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## Media Release

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# DesignSingapore Council's School of X runs fast-paced Community Bootcamp Challenge in the heartlands and the civic district for its first anniversary

*Everyday Singaporeans including volunteers, residents and designers competed to generate ideas and solutions to design more loveable and unique public spaces and connections*



**Singapore, 29 November 2021** – The DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) today announced the winners of its community bootcamp challenge that was organised to commemorate the first anniversary of School of X, a classroom without walls to equip anyone and everyone with collaborative design skills to solve real-world social and business challenges.

Three School of X bootcamps with close to 30 participants were conducted at three locations – Queenstown (Tanglin Halt), Telok Blangah and Civic District (National Gallery Singapore) – to address unique community challenges and shape more loveable neighbourhoods by supporting newly relocated seniors, integrating biodiversity in estates and forging connections through art respectively.

The winning team from Queenstown (Tanglin Halt) sought to address the challenge of having touchpoints that sustain and grow connections when people move to the new neighbourhood in view of the imminent demolition of the Tanglin Halt estate. The team focused on building community bonds by creating a ‘Community without Walls’ – a neighbourhood that welcomes everyone. Ideas include posters in lifts that stimulate conversations, modular chairs with painted messages in common areas to encourage interaction, and volunteer ambassadors to organise a year-round programme of engagement and activities. They will receive a seed funding of \$5,000 by Dsg to further develop their proposed solution. (Please refer to **Annex A** for full details on the participating teams and their proposed solutions.)

Mark Wee, Executive Director, Dsg, said: “In the increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous or VUCA world we live in, more than ever, people need to be empathic, collaborative, and creative problem solvers to tackle the many wicked challenges today. The School of X was created to enable citizens and organisations to be empowered with human-centred design skills to drive innovation and impact in their communities or simply for issues that matter to them – from challenges such as thinking about how to better use our estate’s void deck spaces, to addressing systems-level complications in healthcare practices.”

The half-day bootcamp programme for each team followed a design-centric process of shaping the challenge statement, conducting user research, generating ideas and prototypes, and user testing – to create solutions that tackle their unique challenges. Teams were paired with experienced design facilitators like Simon Siah, Innovation Consultant at National Gallery Singapore’s Y-Lab, and comprised of volunteers, residents, and locals passionate about social causes like Melissa Kwee, CEO of National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre and the children of Calvin Soh, Founder of One Kind House. Rachel Ong, Member of Parliament for West Coast GRC (Telok Blangah) hosted the bootcamp for the Telok Blangah team, while non-profit organisation My Community hosted the team at Tanglin Halt.

The community bootcamp challenge solutions were evaluated based on criteria like their relevance, desirability, feasibility, sustainability, impact and more by a distinguished panel of judges, namely Mark Wee, Executive Director of Dsg, Leslie Fountain, Executive Director (Practice) of Foolproof, and Adib Jalal, Urbanist, Educator and experienced place maker. Members of the public were also invited to vote for their favourite team and solution on the School of X Instagram page. Public voting accounted for 20 per cent of the scores.

Sharing more on the bootcamps and how they reinforce School of X’s values, Tamsin Greulich-Smith, Director of School of X, Dsg, said: “These fast-paced bootcamps show just how simple and impactful the design process can be, and are testament to the ability of all citizens to become changemakers! I believe anyone can use design to tackle their challenges – from primary school children to retirees. It’s fundamentally about people; bringing together different perspectives to better understand the problem we’re trying to solve and collaborating to create better solutions. We are proud to partner with forward-thinking organisations, who want to empower staff and stakeholders to creatively solve shared challenges, and experienced facilitators who are passionate about using design to

create positive impact for society. Together, we are building a network of resources that make design accessible to everyone. As individuals, it can feel overwhelming to solve the wicked problems we care about around us – but we can overcome these problems hand-in-hand, step-by-step, and long into the future.”

