The Honourable John Lee Ka-chiu, GBM, SBS, PDSM, PMSM
Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Chief Executive's Office
Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

9 November 2026

Dear Chief Executive

2026 WHITE PAPER
Asia's World City: Attracting the Next Generation of Global Talent
The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

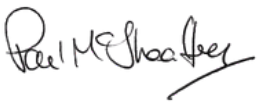
On behalf of the Future Leaders Committee of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, I am pleased to present our 2026 White Paper, ***Asia's World City: Attracting the Next Generation of Global Talent***. Rooted in the firsthand perspectives gathered at our annual Hackathon, this paper outlines actionable proposals to strengthen Hong Kong's talent landscape.

Now in its fourth year, our Hackathon convenes young professionals across our membership to address critical challenges facing the city. Shifting focus from last year's theme of AI, this June's cohort examined what elements are essential for Hong Kong to draw global talent as Asia's World City. Our young leaders emphasised the factors that shape Hong Kong's ability to attract and retain global talent, leading to the **eight core recommendations** detailed below across talent cultivation, attraction, retention, and strategic regional enablers.

Drawing global talent starts with sharing the genuine stories of Hong Kong. We recognise the vital role of Hong Kong Talent Engage (HKTE), whose international outreach - from overseas university fairs to Global Talent Summit Week - amplifies Hong Kong's voice globally. This Paper builds on HKTE's strong foundation by bringing the authentic perspectives of our young professionals to the forefront.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these findings and explore how they can support your administration's talent strategy. Special thanks to **Alexa Grierson (Chair)**, **Lucia Chen (Vice Chair)**, and the members of the Future Leaders Committee, whose dedication made this White Paper possible.

Yours sincerely,



Paul McSheaffrey
Chair, The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Cc:
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BRITCHAM HONG KONG

2026 WHITE PAPER

ASIA'S WORLD CITY: ATTRACTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TALENT



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INTRODUCTION

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong ("the Chamber") Future Leaders Committee is delighted to share our 2026 White Paper – "Asia's World City: Attracting the Next Generation of Talent".

The proposals are driven by the outputs from our 2026 Future Leaders Impact Hackathon, an annual event bringing together passionate young professionals from a diverse mix of backgrounds, professions, and roles to share valuable insights and recommendations to hack Hong Kong's future.

This year's Hackathon brought together over 100 young professionals from more than 30 leading organisations, including financial institutions (HSBC, Standard Chartered, Bank of China), professional services firms (KPMG, EY, Accenture), property developers (Swire Properties), law firms (Baker McKenzie, Eversheds Sutherland), and government-related bodies (InvestHK).

The challenge posed to this year's attendees was: In the context of framing Hong Kong as Asia's World City – what elements are essential for Hong Kong to draw the next generation of global talent?

The resulting discussion was structured under the four pillars of the Chamber's campaign – LIVE, WORK, PLAY, LEARN. Recommendations from the four pillars interlink and together contribute towards strengthening Hong Kong's position as 'Asia's World City'.

This submission brings forward eight proposals for consideration, grouped by:

- **Talent cultivation** – public-private sector partnership
- **Talent attraction** – connect and promote
- **Talent retention** – community integration and liveability
- **Supporting strategic enablers** – Northern Metropolis, tourism, and the Greater Bay Area ("GBA")

The submission also includes quoted viewpoints from attendees on key issues leading to each proposal (in italics). These first-hand perspectives provide additional context for consideration.

TALENT CULTIVATION

REASON FOR FOCUS: Hong Kong faces a projected manpower shortfall of 180,000 by 2028, with skilled technical workers accounting for over one-third of this gap.[1] Strong local and international talent pipelines are vital for Hong Kong's economic growth, with incoming talent contributing about 1.2% of GDP per annum for the past 3 years.[2] Investment in skills development, industry-relevant training, innovation capacity, and lifelong learning helps prepare the workforce for emerging industries and future opportunities.

Recommendation 1: Government and private-sector partnership to identify local talent gaps

"University students questioning whether their current syllabus teachings remain applicable for future jobs."

