

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

**Progress Report on Digital Inclusion**

**Purpose**

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

**Background**

2. Hong Kong has a robust telecommunications infrastructure. Our average peak Internet connection speed at 57.5 Mbps is the fastest in the world but our Internet charges are among the lowest. As at January 2013, the household broadband take-up rate and mobile penetration rate are 86% and 229% respectively, putting Hong Kong in the forefront of ICT (information and communications technology) adoption.

3. One of the five key action areas of Government's Digital 21 Strategy is to build an inclusive, knowledge-based society. In consultation with the Task Force on Digital Inclusion set up under the Digital 21 Strategy Advisory Committee, the Government has been implementing a comprehensive digital inclusion programme to enable all sectors of the community to benefit from the convenience and better quality of life brought about by ICT. We adopt a targeted approach, focusing on three priority groups, namely students from low-income families, persons with disabilities and the elderly. The following paragraphs set out the progress of our various digital inclusion measures.

**Internet Learning Support Programme**

4. To assist students from low-income families<sup>1</sup> to undertake web-based learning at home, and with funding approval from the Finance Committee<sup>2</sup>, the

<sup>1</sup> 'Low-income families' refer to those families with children who are full-time students receiving education at primary and secondary levels and who are eligible for the flat-rate grant for School-related Expenses (SRE) under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) scheme or financial assistance under the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA).

<sup>2</sup> At the meeting on 28 May 2010, the Legislative Council Finance Committee approved a funding commitment of \$220 million for implementation of the Programme.

Government has embarked on the “i Learn at Home” Internet Learning Support Programme (the Programme) since July 2011. We have commissioned the eInclusion Foundation Limited (eInclusion), jointly formed by the Boys’ & Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong (BGCA) and the Internet Professional Association (iProA), and WebOrganic, formed by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, to implement the Programme in the eastern and western parts of the territory respectively. As stated in the submission to Finance Committee, it was envisaged that the Programme would help students from these families, especially those who currently do not have Internet connection at home, to gain access to the Internet. The Programme will be managed by a non-profit-making organisation which will work closely with community organisations, educators, Internet service providers (ISPs), ICT suppliers and government agencies, to –

- (a) identify needy students’ Internet learning needs; and
- (b) make available, by making use of existing facilities and services of government departments and non-governmental organisations where possible –
  - i. affordable internet access services and computers; and
  - ii. training and technical support to the target families in a cost-effective manner.

5. Currently, the following baseline services are undertaken by the Implementers under the Programme –

- (a) sourcing affordable computers suitable for web-based learning with flexible payment options;
- (b) sourcing Internet service for learning purpose at concessionary pricing;
- (c) student training on proper and safe use of the Internet for learning purpose;
- (d) training to help parents provide guidance and support their children with web-based learning;
- (e) technical and user support; and
- (f) counselling for Internet-related issues such as Internet addiction, cyber-bullying, etc.

### *Progress of Implementation*

6. Since Programme launch in July 2011, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) and two Implementers worked hard to promote the Programme, hone Programme offers and drive participation from eligible families. Programme materials are distributed to **all** eligible families through the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) and Social Welfare Department (SWD). In the case of SFAA, enrolment forms pre-printed with

their names are distributed to the eligible families to facilitate target beneficiaries to sign up. Together with the Implementers, we embarked on a series of promotion activities, including briefings to schools and district councils, reaching-out to students from ethnic minorities groups, etc. to introduce the Programme to different stakeholders. The Implementers also set up additional service centres across the territory to provide more convenient access to Programme services, and launched seasonal discounts as well as value-added products and services such as tablet devices, free on-line tutoring services, etc. to entice participation.

7. As at 31 March 2013, of the 282 000 eligible families, 65 904 (23.4%) have enrolled in the Programme and 17 652 (26.8% of those enrolled and 6.3% of eligible families) have received at least one type of services from the Implementers in the past two school years. A summary of promotion activities organised over the past year, the latest service take-up and the Programme expenditures incurred as reported by eInclusion and WebOrganic are set out at **Annex A**.

8. Through our letter of 6 March 2013, we informed the ITB Panel of our decision to terminate our Funding & Operation Agreement (F&OA) with eInclusion with effect from 19 May 2013 and appoint the BGCA to take over the implementation of the Programme in the eastern part of Hong Kong as guarantor of eInclusion in accordance with the F&OA. BGCA has been delivering frontline services under the Programme. With well-established social networks and expertise to provide support to students from low-income families and their parents, it took over Programme implementation with minimal disruption to the service recipients.

#### *Mid-Term Review*

9. As reported to the Panel at the commencement of the Programme, a review on the implementation arrangements would be conducted after the first two years. In carrying out the Mid-term Review (the Review), we commissioned an independent research agency to collect feedback from different stakeholders through focus group discussions and telephone surveys (the Survey). We also took into account the latest findings of the Census and Statistics Department in respect of the Internet adoption rate of low-income families with school-age children, the developments in respect of eLearning in recent years and the inherent challenges under the current service delivery arrangements. The purpose is to assess how far the Programme has achieved the objectives as set out in paragraph 4 above.

10. According to the findings of the Survey, generally speaking, the service recipients were content with the services provided by the two Implementers and the satisfaction rates were over 70%. They considered the Implementers helpful and friendly. From service recipients' feedback, they found the technical and user support offered under the Programme most useful as such services could be pricey in the market and sometimes difficult to source. Moreover, since some of the service recipients find it difficult to articulate the problems they have encountered and without the help of the Implementers, they would need to spend far more time and money to rectify the problems that they encountered.

11. The positive comments notwithstanding, we notice that despite the continued vigorous enrolment drive covering practically all eligible families, take-up of Programme services has been slower than expected (see paragraph 7 above). The following factors might have impact on service take-up.

