

**For discussion
on 15 March 2021**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
“Knowing More About IT” Programme**

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the “Knowing More About IT” Programme to be implemented for all publicly-funded primary schools¹ in Hong Kong to enhance primary school students’ interest, knowledge and application of information technology (IT) through extra-curricular activities (ECAs).

Background

2. Strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and popular science education is among the eight major areas of work announced in the 2017 Policy Address to drive innovation and technology (I&T) development. In this digital era, IT plays a vital role in both I&T development and people’s daily living. The demand for IT talent in all sectors of the economy is ever-increasing. We consider that the younger generation needs to build up a solid IT foundation as early as possible.

3. The Innovation and Technology Bureau rolled out the “IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools” Programme in the 2020/21 school year to cultivate an interest in IT among secondary school students, and enhance their digital skills, computational thinking and innovative abilities. The programme has been well received by both the secondary schools and the IT industry. Despite the schools’ ECAs were severely affected by the COVID-19 epidemic, response to the programme has been overwhelming ever since application was opened in December 2020. We have received over 100 applications from secondary schools as at end-February 2021.

¹ These include government, aided and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, but exclude private schools and international schools. The number of publicly-funded primary schools is 536 in the 2019/20 school year.

4. Financial Secretary announced in the 2021-22 Budget that the Government would extend the “IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools” Programme to all publicly-funded primary schools and implement the “Knowing More About IT” Programme, with an aim to stimulate primary school students’ interest in IT and strengthen their basic IT knowledge through ECAs, thereby enhancing their interest to pursue the study of STEM subjects and preparing for integration into the digital society in the future.

Programme Details

5. Under the “Knowing More About IT” Programme, all publicly-funded primary schools can apply for a funding grant of up to \$400,000 from the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) within the three schools years from 2021/22 to 2023/24. The scope of funding comprises the following two parts -

- (a) Operating grant: for meeting expenditure on professional services, operating services and technical support services etc. for IT-related ECAs; and
- (b) One-off grant: for meeting upfront expenditure on hardware, software and equipment required for organising IT-related ECAs.

6. The operating grant is used mainly for organising school-based ECAs, such as coding class, robotics and artificial intelligence workshops, participation in IT-related competitions and visits to IT companies etc. We welcome schools to jointly organise IT activities if they consider appropriate. As for the one-off grant, it is used mainly for procuring hardware, software and equipment necessary for ECAs. OGCIO will compile a reference list of relevant IT equipment and devices applicable to primary schools.

7. The maximum operating grant for organising ECAs is \$400,000, while the maximum one-off grant for acquiring IT equipment is \$200,000. OGCIO will issue guidelines on the application and funding details of the programme, as well as the nature and types of activities to be covered.

8. We will adopt management arrangements similar to that of the “IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools” Programme to allow schools to use the grants with greater flexibility. Schools are required to submit an annual plan to set out clearly the list of IT activities to be organised (including expenditure

estimates, details of the activities and the estimated number of participants etc.) and the estimated expenditure for procuring equipment and devices. To avoid increasing administrative workload for schools and facilitate timely purchase of new IT hardware and software, depending on the annual budget, we will make best effort to disperse grants at the beginning of each academic year. A year-end report needs to be submitted to OGCIO. Schools are required to submit a final report with audited accounts by the end of the three-year programme for checking and review, and refund any unspent grant to the Government. OGCIO will provide detailed guidelines on the reporting and monitoring procedures.

9. In addition, the terms of reference of the current Advisory Committee and Vetting Committee of the “IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools” Programme will be expanded to cover the “Knowing More About IT” Programme. The Advisory Committee is chaired by Government Chief Information Officer, with members comprising IT professionals, I&T sector and education professionals. They are responsible for providing advice on the reference list of IT equipment, nature and types of activities, and implementation progress of the programme. The Vetting Committee comprises experts from both the education and IT sectors, and is responsible for approving school applications and providing advice on funding allocation.

Financial Implications

10. We will allocate an additional general non-recurrent expenditure of \$225 million to implement the “Knowing More About IT” Programme for three academic years starting from 2021/22 academic year.

11. The estimated cashflow for the relevant financial year is as follows –

(\$million)					
Financial year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Cashflow	39	95	66	25	225

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to note the details of the “Knowing More About IT” Programme.

**Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
Innovation and Technology Bureau
March 2021**