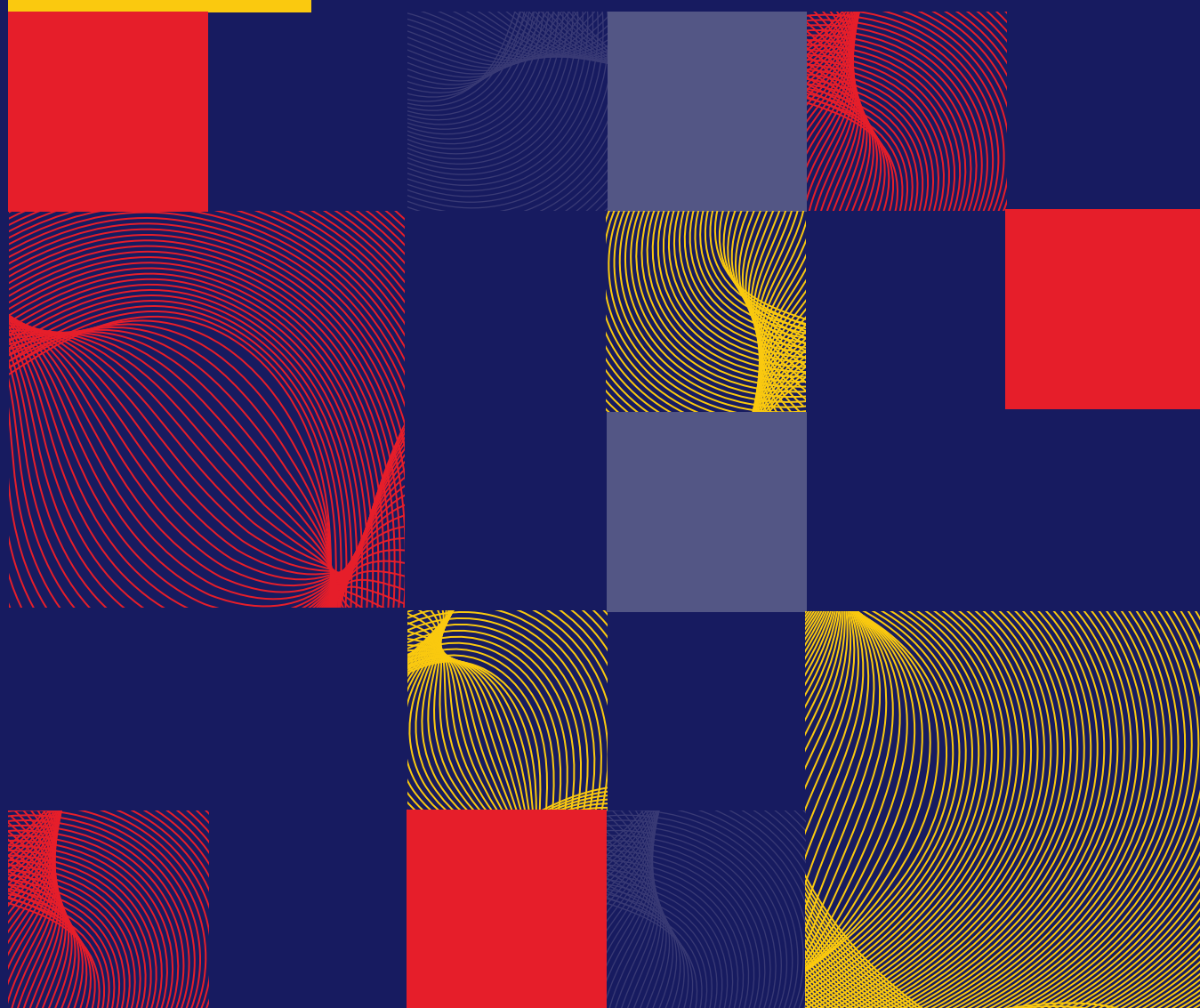
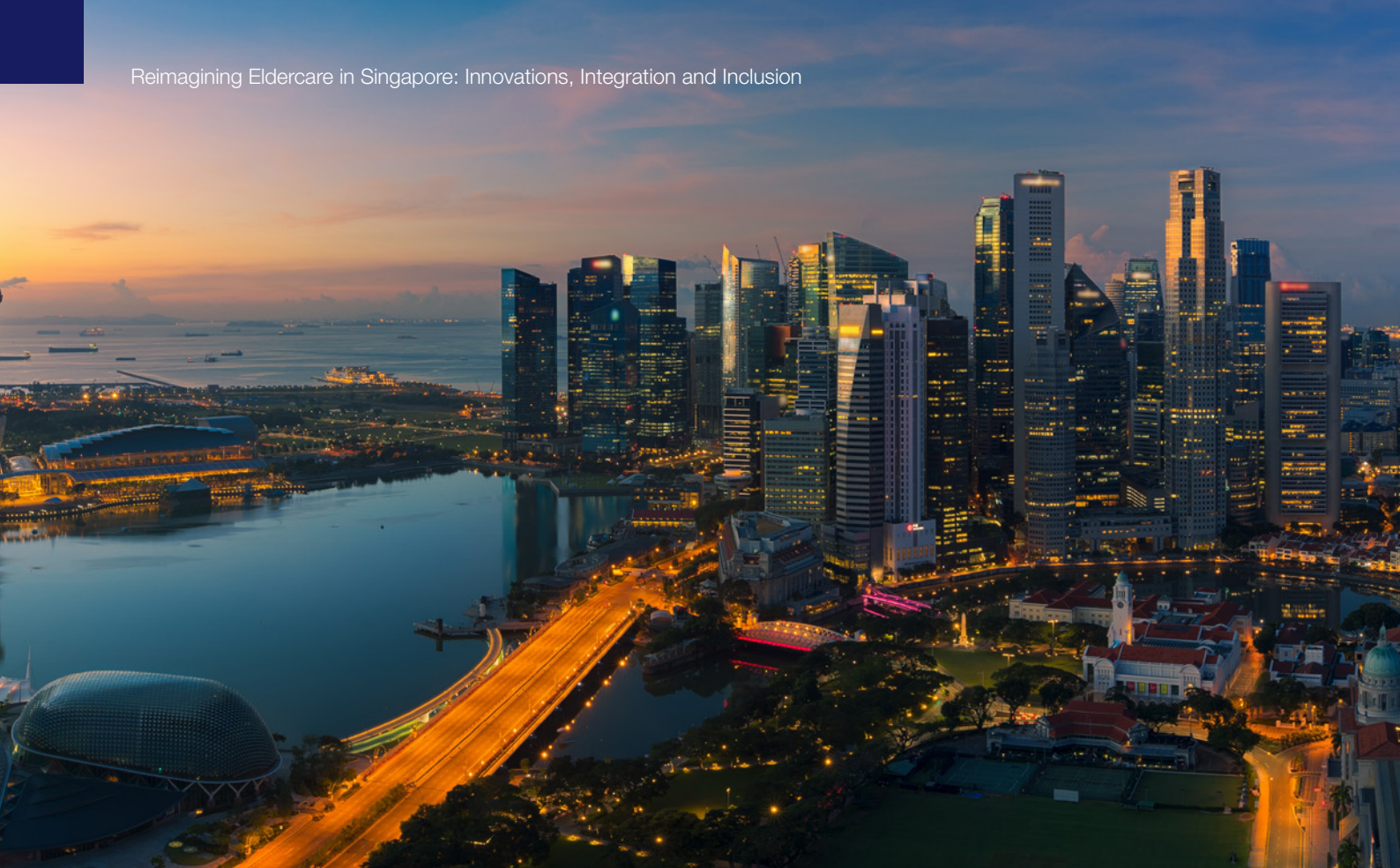


