

LCQ20: Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

The Chief Executive announced in the 2017 Policy Address the setting up of a Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology (Steering Committee) to be chaired by her personally to examine and steer measures under the eight areas of innovation and technology as well as the smart city projects. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government indicated in November 2017 that 'the Steering Committee is a high-level, inter-departmental Government internal committee with membership comprising the majority of the Government Secretaries as well as the relevant department heads', of the current membership of the Steering Committee;

(2) of the number of meetings held by the Steering Committee since its establishment and set out, in a table by meeting date, the agenda items, attendance list, outcome and follow-up actions of each meeting;

(3) as it is learnt that the Singapore established the National Research Foundation (NRF) as early as in 2006 which sets the direction for research and development (R&D) for the nation by formulating an overarching strategy in every five years, and NRF has launched a number of funding schemes that align with its strategy and has provided guidelines to the funding bodies under the various government ministries on the ways to allocate funds, whether the Steering Committee will commence work in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) as a think tank has suggested that the Steering Committee should, upon making reference to the practice of Singapore and the United Kingdom, establish an overarching department responsible for steering R&D, so as to more effectively co-ordinate and optimise the use of R&D funding by the various Government departments, whether the Steering Committee will consider the suggestion; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and how the Government takes forward the relevant work?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Elizabeth Quat is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology (Steering

Committee) chaired by the Chief Executive was established in December 2017, with an aim to take forward the development of innovation and technology (I&T) in Hong Kong, to steer collaboration and participation across bureaux and departments with effect from the most senior level and ensure that the resources requirement will be met in a timely manner.

Members of the Steering Committee include two Secretaries of Departments, ten Directors of Bureau and six Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments. The membership is at Annex. Since its establishment, the Steering Committee has convened a total of seven meetings, with discussion items including:

- (i) Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong (Blueprint);
- (ii) Technology Talent Admission Scheme;
- (iii) Open Data Policy;
- (iv) Faster Payment System developed by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority;
- (v) development of biomedical technology;
- (vi) launch of 5G wireless network;
- (vii) Hospital Authority's Big Data Analytics Platform;
- (viii) pro-innovation government procurement policy;
- (ix) 'iAM Smart' one-stop personalised digital service platform;
- (x) Common Spatial Data Infrastructure;
- (xi) popular science education; and
- (xii) the Government's Electronic Recordkeeping System.

The policies and measures mentioned above have all been launched or had their implementation timetable announced. Apart from the two regular agenda items, namely reviewing the progress in I&T in eight major areas and the Blueprint, the Steering Committee also provides policy steer and monitors progress of implementing individual I&T initiatives and measures.

(3) and (4) We are aware of a recent research report which recommended establishing an overarching research and development (R&D) department to co-ordinate and enhance the use of R&D funds from various Government departments.

At present, various government funding schemes have different policy objectives and background. Their different characteristics, objectives, funding criteria, and application time can cater for different applicants. For example, generally speaking, a significant share (over 80 per cent) of the Innovation and Technology Fund is used to fund enterprise-led projects, which, apart from research projects, include other non-research projects such as recruiting researchers, fostering technology adoption, and promoting technology culture. Only a small portion subsidises research projects initiated by universities. The funding considerations for these two categories of projects are not the same and it may not be appropriate for them to be administered by a single department. In fact, university researchers are used to applying for funding from different departments. That said, in response to the relevant recommendations from the Task Force on Review of Research Policy and Funding, a common researcher identity, namely the Open Research Contributor ID (ORCID), has been adopted for the grants

applications to the Research Grants Council, and an inter-departmental liaison group comprising agencies administering research funding schemes has been established within the Government. The liaison group has regular exchanges on research directions, research policies, and funding matters so as to strengthen and improve co-ordination between different funding departments.