

MEDIA STATEMENT

SME Centres' Group-based Upgrading initiative to help SMEs solve common business challenges and adopt technology gain traction with 22 projects in a year

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1. The Group-based Upgrading (GBU) initiative, announced in 2017, has resulted in a total of 22 projects arising from the SME Centres' efforts to aggregate common capability needs of SMEs and help to facilitate group-based solutions for mass deployment. These projects, which include both digital and non-digital solutions, have since helped over 100 participating businesses to improve their sales and revenue, productivity, customer service levels and shopping experiences, and are projected to benefit another 200 SMEs by the end of 2018.
2. GBU projects resulted from Business Advisors' interactions with SMEs which surfaced similar business challenges and issues faced by businesses in the same locality or trade. The initiative adopts a group-based solutions approach in tackling these common business challenges. Individually, SME owners may face resource constraints in their capability and growth efforts. By pooling resources and ideas together, SME Centres can help these businesses discover collective solutions to tackle common problems and overcome the challenges together.
3. One such ongoing trade-based GBU project that started in November 2017 is led by SME Centre@Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) for the tailoring sector. The project aims to help businesses in this trade raise productivity levels by using a 3D body scanner, where details like body measurements are captured directly into a customer database through the use of the body scanner. This reduces human errors and the time needed to manually record the appropriate measurements. On top of that, an order management system is also being introduced to help speed up and track the order taking process, and enable easier retrieval of customers' orders. This GBU project is targeting to reach out to 30 tailoring businesses by end of 2018.
4. Another example of a locality-based project that started in November 2017 is the One Kampong Glam GBU initiative by SME Centre@Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SMCCI) and the merchant association One Kampong Gelam. This digital makeover project of Kampong Glam involves identifying technologies to uplift the appeal of the area by creating a richer and more immersive retail experience. The move is timely given consumers' increasing preference of shopping online which impacted the businesses of traditional merchants. The project introduces an integrated point-of-sale, CRM and inventory management system to help improve the productivity of the merchants. And with the customer data collected, businesses are able to use data analytics to enhance the shopping experience in this heritage-rich area and encourage footfall to the stores. Currently, there are more than 10 businesses participating in this GBU project, and the project is expected to see 100 merchants come on board by end of 2018.

Progress of SME Centres

5. Introduced in 2013, [SME Centres](#) are one-stop centres set up to provide SMEs with free business diagnosis and advice, capability workshops and guidance on assistance schemes.
6. Collectively, SME Centres assist over 20,000 SMEs every year through face-to-face business advisory sessions, capability workshops and outreach events. Most of the SMEs helped by the centres were micro and small enterprises with less than S\$1 million in annual revenue, and between S\$1 million and S\$10 million in annual revenue respectively.
7. Popular areas that SMEs sought help on are in new business set-up, business capabilities diagnosis and advice on government assistance programmes. In 2017, some 1,100 SMEs embarked on and completed capability development projects, which nearly doubled the number of SMEs in 2013. Of these SMEs, 70% embarked on some form of technology adoption, such as point-of-sale system, customer relationship management system, HR IT system, etc.

Moving Forward

8. With increasing digital disruption across various sectors SMEs will need to build stronger digital capabilities and actively adopt technology to grow their businesses. SMEs that need assistance to upgrade or transform their business can approach the SME Centres and their Business Advisors for free one-on-one business advisory and business diagnosis, as well as for help to strengthen their capabilities through capability workshops.
9. Moving forward, SME Centres will be driving more impactful group-based upgrading projects to help SMEs, including businesses in the heartlands, to solve common business problems and adopt appropriate technology solutions. SME Centres will also be deepening their scope of business diagnosis, advisory services and capability workshops in areas such as:
 - a. Digitalisation and e-Commerce
 - Help SMEs to recognise the need to digitalise and embark on e-Commerce
 - Curate available digital solutions and e-Commerce platforms and make recommendations to SMEs
 - Organise specific digital solution and e-Commerce workshops
 - b. Internationalisation

For SMEs new to internationalisation,

 - Organise basic export/import and market entry advisory workshops
 - Give basic market advisory (starting with ASEAN markets), and provide advice on relevant internationalisation tools and programmes
 - Connect them to Enterprise Singapore's [overseas centres/Plug and Play Network \(PPN\)](#)¹ partners
10. SMEs keen to make an appointment with Business Advisors at various SME Centres can visit www.smeportal.sg/smecentres or call 6898 1800 for more information.

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¹ Enterprise Singapore's Plug & Play Network (PPN) is designed to provide in-market assistance to Singapore SMEs. This network of in-market partners aims to address challenges faced by SMEs when venturing overseas in the areas of market knowledge and insights, business leads and business matching, and co-working spaces options. www.enterprisesg.gov.sg/PPN

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About Enterprise Singapore

Enterprise Singapore is the government agency championing enterprise development. Our vision for Singapore is a vibrant economy with globally competitive Singapore enterprises.

International Enterprise Singapore and SPRING came together on 1 April 2018 as a single agency to form Enterprise Singapore. Our mission is to grow stronger Singapore companies by building capabilities and accessing global opportunities, thereby creating good jobs for Singaporeans.

We work with committed companies to build capabilities, innovate and internationalise. We also support the growth of Singapore as a hub for global trading and startups. As the national standards and accreditation body, we continue to build trust in Singapore's products and services through quality and standards.

Visit www.enterprisesg.gov.sg for more information.

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