

**Reflections on  
the Ngee Ann Kongsi – Institute of Policy Studies  
Citizens' Panel on Employment Resilience**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the Ngee Ann Kongsi – Institute of Policy Studies Citizens' Panel on Employment Resilience (henceforth referred to as "Citizens' Panel") engaged 59 Singaporeans and Permanent Residents (PRs) to co-create solutions for improving the adaptability and employability of workers who are at different stages of their career lifetime. Workers who are in different stages of career lifetime include those who remain in work, those who are involuntarily out of work and those who are preparing to go back to work.

The Citizens' Panel was conducted over four full-day sessions on 11 and 25 February and 11 and 25 March 2023. The participants of the Citizens' Panel included employees that come from diverse backgrounds, i.e., various occupations and industries, employers, to employment intermediaries (e.g., career counsellors, trainers and recruiters). Together, the participants developed ideas and proposals to address the challenge statement:

***"How might we strengthen our employment resilience?"***

Employment resilience refers to the capability of workers to stay adaptable and remain employable throughout their career lifetime in an increasing unpredictable and dynamic labour market.

The Citizens' Panel is a response to global trends in employment and their impact on the employment landscape in Singapore. With increasing global technological progress and shifting industry priorities, the core tasks and skills necessary in most jobs and occupations will inadvertently change, putting jobs at risk. As businesses adopt greater use of digital technologies, the increase in remote and hybrid working arrangements in a post-pandemic world means that being physically present may no longer be a requirement for some jobs. As such, workers will face not only local but regional and even global competition for jobs. Furthermore, with the global shift from traditional permanent employment to alternative work arrangements such as contract-based employment, freelancing and self-employment, Singapore can expect more transitions in and out of employment throughout one's career in future. Such movements may increase periods of unemployment or training in between.

In the face of employment disruptions, mid-career workers in Singapore, especially those in their 40s and 50s, workers in small and medium-sized enterprises, and blue-collar and non-professional white-collar workers are especially at risk.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ng Wei Kai, "Upskilling: Workers need help to identify skills they lack, but information is scarce, say experts," *The Straits Times*, 7 November 2022, available at <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/parenting-education/upskilling-workers-need-help-to-identify-skills-they-lack-but-information-is-scarce-say-experts>

## Challenge Areas

1. **Career Self-Management:** Given the changing landscape of the workforce, it is necessary for individuals to take ownership of their career journeys by continually upskilling and acquiring core skills through lifelong learning, to stay relevant to the evolving needs of the global economy. Notably, there lies the tension between balancing immediate financial concerns and long-term benefits reaped from upskilling. Hence, there is a need to support workers in their career journeys considering this tension. We posed the following challenge statement to participants:

***“How might we encourage workers to take an active role in managing their careers throughout their working lives?”***

2. **Training and Development:** A well-functioning skills ecosystem is necessary to deliver training and development according to labour demand and to support workers as they take on new jobs, change occupations or industries. Current schemes aim to assist both employers and employees by facilitating job matching, subsidising upskilling and reskilling, and helping workers to pivot towards more promising careers. Some examples include Career Conversion Programmes, SkillsFuture Career Transition Programme, Workfare Skills Support Scheme and various career-matching services. Despite the initiatives out there, challenges remain in terms of encouraging higher participation in training and development among employees and employers and facilitating career or job matching to the relevant occupation or industry post-training. We posed the following challenge statement to participants:

***“How might we complement existing efforts on training and development for workers to stay adaptable and remain employable, in order to meet changing needs of the labour market?”***

3. **Unemployment Support:** Going forward, disruptions to the labour market are likely to result in more jobs being obsolete and more workers being displaced. Although some employers may provide retrenchment benefits for displaced workers, it is not mandatory under the Employment Act and many workers may not get enough income support to tide through the period in between jobs. Unemployment support is designed to make temporary payments to individuals, for conditional periods of time, when they lose their jobs involuntarily. To date, Singapore remains among the few developed countries that does not provide unemployment support. In 2021, the PME (Professionals, Managers and Executives) Taskforce, led by the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF), has proposed that the

government consider unemployment income support for all workers who are involuntarily unemployed.<sup>2, 3</sup>

An unemployment support scheme has to strike an optimal balance between ensuring adequate income support and creating attractive work incentives, to facilitate workers' re-entry into the labour force. To achieve this balance, the following design and implementation characteristics need to be taken into consideration:

- Funding sources or financing mechanisms (i.e., government, employers/businesses, workers)
- Eligibility criteria (i.e., which groups of workers are eligible, definition of involuntary unemployment, on the condition that unemployed individuals are engaged in active job search)
- Replacement rates (i.e., the percentage of income replaced by unemployment support)
- Replacement duration (i.e., time period where unemployment support is available)
- Waiting period (i.e., time where no benefit is paid even when eligible for unemployment support)

We posed the following challenge statement to participants:

***“How might we explore practical schemes for unemployment support that are supplemented by active labour market policies for workers who are involuntarily out of work?”***

## Planning and Recruitment

As part of the planning process, we worked with our policy partner, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), which contributed policy perspectives to the three challenge areas. We appointed ThinkPlace, a design consultancy, to recruit participants and facilitate the sessions.

Participants were recruited in a two-stage process — a self-administered online questionnaire, followed by a telephone screening. To ensure that the Citizens' Panel comprised participants whose backgrounds were reflective of the diversity in Singapore society, selection was based on their employment status, role in the employment landscape (i.e., employee, employer, employment intermediary), employment history, age, gender, ethnicity, and educational and household income

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<sup>2</sup> NTUC and SNFE 2021 PME Taskforce Report: Strengthening Support for Professionals, Managers and Executives (PMEs), available at <https://www.ntuc.org.sg/uportal/news/NTUC-SNEF-PME-Taskforce-Report/>

<sup>3</sup> In its launch of the Forward Singapore report on 27 October 2023, the government said it would introduce a new scheme to help involuntarily unemployed jobseekers. One way was to provide “financial support that is conditional upon workers doing their part to actively search for jobs every month; and targeted assistance for involuntarily unemployed workers in the lower- and middle-income groups, who are more likely to face financial pressures”, available at <https://www.forwardsingapore.gov.sg/working-adult>.

levels. In addition, we assessed participants' interest in employment-related topics, and their commitment to attend all four sessions.

Below, we present the demographics of the 59 participants, profiled by gender, employment status, age, ethnicity, monthly income, and highest education level (see Figures 1 to 6).

