meet the output and outcomes indicators of the project within a specific time at its own cost.

5.2.2.10 *Sustainability*

Describe the plan to maintain development of the project and sustain its impacts after project completion. If the project is able to become self-sufficient financially in future, please provide relevant information (e.g. the recurrent expenditure involved and a timetable setting out how long it will take for the project to become self-sufficient).

5.2.2.11 *Budget of the Project*

The applicant organisation should provide a detailed budget for the project proposal. Each income and expenditure item should be reasonable and realistic, and with detailed breakdowns. All expenditure items incurred before the commencement and/or after the completion dates of the project will not be supported and should not be included.

Note: Any increase in cost arising from inflation or unforeseen requirements will be of the responsibility of the recipient organisations. Requests of budget variation for additional funding after project approval will normally not be considered.

All applications are considered on their individual merits. Please study carefully the following funding criteria and the existing levels of funding support for expenses as set out in Reference Level of Funding Support for Expenses, **Appendix II** of this Guide, when preparing the budget. **Expenditure items that are generally not supported and may be considered are also listed in Appendix II of this Guide.**

- (a) Staffing

- (i) The applicant organisation is expected to have the human resources and expertise to supervise and undertake the project. Hence, no funding support will be provided for hiring additional supervisory staff, administrative staff, professional advisor(s), or provision of training course(s) for staff of the recipient organisation. Funding support for the costs brought about by the deployment of the existing staff of the recipient organisation for duties related to the project must be clearly shown in the budget and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - (ii) Funding for staff employed directly for the project may be supported, the salaries of which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The total amount for covering the salaries of project staff should normally be below 50% of the total approved budget or actual expenditure of the project, whichever is the less.
 - (iii) The requirements of statutory minimum wage, Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF), employees' compensation insurance, and other employment legislations must be complied with. Funding for MPF and staff insurance for the project will be supported.
- (b) Travel and Transportation
- (i) Funding for travelling expenses on public transport for project staff/volunteers and hire of transport services will be supported.
 - (ii) Non-local travel will normally not be supported. Non-local participants participating in a local function are normally expected to pay for their own travelling expenses.
- (c) Education and Promotion
- (i) Use of e-publications is encouraged to minimise waste generation through printed materials.
 - (ii) Funding for website design and maintenance cost will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Consideration should be given to the use of own existing website, social media page, etc. to achieve publicity results instead of creating a website for a project.
 - (iii) Expenses on educational materials will be considered on the condition that they are essential.
 - (iv) Funding for rental of venue and facilities owned by the applicant organisation is normally not supported.

- (v) Funding for production of practical and promotional guides such as that on green lifestyle, energy efficiency, eco-tours and nature conservation will be considered. Details of the publication arrangements and relevant budget should be provided in the application form for assessment.
- (vi) Funding for hire of transport for conducting promotional and educational activities of the project, travel allowances and meal allowances for volunteers will be considered.

(d) Insurance

A recipient organisation must effect and keep in force appropriate insurance policies for its project(s) throughout the project period(s), including but not limited to employees' compensation insurance, third party insurance, public liability insurance, group personal accident insurance, etc. Under no circumstances shall the ECF or Vetting Sub-committee or Secretariat be held liable for any loss or damages or liabilities arising from the funded project.

(e) Administration and General Expenses

For applications from non-governmental organisations (including green groups) without receiving government subvention, general administrative and overhead cost incurred from the project will be considered, subject to a funding cap of 10% of the total approved budget or the actual expenditure of the project, whichever is the less. Breakdown of expenditure with justifications should be provided. The applicant organisation should declare in the application form whether it is receiving any government subventions.

(f) Others

- (i) All other expenses will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (ii) Funding for unspecified miscellaneous and contingency item(s) is not supported.
- (iii) Funding for renting or purchasing material(s) already in the stock kept by the applicant organisation is not supported.
- (iv) If recurrent expenditure is incurred, information on whether the project can become self-sufficient after a period of time should be provided.

5.2.2.12 *Justification(s) for Procurement of Capital Items (if applicable)*

The applicant organisation should state clearly what capital items will need to be procured for use in the project, and provide supplementary information to explain the use and necessity. The procurement of these capital items will be considered case by case, and the total cost of these capital items shall normally not exceed 30% of the total budget. If such items are approved, the applicant organisation shall follow the procurement process as stated in Appendix I of this Guide; otherwise, details of the proposed procurement, justification(s) for the special procurement arrangement and its relationship with the designated supplier concerned must be provided.

5.2.2.13 *Estimated Revenue Generated from the Project*

The applicant organisation should state how the revenue derived from the project (including recurrent income) will be used to further the objectives of the project. Estimated revenue expected to be gained from the project shall be taken into account when formulating the amount of grant applied for. Details on how the income will be used to offset the cost of the project should be provided. If this is not possible, full explanation should be given.

5.2.2.14 *Proposed Percentage of First Payment*

The applicant organisation may propose the required percentage of first payment, which shall not exceed 50% of the budget. The applicant organisation should consider the need for renting operational spaces (e.g. workshop, storage spaces, etc.), and procuring equipment, machinery, capital items, etc. in the initial stage of the project in calculating the percentage of first payment required to start up the project. The ECF Committee will consider various factors to make a final decision on the percentage of the first payment.

5.2.2.15 *Other Sources of Funds*

The applicant organisation should clearly list out the availability of other sources of sponsorship(s), both confirmed and being applied, for the project, and state clearly which parts of the project will be funded by these sources of other sponsorship(s) and how these parts are related to the parts to be funded by the ECF.

Prior approval shall be obtained from the Vetting Sub-committee for any changes to the sponsorship(s) during project implementation, for example when the recipient organisation intends to seek other sponsorship(s) to support other related items of the project not funded by the ECF or to top up items that are partly or jointly funded by the ECF, etc. The Vetting Sub-committee will consider whether the sponsorship(s) will constitute any conflict of interest or cause any potential liabilities or damages to the image of the ECF, etc. before making a decision to approve, reject or approve the proposed changes with conditions e.g. on how the ECF funding support should be adjusted. It will then be up to the recipient organisations to agree with their sponsor(s) on details of the sponsorships in accordance with the decisions of the Vetting Sub-committee.

5.2.2.16 *Information of the Project Team*

State detailed information of the project team including details of the project leader, composition and number of staff members and volunteers (if applicable), their respective positions in the applicant organisation (if applicable), their duties in the project and the amount of time they would spend working on the project (in terms of number of days/working hours per month). The project team's structure/organisation chart should be provided if needed.

5.2.2.17 *Experience and Record of Applicant Organisation in Organising Related Activities other than Projects under the ECF*

Provide experience and record in organising related activities other than projects under the ECF.