Future Ready Business Series 2025

# Reimagining Eldercare in Singapore: Innovations, Integration and Inclusion

Singapore

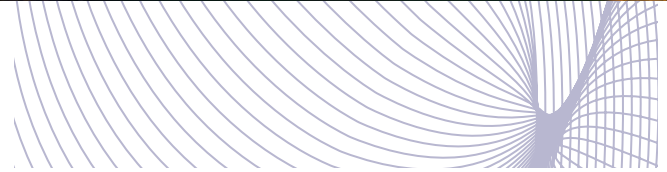




## About the series

Through the Future Ready Business Series, RMIT's College of Business and Law connects local business leaders with its growing Alumni community. The program provides a platform to network, exchange knowledge, and learn from global experts in business, technology, and social impact.

Launched in 2020 to provide the RMIT alumni business community with practical advice to respond to the challenges created by the pandemic, the "Business Transformation in Challenging Times" webinar series attracted alumni from across the globe, including Australia, Spain, Vietnam, and Singapore.



The series was rebranded as the *Future Ready Business Series* in 2022 and provides the global alumni network, business leaders and local government bodies with valuable insights into emerging business trends and the evolving global marketplace through in-person events.

Since its inception, there have been 33 initiatives in this series, held in Australia, Vietnam, Singapore, India, China, and Indonesia.

