

Message

In his Policy Address last October, the Chief Executive outlined his vision for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region : to make Hong Kong a leader in the information world of tomorrow. I have set out in this Policy Objective booklet the key result areas which we believe will take Hong Kong forward and deliver this vision.

Our Policy Objective on information technology is underpinned by three core principles. First, we will take the opportunities presented by information technology (IT) development to enhance the personal and social life of the community by providing improved access to public services electronically. Second, we will establish an information infrastructure with an open common interface for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region so that businesses and individuals can also derive benefits from it. Third, we will create an environment conducive to the development and growth of the IT sector and electronic business.

For Hong Kong to maintain its status as a leading international financial and business centre and to remain competitive in the global market, we have to keep ourselves in the forefront of IT development, and to make the best use of the ever advancing information and communications technologies to improve the services that we offer. With this Policy Objective, we wish to be able to bring about improved public services to the community, to help develop new ways of doing business, and to maintain Hong Kong's competitiveness in the Information Age.



(K C Kwong)

Secretary for Information Technology
and Broadcasting

Information Technology

Our Policy Objective is to enhance and promote Hong Kong's information infrastructure and services so as to make Hong Kong a leading digital city in the globally connected world of the 21st century.

Our targets in pursuing this Policy Objective are –

- The availability of an open common interface for electronic transactions between Government, businesses and individuals
- The extensive use of IT within Government
- High computer literacy rate in the community
- High IT take-up rate in businesses and households
- Hong Kong's active participation in international and bilateral IT co-operation

Key Result Areas (KRAs)

To ensure that this Policy Objective can be achieved, we must deliver results in a number of key areas, that is, we must –

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III	Promote and facilitate the use of new and emerging information technologies within the community	Page 9

The following sections of this booklet explain the importance of these KRAs, describe the broad thrust of our efforts, and outline the indicators which we are using to assess progress. Each section lists the new key initiatives being taken to achieve our objectives and pinpoints the agency accountable for each initiative and the specific targets which we intend to meet.

I

Develop IT infrastructure and set standards

The Government is committed to keeping Hong Kong in the forefront of information technology development. The establishment of the Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau in April 1998 has improved co-ordination in the formulation of policies on information technology and the related areas of broadcasting and telecommunications. To assist the Bureau in this task, the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee was set up in August 1998.

To promote the wider use of information technology in Hong Kong, we seek to establish an information infrastructure with an open common interface through which the Government, business and the general public can interact easily and securely. Accordingly, we will take a lead in creating demand for services that make effective use of the shared infrastructure through the introduction of on-line delivery of government services, or Electronic Service Delivery (ESD). With ESD, the public will be able to transact business with Government through a diversity of access devices, and government departments will be able to improve the quality and efficiency of the delivery of their services to the community.

The private sector will be able to make use of the same open, common information infrastructure for conducting electronic commercial transactions at a later stage. This infrastructure can also serve as the gateway for electronic transactions with the Mainland. To encourage the general public and, in particular, the business community to participate in electronic commerce, we will address concerns about the security of on-line transactions by introducing an appropriate legal framework, facilitating the establishment of certification authorities, and building secure central gateways to government departments.

The Government will promote the widest possible use of this information infrastructure by introducing common standards which apply to both the public and private sectors. In particular, we will establish a common interface for the use of Chinese in electronic communication and data exchange between Government departments and the community.

With our excellent telecommunications network and the close relationship with the Mainland, Hong Kong has the potential to develop into an Asian hub for the Internet. We shall take steps to create an environment conducive to this development, with a view to promoting information flow within the region through Hong Kong. This will in turn enhance Hong Kong's role as a main player in electronic commerce in Asia.

To take advantage of the latest developments in information technology, we will continue to explore with interested countries the possibility of entering into co-operation arrangements with us. We will also take an active part in discussions on electronic commerce in international fora to assist in the development of international consensus on the treatment of relevant cross-border issues.

Indicators

Our indicators of progress in this area are –

- the timely development of an open common interface for data exchange and transactions between Government and the community
- the adoption of industry standards to ensure that IT based systems are compatible and can communicate with each other
- Hong Kong's active participation in multilateral and bilateral co-operation on IT

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To co-ordinate and implement a phased programme for the electronic delivery of services through an information infrastructure with an open, common interface in the public sector, and subsequently extending it to cover the private sector</p> <p><i>(Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau (ITBB))*</i></p>	<p>To invite tenders from potential service operators in 1998-1999, with a view to introducing the first phase of ESD in 2000</p>
<p>To build secure central gateways for communication between government departments and the community and the business sector for the purpose of information dissemination and service delivery through the Internet</p> <p><i>(Information Technology Services Department (ITSD))</i></p>	<p>To build the secure central gateways in 2000</p>
<p>To facilitate the development of a public key infrastructure and the establishment of Certification Authorities to ensure security in the delivery of electronic services and in carrying out electronic transactions</p> <p><i>(ITBB)</i></p>	<p>To set up a public Certification Authority by 1999</p>

