

OGCIO's programmes and projects in promoting the wider use of IT in the community

The Audit Commission ("Audit") conducted a review of the programmes and projects of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") in promoting the wider use of information technology ("IT") in the community.

2. OGCIO's work in promoting the wider use of IT in the community contributes to building a digitally inclusive society. Digital inclusion enables all members of the community to have an equal opportunity to benefit from information and communications technology ("ICT") developments. In 2016-2017, the total expenditure for the initiatives of OGCIO to promote the wider use of IT in the community was \$117.6 million, comprising \$98.7 million for the programme area "IT in the Community" and \$18.9 million for the provision of free public Wi-Fi services funded by the Capital Works Reserve Fund.

3. The Committee noted the following findings from the Director of Audit's Report:

- the annual take-up rate (i.e. the percentage of eligible families served) of the Internet Learning Support Programme ("ILSP")¹ for the school years from 2011-2012 to 2016-2017 ranged only from 4% to 14%. The take-up rate of the ILSP services for the six-year period was 18%;
- up to December 2017, 17 mobile applications ("mobile apps") with a total funding of \$6 million had been developed and launched under the Funding Scheme for Digital Inclusion Mobile Apps.² Eight of the 12 digital inclusion mobile apps funded in the first and second rounds failed to achieve the download targets within the first 12 months after the launch of the mobile apps;
- all government mobile apps developed on or after 1 December 2014 should be made accessible for all users and conform to all the baseline accessibility criteria, e.g. providing text resize function and sufficient colour contrast. As at October 2017, one (4%) of the 23 mobile apps

¹ In May 2010, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved a funding of \$220 million for the implementation of ILSP. ILSP is aimed at helping students from low-income families acquire computer equipment and Internet access services at affordable prices, and providing them and their parents with user and social support to enable their effective use of the subsidy and proper use of the associated educational opportunity.

² Since 2012, OGCIO had launched three rounds of Funding Scheme for Digital Inclusion Mobile Apps to provide funding support for non-profit-making social service organizations to develop mobile apps that cater for the needs of underprivileged groups for free use.

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developed on or after 1 December 2014 and 58 (65%) of the 89 mobile apps developed before 1 December 2014 did not conform to the baseline accessibility criteria;

- in 2017, of the 3 087 Government Wi-Fi ("GovWiFi") hotspots³ checked by OGCIO, the download speed of 1 171 (38%) hotspots was lower than the pledged speed of three Megabits per second, and no Wi-Fi connection could be established at 10 (0.3%) hotspots. For 196 (32%) of the 616 GovWiFi venues, the average daily number of users from 2014 to 2017 was less than 15;
- according to the results of the sample service checks conducted by OGCIO, the percentage of Wi-Fi.HK⁴ venues where Wi-Fi connections could not be established increased from 5% (9 of 165 venues checked) in 2015 to 13% (37 of 284 venues checked) in 2017. The Government pledged to expand the number of Wi-Fi.HK hotspots from 17 000 to 34 000 by 2019, yet the number of Wi-Fi.HK hotspots had only increased by 3 339 (from 17 000 to 20 339) as at 31 December 2017. Up to 28 February 2018, only 19 private organizations had joined the Wi-Fi.HK brand since May 2016;
- under the public-private collaboration pilot project,⁵ free Wi-Fi services had been launched at only 12 (6%) of the 185 venues by the deadline (i.e. 19 December 2017). Three of the four service providers had not commenced the Wi-Fi services at some or all of the allocated venues;
- in 2012, the disposal of three dedicated sites at Tseung Kwan O Town for high-tier data centres⁶ was approved. However, up to January 2018, two of the sites were not yet available for sale. Separately,

³ The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved \$217.6 million in 2007 and a supplementary provision of \$68 million in 2011 for the provision of GovWiFi services from December 2007 to December 2017. Under the GovWiFi services, free public Wi-Fi services were provided in selected government premises.

⁴ Wi-Fi.HK is launched in August 2014 through collaboration of the Government with a number of public and private organizations for providing free Wi-Fi services in Hong Kong.

⁵ On 20 December 2016, the Government entered into licence agreements with four service providers to provide Wi-Fi services for a service period of five years at 185 government venues across 18 districts in Hong Kong with high patronage.

⁶ A data centre is a facility for housing computer systems and associated components. Data centres are classified into four tiers according to serviceability levels and building requirements. Tier 3 and Tier 4 data centres are also known as high-tier data centres.

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from 25 June 2012 to 31 December 2017, the Lands Department only received four applications for lease modification of industrial lots to be used for high-tier data centres;

- up to 31 December 2017, only 47 (66%) of the 71 government bureaux/departments and eight public and private organizations released their data to the Public Sector Information ("PSI") portal;⁷ and
- an assessor and a member of the judging panel of an award category of the Hong Kong ICT Awards⁸ from 2013 to 2017 were members of the project team of the organization for providing the secretariat service. Audit also discovered that an award winner of the Hong Kong ICT Awards 2016 did not meet the entry requirement and was eventually disqualified by OGCIO.

4. The Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. Instead, it asked for written responses regarding the implementation of ILSP, the Funding Scheme for Digital Inclusion Mobile Apps, PSI portal and the Hong Kong ICT Awards; the promotion of accessible design in websites and mobile apps; the progress of the provision of free public Wi-Fi services; and the development of data centres and the strategies and work programmes on promoting the wider use of IT in the community. The consolidated replies from **Secretary for Innovation and Technology** and **Government Chief Information Officer** are in *Appendix 15*.

5. The Committee wishes to be kept informed of the progress made in implementing the various recommendations made by Audit.

⁷ PSI refers to the variety of information collected, produced and possessed by the Government and public bodies as part of their day-to-day operations. OGCIO launched the government PSI portal in 2011 and revamped the portal in March 2015 to make available PSI in digital format for commercial or non-commercial use free of charge.

⁸ The Hong Kong ICT Awards Programme is steered by OGCIO and organized by ICT industry associations and professional bodies to (a) recognize and promote outstanding ICT inventions and applications; and (b) build a locally espoused and internationally acclaimed brand of ICT awards.