"A common perception that most jobs in Hong Kong are solely Finance sector driven, with very limited opportunities for other industries or skill sets required."

- **Use employer-sponsored visa applications to identify local skills shortages and inform targeted training programmes.** Government could actively engage employers applying to recruit overseas talent to understand which skills, experience or roles cannot currently be sourced locally. These insights could then inform new courses, bootcamps, and reskilling initiatives, ensuring the local workforce is better equipped to meet market demand. A similar approach is used in Singapore, where employers explain the need to recruit overseas rather than locally, enabling the Government to respond to identified skills shortages and strengthen the local talent pipeline. This approach could help expand local skills and employment pathways.

Recommendation 2: Public-private sector partnership to build ecosystem for talent upskilling

"There are workforce training schemes provided by Government, universities and employers respectively. However, not sure if these parties work together to provide training needed by the market?"

"There are worries about company development direction given availability of latest AI tools, would it result in job cuts instead of employee upskilling or retraining? It is not clear what employers would do and could result in employee resisting to adopt latest technological tools."

- **Establish a formal partnership between Government, universities, and employers to develop training programmes that address current and emerging skills needs.** This partnership could use industry insight to shape university courses, industry placements, bootcamps and reskilling programmes. It should support both graduates and the existing workforce, with greater access to

[1] Report on 2023 Manpower Projection
[2] 勞工及福利局局長為2026香港國際人才交流大會主禮致辭（只有中文）

subsidised AI learning and development as technologies and working practices evolve. Employers should have a visible role in supporting workforce transition, recognising that companies need to be visibly developing and investing in reskilling or redeploying talent. This would help build a future-ready workforce while reducing uncertainty, resistance to new tools and concerns about job displacement.

TALENT ATTRACTION

REASON FOR FOCUS: Attracting high-quality talent is critical to Hong Kong's status as an international hub – ranking fourth globally and ranking first in Asia for the "World Talent Ranking 2025" published by the International Institute for Management Development.[3] As global competition for skilled workers intensifies, Hong Kong should continue to differentiate itself as the preferred destination for emerging talent, professionals, entrepreneurs, and researchers.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen active talent attraction to expand Hong Kong's talent pipeline

"I only learned about Hong Kong university offerings by chance through a Mainland university career office."

"Based on personal experience, researchers and scholars seem not yet familiar with Hong Kong university positioning and offerings – hence they generally do not consider relocating here."

- **Establish targeted partnerships with overseas university talent offices to create Hong Kong internship, exchange and early-career programmes.** These programmes should give students and recent graduates who have not previously lived in Hong Kong the opportunity to experience studying, working and building a career in the city. This could include government-supported internships, year-abroad exchanges, and graduate placements. By engaging prospective talent through trusted university channels and offering first-hand experience of Hong Kong, the initiative could strengthen the pipeline of future students and professionals.

- **Partner with international business chambers in Hong Kong to reconnect with former residents and promote local career opportunities overseas.** Chambers should share information on Hong Kong internships, graduate programmes and private-sector vacancies through their networks, helping people who have previously studied, worked, or lived in the city identify opportunities to return. This would extend Hong Kong's talent outreach through established international networks.

- **Develop and promote a distinctive international value proposition for Hong Kong's universities.** Universities should clearly define what differentiates studying, teaching, and conducting research in Hong Kong, building on and increasing awareness of the Government's existing "Study in Hong Kong" platform and the strong performance of Hong Kong universities in global rankings.[4] This positioning should be reinforced through greater participation and visibility in relevant academic events, journals and international ranking exercises to attract scholars and students.

- **Encourage employers to apply proportionate language requirements in recruitment.** Employers should distinguish between roles where Cantonese or Mandarin capability is essential and those where it is only desirable. This would avoid discouraging otherwise qualified international applicants and help widen Hong Kong's international talent pool.

