

Executive Summary

Provision of Consultancy Service for Enhancing
the Evaluation of Assistance Programmes under
the Community Care Fund

March 2014



Background

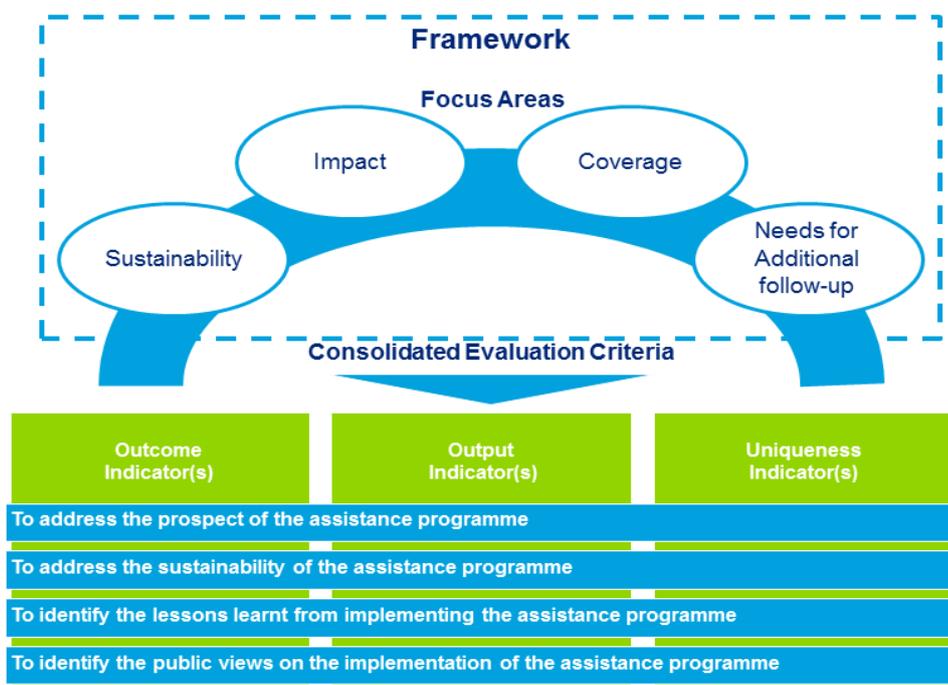
1. The Community Care Fund ("CCF") has been established since early 2011. Its major objective is to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered. In addition, the CCF may implement measures on a pilot basis to help the Government identify those that can be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance programme.
2. The CCF has launched a number of Assistance Programmes ("APs") in various areas covering education, home affairs, housing, medical and welfare for different target beneficiary groups.
3. Government departments and other organisations entrusted to implement the APs are the Implementing Agencies ("IAs"). They are required to submit periodic progress and financial reports to the CCF Task Force under the Commission on Poverty for reviewing the APs.
4. In addition, IAs are also required to evaluate the effectiveness of the APs under their purview, which will, on one hand, assist the CCF Task Force in considering how an AP may be enhanced or modified to better meet the objectives of the AP and, on the other hand, facilitate the Government to consider whether and how the AP may be incorporated into the regular assistance programme in future.

Objectives of the Consultancy Study

5. The CCF Secretariat under the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") engaged Deloitte Consulting (Hong Kong) Limited ("Deloitte Consulting"; or we) to review the evaluation work carried out / to be carried out by the IAs and advise on areas of enhancement accordingly. The objectives of this project (the "Consultancy Study") are:
 - Reviewing and commenting on the evaluation mechanisms and methodologies adopted by the IAs for the APs and providing advice on enhancing the evaluation work;
 - Advising on the yardsticks and factors to consider for the incorporation of appropriate APs into the regular assistance programme; and
 - Devising the framework and work plan for conducting impact assessment, and identifying up to three APs for conducting such impact assessment in future.