### *Efforts to Close the Digital Gap*

12. In the past three years, Internet adoption of students from low-income families has increased significantly from 87% in 2010<sup>3</sup> to 96% in 2012. This 96% is close to the mainstream 97% adoption rate<sup>4</sup>. Hence, the demand for computers and Internet services amongst eligible families might not be as high as expected. Furthermore, with the advent of eLearning in recent years<sup>5</sup>, ICT literacy among both students and parents has improved and again lessening the demand for services. The Implementers have rightly pointed out that with its extensive publicity, promotion and training, the Programme services might have been one of the factors contributing to closing of the digital gap. One of the Implementers also pointed out that it requires extra efforts and investments to engage this last 4% of eligible families who have not yet connected to the Internet, and some 30 000 low-income families will become eligible for the Programme every year as their children start primary education.

### *Positive Changes in the Market Environment*

13. The market offers a wide range of choice of computers that are suitable for Internet learning and sometimes, attractive discounts would also be offered and some service recipients might opt to source from the market direct. In relation to Internet service, one of the Implementers has successfully secured a very attractive package for service recipients. However, since the bandwidth provided under this Programme are confined to educational needs of the eligible

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<sup>3</sup> Source : a survey conducted by Policy 21 Ltd in early 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Source : Thematic Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2012.

<sup>5</sup> The Education Bureau is implementing the 3<sup>rd</sup> IT in Education Strategy since 2008 to drive the integration of information technology into learning and teaching. A pilot "E-Textbook Market Development Scheme" was also launched in 2012 to promote the development of e-textbooks in line with local curricula.

students, some potential service recipients might have preferred other bundled packages that could allow for other types of services, for example bundling with telephone or other digital entertainment services and this might also have contributed towards the relatively low take up rate, despite the attractive package.

### *Data Privacy and Labeling Concerns in the Operating Environment*

14. The two Implementers have sought to enlist participation through school-based promotion. However, because of personal data privacy concerns and to avoid any labeling effect, SFAA, SWD and the schools declined to provide information on eligible students to the Implementers. In order not to label disadvantaged students, schools usually arrange all students to attend the talks delivered by the Implementers irrespective of their eligibility. As a result, the Implementers find it particularly challenging to identify the eligible students and need to dedicate substantial amount of resources towards this end. Despite the very hard efforts made by all parties (paragraph 6 above) in reaching out to the target recipients, the enrolment results were less than expected.

### *Other Observations*

15. The Implementers have dedicated tremendous efforts and resources in reaching out to the target service recipients. However, the low take up rate coupled with the extra amount of resources needed to persuade target recipients to take up the services means that the investment for each instance of service received, i.e. acquiring computer or broadband service, attending training, requesting technical support, user support or counselling services, is very high and on average it reaches \$1,100 per service<sup>6</sup>. We also notice that the arrangement whereby the Implementers “resell”, i.e. sourcing products from computer and Internet services suppliers through bulk purchase and reselling to the target beneficiaries with flexible payment options, results in delinquent instalment payments from those on hire purchase and it averages at around 4.7%, with potential cumulative write-off of about \$672,000<sup>7</sup> covering 240 service recipients out of 5 158 who purchased computers and broadband service through the two Implementers. The reselling operation and the handling of delinquent payment have added to the operational overheads.

16. The gist of the Review is set out at **Annex B**.

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<sup>6</sup> To obtain a rough idea of cost-effectiveness, we have derived the average cost per service by dividing the total annual expenditures by the number of baseline services delivered

<sup>7</sup> eInclusion — identified bad debt: 77 cases, potential credit at risk: 46 cases.  
WebOrganic — identified bad debt: 58 cases, potential credit at risk: 59 cases.

17. In view of the above, we conclude that there is scope for fine-tuning the Programme by focusing on services that are not readily available in the market, trimming services that have abundant alternative providers and adopting a more on-demand model of service delivery. We are mindful of our undertaking to the Finance Committee that the services should be made available to the target families on a cost-effective manner. We envisage that in the coming academic year, the Implementers would –

- (a) focus on providing training to students and their parents on Internet use;
- (b) focus on providing technical support to the eligible families in the form of hotlines and where necessary, limited on-site services; and
- (c) continue to provide social support and counselling services to eligible families in need; however, we would explore with the Education Bureau on the possibility of extending its Internet Safety Hotline service to all students including those eligible for the Programme.

18. We are also re-visiting the service of reselling computers. This service carries a unit cost (or investment<sup>8</sup>) of around \$1,500 and we are exploring whether there are more cost-effective means of providing this service. The reselling of Internet services also entails a relatively high unit cost (or investment).

19. Separately, OGCIO would undertake Programme promotion in collaboration with the Implementers and other government agencies, and use “i Learn at home” as the single brand name to sharpen the public image of the Programme and avoid any possible confusion over the different brand names. Furthermore, we would also encourage collaboration between the two Implementers who will continue to implement the Programme in their respective service regions.

20. We are finalising the detailed arrangements with the two Implementers with a view to implementing them in the 2013/14 school year. With the above refinements, we expect that the funds committed for the Programme can provide services beyond the originally envisaged five year period. We will conduct another review in 2015-16 to consider the way forward having regard to the latest Internet learning needs among students from low-income families.

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<sup>8</sup> The costs include the capital costs for setting up various systems including Customer Relationship Management system, Point-of-Sales system and portal for the Programme. Such costs are one-off in nature and would be substantially reduced in the coming few years. The unit cost is derived by a crude calculation method based on direct costs and allocated indirect costs. The Implementers may have different cost allocation approach.

## **Web Accessibility Campaign**

21. The Internet provides access to information, online services, entertainment and networking anytime and anywhere. Most businesses and organisations have set up websites for their products and services but many of these websites are inaccessible to people beset with visual, physical, hearing or cognitive impairment. The Government has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to drive the adoption of web accessibility designs in public and private websites, namely through Government leadership, fostering awareness, promulgating resources, building expertise and encouraging adoption as set out at **Annex C**.

### *Government Leadership*

22. To set an example for other organisations, we work towards having all government websites to conform to Level AA standard of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) promulgated by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) by 2013. As at March 2013, about 80% of government websites have achieved this requirement. The remaining websites, which are generally accessible though not yet up to the latest standard, are undergoing major redevelopment scheduled for completion later this year or within 2014. We also encourage public-sector organisations to follow suit and most of them respond positively. About 31% of 68 statutory and public sector organisations, at **Annex D**, have incorporated key web accessibility features in their websites, while 37% of them have plans to do so by 2014. For the remainder, we will continue to appeal for their support for this meaningful cause.