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[3] Hong Kong leaps to fourth place and ranks first in Asia in World Talent Ranking 2025
[4] Legislative Council Paper on Building Hong Kong into an International Education Hub; Five Hong Kong universities continue to rank among global top 100, helping to consolidate status as international education hub

Recommendation 4: Enhance work visa offerings to improve access to employment

"Most of my non-local graduate university classmates left Hong Kong because they were unable to find a Hong Kong employer willing to sponsor their visa – they did want to stay on to work in Hong Kong. Visa was the key factor affecting their employment status, cause performance-wise they are on par with local classmates who did get hired."

"Some who come to Hong Kong through the Top Talent Pass Scheme struggle to find work."

- **Enhance work visa pathways and provide targeted employment support for visa holders.** The Government should review visa options for overseas and Hong Kong-educated non-local graduates, while improving awareness of the pathways available to remain and work in the city. While the 24-month unconditional IANG visa pathway is already operational, many non-local graduates remain unaware of its eligibility criteria and post-study benefits. Support should also extend beyond issuing visas to helping Top Talent Pass Scheme holders connect with suitable employers, as some continue to struggle to secure job offers after arriving in Hong Kong.

TALENT RETENTION

REASON FOR FOCUS: Outward migration and high turnover among the skilled workforce weaken Hong Kong's ability to retain talent and sustain long-term growth – as of end-July 2025, the Top Talent Pass Scheme extension application rate was about 54%.[5] It is crucial to provide support beyond career opportunities, enabling our workforce and their families to build a future together in Hong Kong.

Recommendation 5: Facilitate community integration to build belonging

"Retention and experience after arrival is a problem – It could be hard to meet people and form a sense of belonging, since there are no existing community especially for those in early stage of their careers."

"The language barrier for non-Chinese speakers are challenging for both daily living and job finding – how could we better facilitate the language learning?"

- **Facilitate coordinated newcomer integration programmes that help new arrivals build lasting connections and establish a life in Hong Kong.** The programmes should bring together practical support across social connection, housing, schooling, and language. This could include:
  - **Social connection** – online platforms and in-person events that connect newcomers with existing communities
  - **Housing** – independent guidance on housing and neighbourhoods, tailored for newcomers to Hong Kong on leasing, renting, or purchasing, so those not familiar with the local scene would have a better understanding of available options. Currently, most get such information from their real estate agents, who may be biased in the areas and accommodation types that they promote.
  - **Living hubs** – build on successful Hong Kong models such as InnoCell and Weave Living, which combine accommodation with shared facilities and community activities, by developing more intergenerational communities connecting newcomers, young professionals, families and older people. This could strengthen social cohesion through shared spaces and mutual support, drawing on successful international models such as Humanitas in the Netherlands,[6] where intergenerational living promotes reciprocity and connections between generations.
  - **Schooling** – provide clear, independent and multilingual guidance on the full range of education options available to help newcomers and relocating families make informed choices and understand where local or bilingual education may be suitable, rather than assuming that international schools are the only viable option. This should explain the differences between public sector, Direct Subsidy Scheme, private independent, and international schools, including admissions processes, language of instruction, fees, catchment considerations and application timelines.

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[5] Legislative Council Panel on Manpower Overview of Extension of Stay for Talents under the Top Talent Pass Scheme
[6] Building bridges between generations. 12.5 years of residential students at WZC Humanitas | WZC Humanitas Deventer

- **Language** – accessible language-learning support to help newcomers navigate daily life and build stronger local community connections:
  - Free or subsidised Cantonese and Mandarin courses
  - Supported by a buddy programme for non-Chinese speakers

Recommendation 6: Enhance family-friendly activities to improve liveability

"It is difficult to find weekend activities to do with children in Hong Kong, especially if factoring in affordability and cost for families with more than one child."

"Children's well-being and education is a key consideration when families relocate, some say they decided to move to Singapore for this aspect when comparing to Hong Kong."

