

29 December 2020

Circular to Licensed Corporations Launch of iAM Smart

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) launched iAM Smart¹ initiative on 29 December 2020. The Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) encourages licensed corporations (LCs) to actively consider adopting iAM Smart.

iAM Smart initiative

As one of the key infrastructure projects for smart city development announced in the 2017 Policy Address, iAM Smart provides all Hong Kong residents with a single digital identity and authentication method to conduct government and commercial transactions online. Hong Kong residents can apply for iAM Smart accounts free of charge on a voluntary basis. Details of the initiative are set out on the iAM Smart website and the designated website of OGCIO². The main iAM Smart functions and applications are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Functions of iAM Smart

Authentication

With an iAM Smart account, users can make use of the biometrics in their personal mobile devices to authenticate their identities, which have been verified against their Hong Kong Identity Cards (HKIC) during iAM Smart registration, to log in to online services. This provides convenient access to various online services without the need to manage different usernames and passwords or carry multiple security tokens.

Digital signing

iAM Smart supports digital signing with legal backing under the Electronic Transactions Ordinance (Cap. 553) for statutory documents and procedures, as well as for conducting important commercial transactions.

Form filling

iAM Smart users can choose to store commonly used personal data in their own “e-ME” profile so that they can save time and effort by not having to re-enter data when making different online applications. Data provided by the users will be encrypted and stored in government data centre facilities to protect data security and personal privacy. iAM Smart users may also give consent to provide their data to other entities for different online services.

¹ iAM Smart 「智方便」 (formerly known as Electronic Identity; eID)

² Please refer to the websites <https://www.iamsmart.gov.hk/en/index.html> and https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/business/tech_promotion/iam_smart/ for details.



Applications of iAM Smart

More than 20 commonly used online government services will be accessible through the iAM Smart platform. By mid-2021, iAM Smart users will be able to access over 100 online government services through the platform. Subject to the progress of the adoption by government online services and the readiness of the companies in the financial sector to adopt iAM Smart, the OGCIO will arrange for the roll out iAM Smart to financial institutions.

Considerations for adopting iAM Smart

As iAM Smart is a cornerstone for promoting the development of the fintech ecosystem in Hong Kong and its transformation into a smart city, LCs are highly encouraged to consider adopting iAM Smart in their businesses to enable customers to use online services (such as authentication to log in to online accounts and sign documents) and to conduct online transactions more conveniently and efficiently, without compromising statutory and supervisory requirements.

Since iAM Smart provides a reliable and independent source of Hong Kong residents' identities, it may be used to facilitate remote onboarding of customers. For the avoidance of doubt, the SFC would accept iAM Smart for client identity verification and the associated digital signing for onboarding purposes. LCs which wish to explore potential use cases for iAM Smart can do so by participating in the following iAM Smart Pilot Sandbox Programme.

iAM Smart Pilot Sandbox Programme

To enable financial institutions to conduct simulated tests of the Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) functions under iAM Smart, the OGCIO in collaboration with Cyberport introduced the first phase of the iAM Smart Pilot Sandbox Programme in March 2020. The second phase of the programme was launched in September 2020 for financial institutions intending to adopt iAM Smart to test their applications in an integration testing environment.

LCs interested in participating in the programme are required to submit an application to Cyberport via the SFC³. Should you have any questions related to the programme, please contact iamsmart@cyberport.hk or 3166 3978.

Should you have any questions regarding the contents of this circular, please contact Ms Denise Chan at 2231 1188 or your case officers.

Intermediaries Supervision Department
Intermediaries Division
Securities and Futures Commission

End

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³ Please refer to the invitation letter issued by the SFC on 6 October 2020 which is posted at https://www.sfc.hk/-/media/EN/files/IS/publications/Invitation_Letter.pdf