Figure 1: Gender of participants (n=59)

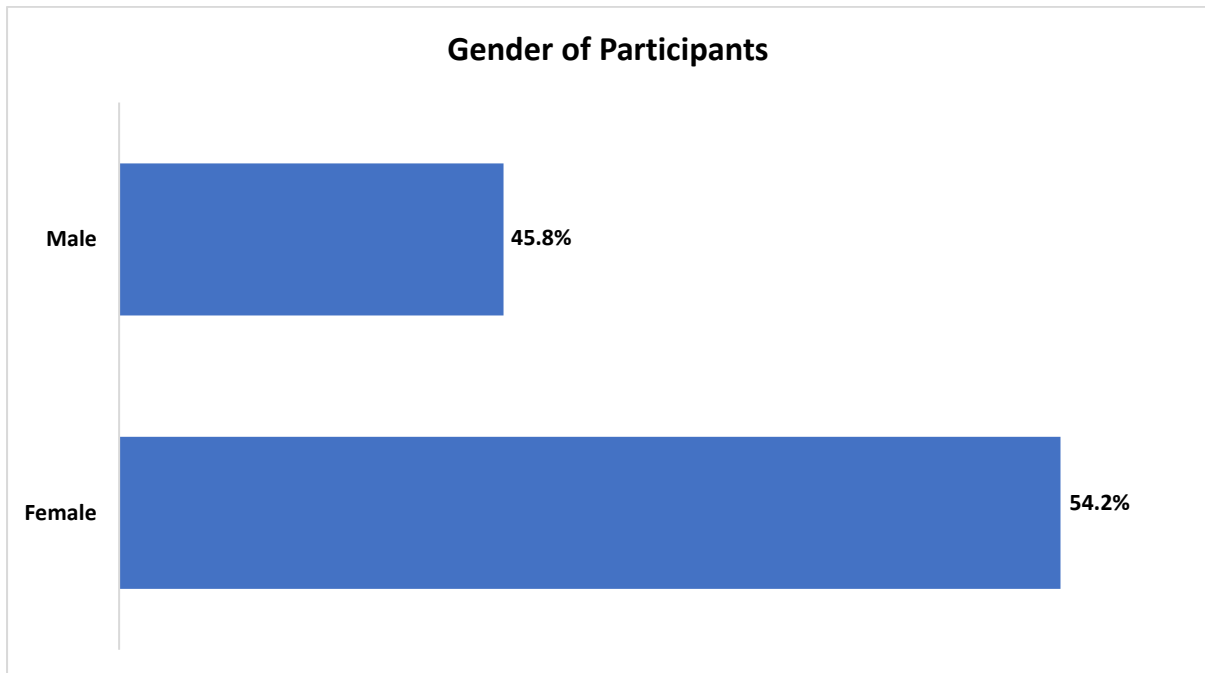


Figure 2: Employment status of participants (n=59)

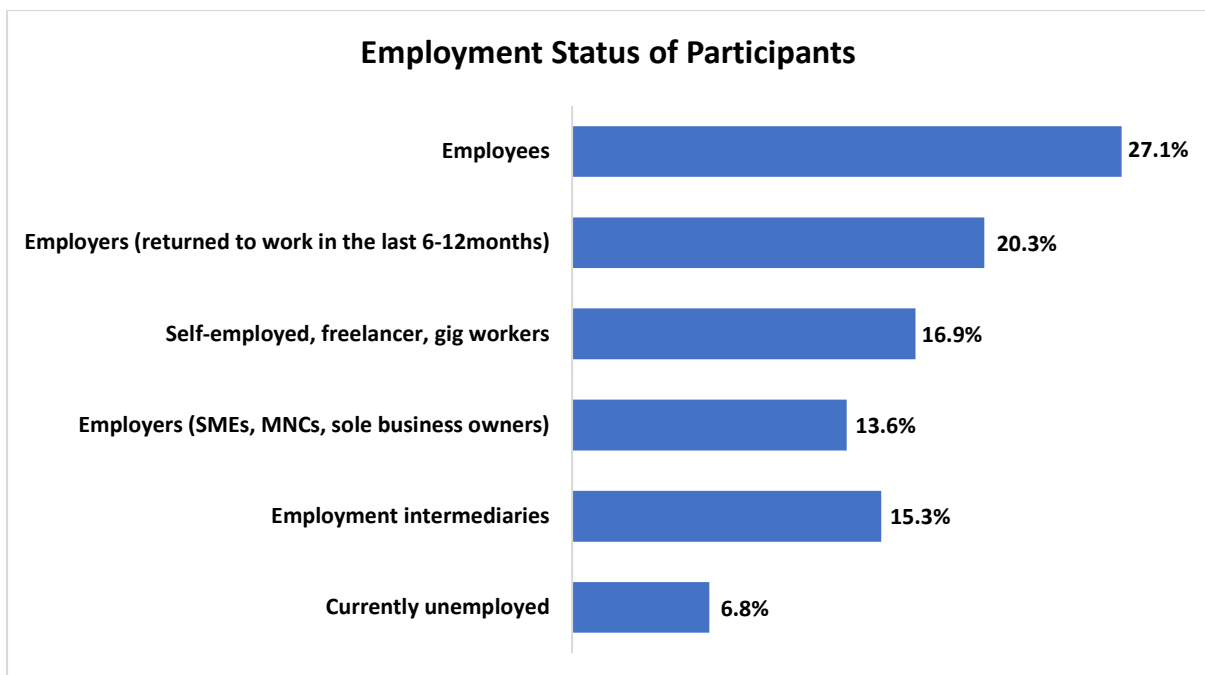


Figure 3: Age of participants (n=59)

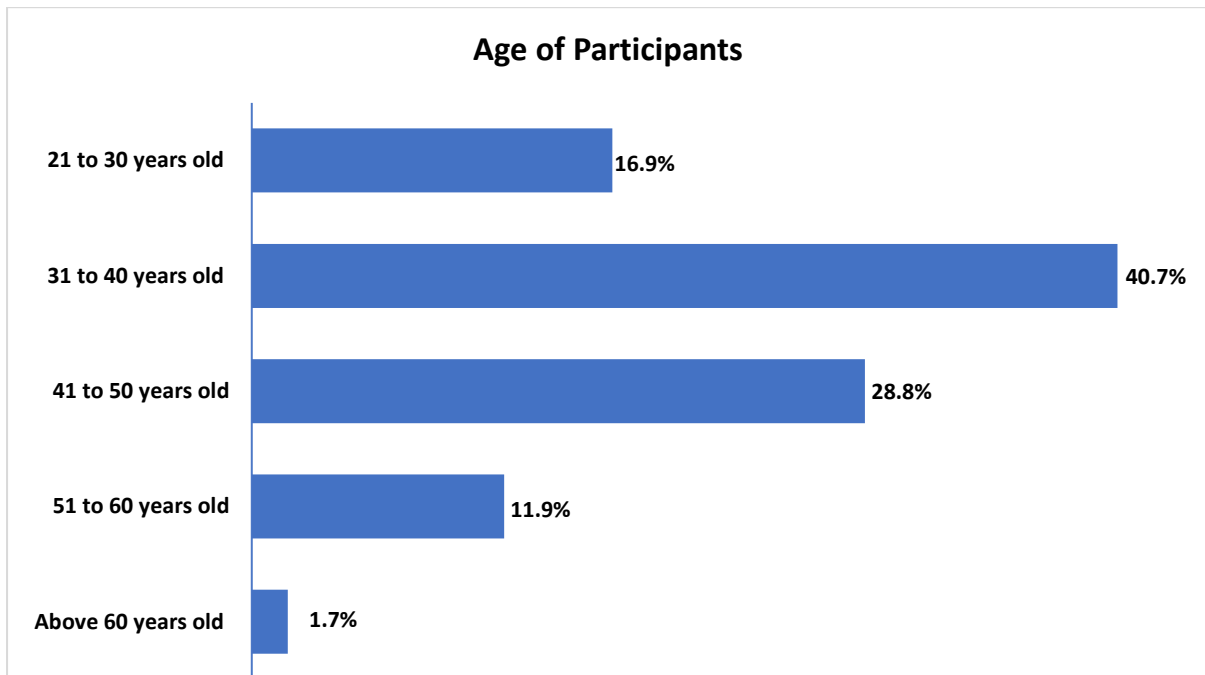


Figure 4: Ethnicity of participants (n=59)

