

# **WORKFARE IN SINGAPORE<sup>1</sup>**

## **A CASE STUDY**

Key Topics Discussed:

**EXPLORATION, RESILIENCE POLICY AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**

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# INTRODUCTION

Workfare is often thought to refer to the income supplement given to low-income workers to encourage them to stay in employment. It is more than that. In Singapore, Workfare embodies the philosophy that work is the best form of social assistance. People who are able to work should be helped to find a job and earn a salary that is enough to support them and their family. Manifested in concrete policies, Workfare reinforces the work ethic of Singaporeans and makes it worthwhile for anyone at the margin to offer up their labour to the economy.

The development of Workfare marks a milestone in the history of social assistance to low-income Singaporeans. When it was announced, it came as a surprise to some Singaporeans raised on a diet of strict anti-entitlement and anti-dependency rhetoric. However, Workfare is not a radical departure from the nation’s policy approach: it reinforces the values of hard work and self-reliance that already exist in Singapore society. Workfare is first a pragmatic response to the effects of globalization and technology on wage stagnation and dispersion. Second, Workfare encourages the work ethic by providing incentives for working.

The case traces the evolution of Workfare in Singapore and illustrates Singapore’s approach to policy making. Active scanning for policy ideas and experiences from around the world enabled Singapore’s policy makers to adopt and adapt ideas to suit the local context. Testing the idea in incremental steps increased acceptance and enabled refinements along the way, eventually leading to policy innovation.

The case also explores the following elements of the New Synthesis Framework:

- The approach to building societal resilience by addressing the resilience of individuals and

their families by encouraging work, enhancing employability and helping them grow assets for the future.

- The involvement of other stakeholders of society to achieve societal outcomes, such as encouraging citizens who are able to work to find employment, upgrading their skills to stay in employment and providing incentives to employers to retain and re-train their employees.
- The use of early and multiple policy interventions at various levels: for example, a combination of income supplements, subsidies and a range of initiatives to increase opportunities for low-wage workers.

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

### THE CONTEXT

The Asian financial crisis in 1998 and subsequent events (the global downturn in 2001, SARS in 2003) put an end to more than a decade of sustained non-inflationary growth and low unemployment in Singapore. Growth slowed and economic output shrank in real terms between 1998 and 2003. The resident unemployment rate jumped from an annual average of 2.0 percent in 1997 to 3.5 percent in 1998, and peaked at 5.2 percent in 2003. The number of retrenched workers (or those made redundant) tripled from 9,800 in 1997 to 29,100 in 1998. Net job creation was negative from 2001 to 2003 (see Table 1).

Singapore’s income distribution, which was stable in the previous decade and improving before that, deteriorated sharply in the decade following the Asian financial

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Real change in GDP (%)	-1.4	7.2	10.1	-2.4	4.2	3.1	8.8	6.6	7.9	7.7
Unemployment rate (%)*	2.7	3.9	4.9	3.1	4.6	4.8	4.7	4.4	3.5	3.1
Net job creation ('000)	-23.4	39.9	108.5	-0.1	-22.9	-12.9	71.4	113.3	176.0	234.9

TABLE 1: Economic indicators (1998-2007)

\*Seasonally adjusted resident unemployment rate as at June. Source: Department of Statistics, Singapore ([www.singstat.gov.sg](http://www.singstat.gov.sg))

crisis. A paper by the Department of Statistics (DOS) in 2005<sup>2</sup> revealed that real household incomes for the bottom two quintiles fell between 1998 and 2003 (the bottom 20 percent experienced the sharpest drop of 3.2 percent) even as they rose for those in the top 40 percent. This in stark contrast to the income growth for all households in the five years preceding the Asian crisis (see Table 2).

The widening wage gap was not peculiar to Singapore, but reflected global conditions. Growing labour mobility and the spread of technology, as well as the rise of China and India, contributed to polarizing the labour market, pushing up wages at the top and further depressing wages at the low end. There was the further concern that the most vulnerable low-wage workers were mostly older, had below secondary school-level qualifications and were ill equipped to succeed in the new economy.

