

**For discussion
on 9 July 2001**

**Legislative Council Panel on
Information Technology and Broadcasting**

Digital Divide

Purpose

This paper sets out Government's response to the submissions on digital divide made by various organizations at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting held on 14 May 2001.

Background

2. On 14 May 2001, we briefed Members on Government's policies and measures to address issues relating to digital divide. Representatives from various organizations also attended the meeting to express views and make submissions on the subject. Members asked the Administration to respond to the views expressed by the organizations and report back at the Panel meeting to be held in July 2001.

Government's Response

3. We set out at the Annex Government's detailed response to the views expressed by the various organizations. We also summarize below Government's response on some of the major issues.

Establishment of a Committee on Digital Divide

4. The Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau is responsible for formulating the overall policy on digital divide. We have included "strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation" as one of the key result areas in the "2001 Digital 21 IT Strategy". Since the

subject of digital divide is wide in scope and relates to a number of sectors, various task forces have already been set up under different departments to deal with the issue and to implement related measures. For example, the Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, has been set up to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector; a Central Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of IT Usage among Women, chaired by the Director of Home Affairs, has been set up to coordinate and promote the use of IT among grassroot women; a task force has also been set up in the Education Department to work on the implementation plan for applying IT in education for schools. We consider that it will be more focused and effective for individual task forces to address issues relating to digital divide in their own sectors, while the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau and the Information Technology Services Department will coordinate the work centrally. If necessary, we will consult the views of the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee. Therefore, it is not necessary to separately set up a committee on digital divide comprising representatives of various sectors. Otherwise there will be duplication of efforts.

Barrier-free Web Site Design

5. The Government has taken the lead by example in adopting and promoting barrier-free web site design for delivering electronic services. In the design and implementation of the Electronic Services Delivery (ESD) Scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The web site is designed in conformity with the standards of the internationally recognized “Web Content Accessibility Guidelines” developed by the World Wide Web Consortium. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The user interface and navigation of the web site have also passed the Bobby Test and conform to the international standards.

6. To facilitate access by people with disabilities to public services electronically, we plan to enhance all Government web sites by 2002 or earlier in accordance with our internal web accessibility guidelines. These guidelines have also been issued to public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption. We will also assist these organizations, such as through organizing seminars and workshops, to understand these guidelines.

7. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, IT industry organizations, the universities and other representative organizations of the blind and visually impaired to arouse the awareness of the community on the issue of web accessibility. We are now working with the Internet Professionals Association to organize the Web Care Campaign in order to promote web accessibility to the private sector.

Enhancing Awareness and Application of IT in the Community

8. To promote the use of IT and enhance the IT awareness of the community, we launched the "IT Hong Kong" campaign in September 2000, which comprised a series of IT awareness programmes, district IT activities, the establishment of a dedicated "IT Hong Kong" promotional website, and the introduction of an IT Pioneer scheme. All the 18 districts actively participated in the campaign and we have received very positive response from the community.

9. Around 18,000 people have attended the training organized under the IT Awareness Programme, and of whom around 5,000 were senior citizens and 2,300 were people with disabilities. We are now planning to organize a new round of IT Awareness Programme and we expect the programme will provide 8,000 training places for the general public, 5,000 for senior citizens and another 5,000 for people with disabilities. We are also refining and enhancing the course materials in order to meet the needs of different groups. We will continue to organize such programme to enhance the IT awareness of the community.

Enhancing Computer and Internet Accessibility for the Disadvantaged

10. The most effective way to increase the computer and Internet access for the disadvantaged people is to provide more public computers for their free use. Under the "Community Cyberpoint" project and through subvention to non-Government organizations (NGOs), we have installed at present more than 2,200 computers with Internet connection for free use by the public at convenient locations around the territory, including community

Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 14 May 2001

Submissions made by various organizations on Digital Divide and Government's responses

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
Breakthrough	1. Support schools and youth centres to open up their computer and Internet facilities for use by students during night time and public holidays.	<p>The Government has provided incentive grant to encourage schools to open up their computer facilities for use by students after normal school hours. As at May 2001, 568 schools (including 308 secondary, 244 primary and 16 special schools) have applied for the incentive grant in the 2000/01 school year. The Government will conduct a questionnaire survey in June/July 2001 to collect schools' view on opening up their IT facilities to the public and the supporting measures required. In the coming school year, the Education Department will continue to provide incentive grant to schools which are willing to extend the opening hours of their computer room/facilities for use by students, and will encourage other schools to participate in the scheme.</p> <p>In July 1999, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) allocated over \$27 million to implement a computer services scheme, providing 125 children and youth centres, the Integrated Team of Children and Youth Centres Services, community centres and the Group Work Unit of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) with 1,000 computers and related Internet connection facilities for free use by youngsters aged from 6 to 24 outside school hours; and provided basic IT usage courses as well as necessary technical support to the youngsters through social workers and trained volunteers according to needs.</p>
	2. Provide media and information education for students and citizens.	<p>In 1999, the Curriculum Development Institute of the Education Department (ED) has developed the "Information Technology Learning Targets" which outline the essential IT knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should acquire at various stages of schooling. These serve as a reference for schools to organize teaching and learning activities to develop IT capabilities of the students. Through these learning activities, students will become habitual IT users in accomplishing learning tasks in schools and job-related tasks in their future careers.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>As regards general public, the Government is now organizing the IT awareness courses to help them understand and use of IT. If they require in-depth understanding and application of more specialized knowledge and skills in certain areas, there are related training programmes offered by other organizations in the market.</p>
	<p>3. Employ youngsters as short-term tutors to teach their neighbours and the adults on information literacy.</p>	<p>The Government has developed volunteer training programmes to train up trainers to help others to acquire IT skills, e.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Last year, over 200 trainers were trained up for the IT awareness courses for the disabled. 2. Over 200 IT volunteers have participated to assist the Internet Professionals Association in organising the Web Care campaign. 3. The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to train up, in the next three years, 600 trainers for the IT awareness courses for the disabled and 500 trainers for the IT awareness courses for the senior citizens.
	<p>4. Provide funding for the development of digital culture , arts, and humanities, and encourage creativity and critical thinking.</p>	<p>Public libraries under the management of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) have been fully computerized, providing multi-media computers for members of the public to search for information on the Internet, e-books of various subjects, e-journals, CD-ROM databases and on-line databases, etc. As regards the arts community in Hong Kong, digital technology has already been used in film productions and artistic creations. The LCSD has also organized or sponsored such creative activities from time to time. For example, in the opening exhibitions of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in December 2000, the “Art +01 – A Digital Exploration” exhibition was one of them. Moreover, when HKSAR took part in the biennial arts festival of Venice, Italy for the first time in 2001, one of the three contemporary artists representing Hong Kong was specialized in digital video creation.</p>
	<p>5. Encourage the development of Chinese content. Encourage cross border cooperation to enhance local bilingual web sites. Develop local information content and network systematically and proactively.</p>	<p>The Government strongly encourages the development of content for Chinese language web sites and will create a favourable environment, such as establishing telecommunications infrastructure, etc. to facilitate market development. We are actively promoting the adoption of the international coding standard of ISO 10646. The Government advised IT vendors late last year that starting from February this year, all Chinese language related computer products supplied to the Government had to support ISO 10646 and the Hong Kong Supplementary Character Set.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>6. Provide resources to and award the development of outstanding educational web pages and content, with emphasis on the entertainment and interaction expressed. Educate the public on information ethics, and foster healthy and balanced digital development.</p>	<p>To foster a digital culture in the community, the ED is planning to organize a campaign, tentatively named as "Digital 2001" to promote among teachers, parents, students and members of the public the habit of reading, learning, and sharing with others on communication; and when encountering problems, they can think proactively, make the best use of technology, improve their work and life through innovative ways, and build up the spirit of proactively serving the community. The campaign will also include an award scheme on outstanding web pages.</p>
<p>Equal Opportunities Commission</p>	<p>7. The Government as service provider and regulator should formulate policies to ensure that design of IT products and services are accessible by people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Regarding web accessibility, we have issued guidelines to public bodies and Government subvented organizations. We would also render further assistance, like organizing seminars, workshops, etc. to these organizations.</p> <p>We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p> <p>The Government has been actively providing ancillary tools for use by people with disabilities, for example-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The personal computers at the Super Cyber Centre are designed with movable chairs so that staff at the centre can remove the chair for the disabled in using the computer facilities. Apart from furniture, computing facilities such as the Chinese writing pad and the mouse are also movable. This provides flexibility to the disabled for easy adjustment of the arm position. Moreover, the Super Cyber Centre is also equipped with a computer specially designed for use by the visually impaired. • The design of Community Cyber Points has already taken into account the needs of

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response												
		<p>wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities (screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer, power braille) at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired.</p> <p>At present, senior citizens and people with disabilities can use the computer facilities and browse the Internet at the Community Cyber Points in various community centres, public libraries and post offices. To facilitate senior citizens and people with disabilities to have wider access to IT, the SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to install computers with Internet access and training capacity at multi-service centres for senior citizens, elderly centres and various rehabilitation service units and homes in 2001-02. To cater for the needs of people with disabilities, special ancillary facilities such as handrail, touch screen, screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille, etc. will be installed. The related numbers of computers and service units are as follows –</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="846 671 2042 927"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>No. of service units</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>No. of computers</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02</td> <td style="text-align: center;">249</td> <td style="text-align: center;">284</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Computer facilities for people with disabilities in 2001-02</td> <td style="text-align: center;">464</td> <td style="text-align: center;">540</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Total</td> <td style="text-align: center;">713</td> <td style="text-align: center;">824</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<u>No. of service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>	Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02	249	284	Computer facilities for people with disabilities in 2001-02	464	540	Total	713	824
	<u>No. of service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>												
Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02	249	284												
Computer facilities for people with disabilities in 2001-02	464	540												
Total	713	824												
	<p>8. Suggest the Government to collect data specifically on the present usage of IT by women and people with disabilities.</p>	<p>According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the objective measuring factors of digital divide are the development of telecommunications infrastructure, the penetration of personal computer and Internet among different sexes, age groups and income groups. The Government has conducted regular surveys on the use of information technology in Hong Kong so as to monitor the digital divide situation. We will continue to improve the survey methodology in order to obtain the relevant data of various sectors.</p>												
	<p>9. When formulating the IT budget, the Government must examine the possible impact and benefits of the relevant items on people</p>	<p>We will take note of the suggestion in formulating our policies.</p>												

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response						
	with disabilities and women							
	10. Public policy on IT should aim at bringing access of PC and Internet to people at home, at school, at work and in the community.	The Government has formulated policies to provide computer facilities in schools, install computer facilities at community levels for free use by the public, and to encourage the general public and the business sector to widely adopt the use of IT.						
	11. Cyberpoints should be extended to cover centres for people with disabilities.	<p>At present, people with disabilities can use computer facilities and browse the Internet at the Community Cyber Points set up in various community centres, public libraries and post offices. To provide them with wider access to IT, the SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to install computers with Internet access and training capacity at various rehabilitation service units and homes in 2001-02. To cater for the needs of the disabled, special ancillary facilities such as handrail, touch screen, screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille, etc. will be installed. The number of computer facilities and service units is as follows –</p> <table data-bbox="891 826 1809 925"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="891 826 1120 858"><u>No. of organizations</u></th> <th data-bbox="1176 826 1541 858"><u>No. of rehabilitation service units</u></th> <th data-bbox="1608 826 1809 858"><u>No. of computers</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="969 890 1003 922">70</td> <td data-bbox="1272 890 1328 922">464</td> <td data-bbox="1641 890 1697 922">540</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>No. of organizations</u>	<u>No. of rehabilitation service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>	70	464	540
<u>No. of organizations</u>	<u>No. of rehabilitation service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>						
70	464	540						
	12. Cyberpoints should be extended to cover women centres.	The Home Affairs Department (HAD) has set up a Central Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of IT Usage among Women, aiming to coordinate Government and non-Government organizations to promote activities and training on the usage of IT among women. To cope with the needs, HAD has established the Super Cyber Centre and increased the number of computer facilities in the Community Cyber Points for use by the general public (including women).						
	13. The Government should take measures to encourage research and development of new ancillary technology.	The Government encourages research and development of new technology and has set up the Innovation and Technology Fund to provide financial support for technological research and development, including ancillary technology. The Government will also lead by example in the promotion of the use of ancillary technology.						

