

Government launches support measures for small and medium-sized arts groups

The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) today (May 29) announced that the Government will launch a series of measures to help small and medium-sized arts groups tide over economic adversity.

An HAB spokesman noted that the Committee on Performing Arts had set up an Ad Hoc Working Group on Support for Small and Medium-sized Arts Groups in February 2009 to examine the challenges faced by such groups during the current economic crisis, and the feasible support measures.

The spokesman said that the support measures involve government funding of about \$10 million, and will be implemented with immediate effect to help the arts groups meet the challenges.

Speaking at today's press briefing, the Chairman of the Committee on Performing Arts, Dr Darwin Chen, said: "The small and medium-sized arts groups, which are valuable assets of the local arts community, have been greatly affected under the current turbulent economic environment. The Ad Hoc Working Group has held meetings in the past few months with the HAB, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Arts Development Council to review the current support measures for the small and medium-sized arts groups and propose a series of measures."

The Convenor of the Ad Hoc Working Group, Mr Ko Chi-sum, said: "Support will be provided to the arts groups on various aspects, including assistance in publicising their programmes, enhancement of performance opportunities, promotion of community involvement for audience building, as well as relief on cash flow."

On publicity, the LCSD will step up promotion of the programmes of the small and medium-sized arts groups through placement of newspaper advertisements and provision of some free sites for venue partners to publicise their programmes.

Mr Ko noted that the LCSD would present more programmes of the arts groups at its venues in the New Territories and non-LCSD venues. A variety of projects will also be launched to enhance audience building in schools and in the community, providing more performance opportunities for the arts groups.

The LCSD will encourage the arts groups to schedule more performances in the daytime specifically for students, and enhance the “School Arts Animateur Scheme” for the groups to introduce different genres of performing arts to schools. It will also collaborate with the arts groups and schools to arrange students’ performances at voluntary agencies in their school neighbourhood.

The LCSD, taking into account the specific needs of different communities, will organise more free thematic entertainment and cultural activities. To bring the arts to the community, it will also enhance the partnership of the arts groups with District Councils, educational institutions and local organisations in organising activities.

“To help relieve their cash flow problem, the Administration will arrange the reimbursement of ticket proceeds to designated arts groups in advance on a weekly basis, with the minimum amount reduced from \$50,000 to \$30,000,” Mr Ko said.

Small and medium-sized arts groups can also defer payment of 75% of the deposit in the second installment if they rent auditoriums, cultural activities halls and exhibition galleries in Tsuen Wan Town Hall and Tuen Mun Town Hall, as well as the auditorium in Yuen Long Theatre.

The Ad Hoc Working Group also supported the LCSD’s proposal to strengthen support of quality arts groups through arranging re-runs of remarkable performances to enrich their repertoire, and offering them assistance in formulating a long-term programme strategy and making advance booking of venues.

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