

# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT WORK OF THE CIVIL SERVICE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

## Executive Summary

1. With overall policy responsibility for the management of the civil service, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) works in collaboration with bureaux/departments (B/Ds) to provide learning opportunities for some 183,000 government employees that would equip them with the skills, knowledge and mind-set necessary for providing quality services to the public. In 2016-17, the CSB and B/Ds spent a total of \$1.2 billion on the provision of civil service training and development for some 700,000 participants. While B/Ds are mainly responsible for providing their staff with vocational training to meet job-specific needs, the CSB has a dedicated Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) responsible for providing training programmes that fulfil the common training needs of civil servants in areas of senior leadership development, national studies, communication and management. The CSTDI also implements initiatives to promote continuous learning in the civil service, such as providing e-learning resources through the e-learning portal, i.e. the Cyber Learning Centre Plus (CLC Plus) and training sponsorship to encourage civil servants to attend job-related courses in their own spare time. As at 31 March 2018, the CSTDI had an establishment of 116 staff and training facilities including an auditorium, 22 training rooms and a Learning Resource Centre (LRC). The financial provision of the CSTDI in 2017-18 amounted to \$148.3 million. The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review to examine the training and development work of the CSTDI.

## Management of training programmes

2. *Training administration.* Training programmes organised by the CSTDI can be broadly classified into local and non-local programmes. In 2017, the CSTDI organised 1,216 classes of local training programmes for 57,414 trainees, comprising 610 classes of central programmes (i.e. open to all B/Ds) and 606 classes of customised programmes for specific B/Ds. The CSTDI also organised 25 classes of Mainland national studies programmes for 683 civil servants, and civil service exchange programmes held in the Mainland and overseas study programmes for another 34 civil servants. The successful delivery of training events depends on both

## Executive Summary

---

the contribution of trainers and trainees, and effective and efficient training administration. The CSTDI is assisted by the computerised Training Information and Administration System (TIAS) in various training administration functions, including inviting and processing nominations, training place allocation, attendance status update, training record maintenance and management reporting. Authorised users of B/Ds (e.g. Training Managers) can login to the TIAS to input training nominations and download training records. The TIAS also supports interface with two computerised training management systems installed by 14 B/Ds (as at September 2018) to facilitate electronic transfer of applications/nominations (paras. 2.2 to 2.5 and 2.12). Audit examination has revealed room for wider use of technology in enhancing the training administration process:

- (a) ***Manual processing of training applications/nominations by some B/Ds.*** The CSTDI issues invitations to training courses to B/Ds for direct dissemination to their staff. While the application and nomination process is automated for 14 B/Ds using the two computerised training management systems, other B/Ds need to consolidate applications from staff and upload nominations to the TIAS. According to the CSTDI, some B/Ds have developed their own computerised systems to facilitate training administration though such systems have no direct interface with the TIAS. However, for those B/Ds without any computerised system for training management, they need to manually collate application details for uploading to the TIAS, which is time and resource consuming, and prone to errors. The CSB needs to explore ways to make better use of technology to enhance the administration of training applications/nominations by B/Ds (para. 2.5);
  
- (b) ***Scope for wider use of e-forms.*** For those classes which do not require prioritisation of nominations by B/Ds, applicants may e-mail or fax their completed applications direct to the CSTDI. Prior to 2016, CSTDI staff had to manually input details of such applications into the TIAS. As a measure to reduce the time and efforts in processing these applications, the CSTDI has since 2016 introduced an e-form solution whereby the application details are uploaded automatically to the TIAS. However, only 58 (10%) of the 610 classes of central programmes held in 2017 used e-forms for enrolment. In Audit's view, the CSTDI needs to make wider use of e-forms to streamline the training enrolment process in B/Ds as far as practicable, especially for courses with short application periods such as re-run classes (additional classes held in the same year for popular courses) or second round of applications for under-subscribed classes (para. 2.6); and

## Executive Summary

---

- (c) ***Collecting trainees' feedback by electronic means.*** To improve operational efficiency and reduce manual efforts on data input of attendance status of individual trainees into the TIAS, the CSB informed Audit in September 2018 that a project would be commenced shortly to develop an e-registration system which could: (i) generate unique Quick Response Code to trainees for on-site registration; and (ii) integrate with the TIAS for automatic updating of attendance records. However, for course evaluation, the CSTDI currently uses paper-based evaluation forms to collect feedback from participants. The CSTDI should consider collecting trainees' feedback by electronic means (paras. 2.3(d) and 2.8).