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>14. The Government should set standards to ensure that the design of web sites suits the needs of different people.</p>	<p>Regarding web accessibility, we have issued guidelines to public bodies and Government subvented organizations. We would also render further assistance like organizing seminars, workshops, etc. to these organizations.</p> <p>We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p>
	<p>15. Suggest the Government to establish an IT resource centre or information network to provide assistance and advice to people with disabilities in using ancillary technology, and to those who require other forms of assistance such as technical support and/or software applications issues, etc.</p>	<p>The Government has, through the Lotteries Fund and other charity funds, allocated resources to non-Government organizations to establish different forms of support services and set up web sites to assist people with disabilities in using IT, multi-media applications and ancillary equipment.</p> <p>In addition, the SWD has secured funds from the Lotteries Fund to set up a web portal this year for people with disabilities. The portal will provide guidelines on local rehabilitation services, information on daily life for people with disabilities, a discussion forum, etc. so as to facilitate people with disabilities to obtain useful information and communicate online with each other.</p>
	<p>16. The Government needs to consider how to facilitate people with low or no income (such as housewives) for payment in electronic transactions, by offering different means of payment methods.</p>	<p>The Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) scheme supports a variety of electronic payment methods. Apart from credit cards (such as Visa Card, Master Card), it also supports the use of debit cards (such as ETC or Jetco) in order to cater for the needs of those who do not have any credit card. Besides, we are in close collaboration with the ESD contractor to develop other electronic payment methods (such as Visa Cash, Octopus, etc.) to ensure that the public can obtain on-line public service in an easy manner.</p> <p>We also encourage the industry to accept different means of payment methods. We have written to major Internet Service Providers (ISPs), requesting them to accept payments other than credit card. One major broadband ISP has accepted Government's suggestion to</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		accept other means of payment. Other ISPs are also actively considering Government's suggestion.
	17. Government should ensure that the IT facilities and services acquired are accessible to people with disabilities.	<p>The Government pays great attention to ancillary tools which help people with disabilities to use IT, e.g. -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The personal computers at the Super Cyber Centre are designed with movable chairs so that staff at the centre can remove the chair for the disabled in using the computer facility. Apart from furniture, computing facilities such as the Chinese writing pad and the mouse are also movable. This provides flexibility to the disabled for easy adjustment of the arm position. Moreover, the Super Cyber Centre is also equipped with a computer specially designed for use by the visually impaired. • To provide greater access to IT for people with disabilities and senior citizens, the SWD has planned to install computer facilities with Internet access at rehabilitation centres, multipurpose centres and community centres in 2001-02. • During the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. • The design of Community Cyber Points has already taken into account the needs of wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities (screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer, power braille) at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired. • In order to facilitate the blind and the visually impaired to access on-line public services, the Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier. The guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption. <p>Moreover, to provide greater access to IT for people with disabilities and senior citizens, the SWD will install computer facilities with Internet access at various rehabilitation service units, multi-service centres for the elderly, and elderly centres in 2001-02.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>18. According to the survey by Census & Statistics Department, people in Hong Kong were generally aware of the significant role IT was playing in their daily lives and in economic development. However, the survey did not provide much information on the readiness of people to attend the IT training programme and whether they have the resources (including financial resources, time and support etc.) to do so.</p>	<p>The survey conducted by the Census & Statistics Department (C&SD) was a face-to-face interview survey, with a view to understanding the use of IT by households and individuals. The design of the questionnaire has made reference to that of other advanced economies. C&SD will continue to improve the questionnaire and the design of the survey. We will refer the suggestions of EOC to C&SD. Moreover, the Government will take the initiative to organize free IT awareness courses and provide various facilities to facilitate members of the public to access IT.</p>
	<p>19. For people with disabilities, schools should have the necessary IT expertise to support them to learn and use IT.</p>	<p>The ED has all along provided resources to special schools for the acquisition of IT facilities. As early as 1989, ED made use of IT to teach the handicapped children. During that time, through the Computer Education in Special Schools Project, schools were provided with hardware/software/training to support handicapped children to use IT in their learning. As regards the training and development of teachers, the ED has employed overseas experts to host seminars and workshops for teachers of special schools on the use of IT to facilitate learning. Moreover, dedicated software for children with special educational needs are developed and the necessary in-service training programmes are offered to teachers.</p>
	<p>20. The Government needs to conduct qualitative studies to understand how gender role affects girls and boys in pursuing IT studies so as to identify strategies to remove the barriers.</p>	<p>The Government always encourages students, irrespective of their gender, to learn IT. As the use of IT becomes popular, the traditional concept about boys placing more emphasis on science subjects and girls on arts subjects has gradually changed. We will continue to monitor the development in this area.</p>
	<p>21. The ratio of elderly and disabled beneficiaries under the IT</p>	<p>In the first two rounds of IT awareness programmes conducted last year, around 18,000 people, including 5,000 senior citizens and 2,300 people with disabilities, attended training</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	awareness programmes of the IT Hong Kong campaign is still small.	courses and learnt the basic skills of using computer and browsing the Internet. The Government is currently planning to organize the third round of IT awareness programme in all 18 districts. There will be around 8,000 training places available for the general public. Moreover, the SWD plans to work with non-Government organizations again in organizing IT awareness programmes to provide free computer and Internet training courses for 5,000 senior citizens and 5,000 people with disabilities. We will continue to organize similar training so that more senior citizens and people with disabilities can benefit.
	22. The Government does not seem to have any specific IT awareness programmes for women.	The IT awareness courses organized by the Government are for the general public, including women. According to our record, 70% of the participants of IT awareness programmes are women.
	23. In order to realize 'digital inclusion', the Government needs to work in partnership with users, the private sector and non-Government organizations. The Government needs to consider ways to facilitate all stakeholders to participate and provide support during the process of working towards a digital inclusive society for Hong Kong.	The Government has always put emphasis in cooperating with grass root organizations and the industry. In the training for senior citizens and people with disabilities in the use IT, the Government also adopts the "train the trainer" approach, with the aim to training up a group of senior citizens and people with disabilities to support and encourage other members to learn IT. Recently, we have also provided funding support to the Internet Professionals Association to organise a series of activities to address the issue of digital divide.
Hong Kong Computer Society	24. No-barrier to access to IT and the popular use of internet should be one of the important agenda in the planning of the overall IT policies of the Government.	This has always been an objective of the Government in formulating policies and implementing related measures. In the recently promulgated 2001 Digital 21 Strategy, we have included "Strengthening the Community for Digital Exploitation" as one of the key results areas.
	25. Series of programmes and promotions should be organized to create the awareness to all	To promote the awareness and wider use of IT, the Government launched the "IT Hong Kong" campaign in September last year. The campaign comprises IT awareness courses, district activities, the establishment of an IT web site, the recruitment of IT pioneers, etc.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	citizens of Hong Kong about the Digital Divide.	The 18 districts are actively participating in the campaign and have organized as many as 40 activities, including web page design competition, open day for Cyber Points, carnivals and online guidance service, etc.. Through these activities, we aim to encourage public's participation so that they can cope with the digital era.
	26. A task force should be set up including IT professional bodies, IT/Telecommunications/internet service providers, community service organizations and Government representatives to develop both long-term and short-term plans and initiatives, with focus on those disadvantaged groups (including the elderly, the disabled, lower income families) on Digital Divide.	The Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau is responsible for formulating the overall policy on digital divide. We have included "strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation" as one of the key result areas in the "2001 Digital 21 Strategy". Since the subject of digital divide is wide in scope and relates to different sectors, various task forces have already been set up under different departments to deal with the issue and implement related measures. For example, the Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, has been set up to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector; a Central Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of IT Usage among Women, chaired by the Director of Home Affairs, has been set up to coordinate and promote the use of IT among grassroot women; a task force has also been set up in the Education Department to work on the implementation plan for applying IT in education for schools. We consider that it will be more focused and effective for individual task forces to address issues relating to digital divide in their own sectors, while the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau and Information Technology Services Department will coordinate the work centrally. If necessary, we may consult the views of the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee. Therefore, it is not necessary to separately set up a committee comprising representatives of various sectors. Otherwise there will be duplication of efforts.
	27. More information infrastructure, such as Cyber-points, should be developed for more people to access internet.	To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, we will extend the "Community Cyber Points" scheme and provide subsidies to non-Government organizations to install computer facilities. By the end of 2001/02, we will increase the number of public computers for free use by the public from the current of 2,200 to 4,300. At present, senior citizens and people with disabilities can use computer facilities and browse the Internet at the Community Cyber Points in various community centres, public libraries and post offices. To facilitate senior citizens and people with disabilities to have greater access to IT, the SWD has secured funds from the Lotteries Fund to install computers

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response												
		<p>with Internet access and training capacity at multi-service centres for the elderly, elderly centres and various rehabilitation service units and homes in 2001-02. To cater for the needs of people with disabilities, special ancillary facilities such as handrail, touch screen, screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille, etc. will be installed. The related number of computers and service units is as follows –</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="846 379 2042 659"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>No. of service units</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>No. of computers</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02</td> <td style="text-align: center;">249</td> <td style="text-align: center;">284</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Computer facilities for the disabled in 2001-02</td> <td style="text-align: center;">464</td> <td style="text-align: center;">540</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">total</td> <td style="text-align: center;">713</td> <td style="text-align: center;">824</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<u>No. of service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>	Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02	249	284	Computer facilities for the disabled in 2001-02	464	540	total	713	824
	<u>No. of service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>												
Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02	249	284												
Computer facilities for the disabled in 2001-02	464	540												
total	713	824												
	<p>28. Ongoing recycling computer projects such as "CompuAid" should be continued, so that more lower income groups can have chances to install computers at home.</p>	<p>We have explored with the industry the feasibility of implementing a computer recycling programme. We have found that there are many practical problems such as resources for renovating the old computers, the availability of spare parts, how to supply new software and the arrangement for maintenance and repair, etc. So the recycling of computers may not be practicable and cost-effective. We therefore recommend that we should pool our resources to provide public computer facilities for use by people without their own computers.</p>												
	<p>29. Internet/Telecommunications service providers should offer more economic service packages, and Government could subsidize on those service packages.</p>	<p>The Government encourages the industry to offer favourable packages of services to the community. However, as Government's policy is to allow the market to operate freely, the Government will not interfere with commercial decision.</p>												
	<p>30. Government could offer either loans or subsidize to those disadvantaged groups to purchase computers at home.</p>	<p>The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize people with disabilities to set up personal computer workstations at home to help them to find and sustain an income-generating job. To date, 64 applicants have received support with a total grant of \$995,000. To further extend the scheme, \$3 million was injected from the Lotteries Fund into the Central Fund for Personal Computers in March 2001. It is expected that about 200 more people with disabilities can benefit.</p>												

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>31. Extend IT in education, such as online learning, to those disadvantaged groups instead of just secondary and primary students.</p>	<p>The ED has all along provided resources to special schools for the acquisition of IT facilities. As early as 1989, ED has made use of IT to teach the handicapped children. During that time, through the Computer Education in Special Schools Project, schools were provided with hardware/software/training to support handicapped children to use IT in their learning. As regards training and development of teachers, the ED has employed overseas experts to host seminars and workshops for teachers of special schools on the use of IT to facilitate learning. Moreover, dedicated software for children with special educational needs are developed and the necessary in-service training programmes are offered to the teachers.</p> <p>Through the funding from the Lotteries Fund, the SWD also finances the Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services to develop multi-media training web site for the mentally retarded. When completed, the web site is expected to provide web-based training opportunities for the mentally retarded.</p>
	<p>32. "Train the trainers" provide more IT literacy trainings to more volunteer and community organizations, NGOs helpers, so as to enlarge the number of task force to provide IT literacy to those disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p>The Government has developed volunteer training programmes to train up trainers to help others to acquire IT skills, e.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Last year, over 200 trainers were trained up for the IT awareness courses for the disabled. 2. Over 200 IT volunteers have participated to assist the Internet Professionals Association in organising the Web Care campaign. 3. The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to train up, in the next three years, 600 trainers for the IT awareness courses for the disabled and 500 trainers for the IT awareness courses for senior citizens.
<p>The Hong Kong Council of Social Service</p>	<p>33. Universal no-barrier access to information technology and the Internet should be a major objective and a guiding principle in the overall information technology policies of the Government. Disadvantaged groups, being less capable to help themselves in catching up in the information era, should have</p>	<p>The Government agrees that there is a need to promote barrier-free access to IT and the Internet. The Government is taking the lead in adopting web accessibility guideline to improve Government web sites so as to allow easy access by everyone (including disadvantaged groups).</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	priority in receiving assistance.	
	34. A task force to tackle digital divide should be set up.	<p>The Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau is responsible for formulating the overall policy on digital divide. We have included “strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation” as one of the key result areas in the “2001 Digital 21 Strategy”. Since the subject of digital divide is wide in scope and relates to different sectors, various task forces have already been set up under different departments to deal with the issue and implement related measures. For example, the Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, has been set up to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector; a Central Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of IT Usage among Women, chaired by the Director of Home Affairs, has been set up to coordinate and promote the use of IT among grassroot women; a task force has also been set up in the Education Department to work on the implementation plan for applying IT in education for schools. We consider that it will be more focused and effective for individual task forces to address issues relating to digital divide in their own sectors, while the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau and Information Technology Services Department will coordinate the work centrally. If necessary, we may consult the views of the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee. Therefore, it is not necessary to separately set up a committee comprising representatives of various sectors. Otherwise there will be duplication of efforts.</p>
	35. Indicators to measure the magnitude of digital divide should be updated and reviewed periodically in order to monitor the progress and effectiveness of programmes.	<p>The Government has conducted regular surveys on the use of IT in Hong Kong so as to monitor the digital divide situation. We will continue to improve the survey methodology in order to obtain the relevant data.</p>
	36. Expand the portable computer loan scheme for secondary school students to cover participants of adult education and employee retraining programme.	<p>Under the existing scheme, students from less well-off families can borrow the notebook computers acquired by schools. The Government is presently assessing the effectiveness of the scheme and has not considered expanding it to cover participants of adult education and retraining programme. If necessary, members of the public can use the public computers at Community Cyber Points and public libraries free-of-charge. We will increase the access and usage of IT within the community by providing more public computer facilities.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response									
	37. Encourage vendors to offer special discounts for the disadvantaged.	The Government encourages the industry to offer favourable packages of services to the community. However, as Government's policy is to allow the market to operate freely, the Government will not interfere with commercial decision.									
	38. Continual support for computer recycling programmes	We have explored with the industry the feasibility of implementing a computer recycling programme. We have found that there are many practical problems such as resources for renovating the old computers, the availability of spare parts, how to supply new software and the arrangement for maintenance and repair, etc. So the recycling of computers may not be practicable and cost-effective. We therefore recommend that we should pool our resources to provide public computer facilities for use by people without their own computers.									
	39. Establish sufficient cyberpoints offering quality Internet access to the public.	<p>To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, we will extend the "Community Cyber Points" scheme and provide subsidies to non-Government organizations to install computer facilities. By the end of 2001/02, we will increase the number of public computers for free use by the public from the current of 2,200 to 4,300.</p> <p>At present, senior citizens and people with disabilities can use computer facilities and browse the Internet at the Community Cyber Points in various community centres, public libraries and post offices. To facilitate senior citizens and people with disabilities to have greater access to IT, the SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to install computers with Internet access and training capacity at multi-service centres for the elderly, elderly centres and various rehabilitation service units and homes in 2001-02. To cater for the needs of people with disabilities, special ancillary facilities such as handrail, touch screen, screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille, etc. will be installed. The related number of computers and service units is as follows –</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="844 1230 2045 1412"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>No. of service units</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>No. of computers</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02</td> <td style="text-align: center;">249</td> <td style="text-align: center;">284</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Computer facilities for the disabled in 2001-02</td> <td style="text-align: center;">464</td> <td style="text-align: center;">540</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<u>No. of service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>	Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02	249	284	Computer facilities for the disabled in 2001-02	464	540
	<u>No. of service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>									
Computer facilities for senior citizens in 2001-02	249	284									
Computer facilities for the disabled in 2001-02	464	540									

