



THE Ngee ANN KONGSI - INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES
CITIZENS' PANEL ON

EMPLOYMENT RESILIENCE

CITIZENS' REPORT
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List of Abbreviations

AIC	Agency for Integrated Care
CAP	Career Advisory Programme
CDAC	Chinese Development Assistance Council
CNA	Channel NewsAsia
CPF	Central Provident Fund
DOS	Singapore Department of Statistics
e2i	Employment & Employability Institute
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
ECG	Education and Career Guidance
EDCA	Early Childhood Development Agency
FWAs	Flexible Work Arrangements
GovTech	Government Technology Agency
IHLs	Institutes of Higher Learning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMH	Institute of Mental Health
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies
IRAS	Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore
JSIT	Jobs-Skills Integrator
LLI	Lifelong Learning Institute
LKYSPP	Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
Mendaki	Yayasan Mendaki
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
NAC	National Arts Council Singapore
NCSS	National Council of Social Service
NTUC	National Trades Union Congress
PBM	Purpose Bound Money
PMET	Professional, Managerial, Executive and Technical
SAMH	Singapore Association for Mental Health
SEP	Self-Employed Person
SG	Singapore
SINDA	Singapore Indian Development Association
SNEF	Singapore National Employers Federation
SSG	SkillsFuture Singapore
WSG	Workforce Singapore
TAFEP	Tripartite Alliance for Fair & Progressive Employment Practices
U FSE	Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



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Context and Panel Purpose

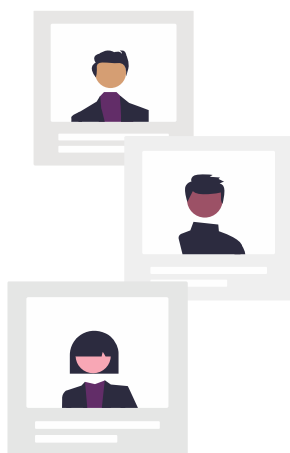
Context

The Ngee Ann Kongsi - Institute of Policy Studies Citizens' Panel on Employment Resilience, held over four sessions in February and March 2023, engaged with Singaporeans and Permanent Residents (PRs) to co-create ideas and proposals on how to improve employment resilience of workers at different stages of their career lifetime, namely, those who remain in-work, those who are involuntarily out of work, and those preparing to go back to work. **“Employment resilience” refers to the capability of workers to stay adaptable and remain employable throughout their career lifetime in an unpredictable and dynamic labour market.** The Panel addressed this overarching challenge statement:

“How might we strengthen our employment resilience?”

This challenge statement is further broken down into three areas and sub-challenge statements (see pages 7 to 9). This report presents the Panel's proposals.

Who were involved?



Participants

Fifty-nine Singaporeans and PRs from different facets of the local employment landscape participated in the Panel and co-created ideas and proposals.

Ministry of Manpower (MOM) representatives

Representatives shared policy perspectives on employment-related issues with the participants.

Expert speakers and resource persons

Expert speakers and resource resources provided the context and insights on issues in the employment landscape to help participants in the formulation of their ideas and proposals.



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Key Challenge Areas

Key Challenge Areas

In view of the global trends in employment and its impact on the employment landscape in Singapore, the Citizens' Panel focused on three areas and the respective sub-challenge statements:

Challenge Area 1: Career Self-Management

"How might we encourage workers to take an active role in managing their careers so that they can stay adaptable and remain employable throughout their working lives?"

In the changing employment landscape, workers need to be aware of how global trends can impact their career growth, and how best they can prepare and adapt, by acquiring core skills to meet the needs of the economy. To support workers, new initiatives could include the development of a personalised career plan to equip them with the ability to identify jobs in promising sectors and the skills needed, set career goals, self-regulate, self-direct, self-construct new careers with ownership of their career journey.¹

Workers would need to have the ability (can do) and the motivation (will do) to adapt. Workers who are self-directed, are ready to take an active role in managing their careers. Others may be less adept in understanding what they need to do to develop themselves or face employment barriers, such as the lack of necessary education and skills, and limited access to job opportunities and training.

In response, participants developed the following challenge statements:

- How might we build self-help skills for individuals to manage their own careers/mental well-being?
- How might we help individuals own their careers in partnership with employers, intermediaries and the community?
- 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?

¹Tay, Hong Yi, "Career progress is like taking care of one's health: Tan See Leng," *The Straits Times*, November 2, 2022, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/jobs/career-progress-is-like-taking-care-of-one-s-health-tan-see-leng>.

Challenge Area 2: Training & Development

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

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. Examples include the Career Conversion Programmes, SkillsFuture Career Transition Programme, Workfare Skills Support Scheme and various career-matching services. What more can be done to encourage higher participation in training and development among employees and to facilitate job matching to the relevant occupation or industry post-training?

In response, participants developed the following challenge statements:

- 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?
- How might we empower individuals to “upgrade” by choosing the most relevant courses for themselves so that they progress in their careers?
- 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?

Challenge Area 3: Unemployment Support

“How might we think about unemployment support to supplement active labour market policies so that we can better support displaced workers to bounce back into employment?”

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. At the same time, it creates incentives for them to return to the workforce. 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.²

In response, participants developed the following challenge statements:

- How might we create a system of support for those involuntarily out of work to obtain adequate income support, reskilling and training?
- 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?

²See, Sharon, “PME taskforce says it has not made progress on its unemployment benefits recommendations,” *The Business Times*, October 26, 2022, <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/singapore/economy-policy/pme-taskforce-says-it-has-not-made-progress-its-unemployment-benefits>.

“How might we encourage workers to take an active role in managing their careers so that they can stay adaptable and remain employable throughout their working lives?”

3

Our Proposed Initiatives (I)

Challenge Area 1: Career Self-Management

3.1 Career Wellbeing-SG Campaign



Campaign logo designed by participants

What is the context of this idea/solution? What is happening today that is driving the need for an intervention?

Workers are getting sandwiched between various roles in both their careers and personal lives. Workers have to provide for their parents and young kids as well as manage their own individual careers by themselves. As a result, a lot of stress is placed on them while they are still expected to cope and manage themselves. They do not have an avenue to be able to manage their careers through seeking relevant support and services.

In the current employment climate with frequent job disruptions, it is important that individuals stay career-resilient and employable to weather possible changes in the future. At the same time, it is easy for mid-career workers to forget about their mental health because of fear of not being able to catch up and anxiety about job security.

What are the problems we are trying to solve?

We want to solve the problem of people being seen solely as workers and not as individuals who have their own sense of identity and dreams they want to achieve in their careers.

The organisations providing the support for career and mental well-being keep both aspects separate, but there should be something that integrates both to create a more comprehensive assessment and outlet to help and educate individuals about their career well-being.

There may be a lack of awareness about ongoing campaigns, such as MindSG and mindline.sg, and individuals may lack the motivation to take charge and own their own career development. This solution is intended to tackle these issues.

What are the gaps in current measures?



Need to **strengthen the link** between career well-being and existing career support measures



General **lack of awareness of existing measures** in place, i.e., MindSG, HealthHub, mindline.sg



Individuals are **unaware of the need to be motivated to take charge** at any stage of their career

Current awareness campaigns on mental health, tend not to focus on career health/vocational well-being. A person may be in a favourable career trajectory, but their mental well-being might be ignored. Thus, there is a need to strengthen the link between career well-being and existing career support measures.

Measures focusing on organisational career development tend to be undertaken by institutions and employers, but not by individuals. We believe that individuals need to be motivated to take charge at all stages of their career instead of waiting for a major event to happen to consider their next steps.

There is a general lack of awareness of existing mental well-being measures in place, i.e., MindSG by HealthHub, and mindline.sg. Even though there are such support services, members of the public may not be aware of them.



Potential campaign poster sited at an MRT station. Prototype developed by participants.

What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

Our proposal is a campaign targeting mid-career workers using promotional and evergreen strategies, which aims to:

- Raise awareness and reinforce the concept of career well-being by adopting a holistic approach to both the individual's mental and career well-being instead of just treating them as separate entities.
- Educate and remind individuals to be aware of and take ownership of their personal career well-being through campaigns that show them a model example and how they can achieve similar success in their career well-being and health.
- Bring together existing and additional resources to provide ease of access so that individuals are aware of the avenues that could help them manage their careers.

The campaign would include the following evergreen strategies such as:

1. **Self-help checklist** – Self assessment via QR code scan for users to assess personal career well-being score.
2. **Spotlight support services and resources** – Work with NGOs (Silver Ribbon), grassroot organisations (People's Association) to share stories about support services for users to lean on.
3. **Resources and helplines** – Career Wellbeing-SG website, helplines, resources for users to access whenever they need.



Potential campaign poster sited on an MRT cabin. Prototype developed by participants.



Potential campaign poster sited at a bus stop. Prototype developed by participants.

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

The intended outcomes are:

- Promote and raise awareness of the importance of career well-being in Singapore so that there are initiatives and resources for people to seek help and support
- To motivate individuals and showcase success stories of those who have been through their career journeys and have overcome their challenges

The employment intermediaries and employment-related organisations that we are working with for this will need to adopt a more holistic view of both career well-being and mental well-being.

Who are the target audience(s)?

Our target audience comprises individuals in their mid-careers, specifically those who are sandwiched between taking care of their parents and raising children while having multiple financial obligations.

A typical mid-career worker's profile is illustrated in this visual:



Image: The "Sandwiched Juggler"

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/solutions?

These are the stakeholders/partners who can focus on the career aspect of the Career Wellbeing-SG campaign: Ministry of Manpower, NTUC and Workforce Singapore.

These are the stakeholders/partners who can focus on the well-being aspect of the Career Wellbeing-SG campaign: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), Agency of Integrated Care (AIC), National Council of Social Service (NCSS), Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH).

Reward and recognise employers who sign up for Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) as part of their employee benefits package. EAPs are staffed by trained professionals to provide counselling, support groups and referrals to community resources. If more organisations can be involved, it will provide employees with the platform to seek professional support at their workplace at a lower cost. All information provided during these sessions are to be kept strictly confidential to provide a safe environment for employees to share any issues or challenges that they are facing.


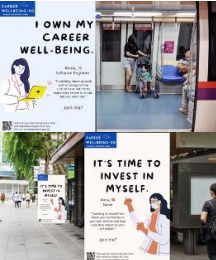




Are there similar ideas/solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/solutions different?

Existing measures do not integrate mental well-being and career well-being. Currently, it is either one or the other, and we want to implement a more holistic approach where we focus on both the person's mental well-being and career well-being.

We should not separate career and mental well-being but have a more holistic approach to develop the person as a mentally well, career-driven individual.

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

1. **Lack of budget** — a national campaign like this requires strong financial backing especially on the promotional elements and ensuring continuity of the campaign. A lack of budget support might limit the effectiveness of the initiative.
2. **Lack of continual support from agency partners** — intermediaries and agency partners play an important role in the campaign, especially in terms of presence, notwithstanding budget and resource support that they can provide.
3. **Lack of continual support from corporate partners** — the campaign can be more successful if it encourages corporate partners to extend the campaign towards their own employees and ensures the continuity in the education of the career well-being concept.
4. **Lack of reach** — a main festival is likely to be held in the central area, but participants will come from all over Singapore. If the festival has limited reach, or the ads are not put up evenly across Singapore, there might be a certain group of the population who may not benefit from the campaign.
5. **Continuity of the campaign** — this campaign is designed for continuity, and there are elements that need to have continuity to be effective.
 - a. The self-help checklist is meant to measure the current state of well-being and should continue to be available so that individuals can check their well-being from time to time.
 - b. Support groups can only achieve effectiveness if they continue to keep running and growing, so as to achieve better participation among the new and old participants.
 - c. Resources need to continue to be available as the concept of career well-being will not go away. Individuals will require help and support from time to time, and they will look for such resources when the need arises.

Promotional Elements		Evergreen Initiatives		
				
Advertisements	Festival	Self-help Checklist	Spotlight, Support Group	Resources and Helplines
 <p>For outreach towards the mass population to increase awareness on the concept of CWB.</p>	 <p>Signature event for a focused education experience for motivated attendees.</p>	 <p>Self assessment via QR code scan for users to assess personal CWB score.</p>	 <p>Human interest stories to inspire, and safe support groups for users to lean on.</p>	 <p>CWB-SG website, helplines, resources for users to access whenever they need</p>

Suggested implementation plan for the Career Wellbeing-SG campaign by participants.

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

1. **Raise awareness and reinforce the concept of career well-being** — There is a general lack of awareness of existing measures in place, and the concept of career well-being helps to bring in a new dimension for the existing measures in place.
2. **Combine existing and additional resources to provide ease of access.** There are existing projects like safe pods at Queenstown and Career Connect On-The-Go that provide similar services, but the implementation is not in the holistic manner that we have envisioned.
3. **Partner with intermediaries and agencies to make this a joint initiative.** Partner government agencies like the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), National Council of Social Service (NCSS), Workforce Singapore Group (WSG) and Institute of Mental Health (IMH) to bring about the integration of both career and mental well-being.
4. **Promotional elements**
 - a. Advertisements on MRT trains and bus stops for outreach towards the mass population to increase awareness on the concept of Career Well-being.
 - b. Two-day weekend festival — signature event for a focused education experience for motivated attendees.

3.2 Career Passport & Career Gym

What is the context of this idea/solution? What is happening today that is driving the need for an intervention?

The context of this idea/solution is the disconnect between individuals on their career with regard to passion, personality, expectations and suitability. Our youths find it difficult and challenging to navigate their career path and have no clear direction of what they want to do.

There is little emphasis on future careers, and an overemphasis on academic pursuits. We need to be preventive/proactive instead of reactive and passive, which is the current case. We are strong from an industrial and employer perspective alone. The driver for intervention is the need to engage different career content and dimensions.

What are the problems we are trying to solve?

The team's suggestion is to develop self-awareness and build confidence and support the understanding of career options among youths, in order for them to stay motivated to continue to stay in their career.

There is a disconnect between an individual's career and the contents in their tertiary courses. Students do not use VIPS (Values, Interests, Personality and Skills) for selection of tertiary courses. They merely base their course choices on cut-off points and prospects, not their individual skill sets, passion, interest and aptitude. There is also no process in place to manage interest and job expectations.

After their education, when they start their first jobs, there is often a misalignment between career expectations and individual interest. There is also a lack of guidance to help individuals reach their aspirations if there is a mismatch with too many unknowns.

Throughout their education and career journey, individuals only look to professionals when they have reached the stage where they have no other options to turn to. Their intervention process is usually reactive rather than proactive. In short, individuals lack the necessary training to take proactive and preventive measures.

Through the identification of gaps, we have come up with several suggestions to help all Singapore citizens and permanent residents achieve this, starting from Secondary 2.

