



Rural in Action Start-up Scheme (RA2s)

Application Guide

Background

The rural areas and rural population in Hong Kong and other parts of Asia are declining due to demographic ageing, rural-urban migration, structural economic change, globalisation of agriculture products, and urbanisation. With a view to developing a community-based action model for rural revitalization, the Policy for Sustainability Lab (PSL) of the Centre for Civil Society and Governance at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) has initiated the “HSBC Rural Sustainability” programme. As part of the programme, the Rural in Action Start-up Scheme (RA2s) was launched in 2019. RA2s seeks to invite individuals and groups of community members and specialists of different expertise to develop new business models to revive and reinforce the vibrancy and hence sustainability of rural villages.

Aims

RA2s is an award scheme that aims to encourage proactive involvement of young and experienced entrepreneurs or talents who are interested in **developing sustainable rural revitalisation models, businesses and innovations** that are environmentally friendly, financially sustainable, culturally appropriate and socially beneficial. RA2s also supports local efforts to build sustainable living environments in rural Hong Kong. Applicants will be encouraged and facilitated to form partnerships to develop collaborative action projects in rural areas of Hong Kong.

Theme and Priorities

The proposals applying for RA2s should focus on achieving **Rural Sustainability**. Priority will be given to proposals that foster rural-urban interactions. Development of new concepts, products, activities or services that seek the opportunities to create collaboration, partnership and business models between urban and rural areas and communities are preferred.

Funding Scope and Duration

Successful applicants will be awarded a start-up grant ranging between HKD50,000-HKD200,000 per project to innovate, incubate and implement rural sustainability solutions. The award is intended to be a seed-funding scheme facilitating ideation, prototyping, testing, and initial implementation to germinate into an incubation stage so that the solution may potentially be self-sustained or attract angel fund and venture capital support for further development. Each successful start-up will be funded for no more than 12 months. For proposals submitted for 2020 opening, all project activities must be completed by 31 March 2022.



Any expenditure item or part thereof which is already funded by the Government, a Government subvented body/institution, HKU or third parties will however not be funded under RA2s, i.e. no double payment is allowed for the same part of an expenditure item. If the proposed project already received and/or applied for other sources of funding, such information should be disclosed at the time of application. In addition, the funding does not cover applicants' salary to avoid any potential offence of organized crimes. The funding and any revenue derived during the funding period must be fully directed towards the operation of the proposed business.

Our Support

In addition to the seed grant, the “HSBC Rural Sustainability” programme may provide the following support:

- Training opportunities
- Community networks
- Promotion and publicity
- Professional advice on rural affairs

The PSL team will work closely with proponents of successful proposals in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the projects. The proponents are expected to engage with the PSL team regularly and are required to submit a progress report every 3 months. For proposal submitted for the 2020 opening, the final progress report must be submitted by 30 April 2022.

Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria will be adopted:

- Applications for RA2s can only be made by fellows of the Sustainable Communities Fellowship Scheme (i.e. graduates or participants who have completed courses or educational activities organised by the Centre for Civil Society and Governance at The University of Hong Kong);
- Applications for RA2s can be made by individuals, teams, or companies registered and incorporated in Hong Kong which comprise of at least one fellow of the Sustainable Communities Fellowship Scheme;
- The individual applicant or the Person-in-Charge of the team must be a permanent Hong Kong resident aged 18 or above; and
- For the avoidance of doubt, the individual applicant or Person-in-Charge cannot join other concurrently active teams / start-ups funded by the “HSBC Rural Sustainability” programme.

Responsibilities of Applicants

The individual applicant or Person-in-Charge should possess a key role and have substantial control of the submission, and be responsible for:

- Overseeing the operations of the start-up;
- Liaising with PSL on matters relating to the funding support under RA2s;
- Receiving payment or award to be paid or granted under RA2s;



- Complying with the guidelines, rules, regulations and all applicable laws with respond to the RA2s application; and
- Signing agreement(s) or document(s) in relation to RA2s with HKU.

Application Procedures

The applicant should complete an application form (Annex I) with the following details electronically to PSL (ruralsd@hku.hk) on or before the deadline stated below. Late submissions will not be considered.

