



**環境及自然保育基金**  
Environment and Conservation Fund

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**Guide to Application**

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**Research and Development Projects**

*(Revised version in July 2025)*

Research and Development Projects  
Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat  
Environment and Conservation Fund

5/F, Southorn Centre  
130 Hennessy Road  
Wanchai, Hong Kong

Tel : 2835 1234  
Fax : 2827 8138  
Email : [ecf@eeb.gov.hk](mailto:ecf@eeb.gov.hk)

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## 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 protection and nature 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. There are three funding schemes established under the ECF, namely, the Research and Development (R&D) Projects Funding Scheme, the Publicity and Education Projects Funding Scheme as well as the Practice and Action Projects Funding Scheme.

To collaborate with the ECF in supporting R&D projects, the Wheelock & Co. set up the Woo Wheelock Green Fund (WWGF) in 1994 and select projects for joint funding support on an equal share basis.

### 1.1 Purpose of this Guide

This Guide aims to provide specific guidance on the application of **R&D Projects Funding Scheme** and completion of the relevant application form, and illustrate the requirements and responsibilities of recipient organisations of the grant. Upon approval of the grant by the ECF Committee<sup>1</sup>, 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 other conditions of grant in the implementation of the proposed project.

### 1.2 Nature of R&D Projects

- 1.2.1 R&D projects aim to encourage policy and technology research in the field of environmental protection and nature conservation, application of project outcomes and exchange of knowledge and professional development through conferences. R&D projects cover three types of projects, namely research projects, technology development and demonstration projects, and conference projects. Each R&D project should normally last for not more than 30 months unless approved or required by the ECF Committee for specific reasons.
- 1.2.2 Research projects should contribute to academic advancement and policy development in the field of environmental improvement and nature conservation of the local environment, and should not be too theoretical in nature. Merits will be given to projects with outcomes that have the potential for further technology development in the local environmental fields in Hong Kong.
- 1.2.3 Technology development and demonstration projects should be of direct and practical benefit to the improvement and conservation of the environment of Hong Kong, and the project outcomes should have the potential to be widely adopted. They may include the introduction, development and demonstration of new technologies. The project results, benefits or deliverables must accrue to one or more sectors/industries, and not just to individual companies/organisations. The project results should be publicised, and the benefits or deliverables should be made available to relevant sectors/industries in an

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

open and non-exclusive manner to encourage a wider adoption of the relevant technology in Hong Kong. Merits will be given to projects with outcomes that have the potential for general adoption in the local environmental fields in Hong Kong.

- 1.2.4 For each research project or technology development and demonstration project, the amount of funding sought should not normally exceed HK\$3,000,000, regardless of the duration of the proposed project. Exceptional consideration for a project exceeding HK\$3,000,000 may be given only if the Research and Development Projects Vetting Subcommittee (the Vetting Subcommittee), established under the ECF Committee to vet applications, is satisfied that the project is exceptionally meritorious with outcomes highly beneficial for improving the local environment.
- 1.2.5 The theme and nature of conference projects should focus on environmental protection and sustainable development, and promote exchange of professional knowledge, academic research, technological development, best practices and experience in the field of environmental protection and nature conservation, aiming to raise Hong Kong's profile as a leading green city. The ceiling on funding an international conference to be held in Hong Kong is HK\$500,000 or 70% of the total actual expenditure, whichever is the less.
- 1.2.6 Applicants, particularly those involving a large project sum, should engage the relevant stakeholders (e.g. potential sectors/industries or beneficiaries of project outcomes) to solicit their input, participation, or support for the project. For example, if the project involves demonstration of a technology that may be adopted in certain sectors or environmental industries, the applicants are advised to include an expression of interest or support from the relevant sectors/industries to illustrate that the project outcomes have the potential to be adopted. Where possible, the applicant should put in place a mechanism to continuously engage the stakeholders during the project to ensure applicability of the study results.

### 1.3 Priority Topics

The Vetting Subcommittee recommends a list of priority topics (**Appendix I** of this Guide) on an annual basis so as to give directions to applicants in focusing more on areas relating to prevailing policy priorities and latest technological development trends in putting up their research, technology development and demonstration or conference project proposals in the applications. **Applications for projects outside the list are still welcomed and would be considered and approved on individual merits, albeit with lower order of priority.** Only one priority topic can be chosen for each application.

### 1.4 Administration Work

Administration work in relation to the funding arrangements of R&D Projects is undertaken by the Research and Development Projects Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat (the Secretariat) under the ECF Committee.

### 1.5 Assistance in Application

For each round of new application, the Secretariat will organise briefing session(s) for organisations to understand the application requirements. For any enquiries 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, it means the applicant organisation has understood and agreed with the following clauses: -
- (a) the Government reserves the right to disqualify the application 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) even after the application is approved, the Government may immediately withdraw or cancel the relevant approval upon the occurrence of any of the following events: -
    - (i) the 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 organisation or the continued implementation of the 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 and complete **Section A** of the application form relating to safeguarding national security. An application will be considered **invalid** if this section is not duly completed and submitted together with the application.

### 3. GUIDE TO APPLICATION

#### 3.1 Who may apply?

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

Applicant organisations should provide document(s) to support their eligibility as a local non-profit making organisation and submit the document(s) together with the application form. The requirements for supporting documents for different types of local non-profit-making organisations are as follows (if applicable): -

##### *(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). 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 applicant organisation's registration document; and
- (iii) a copy of the applicant organisation's Articles of Association.