What are the gaps in current measures?

As mentioned earlier, individuals are not adequately equipped to apply proactive and preventive measures. There is a risk that early career joiners and those new to the job market might not know where to go to seek career advice.

Another issue that is prevalent is that there are insufficient career and interest alignment. Many of our youths base their potential career paths on what it is their friends want to do, which industry makes the most money, and other factors that may not take into account their own interests and suitability for the industry.

There is also a lack of holistic career education. The current system of monthly ECG (Education and Career Guidance) lessons for secondary school students is not sufficient. Through our group discussions, we have also discovered that ECG lessons are being conducted by their subject teachers. The group's fear is that the subject teachers may use their ECG period to teach their own subjects. In addition, the few open houses that youths attend after their N- or O-levels are not enough for them to decide on a career path. Youths are easily swayed by the bright colours and cheery slogans of such open houses and might not have a clear path of what career they want to pursue next.

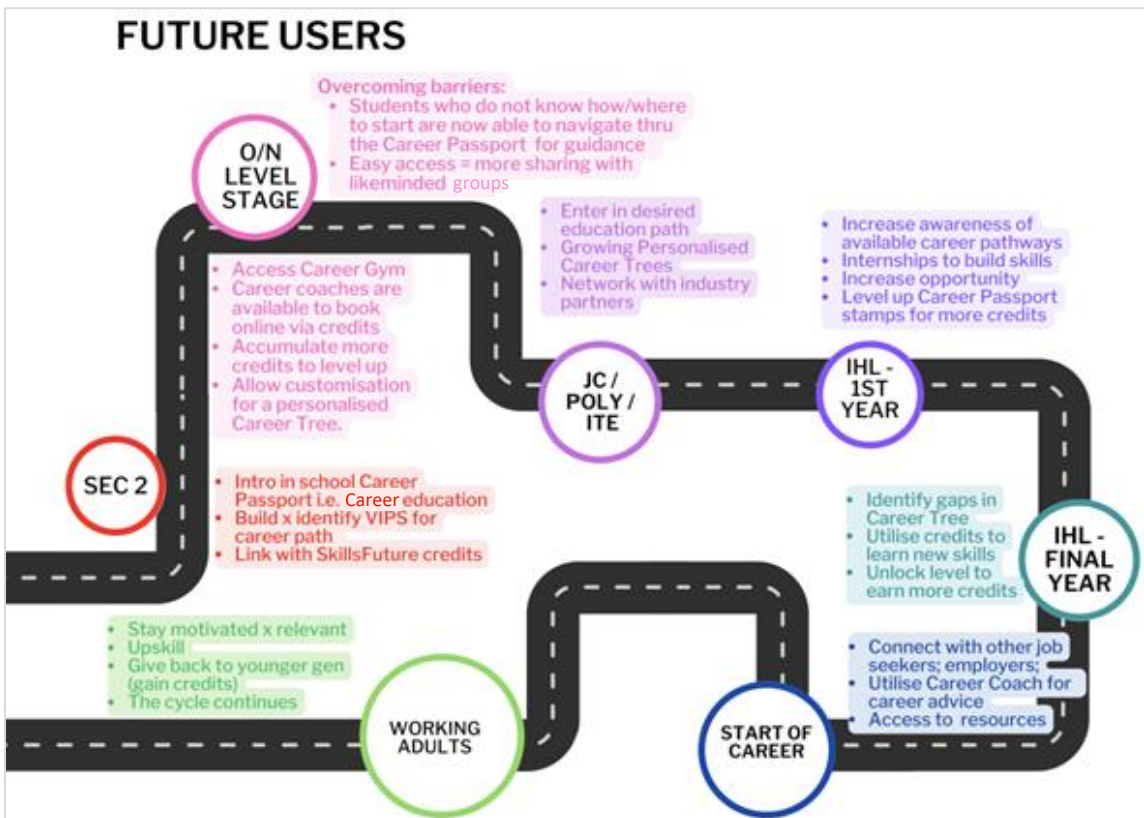
Moreover, there are too many unknowns when it comes to charting their career path due to the lack of career self-archetypes and prototypes. Our discussion had led us to the conclusion that a lot of it can come in the form of self-administered tests to the youths. This is where they can discover their self-archetypes and prototypes.

What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

1. Digital Career Passport via MyInfo

We plan to implement the use of a digital career passport via MyInfo consisting of the following features:

- A career passport that is linked to Singpass. This passport will reflect an individual's data such as co-curricular activities, achievements and courses attended. We propose to make it compulsory for students in secondary schools so they can have a better idea of the career options available to them given the above data inputs.
- A points system will be used to reward points to individuals who offer help like career guidance, and such points can be used to redeem training courses. This system can be integrated with SkillsFuture Credits.



Career life map developed by participants

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

- Secondary school students will be more certain of their desired education path — be it Polytechnic, Junior College or Institute of Technical Education. The intended goal is for fewer students to drop out or switch courses in their first year of studies. Lastly, students will realise the importance of skills and not just grades.
- Personalised Career Trees allow individuals to have greater awareness of the career pathways available to them when they choose a field of training/upskilling. Increased satisfaction and motivation involving their careers is also expected.
- Training credits like SkillsFuture will be put to better use to truly lead an individual towards their desired job through trial and error.
- A job heat map allows individuals to be aware of the sectors that have the highest openings so that they may make better informed decisions for their career path.

What are the gaps in current measures?

As mentioned earlier, individuals are not adequately equipped to apply proactive and preventive measures. There is a risk that early career joiners and those new to the job market might not know where to go to seek career advice.

Who are the target audience(s)?

Our target audience includes youths, working adults, mid-career switchers, parents of secondary school-age children, those on their first job and/or fresh graduates and employers/ self-employed.

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/solutions?

The stakeholders/partners are GovTech Singapore, IRAS, e2i, WSG, educators and employers.

- **GovTech Singapore:** They would be involved in integrating the career passport into user's Singpass for ease of access.
- **Educators (e.g., MOE):** They would be involved in training the youths and giving them information through carefully crafted ECG lessons where there is protected curriculum time meant only for ECG lessons.
- **Employers:** Employers can be part of this portal to look for the "right" employees based on their personality, experience, etc.
- **IRAS:** Provide information on an accurate pay range for job seekers in different industries. Information gathered from IRAS would be reflected in the user's heat map.

Are there similar ideas/solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/solutions different?

Yes. There are existing WSG and e2i programmes and initiatives, but they are not holistic and lack a personal touch.

There are ECG classes for secondary, ITE, junior colleges, polytechnic and university students. Career coaches are available for those who are unemployed, retrenched or wish to rejoin the workforce after the break. WSG also provides career guidance and development programmes for adults who are new to the workforce or those under long-term retrenchment or under long career break.

While we understand there are existing programmes and initiatives by both WSG and e2i, we assessed them to be insufficient and lacking in deeper career conversations. Both WSG and e2i will need remodelling and require deeper expertise in career development practitioners to serve from surface to deep career needs and career-life design.

Guiding Principles of Career Development

THE WORD "CAREER" COMES FROM THE LATIN FOR CART OR CHARIOT (CARRUS), A MEANS TO CARRY YOU FROM ONE POINT TO ANOTHER. A CAREER IS ABOUT THE LIFE YOU WANT TO LEAD – NOT JUST A JOB, OCCUPATION OR PROFESSION. IT INVOLVES DECIDING AMONG POSSIBLE AND PREFERRED FUTURES. IT ANSWERS: "WHO DO I WANT TO BE IN THE WORLD?", "WHAT KIND OF LIFESTYLE AM I SEEKING?" AND "HOW CAN I MAKE AN IMPACT?"

AS CANADIANS, WE LIKE THE METAPHOR OF A CANOE TO REPRESENT OUR CAREERS – WE USE IT ON OUR JOURNEY, WE STOCK IT WITH THE TOOLS WE NEED, AND WE PROACTIVELY STEER IT TO OUR DESTINATION, SOMETIMES WE FACE RAPIDS, AND AS CONDITIONS CHANGE SO MIGHT OUR COURSE.

PURPOSE

THIS DOCUMENT IS INTENDED TO BRING GREATER CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY TO OUR NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CAREER DEVELOPMENT. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN CERIC'S VISION THAT PEOPLE IN CANADA HAVE THE CAPACITY TO USE THEIR SKILLS AND TALENTS TOWARDS A MORE FULFILLING FUTURE FOR ALL. THEY ARE A STARTING POINT TO INFORM DISCUSSIONS WITH CLIENTS, EMPLOYERS, FUNDERS, POLICY-MAKERS, FAMILIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, AND A BASIS FOR COLLABORATION.

BENEFITS

RESEARCH SHOWS CAREER DEVELOPMENT IS ASSOCIATED WITH MANY EDUCATIONAL, SOCIETAL AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS. INDIVIDUALS REALIZE GREATER WELL-BEING AND SATISFACTION IN LIFE. SCHOOLS LIFT STUDENT SUCCESS AND GRADUATION RATES. ORGANIZATIONS FILL SKILLS GAPS AND IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY. GOVERNMENTS REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT AND BOOST SOCIAL MOBILITY AND STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC GROWTH. AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF AN INCREASINGLY FREELANCE ECONOMY AND THE RAPIDLY SHIFTING NATURE OF WORK, CAREER DEVELOPMENT MATTERS MORE THAN EVER.

8 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT...

- IS A LIFELONG PROCESS OF BLENDING AND MANAGING PAID AND UNPAID ACTIVITIES: LEARNING (EDUCATION), WORK (EMPLOYMENT), ENTREPRENEURSHIP, VOLUNTEERISM AND LEISURE TIME.
- ENTAILS DETERMINING INTERESTS, BELIEFS, VALUES, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES – AND CONNECTING THOSE WITH MARKET NEEDS.
- SHOULD BE SELF-DIRECTED. AN INDIVIDUAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER OWN CAREER, BUT IS NOT ALONE – WE ALL INFLUENCE AND ARE INFLUENCED BY OUR ENVIRONMENT.
- INVOLVES UNDERSTANDING OPTIONS, NAVIGATING WITH PURPOSE AND MAKING INFORMED CHOICES.
- MEANS MAKING THE MOST OF TALENT AND POTENTIAL, HOWEVER YOU DEFINE GROWTH AND SUCCESS – NOT NECESSARILY LINEAR ADVANCEMENT.
- IS OFTEN SUPPORTED AND SHAPED BY EDUCATORS, FAMILY, PEERS, MANAGERS AND THE GREATER COMMUNITY.
- CAN BE COMPLEX AND COMPLICATED, SO CONTEXT IS KEY – THERE MAY BE BOTH INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS (FINANCIAL, CULTURAL, HEALTH) OR EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS (LABOUR MARKET, TECHNOLOGY).
- IS DYNAMIC, EVOLVING AND REQUIRES CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE THROUGH MULTIPLE TRANSITIONS.

THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT REFLECT MULTIPLE VOICES FROM CERIC.

CERIC Advancing Career Development in Canada

Memorandum of Understanding with Government of Canada

ceric.ca/principles

Image source: <https://ceric.ca/publications/guiding-principles-of-career-development/>

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

Implementing a digital career passport comes with its challenges, some of which include:

1. **User adoption:** Getting existing workers in the workforce to use the digital career passport can be a challenge, especially those who do not want to take ownership of their career.
2. **Data privacy concerns:** With the collection of personal information, users may be hesitant to use it due to concerns about data privacy.
3. **Maintaining relevance:** The job market is constantly changing, and the Passport needs to keep up with these changes to be able to redesign or reframe people's career-self and mindset.

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

The next steps to implement Digital Career Passport via MyInfo are:

1. Define the Digital Career Passport's purpose and target audience: Determine the passport's specific purpose, whether it is to connect job seekers with employers, provide career advice, or offer job search tools. Identify the target audience and what they need from this service.
2. Design the user journey for the online passport service. For physical career hubs, we can do a small-scale prototype and pilot-test the implementation and linkage to existing physical career hubs such as WSG or e2i Career Centre, where we can prototype these career life design services and have deeper career conversations by trained career development practitioners.
3. Integrate or shift the entire career hub digital presence under other apps such as LifeSG App, as there are currently too many 'Apps' already.
4. On top of revamping the current physical locations of e2i and LLI (Lifelong Learning Institute) to make room for career practitioners, we can decentralise some of their functions by making them more accessible to the general public. This can be done through the establishment of rooms in Community Centres or Residents' Corners.

3.3 Career Self-Management as a Tripartite Standard & Community Career Coach

What is the context of this idea/solution? What are the problems we are trying to solve?

There are several players that are essential in supporting employees to manage their career, including employers, government agencies and other intermediaries such as self-help groups or ground-up groups. Despite the existence of several initiatives aimed at aiding workers in their career journeys, the average Singaporean still faces challenges in being fully prepared and equipped to navigate the constantly evolving employment landscape.

Generally, individuals tend to neglect the management of their own careers until a need arises, for example, when facing retrenchment, career stagnation, or job dissatisfaction. Such a reactive approach is not ideal, as it overlooks the benefits of taking proactive steps to ensure career health. The lack of awareness regarding the significance of career self-management can lead to downstream issues, particularly when unexpected career changes occur, leaving individuals feeling unprepared to handle them.

Singapore offers numerous resources to individuals seeking career management support. However, there is a problem with the accessibility of information. Many are unaware of the resources available or find the abundance of information too daunting to navigate. Consequently, the resources are not viewed as beneficial and are underutilised.

Employee:

- 1. Lack of Awareness:** One of the major challenges is the lack of awareness among employees about the career support services. Many employees may not know about the various training and development programmes, mentorship opportunities and career counselling services that are available to them. Employees feel overwhelmed by or are simply not aware of the vast amount of career management resources available to them.
- 2. Lack of Alignment with Goals:** Employees may not see the value in participating as it may not feel relevant to their career paths. Employees may not recognise the importance of managing their own career health until it is too late (e.g., retrenchment, career stagnation or lack of fulfilment).

Additionally, some employers are unsure about how to encourage and enable employees to manage their careers independently. Inadequate resources and personnel to train and cultivate employees may be an issue, and there may also be reluctance to invest in training and development, as employers fear losing employees to other organisations.

Employer:

1. **Lack of Managerial Support:** Managers may not be trained or equipped to provide adequate support for employee career development. This can result in a lack of engagement or direction for employees seeking career support.
2. **Limited Resources:** Employers may not have enough resources to offer comprehensive career support services to all their employees. Smaller companies or those with limited budgets may struggle to provide the necessary support for career development. Additionally, employers may not have sufficient resources and manpower to train and develop employees.
3. **Inadequate Evaluation:** Employers may be uncertain about how to support and empower employees to self-manage their careers. There is also fear of losing employees after they made investments in training and development, which discourages employers from identifying areas for improvement and making the necessary changes.

