

MEDIA FACTSHEET (29 FEB 08)

BUILDING AN ALL-INCLUSIVE DIGITAL SOCIETY

As infocomm is increasingly an enabler of economic and social growth, it is important that no one, including the elderly, needy and disabled, is left behind. As part of the 10-year infocomm masterplan, iNtelligent Nation 2015 (iN2015), the IDA is committed to work with community groups and industry, to bring the benefits of infocomm to all.

Over the next five years, IDA is investing some S\$43 million on programmes to ensure that sections of the population such as the elderly, disabled, poor and less educated have access to infocomm, and make use of it to access e-services, improve their lifestyle, or to enhance employment and employability.

Specifically, the programmes include the Silver Infocomm Initiative, NEU PC Plus and iNSPIRE fund, and Infocomm Accessibility Centre as follows:

THE ELDERLY

I. Silver Infocomm Initiative

The Silver Infocomm Initiative is a three-year programme that aims to bridge the digital divide among senior citizens through addressing their vast differences in educational background, language and infocomm competencies. Training in digital lifestyle skills will be offered to some 30,000 senior citizens (age 55 and above) so that they can stay economically active and independent.

Through the Silver Infocomm Initiative, senior citizens will benefit from:

- **Silver Infocomm Junction**

Eight Silver Infocomm Junctions (SIJ) or centres with infocomm access and training for seniors will be set up around Singapore by 2010. Already, the first SIJ has been set up at the Retired & Senior Volunteer Programme (Singapore), or RSVP Singapore office located at Bishan. Through the SIJs, senior citizens can pick up infocomm skills, including making video-calls on the Internet, socialising online and playing computer games. These skills will help enhance their lifestyle. Seniors can also look forward to multi-lingual training, such as Chinese Internet surfing.

- **Silver Infocomm Ambassadors**

Silver Infocomm Ambassadors are infocomm-savvy seniors who impart infocomm knowledge to their peers by acting as course instructors. This way, senior non-infocomm users will feel more comfortable in asking and learning more about infocomm.

- Silver Infocomm Outreach

This programme aims to provide opportunities for seniors to learn more about infocomm through workshop-cum-field trips, such as a visit to the Changi Airport after learning about travel-related online services. It also aims to promote infocomm to seniors through roadshows and events, such as the inaugural Silver Industry Conference and Exhibition held in January 2008. This exhibition was organised by the Silver Industry Committee, and supported by the Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports, as well as Spring Singapore.

THE NEEDY

The NEU PC Plus and iNSPIRE Fund are two programmes that support one of iN2015's goals to ensure that all households with school-going children will own a computer by 2015.

II. NEU PC Plus and iNSPIRE Fund

IDA's effort in equipping needy households with computer ownership started in November 1999. These schemes have benefited about 20,000 needy households whose gross monthly household is less than S\$2,000 or whose per capita monthly income does not exceed S\$500.

In November 2006, these programmes evolved to become NEU PC Plus. The NEU PC Plus programme started offering students from low-income household, as well as the disabled, new computers bundled with 3 years of free broadband access and software at an affordable price of S\$285, which works out to less than 30 cents a day. Needy students can apply for NEU PC Plus through the Association of Muslim Professionals, Chinese Development Assistance Council, The Eurasian Association, Institute of Technical Education, Sikh Centre, Singapore Indian Development Association, Society for the Physically Disabled and Yayasan MENDAKI. The corporate sponsors for NEU PC Plus include Microsoft, SingNet and TrendMicro. To date, about 4,200 low-income families have benefited from this programme. In total, 38,000 families stand to benefit by 2015.

In 2007, IDA and the industry also set up the iNSPIRE Fund to help those who cannot afford to co-pay, to earn their PC, by doing some form of community service in the spirit of "paying it forward". Needy students can render six (for Secondary Two students and below) to 12 (for Secondary Three students and above) hours of community service, such as helping out at old folks and children's homes, in order to receive a fully-paid desktop PC.

The community service records must be endorsed by their teachers or the staff of the voluntary welfare organisations which they service and sent to the Singapore Children's Society for processing.

The iNSPIRE Fund is expected to assist approximately 4,000 students from needy households over the next four years. These students must come from households whose total monthly income is below S\$1,500 or per capita monthly income is less than S\$300.

IDA will contribute S\$2 for every S\$1 that is drawn down from the iNSPIRE Fund. The corporate donor for the iNSPIRE Fund is Singapore Infocomm Technology Federation (SiTF), who have collaborated with the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre to promote volunteerism using SiTF's V-Fund (a fund set up to promote volunteerism initiatives). Maybank has also pledged its support.

THE DISABLED

Because of physical disability, vision, hearing or speech impairment, it may be challenging for people with disabilities to gain full access to education, jobs and social interactions. To bridge this gap, the Infocomm Accessibility Centre is being set up to help them make use of infocomm to enhance quality of life and employability, so that they can integrate into mainstream society.

III. Infocomm Accessibility Centre

The Infocomm Accessibility Centre aims to train some 4,000 trainees with disabilities (visually-impaired, hearing-impaired or physically-challenged) over three years as follows:

- **Customised Courses and Affordable Training**
IDA and the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) will work with commercial training providers and institutes of higher learning on structured training curriculum such as digital imaging, network management and database management for the disabled community. There will be three levels of training – elementary, intermediate and advanced, that will lead to industry certification. Training subsidies from IDA and other agencies are also available to course applicants. About 270 trainees have attended the basic to intermediate courses since September 2007.
- **Technology Aids for Learning and Interaction**
From January 2008, the Infocomm Accessibility Centre has been equipped with some Assistive Technology (AT) tools, such as adapted mice and keyboards for the physically-disabled, screen readers and Braille notetakers for the visually-handicapped and sound amplifiers for the hearing-impaired. These tools will aid trainees with different disabilities as they learn and interact together.
- **Infocomm AT Library**
An Assistive Technology (AT) library will be fully set up by June 2008 for people with disabilities to borrow AT tools home for pre-purchase trials. Meanwhile, trainees at the IA Centre can already start to enjoy the loan service since January 2008 with the newly-purchased equipment that have arrived.

- **Apprenticeship and Employment Opportunities**

To prepare for work-readiness, trainees who show good potential can progress into three- to 12-month-long apprenticeship training for infocomm-industry skills, such as web design and database administration. The Infocomm Accessibility Centre can provide hands-on work experience through workshops, vocational assessments and facilitated job placements to enhance the employability of Singaporeans with disabilities and create new employment opportunities for them.

Co-funded by IDA and MCYS, with other contributions from the private and people sector, the Infocomm Accessibility Centre is expected to be launched by mid 2008.

Media Contact

Ms Vanni CHEONG

Manager, Corporate & Marketing Communication

Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore

DID: 6211-0353

Email: vanni_cheong@ida.gov.sg