

**SG YOUTH FORUM 2025 OPENING REMARKS AND PANEL DIALOGUE:
“FROM SG60 TO SG100: SHAPING SINGAPORE’S FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE”
6 SEPTEMBER 2025, 1.15PM TO 1.55PM
SANDS EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTRE, HELICONIA BALLROOM**

The session commenced with Opening Remarks by Mr David Neo, Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, followed by a panel dialogue.

Opening Remarks

- Acting Minister Neo said that SG60 was a significant milestone and Singapore became a nation out of necessity rather than choice. He said that Singapore had faced challenges including racial riots, financial crises, and COVID-19 and each generation had played its part for Singapore to reach today's achievements, and youths had shared their desire to take an active role in leadership.
- Acting Minister Neo said that SG Youth Plan engagements organised throughout the year had gathered over 200,000 responses from more than 50,000 youths and stakeholders. He said that the plan identified key youth aspirations: (i) to redefine success beyond traditional metrics, (ii) desire to contribute meaningfully to society, and (iii) to build stronger connections across communities.
- Acting Minister Neo said that youths faced an increasingly complex and uncertain world, and the government would do more to support youths, help them pursue their dreams, and increase opportunities for them to shape the future.
- Acting Minister Neo encouraged youth to contribute to the SG Youth Plan, by developing a plan for youth, by youth, to build a shared future together.

Acting Minister Neo's full speech can be referenced here: [\[link\]](#)

Panel Dialogue

Approximately 500 youth participants gathered to engage in a panel discussion involving the following panellists and moderator:

- Mr David Neo, Acting Minister, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth
- Mr Hajamohideen Shafeeq, Vice President, IMYouth
- Ms Constance Han Xin Ying, Undergraduate, Nanyang Technological University
- Ms Elly Estiqah, Student, Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- [Moderator] Mr Rishi Budhrani, Professional Host

Key Insights from Panel Discussion:

i) Looking Ahead to SG100

Participants asked (via Slido) how Singapore might redefine success beyond good grades and stable jobs.

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- Acting Minister Neo said that Singapore's journey to SG100 required youths to co-create and shape national policies alongside government and community. He said that platforms like the SG Youth Plan, Youth Panels, and Youth Expedition Project had enabled youths to be heard and to lead, and the challenge was how youths could deepen impact and broaden reach.
- Mr Shafeeq said that a youth within an organisation he volunteered with wanted to become a bus captain, which he observed was rare among youths. He said that this rarity stemmed from societal expectations that consistently pushed youths toward sectors like Information Technology and banking, causing alternative career paths to be undervalued or overlooked.
- Acting Minister Neo said that every youth could contribute through their career, ground-up initiatives, or community leadership, and their actions taken today would lay the foundation for the Singapore envisioned by youths at SG100.

ii) Challenges in Youth-Government Partnership

The moderator asked what were some challenges the 3P (People, Private, Public) sectors faced in engaging youths.

- Acting Minister Neo said that stronger collaboration between the 3P sectors was required to create more inclusive opportunities for youths. He said that a stronger partnership would combine ground-up passion from youths, institutional support, and industry expertise.
- Acting Minister Neo said that bridging barriers through trust required building partnerships that turned feedback into action, which would address youths’ concerns about feeling unheard against the government’s need to balance diverse voices.

Participants asked (via Slido) about support systems for independent artists (e.g. sustainable platforms aside from grants) and how Singapore could continue to foster an independent art scene given the recent closure of The Projector.

- Acting Minister Neo shared that the government could serve as a catalyst for partnerships with businesses and community groups. He said that it was essential for artists to master the business aspects of creative careers, such as understanding production economics, copyright considerations, and financial planning.
- Acting Minister Neo said that the SG Culture Pass was an example of tools that broadened public engagement with Singapore's creative scene. He shared the importance of a cultural shift, where Singaporeans recognise arts and culture as essential elements of their national identity.

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Participants asked (via Slido) how youth voices influenced policy or government decisions, and what were some opportunities to help youths understand community challenges and develop more meaningful solutions.

