

**Project Summary for IAL Website**

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<b>Project Title:</b>	Empowering Singaporean Workers to Transition, and Map Careers Better in the Future of Work through Open Loop Careers
<b>Project Number:</b>	GA19-03
<b>Year of Approval:</b>	2021
<b>Funding Source:</b>	WDARF
<b>Objectives and intended outcomes of the project:</b>	<p>The main objective is to develop understanding of the following:</p> <p>(1) whether theoretical concepts that allude to flexible regular transitions between education and careers/jobs, such as boundaryless and flexible protean careers and freelancing, can actually be implemented, particularly in the Singaporean context,</p> <p>(2) how workers respond, learn and behave as they transition between careers/jobs and education regularly,</p> <p>(3) what are the appropriate levels of support and scaffolding from other individuals and entities (state, company, etc.), and,</p> <p>(4) the need for a multi-level perspective solution.</p> <p>The intended outcomes are: (1) knowledge products, such as articles, reports and conference presentations aimed at sharing applied information with relevant stakeholders; (2) recommendations and strategies to help Singaporean workers build successful Open Loop Careers.</p>
<b>Project Team</b>	
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	POON King Wang CHNG Samuel WILLEMS Thijs MUSSAGULOVA Assel GOH Zi An Galvyn TANG Cheryl JAYASEKARA Dinithi
<b>Summary of Project (up to 300 words)</b>	
<p>The project comprises three work packages. The first work package (WP) involves a longitudinal study of 1000 Singaporean workers aimed at measuring changes in career circumstances and attitudes over time (12 months), as well as qualitative interviews with select individuals out of 1000 survey respondents in order to glean deeper insights on their personal experiences.</p> <p>The second WP is secondary data analysis using the employment data of graduates from ITE and polytechnics intended to compare and understand their career pathways.</p> <p>The third WP focuses on recommendations and strategies to help Singaporean workers and students prepare for and build successful Open Loop Careers, based on the results of a review of existing schemes, initiatives and policies and the findings from WPs 1 and 2.</p>	

**Summary of Project Findings, Deliverables and Impacts (up to 500 words)**

Over 3.5 years, this project developed and validated a new applied theory of “**Open Loop Careers**” (**OLC**) to better support Singaporean workers facing continuous, non-linear transitions across jobs, roles, sectors, and life stages. The central finding is a concise definition of **successful Open Loop Careers**: workers transition continuously and successfully when they (1) can **flex** their existing and newly acquired skills to *show—not just tell*—they can do the next role, and (2) have **flexible work identities**, meaning they can *see themselves* in plausible next roles even before they commit to training or a job move.

**Evidence base and approach.** The research combined three survey waves (approx. 4,000 / 2,000 / 1,000 respondents) with **225 interviewees and workshop participants**, enabling longitudinal insight into how transitions unfold under shifting economic conditions. The multi-wave design revealed a key problem in the prevailing “train/reskill → get new job” narrative: positive effects of adult learning and employer-provided training on outcomes appeared in Wave 1 (strong economy) but largely **disappeared** in Waves 2–3 as conditions worsened—suggesting training alone is an insufficient explanation for sustained transition success.

1. **Flexing skills (post-training gap):** workers struggle to demonstrate job-relevant competence after training, especially in skill-based hiring contexts.
2. **Flexibility with work identities (pre-training gap):** many cannot imagine themselves in new roles, which prevents commitment to training or switching even when “transferable skills” exist.

**Deliverables.** The project produced a **system of five tested recommendations** operating across scales: (R1) prestigious CET scholarships; (R2) micro-flexing/micro-flexibility starter modules in training; (R3) no-code GenAI (e.g., custom GPTs) to empower flex and identity exploration; (R4) embodied-cognition career support tools (e.g., Career Journey Maps, Career Quest Cards, Skills Swap, Career GPTs); and (R5) organisational “keystone” flex-flexi habits starting with wellbeing (Wellbeing × WellMeaning Matrix).

**Impacts.** The research reframes workforce transitions from a single intervention (training) to an integrated system that is **individualised yet scalable**, better aligned to Singapore’s diverse pathways and the realities of continuous change. It also demonstrates how practical prototypes (especially embodied tools and no-code GenAI) can translate research into usable supports that increase motivation, clarity, and agency in navigating open-loop careers.

The research is featured on page 62 of SkillsFuture Singapore's "Skills Demand for the Future Economy Report 2025" (<https://jobsandskills.skillsfuture.gov.sg/insights/sdfe>).

The work is also the basis for the Workforce Singapore-funded pilots in "What's Next: Reimagine Your Career Using DesignAI" to help SMEs 50 years and above (<https://www.wsg.gov.sg/home/media-room/media-releases-speeches/workforce-singapore-and-singapore-university-of-technology-and-design-launch-pilot-programme-to-help-500-pmets-reimagine-work-with-career-planning-and-ai-tools>). It has also contributed to the development of a new model of workforce resilience we name "Asset-Based Community Development @ Work i.e. ABCD@Work", and how we design strategies for adult learning.