5.2.2.18 *Brief Descriptions on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Practices of the Applicant Organisation*

Provide brief descriptions on environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices of the applicant organisation, for example, initiatives implemented to reduce negative environmental impact, improve social responsibility and ensure strong corporate governance.

5.2.2.19 *Other Relevant Information in Support of the Application*

Provide other information as considered relevant. For example, the experience of the person-in-charge or assisting organisation(s) in organising similar projects.

5.2.2.20 *Supplementary Sheet for First-time Applicant Organisation*

For first-time applicant organisation of EE&CA Projects, or an organisation applied for funding support from the ECF before but the organisation's information and/or Memorandum of Association and/or Articles of Association has/have been changed, the following information must be provided in the Supplementary Sheet –

- (a) Whether the applicant organisation is exempted from tax under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112);
- (b) Registration status of the applicant organisation;
- (c) Information on the principal persons-in-charge/directors/office bearers of the applicant organisation;
- (d) Whether the applicant organisation has amended any clauses relevant to profits or properties in its Articles of Association in the past one year;

- (e) Whether the applicant organisation receives any Government subventions; and
- (f) Background information about the applicant organisation.

Note: Documentary proof of the applicant organisation's non-profit making status is required to be submitted together with the application form.

5.2.3 Agreement on Safeguarding National Security

Applicant organisation is required to sign an agreement on safeguarding national security by completing **Appendix I** of the application form for each application. An application will be considered **invalid** if the Appendix is not duly signed and submitted along with the application.

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF GRANT

1 Agreement

- 1.1 For each approved project, the recipient organisation has to sign an agreement with the Government and comply with all the terms and conditions of the agreement therein.

2 Use of grant

- 2.1 The benefits of the project must accrue to the local community as a whole, and not just an individual, a single private organisation or a consortium of private companies.
- 2.2 The allocated grant shall be used for the approved project only and shall not be used as payments to any individual member of the public as a financial reward for participation in the activities associated with the project.

3 Disbursement and reimbursement of grants

- 3.1 Depending on the content of work plan for the approved project, the recipient organisation will receive the first payment with a maximum of 50% of the total grant upon signing of the funding agreement and submission of the completed auditor undertaking form. Upon submission of a progress report with information on satisfactory performance and financial position of the project, the recipient organisation may be eligible for a further disbursement if the financial position of the project submitted justifies that not less than 80% of the previous payment(s) has/have been/will soon be spent such that a further disbursement is required for undertaking the project as scheduled. The last 10% of the grant will normally only be released after the completion of the project, submission of a completion report together with a statement of accounts for the project and auditor's report (if applicable) and subject to the endorsement by the Vetting Sub-committee in accordance with the requirements specified in sections 5 and 6 below.

The ECF Committee, Vetting Sub-committee or the Secretariat will decide the percentage of project disbursements in accordance with the financial position and the quantitative results of the project.

Note: The final payment will normally be released within three months upon the endorsement of the completion report by the Vetting Sub-committee, in addition to the receipt of all necessary reports and/or documents as appropriate and when required; settlement of all subsequent necessary clarifications as requested by the Vetting Sub-committee and/or the Secretariat; and fulfilment of the auditing requirement, as applicable.

- 3.2 In the case of unsatisfactory performance or for any reason that the recipient organisation is unable to attain the project targets with no reasonable justification, the Vetting Sub-committee reserves the right to reduce the amount of the funding disbursement based on the performance of the recipient organisation, by taking into account of the percentage of the quantifiable targets achieved and/or other factors which deemed relevant.

- 3.3 All revenue received, irrespective of whether it has been declared in the project proposal, must be defrayed against the actual expenditure before calculating the amount to be reimbursed as the final payment.
- 3.4 Amount to be reimbursed for an individual item of the budget will normally not exceed the approved amount for that item. In general, increase of the approved amount for a grouping of the budget items will not be approved. However, with reasonable justifications, flexible use of approved grants among the budget items under the same grouping as defined by the Vetting Sub-committee will be allowed provided that the total approved amount for the budget items within the same grouping will not be increased. In other words, the sum of the amounts to be reimbursed for all individual items under a same grouping of the budget will normally not exceed the approved amount for that group of budget. The ECF Committee may consider increase the approved amount and/or the level of funding support for an individual item on a case-by-case basis but the total approved amount for the project should normally remain unchanged.
- 3.5 The grant may be reduced on a pro-rata basis in the following circumstances -
- (a) the scope and/or activities of the project is/are changed;
 - (b) the actual number of activities (e.g. seminars) is fewer than that proposed;
 - (c) the number of participants is fewer than that proposed and the grant is allocated according to the number of participants;
 - (d) the number of publications (e.g. leaflets) is fewer than that proposed; or
 - (e) the duration of project is reduced.
- 3.6 Any item not included in the approved budget will normally not be reimbursed.
- 3.7 Income derived from the project during and after the project period, including but not limited to sale of output, revenue generated from activities and interest income generated from cash in hand for the project, should be ploughed back into the project account for offsetting part or whole of the actual expenditure. Failure to report and return such income to the ECF Committee may render the recipient organisation ineligible for future funding support from the ECF.
- 3.8 Any unspent balance of the grant shall be returned to the ECF within two months after the completion of the project or on or before the date as specified in a letter issued by the Secretariat requesting for the return of unspent grant.

4 Project account and interest

- 4.1 The grant paid to the recipient organisation shall be deposited into and appropriately kept in a separate risk-free interest-bearing account opened with a licensed bank in the name of the recipient organisation.
- 4.2 For a project receiving a grant of HK\$300,000 or above, the grant should be kept in a separate account with a licensed bank for the project. All income and expenditure

should be clearly book-kept to facilitate the checking of all financial records by the Government and auditors as and when necessary. For universities, the grants should be kept by the finance office and there is no need to open a separate account with a licensed bank for the project.

- 4.3 The recipient organisation should write to the Secretariat in case they have difficulties in opening a risk-free interest-bearing account and/or a separate account with a licensed bank for the project.
- 4.4 Interest and income generated from the grant, if any, and other monetary receipts for the project have to be reasonably apportioned to the project and no negative interest shall be charged to the project. The interest earned shall be used to offset the project costs and shall not be used for other purposes outside the project without the prior approval of the Vetting Sub-committee.
- 4.5 The recipient organisation may be required to compensate the Government for any loss of interest income if the grant is not properly handled. Where necessary, the Government may initiate legal action for suitable remedies.

5 Reporting requirement

5.1 Progress Report

Recipient organisations shall submit a progress report together with a statement of accounts for the project expenses once every six months to the Secretariat. The progress report shall be submitted within one month following the end date of the corresponding reporting period. In addition, the ECF Committee, Vetting Sub-committee or Secretariat may carry out site inspections and/or surprise checks to examine the progress of a project at any time without prior notice to the recipient organisation. Recipient organisations should provide information about the project activities upon request by the Secretariat to facilitate spot checks on the activities.