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Growing income inequality created tension in social policy. Since the 1960s, the government had warned against the dangers of a welfare state undermining economic growth and perpetuating high unemployment through its corrosive effects on the Singaporean work ethic. In 1998, as the impact of Asian economic crisis worked its way through the Singapore economy, then-Minister for Finance, Richard Hu, reiterated the government’s position on welfare in the Budget Speech:

“The absence of large scale public assistance programs reflects the Government’s stand on state welfarism. We believe that extensive welfare programs damage the fabric of our society as they diminish individual responsibility, self-reliance, com-

munity support and the work ethic. Even in the United Kingdom, the Government has realised that welfarism is not the right way to go, and is trying to roll back many of the welfare programs and policies introduced after the Second World War. Our approach is one of many helping hands, with co-funding from Government and public donations, and services rendered by volunteers and members of the community.”<sup>3</sup>

Singapore’s rejection of a welfare state was also based on the belief—backed by its own experience in the first 30 years of nationhood—that a rising tide would lift all boats, that people who were willing to work hard would be able to provide for their families, live in their own homes and give their children a better future. The widening income gap threatened this belief and challenged social cohesion. Then-Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, responding to concerns on income inequality, articulated the policy dilemma facing the government in his 2000 National Day Rally Speech:

“As a principle, we should not have measures that artificially raise the earnings of the lower-income Singaporeans. This will reduce the incentive for them to take the responsibility of improving their lot and that of their children. It will also turn away successful Singaporeans who are penalized for their achievements.

That said, we cannot succeed as a nation if we operate strictly on the basis of every-man-for-himself. There would be no social cohesion if lower-income workers perceive that society is not willing to give them a helping hand to improve their lives.

	Income (S\$)			Average % change per annum	
	1993	1998	2003	1993-1998	1998-2003
<b>All Households</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>1,298</b>	<b>1,457</b>	<b>8.7 %</b>	<b>2.3 %</b>
Lowest 20%	240	304	281	4.8%	-1.6%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quintile	422	608	635	7.6%	0.9%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quintile	620	940	1,004	8.7%	1.3%
4 <sup>th</sup> Quintile	929	1,424	1,572	8.9%	2.0%
Highest 20%	2,072	3,215	3,790	9.2%	3.3%

TABLE 2: Change in Household Income (1993-2003)

Source: Department of Statistics, Singapore, “Trends in Household Income and Expenditure,” 2005

**Or they fall so far down that they cannot afford even basic amenities.<sup>4</sup>**



Contributing to the tension was a perception that foreign workers were taking jobs away from local workers and further depressing wages in low-skilled jobs. One option was to protect local workers and wages, either by restricting the influx of foreign workers or by enacting minimum wage legislation. Protectionism, however, would necessitate a radical overhaul of Singapore's social and economic policy. The latter is grounded on the need to keep Singapore competitive by keeping business costs low and increasing the skills and size of the labour force. A minimum wage policy would have introduced rigidities into the labour market at a time when the government was trying to enhance competitiveness by lowering wage costs through cuts in the employer Central Provident Fund (CPF) contribution rate and by diversifying the economy.<sup>5</sup> Foreign workers could boost growth in good times by providing the “full range and diversity of skills and experiences which the companies need[ed]”<sup>6</sup> and cushion the impact of job losses in bad times. As recently as June 2008, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Secretary-General, Lim Swee Sway, felt compelled to remind Singaporeans that foreign workers, far from being a threat, were necessary to sustain economic growth.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, something had to be done about low-wage workers. If the government would not adopt protectionist measures, then it had to consider redistributive measures. In introducing the first large-scale, one-off income redistribution program, the New Singapore Shares (NSS) scheme,<sup>8</sup> then-Prime Minister Goh laid the foundation for a “new social compact:”<sup>9</sup> the government would not shelter Singaporeans from global competition but would instead redistribute some of the benefits of economic growth to lower-income groups. The challenge was to find a way of doing so without “creating a dependency mentality among our people.”<sup>10</sup>

The NSS scheme provided a piece of the puzzle, but was not in itself a permanent solution. It was deliberately conceived as an *ad hoc*, one-off scheme to avoid entrenching any expectation of handouts from the government. The problem of low-wage workers, on the other hand, appeared to be structural. Any long-term solution would have to include measures to enhance employability, raise incomes on a sustained basis and ensure that

children were equipped with the skills needed to succeed in a more volatile and global economy.