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response		
		Total	713	824
	40. Promote a competitive environment to encourage vendors to develop alternative solutions so that the public might have more choices.	It has always been Government's policy to provide a favourable competitive environment so that vendors can develop systems in a fair and open market which will allow more choices for the public.		
	41. Continue IT awareness promotion programmes for the disadvantaged.	In the first two rounds of IT awareness programmes conducted last year, around 18,000 people, including 5,000 senior citizens and 2,300 people with disabilities, attended training courses and learnt the basic skills of using computer and browsing the Internet. The Government is currently planning to organize the third round of IT awareness programme in all 18 districts. There will be around 8,000 training places available for the general public. Moreover, the SWD plans to work with non-Government organizations again in organizing IT awareness programmes to provide free computer and Internet training courses for 5,000 senior citizens and 5,000 people with disabilities. We will continue to organize similar training so that more people (particularly disadvantaged groups) can benefit.		
	42. Provide free computer training at various skill levels for the disadvantaged.	The design of the "IT awareness programme for people with disabilities" organized by the Government through non-Government organizations is based on the needs of different categories of people with disabilities. The programme includes not only basic computer operation and Internet browsing, but also training on using different types of ancillary tools and software. The Government is actively planning to organize the third round of IT awareness programme in 18 districts, and will review the course content. At present, the SWD is examining, in the coming year, the scope to allow co-organizing organizations to include their training activities in the programme so as to provide multi-dimensional training courses to suit the different needs of senior citizens and people with disabilities.		
	43. Provide financial support to organize volunteer groups to provide technical support services to the disadvantaged.	<p>The Government has developed volunteer training programmes to train up trainers to help others to acquire IT skills, e.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Last year, over 200 trainers were trained up for the IT awareness courses for the disabled. 2. Over 200 IT volunteers have participated to assist the Internet Professionals Association 		