3. ***Need to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses.*** Of the 610 classes of central programmes held in 2017, 346 (57%) were over-subscribed. According to the CSTDI, for over-subscribed seminar-type classes which involve mainly dissemination of principles and guidelines, it may change to a larger venue to accommodate more eligible trainees. For over-subscribed workshop-type classes which are not practical to increase the class size without compromising training effectiveness, additional classes may be arranged in the same year (i.e. re-run) or the following year. However, Audit found that for 83 classes (involving 33 workshops and 2 seminars) with over-subscription rate of 100% or more in 2017, no re-run was held for 19 workshops and 1 seminar. Moreover, 7 of the 19 workshops were also over-subscribed by 100% or more in 2016 but without increase in the number of scheduled classes in 2017. While the CSTDI in conjunction with individual B/Ds had organised 55 customised classes for 2 of the 7 over-subscribed workshops during 2013 to 2017, the over-subscription of these 2 popular workshops under the central programmes was not addressed during the period. For the over-subscribed seminar without a re-run in 2017, the CSTDI had not arranged video-taping or uploading the course materials on the CLC Plus. There is a need to step up efforts to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses, including arranging additional classes for persistently over-subscribed courses and making use of the CLC Plus to provide alternative learning opportunities for unselected nominees (paras. 2.14 to 2.17).

4. ***Need to improve the planning of target class size.*** According to the CSTDI, annual training plans are prepared to set out the target participants, mode of delivery, class size and schedule of each training programme. However, Audit found that the practice of setting target class size varied among different training units. While a target class size was set for each management course organised by two training units, it was not set for individual language or national studies courses

## Executive Summary

---

organised by another two training units. Instead, an overall target number of trainees was set for each category of courses. For instance, an overall target of 3,000 trainees was set in the 2017 annual plan for all Putonghua courses but the target class size for each Putonghua course was not available. Moreover, the target class size for individual courses (even available as in the case of management courses) was not recorded in the TIAS to facilitate the selection of nominees. There is a need to improve the setting and documentation of the target class size for better management of training resources (paras. 2.18 and 2.19).

5. ***Need to fully utilise training places.*** According to the CSTDI, to minimise wastage of training places, when allocating training places for over-subscribed classes, it would: (a) select more trainees than the target class size as a buffer for withdrawals and absences of trainees where practicable (i.e. the buffer arrangement); and (b) maintain a waiting list so that unselected nominees will be enrolled to fill the training places upon receipt of withdrawal notifications from selected nominees. However, Audit found that for 25 (7%) of the 346 over-subscribed classes in 2017, the number of selected nominees fell short of their respective target class sizes by 1% to 14% (averaging 6%). For example, for a language course with a target class size of 25 to 35, the number of selected nominees in 9 over-subscribed classes was less than the maximum class size of 35 by 9% to 14% (averaging 12%), resulting in unused training places. Audit also found that in 7 over-subscribed classes of other courses with the actual attendance less than the target class size, there was no record to show that unused training places arising from withdrawals had been reallocated to waitlisted nominees. There is a need to make better use of the buffer arrangement and the waiting list mechanism to fully utilise training places. In 2017, the CSTDI arranged re-runs for 8 over-subscribed seminars. However, it had not invited new applications for the re-runs even when the venues could accommodate more attendees because of time constraint. Audit considers that there is merit to consider using e-forms (see para. 2(b) above) to save time and efforts in coordinating applications (paras. 2.20 to 2.23, 2.25 and 2.26).