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

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); and
- (ii) a copy of the applicant 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 prohibit the distribution of its incomes and properties amongst its members).

#### 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>). Applications 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. For proposed projects from universities and the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi), the person-in-charge should be the principal investigator of the project (see section 5.2.2.3 of this Guide for more details).

(b) Applicant organisations may complete and submit an application by filling in the electronic application form at the GovHK website (<https://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/epd006/>) 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>)
- Research and Development Projects Vetting Subcommittee Secretariat  
(Address: 5/F, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong)
- The email of the ECF (Email address: [ecf@eeb.gov.hk](mailto: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, Wanchai, Hong Kong)

For application submitted by post, the postmark should be dated on or before the application closing date. Otherwise, it will be regarded as late application. Please ensure payment of sufficient postage as underpaid mails will not be accepted. Applicant organisations will bear any consequences arising from paying insufficient postage.

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. This arrangement is applicable to the application submitted in person and by post.

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.

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 of receipt. The Vetting Subcommittee and the Secretariat is not obliged to contact the applicant organisation for missing documents or incomplete information. Incomplete application forms will not be processed.

Step 2: Before the Vetting Subcommittee considers the applications, the Secretariat will seek views from relevant government departments and/or external assessor(s) on the project proposals as appropriate.

- The principal investigator may be invited to provide responses to any requests for clarifications or supplementary information on the proposed project.
- For applications with a proposed budget of over HK\$600,000, at least one external assessor will be invited to assess the project proposal. A “double-blind” system (i.e. the identities of both the assessor and the applicant will not be disclosed to each other) for external assessment of funding applications is adopted.
- For applications with a proposed budget of over HK\$2,000,000, the identity and experience of the principal investigator and co-investigator(s) responsible for the project will be presented to the external assessor(s) to facilitate the assessment of the capability of the project team while the identity of the external assessor(s) will not be disclosed.

Step 3: The application will be vetted by the Vetting Subcommittee and be recommended to the ECF Committee. The applicant organisation may be requested to provide further information as appropriate. For application with a proposed budget of over HK\$2,000,000, the principal investigator may be invited to make a presentation of the project proposal to the Vetting Subcommittee.

Step 4: 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 and/or set ceilings for individual expenditure items, and prescribe approval conditions when approving the amount of grants for the projects.

Step 5: The Secretariat will notify applicant organisations of the decisions of ECF Committee in respect of project approval and the conditions of grant which shall be final.

### 3.4 How many applications can an applicant submit each round?

In each round of application, any individual person can submit no more than one application for research project or technology development and demonstration project and one application for conference project in the capacity of the principal investigator of an applicant organisation.



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

Under normal circumstances, application(s) submitted by the applicant organisation/principal investigator who is already undertaking two approved on-going research projects and/or technology development and demonstration projects and one on-going conference project will not be approved.

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

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

**3.7 Can I resubmit my application for the next round of application?**

Yes, the applicant organisation may revise and improve their project proposal submitted in previous unsuccessful application, and resubmit the application form during subsequent rounds of applications. In the resubmission, the applicant organisation must clearly indicate the major differences between resubmitted and not approved projects in the application form for consideration. All applications, including resubmitted applications and new applications, received in any round of applications will be considered on an equal footing.

**3.8 Will the comments from the government departments and/or external assessor(s) on the project proposals be released?**

No, the comments from the government departments and/or external assessor(s) will only be provided to the Vetting Subcommittee for internal reference only, for reason that the disclosure of the requested information might inhibit the frankness and candour of discussion of the Vetting Subcommittee.

## 4. GUIDE TO PREPARE PROJECT PROPOSAL

### 4.1 General

The following factors should be considered when preparing a project proposal for the funding application: –

- 4.1.1 The proposed 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 actions to improve the environment.
- 4.1.2 The benefits of the proposed project 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 proposed project must be non-profit-making in nature.
- 4.1.4 The project proposal should demonstrate the following factors –
  - (a) the project is targeted at promoting policy and technical studies, and also exchanges, in the areas of environmental protection and nature conservation;
  - (b) the project echoes the Government's policies and programmes in environmental protection;
  - (c) the technology and other products to be delivered under the project have the potential to be widely adopted or utilised by the trade or by the relevant government department(s);
  - (d) the benefits that the project 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;
  - (e) there is a demonstrable need for the project and the programmes of the project proposal process innovative elements;
  - (f) for conference projects, that the proposed conference can effectively facilitate exchange of best practices, expertise and experience on environmental and conservation issues and raise Hong Kong's profile as a leading green city;
  - (g) the planned deliverables and publicity/technology transfer plan for dissemination and promotion of the project deliverables are implementable with high practical value;
  - (h) the projects adopt specific indicators as performance indicators;
  - (i) the technical and project management capability of the applicant organisations and/or the principal investigators, including the effectiveness of their past project(s), timely submission of reports, and their ability to comply with the funding conditions;

- (j) the project duration is reasonable and the schedule of implementation is well-planned and practicable;
- (k) the proposed budget is prudent, realistic and cost-effective, with every expenditure item well justified;
- (l) whether the project has received other sources of funding support;
- (m) whether the project should more appropriately be funded by other sources;
- (n) whether there is or likely to be duplication of the work already or currently being carried out by other organisations or government departments; and
- (o) if it is an application for studies being carried out in phases/for extension, whether the project shows enhancement/improvement in different aspects such as adding new elements, improving performance, and/or optimising the project, etc. and diminishing reliance on the ECF funding support without compromising the project performance.

