

ANNEX A: People-driven Innovation in Enterprises (PIE) Programme

The People-driven Innovation in Enterprises (PIE) Programme supports SMEs to strengthen their innovation capacity by mobilising their workforce to create new growth areas, drawn from the practices of Singapore's top-performing SMEs.

PIE plugs a critical SME gap

PIE helps SMEs grow their business pie through their people — based on what Singapore's top performers already do. Research from the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL), covering 2,800 SMEs, shows the most profitable and innovative firms are those that best harness their workforce to drive growth. Yet only 1 in 10 SMEs do this today.

At the same time, the opportunity is clear. IAL's analysis of OECD Survey of Adult Skills data shows that Singapore's SME workers have skills proficiency comparable to those in larger firms — but these skills are underutilised in their jobs. PIE closes this gap by scaling the 'secret sauce' of top SMEs: combining business and people strategies to drive stronger profits, revenue and market share. With SMEs employing 70% of the workforce, the upside is significant.

Through PIE, participating enterprises will:

- Identify new growth opportunities
- Build capabilities in business foresight and customer insight
- Turn ideas into new products and services through workplace learning

PIE comprises three components: PIE Activator, PIE Workforce Journey and PIE Navigator.

PIE Activator: The data

"The Enterprise Compass is the first report that presented my organisation in an accurate and explicit way. This is the reason why I support the PIE project because I want growth for my company." – *Ken Ng, CEO, Raffles Strata Management*

SMEs are provided new data-driven support — using SMEs' own enterprise data to guide transformation. They begin by benchmarking themselves against top-performing firms using IAL's proprietary **Enterprise Compass** — a 100-question diagnostic tool that assesses business strategy, innovation and people practices to pinpoint priorities for action.

Based on IAL's research, SMEs might fall into these categories:

- **10%** have strong business models and strong people practices;
- **35%** have weak business models, lacking premium, differentiated offerings — even if people practices are improving;
- **15%** have strong business models but weak people practices to execute and scale;
- **20%** have sound fundamentals but experience lag due to limited innovation;
- **20%** have weaknesses in both business and people strategies

Following the diagnostic assessment, a tailored pathway is co-developed with SME leaders. Firms are guided to improve on their products and services, with employees taking a leading role to shape the

product and go-to-market strategies. The approach shifts leadership from control to trust — positioning the workforce as a source of insight, innovation and strategy.

PIE Workforce Journey: The transformation

“We moved beyond operations to look at new possibilities for the business. It makes us listen hard to what our customers are saying and what we can offer them.” – *the self-driven team at Raffles Strata Management, who co-developed a new digital app to strategically uplift strata management services.*

Employees work on strategic activities such as product category creation and minimum viable product (MVP) testing, engaging customers closely to develop more premium, differentiated products. To fit SMEs’ operational realities, the programme is structured to run with these areas of focus:

- **Workplace learning:** Delivered across **six bursts (Innovate Phase and Sustain Phase)**, each lasting 4–6 weeks across 9-12 months
- **Designed for SMEs:** Requires about **2 hours per week**, built around day-to-day operations
- **Learn and apply immediately:** Combines coaching with real workplace projects, not classroom training
- **Builds critical capabilities:** Develops strategic business skills such as product innovation, customer intelligence, profit-and-loss strategies

Innovate Phase (3 bursts)	Sustain Phase (3 bursts)
<p>Product Category Creation Create new products and services by supporting workers to activate deep customer intelligence, market-sensing capabilities, commercial thinking through explicit profit-and-loss logic, supported by AI-enabled tools</p>	<p>Future Work Design Hardwire new capabilities into hiring, job design, and rewards, ensuring that roles, incentives, and career pathways support the firm’s new strategic direction</p>
<p>Minimum Viable Product (MVP) Testing Enabling teams closest to customers to test priority concepts through MVPs, build evidence of value, and inform confident investment decisions</p>	<p>Next-generation Teaming Supporting how teams work as complexity increases through interfaces, and as coordination mechanisms need to operate with speed and coherence</p>
<p>Capability Pods Build targeted skills (such as AI, sustainability, or advanced customer analytics) in direct connection with the new category created</p>	<p>Generative Workplace Learning Embeds practices and techniques that allow teams to create new knowledge together—through reflection, experimentation, and shared problem-solving.</p>

PIE Navigator: The Enabler

“SMEs need a new playbook with a strong launch catalyst — — one that unleashes their people to spark innovation and accelerate growth”
– *Florence Yuen, former business leader and now PIE specialist*

Guiding SMEs through PIE are trained specialists — consultants equipped by IAL to integrate business and workplace learning. Acting as both idea coaches and facilitators, they help firms reframe challenges,

explore new market opportunities, and align teams to drive change. They are supported by IAL with tools and resources to steer SMEs through transformation.

How to Participate

Interested enterprises can reach out to IAL at partnerships@ial.edu.sg. Eligible SMEs can receive up to 90% consultancy grants under the NACE@IAL Mentorship Support Grant.