

Work-Life Grant: SGD 2,000 for each local employee working from home

During the past weeks, the Singapore government has expanded the financial assistance granted to local businesses in various ways. In this respect, a lot of consideration has been given to the support Singapore employers can obtain under the Jobs Support Scheme. Far less attention was paid to the so-called Work-Life Grant ("WLG"). This is unfortunate because, unlike with the Jobs Support Scheme, employers do not benefit from the WLG automatically. The WLG has to be applied for. And many employers who fulfil the WLG eligibility criteria anyway may "give away money" by failing to do so.

For starters, the WLG incentivises Singapore companies to implement and sustain the use of flexible work arrangements for their local employees, i.e. for employees who are Singapore citizens or Permanent Residents. The WLG comprises two components, namely:

- a *Job Sharing Incentive* which encourages organisations to support local employees at a professional/managerial/executive level who adopt job sharing arrangements; and
- a *Flexible Work Arrangement Incentive* ("**FWA Incentive**") which provides financial support to organisations putting in place flexible work arrangements for their employees (keywords: part-time, staggered working hours, compressed workweek, time banking, telecommuting).

A hurdle Singapore employers faced so far with regard to the WLG was that it required at least a medium-term commitment.

The grant would only be paid for employees who adopted flexible work arrangements for a continuous period of six months. This held many organisations back from taking an application for the WLG into closer consideration.

The current COVID-19 situation may now lead to the WLG becoming attractive for a multitude of Singapore employers. Under the "enhanced" FWA Incentive criteria, employers will be eligible to receive an FWA Incentive of SGD 2,000 for every employee who adopts work-from-home arrangements daily for at least one month after it stops being mandatory to do so (i.e. possibly after the Circuit Breaker period is over). If a work-from-home arrangement is not feasible, an arrangement with staggered hours work would also be eligible for FWA Incentive.

Many employers have already voluntarily implemented flexible work arrangements before the Circuit Breaker started. And many employers consider to continue these arrangements even afterwards – mostly in order to protect the health of their employees. For these businesses having a closer look at the option of an application for the FWA Incentive may turn out very rewarding.

Applications for the FWA Incentive under the enhanced criteria are open since 20 April 2020.

At Luther LLP, we are ready to answer any questions you may have with respect to a WLG application. Please feel free to reach out to us, if we may assist you.

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