This paper shares insights drawn from a recent Future Ready Business Series event hosted by RMIT's College of Business and Law in collaboration with the Singapore Red Cross. The event brought together leaders from government, academia, and industry to explore one central question:

***How can innovation, integration, and inclusion reshape the future of eldercare in Singapore?***

Singapore's rapidly ageing population is fundamentally reshaping the way communities, healthcare systems, and policymakers approach wellbeing, independence, and social connection. With life expectancy now reaching 83.5 years, Singaporeans face not only longer lives but also the challenge of extending healthy living into these extra years. By 2030, one in four citizens will be aged 65 or older, marking Singapore as one of the world's fastest-ageing societies.<sup>1</sup>

This demographic transformation calls for new models of care that support autonomy and quality of life, beyond conventional medical or institutional approaches. In response, national policy has pivoted strongly through initiatives such as Healthier SG, which shifts healthcare delivery away from curative care and toward prevention and integrated community support.<sup>2</sup> The Age Well SG programme extends this vision, representing a coordinated, multi-ministry strategy to build communities that help seniors to age well in familiar environments.<sup>3</sup>

Singapore's efforts are connected to global and regional frameworks, most notably the World Health Organization's Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), which encourages cities and countries to place healthy ageing at the centre of policy and innovation.<sup>4</sup> Regionally, the ASEAN Secretariat's Regional Plan of Action for Ageing (2023–2030) emphasises community-driven empowerment and collaboration to create resilient, inclusive societies.<sup>5</sup>

Reflecting on these ambitions, the Singapore Red Cross and RMIT University convened a cross-sector dialogue on the International Day of Older Persons to explore how ageing can be reframed through dignity, participation and innovation. The event brought together leaders from government, academia and industry to discuss community-based care, digital inclusion and cross-sector collaboration. Participants shared a common conviction that the future of ageing must be co-designed with older adults rather than designed for them.

**“As we live longer,  
are we living better,  
or can we live better?”**

**– Mr Benjamin William,  
Secretary General and CEO  
of the Singapore Red Cross**



Within this context, the *Reimagining Eldercare in Singapore* event examined how technology, community networks, and governance frameworks can converge to create systems of care that are sustainable, equitable and human-centred.

## Key Takeaways

- Singapore is reframing ageing as a stage of contribution rather than dependency. Older adults are now recognised as active participants in civic and community life.
- Health, technology and social care are being more closely aligned through Healthier SG and Age Well SG. Both programs aim to narrow the gap between lifespan and healthspan and enable seniors to age in place.
- Digital inclusion has become an essential public infrastructure. The goal is to build confidence and trust so that older adults can use technology to manage their well-being and maintain social connections.
- Volunteerism, caregiver training and peer mentoring are strengthening community networks. These approaches help reduce isolation and extend the reach of formal care systems.
- Collaboration is driving new forms of innovation. RMIT's partnership with the Singapore Red Cross has grown over five years into a shared platform for applied research, education and humanitarian impact.

1 Singapore Department of Statistics, *Population in Brief 2024*, 2024, [https://www.population.gov.sg/files/media-centre/publications/Population\\_in\\_Brief\\_2024.pdf](https://www.population.gov.sg/files/media-centre/publications/Population_in_Brief_2024.pdf)

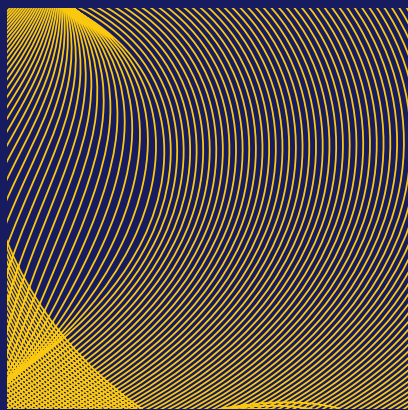
Channel News Asia, *Life expectancy of Singapore residents rises to 83.5 years in 2024*, 2024, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/life-expectancy-singapore-rises-2024-5154631>

2 The Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific, *Healthier SG: for a healthier Singapore and beyond*, 2023, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10485661/>

3 Ministry of Health, *Age Well SG Factsheet 2023*, 2023, <https://www.agewellsg.gov.sg/about/>

4 World Health Organisation, *Promoting Healthy Ageing in Singapore 2023–2030*, 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/promoting-healthy-ageing-in-singapore>

5 ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN's Proactive Strategy for Ageing Populations*, 2025, <https://theaseanmagazine.asean.org/article/aseans-proactive-strategy-for-ageing-populations/>



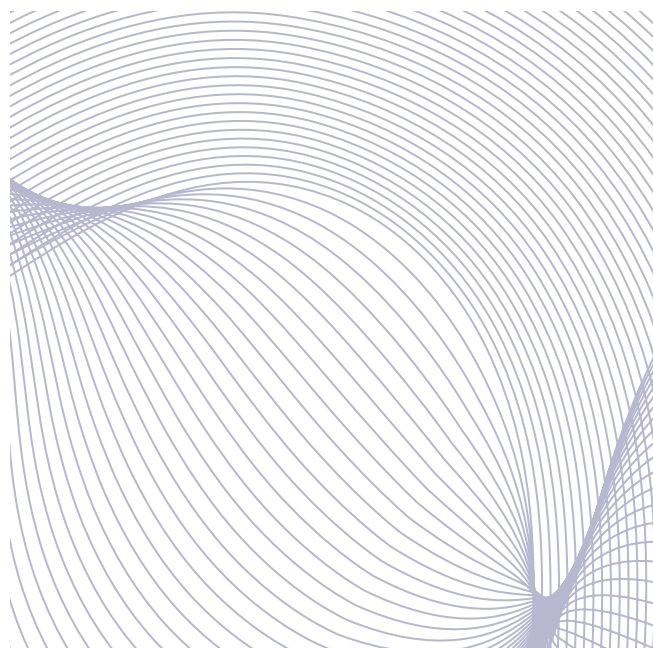
# Reframing Ageing as Empowerment



Ageing in Singapore is being redefined as an active and valued stage of life. The focus is shifting from care and dependency toward participation and contribution. Older adults are recognised as community leaders, mentors, and volunteers who sustain the social fabric through their time, skills, and lived experience.<sup>6</sup>