1. Name of applicant(s) or registered company / organisation
2. Executive summary (1 page)
3. Project name
4. Profile of the project proponent(s)/organisation
5. Project objective(s)
6. Detailed business plan
 - (i) Deliverables (and key performance indicators, if applicable)
 - (ii) Target clientele(s)/market(s)
 - (iii) Manpower arrangement
 - (iv) A summary paragraph to point out and explain the major innovation(s) of the project, and provide details on how the innovation(s) would be translated into a sustainable business model beyond the funding period (around 100 words in English)
 - (v) Project timeline and work plan (detailed work programme and financial plan with budget, revenue and cash flow for the first year of operation to demonstrate the start-up proposal's viability)
 - (vi) A financial forecast covering the second year of operation
 - (vii) Demonstration of project financial sustainability and scalability
 - (viii) Benefits to the local and/or wider community (such as the creation of jobs/ training opportunities)
 - (ix) Project performance monitoring methods and sustainability assessment methods*
7. CVs of the Person-in-Charge and all team members (if applicable)
8. Certificate of Incorporation under the Companies Ordinance (if applicable)
9. Agreement between the applicant and the collaborating organisation(s) on the sharing of the royalties or intellectual property rights or any other sorts of income to be generated from the applicant (if any)
10. Intellectual property rights arising from the project (if any)
11. Comments or supporting documents from relevant experts or rural communities (if any)
12. Other sources of funding already received and/or applied for in relation to the proposed project (if any)

* Applicants may refer to the Six Core Dimensions for Sustainability Assessment listed on the “HSBC Rural Sustainability” programme webpage (<http://www.socsc.hku.hk/psl/laichiwo/en/pages/sustainability-assessment/assessment/>) or adopt any other impact assessment rubrics.



Assessment Criteria

Shortlisted applicants* will be invited for an interview with the vetting panel. The panel may consist of members from the following expertise:

- University scholar in the field of sustainability and/or innovation
- Representative from a relevant government agency
- Experienced member from the business sector
- Legal adviser
- Expert in the field of environmental management / technology

The panel will assess the submissions based on the following criteria:

- **Creativity, innovation and originality (25%)** – creative solutions to rural issues and problems, and capability on use of appropriate technology (if applicable)
- **Capability of the team (25%)** – track record, qualifications and strength, execution ability, and business management knowledge and skills
- **Commercial viability and technical feasibility of the solution (25%)** – business direction, short and long term objectives, revenue-generating potential, market demands and marketing strategies, long-term business viability, and scalability in the future
- **Contribution to sustainable development of rural communities (25%)** – potential benefits to the local community, contribution to sustainable development goals, social inclusion and ethical decision making

**All applications received will be first assessed by the secretariat (Policy for Sustainability Lab) based on the eligibility for application. Eligible applications will be further shortlisted by the vetting panel. Only shortlisted applications will be invited for an interview with the vetting panel (if applicable).*

Notification of Results

Successful applicants will be informed within 45 calendar days from the date of the panel interview. The notification may stipulate terms and conditions associated with the award imposed by PSL and HKU. Successful applicants are required to confirm the acceptance of the offer within 14 calendar days from the issue date of the offer. The offer will lapse after the said period.

Intellectual Property Rights

The awardee will own all intellectual property rights created from the project funded under RA2s, unless otherwise specified by alternative agreements. The awardee should take responsibility to manage any background intellectual property (IP) and any IP developed in collaboration with members of any external parties.

Publicity, Acknowledgement and Indemnification

General information about each awardee may be publicised through websites and other channels, which PSL deemed appropriate. Proper acknowledgement of the “HSBC Rural Sustainability” programme and PSL should appear on all equipment, facilities, publications,



publicity and media events related to an RA2s-funded project. All awardees shall fully and perpetually indemnify PSL from all liabilities and shall always keep PSL whole and harmless from all liabilities and all damages from all actions and activities of said awardee. PSL reserves the right to take legal action against any parties to protect our rights and resources.

Enquiries

For enquires related to RA2s, please contact Ms Sianna Yiu (by email: sianna@hku.hk or by phone: 3917-4910) or Ms Anna Yau (by email: annawyau@hku.hk or by phone 3917-5540).

