

20 July 2017

Education Bureau Circular No. 11/2017

Information Technology Staffing Support Grant

[Note: This Circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and Heads of all government, aided (including special schools), caput and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) – for necessary action; and
- (b) Heads of Sections – for information.]

Summary

This circular sets out details of the “Information Technology Staffing Support Grant” (ITSS Grant) which aims to strengthen the Information Technology (IT) staffing support to all public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools). Schools are invited to attend the upcoming briefing sessions on the use of the ITSS Grant.

Details

Background

2. Building on the success and achievements of past three strategies on Information Technology in Education (ITE) and other e-learning initiatives, the Education Bureau (EDB) launched the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education (ITE4) in the 2015/16 school year. One of the key measures is to equip all public sector schools with WiFi coverage in all classrooms to facilitate the use of mobile computing devices for e-learning. EDB has been providing all public sector schools with an annual recurrent Composite Information Technology Grant (CITG). Schools can flexibly deploy CITG to meet their operational needs for IT in education. Under ITE4, EDB has also disbursed an extra recurrent grant of \$70,000 on average per school for continuous subscription of WiFi services,

a one-off grant of \$100,000 on average per school to acquire mobile computing devices and an extra One-off IT Grant of \$200,000 on average per school to enhance support on the practice of e-learning.

ITSS Grant

3. In view of the increasingly wider adoption of IT in education, starting from the 2017/18 school year, EDB will provide an additional recurrent cash grant to all public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) for strengthening the IT staffing support to practise e-learning and take forward various education initiatives which will harness IT. The funding amount for the 2017/18 school year will be \$25,000 per month, i.e. \$300,000 per year for each school. The grant will be adjusted annually in accordance with the movement of Composite Consumer Price Index.

4. The ITSS Grant should primarily be used for strengthening schools' IT staffing support. Schools could use the grant to employ their own staff or appoint IT companies to provide agency worker(s) to render the required technical support services in school campus. Please refer to the Appendix for the recommended duties of these technical support staff. If there is still remaining funding, schools may then use the remainder of the grant to acquire additional technical support services beyond the provision of their own technical support staff or agency worker(s), such as data migration and cloud management, from service providers to meet their specific needs.

5. For schools employing their own technical support staff, they are advised to fulfil their obligations as good employers by giving full consideration to the market pay level and work conditions, including annual pay adjustment when determining the actual remuneration package. Schools are also advised to provide training opportunities to enable the technical support staff to keep abreast of the advancement in technology. All expenditures related to employment of staff, such as salaries, Mandatory Provident Fund contribution, any other statutory benefits and relevant training, could be paid out by this grant and no additional funding will be provided to cover such expenditures.

Disbursement

6. For aided schools (including special schools) and caput schools, the ITSS Grant will be released to schools in August in an amount equal to 7 months of allocation, i.e. \$175,000. The remaining amount will be released to schools in April of the following year. For government schools, the grant will be allocated in the form of budget allocations at two points in September and April of the school year; separate allocation for the unspent balance (if any) of the preceding financial year will be provided at the beginning of the next financial year. For DSS schools, the provision of the recurrent cash grant will be provided through the DSS unit subsidy.

Accounting and Other Related Arrangements

7. For accounting and auditing purposes, aided and caput schools are required to keep a separate ledger account for the recurrent cash grant to record all the incomes and expenditures chargeable to the grant. Government schools will be allocated with a designated user code for capturing the provision of the recurrent cash grant and the expenditures thereon. Besides, school should refer to relevant EDB Circulars and guidelines as appropriate in handling matters such as recruitment, hire of services, procurement of goods and services, etc.

8. As the ITSS Grant is a recurrent cash grant, schools are required to optimise its use for the respective school years. Hence, schools are not expected to retain surplus of this grant in principle. However, we note that for cashflow reasons and/or arising from operational needs, some schools might not be able to fully utilise their funding within the school/financial year. We thus allow schools to retain a reasonable amount of unspent balance in a school/financial year and carry it forward for use in the subsequent year as detailed in the paragraphs below.

9. For aided and caput schools, we allow schools to retain the surplus balance up to 12 months' provision of this recurrent cash grant and carry it forward for use in the next school year. EDB will claw back any amount in excess of the said cap based on schools' annual audited accounts. Transfer of funds out of this cash grant is not allowed.

10. Government schools will be accorded with the same arrangement as for aided and caput schools above, except that they will be accounted for on

a financial year basis and any unspent balance in excess of the cap will lapse at the end of the relevant financial year. Transfer of funds out of this cash grant is not allowed.

11. If a deficit is incurred on the recurrent cash grant in any year, aided schools may deploy the surplus under Expanded Operating Expenditure Block Grant or the General Domain of Operating Expenditure Block Grant to top up the deficit of the recurrent cash grant while government schools may deploy the surplus of the Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant to cover the deficit. Caput schools can deploy government funds to cover the deficit. Any remaining deficit balance not covered in that year should be met by schools' own funds.

Briefing Session

12. We will organise two identical briefing sessions on the ITSS Grant on 29 and 30 August 2017. Schools are invited to nominate a representative to attend the sessions and enrol through the Training Calendar System [Course ID: EI0020170252].

Enquiry

13. For enquiries, schools may contact their respective Senior School Development Officers or the Information Technology in Education Section at 3698 3606.

(YT LAU)
for Permanent Secretary for Education

Recommended Duties of Technical Support Staff

Acquired under the ITSS Grant

- Operating and monitoring computer equipment, network and servers, including mobile computing devices and audio/video equipment;
- Performing user IT support and assisting in incident management/trouble shooting;
- Assisting in management of computer job processing and systems, including WebSAMS, e-learning platforms, schools' intranet and webpages;
- Assisting in procurement of IT equipment and services, contract administration, site preparation, and management of IT asset and external suppliers such as WiFi service providers;
- Assisting in maintenance of records and documentation; and
- Any other relevant technical duties in supporting IT in Education.