**“At this point, there is only so much that the Government can do. I’ve rattled off a number of Government initiatives, but these are not enough. We do need community efforts, such as the Singapore Red Cross, to engage and care for our seniors. These are equally vital efforts as well.”**

**– Mr Eric Chua,  
Senior Parliamentary Secretary for the  
Ministry of Social and Family Development<sup>7</sup>**



The Singapore Red Cross Community Befriending Programme (CBP) exemplifies this principle. Established in 2016, it connects volunteers, many of them seniors, with older residents who live alone. Trained volunteers conduct home visits, organise social activities, and offer emotional support, currently serving over 900 elderly Singaporeans with the help of about 100 active volunteers. This model not only reduces social isolation but also fosters dignity and self-esteem in later life.<sup>8</sup>

The Senior Volunteer Scheme extends this ethos of participation. Retirees contribute skills in outreach, fundraising, and mentoring younger volunteers, with roles tailored to interests and capacity. Singapore Red Cross provides ongoing volunteer training and matches seniors to meaningful opportunities, ensuring engagement that benefits both individuals and their communities.<sup>9</sup>

Panel discussions reinforced that empowerment in later life is as much emotional as it is practical. Seniors are increasingly seen as “cultural anchors” whose life stories strengthen continuity and resilience in community life. Some volunteers begin as recipients of support and later become ‘befrienders’ themselves, exemplifying personal growth and ongoing purpose. As one panellist reflected, “Ageing well is not about staying busy; it is about feeling necessary.”

This human-centred approach aligns with national policies promoting ageing-in-place and lifelong learning, reinforced by the refreshed Action Plan for Successful Ageing (2023). These strategies recognise that empowerment thrives on connection, trust, and the opportunity to contribute. When older adults are valued as partners, longevity itself becomes not just a measure of health, but a shared achievement, a testament to Singapore’s evolving resilience and dignity in later life.<sup>10</sup>

6 ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN’s Proactive Strategy for Ageing Populations*, 2025, <https://theaseanmagazine.asean.org/article/aseans-proactive-strategy-for-ageing-populations/>

7 Ministry of Social and Family Development, *Speech by Mr Eric Chua*, 2025, <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/article/speech-by-mr-eric-choa--senior-parliamentary-secretary-for-social-and-family-development--at-singapore-red-cross'-international-day-of-elder-persons>

8 Singapore Red Cross, *Community Befriending Programme*, <https://redcross.sg/get-assistance/for-the-elderly.html>

9 Singapore Red Cross, *Volunteer with Us*, <https://www.redcross.sg/get-involved/volunteer-with-us.html>

10 Ministry of Health, *Good progress in the implementation of Age Well SG*, 2024, <https://www.moh.gov.sg/newsroom/good-progress-in-the-implementation-of-age-well-sg/>



## Innovation and Integration in Eldercare

Technology is reshaping how eldercare is delivered in Singapore. Innovation is being applied not only to improve efficiency but to uphold independence and dignity for seniors who wish to remain at home. Integration occurs when these systems work together to help seniors age safely in their own homes, maintaining confidence and dignity. This direction reflects national policy under Age Well SG and is evident in the community work of the Singapore Red Cross.<sup>11</sup>

### HoME+ 2.0 technology for safety and dignity

The Home Monitoring and Eldercare (HoME+) system is an example of innovation used for care rather than disruption. HoME+ uses motion sensors to detect irregular activity and alert responders. The upgraded HoME+ 2.0 model includes a direct communication link that allows call-centre staff to speak with the senior during an emergency. With support from the Asian Medical Foundation and the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation, the system now serves more than 1,200 households.<sup>12</sup>

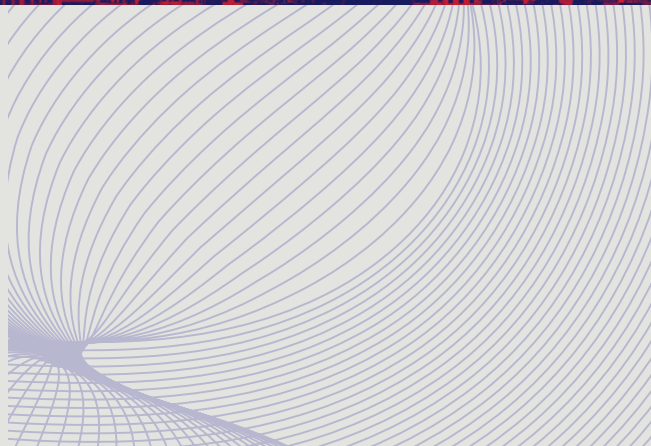
Each alert is handled by a trained response team that assesses the situation and arranges help. The process builds trust because seniors know assistance will come from people, not automated messages.

