

'Feel good' factors of working in GBA

Young participants of the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme relish their living and working experience in the mainland cities of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, exhibiting noticeably more faith, understanding and interest as they chart their career paths in the region.

The program, launched by the Hong Kong government in early 2021, encourages enterprises with operations in both Hong Kong and the nine mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area to recruit and deploy local university and tertiary–institution graduates to work in the mainland GBA cities. As of mid–2022, most employees in the program have been working for about nine months.

The program has been generally well received by participating employees, according to a phasic impact study co–conducted by MWYO, an independent think tank that focuses on Hong Kong youth issues, together with the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce.

Among the 123 respondents who completed both Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires, the number of employees who were willing to work in the Greater Bay Area for more than two years increased by 5 percent to 44 percent, Phase 2 survey results showed

The online surveys were conducted from September to October 2021 for Phase 1, and from March to April 2022 for Phase 2. Phase 3 of the study will be conducted in November and December — the last two months before the program concludes.

Among the 123 respondents who completed both Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires, the number of employees who were willing to work in the Greater Bay Area for more than two years increased by 5 percent to 44 percent, Phase 2 survey results showed. The employees pinned high expectations on the program, with 88 percent banking on the program to help them further their careers, 69 percent expecting to gain more work experience, and 58 percent hoping to expand their networks.

Employees have acquainted and acclimated themselves with various aspects of life in the mainland. Comparing the two phases of studies, the proportion of employees who understand mainland companies' norms and organizational culture increased significantly by 23 percent. The proportion of employees who understood the subsidies provided by mainland authorities and healthcare services there also increased by 23 and 14 percent respectively. However, there's still some ignorance about the mainland's tax payment requirements and social security system, the survey showed.

Employees generally have become more accustomed to living and working on the mainland, and more willing to mingle with the locals, as shown in the Phase 2 survey. About 73 percent of employees stated that they often or sometimes socialized with their mainland friends, up from 65 percent in Phase 1. Most employees said they spent their spare time traveling within the Chinese mainland and socializing with their mainland friends.

In view of the findings, Law Cheung–kwok, MWYO special advisor, said, “It is essential to

offer more GBA employment opportunities for Hong Kong youths' development. The continued success of the scheme depends on the avid participation of young workers and employers. Employees under the scheme may learn from each other and persuade their peers in Hong Kong to consider seeking work in the GBA, thus promoting overall GBA youth employment.”

If the program were to be terminated, he posits the positive outcome attained so far and the anticipated peer effect would fall by the wayside. “The promotional effect of GBA youth employment would be greatly diminished,” he said.

He called for the government to continue resuming the role of a leader and facilitator in promoting youth employment in the Greater Bay Area.