

Detailed Notes: Youth Policy Forum Youth Panel Presentations

Date/Time: Saturday, 24 August 2024, 12.30pm – 2.30pm

Venue: Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Cassia Ballroom

The session commenced with an introduction by host and moderator Ms Margaret Lim. Representatives from #GreenHacks, #TechHacks, #JobHacks and #LifeHacks shared their panel's challenge statement and recommendations, followed by addressing questions from the audience.

INTRODUCTION

1. Ms Lim welcomed participants to the Panel Showcase segment of the Youth Policy Forum. She cited data from the MCCY Social Pulse Survey that 69% of youths desired to take action to contribute to Singapore and said that the Government had also reciprocally called for strengthened partnerships with citizens to refresh Singapore's social compact.
2. Ms Lim said that the audience would be able to hear how young Singaporeans had been working closely with Government agencies to shape policies and recommendations. She encouraged the audience to also have a stake by sharing their feedback on the panels' recommendations, which would eventually be submitted to the relevant Government agencies.

#GREENHACKS PANEL SHOWCASE

Panel Presentation

3. Ms Lim introduced the #GreenHacks panel representatives Ms Kong Man Jing and Mr Preston Wong.
4. The presenters shared the following:
 - (i) #GreenHacks Challenge Statement
How might we recycle differently and increase public awareness about the importance of recycling among households within housing estates, so that citizens learn how to recycle right and effectively reduce the current 40% contamination rate in recycling?
 - (ii) Preliminary Recommendations
The panel had adopted a three-pronged approach of:
 - (a) Information – Providing better recycling information through a simplified product labelling scheme for recyclables;
 - (b) Infrastructure – Introducing segregated waste bins for different types of recyclables; and
 - (c) Involvement – Working with the community to improve public education and awareness of recycling.

Question and Answer

A participant asked if the panel had considered implementing fines for people who recycled incorrectly.

5. The presenters said that the panel had explored the option but opted not to impose disincentives. They said that fining would also require logistics to support surveillance, and determining the extent of offences would be difficult. Instead, the panel decided to focus on awareness and information to inculcate intrinsic motivation.

A participant asked if there should be more financial incentives for companies as they changed to more sustainable practices.

6. The presenters acknowledged that while financial incentives could help, it was a “crutch” that needed to be removed in the long run. The panellists said that if efforts were focused on educating consumers, this would contribute to companies benefiting from being more sustainable in their practices, which would in turn translate into revenue and overall increase in profit margins over time.

A participant said that “sustainomics” (a combination of sustainability and economics) was practised in European countries and asked how Singapore and Southeast Asia could follow suit.

7. The presenters explained that “sustainomics” aimed to achieve sustainability goals while ensuring economic viability at the same time and was something the panel had considered as part of their solutioning process. They said that through engaging different stakeholders, they realised that regardless of the solution implemented, the costs had to be viable. They cited the idea of using simplified labels where it was important to connect with big organisations to encourage participation as it would help with scaling and cost of introducing new labels.

A participant asked how institutions could promote recycling through applying the panel’s concepts of Information, Infrastructure and Involvement.

8. The presenters said that the panel intended to implement their recommendations over a few years by engaging stakeholders such as institutions and Government agencies to share about information (new labels) and infrastructure (segregated waste bins). The panel would also reach out to the community as part of involvement to improve education and awareness of recycling.

A participant asked how the older generation might be encouraged to adopt the panel’s recommendations.

9. The presenters said that the use of new simplified labels was targeted at helping the elderly to recycle more easily.

#TECHHACKS PANEL SHOWCASE

Panel Presentation

10. Ms Lim introduced the #TechHacks panel representatives Ms Azlin Zubairah and Mr Bryan Ong.
11. The presenters shared the following:
 - (i) #TechHacks Challenge Statement

How might we strengthen mindfulness and awareness of online harms on social media among Singaporean youth, and understand their expectations in terms of safe online spaces in Singapore, with the aim of building a kinder, safer and healthier digital world?