Overcoming these challenges will necessitate a collaborative endeavour from employers — involving the enhancement of awareness, allocation of ample resources, improved accessibility, alignment of career support services with employee objectives, provision of suitable training and guidance for managers, and regular evaluation of the efficacy of career support programmes. By taking these steps, employers can assist employees in developing their skills, realising their career aspirations, and contributing to the overall success of the organisation. Availability of community services will ensure that employees have suitable access to the required resources.

What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

1. Introduction of a new Tripartite Standards on Performance and Career Management

Currently, there are no Tripartite Standards on Career Management or Training. Although there are tripartite guidelines on Performance Management, we are proposing to introduce new tripartite standards (TS) on Performance & Career Management, that specifies fair and progressive performance & career management practices that employers should implement at the workplace to effectively manage their career aspirations and to stay adaptable and remain employable.

The Tripartite Standards³ are a new tripartite initiative that helps organisations with good practices distinguish themselves. They complement our laws, tripartite guidelines and advisories to increase the adoption of fair and progressive workplace practices in Singapore.

The Tripartite Standards on Performance & Career Management will include:

- **Career Development:** Employers should provide their employees with opportunities for career growth and development, including training and development programmes, job rotation, mentorship and coaching, and career counselling. Employees should take responsibility for their own career development by actively seeking out these opportunities and setting career goals. Employers should develop a competency framework and a training and development roadmap for employees; provide and communicate to eligible employees the opportunities for posting and training; and provide employees with financial subsidies/grants for both at-work and time-off for training.
- **Performance Management:** Employers should establish clear performance management systems that provide employees with regular feedback on their performance, recognition for their achievements, and opportunities for improvement. Employees should take ownership of their performance by setting clear performance goals, seeking feedback from their managers and peers, and taking action to improve their performance. Employers should develop measurable standards for evaluating job performance, conduct regular and constructive performance and career reviews, and document performance reviews and career reviews.
- **Equal Opportunities:** Employers should ensure that all employees have equal access to career development opportunities, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, or other personal characteristics. Employees should advocate for themselves and their colleagues by raising any concerns about discrimination or bias and seeking out opportunities for diversity and inclusion. Employers should review criteria standards regularly to check against discrimination and set up an internal appeal process to address employees' questions or concerns on their appraisals.

³ Tripartite Standards, Ministry of Manpower.

<https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/tripartism-in-singapore/tripartite-standards>












- **Career Transitions:** Employers should provide support for employees who are transitioning to new roles or careers within or outside the organisation. This can include job search assistance, outplacement services and career coaching. Employers can partner with intermediaries such as WSG, e2i or SkillsFuture. Employees should take responsibility for their career transitions by networking, building their skills, and seeking out opportunities for growth and development.
- **Vibrant Learning Ecosystem:** Employers should establish a vibrant learning and development culture. This can be done by promoting a growth mindset among the employees, offering diverse learning opportunities through building greater connectivity with subject matter experts from both internal resources (employees) and external partners (community, grassroots organisations).

We are proposing several incentives to nudge employees towards adopting the Tripartite Standards:

- Grants or subsidies for employees to send employees for trainings (covering training costs, especially for companies that have no training budget)
- Financial or tax incentives
- Networking opportunities

Available Tripartite Standards

The following Tripartite Standards have been launched:

	Tripartite Standard on Advancing Well-Being of Lower-Wage Workers ☑		Tripartite Standard on the Procurement of Services from Media Freelancers ☑
	Tripartite Standard on Employment of Term Contract Employees ☑		Tripartite Standard on Unpaid Leave for Unexpected Care Needs ☑
	Tripartite Standard on Flexible Work Arrangements ☑		Tripartite Standard on Contracting with Self-Employed Persons ☑
	Tripartite Standard on Grievance Handling ☑		Tripartite Standard on Age-friendly Workplace Practices ☑
	Tripartite Standard on Recruitment Practices ☑		Tripartite Standard on Work-Life Harmony Practices ☑
		PROPOSED Tripartite Standard on Performance and Career Management	

Participants' proposal to include a new Tripartite Standard on Performance and Career Management

2. Community Career Coaches

The role of community career coaches is to understand an individual's needs and offer strategic client-centric service on career guidance. This will include:

- Identifying an individual's career and personal goals
- Guiding individuals in navigating various resource platforms
- Equipping individuals with skills on how to organise their resume, prepare for a job interview, and other career-related tips
- Connecting individuals to the right resources by leveraging both national and community programmes and organisations like e2i and WSG.
- Encouraging individuals on their journey of lifelong learning

Community career coaches will be deployed to community centres throughout Singapore, and those interested can either drop in or book an appointment. Employers will also be encouraged to invite these coaches to support their employees.

The community career coaches will need to be recruited and trained as volunteers. The potential pool of coaches includes existing HR practitioners, industry mentors, members of self-help groups and grassroots organisations.

Once they have been recruited, volunteers will go through a programme similar to the WSG Career Advisory Programme (CAP). They will receive training on career basics and coaching skills to provide effective guidance to future clients. To attract volunteers, the training will be sponsored (hopefully, by WSG), and volunteers are expected to serve for at least six months, dedicating about 4 hours per month. In recognition of their contributions, volunteers will receive additional SkillsFuture credit and a formal certification of their competency as a career coach. Active volunteers also stand a chance to receive SkillsFuture Fellowships or national volunteer awards.

To ensure that community career coaching volunteers feel supported throughout their journey, regular gathering sessions will be organised. These sessions are also great opportunities for them to meet like-minded individuals from different industries, enhancing their social and professional capital.

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

With the proposed solutions, we hope that both employers and employees will have an enhanced appreciation for the importance of career self-management and feel well-supported in pursuing it for themselves or their employees.

For employers, having fair employment practices in career and performance management will make them appear as progressive employers and attract high-quality employees who are equally invested in their career self-management. The adoption of the tripartite standards will bring more growth to their organisation. By adopting these standards, employers can create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture that promotes employee engagement, retention and productivity.

For employees, they can take ownership of their career development and work towards their career goals. With access to community career coaches, employees will have an increased awareness of their career opportunities and available resources. This will empower them to make more informed career choices. Employees who have supportive employers, especially, will have a fulfilling and healthy career journey.

For the government (MOM), they can encourage the sustainable adoption of this new Tripartite Standards on Performance and Career Management by making it a guideline in the future. This will create a workplace norm in Singapore where employees feel that it is acceptable to request time off arrangements for the purpose of upskilling while employers maintain fair judgment to evaluate this request based on their business needs.

Who are the target audience(s)?

The introduction of the Tripartite Standards on Performance and Career Management is targeted at employers who desire to be recognised as a progressive employer and gain a competitive edge.

The career community coaches are for employees who are seeking clarity in their career health and growth.

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/solutions?

The main stakeholders who will be critical in the implementation of tripartite standards are the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) partners, namely, MOM, NTUC and Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF). Additionally, employers can also be represented by members of the Trade Associations and Chambers.

WSG and e2i will be important partners as they have an existing volunteer career advisors scheme. HR practitioners or industry mentors with great foundational knowledge will be developed as community career coaches. Self-help groups such as Mendaki, CDAC and SINDA, and grassroots organisations also can support in recruiting interested volunteers.

Are there similar ideas/solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/ solutions different?

Currently, there are several initiatives that provide similar services to our proposed idea of a community career coach.

For example, WSG has a Volunteer Career Advisors Initiative,⁴ which aims to provide individuals (especially mature workers) with peer-level support and career guidance as they navigate professional pathways to advance their careers, or transition to other jobs. The volunteers are industry veterans who are committed to make a difference by sharing their experiences with and providing career guidance to their peers.

Yayasan Mendaki also has Care Advisors at satellite centres,⁵ where their officers provide career guidance to youths and job seekers, and connect them to the right resources by leveraging both national and community programmes. The satellite centres are currently available at Jurong, Pasir Ris, Woodlands, Choa Chu Kang and Wisma MENDAKI.

These two initiatives are targeted towards mature workers, job seekers or low-income families. Our community career coach service aims to serve the larger community of employees, regardless of the phase of their career.

⁴ Volunteer Career Advisors Initiative, Workforce Singapore.

<https://www.wsg.gov.sg/home/individuals/attachment-placement-programmes/volunteer-career-advisors-initiative>

⁵ Nazren, Fasiha, "S'porean, 31, finds fulfilment in helping youths & jobseekers who are uncertain about their future," Mothership, March 1, 2023,

<https://mothership.sg/2023/03/mendaki-care-advisors-interview/>

The take-up rate of these initiatives may not be as high. Therefore, our community/volunteer career coach service will be better promoted and possibly related to our other proposed idea of introducing a Tripartite Standards on Performance and Career Management. Employers who are keen on adopting the Tripartite Standards can refer their employees to a community career coach, which will ensure a regular flow of individuals to seek advice from a community career coach.

At the recent Budget, the Jobs-Skills Integrators⁶ initiative was announced. The initiative aims to ensure that training leads to good job prospects by engaging enterprises to work closely with training providers, to close the manpower and skills gaps. This initiative will address building job-specific skills and employability, whereas community career coaches are “individual-centric” to support employees’ overall career readiness and development.

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

The introduction of Tripartite Standards on Performance and Career Management will require strong buy-in from the stakeholders. Otherwise, there will not be a positive response from the employers and there may be very few employers who will adapt the set of recommended standards.

We recognise that currently, it is not easy for job seekers to identify employers who have met the various Tripartite Standards. This is because the information is not made readily available on the various job portals. With this, progressive employees may not derive much recognition, which will demotivate them from adopting the Tripartite Standards.

In addition, it might be challenging to recruit, train and retain suitable community career coaches. If the community career coaches are not well equipped for their role, this will lead to a negative experience for the employees who seek their help.

⁶ *Tay, Hong Yi, "Budget 2023: Jobs-Skills Integrators to ensure training leads to good job prospects," The Straits Times, February 15, 2023, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/budget-2023-jobs-skills-integrators-to-ensure-training-leads-to-good-job-prospects>*

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

The next step will be to seek input from employees, business owners and members of the trade associations on the proposed Tripartite Standards on Performance and Career Management. It will also be important to hear from them on the appropriate incentives that will encourage them to adopt the recommended tripartite standards.

It is critical to work with career portals to spotlight employers who have adopted the Tripartite Standards. Here are some recommendations:

1. Create a filter or search function that allows job seekers to easily identify employers who have met the Tripartite Standards. This could be a separate category or tag that job seekers can select when searching for job opportunities on the portal.
2. Partner with TAFEP to promote the Tripartite Standards and employers who have adopted them. This could include featuring TAFEP-approved employers on the career portal or highlighting success stories of employers who have met the standards.
3. Incorporate the Tripartite Standards into the job posting process. Employers who have met the standards could be required to include a tag or badge in their job postings indicating that they have adopted the Tripartite Standards. This would make it easier for job seekers to identify and apply to these employers.
4. Provide educational resources for job seekers on the Tripartite Standards. This could include articles, blog posts or webinars that highlight the benefits of working for a TAFEP-approved employer and the protections that the Tripartite Standards provide.
5. Consider creating a dedicated section on the career portal that highlights TAFEP-approved employers and their commitment to fair and responsible employment practices. This could include profiles of individual employers, interviews with employees, and success stories of employers who have met the standards.

It will also be great if we can work together with WSG and e2i to co-develop their community/volunteer career coach programme for the broader population who are keen to better care for their career health (not just those who are unemployed, retrenched or looking for career switches).

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

4

Our Proposed Initiatives (II)

Challenge Area 2: Training & Development

4.1 Jobs & Courses Market Dashboard

What is the context of this idea/solution? What is happening today that is driving the need for an intervention?

In the current job seeking market, job seekers are struggling to find relevant and reliable information to aid them in their job seeking journey. The need for this solution is driven by the fact that there is a plethora of portals and websites available, each with their own unique listings. We find that the information is simply dumped, lacking and unintegrated. This makes it difficult for job seekers to keep track of all the available resources that match their skills and interests. For example, on the MySkillsFuture website,⁷ certain industries do not have recommended courses or are unclickable (e.g., advertising, agriculture). This makes an unsatisfactory user experience and demotivates some from exploring an industry that they may be interested in.

Additionally, the ability to upskill through taking value-added courses is an important aspect of this solution. With the current pace of technological advancements, job seekers need to constantly upgrade their skills to stay competitive in the job market. We obtained ground feedback that some people have attended courses, only to find that the certificates obtained were not recognised or relevant in the industry. The feeling of dejection and helplessness is further compounded by the lack of insights into the job market trends. Having been disappointed before, the jobseeker feels a lack of confidence in upskilling as information available is not easily understood, further hindering their inclinations to upskill.

By creating a jobs market dashboard that pulls and amalgamates information from various websites, job seekers can have a centralised platform to view all the relevant job opportunities and courses to them, so as to enhance their employability. This intervention aims to streamline the job search process, empower job seekers to take charge of their career development by providing them with a comprehensive platform, and make it easier for job seekers as they venture confidently on their career journey.

⁷ Singapore Industry Landscape, MySkillsFuture.
<https://www.myskillsfuture.gov.sg/content/student/en/preu/world-of-work/industry-landscape.html>

What are the problems we are trying to solve?

One of the main issues is the difficulty in finding relevant information due to the multitude of websites and job portals available, each with their own unique listings.

Another problem is the lack of confidence in the outcomes of courses, which may be due to a mismatch between the skills being taught in courses and the skills required by the industry. This mismatch can lead to job seekers taking up courses that do not lead to relevant job opportunities or provide the necessary skills to succeed in the workforce.

The issue of complacency in an individual's current job is also a challenge that needs to be addressed. Employees who are not upskilling may find themselves being left behind as the job market evolves and new skills become essential.

What are the gaps in current measures?

Current interfaces are not user-friendly as data is not consolidated in one place, hence the need for a dashboard.

Course listings with feedback given by past attendees of courses would be more beneficial.

