State of the Ecosystem for Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore
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# Acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Action Community for Entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>ASCEP</td>
<td>Asia Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy</td>
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<td>AVPN</td>
<td>Asian Venture Philanthropy Network</td>
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<td>BOP</td>
<td>Base of the Pyramid</td>
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<td>CCA</td>
<td>Co-curricular activity</td>
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<td>EDB</td>
<td>Economic Development Board</td>
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<td>ESG</td>
<td>Environmental, social, and governance</td>
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<td>FFG</td>
<td>FestivalForGood</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHL</td>
<td>Institute of Higher Learning</td>
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<td>IIX</td>
<td>Impact Investment Exchange Asia</td>
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<td>IMDA</td>
<td>Infocomm Media Development Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITE</td>
<td>Institute of Technical Education</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MSF</td>
<td>Ministry of Social and Family Development</td>
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<td>NOC</td>
<td>NUS Overseas Colleges</td>
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<td>NUS</td>
<td>National University of Singapore</td>
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<td>NYC</td>
<td>National Youth Council</td>
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<td>PCSEA</td>
<td>President’s Challenge Social Enterprise Award</td>
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<td>PR</td>
<td>Permanent Residents</td>
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<td>raiSE</td>
<td>Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SIF</td>
<td>Singapore International Foundation</td>
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<td>SiPi</td>
<td>Singapore Innovation &amp; Productivity Institute</td>
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<td>SGX</td>
<td>Singapore Exchange</td>
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<td>SMU</td>
<td>Singapore Management University</td>
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<td>TBNA</td>
<td>Transformational Business Network Asia</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UOBVM</td>
<td>UOB Venture Management</td>
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<td>YAC</td>
<td>Youth Action Challenge</td>
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Executive Summary

Youth in Singapore make up about a quarter of the population as of 2021. They have come of age in a country that has achieved rapid economic growth and transited from a low-income country to a high-income country within a few decades. At the same time, the youth are growing up in the shadow of global warming and climate change as well as the recent COVID-19 pandemic that affected lives and livelihoods. Despite the wealth in the country, segments of the population are still faced with a myriad of challenges including mental health issues, senior loneliness and food insecurity.

Amid these challenges, it is encouraging that youth in Singapore are showing increasing concern for community issues. They are participating more in civic activities and are more socially conscious. In their quest to contribute to a better world, social entrepreneurship with its hybrid nature of financial sustainability and purpose appeals to youth in their search for an attractive model to address inclusivity and sustainability goals.

Youth play an outsized role in social entrepreneurship. Despite being a quarter of the population, it is estimated that 40 percent of social enterprises in Singapore are youth led. Youth in Singapore use social entrepreneurship to solve social and/or environmental problems and are the key to creating a better and more sustainable future. To fulfill the potential of youth social entrepreneurship, it is important to understand the enabling factors and challenges that youth face in their social entrepreneurship journey.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – under the Youth Co:Lab initiative co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation have commissioned this study to strengthen the understanding of the current state of the ecosystem for youth social entrepreneurship in Singapore and provide recommendations to strengthen the ecosystem over the coming years.

The study assesses Singapore’s ecosystem for youth social entrepreneurship though Youth Co:Lab’s ecosystem diagnostic framework by analyzing the strengths and opportunities, challenges and good practices within the key domains of the ecosystem:

1. policy and regulatory framework
2. human capital and entrepreneurship culture
3. access to finance and incentives
4. business development support and infrastructure
5. access to markets
6. innovation and technology

The research applies a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods through secondary and primary data analysis, including desk review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a survey.
Key findings of the deep dive into the six domains of the youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem:

01 Policy and regulatory framework

Government ministries and statutory boards play a significant role in enabling youth social entrepreneurship through its policies, regulations, incentives and programmes. The government is business-friendly with a transparent corporate tax regime, wide range of funding opportunities, compliance with global standards as well as a strong intellectual property protection regime. The government also recognizes that cross-sector collaboration facilitates innovation and social impact. However, as government support schemes and grants are funded by taxpayers’ money, applications can have stringent criteria and be lengthy due to the need for due diligence and accountability that can deter youth social entrepreneurs.

02 Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture

Social norms and youth’s entrepreneurship qualities influence their pursuit of social entrepreneurship. Youth in Singapore possess qualities of adaptability, resourcefulness and are highly educated; all of which can enable them to become successful youth social entrepreneurs. Exposure to social entrepreneurship is increasing, especially in higher education. However, societal, parental and peer pressure could discourage youth from taking on the financial and reputational risk present in starting a social enterprise.

03 Access to Finance and Incentives

Financing helps youth establish, maintain and grow their social enterprises. Singapore is an investment hub, especially for early-stage enterprises. Youth social entrepreneurs have access to investment, grants and other financial resources. Although the private sector and government offer support, impact investors are relatively new and more interested in emerging economies outside Singapore. Particularly later-stage enterprises find it hard to access funding. Besides, many social enterprises continue to struggle with financial sustainability despite access to funding. High business operating costs including labour and rental costs in Singapore contribute to the challenge for financial sustainability. Compensation levels in social enterprises also tend to be lower due to the perception that people running social enterprises should not be paid as much as for-profit businesses.
Non-financial support plays an important role in the establishment and growth of social enterprises. There are many resources in Singapore for youth social entrepreneurs to tap on. An ecosystem of support from government and other stakeholders, including Youth Co:Lab, makes starting an enterprise more accessible than ever. The support and opportunities can include hackathons, incubators, accelerators, pitch events, competitions, training, internships, mentoring, co-working spaces and networking. However, youth require help to get started or plug gaps as they may not always know where to look. Existing support and opportunities can be confusing and inefficient.

Accessing local, regional and/or international markets is crucial for social enterprises to reach out and sell their products and services to potential customers. Singapore’s highly developed infrastructure and logistics as well as business-friendly policies facilitate access to markets. However, social enterprises continue to face challenges selling products and services to the public and to businesses. Public awareness continues to be a barrier, but social enterprises also lack marketing, customer acquisition and related skills. Youth are not sufficiently exposed to international issues and markets, they either do not develop regionally or globally scalable solutions or find it too risky to try.

Innovating and adopting technology helps social enterprises stay relevant to the business environment. Youth in Singapore are generally well-versed in technology with exposure starting from a very early age. Therefore, youth social entrepreneurs are well-placed to leverage technology and digital platforms to drive business growth. Ecosystem players from corporate to government agencies are supporting the digital transformation of social enterprises. While there is a high level of awareness and adoption of digital transformation strategies, social enterprises have only moderate levels of success in their digitalization journey. The most significant barrier for digital transformation is high implementation cost. Other barriers include challenges to attract digital talent and appropriate technology partners as well as low awareness of government support.
Recommendations

To strengthen the youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem, the report provides the following recommendations to develop actionable interventions

1) **Reshape the narrative on youth social entrepreneurship**

- Run more public and school campaigns to normalize becoming a youth social entrepreneur.
- Run programmes that strengthen entrepreneurial mindset and encourage creativity and innovation at primary and secondary schools.

2) **Widen the access to existing opportunities**

- Create a repository of local and international resources including investments, grants, incentive schemes, programmes, mentors, co-working spaces. The repository should have tags to differentiate youth-specific grants as well as grants with gender and inclusion lenses.
- Modify grants to require less paperwork and fewer restrictions to specific types of expenditure or results. There is also the opportunity to create new grant schemes with unrestricted funding.
- Centralize government-led funding, with new features such as dollar-matching with private sector capital.
- Funding for first-time entrepreneurs could be extended to repeat founders starting their second or third enterprise.
- Programmes that are only available to Singapore citizens and permanent residents (PRs) could be extended to non-citizens and non-PRs.
- Level up access by providing opportunities and funding schemes with gender and inclusion lenses.

3) **Increase resources to support more types and different stages of social enterprises**

- Create more programmes and schemes supporting later-stage social enterprises.
- Increase support for social enterprises that operate like small businesses rather than like start-ups.
- For programmes that are only available to social enterprises serving local communities, extend support to enterprises serving overseas communities.
- Whole-of-government approach to coordinate policymaking for social enterprises, via a steering committee that should have representation for gender, youth and inclusion lenses.
4) Strengthen the capability of youth social entrepreneurs

- Build business, fundraising and impact measurement skills, through education, training, internships and/or mentoring.
- Create a regional community of entrepreneurs (past and present), investors, industry experts, business mentors and executive coaches through cross-border forums, events and matching services.
Introduction

1.1 Key Definitions and Concepts
1.2 Research Methodology
1.3 Limitations
**Introduction**

Since its independence in 1965, Singapore has been able to achieve unparalleled economic growth. Singapore was able to rapidly develop from a low-income country to a high-income country with gross domestic product growth being one of the highest in the world at an average of 7.7 percent since independence and topping 9.2 percent in the first 25 years. While Singapore has seen such great economic growth, it also has a myriad of social problems including mental health issues, senior loneliness and food insecurity.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbates inequality in Singapore. Youth in Singapore has come of age in an unsettling time. Besides experiencing first-hand how the pandemic has affected lives and livelihoods, they have also lived under the shadow of global warming and climate change. Amid these challenges, youth in Singapore are showing increasing concern for the community according to the National Youth Survey. They are participating more in civic activities and have become socially conscious. 88 percent of youth surveyed in 2019 had participated in at least one civic activity compared to 65 percent in 2016. In their quest to contribute to a better world, social entrepreneurship with its hybrid nature of financial sustainability and purpose appeals to youth in their search for an attractive model to address the unmet economic and social/environment needs and demands of youth.