**Note: The ECF Committee is not obliged to approve funding for any subsequent phases, notwithstanding that the earlier phases were funded by the ECF. Normally, the same project will not be approved for extension more than twice.**

## 4.2 How applications are assessed?

Based upon the criteria set out in section 4.1.4 (a) to (o) above, the Secretariat adopts the following marking scheme to evaluate the merits of the applications and prioritise the applications according to their marks attained for consideration by the Vetting Subcommittee.

Assessment Criteria	Scoring Weight (Percentage of Total)#		
	Amount of Grant Applied		
	\$500,000 or below	Over \$500,000 - \$2,000,000 or below	Over \$2,000,000
Quality of the proposed project	60%	55%	50%
Effectiveness of the proposed project	20%	20%	20%
Practical application potential of the project results	10%	15%	20%
Capability and track record of the applicant organisation*	10%	10%	10%

# If the proposed project fails to attain half or more of the relevant scoring weight in any of the assessment criteria (e.g. a project applying for a grant of HK\$3,000,000 fails to get 25% of the total score in “Quality of the proposed project”), then the application will not be approved for funding.

\* Including capability and track record of the applicant organisation itself and/or the principal investigator/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 forms not submitted in accordance with the format and requirements as prescribed in section 3.2 above will not be processed.
- 5.1.2 Where supporting documents are required in the application form, please ensure that all information provided in the application form is in the fullest manner. The Vetting Subcommittee and the Secretariat are not obligated to contact the applicant organisations for missing information or seeking clarification, and would proceed with the vetting on the basis of the information submitted before the application closing date.
- 5.1.3 Applicant organisation is welcome to contact the Secretariat if there are enquiries on the information or document required in the application form before submission.
- 5.1.4 Applicant organisation should make reference to this Guide before preparing the project proposal and the proposed budget required.
- 5.1.5 **Applications from universities and THEi must be submitted through the Research Office of the respective institutions, i.e. there should be a covering letter from the Research Office to the Secretariat for paper-based applications, or the electronic application forms must be submitted by the Research Office. There should be the official chop of the relevant academic faculty/department/research office where appropriate. Research Offices should provide supporting document(s) as specified in section 3.1 to support their eligibility as a local non-profit making organisation as appropriate.**

### 5.2 Sections of the Application Form

#### 5.2.1 Personal Data Collection Statement

- 5.2.1.1 The person-in-charge of the applicant organisation should read and understand the Statement.

#### 5.2.2 Section A – Data Sheet

- 5.2.2.1 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 will be put on the ECF website for public access if the ECF Committee deems necessary. If the applicant organisation does not want any of the information in this section to be released, please provide justifications to the Secretariat together with the application.

#### 5.2.2.2 *Applicant Organisation*

The basic information of the applicant organisation and person-in-charge is required to be provided in this section. If the proposed project is jointly organised by several organisations, the organisations concerned should nominate a principal organisation as the applicant organisation to submit an application.

#### 5.2.2.3 *Particulars of the Person-in-charge*

**For proposed projects from universities and THEi, the person-in-charge should either be the principal investigator of the project or the head of the relevant academic faculty/department/office.**

**The Research Office should ensure that only academic staff members whose conditions of employment meet all the following requirements would serve as principal investigators of R&D projects –**

- (a) they have a full-time<sup>2</sup> appointment in the institution proper<sup>3</sup>;
- (b) they are in Staff Grades equivalent to Academic Staff Grades “A” to “I” (i.e. from “Professor” to “Assistant Lecturer”) under the University Grants Committee scale;
- (c) they are primarily engaged in and spend at least 80% of their time in degree or higher degree work at the institution proper; and
- (d) their salary is wholly funded<sup>4</sup> by the institution proper.

**Visiting staff will only be eligible if they have a full-time appointment in the institution proper covering the duration of the project. Staff supported by external research grants<sup>5</sup> are not eligible.**

**If the current appointment of a principal investigator cannot cover the whole project period, the project must include at least one eligible co-investigator from the same institution proper who can take over the project upon the retirement or departure of the principal investigator.**

**The Research Office should, in submitting the applications and accepting the grants, confirm the eligibility of their principal investigators and the need to include co-investigator(s) in relation to the above.**

**The Research Office should inform the Secretariat as soon as the principal investigator ceases to be a full-time employee with the institution, or ceases to be eligible to serve as principal investigator as detailed above.**

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<sup>2</sup> Part-time staff and staff holding honorary appointments are excluded.

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

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

<sup>5</sup> These grants are normally awarded for a designated purpose.

Other than universities and THEi, the “person-in-charge” of a project proposal should be the Head or Deputy Head of the applicant organisation.

5.2.2.4 *The Proposed Project - 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.**

5.2.2.5 *The Proposed Project - Brief Description of Project*

Give a brief account of the project in not more than 200 words.