Milestone Dates

2 November 2020 (Mon) noon	RA2s application deadline
27 November 2020 (Friday) 2:00pm – 6:30pm	Project selection by panel
December 2020	Notification of winning applications
Spring 2021	Awardees will be provided with optional start-up training opportunities



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Note to applicant(s)

1. Present all monetary figures in **Hong Kong Dollars (HK\$)**.
2. Put **NA** where the information sought is not applicable or not available.
3. Read thoroughly the [application guide](#) before completing this application form.
4. Submit **all supporting documents with this application form** electronically to ruralsd@hku.hk on or before the deadline stated in the application guide.
5. For enquiries, please contact Ms Sianna Yiu (by email: sianna@hku.hk or by phone: 3917-4910) or Ms Anna Yau (by email: annawyau@hku.hk or by phone 3917-5540).



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Application Form

Project Name (in English):
Project Name (in Chinese):
One line description of what your start-up does:

Part A: Applicant(s) Details

<i>Person-in-Charge</i>	
English Name:	Chinese Name:
Date of Birth:	Mobile Phone:
Email:	Mailing Address:
Academy Course/Activities Completed and Year of Completion	

<i>Other Team Members</i>				
English Name	Chinese Name	Email	Phone	Academy Course/Activities Completed (if any):



Fill in the following if you have already registered a company:

<u>Company Registration</u>	
Company Name:	
Date of Registration:	Website (if any):
Company Address Registered:	
Person-in-Charge's Ownership of the Company (%):	

Fill in the following if you have collaborating parties:

<u>Collaborating Parties</u>
Name of Organisation(s):
Form of Collaboration(s):
Name, phone number, and email address of the contact person(s) of the collaborating party(ies):



Part B: Summary of Business Proposal

Please provide details of the business proposal in your supporting documents.

<i>Brief Description of Business</i>
Overview of business model, objectives and expected outcomes (not more than 200 words):

<i>Project Milestones for the First Year</i>		
<i>From (mm/yyyy)</i>	<i>To (mm/yyyy)</i>	<i>Milestones</i>
<i>Example: 01/2021</i>	<i>03/2021</i>	<i>Completion of Market Research</i>



Part C: Budget and Finance Planning

Grand total of funding being applied for (HK\$):

Please provide details of the estimated expenditure items in your supporting documents.

Expected Payment Schedule			
Date	Milestones Achieved	Amount to be Received	Accumulative Amount to be Received

Part D: Supporting Documents

Please enclose the following documents as required in the previous sections and the application guide–

- Completed application form (this form)
- Profile of the project proponent(s)/organisation
- Project objective(s)
- Detailed business plan, including:
 - (i) Deliverables (and key performance indicators, if applicable)
 - (ii) Target clientele(s)/market(s)
 - (iii) Manpower arrangement
 - (iv) A summary paragraph to point out and explain the major innovation(s) of the project, and provide details on how the innovation(s) would be translated into a sustainable business model beyond the funding period (around 100 words in English)
 - (v) Project timeline and work plan to operate the start-up proposal for at least one year
 - (vi) Demonstration of project financial sustainability and scalability
 - (vii) A complete financial plan with budget, revenue and cash flow forecasts covering at least the first two years of operation
 - (viii) Benefits to the local and/or wider community (such as the creation of jobs/training opportunities)
 - (ix) Project performance monitoring methods and sustainability assessment methods*
- CVs of all team members (if applicable)
- Certificate of Incorporation under the Companies Ordinance (if applicable)
- Agreement between the applicant and the collaborating organisation(s) on the sharing of the royalties or intellectual property rights or any other sorts of income to be generated from the applicant (if any)
- Comments or supporting documents from relevant experts or rural communities (if any)
- Other sources of funding already received and/or applied for in relation to the proposed project (if any)



Part E: Declaration

We hereby declare that:

- We have observed and agreed with all guidelines governing this application to RA2s;
- All information provided in this application, as well as the supporting documents, is accurate and reflects the status of affairs at the date of submission. I shall inform the relevant HKU staff immediately if there are any subsequent changes to the above information;
- The ideas in the submitted project are without any constituted or potential act of infringement of the intellectual property rights of other individuals and/or organisations;
- We understand the information provided in this application will be disclosed to HKU staff for screening purposes. No Non-Disclosure Agreement of any kind will be signed with HKU or relevant staff at any occasion;
- We give our consent to HKU staff to carry out necessary due diligence/reference checks to assess this application;
- We acknowledge that HKU and HSBC can make use of our project for promotional purposes if our submission is selected; and
- We understand that should the project receive an award, an agreement shall be entered into with HKU.

Signature of Applicant or Person-in-Charge
for and on behalf of the team:

Date: _____