- (a) For a project receiving a grant below HK\$150,000, submission of original invoices and receipts for the expenses of the project together with the progress report is required.
- (b) For a project receiving a grant of HK\$150,000 or above and below HK\$300,000, submission of invoices and receipts for the expenses of the project together with the progress report may be required depending on the auditing arrangement for the project opted by the recipient organisation as stipulated in section 6.3 below.
- (c) For a project receiving a grant of HK\$300,000 or above, submission of invoices and receipts for the expenses of the project together with the progress report is not required.
- (d) To keep track of the project progress for disbursement/ reimbursement, the recipient organisations may be required to report project outputs regularly (including attendance of activities, etc.) to the Secretariat via smart electronic means.

5.2 Completion Report

The recipient organisation has to submit a completion report together with a statement of accounts to the Secretariat within two months upon completion of project (except for Clean Shorelines Small Scale Projects, the recipient organisation has to submit a completion report together with a statement of accounts to the Secretariat within one month upon completion of project or before the date specified in the approval letter). The Vetting Sub-committee will assess the effectiveness of the project by comparing the project results/benefits/outcomes/impacts against its original objectives and targets as set out in the project proposal.

- 5.3 Additional report(s), such as installation report for facilities may be required to be submitted within one month after completion of the installation works concerned for certain projects. Such specific reporting requirement will be specified in the respective agreement.
- 5.4 All progress and completion reports should be signed off by the person-in-charge of the recipient organisation or the project leader of the project and submitted in the format as requested.
- 5.5 If an extension of the submission deadline(s) for the progress and/or completion report(s) is required, prior approval should be obtained from the Secretariat.
- 5.6 Unsatisfactory performance and delay in report(s) submission will affect the recipient organisation's future chance of getting funding support from the ECF, and the recipient organisation's management will be informed of such. In particular, the past record of a recipient organisation's punctuality in report(s) and/or related document(s) submission will be taken into account when considering new application(s) from the recipient organisation. The new application(s) will in general not be considered by the Vetting sub-committee if the applicant organisation has completed project(s) under the same funding scheme and the required report(s) and document(s) are still overdue.
- 5.7 The recipient organisation is required to perform project evaluation and activity assessment for monitoring and measuring both output and outcomes of the project. For project evaluation, the applicant organisation should state clearly the expected output indicators with the target beneficiaries specified in Appendix II of the application form and provide relevant information in the progress and/or completion report(s) for evaluation, as necessary. For activity assessment, the recipient organisation should identify one project activity of the project, illustrate the design of a set of pre-activity and post-activity questionnaires in the application form, and invite the activity's participants to fill in the questionnaires before and after the activity respectively. Questionnaires from not less than around 20% or 50 of the total participants (whichever is the less) should be collected for assessment. A summary of activity assessment should be submitted together with the completion report. Samples questionnaires are available at the ECF website.

6 Auditing requirements

- 6.1 The recipient organisation has to submit a complete statement of accounts together with the progress, completion and/or installation report(s) to the Secretariat within two

months upon completion of the project. If an extension of the submission deadline is required, prior approval should be obtained from the Vetting Sub-committee.

- 6.2 For a project receiving a grant below HK\$150,000, the grant received must be shown in the complete statement of accounts together with the original copies of invoices, receipts, quotations and so on. Auditing will not be required, but the Secretariat reserves the right to check all financial records kept by the recipient organisation relating to the use of the grant.
- 6.3 For a project receiving a grant of HK\$150,000 or above and below HK\$300,000, the recipient organisation may opt for showing the grant received in the complete statement of accounts together with the original copies of invoices, receipts, quotations and so on which auditing will not be required, or for the statement of accounts be audited by a Certified Public Accountant (Practising) within the meaning of Section 2 of the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap. 50) to provide reasonable assurance that the audited accounts have properly presented the financial position and that the conditions of the grant are met, with these conclusions explicitly stated in the auditor's report. The followings should be noted when preparing the auditor's report—
- (a) Recipient organisations should take note of and ensure that the auditors engaged by them to perform the reasonable assurance audit must comply with the requirements provided in the documents titled “Notes for Auditors of Recipient Organisations” and “Sample Auditor's Report” in **Appendices III** and **IV** of this Guide respectively.
 - (b) Recipient organisations are not required to attach copies of invoices, receipts, quotations and so on to the audited statement of accounts, unless specifically requested by the Secretariat to do so. However, recipient organisations should still keep the original copies of invoices, receipts, quotations and so on for record and checking by the Secretariat if necessary for at least seven years after submission of the completion/auditor's report, or release of the final payment, or in accordance with prevailing statutory requirements, whichever the longer.
 - (c) Recipient organisations are required to make available to the auditors all information, documents and explanations relating to their projects funded by the ECF for audit purpose.
- 6.4 For a project receiving a grant of HK\$300,000 or above, the statement of accounts must be audited by a certified public accountant (practising) within the meaning of Section 2 of the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap. 50) to provide reasonable assurance that the audited accounts have properly presented the financial position and that the conditions of the grant are met, with these conclusions explicitly stated in the auditor's report. The followings should be noted when preparing the auditor's report—
- (a) Recipient organisations should take note of and ensure that the auditors engaged by them to perform the reasonable assurance audit must comply with the requirements provided in the documents titled “Notes for Auditors of Recipient Organisations” and “Sample Auditor's Report” in **Appendices III** and **IV** of this Guide respectively.

- (b) For projects lasting more than eighteen months, recipient organisations are required to submit a statement of accounts to the Secretariat once every twelve months and within two months upon completion of the project.
 - (c) Recipient organisations are not required to attach copies of invoices, receipts, quotations and so on to the audited statement of accounts, unless specifically requested by the Secretariat to do so. However, recipient organisations should still keep the original copies of invoices, receipts, quotations and so on for record and checking by the Secretariat if necessary for at least seven years after submission of the completion/auditor's report, or release of the final payment, or in accordance with prevailing statutory requirements, whichever is the longer.
 - (d) Recipient organisations are required to make available to the auditors all information, documents and explanations relating to their projects funded by the ECF for audit purpose.
- 6.5 Recipient organisations may visit the ECF website for reference to “the List of Audit Service Providers for Environment and Conservation Fund Projects” (“the List”) when they seek audit services for their approved projects. “The List” can be viewed at the following link:
- https://www.ecf.gov.hk/en/resources/audit/List_of_Audit_Service_Providers_for_ECF_Projects.pdf
- “The List” is for reference only and inclusion of audit service providers should not be taken as endorsement or recommendation of such service providers by the Government or the Secretariat for the provision of any kinds of services to the recipient organisations.
- 6.6 For universities, regardless of the amount of the grant involved in a project, a statement of accounts certified by their finance office is acceptable.
- 6.7 The statement of accounts as required above must be submitted in prescribed format as specified by the Secretariat. The actual expenses and elaborations on individual transactions under each approved budget item should be clearly indicated. It should be noted that recipient organisations should provide all necessary details in the completed statement of accounts, and the Secretariat is not obligated to request for additional information from recipient organisations.

