

Head 96 — GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT: OVERSEAS ECONOMIC AND TRADE OFFICES

Controlling officer: the Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development will account for expenditure under this Head.

Estimate 2026–27 **\$598.9m**

Establishment ceiling 2026–27 (notional annual mid-point salary value) representing an estimated 205 non-directorate posts as at 31 March 2026 rising by 12 posts to 217 posts as at 31 March 2027..... **\$163.1m**

In addition, there will be an estimated 23 directorate posts as at 31 March 2026 reducing by one post to 22 posts as at 31 March 2027.

Controlling Officer's Report

Programmes

Programme (1) Commercial Relations
Programme (2) Public Relations
Programme (3) Investment Promotion

These programmes contribute to Policy Area 6: Commerce and Industry (Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development).

Detail

Programme (1): Commercial Relations

	2024–25 (Actual)	2025–26 (Original)	2025–26 (Revised)	2026–27 (Estimate)
Financial provision (\$m)	214.8	285.2	223.4 (–21.7%)	284.9 (+27.5%)
				(or –0.1% on 2025–26 Original)

Aim

- 2 The aim is to represent and promote Hong Kong's trading and commercial interests outside Hong Kong.

Brief Description

3 The overseas Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) in Bangkok, Berlin, Brussels, Dubai, Geneva, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, London, New York, San Francisco, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto and Washington D.C. identify, develop and cultivate contacts with host governments, represent Hong Kong at international trade organisations, and maintain liaison with other governments and organisations in order to further Hong Kong's trade and economic interests. They monitor and report on developments which are likely to affect such interests, discuss with their host and other governments specific trade and economic issues, support senior officers' overseas visits, and promote the business opportunities including those arising from the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement, Hong Kong's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development.

- 4 The key performance measures in respect of commercial relations are:

Indicators

	2024 (Actual)#	2025 (Actual)#	2026 (Estimate)#
meetings on trade-related matters attended.....	3 641	3 478	3 505
visits to host governments and trade organisations.....	1 285	1 290	1 305
seminars, exhibitions and workshops			
organised	384	387	395
participated.....	1 184	1 195	1 205
public speeches given.....	474	477	485
media interviews/briefings given.....	556	555	560
circulars/newsletters/press releases issued.....	2 647	2 682	2 730

Figures also cover events in virtual form.

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Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2026–27

5 During 2026–27, the overseas ETOs, including the new one in Kuala Lumpur which has commenced operation with effect from 10 December 2025, will continue to promote Hong Kong’s trade and commercial interests, including countering protectionism in Hong Kong’s major markets, as well as representing Hong Kong and providing support to the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and, as appropriate, other bureaux and departments on issues of special interests on the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral fronts. Among other things, the overseas ETOs concerned will work closely with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Invest Hong Kong under the “Economic and Trade Express” (ETE) to conduct joint promotional activities and support the outbound visits for local small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups to explore overseas markets. In addition, the Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses and Talents set up under the ETOs will continue to provide support to the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises and Hong Kong Talent Engage.

Programme (2): Public Relations

	2024–25 (Actual)	2025–26 (Original)	2025–26 (Revised)	2026–27 (Estimate)
Financial provision (\$m)	160.7	213.0	167.5 (–21.4%)	212.5 (+26.9%)
				(or –0.2% on 2025–26 Original)

Aim

6 The aim is to promote Hong Kong as a trusted trading partner and a premier location for doing business.

Brief Description

7 The overseas ETOs monitor and report on reactions to events in Hong Kong. They update overseas interlocutors on developments in Hong Kong, organise publicity and public relations activities for Hong Kong in the host countries or regions under their purview, liaise with Hong Kong enterprises and people, and provide a comprehensive information and enquiry service about Hong Kong.