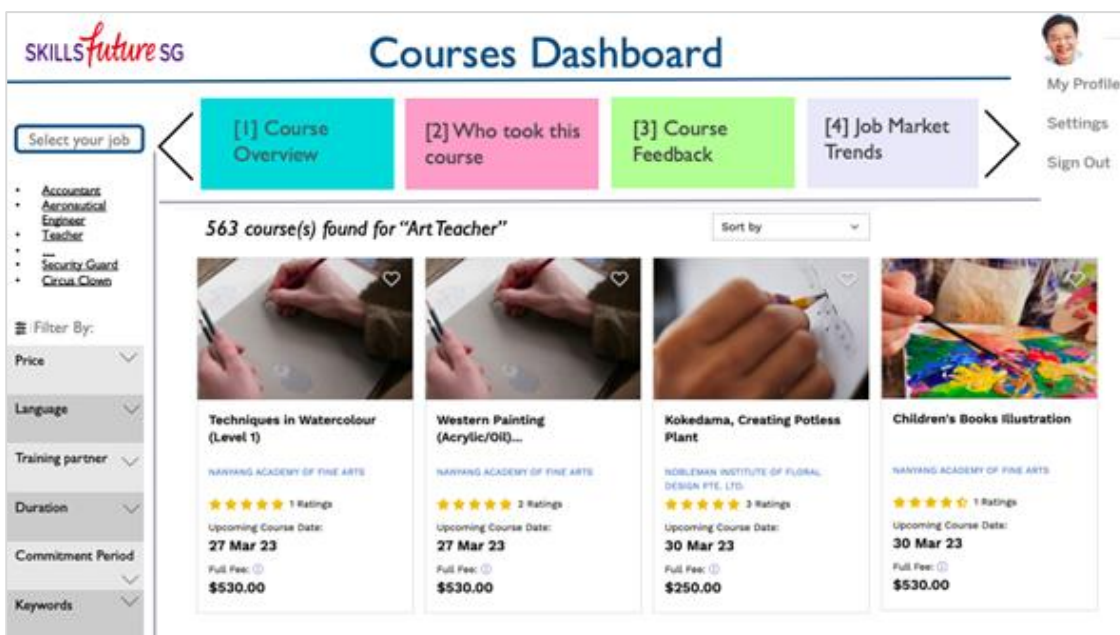
What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

The proposed solution is a jobs market and training dashboard that integrates industry trends with relevant, recognised and valuable courses eligible for grants. This dashboard aims to simplify the job search process by providing job seekers with a personalised and user-friendly platform to access job opportunities, training options, and industry trends.

One key aspect of this solution is the dynamic collaboration between industries. By bringing together various industry experts and employers, they can share insights and knowledge about industry trends, job vacancies, and the skills required to fill these vacancies. This, in turn, can provide individuals with a more up-to-date and comprehensive view of the job market and the corresponding skills in demand. It further helps individuals tailor their career pathways to align with their skills and interests and provides opportunities to upskill and advance their careers.

Another important feature of this proposed dashboard is its ability to simplify job matching and upskilling for users. By leveraging data analytics and machine learning algorithms, the dashboard can provide personalised job recommendations that match the user's experience, skills, and interests. This can save individual's time and effort and increase the likelihood of finding suitable job opportunities.

In addition to job matching, the dashboard provides users with access to relevant and recognised courses eligible for grants, allowing individuals to upskill and improve their employability. These courses are recognised by industry leaders and can help individuals acquire the necessary skills to succeed in their desired careers. The grants that are tagged to the courses will provide additional motivation for individuals to upskill as they can do so without incurring excessive financial burden.



Prototype dashboards developed by participants

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

The intended outcomes of the proposed jobs market dashboard are numerous and far-reaching. One of the primary goals is to empower job seekers and employees to take control of their career development and succeed in the ever-evolving job market by providing them with the tools and resources needed to succeed.

By providing easy access to courses that are recognised and relevant to the current job market, the dashboard aims to help individuals improve their skills and become more employable. This will ultimately lead to better job outcomes, better pay and a more fulfilling career for individuals.

The dashboard also aims to have a positive impact on society as a whole by creating happier and more productive citizens. By integrating available data from multiple sources, the job market dashboard can provide individuals with a more accurate and comprehensive view of the job market and the skills in-demand, helping them to make better-informed decisions when choosing relevant training options to upskill. This helps to increase job satisfaction and reduce the number of people who are stuck in unfulfilling or dead-end jobs. This, in turn, can lead to a more engaged and motivated workforce.

Another intended outcome of the dashboard is to improve job matching and talent retention for employers. By providing employers with access to a pool of skilled and motivated job seekers, the dashboard can help to strengthen employers' confidence in finding the right talent to fill their job vacancies. This can reduce the time and cost associated with recruitment and training and help companies to retain their best employees by providing opportunities for career development through upskilling. By providing updated information (e.g., skills required) of the kind of workers they are looking for, we hope that the dashboard can provide a goal for training providers to "raise the quality, currency and impact of training delivered".⁸ This, in turn, can lead to a more engaged and motivated workforce, which can benefit employers and the wider economy.

Overall, the intended outcomes of the job market dashboard are to empower individuals, improve job outcomes, create happier and more productive citizens and support employers in finding and retaining the right talent. By providing a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced by job seekers, employees, and employers in the current job market, the dashboard has the potential to make a significant and positive impact on society as a whole.

⁸ Yong, Li Xuan, "560,000 tapped SkillsFuture schemes in 2022, down from 660,000 in 2021," *The Straits Times*, March 23, 2023, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/560000-tapped-skillsfuture-schemes-in-2022-down-from-660000-in-2021>

Who are the target audience(s)?

We strive to provide a solution for everyone, targeting job seekers and even employees who are content in their current jobs but require a nudge to upskill.

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/solutions?

There are several key stakeholders who are important in the successful implementation of the jobs market dashboard.

Firstly, employers from different industries are vital stakeholders as they offer job opportunities and are directly impacted by any changes or improvements in the job market.

Secondly, job seekers are important stakeholders as they are the ones looking for employment opportunities and relevant courses, and will directly benefit from any solutions that help them in finding suitable jobs.

Thirdly, employees who are currently employed may benefit from this initiative, as it can improve their working conditions or career prospects.

Next, various government agencies, such as the MOM, SSG and WSG, play a significant role in addressing job market challenges and offer training and upskilling courses for citizens. These agencies can provide valuable data and insights to help inform the development of the job market dashboard.

Lastly, online job portals and recruitment platforms, such as LinkedIn and JobStreet, are important stakeholders as they can exchange information on job opportunities and help to connect job seekers with potential employers.

Are there similar ideas/solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/ solutions different?

We are proposing a combination of all the information from multiple websites (e.g., SkillsFuture, LinkedIn, Indeed, JobStreet, MyCareersFuture, reports on current/future industry trends) on one dashboard for easier access — the enhancement of the existing SkillsFuture website by adding features that will be more useful to the users.

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

There are several challenges that may arise in implementing the ideas and solutions for job seekers and employers. Some of these challenges include:

1. **Reliability of data:** One of the critical challenges in implementing ideas and solutions is ensuring that the data used is reliable and accurate. The data projection may not always match reality, and external factors such as COVID-19 may have a significant impact on the job market.
2. **Employers not forthcoming with data:** Employers may not be forthcoming in providing data on their workforce and job openings, which may hinder the effectiveness of job matching and training programmes.
3. **Pigeonholing of data:** There is a risk of pigeonholing data, which means limiting the scope of the job market to specific industries or job roles. This may prevent job seekers from exploring different career paths and limit the diversity of the job market.
4. **Skills gap of employees:** Addressing the skills gap of employees can be challenging, as it may require significant investment in training and upskilling programmes.
5. **Age discrimination:** Age discrimination may be a barrier for older workers who are seeking employment or opportunities for career growth. Seniors may also have difficulty accessing technological platforms, hence limiting their access to resources.
6. **Psychological fear where individuals feel stuck/face a barrier:** Some job seekers may have a fear of change and be resistant to new ideas or opportunities, which can be a barrier to the adoption of new solutions. Too many choices may lead to a paradox of choice, and individuals may not want to progress in the end.
7. **Too much uncertainty:** The job market can be unpredictable, and there may be too much uncertainty for job seekers and employers to make informed decisions.
8. **Data-driven insights:** There may be challenges in developing and implementing data-driven insights that are relevant and useful for job seekers and employers. This may require collaboration between government agencies, job portals, and private employment agencies to ensure that the data is used effectively to support the job market.

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

The next steps to implement this idea would involve a collaborative effort between government agencies, private employment agencies, job portals and other stakeholders to develop and refine the solution. Here are some possible next steps:

1. Develop a timeline to create the dashboard
2. Conduct user research to understand the needs of individuals and employers, including their preferences for job matching and training programmes and to identify potential barriers to adoption
3. Develop the dashboard and integrate with, for example, the SkillsFuture portal to provide a seamless user experience. Have the dashboard as the main page of the SkillsFuture portal so that users can navigate around the website and the relevant information quickly
4. Pilot test the dashboard to validate its effectiveness and identify any issues before scaling the website up
5. Refine the dashboard based on feedback from users and insights gathered from data analysis

As a panel, we can contribute to realising this idea by providing our expertise and insights into the job market and the needs of job seekers and employers. Some ideas from a commentary published on CNA can be found here.⁹ We are more than happy to provide constructive feedback and suggestions based on our user experiences and work closely with government agencies to ensure that the solution is effective and meets the needs of all stakeholders.

⁹Lim-Lange, Crystal, "Commentary: Don't waste Budget money. Here's how to stretch your SkillsFuture dollars," CNA, February 20, 2020, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/skillsfuture-singapore-budget-2020-top-ups-credits-best-courses-778611>

4.2 Resource Hub for Self-Employed Persons

What is the context of this idea/solution? What is happening today that is driving the need for an intervention?

Self-employment has become increasingly popular in recent years, as more people are attracted to the flexibility and control it provides over their work. This trend is expected to make up a significant portion of Singapore's employment landscape.

Self-employed persons (SEPs) comprise gig workers, freelancers, professionals and business owners. They are a diverse group of both blue- and white-collared workers and have much to contribute in terms of their trade or specialty.

As Singapore focuses on the employment resilience of its citizens, it is important to ensure that SEPs also have a robust presence in the workforce. However, currently, SEPs face insecurity and uncertainty about their future income opportunities. They often feel disconnected from the various support and resources available to them.

What are the problems we are trying to solve?

SEPS usually face many challenges operating in the Singapore landscape:

1. Financial and continuous income stream insecurity
2. Limited access to resources/networks
3. Scarce resources to be channelled for their self-growth, training and development
4. Social isolation and loneliness: not having the right support network and collaboration in their quest

While there is an increasing host of programmes to support SEPs, these might not always be user-centric, and do not offer a unified solution. To the SEPs, information/resources are currently scattered, and it might be too time-consuming for them to research for the right resources.

What are the gaps in current measures?

Currently, there are multiple platforms that SEPs can use to seek help, including NTUC (Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit - U FSE¹⁰; NTUC LearningHub), SkillsFuture Singapore, Workforce Singapore, and some trade industries/associations (e.g., Singapore Business Federation, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry).

However, these resources are scattered and may not always meet their immediate needs. SEPs may not know which resources will suit them and what else is available. As time is money for SEPs, surfing the web and finding relevant training courses can mean time spent away from earning an income.

When it comes to training and development, while many opportunities are available, they are often at a basic level and targeted towards beginners or mid-career switchers. Professional SEPs need training at a more advanced and trade-relevant level, and courses should be designed and conducted by practitioners with current real-world experience.

Finally, SEPs would appreciate more networking opportunities and trade-relevant events to help them sharpen their skills. For example, experienced SEPs could play the role of a mentor or coach. There seems to be a lack of an SEP-centric, one-stop resource for SEPs to collaborate, grow and thrive in their profession.

What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

We propose a unified, user-centric Resource Hub for Self-Employed Persons (SEPs). The Resource Hub will provide:

1. **Access to networks:** The platform will partner with relevant organisations and service providers to enable SEPs to connect with peers and mentors, build supportive relationships, and promote professional cohesion within the SEP community.
2. **Access to information and training:** The platform will offer skills upgrading and entrepreneurship programmes, as well as other training and development opportunities to help self-employed individuals build their capacity and grow their businesses in a practical and relevant manner.
3. **Access to financial assistance and advice:** The platform will provide financial assistance and advice to help mitigate the impact of income fluctuations and support self-employed persons during times of financial hardship.

To ensure that the platform meets the needs of SEPs, user-need analysis will be conducted using pre-surveys and/or AI analytics/data to help understand their circumstances and point them towards relevant resources.

¹⁰ Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit. <https://ufse.org.sg/Pages/default.aspx>

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

Ultimately, we want a thriving SEP community within the Singapore workforce landscape that grows sustainably. The resource hub aims to support SEPs in Singapore by providing them with the necessary tools and resources to succeed in their businesses. The following are the intended outcomes of establishing a resource hub for the self-employed:

1. **Increased business success:** The primary intended outcome of the resource hub is to increase the success rate of SEPs. By providing access to training, funding and networking opportunities, the resource hub can help self-employed individuals improve their business operations and achieve greater success.
2. **Improved financial stability:** Many SEPs struggle with financial stability due to irregular income and a lack of access to funding. The resource hub can provide financial education, funding opportunities and support for self-employed individuals to help them achieve greater financial stability.
3. **Increased employment:** Self-employed individuals are often small business owners who may require additional support in the form of employees or contract workers. By supporting the success of SEPs, the resource hub can indirectly support employment opportunities for others.
4. **Better regulatory compliance:** Many SEPs struggle to navigate the regulatory landscape in Singapore. By providing access to information and resources, the resource hub can help SEPs comply with relevant regulations and avoid fines or other penalties.
5. **Stronger community:** SEPs can feel isolated in their businesses. By providing networking opportunities and support, the resource hub can help build a stronger sense of community among SEPs.

The Resource Hub can organise events that are SEPs-focused, like a “SEP Learning and Networking Day”. During such an event, SEPs will have the opportunity to network, gather and collaborate, and also be aware of what programmes/fundings/schemes are available to them.

By supporting the success of SEPs, the resource hub can contribute to the growth and success of the Singaporean economy.

Who are the target audience(s)?

Self-employed persons, who include freelancers, gig workers, and business owners.

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/solutions?

We propose that this SEP Resource Hub be managed by Workforce Singapore (WSG). SEPs should be officially recognised as a contributory workforce in the overall Singapore employment landscape.

WSG (or its equivalent) will be able to synergise and streamline all available resources, funding and support (e.g., training and development) towards the needs of the diverse community of SEPs. They can bring together partners like U FSE (NTUC), Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) and experienced trade associations to collaborate.

Are there similar ideas/solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/ solutions different?

1. In the UK, there is a SEP/business owners resource hub with the mission to act as a focal point for businesses that wish to grow by referring them to coordinated and cohesive growth programmes, business networks, growth groups and links to specialist information, advice, and services.
2. U FSE (NTUC) has programmes and events targeted at SEPs. However, these could be strengthened to benefit all SEPs (including non-members) and be more trade-relevant by elevating these resources at a more macro level.
3. In our research, we discovered that the National Arts Council Singapore (NAC) has recently started a resource hub initiative to support Arts SEPs and freelance practitioners to unlock new opportunities and grow meaningful careers for the long term.
4. If this initiative can be extended to other industry/professional groups for SEPs (businesses and freelancers), it could enhance employment resilience in Singapore.