The State of Social Enterprise in Singapore report found that social enterprises were largely youth-led with 40 percent of the social enterprises studies led by youth (people 35 years and below according to the national definition). These youth social entrepreneurs are often trying to solve existing problems, mitigate future risks while also creating a space for economic development. This is encouraging as youth shape the social and economic development of many countries, including Singapore. Being the current and future decision-makers, youth are the key to creating a better and more sustainable future.

Successful youth social entrepreneurship has the ability to fuel youth development as well as inclusive growth for the economy, thereby responding to the needs of the vulnerable and marginalized segments of society. For the potential of youth social entrepreneurship to be realized, it is thus imperative to support its development in Singapore.

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To bridge the gap, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the Youth Co:Lab initiative co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation commissioned this national research on youth social entrepreneurship in Singapore. The three key objectives were:

- Map the key ecosystem players in the youth social entrepreneurship space
- Analyze the strengths, opportunities, challenges and gaps of the youth social entrepreneurship landscape
- Bring the ecosystem together to address any identified challenges or gaps by operationalizing the recommendations of this study

The purpose of the study was to gather insights and share recommendations on the development of youth social entrepreneurship through meaningful collaborations. The study also sought to address the knowledge gap in the existing research in Singapore on youth owned social enterprises and youth social entrepreneurship.
1.1 Youth

This study adopts the definition of youth as set by the Government of Singapore. National Youth Council (NYC), the national body for holistic youth development in Singapore, defines youth as those between 15 and 35 years old. Engagements and programmes though are further targeted in three age bands – 15 to 18, 19 to 24 and 25 to 35 to ensure relevance.

1.1.2 Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprises

In the United Nations report - The World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda, social entrepreneurship is described as “entrepreneurial activity with the explicit objective of addressing societal problems”. The core elements that characterize social entrepreneurship are:

• An initiative launched by an individual or group of individuals;
• An explicit aim to benefit the community;
• Decision-making power not based on capital ownership;
• Participatory governance involving those affected by the venture; and
• Limited profit distribution.

There is no legal definition of social enterprise in Singapore. According to the State of Social Enterprise in Singapore report that is commissioned by British Council, a social enterprise is an "organization that undertake business activity primarily motivated by a social or environmental mission and its profit is directed towards this mission". This definition of social enterprise is employed throughout this study. Meanwhile, Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise, raiSE, defines social enterprise as “a business entity set up with clear social goals and where there is clear management intent as well as resources allocated to fulfil its social objectives”.

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1.1.3 Youth Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem is made up of young social entrepreneurs, aspiring youth social entrepreneurs and stakeholders coming together to influence and contribute to the operating environment for youth social entrepreneurship. The stakeholders include but are not limited to social enterprises; accelerators and incubators; auxiliary support organizations; educational institutions, government; investors and funders; and networks.

In this study, the ecosystem for youth social entrepreneurship is analyzed using the Youth Co:Lab’s ecosystem diagnostic framework\textsuperscript{12} which consists of six domains:

1. Policy and Regulatory Framework
2. Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture
3. Access to Finance and Incentives
4. Business Development Support and Infrastructure
5. Innovation and Technology
6. Access to Markets

\textbf{Figure 1:}
Six Domains of Youth Co:Lab’s Ecosystem Diagnostic Framework

\textsuperscript{12} The overall framework is informed by Youth Co:Lab’s work with young entrepreneurs and ecosystem stakeholders, the ‘Government to Community’ dialogue framework utilised by the Youth Co:Lab project to assess the five ingredients of a thriving start-up ecosystem, as well as previous research produced by Youth Co:Lab and its partners, such as Islamic Development Bank and Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. The framework is informed by leading research in the field, such as the framework of Domains of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem by Daniel Isenberg (2009, 2011).
Each domain is further broken into components and analyzed through a youth responsive lens, covering specific strengths and challenges that are youth social entrepreneurship specific. The Singapore study further complemented the existing framework by adding the impact assessment component under the business development support and infrastructure domain.

The framework’s domains as well as the components they cover are provided in the table below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Components covered under the domain</th>
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<tr>
<td>Policy and Regulatory Framework</td>
<td>• Existing laws and regulations relevance and support for youth social entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy and regulatory framework relevance and support for youth social entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government institutions support for youth social entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture</td>
<td>• Existing skillsets of talents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Education at school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Societal norms</td>
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<td>Access to Finance and Incentives</td>
<td>• Government incentives for youth social entrepreneurs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Access to youth social entrepreneur-specific finance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Depth and breadth of financial instruments for youth social entrepreneurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Development Support and Infrastructure</td>
<td>• Existing non-government institutions relevance and support for youth social entrepreneurship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Government led opportunities for youth social entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adequacy of existing auxiliary professional services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Adequacy of impact assessment frameworks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Markets</td>
<td>• Market entry regulations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Existing logistics and physical infrastructure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Access to international markets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation and Technology</td>
<td>• Technology adoption for business growth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ability for youth social entrepreneurs to leverage digital platforms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Laws and legal authorities protecting intellectual property rights</td>
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The use of this analysis framework has five key advantages:

- The framework gathers the sentiments from the various stakeholder groups and supports the identification of strengths and challenges that each group face through the Hex-Key Confidence Index, which polled stakeholders’ sentiments on the component parts of a given domain.

- The findings and analysis that are segmented by the different stakeholder groups allow more targeted recommendations to be made for each group\(^\text{13}\).

- The framework is holistic and examines different domains that contribute towards the development of an entrepreneurship ecosystem that is supportive of youth social entrepreneurs\(^\text{14}\).

- The framework has already been used by Youth Co:Lab in other Asian countries and this facilitates cross-countries analysis.

- The framework has a youth-responsive lens of analysis and includes gender and inclusion analysis lenses.

\(^{13}\) UNDP. (2021). State of the Ecosystem for Youth Entrepreneurship in Bangladesh.

\(^{14}\) UNDP. (2021). State of the Ecosystem for Youth Entrepreneurship in Bangladesh.
1.2 Research Methodology

The study was conducted from September 2021 to January 2022, guided by the Youth Co:Lab’s ecosystem diagnostic framework. A mixed-methods approach was used with qualitative and quantitative data collected from primary and secondary sources for comprehensiveness. Sources included desk review, survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Stakeholders targeted for the study were either youth focused or responsive to youth.

**Secondary data**

Desk reviews were carried out on topics related to youth social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship and youth.

**Key informant interviews**

Ten stakeholders who play different roles in youth social entrepreneurship were interviewed about the barriers and enabling factors for the development of the sector in Singapore. They were also asked to share their confidence levels in six domains of the youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

**Hex Confidence Survey**

16 youth social entrepreneurs and 14 ecosystem players rated their confidence in the six domains. The online survey was disseminated via email and social media.

**Focus group discussions**

Three focus group discussions were held with 47 participants representing youth social entrepreneurs (49 percent), impact investors (11 percent), academia (15 percent) and ecosystem enablers/builders (26 percent). Initial acceptance for the invites for the focus group discussions were skewed heavily towards male representation with 23 (68 percent) out of 34 acceptances. Extra efforts were made to increase the female representation. In the end, 23 (49 percent) out of 47 participants were female.
Discussions amongst the focus group participants were focussed on:

- Perspective on the barriers and enabling factors for youth social entrepreneurship
- The strengths and challenges faced by youth social entrepreneurs
- The support available and the areas where support can be strengthened and identification of ecosystem gaps
- Recommendations to address the top ranked ecosystem gaps.

The list of stakeholders who interviewed and/or participated in our focus group discussion can be found in Annex.
1.3 Limitations

This study generates most of its insight from the 57 unique stakeholders who participated in the interviews, focus group discussions and survey. While the study participants represented a range of stakeholders in the youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem, the study cannot claim that it is representative of the various types of social entrepreneurs, social enterprises and ecosystem stakeholders. In particular:

i. a few key organizations declined to participate;

ii. there was proportionately less representation from certain groups of ecosystem stakeholders such as government agencies and

iii. a limited number of people responded to the survey.

Another challenge was getting stakeholders to participate in the focus group discussions as well as the confidence level survey. The focus group discussions were originally planned to be physical with adherence to safe management measures guidelines. However, it was shifted online to improve participation rate as many people declined the invitation to participate in the physical sessions. For the confidence level survey, due to the small number of respondents, the sample might not be representative of the various kinds of stakeholders in the youth social entrepreneurship space.

To address these limitations, insights were triangulated from the various primary sources, including international literature on youth social entrepreneurship and articles on entrepreneurship in Singapore. The research also benefited from the personal experiences of the study team, particularly the lead researchers who were social entrepreneurs themselves.
Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

2.1 Contextualising Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

2.2 Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

2.3 Ecosystem and Key Players
2.1 Contextualising Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

At about 1 million people, the Singapore’s resident youth population is about one quarter of the resident population in 2021\(^{15}\). There is an even split for gender ratio among the youth. Youth come from diverse ethnic backgrounds - 72 percent Chinese, 17 percent Malay, 9 percent Indian and 3 percent other ethnicities. Generally, youth are increasingly participating in tertiary education. For youth aged 25 to 29 years old in the labour force, the percentage of those with university qualification has increased significantly from 26 percent in 1999 to 56 percent in 2019\(^{16}\).

Unemployment is low at 5.9 percent for those between 15 years and 29 years and 2.2 percent for those in 30 years and 39 years old\(^{17}\). The top industries that employed youth are public administration & education; wholesale & retail trade; and financial & insurance services. The top three occupations of youth are associate professionals & technicians (29.8 percent), professionals (26.5 percent), service & sales workers (11.3 percent). Only 1 percent of youth are working proprietors - people who operate and manage their own businesses\(^{18}\). This low percentage of working proprietors corroborated with the finding on youth’s aspiration to be an entrepreneur from the World Economic Forum report on ASEAN Youth Technology, Skills and the Future of Work. It was found that among the six ASEAN countries covered, the desire for entrepreneurship is the lowest in Singapore with only 16.9 percent of youth expressing this aspiration compared to 33.1 percent on average for the region\(^{19}\).