### *Fostering Awareness*

23. Since the launch of the campaign in late 2011, OGCIO has organised more than 20 seminars and workshops to foster awareness on web accessibility. Over 3 000 participants comprising business executives, website administrators, ICT practitioners and tertiary ICT students have attended these seminars and workshops to share know-how and best practices.

### *Promulgating Resources*

24. Different types of resources including a management handbook on web accessibility, demonstration of key web accessibility design features and a thematic portal ([www.webforall.gov.hk](http://www.webforall.gov.hk)) etc. were prepared to assist executives and website developers to appreciate the importance of web accessibility and to help them incorporate accessibility features into their websites. These resources are well-received, as reflected by the high access rates of over 1 million page views and 80 000 downloads since their launch in October 2011. To further facilitate adoption among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs), we have also developed templates of

accessible webpages with sample codes for free download through the thematic portal. NGOs and SMEs can build their own barrier-free websites quickly by adopting these templates with minimal customisation. OGCIO also provides technical support on the use of these templates. Our efforts on building up capability on web accessibility are summarised at **Annex E**.

### *Building Expertise*

25. To sustain the building up of capability among website developers, we have liaised with local universities and tertiary institutions encouraging them to incorporate web accessibility in their ICT curricula. The institutions are supportive of this initiative. A summary of the arrangements made by different institutions is set out at **Annex F**.

### *Encouraging Adoption*

26. To encourage and incentivise wider adoption of web accessibility in non-government websites, we jointly organised with the Equal Opportunities Commission a recognition scheme to show appreciation to local enterprises and organisations for making their websites accessible. The recognition scheme attracted encouraging responses from over 100 enterprises and organisations from different sectors covering public transport, telecommunications, news, banking, medical, academia, information technology, the media, public bodies and social services organisations. Under the recognition scheme, free assessment and advisory services were provided to participating organisations to help them enhance their websites up to the required accessibility standards. A total of 70 websites achieved the required standards by the end of the assessment period, of which 44 attained gold award and 26 silver awards. These websites can carry a “Web-for-all” accreditation logo to showcase their achievements. A list of the awarded websites is set out at **Annex G**.

## **Encouraging ICT Adoption among the Elderly**

### *Enhancing Awareness and Knowledge*

27. Advancement in ICT opens up ample opportunities for the elderly to expand their social horizon, integrate with the society and enhance their quality of life. To encourage the elderly to use ICT more actively in their daily lives, we have implemented multi-faceted measures to facilitate and motivate their engagement with information. We commissioned the Hong Kong Society for the Aged (SAGE) to develop a thematic portal, “eElderly”, in June 2010 to provide the elderly with one-stop access to information surrounding their needs and interests; enhancements were made in 2012 to incorporate more interesting contents and features. We also funded three social service organisations in 2012



to organise a combination of activities to raise the elderly's awareness and knowledge in the use of digital devices and electronic services. Over 38 000 elders participated in activities including ICT training and seminars, tablet computers on-loan services, inter-generation out-reaching activities, etc. These activities have successfully encouraged the participants to use ICT to widen their social circle and enhance their communication with the younger generation. About 1 000 silver surfers were also trained up and act as advocates to support the use of ICT among their peers.

### *Incentivising Usage*

28. To further motivate the elderly to use ICT, we launched the first territory-wide Smart Elderly Awards recognition scheme in late 2012 to show appreciation and recognition to those elderly who use ICT actively in their daily lives. SAGE was selected through an open invitation for proposal exercise to implement the scheme in collaboration with elderly service centres over the territory. A series of promotional activities and training programmes were organised to encourage and facilitate participation. An Elderly ICT Expo was also held to showcase how the elderly can live a digital life. The scheme received encouraging response, with a total of 123 elderly centres joining to promote the scheme to their elderly members and co-ordinate nominations for the awards. By the close of the nomination period, nearly 2 000 seniors accomplished relevant usage requirements and attained diamond, gold, silver, or bronze awards as recognition of their achievements. Details are set out at **Annex H**.

### **Development of Mobile Applications for Under-privileged Groups**

29. Apart from the above targeted measures for the three priority groups, we initiated a funding scheme in October 2012 to support the development of mobile applications that facilitate digital inclusion for different needy sectors. By leveraging the easy-to-use interface, well-designed accessibility features and the mobility of smart phones and tablet computers, the funding scheme aims at spurring the local industry to develop mobile applications that cater for the needs of underprivileged groups to help them enhance their quality of life.

30. Forty-five proposals were received through an open invitation and we have selected seven proposals for funding support amounting to about \$2 million. The selected applications provide contents and services to serve specific needs of the elderly and different under-privileged groups, covering education kits for children with intellectual disabilities, barrier-free travel guide for physically handicapped persons, speech training kit for the hearing impaired, speech augmented map for the visually impaired, Cantonese learning tools for ethnic minorities, and a mobile portal for locating elderly activities. The development

work started in April 2013 and the products will be available for free download and use by end 2013. Details of the seven funded projects are set out at **Annex I**.

### **Performance Targets**

31. At the Panel meeting on 14 May 2012, we reported on a number of performance indicators to track the effectiveness of various digital inclusion programmes. We have been making good progress on various fronts. As mentioned in paragraph 12 above, according to a Thematic Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2012, the difference in Internet adoption at home between students from low-income families and their counterparts in the mainstream community has substantially narrowed to 1% in 2012. The e-competence of the elderly also continues to improve as reflected from feedback we collected through various digital inclusion activities. As regards the Web Accessibility Campaign, about 80% of government websites have already achieved W3C WCAG 2.0 Level AA standard as pledged, and all tertiary institutions have also incorporated web accessibility in their ICT curricula. We will continue to monitor progress. Achievement of the performance targets is set out at **Annex J**.