Established by Dsg to equip everyone with design skills to effect social impact, School of X provides the platform for real-world learning to take place through a collaborative approach that includes training workshops and coaching on designing, testing and implementing solutions. Typically, organisations known as ‘Challenge Sponsors’ will have a pressing public challenge that needs addressing. School of X, with its team of experienced design facilitators, will equip and empower the staff within the organisations to solve the issue, working in partnership with relevant external participants, such as customers, vendors and volunteers. By building the skills of staff to solve the challenge themselves, this approach enables the Challenge Sponsor to continue to drive innovative change after the School of X project ends.

School of X welcomes participants from diverse backgrounds regardless of their design experience, be it professionals interested in learning about design-led approaches or citizens passionate about solving community issues. Guided by the facilitators, they will learn, in a structured, straight-forward manner, to collaborate and design solutions for a specific challenge proposed by the Challenge Sponsor. These tend to be ‘wicked’ complex challenges that are not easy to solve using traditional problem-solving tools, but which are ideal for a design thinking approach.

School of X ran its first pilot with the Centre for Fathering in October 2020 and has since engaged more than 700 participants and completed 13 successful projects with Challenge Sponsors like the Sentosa Development Corporation and SG Enable, addressing various

social and business challenges. (Please refer to the **Annex B** for more details on these School of X projects.)

School of X works with Challenge Sponsors that are passionate about building empathy, creative problem-solving skills, and innovation capabilities in their workforce, and motivated to create positive impact both within and beyond their organisations. Their design briefs will provide the impetus for participants from all walks of life to be involved in driving change for good.

For more information about School of X, or to sign up as a Challenge Sponsor or participant, visit <https://www.sox.sg>.

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## **About the DesignSingapore Council**

DesignSingapore Council's (Dsg) vision is for Singapore to be an innovation-driven economy and a loveable city through design by 2025. As the national agency that promotes design, our mission is to develop the design sector, help Singapore use design for innovation and growth, and make life better in this UNESCO Creative City of Design. The Dsg is a subsidiary of the Singapore Economic Development Board. For more information, please visit [www.designsingapore.org](http://www.designsingapore.org).

## **About the School of X**

The School of X is a classroom without walls, established by DesignSingapore Council to equip everyone with collaborative design skills and design-led creative thinking to solve real-world social and business challenges, with lasting impact. Participants, design experts, and challenge sponsors will work within a framework that includes tools, workshops and more with a network of partners from the industry and public sector. For more information, please visit [www.sox.sg](http://www.sox.sg).

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## **ANNEX A: School of X Community Bootcamp Challenge Solutions**

*(\*more photos will be available upon request)*

### **I. QUEENSTOWN (TANGLIN HALT)**



- **Challenge sponsor:** My Community
- **Team lead:** Melissa Kwee, CEO, National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre
- **Design facilitators:** Tamsin Greulich-Smith, Director of SoX, Dsg, and Joanne Teh, Assistant Director of Innovation, IMDA
- **Challenge Focus:** How might we build touchpoints that sustain and grow connections when people move to the new neighbourhood?

For the seniors being displaced by the demolition of the old residential blocks in the Tanglin Halt estate, the move to their new community feels exciting but also unsettling. Among the remaining residents being relocated, some have lived in the estate for more

than 50 years and rely on a community of hawkers, shopkeepers, and neighbours as their support network.

While the relocation means access to modern new amenities for residents, there are worries about how the move will disrupt the daily routines of the elderly and their social support network, affect the future of long-time stall-owners, and potentially take a toll on their mental and physical well-being. The team sought to come up with new ideas on how we can support seniors in assimilating into and loving their new neighbourhood.

### **Solution**

Ten participants from the local community network which includes Tanglin Halt residents, identified through user research that many seniors who had already relocated still return to Tanglin Halt daily for their regular chats with friends and buy food from their favourite hawker stalls. One shared that he had lost his spectacles in his new estate, and had come back to his old neighbourhood to see if his friends could help him find them. Saddened that there was no one in his new housing block that he could talk to about this issue, the team was inspired to not only help relocated people to forge connections with strangers in their new housing estates, but also to sustain the treasured relationships from their old one.