- Acting Minister Neo said that the government's commitment went beyond listening to youth voices and extended to providing resources to help turn their ideas into reality. He said the Young ChangeMakers (YCM) Grant was an example of how youth voices supported over 150 projects involving almost 1,400 youths and provided funding of up to \$10,000 for youth-led projects. He also cited the Youth Panels as a platform for youths to co-create policy issues with government agencies.

iii) SG100 - What are the opportunities ahead

Participants asked (via Slido) how youths could embody moving from a "We-First" to a "You-First" society.

- Acting Minister Neo said that the "You-First" philosophy was a progression of empathy and care that started with immediate family and then extended to friends, neighbours, and strangers in need. He said that this was a shift from individualism towards a society where people empathised with others and took action to help.
- Ms Elly said that personal passions could be transformed into community-building projects. She shared that her friend leveraged his passion for e-sports to organise community events that brought people with similar interests together, and encouraged youths to think how they could use their passions to make Singapore a better place.
- Mr Shafeeq said he observed that some youths viewed volunteering as a “clocking culture” to accumulate co-curricular activities points then stopping after graduation and returning around 55 years old to give back to society. He encouraged youths to make volunteering a consistent lifestyle choice.

The moderator asked the panellists what were some tools or platforms that supported them in turning their ideas into action, and how youth engagement could transform from sharing issues to active problem-solving.

- Ms Han said that youths had a responsibility to mentor their juniors and “pay it forward”, creating a sustainable cycle of guidance that ensured future generations received equal or better opportunities.
- Acting Minister Neo said that a "Think Big, Start Small, Go Far" philosophy was essential for youths who had ideas but did not take action. He said that youths could access grants, mentorship and networks such as Youth Corps Singapore, YCM and SG Youth Plan initiatives to enable them to turn ideas into reality. He said that these actions reflected a shift towards a “democracy of deeds”, a system where change came through action and youth-led initiatives, instead of consultation.

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Participants asked (via Slido) how the National Youth Council (NYC) could take a more ground-up approach in engaging youths, and what would inspire more youth to take the lead in community initiatives.

- Acting Minister Neo said that youth engagement needed to expand beyond the usual group of active participants to reach broader segments of Singaporean youth. He said that showcasing tangible outcomes from youth-led initiatives and ensuring awareness of, and access to support networks could encourage greater youth participation.

Closing Remarks

- Acting Minister Neo said that having a sense of belonging to Singapore or feeling Singaporean often boiled down to people and their relationships with each other. He encouraged participants to aspire towards putting others first and empathising with them to build a Singapore that everyone would want to be part of.

Notes recorded by the NYC Youth Leadership and Engagement Team.

SG YOUTH FORUM 2025 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (CAREERS)
6 SEPTEMBER 2025, 2.30PM TO 3.15PM
SANDS EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTRE, SARACA BALLROOM

On 6 September 2025, as part of the SG Youth Forum, 40 youth participants gathered to engage in deep-dive discussions on the topic of Careers, with the aim of sharing actionable insights that will contribute to the SG Youth Plan. The session covered youth anxieties about employment, expectations of existing support systems and enablers that could build long-term career confidence.

The overarching question for the session was **‘How might we support young people to feel confident and be prepared for their careers in an uncertain and fast changing world?’**

Key Insights of Focus Group Discussion:

Career Ambiguities

Issue: Young people still feel uncertain about their careers despite overall strong labour market conditions. Existing initiatives such as internships or traineeships may meet or fall short of youths’ expectations.