The screenshot shows the 'SUBSCRIBERS PORTAL' for the Arts Resource Hub. On the left, under the heading 'The Arts Resource Hub Story', there is a paragraph describing the initiative: 'The National Arts Council (NAC)'s Arts Resource Hub (ARH) initiative supports arts Self-Employed Persons (SEPs) and freelance practitioners in Singapore to unlock new opportunities and grow meaningful careers for the long term. The initiative was set up in 2019 after extensive consultations with more than 370 individuals from the arts community across disciplines and practices over the course of 2017 and 2018. Ten key priorities were discussed including the need for an accessible online platform with aggregated training and job opportunities as well as useful information on financial planning and legal knowledge. To address and tailor ARH's offerings to suit SEPs' needs, NAC developed the current range of resources in close collaboration with industry professionals from the arts sector, to which we owe our thanks to many individuals and organisations. For on-the-go updates on programmes and offerings, join our ARH Telegram channel at t.me/artsresourcehub.

 On the right, the 'Subscribers Portal Login' section features the 'arts resource hub' logo and 'Important Notes' stating that only Singpass users can access the portal. It provides instructions for users without Singpass and includes a 'Log in with singpass' button and a 'SIGN IN AS A RECRUITER →' button.

The National Arts Council's Art Resource Hub. Image Source: <https://www.nac.gov.sg/support/arts-resource-hub/about-arts-resource-hub>

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

Some challenges that may arise during the implementation process include:

1. **Funding:** Securing sufficient funding to support the hub's operations. The government needs to allocate resources to establish and operate the hub, or seek partnerships with private organisations or investors to provide financial support.
2. **Access to Resources:** The hub's effectiveness will depend on the availability and accessibility of relevant resources, such as training programmes, funding opportunities, and expert advice. Ensuring that these resources are relevant, up-to-date and easily accessible to SEPs could be challenging.
3. **Regulatory Compliance:** The hub must ensure compliance with all relevant regulations and requirements in Singapore, including those related to data privacy, intellectual property and employment laws.
4. **Technology:** The hub will need robust and secure IT infrastructure and digital platforms to support its operations and enable SEPs to access its resources remotely. However, not all SEPs are tech-savvy, so the hub must be user-friendly and provide assistance to those who need it.
5. **Outreach and Engagement:** The hub must actively engage with SEPs to ensure that they are aware of its services and resources. This could involve marketing campaigns, outreach programmes and other forms of engagement.
6. **Competent Personnel:** The hub must be staffed by personnel who appreciate SEPs and can relate to users, preferably those who are SEPs themselves.

In conclusion, while establishing a resource hub for SEPs in Singapore has the potential to provide significant benefits, proper planning and execution are crucial to overcoming potential challenges.

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

As SEPs/business owners ourselves, we can contribute in the following ways:

1. **Networking and Mentorship:** We can actively participate in networking opportunities and mentorship for fellow SEPs. This can involve organising meetups, workshops and other events that allow SEPs to connect with one another and learn from more experienced members of the community.
2. **Resource Sharing:** We can share tips and best practices for running a successful business, providing access to tools and resources, and sharing information about funding opportunities and the business world.
3. **Advocacy:** We can advocate for the resource hub and raise awareness of its services and resources. This can involve sharing information about the hub on social media, promoting its events and activities, and encouraging other members of the community to use its services.
4. **Feedback and Evaluation:** We can provide feedback and evaluation of the resource hub's performance, acting as "mystery shoppers" to identify areas for improvement and make data-driven decisions about future strategies.
5. **Volunteering:** We can volunteer our time and expertise to support the resource hub's activities. This can involve serving as mentors or advisors, providing assistance for events and workshops, and contributing to the development of educational and training materials.

In conclusion, as a community of SEPs and business owners, we can make a valuable contribution to the resource hub for SEPs in Singapore. By providing networking and mentorship, sharing resources and knowledge, advocating for the hub, providing feedback and evaluation, and volunteering our time and expertise, we can support the success of the resource hub and help self-employed individuals thrive in Singapore.

4.3 Portal for Transiting Parents

What is the context of this idea/solution? What is happening today that is driving the need for an intervention?

The “back to work” proposal is a response to factors driving the need for intervention to support the career re-entry of PMETs and stay-at-home parents.

These factors include:

1. **Demographic changes:** Singapore's ageing population negatively affects a shrinking workforce and a shortage of skilled labour. The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed many people's perspectives. Increasingly, many people are choosing to take a career break for various personal and family reasons, such as spending quality time with their children, taking on caregiver duties with elderly parents, re-evaluating their career goals, learning new skills, travelling, volunteering, or simply recharging for health reasons. To address the gap in skilled and experienced workforce, these back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents can be supported to re-enter the labour market.
2. **Technological disruption:** The rise of new technologies and automation is shifting the employment landscape. People who have taken a career break may lack the new skills required by employers today to re-enter the market.
3. **Post-pandemic workforce & gender diversity:** Since the beginning of the pandemic, many women left the workforce for childcare or caregiver responsibilities. There is a need to help women rebuild their careers, which may, in turn, resolve the shortage of specific skill sets employers need and avoid the costs associated with high turnover. More importantly, it may ensure that women's progress in the workplace is not set back for an entire generation. Hence, there is a need for employers to recognise “gaps” in work experience (CV/LinkedIn) for this group of people.
4. **Economic challenges:** The COVID-19 pandemic triggered massive job displacements worldwide, including Singapore. This has made it more difficult for qualified PMETs and Stay-At-Home Parents to re-enter the workforce as there is increased competition for available jobs.

5. Government: Currently, WSG, as a statutory board under MOM, has many programmes and initiatives to help individuals find employment, such as Career Conversion Programmes, Career Trial, and SGUnited Mid-Career Pathways Programme. There are over 10 pages of such programmes and initiatives on the WSG website.¹¹ However, these programmes and initiatives are often difficult to navigate and/or differentiate, and we strongly feel that they do not directly address the needs and unique circumstances of those PMETs and Stay-At-Home Parents who have had an extended break in their career (these include caregivers of our ageing population).

For our proposal, we define “extended break” as a period of two years or more of not working in their former professional roles. We strongly feel there is a need for both a centralised, one-stop-portal and a government-to-government initiative designed uniquely to help this group of PMETs and stay-at-home parents.

In light of significant challenges, the "back to work" proposal aims to provide targeted support and resources to help Back to Work PMETs and stay-at-home parents overcome the barriers to re-entering the workforce and achieving their career goals.

What are the problems we are trying to solve?

The "back to work" proposal aims to help solve the problem of career re-entry for PMETs and stay-at-home parents who have taken a career break. These people often face significant challenges in their desire to return to the workforce, including a lack of relevant skills, gaps in years of relevant work experience, limited job opportunities, and a lack of flexible work arrangements that can accommodate their personal and family responsibilities (school hours jobs, school holidays constraints, caregiver medical appointments, etc.).

Several reports, such as one by PriceWaterhouseCoopers,¹² found that returning women are particularly disadvantaged for various reasons.

Firstly, there is employers’ hiring bias that views a lack of current experience as an erosion of skills. Secondly, many returning women move into lower skilled jobs due to lack of flexible or part-time work in quality roles.

While there has been no similar study on male subjects, it would be interesting to find out if returning men had similar experiences.

The proposal aims to address these challenges through a recommendation of a purposefully-designed, centralised portal that can be a one-stop-shop for both PMETs and stay-at-home parents, employers and recruiters.

¹¹ Workforce Singapore. <https://www.wsg.gov.sg/>

¹²“Women returners,” PriceWaterhouseCoopers, November, 2016,

<https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/women-returners/pwc-research-women-returners-nov-2016.pdf>

To do this successfully, we recognise that a change in mindset and cultural values is needed across society, where half-day and flexi-time professional jobs are acknowledged. Hence, we highly recommend that the government takes the first step in engendering a change in mindset by creating a government-to-government initiative. This programme would attempt to link up government ministries, with the Ministry of Manpower as the advocator and enabler, creating suitable school-hours jobs or flexi jobs for PMETs and stay-at-home parents.

A government-to-government initiative would aim to provide relief from the frustrations experienced by the PMETs and stay-at-home parents as well as resolve employment shortages faced by government agencies, such as teacher shortages in the schools. The government, through MOM, will act as the advocator and champion of this programme, and become the enabler for employability and resilience in post-pandemic Singapore.

This proposal aims to help people achieve their career goals and contribute to Singapore's economic growth and development, while supporting greater gender diversity and family-friendly work arrangements.

Existing Gaps

Case 1

Hi, I am a stay-at-home mum for over 2 years. I left work, as a Asia Pacific Regional Manager, to spend time with my K1 girl during Covid. Now that she is older, I am looking for a job to **fit around her school routines** so that I can contribute to the family income.

Case 2

Hi, I am a stay-at-home mum of two adult children for 10 years. I was previously a R&D sales manager. I am looking to return to work in a **professional setting** but not at entry level.

Case 3

Hi, I am a stay-at-home mum with two independent teenage children for 6 years. I was an engineer in an MNC. I am looking for **flexible work** that will allow me to spend some time with them as they go through their adolescent journey.

Current career re-entry issues faced by stay-at-home-mothers identified by participants.

What are the gaps in current measures?

1. **Lack of a centralised portal** for back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents looking for flexi-jobs.
2. **Limited awareness and outreach:** Despite the efforts by MOM to promote its programmes, many back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents may not be aware of the resources and support available to them. This may be due to a lack of outreach efforts, limited engagement with community organisations, or a lack of visibility of the programmes in certain sectors or industries.
3. **Insufficient job opportunities:** While there may be existing programmes available that aim to connect back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents with job opportunities, there may be a shortage of suitable PMET flexi positions available in certain sectors. This may limit the programme's effectiveness in helping individuals find suitable employment that matches their skills and experience.
4. **Limited flexibility and work-life balance:** While there is a growing emphasis on the importance of work-life balance and flexible work arrangements, not all employers may be willing or able to offer these as options to the workforce. This may limit the employment opportunities available to back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents who require these arrangements to manage their personal and family responsibilities. This might be due to the lack of know-how from employers on how to implement such flexi work. There are also limited incentives to offer such flexibility. Currently, employers are only recognised with a tripartite badge.
5. **Discriminatory hiring:** Some participants shared experiences of discriminatory hiring where candidates with career gaps tend to be less preferred.

What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

There are already similar job portals for career relaunching available overseas.

Some of them are:

- **Working Parents Connect¹¹ (Australia)**
- **The Mom Project¹² (US)**
- **iRelaunch¹³ (US)**
- **HireMyMom¹⁴ (US)**
- **MummyJobs¹⁵ (UK)**
- **workingmums¹⁶ (UK)**
- **Netmums¹⁷(UK):** Term-time only jobs, which also includes jobs from the National Health Department and the Civil Service in the UK, and in schools

Similar site in Singapore: Mums@Work¹⁸

So why are we still proposing this idea?

In Singapore, Mums@Work is a social enterprise that has limited resources to reach out and cater to a wider audience. It is dependent on word-of-mouth marketing and not many are aware of its existence. Therefore, a more ideal framework would be for a "back to work" programme initiated by the government to spread the outreach is suggested.

¹¹ Working Parents Connect. <https://www.workingparentsconnect.com.au/>

¹² The Mom Project. <https://themomproject.com/>

¹³ iRelaunch. <https://www.irelaunch.com/>

¹⁴ HireMyMom. <https://www.hiremymom.com/>

¹⁵ MummyJobs. <https://mummyjobs.co.uk/>

¹⁶ workingmums. <http://www.workingmums.co.uk/>

¹⁷ Netmums. <https://www.netmums.com/>

¹⁸ Mums@Work Singapore. <https://www.mumsatwork.net/>

Pre-launch (low-hanging fruit - MOM to build a portal)

A "Back to Work" portal can be an effective tool for matching back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents with suitable job opportunities. The following are some features that a good "Back to Work" portal should have:

- **User-friendly interface:** The portal should have a user-friendly interface that is easy to navigate and understand. It should be designed to cater to the specific needs of back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents.
- **Job matching algorithm:** The portal should have an advanced job matching algorithm that uses data analysis and machine learning to match job seekers with suitable job opportunities based on their skills, experience, and preferences.
- **Comprehensive job listings:** The portal should have a comprehensive listing of job opportunities that are suitable for back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents, including part-time, contract and flexible work arrangements.
- **Resume builder and career assessment tools:** The portal should offer tools to help job seekers build their resumes and assess their skills, strengths and weaknesses.
- **Job search alerts:** The portal should have an alert system that notifies job seekers of new job opportunities that match their skills and preferences.
- **Push enablement and subscription:** Having a status in the government website to allow one to maintain their employment status (which could include and is not limited to "looking to return to work" and "currently taking a career break"). Based on the status selected , auto push of information/subscription which may assist one's employment journey
- **Networking and mentoring opportunities:** The portal should offer networking and mentoring opportunities to help job seekers build their professional networks and connect with mentors in their field.
- **Resource library:** The portal should have a resource library that provides job seekers with information on job search strategies, resume writing tips and career development resources.
- **Employer profiles and reviews:** The portal should have employer profiles and reviews to help job seekers learn more about potential employers and their work culture.

Overall, a "Back to Work" portal should be designed to provide back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents with a user-friendly, comprehensive and supportive platform that can help them find suitable job opportunities.

Launch Phase (MOM launching the portal)

The government to play a crucial role in ensuring the success of a "Back to Work" portal by providing support in the following areas:

- **Funding:** The government can provide funding to support the development and maintenance of the portal. This can include financial support for technology infrastructure, staffing, marketing and outreach efforts, and other related expenses.
- **Collaboration with employers:** The government can work closely with employers to encourage them to use the portal and post job opportunities that are suitable for back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents. In addition, the government can provide incentives to employers who participate in the programme and demonstrate a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and work-life balance. We cannot emphasise enough the need for job redesigning and creation of quality jobs for highly skilled PMETs and stay-at-home parents. Some suggested employers to start with could be government affiliated organisations, IHLs, i.e., universities or large tech firms, telecommunication operators, online retailers, consultancy or mining services organisations. This gives a wide span of jobs ranging from administration, data analysis to sales.
- **Outreach and education:** The government can help promote the portal to potential users through targeted outreach and education efforts. This can include workshops, webinars and other training sessions that help job seekers learn about the portal's features and benefits.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** The government can monitor the portal's performance and evaluate its impact on back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents. This can involve tracking metrics such as the number of job postings, the number of successful job matches, and the overall user satisfaction rate.
- **Continuous improvement:** The government can work with the portal's developers and stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and implement changes that enhance the portal's functionality and usability.
- **Feedback:** Employers to provide feedback about why a candidate is selected/not selected. This could provide insights on the skills required in the market, coaching for job seekers and how the government can better plan for future courses.

