

Enabling Social Innovation in Singapore

Country Snapshot



POWERED BY 1Family Foundation

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ¹

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Singapore's social innovation ecosystem.

✓ Direct focus on social innovation 🔗 Connected but indirect focus on social innovation ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Official Definition of Social Innovation 🔗



- Singapore has no official legal definition of social innovation. The government's focus is channelled through social enterprise development: **raiSE** defines Social Enterprises as "business entities set up with clear social goals" where management intent and resources are allocated to fulfil social objectives ².

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



- **raiSE (Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise, est. 2015)**: A sector developer and membership body under the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), focused on building Singapore's social enterprise ecosystem through funding, capacity building, and advocacy ².
- **NCSS (National Council of Social Service, est. 1992)**: A statutory board under MSF acting as sector developer for the social service sector, which supports innovative approaches to social service delivery ⁴.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



- Rather than a dedicated social innovation strategy, the government integrates innovation into broader social sector planning. The **Social Service Sector Transformation Plan (NCSS)** and **Forward Singapore** initiative frame social innovation through the lens of social service modernisation and citizen empowerment ⁴.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



- No legislation specifically targets social innovation. The **Charities Act** and **Companies Act** provide the general legal environment for social enterprises and NGOs ¹⁴.
- Tax deductions for donations to Institutions of a Public Character (IPCs) and the **Double Tax Deduction for Internationalisation** scheme are key fiscal enablers for the social sector, though not social innovation-specific ¹⁷.

Official Statistics 🔗



- No official statistics specifically on social innovation are collected. The Commissioner of Charities collects annual data on registered charities (approx. 2,400 as of 2022) and IPC tax-deductible donations ¹⁴; **raiSE** tracks its SE membership (approx. 336 as of 2018, not publicly updated since) ³.

Government Programs



- **VentureForGood (VFG) Grant** (raiSE/MSF, est. 2015): Provides up to SGD 300,000 to social enterprises in seed and growth stages addressing social gaps including employment of disadvantaged individuals ⁶.
- **VentureForGood Youth** (raiSE, ongoing): Grants up to SGD 20,000 for youth-led (18–35) social enterprises ¹⁶.
- **raiSE Impact Finance Plus (RIF+)**: Growth-stage equity investment and capability development support for high-potential social enterprises ¹⁶.
- **Tote Board Future-Ready Society Impact Fund** (Tote Board/LKYCIC/IPS, 2023–2025): SGD 6 million pilot to address emerging community needs through social innovation, co-designed with community partners ²².
- **BAGUS Together** (NVPC/Temasek Foundation/Tote Board, 2024): SGD 5 million, five-year initiative to empower the groundup movement in Singapore ¹⁵.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



- **raiSE** (2015): National membership body and sector developer for social enterprises ².
- **NVPC (National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre)**: Promotes a culture of giving and volunteerism, serving as a hub for the philanthropy ecosystem ¹⁵.
- **AVPN** (est. 2011, HQ: Singapore): Asia's leading social investment ecosystem builder, convening 600+ social investors and funders across the region ⁸.
- **Community Foundation of Singapore (CFS)**: A philanthropic intermediary connecting donors to causes and supporting collaborative giving ¹³.
- **Lien Centre for Social Innovation (LCSI) at SMU**: A research and capacity-building centre promoting social consciousness and partnership-driven innovation ⁷.
- **Social Enterprise Associations**: raiSE serves as the primary sectoral network for social enterprises; Singapore also has active cooperatives through the Singapore National Co-operative Federation ².

Support Initiatives



- Key non-financial support includes: incubation and acceleration (e.g., NUS Enterprise–raiSE TS2 programme, a 10-week accelerator for impact-driven start-ups) ¹⁶; the raiSE SE Fellowship Programme, matching social enterprises with corporate mentors ²; and capacity-building through NCSS's Training Network Model for social service agencies ¹⁸.