Their solution, a 'Community without Walls', would create a neighbourhood that welcomes and helps everyone to feel at home. They proposed prompts such as posters in lifts that pose unexpected questions to stimulate serendipitous conversations and freestanding chairs with painted messages that could be moved around the common areas and void decks to encourage interaction.

Happiness Ambassadors will also be appointed within each housing block to give out Happiness Buttons to residents who need a smile and a chat. These volunteer ambassadors will also invite all residents to share their birthdays, as part of the year-round programme of engagement and activities. A communal Birthday Board will be updated with each person's birthday and passersby can add greetings and well-wishes, so residents feel valued in their community.

These solutions are meant to bring together people, structures, and activities to build community bonds. In this vision for the community, the team believes everyone will become a "QT (Queenstown) Kaki".

**Quotes from bootcamp challenge sponsor:**

- Kwek Li Yong, Executive Director, My Community: "At My Community, we shape what we do based on the collection of oral history by talking with the residents, aka user research, and such invaluable data has made our community and heritage offerings richer. What the School of X has done for the Tanglin Halt estate through this bootcamp gives us a foretaste of how design not only brings forth new and innovative solutions, it bridges communities and enriches lives."

**Quotes from bootcamp challenge lead participants:**

- A new resident of Queenstown, Melissa Kwee, also CEO, National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre: "The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge social impact on our elderly, with many feeling more isolated and lonely. In addition to dealing with the social restrictions, elderly residents of Tanglin Halt had to cope with the additional stress of relocation from a beloved neighbourhood. To support them with this transition, many community members passionately worked together to come up with ideas to help our seniors lead more engaged and meaningful lives

in their new community. I would like to see more people be inspired by this School of X challenge to collaborate and take action for a common good.”

- Joey Gan, Business Development Director for a Global Health Services Company: “Many of us who participated in the School of X bootcamp have grown up in Queenstown. We hold Tanglin Halt this estate close to our hearts and understand how hard this relocation can be for the seniors, whose everyday lives revolve around familiar spots and people in the community. It was a heartwarming and rewarding experience to put ourselves in their shoes and design new solutions to improve their lives.”

## II. TELOK BLANGAH



- **Challenge sponsor:** Rachel Ong, Member of Parliament (MP), West Coast GRC
- **Design facilitators:** Dylan Soh and Ava Soh, son and daughter of Calvin Soh, Founder of One Kind House
- **Challenge Focus:** How might we expose families to nature, so that they bond by engaging with and embracing it, and fall in love with nature so it becomes part of everyday life?

Residents of Telok Blangah take pride in the estate's abundance of lush greenery and biodiversity. The neighbourhood with its iconic Mount Faber that is linked to Telok Blangah Hill Park, Henderson Waves and HortPark, is frequented for various recreational activities, such as trekking, dining and sightseeing, where visitors get to watch the birds, squirrels and butterflies in their natural surroundings. For many of the residents, the

estate's biodiversity provides a restorative environment that uplifts their mental and emotional well-being. Yet, many deem wildlife as messy and noisy, and prefer to keep them at arms' length.

So to further build appreciation and wonder for nature in the community, residents in Telok Blangah are considering how the neighbourhood can more seamlessly integrate nature and biodiversity into their everyday life and commonly-used spaces.

### **Solution**

Rachel Ong, MP of West Coast GRC (Telok Blangah), rallied 12 participants from the GRC's resident volunteer group to participate in the bootcamp, held at the heart of Telok Blangah. The team envisaged an integrated solution that would help residents see wildlife on their doorsteps as a normal and rewarding part of everyday life. They created a multi-tiered prototype that starts from the moment you open your home's front door, where you are greeted by the lush and fragrant greenery of plants growing from mosquito-detering planters. QR codes on the sides of the planters allow residents to find out more about each plant, and where else it is growing around the estate. Specially selected plants, such as lemon balm, will naturally deter insect pests, to alleviate public concerns that wildlife can be a nuisance.

