

**For information**

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

**Internet Learning Support Programme**

**Purpose**

As requested, we have prepared this note to provide an update to Members on the progress of the Internet Learning Support Programme (ILSP).

**Background**

2. In his 2010-11 Budget, the Financial Secretary announced a two-pronged strategy to assist students from low-income families to undertake web-based learning at home through provision of an Internet access subsidy and an ILSP. The Finance Committee approved a funding of \$500 million for these two initiatives at its meeting on 28 May 2010.

**Current Position**

3. The **Internet access subsidy** has been disbursed to eligible families in the beginning of the current school year (2010/11), together with the flat-rate grant for School-related Expenses under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme or the School Textbook Assistance from Student Financial Assistance Agency as the case may be. To enable good use of the subsidy, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) has encouraged Internet service providers and computer suppliers through industry bodies to introduce special product and service offers to the eligible families. With OGCIO's facilitation, some industry bodies have rolled out offers from Internet service providers and hardware and software suppliers since 16 November 2010.

4. For the **ILSP**, which aims at helping eligible families acquire affordable computers and Internet access service and providing them with technical and social support, OGCIO launched an open Request for Proposal

(RFP) between May and July 2010 with a view to identifying a non-profit organisation as implementation agent. The RFP invitation document set out the objectives and requirements of the programme, as well as the marking scheme for evaluating the proposals.

5. Five proposals were received when the RFP closed on 5 July 2010. They were assessed by an Evaluation Panel, led by the Government Chief Information Officer (GCIO) and comprising representatives of the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA), in accordance with the published process and criteria.

6. The Evaluation Panel completed rigorous assessment on different aspects of the proposals, including the proposed operating and financial models, key performance indicators, risk assessment, collaboration with various parties, the expertise, track record and commitment of the proponent and its partners, as well as the arrangements for corporate governance, management and control, and public accountability. Two leading contenders emerged and GCIO concluded that it would be in the best interests of low-income families if the programme could be executed so as to incorporate the best elements of the two leading proposals. The evaluation process and the proposed way forward were reviewed and accepted by a committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Technology) and comprising three representatives from the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Education Bureau.

7. Upon conclusion of the RFP exercise, GCIO debriefed all the five proponents individually on 22 October 2010 and informed them that the Government would invite the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) and the eInclusion Foundation Limited (eInclusion) to explore the possibility of collaboration in jointly establishing a non-profit organisation to implement the programme.

8. HKCSS and eInclusion had intensive discussions since November 2010 to explore possible collaboration arrangements. While both parties share the belief in the benefits of this programme to low-income families and are fully committed to ensuring its successful delivery, there was difficulty reaching agreement on a collaboration model to co-found an implementation agent to take forward the programme.

9. In early January 2011, the Government proposed an alternative collaboration arrangement by engaging HKCSS and eInclusion to implement the programme in two geographical zones having regard to the spread of

low-income families, with each of them taking up responsibility for one of the zones and OGCIO providing central coordination on matters such as territory-wide promotion, students' eligibility, monitoring and reporting, and other mutual concerns. This arrangement enables both organisations to leverage their network and management experience to bring benefits to low-income families. The Government will review the implementation arrangements in two years.

10. Both HKCSS and eInclusion have accepted this dual implementer approach. We are now working out the collaboration principles and funding and operation arrangements with them. Some of the accepted principles would include establishing common standards of service, setting up performance indicators for evaluation, ensuring continuous service to the low-income families, etc. Through the co-ordination of OGCIO, the two organisations will proceed with preparatory work to launch the programme by the start of the 2011/12 school year as scheduled.

### **Clarification**

11. In response to a media article in early November 2010, some Members have asked for clarification on the involvement or otherwise of the Under Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (USCED) in the RFP exercise. We can confirm that USCED has not been involved at all in the RFP exercise or any part of the subsequent discussions with the HKCSS or eInclusion.

Office of the Government Chief Information Officer  
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau  
January 2011