

Incubation Stall Programme (ISP) – Frequently Asked Questions

(As of Oct 2022)

Section A – About the ISP

Q1. What is the ISP?

The ISP provides eligible aspiring hawkers opportunities to take up stalls that are fitted with the basic standard fixtures and equipment at NEA-managed hawker centres with reduced rental to start their hawker businesses.

Section B – Eligibility Criteria

Q2. Why does NEA require applicants to have attended ITE’s “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business” short course or be a graduate of business management course(s) offered in tertiary institutions that cover similar modules*? I have a degree/diploma/WSQ certification in accounting/business admin/business management/marketing/culinary arts, am I eligible to apply?

Running a hawker business requires both culinary and business management skills. To show that applicant do possess business management skills, applicant need to have completed ITE’s “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business” course (a 9-hour course conducted over 3 evenings) or be a graduate of business management course(s) offered in tertiary institutions (such as ITE, polytechnics, universities) that cover similar modules* to show that applicant do possess business management skills.

*The modules of the ITE course are:

- Breakdown the revenue and costs of starting and running a hawker stall
- Perform simple profit and loss analysis
- Identify competitors and the target customer groups
- Determine the selection criteria of suppliers
- Learn ways to create a positive customer experience
- Understand the principles of marketing
- Master techniques to spruce up a hawker display
- Introduction to simple business plan writing
- Describe the process of applying for hawker stall

If applicant is keen to sign up for the ITE Course, applicant may register with ITE College West at: <https://www.ite.edu.sg/courses/course-finder/course/coc-in-introduction-to-managing-a-hawker-business>

Q3. If I have not attended the “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business Course”, are there other eligible courses that I can apply for?

Any certification course that covered modules similar to those covered in the ITE course will be recognised. One such option is the Hawkers’ Development Programme (HDP): a 5-day course to equip aspiring hawkers with the relevant skills and competencies to run their hawker businesses. More details on HDP are available at: www.aci.edu.sg/hdp.html

Q4. I was a former employee in a F&B outlet, will I still need to complete the ITE’s “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business” Course in order to apply for an incubation stall?

Yes, unless applicant have another certificate that covered modules that are similar to those covered in the ITE course. If so, please provide us with a copy of the transcript or equivalent document indicating the list of modules taken during the application.

Q5. Are my business partners and stall assistants required to attend the ITE’s “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business” Course?

Q6. Can I hire a staff to assist me at the incubation stall? Can I have a business partner to jointly manage the incubation stall? Do I get any subsidy for hiring a stall assistant?

The incubation stall must be personally operated by the applicant who would be the registered stallholder for the stall. Hawker assistants will have to be registered with NEA. NEA will not be providing any subsidy for the hiring of staff.

The hawker assistant at a cooked food stall must:

- be a Singapore Citizen or a Permanent Resident
- be 13 years old and above
- not be a stallholder or nominee of any subsidised stall in NEA-managed hawker centre
- not be blacklisted or debarred from operating a hawker stall by NEA
- possess a valid Basic Food Hygiene Course (BFHC) certificate

Q7. Am I allowed to apply for joint operator (JO) scheme?

The ISP stallholder is not allowed to have any JO during the 15-months programme tenure. During the first 3 years of tenancy upon completion of the programme tenure, the converted ISP stallholder is allowed to appoint joint operator, on the condition that the JO will have to sell the same dish as the converted incubation stallholder. After the first 3 years of tenancy, the prevailing policy on JO will apply. For more information, the ISP stallholder may refer to <https://www.nea.gov.sg/docs/default-source/our-services/hawker-management/including-a-joint-operator.pdf>

Q8. Why does NEA require applicants to submit a business proposal?

The business proposal allows NEA as well as the Food Tasting Panel to assess the viability of the proposed business, which includes the market acceptance and risks involved in the applicant’s proposed hawker business.

Section C – Terms and Conditions

Q9. Can I sell drinks and desserts at the incubation stall?

No, the incubation stalls are only for sale of cooked food.

Q10. Can I choose the location of my incubation stall or is it allocated to me by the NEA? Are the incubation stalls always offered at the same locations?

Incubation stalls are located in selected hawker centres across Singapore. The list of available incubation stalls is updated monthly. Successful ISP applicants can select their incubation stall from the “List of Available Incubation Stalls” found on the NEA Website: <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/hawker-management/programmes-and-grants/isp>.

Q11. The incubation stalls that I indicated in Part B of the Application Form may not be available by the time I am notified of my successful application. Should I still provide my projection of expenses and revenue based on the incubation stall location indicated in Part B?