Framework for Assessing the Evaluation Mechanisms Adopted by the IAs

6. Having reviewed the operations and the evaluation mechanisms / plans of the APs, we noted the diverse nature of the APs and tailored an assessment framework taking into account the uniqueness of different APs and the evaluation considerations adopted by other not-for-profit organisations or programmes. The following diagram illustrates the framework for assessing the evaluation work adopted by the IAs for the APs:



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7. This assessment framework involved two dimensions, namely Focus Area and Indicator, which served as the basis and guidance for conducting the evaluation work.

Definitions of the focus areas and indicators

8. The evaluation criteria involved the following **Focus Areas**:
- *Sustainability* – Whether the implementation model of the AP can facilitate the provision of subsidy to the beneficiaries without creating imbalanced commitment in the operational, manpower and financial context.
 - *Impact* – Whether the AP can meet its objective and create a notable change to the beneficiaries and to the social safety net as a whole.
 - *Coverage* – Whether the number of persons assisted under the AP is significant vis-à-vis the total number of potential beneficiaries for the AP (*this is purely quantitative in nature*).
 - *Needs for Additional follow-up* – Whether any supplementary action or policy is required for better implementation of the AP (*this is purely qualitative in nature*).
9. The focus areas are reflected in each of the following **Indicators**:
- *Outcome Indicator* – Indicate the changes that are expected to be found among the beneficiaries and the observations and lessons learnt during the implementation of the AP.
 - *Output Indicator* – Indicate the number of actual beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries and other quantitative factors. Indicators must be specific, measurable and achievable.
 - *Uniqueness Indicator* – Indicate whether the AP is serving in areas not previously covered by the social safety net or provided by any social welfare body.

The assessment framework

10. The assessment framework which is a combination of the 4 **Focus Areas** and the 3 **Indicators** is set out in the table below:

Indicators	Focus Areas		
Indicators	Outcome Indicators	Output Indicators	Uniqueness Indicators
Sustainability <i>Availability of human and financial resources (for further service provision if a programme is regularised)</i>	<i>Is resources deployment well addressed in the evaluation work? Are areas for improvement set out or noted in the evaluation?</i>	<i>Is the administrative cost for the assistance programme in line with the pre-set threshold?</i>	<i>Is the assistance programme able to leverage on the existing welfare system in distributing the subsidy / providing the services?</i>
Impact <i>Whether an assistance programme can meet its objective and create a notable change to the beneficiaries and to the social welfare safety net as a whole</i>	<i>Are there any justifications for the stated objective of the assistance programme (why are we serving this group of people)?</i>	<i>Which income group receives the most benefit?</i>	<i>Is the assistance programme serving the target beneficiaries (justify with the eventual output)?</i>
Coverage <i>The number of persons being aided versus the total number of potential beneficiaries</i>		<i>% of people benefited out of the population of potential beneficiaries</i>	<i>Justifying the population of potential beneficiaries – why and how this group is identified and what is the methodology to arrive at the estimated figures</i>
Needs for Additional follow-up <i>Any supplementary action or policy is required in order to achieve the stated objective? Is the programme one-off or not?</i>	<i>Are there any identifiable beneficiaries in future?</i>		<i>What are the marginal cases for this assistance programme and why are they not included in this programme in the first place?</i>

11. We made use of the assessment framework above to assess the evaluation work of each AP.
12. In assessing the evaluation mechanism adopted by each of the IAs, we have filled up each individual cell (the intersection of **Focus Area** and **Indicator**) in the table above with the observations / analysis for each of the APs. We also suggested enhancements for the evaluation work of individual APs.
13. We provided further suggestions on the actual operations of the evaluation (including data collection protocol, data processing and analysis, etc.) to individual IAs for consideration.

Advice given on the regularisation of assistance programmes

14. The assessment framework specified in the aforementioned section explained how details should be gathered by the IAs to facilitate the evaluation work. It also helped identify factors for consideration of whether such APs should be regularised. The key questions to address are as follows:

- "What are the lessons learnt from the implementation of the AP?"
- "What is the sustainability of the AP?"
- "What are the public views on the AP?"
- "What are the prospects of the AP?"