5.2.2.6 *Declaration*

The applicant organisation should complete a declaration to certify the information provided in the application form is true and accurate, and in compliance with the relevant terms.

The applicant organisation should declare whether it receives any Government subvention. If so, the applicant organisation should provide the name of the Government department concerned.

5.2.2.7 *Agreement on Safeguarding National Security*

Applicant organisation is required to sign and complete the Agreement on Safeguarding National Security. An application will be considered **invalid** if the Agreement is not completed.

5.2.2.8 *Details of the Proposed Project - Type of the Project*

Indicate the type of project (i.e. research project, technology development and demonstration project or conference project). Please choose one type only.

5.2.2.9 *Details of the Proposed Project - Topic*

Indicate the research topic of project. Please choose one topic only.

5.2.2.10 *Details of the Proposed Project - Species Occurrence Data*

For priority topic relating to “**B. Biodiversity and Conservation**”, the applicant organisation shall specify whether the project involves any collection of species occurrence data (location coordinates).

Upon completion of the project, the successful applicant organisation is required to submit the species occurrence data in a standardised data

requisition form, together with the completion report and statement of accounts. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department will use the submitted data for conservation and educational purposes, such as uploading the full dataset or a subset onto its Biodiversity Geographic Information System in appropriate location resolutions for public viewing. The data requisition form can be downloaded from the ECF website.

### 5.2.3 Section B – Project Proposal

#### 5.2.3.1 *Duration of the Project*

State the commencement and completion dates and the project duration. Each R&D Projects should normally last for not more than 30 months. For conference projects, please also provide the planned dates when the conference would be held.

#### 5.2.3.2 *Objectives of the Project*

**In clear and specific terms**, state the project's direct and practical contributions to environmental improvement and conservation of the local environment. Explain the demonstrable needs that justify the project and **the broader goals it aims to achieve**.

For studies being carried out in phases, the results and findings of the earlier phase(s) should be included in the application if the application is seeking funding support for the subsequent phases. The benefits and contributions of the earlier phase(s) to environmental protection and conservation will be taken into account in considering the current funding application.

#### 5.2.3.3 *Details of the Project*

State the target group(s)/sector(s), the estimated size of the sector and the study scope. For technology development and demonstration projects, state the target sector(s) in Hong Kong and the estimated size of the sector(s).

For conference projects, specify the theme, detailed activities, proposed/invited speakers and planned number of people involved.

#### 5.2.3.4 *Expected Benefits of the Project*

State the planned deliverables and performance indicators and a detailed plan for the deliverables' and performance indicators' dissemination and/or knowledge and technology transfer.

- (a) Deliverables and performance indicators of the project – Give targeted quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the project, as well as performance indicators as appropriate (e.g. the effectiveness of the research prototype). **Focus on the tangible and measurable outputs the project will produce to achieve its stated objectives.**

- (b) Dissemination and/or knowledge and technology transfer – For the project deliverables and performance indicators, give a detailed plan on dissemination and/or knowledge and technology transfer, including but not limited to disseminating the results and findings of the project through physical and/or online workshop(s), seminar(s), or website(s), and where appropriate, against performance indicators including, but not limited to –
  - (i) the number of journals, papers, manuscripts to be submitted or presented. Dissemination of the project findings and results through e-newsletters, websites, social media platforms, exhibitions, online seminars/workshops, etc.;
  - (ii) the number of media coverage on the programmes; and
  - (iii) the technologies transferred to stakeholders.

#### 5.2.3.5 *Overall Effectiveness of the Project*

State the overall effectiveness of the project.

##### For Research Projects

State how the project makes contribution(s) to academic advancement in the field of environmental improvement and conservation (*e.g. the project could establish a foundation for the development of know-how for future studies on alternatives to microplastics, thereby driving further technological advancement.*).

##### For Technology Development and Demonstration Projects

State how the deliverables and performance indicators of the project can be applied to environmental improvement and conservation of the local environment (including its direct and indirect contributions/merits) (*e.g. the deliverables of the project can be directly applied to the reduction in exhaust emissions from local restaurants, which can also improve the health of citizens.*).

##### For Conference projects

State how the project facilitates the exchange of practices, expertise and experience on environmental protection and nature conservation among relevant practitioners, academia and professionals (*e.g. the conference project will provide both face-to-face and online platform for experts from different countries to provide insights and exchange technologies on waste management in Hong Kong. Panel discussions will also be conducted to understand the waste management strategies of various countries.*).

#### 5.2.3.6 *Method of Implementation of the Project*

As a separate attachment to the application form, state clearly the implementation method to be employed and explain how this could achieve the project's objectives.



If questionnaire surveys will be performed to collect information or data, a copy of the questionnaire(s) to be adopted, or a detailed framework of such questionnaire(s), should be provided together with the application.