- **Open school sports grounds for public use and expand affordable family activities during weekends and public holidays.** When facilities are not required for school activities, selected sports grounds could be made available for families. This could be complemented by affordable sports, music, arts, and handicraft programmes that enrich children's learning, provide extracurricular opportunities and encourage social connection, reflecting the proposal for sports, music or arts affordable for families. In practice:
  - In general: Indemnity framework to relieve participating schools from legal liability for public injury or property damage.
  - For the private and international school sector: Incentivise more affordable access to verified NGOs or local sports associations to offset the financial advantage of higher-paying commercial renters.
  - For local public and Government-aided school sector: Introduce a flat-rate weekend operational grant for such purpose to provide operational relief instead of placing administrative and cost burdens on the schools.

- **Introduce annual childcare leave to give parents more time to care for their children and encourage better work-life-family balance.** The entitlement could increase according to family size, drawing on Singapore's recently announced approach, under which each parent receives 8, 10, or 12 days of leave annually for one, two, or three or more Singaporean children aged 12 or below.[7] This extends the leave available under the previous scheme and provides a potential model for strengthening family support in Hong Kong.

[7] NDR 2026: Parents to get up to 12 days of childcare leave each - CNA

SUPPORTING STRATEGIC ENABLERS

REASON FOR FOCUS: Strategic enablers require dedicated talent support to accelerate growth, unlock opportunities, and drive measurable impact. Talent-related initiatives should be tailored around Hong Kong's priority developments so that skills, mobility, partnerships, and promotion efforts directly support areas of strategic growth.

- Northern Metropolis: Transforming the Northern Metropolis, which amounts to a third of Hong Kong's total area, into Hong Kong's innovation and technology economic engine[8] will require a workforce with the right skills. However, from the perspective of young talent, its direct relevance appears unclear.
- Tourism: Visitor arrivals reached 49.9 million in 2025[9] and continue to grow. Combined with increased demand for outdoor activities, this places pressure on specialised talent – such as sustainable tourism, hospitality, and environmental management to manage demand and fully realise growth ambitions.
- GBA connectivity: With a record high of around 335 million passengers having passed through Hong Kong's control points in 2025,[10] cross-border connectivity is essential. How to remove friction to facilitate regional movement and integration?

By aligning talent attraction, upskilling, retention, and visa initiatives with these developments, Hong Kong can strengthen its value proposition, build the workforce needed for emerging opportunities, and ensure talent policy is connected to long-term economic and place-based priorities.

Recommendation 7: Accelerate Hong Kong's strategic enablers to unlock growth opportunities
Northern Metropolis

Northern Metropolis:

"Not sure why we should relocate to Northern Metropolis?"

"How could the large land supply and development focus of Northern Metropolis benefit us?"

Together, these measures would help reduce barriers to relocation, support talent attraction and retention, and strengthen the Northern Metropolis as a vibrant, internationally connected community that complements its role as a major economic and innovation hub.

- **Create large-scale, mixed-use, public-private land development opportunities that enable the private-sector to lead the design, construction, and operation of government-facilitated developments.** The Government should identify and release suitable land parcels for private-sector-led development on design, construction and operation, creating opportunities for

[8] Northern Metropolis - Basic Information
[9] HK_Tourism_Industry_Snapshot_published_in_Jul_2026_ENTC_V2.pdf
[10] news.gov.hk - Passenger traffic hits record high

investment in the Northern Metropolis growth-engine – including but not limited to Fanling North, San Tin Technopole, Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park. This would enable developers, operators and investors to play a more active role in creating, maintaining, and enhancing high-end industrial and service developments.

- **Launch a dedicated Northern Metropolis engagement programme that gives young professionals and private-sector partners a direct role in shaping its development.** The programme should bring together Government, investors, developers, operators, and young professionals to help address the apparent lack of awareness or connection among younger talent. Northern Metropolis was not a focus in most of the event discussions, suggesting that its opportunities are not yet sufficiently visible or relevant to this audience. Targeted engagement and structured consultation could help young professionals understand how they can contribute to the Northern Metropolis while ensuring its development better reflects the needs of talent Hong Kong aims to attract and retain.