Assessment on the Evaluation Work of Assistance Programmes

15. Our Consultancy Study covered the following 15 APs:

Ref	Implementation Agency	Assistance Programme
1	Education Bureau	School-based Fund (Cross-boundary Learning Activities) to subsidise primary and secondary school students from low income families to participate in learning activities outside Hong Kong
2		After-school Care Pilot Scheme
3		Subsidy to meet lunch expenses at whole-day primary schools for students from low-income families
4	Home Affairs Department	Financial Assistance for Non-school-attending Ethnic Minorities ("EMs") and New Arrivals ("NAs") from the Mainland for Taking Language Examinations
5		Subsidy for Non-school-attending EMs and NAs from the Mainland Participating in Language Courses
6	Hospital Authority (with Food and Health Bureau overseeing the AP)	Subsidy for patients of Hospital Authority ("HA") for specified self-financed cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund ("SF") safety net but have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively high efficacy
7		Subsidy for needy HA patients who marginally fall outside the SF safety net for the use of SF subsidised drugs
8	Social Welfare Department	Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled
9		Subsidy for Elders who are on the waiting list of Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases) for Household Cleaning and Escorting Services for Medical Consultations
10		Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing
11		Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services
12		Subsidy for Tenants Purchase Scheme Flat Owners on CSSA
13	Home Affairs Bureau	Subsidy for Low-income Elderly Tenants in Private Housing
14	Buildings Department / Development Bureau	Relocation Allowance for Eligible Residents of Sub-divided Units in Industrial Buildings who have to move out as a result of Enforcement Action by the Buildings Department
15	Hong Kong Dental Association (with Food and Health Bureau overseeing the AP)	Elderly Dental Assistance Programme

16. We prepared working papers for the aforementioned assessment for each AP.

17. A summary of our major observations for the evaluation mechanisms of the APs is set out in the table below:

Indicator Focus Area	Outcome Indicators	Output Indicators	Uniqueness Indicators
<p>Sustainability</p> <p><i>Availability of human and financial resources (for further service provision if a programme is regularised)</i></p>	<p><i>Is resources deployment well addressed in the evaluation work? Are areas for improvement set out or noted in the evaluation?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where external parties (e.g. NGOs or other authorities) were involved in the operations of the APs, we advised the IAs to highlight the degree of involvement by those external parties, as well as their comments on the current arrangement of the APs. Some IAs did not include those external parties in their original evaluation mechanisms. They then used supplementary questionnaires to collect the views from the external parties. We also recommended the IAs to summarise the lessons learnt from operating the APs, such that the experience could be leveraged in future when designing the operating models for new APs. 	<p><i>Is the administrative cost for the assistance programme in line with the pre-set threshold?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources deployed (in terms of financial and manpower) for the planning and operation of the APs should be reflected. Whether the requirement to keep the administrative costs of an AP within 5% of the estimated disbursement amount could be complied should be stated. 	<p><i>Is the assistance programme able to leverage on existing welfare system in distributing the subsidy / providing the services?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several IAs noted that the APs under their purview were very unique in nature. We recommended the IAs to illustrate the uniqueness of the APs in the current welfare system. Some APs were in fact extension of existing services or subsidies. We recommended the relevant IAs to set out the information regarding the current service or subsidy offered, and how these APs complemented the existing services or subsidies with its unique scope and objectives.
<p>Impact</p> <p><i>Whether an assistance programme can meet its objective and create a notable change to the beneficiaries and to the social welfare safety net as a whole</i></p>	<p><i>Are there any justifications for the stated objective of the assistance programme (why are we serving this group of people)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most IAs had plans to survey the beneficiaries directly through questionnaire, which included questions regarding the satisfaction level, sufficiency of assistance provided, comments on the details of arrangement as well as other opinions. We commented on the format and style of questionnaires. We were of the view that IAs should use more open-ended questions to capture more comprehensive opinion. For IAs with no plans to reach out to the beneficiaries in their evaluation plans, they were recommended to consider setting up such plan, or to survey them indirectly if the assistance was provided to them through a third party. 	<p><i>Which income group receives the most benefit?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most IAs included the average subsidy per beneficiary, total beneficiaries served and other statistics (e.g. number of applications received, number of applications pending for approval). 	<p><i>Is the assistance programme serving the target beneficiaries (justify with the eventual output)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We were of the view that conventional channels (i.e. opinion survey or public consultation) might be too costly to implement and might result in cost-over-benefit. IAs usually kept log of enquiries made by the public / potential beneficiaries through telephone hotlines. We recommended the IAs to include the information and summaries of such enquiries as a source of public opinions.

