Information Note on
The IT Scheme for People with Visual Impairment

Introduction

1. People with visual impairment (PVI) require computer aids, such as screen readers and Braille displays, to access via personal computers (PC) a wide variety of information. The distribution of such computer aids to communal access points and assisting PVI to acquire such high-performance facilities can increase their opportunities to get in touch with the digital world, and to meet their studies or employment needs respectively.   To these ends, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has established the Information Technology Scheme for People with Visual Impairment (IT Scheme), as a continuation of The Jockey Club IT Scheme for People with Visual Impairment which ended in end-2020, to support PVI in the acquisition of equipment/devices.

Objectives

2. The Scheme aims to:

(a) support organisations (such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), self-help groups and educational institutions) the acquisition of high-performance Chinese screen readers, Braille displays and accessories to be installed at the communal access points for the use of PVI; and

(b) subsidise individual PVI who requires information technology (IT) for the purpose of studies or employment but has genuine financial difficulty in the purchase of the high-performance Chinese screen readers, Braille displays and accessories/portable devices.

Administration of the IT Scheme

3. While the SWD takes up the administration of the IT Scheme, all applications are vetted by the Central Committee on Information Technology for Rehabilitation Services (the Committee). The Committee is comprised of members from the IT, rehabilitation service and welfare fields who have cross knowledge or experiences in IT and rehabilitation service, as well as the representative of SWD. **The decision of the Committee on each application shall be final.**

Scope of Support

4.   The scope of support of the IT Scheme covers the following three types of aids:

(a) ***High-performance Chinese screen reader,*** which demonstrates stable and satisfactory performance in PC of specifications prevalent in recent years;

(b) ***Braille output display of 40 cells***; and

(c) ***Accessories/portable devices***.

5.   A list of endorsed items for these three types of aids by the Committee is at Appendix for reference.   For models other than those cited in (a) and (b) or equipment/devices other than those cited in (c) of the reference list, the applicant must provide full justifications for special consideration by the Committee. The subsidy granted will be solely for the purchase of relevant aids and <u>no cost such as those of the after-sale service, maintenance, other optional/peripheral items or upgrading of facilities, will be borne by the IT Scheme</u>.

Beneficiary

6.   There are two categories of beneficiaries under this IT Scheme, namely:

(a) ***Organisations***
Non-profit NGOs providing services/training/education for PVI, such as social welfare NGOs serving PVI, self-help groups for PVI, schools for the blind and local tertiary institutes; and

(b) ***Individual PVI***
Individuals with visual impairment who demonstrate a need for high-performance computer aids to facilitate their use of IT and/or accessories/portable devices in the reference list at Appendix for the purpose of studies or employment, but their schools/employers do not provide such aids and they cannot afford such aids due to genuine financial difficulty.

Eligibility

Organisational applicants

7.   The IT Scheme supports the service units of organisations mentioned in paragraph 6(a) above with a view to providing more communal access points equipped with high performance Chinese screen readers, Braille displays and/or accessories in the reference list at Appendix.   Priority will be given to

organisations which provide IT services for relatively more PVI/students with visual impairment.

Individual applicants

8.   Apart from not possessing the aids supported by the IT Scheme, individual applicants must also meet the following conditions -

    (a)   Nominated by subvented non-governmental rehabilitation organisations, students affairs offices of local tertiary institutes, principals of local secondary and primary schools, or the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department (applications must be submitted through one of these nominating organisations);

    (b)   Possessing basic competency in using IT and demonstrating the needs for such aids for studies or employment; and

    (c)   Not having received subsidies from other charitable funds such as the Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities in the past three years for acquiring high-performance Chinese screen readers, Braille displays, accessories and/or portable devices in the reference list at Appendix .

9.   In addition to meeting the conditions in paragraph 8 above, individual applicants must satisfy the financial criteria that their family asset should be below the asset limit for medical waiving at public hospitals and clinics. Moreover, their family income should be below 150% of Median Monthly Domestic Household Index (MMDHI). Level of monthly household income and the subsidy level which may be granted are provided according to the following scale:

Family Income Level	**Support Level for the Scheme**
Below 100% MMDHI	100%
Above 100% MMDHI but below 125% MMDHI	75%
Above 125% MMDHI but below 150% MMDHI	50%

To optimise the use of available resources, priority will be given to individual applicants who are proven to be in immense financial difficulty in the acquisition of the aids supported under the IT Scheme.