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>in organising the Web Care campaign.</p> <p>3. The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to train up, in the next three years, 600 trainers for the IT awareness courses for the disabled and 500 trainers for the IT awareness courses for senior citizens.</p> <p>4. The "IT Pioneer" scheme has recruited 2 000 volunteers.</p>
	<p>44. Training Coupon Programme for the disadvantaged to acquire suitable computer training should be implemented.</p>	<p>The Government is now implementing the "IT Hong Kong " campaign which includes free IT awareness courses for disadvantaged groups. Thus we do not consider it necessary to implement the suggested training coupon programme.</p>
	<p>45. Seek the assistance of professional IT associations in drawing up the code of practice for barrier-free design of web sites. Promote the use of proper server tools and applications contributing to barrier-free design. Promote the provision of barrier-free web sites for the disadvantaged.</p>	<p>Regarding web accessibility, we have issued guidelines and will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p>
	<p>46. Set up a virtual data center, adopting barrier-free design applications, to host all web sites for non-profit-making organizations.</p>	<p>As different non-Government organizations may have different support requirements and specifications for web site (such as bandwidth and server capacity), there would be difficulties for an agency to act as a virtual data centre to enhance accessibility of web sites of all organisations in order to achieve barrier-free design. However, we will consider if it is feasible to coordinate various non-Government organizations in dealing with and enhancing the accessibility of web sites.</p>
	<p>47. Provide support to establish vertical portal sites for different disadvantaged groups, such as</p>	<p>The SWD has rendered support to the Cyber Senior Network Development Association Limited to apply for funds from charitable organizations to set up a portal site for senior citizens.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>the elderly, people with disabilities, women, new arrivals and low-income families, etc. .</p>	<p>The SWD has secured funds from the Lotteries Fund to set up a web portal this year for people with disabilities. The portal will provide guidelines on local rehabilitation services, information on daily life for people with disabilities, a discussion forum, etc. so as to facilitate people with disabilities to obtain useful information and communicate online with each other.</p> <p>Moreover, the web site of HAD has also provided related service information for the new arrivals.</p>
<p>Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres</p> <p>(Note: the original submission of the organization is in Chinese and the translation is provided by the Government)</p>	<p>48. At present, most payment methods offered by private network operators are unfavourable to grass roots women to participate in IT activities. Grass roots women, unlike working women, have difficulties in applying for credit cards because they do not have proper economic status.</p>	<p>The Government has written to major Internet Service Providers (ISPs) urging them to accept, apart from credit cards, other payment methods such as cash, cheque, auto-pay, ETC or prepaid methods. If it is necessary to pay a deposit, the amount of deposit should be reasonable and comparable to the amount of monthly fee. To date, one well-established broadband ISP has accepted Government's suggestion and has agreed to accept other means of payment. A number of other service providers are also actively considering Government's suggestion.</p>
	<p>49. To examine if various Government departments and public bodies have protected the rights of women and encouraged women to participate in IT activities, in order to reduce digital divide and hence narrow the gap between the rich and the poor.</p>	<p>The HAD has set up a Central Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of IT Usage Among Women in late 2000 to coordinate various Government departments, non-Government organizations and the private sector to organize and promote IT activities for women.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>To establish link and cooperate with social organizations , and put in resources to promote support for women at the community level.</p> <p>Implement gender-oriented initiatives and examine if ITBB, ITSD, ED, ERB, Labour Department, etc. have observed the equal opportunity principle for different sexes for the benefit of women.</p>	
	<p>50. To incorporate the gender perspective into existing polices, and to examine the role of sex in IT development.</p>	<p>In formulating policies, the Government has always taken into consideration the variances among various sectors, with a view to delivering maximum benefits to the society.</p>
	<p>51. Be concerned about inequality or dormant discrimination confronted by women, develop measures to regulate private companies and public bodies to operate on the basis of sex equality.</p> <p>Observe the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW]in the implementation of Government policies.</p>	<p>The Government has committed to promoting equal opportunities for both sexes. According to the existing Sex Discrimination Ordinance, discrimination attributed to sex, marital status or pregnancy is illegal. The Ordinance applies to both the private sector and public bodies, to safeguard women to have equal opportunities in employment and other areas such as education, provision of goods, facilities, services, etc. Besides, the Equal Opportunities Commission has also drawn up a Code of Practice on Employment to help employers, employees and other interested parties to understand the responsibilities covered by the Sex Discrimination Ordinance.</p> <p>The Government will continue to comply with the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.</p>
	<p>52. Increase resources for women groups to ensure that they have adequate opportunities to</p>	<p>The Government has always been concerned about the opportunity of women in taking part in IT development. In the IT awareness courses already organized, 70% of the participants were women.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	participate in IT development.	
	53. Develop community support schemes to coordinate different departments to provide resources for the disadvantaged, so as to avoid widening the gap between the rich and the poor due to IT advancement.	The Government has taken note of the suggestion. We will actively pursue various measures and provide resources to deal with digital divide.
	54. Conduct surveys on the needs of women for IT participation. Carry out sex analysis to understand the situation of women in IT development.	The Government has conducted regular surveys on the use of IT in Hong Kong so as to monitor the digital divide situation. We will continue to improve the survey methodology in order to obtain the relevant data. We will also closely monitor the impact of IT advancement on different sectors of the community.
	55. The Government and the ERB should organize more courses dedicated for women.	<p>The Government has always been concerned about the opportunity of women to participate in IT development. In the IT awareness courses already organized, 70% of the participants were women.</p> <p>About 27,000 and 30,000 women participated in the full-time, part-time and evening courses of different basic computer training organized by the ERB in 1999-2000 and 2000-01 respectively, which accounted for around 80% of the total number of trainees. This year, the ERB would continue to provide more training places on computer courses and the percentage of woman trainees is expected to be more or less the same or even higher than that in the past two years.</p>
	56. The IT awareness courses provided are too fast in pace and too difficult in content. The Government should teach women on how to make use of the services under the ESD scheme.	The Government is actively planning to organize the third round of IT awareness course. We are now working on the course content to ensure that it can cater for the different needs of various sectors. We would also include how to use ESD services in the course content.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
Hong Kong Retinitus Pigmentosa Society	57. The Government should deploy resources to help those in need to acquire low-vision aids and provide adequate facilities to cater for the needs of users. The Government should provide grants or subsidies to low vision people for acquiring computers, and preference should be given to the unemployed and the poor.	The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize people with disabilities to set up personal computer workstations at home to help them to find and sustain an income-generating job. To date, 64 applicants have received support with a total grant of \$995,000. To further extend the scheme, \$3 million was injected from the Lotteries Fund into the Central Fund for Personal Computers in March 2001. It is expected that about 200 more people with disabilities can benefit. Moreover, there are presently a number of other funds including the Quality Education Fund, Lotteries Fund, Chinese Permanent Cemeteries Fund, etc. to subsidize the development of computer programmes, the organization of short-term computer courses and the acquisition of facilities for people with disabilities. In the past three years, these funds have provided a total of \$34.9 million for the aforesaid purposes. To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, we will extend the "Community Cyber Points" scheme and provide subsidies to non-Government organizations to install computer facilities. By the end of 2001/02, we will increase the number of public computers for free use by the public from the current 2,200 to 4,300.
	58. Some low-vision aids are expensive but are necessities rather than alternatives for low vision persons. At present, the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund only subsidizes full-time students to buy low-vision aids and the Employaid Fund only subsidizes working people to buy low-vision aids for use at the workplace. Other low vision persons are excluded. We suggest that the SAR Government should establish a trust fund to provide subsidies or allowances to low vision persons for buying low-vision aids.	The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize people with disabilities to set up personal computer workstations at home to help them to find and sustain an income-generating job. To date, 64 applicants have received support with a total grant of \$995,000. To further extend the scheme, \$3 million was injected from the Lotteries Fund into the Central Fund for Personal Computers in March 2001. It is expected that about 200 more people with disabilities can benefit. In addition, some non-Government organizations will also provide vocational rehabilitation scheme and activity fund through charity funds or other resources, and give technical advice, support and assistance, loans etc. on the acquisition of equipment and ancillary tools so that the working ability of people with disabilities can be fully explored.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>59. We demand that salaries tax allowances, either personal allowance or dependent allowance, shall be granted in respect of the expenditure for buying low-vision aids by the visually impaired.</p>	<p>Under the current salaries tax and profits tax regime, anyone (including the visually impaired) who requires computer facilities or low-vision aids at work or business are eligible to claim depreciation allowances for such expenditure. In addition, those who maintain their disabled dependants (spouse, children, siblings, parent, grandparents) and are eligible to claim the basic allowance of such dependants are at the same time eligible for the disabled dependant allowance, so that they may buy accessories to improve the standard of living of the disabled dependants.</p>
	<p>60. We suggest that the SAR Government should establish more Cyber Points at various districts for use by low vision persons. Places like municipal service complexes, libraries, schools, MTR stations and KCR stations, etc. should be provided with such facilities.</p>	<p>At present, all public libraries are provided with computer and Internet facilities for use by the visually impaired.</p> <p>In addition, the Government set up last year Cyber Points for use by the blind and visually impaired at the Hong Kong Society for the Blind, the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Retinitus Pigmentosa Society and Ebenezer School for the Blind. In the coming year, apart from providing more computers and ancillary equipment at the aforesaid locations, the Government would also provide computers and ancillary equipment at other social service units, such as the Shek Kip Mei Lutheran Centre for the Blind and the Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service and Pentecostal Holiness Church Ling Kwong Centre for the Blind, etc..</p>
	<p>61. The Government should undertake or subsidize service organizations for the visually impaired to provide low-vision aids and computer hiring services for needy persons.</p>	<p>The Government has set up Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired at the Hong Kong Society for the Blind, the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Retinitus Pigmentosa Society and Ebenezer School for the Blind.</p> <p>The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize people with disabilities to set up personal computer workstations at home to help them to find and sustain an income-generating job. To date, 64 applicants have receive support with a total grant of \$995,000. To further extend the scheme, \$3 million was injected from the Lotteries Fund into the Central Fund for Personal Computers in March 2001. It is expected that about 200 more people with disabilities can benefit.</p> <p>In addition, some non-Government organizations will also provide vocational rehabilitation scheme and activity fund through charity funds or other resources, and give technical advice, support and assistance, loans etc. on the acquisition of equipment and ancillary tools to</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		people with disabilities.
	62. We demand that the Government should pay attention to the needs of the low vision persons in the application, installation and maintenance of computer hardware and software, and provide appropriate training.	The Government has always been concerned with the needs of low vision persons and the visually impaired and has provided IT training for them. Last year, the Government provided over 200 training places on IT awareness course for them and we will further expand the scheme in future.
	63. In view of the insufficient provision of appropriate IT facilities for low vision persons, the Government should improve the situation by deploying more resources to assist those organizations which provide IT training for low vision persons so that more training courses on computer hardware, software and low-vision aids can be organized.	<p>The Government has already provided resources to the concerned service agencies for organizing IT awareness courses for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The Government has planned to allocate more resources to assist the concerned organizations to provide in the coming few years more training courses on IT and low-vision aids for the visually impaired.</p>
	64. Government departments should take the lead to remove obstacles by making web pages more accessible by low vision persons and launching publicity programme to urge the industry to take into consideration the needs of the low vision persons when designing home pages.	<p>To facilitate the blind and the visually impaired to access online public services, the Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier. The guideline has also been issued to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for their reference and adoption. We have also received suggestions from around ten organizations representing people with disabilities and will make reference to them for enhancing Government web sites. To promote industry awareness of web accessibility and to handle such problem, the Government has also held seminars for the IT sector with representatives of the Hong Kong Blind Union, Equal Opportunities Commission, universities and the Government as speakers. We will organize similar seminars and invite representatives of public bodies and Government subvented organizations to attend.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>65. The Government should issue guidelines to the IT sector, requiring them to consider the needs of the blind and low-vision persons in designing web pages and developing software (especially Chinese language computer-assisted software). It should also, following the practice adopted by the United States, enact legislation that requires software vendors to disclose the source codes for some software to facilitate the compatibility of Chinese screen reader software with other software.</p>	<p>We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p> <p>While we are committed to promoting software development in Hong Kong, whether to adopt the open source approach is a commercial decision of the software developers..</p>
	<p>66. We urge the Government to act as a coordinator and a driver, and to consult representative bodies of the visually impaired on the development of Chinese screen reader software.</p>	<p>The Government has all along maintained close liaison with the industry and concerned organizations, with a view to promoting the development of Chinese screen reader software. The newly amended Copyright Ordinance plays a positive role in encouraging the use of authorised software in enterprises and promotes market competition. In the long run, more software developers will invest in product development to provide users with more choices at cheaper prices.</p>
	<p>67. Media other than the Internet, such as radio, television and Government publicity leaflets, should be widely used for disseminating detailed Government information.</p>	<p>The Government has all along disseminated information through various media such as radio, television and publicity leaflets. The Internet is one of such media.</p>
	<p>68. For important Government documents and consultation</p>	<p>The Government will consider this proposal. In addition, the Government will also examine the feasibility of using other means such as the Interactive Voice Response System</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	papers issued by political parties, there should be a tape version as well to cater for the needs of low vision persons who have lost their reading ability and do not know how to use braille.	and audio webcasting on the Internet to facilitate access to the contents of Government material.
<p>Hong Kong Senior IT Advocates</p> <p>(Note: the original submission of the organization is in Chinese and the translation is provided by the Government)</p>	69. Set up a digital inclusion strategy committee	<p>The Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau is responsible for formulating the overall policy on digital divide. We have included “strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation” as one of the key result areas in the “2001 Digital 21 Strategy”. Since the subject of digital divide is wide in scope and relates to different of sectors, various task forces have already been set up under different departments to deal with the issue and implement related measures. For example, the Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, has been set up to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector; a Central Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of IT Usage among Women, chaired by the Director of Home Affairs, has been set up to coordinate and promote the use of IT among grassroot women; a task force has also been set up in the ED to work on the implementation plan for applying IT in education for schools. We consider that it will be more focused and effective for individual task forces to address issues relating to digital divide in their own sectors, while the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau and Information Technology Services Department will coordinate the work centrally. If necessary, we may consult the views of the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee. Therefore, it is not necessary to separately set up a committee comprising representatives of various sectors. Otherwise there will be duplication of efforts.</p>
	70. Conduct research and surveys on the digital divide situation in Hong Kong	The Government has conducted regular surveys on the use of IT in Hong Kong so as to monitor the digital divide situation. We will continue to improve the survey methodology in order to obtain the relevant data.
	71. Continue to organize IT awareness courses to enable the general public at grass roots level to learn the basic IT skills.	The Government is actively organizing the third round of IT awareness course in 18 districts, and about 8,000 training places would be made available for the general public, 5,000 for people with disabilities and another 5,000 for senior citizens.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>72. Assist the disadvantaged. Consider implementing support schemes so that everyone can have access to the use of computer.</p>	<p>In order to avoid and prevent the emergence of digital divide, the Government has formulated policies and implemented relevant measures, including –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. encouraging the market to offer telecommunications connection services at affordable prices 2. providing computer facilities at various locations for free use by the public 3. installing ancillary devices and software at various places to provide more opportunities for people with disabilities to gain access to and use IT 4. providing free electronic mail accounts 5. subsidizing people with disabilities to acquire personal computers for employment purpose 6. organizing free IT awareness courses, encourage and provide more opportunities for various sectors of the community (such as senior citizens, the disabled, housewives, new arrivals, the disadvantaged and those at the grass roots level) to learn and use ICT. 7. Through expanding the “Community Cyber Points” scheme and providing subsidies to non-Government organizations, to provide more computer facilities for free use by the public.
	<p>73. Subsidize the families under Comprehensive Social Security Assistance(CSSA) scheme or low-income families to use computer. We suggest that the Government should give them financial aid to hire computer and to pay for basic Internet service.</p>	<p>The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance(CSSA) scheme is a non-contributory scheme with funds coming from the general revenue to help those who are unable to support themselves economically by providing them with income at a certain level so that they can meet the basic needs of living. We consider that the most effective means for those receiving CSSA to access computers is to make use of the public computer facilities at various community centres, rehabilitation service units, multi-service centres for the elderly, etc.</p>
	<p>74. The Government should increase the number of Community Cyber Points, raise the ratio of computers to users, and extend the scheme to more district offices of Government</p>	<p>To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, we will extend the “Community Cyber Points” scheme and provide subsidies to non-Government organizations to install computer facilities. By the end of 2001-02, we will increase the number of computers for free use by the public from the current 2,200 to 4,300.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	departments (such as the offices of the estates under the Housing Authority, the SWD).	
	75. Provide support to grass root self-supporting organizations. To narrow the gap of digital divide, the Government can mobilize the disadvantaged community to support each other and encourage members of the public at grass root level to engage in self-learning, but this requires Government's support and encouragement.	<p>The Government has always put emphasis in cooperating with grass root organizations and the industry. During the training of senior citizens and people with disabilities in the use IT, the Government also adopts the "train the trainer" approach, with the aim to training up a group of senior citizens and people with disabilities to support and encourage other members to learn IT.</p> <p>The SWD has rendered support for the Cyber Senior Network Development Association Limited to apply for funds from charitable organizations to set up a web portal for senior citizens.</p>
	76. The Government should refrain from allowing public service organizations to provide service that must be accessed through IT tools because there must be some members of the public who do not know how to use IT tools. For instance, the elderly, as they often forget the password and are of lower education level, they would usually prefer to adopt the direct face to face mode of communication.	At present, Government services are provided to the public through various means and electronic means is only one option. We strongly encourage the public to make use of the ESD scheme to access Government services, but at the same time, we will also maintain counter service to cater for the needs of those who do not use online services.
	77. The Government should provide venue for self-supporting organizations such as the Hong Kong Senior IT Advocates as	The Government has always encouraged district organizations such as the Hong Kong Senior IT Advocates to make use of their own and other district resources to identify a suitable venue as their association office.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	their association office.	We welcome voluntary agencies to book and use the facilities in the Super Cyber Centre free of charge. In particular, voluntary agencies can book the two Computer Learning Rooms for organizing training courses. The Hong Kong Senior IT Advocates can consider using the Super Cyber Centre to organize IT activities.
The Hong Kong Society for the Blind	78. When Government departments or associated funding bodies subsidize non-Government organizations to buy computers, adequate provision should be provided to those visually impaired employees to cover for the necessary ancillary equipment such as screen reader software, braille, screen enlarging software, etc. Otherwise, these computers will not be useful for them.	When the SWD and associated funding bodies provide subsidies for non-Government organizations to purchase computers, they will set out the basic specifications and allow non-Government organizations to make use of the provision to acquire ancillary equipment required by their visually impaired employees. The SWD has also provided funds for non-Government organizations to buy this kind of equipment.
	79. Implement tax rebate scheme to allow visually impaired taxpayer to use up to \$80,000 (tax rebate of two consecutive years) to buy necessary IT adaptive equipment. Such scheme can facilitate the visually impaired taxpayers to equip themselves to provide more contribution to the community.	<p>Under the current salaries tax regime, all taxpayers are allowed to deduct from their assessable income all outgoings and expenses which are necessarily incurred in the production of their assessable income. In this connection, for computers and Internet-related equipment in general and special supporting equipment for people with disabilities (e.g. braille), the taxpayer may claim depreciation allowances in respect of the actual expenditure incurred in such purchase, at an initial allowance of 60% of the expenditure in the year of purchase, and an annual allowance ranging from 10% to 30% on the reducing value of the same equipment in the first and each subsequent year of assessment where he or she has assessable income chargeable to salaries tax, until the entire amount of the purchase expenditure has been deducted.</p> <p>Besides, a Disabled Dependant Allowance of \$60,000 is granted, under salaries tax, if an individual is maintaining a dependent who is eligible to claim an allowance under the Disability Allowance Scheme. This Allowance is in addition to any allowance already</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>being claimed by the taxpayer in respect of the disabled family member in question. This Allowance is in recognition of the special daily living needs of people with disabilities, including the purchase of computer equipment which could improve the daily living of the people with disabilities.</p> <p>The Government will consider any proposals, relating to existing tax concessions alongside all other tax-related proposals, having regard to all relevant factors including our overall fiscal conditions, in the context of drawing up revenue proposals for the annual budget.</p>
	<p>80. Set up a working group within the ITSD, similar to the one under the Transport Department which deals with matters related to barrier free access for people with disabilities, to study the IT access problem of the visually impaired.</p>	<p>We will consider this suggestion.</p>
	<p>81. Apart from basic courses, the Government should provide more advanced IT training courses as well.</p>	<p>We will consider this suggestion. The Government is actively planning to organize the third round of IT awareness course and is reviewing the course content. The SWD is now working on the content of the IT awareness courses for people with disabilities so that suitable courses at various levels can be tailor-made for different groups of disabled persons.</p>
	<p>82. The Hong Kong Society for the Blind hopes that the ITSD would render assistance to explore the feasibility of introducing some overseas software that is suitable for use by the blind.</p>	<p>The ITSD welcomes further information from the Hong Kong Society for the Blind so that it can work with the Society to study the matter.</p>
	<p>83. The Government should consider setting up a new charity fund or make use of existing charity funds to support the research and</p>	<p>The Government's established Innovation and Technology Fund can provide funding support to local organizations to develop software products for use by the blind and visually impaired.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	development of Chinese ancillary facilities for use by the disabled.	
Hong Kong Society for the Deaf	84. Due to the limitations within the local mobile communication networks, the hearing impaired and their friends can only make use of short messages service within the same network. This reduces their rights to choose. Besides, the mobile communication service packages offered by network operators do not include short messages service. Hence, the hearing impaired, who are in need of such service, need to pay for the mobile phone service that is not suitable for them and then pay for another extra amount in order to obtain the short messages service.	<p>At present, the short messages services provided by mobile telecommunications network operators can only be used by customers of the same operator's network. Inter-network short messages service is not available because the short messages services centres of different networks are not interconnected. However, through OFTA's coordination, the existing six mobile telecommunications network operators have agreed to interconnect the short messages services of their networks and establish a central processing system for the transmission of short messages between networks.</p> <p>The network operators are actively pursuing with the building, installation and testing of the new system which supports inter-network short messages services. They expect that the system implementation will be completed in July this year if it progresses smoothly. OFTA will closely monitor the progress and further coordinate with various operators so that inter-network short messages services can be launched as soon as possible to benefit the consumers. As regards the service packages, after taking into consideration the views expressed by the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting on 14 May 2001, OFTA has written to all mobile telecommunications network operators asking them to take into account the Society's views. To date, four mobile telecommunications network operators have agreed to provide concessionary services to the hearing impaired.</p>
	85. Public facsimile service has not yet achieved the concept of bi-directional communication. While Hong Kong is actively promoting the development of IT, we hope TTY can be introduced into Hong Kong with necessary improvement so that it can suit the environment of Hong Kong.	<p>The market for public telecommunications network-to-user terminal equipment in Hong Kong has been liberalized since 1980s, i.e. any interested persons or parties may freely sell, connect to and use TTY, in which no technical accreditation or approval is required. As there is already a set of internationally recognized technical standards for TTY, needy people, when importing different brands of TTY product from overseas, would only need to examine if the products comply with the standards. According to the information of OFTA, UK, USA, France, Belgium, Australia, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and the Netherlands have manufactured TTY.</p> <p>Note : The full name of TTY is tele-typewriter. It is a special kind of telecommunication device for the hearing impaired or the deaf to make use of the keyboard and display unit for</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		communication purpose. Both ends of the communication would need to use TTY.
	86. At present, not all news programmes on TV are provided with subtitles, most TV broadcasting stations do not provide such service particularly for broadcast of unanticipated incidents or emergency announcements.	<p>The Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) encourages television broadcasting stations to provide subtitles in news programmes to facilitate viewing.</p> <p>The two domestic free television licensees, i.e. Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) and Asia Television Limited (ATV), have provided subtitles, according to prepared scripts, during the noon, evening and late evening news at their Chinese channels. As regards recorded video or live broadcast in news programme, television broadcasting stations generally use captions to introduce characters in the recorded video or live broadcast. The two television broadcasting stations also provide subtitles to inform audience of emergency incidents, e.g. special traffic arrangement or bad weather announcement.</p> <p>As for the live news broadcast about unanticipated incidents, there may be difficulties in providing subtitles in the news programme as television broadcasting stations need to consider the special nature of these news material which require immediate broadcast. So generally speaking, this kind of news programme does not have subtitles.</p>
	87. Some Government departments, banks and commercial organizations do not provide enquiry service by facsimile.	There is a "List of Facsimile" of all Government bureaux and departments in "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Telephone Directory". General public may fax their enquiries to various bureaux and departments by referring to the list. The Telephone Directory will also be uploaded to the Internet by the end of 2001-02. By then, the public will have access to the telephone and fax numbers of all bureaux and departments through the Internet.
	88. Hearing aids very often cannot be operated within Government premises.	We would follow up and study the feasibility of making improvement.
Innovation & Technology Association	89. Setting up an information centre for providing global information about digital divide can help to bridge the divide.	The ITBB is now responsible for overseeing the overall policy on digital divide, and has included "strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation" as one of the key result areas in the 2001 Digital 21 Strategy. The ITSD also collects data annually on the use of IT in Hong Kong through the Census and Statistics Department, and monitors closely the global developments and measures in this respect. The Digital 21 web site, which