Youth in Singapore are increasingly socially and environmentally conscious according to findings from the National Youth Survey\(^{20}\). Beyond awareness, they are also taking action to participate in active discussion and concrete engagements such as environmental conservation efforts. The survey found that a majority of youth (88 percent) participated in at least one civic activity in the past 12 months\(^{21}\).


2.2 Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

According to the State of Social Enterprise in Singapore report\(^22\), it is estimated there are between 2,660 and 12,717\(^23\) social enterprises in Singapore. Based on the 146 social enterprises it surveyed, 40 percent are estimated to be youth-led, which translates to between 434 to 4,457 youth-led social enterprises\(^24\). These statistics suggest that youth are greatly involved in social entrepreneurship since they represent 25 percent of the population but led 40 percent of social enterprises. This is not surprisingly given that youth are increasingly civic minded and socially conscious. Social entrepreneurship could be seen as an avenue to fulfil their aspiration of creating social or environmental good in a sustainable way. This also collaborated with a public perception study that was conducted by raiSE in 2020 that found that younger individuals have higher awareness of social enterprises\(^25\).

Alongside this increasing awareness and inclination towards social entrepreneurship, Singapore has been rated the 2nd best country for doing business\(^26\) and the 5th best country for social entrepreneurs to live and work in\(^27\). The latter was based on a 2019 poll conducted by Thomson Reuters Foundation that looked at 6 key areas - government support, attraction of skilled staff, public understanding, making a living, gaining momentum and access to investment. Singapore ranked first for government policy that supported social entrepreneurs and second for access to grant funding. It fared less well in attracting skilled staff and making a living\(^28\). These findings were consistent with the insights shared by interviewees and participants of focus group discussions of this study who rated policy and regulatory framework as well as innovation and technology more confidently over human capital and entrepreneurship culture for youth social entrepreneurship in Singapore. Challenges such as the societal and family pressure to pursue more financially rewarding career pathways as well as the risk averse culture hold back some youth to pursue a social entrepreneurship pathway.


\(^{23}\) The study estimated the number of social enterprises using the social enterprise prevalence rate that was reported in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report. As the rate was not available for Singapore, the study used both the lowest as well as the highest prevalence rates that were found in countries in Southeast Asia to estimate the possible range.


\(^{27}\) Thomas Reuters Foundation (2019). The best countries to be a social entrepreneur. Retrieved from: poll2019.trust.org

Alongside this increasing awareness and inclination towards social entrepreneurship, Singapore has been rated the 2\textsuperscript{nd} best country for doing business\textsuperscript{24} and the 5\textsuperscript{th} best country for social entrepreneurs to live and work in\textsuperscript{25}.

\textsuperscript{25} raiSE. (2020). Public Perception Survey on Social Enterprises.
Aside from the above challenges, there are a number of enabling factors for youth social entrepreneurship in Singapore. The policy and regulatory environment has been supportive. From the economic aspect, more youths in Singapore come from middle to high income family backgrounds that reduce the economic pressure they face and enable them the leeway to pursue opportunities that resonate with their passion and values. There is also support from the ecosystem including the educational institutions that expose youth to social entrepreneurship from a young age through the various school programmes.

For youth that start social enterprises, capacity builders and accelerators are present to support them. Access to finance is also relatively abundant especially to the first-time youth social entrepreneurs.

Youth social entrepreneurs have also been relatively successful. Compared to the general 57 percent of all social enterprises breaking even or making profits, youth-led social enterprises fared better with 67 percent either breaking even or making profits. They were also able to secure external finance with 58 percent of youth-led social enterprises successful in their applications for external finance compared to the 53 percent success rate for all social enterprises.


2.3 Gender and Inclusion

There is no specific data on women youth social entrepreneurs. But for all social enterprises, almost two thirds (64 percent) are women-led in Singapore31. These are social enterprises where women hold a majority of the senior management roles. This percentage is substantially greater than the general economy where women make up just 26 per cent of all business owners32.

According to the State of Social Enterprise in South East Asia report, social enterprises support women’s empowerment in a number of ways. They offer more leadership opportunities for women in many countries and create proportionally more jobs for women than other sectors of the economy33.

Women-led social enterprises fare worse than youth-led social enterprises. In terms of profitability and sustainability, 59 percent of women-led social enterprises were either breaking even or making profits compared to 67 percent of youth-led social enterprises. They were also less successful in their applications for external finance at 48 percent compared to 58 percent for youth-led social enterprises34.

However, it should be noted that senior-led social enterprises that were featured in the report fared the worst among the three groups of social enterprises featured by the State of Social Enterprise in Singapore report. Just 46 percent of senior-led social enterprises were breaking even or making profits and only 25 percent were successful in their applications for external finance35.

Social enterprises support inclusion in Singapore, serving a diverse range of clients, especially disadvantaged communities. In Singapore, 51 percent of social enterprises served people and families with low income. Other most common groups of clients included charities (42 percent), people with disabilities (40 percent), vulnerable youth and children (34 per cent) as well as women and girls (31 percent)36. In addition, the funding schemes for social enterprises in Singapore also tend to have an inclusion angle, particularly on the employment of disadvantaged groups.
Ecosystem and Key Players

Youth social entrepreneurship in Singapore is supported by a vibrant ecosystem with a range of stakeholders. These stakeholders provide capacity building, funding, access to information, network and other support services. Most of the stakeholders do not cater specifically for young social entrepreneurs but rather all age groups. Many of them also cater for general entrepreneurship with social entrepreneurship being a subset.

The stakeholders are mapped in a non-exhaustive manner into six broad categories:

1. accelerators and incubators,
2. auxiliary support,
3. educational institutions,
4. government,
5. investors and funders, and
6. networks
Accelerators and Incubators

Accelerators and incubators help youth social entrepreneurs that are at different stages of their entrepreneurship cycle with services such as advisory, mentorship, strategy planning, networking, funding and marketing. In Singapore, many educational institutions, especially the universities, have incubation programmes for their students interested in social entrepreneurship. There are also organizations like Singapore International Foundation that have specialized incubation programmes for youth.

Examples

**Accelerating Asia Ventures:** Accelerating Asia Ventures is an accelerator venture capital with the guiding belief that “entrepreneurs are one of humanity’s greatest catalysts for positive change”. It sees impact as using investment capital and supporting start-ups that have a positive impact on society37.

**Second Muse:** Second Muse is an impact and innovation company. It supports entrepreneurs and the ecosystems around them, by engaging participants and organizations through a mix of innovation programming (hackathons, incubators, accelerators), that as whole benefit people and protect the planet38.

State of the Ecosystem for Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

Auxiliary Support

Auxiliary support organizations provide capacity building, consulting, impact assessment, legal, accounting services as well as co-working spaces to support youth social entrepreneurs in their daily operations and/or the development of their social enterprises.

Examples

*SCAPE: *SCAPE aims to motivate and empower youths to realize their potential and seeks to be the home of enterprising youths committed to creating their own future. It offers youth entrepreneurs and start-ups access to co-working spaces, developmental programmes to learn, prototype and validate ideas such as business pitches, workshops and networking sessions.

Social Collider: Social Collider is a co-working, collaborative and co-innovative community to help impact organizations to scale and grow. Workshops on different topics are also conducted to help social entrepreneurs grow their capabilities.
Educational Institutions

Educational institutions in Singapore from primary schools to the universities are running a myriad of social entrepreneurship programmes for youths. In the primary to secondary levels, the programmes tend to focus on exposing youths to social entrepreneurship concepts and ideas. In the higher educational levels, besides providing social entrepreneurship education, there are programmes and support services for youths that are interested in pursuing social entrepreneurship projects.

Examples

**Singapore Management University (SMU):** SMU is Asia’s first “Change-maker Campus” accredited by Ashoka for its commitment to social innovation in its curriculum. Social entrepreneurship module is offered by the university. It also offers SMU-X, an experiential learning experience, to transform traditional courses into project-based learning experiences that have an impact on the greater community. Through its Institute of Innovation & Entrepreneurship, the school prepares interested students to address social problems with business solutions. SMU also runs Business Innovations Generator (BIG) programme, a four-month incubation programme for SMU students, alumni and staff. Social enterprises have been incubated by BIG.

**National University of Singapore (NUS) Enterprise:** NUS Enterprise promotes entrepreneurship in the university. It runs experiential entrepreneurial education, forges active industry partnerships as well as provides entrepreneurship support and entrepreneurship outreach. To nurture entrepreneurs among its students, alumni and staff, it provides co-working facilities; expert mentoring sessions; idea validation and test-bedding capabilities; networking opportunities; access to funding as well as capacity building events and workshops. Social entrepreneurs are supported within the existing programmes.

**Nanyang Girls’ High School (NYGH):** NYGH is a secondary school that offers its students Community Education to develop the students’ knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to respectfully engage and meaningfully serve the community. NYGH also provides a space on campus for Crater - a coworking space for social entrepreneurs. At Crater@NYGH, they work to nurture the students into great learners and empower them to make a difference in the world.
Government

Government agencies and related organizations play a significant role in supporting youth social entrepreneurship in Singapore. Even though there is no dedicated single government agency looking at youth social entrepreneurship, many government agencies provide support in this area. They provide infrastructure, funding and capacity building for youth-owned/youth-led social enterprises.

