

OPENING REMARKS BY MS. GAN SIOW HUANG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, THE LEARNING ENTERPRISE ALLIANCE AWARD CEREMONY, 20 OCTOBER 2023

1. Good evening everyone.
2. First of all, I would like to convey my heartiest congratulations to all the 2023 Learning Enterprise Alliance awardees who have demonstrated dedication and commitment towards creating a culture of lifelong learning at the workplace. I hope to see more employers in Singapore doing the same.

Importance of investing in workforce skills development

3. Given the current pace of digitalization, the nature of jobs and skills are evolving rapidly. To seize new and emerging opportunities that may come along, our workforce needs to be ready with the right skills. It is hence critical that companies upskill their workers so as to remain competitive.
4. However, some companies may not know how and where to start, while others are hard pressed for time trying to meet production schedules and cannot afford to let their workers take time off for training. These are real challenges, and we heard such feedback from employers through the ForwardSG engagements this year. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in particular face such resource limitations more acutely.
5. To better support businesses in their transformation, as part of Budget 2023, the Government announced the Enterprise Innovation Scheme (EIS). Specifically for training, businesses may claim enhanced deduction on training expenditure incurred on courses that are eligible for SSG funding and aligned with the Skills Framework.
6. We are looking into ways to strengthen support for employers in training their workers. For example, we are enhancing the signposting of new, emerging skills for employers and individuals through the publishing of Jobs-Skills Insights.

Workplace Learning is a Key Strategy

7. Enhancing workplace learning is a key strategy to enable companies to grow their role in reskilling and upskilling their workforce. The National Centre of Excellence for Workplace Learning (NACE) was set up in 2018 to help companies build workplace learning capabilities, solutions, and systems. By putting in place a proper structure for learning to take place while on-the-job, workers can learn and apply their skills simultaneously and not have to take significant time off to attend classes outside. This is a win-win both for the employers and employees.
8. I am heartened that many companies in our midst today have embraced the spirit of lifelong learning, some of whom will be receiving the LEA award this evening. There

are three key factors which played an important role in determining the effectiveness of workplace learning initiatives:

9. First, innovative use of education technology (EdTech). EdTech has the potential to significantly enhance the quality of training and address the challenges of adult learning. For instance, Sengkang General Hospital deployed digital workplace learning interventions to allow its employees to learn on-the-job through micro-learning objects. This approach has effectively helped the hospital staff to access learning as and when required, in response to scheduling challenges due to work demands and shift work in healthcare.

10. Second, a commitment towards lifelong learning. Even with the right systems and processes in place to support workplace learning, these can only be sustained in the longer term if employers and employees have the right mindset.
 - a) I am glad that IAL, as a strong proponent of workplace learning, is expanding its reach to more companies through the Learning Enterprise Alliance (LEA).
 - b) The LEA is close to 130 enterprises strong today with 27 new members coming on board this year. I hope to see the LEA growing from strength to strength in the coming years with more companies joining the alliance to exchange knowledge and best practices.
 - c) IAL will also be signing MOUs with the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), Kydon Holdings and Home Team Academy to advance the workplace learning agenda and develop new training programmes to meet their manpower development goals.

11. Finally, enabling industry experts as adult educators. With their deep domain expertise, industry experts are often tapped on by employers to deliver workplace training. To harness the potential of industry practitioners and enrich the training available in their sectors, IAL developed an accelerated industry-centric pathway that qualifies them as adult educators.
 - a) This year, IAL extended the initiative to the land transport sector with SBS Transit and NTUC Learning Hub, targeting at senior bus captains. IAL plans to expand this to the healthcare and social services sectors.

Conclusion

12. I am glad to see the multitude of partnerships that are being forged to keep businesses and our workforce competitive.

13. Once again, congratulations to the LEA award recipients and the IAL team for organising another successful edition of the LEA award ceremony. I wish everyone a good evening ahead.

14. Thank you.