Gamification also allows interested residents to take part in nature-focused activities, such as wildlife-spotting competitions between different housing blocks. And in response to user research insights, there will be an intergenerational communal playground and activity area for both seniors and youngsters to exercise and have fun together, rather than be segregated into different areas. The play area will support community building through human connections, whilst integrating wildlife with areas for people to grow plants and monitor their progress.

The team even envisaged a community chicken coop which will allow people to share the responsibility of caring for the chickens and even the eggs they produce. An urban farm can also connect people to the source of their foods, and regular engagement activities and pop-up farm events will ensure that the space remains attractive, lively and engaging.

**Quote from bootcamp challenge sponsor:**

- Rachel Ong, MP, West Coast GRC: "Singapore is one of the world's greenest city-states, and I think we are all very blessed to have access to an island wide network of parks, gardens and nature reserves we can immerse ourselves in. But we also recognise that there is more we can do within the local community to build an appreciation for nature and protect our biodiversity. It's extremely encouraging to see so many of our community members and residents sharing their thoughtful insights and applying human-centred approaches to make our estates more liveable and loveable, by integrating the rich biodiversity around them into their lives through this bootcamp. Thank you, School of X!"

**Quote from bootcamp design facilitator:**

- Ava Soh, One Kind Block: "This bootcamp empowers the community to solve their own problems in a way that's ground up, organic and builds community. Design thinking allows them to come up with ideas in a way that's fun and not intimidating. This shows they have a hand in shaping their community. They need to see some of their ideas come to life otherwise it becomes a wasted opportunity."

**Quote from bootcamp participant:**

- Bianca Hanbury-Morris, Marketing Director, BOLT Global: "I think individuals and small communities can often feel powerless in the face of global issues like biodiversity loss and climate change. These are issues we care about deeply, but they can also feel somewhat impossible to tackle. School of X's very down-to-earth and practical approach helped us understand how to define the challenge and

develop a solution. It was also such an inspiring experience! These tools can be used by anyone and can be applied to any problem. It gave us confidence in tackling all sorts of other challenges in our community.”

### III. NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE



- **Challenge sponsor:** National Gallery Singapore
- **Design facilitator:** Simon Siah, Innovation Consultant, Y-Lab (an innovation lab of National Gallery Singapore)
- **Challenge Focus:** How might we use visual arts to help people forge loveable connections in neighbourhoods?

Cited as the "Birthplace of Modern Singapore", the Civic District is home to Singapore's thriving arts, culture, heritage, and lifestyle scene. The vibrant precinct includes the nation's most notable art galleries and restored buildings.

Visual arts have always acted as a bridge for interaction and mutual understanding, bringing together families, friends, colleagues, and even strangers. The visual arts are for

everyone, regardless of age, language or background, and can play a significant role in culture-building, community life and city planning.

As the nation emerges from the difficulties brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic, five participants including members of the Gallery staff and public sought to explore how visual arts can play a greater role in helping to forge stronger connections in neighbourhoods.

### **Solution**

From their user research, they discovered that people come to the Civic District to escape their daily grind. They enjoy being surrounded by the cultural heritage and beautiful architecture. However, what is missing is the human connection, unlike their own estates, where they can chat with friends in coffee shops and other areas.

The team was then inspired to conceptualise an augmented reality (AR) art trail, which would feature simple and plain white art installations peppered throughout. Meant to stimulate curiosity and interest, these incomplete-looking art installations will have a QR code for people to scan and be brought to an AR view that overlays visual artworks of that location, created by artists in the past. People can then share experiences from that location – like precious, fond or funny memories. Submitting comments will feed the human engagement monitor of the artwork, which then triggers a change in the appearance of the installation.

If others read your comment and like it, or reply to it, the human engagement monitor records more activity, and the artwork will evolve further. The greater the number of connections made and interactions recorded through the portal, the more the artwork changes until eventually, the finished piece is illuminated!