The applicant organisation should avoid experiments on living animal(s) in the proposed project as far as possible and should consider alternative methods to achieve project objectives. If animal testing forms an essential part of the proposed project, the applicant organisation must provide full justification(s) on the necessity to conduct such experiments. The applicant organisation should ensure that persons performing such experiments have obtained an Animal Experiment Licence if it falls under the control of the Animals (Control of Experiments) Ordinance (Cap. 340) and present the relevant licence, permit or endorsement(s) upon request by the Secretariat. Details on the application for animal experiment licence can be found at the link below –

[https://www.dh.gov.hk/english/useful/useful\\_alo/useful\\_alo.html](https://www.dh.gov.hk/english/useful/useful_alo/useful_alo.html)

The applicant organisation should also follow the “Code of Practice - Care and Use of Animals for Experimental Purposes” which can be found at the link below –

[https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/aboutus/abt\\_adv/files/Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_Care\\_and\\_Use\\_of\\_Animals\\_for\\_Experimental\\_Purposes\\_English.pdf](https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/aboutus/abt_adv/files/Code_of_Practice_Care_and_Use_of_Animals_for_Experimental_Purposes_English.pdf)

#### 5.2.3.7 *Details of Implementation Plan and Timetable of Core Tasks*

Give a detailed workplan describing the various activities that will be carried out under the project with a time-table showing the duration and sequence of the various activities in the project.

#### 5.2.3.8 *Innovative Element of the Proposed Project*

List out the similar type of project(s) undertaken and/or all related research (both planned and completed) in the past or at present and provide the details.

List out the innovative element(s) of the proposed project and difference(s) compared to similar projects (e.g. research method, methodology, target group, study scope, or deliverables etc.) (*e.g. the proposed project will present a novel contribution to the waste management field through investigating the application and integration of microbial electrochemical cells (MECs) with existing waste treatment processes or resource recovery technologies for municipal solid waste in Hong Kong. No previous research has been conducted in Hong Kong.*).

#### 5.2.3.9 *Project Sustainability*

- (a) State the plan to sustain impacts upon project completion including but not limited to –
  - (i) state whether the project findings can be adopted / utilised by government departments / relevant sector in Hong Kong.

*(e.g. the system demonstration project can be adopted by the government department to remove algal biomass from reservoirs in Hong Kong);*

- (ii) the project findings will attract other sources of funding for further development or developing a new research project *(e.g. a bus company is interested in the waste heat recovery system developed under a research project and will collaborate with the PI to refine the system for trial use in its fleet);*
  - (iii) share the database of the project findings with relevant research institutions to sustain its impacts.
- (b) Specify whether there is a possibility that the funded project output may generate significant income after project completion. If so, –
- confirm the project is not commissioned by a commercial body to conduct the or part of the study for deriving an income and no such agreement has been signed with any commercial body; and
  - confirm and justify how the proposed project could meet the non-profit making nature and satisfy the related requirements as prescribed in this Guide.

The applicant organisation is required to grant unconditionally and irrevocably to the Government and/or Wheelock & Co./WWGF the right to publish results and findings, and, if applicable, to ensure widespread adoption of the technologies by relevant sectors. The project results, benefits or deliverables must accrue to one or more sectors/industries, and not just to individual companies/organisations.

#### 5.2.3.10 *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.**

Please study carefully the following funding criteria for various expenditure items when preparing the budget. Project expenditures can be categorised into the following types –

(a) Staffing

- (i) The applicant organisation is expected to have the necessary 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 working for the project, and the costs brought about by deployment of existing staff of the applicant organisation for duties relating to the project.
- (ii) Funding will **not** be given for remunerating the principal investigator or co-investigators.
- (iii) Funding for newly employed research assistants working directly for the project may be supported. Justifications for applying for funding for other non-research project staff should be provided and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please refer to **Appendix II** of this Guide for the maximum funding scale.
- (iv) 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 employee insurance for the project will be supported.

(b) Equipment and Consumables

- (i) Funding for purchase of equipment and consumables will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (ii) Funding for purchase of individual capital items, such as computers and servers will normally **not** be supported.

(c) Others

- (i) Funding support for representative(s) of the project team to attend overseas conference(s) and/or online conference(s) to present the results/findings of the project will be considered. Please refer to **Appendix III** of this Guide for the funding scale, coverage and reporting requirement.
- (ii) Funding for publication of results will **not** be supported, unless this forms an essential part of the project. Use of e-channels to release the publication is encouraged to reach out to a wider number of people and to minimise the use of papers through printed materials.
- (iii) Funding for patent fees will **not** be supported, unless this forms an essential part of the project.
- (iv) Funding for production of printed promotion materials, for example, posters and printing of existing leaflets or educational materials will **not** be supported.

- (v) Funding for travelling and accommodation costs for overseas co-investigators coming to Hong Kong will **not** be supported. The applicant organisation or the overseas co-investigators are expected to pay for their own travelling and living expenses.
  - (vi) A recipient organisation must effect and keep in force appropriate insurance policies for the projects 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 (and the Wheelock & Co./WWGF *for jointly funded projects*) or the Vetting Subcommittee or Secretariat be held liable for any loss or damage or liabilities arising from the funded project.
  - (vii) For applications from non-governmental organisations (including green groups) without receiving any Government subventions, general administrative and overhead cost incurred from the project will be considered, subject to a cap of 10% of the total approved budget or actual expenditure, whichever is the less. Breakdowns with justifications should be provided. The applicant organisation should declare in the application form whether it receives any government subventions.
  - (viii) Recurrent expenditure after the completion of the project, including but not limited to website maintenance costs, will not be supported.
- (d) For proposed **conference project** to be held in Hong Kong, please refer to **Appendix IV** of this Guide for the acceptable expenditure items. Funding for purchase of equipment will normally not be considered. **The funding cap is HK\$500,000 or 70% of the total actual expenditure, whichever would be the less.** Please refer to **Appendix V** of this Guide for the calculations of reimbursable expenditure under different scenarios.
- (e) Procurement of Capital Items, Goods and Services (if applicable)

The applicant organisation should state clearly what equipment, machinery and other capital items will need to be procured for use in the project. The procurement of these capital items will be considered case-by-case, and only items absolutely necessary and solely for the delivery of the project will be supported.