## POLICY OPTIONS

The Ministerial Committee on Low Wage Workers was set up in June 2005 to recommend measures to improve employability and income security for low-wage workers and help their families break the cycle of poverty.

### THE WELFARE MODEL: HONG KONG

One option was to enhance the financial assistance provided to unemployed workers and make such assistance conditional on job search and training efforts, such as expanding temporary programs like the Work Assistance Program set up in 2003 (later restructured into the Work Support Scheme). The idea was to minimize the disincentives associated with unemployment assistance work by reducing the welfare payment to a rate (known as the withdrawal rate) lower than 100 percent, so that every dollar the recipient earned from work would reduce the unemployment benefit by less than a dollar.

Hong Kong provided one example of such a system. High unemployment rates in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis and again after SARS led to high welfare rolls at a time when government revenues were decreasing. In response, Hong Kong tightened eligibility conditions and imposed stricter work requirements for unemployed welfare recipients, first through the Support for Self-reliance (SFS) program in 1999, and then the Intensified SFS program in 2003. A system of disregarded earnings encouraged welfare recipients to work by phasing out the withdrawal of welfare benefits. These measures worked to some extent: from 2003 to 2005, the caseload for unemployed recipients in the Intensified SFS program dropped 5 percent annually, in contrast to other Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) groups (such as single mothers, the disabled and the elderly) where caseloads *increased* 6 percent annually. Of the new applicants to the program, 40 percent returned to work within the month.<sup>11</sup>

The limited reforms in Hong Kong offer several lessons. First, the danger of entitlement creep was very real—

even in a city characterized by Milton Friedman as the embodiment of free enterprise. “If you want to see capitalism at work, go to Hong Kong”.<sup>12</sup> Second, reforms in Hong Kong did not do enough to strengthen incentives to work. Generous cash and healthcare benefits, even after the reforms, meant that a welfare recipient might quite rationally decide to remain on welfare rather than find a low-paying job.<sup>13</sup> Hong Kong’s welfare program also required policing and enforcement to combat fraud. Applications were policed through intensive frontline screening, a whistle-blowing system for the public and a “risk management” approach for identifying potential fraud cases.

## THE WORKFARE MODEL: WISCONSIN WORKS (W-2)

The 1996, American welfare reforms offered a radically different model to traditional welfare systems. One example of the new “welfare-to-work” system was the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program introduced in 1997, known for *both* its strict work requirements and its generous employment support package. The philosophy here was “pay more, demand more,” as opposed to the “pay little, demand little” approach commonly found in traditional welfare systems and the “pay much, demand little” approach in European unemployment insurance systems.<sup>14</sup>

W-2 divided all participants into four tiers according to their readiness and ability to work. The idea was that all participants who *could* work *should* work. Participants who were able to take on market jobs were required to work, while participants who were able to work but lacked sufficient experience or regular work skills and habits were placed in trial jobs (wage-subsidized jobs) or community service jobs. Only participants who were not work-capable were not required to do so, though they were required to undergo training or perform basic jobs.<sup>15</sup>

In return for strict work requirements, participants who worked in market and trial jobs (the first two tiers) could receive earned income tax credits (EITC), which were payable once they had paid their income taxes. In addition to the federal tax credits, Wisconsin offered the highest state EITC for low-wage workers. It also mandated a minimum wage higher than the federal one.