### **Advice Sought**

32. In the coming year, we will continue with various digital inclusion measures, including continued implementation of the refined Internet Learning Support Programme, driving forward the Web Accessibility Campaign and the Web Accessibility Awards Scheme, organising the Smart Elderly Awards Scheme and associated activities to encourage ICT adoption among the elderly and promoting the development of mobile applications for underprivileged groups. 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  
June 2013**

**Internet Learning Support Programme**  
**Progress and Performance**

**1. Performance Figures up to 31 March 2013 as reported by eInclusion and WebOrganic**

Service Areas	Progress as at 31 March 2013		
	eInclusion	WebOrganic	Total
1. Number of Target Beneficiaries reached	37 793 families	28 111 families	65 904 families
2. Number of Target Beneficiaries served	8 460 families	9 192 families	17 652 families
3. Number of students trained	5 941	5 780	11 721
4. Number of parents trained	9 790	4 238	14 028
5. Number of Internet packages sold	890 packages	2 480 packages	3 370 packages
6. Number of computers sold	3 306 pieces	3 116 pieces	6 422 pieces
7. User support requests handled (hotline)	36 517 requests	21 381 requests	57 898 requests
8. Counselling services rendered	2 598 cases	490 cases	3 079 cases
9. Conversion of non-user to user of Internet access at home	1 572	1 291	2 863

## 2. Promotion Activities (April 2012 – March 2013)

### *Office of the Government Chief Information Officer*

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Promotion Activities</b>
May 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings to schools</li> </ul>
July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadcasting of Announcements in the Public Interest (API) on television and radio</li> <li>• Broadcasting of API at community facilities</li> </ul>
June 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of Programme leaflet in seven languages to ethnic minorities</li> </ul>
August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct mail of programme leaflets and pre-filled enrolment forms to some 170 000 eligible families (74% of total) through the Student Financial Assistance Agency</li> </ul>
September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution of programme information (some 60 000) to eligible families through the District Social Security Centres of the Social Welfare Department</li> </ul>
March 2012 to February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings to committees under 18 District Councils</li> </ul>

### *eInclusion*

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Promotion Activities</b>
July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-Learning Symposium for teachers and partners</li> </ul>
August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of Learn Something eBook Competition</li> </ul>
October 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Promotion Poster in MTR stations</li> <li>• Lucky Draw Campaign Poster in 7 Public Housing Estates and 25 Primary / Secondary Schools</li> <li>• Advertisement in Newsletter of eLearning organisation (Modern Educational Research Society Ltd)</li> </ul>
November 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional booth at Inno Carnival organised by Information Technology Commission</li> </ul>

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Promotion Activities</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write-up in Newsletter of eLearning organisation (HK Association of Computer Education)</li> </ul>
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisement in <i>eCampus Today</i></li> </ul>
January 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of online interactive curriculum and tutorial</li> <li>• Launch of six new iLearning Stations and Partners</li> </ul>
February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese New Year sales promotion</li> </ul>
April 2012 to March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks and visits to schools</li> </ul>

### **WebOrganic**

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Promotion Activities</b>
July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Promotion Poster in MTR stations</li> </ul>
August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertorial Promotion on Hong Kong Economic Times (HKET) and Sky Post</li> </ul>
September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of 14 New Satellite Training Centres</li> <li>• Conference on Internet Learning for teachers and partners</li> </ul>
November 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• API Broadcasting in RoadShow</li> <li>• Participant in TVB “Pearl Report” Programme to promote WebOrganic’s support for Seed/Tree Schools on eLearning deployment</li> </ul>
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing of the latest technology of eLearning content and platform to school teachers</li> </ul>
April 2012 to March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks and visits to schools</li> <li>• Meetings with the stakeholders such as principals, Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations, Parent Associations, etc.</li> </ul>

**3. Breakdown of Expenditure<sup>1</sup> incurred up to March 2013 as reported by eInclusion and WebOrganic**

<b>Implementer</b>	<b>2011-12 (HK\$ million)</b>	<b>2012-13 (HK\$ million)</b>	<b>Total (HK\$ million)</b>
<b>eInclusion</b>			
— Programme implementation	10.9	12.5	23.4
- Sale of Internet Access	1.8	2.2	4.0
- Sale of computers	4.3	3.1	7.4
- Training and Technical Support	2.0	6.3	8.3
- Programme Support	2.8	0.9	3.7
— General Administration	4.0	2.4	6.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>29.8</b>
<b>WebOrganic</b>			
— Programme implementation	11.1	9.7	20.8
- Sale of Internet Access	(0.3) <sup>2</sup>	1.2	0.9
- Sale of computers	4.0	0.3	4.3
- Training and Technical Support	5.9	6.3	12.2
- Programme Support	1.5	1.9	3.4
— General Administration	2.2	1.7	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>24.7</b>

<sup>1</sup> The above reflects the actual expenditures of the two implementation agencies. “Accounts payable” and “Accounts receivable” are not included.

<sup>2</sup> Subscription of the Internet access services in WebOrganic requires an upfront 1-year prepayment. Since “Accounts payable” was not included, there was a net revenue from sale of Internet access in WebOrganic during 2011-12.

## **Internet Learning Support Programme**

### **Gist of Mid-term Review**

#### **Purpose**

According to the Funding and Operation Agreement with the Implementers, the objectives of the Mid-term Review are to:

- i. assess the outcome of the Programme against the Programme objectives;
- ii. assess and identify the educational needs, and in particular, the Internet learning needs of the target beneficiaries to the Programme with a view to making forward projections and proposals in facilitating Internet learning at home;
- iii. evaluate the priority of objectives of the Programme and its implications on the implementation for the remaining years of the Programme; and
- iv. assess if there is a need for the sustainability of the Programme beyond the five-year period, and if so required, the implications and requirements on the Implementers.

#### **Review Framework**

2. The Review framework was devised by OGCIO with inputs from the Implementers. Apart from making reference to performance figures as at March 2013 as reported by eInclusion and WebOrganic, OGCIO has engaged a research agency, MVA Hong Kong Limited (MVA), to conduct a study comprising focus groups discussions and telephone survey to obtain feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness of Programme implementation. A total of nine focus group discussions with representatives of school heads, parents and students (both enrolled and not-yet enrolled) were conducted, while a total of 2 079 parents or students were surveyed. Among the respondents, about 1 039 of them are users who have used the Programme services at least once, while the remainders are those who have enrolled in the Programme but never used any services.