Examples

National Youth Council (NYC): NYC is the national coordinating body for youth affairs in Singapore. Together with partners, NYC develops future-ready youth who are committed to Singapore by instilling in them a heart for service, resilience and an enterprising spirit. It provides a range of funding schemes to support youth development work, where youth, youth sector organizations, social service agencies, educational institutions and social enterprises may be eligible to apply. NYC also supports and runs multiple programmes under its broad youth development agenda and some are related to youth social entrepreneurship.

Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF): MSF focuses on nurturing resilient individuals, strong families and a caring society in Singapore. It supported and funded social enterprises through various programmes such as the Youth Social Entrepreneurship Programme for Start-Ups and ComCare Enterprise Fund. In 2015, together with a few other partners, it set up raiSE to support the development of the social enterprise sector. MSF has been providing support and funding for social enterprises through raiSE. For instance, the ComCare Enterprise Fund was renamed as the VentureForGood grant and has been administered by raiSE since 2015.

Enterprise Singapore: Enterprise Singapore is the government agency championing enterprise development. It supports the growth of Singapore as a hub for global training and start-ups. It has supported enterprises with a wide range of financial as well as non-financial assistance.39

Investors and Funds

Investors and funders for youth social entrepreneurs come from a variety of sources including banks, impact investors, foundations and government agencies. SIF, raiSE and a number of funders have specific grant fundings for youth social entrepreneurs. Many of the incubation programmes including those run by higher educational institutions also come with grant amounts for successful youth social entrepreneurs. For youth social entrepreneurs that are looking for investments, they can seek out impact investors for impact investments and banks for bank loans. Though securing bank loans may often require personal guarantees and as such, could serve as a deterrent for youth seeking bank loans as growth capital for their social enterprises.

Examples

**Singapore International Foundation (SIF):** SIF is an organization that aims to strengthen mutual understanding, ties and trust between global communities. It had run The Young Social Entrepreneurs (YSE) programme since 2010 to nurture youth social entrepreneurs. Currently, the YSE Global programme is an eight-month programme that offers youths with network, mentorship, capacity building workshops, study trips and grants of up to S$20,000 to start or scale up their social enterprises in Singapore and beyond.

**DBS Foundation and DBS Bank:** DBS Bank offers a Social Enterprise Package, a low-cost banking solution with preferential transaction rates, no account fees, no initial deposit and minimum monthly balance, for social enterprises. It also offers unsecured business loans at preferential interest rates for social enterprises. Through the DBS Foundation that it established in 2014, it provides grants to social enterprises as well as non-monetary forms of support, such as skills-based volunteers, to help social enterprises overcome their business challenges.

**UOB Venture Management (UOBVM):** UOBVM invests in enterprises that generate a positive social and/or environmental impact, alongside financial return in the region. Its impact strategy is to target fast-growing businesses that seek to improve the well-being and livelihood of people living at the “Base of Pyramid”.

State of the Ecosystem for Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore
Networks

Networks provide youth social entrepreneurs opportunities to connect with peers, collaborators, mentors, funders and supporters through networking events, showcases, pitches and small group meetings.

Examples

**Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE):** ACE was launched by the Ministry of Trade and Industry in 2003 to promote entrepreneurship, catalyse new growth opportunities, scale start-ups and build champion enterprises. It supports start-ups in areas such as mentorship, network building, talent and financing. ACE’s Global Ready Talent Programme aims to build a pipeline of talent to support Singapore enterprises with their overseas expansion, by exposing young Singaporeans to internships and overseas work opportunities.

**Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise, raiSE:** raiSE was set up in 2015 to develop the social enterprise sector through a cross-sector collaboration between the MSF, National Council of Social Service, Social Enterprise Association and Tote Board. It is a membership body for social enterprises. It seeds and nurtures new social enterprises by offering a range of services such as training, networking, mentoring, funding and resources. It runs various programmes including raiSE Incubation Programme which aims to catalyse the implementation of selected solutions and development of early-stage social enterprises. It provides one to one coaching for social enterprises through its SE Fellowship programme. For funding, it offers VentureForGood, VentureForGood (Youth) and Impact Finance Plus.

**Youth Co:Lab:** Youth Co:Lab in Singapore was launched in 2019, by the United Nations Development Programme and Citi Foundation, through Citi Singapore. It has partnered with National Youth Council to drive youth development and broadens outreach to young Singaporeans and youth sector organizations. From Jan 2020 to Jan 2022, it had run three seasons of Youth Action Challenge (YAC) to empower youth to champion ground-up initiatives in partnership with the government, businesses and community organizations. YAC provides the opportunity for youth to turn their ideas into reality through curated workshops and guidance as well as be provided with key resources, networks and up to S$50,000 in grants to implement their ideas. In the third season, youth teams that indicated their interest in continuing their journey after the YAC as social entrepreneurs also received the opportunity to join the Social Enterprise track.40

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2.5 Policies and Plans to Develop Youth Social Entrepreneurship

Policies in Singapore do not exclusively target youth social entrepreneurship, but many policies through their support for youth, social and/or entrepreneurship agendas are supporting youth social entrepreneurship. These policies include those catering to youth development, education, trade, community, employment, health and environment.

Policies supporting social entrepreneurship can be traced to the early 2000s when the Singapore government recognized the role social enterprises could play in supporting disadvantaged individuals and drove a series of initiatives to support the social enterprise sector including setting up the ComCare Enterprise Fund in 2003 to provide seed funding for social enterprises. A Social Enterprise Committee including social entrepreneurs and government officials was subsequently formed to make recommendations for the development of the sector to the government. As a result of the recommendations, the Social Enterprise Association was formed in 2009 to promote social entrepreneurship, raise public awareness and foster partnerships among key stakeholders41.

In 2012, support for social enterprises received a further boost when the Office of the President of Singapore launched the President’s Challenge Social Enterprise Award to honour and recognize outstanding social enterprises for their contributions. In the initial years, there were commendations given to Youth Social Enterprise of the Year. However, the youth award has been withdrawn since 201942.

In 2015, the Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise (raiSE) was established as a sector developer to nurture and raise awareness and support for social enterprises through a cross-sector collaboration among the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), National Council of Social Service (NCSS), Social Enterprise Association and Tote Board43. As of March 2021, raiSE has provided grants of approximately S$19 million and invested over S$8 million to social enterprises44.

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Deep Dive into the Youth Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

3.1 Policy and Regulatory Framework
3.2 Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture
3.3 Access to Finance and Incentives
3.4 Business Development Support and Infrastructure
3.5 Access to Markets
3.6 Innovation and Technology
Findings in this section come predominantly from the Hex-Key Confidence Index Survey as well as the insights shared by the focus group participants and interviewees. The strengths, challenges and gaps of the youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Singapore are analyzed according to six domains: Policy and Regulatory Framework; Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture; Access to Finance and Incentives; Business Development Support and Infrastructure; Access to Markets; and Innovation and Technology.

Social entrepreneurs and Ecosystem players

Figure 3:
Ecosystem Hex-Key Confidence Index Score
Overall, confidence in the social entrepreneurship system is fairly strong. Youth have opportunities to become a social entrepreneur and are provided with resources to do so. Across the six domains, confidence level is highest for innovation and technology, followed by policy and regulatory framework. The domain with the lowest confidence level is human capital and entrepreneurship culture. Ecosystem players generally display a higher level of confidence in all domains except for access to finance and incentives as well as access to markets. There are areas that could be improved or strengthened and Table 2 identifies key strengths, challenges and gaps.

Table 2: Key strengths and weaknesses of the youth social entrepreneurship system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Key strengths</th>
<th>Key weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Regulatory Framework</td>
<td>• Business-friendly and youth policies and programmes with transparent, efficient and clear procedures</td>
<td>• Stringent criteria and lengthy application for government support and schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture</td>
<td>• Strong primary and secondary education</td>
<td>• Society is risk-averse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong exposure to social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship at Institutes of Higher Learning</td>
<td>• Social entrepreneurship is not considered a financially sustainable career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing public awareness of social enterprises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Finance and Incentives</td>
<td>• Range of resources available</td>
<td>• Funding comes with constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Compensation of founders and employees is insufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Development Support and Infrastructure</td>
<td>• Range of programmes and support available</td>
<td>• Lack of entrepreneurial and venture building knowledge, weak business experience and limited understanding of markets by youth social entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• raiSE plays an intermediary role as a sector developer</td>
<td>• Lack of awareness of support available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Markets</td>
<td>• Highly-developed infrastructure</td>
<td>• Small local market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing number of customers buying from social enterprises</td>
<td>• Inadequate exposure and ability to access international markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and technology</td>
<td>• Singapore is well-versed in technology</td>
<td>• High implementation cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Challenging to attract digital talents and technology partners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Policy and Regulatory Framework

Figure 4: Policy and Regulatory Framework Domain Confidence Index Score

Government ministries and statutory boards play a significant role in enabling youth social entrepreneurship through its policies, regulations, incentives and programmes. The Hex-Key Confidence Index Survey scores reflect that the government is business-friendly and has made efforts to support social innovation among youth. However, stringent criteria and lengthy application for government support schemes and grants could deter youth social entrepreneurs.
Singapore ranked 2\textsuperscript{nd} out of 44 countries in terms of social entrepreneurs’ ease of getting grant fund\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45} Thomas Reuters Foundation (2019). The best countries to be a social entrepreneur. Retrieved from: poll2019.trust.org
State of the Ecosystem for Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

3.1.1 Strengths

Government policies are business-friendly with transparent corporate tax regime, wide range of funding opportunities, compliance with global standards as well as a strong intellectual property protection regime. Financially, social entrepreneurs can easily secure grants to start an enterprise. Starting a business is simple and straightforward, as procedures are transparent, efficient and clearly explained. In addition, Singapore has strong contract enforcement and judicial processes.