(ii) Preliminary Recommendations

The panel had developed four ideas to complement existing online safety initiatives:

- (a) An annual sense-making survey on the impact of online harms on youth;
- (b) A lifecycle model of online harms to understand the different stages of online threats and identify intervention points;
- (c) Suggestions to improve the accountability of digital platforms; and
- (d) The inclusion of youth as a discrete stakeholder group to be consulted on digital policies.

Question and Answer

A participant asked how the panel's recommendations might address the growing issue of deepfakes being used as tools for online bullying and harassment.

12. The presenters said that their first recommendation was to launch an annual survey to monitor emerging threats online. They said that the survey could help to track the rise of new threats such as deepfakes, as well as how they were being addressed over time. The presenters said that their second recommendation of developing a lifecycle model of online harms would help inform youths of intervention points to seek support when encountering deepfakes. The presenters added that digital platforms could be made more accountable when responding to reports of deepfakes, and their last recommendation of youths as a discrete stakeholder group would make youths part of the consultation process to address online harms.

A participant asked if the panel's proposed annual survey would be similar to the one conducted in schools by the Ministry of Education (MOE).

13. The presenters said that they were aware of existing surveys on online safety, but hoped to explore dedicated ways to emphasise and obtain metrics on youths in relation to online harms. They said that they hoped to leverage on existing survey infrastructures to work towards better metrics and tracking data, and engage various stakeholders to improve existing solutions.

A participant asked how parents could understand and support their children who were encountering online harms.

14. The presenters said that having open conversations between parents and youths was important. They encouraged youths to educate their parents on online platforms, as some parents may not have grown up with the Internet. In turn, they encouraged parents to adapt their lived experiences for the online space. The presenters said that the lifecycle model of online harms would help parents understand where and how online harms were perpetrated, how they could be resolved and provide them with knowledge on where they could intervene and how to support their children.

A participant asked how the recommendations addressing online harms could be used to mitigate offline harms such as bullying.

15. The presenters said that the online and offline worlds were not separate entities, although the panel chose to focus on online harms. They said that through research, the panel discovered that whenever a victim faced online harms, there were ripple effects that extended into physical space. Thus, the panel hoped to foster a safer online space which could carry into the offline space as well.

#JOBHACKS PANEL SHOWCASE

Panel Presentation

16. Ms Lim introduced the #JobHacks panel representatives Ms Nayla Riza, Ms Claire Lee and Mr Adriaal Pang.
17. The presenters shared the following:
 - (i) #JobHacks Challenge Statement
How might we help young Singaporeans under 35 years old to find jobs and economic opportunities in Southeast Asia?
 - (ii) Recommendations
The panel had developed the following ideas:
 - (a) Strengthening awareness of ASEAN within secondary school and pre-university students, through an education roadmap that includes overseas trips for secondary students, student exchange programmes for university students and programmes such as the Youth Expedition Programme;
 - (b) Connecting youths with overseas Singaporean networks in ASEAN, such as through online sessions to better understand how to pursue a career overseas and obtain information on the job market outside Singapore; and
 - (c) Increasing accessibility to opportunities in Southeast Asia by introducing talent swaps between companies in Singapore and within ASEAN, through a one-stop online portal.

Question and Answer

A participant asked how the panel would approach schools to encourage youths to take up these opportunities.

18. The presenters said that the panel had engaged MOE and students, and discussed the possibility of complementing existing education and career guidance for students with resources offered by non-profits, such as Advisory Singapore, which conducts online Zoom webinars for working adults to share their journeys in landing their jobs and provide mentorship.

A participant asked why the panel chose to focus on careers in ASEAN instead of Singapore, as not many youths might wish to work abroad.

19. The presenters said that it was not a “zero-sum choice” between job opportunities in Singapore versus Southeast Asia. They said that through their research, the panel found that there were growing opportunities within multinational companies and startups in Southeast Asia. The presenters said that this gave rise to more options for youths to complete a stint in Southeast Asia and work in Singapore as part of their career development milestones.

A participant said that given the median salary of fresh graduates in Singapore, it might not be feasible for Singaporeans to work in Southeast Asia on a full-time basis.