Cash grants were given only to participants who worked in community service jobs or who were unable to work because of severe barriers (the last two tiers), and this was subject to a maximum time period. All participants, including those in market jobs, qualified for a generous employment support package, which included healthcare benefits, job search and training assistance, co-payment for childcare services for low-income families, job access loans to help families meet immediate financial needs (such as car repairs or personal emergencies) and assistance with transportation to help parents get their children to daycare and themselves to work.<sup>16</sup>

W-2 proved remarkably successful in reducing the welfare rolls. The number of recipients receiving cash aid fell from 55,000 in 1996 to just over 10,000 in 2004, the largest decline experienced in the United States of America. Administrative data on case closures in the first two years of the program showed that more than 60 percent of the cases closed due to employment.<sup>17</sup>

However, the W-2 program was also criticized for its overwhelming concern with reducing welfare rolls and forcing participants into the job market at the expense of training and education programs that might increase the longer-term earning capacity of participants. A 2005 audit by the state Legislative Audit Bureau found that only about 20 percent of former participants earned more than the state poverty level in the year after they left W-2, although the proportion increased to 42 percent if the federal and state tax credits were included. The relatively high levels of recidivism in W-2 also suggest that the program was ineffective in increasing social mobility among needy families.<sup>18</sup>

## WORKFARE IN SINGAPORE’S CONTEXT

The W-2 experience offered several learning points for Singapore. Most importantly, it convinced policy makers that it was possible to provide institutionalized assistance to low-wage workers in a way that did not create disincentives to work or result in an overweening dependence on the state.

Welfare reforms elsewhere (as in Hong Kong) had focused on extending more help to welfare recipients and then providing incentives for them to return to work. But



perversely, such efforts may have had the unintended effect of encouraging more people to be on welfare. The key insight of W-2 was that welfare recipients should not get a better deal than low-income individuals struggling on their own. More can be done for welfare recipients only if it is also done for other low-income individuals. In this way, government assistance does not create incentives for people to be on and stay on welfare.

Financial support and work requirements should not take the place of training and upgrading efforts, which are necessary to raise the longer-term earning capacity of workers and enable them to be self-reliant.

Support should not be limited to cash benefits or job search assistance, but should cover a range of services that support work, such as child care and healthcare. These benefits should be offered to all low-wage workers, not just welfare recipients.

The final report of the Ministerial Committee, published in January 2006, proposed Workfare as “a more effective alternative” to traditional welfare. The goal of Workfare is to ensure that all who can work find meaningful jobs and earn adequate wages to support themselves and their children. They should also be able to own their own homes, educate their children and put aside enough for their medical and retirement needs.<sup>19</sup>

Workfare is based on the principle that the government helps those who help themselves. To this end, the Committee outlined holistic approaches covering financial assistance for needy families, skills training and upgrading, expanding job opportunities, support for children from low-income families, surplus sharing schemes and financial support for low-wage workers.

## MAKING INNOVATION POSSIBLE BY TAKING INCREMENTAL STEPS

One of the Committee’s key recommendations was the Workfare Bonus Scheme (WBS). Although some studies had been done on the feasibility of introducing a wage supplementation scheme in Singapore, there was still some concern that a permanent income transfer program, however well intentioned, might create unin-

tended distortions.

In announcing the details of the scheme in the 2006 Budget Statement, Prime Minister Lee warned that

**“...We should avoid creating permanent schemes unless we are very confident of how they will work. Instead, we should experiment with new schemes, see how they work out, and adjust and improve as we gain experience.”<sup>20</sup>**

The WBS was therefore conceived as a one-off scheme, though spread over two years and bundled with the rest of the Progress Package. It was targeted at older low-wage workers who were most vulnerable to structural changes in the economy. To encourage efforts at work, the bonus would be given only to workers who had worked for at least six months in the year of the payout. (See Annex A for details of the scheme.)

As the government had already given one-off cash transfers (for example, to offset increases in consumption tax rates or to provide short-term relief during economic slowdowns), the 2006 WBS was within the “possibility space” of current policy. On 1 May 2006, the first tranche of the Workfare Bonus was given to around 330,000 workers, at a cost of around S\$150 million.

