

For information
on 14 March 2011

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

Progress Report on Digital Inclusion

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the progress on Government's digital inclusion initiatives.

Background

2. One of the five key action areas of Government's Digital 21 Strategy is to build an inclusive, knowledge-based society. The Digital 21 Strategy Advisory Committee set up a Task Force on Digital Inclusion to formulate strategies and initiatives for addressing digital inclusion issues in a holistic manner. Taking into account deliberations of the Task Force and input through engagement with relevant stakeholders, the Government has initiated digital inclusion programmes targeted at youths, the elderly, persons with disabilities and students from low-income families. The following paragraphs report the progress of these initiatives.

Internet Education Campaign

3. To promote the safe and healthy use of the Internet among students, their parents and teachers, we conducted a one-year "Be NetWise" Internet education campaign from September 2009 to November 2010, with a budget of \$63 million. A wide range of activities at territory-wide, district and school levels involving more than 450 000 participants were organised, including large-scale promotion events, roving exhibitions, seminars, home visits, and mobile exhibition, etc. During the campaign period:

- over 1 000 education seminars were organised for some 170 000 students, parents, teachers and social workers, with average attendance rate over 80%;
- over 90 000 home visits were conducted;
- about 100 000 handbooks for parents on Internet usage were distributed; and
- over 50 000 individual counseling sessions on Internet behaviour were provided through a specialized family support centre set up for the campaign.

Professional education resource kits were also produced for distribution to all primary and secondary schools providing systematic and practical reference materials to assist teachers and school social workers to carry out Internet education in schools.

4. The campaign was very well-received by the community. The campaign report is available at www.be-netwise.hk for public information. Upon its completion, the central coordinator of the campaign, the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, continues to maintain the resources and services developed in the campaign, including the family support centre, online portal and handbook for parents, professional education resources for teachers and social workers, etc. The training materials will also be made available for use in the Internet Learning Support Programme described in paragraphs 14 to 18.

District Cyber Centre Pilot Scheme

5. The District Cyber Centre (DCC) Pilot Scheme, which commenced in February 2009, provides Internet accessibility, computers and associated equipment and training to different computer centres operated by community organisations to empower them to support ICT use among needy groups in districts. A DCC Alliance chaired by the Government Chief Information Officer and comprising the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited, Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Internet Professional Association, was formed to implement the Scheme. Currently, there are 57 centres in different parts of the territory catering for different needy groups including low-income

families, women, children and youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities. To promote the wider use of computer and Internet among the elderly, a new elderly learning programme was recently introduced to support centres serving the elderly through the provision of customised training and elderly-friendly equipment, such as large computer monitors with touch-screen function.

6. In the past two years, the Government has injected \$22 million into the Scheme. In addition, the Scheme has raised more than \$26 million of in-kind donations such as software licenses, broadband connections and professional services from the private sector. Over 62 000 usage hours of the computer facilities were recorded and around 2 500 training courses and activities were organised for over 38 000 participants. A mobile truck was also employed to tour around the territory to promote the learning and application of ICT. To encourage the active participation of centres and their users in ICT learning, training and voluntary services, an annual award presentation ceremony is organised. Since inception of the Scheme in 2009, some 2 000 participants have received awards.

Elderly Portal

7. The Financial Secretary announced in the 2009-10 Budget the development of a dedicated portal for the elderly. The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) has subsequently appointed through an open process the Hong Kong Society for the Aged (SAGE) to take forward the project. Launched in June 2010, the portal, called “eElderly”, is designed to enable easy use and navigation by the elderly. With contents catering for their needs and interests, the portal encourages the elderly to acquire Internet skills to engage with information and expand their horizon.

8. Over the past nine months of operation, the portal has recorded a monthly average of over two million visits from some 20 000 visitors. To promote the use of the portal, SAGE has partnered with the DCC Scheme and some 100 elderly centres to provide training for their elderly members.

9. OGCIO and SAGE are making preparations for the second and final phase of the project to incorporate more interesting contents and services for the elderly as well as silver-hair market offerings.

