

# **The Organisation of Housing Professionals The Hong Kong Experience**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper looks at the organisation of housing professionals in Hong Kong by using the Hong Kong Branch, Chartered Institute of Housing as an example. The first part briefly introduces the Chartered Institute of Housing and its organisational structure. The second section discusses the factors for running a successful professional body. The key factor highlighted is the commitment of housing professionals in caring for the well being of the community.

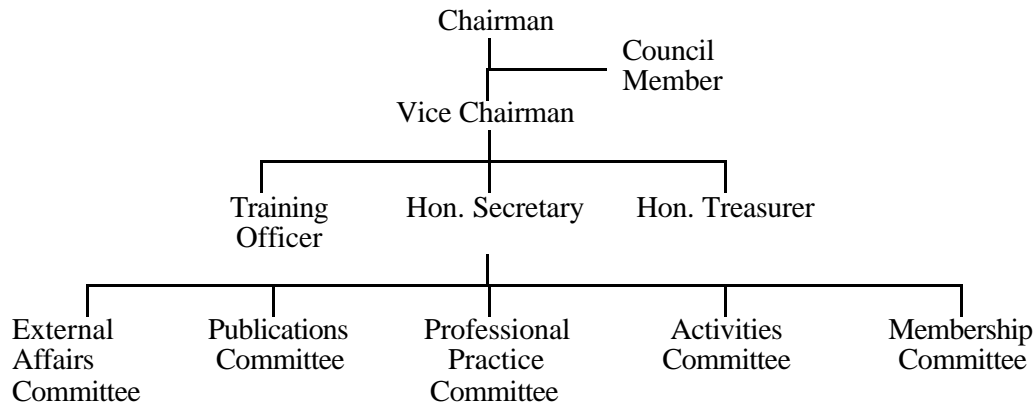
## **1. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)**

The CIH, with its headquarters in the United Kingdom, is a professional organisation for people working in housing. It plays a leading role in setting standards in housing policy, training and education, housing management and professional development.

In 1984, it was incorporated by Royal Charter. To fulfill its mission of promoting the art and science of housing, the Institute offers training and education to housing practitioners, supplies professional advice and information as well as providing a forum for individual members to discuss housing issues.

The CIH has over 13,000 members of various grades, mainly in the UK and Hong Kong. They work for local authorities, housing associations, educational bodies, private sector and voluntary organisations.

## 2. Organisation Structure of Hong Kong Branch, Chartered Institute of Housing



Members of the Executive Committee are elected annually. They meet together on a monthly and ad hoc basis. There are 5 working committees each assigned with specific duties ranging from membership recruitment to professional practice, etc.

## 3. Factors for Running A Successful Professional Body

The Hong Kong Branch's 30 years experience as a professional body and the key factors for maintaining its successful operations are discussed below.

### 3.1 Internal Factors

#### 3.1.1 Membership Recruitment

Although not the only factor, we can measure the success of a professional institution by its membership size. For CIH Hong Kong Branch, we set annual target for our recruitment and design promotion plans for membership drive. On target members include students studying for housing courses and junior practitioners in the industry.

### **3.1.2 Training and Education**

This is one of the two major objectives of the Institute. In the late 1960s', we launched our Diploma in Housing Program with the University of Hong Kong, a pre-qualification for election to membership of the Institute. In recent years, our training programs have extended to certificate and degree courses. Our Training Officer has been instrumental in providing input to the course design as well as in arranging Professional Experience Requirements (PER) projects for the final year students.

We also take care of the training needs of housing practitioners by organising short courses, seminars and workshops so that they can update their knowledge and enhance their professional competence.

### **3.1.3 Members Communication**

Effective communication with members is very important in maintaining their support and loyalty to the Institute. There are various channels, through which the Institute can keep in touch with its members, one of which is the publication of journals and newsletters.

Social activities are also ideal occasions for members to meet with their fellow counterparts for exchanging information and to socialize. As Christmas is around the corner, our members are all ready for parties and have fun together.

### **3.1.4 Code of Professional Conduct**

For a professional body to be successful and accepted by society, it has to ensure that its members subscribe to its values and achieve high standards of personal and professional conducts.

We have our Code of Professional Conduct, which sets out a number of rules and standards concerning personal integrity, honesty, self-discipline, diligence and professional competence. The Code is intended to give institute members clear guidelines about how to conduct themselves. It is also of value to employers, customers, and the community by demonstrating the standards of behavior they can expect of institute members.

## **3.2 External Factors**

### **3.2.1 Government Recognition**

Government's formal recognition of an institution's status as the representative of a professional discipline is vital to the institute's operation as an on-going concern. For professions like medical doctors and lawyers, membership of their respective professional institutions is a must for getting the licence to practise.

For the Hong Kong Branch, it took us many years to obtain government's recognition of our professional status with regard to civil service recruitment and promotion, and as a pre-requisite qualification for studying higher degrees in the universities, etc.

As a recognized professional body, the government consults us on important matters relating to land and housing, and in this respect, we can make our contribution to the formulation of housing policies and legislation.

### **3.2.2 Social Acceptance**

It is equally important to gain social acceptance of the professional status of our Institute. It has taken us very long time to build the groundwork for social acceptance. To achieve this, we adopt a strategy by positioning ourselves as a link bridge between the government and the public. We have demonstrated our ability as an effective channel to reflect public opinions on housing matters. We have also been very active in providing free consultant service to members of the public and in resolving their housing problems.

### **3.2.3 Public Relations**

Good PR are important for every organisation. As a professional body, it can and should act as if it were a member of the community. The situation is one of inter-dependence – a professional discipline needs the support of the community and the community must understand the professional discipline. All professional bodies need to establish a community relations program that both deals with complaints and involves itself in community activities. This may include local press relations, special visits to underprivileged families, open days, sponsorship, charity functions, community projects, etc.

### **3.2.4 Political Representation**

A professional body reaches its highest achievement, if its member is elected or appointed to government's administration or legislature.

The CIH Hong Kong Branch has, for many years, sought for representation in the relevant professional constituency of the legislature in the hope that voices of our members can be heard in the political arena. Although there is still a long way to go before we can succeed, we are confident that, with the continual growth of our Branch, we will be able to secure a seat in the Legislative Council ultimately.

## **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to share with you the motto of the Chartered Institute of Housing: "NOT FOR OURSELVES BUT FOR THE COMMUNITY".