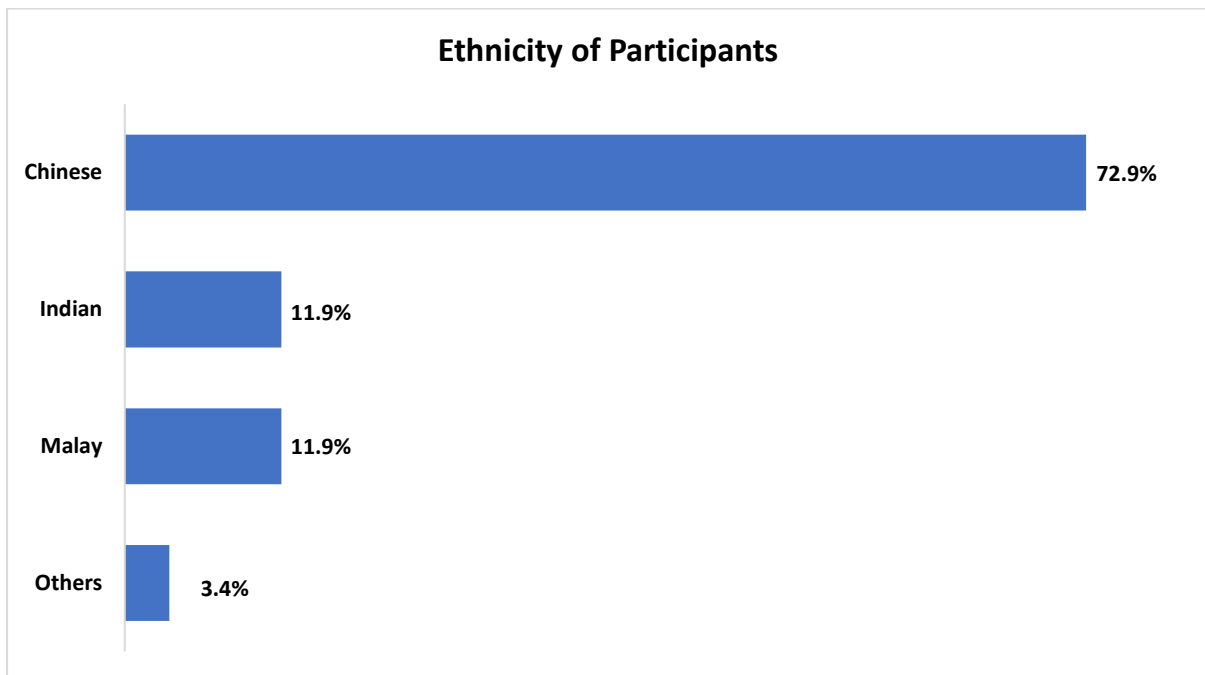
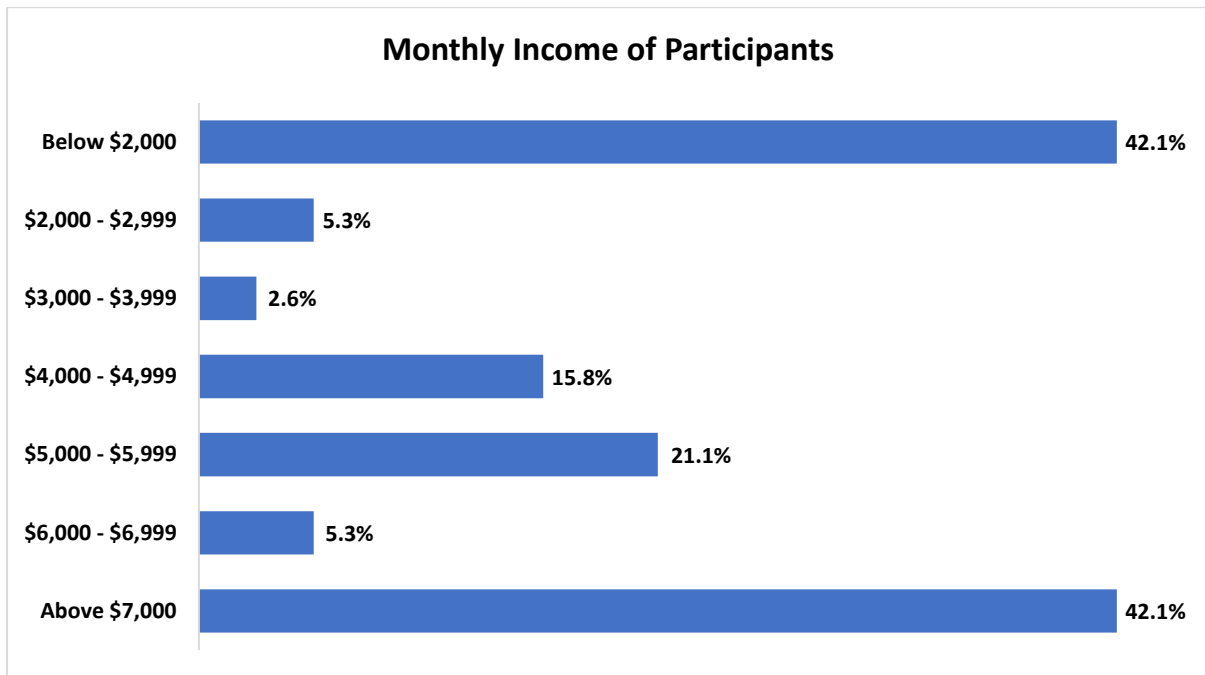
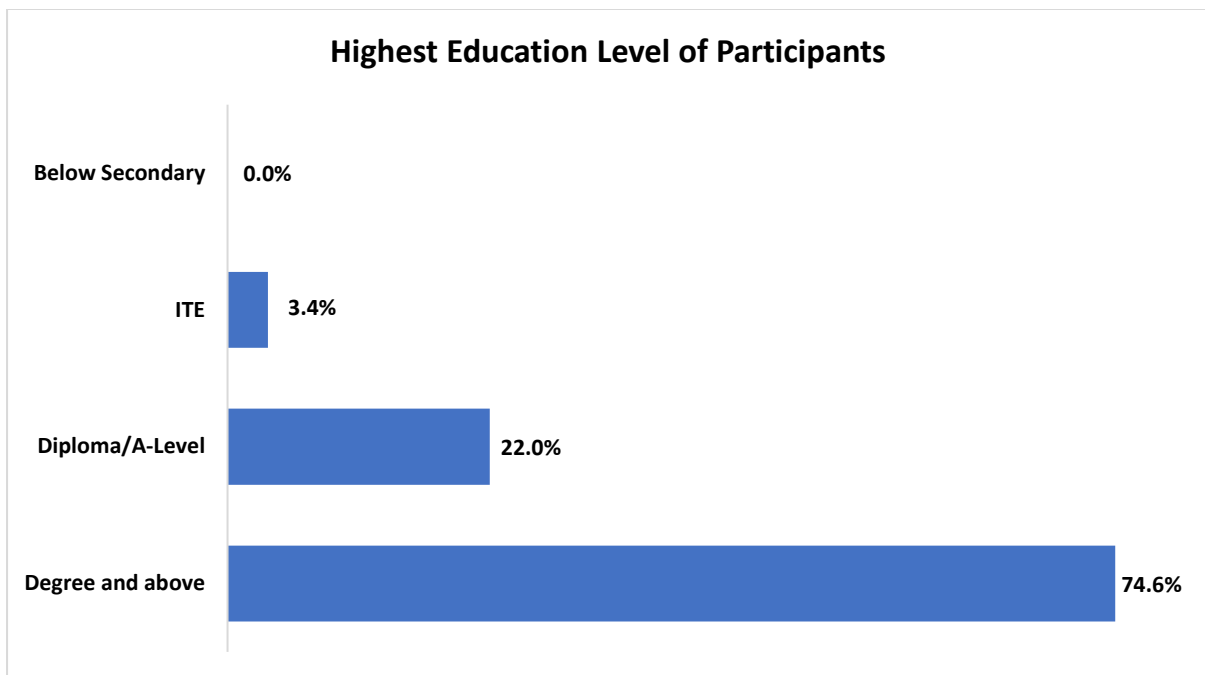


Figure 5: Monthly income of participants (employed and self-employed, n=38\*)



\*Information on monthly income for employers and employment intermediaries was not collected.

