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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 3 June 2024

Background brief on promoting digital inclusion

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Administration's work on promoting digital inclusion. It also gives a brief account of the major views and concerns expressed by Members when relevant issues were discussed by the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting ("the Panel") in recent years.

Background

2. Digital technology is closely related to people's daily life, and online shopping, electronic payment, etc. have already become the mode of daily life of members of the public under the new normal.   The Government has implemented various measures to help those in need especially the elderly to understand and use digital technology products and services, with a view to accelerating their integration into the digital society.

Digital inclusion measures

Information and Communications Technology Outreach Programme for the Elderly

3. Since 2014, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") has launched several rounds of the Information and Communications Technology ("ICT") Outreach Programme for the Elderly ("the Outreach Programme").   Under this initiative, not-for-profit elderly

services organizations were commissioned to organize a variety of activities for elderlies to experience digital living, encouraging them to make wider use of digital technology.   Also, mobile outreach service stations have been set up to proactively introduce useful mobile apps to the elderly and answer their questions on using smart phone.

Enriched Information and Communications Technology Training Programme for the Elderly

4.   OGCIO launched the Enriched ICT Training Programme for the Elderly in 2019, offering over 100 free advanced digital training courses for the elderly with basic knowledge of digital technology.   Topics covered include "iAM Smart", gerontechnology, cyber security and so on.   Youth volunteers will be arranged to serve as course instructors to facilitate the elderly in using digital technology and promote inter-generational harmony. Upon completion of the advanced training courses, the elderly participants can even act as teaching assistants to encourage their fellows to obtain technology knowledge and broaden their social circles.

Web-based learning portal for the elderly

5.   OGCIO launched a web-based learning portal, namely the Elderly IT learning portal, in 2019 to facilitate the self-directed learning of digital technologies by more elderly people.   The learning modules offered by the web-based learning portal include "HKeMobility", electronic payment, and electronic food ordering applications.

Recognition scheme for the elderly

6.   OGCIO launched the first "Elderly IT Stars Recognition Scheme" in 2021 to commend elders who have been active in learning and making good use of digital technology.   Through their success stories, the awardees can encourage other fellow elders to follow suit.

Web/Mobile Applications accessibility

7.   Currently, all government websites (about 600) meet the Level AA standard of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") Version 2.0 promulgated by the World Wide Web Consortium and are in compliance with the requirements of web accessibility to facilitate utilization among persons with disabilities.   Over half of these government websites have

further met the latest standard of WCAG Version 2.1[1] or have planned to meet this standard when conducting large-scale website revamp. Besides, about 80 government mobile applications have conformed to the "Baseline Accessibility Criteria for Government Mobile App".[2]

8. With regard to enterprises and public and private organizations, OGCIO will promote the adoption of web accessibility design catering for the needs of the elderly by public and private organizations on multiple fronts. Free assessment and advisory services will be provided to all participating organizations in the Web Accessibility Recognition Scheme, and regular briefing sessions will be arranged for members of different sectors of the community to promote the concepts and technical requirements of web accessibility.

Promotion of social innovation and cross-sector collaboration

9. Launched in 2013, the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund ("the SIE Fund") seeks to alleviate poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong by promoting social innovation and nurturing social entrepreneurship. The SIE Fund accepts funding applications from individuals, non-governmental or business organizations that propose innovative ideas to address poverty issues in Hong Kong. Different types of digital technologies are involved in the projects, such as the development of smart glasses to provide real-time visual assistance to visually impaired persons. In the process of reviewing funding applications, the Fund has an established evaluation mechanism and criteria. Each application will be handled through a fair and transparent process, taking into consideration important factors including, among others, the project innovativeness and expected social impact, service design and mode of operation, and relevant experience of the project team.

10. Through the engagement of an intermediary, the SIE Fund has established the Gerontechnology Platform ("the Platform") in 2021 to link up different stakeholders on the supply and demand sides by way of

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[1] For details about the latest standard of WCAG Version 2.1, please refer to the OGCIO web page.

[2] With a high degree of penetration of mobile telephone services, opportunities arise for enterprises and organizations to develop accessible applications on mobile platform in order to harness the fast growing digital economy. The Administration has prepared the Mobile Application Accessibility Handbook for mobile application owners and developers, which covers the basic concept and best practices in making mobile applications accessible to persons with disabilities. These best practices are categorized into Baseline level and Advanced level.

engagement, cross-sector partnership and collaboration. The goal is to foster the development and application of gerontechnology. As at July 2023, the Platform has provided start-ups and small-and-medium enterprises with over 1 000 support and consultancy services on the design or development of gerontechnology products.

Previous discussions

11. The major views and concerns expressed by Members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Internet usage rate among the elderly

12. Noting that the Internet usage rate of persons aged 65 and above reached 82% in 2022 and that the Administration expected the Internet usage rate among the elderly to attain 87% by 2025, Members commented that a more aggressive target should be set, while enquiring about the Administration's measures to improve the living of the elderly by promoting their greater adoption of digital technology. The Administration explained that it would strive to promote digital inclusion by, for example, increasing the number of mobile outreach service stations and stepping up collaborative efforts with the District Services and Community Care Teams ("the Care Teams") and industry organizations, with a view to further boosting the Internet usage rate among the elderly.