Indicator Focus Area	Outcome Indicators	Output Indicators	Uniqueness Indicators
<p>Coverage</p> <p><i>The number of persons being aided versus the total number of potential beneficiaries</i></p>		<p><i>% of people benefited out of the population of potential beneficiaries</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommended the IAs to include both the reach-out rate and response rate of the potential beneficiaries as the key indicators to reflect the popularity of their APs. • Some IAs expressed difficulty in defining the potential beneficiaries of the APs. Some other IAs commented that it was difficult to identify the number of eligible beneficiaries as the reaching-out work was done through third parties. We recommended the IAs to include the rationale for not being able to provide this indicator. 	<p><i>Justifying the population of potential beneficiaries – why and how this group is identified and what is the methodology to arrive at the estimated figures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommended the IAs to set out how they promoted and publicised their APs. • We also recommended the IAs to include explanations on how such publicity channels were appropriate in respect of reaching out to the target beneficiaries. • Some APs identified their beneficiaries from a well-specified waiting list, therefore incurring minimal promotion efforts. We recommended these IAs to set out their source of beneficiaries and to justify their minimal promotion efforts.
<p>Needs for Additional follow-up</p> <p><i>Any supplementary action or policy is required in order to achieve the stated objective? Is the programme one-off or not?</i></p>	<p><i>Are there any identifiable beneficiaries in future?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some IAs thought that their APs were designed as pilot scheme and it was not important to predict trends and project future demand. We recommended these IAs to record the actual number of beneficiaries as a proxy for predicting the trend and future demand. • Some APs were designed based on a more established framework which enabled the IAs to collect more reliable statistics for predicting the trend and future demand. We recommended the relevant IAs to include such information. • Some APs are one-off programmes. We were of the view that such indicator might be irrelevant and therefore recommended the relevant IAs not to include this indicator. 		<p><i>What are the marginal cases for this assistance programme and why are they not included in this programme in the first place?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few IAs planned to survey some unsuccessful applicants to understand their needs. We recommended them to include such information. • Some IAs, which did not conduct a survey with unsuccessful applicants, were able to identify a few common reasons for unsuccessful applications. We recommended the IAs to include such information. However, surveying the unsuccessful applicants was preferred to other alternatives. • A few APs came across cases where eligible beneficiaries eventually dropped out from the APs voluntarily. We recommended the relevant IAs to include the percentage of drop-out beneficiaries, and the reasons of such drop-outs.

Observations for Consideration when Designing Evaluation Mechanisms of Assistance Programmes in Future