#### **Background**

3. FS announced in 2010 Budget to facilitate Internet learning among students from low-income families through a two-pronged strategy –

- (a) EDB to disburse (through SFAA and SWD) a non-accountable annual household-based Internet Access Subsidy (full grant at \$1,300 and half grant at \$650) to eligible families; and
- (b) OGCIO to implement the ILSP to help eligible families procure affordable computers and Internet service as well as provide them with free training and technical support.

4. Finance Committee approved a funding of \$220 million for ILSP implementation. OGCIO has subsequently engaged eInclusion Foundation Limited (eInclusion)<sup>1</sup> and WebOrganic<sup>2</sup> to implement ILSP in the eastern and western parts of Hong Kong respectively.

### **Implementation Arrangements**

5. WebOrganic and eInclusion provide the same set of baseline services to target beneficiaries in their respective service regions –

- (a) sourcing affordable computers suitable for web-based learning with flexible payment options;
- (b) sourcing Internet service for learning purposes at concessionary pricing;
- (c) student training on proper and safe use of the Internet for learning purpose;
- (d) training to help parents provide guidance and support their children with web-based learning;
- (e) technical and user support; and
- (f) counselling for Internet-related issues such as Internet addiction, cyber bullying, etc.

6. WebOrganic and eInclusion operate on different business models, leveraging on their respective network and expertise. WebOrganic has engaged some 20 non-governmental organisations to deliver frontline services while eInclusion relies mostly on BGCA's service network. On product offers, WebOrganic operates on a single-brand approach for both broadband services and computers, while eInclusion operates on a "supermarket" model offering a few choices. Computer and Internet service are generally offered at discounts from market offerings in spite of limited product variety.

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<sup>1</sup> BGCA has taken over the Programme implementation from eInclusion with effect from 19 May 2013.

<sup>2</sup> WebOrganic is a separate entity established by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) for implementing the ILSP.



7. OGCIO takes the lead in territory-wide promotion. The Implementers are responsible for promoting their service and product offers in respective service districts. Apart from the programme branding of 'i Learn at home', WebOrganic and eInclusion carry specific branding (**WebOrganic** and **Net-Com rock n' roll** respectively) for their services.

## **Current Position**

### *Internet Adoption of Students from Low-income Families*

8. Prior to the Programme inception in early 2010, a survey conducted by the Policy 21 Limited revealed that about 87% of low-income families with children in primary and secondary schools had Internet connection at home. Another survey conducted by the Policy 21 Limited at the end of 2011 on a relatively small sample reflected that the adoption had increased to about 97%. According to the thematic household survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2012, the adoption was at 96%, which is nearly on par with their counterparts in mainstream community at 97%. This indicates that in terms of Internet learning, the digital gap on this needy group has been closing fast in the past three years.

### *Programme Effectiveness*

9. According to the findings of the study conducted by MVA, generally speaking, the service recipients were content with the services provided by the two Implementers and the satisfaction rates were over 70%<sup>3</sup>.

10. Service beneficiaries considered that the sales of computer and Internet access service were the most important services, but they were least satisfied with these two services due to their unattractive offerings and limited choices of products. They also expected a higher level of provision beyond what is offered under the Programme for Internet learning at home. Service recipients were most satisfied with training service as well as social support and counseling, which are nonetheless considered to be the relatively less important since similar services were available from other sources.

11. For non-users, the main reasons for not using the Programme services were that the services were considered unnecessary and the product offers were not attractive. Most of them indicated that they already own computers and Internet access at home, and they did not require the training, technical and social

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<sup>3</sup> In the telephone survey conducted by MVA in late 2012, programme service recipients were asked on their overall satisfaction level towards the Programme, 71.5% of them gave the Programme a satisfaction score of 4 or 5 out of a maximum of 5.

support services even though these services were free. Some also had confusion over the different brandings being used for the Programme.

12. The above reflect that the scope of the Programme needs refinement in order to better cope with the latest Internet learning needs of target recipients.

### *Service Take-up*

13. Up to 31 March 2013, a total of 17 652 families, i.e. 6.3% of some 282 000 eligible families in the past two school years have received services from the Implementers. The level of service take-up was below the targets set out in the Funding and Operation Agreement with the Government.

14. Below are the possible reasons for the overall adoption being slower than expected –

#### (a) Computer & Internet access service

- i. The digital gap has substantially narrowed; 96% of target families already have computers and Internet connection at home;
- ii. According to the study, service recipients considered the pricing unattractive for computer offer and the choices limited both for computer offer and broadband services packages. In relation to the bandwidth of the Internet service, they also expected a higher level of provision than the basic level offered under the Programme designed for Internet learning;
- iii. The Implementers operate by sourcing suitable computer products at discounted prices. Given the very competitive nature of the computer retail business and the products are of very short life cycle, it remains rather challenging for the Implementers to secure substantial discounts from the suppliers.

#### (b) Student and Parent Training services

- i. Information literacy of parents and students have improved;
- ii. According to focus group respondents, students considered that the training overlaps with school education and parents did not consider such training useful. They also felt that timing and locations were inconvenient.

#### (c) Technical and user support service

- i. According to focus group respondents, secondary students did not consider the support service useful. They preferred to seek assistance from their peers. Parents and primary

students considered that the support service was useful and could save their money and time.

(d) Counselling Service

- i. According to focus group respondents, students did not consider the counselling service useful. Parents and schools considered that the counselling service overlapped with school social service.

*Programme Fund Utilisation*

15. Expenditure incurred up to March 2013 as reported by eInclusion and WebOrganic are \$29.8 million and \$24.7 million respectively.