7 Intellectual property rights arising from projects and the use of project results

- 7.1 Unless negotiated otherwise between the Secretariat and recipient organisation, the recipient organisation will solely own all intellectual property rights arising from the project.
- 7.2 Recipient organisation is required to grant unconditionally and irrevocably to the Government the right to publish or use the results, findings and any other information provided in the application form, progress reports, completion report and other publications or publicity materials of the project.

8 Acknowledgement of support and publicity

- 8.1 For all ECF-funded projects, the words “Environment and Conservation Fund” should be added at the beginning of their project titles.
- 8.2 When using the ECF logo, a complete logo consisting of the words “環境及自然保育基金 Environment and Conservation Fund” (i.e. the Chinese and English full names of the ECF) shall be used as far as possible; and where impracticable, the image part (i.e. the emblem) of the complete logo shall be used. Regardless of whether a complete logo or only an emblem is used, the words 「資助」 or “Funded by” should be clearly marked on the top left position of the logo or the emblem under general circumstances.
- 8.3 When it is necessary to display the logos and/or names of organisations other than the ECF, the ECF logo should be placed in a prominent position. The logos and/or names of the recipient organisations or organisers and/or co-organising/sponsoring/supporting/assisting and any other bodies should not be larger in size, or placed in a more prominent position, than those of the ECF; the roles of each organisation should be clearly indicated in words as well.
- 8.4 Apart from the logos and/or names of the ECF, recipient organisations or organisers, as well as co-organising/sponsoring/supporting/assisting and any other bodies approved by the ECF, display of any additional logos and/or names of other individuals or organisations, if needed, are subject to the prior approval of the ECF Committee.
- 8.5 Apart from the project title, the ECF logo should be clearly marked on all publications and publicity materials related to the project and project activities as appropriate. Publications and publicity materials include but not limited to envelopes, letters, invitation cards, labels, notices, leaflets, posters, brochures, programme booklets, academic journals/papers, exhibition panels, banners, easy-mount frames, webpages, short videos, paper advertisements, website/social media posts and/or images.
- 8.6 For all publications and publicity materials for projects and/or project activities which are produced with grants from the ECF, their content and design have to be reviewed by the Secretariat, and the Secretariat has the right to make amendments to them. Subject to the site constraints, the Secretariat may request the recipient organisations to change the presentation, locations and positions for the display of publications and publicity materials for the activities. Recipient organisations are required to submit copies/samples including artwork of all publicity materials proposed to the Secretariat for review before the materials are produced or used for the projects or the projects’ activities, and should follow the advice of the Secretariat on revising the format and presentation of such materials whenever required.
- 8.7 When considering the location and arrangement for displaying publicity materials, the recipient organisations should comply with the relevant legislation and regulations, and obtain the endorsement from all relevant authorities, government departments and other parties concerned, including consultation with the parties affected, as appropriate. The funding support from ECF for the projects should in no way be construed as support for the proposed display location and arrangement of such publicity materials.

- 8.8 For project premises with rental subsidies from the ECF, signboards containing the ECF logo and project title and specifying that the projects are “Funded by Environment and Conservation Fund” have to be installed at a conspicuous location of the front entrance of the premises, irrespective of whether the premises will be open to the public/participants for use or carrying out project activities (such as workshops). The signboards should be reasonably conspicuous in size. If the project premises have more than one entrance, the same signboard should be installed at all entrances taking into account the physical environment. Under no circumstances shall the signboards for project premises with rental subsidies be smaller than A3 size. Besides, publications or publicity materials that are unrelated to the ECF-funded projects shall not be openly displayed at the frontage of the project premises with rental fees solely subsidised by the ECF.
- 8.9 Recipient organisations shall promulgate social media posts through mainstream social media in Hong Kong to promote the project regularly during the project period upon request. In general, for each funded Environmental Education and Community Action Project, recipient organisations shall promote the project by promulgating not less than one social media post through a mainstream social media in Hong Kong once every two months in accordance with the approved project work plan during the project period. For social media posts and/or images, the following four hashtags shall be added to their content:
- #環境及自然保育基金資助 #ECF #環保友 #ECFriends
- 8.10 Owing to time limit consideration, recipient organisations may publish the social media posts in due time on condition that the content and images of the posts are carefully reviewed beforehand to ensure information accuracy and that the message(s) is/are delivered in a reasonable and positive manner. If there is anything inappropriate with a post, the recipient organisation should correct/revise the post, or delete it upon request by the Secretariat.
- 8.11 For the purpose of identification, recipient organisations should issue suitable work identity cards and/or provide uniforms to staff and/or volunteers carrying out activities under the projects. If staff members and/or volunteers of the project and/or project activities receive funding support from the ECF to cover expenses for their uniforms, the ECF logo and the project title should be clearly printed on the uniforms for the project and/or project activities. Staff members and/or volunteers of the projects should not wear other uniforms apart from those of the recipient organisations and/or those produced for the project and/or project activities. Where other means of identification is proposed, prior approval should be obtained from the Secretariat.
- 8.12 Recipient organisations should notify the Secretariat of the project results before publicising them. Copies of publications or publicity materials produced under the projects must be submitted along with the progress/completion report(s) to the Secretariat.
- 8.13 Recipient organisations should try to publicise the project results or any events related to the projects through e-newsletters, websites, social media platforms, seminars, workshops, exhibitions, etc. and provide the relevant details in the progress/completion report(s).

- 8.14 Information of the projects (including photographs and project results) may be uploaded to the websites of the ECF or EPD for public access.

9 Disclaimer and terms

- 9.1 In no circumstances shall the logo, emblem and name of the ECF be used for commercial publicity or other purposes which may damage the image of and/or cause any liabilities to the ECF.
- 9.2 A disclaimer reading “*Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material/event do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Environment and Conservation Fund.*” should be added to all publications and media briefs relating to all ECF-funded projects.
- 9.3 Projects which receive funding support from the ECF, including the activities, publicity and other events organised under the projects, as well as their related educational, publicity and other related materials, should not be used for purposes of personal, political, commercial or religious publicity of any individuals or organisations. Nor should any such activities, events or materials arising from an ECF-funded project be presented in a way as to induce public perception of any personal, political, commercial or religious publicity of any kind, or misrepresent any associations of any individuals or organisations with the ECF. In addition, activities/events organised and materials produced under the projects should not be implemented or distributed in a way which may adversely affect the image of and/or cause any liabilities to the ECF.
- 9.4 Under no circumstances shall the ECF Committee, its sub-committees, the relevant secretariats and/or the Government be held liable for any loss or damages or liabilities arising from the funded project.
- 9.5 The ECF Committee, its sub-committees, the relevant secretariats, and/or the Government shall have no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or other liabilities arising from the projects.

