For information

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

Building a Digitally Inclusive Society

Introduction

This paper briefs Members about the present situation of digital inclusiveness in Hong Kong and the proposed way forward for building Hong Kong a digitally inclusive society.

Present Situation

2.   Since 1998, we have successfully boosted the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Hong Kong.   From 1998 to 2007, our household Personal Computer penetration rate has increased significantly from about 35% to 74% while the household Internet penetration rate has increased from about 12% to 70%.   Relevant findings of the 2007 Household Survey on Information Technology Usage and Penetration can be found in Annex A.

3.   Hong Kong stands in leading positions in many international benchmarks in respect of measuring an Information Society.   In the International Telecommunication Union's 2007 ICT Opportunity Index[1], Hong Kong ranked 3rd out of about 180 economies worldwide.   However, there is a dichotomy in respect of the disadvantaged groups.

Assessment of Digital Inclusiveness

4.   The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to conduct a

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[1] The major attributes of the 2007 ICT Opportunity Index are Telephony, Internet (traffic/usage), Computers (adoption rate), Quality of Labour Force/Education and Broadcasting (TV).

study in 2005 to assess the degree of digital inclusiveness in Hong Kong. A Comprehensive Digital Inclusion Index[2] (CDII) was established under the study and the CDII of the six disadvantaged groups are:

Elderly	Persons with disabilities and/or chronic illness	Female homemakers (aged 35-59 with level of education at/below primary six)	Single parents	New arrivals	Children of low income families
0.27	0.35	0.37	0.45	0.61	0.63

5.　　　　The study revealed that some specific groups within the society were still lagging behind and might not fully benefit from the digital world. The Government takes note of the findings, which have provided useful pointers to the circumstances of some of the disadvantaged groups.

6.　　　　To better understand the barriers preventing the disadvantaged groups from the greater use of ICT, the OGCIO further commissioned the HKU to undertake an in-depth study in 2007. The barriers revealed by the study are summarised below.

Disadvantaged Group	Barriers on Adopting ICT
Elderly	• Lack of ICT knowledge and skills • Accessibility is still a concern
Persons with disabilities and/or chronic illness	• Lack of costly assisting tools and equipments • Lack of tailor-made ICT trainings
Female homemakers	• Accessibility is still a problem • Affordability in terms of maintenance as well as hardware and software is a concern

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[2]　Ranges from 0 to 1, the CDII reflects the difference in digital inclusiveness between the disadvantaged groups and non-disadvantaged groups. A value of 1 means the level of digital inclusiveness of the disadvantaged group is about the same as the non-disadvantaged group.

Disadvantaged Group	Barriers on Adopting ICT
Single parents	• Training classes do not meet their schedule • Affordability in terms of maintenance as well as hardware and software is a concern
New arrivals	• Illiteracy in English and Chinese Input Method • Lack of tailor-made ICT trainings
Children of low income families	• Accessibility in schools is still limited in terms of opening hours and equipment • Insufficient technical support

Existing measures

7.　　　　Over the years, the Government, in collaboration with the industry and non-government organisations (NGOs), has been undertaking various measures and programmes to bridge the digital divide in the community.　Some of the major programmes are:

- Support the Digital Solidarity Fund of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service;
- Produce radio education programmes to promote ICT adoption;
- Support and collaborate with the social welfare sector and the ICT industry to implement digital inclusion programmes, such as the e-Inclusion Campaign of the Internet Professional Association and the iT Women project of the Caritas Community Centre;
- Encourage the community to adopt barrier-free web design;
- Promote the use of ICT through the IT Hong Kong Campaign; and
- Encourage the development of ICT products and applications for the disadvantaged groups and raise public awareness on digital inclusion through the Hong Kong ICT Awards Scheme.

The Way Forward

8.　　　　Following the recommendation of the 2008 Digital 21 Strategy which will be published later this year, we are planning to set up a task force in early 2008 immediately after the release of the Strategy.　Taking into

account findings of local studies and international benchmarks, the task force is to holistically formulate strategies and initiatives to further address the digital inclusion issues in Hong Kong.   The proposed membership and terms of reference of the task force is enclosed at <u>Annex B</u>.

9.　　　　From the experience gained as well as the evolving situation of the society, we will seek to refine some existing approaches and implement targeted digital inclusion initiatives to facilitate and encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in the Information Society.   One of them is to explore the collaboration with NGOs at district level to implement tailor-made digital inclusion programmes for the disadvantaged groups.   We see that the NGOs, which are in the front line of social services, should have better knowledge and experience in serving the disadvantaged groups in their respective district.

Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
December 2007

**Findings of 2007 Household Survey on
Information Technology Usage and Penetration**

Key Indicators	Findings
Penetration of households with personal computer (PC) at home	around 1,671,600 households, representing **74.2%** of all households
Penetration of Internet in households	around 1,580,200 households with PC at home connected to Internet, representing **70.1%** of all households
Number/Percentage of persons aged 10 and over who had used PC in the past twelve months before the survey conducted amongst all persons aged 10 and over	around 4,061,500, which is 66.4% of that age group
Number/Percentage of persons aged 10 and over who had used Internet service in the past twelve months before the survey conducted amongst all persons aged 10 and over	around 3,961,400, which is 64.8% of that age group

Proposed Task Force on Digital Inclusion

Objective

1.   To formulate strategies and initiatives for addressing digital inclusion issues in Hong Kong in a holistic manner with an aim to enable all members of the community to have equal opportunity to benefit from ICT development.