Special Provisions

10.   *Organisational applicants* have to ensure that they will carry out reasonable measures to facilitate priority access by PVI to the PCs installed with these aids and/or the accessories in the reference list at Appendix.

11.　　Successful *organisational applicants* will be supported in full for purchasing a set of high-performance Chinese screen reader (capped at $9,800) and/or Braille displays (capped at $36,000) and/or accessories in the reference list at Appendix (capped at $66,300).　Successful *individual applicants* will be supported for a set of high-performance Chinese screen reader with an amount not more than $9,800 and/or Braille displays (capped at $32,400) and/or accessories/portable devices (capped at $49,600) in the reference list at Appendix.

12.　　All successful *organisational* or *individual applicants* are required to enter into a declaration that they will not resell or transfer any of the supported aids to other persons.

13.　　For successful *organisational* or *individual applicants*, it is their responsibility to observe the Copyright Ordinance and other related ordinances in the purchase/use of the supported computer aids and the related IT facilities. SWD accepts no responsibility whatsoever incurred from the applicants' failure to comply with the Copyright Ordinance and other related ordinances during the purchase/use of such aids and facilities.

14.　　In general, *successful individual applicants* will only be eligible for each category of the subsidy covered by the IT Scheme once.　If an application is made again, the applicant has to delineate the supporting reason(s) that warrant the Committee's special consideration.　Application will only be considered if the beneficiary demonstrated genuine financial difficulties and need for study/employment purposes.　Re-application for procurement of Braille display and/or accessories/portable devices in the reference list at Appendix should be made at least three years since last application. Re-application for upgrading of screen reader may be considered if the existing version is not compatible with the new/enhanced versions of other software applications.

Application Procedures

15.   SWD will send out invitations for application from eligible organisations and individuals at half-year intervals.   A ceiling of grant for each batch of application will be set.   If the grant approved for a batch of application exceeds the ceiling of grant for the batch, the remaining applications in the batch will be carried forward to the next batch of application for consideration according to the sequence of the application dates.   *Organisational* and *individual applicants* will be notified of the results two months after the deadline for application.

16.   Applications from *organisational applicants* can be made on a prescribed application form together with the quotations for the required items.

17.   *Individual applicants* must seek the nomination of the organisations mentioned in paragraph 8(a) above and submit an application through the nominating organisation on a prescribed application form together with the quotations for the required items.   The nominating organisation is required to -

(a)   assess the applicant's needs for computer aids and/or accessories/portable devices in the reference list at Appendix;
(b)   assess the applicant's IT competency;
(c)   assess the applicant's financial situation; and
(d)   assist the applicant in the use of IT with the aids, and provide the necessary follow-up/technical support to facilitate their studies or employment.

18.   Once the application is approved with notification letter issued, the *organisational* or *individual applicant* may procure the necessary computer aids and/or accessories/portable devices in the reference list at Appendix in one month's time.   Payment would be arranged by reimbursement upon the production of a valid receipt.   SWD may render direct payment to the supplier according to the invoice where necessary.

Enquiries

19.   Enquiries can be made to the Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services Branch of SWD at telephone number: 3586 3594 or e-mail: eoimc@swd.gov.hk.

Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services Branch
Social Welfare Department
January 2021

The IT Scheme for People with Visual Impairment
List of Endorsed Models of Computer Aids and Accessories/Portable Devices
(For Reference only)

High-performance Chinese Screen Readers

- Chinese JAWS
- Dolphin Supernova
- Dolphin LunarPlus
- Dolphin Hal
- JAWS
- ZoomText Screen Reader USB

Braille Displays (40 cells)

- Focus 40 Blue Braille Display
- Focus 40 Braille Display
- HT Braillino
- HT Easy Braille
- PAC Mate
- SuperVario

Accessories or Portable Devices

- Desktop CCTV
- Optical Reading Machine
- Braille Embosser
- Braille Mini Writer
- Braille Edge
- Portable Magnifier (applicable to individual applicant only)
- Personal Note-taker (applicable to individual applicant only)