

LAWTECH FUND (“LTF”)

Guidance Notes for Applications

I. Objective of LTF

1. The LTF aims to subsidise law firms and barristers’ chambers to procure or upgrade their information technology systems and/or to arrange relevant lawtech training for their staff, including the practising lawyers and employees (including pupils and trainees). The Joint Committee established by the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association (hereinafter the Joint Committee) is responsible for receiving applications under the LTF, processing and deciding whether to approve the received applications and arranging for disbursement of the reimbursed amount for successful applications.

2. For the purpose of applications under the LTF,

“information technology systems” means all information technology systems including hardware, servers, computer equipment, software, databases, networks, cloud based services and other information technological tools used in connection with the operation of the practice of the applicant as recognized and approved by the Joint Committee.

“procure” means purchase and does not extend to leasing or renting.

“lawtech training” refers to the relevant lawtech training as recognised and approved by the Joint Committee.

II. Eligibility

3. An applicant applying for funding under LTF must either be a Hong Kong law firm or a barristers’ chambers. As of 8 April 2020 on the Government’s announcement of the set-up of the LTF and at the time of the payment of the reimbursement where the application is successful,

- (a) With respect to a Hong Kong law firm applicant,
 - the firm must be in practice; and
 - the number of Hong Kong solicitors holding a current practising certificate within the firm must be five (5) or less (for example, it could be a sole proprietor with 4 consultants).
- (b) With respect to a barristers’ chambers applicant,
 - the number of barristers holding a current practicing certificate within the set of chambers must be five (5) or less.

(hereinafter referred to as the Eligible Applicant)

4. Only recognised expenses are eligible for reimbursement under the LTF. These refer to expenses (i) committed by an Eligible Applicant during the application period and due for payment to the product/service providers during the application period or shortly thereafter, or (ii) committed before the application period but yet to be due for full payment to the product/service providers on the first day of the application period to:
 - (a) procure or upgrade the information technology systems of the Eligible Applicant; and/or
 - (b) arrange relevant lawtech training, as recognised by the Joint Committee, for the practitioners and staff (including pupils and trainees) of the Eligible Applicant.

For the avoidance of doubt, recognised expenses do not include:

- (a) any expenses which have been fully paid by an Eligible Applicant before the commencement of the application period; and
 - (b) rentals, leasing fees or other fees incurred by an Eligible Applicant for renting or leasing of the information technology systems.
5. LTF aims to support law firms and barristers' chambers to procure/upgrade their information technology systems and/or to arrange lawtech training for their practitioners and staff.
6. The merits of each application are considered on a case-by-case basis.
7. Funding support under the LTF is granted on a reimbursable basis up to a maximum amount of HK\$50,000 for each Eligible Applicant.
8. Each Eligible Applicant is encouraged to submit one application under the LTF for the current round of application (application which opens on 28 April 2020). Where more than one application is submitted by the same Eligible Applicant, consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis.
9. Funding support for lawtech training under the LTF is restricted to training participated by the practitioners and staff of an Eligible Applicant in Hong Kong, be it face to face or online training. Technological training participated outside Hong Kong will not be funded under the LTF.
10. An Eligible Applicant is required to provide the following in an application under the LTF:
 - (a) a breakdown of the costs that the applicant will expend to procure or upgrade its information technology systems and/or to arrange lawtech training for its practitioners and staff, together with documentary evidence to support the breakdown (invoices, receipts etc.);

- (b) a confirmation in writing that the information technology systems have been or will be used for the operation or practice of the Eligible Applicant and that the Eligible Applicant will keep them for not less than two (2) years from the date of reimbursement;
- (c) a confirmation in writing that as a condition of reimbursement, the title and interest in the product procured vests with the Eligible Applicant and the Eligible Applicant shall not transfer, sell or dispose of the product within two (2) years from the date of reimbursement;
- (d) consent in writing, that in respect of law firm applicants to the Law Society of Hong Kong, or in respect of barristers' chambers applicants to the Hong Kong Bar Association, to inspect the product procured with LTF funding to verify compliance with sub-paragraph (c) above at any time before the expiry of the 2-year period;
- (e) a confirmation in writing that other than the LTF, the Eligible Applicant has not applied for or received and will not apply for or receive any financial grant or subsidy from the Government or any public sources in relation to the procurement of the information technology systems or the arrangement of the lawtech training which forms the subject matter of the application under the LTF; and
- (f) a confirmation in writing that all products reimbursed with funds under the LTF are licensed products and do not infringe any intellectual property rights.

III. Conflict of Interest

- 11. Applicants must declare that they have no actual or potential conflict of interest in the procurement of the information technology systems or technological training.

IV. Application Procedures

- 12. The LTF is open for application for 2 months from 28 April 2020 to 26 June 2020, subject to any further extension as agreed by the Joint Committee and the Department of Justice.
- 13. The application forms for law firm applicants and barristers' chambers applicants are at **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2** respectively.
- 14. The completed application form together with the supporting documents should be submitted by the Eligible Applicants to the Joint Committee by email at lawtechfund@hklawsoc.org.hk within the period that the application is open.
- 15. The Joint Committee reserves the right to seek additional information from the Eligible Applicants where necessary. The application will be considered withdrawn if the

information/clarification requested by the Joint Committee is not provided within 14 days of the request, unless a time extension in writing is granted.

16. One of the overall aims of the COVID-19 relief measures launched by the Government is to support local businesses. This overall aim will be taken into account when assessing applications under the LTF.
17. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their applications in writing within one (1) month from the date of their applications with complete information. Decisions on the applications by the Joint Committee will be final.
18. Payment of reimbursement to a successful applicant will be by way of cheque made payable in the name of the applicant in the case of a law firm or in the case of a barristers' chambers in the name of the chambers' head.

V. Reporting and Disclosure

19. The Joint Committee will be required to report to the Government on the details of disbursements made under the LTF from time to time.
20. While information provided by the applicants in connection with their applications will be kept in confidence and all personal data will be handled in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486), it is a prerequisite to an application under the LTF that applicants consent to the information on their applications being disclosed, without further reference to them, to Government bureaux/departments, statutory bodies, or other third parties for the purposes of processing the application, conducting research and survey, compiling statistics, meeting requirements of the law and/or performing their functions and disbursing funding or other related purposes.

VI. Enquiries

21. Enquiries should be submitted by email to lawtechfund@hklawsoc.org.hk.