**“[The initiative shows how...] technology and community can work together to help seniors live with dignity and independence.”**

**– Mr Eric Chua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development & Ministry of Law**

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Health Singapore, Age Well SG, <https://www.agewellsg.gov.sg/about/>

<sup>12</sup> Singapore Red Cross, *Home Monitoring and Eldercare (HoME+)*, 2024, <https://redcross.sg/home-monitoring>



## Caregiver training and community mobility

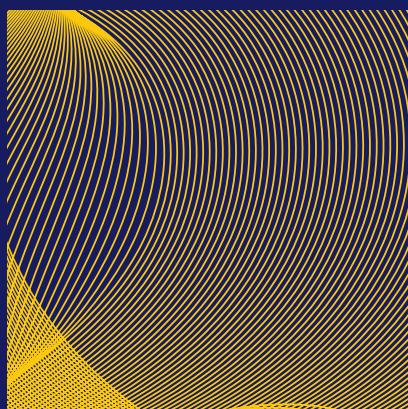
The Red Cross Caregiver Training Programme strengthens families and volunteers to manage daily care with confidence. Courses cover psychological first aid, dementia communication and stress management. Fees are subsidised through the Agency for Integrated Care's Caregivers Training Grant and SkillsFuture credits, widening access to practical education.<sup>13</sup>

The Medical Chaperone and Transportation Service complements this work by providing dependable access to healthcare. Trained volunteers accompany seniors to medical appointments, dialysis or rehabilitation. Some drive Red Cross vehicles; others assist clients on public transport. The service maintains access to healthcare while supporting independent living.<sup>14</sup>

Together, these initiatives link safety and mobility. Training connects the two and keeps the model human-centred. The result is a local system that scales through coordination and trust. Independence remains possible for longer.

<sup>13</sup> Singapore Red Cross, Caregiver Training Program, 2024, <https://redcross.sg/get-trained.html>

<sup>14</sup> Singapore Red Cross, *Medical Chaperone and Transportation Service*, 2024, <https://redcross.sg/news-and-stories/12-stories/1589-srcinthezone-meet-the-people-behind-src-s-medical-chaperone-and-transportation-team.html>



## **Inclusion Through Digital Confidence**

**SINGAPORE**

Digital inclusion has become central to Singapore's ageing agenda. Most older adults now have access to devices and internet services, yet many still lack the confidence to use them meaningfully. The distinction between access and inclusion is critical. Confidence, trust and relevance determine whether technology supports independence or deepens isolation.<sup>15</sup>

Professor Bernardo Figueiredo, Positive Ageing Lead at RMIT University, emphasised that digital inclusion is “not about electronic devices and technology only; it is also about wellbeing and social inclusion.”<sup>15</sup> His argument challenged the assumption that digital access alone is sufficient. Older adults engage more fully when they feel safe, supported, and able to use technology in ways that matter to their daily lives. Confidence and trust, rather than infrastructure, form the true foundation for continuous learning and meaningful digital participation.

In his keynote, Professor Figueiredo explained that seniors often face emotional and social barriers long before technical ones. Engagement grows when learning environments are familiar, relationships are strong, and technology feels personally relevant. When older adults use digital tools to stay connected, manage appointments independently, share photos, or participate in community groups, digital use becomes part of everyday life. Without this emotional and social foundation, even well-designed systems risk remaining underused.<sup>16</sup>

Professor Bernardo Figueiredo's research at RMIT University reinforces this perspective. His Shaping Connections project, developed with Dr Torgeir Aleti and delivered with the University of the Third Age (U3A), examines how peer mentoring builds both digital capability and social connection among older adults. Participants reported higher confidence and motivation when learning took place in small, familiar groups with ongoing support. Similar findings emerged in his study Co-Creating ICT Risk Strategies with Older Australians: A Workshop Model, which showed that co-design, empathy and sustained interaction were more effective than short, technical lessons. Together, these studies confirm that digital capability grows through trust, relevance, shared experience and continuity rather than through technology alone.<sup>17</sup>



**L to R: Mr. Benjamin William**, Secretary General/CEO, Singapore Red Cross, **Dr Wee Beng Geok**, Management Committee Member, Asian Medical Foundation, **Eric Chua**, Senior Parliamentary Secretary of Ministry of Family and Development, **Mr Douglas Goh**, Director for Digital Engagement & Adoption, Infocom Media Development Authority, **Dr Yao Fengyuan**, Chief of Geriatric Psychiatry, Institute of Mental Health