8 The key performance measures in respect of public relations are:

Indicators

	2024 (Actual)#	2025 (Actual)#	2026 (Estimate)#
call on senior government officials/organisations.....	1 426	1 435	1 445
public relations functions/events (including cultural functions/events)			
organised	921	934	945
participated.....	1 583	1 589	1 605
newsletters, pamphlets, press releases issued	2 733	2 768	2 815
no. of visitors assisted	3 100	3 458	2 235
public speeches given.....	534	537	545
media interviews/briefings given	557	555	560
enquiries handled	14 240	12 597	11 385

Figures also cover events in virtual form.

Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2026–27

9 During 2026–27, the overseas ETOs will continue to step up publicity and public relations efforts and launch promotional campaigns (including those under ETE) to enhance Hong Kong’s international image, and strengthen collaboration with other Hong Kong overseas agencies in developing strategies for city branding and publicity.

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Programme (3): Investment Promotion

	2024–25 (Actual)	2025–26 (Original)	2025–26 (Revised)	2026–27 (Estimate)
Financial provision (\$m)	77.0	102.0	80.5 (–21.1%)	101.5 (+26.1%)
				(or –0.5% on 2025–26 Original)

Aim

10 The aim is to attract foreign direct investment to Hong Kong and to promote Hong Kong’s many advantages as a regional hub and the preferred business location in Asia.

Brief Description

11 In close collaboration with Invest Hong Kong, the overseas ETOs promote the attractiveness of Hong Kong as an international financial and business centre, provide assistance and support to overseas companies to establish or expand operations in Hong Kong, and support Mainland enterprises in going global through Hong Kong.

12 The key performance measures in respect of investment promotion are:

Indicators

	2024 (Actual)	2025 (Actual)	2026 (Estimate)
new projects generated ^λ	272	325	350
projects completed [¶]	127	143	175

^λ New projects with the potential of becoming completed projects in the coming 18 months. The figure reflects the investment promotion efforts in a particular year, discounting projects carried forward from previous years.

[¶] Investment projects each resulting in an overseas company setting up or undergoing a significant expansion in Hong Kong with the assistance of Invest Hong Kong.

Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2026–27

13 During 2026–27, the overseas ETOs concerned and their Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses and Talents will continue to work closely with Invest Hong Kong and the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises to step up their efforts in attracting overseas companies, especially strategic enterprises, to set up and expand their operations in Hong Kong and access business opportunities on the Chinese Mainland and elsewhere. The overseas ETOs concerned and their Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses and Talents will also make use of the ETE platform to bring in enterprises to invest in and establish businesses in Hong Kong, thereby promoting dual-way flow of enterprises and investments; and where necessary, provide support to Mainland enterprises expanding to overseas markets through Hong Kong.

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ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PROVISION

Programme	2024–25 (Actual) (\$m)	2025–26 (Original) (\$m)	2025–26 (Revised) (\$m)	2026–27 (Estimate) (\$m)
(1) Commercial Relations.....	214.8	285.2	223.4	284.9
(2) Public Relations	160.7	213.0	167.5	212.5
(3) Investment Promotion	77.0	102.0	80.5	101.5
	452.5	600.2	471.4 (–21.5%)	598.9 (+27.0%)
				(or –0.2% on 2025–26 Original)

Analysis of Financial and Staffing Provision

Programme (1)

Provision for 2026–27 is \$61.5 million (27.5%) higher than the revised estimate for 2025–26. This is mainly due to the increased provision for the new ETOs under planning, increased salary provision for filling vacancies and staff changes, and increased operating expenses. There will be a net increase of two posts in 2026–27.