20. The presenters acknowledged that this was a valid concern and said that the panel was still in the process of working through the issue. They also noted that there were funding incentives for companies looking to hire experienced staff and said that their next step would be to engage with such programme organisers to understand how to encourage Singaporeans to enter the ASEAN market.

A participant asked why the panel chose to focus on youths as a target audience, and how the panel would ensure that the mentors would represent the opportunities in ASEAN well.

21. The presenters explained that youths were chosen as harnessing ambition was a lifelong process that starts with an awareness of and an appreciation for career planning. They said that this would allow eventual application of insights when youths transitioned to seeking internships while in institutes of higher learning, and later when entering the job market.
22. The presenters also shared that it was possible to tap on the Singapore Global Network’s strong network to identify mentors based locally and abroad to learn about job opportunities and working in ASEAN.

A participant asked if the panel was considering how to facilitate the entry of youths from ASEAN who would like to work in Singapore.

23. The presenters said that the panel was focused on expanding overseas job opportunities for Singaporeans as their research had shown that 75% of youths were unaware of such opportunities, which contributed to anxiety among youths when searching for jobs and preparing for their careers. They said that from their engagements with stakeholders, infrastructure to bring non-Singaporeans into the Singapore market was already available.

#LIFEHACKS PANEL SHOWCASE

Panel Presentation

24. Ms Lim introduced the #LifeHacks panel representatives Ms Lok Siying, Ms Lauren Koek, and Mr Mohd Arshad.
25. The presenters shared the following:
(i) #LifeHacks Challenge Statement

How might we improve financial literacy among youth and enable them to take necessary action to improve their financial resilience to adapt to changes in the present cost-of-living-climate?

(ii) Recommendations

The panel proposed the following ideas:

- (a) A Financial Literacy Excellence (FLEX) Guide that functions as a one-stop resource that aims to guide youth to make informed financial decisions at important life stages; and
- (b) A Starter Savings Plan to support lower-income Singaporeans in building emergency funds to improve their financial well-being.

Question and Answer

A participant asked how the FLEX Guide would provide financial literacy to those who want to start a business but do not know how to manage their money.

26. The presenters said that financial literacy principles were universal although entrepreneurs would have slightly different considerations to keep in mind, such as the need for larger emergency savings to address their business's cashflow needs. The presenters said that the panel would consider incorporating support for entrepreneurs, including aspects of minimum capital requirements and startup grants available, within the FLEX Guide.

A participant asked how feasible it was to encourage financial literacy habits among youths when they may not be ready to start saving.

27. The presenters said that financial literacy habits went beyond saving money, and included knowledge of budgeting, how to invest and being aware of scams. They said that the FLEX Guide would take a life stage approach to include financial goals that youths could work towards at different ages.

A participant said that the FLEX Guide seemed similar to the LifeSG app, and how platforms that offered similar services could reduce overlap.

28. The presenters said that the FLEX Guide differed from LifeSG as it provided users with gamification features and actionable items to incentivise them reach their financial goals. The presenters acknowledged that all platforms had their limitations and hoped that the customisability of the FLEX Guide would provide value-add to users.

A participant asked why the panel recommended a Starter Savings Plan (SSP) when there was already the CPF, and how the SSP would avoid "blaming the poor" by focusing on personal responsibility as opposed to addressing issues like wage stagnation.

29. The presenters explained that the SSP was meant to encourage the habit of saving for lower income Singaporeans, while the CPF was intended to support one's retirement. The presenters said that the panel's recommendations were never intended to "blame the poor" but instead provide avenues to the most financially pressed to take the first step in putting money aside and hoped that the reward mechanism would incentivise users towards savings.

30. The presenters said that the panel would study the issue of low-income families facing difficulties in saving money and emphasised that financial literacy was nevertheless a good start to help children rise above their circumstances.
31. Ms Lim closed the session by inviting the audience to find out more about the panel's recommendations and encouraged them to have a stake in shaping their recommendations by providing feedback in the Youth Panels Digital Feedback Exercise.