15 Fei Yue, *Digital Inclusion for Seniors in Singapore*, 2024, <https://fycs.org/digital-inclusion-for-seniors-in-singapore/>

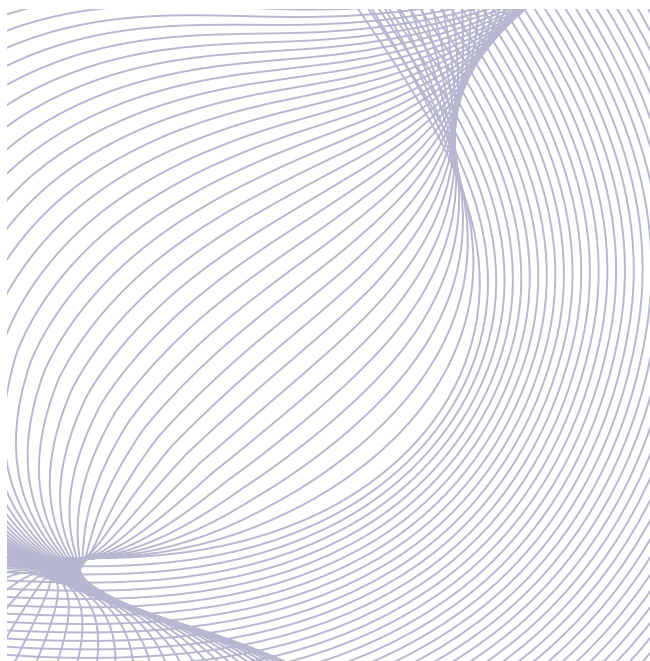
16 Aleti, T., Figueiredo, B., Martin, D. M., & Reid, M., *Digital Inclusion in Later Life: Older Adults' Socialisation Processes in Learning and Using Technology*, *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 32(4), 295-307, 2023, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14413582231187652> (Original work published 2024)

17 RMIT University, *Peer-to-peer mentoring boosts digital social inclusion*, 2024, <https://www.rmit.edu.au/research/impact/peer-to-peer-mentoring-boosts-digital-social-inclusion>; and Figueiredo B. & Aleti T., *Co-Creating ICT Risk Strategies with Older Australians: A Workshop Model*, 2024, [https://research-repository.rmit.edu.au/articles/journal\\_contribution/Co-Creating\\_ICT\\_Risk\\_Strategies\\_with\\_Older\\_Australians\\_A\\_Workshop\\_Model/27564852](https://research-repository.rmit.edu.au/articles/journal_contribution/Co-Creating_ICT_Risk_Strategies_with_Older_Australians_A_Workshop_Model/27564852)

## Lessons from practice

Professor Figueiredo drew on international examples that treat digital learning as part of social infrastructure. In Australia, the Be Connected program funds libraries, neighbourhood houses, and community organisations to run small-group learning sessions in familiar settings. Participants develop both skills and confidence, often returning as peer mentors.<sup>18</sup> In the United Kingdom, Digital Health Hubs provide individual coaching for older adults managing online appointments and health data. The National Databank Initiative reduces cost barriers by providing free mobile data through community partners. Both programs emphasise accessibility, support, and trust.<sup>19</sup>

The United States and Finland show the value of sustained engagement. The Digital Navigator model in the US trains local guides to provide ongoing one-to-one support. Finland's *digituki* volunteers deliver similar help in the homes of older residents who cannot attend classes. In both countries, these models share a commitment to continuity, relational support, and ensuring that no older adult is left to navigate digital systems alone.<sup>20</sup>

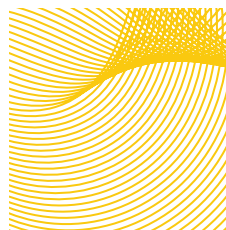


## Confidence through relevance

Singapore's experience mirrors these findings. Surveys indicate that while most seniors use mobile phones and social media, few apply technology to health management or civic services. Many gain confidence only when digital tools meet personal goals, such as keeping in touch with family or monitoring health with support from a trusted volunteer.<sup>21</sup>

At the event, panellists discussed the value of peer learning and humour in teaching digital skills. One facilitator described how seniors grew more confident after showing each other how to use contactless payments. Another explained that laughter often diffused anxiety about making mistakes. These stories echoed Professor Figueiredo's observation that inclusion depends on shared experiences and empathy as much as instruction.

Programs that spotlight ongoing mentoring and peer learning, such as those run by the Singapore Red Cross, demonstrate that digital engagement flourishes within a vibrant community life. By making digital learning a regular part of gatherings, Singapore is ensuring that confidence and connection go hand in hand. As national strategies evolve, the true measure of success will be whether every senior feels not just online, but included, valued, and ready to help lead Singapore's digital future.