Besides being business-friendly, the government promotes a “do-good” mentality that is embraced by the private sector. In 2017, the Singapore Exchange made it mandatory for listed companies to report their environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices. The government recognizes that cross-sector collaboration facilitates innovation and social impact. For example, NYC brings in different ministries, development organizations and the private sector to partner entrepreneurs and maximise their exposure.

Some of the public policies and initiatives introduced have been great in building the ecosystem that supports social entrepreneurship in Singapore. Moving forward, I would like to see greater tri-sector collaboration to grow youth social entrepreneurship in a substantial way, and more opportunities for our young changemakers to be exposed to regional markets and networks to scale their work internationally.

– Jean Tan,
Singapore International Foundation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1. Government agencies that contribute towards youth social entrepreneurship</th>
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</table>

**Enterprise Singapore** champions enterprise development. They offer a range of financial and non-financial assistance like grants, loans, insurance, tax incentives, investments, digital programmes, business toolkits, and so on.

**The National Youth Council (NYC)** develops future-ready youth who have a heart for service, resilience and an enterprising spirit. The agency offers local and international programmes that help youth broaden their horizons, as well as project grants. In particular, NYC partners UNDP and Citi Foundation to run the Youth Action Challenge.

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3.1.2 Challenges and Gaps

While policies are business-friendly, some laws can be inflexible. For example, at least one company director needs to be a local resident.

There is also a lack of legal definition of social enterprise. The Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise (raiSE) was set up through a collaboration that included the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Tote Board. raiSE is set up to operate with some degree of autonomy which allows it to have more flexibility compared to a government agency.

However, as government support schemes and grants are funded by taxpayers’ money, applications can have stringent criteria and be lengthy due to the need for due diligence and accountability. These can deter youth social entrepreneurs. Such grants also typically exclude non-citizens and non-Permanent Residents (PRs), even if their enterprises are focused on Singapore.

Navigating the regulations can sometimes be ambiguous because a lot of things are illegal in Singapore.

- Investor (Focus Group)
3.2

Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture

Social norms and youth’s entrepreneurship qualities influence their pursuit of social entrepreneurship. The Hex-Key Confidence Index Survey scores reflect that exposure to social entrepreneurship is increasing, especially in higher education. However, societal, parental and peer pressure discourages youth from taking the financial and reputational risk.

Figure 5:
Human Capital and Entrepreneurship Culture Domain Confidence Index Score
3.2.1 Strengths

Youth in Singapore possess qualities of adaptability, resourcefulness and are highly educated; all of which can enable them to become successful social entrepreneurs. Literacy rate is 97.6 percent for residents aged 15 years and over. 61.8 percent of residents aged 25 years and above have post-secondary qualifications. Besides literacy and numeracy education, Values in Action (VIA); the learning and application of values, knowledge and skills; is a key student development experience that nurtures socially responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to the community.

These higher education trends track wider social norms of people becoming increasingly concerned about socially and environmentally responsible businesses. Through the efforts of the government and other stakeholders, public awareness of social enterprises is high and continues to increase.

Exposure through public awareness and the education system have encouraged more youth to consider social entrepreneurship. More youth want to do good and run their own businesses.

Could do with a unicorn, or role model, of a social entrepreneur that might help with overcoming the negative connotations of social entrepreneurship.

- Jerrick Tee & Hui Ming Chee (NUS Enterprise)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3. Examples of entrepreneurship-related programmes at Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republic Polytechnic</strong>: Has a social enterprise track for its Diploma in Business programme that incorporates innovation, digitalization and communication to sharpen students' business acumen and deepen expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singapore Management University (SMU)</strong>: Started integrating internships and community into its core curriculum as credit-bearing programmes in 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pollinate</strong>: Joint initiative of Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic and the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) to help students and alumni build their businesses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive role models have encouraged youth to become social entrepreneurs.

- Social Entrepreneur (Focus Group)
Box 2: Insights from Focus Group Participants

The qualities that youth in Singapore possess

- Adaptable and Agile
- Creative and innovative
- Curious, open-minded, and willing to try
- Idealistic and passionate
- Optimistic
- Resourceful
- Quick to learn
- Tenacious with a strong work ethic

The qualities that youth in Singapore lack

- Ambition
- Belief
- Global Outlook
- Long term vision and patience
- Risk Taking

72% of survey respondents in 2020 had heard of the term ‘social enterprises’, compared with 65% in 2016, and 13% in 2010. 16.9% of youths in Singapore expressed aspiration to be an entrepreneur.

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3.2.2

Challenges and Gaps

Youth in Singapore are highly skilled but lack qualities like the ability and confidence to take risks in starting an enterprise as shared by our focus group participants. This risk is amplified in a country which values economic outcomes but is risk-averse and stigmatises failure, especially within the education system\(^\text{57}\).

People associate social and environmental responsibility with volunteering. Compared with employment; especially as a doctor, lawyer, civil servant; social entrepreneurship is not considered a credible career path. Singapore’s high cost of living coupled with low remuneration of founders and employees increase youth’s pressure to choose a more financially stable path. Parents and caregivers are naturally concerned about their children being able to support themselves financially.

Many youths become social entrepreneurs in spite of these pressures and subsequently face challenges sustaining their choice. Even among those who are seemingly successful, some founders stop after graduation or after a few years to pursue a more conventional career.

Awareness about social entrepreneurship continues to be a barrier, particularly among the older generation who are the parents and caregivers of today’s youth. Older people are far less likely to be on online platforms and coverage of social entrepreneurship on offline channels is limited\(^\text{58}\).

Empathy, change-making (taking action to solve problems), teamwork and new leadership skills are key traits that would allow youth to create long-lasting social change. Nurturing young people to be more entrepreneurial to solve problems for a better world is more powerful than just creating enterprises.

- Sumitra Pasupathy  
  *Ashoka Innovators for the Public*

Youth are worried about failure.

- Social Entrepreneur  
  * (Focus Group)


Access to Finance and Incentives

Figure 6: Access to Finance and Incentives Domain Confidence Index Score

Financing helps youth establish, maintain and grow their social enterprises. The Hex-Key Confidence Index Survey scores reflect that although the private sector and government offer support, impact investors are relatively new and more interested in emerging economies outside Singapore.

Later-stage enterprises find it hard to access funding. Limited access to resources means that social entrepreneurs may struggle to make a living.
3.3.1 Strengths

Youth social entrepreneurs have access to investment, grants and other financial resources. Singapore is an investment hub, especially for early-stage enterprises. Besides funding for causes and enterprises in general, there are organizations specifically funding social enterprises. Beyond the social enterprise sector, Enterprise Singapore finances entrepreneurs and the Economic Development Board (EDB) facilitates investments.

There are also investment networks that connect social enterprises with investors, including the AVPN, Impact Investment Exchange Asia (IIX) and Transformational Business Network Asia (TBN Asia). The flip side of access to grants is the view of investors and ecosystem players, that social entrepreneurs are not incentivised to be more financially sustainable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4. Examples of organizations that support social enterprises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Action Challenge: Organized by the National Youth Council in partnership with Youth Co:Lab, co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation, the Youth Action Challenge provides youth teams up to S$50,000 to turn their ideas into reality. Additional funding of S$20,000 is granted to two champion social entrepreneurial teams through Youth Co:Lab’s partnership with CVC Capital Partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore International Foundation (SIF): Young Social Entrepreneurs (YSE) Global provides winners with up to S$20,000 to start or scale up their social enterprise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore Centre for Social Enterprises (raiSE): Offers investment capital through Impact Finance and grants through VentureForGood, including up to S$20,000 through VentureForGood (Youth) for social enterprises set up by youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBS Foundation: Provides grants between S$50,000 and S$250,000 for innovative social enterprises with a proven business model and track record and who are looking to scale up.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a lot of safety net in Singapore in grants and lack of any real struggle for entrepreneurs.

- Ecosystem Player (Focus Group)
3.3.2 Challenges and Gaps

Many social enterprises continue to struggle with financial sustainability despite access to funding. High business operating costs including labour and rental costs in Singapore contribute to the challenge for financial sustainability. Compensation levels in social enterprises also tend to be lower due to the perception that people running social enterprises should not be paid as much as for-profit businesses.

Although there is access to investment, impact investment is still emerging in Singapore. Impact investors are not as visible as venture capitalists (VCs), presenting challenges for social entrepreneurs to seek this source of funding. Social enterprises also face the following challenges: a lot of funding is only available to first-time founders; Investors are typically more interested in emerging economies and less financing is available to post-early-stage enterprises looking to scale up.

Therefore, becoming a social entrepreneur requires significant financial sacrifices that are mostly accessible to those supported by the capital of the founders, family, or friends.
Venture firms invested **SGD 13.4 billion** into local start-ups in the first three quarters of 2019, a **36% increase** from the previous year\(^{59}\).

Singapore ranked **24\(^{th}\) out of 44 countries** in terms of social entrepreneurs being able to make a living from their work\(^{60}\).

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3.4 Business Development Support and Infrastructure

Non-financial support plays an important role in the establishment and growth of social enterprises. The Hex-Key Confidence Index Survey scores reflect that there are many resources for youth social entrepreneurs to tap on. However, they require help to get started or plug gaps as they may not always know where to look due to lack of awareness. These include support in impact assessment and auxiliary professional services such as legal and accounting services. Furthermore, existing support and opportunities can be confusing and inefficient.