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		provides details on the Digital 21 Strategy, also includes information on the use of IT in the community.
	90. Establishing links to people and organizations can help addressing the challenge of digital divide. Bodies should be encouraged to organize activities and provide services to help bridging the gap of digital divide.	The Government has always put emphasis in cooperating with grass root organizations and the industry. We are committed to working closely with the industry, the academia, the private sector, charitable and non-profit-making bodies in organizing activities to assist various sectors of the community to learn and use IT.
	91. Providing training and awareness programmes can help to bridge digital divide.	We have organized the IT awareness programme. In the first two rounds of IT awareness programmes conducted last year, around 18,000 people, including 5,000 senior citizens and 2,300 people with disabilities, attended training courses and learnt the basic skills of using computer and browsing the Internet. The Government is currently planning to organize the third round of IT awareness programme in all 18 districts. There will be around 8,000 training places available for the general public. Moreover, the SWD plans to work with non-Government organizations again in organizing IT awareness programmes to provide free computer and Internet training courses for 5,000 senior citizens and 5,000 people with disabilities. We will continue to organize similar training so that more people can benefit.
	92. Hong Kong should conduct research on the situation of digital divide. There should be systematic and objective studies on the digital divide in the community.	The Government has conducted regular surveys on the use of IT in Hong Kong so as to monitor the digital divide situation. We will continue to improve the survey methodology in order to obtain the relevant data.
	93. A long term strategy and development programme that would provide sufficient commercial incentives should be worked out.	The Government has included "strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation" as one of the key result areas in the 2001 Digital 21 Strategy and has set up different working groups to address the issue. We will work closely with the industry, the academia, the private sector, charitable and non-profit-making bodies in organizing activities to assist various sectors of the community to learn and use IT.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	94. The community should work towards universal barrier-free access to the Internet.	<p>Regarding web accessibility, we have issued guidelines to public bodies and Government subvented organizations. We would also render further assistance like organizing seminars, workshops, etc. to these organizations.</p> <p>We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p>
	95. Manpower and financial resources should be well coordinated and efficiently utilized to bridge the digital divide.	<p>The Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau is responsible for formulating the overall policy on digital divide. To address the specific issues related to digital divide in different sectors, we have set up a number of task forces in different departments to deal with the issue and implement related measures. For example, the Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, has been set up to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector; a Central Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of IT Usage among Women has been set up to coordinate and promote the use of IT among women; a task force has also been set up in the Education Department to work on the implementation plan for applying IT in education for schools. The Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau and Information Technology Services Department will coordinate the work centrally.</p>
Rehabilitation Alliance Hong Kong (Note: the original submission of the organization)	96. As the ESD kiosks are operated in a touch screen mode, the visually impaired are unable to use them. For the physically handicapped, the position of the monitor is too high for them to view the full screen. Moreover, wheelchair-users cannot use the	As regards ESD kiosks set up in public locations, because of the various physical constraints, it is difficult for the design to meet the needs of different groups of people. However, people can use computer facilities at home or office to receive exactly the same service. To completely revamp the kiosks so as to facilitate everybody to use them may not be practicable. But we will install screen enlarging software in the kiosks to facilitate use by the visually impaired. In the further implementation of the ESD scheme, we will supervise the ESD operator to introduce improvement measures in respect of the design of the ESD web site and other ancillary facilities. We will also consult different bodies with a

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
is in Chinese and the translation is provided by the Government)	computer facilities at ESD kiosks at the front upright position and have to turn aside to use it.	view to further improving the scheme.
	97. Although the Government emphasizes that computer facilities provided for use by the visually impaired in some non-Government organizations and libraries have taken into consideration the needs of the disabled, such practice contradicts the principle of equal opportunities because the general public can use computers at MTR and KCR stations as well as various shopping malls whereas the disabled are restricted to use computers at specific places.	<p>Regarding the provision of facilities that are suitable for use by the blind and visually impaired, we have consulted relevant organizations before deciding to set up Cyber Points for them at the Hong Kong Society for the Blind, the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society and Ebenezer School for the Blind.</p> <p>As for those who are physically handicapped, the type of special equipment to be provided would need to suit individual needs and it would also largely depend on the extent of physical disability. It is therefore not practical to install special equipment for the physical disabled in all public computers. However, we will continue to identify suitable locations which are convenient to the disabled to install such equipment.</p>
	98. At present, the design of most web pages is not suitable for use by the visually impaired, and most web pages do not have a text-only version as well. It seems that the Government lacks an effective system that requires web page design / digital technology companies to give consideration to the needs of the disabled in designing their services and products.	<p>Regarding web accessibility, we have issued guidelines to public bodies and Government subvented organizations. We would also render further assistance like organizing seminars, workshops, etc. to these organizations.</p> <p>We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
The Spastics Association of Hong Kong	99. Is there any organizations, other than the Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services and the Rehabilitation Engineering Centre of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, that can provide the latest information on the ancillary equipment for the spastics? In addition, apart from getting verbal replies from the staff of the organizations concerned, is there any other channels through which such information can be obtained directly?	<p>At present, apart from the organizations (the Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services, and the Rehabaid Centre of the Rehabaid Society) that provide advice and support for the disabled in respect of the use of ancillary equipment, there are also some support services available for the disabled to seek professional advice and support on ancillary equipment. These support services include :</p> <p>Domiciliary Occupational Therapy Service which provides rehabilitation services and training for needy clients, their families and their caretakers. Its services include designing, recommending, ordering and manufacturing rehabilitation ancillary equipment for clients with a view to helping them to lead an independent life and integrate into the community.</p> <p>Occupational therapists in rehabilitation agencies and the Central Para-medical Support Service Unit of the SWD will provide appropriate rehabilitation training and professional advice for disabled persons who are receiving services of rehabilitation agencies. These include designing appropriate ancillary equipment for them if necessary, in order to help them to solve their daily life problems.</p>
	100. Is there any institutions that provide trial services of new equipment ?	As professionals of the organizations concerned will provide advice on the use of ancillary equipment according to the needs of the disabled, or make arrangements for trial use according to specific situation, there is no need at present to provide trial services of new equipment.
	101. Can the Government allocate more resources for the spastics to learn and use IT?	<p>To facilitate greater access to IT for the disabled, the SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to provide, in 2001-02, 540 computers with Internet access and training capacity in 464 rehabilitation service units in Hong Kong, and to provide ancillary equipment for disabled persons according to their needs. To take into account the specific needs of the spastics, additional resources have been allocated for ordering ancillary facilities to be installed in 30 computers for use by the spastics.</p> <p>Moreover, the SWD is now planning to work with non-Government organizations again in organizing IT Awareness Programme. In the new round of the programme, we will provide free computer and Internet training courses for 5,000 disabled persons, including the spastics.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	102.Can the Government make provision for setting up a central resources centre through which each disabled person or his/her families can obtain the services and ancillary facilities required?	As there are many channels, including two non-Government organizations, the Domiciliary Occupational Therapy Service, occupational therapists in rehabilitation agencies and the Central Para-medical Support Service Unit of the SWD, available for providing professional advice and services for disabled persons on the use of ancillary equipment under different situations, there is no need to set up a central resources centre at the present moment.
WebMasters (Hong Kong) Association (Note: the original submission of the organization is mainly in Chinese and the translation is provided by the Government)	103.To amend the existing policies so as to allow families under Comprehensive Social Security assistance (CSSA) to buy and upgrade their computer facilities and use broadband services every year on an accountable basis	Comprehensive Social Security Assistance(CSSA) scheme is a non-contributory scheme with funds coming from the general revenue to help those who are unable to support themselves economically by providing them with income at a certain level so that they can meet the basic needs of living. If necessary, CSSA recipients can use the computer facilities at various Community Cyber Points, rehabilitation service units, multi-service centres for the elderly and social centres.
	104.To subsidize voluntary agencies to set up cyber points in districts where most low-income persons resided, and to allow low-income persons to use computers under the guidance of professionals.	<p>To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, the Government has set up Community Cyber Points at various community centres, community halls and District Offices to provide computer facilities for free use by the public.</p> <p>To facilitate greater access to IT for the senior citizens and the disabled, the SWD will install computers with Internet access at various rehabilitation service units, multi-service centres for the elderly and elderly centres in 2001-02.</p> <p>We will also organize various activities, train the trainers and volunteers, and provide training to people who have less opportunities to access IT.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	105. Tax rebate in respect of donations or Government special subvention granted to charitable institutions should also be made available to Internet service providers which provide free broadband service to CSSA recipients.	The Government, when drawing up revenue proposals for the annual budget, will take into consideration all factors including the Government's overall financial position and any proposals on tax adjustment including proposals on adjustment of various allowances and deduction items.
	106. The Government should establish a special fund to subsidize low-income persons who are not CSSA recipients to buy computers and use broadband services.	At present, disabled persons may, through different charitable funds, obtain financial assistance to buy computers and application software. The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize disabled persons to set up personal computer workstations at home. Moreover, an Independent Living Fund has been established by the Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services with sponsorship from numerous institutions (including the Marden Foundation, the S. K. Yee Fund for the Disabled and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, etc.). The objective of providing financial assistance to disabled persons in the form of an interest-free loan for buying equipment like computers, application software and instruments is to help them lead an independent life. The Government is also committed to encouraging and supporting all sectors of the community to gain access to and widely use IT through the process of learning. Subsidies are provided to non-Government organizations through various funds like the Lotteries Fund, General Chinese Charities Fund, Sir Robert Ho Tung Charitable Fund and Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Mentally Handicapped, for promoting the use IT among needy persons.
	107. To make reference to overseas experience and add provisions in the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, requiring some institutions to consider the needs of the disabled in designing their web pages or e-kiosks, and to provide facilities specially designed for use by the disabled.	The existing Disability Discrimination Ordinance has already provided protection for the disabled. We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>108. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority should issue guidelines to banks, requiring them to provide a certain number of automatic teller machines for use by the blind and prohibiting them from charging the blind for using counter services.</p>	<p>In the Code of Banking Practice (the Code), which is a voluntary code issued by the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) and Deposit Taking Companies (DTC) Association, authorized institutions are encouraged to install specialized machines or software and to provide physical access to facilitate the provision of banking services to people with disabilities. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) fully endorses the Code and encourages banks to take care of the needs of people with disabilities.</p> <p>The two associations have also issued guidelines to member institutions recommending the best banking practices with respect to the provision of services for visually impaired customers. The HKAB is currently in touch with concerned parties including the Equal Opportunities Commission to consider how the industry guidelines can be enhanced.</p> <p>With respect to banks' charging policy, the HKMA does not regulate banks' fees and charges which are commercial decisions. Nevertheless, the HKMA has already recommended to banks earlier this year that they should give sympathetic consideration to senior citizens and vulnerable/disadvantaged groups when adjusting fees and charges, for example, by granting exemptions to such people.</p>
	<p>109. To make provision for the Equal Opportunities Commission to facilitate the organization of related publicity and education programmes.</p>	<p>The Government has allocated over \$79 million to the Equal Opportunities Commission as operating expenses in 2001-02, which includes the expenditure on publicity and education activities. The Commission can, at its own discretion, decide on how to use the fund in these areas.</p>
	<p>110. To establish a fund to subsidize local companies to engage in the research, development and production of computer facilities for use by the disabled.</p>	<p>Those who intend to develop software tools for use by the local community may apply for funding from the Innovation and Technology Fund. We welcome industry organizations to make use of the Fund to develop computer tools that are suitable for use by the visually impaired and the disabled.</p>
	<p>111. The Government should subsidize the industry bodies concerned to implement some</p>	<p>The Government has always put emphasis in cooperating with grass root organizations and the industry. We are committed to working closely with the industry, the academia, the private sector, charitable and non-profit-making bodies in organizing activities to assist</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>programmes that can narrow digital divide for the disabled. Moreover, the industry and the disabled should be consulted on a regular basis.</p>	<p>various sectors of the community to learn and use IT. Recently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p> <p>In addition, a Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector has been established by the SWD to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector so as to facilitate better management and service provision. It will also take into consideration the needs of the disabled and the senior citizens in using IT and encourage the development of related schemes to help them in using IT.</p>
	<p>112. The Government should subsidize people with disabilities to buy computer-related peripheral equipment.</p>	<p>The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize disabled persons to set up personal computer workstations at home to help them find and sustain an income-generating job. To date, 64 applicants have received support with a total grant of \$995,000. To further extend the scheme, \$3 million was injected from the Lotteries Fund into the Central Fund for Personal Computers in March 2001.</p>
	<p>113. Ancillary facilities for the disabled should be provided at the ESD kiosks installed in public places.</p>	<p>During the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>As regards the provision of facilities, the Government has set up Community Cyber Points in various places to provide public computer facilities for members of the public to access on-line public services and other Internet information. The design of such facilities has taken into account the needs of wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities such as screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired.</p> <p>The public kiosks under the ESD scheme are also provided with touch pad for easy access and data input by people with physical handicap such as wheelchair users. However, because these kiosks are installed in public locations, there are some physical constraints on</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>the design. We will shortly installed screen enlarging software in these kiosks to facilitate easy access by the visually impaired. Besides, the ESD contractor has also prepared braille promotional leaflets and audio tapes to brief the blind and the visually impaired on the ESD scheme.</p> <p>We will keep on making improvement with a view to making ESD services accessible to all sectors of the community.</p>
	<p>114. We believe that disabled persons themselves understand their needs best. Hence, the Government should provide assistance and resources to organizations comprising members with disabilities and provide IT training for them.</p>	<p>In the last two rounds of IT awareness courses for the disabled and senior citizens, the Government has provided sponsorship to the organizations of the disabled for implementing the programme. The third round of the IT awareness courses being organized will be carried out in the same manner.</p>
	<p>115. In addition to the various schemes for addressing digital divide in the disabled and low-income groups, there should be promotional programmes to encourage the elderly to learn IT.</p>	<p>There are courses specially designed for senior citizens under the IT awareness programme to encourage them to learn IT. As regards the publicity of these courses, district offices will liaise with non-Government organizations like women associations, owners' corporations, mutual aid committees, youth centres and elderly centres in various districts, convey the information of these activities to members of various organizations and the general public. Details of programmes will also be posted at public enquiry service centres of various districts to invite application by interested persons.</p> <p>The SWD has launched the three-year "Opportunities for the Elderly" scheme since January 1999 and provided funds for community organizations including the multi-service centres for the elderly and elderly centres to organize activities. As at 2001, we have made a provision of \$7.7 million to finance 869 projects, of which 74 are programmes to encourage senior citizens to learn computer.</p>
	<p>116. To provide subsidies to elderly centres, day care centres for the elderly and community centres</p>	<p>The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to install 284 computers with Internet access at 249 multi-service centres for the elderly and elderly centres by the end of 2001. Thus, senior citizens, apart from being able to use the computer facilities at</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	for employing professionals to teach elderly how to use computer and acquiring related facilities.	community halls/centres, public libraries and post offices, can also use the computer facilities at multi-service centres for the elderly and elderly centres for practice, web-based learning or search for information. The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to provide IT training for 500 workers and volunteers of multi-service centres for the elderly between October 2001 and March 2002, so that they can give guidance to senior citizens, thus enabling more senior citizens to learn IT.
	117.To encourage elderly to learn computer by making reference to Japan's experience.	In formulating policies and measures, we always take into account experiences of other economies. For example, the SWD will refine the course content of local training programmes for senior citizens by making reference to overseas experience in encouraging senior citizens to learn computer.
Hong Kong Blind Union	118.We urge the Government to speed up the process of making all other Government websites accessible.	In order to facilitate the blind and the visually impaired to access online public services, the Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier, and the guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption.
	119.Universal design for web pages with alt-text, textual description of pictures and graphics and sufficient color contrast for low vision users.	The internal web accessibility guideline of the Government has already included the suggestion. There are merits in both the version with built-in accessibility features and the text-only version; e.g. a text-only version may be easier to implement but more difficult to maintain. We will let the concerned organizations decide on which version to adopt. However, it will not be cost-effective to implement and maintain both versions simultaneously.
	120.We urge the Government not to adopt the Bobby test as the only or the best evaluation tool.	We are not using the "Bobby test" as the only assessment tool. We will invite representatives of user organizations (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society of the Blind, the Hong Kong Retinitus Pigmentosa Society) to conduct actual tests and express their views. The Government has been adopting this approach in enhancing the accessibility of its web sites.
	121.We urge the Government to adopt as its practice the w3c guideline together with test by users as the most reliable guide.	The development of our internal guidelines is based on the World Wide Web Consortium guidelines, with input from local organizations of the blind and visually impaired, to make them more easily understandable to non-technical Government webmasters. When our webmasters gain more experience in the concepts of web accessibility, we may consider