10 Procurement of goods and services

- 10.1 Recipient organisations are obligated to adhere to a high standard of integrity and spend the grants in an open, fair and accountable manner. Recipient organisations are advised to observe the best practice checklists issued by the Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) titled, “Strengthening Integrity and Accountability - Government Funding Schemes Grantee’s Guidebook” and the “Integrity and Corruption Prevention Guide on Managing Relationship with Public Servants” which can be downloaded from the ICAC website or the link as below -

https://cpas.icac.hk/UploadImages/InfoFile/cate_43/2017/43903a1c-f8c9-4bac-b4f8-e7ed80b9a004.pdf

https://www.icac.org.hk/icac/pb/download/reference/cpg_managing_relationship_with_public_servants_en.pdf

- 10.2 Recipient organisations should exercise utmost prudence in procuring capital items, goods and services for their projects and must adhere to the following procedures unless the Vetting Sub-committee agrees otherwise -
- (a) For every procurement of an aggregate value of HK\$5,000 or below, quotations from suppliers are not required for most items unless specified in **Appendix II** of this Guide.
 - (b) For every procurement of an aggregate value of more than HK\$5,000 but less than HK\$10,000, quotations from at least two suppliers should be obtained.
 - (c) For every procurement of an aggregate value of HK\$10,000 or more but less than HK\$500,000, quotations from at least three suppliers should be obtained.
 - (d) For every procurement of aggregate value of HK\$500,000 or more, open tendering should be conducted.
- 10.3 Recipient organisations should select the supplier that has submitted the lowest conforming bid in a quotation exercise. If the lowest conforming bid is not selected, full justifications and assessment criteria (e.g. use of marking scheme) must be given and prior agreement must be obtained from the Vetting Sub-committee.
- 10.4 In case a recipient organisation intends to procure goods and services from a designated supplier/service provider without following the procurement process as stated in section 10.2 above, it has to provide details of the proposed procurement, justifications for the special procurement arrangement, and its relationship with the designated supplier/service provider concerned in the application form. If such special procurement arrangement is not proposed in the application form and approved, subsequent prior approval from the Vetting Sub-committee will be required.
- 10.5 For tertiary institutions, they may adhere to their established/current standard procurement procedures.
- 10.6 All quotations/tendering documents should be kept for inspection by the Secretariat if necessary for at least seven years after submission of the completion/auditor's report(s), or release of the final payment, or in accordance with prevailing statutory requirements, whichever the longer.
- 10.7 Recruitment of staff and procurement of goods/services for all ECF-funded projects must be conducted in an open and fair manner. A mechanism should be put in place for staff/workers to declare any conflict of interest and to prohibit staff/workers from soliciting or accepting any advantages when handling the ECF-funded projects. All records of declaration of interest should be properly documented and submitted to the Secretariat for record. Please refer to **Appendix V** of this Guide for the probity requirements for recipient organisations.

11 Title of capital items, educational materials and computer software

- 11.1 The title to capital items (including minor works, facilities and equipment), educational materials and computer software procured with an ECF project will remain with the Government during the project period. Upon satisfactory completion of the project and

subject to the approval of the Vetting Sub-committee, the title to the items may be transferred to the recipient organisation on a case-by-case basis.

12 Suspension/termination of funding support

- 12.1 The Vetting Sub-committee may suspend/terminate funding support of a project under the following circumstances, but not limited to -
- (a) the project does not commence within six months of the approval of the grant and no reasonable explanation has been given;
 - (b) the Vetting Sub-committee considers that the project has not progressed satisfactorily and no reasonable explanation has been given;
 - (c) the project leader leaves the recipient organisation 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 Sub-committee to take over the role of the project leader;
 - (d) the recipient organisation fails to submit the required report and/or achieve the deliverables by the deadline stipulated;
 - (e) the recipient organisation fails to make proper acknowledgment of the ECF;
or
 - (f) the recipient organisation fails to comply with the funding conditions as set out in this Guide and the approval letter and no reasonable explanation has been given.
- 12.2 In each of the above cases of suspension/termination of funding support, the Vetting Sub-committee shall give one-month notice to the recipient organisation, stating the reason(s) for the suspension/termination. In the case of suspension, the recipient organisation should demonstrate that measures have been taken to improve the unsatisfactory situation and rectify the problems before the Vetting Sub-committee considers lifting the suspension. In the case of termination, the balance of the grant or any funding given in advance shall be returned to the ECF. The Vetting Sub-committee will consider possible redeployment of the capital items, educational materials and computer software acquired for the project.
- 12.3 Any suspension or termination of a project will affect the recipient organisation's future chance of getting financial support from the ECF. If the termination is due to failure in submission of the completion reports and/or the associated document(s), the recipient organisation will not be allowed to apply for ECF funding for a period of not less than one year, counting from the date of the termination notice, as a penalty and the recipient organisation's management will be informed.
- 12.4 The ECF shall be entitled to be refunded by the recipient organisation of some or all of a grant which has been used other than in accordance with the terms of the approved project.

- 12.5 Any major changes to the project must be approved by the Vetting Sub-committee. Such major changes include -
- (a) revision to the objectives and/or content and/or budget;
 - (b) change of the project leader;
 - (c) transfer of the project to another organisation;
 - (d) deferral of the submission date of the progress/completion/installation report and statement of accounts; or
 - (e) change in sponsorship.
- 12.6 The Vetting Sub-committee may suspend/terminate funding support for the project if the project is being carried out under any of the above circumstances without prior approval by the Vetting Sub-committee.
- 12.7 Any minor changes to a project such as a change of activity date, venue, and activity mode etc., should be submitted to the Secretariat for approval in advance.

13 Others

- 13.1 The ECF Committee, its sub-committees, the relevant secretariats and/or the Government may at any time, if consider fit, amend or add to the above conditions, without prior notice to the recipient organisations.
- 13.2 If personal information of participants was to be collected for any purposes of the project, the information should be properly handled according to the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. If in doubt, advice from the Office for the Privacy Commissioner of Personal Data should be sought.