**Quote from bootcamp challenge sponsor and design facilitator:**

- Simon Siah, Innovation Consultant, Y-Lab: "Art plays a big role in uniting, healing and forging connections, especially as we deal with an ongoing pandemic. The School of X bootcamp was a timely opportunity for us to better understand the role of art for the Civic district community primarily made up of a transient population who travels for work and play. We thoroughly enjoyed the conversations we had on the ground. The insights gleaned will help us better understand how visual arts can be used in creating a Museum without walls inspiring a more thoughtful, creative and inclusive society, and enable us to shape more relevant and engaging programmes."

**Quote from bootcamp participant:**

- Parul Kapur, Student: "When we got started, we found it a little difficult to narrow in on exactly the nature of the problem we wanted to solve, but going out to the streets around the Gallery and asking passers-by for their perspectives, quickly enabled us to see the challenge and the opportunity more clearly. It was fascinating to see the team members push each other out of their comfort zones to ideate and work together to shape the solution, which finally was a combination of all our different concepts. On my own, I doubt I could have thought of this, but through the process we learned how to collaborate, iterate and keep refining our ideas so that we ended up with something really original!"

## **ANNEX B: School of X Case Studies**

### **I. CENTRE FOR FATHERING – STRENGTHENING THE FATHER-CHILD BOND**

Project date: October 2020



The School of X ran its first pilot programme with the Centre for Fathering (CFF) as a Challenge Sponsor, to help the organisation innovate its business model to strengthen financial resilience and reimagine outreach strategies so that families in need are better supported, particularly in view of disruption to service delivery during the pandemic, and ensure that engagement is sustained throughout the life of the child rather than in episodic periods. The pilot run included a six-part workshop, where 26 participants were involved in user research, and generation of ideas and prototypes. Subsequently, they were given the opportunity to trial their ideas under the guidance of design facilitators, who helped them identify areas for iteration and understand the implementation process better.

The programme culminated in a range of solutions that aim to tackle the issue of service continuity and financial resilience. For instance, a curated 'Dads Field Pack' was proposed

to support new fathers. The kit sought to alleviate their parenthood concerns with a range of resources designed to guide and support fathers during these intimidating early days of parenthood, including practical tips on how best to support the mother during her early post-natal days, and available government subsidies. The idea even caught the attention of the Prime Minister's Office, and on New Year's Day 2021, Minister Indranee Rajah gave out field packs to fathers of babies born at the KK Women's and Children's Hospital.

Participants also designed novel corporate engagement models to create new revenue streams for CFF, and refreshing family engagement activities to encourage greater family bonding.

#### **Feedback from the Challenge Sponsor:**

- Bryan Tan, CEO, CFF: "We have been around for more than two decades and felt it was timely for us to examine how the landscape for parenting, specifically fathering, will be like in the next 10 to 20 years. The School of X programme has imbued greater creative confidence among the team and taught us new human-centred approaches that I believe will be beneficial to our lives, our beneficiaries and our communities for years to come."

#### **About Centre for Fathering**

Centre for Fathering (CFF) is a non-profit organisation founded to promote active and involved fathering, and address issues caused by fatherlessness in Singapore. The organisation aims to empower more fathers to be better role models and an enduring inspiration to their children. Since 2015, CFF has been the driving force behind Singapore's nation-wide fathering movement – DADs for Life, which seeks to inspire and

mobilise fathers to become more involved with and serve as a good influence towards their children. For more information, please visit <https://fathers.com.sg/>.

## II. SENTOSA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – REIMAGINING THE BEACH EXPERIENCE

Project date: March 2021



Amid COVID-19 restrictions, the beaches and green spaces of Sentosa have provided much-needed respite for Singaporeans, attracting guests seeking to relax and unwind. With the safety and wellbeing of guests being a top priority, the challenge faced by Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) has thus been to ensure that guests continue to enjoy a great experience on Sentosa’s beaches, while adhering to the prevailing Safe Management Measures (SMM).

