

MEDIA RELEASE

Enhancements for Accessibility Fund, S\$20 million available to support more building owners in Universal Design (UD) upgrading works

- *Funding eligibility expanded to include buildings already fitted with accessibility features to support further UD upgrades*
- *Extension of funding support until March 2027 for non-barrier free buildings to upgrade with basic accessibility features*
- *From early 2023, basic accessibility upgrades for existing commercial and institutional buildings without accessibility features will be mandatory when any addition and alteration works are carried out*

Monday, 1 August 2022 – The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) is accelerating the pace of accessibility upgrading for buildings and the built environment through incentives, legislation and community partnerships. These initiatives complement the vision of a more inclusive Singapore that will be charted in the next Enabling Masterplan¹, EMP2030.

Enhancement and Extension of Accessibility Fund²

2 The Accessibility Fund (AF) is an incentive scheme that provides funding support to building owners who undertake upgrading works to improve the inclusiveness of their buildings. Since its inception in 2007, the AF has supported accessibility upgrading in more than 150 buildings, with about S\$20 million still available. BCA will enhance the AF by expanding the eligibility criteria to include buildings that have already been fitted with basic accessibility features.³ This is to

¹ The Enabling Masterplans are roadmaps for the government and the community to work together, to support persons with disabilities (PwDs). More information is available on Ministry of Social and Family development's website: go.gov.sg/emp3site

² Since its inception in 2007, more than 150 buildings have tapped on the AF to better cater to their patrons, staff and visitors, including persons with disabilities (PwDs) and the elderly. More information on the AF is available on the BCA website: go.gov.sg/bcaud-af

³ The AF was initially available only to buildings built prior to the implementation of basic accessibility requirements in 1990. Under the enhanced AF, buildings built between 1990 and the implementation of the Code on Accessibility in the Built Environment 2013, i.e. 1 April 2014, will be eligible for funding to support the implementation of UD features.

encourage building owners to voluntarily upgrade their buildings with more UD features such as grab bars for the elderly, child-friendly toilets and lactation rooms, to improve support for the needs of the elderly, families with young children and nursing mothers. Building owners can receive up to S\$100,000 to fund these upgrades.

3 BCA will also continue to accept applications for funding support for accessibility upgrading in older, non-barrier free buildings until end March 2027. In addition, an interim payment⁴ option is now available to better support building owners to meet their cashflow needs for costlier accessibility upgrading works involving lifts.

4 A beneficiary of the AF is Panasonic Factory Solutions Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. (PFSAP). HR General Manager, Ms. Celia Quek shared, “We have tapped on the AF to put in place a toilet, passenger lift and car park lot for persons with disabilities, as well as ramps and a nursing room at our company’s premises. We believe that the accessibility and universal design upgrade is of utmost necessity as it allows us to tap on a larger employment pool such as senior workers or people with disabilities. We can also better support nursing mothers who are returning back to the workplace after their maternity leave.”

5 Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs & Ministry of National Development, Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim said, “Singapore is progressively becoming a more inclusive society, making provisions to allow our people with different needs to carry out their daily activities and integrate fully into society. We can do more by having accessibility features integrated into our existing buildings. I encourage building owners to tap on the AF and make good use of the funding support to make their buildings barrier-free.”

Mandatory Basic Accessibility Upgrading for Existing Inaccessible Buildings

6 To further accelerate accessibility upgrading in older buildings, BCA will require the owners of existing commercial or institutional buildings which are not barrier-free to put in place basic accessibility features when any addition and alteration works are carried out within their building.⁵ BCA will implement this requirement in early 2023.

7 BCA’s Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Kelvin Wong said, “We want to provide the necessary basic infrastructure to support not just individual patrons, but also business owners looking to tap onto a wider pool of talents. A study⁶ in 2018 has shown that companies championing accessibility see 28% greater annual revenue and a profit

⁴ This one-time interim payment will be available to buildings that undergo accessibility upgrading projects with a minimum value of \$200,000 which involve lift installation works.

⁵ Existing commercial or institutional buildings with gross floor area of more than 500sqm carrying out addition and alteration works and which are required to put in place basic accessibility features under the new requirement, will not be eligible for the AF for basic accessibility upgrading works. The AF is meant to support voluntary efforts from the industry.

⁶ Research findings from Accenture’s Getting to Equal 2018: The Disability Inclusion Advantage report

margin 30% higher than their peers. And in Singapore, we want to be an enabler for them.”

Improving Accessibility of Public Spaces Through Community Partnerships

8 Some public spaces in between buildings and infrastructure still pose challenges for persons with disabilities (PwDs). BCA has been working with Our Accessible City@CBD (Raffles Place), a community partnership comprising representatives from the PwD community, built environment sector, social service agencies and the public sector, to identify issues, co-create solutions and enhance the accessibility of public spaces.

9 Co-lead of Our Accessible City@CBD, Ar. Michael Ngu said, “I am pleased to co-chair the Community Partnership initiative for this project with many talented individuals. Through an open collaborative framework to work with public, private and non-profit organisations, we are able to collectively identify key challenges, prioritise and co-develop solutions to improve accessibility in Raffles Place, Singapore’s prominent financial city center. This is indeed a key milestone towards building a more inclusive and sustainable Singapore.”

10 The efforts of Our Accessible City@CBD have resulted in accessibility improvements at Raffles Place, such as better way-finding signage and connectivity between buildings. Efforts are still ongoing – accessibility site survey sessions were conducted in May and June 2022 to gather feedback from community partners and PwD representatives on the suggested accessible routes and solutions, which will facilitate the subsequent discussion on the development of the accessibility plan for Raffles Place.

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Annex A – Factsheet on accessibility and user-friendliness of the Built Environment

About BCA

The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) champions the development and transformation of the built environment sector, in order to improve Singapore’s living environment. BCA oversees areas such as safety, quality, inclusiveness, sustainability and productivity, all of which, together with our stakeholders and industry partners, help to achieve our mission to transform the Built Environment sector and shape a liveable and smart built environment for Singapore. For more information, visit www1.bca.gov.sg.