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		asking them to directly follow the World Wide Web Consortium guidelines.
	122. We urge the Government to take action in pushing web accessibility as an industry standard and set web accessibility as a condition for compliance in Government tenders.	<p>We have issued guidelines to public bodies and Government subvented organizations. We will also render further assistance like organizing seminars, workshops, etc. to these organizations.</p> <p>We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.</p>
	123. We urge the Government to mandate ESD life operator to introduce speech/Braille display and keyboard as soon as technically possible.	Complete revamp of public kiosks set up in public locations for the convenience of the visually impaired may not be practicable, but all kiosks would be provided with screen enlarging software for low vision users in the coming months. At present, we can use personal computers at home to access ESD services. We will also consider installing more computer facilities at "Community Cyber Points" specially set up for the visually impaired to facilitate them to access services under the ESD scheme.
	124. We hope that the Government could invest resources and co-operate with the universities and software developers to develop suitable Chinese screen reader software for local users.	The Government has worked closely with the industry, the universities and related organizations to promote the development of Chinese screen reader software.
	125. For the IT awareness Program, more varieties of training programmes, including primary and advanced course are needed. It is necessary to strengthen the	The purpose of IT awareness courses is to provide training to people who have less opportunities to use IT in their daily lives so that they can acquire the basic skills and understand the benefits of using IT. After these people have completed the basic training, they may enroll in other training courses provided by non-Government or private organizations.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	training for trainers.	<p>As regards training the trainers, the Government has implemented relevant programmes –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Last year, over 200 trainers were trained up for the IT awareness courses for the disabled. ■ Over 200 IT volunteers have participated to assist the Internet Professionals Association in organising the Web Care campaign. ■ The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to train up, in the next three years, 600 trainers for the IT awareness courses for the disabled and 500 trainers for the IT awareness courses for senior citizens.
	126.Subsidy for visually impaired users for purchase of the equipment and software is in need. Employment Aid provides funds and the lent of disabled employees for applications.	<p>The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize disabled persons to set up personal computer workstations at home to help them find and sustain an income-generating job. To date, 64 applicants have receive support with a total grant of \$995,000. To further extend the scheme, \$3 million was injected from the Lotteries Fund into the Central Fund for Personal Computers in March 2001. It is expected that about 200 more disabled persons can benefit.</p> <p>In addition, some non-Government organizations will also provide vocational rehabilitation scheme and activity fund through charity funds or other resources, and give technical advice, support and assistance, loans etc. on the acquisition of equipment and ancillary tools so that disabled persons' working ability can be fully explored.</p>
	127.Government support to school for visually impaired students are important.	<p>The ED has all along provided resources to special schools for the acquisition of IT facilities. As early as 1989, ED made use of IT to teach the handicapped children. During that time, through the Computer Education in Special Schools Project, schools were provided with hardware/software/training to support handicapped children to use IT in their learning. As regards the training and development of teachers, the ED has employed overseas experts to host seminars and workshops for teachers of special schools on the use of IT to facilitate learning. Moreover, dedicated software for children with special educational needs are developed and the necessary in-service training programmes are offered to the teachers.</p> <p>Additional resources were provided to the Ebenezer School in February 2000 to enable the</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		school to act as a resource centre for the visually impaired people and also offer consultative, advisory and training services to both the visually impaired children and their parents.
Hon Sin Chung Kai	128.The Government has to establish a working group which comprises of representatives from the relevant Government departments, private and non-profit sector to focus on Digital Divide in Hong Kong.	The Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau is responsible for formulating the overall policy on digital divide. We have included “strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation” as one of the key result areas in the “2001 Digital 21 Strategy”. Since the subject of digital divide is wide in scope and relates to different sectors, various task forces have already been set up under different departments to deal with the issue and implement related measures. For example, the Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, has been set up to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector; a Central Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of IT Usage among Women, chaired by the Director of Home Affairs, has been set up to coordinate and promote the use of IT among grassroot women; a task force has also been set up in the Education Department to work on the implementation plan for applying IT in education for schools. We consider that it will be more focused and effective for individual task forces to address issues relating to digital divide in their own sectors, while the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau and Information Technology Services Department will coordinate the work centrally. If necessary, we may consult the views of Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee. Therefore, it is not necessary to separately set up a committee comprising representatives of various. Otherwise there will be duplication of efforts.
	129.We suggest the Government to develop a set of benchmark Digital Divide index so as to further review the rate of information literacy and progress of reform against world standard on Digital Divide.	According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the objective measuring factors of digital divide are the development of telecommunications infrastructure, the penetration of personal computer and Internet among different sexes, age groups and income groups. The Government has conducted regular surveys on the use of IT in Hong Kong so as to monitor the digital divide situation.
	130.A clear policy on digital divide is also needed to ensure the IT polices can be mutually integrated with other relevant policies.	In the recently promulgated “ 2001 Digital 21 Strategy”, we have included “strengthening the Hong Kong community for digital exploitation” as one of the key result areas, and has clearly set out Government's position, policy and measures on digital divide.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	131.Co-opt with schools for running "eFamily" programmes, to recruit children to train their parents and family.	ITSD and ED produced a CD-ROM "Explore IT with Our Children " last year as part of the IT Appreciation for Parents scheme. We are planning to extend the scheme to primary schools. Besides, to foster a digital culture in the community, ED is planning to organize a campaign, tentatively named as "Digital 2001" to promote among teachers, parents, students and members of the public the habit of reading, learning, and sharing with others on communication; and when encountering problems, they can think proactively, make the best use of technology, improve their work and life through innovative ways, and build up the spirit of proactively serving the community.
	132.Identify diversified needs with respect to ICT by conducting more research on the needs and problems faced by different disadvantaged group.	<p>The SWD would, through various means (including the feedback on the IT Awareness Programme for the Disabled, trainers' proposals on the course design and content, etc.), get to know and take into consideration the needs of the disabled in using IT and the problems they often encounter.</p> <p>Besides, the SWD is now assisting the HWB in a study on the life-long learning of senior citizens, including the needs, willingness and difficulties of senior citizens in learning how to use computer.</p>
	133.Raise IT awareness among the disadvantaged groups by stepping up effort on launching more public campaigns aimed to promote the potential benefits of the information society, with particular emphasis on the ICT needs of underprivileged groups.	<p>To promote the awareness and wider use of IT, the Government launched the "IT Hong Kong" campaign in September last year. The campaign comprises IT awareness courses, district activities, the establishment of an IT web site, the recruitment of IT pioneers, etc. The 18 districts are actively participating in the campaign and have organized as many as 40 activities, including web page design competition, open day for Cyber Points, carnivals and online guidance service, etc.. Through these activities, we aim to encourage public's participation so that they can cope with the digital era.</p> <p>The SWD has launched the three-year "Opportunities for the Elderly" scheme since January 1999 and provided funds for community organizations including the multi-service centres for the elderly and elderly centres to organize activities. As at 2001, we have made a provision of \$7.7 million to finance 869 projects, of which 74 are programmes to encourage senior citizens to learn computer.</p>
	134.Promote the principle of	The Government has proactively promoted barrier-free web design.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>universal design by promoting and applying this design philosophy to design software and equipment that accommodate a wider range of users at the outset.</p>	<p>During the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>As regards the provision of facilities, the Government has set up Community Cyber Points in various places to provide public computer facilities for members of the public to access on-line public services and other Internet information. The design of such facilities has taken into account the needs of wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities such as screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired.</p> <p>The public kiosks under the ESD scheme are also provided with touch pad for easy access and data input by people with physical handicap such as wheelchair users. Screen enlarging software will also be installed in these kiosks shortly to facilitate use by the visually impaired.</p> <p>In order to facilitate the blind and the visually impaired to access online public services, the Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier, and the guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption. If necessary, we would render further assistance to organizations concerned by organizing seminars and workshops, etc.</p> <p>We will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.
	135.Foster the use of assistive technology by addressing the importance of the integration of assistive technologies into existing facilities or services so as to encourage the use of ICT by the people with disabilities.	The Government has taken the lead in the use of ancillary tools for the disabled. For instance, the design of Community Cyber Points has already taken into account the needs of wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities (screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer, power braille) at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired.
	136.Improve web accessibility by formulating a long-term web accessibility policy to ensure that the design of ICT services and equipment is such that they are accessible all people.	<p>To enhance web accessibility, we have issued guidelines and will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. The Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier. The guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption.</p> <p>As regards the provision of facilities, we have always considered the needs of various sectors and made improvements by taking their views into account. For example, in the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test, to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p>
	137.Develop suitable content by motivating content service providers to consider the disadvantaged community as a potential user group and develop relevant content for them. Promote easy-to-use devices by	The Government will provide a favourable environment for development of the content service providers market and will not interfere with market operation. We will, through the cooperation with other bodies, organize activities (such as the Web Care campaign co-organized with the Internet Professionals Association) to promote the awareness on the issue of digital divide and to encourage the businesses to provide assistance to the disadvantaged.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>encouraging service providers to create ICT devices that are helpful and simple for the senior community to use. For the connection charges of the access of ICT, the industry may consider reducing access fees or providing special service package for the lower income group.</p>	
	<p>138. A greater number of general introductory courses and inter-generational project on ICT targeted at women with lower education, older people and people with disabilities is also needed. Allocating additional funds for train the trainers programme.</p>	<p>We have organized IT awareness courses –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District based IT awareness programme in 18 districts for housewives, senior citizens, new arrivals and the grass roots community with around 10,000 participants. 2. IT awareness programme co-organized by SWD and ITSD for senior citizens with 5,000 participants. 3. IT awareness programme co-organized by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, SWD and ITSD for the disabled with around 2,300 participants. <p>The Government is currently planning to organize the third round of IT awareness programme in all 18 districts. There will be around 8,000 training places available for the general public. Moreover, the SWD plans to work with non-Government organizations again in organizing IT awareness programmes to provide free computer and Internet training courses for 5,000 senior citizens and 5,000 people with disabilities. We will continue to organize similar training so that more people can benefit.</p> <p>Besides, The Government has always put emphasis in cooperating with grass root organizations and the industry. During the training of senior citizens and people with disabilities in the use IT, the Government also adopts the “train the trainer” approach, with the aim to training up a group of seniors and people with disabilities to support and encourage other members to learn IT.</p> <p>As regards training the trainers, the Government has implemented relevant programmes –</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Last year, over 200 trainers were trained up for the IT awareness courses for the disabled. ■ Over 200 IT volunteers have participated to assist the Internet Professionals Association in organising the Web Care campaign. ● The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to train up, in the next three years, 600 trainers for the IT awareness courses for the disabled and 500 trainers for the IT awareness courses for senior citizens.
	<p>139. Incorporate ICT into existing services: more innovative programmes need to be developed and integrated into existing programmes. For example, the Hospital Authority needs to incorporate the use of ICT in the existing rehabilitative programmes for the elderly and people with disabilities.</p>	<p>The Government is fully committed to promoting the public to access public services through electronic means, for example :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Under the ESD scheme, various types of public services are made available to the public through the Internet and public kiosks. This scheme establishes the leadership of the Government in electronic business and significantly transforms the mode of communication between the public and the Government. ■ Moreover, the SWD has set up a Joint Committee on IT for the Welfare Sector to promote the use of IT in the welfare sector and encourage the launching of various innovative programmes to provide welfare services.
	<p>140. We recommend the Government to conduct relevant studies to evaluate the social impact and particular needs of ICT development on the disadvantaged group so that specific programmes can be developed for them. The Government should conduct a comprehensive review on implications and barriers of e-commerce to the elderly and people with disabilities.</p>	<p>According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the objective measuring factors of digital divide are the development of telecommunications infrastructure, the penetration of personal computer and Internet among different sexes, age groups and income groups. The Government has conducted regular surveys on the use of IT in Hong Kong so as to monitor the digital divide situation. We will continue to improve the survey methodology in order to obtain the relevant data. We would also assess the impacts of the development of IT on the society, so that all sectors of the community would benefit from the use of IT.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>141. Provide tax credits for vendors who donate equipment, internet access and professional ICT training to the community. Give tax incentives to encourage employers to provide computer and Internet access for employees at home. Provide tax credits for companies to design products and services for the disadvantaged group, such as elderly and people with disabilities. Offer tax deduction to the corporate where relevant assistive technology and technology access are arranged for their employees with disability. Providing tax incentives to the companies who have made its site fully accessible.</p>	<p>The Government, when drawing up revenue proposals for the annual budget, will take into consideration all factors including the Government's overall financial position and any proposals on tax adjustment including proposals on adjustment of various allowances and deduction items.</p>
	<p>142. Offer bonus, discounts or priority service for those who use online public services, such as filing tax return, paying bills, driving license registration, etc.</p>	<p>The ESD contractor has introduced a series of concessions and prizes to encourage all sectors of the community to make use of the ESD scheme to access public services. For instance -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those new e-cert users who have used the e-cert for at least once, they will receive supermarket gift coupon. • The public using ESD to make appointment on ID card application will enter a lucky draw. The organization launching the lucky draw will award personal digital assistants as prizes. • The public using ESD for tax return would also enter a lucky draw. The prizes would be gift vouchers.
	<p>143. SWD should consider additional</p>	<p>The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) scheme is a non-contributory scheme</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	<p>allowance to subsidize the CSSA families on the purchase of computer-related facilities or Internet services charges. In addition, the SWD might consider partnering with the non-profit making agencies and private sector to equip low-income group (e.g. receiving CSSA families) with a used PC bundled with free Internet access and basic training to each of those families.</p>	<p>with funds coming from the general revenue to help those who are unable to support themselves economically by providing them with income at a certain level so that they can meet the basic needs of living. We consider that the most effective means for those receiving CSSA to access computers is to make use of the computer facilities at various Community Cyber Points, rehabilitation service units, multi-service centres for the elderly.</p>
	<p>144. Allocate additional funding for the project promoting online automated translation, speech technology and other technologies to allow non-English speaking people or illiterate to use the Internet easily.</p>	<p>Those who intend to develop software tools for use by the local community may apply for funding from the Innovation and Technology Fund. We welcome industry organizations to make use of the Fund to develop computer tools that are suitable for use by the visually impaired and the disabled.</p>
	<p>145. Allocate funding for tech-education research so as to accelerate the goal set by the Education and Manpower Bureau to deliver 25% of the school curriculum with the assistance of ICT as soon as possible.</p>	<p>On education, we launched the five-year Strategy of "Information Technology for Learning in a New Era" in 1998 which entails a capital investment of \$3.2 billion and an annual recurrent expenditure of over \$550 million for the promotion of IT education in secondary and primary schools. It is our aim to make use of IT to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning. We will also make more use of IT in teaching so that our next generation will be able to process information effectively and efficiently and will develop a life-long learning attitude and capability. Our target is to have 25% of the school curriculum taught with the assistance of IT by 2002-03 school year.</p> <p>ED has commissioned a consultancy for an interim review on the implementation of IT in education. On top of stock taking the progress and achievements so far, the opportunity</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		would also be taken to identify any need for necessary adjustment to the course of action and to pave the way for the final phase of evaluation at the end of the 5-year strategy in 2004.
	146.Promote the wide use of ICT in the public and non-profit sector by providing grants to them to develop ICT infrastructure and services that are accessible to all.	To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, we will extend the "Community Cyber Points" scheme and provide subsidies to non-Government organizations to install computers. By the end of 2001/02, we will increase the number of public computers for free use by the public from the current 2,200 to 4,300 throughout the territory.
	147.The private sector should work with the Housing Department to facilitate the deployment of public infrastructure for Internet access in all coming public housing estate project.	The Housing Department is discussing with the relevant industry for implementing the work.
	148.Develop forum to encourage public debate and discussion of concerns about the Digital Inclusive Society and the benefits of utilizing technology in everyday life.	We would, through the cooperation with other bodies, organize activities (such as the Web Care campaign co-organized with the Internet Professionals Association) to promote the awareness on the issue of digital divide and to encourage the businesses to provide assistance for the disadvantaged.
	149.Extend the existing "IT-ambassadors" to facilitate the early adopters of ICT to guide late adopters in their use of online services. We suggest the Home Affairs Department (HAD) recruit volunteers from different segments of population to train late adopters. Initiate tapping can be targeted to	The existing volunteer training programmes of the Government are as follows - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Last year, over 200 trainers were trained up for the IT awareness courses for the disabled. 2. Over 200 IT volunteers have participated to assist the Internet Professionals Association in organising the Web Care campaign. 3. The SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to train up, in the next three years, 600 trainers for the IT awareness courses for the disabled and 500 trainers for the IT awareness courses for senior citizens. 4. The Super Cyber Centre has launched a volunteer recruitment scheme. With the participation of these volunteers, the centre is planning to expand its services, including

