

## **Minister's Keynote Address at Digital for Life Year-End Event on 4 Nov 2022**

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Partners, Donors, Friends of the Digital for Life movement or DfL

Colleagues and Friends

### **Introduction**

1. Good evening and a very warm welcome to everyone present here today at this appreciation dinner. I want to especially welcome our friends who have joined the movement recently. I hope that you have gotten a sense of the warmth and enthusiasm of the community that you have just become part of.

### **The DfL movement has gained significant momentum since its launch**

2. The DfL movement was launched in February last year, at a critical juncture when the importance of digital inclusion was brought to fore.
3. For me personally, DfL is an important movement because as we move headlong to get digital transformation pervasive across our entire economy, it is important for us to remember that going digital is a very daunting process for certain segments of our community. Digital inclusion is not a given and we have to make it happen. It is, therefore, through DfL that we build a platform for the people, private and public sectors to come together and co-create initiatives to help Singaporeans build the skills and tools for a digital future.
4. Today, the DfL movement is a thriving community of like-minded individuals and organisations that continues to grow from strength to strength. In less than two years, our network has expanded to over 130 partners. Collectively, we have driven about 140 ground-up projects to uplift digital literacy, promote cyber wellness and overall, to help Singaporeans to embrace digitalisation. And what is the net effect of these ground-up projects? The impact is quite significant. We have empowered over 270,000 Singaporeans to lead digitally-enriched lives.
5. The significance of the movement is not just in the numbers, but also from the profound impact of your work. Your efforts now form powerful stories in our common treasure trove – stories that are powerful, stories that tell us what is possible when we put our minds together. There are many inspiring stories but let me share two this evening.
6. The first is about helping vulnerable groups stay connected in a digital world. During the DfL festival in May this year, we launched the “Data for All” initiative, where our telcos pledged to provide mobile data lines worth more than \$3 million to 30,000 beneficiaries. For example, SingTel GOMO users have donated 1.2 million gigabyte of data. This will provide 10,000 vulnerable seniors with free mobile data lines. One senior beneficiary is Mr Pek Wong Lim, who learnt about the Data for All initiative through King George’s Avenue Senior Activity Centre which he frequented and continue to frequent. With access to more mobile data, he can now use many more apps on his smartphone to enrich his daily life. Mr Pek has now turn advocate and now encourages other seniors to also use tech to improve their lives.



7. My second story is about people on the other end of the age spectrum – youths. If you consider the fact that the exciting career opportunities in tech have naturally created an impetus for our bright students to enrol in STEM related subjects, specifically in Computer Science. Then you must ask yourself, has everyone gotten the idea that this is where opportunity lies? Do some of them face barriers in being able to do so? The answer is, yes. Because some may not have the knowledge, and if they do have the knowledge, they may know how to get started.
8. We have a social enterprise called Hatch. Hatch observed that many at-risk and out-of-school youths were keen to land jobs in the digital industry. However, they often lacked exposure and access to opportunities to enable them to pursue their aspirations. Hatch decided to start the ‘Digital ASPIrations for All’. Mr Victor Zhu, who is the founder of this initiative, decided with his colleagues and friends, that they will offer skills training and work attachments in the digital design industry. To date, this programme has benefitted over 500 youths. Some of these youths have secured internships with Hatch’s partner companies, such as social recruiting platform Wantedly.
9. Nuruljannah Afiqah Bte Reduwan is one beneficiary of Hatch’s programme. Afiqah had dropped out of secondary school due to health issues. But today, she is applying her newfound knowledge and skills, both as a sales intern with Wantedly and in her family’s online baking business. In other words, not only does she have an independent livelihood, but she is also helping her family expand her home-based business. In so doing, she is improving her family’s financial situation.

### **Youths can be catalysts in building a digitally inclusive society**

10. Building our youths’ capabilities to thrive in a digital world is a step towards a digitally inclusive society. It is empowering if we can also help them to become agents of good, who help others to thrive in the digital world.
11. How can this be done? One way is to offer platforms for youths to support the less digitally-savvy. Since July 2020, more than 900 volunteers from Youth Corps Singapore have been running digital learning workshops at senior activity centres. Their efforts have helped about 1,800 seniors acquire basic digital skills.
12. Another approach is to empower youths to apply their knowledge of tech to create a positive social impact. With support from partners like Amazon Web Services and Intel, over 300 secondary school and junior college students developed tech solutions to address real-world problems. These include a web-based app to raise awareness about proper recycling and a prototype to help diagnose sports injuries and neurological conditions.
13. I believe our youths have much potential to be unlocked. For those who want to play a part, the DfL Fund can provide funding support for your projects. The next call for proposals for the DfL Fund opens next month.

### **Call to action for more individuals and organisations to join the DfL and contribute to digital inclusion**

14. Let me now turn the spotlight on donors to the DfL Fund.
15. The DfL Fund was established last year to provide a channel for the community to donate to the worthy cause of promoting digital inclusion. Donations to this fund are matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government.



16. Reflecting the strong societal support, the DfL fund has exceeded its fundraising target of \$10 million, with a total of \$10.25 million raised.
17. This year's donors, include DBS Foundation, Netlink Trust, UOB and Maybank. We thank you all, for the donations are like a fuel that will keep the meaningful projects running in the coming year.
18. In fact, many of our donors have gone over and above financial contributions – to make a difference through deeds. For example, DBS will start a nationwide initiative, where their staff will impart digital skills and literacy to families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Up to 100,000 beneficiaries will be trained in areas such as digital transactions, cyber safety, and scam awareness over two years.

### **Conclusion**

19. To conclude, I thank all our partners for working with us to promote and sustain digital inclusion.
20. As we refresh our social compact under the Forward Singapore exercise that Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong launched in June this year, I think that the objectives and spirit of Forward Singapore are the same as DfL. It is about ensuring that everyone in Singapore has a chance to move ahead. It is about ensuring that no one is left behind. It is about creating that sense of inclusion. It is about building up a community. And tonight's community is a wonderful community.
21. Thank you all once again for being part of it.