Government-to-Government Initiative

The Ministry of Manpower to work with their counterparts (other ministries) to cater for part time/flexi/school hours jobs for back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents.

For example, Candidate A has experience, skills and knowledge with young children and playdates, and this could be an asset to EDCA where they can focus on preschools.

Alternatively, Candidate B can apply to be a teacher assistant in MOE schools to help prepare materials teachers need for the lessons, set up classrooms for different lessons, and help with student management and other secondary tasks, thereby, addressing high turnover rate and burnout rate among teachers.

These teacher assistant roles are already a fundamental part of international school education in Singapore and in local schools in the UK. MOE could model this system to reduce teachers' workload and give teachers more time to focus on the curriculum and personalised student support instead of being bogged down preparing teaching materials and doing administration. This could ease MOE's problem of teacher shortages and teachers leaving mainstream education.

Another example would be Candidate C responding to a partnership between MOM and the Ministry of Health for roles within the health system such as in administration, finance/billing, customer enquiries, providing support in the pediatrics department (reading or storytelling). Similarly, this is a common model in hospitals in Australia.

The potential for this type of partnership is significant and MOM could act as a leader in helping to move this forward.

MOM and other ministries would need to work together as an example to private enterprise.

- MOM and various ministries to jointly accelerate the use of augmented intelligence to generate sufficient highly skilled flex PMET job roles. To trial out within government sector before sharing framework to wider industry.¹⁹

By providing support in these areas, the government can help ensure that the "Back to Work" portal is successful in meeting the needs of back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents, and ultimately help to facilitate their successful re-entry into the workforce.

¹⁹ Lee, Alvin, "AI: Automating and augmenting the future of human work," Singapore Management University, November 22, 2022, <https://research.smu.edu.sg/news/2022/nov/22/ai-automating-and-augmenting-future-human-work>

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

The "Back to Work" programme in Singapore has the following intended outcomes:

1. **Career re-entry:** The programme aims to support the successful re-entry of back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents into the workforce, by providing job matching services, training and development opportunities, and support for work-life balance.
2. **Skills upgrading:** The programme aims to help individuals who have taken career breaks to upgrade their skills and knowledge, in order to keep pace with changing industry demands and emerging technologies.
3. **Increased gender diversity:** The programme aims to promote greater gender diversity in the workforce, by supporting the career re-entry of women who have taken career breaks to care for children or elderly family members.
4. **Economic growth:** The programme aims to support Singapore's economic growth and development, by helping to address the talent gap in certain industries and sectors, and by increasing the availability of skilled workers.
5. **Work-life balance:** The programme aims to promote greater work-life balance, by providing flexible work arrangements that can accommodate the personal and family responsibilities of back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents.

Last but not least, "Singapore's low fertility rates suggest that formal sector provision cannot substitute parents spending quality time with children. While access to excellent childcare options and domestic workers may help, institutional support — parental leave and flexible work arrangements that allow families to spend more time together — is needed as well."²⁰

Singapore Management University's sociology professor Paulin Straughan argued that besides WFH arrangements, people in their 20s could also take time off from work and resume their careers afterwards when the children no longer need "intensive care."²¹

Therefore, by normalising career breaks and making it easier for individuals to resume their career, we may eventually help raise Singapore fertility rates.

²⁰ Tan, Poh Lin, "Singapore's experience in trying to raise its fertility rate offers lessons for other countries," IMF F&D, March, 2020,

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2020/03/lessons-from-singapore-on-raising-fertility-rates-tan>

²¹ Ang, Shermaine, "Flexi-work arrangements could help boost fertility rate: Experts," The Straits Times, October 23, 2022,

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/flexi-work-arrangements-could-help-boost-fertility-rate-experts>

Who are the target audience(s)?

The target audience of the "Back to Work" proposal includes two main groups:

Back-to-work PMETs: This group includes professionals, managers, executives and technicians who have taken a career break and are looking to return to the workforce. They may have left their jobs to care for family members or for personal reasons, and are now seeking opportunities to restart their careers.

Stay-at-home parents: This group includes individuals who have left the workforce to care for their children and are now looking to return to work. They may have taken a break for a few years or longer, and are seeking job opportunities that offer work-life balance, school hours or flexible work arrangements.

Both of these groups face unique challenges in re-entering the workforce, including a lack of recent work experience, a need for flexible work arrangements, and a lack of confidence in their skills and abilities. The "Back to Work" proposal aims to address these challenges by providing a range of support services and resources, including job matching services, career coaching, training and development opportunities, and employer outreach initiatives. By targeting these groups, the programme aims to help them overcome the barriers to re-entering the workforce and achieve their career goals.

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/solutions?

The key stakeholders in this programme include:

- **Ministry of Manpower (MOM):** The MOM is responsible for the development and implementation of the "Back to Work" programme. The MOM sets the policies, guidelines and regulations for the programme, and collaborates with other stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation.
- **Employers:** Employers play a critical role in the "Back to Work" programme by providing job opportunities for back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents. Employers may also participate in the programme by offering flexible work arrangements and providing support for training and development. Job redesigning is an important aspect as the current Singapore climate does not have sufficient flexi and part time PMET jobs.
- **Career coaches and counsellors:** Career coaches and counsellors provide guidance and support to back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents. They help these individuals identify their career goals, develop job search strategies, and build the skills and confidence needed to succeed in the workforce.

- **Training and education providers:** Training and education providers offer courses and programmes that help back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents develop the skills and knowledge needed for their desired careers. They may also provide support for job search and career development.
- **"Back to Work" portal developers and administrators:** The developers and administrators of the "Back to Work" portal are responsible for creating and maintaining the online platform that connects back-to-work PMETs and stay-at-home parents with job opportunities and other career resources.

Are there similar ideas/solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/ solutions different?

Mums@Work is a local social enterprise established in early 2010, with the vision of supporting mothers looking for flexi-work, getting back to work, as well as starting their own businesses. However, its target population is limited to stay-at-home mothers and membership applications are subject to approval.

Our idea is modelled after iRelaunch²² — a private enterprise in the United States that targets a larger group of returning to work professionals (hence not limited to mothers) since 2008. It is a very successful portal with university partners, community partners and various professional association partners. Many inspiring stories are also posted in the portal.

In addition, we seek government support in providing incentives to employers, similar to salary support that has been a feature in WSG's current programmes. We envision that with the support and resources from MOM, our Singapore version of similar programmes, will have a wider reach and yield greater success compared to Mums@Work or iRelaunch.

As for the government-to-government initiative, we are unaware of any similar solutions. This will be a unique solution that features close government collaboration, that will result in creating instant jobs and resolving labour shortages within various ministries.

²² iRelaunch. <https://www.irelaunch.com/>

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

The implementation of this programme can face several challenges, some of which are:

1. **Stigma and bias:** Individuals who have taken a career break or who have been out of work for an extended period may face stigma and bias from employers, making it difficult for them to re-enter the workforce.
2. **Skills gap:** Individuals who have been out of work for an extended period may have skills that are outdated or no longer in demand. This skills gap can make it challenging to find suitable job opportunities.
3. **Limited job opportunities:** The availability of suitable job opportunities for individuals returning to the workforce may be limited, especially in industries or sectors that have been impacted by economic downturns or changes.
4. **Lack of flexibility:** Flexi-work arrangement has yet to become a norm in Singapore. Even so, companies who adopted Tripartite Standards on FWAs are investing in job redesigning for their current employees instead of creating new vacancies on flexi-work terms.
5. **Funding and resources:** The programme may require significant funding and resources to provide services and support to participants, which may be a challenge to secure.
6. **Inadequate outreach and awareness:** A lack of outreach and awareness about the programme may result in eligible individuals not being aware of the services and support available to them.
7. **Resistance to change:** Employers and individuals may be resistant to change, making it challenging to implement new approaches and strategies. According to the DOS, 53.1% of Singapore residents aged 25 years and above have at least a diploma or professional qualifications.²³ That means there is a large pool of PMETs from which employers can have their pick and those with long career breaks will probably rank low among employers' choices.
8. **A concerted effort within ministries** is needed to ensure the smooth running of the government-to-government initiative.

Addressing these challenges will require a collaborative effort from the government, employers, training providers, and individuals. By addressing these challenges proactively, the "Back to Work" programme can be designed and implemented to be more effective, inclusive and successful.

²³ Singapore Population, Department of Statistics Singapore.
<https://www.singstat.gov.sg/modules/infographics/population>

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

The implementation of a "Back to Work" programme would involve collaboration between MOM, relevant government agencies, and employers in Singapore.

The following are some of the next steps that could be taken to implement such a programme:

- 1. Develop a detailed plan:** MOM could work with relevant agencies to develop a detailed plan for the "Back to Work" programme. This plan could include the specific services to be provided, target groups, funding requirements and expected outcomes.
- 2. Establish partnerships:** MOM could establish partnerships with employers, industry associations, training providers, and other organisations to implement the programme. These partnerships could help to identify job opportunities, provide training and support, and promote the programme to potential participants.
- 3. Set up a dedicated team:** MOM could set up a dedicated team to manage the programme, including staff responsible for outreach, career coaching and counselling, job placement and matching, and post-employment support. This team could consider recruiting job seekers who are looking to return to work on a short-term assignment basis to improve the efficacy of the programme.
- 4. Launch the programme:** Once the plan is developed and partnerships are established, MOM could launch the programme and start providing services to eligible individuals.
- 5. Individuals can contribute to the success of the "Back to Work" programme in several ways, such as:**
 - (a) Spreading the word:** Individuals can help to spread the word about the programme to their friends, family members, and networks. This can help to increase awareness and encourage more people to participate.
 - (b) Volunteering:** Individuals can volunteer to provide career coaching and counselling, job placement and matching, or other services to programme participants.
 - (c) Participating:** Individuals who are eligible for the programme can participate and take advantage of the services and support provided.
 - (d) Providing feedback:** Individuals can provide feedback on the programme to help improve its effectiveness and impact.

By working together, MOM, employers and individuals can help to create a "Back to Work" programme that is effective, inclusive and beneficial for all Singaporeans.

*“How might we think about **unemployment support** to supplement active labour market policies so that we can better support displaced workers to bounce back into employment?”*

5

Our Proposed Initiatives (III)

Challenge Area 3: Unemployment Support

5.1 Transition Assurance Package

What is the context of this idea/solution? What is happening today that is driving the need for an intervention?

At the moment, there is no financial support specific for unemployed individuals. As such, Singapore is an outlier among developed countries such as Canada and Sweden, which have unemployment benefits for their people.

For example, in Canada, the unemployed upon meeting specific conditions and eligibility, could get up to 55% of their earnings, up to a maximum of 45 weeks.²⁴

In Sweden, unemployed people who fulfil stipulated conditions are given cash assistance and other support including training grant and job search allowance.²⁵

Financial support is necessary when the unemployed are encouraged to upskill and retrain in order to stay relevant in an evolving workplace climate. Seeking new job opportunities and reskilling courses can take significant time, which presents challenges for the unemployed people.

Apart from the costs of reskilling courses that are borne by unemployed individuals, they may struggle with ongoing bills and daily expenses during the period of unemployment.

What are the problems we are trying to solve?

We want the unemployed to be less worried about paying bills while they prepare for their next job, be it through skills and training programmes or by spending more time deliberating job prospects and attending interviews.

Due to the lack of financial support, they have fears of quitting existing jobs to find better jobs. This creates a vicious cycle of them either being stuck in jobs that are not meaningful to them or having little time to seek out better job opportunities.

We want to provide more leeway for individuals to seek out jobs that are more aligned with their passion and interests rather than taking on any jobs that come their way.

²⁴ *El regular benefits, Government of Canada.*

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-regular-benefit.html>

²⁵ *Sweden - Unemployment benefits, European Commission.*

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1130&langId=en&intPagId=4817#:~:text=Unemployment%20benefits%2C%20whether%20paid%20from,to%20an%20additional%20150%20days.>

What are the gaps in current measures?

At present, Singapore does not provide any financial benefits for the unemployed in transition.

Singapore does not stipulate rules, or mandate companies to provide severance or retrenchment packages. Due to a lack of standardisation for severance packages, some unemployed people may not receive retrenchment benefits upon retrenchment. This places such individuals in a disadvantageous position in their next job search.

ComCare scheme²⁶ is a broad-based scheme that does not have specific interventions nor financial support that are targeted specifically at the unemployed people in Singapore.

What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

Financial payouts to aid out-of-work resident workers who are in a phase of transition into their next job. We define resident workers as those who have previously contributed to their CPF accounts for at least 12 months out of the past 24 months.

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

There are two main outcomes. One is to help reduce unemployment rates in Singapore by providing re-employment support to the unemployed people. The second is to allow more time and breathing space for the unemployed people to find jobs that are in line with their forte, passion and interests, so as to help them transit into a new role that best fits their abilities and aptitudes.

Who are the target audience(s)?

All out-of-work citizens and permanent residents who have contributed to their CPF accounts for at least 12 months out of the past 24 months. This includes self-employed individuals who have volunteered to contribute to their CPF accounts.

²⁶ ComCare Short-to-Medium Term Assistance.
<https://supportgowhere.life.gov.sg/schemes/COMCARE-SMTA/comcare-short-to-medium-term-assistance-smta>

Should the degree of agency over one's employment situation be a factor that determines whether one qualifies for unemployment support?

Yes, we recognise that there are exceptional circumstances where employees are forced to resign as a result of unfair and unreasonable treatment from their employers or organisations.

In a toxic work environment, various forms of biases and workplace bullying present in organisations can lead workers to resign in their workplace. Such factors are beyond the employees' control and undermine their well-being on many levels.²⁷

Authorities should therefore reconsider such applications and appeals on a case-by-case basis. In such cases, post workplace departure interviews can be carried out to understand more about the employees' situation and to obtain evidence to substantiate their claims.

Overall, the government shall have a mandate over who qualifies for the unemployed support.

What would the eligibility criteria be?

All out-of-work residents who have contributed to their CPF for at least 12 months out of the past 24 months shall qualify for the scheme.

Eligibility includes, but is not limited to:

1. Becoming out of job due to lack of work
2. Have a contract employment that has been terminated
3. Have been terminated from their job (through no fault of their own)
4. Are made redundant through organisational downsizing or restructuring (M&A)
5. Are made redundant due to the bankruptcy/liquidation
6. Are made redundant because of a business reason beyond their control
7. People who want a career switch but are unable to find unemployment after their previous role

²⁷ Sull, Donald, Sull, Charles, Cipolli, William, Brighenti, Caio, " Why Every Leader Needs to Worry About Toxic Culture," MIT Sloan, March 16, 2022, <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/why-every-leader-needs-to-worry-about-toxic-culture/>

Individuals will not be eligible if they:

1. Were fired for violating company policy such as misconduct, insubordination, absenteeism, etc.
2. Were involved in work stoppages or strikes

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/ solutions?