6. ***Difficulties in arranging all middle-level civil servants to attend national studies programmes within six years.*** Over the years, the CSB has been encouraging B/Ds to arrange middle-level civil servants (i.e. officers at Master Pay Scale Point 34 to 44 or equivalent) to attend national studies programmes with a time schedule drawn up in 2018 for them to attend such programmes within 6 years from reaching Master Pay Scale Point 34 or equivalent. Up to 2017, some 13,000 middle-level civil servants had yet to attend the programmes. Audit noted that the number of planned training places would only increase from 280 in 2017 to 340 in 2018 and further to 420 in

## Executive Summary

---

2019. On this basis, it is unlikely that all middle-level civil servants can attend national studies programmes within 6 years. Moreover, based on the attendance records of such programmes from 2013 to 2017 and the maximum number of training places of 320 each year, Audit found that on average, 37 (12%) additional trainees could be accommodated. There is a need to review the 6-year time schedule, and further promote and encourage B/Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend such programmes in order to make full use of the training places (paras. 2.30 to 2.32).

### Initiatives to promote continuous learning

7. ***Provision of e-learning resources.*** The CSTDI launched the web-based CLC Plus in September 2002 to provide a range of online training resources for civil servants to learn at their own time and according to their own pace. As at May 2018, the CLC Plus hosted 2,384 items of CSTDI e-learning resources and 351 items of departmental-specific training resources. All government employees are eligible to use the e-learning resources through two channels, i.e. the Internet (requiring registration of a CLC Plus account) or departmental portal via the Government Intranet (no prior registration required). As at May 2018, there were 139,362 user accounts, of which 79,713 (57%) were CLC Plus accounts and 59,649 (43%) were departmental portal accounts (paras. 3.2 to 3.4). Audit examination has revealed the following issues that warrant the CSTDI's attention:

- (a) ***Large number of inactive accounts.*** As at May 2018, 14,955 (11%) of 139,362 accounts were not usable, e.g. deleted accounts or locked accounts. For the remaining 124,407 usable accounts, Audit found that 85,788 (69%) accounts were inactive (i.e. the user had not used the CLC Plus for one year or more) and the CSTDI's reminder e-mails could not reach the 41,941 inactive departmental portal account users because the CSTDI did not have their e-mail addresses as no prior registration was required for such accounts. There is a need to step up efforts to motivate inactive account users to use the CLC Plus, including enlisting the assistance of relevant B/Ds in this regard for the inactive departmental portal account users (paras. 3.6 and 3.7);
- (b) ***Inadequacies in user account management.*** In accordance with the relevant information technology security policy and guidelines issued by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer in 2016, all user access rights should be reviewed periodically and revoked after a pre-defined

## Executive Summary

---

period of inactivity or when no longer required (e.g. upon a staff's termination or change of employment). Of the 85,788 inactive accounts, 17,910 (21%) accounts had remained inactive for 5 years or more. Moreover, in one B/D, the number of user accounts had exceeded its establishment by over 100%, suggesting that some accounts could have been held by officers who have left the B/D. There is a need to review the user access rights of such accounts (paras. 3.6 and 3.9); and

- (c) ***Low participation rate of the CLC Plus in some B/Ds.*** In analysing user accounts of B/Ds (see (b) above), Audit also found that the number of user accounts of 15 B/Ds only accounted for less than 50% (ranging from 13% to 49%) of their establishment. There is a need for the CSTDI in collaboration with relevant B/Ds to find out the reasons for the low participation rate of the CLC Plus with a view to devising effective measures to attract new users (para. 3.10).