The smooth implementation of the WBS and the minimal evidence of abuse gave decision makers the confidence to make it permanent a year later. This was announced in the 2007 Budget Statement under the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme:

**“The Workfare Income Supplement scheme is a major policy change. For the first time, the state will be supplementing the market wages that low-wage workers receive. But we have decided to make this change so as to help low-wage workers and encourage them to stay employed. This will strengthen social inclusion in Singapore.”<sup>21</sup>**

In 2010, the government further revised the WIS scheme. The income ceiling to qualify for WIS was raised from S\$1,500 to S\$1,700, widening the scheme’s reach to 400,000 workers. The maximum payout was also increased from S\$2,400 to S\$2,800. (See Annex

B for details of the WIS scheme and its 2010 revisions). The government also introduced a three-year Workfare Training Scheme (WTS) to complement the WIS scheme. The WTS provides 90-95 percent of absentee payroll and course fees to employers who send their older low-wage workers for training. In addition, WIS recipients receive a Training Commitment Award of up to S\$400.

continue to be monitored.

## CONCLUSION

Workfare was a multifaceted approach to a global problem, customized to Singapore's unique social conditions and institutions. It was a creative attempt to combine elements of wage supplementation and subsidy models.

The approach involved multiple policy interventions coming together on multiple fronts to increase opportunities for low-wage workers so that they could support themselves and build up assets for the future. These changes were all based on coherent strategies (made possible by existing guiding principles of governance, such as the emphasis on self-reliance), the focus on achieving sustainable outcomes for the longer term (rather than adopting quick fixes that could create dependence on the state in the long run) and finally a whole-of-government framing rather than an agency-centric approach to achieving public results.

The policy-making process was enabled by the practice of active scanning for alternative models and learning from the experience of other countries, and adapting and contextualizing insight to Singapore's own challenges and needs. Innovation leaps did not happen overnight but through incremental steps, testing out the "adjacent possible" of existing policies and building on the go.

There are encouraging signs of Workfare's success. For example, WIS reaches over 300,000 workers. Each recipient receives an average of S\$1,000 a year, which represents about 10 percent of their average annual income. This provides low-wage workers with assistance to help meet immediate needs and to build up savings for retirement.

Nevertheless, Workfare is still in its early days. The jury is still out on its success in meeting its other long-term objectives, such as facilitating social inclusion and providing income mobility across generations. These trends

# ANNEX

## ANNEX A: WORKFARE BONUS SCHEME (WBS)

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Recipients are required to

- be Singapore citizens;
- be more than 40 years old;
- live in a property with an annual value (the estimated annual rent of the property, based on the market rents of comparable properties) of not more than S\$10,000;
- have a monthly income of S\$1,500 or less;
- have worked for at least six months in the calendar year; and
- sign up for the Progress Package in 2006.

### STRUCTURE

- Two tranches: May 2006 and May 2007.
- Verification: For formal employees, employment and income are automatically verified using their Central Provident Fund (CPF) contribution records. Self-employed and informal workers who do not have tax or CPF records may declare their income to the CPF Board instead.
- Payout structure: 10 percent of the bonus is credited into the recipient's CPF Medisave Account. The remaining 90 percent is given in cash.
- Amount: The amount of the payment depends on the recipient's average monthly income.

## ANNEX B: WORKFARE INCOME SUPPLEMENT (WIS) SCHEME

(As announced in 2007)

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Recipients are required to

- be Singapore citizens;
- be more than 35 years old;
- live in a property with an annual value of not more than S\$10,000 (changed to S\$11,000 from 2008 as a result of the revaluation of public residential properties in 2007);
- have a monthly income of S\$1,500 or less; and
- have worked for at least three months in any six-month period in the calendar year, or at least six months in the calendar year. (Workers who have only worked three months out of the six-month period receive 50 percent of the payout.)



## STRUCTURE

- Payouts are given to eligible recipients earning above S\$50 and up to S\$1,500 a month.
- Payments are made twice a year.
- Verification: For formal employees, employment and income are automatically verified using their CPF contribution records. Self-employed and informal workers contribute to their Medisave Accounts to receive the WIS.
- Payout structure: For formal employees, a cash-to-CPF ratio of 1:2.5 is used. For self-employed and informal workers, the entire payout is credited to their Medisave Accounts.
- Amount: The amount of the payout depends on the recipient's age, monthly income, and employment status. Self-employed and informal workers who contributed to their Medisave Accounts received two thirds of the total amount given to employees.

