



IT Voice 2012
Comments on 2014 Digital 21 Strategy
29 November, 2013

In response to the consultation on the 2014 Digital 21 Strategy (hereafter 'D21'), IT Voice 2012 (hereafter "ITV") would like to submit its comments below. The comments are categorized into 4 major areas i.e. Public Service, Infrastructure, E-Learning and Start-ups.

1. Public Service

- a. ITV welcomes the proposal to provide e-Certificates to the public free-of-charge. ITV suggests that in order to reduce the certificate renewal effort on the part of users, the Government should extend the e-Certificate's validity to a longer period, say, 3 years.
- b. ITV suggests that there should be a unified set of guidelines to be followed by the different Government departments on what online services should require e-Certificate with major reference to data sensitivity levels.
- c. Security, including data and voice, on which user confidence is based, is an integral part of a smarter Hong Kong. Regrettably, the consultation paper has not addressed the issue adequately especially when the problem is attracting international attention. In relation to this, the Government should put in extra efforts in educating the public to be more sensitive and careful in data security when using online services.
- d. ITV believes that the Government's open data policy as manifested in Data.one is a move in the right direction. ITV, however, expects more Government public data sets to be provided to the public. This does not only elevate the degree of transparency to enhance governance, it

would create more business opportunities in the private sector for the creative use of data, for example, investment and business advisory service.

- e. ITV notices that D21 mentions very little on green technology. Similarly, there is no coverage on what guidelines and measures the Government will establish along this direction in expectation of the launch of the territory-wide Electronic Health Record Program, a major project that the public in general and the ICT industry in particular are anxiously waiting for.
- f. The SME Cloud is a very constructive concept to Hong Kong. The Government should evaluate the related policy from the Cloud users' perspective. For example, the Government can put in more effort in educating the public on the use of Cloud services, the security and privacy issues of Cloud computing and in providing platform for matching Cloud services to users and Cloud service directory .

2. Infrastructure

- a. In the 2008 D21, the Government spelt out its plan to build 10,000 Wifi hotspots. ITV welcomes the Government's intention to build an additional 10,000 hotspots. However, ITV likes to point that there must be a balance between free public Wifi service and those provided by the private operators. The Government must not ignore the commercial interest of the operators who have invested substantially into the building of their networks.
- b. In connection to the objective of 'empowering everyone', ITV urges the Government to look into the non-availability of broadband network service in some remote areas in the Territory. Those who lived in remote areas should not be deprived of the right to connect at reasonably fast speed.
- c. ITV suggests that the Government should also study and review:
 - i. Strengthening the promotion of Green ICT
 - ii. Assistance to data center service providers
 - iii. The next digital divide of network access - low speed versus

high speed communication links

3. E-Learning

- a. ITV appreciates OGCIO's proactive role in promoting e-Learning and the provision of Wifi service to the classrooms. This would further enhance the development of e-Learning in Hong Kong.
- b. ITV welcomes the idea of introducing programming subjects to primary and secondary students as part of a comprehensive update of current ICT education. However, ITV would like to point out that this should not be seen solely as a strategy to train up more IT talents. It should aim at cultivating system and creative thinking among the students and should be part of a properly planned K-12 STEM curriculum. ITV would like to further point out that these programming subjects should not be included in examinations to avoid creating additional pressure on the already over-loaded students except for those specializing in STEM subjects at senior high school.
- c. In line with item b. above, ITV hopes that the Government can introduce more game-based learning and kid programming in schools. These would make learning more interesting to the students and create business opportunities for the local ICT industry.
- d. A Smarter Hong Kong requires the continual accumulation of ICT knowledge by its citizens. To empower everyone, The Government should put in more resources to encourage Hong Kong people to continually acquire up-to-date ICT knowledge. For example, the Continuing Education Fund should allow more ICT related subjects and courses to be eligible.

4. Start-ups

- a. ITV concurs to the general observation by participants in the ICT industry that suitable IT professionals such as programmers, project managers are hard to find. With less backing, start-ups find it particularly difficult to recruit talents, a critical element in starting an ICT business. This is an issue D21 should look into if it intends to

support a thriving ICT industry.

- b. D21 admits that there is still a gap between demand and supply of local graduates from ICT programs. However, D21 fails to put forth concrete action plans on how to resolve this unfavorable situation. Its proposal on program co-designing, internship and recognition framework do not address directly to the issue of how to increase supply of graduates.
- c. ITV and most, if not all, start-up entrepreneurs believe that funding is the critical constraint in the building up of a young and thriving ICT industry. ITV does not believe that an online portal, showcase of products and permanent gallery, as D21 suggests, would significantly support ICT start-ups. To address the funding issue, the Government should observe the development and practice in countries like the USA where there are numerous channels for start-ups to raise their initial capital. A good example would be the crowd-funding scheme in the US which receives favorable response from both the start-ups and the investors.
- d. Many ICT start-ups that ITV contacted opined that the application and reimbursement procedures for Government funds or incubation programs such as SERAP are unnecessarily complicated. OGCI should play a pivotal role in coordinating with the concerned Government bureaus and departments to resolve this problem.
- e. ITV would also like to point out that in Hong Kong, ICT has an image problem. Students and their family do not regard ICT or computer science highly as a field of study or a career. This is an issue that the Government should address.

If necessary, please contact Mr. SC Leung at sc@itvoice.hk for queries and clarifications in connection to the above response.

About IT Voice 2012: <http://itvoice2012.hk/wp/about-us>