Initiatives for Persons with Disabilities

10. According to our latest survey, ICT usage among persons with disabilities is low, with Internet usage rate of 15% as compared to 78% for the general community. We have therefore initiated a number of targeted measures to promote the wider adoption of ICT among them. To facilitate experience sharing and exchanges on latest ICT development and support for persons with disabilities, we commissioned the Hong Kong Council of Social Service to organise a forum in December 2010. The forum, with more than 200 participants from ICT industry, NGOs serving persons with disabilities, as well as public and private sector organisations, provided a platform for the exchange of ideas, tools, applications and assistive technologies on ICT adoption and support for persons with disabilities.

11. Recognising the increasing information needs of persons with disabilities, we are taking a holistic approach in assessing their needs in terms of basic content to enhance their daily lives, accessibility of websites, and relevant ICT-based assistive tools that may not be readily available. OGCIO will be engaging relevant non-government organisations and support groups on rehabilitation in identifying worthwhile initiatives.

12. In 2010, OGCIO has set aside \$3.6 million to support the development of ICT-based assistive tools and applications for persons with disabilities. We have, through a competitive tender process, commissioned the Internet Professional Association to provide administrative and technical support in evaluating the technical feasibility of proposals received and monitoring progress of the funded projects. During the invitation period from 17 January to 21 February 2011, a total of 39 project proposals have been received. OGCIO is now assessing the proposals with the support of an advisory committee comprising representatives from ICT industry and NGOs serving persons with disabilities.

13. We are also making preparations to launch a web accessibility campaign in mid-2011 to promote the adoption of web accessibility design in both public and private websites to facilitate access of online information and services for persons with disabilities. The campaign will cover a wide range of activities including the development of a management handbook on web accessibility for corporation executives; seminars and workshops on international standards and best practices; as well as web accessibility assessment and accreditation service for websites frequently used by persons with disabilities. We have earmarked \$1 million for implementation of this campaign.

Internet Learning Support Programme

14. In the 2010-11 Budget, the Financial Secretary allocated \$220 million for the implementation of a five-year Internet learning support programme to assist students from low-income families to acquire affordable computers and Internet access service and provide user and social support to them. We updated Members in January 2011 that we would engage two Implementers, namely the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) and the eInclusion Foundation Limited (eInclusion) to implement the programme in two geographical zones¹.

15. Of the \$220 million budget for this initiative, the Implementers will each be allocated a total of \$100 million over a five-year period from 2011-12 to 2015-16 to implement the programme in their service zones. The Implementers will confine their total administrative costs to \$11.25 million each, which is in line with our undertaking to the Finance Committee in May 2010. The yearly allocation is subject to the Funding and Operation Agreements with the Implementers which are being prepared, and subject to OGCIO's acceptance of their annual business plans and performance reports. OGCIO will conduct a review of the implementation arrangements in two years.

¹ Based on the spread of eligible families as at December 2010, the two Implementers agreed that HKCSS will cover ten districts including Island, Southern, Wanchai, Central & Western, Yau Tsim Mong, Shamshuipo, Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, while eInclusion will cover eight districts including Eastern, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Shatin, Tai Po, Sai Kung and North.

16. The Implementers are making good progress to roll out the programme before commencement of the 2011/12 school year as scheduled. A central programme logo has been selected and a programme portal (www.ilearnathome.hk) providing information on the Implementers' service zones and training resources is being developed.

17. We are drawing up service standards and performance targets which the Implementers are expected to deliver. These include, for instance, speed and up-time of Internet access service, minimum configuration and software bundle of computer equipment, availability of technical support (through hotline helpdesk, customer support centre, usage support at home), student and parent training, social support, handling of complaints and referral arrangements between the two Implementers. We will also set performance targets on number of beneficiaries and conversion of non-users to Internet users, number of training sessions and number of user support sessions, as a basis to monitor the effectiveness and performance of the Implementers.

18. We aim at agreeing the service standards and performance targets for finalising the Funding and Operation Agreement with the Implementers by April 2011. This will enable the Implementers to identify service partners and work out offers with Internet Service Providers and computer suppliers in time for programme roll-out before September 2011.

Advice Sought

19. Members are invited to note the above progress update on the digital inclusion initiatives.

Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
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