Programme (2)

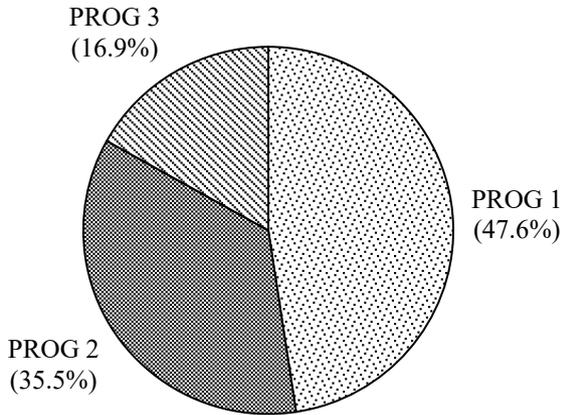
Provision for 2026–27 is \$45.0 million (26.9%) higher than the revised estimate for 2025–26. The reasons for the increase under Programme (1) above also apply here. There will be a net increase of five posts in 2026–27.

Programme (3)

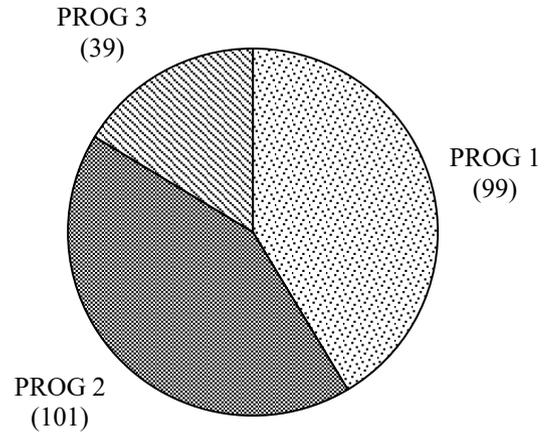
Provision for 2026–27 is \$21.0 million (26.1%) higher than the revised estimate for 2025–26. The reasons for the increase under Programme (1) above also apply here. There will be a net increase of four posts in 2026–27.

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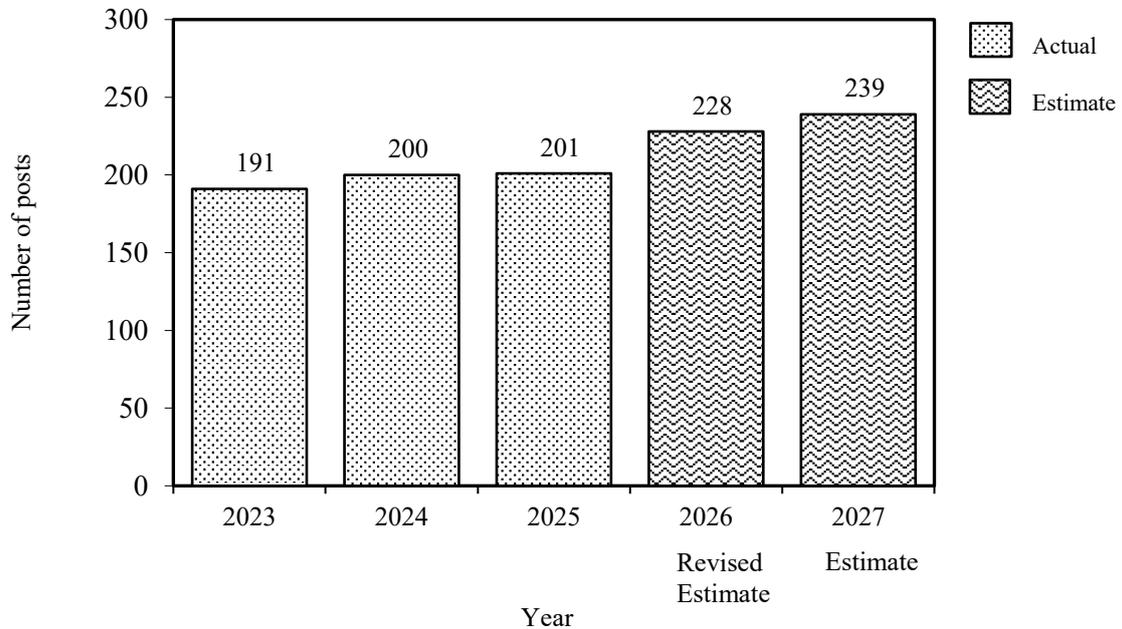
*Allocation of provision
to programmes
(2026-27)*