- **Position the Northern Metropolis as a premier destination for international talent and their families through schooling and rental support offerings.** The Government should implement targeted measures to make the Northern Metropolis an attractive place to live, work, and build a career. This could include:
    - Increasing international school capacity and related planning clarity within the district, recognising the importance of education in relocation decisions and as a cornerstone in community building.
    - Introducing temporary rental reimbursement or support schemes for new arrivals during their initial relocation period.
    - Relocation of Government staff and offices, and increased use of the region for meetings to increase vibrancy and create community connection.

<u>Tourism</u>

"Why are there not more examples of developers being at the forefront of tourism-related developments? E.g. Sun Hung Kai's GO PARK Sai Sha with an outdoor sports park, water sports centre, and a sporting commercial complex."

"Why is there a big difference between what we think are Hong Kong tourism highlights versus what the Government is currently focusing on?"

Together, these measures would support sustainable tourism growth, diversify Hong Kong's visitor experience, and unlock greater private-sector participation in the development and long-term stewardship of tourism destinations.

- **Create public-private tourism development opportunities that enable the private sector to lead design, build, and operate government-facilitated tourism destinations.** The Government should identify and release suitable tourism land parcels for private-sector-led development, creating opportunities for investment in tourism, coastal tourism, and other nature-based visitor experiences. This would enable developers, operators and investors to play a more active role in creating, maintaining, and enhancing tourism assets.

- **Launch engagements to better understand perceptions of Hong Kong's tourism offerings.** The Government should undertake regular engagement with residents and visitors through surveys and

focus groups to better understand perceptions of Hong Kong's tourism offering and identify opportunities to strengthen and promote its unique combination of urban, cultural, sporting, and outdoor experiences in a highly connected international city. Many newcomers and visitors tend to be pleasantly surprised by aspects of Hong Kong that do not yet feature prominently in its international brand.

Recommendation 8: Deepen Greater Bay Area ("GBA") connectivity to enable talent mobility

"When navigating business with the GBA, there are cross-border friction challenges – talent mobility, working culture, legal system etc."

"How to shatter cultural misconceptions? with Hong Kong neighbouring the GBA how can we better act as a spring-board to facilitate East meet West?"

Together, these measures would help reduce GBA cross-border friction and complement Hong Kong's role as where "East meets West" – facilitating access to the wider region's culture, talent, and economic activities.

- **Introduce a GBA Welcome Pass to encourage newcomers to explore Hong Kong and neighbouring Greater Bay Area cities.** The Government could provide new arrivals with a timelimited travel pass offering free or discounted public transport across Hong Kong and selected GBA transport networks. This would help newcomers become familiar with the region, encourage cross-border mobility, and strengthen awareness of the opportunities available across the Greater Bay Area.

- **Create a dedicated Hong Kong-GBA talent mobility pathway.** The Government should explore stronger alignment between Hong Kong work visas and GBA employment opportunities to enable greater movement of talent across the region. This could include enhanced visa arrangements, simplified work authorisations or pilot schemes that allow professionals who have established careers in Hong Kong to access employment opportunities elsewhere in the GBA.

- **Improve cross-border digital and infrastructure connectivity across the Greater Bay Area.** Government and industry should work together to facilitate uninterrupted connectivity for seamless business operations and make it easier for talent and organisations to take advantage of opportunities across the GBA.

- **Expand student exchange and immersion programmes across the Greater Bay Area.** Schools and universities should provide more long-term, structured opportunities for students to study, work and collaborate across the GBA through structured exchange programmes, placements and innovation initiatives. Early exposure to the region's innovation ecosystem, culture and career opportunities and greater participation in exchange programmes would help students develop a broader understanding of the GBA, build professional networks and strengthen the talent pipeline for future cross-border collaboration. Solutions could include:
    - Credit recognition between Hong Kong and GBA universities
    - Co-incubation and research networks to link student innovators directly with tech giants and capital markets
    - In addition to schemes directed at top-tier university students, provide structured technical, trade and vocation-specific exchange pipelines.