- Participants said they face intense competition in saturated fields and worry about how to stand out among peers with similar interests and qualifications, particularly when many peers share similar career aspirations.
- Participants shared that many young people experience the impostor syndrome, questioning if they are good enough for their chosen career path or if they can make a real difference in fields that are already saturated with many qualified professionals.
- Participants said that the transition from structured education to independent job searching is overwhelming and they feel unprepared to navigate the workforce.
- Participants said that job market volatility and tough job search persist. Participants shared stories of graduates applying to 30 to 100 job positions but only getting 2 to 3 responses.
- Participants shared that many jobs ask for at least three years of experience, even from fresh graduates, and this adds to the anxiety about transitioning from youth to adulthood.
- Participants said that financial pressures remain significant due to Singapore’s high cost of living and they struggle to balance dream jobs with financial needs. Participants also shared that they are concerned about career progression in an increasingly unstable job market.
- Participants shared difficulty in identifying roles that align to their long-term goals, and they have concerns about the longevity and stability of their roles after securing employment.
- Participants said that AI and rapid technology changes create fear about job security. Participants shared concerns that skills acquired today may become obsolete within two years and that even completing multiple internships does not guarantee employment.
- Participants shared that internship experiences vary significantly, noting that some companies assign meaningful work while others limit interns to routine administrative tasks. Participants shared that they value hands-on experiences that complement theoretical learning.

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- Participants said that they value the quality of the internship experience over the name of the company. However, some participants acknowledged that having a well-known brand on the resume can help make a stronger impression with future employers.
- Participants acknowledged that the Graduate Industry Traineeship (GRIT) offers improved compensation compared to regular internships, but shared concerns about the programme's sustainability beyond 2026 and whether stipends are adequate for older graduates requiring CPF contributions.
- Participants said that existing or new programmes should address the gap between the expectations of educators and employers. Participants shared that employers increasingly expect fresh graduates to have work experience, making structured traineeships valuable.

Discovering Confidence Enablers

Issue: What interventions could help youths build long-term confidence in their careers and thrive in the future workplace?

- Participants said that career guidance lacks diverse industry representation as career talks often feature professionals from mainstream industries and fewer of those from less conventional pathways.
- Participants said that they want authentic career information that reflects both the positive and challenging aspects of a role. Participants shared that they prefer hands-on exposure and job shadowing opportunities to gain realistic understanding of what the work actually involves.
- Participants said that career exploration should start early, with secondary school being an appropriate time to begin exploring different career options through structured programmes.
- Participants said that resources provided by the government are difficult to access, with participants feeling overwhelmed by the numerous options. Participants shared the need for better guidance as structured education leaves them unprepared for independent resource navigation.
- Participants said it is crucial to connect with industry professionals and seniors who have navigated similar career paths as they can share real challenges and opportunities.
- Participants said that structured guidance during transition periods is essential, particularly from secondary to tertiary education and from graduation to entering the workforce. Participants shared that youths want access to career counsellors who can help evaluate different pathways.
- Participants said that job taster programmes should provide realistic previews of career expectations, and these programmes should occur at strategic periods such as before entering Polytechnic, after completing Junior College, or during University.
- Participants said that skill development courses should include both soft skills that can be used anywhere and industry-specific skills that prepare them for real jobs.
- Participants said that youths want better training on how to find and navigate resources on their own, so they can upskill more effectively.

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- Participants said that support for AI and technology should focus on how to apply these tools to put into practice. Participants said that they want guidance on appropriate and effective ways to use technology in real-life situations.
- Participants said they want authentic networking opportunities and third-party support systems to facilitate industry connections, as they rarely receive responses when reaching out directly to companies.

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SG YOUTH FORUM 2025 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (YOUTH VOICE)
6 SEPTEMBER 2025, 3.15PM TO 4PM
SANDS EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTRE, SARACA BALLROOM

On 6 September 2025, as part of the SG Youth Forum, 33 youth participants gathered to engage in deep-dive discussions on the topic of Youth Voice, with the aim of sharing actionable insights that will contribute to the SG Youth Plan. The session covered motivations and barriers to civic participation, ways to enhance engagement accessibility and meaningfulness, and preferred platforms for sustained youth involvement.

The overarching question for the session was **‘How can we make youths more willing and able to participate in government and civic engagements?’**

Key insights of Focus Group Discussion:

Understanding Motivations and Barriers

Issue: Reasons behind youths' willingness or reluctance to participate in civic engagements.