16. Because of unforeseen constraints, the Implementers need to spend substantial resources in engagement and service delivery, as detailed below –

- (a) The database of contact information in respect of eligible families cannot be made available to the Implementers due to concerns on data privacy. As a result, the Implementers need to engage the target beneficiaries indirectly through extensive school-based promotion, and most of these activities need to be extended to non-eligible students to avoid labeling effect. Furthermore, given the slow take-up rate, many promotional and value-added services and activities were launched to entice participation. These lead to high operational overheads in the service delivery. To facilitate the process and to maximise reaching-out, the Government arranged to disseminate the Programme materials and enrolment forms to all target beneficiaries through SFAA and SWD to achieve 100% reach out to all target beneficiaries.
- (b) The reselling of computers and Internet service incurs significant operational overheads in the sales administration. Since 4.7% of the purchases by instalment have experienced delinquent payments with credit risks, the two Implementers need to dedicate substantial efforts to follow up on the defaulted payments. Funding also needs to be reserved for potential write-off of the bad debts. As at May 2013, the amount of potential cumulative write-off was about \$672,000, covering 240 service recipients out of 5 158 who purchased computers and broadband service through the two Implementers, of which eInclusion has 77 identified bad debts cases and 46 potential credit at risk cases while WebOrganic has 58 identified bad debts cases and 59 potential credit at risk cases.

## Priorities of Services

17. Based on the above findings and assessment, we recommend to fine-tune the Programme by focusing on services which are difficult to meet through the market, trimming services with abundant alternative providers and adopting a more cost-effective, on-demand model of service delivery as below –

(a) Sale of Computer and Internet Services

Continue to source discounted offers of computers and Internet services for the target beneficiaries. We will re-visit the service of reselling computers. This service carries a unit cost (or investment) of about \$1,500 and attracts potential bad debts. We are exploring whether there are more cost-effective means of providing this service and would also consider how this service would evolve. The same applies to Internet services which also entails a relatively high unit cost (or investment).

(b) Student and Parent Training

Continue to provide training to students and parents on Internet use including training resources in electronic format through portals to facilitate the needy members to pick up or review specific topics of Internet learning everywhere and anytime.

(c) Social Support and Counselling Service

Continue to provide these services to eligible families in need, and leverage school social workers and other existing resources to render direct support to students and parents in need.

(d) Technical Support

Continue to provide hotline and technical support to the eligible families, and arrange home visits on need basis by leveraging volunteer services as far as possible.

(e) Division of Work

Continue with the current model of geographical split between the Implementers to ensure minimum impact to the existing service recipients, but strengthen their collaboration to achieve maximum effectiveness.

(f) ‘On-demand’ Service Delivery

Services will be provided to the target beneficiaries as and when needed, instead of engaging target recipients proactively through school-based promotion. The OGCI will undertake all Programme publicity and promotion in collaboration with other Bureaux/Departments and the two Implementers to promote the awareness among all stakeholders, and adopt a single brand name of “i Learn at home”.

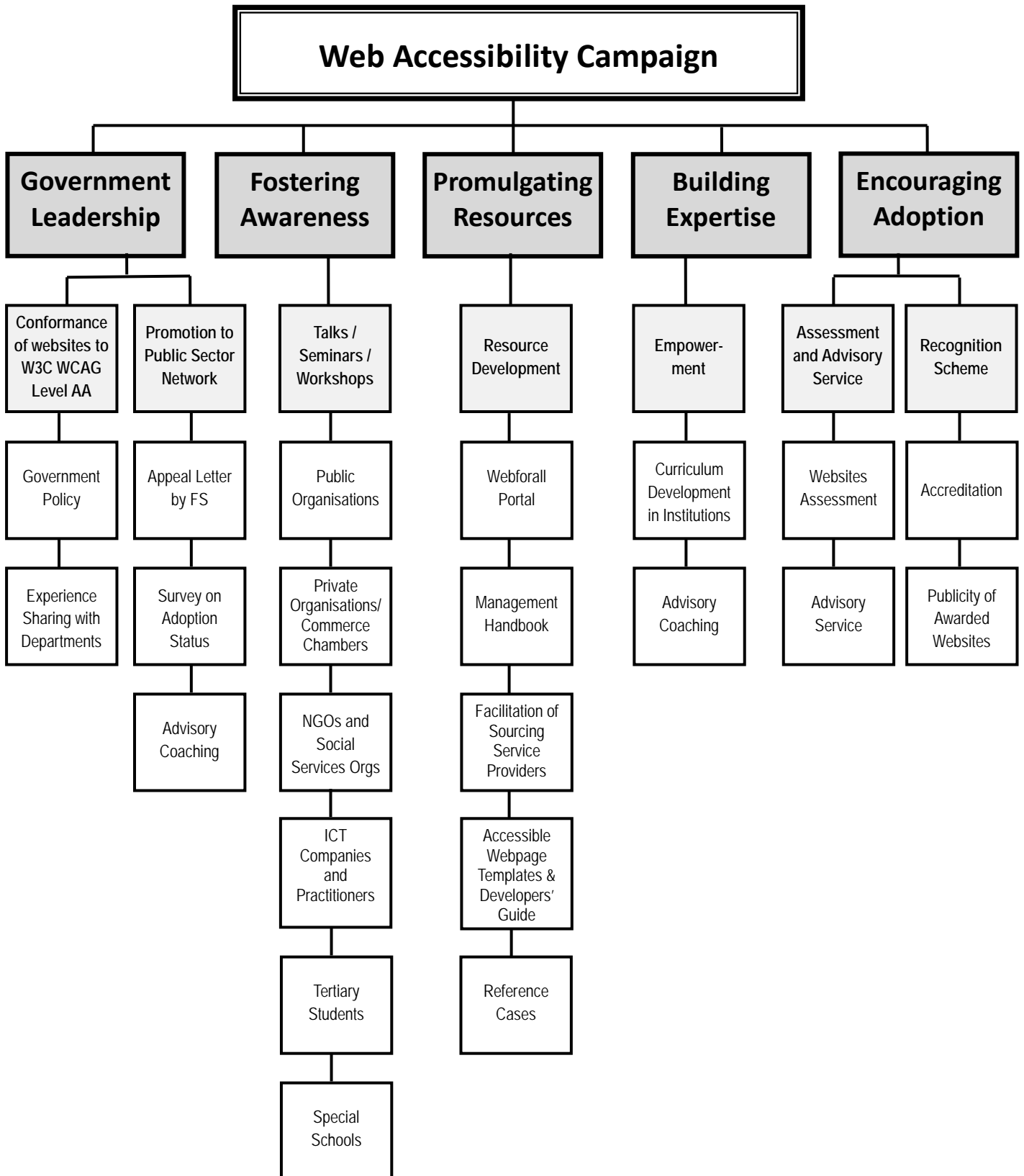
## **Way Forward**

18. We aim to implement the above recommendations in the 2013/14 school year. The Implementers will refine their business plans accordingly and in line with existing practices, funding will be disbursed upon acceptance of the proposed business plans and budgets.