Figure 6: Highest education level of participants (n=59)





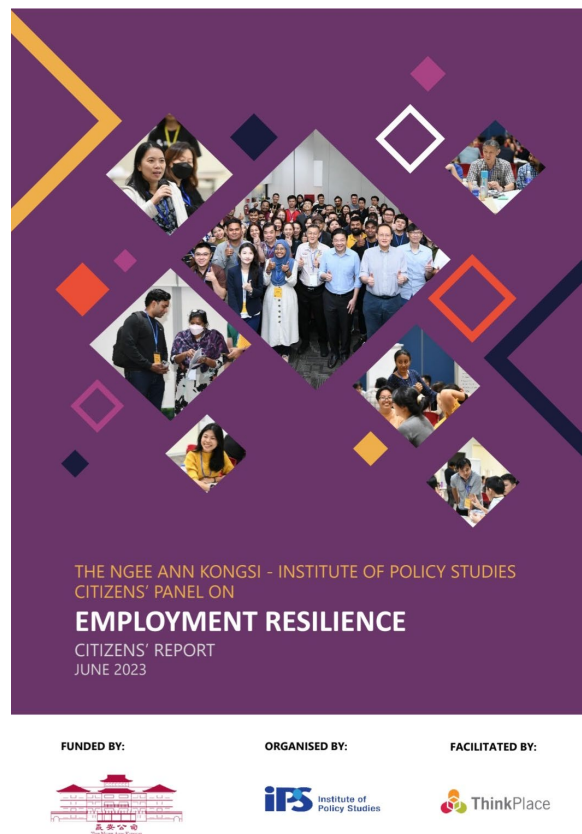
We invited two expert speakers and 17 resource persons across various sectors, ranging from academia, government, corporate to non-profit organisations. They were there to lend their domain expertise and experience in the three challenge areas (i.e., career self-management, training and development and unemployment support); address any knowledge gaps that participants might have; and provide feedback to the participants' challenge statements, ideas and proposals during the testing phase. During the second and third sessions, resource persons were assigned to groups based on their domain knowledge and the groups' chosen topic.

Prior to the commencement of the panel, we developed an information kit that outlined our aims and objectives, with an overview of the employment landscape in Singapore, policies and programmes that have been implemented in other countries, and the three challenge areas. Participants received the kit as background information before the first session, which could be useful for their reflections and discussions of the challenges facing workers in Singapore and what needs to be done.

## OBSERVATIONS OF THE CITIZENS' PANEL

As the sessions progressed over six weeks, the 59 participants were invited to select a challenge area of interest to them. They divided themselves into eight groups to develop ideas and proposals in response to the identified challenge area. Facilitators were assigned to each group to guide participants along the session agenda and facilitate their production of ideas and proposals. At the last session, the participants presented their ideas to Deputy Prime Minister Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for Manpower Dr Tan See Leng, MOM and other stakeholders. They submitted their proposals, which were subsequently consolidated into a Citizens' Report<sup>4</sup> (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Report on recommendations developed by the participants



### Session One

The session began with organisers welcoming participants and introducing them to the process. Dr Tan See Leng highlighted in his opening address the centrality of work in enriching our lives with purpose and meaning. He introduced the concept of career health and the whole-of-society effort that is required to achieve career resilience

<sup>4</sup> The Ngee Ann Kongsi-Institute of Policy Studies Citizens' Panel on Employment Resilience Citizens' Report 2023, available at <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/report-on-the-ngee-ann-kongsi-ips-citizens-panel-on-employment-resilience.pdf>

collectively. The minister also underscored the importance of the Citizens' Panel in contributing to the Forward Singapore exercise and the MOM's commitment to review the participants' proposals. National Trades Union Congress Secretary-General Mr Ng Chee Meng further underscored the need for participation of all stakeholders. This includes the union's commitment to work with the government and employers to support workers as the latter navigate well through their career journeys.

In the plenary session that followed, expert panellists provided an overview of the employment landscape and its challenges. As participants immersed themselves in the three challenge areas — career self-management, training and development, and unemployment support, they identified the gaps in existing policies and programmes and the opportunities for change. Participants selected a challenge area that they had some prior knowledge of or interest in. They were then re-organised into groups to share their perspectives about the specific challenge area and the knowledge gaps that was necessary to plug, in anticipation for the second session where resource persons would be assigned to their groups.

*Figure 8: Plenary session with experts*



Figure 9: Participants sharing their employment stories



The first session concluded with each group sharing their knowledge gaps and presenting their requests for specific information that they think would be useful for the next stage of their deliberation. IPS consolidated and shared these requests (i.e., “asks”) with MOM, which coordinated with different agencies to provide the information to the groups ahead of the second session.

Table 1: Highlights of Session One

Highlights of Session One
Context setting by Minister of Manpower and NTUC Secretary-General
Plenary session with expert speakers
Self-introduction and “Me in the Employment Landscape”
Exploring challenge areas
Reflections and sharing of “asks”

## Session Two

The session started with participants taking a deep dive into their chosen challenge areas and formulating challenge statements in their respective groups. This encouraged participants to narrow the scope of the issue that they wanted to address. Resource persons were assigned to respective groups to address knowledge gaps and provide feedback to the groups’ work-in-progress challenge statements. This was then followed by a short pitch by each group where they continued to seek feedback from one another to refine their challenge statements that were formulated by the participants themselves (see Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of challenge statements by participants

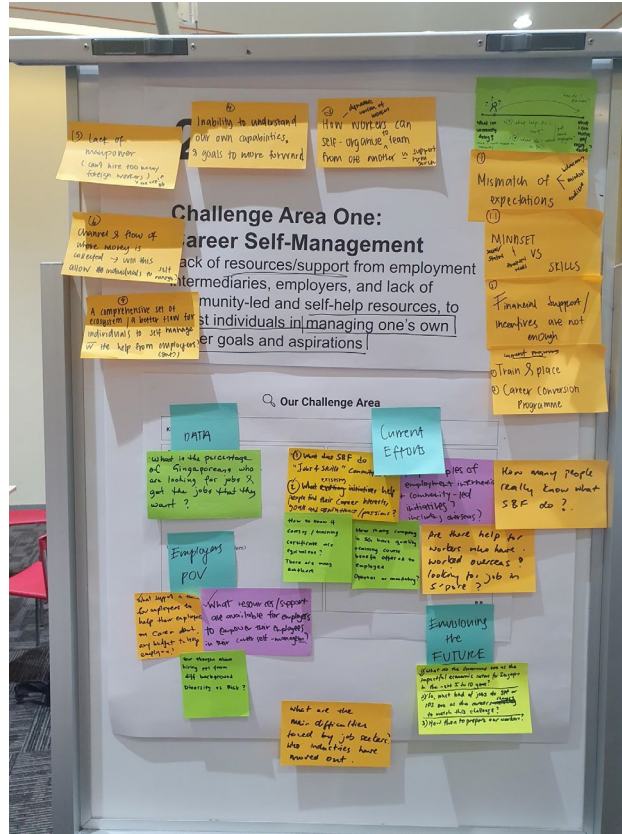
Challenge Areas	Group	Challenge Statements
Career Self-Management	1	How might we build self-help skills for individuals to manage their own careers/mental well-being?
	2	How might we help individuals own their careers in partnership with employers, employment intermediaries, and the community?
	3	How might we develop self-awareness and build confidence and support the understanding of career options among youths and stay-at-home mothers, in order for them to stay motivated in their careers?
Training and Development	4	How might we better match and connect current employment opportunities with skills that stay-at-home parents returning to work have so that they can get work that they are interested in?
	5	How might we empower individuals to “upgrade” by choosing the most relevant courses for themselves so that they progress in their careers?
	6	How might we create a seamless user experience for freelancers and self-employed persons to access learning and development opportunities so they will have income security at each life stage?
Unemployment Support	7	How might we create a system of support for those involuntarily out of work to obtain adequate income support, reskilling and training?
	8	How might we create an easy-to-recall support network for freelancers and gig workers that channels them to the right resources and closes the loop with them, or reduces unemployment in within an achievable timeframe?