#### 5.2.3.11 *Estimated Revenue Generated from the Project (included recurrent income)*

The applicant organisation should state how the revenue (including recurrent income) derived from the project 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.

#### 5.2.3.12 *Other Sources of Subsidies and Sponsorship of the project*

- (a) Clearly list the availability of other sources of any subsidies/sponsorship(s), both confirmed and being applied for, in respect of the project or its activities. State clearly which parts of the project will be funded by these sources of other subsidies/sponsorship(s) and how these parts are related to the parts to be funded by the ECF.
- (b) If yes, state clearly the details of subsidies/sponsorship that are confirmed or being applied for. If the subsidies/sponsorship has/have been confirmed, please provide the relevant written consent(s) (i.e. **Appendix VI**) of the related organisation(s) and fill in “*Details of Collaborating Organisation(s) and Beneficiary Organisation(s) of the Project*” in “*Section C – Other Information*” as well.
- (c) Prior approval shall be obtained from the Vetting Subcommittee 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 Subcommittee 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 Subcommittee.

### 5.2.4 **Section C – Other Information**

#### 5.2.4.1 *Details of the Project Team*

Include the curriculum vitae of the principal investigator (limited to two pages) as a separate attachment to the application form.

Give details of co-investigator(s) as appropriate. **Please note that all co-investigator(s) are required to sign a Confirmation on National Security separately after project approval.**

#### 5.2.4.2 *Details of Collaborating Organisation(s) and Beneficiary Organisation(s) of the Project (if any)*

Give details of collaborating organisations (i.e. co-organising/supporting/sponsoring organisation/individual) and beneficiary organisations/bodies of the project (if any). If its/their involvement in the proposed project has/have been confirmed, please complete and return the written consent(s) in **Appendix VI**. **Please note that all confirmed collaborating organisations and beneficiary organisations are required to sign a Confirmation on National Security separately after project approval.**

#### 5.2.4.3 *Track Record*

The applicant organisation should list out the project(s) supported and application(s) not supported by the ECF in the past five years.

#### 5.2.4.4 *Resubmitted Application*

For an unsuccessful application, if the applicant organisation resubmits it subsequently, the applicant organisation shall set out the differences between the revised proposal and the previous one for consideration.

#### 5.2.4.5 *Other Relevant Supporting Information*

The applicant organisation should provide other information as considered relevant. For example, the experience of the person-in-charge or collaborating organisation(s) in organising similar projects.

### 5.2.5 **Section D – Nomination of External Experts as Assessors**

For applications seeking a budget of over HK\$600,000, it is required to nominate **five external experts as assessors** in the project proposal for consideration by the Vetting Subcommittee. The nominated list of external assessors will be helpful in assisting the Secretariat in identifying independent experts to evaluate the project proposals. In nominating external assessors, the principal investigators and co-investigators are required to declare their relationship and any potential conflict of interest with the nominated assessors, for fairness and transparency. Any undeclared relationships that have existed between the principal investigators/co-investigators and the external assessors, and subsequently come to the attention of the Vetting Subcommittee will be treated seriously and will affect the principal investigators' and co-investigators' future chance of getting funding support from ECF.

### 5.2.6 **Section E – Supplementary Sheet for Applicant Organisation**

**ALL** applicant organisation must provide the following information 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.**

**Priority Topics****(a) Air Quality**

- Development and application of technologies for Greenhouse gas monitoring
- Fixed sniffing system for monitoring real-time emissions from vessels and thereby analysing the fuel sulphur content of vessels
- Air quality monitoring and emission measurements using remote sensing devices and technology
- Photochemical ozone precursors (VOCs) and products monitoring technology
- Use artificial intelligence to refine the emission data of regional air quality model (WRF-CMAQ) using satellite images to enhance the model's forecast performance
- Use of smart technologies and geospatial visualisation to develop a database and user interface of private and public electric vehicle (EV) chargers for all vehicle classes in Hong Kong

**(b) Biodiversity and Conservation**

- Nature-based solutions and their local applicability
- Baseline studies on understudied taxa groups of potential conservation concern
- Studies on conserving threatened species
- Studies on managing and controlling invasive alien species
- Studies on habitat restoration and connectivity
- Studies on urban biodiversity and wildlife-friendly designs
- Impact of climate change on local ecosystems
- Development of smart technologies, tools or systems that facilitate monitoring and/or management of wildlife or habitat, aid enforcement against wildlife crime, or promote sharing of ecological knowledge
- Use of molecular tools (e.g. eDNA) in monitoring of biodiversity
- Assessment and valuation of ecosystem services provided by natural habitats or green and blue spaces in urban settings

