

LAWTECH FUND (“LTF”)
Frequently Asked Questions (“FAQ”)
(as of 24 July 2020)

1. Background Information

1.1 What is the objective of the LTF?

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. Eligibility

2.1 Who is eligible to apply for the LTF (i.e. Eligible Applicant)?

An applicant applying for funding under the LTF must either be a Hong Kong law firm or a barristers’ chambers satisfying either of the following criteria 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’ chamber applicant, the number of barristers holding a current practicing certificate within the set of chambers must be five (5) or less.

2.2 Are law firms NOT practising in Hong Kong eligible for applying for the LTF?

No. Only Hong Kong law firms are eligible.

2.3 What kind of expenses would be eligible for reimbursement under the LTF?

Expenses committed by an Eligible Applicant to procure or upgrade the information technology systems of the Eligible Applicant and/or arrange relevant lawtech training, as recognised by the Joint Committee, for the practitioners and staff (including pupils and trainees) of the Eligible Applicant are recognised by LTF.

“Information technology system” refers to 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.

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

2.4 When should the expenses be committed to be eligible?

The following expenses are eligible:

- (a) Any expenses committed during the application period and due for payment to the product/service providers during the application period or shortly thereafter; or
- (b) 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.

2.5 Are expenses which have been fully committed before the announcement of LTF reimbursable?

No. Purchases of information technology systems which have been completed (i.e. with payment fully settled) and lawtech training which has been conducted before the opening of the application period are not eligible for funding under the LTF.

2.6 Can the cost of renting equipment / computer software be funded under the LTF?

No. Rentals, leasing fees or other fees incurred by an Eligible Applicant for renting or leasing of the information technology systems are not included as recognised expenses under the LTF.

2.7 Are overseas lawtech training covered by the funding under the LTF?

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.

2.8 Can salaries of existing employees of law firms or barristers’ chambers, or fees paid to service companies of law firms and barristers’ chambers for implementing information system upgrade or lawtech trainings be funded under the LTF?

No, salaries and fees paid to a service company of law firms and barristers’ chambers are not covered under the LTF.

3. Funding Ceiling

3.1 What is the funding ceiling for an applicant under the LTF?

Funding support under the LTF is granted on a reimbursable basis up to a maximum amount of HK\$50,000 for each Eligible Applicant.

4. Application Procedures

4.1 When will LTF be open for application?

The LTF is open for application from 28 April 2020 to 6 September 2020 (further extended deadline), subject to any further extension as agreed by the Joint Committee and the Department of Justice.

4.2 How can a funding application be made?

The application forms for law firm applicants and barristers' chambers applicants are respectively available on the website of the Law Society of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Bar Association.

A law firm applicant should apply with the name of the firm as that registered with the Law Society while a barristers' chamber applicant should apply with the duly authorized representative of the chamber (preferably the head of chambers). A person at the law firm or barristers' chambers should be designated as the point of contact on behalf of the applicant with the Joint Committee on LTF in relation to this application.

Completed application form together with the supporting documents should be submitted to the Joint Committee by email at lawtechfund@hklawsoc.org.hk between 28 April 2020 and 6 September 2020 (further extended deadline).

4.3 What documents are required to support the application?

In addition to the application form, Eligible Applicants are required to provide the following supporting documents 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) details of the information technology systems that have been procured or upgraded by the applicant and/or details of the lawtech training that have been arranged for the practitioners and staff of the applicant
- (c) original documentary evidence to support the application to verify that the amount being applied for has been committed or partially settled (e.g. invoices, receipts etc)

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.

4.4 Are there any requirements for format of the supporting documents?

No, there is no specific requirements on the format of the supporting documents.

4.5 Can we submit an application before incurring actual expenses on the procurement or upgrade of the information technology systems and/or arrangement of training?

No. The amount being applied for must have been committed or partially settled.

4.6 Will late application be accepted?

All applications should be submitted by email at lawtechfund@hklawsoc.org.hk within the period that the application is open. Late application will not be entertained.

4.7 Can we submit more than one application for the current round of application?

Each Eligible Applicant is encouraged to submit one application under the LTP for the current round of application. Where more than one application is submitted by the same Eligible Applicant, consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis.

5. Amendment/ Withdrawal of an Application

5.1 Can an application be amended after submission?

Amendment of documents related to the application should be submitted to the Joint Committee by email at lawtechfund@hklawsoc.org.hk, before the application deadline. Any amendments should be related to the same subject matter.

5.2 Can an application be withdrawn?

Applicants should submit a request of withdrawal in writing to the Joint Committee by email at lawtechfund@hklawsoc.org.hk, if they wish to withdraw their application for the LTF.

6. Review of Applications

6.1 Who is responsible for vetting and approval of funding applications?

The Joint Committee and/or its delegated committees established by the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association respectively is/are 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.

6.2 In what order would the applications be processed?

Applications will be processed on a first-come-first-served basis according to the time and date of receipt of a complete and valid application.

6.3 What are the criteria for judging the funding application?

The merits of each application are considered on a case-by-case basis.

7. Application Result

7.1 How will an applicant be notified of the application result?

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 and documentary proof. Decisions on the applications by the Joint Committee and/or its delegated committees will be final.

7.2 What are the obligations and responsibilities of the Eligible Applicant when it accepts the funding support?

Information technology systems and product(s) procured and lawtech training arranged with funds under the LTF should 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.

The Eligible Applicant shall not transfer, sell or dispose of the information technology systems or product(s) within two (2) years from the date of reimbursement.

The Eligible Applicant should 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.

The Eligible Applicant should also make sure that all products reimbursed with funds under the LTF are licensed products and do not infringe any intellectual property.

8. Reimbursement of Fund

8.1 When and how will the fund be disbursed to the successful applicant?

Payment of reimbursement to a successful applicant will be by way of cheque made payable in the English name of an applicant in the case of a law firm or in the case of a barristers' chambers in the English name of the designated authorised person stated in the application form.

Applicants should ensure that the name of applicant is correctly stated in the application form and can receive cheque payment. All costs of reissuing the cheque due to error on the part of the Applicant will be borne by the Applicant.

9. Others

9.1 How can an enquiry be made?

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