**Figure 7:**
Business Development Support and Infrastructure
Domain Confidence Index Score
3.4.1

**Strengths**

An ecosystem of support from government and other stakeholders makes starting an enterprise more accessible than ever. The support and opportunities include hackathons, incubators, accelerators, pitch events, competitions, training, internships, mentoring, co-working spaces and networking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 5. Examples of Business Development Support and Infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Youth Council (NYC):</strong> Through its Youth Corps Community Internship programme, National Youth Council supported many social enterprises with interns from the IHLs that are fully paid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NUS Enterprise:</strong> Offers entrepreneurial education programmes, industry partnerships and other support. One initiative, BLOCK71, develops collaborative and strategic partnerships with established corporates and government agencies around the world to catalyse and aggregate the start-up community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCAPE:</strong> Provides resources and support for youth entrepreneurs including co-working space, sharing sessions by successful entrepreneurs, industry networking events and skills training.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.2 Challenges and Gaps

Focus group participants and interviewees observed that social entrepreneurs tended to have poor business acumen. Lack of entrepreneurial and venture building knowledge, weak business experience and limited understanding of markets lead to a number of key challenges faced by social enterprises. This could also be exacerbated by the fact that social entrepreneurs face more challenges in business decision-making, having to balance business growth with environmental and/or social impact and business growth. Social enterprises also struggle with conducting impact assessments. They shared that it was technically challenging and that each funder typically requests a different set of metrics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 6. Weaknesses in business acumen identified by study participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Overfocused on impact. Some founders feel entitled to sales because of their social or environmental cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some operate more like a charity than a business. They rely on grants and donations rather than trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Others operate like a conventional business, they did not seek to be innovative, creative, or disruptive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being project-minded rather than business-minded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are sources which youth can tap on for support. However, youth do not always know where and how to tap on them. There appears to be a duplication of efforts among ecosystem players. Yet, focus group participants observed that mentorship and post-programme support were lacking.

These gaps can become a significant barrier to entry, because many youths seek to build their competencies, confidence and networks before embarking on their entrepreneurial journey.
## Box 7: Key challenges faced by Social Enterprises, as identified by study participants

### Unsustainable Business Model

- Business model is too broad or too narrow.
- Poor understanding of unique value propositions.
- Business model that is unable to balance impact and profit.
- Trouble deciding whether to be a social enterprise or non-profit.
- Struggle identifying how much profit to make and how much to charge.
- Do not know how to transition out of grants and donations.

### Building a Business

- Limited in the long-term vision and do not consider sustainability.
- Do not think strategically, like how to reinvest profit.
- Lack of holistic or systems thinking.
- Poor knowledge in key domain areas of business, such as HR, accounting and sales.
- Unclear about exit strategies and mechanisms.
Challenges Going to Market

- Difficulty finding early adopters.
- Inability to secure sales and partnerships with business or government.
- Ineffective marketing strategies.

Team Building

- Inadequate support for the founder’s professional and personal growth.
- Difficulty managing the dynamics of core team members.
- Need more soft skills like resilience and resourcefulness.

There could still be some mismatch in expectations between very experienced investors and very young social entrepreneurs. Mentorship and guidance would be important to help bridge this experience gap.

- Shaun Goh
  (Singapore Polytechnic)

There are lots of similar efforts. They need to be streamlined

- Ecosystem Player
  (Focus Group)

There should be tighter follow-up after accelerators / programmes end.

- Social Entrepreneur
  (Focus Group)

Social entrepreneurs could be better connected with mentors.

- Social Entrepreneur
  (Focus Group)
Access to Markets

Accessing local, regional and international markets is crucial for social enterprises to reach out and sell their products and services to potential customers. The Hex-Key Confidence Index Survey scores reflect Singapore’s highly-developed infrastructure and logistics, business-friendly policies and organizations that facilitate access to markets. However, there is limited public awareness, lack of business skills among social entrepreneurs and insufficient exposure to international markets.

**Figure 8:**
Access to Markets Domain Confidence Index Score

![Diagram showing market entry regulations and access to international markets with confidence index scores and sample sizes.](image)
3.5.1

**Strengths**

Supported by ecosystem players, Singapore has highly-developed infrastructure and logistics as well as business-friendly policies that make the country a hub for trade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 8. Examples of ecosystem players that facilitate access to markets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Co:Lab, co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation:</strong> Youth Co:Lab connects youth social entrepreneurs with the larger ecosystem and community in Asia-Pacific region, providing specialized support to expand to new markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temasek LaunchPad:</strong> An Entrepreneurship and Incubation Center based in Temasek Polytechnic that provides mentorship, partnership as well as overseas exposure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>raiSE:</strong> Showcases the products and services of members through digital marketing and events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is relatively easy to sell products and services to the government. Driven by increasing public awareness, there has also been an increase in customers ready to purchase from social enterprises.

**Singapore’s ranking in Thomas Reuters Foundation’s 2019 poll on ‘The best countries to be a social entrepreneur’**

| 3\textsuperscript{rd} of 44 countries | It is easy for social entrepreneurs to sell to government |
| 12\textsuperscript{th} of 44 countries | It is easy for social entrepreneurs to sell to business |
| 27\textsuperscript{th} of 44 countries | It is easy for social entrepreneurs to sell to the public |

3.5.2 Challenges and Gaps

Despite increased awareness, some social enterprises continue to face challenges selling enough products and services to the public and to businesses to be financially sustainable. Public awareness continues to be a barrier\(^2\), but social enterprises also lack marketing, customer acquisition and related skills.

Regardless, being a small country, Singapore's market is limited. Expanding overseas is an imperative. However, because youth are not sufficiently exposed to international issues and markets, they either do not develop regionally or globally scalable solutions or find it too risky to try. While Institute of Higher Learning have programmes which expose youth to entrepreneurship and societal issues both locally and overseas, participation for the overseas programmes could be limited by capacity and cost. In addition, much of the exposure occurs in the tertiary education phase, opening up the opportunities for having such exposures from a younger age.

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Youth lack exposure to market conditions, and their market and business awareness may not be strong.

- Investor (Focus Group)
Innovation and Technology

Innovating and adopting technology helps social enterprises stay relevant to the business environment. The Hex-Key Confidence Index Survey scores reflect Singapore’s strong protection of intellectual property and youth’s ability to leverage technology and digitalization. People in Singapore are generally well-versed in technology, with access to technology and technology education available from a very early age. Therefore, youth social entrepreneurs are well-placed to leverage technology and digital platforms to drive business growth.

However, high implementation cost and challenges to attract digital talents and technology partners hinder youth social entrepreneurs to better harness technology and digitalization.

Figure 9:
Innovation and Technology Domain Confidence Index Score
Singapore topped KPMG’s global ranking of leading technology innovation hubs outside of Silicon Valley/San Francisco in 2021\textsuperscript{63}.

There is a need for more ‘radical’ technological and product innovation. We are only skilled in certain topics.

- Social Entrepreneur (Focus Group)

Relative to the ASEAN region, Singapore as a start-up or innovation hub has developed a stable pipeline of innovative technologies, which could result in a higher societal impact, whether in Singapore itself, or eventually to impact outside of Singapore.

- Jerrick Tee & Hui Ming Tee (NUS Enterprise)

### 3.6.1

**Strengths**

A huge majority of enterprises in Singapore, at over 80 percent, were reported to have digital transformation strategies in place in 2020. Ecosystem players from corporate to government agencies are supporting the digital transformation for social enterprises.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 9. Examples of ecosystem players that support innovation &amp; technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA):</strong> IMDA has a range of services to support enterprises including youth-led social enterprises to capitalise on digital technologies to thrive and grow. There are grants, one stop platform for self-assessment of digital readiness as well as digital advisory and project management services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NUS Enterprise:</strong> The entrepreneurial arm of the National University of Singapore advances innovation and promotes entrepreneurship through active industry partnership and holistic entrepreneurship support. Its initiatives and programmes also complement the university’s academic programmes, providing a bridge between academia and industry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Corporate:** Corporate such as ALIBABA Group and PayPal have rolled out different initiatives to support social enterprises in their digital transformation. ALIBABA Group, in collaboration with raiSE and Nanyang Polytechnic’s Singapore Institute of Retail Studies (NYP-SIRS), launched its first e-commerce bootcamp to provide local social enterprises with the necessary digital commerce knowledge and skills.

### 3.6.2

**Challenges and Gaps**

While there was a high level of awareness and adoption of digital transformation strategies, social enterprises had only moderate levels of success in their digitalization journey. The most significant barrier for digital transformation was high implementation cost. Other barriers include challenges to attract digital talents due to low compensation, low awareness of government support as well as the lack of appropriate technology partners.

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Case Studies of Youth Social Entrepreneurs

Youth Social Entrepreneur: Esther Wang

Esther Wang is the founder of social enterprise – Joytingle, an award-winning health education company. Inspired by a hospital volunteering experience, she started Joytingle at the age of 23 to create a solution (Rabbit Ray) which explains medical procedures through the language of play.

After multiple testings with healthcare professionals and families from different social, economic, migrant backgrounds, the rabbit-shaped patient engagement device is able to explain 5 medical procedures with different layers of complexity to suit the child’s hand-eye coordination skill and customisable for time-crunch clinical environments. A key focus in Esther’s design was to create precious family bonding time in a sterile clinical environment.

Joytingle received mentorship support, angel investment and modest funds from several international awards. To stretch the dollar, Esther bootstrapped without a salary for 4 years to produce over 30 prototypes, attained European Union’s safety clearance and received her patent with the United States Intellectual Property Office. Esther also personally sourced for her own manufacturer and deep dive into the source of materials to ensure it is safe and compliant.

Rabbit Ray has been purchased by over 48 hospitals from over 25 countries including UK, US and Myanmar. Despite the international success, she shared that financial sustainability had always been a challenge for the device that served a very niche market. Similar to the challenges faced by orphan drugs manufacturers, Esther faced the high sunk cost in hardware research and development, international safety clearance in the highly regulated medical industry and intellectual property protection. Secondly, her users would either recover or pass on within a few years - which translates to a shrinking user base.