School of X embarked on a project with SDC to tackle this challenge not just to enhance guest experiences during the pandemic, but also to transform beach experiences for many years to come.

The three-day workshop brought together SDC staff and SDC’s Island Partners (i.e. business establishments in Sentosa), as they collectively brainstormed new challenge statements and conducted user experience research, gathering thoughts and feedback

from guests. Design facilitators guided the participants to generate new user-centred solutions, produce prototypes, and get buy-in for them.

The workshop culminated in fresh and exciting proposals that leveraged on opportunities to improve the guest experience. For instance, one of the teams proposed providing 'Pick n' Go' bags containing useful beach items such as beach mats and sunscreen, and creating sand blasters, to enhance the beach experience and allow guests to leave the beach sand-free respectively. Participants also identified opportunities to organise "rainy-day activities" on the island, and offer work-from-beach packages that would include access to fully equipped work pods at the beach, for workers pining for a change of environment. SDC is currently studying the proposals and will implement selected ones progressively from January 2022.

#### **Feedback from the Challenge Sponsor:**

- Thien Kwee Eng, CEO, SDC: "COVID-19 has presented us with an opportunity to rethink and reimagine the beach experience for our guests. The School of X team came at an opportune time to partner SDC and our Island Partners in facilitating the exchange of information and perspectives on guest experiences, conducting user research, and ideating solutions to enhance the overall beach experience in Sentosa."
- Mira Bharin, Divisional Director, Marketing & Guest Experience, SDC: "Developing user-centric offerings is one of the key facets of enhancing guest experiences, and we are pleased to partner School of X on the workshops as part of our journey to further enhance Sentosa's offerings. Through the workshops, we conducted on-site experiential research and pilots which allowed us to better understand our guests and their perspectives. Apart from enjoying meaningful interactions with guests, we also garnered ideas on how we can welcome more

guests to Sentosa, especially on weekdays. These insights will support us in curating even more enjoyable experiences.”

### **About Sentosa Development Corporation**

Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) was established on 1 September 1972 as a Statutory Board under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Its charter since inception has been to oversee the development, management, marketing and promotion of the island of Sentosa as a resort destination for locals and tourists. Sentosa is a premier leisure and lifestyle destination with an exciting array of themed attractions, award-winning spa retreats, lush rainforests, golden sandy beaches, resort accommodations, world-renowned championship golf courses, exclusive waterfront residences and a deep-water yachting marina, making Sentosa a vibrant island resort with multi-faceted appeal catering to both leisure and business visitors. SDC also owns Singapore’s only cable car sky network which connects from mainland Singapore to Sentosa and across the island to its western end at Siloso Point. Making Sentosa its home, too, is Singapore’s first integrated resort, Resorts World Sentosa, which operates South East Asia’s first Universal Studios theme park and the S.E.A. Aquarium – one of the largest aquariums in the world.

For more information, please visit [www.sentosa.gov.sg](http://www.sentosa.gov.sg)

### **III. SG ENABLE – PREPARING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FOR THE FUTURE ECONOMY**

Project date: March 2021



There are eight Sheltered Workshops in Singapore that offer employment and vocational training to adults with disabilities who do not possess the competencies or skills for open employment. During the Circuit Breaker in 2020, many of these workshops struggled to maintain operations, pushing the social services sector to rethink future resilience and impact strategies. As a recommendation emerging from the National Council of Social Service Beyond COVID-19 Taskforce, School of X shaped and ran a programme with key stakeholders from the sector, to address this challenge, for which SG Enable was the Challenge Sponsor.

The two-week, six-session programme brought together participants from SG Enable and social service agencies, including SPD, Bizlink Centre Singapore Ltd, and Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS), to align across all the Sheltered

Workshops and create shared design statements to guide the agencies as they work towards becoming sustainable and pandemic-proof.

