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Legislative Council

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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 11 June 2018

Updated background brief on Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living and Digital Inclusion

Purpose

This paper summarizes pervious discussions by Members on the Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living ("ITFBL") and issues relating to digital inclusion ("DI").

Background

Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living

2.   In the 2016 Policy Address, the Chief Executive proposed the setting up of a $500 million ITFBL to provide funding support to projects that make use of innovative ideas and technologies to improve people's daily lives. For the purpose of ITFBL, daily life can be improved by (a) making life more convenient; (b) making life healthier and more comfortable; (c) making life safer and (d) improving the general well-being of specific groups (such as the elderly or groups with specific needs). ITFBL was launched in May 2017.

3.   ITFBL is open to applications by non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"), non-profit-making organizations or professional bodies and public service organizations to carry out projects for the benefit of the general public or specific groups, such as the elderly, disabled or the underprivileged groups. An Assessment Panel comprising academia, professionals, representatives from the industry and relevant Government Bureaux/Departments is appointed to vet the applications according to a set of pre-determined criteria. Successful applicants will receive a grant equivalent to the difference between the eligible costs of the

project and funding received from other sources (such as funding from a parent organization, sales proceeds or third party sponsorship), subject to a cap of 90% of the eligible costs of the project or $5 million, whichever is the less.

4.   The Finance Committee ("FC") approved the funding proposal at its meeting held on 28 June 2016.

Promoting digital inclusion

5.   Hong Kong has world-class information and communications technology ("ICT") infrastructure and well-provided Internet service. From education to business, entertainment, health care, government services and social interactions, ICT products and services are available which bring convenience in many aspects of people's daily lives. However, there are sectors in the community, including the elderly and the underprivileged groups which experience barriers in accessing ICT services and are unable to enjoy the full benefits of the digital economy. To bridge this "digital divide" in the community, the Administration has introduced measures which promote DI to achieve the vision of "empowering everyone through technology".

6.   The Administration has implemented various DI initiatives over the past few years to help underprivileged groups, elderly, persons with disabilities and students from low-income families leverage technology, enhance their quality of living and connection with the society. The initiatives include:

(a) **Digital Inclusion Mobile Applications** – This initiative provides funding support for NGOs to develop mobile apps that address the special needs of individual target groups and bring convenience to their daily lives.

(b) **Internet Learning Support Programme** ("ILSP") – ILSP was introduced to support students with limited means to learn through the Internet. The programme has narrowed the gap in respect of ICT usage between students from low-income families and their mainstream counterparts.

(c) **Information and communications technology Outreach Programme for the Elderly** – Through this initiative, the Administration mobilizes volunteers to reach out for institutionalized elderly people at elderly care homes to provide computer training, and arouse their interests in ICT through digital games and communication software.

      (d)   **Web Accessibility Campaign** – The Campaign was launched with the objective to enable people with disabilities to perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the web.

Previous discussions

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7.   The Administration consulted the Information Technology and Broadcasting ("the Panel") on details of ITFBL and DI at its meeting held on 12 June 2017.

Helping the elderly population and community with special needs

8.   Members were concerned whether the Administration would reach out to more elderly people through family members and school students, and to discuss with research and development institutions, elderly service organizations and universities regarding the needs and problems faced by elderly people so that applicants for ITFBL could address more accurately the needs of the elderly in their applications. In response, the Administration informed the Panel that local service agencies were encouraged to adapt suitable overseas innovative technologies to serve the local community. Apart from the ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly, the Administration had also provided funding support for non-profit social service organizations to develop DI mobile apps that addressed the needs of specific community groups, including the elderly.

9.   Members enquired whether the Administration had studied the pattern of the use of the Internet or mobile services by elderly people, whether and to what extent elderly people used social media, and the usual problems or difficulties they encountered when accessing services. The Administration said that it would provide support to initiatives which met the objective of making people's daily living more convenient, comfortable and safer through ITFBL.

Use of the Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living

10.   Members queried whether individuals of the target groups for which mobile apps or other products or services were developed using ITFBL might not be able to use such services if they did not have mobile phones in the first place. They asked if the funding under ITFBL could be used to subsidize low income groups or vulnerable groups to buy mobile phones. The Administration responded that ITFBL could be used not only for supporting the development of mobile apps but also for production of software or services which targeted at the needs of specific community groups. Using ITFBL to subsidize low income or

vulnerable groups to buy mobile phones might not be cost effective. The Administration added that it would explore whether resources or other means of support could be made available to help low income groups to acquire mobile phones and to make use of the services and products developed under ITFBL.

11. On whether ITFBL could also be used to support government departments to improve services to the public through the use of technologies, the Administration said that another $500 million had been set aside for providing support for Government departments to adopt or develop technologies to improve public services.

Performance indicators

12. Members enquired if the Administration would develop performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of ITFBL in promoting DI, especially among elderly people, young people, new arrival women and people with disabilities. The Administration responded that the main objectives of ITFBL were to make people's daily living more convenient, comfortable and safer, or address the needs of specific community groups. It would measure the extent to which ITFBL met these objectives. Applicants for ITFBL would be required to indicate the target beneficiary group(s) of the proposed projects, the number of people expected to benefit from the projects and how the fund's efficacy would be measured.

13. Members suggested that the Administration should set performance indicators and targets in respect of each of the vulnerable groups or communities with special needs for further promotion of DI.

Promoting digital inclusion

14. Members expressed the view that it was important to promote DI among people with disabilities. They considered that promoting DI was one of the Administration's major policy initiatives for many years, but it appeared that the Administration still had not had a thorough understanding of the situation. They suggested that the Administration should devote more efforts and resources to address the issue and map out a strategy on promoting DI. In response, the Administration said it was aware of the situation and would consider developing new key performance indicators to further promote DI having regards to technological advancement.

Legislative Council and Special Finance Committee meetings

15. A question for written answer on ITFBL was raised by Hon Charles Peter MOK at the Council meeting on 1 November 2017. At the Special FC

meeting on 19 April 2018, members also raised queries to the Administration regarding the finance and expenditure of ITFBL, assistance to persons with disabilities, eligibility, and details of its application procedure.

Latest position

16. The Administration will brief the Panel on 11 June 2018 on the latest work progress of ITFBL and DI.

Relevant papers

17. A list of the relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
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List of relevant papers

Issued by	Meeting date/ Issue date	Paper
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting	12 June 2017	Administration's paper on Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living and Digital Inclusion (LC Paper No. CB(4)1133/16-17(05)) Updated background brief on Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living and Digital Inclusion (LC Paper No. CB(4)1133/16-17(06)) Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(4)1360/16-17)
Legislative Council	1 November 2017	Question No. 16 raised by Hon Charles MOK (Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living)
Special Finance Committee	19 April 2018	Administration's replies to Members initial written questions (Reply Serial Nos. ITB008, ITB012, ITB013, ITB020, ITB029, ITB038, ITB045, ITB046, ITB067, ITB078, ITB128 and ITB164 (https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr17-18/english/fc/fc/w_q/itb-e.pdf)