

NEWS/BUSINESS/FINANCE/LIFESTYLE EDITORS [For Immediate Release]

2017 Hong Kong LGBT+ Inclusion Index and Awards New Index version introduced to encourage higher participation by SMEs

Hong Kong, 6 December 2016 – Community Business, a not-for-profit organisation which works with companies to advance responsible and inclusive business practices, announced the official launch of the 2017 LGBT+ Inclusion Index and Awards at the LGBT+ Networking Reception as part of the regional Community Business Conference on 16 November 2016. Online submissions are now open to companies and organisations of all sizes operating in Hong Kong until 24 February 2017.

The 2017 Hong Kong LGBT+ Inclusion Index, first launched in 2015, is Asia's first benchmark on corporate policies and practices for creating inclusive workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees. The Index is being offered every two years to enable companies to make progress, while the Awards are being held on an annual basis.

Community Business has taken a pioneering role in advocating LGBT workplace inclusion in Asia since 2008. In recent years, it has observed that the four-letter acronym 'LGBT' no longer adequately describes the growing diversity of this community, which includes queer and intersex and may continue to evolve over time. Community Business, therefore, has adopted a simple and inclusive approach by adding '+' to 'LGBT', which also symbolises progress. For the second iteration of its Index, it has been re-branded from the 'LGBT Workplace Inclusion Index' to the 'LGBT+ Inclusion Index'. As part of the change, the word 'Workplace' has been removed from the name of the Index, denoting the expanding scope of the Index to cover community and advocacy work by the participants.

The aim of the Index is to drive continued momentum, and while the 2017 Index structure aligns with the 2015 version as closely as possible for ease of submission and tracking of progress, a new category on Strategy and Leadership Accountability has been included, as well as increased emphasis on growing areas such as transgender and intersex inclusion. All participants will be assigned a total score and a ranking on the Index. Companies can maximise their participation by purchasing a Professional or Leader Package which will provide a customised report containing valuable detailed benchmarking data, a breakdown of their scores, and recommendations for improvement.

"As reflected by the low participation rate of local Hong Kong companies back in 2015, the subject of Diversity and Inclusion, and in particular LGBT+ inclusion, are not concepts that are well understood and recognised as important to business by local companies," said Fern Ngai, CEO of Community Business. "We encourage local companies of all sizes to participate, and in so doing, learn about what is accepted as best practice amongst international companies. To encourage small companies to participate, we have introduced an SME* version for the first time and participation will be free of charge at Basic Level." The structure of the SME version is the same as the main Index with some questions, options, and scoring modified so that they are more relevant and applicable to smaller organisations. For any company which is not confident about their results, they may choose to participate on an anonymous basis. A Cantonese information session was recently held to better prepare local companies, including SMEs, for the Index submission process.

*** Small or Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME), defined as:**

Manufacturing firms with fewer than 100 employees in Hong Kong, or

Non-manufacturing firms (including the branches or subsidiaries of global/regional companies) with fewer than 50 employees in Hong Kong, or

Branch or subsidiary companies from a global brand or corporation that has less than 50 employees in Hong Kong.

In addition to making submissions for the Index, organisations are also invited to make nominations for five awards recognising efforts being made to embed LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace and wider community:

- LGBT+ Network Award sponsored by Goldman Sachs;
- LGBT+ Ally Award sponsored by Credit Suisse;
- LGBT+ Executive Sponsor Award sponsored by Herbert Smith Freehills;
- LGBT+ Inclusion Champion Award sponsored by HSBC;
- LGBT+ Community Impact Award sponsored by Goldman Sachs.

The deadline for the award submissions is also 24 February 2017. Short-listed finalists for the Awards will be interviewed in March 2017 by a judging panel comprising one external expert in the relevant field and/or a senior executive from the award sponsor, where applicable, and two judges from Community Business.

The results of the 2017 Index and award winners will be announced at the prestigious LGBT+ Gala Dinner to be held at the Island Shangri-la Hotel, on 17 May 2017 in commemoration of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT). Space is limited and companies and individuals who are interested in sponsoring tables or purchasing tickets should do so as early as possible. Discounts for the Gala Dinner are available as part of the Professional and Leader Packages offered for Index participation.

For details about the 2017 Hong Kong LGBT+ Inclusion Index and awards and the submission process, please visit: <http://www.communitybusiness.org/hklgbtindex/index.html>

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About Community Business

Community Business is a not-for-profit organisation (Hong Kong Charity Number 91/6560) whose mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to have a positive impact on people and communities. A recognised leader in promoting responsible and inclusive business practices in Asia, Community Business conducts research, facilitates networks and events, leads campaigns and provides consultancy and training. Our focus on responsible business is aligned to 5 mission-led themes:

- Investing and supporting local communities
- Tackling inequality in the workplace
- Ensuring happy, healthy, and engaged employees
- Promoting social inclusion
- Building responsible business leadership

Founded in 2003 and based in Hong Kong with a presence in India and the United Kingdom, Community Business works with companies of all sizes and from diverse industries across Asia, harnessing the power of business to drive social change. For more information, please visit www.communitybusiness.org.