The key stakeholders will include the government, intermediaries and employers.

The government will be the overall mandate that oversees the management of the TAP funds. It can also work with intermediaries such as MOM, WSG, SNEF, NTUC, etc., to provide upskilling and job matching support for the unemployed.

Employers should adopt responsible and fair retrenchment practices. Employers should understand that the TAP programme is not a direct replacement of a company severance package or benefits. Employers should report accurate retrenchment data to the MOM for auditing purposes.

Who should fund the transition reassurance package? What would the contribution rates be like?

Singapore's tripartite partners can spearhead the funding of the TAP programme. The government, workers' unions (NTUC) and employers (SNEF) can collaborate and pool a starting capital for the fund. Similar to ComCare's initial funding process from the government,²⁸ periodic top-ups can be made to TAP funds by the state.

After which, a small amount (\$3) will be deducted from employees' CPF and be channelled to fund the scheme. There are two plausible options for the government and policy makers to consider:

Option 1:

Current proposal could include means testing as a safeguard and it can be later removed accordingly if there is no abuse.

Option 2:

Positioned as an interest free loan from the collective pool. Unemployed individuals who claim during the first cycle are required to pay back (70%, etc.) before they can access the subsequent cycles. This allows the TAP pool to grow, and this also reduces the need for means testing as only needy people will likely apply.

²⁸ ComCare Annual Report FY2020, Ministry of Social and Family Development.
<https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/article/ComCare-Annual-Report-FY2020>

What other scenarios did you consider before arriving at this conclusion? How did you arrive at this solution?

We considered a system of defraying bills, such as mortgages, electricity or phone bills, to help unemployed individuals. However, after discussion, we concluded that it was not feasible because this will need to involve cooperation from various private entities. These corporations are beyond the control of the public sector and government and are also answerable to investors and shareholders.

We also considered an opt-in system. However, after consultation with an economist, we learnt that an opt-in system would lead to the undesirable effect of increasing the percentage of people abusing the system to claim unemployment benefits. This would cause the system to be less financially sustainable and socially inequitable.

How much should the transition reassurance package amount be? How did you calculate this?

We are proposing a two-tier payout structure.

From days 1 to 180, the proposed amount is \$60 per day.

From days 181 to 365, the amount is reduced to \$40 per day.

Average amount per month is \$1,500 for the entire year.

According to a study by IPS,²⁹ the average cost of three meals in a hawker centre or food court is about \$17. We assert that \$60 to be a reasonable amount to cover an individual's expenses such as food, transport, groceries, home utilities, phone, internet bills and also insurance premiums.

The amount will be reduced by one-third after six months to disincentivise individuals from staying out of work for prolonged periods and to encourage them to step up their job search efforts.

According to a study by Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy,³⁰ a "reasonable" starting point for a living wage in Singapore is \$2,906 for a couple with two children. According to this article,³¹ \$1,500 appears to be a close estimate for the lowest minimum salary in Singapore.

Our proposal of an average of \$1,500 a month (for an individual receiving the payout for the entire year) is about half of the reasonable living wage derived by the study, and is either lower or in line with the lowest salary in Singapore.

²⁹ Tan, Nixon, "Eating out at hawker centres, food courts & kopitiam 3 times a day costs about S\$17: IPS study," *Mothership*, March 14, 2023, <https://mothership.sg/2023/03/cost-of-eating-out-spore/>

³⁰ Co, Cindy, "\$2,906 a 'reasonable' starting point for a living wage in Singapore: Study," *CNA*, October 8, 2021, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/reasonable-starting-point-living-wage-singapore-lkyspp-study-2230071>

³¹ Choo, Daryl, "55,000 administrators, drivers across all industries to get minimum salaries from March 2023," *Today*, August 30, 2021, <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/55000-administrators-drivers-across-all-industries-get-minimum-salaries>

How long should the duration be? Should there be a cap on the duration?

The payout will be disbursed until the unemployed individual secures employment or up to a maximum of one year, whichever is sooner. After which, the benefit will be halted regardless of the individual's employment status.

An individual can only claim up to one year's worth of unemployment benefit every four years, up to a maximum of 6 cycles throughout the individual's lifetime.

The cap of each unemployment cycle and a limit to claim such benefits in one's lifetime are mechanisms to prevent abuse.

What should be the conditions for receiving transition reassurance (i.e., active job search requirement)? How should we enforce this?

Conditions to qualify (At least 3 out of the 5 criteria)

1. Active job search (screenshots of job applications)
2. Upskilling efforts (certificate of participation/completion)
3. Correspondence relating to interviews (emails with HR for interviews)
4. Career counselling and career coaching sessions
5. Career workshops and career networking sessions

Authorities shall also consider appeals on a case-to-case basis. Proper documentation and proof must be submitted to the relevant agencies for review.

What mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that individuals do not abuse the system?

1. The payout will only cover basic cost of living and is lower than the wages of most, if not all, full-time employment in Singapore to encourage individuals to look for employment to improve their quality of life.
2. There will be a limit on the number of times an individual can avail this benefit throughout his lifetime. (e.g., Every four years can only claim once of up to 12 months of benefit)
3. An individual must fulfil eligibility requirements (3 out of 5 criteria)
4. Waiting time of around 30 days upon verification of eligibility and fulfilment of conditions
5. For each of the 5 criteria, one has to provide full documentation and proof of their involvement to the relevant agencies for review.

Programme Framework

An individual can claim **365 days** of benefits every **4 years** for a maximum of **6 cycles** over the course of your lifetime

Mechanisms to prevent abuse -

- i. Reduced benefit amount after the first 180 days
- ii. Cap for each unemployment cycle
- iii. Total cap on benefits that an individual can claim throughout his lifetime

Program Structure:

Day 1 - 180 :	\$60* per day (\$1,800 per mth)
Day 181 -365:	\$40* per day (\$1,200 per mth)

*Referenced from minimal wage levels in Singapore and a Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy study

[*S\\$2,906 a 'reasonable' starting point for a living wage in Singapore: Study - CNA \(channelnewsasia.com\)](#)

Participants' proposed framework for the TAP programme

Are there similar ideas/solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/ solutions different?

Estonia, Israel and Sweden have similar payout structure and eligibility prerequisites as the proposed TAP programme.

Estonia has a similar payout structure³² to the TAP programme we are proposing. Unemployment allowance is conferred to those who have worked for at least 180 days out of one year. It also has the same eligibility requirements as the TAP programme.

In Israel, unemployment benefits are paid daily,³³ with the amount calculated based on the employee's previous income over the past six months, but not exceeding the daily average wage for the first 125 days of payment and two-thirds of the daily average wage from the 126th day onwards.

The difference is that unemployed individuals can only claim one cycle of benefits once every four years and a maximum of 6 times in his/her lifetime.

³² Estonia - Unemployment insurance benefit, European Commission.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1108&langId=en&intPageId=4510>

³³ National Insurance.

<https://www.btl.gov.il/English%20Homepage/Benefits/Unemployment%20Insurance/Pages/PeriodEntitlement.aspx>

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

1. Unemployment assurance package schemes may raise the national unemployment rates in the short to midterm.
2. There is no strong and direct evidence that unemployment assurance package schemes can help people find better paying jobs or jobs that are better matched to their skills.
3. Unemployment assurance package schemes financed by payroll taxes may increase layoffs in some industries. Some organisations may abuse this to increase unfair or unjustified layoffs without proper mandate from the government.
4. Without a proper channel for tracking work search progress, certain unemployed workers may exaggerate their job search activities to claim benefits while staying unemployed for longer.

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

1. Policy makers need to determine the most suitable payout amount and duration based on concrete calculations and the country's current fiscal standing.
2. Policy makers will need to determine the funding amount and organisation that will provide the funding (e.g., using CPF Contribution to fund the unemployment package wages).
3. Policy makers should determine the appropriate eligibility criteria on whom should receive the funding.
4. Policy makers should also determine on how to get the agreement between employers and workers and to create awareness on the unemployment package.

5.2 Job & Economic Transition (JET) Scheme

What is the context of this idea/solution? What is happening today that is driving the need for an intervention?

Unemployment and underemployment are a global problem, and it can negatively impact individuals, families, societies and economies.

Governments in different countries and employers from different sectors are trying to address this problem at a national level by implementing various national programmes and initiatives. But in the words of DPM Lawrence Wong at the closing session³⁴ of the Citizens' Panel, "very few countries have a good system in place for adult training, skills upgrading and job placement. It is very hard to do at a national level."

Where most systems focus on supporting citizens in achieving full-time permanent employment as employees, they fall short on interventions for those who are self-employed. One recent intervention was CPF contributions for Self-Employed Persons (SEPs) who work as ride-hailing drivers and delivery riders. But as the number of SEPs continue to increase and the nature of work that SEPs do is increasingly remotely-based as well as cut across different sectors, there is an increasing need for an intervention through cross-sector collaborations.

What are the problems we are trying to solve?

The main problem we are trying to solve is unemployment and underemployment among Self-Employed Persons (SEPs). SEPs are as defined by IRAS, and entails several obligations under the existing Self-Employed Scheme as defined by CPF. The obligations include but are not limited to declaring Net Trade Income (NTI) and making MediSave contributions. It is also possible for a person to be a SEP and concurrently be an employee.

Unemployment refers to the situation where people who are able and willing to work cannot find jobs or are not employed. Underemployment refers to the situation where people are unable to reach their full employment potential. Both unemployment and underemployment can have a negative impact on individuals, families, societies, and economies. This may include but not be limited to financial insecurity, reduced standard of living, family disputes, social unrest and economic recession.

³⁴ Wong, Lawrence, "DPM Lawrence Wong at The Closing Session of the Ngee Ann Kongsi-IPS Citizens' Panel on Employment Resilience," Prime Minister's Office, March 25, 2023, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/DPM-Wong-at-The-Closing-Session-of-the-Ngee-Ann-Kongsi-IPS-Citizens-Panel-on-Employment-Resilience>

For the purpose of illustrating this problem with data, we refer to the Graduate Employment Survey 2023³⁵ published by the Ministry of Education, Singapore. Based on latest data from November 2022 across all course clusters in Singapore, graduates in Arts, Design, Media, Music have the lowest full-time permanent employment. This course cluster has consistently been the lowest in the history of the survey. This group of graduates fit our initial target audience because many of these graduates are also SEPs and freelance practitioners.

What are the gaps in current measures?

In Singapore, there are several existing measures to support individuals who are unemployed or struggling to find full-time permanent employment. These measures may include aggregated training and job opportunities based on each sector.

However, there are still gaps in the current measures that may leave many SEPs underserved as they find it difficult to seek full-time permanent employment and/or choose to remain self-employed. In the above illustration of the problem we are trying to solve, SEPs in the arts sector may receive non-financial resources from the National Arts Council³⁶ within the arts sector, such as co-working spaces or legal support to secure a gig. Yet, as we know, the problem of lowest full-time permanent employment still remains in the history of the Graduate Employment Survey.

The opportunities to solve the identified problem are to incentivise cross-sector collaborations and unlock the value of the human capital in Singapore to solve the problem identified in the above. This means fostering collaboration between the arts, tech, financial, engineering, built environment sectors, and many more through the creative economy as an example.

The gaps in the current measures tend to be interventions based on each sector and ironically, this may create gaps between sectors that increasingly need to be crossed in order to achieve employment resilience across sectors as we move into a highly collaborative future of work.

³⁵ *Graduate Employment Survey, Ministry of Education.*

<https://www.moe.gov.sg/-/media/files/post-secondary/ges-2022/joint-web-publication-4-aus-ges2022.ashx>

³⁶ *Securing a Gig, National Arts Council.*

[https://www.nac.gov.sg/resources/toolkits-and-guides/arts-self-employed-persons-\(seps\)-and-freelancers/securing-a-gig](https://www.nac.gov.sg/resources/toolkits-and-guides/arts-self-employed-persons-(seps)-and-freelancers/securing-a-gig)

What is the idea/solution we are proposing?

Our solution focuses on supporting citizens defined as SEPs and building a resilient support system for them beyond their wages. This entails the launch of a Job & Economic Transition (JET) Scheme. Our report will also evaluate their benefits and potential drawbacks.

The JET scheme fills the gaps for cross-sector collaborations and in the words of DPM Lawrence Wong, “protects workers, not jobs”.³⁷

The user journey of SEPs supported by JET Scheme is illustrated by Jo who represents Target Audience A: SEPs seeking self-employment opportunities (Contract for Service) and Lo who represents Target Audience B: SEPs seeking full-time permanent employment opportunities (Contract of Service)

1. Jo and Lo claim the credits from the JET Portal through two separate tracks: Self-employment Opportunity, Assurance, & Resource (SOAR) and Facilitate Upward Employability & Livelihood (FUEL).
2. As someone interested in incentivising other SEPs and SMEs to collaborate with him on securing a Contract for Service, Jo will use the SOAR track to offset costs of professional services of partnering SEPs and SMEs. Whereas Lo uses the FUEL track to offset costs of basic necessities at partnering merchants such as NTUC FairPrice while he is securing a Contract of Service from employers.
3. Jo earns more credits when he secures more contracts, whereas Lo earns more credits when he improves his CV/resume, consult career coaches, applies for jobs or training, etc.

Through a publicly transparent and accountable Credit Scheme with a digital infrastructure such as Purpose Bound Money (PBM),³⁸ the people-private-public sectors can work together from the ground-up to incentivise SEPs in actively seeking self-employment and/or full-time permanent employment opportunities, supporting new initiatives such as the Jobs-Skills Integrator (JSIT),³⁹ which was recently announced in Budget 2023, and ultimately reduce involuntary unemployment rates.

The main intention of this scheme is to provide timely intervention to SEPs during a critical period when they are involuntarily out of work, ensuring that they do not fall through the cracks and suffer from long-term unemployment.

³⁷“Protecting workers, not jobs, is Singapore’s approach to employment resilience: DPM Wong,” CNA, March 25, 2023, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/lawrence-wong-citizens-panel-employment-resilience-protect-workers-not-jobs-3373951>

³⁸ Project Orchid, Monetary Authority of Singapore. <https://www.mas.gov.sg/-/media/mas-media-library/development/fintech/project-orchid/mas-project-orchid-report.pdf>

³⁹ Jobs-Skills Integrators, SkillsFuture Singapore. <https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/jsit>

In addition to a credit scheme, we are implementing a complimentary programme similar in spirit to the Healthy 365 programme to incentivise people to take action. It will include the JET Scheme to help SEPs to survive and thrive. This programme is called PAssion Month, in partnership with the people-private-public sectors.