*Staff by programme
(as at 31 March 2027)*



*Changes in the size of the establishment
(as at 31 March)*



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Sub-head (Code)	Actual expenditure 2024–25	Approved estimate 2025–26	Revised estimate 2025–26	Estimate 2026–27	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	
Operating Account					
Recurrent					
000	Operational expenses	452,455	599,670	470,963	597,298
	Total, Recurrent.....	452,455	599,670	470,963	597,298
	Total, Operating Account	452,455	599,670	470,963	597,298
Capital Account					
Plant, Equipment and Works					
661	Minor plant, vehicles and equipment (block vote).....	—	480	480	1,640
	Total, Plant, Equipment and Works.....	—	480	480	1,640
	Total, Capital Account.....	—	480	480	1,640
	Total Expenditure	452,455	600,150	471,443	598,938

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Details of Expenditure by Subhead

The estimate of the amount required in 2026–27 for the salaries and expenses of the overseas Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) is \$598,938,000. This represents an increase of \$127,495,000 over the revised estimate for 2025–26 and \$146,483,000 over the actual expenditure in 2024–25.

Operating Account

Recurrent

2 It is operationally necessary for the overseas ETOs to make certain payments in the currencies of their host economies. Expenditure in the following currencies will be charged to the appropriate subheads at the exchange rates set out below —

Australian Dollar	1=HK\$5.28176
Canadian Dollar	1=HK\$5.68437
Euro	1=HK\$9.06523
Japanese Yen	1=HK\$0.050212
Pound Sterling	1=HK\$10.43054
Singapore Dollar	1=HK\$6.00917
Swiss Franc	1=HK\$9.66479

Expenditure incurred in the US Dollar will be charged to the appropriate subheads at a fixed exchange rate of US\$1=HK\$7.8.

3 Provision of \$597,298,000 under *Subhead 000 Operational expenses* is for the salaries, allowances and other operating expenses of the overseas ETOs. The increase of \$126,335,000 (26.8%) over the revised estimate for 2025–26 is mainly due to the increased provision for the new ETOs under planning, increased salary provision arising from filling of vacancies, staff changes and salary increment, as well as increased operating expenses.

4 The establishment as at 31 March 2026 will be 228 posts. Of these posts, 150 are filled by staff engaged locally by the overseas ETOs. It is expected that there will be a net increase of 11 posts starting from 2026–27 onwards. Subject to certain conditions, the controlling officer may under delegated power create or delete non-directorate posts during 2026–27, but the notional annual mid-point salary value of all such posts must not exceed \$163,071,000.

5 An analysis of the financial provision under *Subhead 000 Operational expenses* is as follows:

	2024–25 (Actual) (\$'000)	2025–26 (Original) (\$'000)	2025–26 (Revised) (\$'000)	2026–27 (Estimate) (\$'000)
Personal Emoluments				
- Salaries.....	171,081	247,220	176,477	257,534
- Allowances.....	50,738	58,248	41,423	60,310
Personnel Related Expenses				
- Civil Service Provident Fund contribution.....	9,940	17,379	8,990	16,914
- Disturbance allowance.....	2,906	9,019	4,869	7,876
Departmental Expenses				
- General departmental expenses	148,689	169,770	164,380	172,454
Other Charges				
- Publicity	69,101	98,034	74,824	82,210
	452,455	599,670	470,963	597,298

Capital Account

Plant, Equipment and Works

6 Provision of \$1,640,000 under *Subhead 661 Minor plant, vehicles and equipment (block vote)* represents an increase of \$1,160,000 (241.7%) over the revised estimate for 2025–26. This is due to the purchase of additional office cars to replace the existing obsolete ones for ETOs in 2026–27.