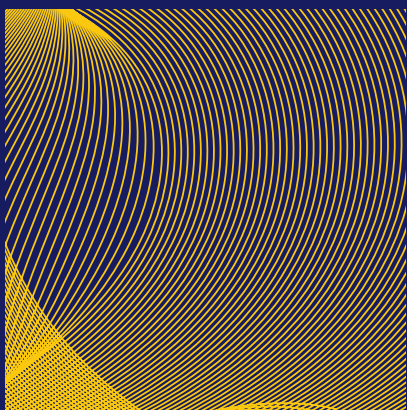


18 Australian Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, *Be Connected Program*, 2024, <https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/>

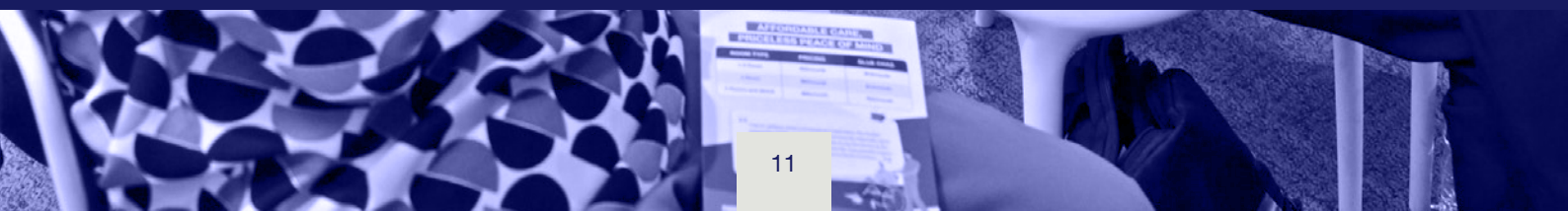
19 NHS Confederation, *Inclusive Digital Healthcare*, 2024, <https://www.nhsconfed.org/publications/inclusive-digital-healthcare-what-you-need-know>

20 National Digital Inclusion Alliance, *Digital Inclusion Alliance*, 2024, <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/>; and Finnish Ministry of Finance, *Digituki Guidelines*, 2024, <https://dvv.fi/documents/16079645/141915645/Digital+Skills+Report+2023.pdf>

21 Q. Leong et al. *Older Adults' Perspectives and Experiences With Digital Health in Singapore: Qualitative Study*, *JMIR Human Factors*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.2196/58641>



## Collaboration and Community as the Future of Care



Collaboration is at the heart of Singapore’s ageing policy, anchoring its strategy to address population change through shared responsibility across government, business, and civil society. Recent government reports emphasise that integration only succeeds when stakeholders value both connection and capacity in equal measure, requiring a networked approach instead of centralisation.<sup>22</sup>

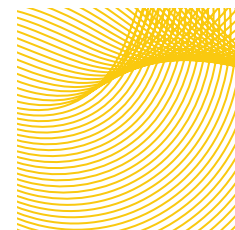
The Singapore Red Cross operates within this collaborative frame. Its eldercare services rely on support from foundations, private partners and trained volunteers. Staff work closely with healthcare and social agencies to connect seniors with appropriate care. This structure ensures that innovation remains grounded in daily life and responsive to individual needs.

Panellists described collaboration as a “social contract”. They noted that the most effective programs are those where responsibility is distributed rather than delegated. Dr Yao from the Institute of Mental Health spoke about the pressure on caregivers managing dementia and emphasised the importance of early detection and mental health literacy. His remarks highlighted how partnerships between clinicians, community workers and volunteers can reduce cost and prevent burnout.<sup>23</sup>

Community networks serve as stabilising infrastructure: volunteers are the trusted links between seniors and formal care, providing companionship and continuity that encourage health screening uptake and digital participation. Data from the CBP and Active Ageing Centres show that guided support leads to higher attendance at neighbourhood events and to regular health monitoring. The panel addressed social isolation, especially among older men; small-group activities, such as repair workshops and music sessions, restore both routine and purpose, reinforcing the evidence that inclusion depends as much on belonging as on physical infrastructure.<sup>24</sup>

The collaboration between RMIT and the Singapore Red Cross provides an academic lens on these developments. Over the past five years, this partnership has grown from project-based engagement into joint research and educational programs that explore community innovation and social impact. The relationship shows how universities can act as convenors and evidence partners for humanitarian organisations, translating insights from research into practice.<sup>25</sup>

Singapore’s future eldercare model will rely less on centralisation and more on partnership. Government sets the strategic direction, community groups ensure extensive reach, and research institutions strengthen evidence and evaluation. When these elements work together, Singapore’s care ecosystem becomes more resilient and adaptive, better equipped to support older adults’ independence.<sup>26</sup>