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	volunteers group of large corporation, self-help groups and social services agencies.	<p>the organization of IT Awareness Courses and guidance services for people using the facilities in the centre.</p> <p>These volunteers will provide assistance to those in need in future activities.</p>
	150. Various Government departments such as ITBB, HAD, ITSD, SWD can partner with private sector to organize events and opportunities such as "IT Awareness Campaign" to build awareness of the value proposition of the Internet.	<p>To promote the awareness and wider use of IT, the Government launched the "IT Hong Kong" campaign in September last year. The campaign comprises IT awareness courses, district activities, the establishment of an IT web site, the recruitment of IT pioneers, etc. The 18 districts are actively participating in the campaign and have organized as many as 40 activities, including web page design competition, open day for Cyber Points, carnivals and on-line guidance service, etc. Through these activities, we aim to encourage the public to participate so that they can cope with the digital era.</p> <p>We would, through the cooperation with other bodies, organize activities (such as the Web Care campaign co-organized with the Internet Professionals Association) to promote the awareness on the issue of digital divide and to encourage the businesses to provide assistance to the disadvantaged.</p>
	151. ITBB, ITSD, SWD and HAD coordinate Recycled PC Scheme and Reused PC Clearinghouse to centralize all the donations from the corporation and allocate the reused PC to the people in need.	<p>We have explored with the industry the feasibility of implementing a computer recycling programme. We have found that there are many practical problems such as resources for renovating the old computers, the availability of spare parts, how to supply new software and the arrangement for maintenance and repair, etc. So the recycling of computers may not be practicable and cost-effective. We therefore recommend that we should pool our resources to provide public computer facilities for people without computers.</p>
	152. ITBB and ITSD adopt voluntary security-rating system for users to recognize security level of e-commerce sites.	<p>The Hong Kong Society of Accountants has started to provide "Web Trust" registration service starting from February this year. "Web Trust" is a scheme co-organized by the American Society of Accountants and the Canadian Society of Accountants to test the extent of privacy protection, confidentiality, security, integrity of commercial operation and transaction, availability, non-repudiation and non-disclosure features of web sites. Electronic commerce web sites complying with the "Web Trust" standards may have a "Web Trust" mark displayed on its web page.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
	153.HAD and ITSD should extend the existing plan of Community Cyber Terminals by increasing the numbers of terminals to all the community center, shopping mall of public housing estate and all public facilities.	To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, we will extend the "Community Cyber Points" scheme and provide subsidies to non-Government organizations for installing computers. By the end of 2001-02, we will increase the number of public computers for free use by the community from the current 2,200 to 4,300. We will continue to explore expansion of this scheme.
	154.Leisure and Cultural Services Department transforms all public libraries into e-libraries so as to enable people to access Internet.	At present, multi-media computers are available in all public libraries of the LCSD for the public to search for information over the Internet. It is expected that there will be a total of 1,535 computers in public libraries for use by the public by the end of 2001. Meanwhile, the public may now make book reservation and renewal over the Internet at home or workplace. This service is available for 18.5 hours a day and is expected to be extended to 24 hours a day by the middle of this year. The digital library materials of the Central Library will also be made accessible to the public over the Internet at the same time.
	155.Accelerate the development of e-Government and demonstrating that ICT is a very effective tool for increasing the efficiency of Government administration and wide disclosure of Government information.	<p>The Government is fully committed to promoting the public to access public services through electronic means, for example :</p> <p>Under the ESD scheme, various types of public services are made available to the public through the Internet and public kiosks. This scheme establishes the leadership of the Government in electronic business and significantly transforms the mode of communication between the public and the Government.</p> <p>We will introduce more electronic services in a later stage.</p>
	156.Implement comprehensive anti-discriminatory guidelines to deal with all aspects of the accessibility telecommunications and ICT services	We would, through the cooperation with other bodies, organize activities (such as the Web Care campaign co-organized with the Internet Professionals Association) to promote the awareness on the issue of digital divide and to encourage the businesses to provide assistance for the disadvantaged. To take the lead in enhancing web accessibility, we have issued guidelines and will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. The Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier. The guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption. As regards the provision of facilities, we have always considered the needs of various sectors and made improvements by taking their views into account. For example, in the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>The design of Community Cyber Points has taken into account the needs of wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities such as screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired.</p> <p>The public kiosks under the ESD scheme are also provided with touch pad for easy access and data input by people with physical handicap such as wheelchair users. Screen enlarging software will also be installed in these kiosks shortly to facilitate use by the visually impaired.</p>
	<p>157. Borrow approach adopted by other nations, such as Netherlands and Australia on developing standardized web guidelines on usability and navigation across all Government websites.</p>	<p>The development of our internal guidelines is based on the World Wide Web Consortium guidelines, with input from local organizations of the blind and visually impaired. We will also make reference to the guidelines issued in other places.</p>
	<p>158. HAD transform all Community Center as an e-learning center by provide free broadband access and Internet training sessions for all people, especially in the poor area.</p>	<p>To facilitate the general public including the disadvantaged to have more opportunities to use IT, we have, through the "Community Cyber Points" scheme and by providing subsidies to non-Government organizations, installed over 2 200 computers with Internet access at various convenient locations including community halls/centres, District Offices, public libraries, post offices and the premises of Government subvented organizations and voluntary agencies for free use by the public. Besides, the Super Cyber Centre at the former Canton Road Government Offices is also provided with over 100 personal computers</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		with broadband Internet access to provide free IT facilities, reference material and training opportunities for the community. We expect that by the end of 2001-02, we will increase the number of public computers for free use by the public from the current 2,200 to 4,300.
	159. Education and Manpower Bureau has to accelerate the overhaul of the existing structure and curriculum to encompass emerging educational tools and new teaching methods which make use of digital media and, integrate cyber civic education into curriculum in order to promote a proper online culture. Besides, it should also promote the development of a local online education and training content market through public funded projects and other strategic intervention.	In 1999, the Curriculum Development Institute of ED developed the "Information Technology Learning Targets" which outlined the essential IT knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should acquire at various stages of schooling. Besides, mastering information technology is one of the independent learning skills for students that are put forth by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) in their consultation document issued to public in November 2000. In the document, the CDC also put emphasis on the study of socio-humanistic aspects of technology education and refocusing teaching and learning from skill-/content-based teaching to a learning mode on a balance among capability, understanding and awareness. To drive the wider use of IT in the community, with the support of Quality Education Fund, ED has launched the Hong Kong Education City in November 2000 aiming to provide schools and the community with high quality Internet and intranet services. The platform offers schools, teachers, students and parents with healthy and high quality educational resources and services.
	160. The Government should take the lead and set requirements that is integrating into universal design principle on the quality and accessibility for the ICT services and products, and invite the IT industry and assistive equipment industry to launch R&D and other projects in this area aim at demonstrating the advantage of universal.	To take the lead in enhancing web accessibility, we have issued guidelines and will urge Government bureaux and departments to follow the web accessibility guidelines to improve Government websites. The Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier. The guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption. As regards the provision of facilities, we have always considered the needs of various sectors and made improvements by taking their views into account. For example, in the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>The design of Community Cyber Points has taken into account the needs of wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities such as screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired.</p> <p>The public kiosks under the ESD scheme are also provided with touch pad for easy access and data input by people with physical handicap such as wheelchair users. Screen enlarging software will also be installed in these kiosks shortly to facilitate use by the visually impaired.</p> <p>As regards investment by business organizations in research projects, it is a commercial decision that depends on market demands. We would, through the cooperation with other bodies, organize activities (such as the Web Care campaign co-organized with the Internet Professionals Association) to promote the awareness on the issue of digital divide and to encourage the businesses to provide assistance to the disadvantaged.</p>
	<p>161. The Government should acknowledge the importance of the integration of assistive technologies, such as electronic books to the existing curriculum, modified keyboards/speech technologies in the community cyberpoint terminals, etc.</p>	<p>The Government understands the importance of ancillary tools. Therefore, we have always taken the lead in the use of ancillary tools for the disabled, for example:</p> <p>In the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>As regards the provision of facilities, the Government has set up Community Cyber Points at various places to provide public computer facilities for members of the public to access on-line public services and other Internet information. Such facilities are designed to take into account the needs of wheelchair users. In addition, the Government has also installed computers with special facilities such as screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille at individual Community Cyber Points for use by the blind and the visually impaired.</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>The public kiosks under the ESD scheme are also provided with touch pad for easy access and data input by people with physical handicap such as wheelchair users. Screen enlarging software will also be installed in these kiosks shortly this year for use by the visually impaired.</p> <p>In order to facilitate the blind and the visually impaired to access online public services, the Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier. The guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption.</p>
	<p>162. Allocate additional funds for schools, corporate and relevant agencies such as Vocational Training Council to train the trainers for the learners with disability.</p>	<p>The ED has all along provided resources to special schools for the acquisition of IT facilities. As early as 1989, ED made use of IT to teach the handicapped children. During that time, through the Computer Education in Special Schools Project, schools were provided with hardware/software/training to support handicapped children to use IT in their learning. As regards the training and development of teachers, the ED has employed overseas experts to host seminars and workshops for teachers of special schools on the use of IT to facilitate learning. Moreover, dedicated software for children with special educational needs are developed and the necessary in-service training programmes are offered to the teachers.</p> <p>The tutors of the Skills Training Centre of VTC are usually required to receive in-service training, including IT training, provided by the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The VTC has also arranged its tutors and staff to take in-house IT courses.</p>
	<p>163. Provide additional subsidy or loan for people with disability to purchase assistive equipment and software.</p>	<p>The SWD has established a Central Fund for Personal Computers to subsidize disabled persons to set up personal computer workstations at home to help them to find and sustain an income-generating job. To date, 64 applicants have received support with a total grant of \$995,000. To further extend the scheme, \$3 million was injected from the Lotteries Fund into the Central Fund for Personal Computers in March 2001. It is expected that about 200 more disabled persons can benefit.</p> <p>In addition, some non-Government organizations will also provide vocational rehabilitation scheme and activity fund through charity funds or other resources, and give technical advice,</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		support and assistance, loans etc. on the acquisition of equipment and ancillary tools so that disabled persons' working ability can be fully explored.
	164. Encourage the IT industry and academia to develop research and development on the local customized software and assistive technology to the people with disability.	The Government encourages the industry and the academia to conduct research and to develop software and ancillary technology to help the disabled in using IT. Those who intend to develop software tools for use by the local community may apply for funds from the Innovation and Technology Fund. We welcome industry organizations to make use of the Fund to develop computer tools that are suitable for use by the visually impaired and the disabled.
	165. Emphasizing accessibility issues and providing accessibility guidelines to all Government departments and private sectors once it is defined.	To facilitate the blind and the visually impaired to access online public services, the Government has planned to enhance all Government web sites according to our internal web accessibility guideline within 2002 or earlier. The guideline has also been distributed to various public bodies and Government subvented organizations for reference and adoption. We will also work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, industry organizations (such as the Internet Professionals Association), universities and user groups (such as the Hong Kong Blind Union, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and the Hong Kong Retinitis Pigmentosa Society) to promote the community's awareness on web accessibility. Presently, we are working with the Internet Professionals Association in launching the Web Care campaign to draw up guidelines on web accessibility and promote them to the private sector.
	166. Promoting public and private sector to adopt "senior friendly" web design for seniors users. Simple, easy-to-understand presentation and user friendly interface are all the usability consideration the web designers and marketers might take into account.	We agree with the suggestion and would promote it in our publicity work.
	167. Promoting other modes of access, such as alt-text, textual	Our web accessibility guideline has provided guideline on different forms of web page design for reference by Government departments.