With the counsel of design facilitators, the partner organisations created shared design statements that focused on fostering stronger collaboration to improve the career paths of persons with disabilities; mobilising key stakeholders more effectively to create and sustain a transition roadmap to enable clients to become more self-sufficient; and ensuring comprehensive collection and analysis of data to future-proof actions for Sheltered Workshops.

### **Feedback from the Challenge Sponsor/Participants:**

- Ron Loh, Assistant Chief Executive, SG Enable: "School of X has enabled us to have fresh perspectives on the work that we do, leveraging design thinking approaches to motivate various social service agencies to re-think the fundamental operating and business models for Sheltered Workshops. . The workshop gave us the opportunity to take a step back, distill the challenges we are facing and better frame the problem areas that we should collectively address."
- Adrian Mok, Deputy Director, MINDS: "While the pandemic affected our organisation, it has also provided the impetus for us to rethink and re-strategise how we do things. The School of X design facilitators have been guiding us to think from the users' perspective, which is very useful in considering their needs and pain points, so that we can find the right solutions to problems."

### **About SG Enable**

SG Enable seeks to enable persons with disabilities to live, learn, work and play in an inclusive society. The focal agency for disability in Singapore, it raises awareness on

disability issues and facilitates access to disability schemes and services. It brings partners together to share knowledge, collaborate and innovate, striving towards a common goal of building an inclusive Singapore and enabling lives. Set up by the Ministry of Social and Family Development in 2013, it is a registered charity and an Institution of a Public Character.

For more information, visit [www.sgenable.sg](http://www.sgenable.sg)

#### **IV. NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE – HUMANISING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

Project date: August – September 2021



In July this year, the National Council of Social Service announced two new initiatives at the annual Social Service Summit, one of which was the Industry Digital Plan for Social Services (IDPSS), to support transformation efforts for the sector.

The IDPSS is a digital transformation roadmap that seeks to advance the social service sector’s digital capabilities progressively over three years, starting from 2021. This is especially timely for a high-touch sector, where human interactions are critical, yet there is a critical and urgent need to digitalise processes and leverage technology to deliver services – without losing personal connections. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly accelerated the need for social service agencies (SSAs) to rethink the way they operate and remain effective in their work.

In alignment with the IDPSS, School of X worked with the NCSS Pioneer Group Programme to develop a capability building and solutioning programme specifically

designed to help SSAs design digital transformation roadmaps with a human-centred design core.

After all, starting with a design thinking lens enables the plans to be developed in the most relevant way for the organisation and their beneficiaries, by understanding existing pain points and unmet needs, and ensuring that the technology enhances customer experience and outcomes.

School of X delivered a two-day programme for 19 participants, representing several SSAs that were selected by NCSS as they had strong ideas for their digital transformation efforts. The SSAs, namely Care Corner Singapore Ltd, New Hope Community Services, TOUCH Community Services and Fei Yue Community Services, embarked on the programme with clear aspirations, and the School of X team helped them to better identify their stakeholder needs and integrate them into the roadmaps.

The programme was carefully designed to enable participants to understand how to integrate human-centred design into their digital transformation plans, with both training and coaching components to enable the SSAs to learn whilst being supported in the development of their roadmaps.

At the end of the programme, each SSA had developed a customer journey blueprint, which will underpin their respective digital transformation roadmap and create a clear path for them to chart their next steps.

**Feedback from the Challenge Sponsor:**

- Mr Bruce Liew, Director, Sector Digitalisation & Transformation, NCSS: "As SSAs shift from traditional high-touch service delivery to technology-enabled service

delivery, they would have to incorporate high-tech with human touch to better serve end-users. We are grateful to have School of X as a partner to guide SSAs in taking a person-centred approach in their digitalisation journey – to collectively increase service users' quality of life.”

### **About National Council of Social Service**

NCSS is the umbrella body for over 450-member social service organisations in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest is the fundraising and engagement arm of NCSS and Social Service Institute (SSI) is the human capital development arm of NCSS.