19. The required expenditures for taking forward the recommendations in the remaining three years will be contained within the provision of the Programme, i.e. \$220 million originally approved by the Finance Committee (ref. FCR(2010-11)15).

20. In view that the take-up has been slower than expected and Programme services will be fine-tuned in coming two years, we consider it premature to assess the sustainability issue at this stage. We will conduct another review in early 2015 to consider the way forward including the sustainability issue having regard to Programme performance and the latest Internet learning needs among students from low-income families.

– End –



**Statutory and Public Sector Organisations  
Adopting Web Accessibility**

The following organisations have adopted web accessibility design –

- Board of Review (Inland Revenue Ordinance)
- Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong
- Commission on Youth
- Construction Industry Council
- Consumer Council
- Engineers Registration Board
- Equal Opportunities Commission
- Fish Marketing Organisation
- Guardianship Board
- Hong Kong Airport Authority
- Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute
- Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic & Vocational Qualifications
- Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health
- Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Ltd
- Hong Kong Note Printing Limited
- Hong Kong Productivity Council
- Hong Kong Tourism Board
- Occupational Deafness Compensation Board
- Road Safety Council
- Vegetable Marketing Organisation
- Vocational Training Council

## Web Accessibility Campaign

### Summary of Activities for Capability Building

Timeframe	Major Activities / Deliverables
October 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign launch ceremony cum seminars</li> <li>• Web accessibility handbook</li> <li>• Web accessibility portal (<a href="http://www.webforall.gov.hk">www.webforall.gov.hk</a>)</li> </ul>
November 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminars for executives and IT managers in private-sector organisations and NGOs</li> </ul>
March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated guidelines on dissemination of information through government websites</li> <li>• Experience sharing session with bureaux and departments</li> </ul>
April 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with tertiary institutions for incorporating web accessibility in ICT curricula</li> </ul>
May 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal letter from Financial Secretary to public organisations</li> <li>• Workshops for public organisations, Government IT services providers</li> </ul>
June 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop for ICT practitioners</li> </ul>
July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Published contact information of ICT companies and NGOs which offer services for implementing and testing of accessible website</li> </ul>
September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience sharing session with bureaux and departments</li> </ul>
October 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch ceremony cum seminars on Web accessibility Recognition Scheme</li> </ul>
November 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion talks on recognition scheme for Chamber of Commerce and CIO board</li> </ul>
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminars for NGOs and ICT practitioners</li> </ul>
January 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness talks for tertiary students</li> </ul>
February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminar for special schools</li> </ul>
April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launching of Accessible webpage templates</li> </ul>





**Summary of Course List in Higher Education Institutions**  
**Incorporation of Web Accessibility into relevant ICT Curricula**

No.	Institutions	Curricula incorporating Web Accessibility
1	City University of Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Introduction to Internet and Programming</li> <li>✧ Web Usability Design and Engineering</li> </ul>
2	Hong Kong Baptist University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Computer Systems and Software Workshop</li> <li>✧ IT for Success in Everyday Life and Work</li> <li>✧ Human Computer Interactions</li> </ul>
3	The Chinese University of Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ IT Foundation</li> <li>✧ Technology, Society and Engineering Practice</li> </ul>
4	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Computer Professional Ethics</li> <li>✧ Human-Computer Interaction</li> <li>✧ Introduction of Internet Computing</li> </ul>
5	The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Exploring Multimedia and Internet Computing</li> <li>✧ Internet Computing</li> </ul>
6	The Open University of Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Introduction to ICT</li> <li>✧ Website Design</li> <li>✧ Website Usability, Internationalisation and Social Issues</li> </ul>
7	The University of Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Internship programme for students of the Computer Science course</li> </ul>
8	Centennial College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Computer and Multimedia Literacy</li> <li>✧ Digital Media and Interactivity</li> </ul>

No.	Institutions	Curricula incorporating Web Accessibility
9	Institute of Vocational Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Human Computer Interaction GUI Programming</li> <li>✧ Mobile and Interface Design</li> <li>✧ User Interface Design</li> <li>✧ Website Design</li> </ul>
10	The Hong Kong Institute of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Principles and Practice of Web Design</li> <li>✧ Introduction to Web Technologies and Standards</li> </ul>
11	Tung Wah College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Community Services and relevant student's course works</li> <li>✧ Student Work Programme</li> </ul>

**Web Accessibility Recognition Scheme**  
**Business Category of the 70 Awardees**

 <b>Name of Gold Awardees</b>	<b>No.</b>	 <b>Name of Silver Awardees</b>	<b>No.</b>
<b>Academia</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City University of Hong Kong</li> <li>• CIO, City University of Hong Kong</li> <li>• ITSO, The HK Polytechnic University</li> <li>• IVE Information Technology</li> <li>• Lingnan University</li> <li>• The Chinese University of HK</li> <li>• The Open University of Hong Kong</li> <li>• The University of Hong Kong</li> </ul>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of CIM, HKIVE (Chai Wan)</li> <li>• Hang Seng Management College</li> <li>• Tung Wah College</li> <li>• Vocational Training Council (VTC)</li> </ul>	4
<b>Government Related</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Airport Authority Hong Kong</li> <li>• Consumer Council (Text version)</li> <li>• Fish Marketing Organisation</li> <li>• HK Council on Smoking and Health</li> <li>• HK Cyberport Management Company Limited</li> <li>• Hong Kong Note Printing Limited</li> <li>• Occupational Deafness Compensation Board</li> <li>• Pok Oi Hospital</li> <li>• Prince of Wales Hospital</li> <li>• Tuen Mun Hospital</li> <li>• Vegetable Marketing Organisation</li> </ul>	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineers Registration Board</li> <li>• Hong Kong Tourism Board</li> <li>• Hospital Authority (New Territories West Cluster)</li> <li>• Hong Kong Productivity Council</li> <li>• Working Group on Tourism &amp; Economic Development of Sai Kung District Council</li> </ul>	5
<b>NGOs</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jockey Club Digital Inclusion Centre</li> <li>• Rehabaid Society</li> <li>• Scout Association of HK The Friends of Scouting</li> <li>• SAHKFOS Jockey Club Kai Yip</li> </ul>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hong Kong Wheelchair Aid Services Limited</li> <li>• SAHK</li> <li>• The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (Caring Company Scheme)</li> </ul>	5