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response						
	description of pictures and graphics and sufficient colour contrast for low vision users, instead of limiting text-only version.							
	168. Allocating resources to set up a support team in ITSD to provide advice and technical support to private companies where difficulties may arise on web accessibility.	The ITSD and individual industry associations have discussed the subject of web page design support. For instance, the Internet Professionals Association has also taken into account the technical advice from ITSD in developing its guideline on web page design.						
	169. Establishing periodic monitoring mechanism on the public sector sites. Encouraging the private sector, especially those major corporate, to adopt web accessibility guidelines.	We would not interfere with the design and content of web sites of private enterprises. We will, through organizing activities (such as the Web Care campaign co-organized with the Internet Professionals Association), to promote the awareness on the issue of digital divide and encourage the businesses to make improvements.						
	170. Develop potential of disadvantaged group in ICT by creating an environment that encourage disadvantaged group to become involved in the application, development and deployment of the technology.	<p>To provide greater access to IT for the disabled, the SWD has secured funding from the Lotteries Fund to install computers with Internet access and training capacity at various rehabilitation service units and homes in 2001-02. To cater for the needs of the disabled, special ancillary facilities such as handrail, touch screen, screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille, etc. will be installed. The related number of computer facilities and service units is as follows –</p> <table data-bbox="891 1161 1800 1217"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="891 1161 1111 1185"><u>No. of organizations</u></th> <th data-bbox="1178 1161 1541 1185"><u>No. of rehabilitation service units</u></th> <th data-bbox="1608 1161 1800 1185"><u>No. of computers</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="972 1190 1008 1214">70</td> <td data-bbox="1258 1190 1317 1214">464</td> <td data-bbox="1644 1190 1680 1214">540</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In addition, SWD is now planning to work with non-Government organizations again in launching the IT Awareness Programme to train 200 trainers and to provide free computer and Internet training courses for 5,000 disabled persons in the coming year. SWD also plans to set up a web portal for people with disabilities in the coming year. The portal will</p>	<u>No. of organizations</u>	<u>No. of rehabilitation service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>	70	464	540
<u>No. of organizations</u>	<u>No. of rehabilitation service units</u>	<u>No. of computers</u>						
70	464	540						

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		provide guidelines on local rehabilitation services, information on daily life for people with disabilities, a discussion forum, etc. so as to facilitate people with disabilities to obtain useful information and communicate online with each other.
	171. Reviewing the accessibility of e-banking facilities and services for people with disabilities and the elderly so that they would not be denied of these services with Hong Kong Monetary Authority.	With the advent of technology in electronic services, the HKMA is of the view that banks should provide appropriate assistance to consumers, including senior citizens and people with disabilities, to access electronic or other technology based banking services. We understand that this is being considered by the HKAB in its current discussion with the Equal Opportunities Commission. The HKMA fully supports the industry's initiatives to improve the accessibility of technology-based banking services for all.
	172. Working with business sector, IT professional bodies and disabled groups to draw up a code of practice on e-commerce accessibility.	The Government would work closely with the industry, the business sector, professional organizations and user groups to assist the disabled to participate in electronic commerce activities.
	173. Establishing Quality Mark Scheme to encourage the business sector to adopt the accessibility guideline in their websites.	Similar items are included in the Web Care campaign now being co-organized by the Government and the Internet Professionals Association.
	174. Installing appropriate assistive equipment and facilities to all the ESD information kiosks so as to broaden the service accessibility to the elderly and people with disabilities.	<p>As regards the provision of facilities, we have always considered the needs of various sectors and taken their views into account in making improvements. In the design and implementation of the ESD scheme, the ESD contractor has already taken into consideration the needs of people with disabilities. The ESD web site is designed in conformity with internationally recognized web accessibility standards. It also provides text only version for use by the blind and the visually impaired. The web interface and navigation have also passed the Bobby Test to ensure compliance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>The public kiosks under the ESD scheme are also provided with touch pad for easy access</p>

Organizations	Suggestions	Government's response
		<p>and data input by people with physical handicap such as wheelchair users. Screen enlarging software will also be installed in these kiosks shortly for use by the visually impaired.</p> <p>We will continue to improve the operation of the ESD Scheme in order to meet the needs of different groups (including senior citizens and disabled) in the community.</p>

Information Technology & Broadcasting Bureau
July 2001

halls/centres, District Offices, public libraries, post offices, and Government-subsidized organizations and voluntary agencies. In addition, we have also set up in the Canton Road Government Offices in Yaumatei a Super Cyber Centre with over 100 computers to provide free IT facilities, resource materials and IT training to the community.

11. We will continue to increase these public computer facilities. By the end of 2001-02, the number of public computers available to the community will increase to about 4,300, including over 280 computers at around 250 elderly centres for use by senior citizens, and 540 computers with special facilities such as screen enlarging software, voice synthesizer software, power braille at over 460 centres for the disabled.

Conclusion

12. The Government is committed to strengthening the IT knowledge of the community for exploring opportunities in the digital world. We will continue to monitor the situation of digital divide and will conduct annual survey so as to formulate appropriate policies and implement suitable measures to address the issue. We will also work with related organizations to build a “digital inclusive” society.

**Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau
July 2001**