PAssion Month

Graduates in Arts, Design, Media, Music have the lowest full-time permanent employment.

Source: Graduate Employment Survey 2023, Ministry of Education, Singapore

“ I, for one, am very excited about the potential and the prospects of the **creative economy**...
...we have lots of talent there, and it's also a **question** of showcasing them, allowing more Singaporeans to see and also appreciate the work that they do. ”

Source: Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, Mr Edwin Tong, on 6 March 2023

PLACES
i.e. imPACT@Hong Lim Green

PROGRAMMES
i.e. PAssion Month

PARTNERSHIPS
i.e. People-Private-Public Sectors

Answer: A month to take action on your passion.

PURPOSE
To benefit 100 Self-Employed Persons (SEPs) each programme.

SCAN ME!

Your Passion. Our Purpose.

Details of PAssion Month programme proposed by participants

This programme targets the audiences as set out in the following sections to achieve a quantifiable outcome of benefiting at least 100 SEPs each programme with our solution.

What are the intended outcomes of this idea/solution?

The FUEL component of the JET scheme aims to achieve the following outcomes including but not limited to:

- **Job Matching:** Increased motivation to improve CV/resume, consult career coaches, apply for jobs and training, and engage in other job-seeking activities.
- **Workforce Participation:** Increased workforce participation for employers to have a larger pool of applicants to choose from, which can improve the overall quality of candidates.
- **Involuntary Unemployment:** Reduced unemployment rates when citizens are more likely to find employment, which can decrease the number of individuals who are involuntarily out of work.
- **Local GDP:** Increased local expenditures when citizens are more likely to spend it locally at partnering merchants, which can help support many local businesses.

The SOAR component of the JET scheme aims to achieve the following outcomes including but not limited to:

- **Networking Opportunities:** Increased business partnerships between established businesses and SEPs can have access to networking opportunities with these businesses.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Increased research and development to navigate complex business environments through expert guidance between entrepreneurs on areas such as financial management, marketing strategies or customer acquisition.
- **Marketing Synergies:** Increased visibility of SEPs to help attract new customers, establish credibility and reputation, and potentially expand their business.
- **Resource Sharing:** Decreased cost of operation when established businesses offer access to underemployed resources that have sunk cost, such as equipment or technology, that SEPs may not have. By collaborating, businesses can share these resources, which can be especially helpful in times of inflation.
- **Talent Crunch:** Established businesses get to work together with SEPs and solve their own talent crunch.

Who are the target audience(s)?

Our target audiences are:

- a) SEPs seeking self-employment opportunities (Contract for Service)
- b) SEPs seeking full-time permanent employment opportunities (Contract of Service)

The specific target audiences to receive credits in Singapore would likely be SEPs who are currently unemployed or underemployed and actively seeking self-employment and/or full-time permanent employment opportunities. This includes individuals who have lost their jobs due to recent layoffs, recent graduates who are entering the job market, and individuals who are facing barriers to employment. The credits could also be targeted towards individuals who are in low-paying full-time permanent jobs despite their high education levels (i.e. university graduates) or individuals that may be struggling to make ends meet including existing gig workers, freelance, or temporary contract workers.

To further zoom in on protecting SEPs using a data-driven approach, we will start with SEPs in the creative economy due to the economic opportunities that could create many new jobs and benefit many SEPs as identified in our target audiences.

According to UNESCO, "The creative economy has grown to become one of the great powerhouses of our times... employing more people aged 15–29 than any other sector."⁴⁰

According to UNCTAD, "Asia-Pacific is the world's biggest market for the cultural and creative industry (CCI)."⁴¹

It is important to note that the two tracks of credits would need to be targeted at SEPs who are actively seeking self-employment and/or full-time permanent employment opportunities. By targeting these specific SEPs, the credits would realise a greater impact in reducing unemployment rates and delivering sustained economic growth in Singapore.

⁴⁰"Cutting Edge | The creative economy: moving in from the sidelines," UNESCO,

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/cutting-edge-creative-economy-moving-sidelines>

⁴¹"Creative Industry 4.0 Towards A New Globalized Creative Economy," UNCTAD, 2022,

https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/tsce-myem2022-Creative-Economy_en.pdf

Who are the stakeholders/partners (e.g., employers, intermediaries, workers, etc.) involved in implementing the ideas/ solutions?

Implementing a JET Scheme in Singapore would involve several stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- **Government agencies:** The Singaporean government would play a crucial role in implementing and administering the programme. MOM and other relevant agencies would be responsible for designing the programme's framework, determining eligibility criteria, and distributing credits among other stakeholders.
- **Businesses:** Businesses would be the key stakeholder to the success of the Credit Scheme as they are the ones who will provide economic opportunities for the SEPs to tap on. The Businesses will need to be willing to work with the SEPs to procure their services or collaborate on projects together.
- **Employers:** Employers would be key stakeholders in the success of the programme as they are the ones who provide employment opportunities. Employers would need to be willing to offer jobs to individuals who are eligible for credits and potentially be willing to partner with the government to provide on-the-job training opportunities.
- **Job training and education providers:** Job training and education providers would play a critical role in helping individuals who are eligible for credits gain the skills and qualifications necessary to secure employment opportunities. These providers could include universities, community colleges, vocational schools, and other organisations that provide job training programmes.
- **Non-profit organisations:** Non-profit organisations, such as job placement agencies and community-based organisations, could help identify individuals who are eligible for credits and provide support services, such as job search assistance, career counselling and financial planning.
- **Individuals:** Individuals who are eligible for credits would be critical stakeholders in the success of the programme. They would need to actively participate in job training programmes, network with potential employers, and apply for job opportunities to receive the credits.

By involving 3P stakeholders in the programme, it would be possible to create a holistic approach to reducing unemployment rates and delivering sustained economic growth in Singapore.

Are there similar ideas/ solutions in place? If yes, how are the ideas/ solutions different?

For the FUEL track, there is a similar national credit programme called Healthy 365, but it has a different objective and target audiences.

The Healthy 365 programme in Singapore is an initiative led by the public sector and aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles among Singaporeans. The programme provides incentives for individuals who engage in healthy activities, such as exercising regularly, attending health screenings, and purchasing healthy food. The incentives come in the form of points that can be redeemed for rewards such as vouchers and discounts at participating merchants.

In contrast, providing credits is aimed at incentivising individuals to actively seek self-employment and/or full-time permanent employment opportunities and reduce the economic costs of unemployment. The credits are intended to provide support to individuals who are struggling to make ends meet while they return to work. This initiative can be led and funded by the people and private sectors.

For the SOAR track, currently there are systems in place to support the growth of small businesses. For instance, the government agency, Enterprise Singapore, has established a national business directory called the Enterprise Singapore Directory. It is a comprehensive online directory that includes a wide range of businesses, from small and medium enterprises to multinational corporations. The directory is aimed at helping businesses in Singapore connect with one another, expand their networks, and explore new business opportunities.

Furthermore, there are several business associations in Singapore that serve as networking platforms for their members. These associations offer various benefits to their members, such as access to business events, training programmes, and networking opportunities. Some examples of these associations include the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

However, a national initiative which can be implemented by 3P stakeholders from the ground-up through cross-sector collaborations, can also help boost adoption and deepen support to deliver sustained economic growth in Singapore.

What possible challenges do you anticipate in implementing the ideas/solutions?

The possible challenges are including but not limited to:

- **Cost:** Providing credits can be costly for governments and organisations. The cost of administering these programmes and distributing and redeeming credits can be substantial.
- **Abuse:** There is a risk of abuse with any incentive programme. Some people may try to take advantage of the system by applying for jobs they have no intention of taking or by redeeming credits for non-essential goods and services.
- **Inefficiency:** Credits may not be the most efficient way to incentivise people to apply for jobs.
- **Exclusion:** Implementing a national program involves people of different demographics. As the shift is towards digital systems, individuals that may not be technologically savvy may require additional help to receive assistance

What are the next steps to implement this idea? As a panel, how might you be able to contribute in realising this idea?

To implement a programme to provide both SOAR and FUEL credits in Singapore successfully, the next steps including but not limited to the following could be implemented:

1. **Develop a comprehensive programme framework:** The first step would be to develop a comprehensive framework for the programme. This would involve determining eligibility criteria for individuals who are eligible for credits, the amount of credits to be provided, and the duration of the programme.
2. **Establish partnerships with employers and job training providers:** The programme would require partnerships with employers to offer job opportunities to individuals who are eligible for credits. The 3P stakeholders could work with employers and job training providers to create a pool of job opportunities and training programmes that individuals could access.
3. **Determine the distribution and administration process:** The distribution and administration process of credits would need to be established. This would include determining how individuals would apply for the credits, how the credits would be distributed, and how the programme would be administered. This may include a development of a dedicated portal to manage the system.

4. **Develop outreach and communication strategies:** To ensure that individuals who are eligible for credits are aware of the programme, effective strategies for public service announcements would need to be developed. These strategies could include advertising the programme through social media, partnering with non-profit organisations to reach eligible individuals, and promoting the programme through job fairs and other events.
5. **Monitor and evaluate the programme:** Once the programme is launched, it would be essential to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness regularly. This would involve collecting data on the number of individuals who have received credits, the number of individuals who have secured employment, and the impact of the programme on the overall unemployment rate in Singapore.

By taking these steps, the 3P stakeholders could successfully implement a solution to provide a holistic support system which includes the implementation of a credit scheme complimented by a programme implemented by us such as PAssion Month, so as to reduce unemployment and underemployment rates, and deliver sustained economic growth in Singapore.

Above all, as this is a solution that can already be implemented from the ground up, the credit scheme is being piloted through "Together Credit"⁴², which will progressively launch the SOAR and FUEL tracks over the next 24 months in partnership with 3P stakeholders, who have collectively contributed resources to make this possible. In addition, we are also making sure that we are inclusive to SEPs with special needs, including those who are still in school and have special education needs⁴³.

⁴² *Together Credit*. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/togethercredit/>

⁴³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CkFNGY4BYy/>



6

Appendix

Organisers and facilitators

Organised by Institute of Policy Studies

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 to promote a greater awareness of policy issues and good governance. Today, IPS is a thinktank within the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) at the National University of Singapore. It seeks to cultivate clarity of thought, forward thinking and a big-picture perspective on issues of critical national interest through strategic deliberation and research. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analysis and takes the long-term view. It studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans which have an impact on policy development and the relevant areas of diplomacy and international affairs. The Institute bridges and engages the diverse stakeholders through its conferences and seminars, closed-door discussions, publications, and surveys on public perceptions of policy.

Organising team:

- Carol Soon, Senior Research Fellow, Head of Society & Culture
- Christopher Gee, Senior Research Fellow, Head, Governance & Economy
- Robyn Tan, Research Fellow, Society & Culture
- Gloria Lin, Research Assistant, Governance & Economy

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To the 59 members of our Citizens' Panel



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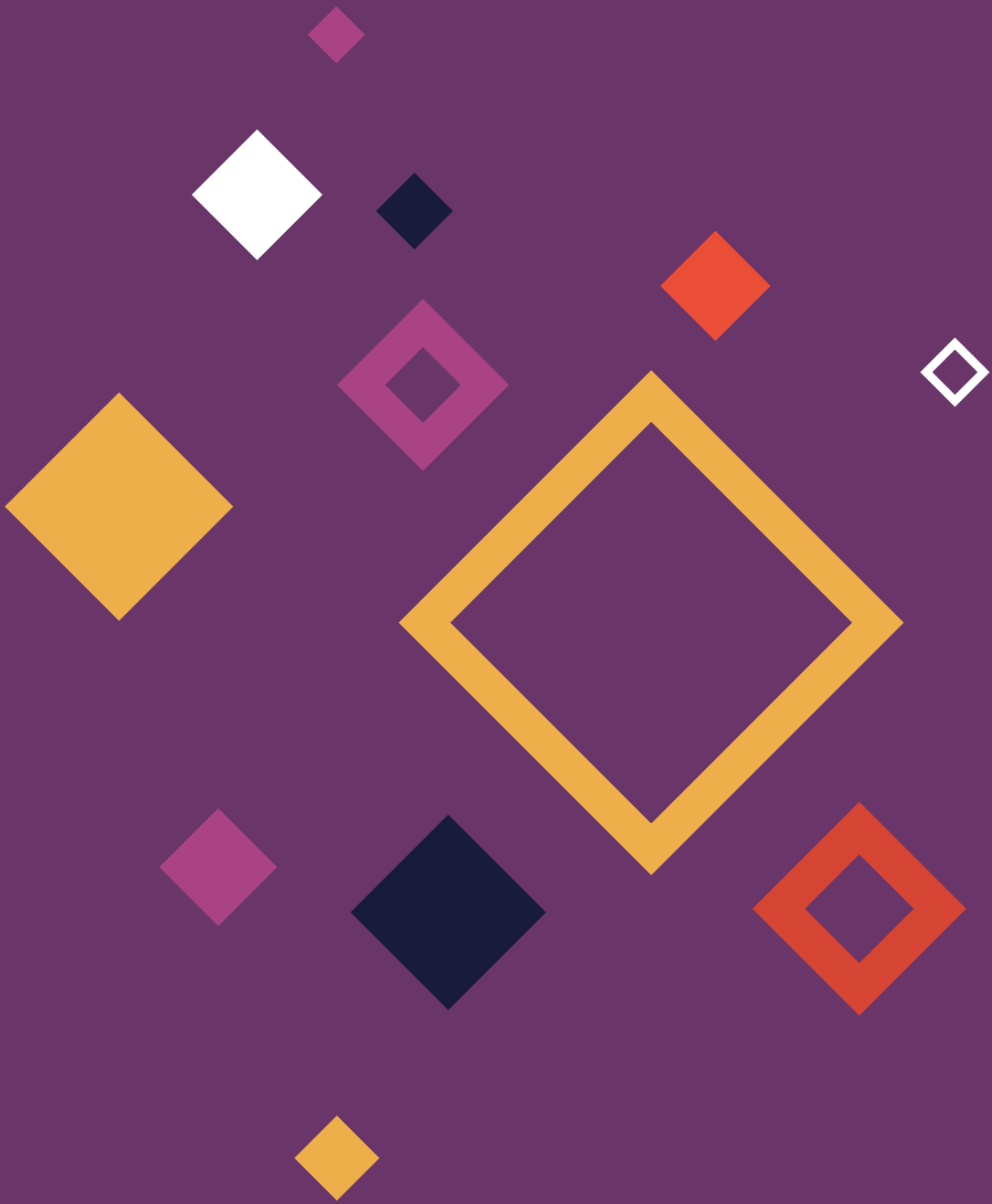
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**CITIZENS' PANEL ON
EMPLOYMENT RESILIENCE**

CITIZENS' REPORT
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