**(c) Climate Change – Mitigation, Adaptation and Resilience**

- Low-carbon technologies for promoting meritorious applications of energy saving and green buildings, net-zero electricity generation, renewable energy and green transport and waste reduction and management
- Smart technologies which promote adoption of low-carbon living in Hong Kong
- Use of smart technologies to compile carbon emission data of companies/organisations in certain sectors (e.g. financial services industry or property management sector etc.)
- Innovative education technology (EdTech) to promote public education on climate change and low-carbon lifestyle or to provide capacity building

**(d) Construction and Traffic Noise - Prevention and Mitigation**

- Mobile construction noise barriers
- Quieter construction equipment; quieter methods for general construction, road resurfacing and building demolition works
- Domestic renovation noise reduction (e.g. quieter equipment or method to dismantle tiles)
- Traffic noise mitigation designs and measures for incorporation in residential developments
- Acoustic metamaterials and active noise cancellation devices to enhance the performance of noise mitigation design
- Light-weight and / or ventilated design for noise barriers/enclosures on existing/new road or boundary structures of building developments
- Low noise road surfacing for local roads
- Application of AI technology in sound recognition of domestic noise, domestic renovation noise and construction noise

**(e) Waste Management, Reduction and Recycling**

- Reduction waste at source
- Handling and recycling mixed non-inert construction waste
- Solution to enhance at source separation of construction waste
- High-performance non-plastic alternatives to disposable plastic tableware
- Handling and recycling of mixed domestic waste plastics with low recycling values
- Substitutes for composite packaging materials
- Innovative technologies for on-site food waste treatment
- Innovative solutions to support self-service mode of community recycling network

**(f) Water Quality and Water Pollution**

- Innovative technology for village houses in remote area
- Innovative techniques for use in sewer condition survey and rehabilitation
- Odour mitigation technology for sewerage facilities and sewage-polluted storm drains
- Innovative technologies for preventing microplastics from entering the water environment
- Risk assessment of antibiotics, anti-microbial resistance and antibiotic-resistant genes in the environment and sewage
- Smart technologies in the monitoring (including recognition, tracking, quantification, classification and mapping, etc.) of floating/marine refuse in watercourses and coastal region
- Real-time water quality measurement and analysis system for nutrient and bacteriological parameters at inland, near-shore and open waters
- Big data analysis of water quality, meteorological and other data for deriving deeper understanding of the correlation and dynamics of different parameters



- Innovative technologies for cost-effective removal of phosphorus in wastewater and environmental waters
- Development and application of novel environmental indicator(s) for monitoring of aquatic environmental health status and trends of Hong Kong waters with respect to climate change impacts

**Funding Scale for Research Supporting Staff**  
**(Section 5.2.3.10 (a) (iii))**

The funding scale for research supporting staff employed for the research project is appended below.

<b>Research Supporting Staff</b>	<b>Maximum Funding</b>
Senior Research Assistant <i>(Master degree holder with working experience or above)</i>	HK\$34,200 per month (full-time) Or HK\$200 per hour (part-time)
Research Assistant I <i>(First degree graduate with some experience or master degree holder with no working experience)</i>	HK\$23,000 per month (full-time) Or HK\$130 per hour (part-time)
Research Assistant II <i>(Recent first degree graduate with little or no working experience)</i>	HK\$18,000 per month (full-time) Or HK\$105 per hour (part-time)
Student Research Assistant <i>(Undergraduate)</i>	HK\$63 per hour

**Coverage and Eligibility for Researcher to Attend Overseas Conference  
(Section 5.2.3.10 (c) (i))**

1. **Eligibility** – For each ECF supported research project or technology development and demonstration project, representative(s) from the project team would be funded to attend overseas international conference and/or online conference **for presenting the results of the project** throughout the whole project period irrespective of the duration of the project. If there are more than one representative attending the same conference, each representative should present the results of the project separately.
2. **Coverage** – A ceiling of **HK\$20,000 per project** would cover the airfare (economy class) direct to and from the conference held outside Hong Kong (including airport taxes), conference registration fees, subsistence allowance including accommodation (for a period beginning one day before the start of the conference and ending one day after the end of the conference, up to a maximum number of seven days), and public means of transport during the period.
3. **Principle of no double-benefit** – Academics with conference grants from local universities or research institutes or conferences organisers/sponsors would not be funded by ECF for attending the same conference.
4. **Application procedures** – The proposed attendance to overseas international conferences shall be included in the project proposal in the project application to the Secretariat.
5. **Disbursement of funds** – Funds will be granted only on **reimbursement basis** according to actual payments made. Expense claims, accompanied by original receipts and supporting documents, must be submitted together with the next progress report or completion report as appropriate.
6. **Supporting documents for funds disbursement** – Supporting documents include documentary evidence issued by the conference organiser(s) confirming the acceptance of paper or poster for presentation at the conference; official conference announcement or invitation letter indicating the dates and venue of the conference and the amount of the registration fees.
7. **Reporting** – A brief report on the conference and a copy of the paper or poster (with the title clearly stated) which has been presented at the conference must be submitted to the Secretariat together with the next progress report or completion report as appropriate.
8. **Absence from funded conference trips** – Grant holders who are subsequently unable to attend the conference due to change of personal circumstances (except for medical reasons with medical certificates) or visa delay/denial will not be reimbursed for the pre-paid conference fees or other associated cancellation charges.