These actionable challenge statements were a critical part of the process as they served the following purposes: (i) represented short descriptions of specific problems, (ii) steered the groups in the right direction, and (iii) helped the groups kick-start the ideation process. The ideation process occurred over several rounds, starting with individual brainstorming for ideas, sharing back in their respective groups, developing idea sheets to cluster different ideas together, and building on one another's ideas. Participants evaluated the ideas generated based on the following set of design criteria:

1. Clarity
2. Accuracy
3. Relevance
4. Logical
5. Breadth
6. Depth

Participants were also tasked to research on the ideas that they have generated — whether the ideas have been implemented elsewhere, which ideas sounded the most novel, and what was within their ability to collectively detail and recommend.

Figure 10: A group's idea board



The second session concluded with a sharing by all the groups. This enabled each group to learn what other groups were working on and identify overlaps. Post-session, the groups were given an assignment to take home — to find out whether the ideas have been previously implemented, alongside evaluating suitability for local context.

Table 3: Highlights of Session Two

Highlights of Session Two
Consultations with resource persons
Developing a challenge statement and getting feedback
Ideation using design criteria
Sharing by all groups

### Session Three

At the beginning of the third session, each group selected one idea that interested them the most, best addressed their challenge statement and could be feasibly developed within the limited time. This session focused on the groups pitching their preliminary ideas, testing them and refining them.

Figure 11: Groups preparing for idea testing



There were three rounds of idea testing built into this session. For the first round of testing, participants developed a pitch to test their ideas with Senior Minister of State for Manpower Dr Koh Poh Koon who was invited to join the session and provide his feedback. This was followed by a second round of testing where the resource persons who attended Session Two were invited back to lend their expertise and experience in evaluating whether the ideas were desirable, feasible and viable. In the final round, participants roved around the different groups to rate one another's ideas and provide inputs on things that could be improved or reconsidered.

*Figure 12: A group pitching their idea to a resource person*

After three rounds of testing, participants reviewed the feedback and continued to finetune their ideas. In preparation for the final session, participants were given time to prepare their group presentations which could be in the form of a storyboard, skit, video or poster. To guide the participants in their preparation for their presentation, they were asked to cover these areas: (i) their challenge statement, (ii) their ideas, (iii) the target audience, (iv) the potential benefits and pitfalls, and (v) the proposed implementation plan.

*Table 4: Highlights of Session Three*

<b>Highlights of Session Three</b>
Pitching to Senior Minister of State Dr Koh Poh Koon
Pitching to resource persons
Pitching to other participants
Refinement scope of proposal by each group
Planning for presentation

## Session Four

The Citizens' Panel concluded with the participants presenting their ideas and proposals to Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong and Minister for Manpower Dr Tan See Leng, who in turn shared their feedback with the groups. In his opening remarks, DPM Wong spoke about Singapore's approach of protecting workers by helping them reskill, upskill and take up new job



opportunities. He highlighted the need to work with multiple stakeholders in this endeavour, citing the Citizens' Panel as one such effort. With citizens more involved in deliberating over policy issues and trade-offs, trust in policy making is strengthened, allowing for an enduring social compact to be built. The presentation segment was also attended by stakeholders from other government agencies and several resource persons who engaged with the participants during the second and third sessions. A summary of the proposed ideas is presented in Appendix A.

Figure 13: Q&A with participants during the presentation segment



Table 5: Highlights of Session Four

Highlights of Session Four
Groups prepare for their presentations
Presenting recommendations to DPM Lawrence Wong, Minister for Manpower Dr Tan See Leng and stakeholders
Q&A with presenters

*Figure 14: Conclusion of the Citizens' Panel, attended by DPM Lawrence Wong, Minister for Manpower Dr Tan See Leng and Assistant Secretary-General of NTUC Mr Patrick Tay*



After their presentations, participants continued to review and refine their ideas and proposals based on the feedback received as they embarked on writing the report. As the session drew to a close, they reflected on the panel process.

## EVALUATING THE CITIZEN'S PANEL PROCESS

We assessed whether the Citizens' Panel reflected a deliberative process based on the following criteria: (i) inclusivity and diversity, (ii) fairness and equality, (iii) knowledge gain, (iv) efficacy, and (v) applicability (see brief descriptions in Table 6). An earlier report published on the Citizens' Jury on the War on Diabetes provides more detail on each criterion.<sup>5</sup> We included questions on participant's overall experience in the Citizens' Panel, their views on the duration and areas for improvement.

The analysis of the participants' experience is based on several sources of data collection, comprising of observations made throughout the four sessions, the pre-panel survey administered during Session One (n=59) and the post-panel survey administered during Session Four (n=58). The survey comprised both close-ended questions where participants were asked to provide their response using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither disagree nor agree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree), as well as open-ended questions. The participants' responses were tallied to derive a mean score, which is represented by the bracketed numbers in the tables.

*Table 6: Meeting the criteria of the deliberative process*

Criteria	Description
Inclusivity and diversity	Recruiting participants from all walks of life that could reflect the wider Singapore society is a necessary first step to eliciting as wide a range of perspectives as possible. Hence, inclusivity is one of the key considerations for ensuring diversity among participants in terms of their socio-demographics, backgrounds and experiences.
Fairness and equality	The deliberative process should create equal opportunities for individuals as well as groups to freely express their opinions, share their perspectives, critique their own and the perspectives of others, and make decisions as a group. Fairness and equality are key considerations through the stages of the Panel — identifying the challenge statement, brainstorming for ideas, testing ideas and refining them, before culminating in the presentation and proposals of their ideas to relevant stakeholders.
Knowledge gain	Participation in the deliberative process should contribute to increasing one's knowledge in the following domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public policies in general</li> <li>• Employment-related topics</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Reflections on the Citizens' Jury on the War on Diabetes (2018), available at [https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj\\_ips-published-191018.pdf](https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj_ips-published-191018.pdf)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider policymaking process (i.e., understand the challenges of balancing needs and resources in policymaking)</li> </ul>
Efficacy	<p>Participation in the deliberative process should contribute to the following domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal efficacy: Individual's judgment of how his or her knowledge and skills have improved through deliberation.</li> <li>• External efficacy: Individuals' assessment that his or her political views and actions have an external impact on the political process.</li> <li>• Political trust: Individual's trust towards government institutions and actors due to a better understanding of the process of democratic decision-making.</li> </ul>
Applicability	<p>Applicability is concerned with the deliverables or the deliberative process that include recommendations in the form of ideas and proposals put forth by the participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence that recommendations would be supported by Singaporeans.</li> <li>• Quality of recommendations that would contribute to policymaking.</li> </ul>

## Inclusivity and Diversity

The diversity of perspectives was an integral part of the panel process, as evidenced by participants' responses. As participants share their employment journeys, others glean from these experiences, something that they would have been privy to if not for the Citizens' Panel. Many of the participants commented on the "great intersection of diversity in terms of views and experiences", giving them the confidence to freely express ideas and enabling them to learn from one another.