Based on her experience she shared that the below helped her or could have helped other budding youth social entrepreneurs.

- Risk management and financial management skills
- Exposure to various leadership and management styles that would be useful for young entrepreneurs like her that started right from school
- Capacity building in marketing and business strategies to build stronger enterprises

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Case Studies of Youth Social Entrepreneurs

Youth Social Entrepreneur: Raye Padit

Raye Padit is the founder of The Fashion Pulpit (TFP) – Singapore first and largest clothes swapping platform⁶⁹.

Raye, a budding fashion designer, seeks to bring awareness around the social and environmental impacts of fast fashion, while still offering consumers style in a sustainable manner. Consumers can maximise what they already have in their closet, prolong the lifespan of their clothes and reduce textile waste.

Starting TFP was not easy with the need to balance social good, profits and fashion. The challenging part is also in transforming mindsets that people as well as potential partners have on fashion. Passion and a team of supporters kept him going.

4.1 Reshape the narrative on youth social entrepreneurship

4.2 Widen the access to existing opportunities

4.3 Increase resources to support more types and different stages of social enterprises

4.4 Strengthen the capability of youth social entrepreneurs
The youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Singapore is vibrant with a range of stakeholders including government agencies, funders, accelerators and educational institutions that come together to contribute to multiple enabling factors. These include a highly educated talent pool; a well-developed business and technological infrastructure; business-friendly policies and programmes; a wide range of finance support as well as exposure to social entrepreneurship in the educational system particularly IHLs.

There are however still gaps in skills, entrepreneurship culture, financial as well as non-financial support that have been identified. This section provides a list of recommendations developed based on the findings and insights shared by the various stakeholders that participated in the research. These recommendations are intended to create an even more conducive youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem, by addressing the various gaps, thereby maximizing the potential of youth to contribute to sustainable development.

“Impactful change is sustained by compatible and accessible support systems built around shared services, incentives and networks that breathe life and inspiration into the entrepreneurship community. All of us, whether public or private, social or commercial, local or regional must step up to value-add to this support system.

- David Chua
National Youth Council
Many youths are discouraged by their family and peers from becoming a social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurship is not considered a legitimate career, because of the financial instability and fear of failing.

The narrative on youth social entrepreneurship can be reshaped to improve existing perceptions.

Run more public and school campaigns to **normalize** becoming a social entrepreneur.

Run programmes that strengthen entrepreneurial mindsets and encourage **creativity and innovation** at primary and secondary schools.
## Table 3: Recommendations (Stigma)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Run more public and school campaigns to <strong>normalize</strong> becoming a social entrepreneur.</td>
<td>Becoming a social entrepreneur is stigmatised. Campaigns that celebrate the successes of a range of social entrepreneurs (beyond more well-known names) would increase the perception that social entrepreneurship is a credible career path. Campaigns could be targeted at parents and peers, as youth care about the opinions of the family and friends when making career choices.</td>
<td>Network organizations could work with government agencies and educational institutions to organize media campaigns and events that showcase successful youth-owned/youth-led social enterprises and youth social entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run programmes that strengthen entrepreneurial mindsets and encourage <strong>creativity and innovation</strong> at primary and secondary schools.</td>
<td>Singapore has been characterised as risk-averse. This runs counter to social entrepreneurship which is an inherently risky endeavour. Programmes that strengthen entrepreneurial mindsets and encourage creativity and innovation, especially at primary and secondary level, would help future youth become more comfortable with risk-taking.</td>
<td>Educational institutions from primary level onwards could be encouraged to run such programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aspiring and existing youth social entrepreneurs face challenges finding and securing support. They may not be aware of the resources that already exist or find it confusing to determine what resources would be most useful for them. Procedures for applying to programmes and funding can also be tedious, further discouraging youth from investing time and effort that can be spent on other aspects of their enterprise. It is recommended to make it easier for youth to find, decide on and secure support.

Create a repository of local and international resources including investments, grants, incentive schemes, programmes, mentors, co-working spaces and so on. The repository should have tags to differentiate youth-specific grants as well as grants with gender and inclusion lenses.

Modify grants to require less paperwork and time and fewer restrictions to specific types of expenditure or results. Or create new grants with unrestricted funding.

Centralize government-led funding, with new features such as dollar-matching with private sector capital.
Table 4: Recommendations (Opportunities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a repository of local and international resources including investments, grants, incentive schemes, programmes, mentors, co-working spaces and so on. The repository should have tags to differentiate youth-specific grants as well as grants with gender and inclusion lenses.</td>
<td>The repository would guide aspiring and existing youth social entrepreneurs through the process of finding suitable opportunities. Youth at all stages of their social entrepreneurship journey would have more information on available resources and would therefore be more likely to secure funding, relevant expertise and opportunities to expand overseas.</td>
<td>The repository could be hosted by a network organization or funder and could be a crowdsourced site. All ecosystem players could be encouraged to contribute to the repository and social entrepreneurs encouraged to add and review opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify grants to require less paperwork and time and fewer restrictions to specific types of expenditure or results. Or create new grants with unrestricted funding.</td>
<td>Unrestricted funding will give youth social entrepreneurs greater autonomy to invest in what is best for their social enterprise, thus increasing their likelihood of success. They would have more time and freedom to be creative and take chances without fear of not achieving funding requirements, resulting in more innovative and successful products and services. This is especially valuable during the early stages of an enterprise, when founders might need to iterate, test and pivot regularly.</td>
<td>Funders, investors and government agencies could streamline their funding requirements and processes or develop new avenues of unrestricted funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralize government-led funding, with new features such as dollar-matching with private sector capital.</td>
<td>Multiple funding schemes administered by multiple government agencies increases the time and resource cost of securing funding, centralizing these multiple schemes managed by a one-stop administrator can shorten this process. The new funding vehicle can also provide dollar-matching with private sector capital, to de-risk and incentivise entry of private sector capital.</td>
<td>Government agencies could come together to set up this centralized funding platform and work with network organizations that have strong connections with private sector funders (eg. HNWIs, investment funds etc.) and understanding of social enterprise business models.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All youth in Singapore should have equal opportunities to become social entrepreneurs. However, some groups of youth receive comparatively less support or are disadvantaged including
1. youth who had previously founded a social enterprise,
2. non-Singapore citizens,
3. female and
4. youth from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds.

For the last group of youth, they are often targeted as clients/beneficiaries of social enterprises but less so as youth social entrepreneurs. More can be done to provide these groups of youth with more access to programmes and opportunities.

Funding for first-time entrepreneurs could be extended to **repeat founders** starting their second or third enterprise.

Programmes that are only available to Singapore citizens and PRs could extend support to **non-citizens and non-PRs**.

**Level up access** by providing opportunities and funding schemes with gender and inclusion lenses.
**Table 5: Recommendations (More opportunities)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding for first-time entrepreneurs could be extended to <strong>repeat founders</strong> starting their second or third enterprise.</td>
<td>Some funding, such as Startup SG Founder(^70), is only available to first-time entrepreneurs. However, many entrepreneurs learn valuable lessons from their first attempt at entrepreneurship that would increase their likelihood of success in subsequent attempts, if funding were not a barrier.</td>
<td><strong>Funders</strong> that only support first-time entrepreneurs could expand their funding criteria to support second- and third-time entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programmes that are only available to Singapore citizens and PRs could extend support to non-citizens and non-PRs.</strong></td>
<td>Non-citizens and PRs are often excluded from receiving support even though their enterprises could benefit Singapore. With more support, non-citizens and PRs will have greater opportunities to succeed and benefit the country through their products/services and/or job creation.</td>
<td><strong>Government agencies, accelerators/incubators, funders and network organizations</strong> that only serve Singapore citizens and PRs could expand their funding, programme, and/or membership criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level up access by providing opportunities and funding schemes with gender and inclusion lenses.</strong></td>
<td>Youth from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds are often targeted as clients of social enterprise. They can be specifically targeted for opportunities and funding schemes as youth social entrepreneurs to empower them. In addition, women-led social enterprises had less success in raising funds(^71). There can be more programme opportunities and funding schemes to level up access for them.</td>
<td><strong>Government agencies, accelerators/incubators, funders and network organizations</strong> could have more specific opportunities and funding schemes with gender and inclusion lenses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Increase resources to support more types and different stages of social enterprises

Most support is targeted at early-stage start-ups serving local communities. There is comparatively less support for the following categories of enterprises: (1) later-stage enterprises; (2) small businesses, and; (3) enterprises serving overseas communities. These categories of enterprises can be offered more support.

Create more programmes and schemes supporting later-stage enterprises.

Increase support for social enterprises that operate like small businesses rather than like start-ups.

For programmes that are only available to social enterprises serving local communities, extend support to enterprises serving overseas communities.

