Comments in Response to the Consultation on the Information Technology Professional Services Arrangement (ITPSA) in the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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We support an ITPSA-like arrangement, which enables a faster tender award process, a lower tender cost, and an efficient process used by the client government departments. The two-tier (or two groups) arrangement allows local SMEs not only to participate but also develops on-the-task practices for local professionals to advance their experience and expertise.

From the perspective of IT professionals, the ITPSA arrangement shall not accelerate price competition in the IT industry, but shall be a driving force to facilitate the **professional development** and **continuing improvement** of the industry, and to maintain and enhance the quality performance of the practitioners in the industry. Due to the lack of quality measurements and motivation schemes in the ITPSA, contractors will tend to deliver a barely satisfactory job rather than a good quality job.

The award of work assignment shall not be based on the lowest bid without regards to quality of work. The selection mechanism shall include quality factors, in quantifiable terms, such as:
- Professional qualification of the proposed team members;
- Previous performance record of the company and the team members; and
- Statistical measurement of defects.

The client departments should have the flexibility to exclude ITPSA contractor(s) because of performance concern for instance.

As a way to improve the industry practice, **professionalism** is of strategic important. Furthermore, client departments may need support to better define the work assignment and to incorporate appropriate quality requirements. We believe that the Government should:
- Organize experience-sharing forums;
- Establish/expand the role of Contract Advisor to review work assignment above certain complexity/size;
- Provide guidelines such as Standard Specification (e.g. imposing professional standard like HKIE INF Discipline qualification and the best practice in system security requirements); and
- Establish industry standards for quality requirements.

To continuously improve the arrangement, a mechanism to closely track and monitor contractor performance shall be put in place and the performance record be made

available to client departments as a reference for contractor selection. Performance indicators could include:
- Services delivery quality;
- Assignment on-time completion and staff turn-over rate; and
- Provision of professionally qualified / committed work-force, etc.

In summary, we believe that the HKSAR needs to continuously upgrade and enhance the professional quality of its IT workforce to support a sustainable development. Without appropriate quality measures, the ITSPA is at a risk of driving price reduction at the expenses of quality. Low quality of work even at low cost is not a sustainable option for the ICT industry in the HKSAR. *The HKIE IT Division and INF Discipline is most pleased to participate and contribute to draw up the professional standards, approach and reference for the common good of the IT industry.*