Collaboration



- Singapore's 4ST Partnership Fund (NCSS/The Majority Trust) funds cross-sector programmes demonstrating collaboration, innovation, and service user empowerment ⁴. The Tote Board Future-Ready Society Impact Fund represents a key government–academia–community partnership ²².
- **Key events**: The AVPN Global Conference (2024 hosted in Singapore) is the largest social investing convening in Asia [8]; NCSS hosts the Social Service Summit; raiSE holds annual networking events for social enterprises ².
- **Key awards**: President's Challenge Social Enterprise Award (biennial, recognising outstanding SEs); Charity Transparency Awards (annual, Commissioner of Charities) ¹⁴.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes

- No single official aggregate figure for total annual funding directed to social innovation is publicly available. The Singapore Budget 2025 announced a SGD 600 million philanthropic push over several years, including expanded government matching schemes ¹⁷.
- Key financing types include: **public grants and subsidies** (Tote Board Enhanced Fund-Raising Programme, benefiting ~500 charities; raiSEVFG grants) ⁵; **philanthropy and foundation funding** (Community Foundation of Singapore, Temasek Foundation, Lee Foundation) ¹³; **impact investment and blended finance** (AVPN ecosystem, raiSE RIF+ equity fund) ⁸; **private sector/CSR** (DBS Foundation Social Enterprise Grants of up to SGD 250,000) [16]; and **government matching grants** (SG Gives Matching Grant at 1.5:1 ratio for large committed gifts) ¹⁷.
- The social innovation financing landscape is relatively well-developed for mainstream social enterprises, but can be less inclusive for underrepresented groups. Financing is most commonly earmarked for **persons with disabilities, elderly, and low-income individuals**; gender-lens investing and rural/ethnic minority-targeted funding are less developed, though the AVPN and some foundations address gender equity specifically ⁸.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness

- Social innovation is a niche but growing topic in Singapore's public discourse, often framed around social enterprise, volunteerism, and the government's "Forward Singapore" agenda. Media coverage tends to focus on specific social enterprise success stories and major philanthropic initiatives rather than the concept of social innovation broadly ¹⁵.

Research

- **Lien Centre for Social Innovation (LCSI, SMU)**: The leading academic centre for social innovation research in Singapore, publishing reports on social service trends, social enterprise, and civil society ⁷.
- **Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (NUS)** and the **Institute of Policy Studies** contribute practitioner and policy-oriented research on social sector issues and futures research (e.g., joint LKYCIC/IPS Future-Ready Society work) ²².
- raiSE publishes practitioner reports on the social enterprise sector; NCSS publishes the **State of the Social Service Sector** report annually ¹⁸.

Education & Human Capital

- Social innovation and social entrepreneurship are embedded as electives and co-curricular programmes at Singapore's autonomous universities (NUS, NTU, SMU), rather than as standalone programmes. SMU's Lien Centre and NUS Enterprise run practitioner-focused training and accelerators ⁷.
- No public data is available on the proportion of graduates gaining credentials focused specifically on social innovation.

Entrepreneurship



EIU Business Environment:

Singapore consistently ranks among the world's top business environments; the most recent EIU Business Environment rankings place Singapore in the global top 5 for political participation and ease of doing business ¹².



Innovation capacity

Singapore ranked 4th globally (out of 133 economies), leading worldwide in 14 out of 78 GII indicators including regulatory quality, ICT access, and logistics performance ⁹.

Global Innovation Index (GI) 2024



GEM Social Entrepreneurship:

Singapore's most recent GEM national report (2014) found a Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rate above 10%, ranking it among the top entrepreneurial nations.

Singapore has not participated in GEM global surveys since 2014; no more recent standardised data is publicly available ²⁰.

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

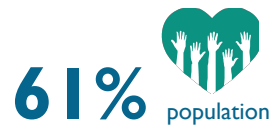
The most recent WVS wave including Singapore (Wave 6, 2012–2014) found moderate levels of interpersonal trust and civic engagement ¹⁹. More recent comparable national data is not publicly available from WVS.



Political Participation:

Singapore's EIU Democracy Index consistently rates it as a "hybrid regime" with formal electoral participation but limited civil liberties; however, civic engagement through volunteering and ground-up initiatives is actively promoted by the government ¹⁵.

EIU Democracy Index



Volunteering

Singapore ranked 3rd globally (out of 142 countries), with an overall score of 61%, rising 19 places year-on-year; 75% of Singaporeans helped a stranger, 68% donated to charity, and 40% volunteered ¹⁰.

CAF World Giving Index 2024



Sustainability

Singapore ranked 47th overall (score: 53.0) and 96th on Climate Change Mitigation (score: 41.2 out of 100), reflecting challenges in GHG emissions reduction despite strong performance in waste management and water ¹¹.

Environmental Performance Index 2024