Proposed Membership

2.   Digital inclusion is one of the major areas of focus under the Digital 21 Strategy.   It is proposed that a senior official from the OGCIO be the convenor of the Task Force.

3.   Members include:

    (a) Senior government officials from the Education Bureau, Home Affairs Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Social Welfare Department, Home Affairs Department and OGCIO.

    (b) Representatives from the social welfare sector.

    (c) Representatives from the ICT industry.

    (d) Representatives from the academia actively participating in promoting digital inclusion.

    (e) Representatives from the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise supporting department/ organisation.

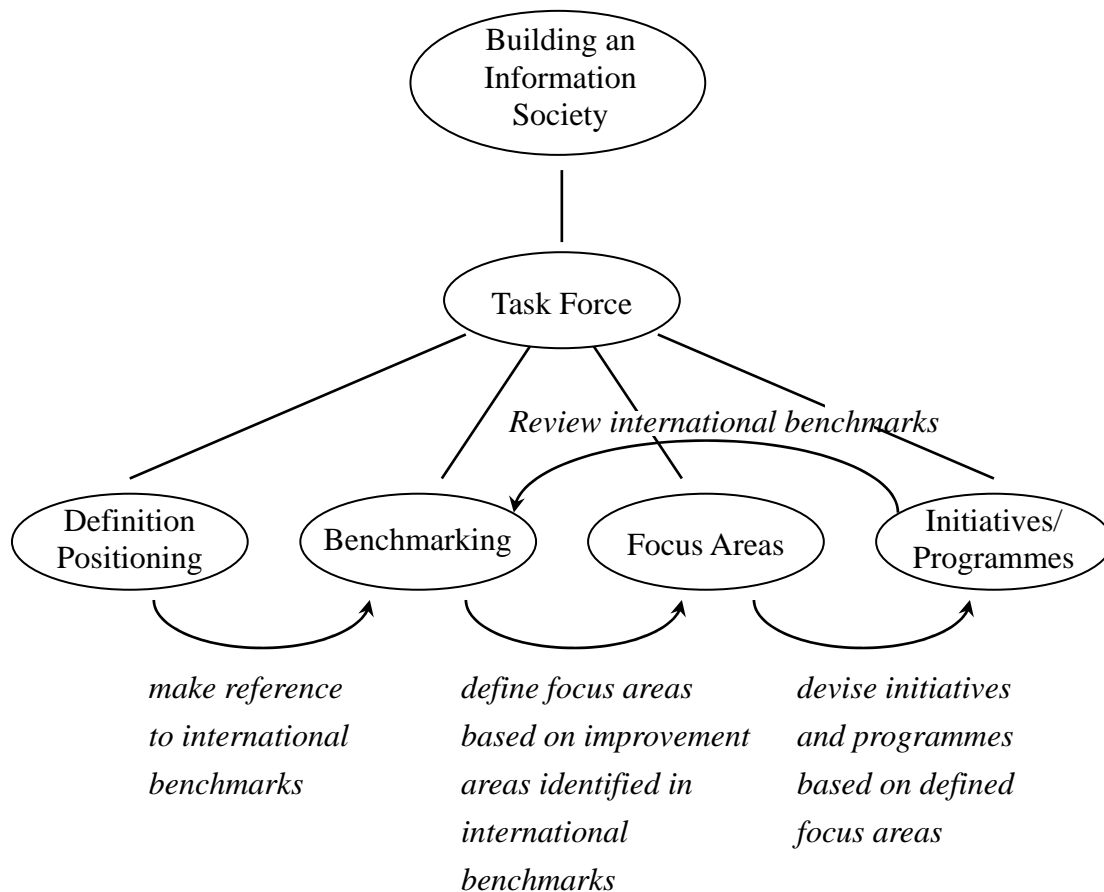   (f) LegCo member(s) with specific interest on digital inclusion.

(Other relevant parties may also be invited to join meetings, on a need basis, to provide input related to their areas of interest)

Proposed Duration

4.　　A two-year term is proposed but this is subject to review after the first year.

Conceptual Model

5.　　The conceptual model of the Task Force is:

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                    ( Building an
                      Information
                       Society )
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                          |
                     ( Task Force )
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              Review international benchmarks
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(Definition Positioning)　(Benchmarking)　(Focus Areas)　(Initiatives/ Programmes)

make reference to international benchmarks　　　*define focus areas based on improvement areas identified in international benchmarks*　　　*devise initiatives and programmes based on defined focus areas*

Roles and Responsibilities

6.　　The main responsibilities of the Task Force are identified as:

(a) <u>Definition & Positioning</u>

- To define digital inclusion and identify digital inclusion issues in the Hong Kong context.

(b) <u>Benchmarking</u>

- To identify relevant indicators, parameters and benchmarks for measuring digital inclusiveness in Hong Kong with reference to the global development.

(c) <u>Identifying Focus Areas</u>

- To sharpen the focus and define a framework of actions on digital inclusion.

(d) <u>Devising Initiatives and Programmes</u>

- To devise and prioritise the digital inclusion initiatives and programmes.
- To liaise/coordinate/advise/recommend relevant parties for the implementation of the initiatives and programmes.
- To review the effectiveness of the initiatives and programmes in terms of the international benchmarking.