- 22 Civil Service College Singapore, *Successful Ageing: Progressive Governance and Collaborative Communities*, 2017, <https://knowledge.csc.gov.sg/ethos-issue-19/successful-ageing-progressive-governance-and-collaborative-communities/>
- 23 The Straits Times, *Who will care for caregivers?*, 2025, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/who-will-care-for-the-caregivers>
- 24 Ministry of Health Singapore, *Data on Seniors Aged 65 and above living alone and plans for new initiatives to prevent unattended deaths*, 2025, <https://www.moh.gov.sg/newsroom/data-on-seniors-aged-65-and-above-living-alone-and-plans-for-new-initiatives-to-prevent-unattended-deaths/>; The Straits Times, *The problem with being alone: Social isolation, loneliness biggest enemy for seniors in S'pore*, 2024, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/all-the-lonely-people-tackling-social-isolation-among-older-singaporeans>
- 25 RMIT University, *Singapore Country Commitment*, 2024, <https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/dam/rmit/au/en/about/locations-and-facilities/locations/overseas/singapore-country-commitment.pdf>
- 26 The Straits Times, *Action plan to help older Singaporeans live well as they age and work longer*, 2024, <http://straitstimes.com/singapore/health/national-plan-to-help-older-singaporeans-live-well-as-they-age-and-work-longer>

# Recommendations

Supporting successful and inclusive ageing requires coordinated effort across business, universities, government and community partners. The following recommendations outline practical steps each stakeholder group can take to strengthen confidence, capability and care across Singapore's ageing ecosystem.

## For Business Leaders

### 1. Invest in age-inclusive product and service design

Organisations can reduce barriers for older consumers by designing environments and services that consider mobility, cognition and digital confidence. Collaborate with seniors and care providers to co-design products, such as digital health tools, accessible housing, and elder-friendly services, that directly address ageing-in-place and emerging health needs.

### 2. Partner with community organisations to extend understanding and reach

Businesses can support healthy ageing by collaborating with partners who understand local contexts and lived experience. Working with community groups, such as the Singapore Red Cross, helps organisations pilot age-friendly solutions, test new tools and strengthen digital confidence among older adults. These partnerships build trust and accelerate adoption.

### 3. Invest in workplace capability for an ageing workforce

As the workforce ages, businesses can strengthen resilience by developing training programs that build digital confidence, caregiving awareness and intergenerational collaboration. This supports retention, reduces stress and prepares organisations for demographic shifts.



## For Universities



### 1. Advance translational research for impact

Universities can contribute to a stronger evidence base by deepening research on digital confidence, ageing in place and community-led models of care. Translate findings into real-world learning methods, technology adoption and volunteer capability that can inform national strategies and program design.

### 2. Strengthen partnerships with community organisations

Collaborations with organisations such as the Singapore Red Cross provide opportunities for students and researchers to translate evidence into frontline practice. Joint projects can support capability-building, evaluation frameworks and innovation pilots that respond to real needs in community settings.

### 3. Build learning pathways for volunteers and caregivers

Universities can offer micro-credentials and short courses that strengthen the skills of volunteers, caregivers and practitioners. Training in communication, digital mentoring and positive ageing supports a workforce that is adapting to demographic change.

## For Government and Ecosystem Partners



### 1. Continue investing in community-based ageing-in-place models

Age Well SG and the Refreshed Action Plan set a strong direction. Continued investment in neighbourhood networks, volunteer capability and local service access will help seniors remain active and supported in familiar environments. This reduces pressure on hospitals and long-term care facilities.

### 2. Improve coordination across health, social and community services

Caregivers often face challenges navigating multiple systems. Clearer referral pathways, shared data protocols and integrated planning can ease this burden and reduce duplication. Stronger coordination also supports early detection and timely intervention.

### 3. Strengthen digital confidence through sustained community programming

Infrastructure is no longer the main barrier. The next step is continuity. Funding models that support regular digital practice, peer mentoring and community-based training will help seniors build confidence and trust. These programs can be embedded into existing social and eldercare services.

### 4. Support cross-sector partnerships through clear frameworks and shared evaluation

Government can enable collaboration by providing guidance on partnership models, evaluation methods and data-sharing practices. This helps organisations align efforts, build evidence and scale successful initiatives across the ecosystem.

Singapore's ageing transition has created a new landscape for policy and community action. Longer lives bring possibility, and the strength of the system lies in how well it converts that possibility into participation, connection, and care. The event made clear that the goals of dignity and independence are shared across government, community organisations, and research partners.

The themes that emerged point to a coherent model. Empowerment is rooted in belonging. Innovation succeeds when technology supports daily routines rather than replacing them. Digital inclusion depends on confidence and trust. Collaboration turns individual programs into an ecosystem that grows stronger through use. The Singapore Red Cross and RMIT University illustrate how applied research and community practice can inform one another and generate new insights.

The future of eldercare in Singapore will be shaped by this combination of evidence, partnership and lived experience. The system will continue to adapt as needs change. What remains constant is the commitment to support older adults to live well, contribute to community life and age with confidence. The conversation demonstrated the value of collective effort and shared purpose.

Singapore has the foundations of a resilient care ecosystem. The opportunity now is to strengthen coordination, deepen capability and embed digital confidence into everyday practice.