On youths' willingness to participate in civic engagements:

- Participants shared a strong desire to contribute meaningfully to Singapore and give back to the community, which drives youth participation.
- Participants also shared additional benefits of participating in civic engagements, such as building connections and forming friendships with like-minded individuals. Participants said that youths seek like-minded individuals to work together and drive collective efforts.
- Participants said that the majority of youths are motivated to voice honest thoughts and champion causes they care about, especially those they feel are under-discussed.
- Participants said that small actions can still make a difference, and when paired with trust that the government has the resources to drive bigger national changes, this motivates youths to get involved.
- Participants shared that seeing the real-time impact of their feedback and having greater transparency between government and citizens motivates youths to participate more actively.
- Participants said that youths are drawn to civic engagement opportunities where they can learn from others' experiences, gain exposure to different communities, and better understand real issues on the ground.

On barriers to civic engagement:

- Participants said that they are deterred by the fear of being judged when speaking about their passions, and a reluctance to leave their comfort zones to meet new people, as they often feel that they lack sufficient knowledge to contribute meaningfully.
- Participants said that another key barrier is the lack of awareness about existing opportunities, which prevents interested youths from participating in available programmes and engagements.
- Participants said that civic engagement can sometimes feel like an echo chamber, with the same people showing up at multiple events. Participants shared that this may create

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fatigue and make them question the value of attending when the same viewpoints are repeatedly shared.

- Participants shared that events are perceived to be too intimidating or formal for people not already in existing volunteering communities. Participants said that the formal settings, expectation to dress professionally, and high-level discussions make these engagements feel inaccessible to youths who have no prior civic engagement experience, leaving them feeling out of place.
- Participants said that they doubt their ability to make meaningful contributions, and questioned how much they can actually contribute to policy-making and whether their voices would be genuinely heard.
- Participants said they tend to prioritise activities that offer direct personal benefits, such as career prospects or academic achievements, over civic engagements that may not offer immediate personal returns.
- Participants shared that many youths are reluctant to participate due to fear of standing out from their social circles. Participants shared that conservative attitudes from the people around them make youths afraid of being labeled as different for engaging in causes that others might not understand or value.

Experience and Relevance

Issue: What would make civic engagements more accessible, meaningful and empowering for youths?

- Participants said that clear outcomes and transparent feedback systems are essential to sustain interest. Participants said that they want to see how their inputs are genuinely considered and adopted by government agencies, rather than ignored.
- Participants said that better outreach is needed to reach untapped youths, particularly non-elite secondary schools who are typically underrepresented, to diversify participation and ensure fair access regardless of educational background.
- Participants suggested different levels of participation based on age, with younger participants focusing on learning and sharing their views, and older youths taking on more active roles in developing and implementing solutions.
- Participants shared that learning journeys to social service areas like inclusive villages were highly valued, as seeing problems firsthand has a greater impact than hearing about them through news or interviews.
- Participants said that civic activities should cater to different personality types. For example, participants said that some may prefer sharing views through surveys instead of speaking up in big groups, while others may feel more comfortable joining smaller events with friends. Participants said that these alternative formats can help more youths take part.
- Participants suggested incorporating civic discussions into school curricula as a way to reach more youths. Participants said that many students currently show little interest in civic discussions.

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- Participants suggested monthly town hall meetings in each constituency for residents to discuss everyday concerns like cost of living in order to make civic engagement more accessible.
- Participants said that youth engagement needs more creative, interactive formats like gamified activities rather than just formal discussions, incorporating elements to make engagements more interesting.

Enablers and Future Ideas

Issue: Types of engagement platforms youths prefer and how can these better encourage sustained participation.

- Participants said that there should be both online and face-to-face options to accommodate different preferences. Participants cited the Young ChangeMakers x SG Youth Forum Participatory Budgeting Exercise as a positive example that offered multiple engagement formats.
- Participants said smaller community-based engagements are strongly preferred over large centralised gatherings. Participants said that casual settings may be more effective for engagement than formal venues which can intimidate participants.
- Participants said that forums which can allow anonymity enable participants to share opinions more openly as ideas will more likely be discussed based on their merit rather than being influenced by who proposed them.
- Participants suggested having direct representation in Parliament similar to the Committee for Minority Rights, to ensure youth voices are heard at the highest level of government.
- Participants said they want better integration between government programmes and educational institutions to identify and support passionate youth, rather than relying on current structures that may lack adequate support.

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