8. ***Measures to facilitate mobile learning.*** To facilitate the use of e-learning resources through mobile devices, the CLC Plus was enhanced in April 2018 to provide an optimal viewing and interactive experience to support effective mobile learning. A mobile application, namely the CSTDI App, was also launched for two mobile operating systems in March 2014 and March 2015 respectively (para. 3.11). Audit examination of the measures to facilitate mobile learning has revealed the following areas for improvement:

- (a) ***Need to expedite actions on migration/retirement of e-learning resources developed using a legacy software.*** Based on a test check of 30 e-learning resources, Audit found that 17 (57%) could not be viewed on mobile devices because they were developed using a legacy software not supported by major operating systems of mobile devices. There is a need to improve accessibility of e-learning resources on mobile devices. As at September 2018, of 130 e-learning resources on the CLC Plus developed using the legacy software, 33 items had been migrated to prevailing technology platforms or retired. The remaining 97 items were planned to be migrated or retired by 2020. However, the migration plan did not cover 32 e-learning resources acquired from third party suppliers. There is a need to expedite actions on the migration/retirement of e-learning resources developed using the legacy software, especially those not included in the plan (paras. 3.12, 3.14 and 3.15); and

## Executive Summary

---

- (b) ***Need to enhance the CSTDI App.*** Audit noted that since the launch of the CSTDI App for two mobile operating systems in 2014 and 2015 respectively, there had not been significant enhancements to its functions. The numbers of downloads and visits decreased from 3,197 in 2015 to 1,136 in 2017 and from 18,260 in 2015 to 5,967 in 2017 respectively. There is a need to commence the enhancement work of the CSTDI App as soon as practicable (paras. 3.16 and 3.18).

9. ***Need to improve services of the LRC.*** The LRC provides basic services including borrowing of books and multi-media learning resources. However, the usage of the LRC in terms of numbers of visits and borrowing records had been on a decreasing trend from 2015 to 2017 (paras. 3.22 and 3.23). Audit has noted that there is room for improving the provision of LRC services:

- (a) ***Simplifying LRC membership registration procedure.*** Borrowing services are only available to government employees who have registered as CLC Plus users. A first-time borrower also needs to register as an LRC member in person by providing basic information on a membership form. As the information to be supplied in the LRC membership form is the same as that required for registering as a CLC Plus user, the CSTDI should consider simplifying the LRC membership registration procedure (para. 3.24(a)); and
- (b) ***Reviewing opening hours of the LRC.*** The opening hours of the LRC are from 9:15 am to 5:15 pm, Monday to Friday. Audit analysis revealed that about 46% of the visitors of the LRC were trainees of CSTDI training courses. To facilitate trainees visiting the LRC before and after class (which normally starts at 9:00 am and ends at 5:30 pm), there is merit to explore the feasibility and usefulness of extending the opening hours of the LRC (para. 3.24(b)).

10. ***Need to improve the management of training sponsorship.*** Since 2005, the CSTDI has launched a training sponsorship scheme for frontline staff to take work-related training courses outside working hours. In a sample check of 106 approved applications, Audit has found that: (a) in 2 approved applications, the applicants were offered gifts (e.g. a new model smartphone) by the external training institutions. The CSTDI needs to lay down guidelines for B/Ds to ensure the proper handling of applications with gifts offered by external training institutions; (b) in 10

## Executive Summary

---

approved applications for attending bus-driving courses/pre-service courses for public-light-bus drivers, there was no documentation on how the approved courses were related to the work of the applicants; and (c) in 3 approved applications, the applications were submitted 5 to 33 days after the courses had started, contrary to the application requirements. In respect of (b) and (c), the CSTDI needs to remind B/Ds to take improvement measures accordingly (paras. 3.30 and 3.33).