Environmental Education and Community Action Projects
Reference Level of Funding Support for Expenses **

Items	Reference Level of Funding Support (HK\$)
Staffing	
1. Project Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ceiling is normally capped at 50% of the total approved grant or total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. • Full-time Project Officer, tertiary education with 3-5 years' working experience whose major responsibilities are formulating project plans, co-ordinating project activities and supervising other staff (if necessary): \$30,800 per month (including Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) contributions). • Full-time Project Assistant, tertiary education with no or less than 3 years' working experience whose major responsibility is handling routine project matters: \$18,100 per month (including MPF contributions). <p><u>Note:</u> The monthly salaries are for reference only. Actual funding support will be considered based on the job requirements and qualifications of the project staff concerned.</p>
2. Hire of Speakers/Instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$275 per hour per speaker/instructor. • For recognised speaker/instructor in relevant fields, maximum \$500 per hour (qualification should be supported by certificates issued by relevant authorities). • For speaker/instructor holding teaching positions in tertiary institutions or a doctorate degree in relevant fields, maximum \$900 per hour (qualification should be supported by certificates issued by relevant authorities). • Fee to be remunerated on a half-hourly basis. • The funding support may be adjusted upwards on the merit of each case. • Honoraria for speakers who are staff employed for the project will normally not be supported.
Travel and Transportation	
3. Transportation - including hire of coach, hire of van for transportation of materials and hire of launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$2,000 per coach for each round trip. • Maximum \$300 per journey for hire of van. • For hire of launch, 40% of the charge should be paid by the participants.

Items	Reference Level of Funding Support (HK\$)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of funding support is based on the actual expenditure with the proof of receipts. Quotations must be provided for hire of coach/launch.
<p>4. Travel Allowance</p> <p>- including for staff and volunteers (For staff, only allowed for travelling from workplace to workplace, both under the project).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum \$45 for each event/activity (excluding daily duty travelling of staff employed by the project). The funding support may be adjusted upwards on the merit of each case.
Education and Promotion	
<p>5. Publicity</p> <p>- including design and production of publicity items and use of publicity channels, such as social media, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ceiling is capped at 20% of the total approved grant or total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. Recycled paper must be used in all printed materials and eco-friendly printing is preferable. To avoid generation of waste, production of leaflets and banners should be minimised and funding support to such items is to be considered case by case. The recipient organisation is free to manoeuvre with the grant among the various approved 'publicity' items.
<p>6. Event Launching/Closing</p> <p>- including venue rental payment, public address system, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ceiling is capped at 20% of the total approved grant or total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. To avoid generation of waste, single use set up/decoration, backdrop, etc. should be avoided and souvenirs are not supported. The recipient organisation is free to manoeuvre with the grant among the various approved 'opening/closing ceremony' items.
<p>7. Venue Setup</p> <p>- such as venue rental and public address system for seminars and workshops, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ceiling is capped at 30% of the total approved grant or total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. Request of funding to cover charges for use of in-house equipment/facilities of the applicant organisation will normally not be supported. If such support is necessary due to special reasons, prior agreement of the Vetting Sub-committee must be obtained and the expenditure for such rental charges is capped at 20% of the current market price.

8. Booths - including rental payments, decoration and prizes for game booths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$650 per booth. • To avoid generation of waste, distribution of gifts or souvenirs should be minimised and funding support to such items is to be considered case by case.
9. Production of Exhibition Panels - including rental of rack and accessories as well as design and production of two-sided panels if required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$2,100 per panel. • The ceiling is capped at \$21,000 per application.
10. Competition Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$1,500 for each sub-category of competition. Trophies, cash or cashable items must not be given. • Environmentally friendly tokens, instead of ordinary trophies or prizes, are preferable.
11. Admission Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are required to pay 40% of the admission fee.
12. Package Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For hire of package activities, 40% of the charge should be paid by the participants.
13. Meal Allowance - for volunteers only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$60 per volunteer for activities lasting for 3 to 5 hours (excluding preparation/travelling time). • Maximum \$85 per volunteer for activities lasting for more than 5 hours (excluding preparation/travelling time).
14. Diving Gear Rental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$150 per person • Normally include: two scuba oxygen tanks, face mask, snorkel, wet suit, buoyancy compensator device, diving regulator, fins, weight belt, and diving computer
Insurance	
15. Insurance for Third Party Liabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding support will be based on the basic requirements. • Quotations must be provided.
16. Other insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Items	Reference Level of Funding Support (HK\$)
Administrative and General Expenses	
17. Administrative and Overhead Costs - only applicable to organisations without government subventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ceiling is capped at 10% of the total approved grant or total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. • Detailed breakdown on items must be provided.
18. General Expenses - including stationery, printing, photocopying and postage, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ceiling is capped at 10% of the total approved grant or total actual expenditure, whichever is the less. • Detailed breakdown on items must be provided.
19. Audit Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum \$20,000 per audit report. • The Audit Undertaking Form signed by a certified public accountant (practising) must be provided.

* Unless there are special justifications, e.g. the project will yield substantial and meritorious output, applied budget exceeding the reference level will normally not be approved. The reference level of funding support may be adjusted by the Vetting Sub-committee as and when necessary.

#The reference level of funding support is not applicable to “Special Grant Projects” but other conditions and requirements such as those on procurement and environmental protection matters as stipulated in this Guide and the approval letter should all be fully complied with.

Expenditure items that are generally NOT supported

1. Contingency.
2. Capital items such as computer, camera, furniture, etc.
3. Souvenirs for officiating guests, guests, judges and participants and activity prizes to participants, except certificate of attendance and/or achievement.
4. Production of non-essential printed product.
5. Refreshment for ceremonies.
6. Non-local travel / local travel for non-local participants (non-local participants are normally expected to pay for their own travelling and living expenses for taking part in a local event/activity).
7. Payments to individuals as a reward for their participation in the project. Subsidy for volunteer(s) involvement in organising the project may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
8. Honoraria for speakers who are staff employed for the project.
9. Energy-saving facilities and procurement of prefabricated systems such as aquaponics systems.
10. Remunerations/rewards for directors/members/employees of the recipient organisation in return of any work/services/tasks rendered for the project unless otherwise agreed by the Vetting Sub-committee. Any remunerations/rewards paid to directors/members/employees of the recipient organisation without obtaining the Vetting Sub-committee's prior approval, as appropriate, will not be supported.
11. Costs for printing/photocopying of questionnaires for project evaluation and activity assessment which should be done by e-means.

Expenditure items that may be considered

1. Hire of temporary/casual workers on a one-off basis.
2. Printing work including essential publicity materials.
3. Under exceptional circumstances, payment of reasonable fees to hire experienced and professional speakers/trainers.
4. Procurement of services such as production of design and artwork.
5. Premium for public liability insurance.

**Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF)
Notes for Auditors of Recipient Organisations**

1. Pursuant to the project agreement made between the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) and the Recipient Organisations (ROs) in respect of each ECF project and the relevant ECF guidelines¹, ROs are required to submit annual and final “audited accounts”² of each ECF project to the Secretariat of the Environment and Conservation Fund (the Secretariat) according to a stipulated timeframe. The requirement to submit “audited accounts” is to assure the ECF that:
 - (a) the project funds were fully and properly applied to the project for which they were paid, and received and expensed in accordance with the approved project budget; and
 - (b) the RO complied with the funding terms and conditions in the administration, management and usage of the ECF project.

These notes aim to provide guidance for auditors of ROs in conducting reasonable assurance engagements and in preparing auditor’s reports for each ECF project.

2. In conducting a reasonable assurance engagement, the auditors should perform audit procedures as they consider necessary in the circumstances and obtain all the information and explanations which they consider necessary in order to provide them with sufficient evidence to give their conclusion as to whether the ROs have complied with, in all material respects, the requirements set by the ECF (including the requirements to keep proper books and records and to prepare annual/final audited accounts of the project), and all the terms and conditions of ECF funding, as specified in the following documents:
 - (a) the project agreements made between the ECF and the ROs in respect of the projects and the appendices thereto (which includes the project proposals);
 - (b) relevant ECF guidelines¹ referred to in the project agreements³; and
 - (c) all applicable instructions and correspondences issued by the Secretariat to the ROs in respect of the projects.
3. The auditors should comply with the Hong Kong Standard on Assurance Engagements 3000 (Revised) “Assurance Engagements Other Than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information” issued and updated from time to time by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants. The following information is required

¹ This means the funding and administrative guidelines of respective programme as referred to in the project agreement.

² The annual and final “audited accounts” comprise income and expenditure statement, balance sheet, notes to the accounts and the auditor’s report and mean annual and final accounts of the project which have been reported on by Auditors under a reasonable assurance engagement conducted in accordance with the Hong Kong Standard on Assurance Engagements 3000 (Revised) “Assurance Engagements Other Than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information” issued by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

³ In case there are written agreements to the otherwise, such agreements shall prevail to the extent where the context so permits.

in an auditor's report prepared by the auditors to be submitted by the ROs to the Secretariat -

- (a) the auditors should state whether, in their conclusion, the ROs have complied with, in all material respects, the requirements set by the ECF (including the requirements to keep proper books and records and to prepare annual/final audited accounts of the project), and all the terms and conditions of ECF funding, as specified in documents mentioned in paragraph 2, and that audited accounts properly presented the financial position of the project;
 - (b) if the auditors are of the opinion that there exist any material non-compliances as identified in paragraph 3(a), they should make full disclosure and quantify the effects of such non-compliance in the auditor's reports; and if the auditors are of the opinion that a proper and separate set of books and records has not been kept by the ROs for the projects, or the project accounts have not been properly prepared, or if the auditors fail to obtain all the information and explanations which are necessary for the purpose of their reasonable assurance engagements, they should make appropriate qualifications in their auditor's reports.
4. The auditors should plan and conduct the reasonable assurance engagement to satisfy paragraphs 2 and 3. In case of any ambiguities regarding the terms and conditions contained in the project agreements and rules and regulations governing ECF projects, auditors should seek clarifications from the ROs and the Secretariat. Any unreasonable reservation or denial of conclusion, for example, comments about ambiguities of ECF guidelines or requirements, expressed by auditors in the auditor's report, will be returned to the ROs for rectification before re-submission to the Secretariat.

The auditors may come across during the course of their reasonable assurance engagements weaknesses/breakdowns in internal control on the part of the ROs which are considered material. They should bring to the ROs' attention the details of such weaknesses/breakdowns and provide the ROs with their recommendations for improvement by setting them out in letters to the ROs. Copies of such letters should be sent to the Secretariat for reference and action as appropriate.

5. Auditors are expected to follow the sample auditor's report as attached in **Appendix IV**.

**SAMPLE AUDITOR'S REPORT ON
THE ANNUAL/FINAL ACCOUNTS UNDER THE
ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION FUND**

UNQUALIFIED CONCLUSION

[ABC PROJECT]

**[FOR THE PERIOD FROM DD/MM/YY (Date/Commencement Date) TO DD/MM/YY
(Date/Completion Date)]**

Auditor's Report to XYZ Organisation

Pursuant to the project agreement made between the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) and [XYZ Organisation] and the relevant ECF guidelines referred to in the project agreement in respect of the [ABC project] funded by the ECF, we have performed a reasonable assurance engagement to report on whether [XYZ Organisation] has complied with, in all material respects, the requirements set by the ECF (including the requirements to keep proper books and records and to prepare proper [annual/final] accounts of [ABC Project] (the project) for the period from [DD/MM/YY to DD/MM/YY] on pages to (the project accounts) in accordance with all applicable Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards (HKFRSs)), and all the terms and conditions of ECF funding, as specified in the following documents:

- (a) the project agreement made between ECF and [XYZ Organisation] in respect of the Project and the appendices thereto (which includes the project proposal);
- (b) the relevant ECF guidelines referred to in the project agreement; and
- (c) all applicable instructions and correspondences issued by ECF to [XYZ Organisation] in respect of the project.

Respective responsibilities of XYZ Organisation and auditors

The ECF requires [XYZ Organisation] to comply with its requirements (including the requirements to keep proper books and records and to prepare proper project accounts), and all the terms and conditions of ECF funding, as specified in the documents mentioned in the above paragraph.

It is our responsibility to form an independent conclusion, based on our reasonable assurance engagement, and to report our conclusion to you.

Quality Control and Independence

Our firm applies Hong Kong Standard on Quality Control (HKSQC) 1 and accordingly maintains a comprehensive system of quality control including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

We have complied with the independence and other ethical requirements of the Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants issued by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public

Accountants (HKICPA), which is founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour.

Basis of conclusion

We conducted our reasonable assurance engagement in accordance with the Hong Kong Standard on Assurance Engagements 3000 (Revised) “Assurance Engagements Other Than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information” issued by the HKICPA and the latest Notes for Auditors of ROs issued by the Secretariat of ECF.