 <b>Name of Gold Awardees</b>	<b>No.</b>	 <b>Name of Silver Awardees</b>	<b>No.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Centre for Children &amp; Youth</li> <li>• SAHKFOS Jockey Club Long Ping Service Centre for Children &amp; Youth</li> <li>• SAHKFOS School Social Work Service</li> <li>• Shek Kip Mei Lutheran Centre for the Blind (Text Version)</li> <li>• The HK Council of Social Service</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation</li> <li>• The Hong Kong Society for the Deaf</li> </ul>	
<b>Commercial</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arcotect Limited</li> <li>• Automated Systems Holdings Limited</li> <li>• BEST-VIEW Media Limited</li> <li>• Cloudgle</li> <li>• Freedom Communications Ltd (Text version)</li> <li>• Market Pro Associates</li> <li>• MINT Asia Limited</li> <li>• NewTrek Systems Limited</li> <li>• Object Valley (Asia Pacific) Limited</li> <li>• on.cc</li> <li>• Scout Association of Hong Kong - Education Centre</li> <li>• SOCOC Limited</li> <li>• The Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd</li> </ul>	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A.S.Watson Group (HK) Limited</li> <li>• Green PR Limited</li> <li>• Hutchison Telecommunications HK Holdings Ltd</li> <li>• IBM China/Hong Kong Limited</li> <li>• New World First Ferry Services Ltd</li> <li>• Ngong Ping 360 Limited</li> <li>• OEM Interactive Company Limited</li> <li>• Ominus (HK) Limited</li> <li>• The Bank of East Asia</li> <li>• The Hong Kong Jockey Club</li> <li>• The Link Management Limited</li> </ul>	11
<b>Others</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Solidarity Fund</li> <li>• Information Technology Resource Centre Limited</li> <li>• Internet Society Hong Kong Limited</li> <li>• Office of the Hon Charles Mok, Legislative Councillor (I.T.)</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HK Institution of Engineers</li> </ul>	1
<b>Total</b>	44	<b>Total</b>	26

## Smart Elderly Awards 2013

Major Items	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of elderly centres / Elder Academies across the territory joining the Scheme to promote the Scheme to their members and nominate them for the awards</li> </ul>	123 centres
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of elderly awardees for using ICT actively in their daily lives</li> </ul>	nearly 2 000 persons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of elders attending the Training Programmes for elderly people</li> </ul>	> 2 000 persons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of self-study handbooks for the elderly</li> </ul>	5 000 copies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of pageviews in the thematic website of the Scheme</li> </ul>	> 10 000 pageviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of elders attending the event on Promotion Day cum Elderly ICT Expo featuring suitable digital products for senior citizens</li> </ul>	3 000 persons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of elderly participants joining the Awards Presentation Ceremony</li> </ul>	700 persons

**Projects for the Development of Digital Inclusion Mobile Applications  
for the Under-privileged Groups**

<b>Project description</b>	<b>Targeted Beneficiary Group</b>	<b>Sponsored Organisation</b>	<b>Funding amount (\$'000)</b>
Provide a barrier-free travel guide for persons with disabilities, detailing the accessibility facilities in tourists spots of Hong Kong	Physically handicapped	The Hong Kong Federation of Handicapped Youth	285
Provide speech augmented map information and indoor venue facility information to visually impaired persons	Visually impaired	The Hong Kong Blind Union	393
Provide Cantonese speech recognition training kits for children with hearing impairment	Hearing impaired	The Hong Kong Society for the Deaf	216
Provide training kits and a publishing platform of educational resources for students with cognitive disabilities	Children with intellectual disabilities	The Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service	178
Provide social learning educational kits for children with autism spectrum disorder	Children with Autism	SAHK	210
Provide a platform for the elderly to search activities in over 190 local elderly centres	Elderly	The Hong Kong Society for the Aged	377
Provide Chinese vocabularies and Cantonese pronunciation service for ethnic minorities	Ethnic minorities	The Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service	338
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,997</b>

**Targets for Students from Low-income Families, the Elderly and  
the Web Accessibility Campaign**

Targets	Timeframe	Current Status
<p><b>Students from Low-income Families</b></p> <p>Facilitating Internet Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Internet at home among students from low-income families is on par with students in the mainstream community</li> </ul>	2014	Difference in Internet adoption has been reduced to only 1% <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>Elderly</b></p> <p>Encouraging adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of the elderly have used a computer</li> <li>• 23% of the elderly have used the Internet</li> </ul>	2014  2014	To be reviewed in 2014 <sup>2</sup>  Ditto
<p><b>Web Accessibility Campaign</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All tertiary institutions have incorporated web accessibility in their ICT curricula</li> <li>• 80% of government websites have validated to W3C WCAG 2.0 AA standard</li> <li>• Top 50 non-government websites frequently visited by persons with disabilities incorporating key web accessibility features increase from currently 25% to 50%</li> </ul>	2013/14  2013  2014	Achieved  Achieved  To be reviewed in 2014 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to the Thematic Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2012, 96% of low-income families with school-age children had computers connected to the Internet at home, while the adoption among the mainstream families with school-age children was 97%.

<sup>2</sup> We will gauge the latest adoption through another Thematic Household Survey in 2014.

<sup>3</sup> We will conduct assessments in 2014 to measure the readiness of non-government websites frequently visited by persons with disabilities