### Other administrative issues

11. *Need to improve booking arrangements of training venues.* CSTDI training venues are designed to cater for different training settings, such as group-based workshops or seminars. Most of them are also opened up for use by other B/Ds subject to availability. While the utilisation rates for most CSTDI training venues from January 2013 to May 2018 were generally above 50%, Audit examination revealed the following issues which could not optimise the utilisation of the training venues (paras. 4.2 and 4.5):

- (a) *Bookings cancelled at short notices.* A total of 3,105 (i.e. 35% of a total of 8,830) advance bookings of the training venues for the period from January 2017 to March 2018 made by the CSTDI and the General Grades Office of the CSB were subsequently cancelled. The notices given for 1,077 (35% of 3,105) cancelled bookings were less than 15 days and the released time slots of only 141 (13% of 1,077) cancelled bookings were subsequently taken up by other users. Audit found that better utilisation of the released time slots could be achieved by giving earlier notice of cancellation, e.g. up to 58% of 260 cancelled bookings with notice periods longer than 90 days were used (paras. 4.6 and 4.7);
- (b) *Manual system of booking by other B/Ds.* The CSTDI made use of a web-based booking system to automate the booking by its internal users and the users of the General Grades Office. However, other B/Ds were still required to follow a set of manual booking procedures (para. 4.8); and
- (c) *Unused bookings not reported.* The CSTDI's computer room was reserved by the General Grades Office from February 2018 to April 2019 for conducting recruitment tests on computer skills every day. However, Audit's site visits on 35 working days in June and July 2018 revealed that the room had not been used for a total of 26 (74%) working days. There



## Executive Summary

---

was no cancellation of the bookings and a 100% utilisation rate was registered for both June and July 2018 (para. 4.10).

12. ***Reporting of performance information.*** The CSB has set six performance pledges on training and development and quality of services, and reported the actual results on its website. The CSB has also set key performance indicators on the training and development work of the CSTDI in its Controlling Officer's Reports, covering service outputs of classroom training, e-learning programmes and other services such as advice and consultancies (paras. 4.16 and 4.17). Audit examination has revealed the following issues:

- (a) ***Need to review the target levels of some performance targets.*** The performance for four of the six performance pledges reported on the CSB's website was persistently above the target levels from 2014-15 to 2016-17, e.g. the actual time taken for submitting service proposals to B/Ds for customised training services only averaged 2.9 days as against the target of 4 weeks. The CSTDI needs to review these targets to ensure that they remain useful in motivating continuous improvement (para. 4.18); and
- (b) ***Need to improve the accuracy of reported performance.*** The actual results of three of the four types of performance indicators reported in the Controlling Officer's Reports for 2016 and 2017 were less than those shown in the supporting records by 1% to 19%. For example, while CSB reported that the page views of the CLC Plus were 4,101,000 and 4,120,000 in 2016 and 2017 respectively, the page views based on the supporting records were 5,085,560 and 4,739,679 in the two years. There is a need to improve the accuracy in reporting performance information in future (para. 4.19).

### Audit recommendations

13. **Audit recommendations are made in the respective sections of this Audit Report. Only the key ones are highlighted in this Executive Summary. Audit has recommended that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) **make wider use of technology to enhance the administration of training applications/nominations by B/Ds (para. 2.9(a));**

## Executive Summary

---

- (b) **step up efforts to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses (para. 2.27(a));**
- (c) **make better use of the buffer arrangement to fully utilise training places (para. 2.27(c));**
- (d) **review the 6-year time schedule for all middle-level civil servants to attend national studies programmes, and further promote and encourage B/Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend such programmes (para. 2.35(a) and (c));**
- (e) **step up efforts to promote the usage of the CLC Plus and review the user access rights of the inactive accounts of the CLC Plus (para. 3.19(a) and (b));**
- (f) **improve the accessibility of e-learning resources on mobile devices (para. 3.19(d));**
- (g) **improve the services of the LRC with a view to improving its usage (para. 3.28(a));**
- (h) **lay down guidelines for B/Ds in handling training sponsorship applications with gifts offered to trainees by external training institutions (para. 3.34(a));**
- (i) **make greater efforts to optimise the utilisation of CSTDI training venues (para. 4.14); and**
- (j) **improve the accuracy in reporting performance information (para. 4.21(b)).**

## Response from the Government

14. The Government generally agrees with the audit recommendations.