Yes, applicant should still do the projection of expenses and revenue based on the incubation stall location indicated in Part B of the Application Form. Applicant’s projections allow NEA as well as the Food Tasting Panel to assess the viability of the proposed business, which includes the market acceptance and risks involved in the proposed hawker business.

Q12. Apart from the stall rent, what are the other operating costs that I would have to pay?

Apart from the stall rent, other operational costs borne by all stallholders are the Service and Conservancy Charges (S&CC), utilities, table-cleaning fees and dish-washing fees (where applicable). In addition, other upfront costs are security deposit (equivalent to 2 months of rent which is refundable) and hawker license fees. There will also be other miscellaneous costs such as signage, displays, crockeries, cookware etc.

Q13. Am I allowed to transfer my incubation stall?

The allocated incubation stall cannot be transferred during the 15-months programme tenure as well as within the first 3 years of tenancy after completion of programme.

Q14. Am I allowed to change the dish presented during the ISP food tasting session?

The incubation stall was allocated based on the dish presented during the ISP Food Tasting Session. Applicants are to keep the dish on their menu during the 15-months programme tenure as well as within the first 3 years of tenancy after completion of programme.

Q15. What happens after the 15-month tenure? Is it possible to apply for extension of the incubation stall if we wish to stay at the stall beyond 15 months?

About 1 to 2 months before the expiry of the incubation stall tenure, NEA will check in with the successful applicant to determine if they are keen to continue in the trade. If the applicant is keen, NEA will allow applicant to remain at the current stall and offer a new 3-year tenancy at market rent. Otherwise, applicant can choose to return the incubation stall to NEA at the end of the incubation stall tenure.

Section D – Food Tasting Session

Q16. How would the Food Tasting Session be conducted? When and where would it be held?

NEA will notify shortlisted applicants in advance of the Food Tasting Session schedule for applicants to demonstrate their culinary skills. The Food Tasting Session will be conducted once NEA has gathered sufficient applicants.

Q17. During the Food Tasting Session, how long do I get to prepare the food? Can I pre-prepare the food?

Applicant will be given about 1 hour 30 minutes to prepare and plate the dish on the day. Thereafter, applicant will present the dish to a Food Tasting Panel. If the dish requires pre-preparation, please notify NEA of the items that are pre-prepared.

Q18. How many dishes do I need to prepare?

Applicant will need to prepare at least one main dish intended to be sold at the incubation stall.

Q19. After the Food Tasting Session, when will NEA notify me if I am successful?

Successful applicants who passed the Food Tasting Session will be notified in four to six weeks' time. NEA will liaise with successful applicants to arrange for the fitting out of the stall and signing of the tenancy agreement.

Section E – Fitting Out of Stalls

Q20. What will be provided in the fitting out of the stall? Will I have to pay any deposit, and will I be liable if the fittings and equipment are damaged during the 15-month tenancy?

The incubation stalls will be fitted out with basic standard fixtures and equipment such as stainless steel shelves, stainless steel worktops, freezer-chiller, display showcase and sinks. To help minimise the upfront capital cost required from aspiring hawkers, no additional deposit will be collected for the stall fittings. NEA reserves the right to claim for any damage within the stall, including any fittings, fixtures and equipment provided by NEA at the commencement of the tenancy including deducting or setting off from the security deposit the claims for damaged or destroyed fittings or any repairs to or any reinstatement works not carried out to our satisfaction.

Q21. Do I get to choose what would be fitted out at the incubation stall? What if I need other equipment that are not provided?

The incubation stalls would be fitted out with basic standard fixtures and equipment. Among the standard fittings, there are some options, for example, a two-tier or three-tier shelves or whether a full or half-height display showcase etc. Trade-specific items would have to be purchased at applicant's own cost.

Q22. Do I have to pay for the fitting out?

When the successful applicant converts the incubation stall to a regular stall after the 15 months programme tenure, applicant will be required to pay for part of the cost of fittings and equipment at the stall.

Section F – Time Frame of Application

Q23. Is there a deadline to apply for an incubation stall?

This is a running programme and fresh applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.

Q24. After the notification on the outcome of the Food Tasting Session, how long does a successful applicant has to select an incubation stall?

Selection of incubation stall has to be made within 9 months upon notification of the successful application. Applicant will have to re-apply to the programme should he/she fail to select a stall within the 9 months window.

Q25. How long will it take from the point of application to the notification of food tasting session outcome?

Most successful cases would take up to 18 weeks. Other considerations for the time taken includes whether there are clarifications needed for their business proposals, availability of food tasting venue and panellists.