

Legislative Council
Subcommittee to Study the Formulation of Long-term Youth Policy
and Development Blueprint

“Assistance in promoting upward mobility of young people”

HKGCC Submission

1. As the voice of business, the mission of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is to help members strengthen their businesses through enhancing the business environment of Hong Kong and ensuring that Hong Kong remains a leader among the world’s most dynamic and competitive business and financial hubs.
2. An abundant and thriving pool of talent is crucial to the sustainability of our business success.
3. The Chamber’s position towards youth development has always been to facilitate young people in acquiring relevant practical knowledge, skills and experience which could prepare them for the workplace and match the current as well as anticipated talent needs of the business sector. For this purpose, we have been running Business-School Partnership Programme since 2001, providing a platform for direct communications between students, teachers and companies to enhance students’ knowledge about businesses and different professions. We host an annual Business Case Competition for tertiary students featuring real-life business problems. Last year the Young Executives Club of the Chamber also launched the inaugural Pitch Perfect Programme which aims to improve the competitive edge of university students in the job market.
4. We welcome the Government’s focused efforts to formulate a comprehensive Youth Development Blueprint to promote whole-person development of young people. As we see it, an enabling environment which allows young people to make informed choices and thrive in a career which meets with their interests, abilities and accords opportunities for further growth is a practical way of promoting upward mobility.
5. To this end, the Government should strengthen collaboration with the business sector to ensure that life-planning education and job-readiness training for young people are current and aligned with the evolving talent needs of Hong Kong. Supporting and funding the development of more apprenticeships, internships, graduate recruitment schemes and on-the-job training across various industries is also invaluable in helping young people get started with their careers.

Facilitate career development in Greater Bay Area (GBA)

6. GBA offers considerable development opportunities for Hong Kong young people. How to bridge information and experience gaps and provide more visibility on GBA opportunities so that more young people could visualize the immense potential of GBA and feel confident about their readiness for a GBA-based career is key.
7. We welcome the Government regularizing the GBA Youth Employment Scheme (the Scheme) and recommend enhancement of the Scheme to tackle some of the obstacles for both participating enterprises and young people. Such obstacles relate mostly to difficulties in administrative and human resource matters, details of which have been set out in the reports of the ongoing Impact Study on the Scheme conducted in conjunction with MWYO.
8. We also recommend broadening the eligibility of the Scheme for both employers and young people to encourage participation by a more diverse group of participants.
9. We wish to emphasize that exchange programmes with universities in GBA and internship opportunities in GBA corporations – as complemented by practical advice and liaison support on the ground – are important constituents of a GBA career strategy. Undertaken prior to graduation, such programmes and opportunities allow participating students to accustom themselves to working and living in GBA early on, which helps instil self-confidence and aspiration for future career opportunities beyond Hong Kong. As such, the Government should resume exchange activities and internships in the Mainland as soon as practicable.

Strengthen business-school partnerships

10. On the home front, we suggest incorporating more elements of career exploration and workplace experience in schools, beginning at upper primary levels, to allow students ample time and guidance over the course of their education to ascertain their interests, abilities and aspirations and prepare for the transition to work life.
11. Currently there are some partnerships between the business sector and schools/universities offering career-related initiatives such as orientation activities, practical skills training, mentoring, familiarization visits and internship opportunities. We suggest the Government support and promote more such business-school partnerships, involving more industries, as this is the most direct way of engaging with schools and students and introducing up-to-date career information and related skills.
12. We note that the Government will map out a Blueprint for Arts and Culture and Creative Industries and a 10-year development blueprint for sports and recreation facilities. The ecosystems of these sectors include a very diverse range of supporting industries, catering to a wide range of skills and abilities. We suggest that the Government engage the respective industries to highlight these career tracks and potential opportunities to young people.

Promote vocational and professional education and training (VPET)

13. Much attention has been focused on stepping up efforts to promote STEAM education at primary and secondary levels and supporting post-secondary education. While this is an important strategic policy direction in line with Hong Kong's positioning envisaged under the 14th Five-Year Plan, our economy comprises a broad spectrum of businesses and service industries. A healthy talent pool should be one that caters to the skills and manpower needs of this diverse range.
14. Cultivating an adequate and diversified workforce should therefore entail an equal promotion of VPET as a pathway parallel to conventional academic education.
15. Key to increasing the appeal of VPET as an attractive career pathway for young people is to expand professional recognition under the Qualifications Framework and encourage continuous professional development. Joint efforts with industry partners to promote the professional image and career prospects of VPET are also important for a more positive public perception of VPET career.

Innovation and Technology (I&T) research projects

16. As Hong Kong moves towards the vision of being an international I&T centre, the Government may initiate or sponsor I&T research projects and offer young people opportunities to participate. The Government can also support and facilitate young people in starting their own I&T businesses.

Closing remarks

17. Nurturing young people so that they can realize their full potential and contribute to society requires foresight, timely planning and good collaboration among various stakeholders. The Government is well-positioned to assume a leading role in coordinating expertise and creating synergy in this regard, implementing policy initiatives and collaborative partnerships to support young people's upward mobility, and reviewing feedback regularly for effectiveness and continued relevance.
18. As a final note, we wish to mention that the severe disruptions over the past few years as a result of the pandemic have restricted training opportunities available to our young people and significantly impacted the employment landscape. The need to relaunch Hong Kong and get the economy back on track is all the more pressing and relevant to young people's employment.