Our reasonable assurance engagement includes examination, on a test basis, of evidences relevant to XYZ Organisation’s compliance with the requirements set by the ECF (including the requirements to keep proper books and records and to prepare proper project accounts), and all the terms and conditions of ECF funding, as specified in the documents mentioned in the above first paragraph. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by XYZ Organisation in the preparation of the project accounts, and of whether the accounting policies have followed the requirements of ECF, and are consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our reasonable assurance engagement so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidences to give our conclusion as to whether XYZ Organisation has complied with, in all material respects, all applicable HKFRSs issued by the HKICPA and the requirements set by the ECF (including the requirements to keep proper books and records and to prepare proper project accounts), and all the terms and conditions of ECF funding, as specified in the documents mentioned in the above first paragraph. In forming our conclusion, we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the project accounts. We believe that our reasonable assurance engagement provides a reasonable basis for our conclusion.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, in our opinion, XYZ Organisation has complied with, in all material respects, all applicable HKFRSs issued by the HKICPA, the requirements set by the ECF (including the requirements to keep proper books and records and to prepare proper project accounts), and all the terms and conditions of ECF funding, as specified in the documents mentioned in the above first paragraph, and that the audited accounts properly presented the financial position of the project.

Use of this report

This report is intended for filing by XYZ Organisation with the ECF, and is not intended to be, and should not be, used by anyone except the above two parties for any other purposes.

(Signed....)

ABC & Co.

Certified Public Accountants (Practising) Hong Kong

Date

**Probity Requirements for Recipient Organisations of
Grants from the Environment and Conservation Fund**

1. Introduction

As Government funds involve public money, there is high public expectation on the recipient organisations of grants from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) to adhere to a high standard of integrity and spend the funds in an open, fair and accountable manner.

2. Probity Provisions

To uphold the integrity of staff members and agents of the recipient organisation in relation to the funded project, the recipient organisation shall:

- require its staff members, subcontractors, agents, assisting/sponsoring organisers and other personnel who are in any way involved in the ECF-funded project, not to offer, solicit or accept from any person any money, gifts or advantages as defined in the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap. 201) in relation to the project;
- be liable for any loss or damage to the ECF, or its trustee, or the ECF Committee or its Vetting Sub-committees arising from the termination of the funding agreement, where the termination is attributed to the commitment of any offence under the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance in relation to the funded project by the recipient organisation or its staff members, subcontractors, agents, assisting/sponsoring organisers or other personnel who are in any way involved in the project;
- ensure, during the period of the project, that it (including its staff members, subcontractors, agents or other personnel) shall not undertake any service, task or job or do anything whatsoever for or on behalf of the recipient organisation or any third party (other than in the performance of the funding agreement) which conflicts, or which may be seen to conflict, with the recipient organisation's duties to the ECF (or its trustee, or the ECF Committee or its Vetting Sub-committees, or the Secretariat to the ECF Committee or its Vetting Sub-committees) under the funding agreement, unless and to the extent the Secretariat of the ECF Committee or the relevant Vetting Sub-committee has been fully informed, and whose permission has been obtained from the ECF Committee or its Vetting Sub-committees, by the recipient organisation in a timely fashion of all the circumstances; and
- notify the Secretariat of the ECF Committee or the relevant Vetting Sub-committee in writing of all or any facts which may reasonably be considered to give rise to a situation where the financial, professional, commercial, personal, or other interests of the recipient organisation or any of its directors, staff members, agents, assisting/sponsoring organisers, contractors, or any of their respective associates or associated persons, conflict or compete, or may conflict or compete, with the recipient organisation's duties to the ECF (or its trustee, or the ECF Committee or its Vetting Sub-committees, or the Secretariat to the ECF Committee or its Vetting Sub-committees) under the funding agreement.

3. Staff Recruitment

- The recipient organisation or the person-in-charge should maintain fairness and

transparency in recruiting staff for the ECF-funded project, and ensure that all such staff members recruited with the ECF grant are well qualified, suitably deployed, and properly remunerated.

4. Procurement

- In procuring goods and services in relation to the ECF-funded project and implementation of activities under the project, the recipient organisation or the person-in-charge should:
 - adopt a set of standard procurement procedures to procure all goods and services in an open, fair and competitive basis, which should be no less stringent than the requirements set out in the ECF's Guide to Application, Terms & Conditions for the Use and Allocation of Fund, and other relevant conditions prescribed for the grant of fund, to ensure consistency in practice.
 - segregate the duties in the procurement process as far as possible, e.g. assign different staff members to source suppliers/contractors for invitation of quotations/tenders, approve quotations/tenders, and certify the goods/services received.
 - specify the approving authorities and the procurement methods for purchases of different values (e.g. open tendering for purchases of significant value or restricted tendering for minor purchases of a specified amount), which should be no less stringent than the requirements set out in the ECF's Guide to Application, Terms & Conditions for the Use and Allocation of Fund, and other relevant conditions prescribed for the grant of fund.
 - state the approving authorities for purchases by single source quotation or tender (preferably by a panel in case of high value purchases) and require the staff concerned to give justifications in writing.
 - include in the tender/quotation invitation documents probity clauses to prohibit all bidders from offering or soliciting bribes in relation to the bidding exercise.
 - incorporate anti-collusion clauses in the tender/quotation invitation document, and require the bidders to submit, together with their bids, a declaration pledging compliance with the anti-collusion clause.
 - add probity clauses to prohibit all contractors'/service providers' staff from offering, soliciting or accepting bribes, in the contracts to be awarded.
 - Seek ICAC's tailor-made advice, if necessary, on procurement in relation to the ECF-funded projects.
- In sourcing suppliers and service providers, the recipient organisation should:
 - compile lists of suppliers/service providers for approval by the designated authority in the recipient organisation to facilitate sourcing of suppliers/service providers for the goods or services that are required frequently.
 - invite the required number of suitable suppliers/service providers on the respective approved lists to bid on a fair-share basis (e.g. by rotation).
 - add other suppliers nominated, with justifications for their nominations and approval

by designated authority, by the users or other staff.

- source, for those without any approved list, suitable suppliers/service providers for invitations to bid, taking into account their company size, experience and past performance records, if any, through the Internet and nominations by the users and other staff, and include the current supplier/service provider as appropriate.

5. Handling of Project Assets

- The person-in-charge should be responsible for the overall control and management of project assets (i.e. all capital items and equipment, minor works installations, educational materials and computer software procured with the ECF grant for use of the project), including any movements or transfers of these items among users. He should keep a register to record the movements of each item, such as the date of issue and the recipient, date and cost of acquisition, detailed description of the equipment and its physical location. He should also mark on each item to show that it is an asset of the ECF.
- The person-in-charge should conduct and record random and regular (e.g. yearly) physical checks on these assets.
- The person-in-charge should report on any loss or damages to these assets, or any unserviceable assets, to the management of the recipient organisation for necessary action. He should also report to the police and the Secretariat for all assets which are lost or stolen.

6. Record Keeping

- The recipient organisation should keep the original copies of invoices, receipts, quotations and so on in respect of the project for record and checking by the Secretariat and its authorised representatives for at least seven years after submission of the completion/auditor's report or release of the final payment or in accordance with prevailing statutory requirements whichever the longer.