## Fairness and Equality

The panel brought participants through many stages, from team building to brainstorming for ideas, sharing at the small group level and large group level, and concluding with eight presentations highlighting proposed ideas to the relevant stakeholders. Overall, majority of the participants perceived the Citizens' Panel process to be a fair and equal one, with 87.9 per cent of participants agreeing that they had enough opportunities to express their views.

The facilitators play a key role in setting the stage for "open, free, and fair discussions", to which 94.8 per cent of participants agreed that the facilitators helped to create a safe space for their views to be shared openly. This safe space made enabled participants to network and engage with others. Participants shared that this resulted in the "depth and quality of discussions", allowing for "different perspectives and brainstorming of ideas".

While there is consensus that the discussions were fair and equal, with 93.1 per cent of participants stating that their views were given fair consideration, a handful, however, pointed out that the more reticent individuals could have been given more opportunity to participate. To this, they suggested having a smaller group size to ensure more time and opportunities for discussion. In this Citizens' Panel, each group had seven to eight participants, and the number of participants was balanced against the number of groups. The number of groups was determined by the themes that emerged from the early rounds of ideation.

Table 7: Fairness and equality

Question	Pre-panel	Post-panel
During the Citizens' Panel, there were enough opportunities for me to express my views.	Not available	87.9% (4.5)
Facilitators were helpful in ensuring a safe space for me to share my views openly.	Not available	94.8% (4.5)
Fellow participants gave fair consideration to my views.	Not available	93.1% (4.1)

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Bracket is for respective mean scores.

## Knowledge Gain

After engaging with expert speakers, resource persons and other participants, and putting together a presentation and embarking on writing the citizen's report, participants expressed that they have gained more knowledge, both in the general understanding of public policies and employment-specific issues. The participants generally agreed that there was sufficient information provided throughout the sessions to bring them up to speed on the employment-related issues and challenges. As mentioned earlier, MOM worked with IPS to gather and consolidate information requested by the participants to plug their knowledge gaps. The knowledge gain is reflected in the survey figures, with initial figures at 33.9 per cent (public policies) and 15.8 per cent (employment-related issues), which increased to 63.8 per cent and 25.9 per cent, respectively.

Discussions with Minister for Manpower Dr Tan See Leng, Senior Minister of State Dr Koh Poh Koon, and experts from different domains shed light on the complexities of the issues and oftentimes competing interests of different stakeholders when it came to what should be done for career self-management, training and development, and unemployment support. To this, the post-panel survey reflected that 94.8 per cent of participants agreed that their experience did enable them to better understand the trade-offs in policymaking. In lieu of this, participants suggested to have more government representatives from other relevant ministries or government agencies on board to share policymaking perspectives and considerations, in order to help them make informed decisions about their ideas and proposals.

Table 8: Knowledge gain

Question	Pre-panel	Post-panel
I am better informed about public policies than are most people.	33.9% (3.3)	63.8% (3.6)
How informed are you about issues relating to employment (e.g., helping workers stay adaptable and employable and support those who are involuntarily out of work)?	15.8% (3.0) (Very informed/ Extremely informed)	25.9% (3.1) (Very informed/ Extremely informed)
The Citizens' Panel process helped me better understand the challenges of balancing needs and resources to solve employment issues.	Not available	94.8% (4.2)

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" (unless stated otherwise). Bracket is for respective mean scores.

## Efficacy

### Internal efficacy — participants' perceptions of their role

The survey conducted pre- and post-panel showed an increase in participants' sense of internal efficacy, where 87.9 per cent of the participants said that the process strengthened their confidence in the value of their contributions as citizens. Also, there was an increase in the number of participants who agreed to having a say in what the government does, from a pre-panel 50.9 per cent to a post-panel 58.6 per cent.

The participants' increased sense of internal efficacy could be attributed to multiple reasons. The first reason being knowledge gain. Participants were provided with resources, such as the information kit, consultations with expert speakers and resource persons — all of which informed them more about public policies.

Second, the participation accorded to participants provided them several opportunities to play a part in the policymaking process, i.e., presenting their ideas through intra-group and inter-group presentations, making a final presentation of their proposals to the relevant stakeholders during the final session, and contributing to the citizens' report.

Table 9: Internal efficacy

Question	Pre-panel	Post-panel
Citizens have a say about what the government does.	50.9% (3.5)	58.6% (3.6)
The Citizens' Panel process strengthened my confidence in the value of my contributions as a citizen.	Not available	87.9% (4.1)

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Bracket is for respective mean scores.

## External efficacy — participants' perceptions of their impact on political process

A positive indicator of people perceiving their personal impact on the political process would be their interest to be involved in future citizen engagement. The post-panel survey reflected that most participants, around 98 per cent, said they would favourably consider participating in future citizen engagement opportunities. Given the positive experience they had, 96.6 per cent of participants said that they would recommend fellow citizens to take part in future Citizens' Panels.

Table 10: External Efficacy

Question	Pre-panel	Post-panel
After my Citizens' Panel experience, I will favourably consider participating in future citizen engagement opportunities.	Not available	98.3% (4.5)
I would recommend fellow citizens to take part in future Citizens' Panels.	Not available	96.6% (4.5)

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Bracket is for respective mean scores.

## Political trust

Survey results showed a slight increase in participants' belief that the government would consider the recommendations made by citizens during public engagement sessions, from 59.3 per cent pre-panel to 62.1 per cent as the panel concluded.

Following the trend of a general increase, participants' perception of the government's willingness to engage with citizens also improved, as reflected in the post-panel survey where participants agreed that the government cares about what citizens think, from 66.1 per cent to 69.0 per cent. This could be due to the participation of policy stakeholders who contributed as resource persons and gave feedback during the rounds of idea testing, and who attended the presentation where citizens delivered their ideas and proposals.

Table 11: Political trust

Question	Pre-panel	Post-panel
I believe the government seriously considers recommendations made by citizens at public engagement sessions.	59.3% (3.5)	62.1% (3.6)
The government cares about what citizens think.	66.1% (3.6)	69.0% (3.7)
I believe that the government is committed to partner citizens to build our future Singapore.	74.6% (3.8)	75.9% (3.8)

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Bracket is for respective mean scores.

## Applicability

At the end of the panel, participants presented eight proposals to address the three key challenge areas (i.e., career self-management, training and development, and unemployment support). Majority of the participants reflected confidence in their ideas

and proposals that were put forth, with 84.5 per cent believing that their recommendations would be supported by fellow Singaporeans and 87.9 per cent believing that their recommendations were worthy of the government's support. This could be attributed to the intensive process of eliciting feedback from their peers, resource persons and policymakers (for instance, the three rounds of testing during Session Three) as they developed their ideas.

Table 12: Applicability

Question	Pre-panel	Post-panel
I believe the Citizens' Panel generated recommendations that will be supported by Singaporeans.	Not available	84.5% (4.1)
I believe the Citizens' Panel generated recommendations that are worthy of government support.	Not available	87.9% (4.2)

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Bracket is for respective mean scores.