Whole-of-government approach to coordinate policymaking for social enterprises, via a steering committee that should have representation for gender, youth and inclusion to ensure that the voices of youth from diverse backgrounds are heard.
Table 6: Recommendations (Support)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create more programmes and schemes supporting later-stage enterprises.</td>
<td>Early-stage enterprises have access to substantially more programmes than later-stage enterprises. With sufficient capacity building, mentoring, coaching and networks, later-stage enterprises would be more likely to succeed past the growth stage. These programmes could complement existing programmes supporting early-stage enterprises, providing follow-up support for participants from prior programmes.</td>
<td>Accelerators/incubators and educational institutions could create new programmes for later-stage enterprises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase support for social enterprises that operate like small businesses rather than like start-ups.</td>
<td>Many programmes are designed on the premise that social enterprises should be run like start-ups seeking equity funding. Not all successful start-ups should grow this way. With more programmes addressing alternative growth approaches such as bootstrapping, more social enterprises could be successful.</td>
<td>Accelerators/incubators and educational institutions could create new programmes for small businesses. Advisors could seek out more small businesses to support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For programmes that are only available to social enterprises serving local communities, extend support to enterprises serving overseas communities.</td>
<td>With Singapore’s small market, many social enterprises need to expand overseas to be financially sustainable. Supporting social enterprises that wish to operate or expand overseas would increase their likelihood of success.</td>
<td>Government agencies, accelerators/incubators, funders and network organizations could expand programme or membership requirements and processes to include social enterprises serving overseas markets. Corporates with the expertise and network could also collaborate or support social enterprises to build business expertise and access overseas markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-of-government approach to coordinate policymaking for social enterprises, via a steering committee.</td>
<td>Multiple government agencies do provide support for social enterprises, but these exist as more residual efforts, largely in isolated pockets and mainly “bottom-up”. A steering committee could drive a “top-down” approach for more deliberate dedication and allocation of resources to social enterprises.</td>
<td>Independent steering committee composed of public sector individuals from the various government agencies, established private entrepreneurs/investors and experienced social entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengthen the capability of youth social entrepreneurs

Youth who struggle to start, grow and sustain their social enterprise typically lack business experience, especially in an international setting. Being able to expand to overseas markets is especially important given the small size of Singapore’s market.

The capability of youth social entrepreneurs can be strengthened with more opportunities for them to gain business skills and international exposure.

Build **business, fundraising and impact measurement skills**, through education, training, internships and mentoring.

Create a **regional community** of entrepreneurs (past and present), investors, industry experts, business mentors and executive coaches through cross-border forums, events and matching services.
Table 7: Recommendations (Capability)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build business, fundraising and impact measurement skills, through education, training, internships and/or mentoring.</td>
<td>Skills that youth social entrepreneurs lack include business models; go-to-market, sales and marketing strategies; business management skills such as HR and accounting; long-term planning; team-building; grant-writing; as well as impact measurement. If they had such skills, they would be more likely to overcome common business challenges.</td>
<td>Accelerators / incubators and educational institutions could expand the scope of their programmes or create new programmes to address the skill gaps. Programmes can bring in mentors with relevant skills and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a regional community of entrepreneurs (past and present), investors, industry experts, business mentors and executive coaches through cross-border forums, events and matching services.</td>
<td>A regional community would connect young social entrepreneurs to supportive regional and global networks that can provide advice, mentoring and coaching. This could expose them to knowledge about overseas markets and provide opportunities to build relationships with potential partners and customers, and develop their business acumen and leadership.</td>
<td>A network organization with support from a funder could organize such activities. Social entrepreneurs, investors, experts, mentors and coaches should be encouraged to share their experience / expertise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 1

List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accelerating Asia</td>
<td>Amra Naidoo</td>
<td>Co-Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Community for Entrepreneurship Youth Wing</td>
<td>Marcus Wong</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashoka Innovators for the Public</td>
<td>Sumitra Pasupathy</td>
<td>Stewardship Lead and Global Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joytingle (with Rabbit Ray)</td>
<td>Esther Wang</td>
<td>Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Youth Council</td>
<td>David Chua</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUS Enterprise</td>
<td>Hui Ming Chee</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUS Enterprise</td>
<td>Jerrick Tee</td>
<td>Program Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore International Foundation</td>
<td>Jean Tan</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore Polytechnic</td>
<td>Lim Lee Yee</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore Polytechnic</td>
<td>Shaun Goh</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Annex 2

### List of Focus Group Discussion Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500 Global</td>
<td>Lim Ee Ling</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AgriG8</td>
<td>Irsyad Ramthan</td>
<td>Product Manager (Former Youth Social Entrepreneur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDACITY</td>
<td>Yang En Tan</td>
<td>Co-Founder &amp; Venture Builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVPN</td>
<td>Amanda Kee</td>
<td>Product Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea Ventures</td>
<td>Dr. Dalal AlGhawas</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citi</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Head of Corporate Affairs Singapore &amp; ASEAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FastCo</td>
<td>Joelle Pang</td>
<td>General Manager, FastJobs &amp; FastGig Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreword Coffee</td>
<td>Lim Wei Jie</td>
<td>Co-Founder &amp; Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ForwardLeap Training Lab</td>
<td>Steven Ong</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GreenArc Capital</td>
<td>Rony J Palathinkal</td>
<td>Co-Founder &amp; CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HelpHer Do Better</td>
<td>MUNIRA MUHRIS</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Tech</td>
<td>Hakim Affandi</td>
<td>Co-Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joytingle (with Rabbit Ray)</td>
<td>Esther Wang</td>
<td>Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasih Hospice Foundation</td>
<td>Teo Shenwei</td>
<td>Head, Fundraising &amp; Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangrove Learning</td>
<td>Wang Junyong</td>
<td>Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUS Enterprise</td>
<td>Siti Nurain Binte Abdul</td>
<td>Assistant Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUS Enterprise</td>
<td>Yuen Ping</td>
<td>Associate Director, NUS Enterprise Academy (I&amp;E Data and Research) &amp; Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lead, Innovation with Societal Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pangolin Films</td>
<td>James Khoo</td>
<td>Chief Creative Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactor School</td>
<td>Khairul Rusydi</td>
<td>Co-Founder &amp; CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reapra</td>
<td>Michael Lee</td>
<td>Investments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore Polytechnic</td>
<td>Lee Yee Lim</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Collider</td>
<td>Russ Neu</td>
<td>Founder and CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore University of Social Sciences</td>
<td>Wei Liang Lim</td>
<td>Associate Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Living Lab</td>
<td>Veerappan Swaminathan</td>
<td>Founder &amp; Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dorsal Effect</td>
<td>Kathy Xu</td>
<td>Founder and Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fashion Pulpit</td>
<td>Raye Padit</td>
<td>Founder &amp; CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learners Collaborative School</td>
<td>Ong Kai Loon Caron</td>
<td>Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utoocentral</td>
<td>Hassan Moosa Cheung</td>
<td>Business Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides the list above, there were participants from 500 Global, Blue7, Crater, Doctor x Dentist, Femcy, Green Collective SG, Halogen Foundation Singapore, Hatch, Innovation Garage, National Youth Council, Octava Foundation, Open Door Policy, Second Muse, SMU Social Impact Catalyst, Spic & Span (Speco Singapore), SUTW Impact Consulting and The Edify Project, Singapore
Hex-key Confidence Index Survey

This survey wants to know your confidence level on the various ecosystem domains supporting Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore. Please assess the various statements and state whether you disagree or agree with the statements (1 for Strongly Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree). There are no right or wrong answers – just give your HONEST opinion.

Name:
Email address:
I am offering my perspectives as a
• Social Entrepreneur
• Ecosystem Builder
• Others, please specify

Note: Ecosystem builders are the stakeholders who provide access to information, networks, support services and resources for the youth social entrepreneurs. They include government agencies, education institutions, investors, finance institutions, corporations, research institutions, incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces and innovation hubs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Statement Header</th>
<th>Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy and regulatory framework</td>
<td>Policy and regulatory framework</td>
<td>The policy and regulatory framework (e.g., government recognition of the social enterprise sector, direct and indirect measures to support social enterprises and the ecosystem) is supportive and relevant to youth social entrepreneurship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government institutions</td>
<td>Government institutions</td>
<td>Government institutions (e.g., science parks, enterprise bodies set up by Govt) provide relevant support (e.g., training, education, funding) to youth social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex 3
## State of the Ecosystem for Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Singapore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laws and regulations</strong></td>
<td>The existing law and regulation (e.g., business registration process, legal age to set up business/bank account, business registration cost) is relevant and supportive to youth social entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human capital and entrepreneurship culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent Skillsets</td>
<td>The existing skillsets of talents match the demand for human capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Education at school is conducive to youth social entrepreneurship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal norms</td>
<td>Societal norms promote youth social entrepreneurship and youth social entrepreneurial culture in comparison to finding job employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to finance and incentives</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance for youth</td>
<td>There is access to entrepreneur-specific finance (e.g. Crowdfunding, grants, bank loans, bonds, private equity, venture capital, impact investment) for youth social entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government incentives</td>
<td>There are relevant government incentives to meet the financial needs of the youth social entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth and breadth of market instruments</td>
<td>Financial instruments and services are available and accessible for young social entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Development Support and Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive non-government institutions</td>
<td>Existing business development support services (e.g., working spaces, accelerator/incubation programme, marketing, networking, mentorship) provided by non-government institutions are relevant and accessible to young entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary professional services</td>
<td>The existing auxiliary professional services are adequate and supportive to youth social entrepreneurship (legal, accounting, consulting, technical expert, investment advisors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government led opportunities</td>
<td>There are enough government led business development opportunities (e.g., working spaces, accelerator/incubation programmes, networking, marketing, mentorship) supporting youth social entrepreneurship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Markets</strong></td>
<td>Market entry regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logistics and physical infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access international market</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Innovation and Technology</strong></th>
<th>Digital platforms</th>
<th>Youth social entrepreneurs are able to effectively leverage digital platforms (e.g., internet/online marketplaces).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technology adoption</td>
<td>Business growth is increasingly being driven by technology adoption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intellectual Property rights</td>
<td>The laws and legal authorities are effective in protecting Intellectual Property rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Impact Assessment</strong></th>
<th>Impact assessment frameworks</th>
<th>The existing impact assessment frameworks are adequate to support the youth entrepreneurs to measure their impact.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The youths have existing skills to measure the impact of their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The youth entrepreneurs view impact assessment as an important aspect of their work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Even though there were seven domains in the survey, the impact assessment domain was eventually incorporated into the business development support and infrastructure domain.
References


42. raiSE (2020). Public Perception Survey on Social Enterprises.