Information and Communications Technology Outreach Programme for the Elderly

13. Members opined that given the recently rampant cyber fraud cases involving artificial intelligence, the Administration should incorporate contents on cyber security and anti-deception in the mobile outreach service activities. Regarding the implementing organizations involved in the Outreach Programme, Members enquired about their roles in the initiative and the number of districts under the service coverage of each organization. The Administration advised that the implementing organizations would be requested to include topics, such as cyber security, in the mobile outreach service activities, and that it would maintain close liaison with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Hong Kong Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Centre to step up the dissemination of anti-scam messages to the elderly and, at the same time, incorporate the relevant elements into the public education materials. Insofar as the roles of the implementing organizations were concerned, outreach activities would be

carried out in multiple districts by these organizations, with the overall service scope covering all the 18 districts across Hong Kong.

Enriched Information and Communications Technology Training Programme for the Elderly and web-based learning portal for the elderly

14.   Regarding the Administration's technology training programmes for the elderly, Members were of the view that while most of the activities were conducted in the form of trial classes to showcase technology to the elderly, elements involving practical application of technology were not found.   Members suggested the addition of content related to digital entertainment and commonly used Mainland mobile applications to the training programmes, so as to enhance the elderly's interest in utilizing digital technology in their daily lives.   Members also commented that consideration might be given to providing resources to organizations such as community groups for the additional recruitment of retirees as ambassadors, in order to strengthen connections with the elderly at the district level.

15.   The Administration advised that information relevant to everyday life was available on the existing web-based learning platform to cater to the elderly's learning needs.   While exploring with training providers the incorporation of more entertaining contents that suited the needs of daily living, the authorities would study the feasibility of working with community groups and different organizations to take forward the work on digital inclusion through the networks of these organizations.

Web accessibility

16.   Members commented that as the development of web accessibility in Hong Kong was still not popularized, the Administration should require subvented organizations and public service organizations to comply with the web accessibility requirements to facilitate usage by persons with disabilities ("PWDs").   The Administration remarked that apart from endeavouring to promote the adoption of web accessibility design by public and private organizations, it would strengthen its promotion and publicity efforts and consult relevant groups on the needs of PWDs for accessing online services.

Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund

17.   Noting that the number of participants in different projects under the SIE Fund and the amount of funding for each participant varied, Members enquired about the indicators adopted by the Administration to determine the funding amount, as well as the measures put in place to prevent those

organizations which had been granted funding under other funding schemes from making duplicate applications to the SIE Fund in respect of the same project.   The Administration responded that interested organizations were invited, by way of open recruitment, to submit project proposals with the theme of promoting inter-generational digital inclusion in 2021.   When considering the projects to which funding would be granted, the assessment criteria were mainly based on factors such as whether the project would meet the objectives of the SIE Fund, the scale of the organizations and whether the organizations had the experience of organizing similar activities.   The amount of funding would be decided on the basis of the scale of the activities and the estimated number of beneficiaries.   At the same time, the Administration would examine whether the organizations had received alternative financial support from the Government in respect of the same project.

Cross-sectoral collaboration

18.   Members enquired about the channels through which the Administration planned to promote outreach activities and training programmes to the hidden elderly people who were not users of the regular services of social welfare agencies or elders with special needs, such as those with dementia.   The Administration advised that it would actively expand the service network in collaboration with the Care Teams, while negotiating with training providers to offer customized training which served the needs of different elderly people.

Performance indicators

19.   Questions were raised as to whether indicators reflecting the elderly's competence in using digital technology would be developed with reference to the experiences of the Mainland or overseas places.   The Administration informed Members that a follow-up survey would be conducted following the completion of a training programme.   The Administration, together with the Census and Statistics Department, would study the inclusion of indicators that would reflect the elderly's capability in using digital technology in the existing survey, so as to further examine the effectiveness of the Administration's efforts in promoting digital inclusion.

Council questions

20.   Members had raised questions related to the Administration's work on promoting digital inclusion at Council meetings.   The relevant

hyperlinks are in the **Appendix**.

Latest position

21.   The Administration will brief the Panel on 3 June 2024 on the work progress of promoting digital inclusion.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 1 and Public Complaints Office
Legislative Council Secretariat
28 May 2024

Promoting digital inclusion

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting	10 July 2023	Agenda Item III: Digital inclusion Minutes of meeting Follow-up paper
Special Meetings of the Finance Committee to Examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025	19 April 2024	Written replies to initial questions raised by Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025 (Reply Serial Nos. : ITIB004, 012, 013, 018, 037, 047, 055, 059, 061, 092 and 180)

Council meeting	Papers
23 November 2022	Question 5: Encouraging the application of gerontechnology among the elderly
19 April 2023	Question 3: Measures to improve social isolation among the elderly
8 November 2023	Members' Motion: Accelerating the construction of community facilities for a smart city and bridging the digital divide