* the brackets denote the agency with lead responsibility for the initiative

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To introduce legislation to facilitate the development of electronic commerce (<i>ITBB</i>)</p>	<p>To introduce legislation in 1999 to provide the necessary legal framework for electronic commerce</p>
<p>To establish a common interface for using Chinese in electronic communication and data exchange between Government and the community (<i>ITSD</i>)</p>	<p>To establish the common interface in 2000</p>
<p>To set up an electronic link between the Governments of the Hong Kong SAR and the Guangdong Province (<i>ITBB</i>)</p>	<p>To set up the inter-government electronic link by 1999</p>
<p>To continue to conclude bilateral arrangements on IT co-operation with countries which are advanced in IT development (<i>ITBB</i>)</p>	<p>Actively explore the possibility of concluding bilateral arrangements on IT co-operation with interested partners in 1999-2000</p>

II

Foster the development of the IT industry locally

As a place where the East meets the West, Hong Kong is well-placed to take an active role in the development of Chinese language standards and applications. To this end, we shall encourage co-operation between the local IT industry businesses and institutions with the Mainland and other Chinese speaking communities in the Asia Pacific region and internationally.

We shall facilitate the commercialisation of the results of research on leading edge technology through closer collaboration between academia and the local IT industry. We shall, in liaison with Industry Department, identify requirements for facilities for small and medium-sized enterprises and individual entrepreneurs to start up IT businesses.

To foster the development of the IT industry locally, we need to have an adequate supply of IT professionals. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) is conducting a consultancy study on the manpower and training needs of the IT sector. The outcome of the study will form a useful basis for the Government to draw up a co-ordinated strategy for IT manpower planning, training and development. We shall liaise closely with EMB in this endeavour.

We shall adopt a vigorous outsourcing strategy for the provision of IT services within Government with a view to creating a market of sufficient size to encourage the further development of the IT industry.

For the local IT industry to stay ahead and competitive, we must know what technological advances are being made elsewhere so that we can position ourselves in the global market strategically. We shall continue to develop and maintain contacts with other economies which are advanced in IT development to facilitate exchanges of information and experience.

Indicators

Our indicators of progress in this area are –

- the contribution of IT services to Hong Kong's GDP
- the growth of skilled IT professionals available to Hong Kong
- the IT professional skills profile in the working population of Hong Kong

Initiative

Target

To expand outsourcing by the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) in order to foster the growth of the local IT industry

(Information Technology Services Department)

In 1999-2000 to start outsourcing the application maintenance activities currently performed in-house by ITSD



Promote and facilitate the use of new and emerging technologies within the community

To deliver the social and economic benefits of information technology developments, the community will need to be aware of the opportunities and benefits offered by new digital technologies, especially the opportunities for exploiting the Internet for commercial use and accessing information for education and social enhancement.

The Government will use the ESD project as the vehicle for promoting the development of its own skills and capabilities so that it leads by example. The Government will achieve greater efficiency and productivity in the delivery of public services by integrating services across boundaries between government departments in order to deliver a seamless service.

We shall continue to promote awareness and understanding of IT and its applications through an active promotion and skills development programme. We will work in close partnership with the local IT industry, businesses, academic and other professional bodies to encourage the cross-fertilisation of ideas and to promote the use of new and emerging technologies within the community.

To promote the wider use of IT in Hong Kong, we shall take the lead in creating demand for services that make effective use of our information infrastructure across a range of private sector organisations and the public sector. This will be achieved by sharing knowledge and expertise and promulgating the benefits of IT in a range of business sectors. We will also continue with our efforts to promote awareness in, and rectification action on the Year 2000 problem. We will publicise progress in this respect in order to assure the public of the continuity of essential services when the new millennium arrives.

The work on IT in education being pursued by EMB is vital in preparing our next generation for the Information Age. We shall continue to assist EMB in this endeavour.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- the computer literacy of the school population and graduates of tertiary institutions
- the effectiveness of publicity efforts in promoting awareness and understanding of IT and its applications
- Internet use and IT penetration in the community and across small and medium-sized enterprises

Initiatives

To transform the delivery of public services by using the ESD infrastructure

(Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau (ITBB))

Targets

To implement the first tranche of public services through ESD by 2000

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To ensure the early rectification of the Year 2000 problem within Government and in organisations which are funded or regulated by Government and which provide public services, and promote awareness of the Year 2000 problem on a community-wide basis</p> <p><i>(ITBB)</i></p>	<p>To achieve Year 2000 compliance for mission critical systems in the public sector by June 1999</p>
<p>To identify projects which help to promote the use of information technology within the community</p> <p><i>(ITBB)</i></p>	<p>To implement pilot projects in 1999-2000</p>
<p>To launch programmes to encourage the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, to engage in electronic commerce</p> <p><i>(ITBB)</i></p>	<p>To work with chambers of commerce and other representative organisations to encourage the participation of consumers, and in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, in electronic commerce</p>