**Funding Cap and List of Acceptable Expenditure Items for Conference Projects  
to be Held in Hong Kong  
(Section 5.2.3.10 (d))**

**1. Funding cap –**

The funding cap per conference is **HK\$500,000 or 70% of the total actual expenditure, whichever is the less**. The Vetting Subcommittee may consider applications above the ceiling that are exceptionally meritorious.

**2. Acceptable expenditure items –**

- (a) **Venue setup** – Including rental payment (for all activities other than opening/closing ceremony, set up and decoration, backdrop, rental payment of venue, PA system, etc.
- (b) **Subsidy to invited speakers** – Expenditure on accommodation and airfares (economy class) for invited speakers. In exceptional circumstances where a higher service class of air passage is proposed, full justifications must be given in the application.
- (c) **Registration fees** – Full subsidy may be considered for local post-graduate/student presenters.
- (d) **Production of exhibition panels**
- (e) **Engagement of project coordinators/assistants for the conference**
- (f) **Opening/closing ceremony** – Including the setup and decoration, backdrop, rental payment of venue, PA system, etc.
- (g) **Transportation** – Including hire of coach, hire of van for transportation of materials and hire of launch.
- (h) **Insurance for third party liabilities** – Funding support will be based on the basic requirements.
- (i) **General expenses** – Including engagements of event management consultants, stationery, films and film development, video tapes, website development and maintenance, simultaneous interpretation/translation services, light refreshment for ceremonies and conferences, and so on.

**Calculations of the Reimbursable Expenditure for Conferences Projects  
to be Held in Hong Kong  
(Section 5.2.3.10 (d))**

1. The recipient organisation should note that the **total income<sup>(i)</sup>** and the **total actual expenditure<sup>(ii)</sup>** shall be reported by the recipient organisation upon project completion. The total income derived from the project during the project period shall be ploughed back into the project account.

(i) “**Total income**” refers to all the revenue received outside of the ECF grant, including donation/sponsorship in money term, interest income; and all the income derived from the project, for example, sales of publications and registration fees, etc.

(ii) “**Total actual expenditure**” refers to the total actual expenses incurred for organising a conference project. The expenditure on budget items not supported by ECF may be included whereas expenditure on sponsored/donated items in kind (e.g. sponsored accommodation which the recipient organisation does not need to pay) should not be included.

2. For calculating the reimbursable expenditure for the conference project:
- (a) the funding cap is the approved grant of HK\$500,000 or 70% of the **total actual expenditure**, whichever would be the less, and
- (b) **total income** received must be defrayed against the total actual expenditure before calculating the amount to be reimbursed as the final payment, depending on different combinations of total actual expenditure and total income as illustrated in the following five examples (assuming the approved grant is HK\$500,000):-

Scenario	Total actual expenditure (\$)	Total income (\$)	Total income deducted from total actual expenditure (\$)	70% of total actual expenditure (\$)	Reimbursable expenditure (\$)	Remarks
1	700,000	150,000	550,000	490,000 (less than 500,000)	490,000 (70% of total actual expenditure)	Total income has all been defrayed against the actual expenditure
2	700,000	300,000	400,000	490,000 (less than 500,000)	400,000 (Total income deducted from total actual expenditure)	Total income should all be defrayed against the actual expenditure
3	1,000,000	200,000	800,000	700,000 (more than 500,000)	500,000 (Approved grant)	Total income has all been defrayed against the actual expenditure
4	1,000,000	600,000	400,000	700,000 (more than 500,000)	400,000 (Total income deducted from total actual expenditure)	Total income should be defrayed against the actual expenditure
5	1,000,000	350,000	650,000	700,000 (more than 500,000)	500,000 (Approved grant)	Total income has all been defrayed against the actual expenditure

To: Secretariat, Research and Development Projects Vetting Subcommittee  
5/F., Southorn Centre  
130 Hennessy Road  
Wanchai, Hong Kong

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Environment and Conservation Fund  
Research and Development Projects**

**Written consent**

**I / our organisation / our company\*** hereby confirm to act as a **co-organising<sup>1</sup> / supporting<sup>2</sup> / beneficiary<sup>3</sup> / sponsoring<sup>4</sup> organisation\*** of the proposed project (Project title) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the applicant organisation  
(Name of Organisation) \_\_\_\_\_

in the Research and Development Projects Funding Scheme under the Environment and Conservation Fund.

*(To be completed by **sponsoring organisation<sup>4</sup>** only)*

**I / our organisation / our company\*** will sponsor HK\$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the applicant organisation for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_  
in the above-mentioned project.

Signature of Individual/Authorised Person*	:	_____
Name of Individual/Authorised Person*	:	_____
Position in Organisation/Company	:	_____
Telephone No.	:	_____
Name and Official Chop of Organisation/Company	:	_____
Date	:	_____

\*Please delete as appropriate

<sup>1</sup> Co-organising organisation refers to an organisation/individual that jointly plans, manages and implements the project.

<sup>2</sup> Supporting organisation refers to an organisation/individual that provides assistance other than financial support (such as goods, materials, foods, beverages or services), but excluding that imposing no additional conditions/requirements for providing such assistance to the project.

<sup>3</sup> Beneficiary organisation refers to an organisation/a group that receives benefits from the project.

<sup>4</sup> Sponsoring organisation refers to an organisation/individual that provides financial support to the project.