18. Following the assessment on the evaluation mechanisms adopted by the IAs for the APs, we had the following observations for consideration by the CCF when designing APs in future:
- Owing to the respective experience of the IAs, they have different understanding on the evaluation work to be conducted on the APs – such difference may weaken the comparability of evaluation results. Making reference to a standardised framework for designing the evaluation mechanism in the early stage (e.g. when APs are being planned) is therefore recommended;
 - The evaluation plan should be ready at the commencement of implementing the APs if possible – getting the evaluation plan ready will enable the collection of appropriate data and statistics early which will be conducive to the evaluation work of the APs. Currently there is no requirement for the IAs to have a formal evaluation plan in place before the commencement of the APs. It is recommended that in future, the IAs should have the evaluation plan prepared before the commencement of the APs if possible. For those IAs with difficulty in coming up with an evaluation plan, they could consider making reference to the evaluations of other APs;
 - The views of beneficiaries are crucial in determining whether the stated objective of an AP is fulfilled. Unless there are impediments to the collection of direct feedback from the beneficiaries, the scope of evaluation should cover surveying the views of the beneficiaries;
 - The views of relevant third parties on the current mode of "care" delivery should be considered in assessing the effectiveness of the APs as the effort and time put in by the third parties should be counted as social costs of implementing the APs. The mode of delivery of the APs should be reviewed to consider whether such cooperation model is sustainable; and
 - It is generally understood that effective APs with significant, sustainable, and positive impact to the society should be considered for incorporation into the Government's regular assistance programme. Factors for deciding whether and how a programme should be regularised should be drawn up early by the IAs if possible. This will be conducive to devising appropriate and meaningful evaluation mechanism accordingly.

Views on Impact Assessment

19. We noted that some APs should warrant a more in-depth study to ascertain the impact they have on the beneficiaries and the society, as well as their contribution towards the overall objective of the CCF. Among a number of different impact assessment tools, the Social Return on Investment ("SROI") framework appears to be the most appropriate and comprehensive framework for assessing such impact having regard to the uniqueness of the APs.
20. SROI is a popular framework for measuring and accounting the social, environmental and economic factors of a programme and the impact in monetary values. It is a framework widely used by practitioners / organisations worldwide. The SROI framework guides the users to measure the changes brought by a programme which are relevant to the people or organisations in relation and to gauge the stakeholders' views upon "impact" with a view to arriving at an overall impact assessment of the programme.
21. We suggested a few guiding principles in developing the SROI-based Impact Assessment framework for CCF APs in future:
- Involve as many stakeholders as possible (i.e. those who have a stake in or an interest associated with the APs);
 - Understand as exactly as possible what impact of the APs means for each group of stakeholders; and
 - Value what matters (also known as the monetisation) as far as possible.
22. The SROI-based Impact Assessment framework was proposed as a foundation for discussion. Further adjustments would be required by the IAs and the CCF Secretariat before application.

Customisations made to the SROI Framework for the CCF

23. In order to better tailor the SROI framework for CCF APs, we suggested the following alignments:
- Qualitative (non-monetary) aspects should also be the focus of the Impact Assessment for CCF APs: although monetisation is a prominent tool in the SROI framework, we believe that the documentation of qualitative aspects are also important when measuring the impact created by the APs to the society; and
 - Future state envisioning: the Impact Assessment for CCF APs should also reflect the lessons learnt from the implementation of the APs by the IAs, so that the experience can be leveraged by the IAs and the CCF when designing future APs.

Steps of Impact Assessment for CCF APs

24. The Impact Assessment work should comprise 3 main stages, including:
- **Stage 1 (Establish)** – identify the relevant stakeholders and potential impacts of the APs on those stakeholders;
 - **Stage 2 (Engage)** – confirm the existence of the impacts experienced by the relevant stakeholders identified in the previous stage; and
 - **Stage 3 (Assess)** – examine the impacts resulted from the APs and suggest how the lessons learnt from the APs could improve the implementation of other programmes in future.

Eligibility for the Impact Assessment

25. The Impact Assessment is used to further study how an AP will affect the society in a much broader scope. Therefore the **readiness** of an AP for such a comprehensive study should be assessed. We considered that the following criteria for selecting APs for the aforementioned Impact Assessment would be relevant:
- The **extensiveness** of the evaluation work;
 - The **receptiveness** of the public;
 - The reasonableness and existence of **future demand**; and
 - The **overall comprehensiveness** of an AP.

Having examined all the APs with the four criteria above, we suggested that if the CCF would conduct impact assessment on selected programmes in future, the following three APs should be considered as suitable:

1. After-school Care Pilot Scheme
2. Elderly Dental Assistance Programme
3. Programme of Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

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