

香港特別行政區政府
政府資訊科技總監
辦公室



OFFICE OF THE
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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HONG KONG
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Tel : (852) 2582 4489

Fax : (852) 3741 2126

Ms Yue Tin-po,
Clerk to Panel
on Information Technology and Broadcasting,
Council Business Division 1,
Legislative Council Secretariat,
Room 1038, 10/F,
Murray Road Multi-storey Carpark Building,
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Tin-po,

Written Questions on the Selection Process of the Internet Learning Support Programme

My response to the written questions raised by the Honourable Emily Lau and the Honourable Lee Wing-tat on 11 July 2011 on the selection process of the Internet Learning Support Programme (ILSP) and their request for documents is set out in the following paragraphs.

Submission of documents

1. Mr Jeremy Godfrey's minute dated 18 August 2010 to the Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Technology) (PSCT), together with two drafts, were provided to the Legislative Council Secretariat on 14 June 2011 (ref. RC(1) of Lot II). The internal documents setting out proposed responses to possible enquiries from legislators and the media as well

as the correspondence between the Corruption Prevention Department of Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Office of Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) were also provided to the Legislative Council Secretariat on 7 July 2011.

Outcome of Selection

2. The Honourable Members asked why the organisation with the highest score was not selected as the Implementer. We have explained the entire selection process in detail in the paper submitted to the Legislative Council on 27 May and at the special meetings of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting held on 7 and 16 June. We reiterate that the entire selection process, from the “Request for Proposal” (RFP) stage, evaluation of proposals to adoption of the dual-implementer approach, was conducted in a fair manner and guided only by the interests of the low-income families.

Dual-implementer Approach

3. As the Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS) and eInclusion Foundation Limited (eInclusion) were unable to reach agreement to co-found an Implementer to jointly execute ILSP, the Government critically reviewed the fallback options available, including the setting up of a Financial Secretary Incorporated company, OGCIO acting as the Implementer, single tender, re-tendering and a dual-implementer approach. Having regard to procedural concerns, accountability, speed of securing stakeholders’ agreement and finalising the implementation details as well as resource implications, the Government decided that in the circumstances, engaging HKCSS and eInclusion to implement the programme in two geographical zones would be the most pragmatic arrangement that could meet the implementation schedule of ILSP. ILSP was launched on 14 July and both Implementers have agreed to cap their administrative costs at \$11.25 million each, thus keeping the total amount of administrative costs within our undertaking to the Finance Committee when we sought funding approval in May 2010. Under the dual-implementer approach, the two Implementers are fully responsible for implementing ILSP in their service zones. This arrangement enables them to leverage their respective networks, management experience and business skills. Given that ILSP is an

innovative service concept, bringing in different modes of operation would shed light on its future development.

Internet Professional Association (iProA)

4. In the period from late 2009 to early 2010 when the selection process for ILSP had not yet commenced, the Task Force on Internet Learning considered that the implementation agent for this innovative programme should possess business experience and professional knowledge and operate along commercial lines. The name of iProA was mentioned during Task Force discussions. The Financial Secretary (FS) agreed that iProA possessed the business experience and professional knowledge to implement ILSP, but it was not the only suitable organisation. As regards other organisations, as FS said at the special meeting of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting, the meetings took place almost two years ago, and as far as he could recall he did not mention other organisations.

FS did not take part in the subsequent selection process. He only responded to the discussions of the Task Force on Internet Learning during the preparatory stage of ILSP and had never given any indication that iProA was the only suitable organisation. Since the selection process had not yet commenced at that time, there was nothing improper; nor was there any inconsistency with the principle of fair selection.

Task Force on Internet Learning

5. The Task Force on Internet Learning held two meetings in total. The Task Force comprised representatives from the Commerce and Economic Bureau, Education Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau, Home Affairs Bureau, Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, OGCIO, Housing Department, Office of the Telecommunications Authority and Student Financial Assistance Agency. At its second meeting, the Task Force on Internet Learning noted from the information provided by OGCIO that iProA intended to implement a new project in support of internet learning. Hence, iProA was mentioned and discussed in passing at the meeting. As this was not a main issue for discussion, this detail was not recorded in the minutes of the Task Force's meetings.

It is not uncommon for the Government to gather information on market trends before conducting a request for proposal exercise, with a view to devising terms and conditions that are practical and cost-effective. There was no impropriety in exploring suitable organisations before launching an open RFP exercise for ILSP.

Informal meetings

6. Mr Jeremy Godfrey alleged that after the last meeting of the Task Force on Internet Learning, Mr Duncan Pescod, former PSCT, attended a private meeting with FS concerning selection of implementation agent for ILSP. Mr Pescod can confirm that he met with FS from time to time to discuss various issues. ILSP was covered in one of those discussions. As far as he can recollect, he briefed FS on the organisations that might be interested and competent to implement the Programme and the name of iProA did come up. As he stated during the special meeting of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting, FS had indicated that he felt that iProA would be a suitable service provider for this project, but not the only one, during the formal discussion on this issue. Mr Pescod cannot recall any other instance when that issue was raised.

During the selection process, OGCIO did not have any informal meeting with the Financial Secretary's Office on ILSP.

Monitoring Arrangements

7. The Government entered into a Funding and Operation Agreement (FOA) with the Implementers in May 2011, stipulating the service targets and measures to ensure effective implementation of the Programme. The FOA stipulates the minimum service standards, such as speed and up-time of Internet access service, configurations and software to be bundled with computer equipment, technical support to be provided through hotline and customer support centres, student and parent training, user support and complaint handling mechanism. These requirements ensure that the Implementers deliver comprehensive services and support to Programme participants. Moreover, the FOA also sets out the referral and service interface arrangements between the Implementers to ensure timely and continuous provision of support and services.

The Implementers are required to submit annual plan, programme report and financial report regularly to the Government for progress and performance monitoring. A Programme Steering Committee led by the Government Chief Information Officer will coordinate and support the work of the two Implementers, address common concerns, foster cooperation and facilitate experience and resource sharing in order to enhance service continuously.

OGCIO will update the LegCo Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting on progress of the Programme regularly and conduct a mid-term implementation review in two years' time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joey Lam', is positioned above the printed name.

(Miss Joey Lam)
for Government Chief Information Officer