### Perceived importance of employment-related topics

Besides participants' reflections on the deliberative process, based on the above criteria we assessed if there were changes in the perceived importance of the employment-related topics discussed throughout the panel. Generally, participants' perceived importance of career self-management, reskilling and upskilling and career coaching or counselling, increased with their participation in the panel, but not for unemployment support (see Table 13).

Before the panel, 63.2 per cent of participants felt that it was important for an unemployment scheme to exist in Singapore. However, this number fell to 56.9 per cent post-panel. One possible explanation is that participants had examined the trade-offs inherent in an unemployment support scheme, especially when there are real-world implications on the key stakeholders including workers, employers or businesses and the government.

Table 13: Perceived importance of employment-related topics

Question	Pre-panel	Post-panel
How important do you think it is for workers to take an active role in managing their careers?	93.0% (4.4)	96.6% (4.5)
How important do you think it is for workers to undergo reskilling and upskilling?	86.0% (4.4)	94.8% (4.4)
How important do you think it is for workers to undergo career coaching or career counselling?	68.4% (3.8)	70.2% (3.9)
Some countries (e.g., Japan and UK) have unemployment benefit schemes for those who are involuntarily out of work. How important do you think an unemployment benefit scheme (one that suits the local context) is for Singapore?	63.2% (3.7)	56.9% (3.8)

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Bracket is for respective mean scores.



## SUMMARY

Overall, 98.2 per cent of the participants said they enjoyed the experience of participating in the Citizens' Panel. In addition, 94.8 per cent of them felt that the panel was both meaningful and empowering for themselves as citizens. Most participants (75.9 per cent) felt that the four full-day sessions provided adequate time for discussion on the topic of employment resilience. For the remaining participants, some felt that more time could have been allocated for brainstorming of concept and solution development (14.7 per cent) and others mentioned more time to be allocated to testing and refining of solutions (23.5 per cent). A handful of participants suggested for more time to be allocated for discussion with government representatives and resource persons on their ideas and proposals and for the final presentation.

The Citizens' Panel concluded with an appreciation dinner on 17 October 2023. There, MOM responded to the panel recommendations and highlighted that the insights had contributed to Forward Singapore (Forward SG) exercise, specifically the "empowerment" pillar that tackles the challenges of the economy and jobs in the changing employment landscape amidst an uncertain world. In fact, the following proposals were incorporated in the Forward SG report: "career passport" that seeks to provide skills and qualifications data and personalised career insights to support workers in making decisions about their jobs and careers; "career gym" that offers personalised career guidance; "new standards for employers" to better manage their workers' career aspirations; and "unemployment support" to help unemployed workers tide over their period of unemployment while seeking out better job opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

The session ended with a call to action, urging panel participants to continue their engagement with MOM as beta testers and ambassadors for the career health digital tools they are developing and as skilled volunteers for existing support networks such as Mentoring SG, Volunteer Career Advisory and Skills Ambassadors, signalling that the panel is a beginning of a continued engagement between the government and citizens.

From the beginning to the end of the Citizens' Panel, the process and participants' proposals were reported extensively on various platforms. These ranged from mainstream media, online media, the government's Forward Singapore platforms, to the Minister for Manpower's Committee of Supply 2023 speech. The publicity increases the visibility of the contributions made by citizens to improving the employment landscape in Singapore. A summary of the media reports is presented in Appendix B. The Citizens' Panel sends a signal to the larger public — that every

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<sup>6</sup> Forward SG Building our Shared Future 2023, available at [https://www.forwardsingapore.gov.sg/-/media/forwardsg/pagecontent/fsg-reports/full-reports/mci-fsg-final-report\\_fa\\_rgb\\_web\\_20-oct-2023.pdf](https://www.forwardsingapore.gov.sg/-/media/forwardsg/pagecontent/fsg-reports/full-reports/mci-fsg-final-report_fa_rgb_web_20-oct-2023.pdf)

person, regardless of their background, has the ability and a part to play in advancing policies for the benefit of those in need.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Robyn TAN is Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies. Her research interests are broadly in the design and implementation of policies, programmes and interventions in real world policy and service settings. She has a keen interest in theory-driven evaluations, specifically in applying realist research to understand what works, for whom, under what conditions, and why. Robyn is an adjunct faculty with the Geriatric Education and Research Institute (GERI) where she is involved in implementation research of health services, with the aim of increasing the translation of research into practice. Prior to joining NUS, Robyn's work in the social service sector focused on building the monitoring and evaluation capabilities of social service agencies.

Dr Carol SOON is Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies where she heads the Society and Culture department. Her research interests are in false information, digital literacy and inclusion, media regulation, new media and activism, and public engagement and deliberation. She worked with the Ministry of Health in 2017 on Singapore's first Citizens' Jury and is currently working with various government agencies on engaging citizens in co-creating policy solutions. Carol is also Associate Director of the Asia Journalism Fellowship, which is supported by Temasek Foundation. She is the Vice Chair of Singapore's Media Literacy Council and she sits on the Civil Service College-Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth Partnerships and Engagement Experts Panel.

Samantha QUEK is Research Assistant at the Institute of Policy Studies and a Communications and New Media graduate from National University of Singapore. Prior to joining IPS, she was a Project Officer at Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, National Technological University, and a research intern at Institute of Adult Learning. Her research interests include digitalisation of the future of work, media psychology and youth engagement.

Gloria LIN was Research Assistant at the Institute of Policy Studies. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Quantitative Finance at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business in Singapore Management University.

## Appendix A

### Summary of challenge statements and proposed ideas

Group	Challenge Area	Challenge Statement	Proposed Idea	Summary of Ideas
1	Career Self-Management	How might we build self-help skills for individuals to manage their own careers/mental well-being?	Career Wellbeing-SG Campaign	<p><b>Target audience:</b> Mid-career workers, especially those with caregiving responsibilities.</p> <p><b>Brief description:</b> Given that mid-career workers may find it challenging to balance both caregiving and career and neglect their mental well-being as a result. The Career Wellbeing-SG Campaign comprises three strategies: (i) Self-help checklist: a self-assessment for individuals to assess their well-being; (ii) Spotlight support services and resources: a partnership with non-profits and grassroots organisations to publish testimonies of support services; (iii) Resources and helplines: a website for easy access to helplines and resources.</p>
2	Career self-management	How might we help individuals own their careers in partnership with employers, intermediaries and the community?	Career Passport & Career Gym	<p><b>Target audience:</b> Secondary school students and their parents, fresh graduates, and mid-career workers.</p> <p><b>Brief description:</b> Youths may face challenges when navigating their careers, given the emphasis on academic pursuits over future careers. Career Passport &amp; Career Gym comprise: (i) Digital Career Passport via MyInfo: Students are issued a digital career passport and linked up with career coaches; (ii) Physical Career Gym: Career counsellors are assigned to schools to provide career guidance to students and are rewarded points for their efforts.</p>
3	Career self-management	How might we develop self-awareness and build	Career Self-Management as a Tripartite	<p><b>Target audience:</b> Employers and employees who share the same desire to continually upskill and upscale.</p>

		confidence and support the understanding of career options among youths and stay-at-home mothers in order for them to stay motivated in their careers?	Standard & Community Career Coach	<b>Brief description:</b> The Tripartite Standards for employers comprise five pointers, all of which focus on continual growth for employees. Incentives can be introduced to nudge employers toward adopting the Tripartite Standards, i.e., grants/subsidies, financial/tax incentives, and networking opportunities. The provision of community career coaches for employees. Community career careers can comprise HR practitioners, industry mentors, members of self-help groups and grassroot organisations who are willing to contribute to this cause.
4	Training and Development	How might we better match and connect current employment opportunities with skills that stay-at-home parents returning to work have so that they can get work that they are interested in?	Portal for Transiting Parents	<b>Target audience:</b> Jobseekers returning from a career break or caregiving commitments, i.e., back-to-work professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) and stay-at-home parents. <b>Brief description:</b> Jobseekers could face challenges when returning to the workforce after taking a career hiatus, e.g., stay-home-parents who could face hiring bias and a job downgrade due to the lack of flexibility in quality jobs. The “Back to Work” portal could provide a user-friendly, comprehensive and supportive platform to help PMETs and stay-at-home parents to secure suitable job opportunities.
5	Training and Development	How might we empower individuals to “upgrade” by choosing the most relevant courses for themselves so that they progress in their careers?	Jobs & Courses Market Dashboard	<b>Target audience:</b> Job seekers and employees looking to upskill. <b>Brief description:</b> The Jobs & Courses Market Dashboard comprises: (i) Bringing together industry experts to share about industry trends, informing individuals about both the job market and skills in demand; (ii) Using data analytics and machine learning algorithms to provide personalised job recommendations to match an individual’s experience, skill and interest; (iii) Listing of grants for specific relevant and recognised courses, thus providing additional motivation for individuals to upskill. These solutions are not new to the

				current SkillsFuture SG platform, but their value proposition is the centralisation of such information.
6	Training and Development	How might we create a seamless user experience for freelancers and self-employed persons to access learning and development opportunities so they will have income security at each life stage?	Resource Hub for Self-Employed Persons	<p><b>Target audience:</b> Self-employed persons (SEPs)</p> <p><b>Brief description:</b> Self-employed persons may face more isolation compared to others in the workforce and could be disconnected from skills upgrading resources. A unified, user-centric Resource Hub for Self-Employed Persons (SEPs) could consolidate resources offered on different sites (i.e., NTUC, SkillsFuture SG, Workforce SG, and some trade industries/associations). They include three components: (i) Networking of SEPs with peers and mentors; (ii) Skills upgrading and entrepreneurship programmes and (iii) Financial assistance/advice to support SEPs during financial hardships.</p>
7	Unemployment Support	How might we create a system of support for those involuntarily out of work to obtain adequate income support, reskilling and training?	Transition Assurance Package	<p><b>Target audience:</b> Out-of-work Singaporean citizens and permanent residents who have contributed to their CPF accounts for at least 12 months out of the past 24 months. The non-eligibility criteria include individuals fired for violating company policy such as misconduct, insubordination, absenteeism and involvement in work stoppages or strikes.</p> <p><b>Brief description:</b> Out-of-work resident workers would need financial support to tide them through the transition into their next job. At times, they may feel pressured into accepting any job that is available to them at the first instance due to their financial commitments. The Transition Assurance Package provides financial payouts based on a 2-tier structure: \$60/day for days 1 to 180 (\$1,800/ month) and \$40/day to days 181 to 365 (\$1,200/month). To receive the payout, workers would need to fulfil at least 3 out of 5 criteria: (i) active job search; (ii) upskilling efforts; (iii) correspondence relating to interviews; (iv) career counselling and coaching</p>

				<p>sessions, and (v) career workshops and networking sessions. The payout will be disbursed until either the individual secures employment or up to a maximum of one year, whichever is sooner. To further prevent individuals from abusing the system, there will be a limit on the number of times they can utilise this benefit throughout one's lifetime (i.e., every four years, they can claim once up to 12 months of benefit).</p>
8	Unemployment Support	How might we create an (easy-to-recall) support network for freelancers and gig workers that channels them to the right resources and closes the loop with them/reduce unemployment in within an achievable timeframe?	Job & Economic Transition (JET) Scheme	<p><b>Target audience:</b> Self-Employed Persons (SEPs) seeking self-employment opportunities and/or full-time permanent employment.</p> <p><b>Brief description:</b> The launch of a Job &amp; Economic Transition (JET) Scheme could provide intervention to SEPs during the critical period when they are involuntarily out of work. The scheme comprises: (i) Self-employment Opportunity, Assurance, &amp; Resource (SOAR) — SEPs seeking self-employment will receive costs offset of professional services when partnering with SEPs and SMEs and (ii) Facilitate Upward Employability &amp; Livelihood (FUEL) — SEPs seeking full-time permanent employment will get discount on necessities when shopping at partnering merchants.</p> <p>For individuals on the SOAR track, they earn more credit when more contracts are secured while individuals on the FUEL track earn more credit when they improve their CV/resume, consult career coaches, apply for jobs or training, etc.</p>

## Appendix B

### Mainstream media

S/N	Date published	Platform	Title
1	11 February 2023	8 world	<a href="#">公民咨询小组 深入讨论就业韧性课题</a>
2	11 February 2023	BERITAMediacorp	<a href="#">IPS adakan panel tinjau lanskap pekerjaan di SG</a>
3	11 February 2023	Lianhe Zaobao	<a href="#">66 人公民咨询小组将向政府建议如何加强就业韧性</a>
4	11 February 2023	Seithi Mediacorp	<a href="#">வேலைவாய்ப்பு நிலவரம் குறித்து ஆராயும் குடிமக்கள் குழு</a>
5	11 February 2023	The Straits Times	<a href="#">Government to get policymaking ideas from citizens' panel to improve employment resilience</a>
6	25 March 2023	CNA	<a href="#">Protecting workers, not jobs, is Singapore's approach to employment resilience DPM Wong</a>
7	25 March 2023	Lianhe Zaobao	<a href="#">黄循财：留住过时工作不如协助员工过渡新岗位</a>
8	25 March 2023	The Straits Times	<a href="#">Singapore's approach to employment resilience is to protect workers, not jobs: DPM Wong</a>
9	26 March 2023	Lianhe Zaobao	<a href="#">黄循财：工作更替是蓬勃经济一部分 政府要助国人提升技能更易过渡新岗位</a>

### Forward Singapore

S/N	Date published	Platform	Title
1	31 March 2023	YouTube (Our SG channel)	<a href="#">How can we improve our career health?</a>
2	28 April 2023	YouTube (Our SG channel)	<a href="#">Empower Closing of Citizens Panel on Career Health</a>
3	October 2023	ForwardSG Report	<a href="#">Forward Singapore Report</a>

## Minister for Manpower Dr Tan See Leng's Speech

S/N	Date published	Platform	Title
1	1 March 2023	Ministry of Manpower	<a href="#">Speech by Minister for Manpower Dr Tan See Leng at Committee of Supply 2023</a>

## Social media posts

S/N	Date published	Platform	Post
1	11 February 2023	Human Resources Online	<a href="#">8 recommendations to improve employment resilience in Singapore</a>
2	1 November 2023	<a href="#">Instagram</a>	<p>In February 2023, close to 60 Singaporeans from all walks of life came together to form a Citizens' Panel on Employment Resilience. Over the course of 8 weeks, they co-created ideas and proposals to help Singaporeans stay employable throughout their careers and remain resilient amid setbacks.</p> <p>Their recommendations contributed to the work of the Empower Pillar of the <a href="#">#ForwardSG</a> exercise, and provided fresh perspectives to inform our policies. Watch the video to hear from the participants on the Citizens' Panel! 🙌</p> <p>🙌 A big thank you to all the participants once again, and to the <a href="#">@ips_sg</a> and Ngee Ann Kongsi for partnering the Singapore Ministry of Manpower to organise the Citizens' Panel!</p>