### (Revisions in 2010)

In 2010, the government announced the following enhancements to the scheme:

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- The monthly income threshold is extended from S\$1,500 to S\$1,700.
- The half-year payment for work done in the first six months of the work year is now assessed independently of the full-year annual assessment. This change allows recipients to keep the half-year WIS payment they receive.

## STRUCTURE

- Maximum payouts for each age tier increased by between S\$150 and S\$400. Older workers received higher increases.
- As workers earn more, they do not lose their WIS benefits as rapidly.

*These enhancements are expected to benefit about 400,000 workers at a cost of around S\$440 million annually.*

## ENDNOTES

1. The case study on “Singapore Workfare” was first written in 2008 by then senior researcher from the Centre for Public Economics, Civil Service College, Koh Tsin Yen. It was further updated in 2011 for the purpose of the New Synthesis Project by Pamela Qiu, a researcher also from the Centre for Public Economics, Civil Service College. The authors would like to thank the management and staff of the Ministry of Manpower (Singapore) for their support in the development of this paper.
2. Department of Statistics (Singapore), “Trends in Household Income and Expenditure,” 2005.
3. Hu, “Budget Speech, 1998.”
4. Goh, “National Day Rally Speech, 2000.”
5. Hu, “Budget Debate Roundup Speech, 2000.”
6. Lee, “Budget Debate Roundup Speech.”
7. Oon, “Keep stagflation at bay: Swee Say”.
8. All adult Singaporeans who contributed at least S\$50 to their CPF accounts would get “shares” worth between S\$200 and S\$1,600, depending on their income and the annual value of their homes. The shares would earn an annual dividend pegged to the real GDP growth rate for the next six years.
9. Goh, “National Day Rally Speech, 2001.”
10. Ibid.
11. Ministry of Finance (Singapore), “Study Team Report on Hong Kong’s Welfare System,” 2005.
12. Friedman and Friedman, *Free to Choose*.
13. For example, a household with five members (two parents, a child, two elderly grandparents) would be eligible to receive over HK\$13,250 a year (about S\$2,230) without working, plus free healthcare benefits while they remained on the CSSA scheme. If the parents took on jobs, their first HK\$600 would be fully disregarded, the next HK\$3,800 would reduce benefits by 50 percent, and any income earned thereafter would reduce CSSA benefits dollar for dollar. The ‘disregarded’ income of HK\$2,500, in other words, represents only a 19 percent increase over his or her CSSA benefits.
14. Ministry of Finance (Singapore), “Study Team Report on Wisconsin-Works (W-2).”
15. Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, “Wisconsin Works (W-2) Overview.”
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. State of Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, *Financial Management of Selected W-2 Agencies*.

19. Ministerial Committee on Low Wage Workers (Singapore), *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Low Wage Workers*.
20. Lee, “Budget Speech, 2006.”
21. Tharman, “Budget Speech, 2007.”

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## FROM NS6 TO NS WORLD

### THE NEW SYNTHESIS PROJECT

The New Synthesis Project is an international partnership of institutions and individuals who are dedicated to advancing the study and practice of public administration. While they hail from different countries, different political systems and different historical, economic and cultural contexts, all share the view that public administration as a practice and discipline is not yet aligned with the challenges of serving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### THE NEW SYNTHESIS 6 NETWORK

In 2009, Madame Jocelyne Bourgon invited six countries to join the New Synthesis Network (NS6), composed of officials, scholars and experts from Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands, Singapore and the United Kingdom. Committed to supporting practitioners whose work is becoming increasingly difficult, this network has engaged close to 200 people from more than 24 organizations. Their efforts have resulted in five international roundtables, five post-roundtable reports, and 17 case studies. Collectively, this work has generated significant insights into preparing governments to serve in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Network's findings have been captured in the publication of a new book entitled *A New Synthesis of Public Administration: Serving in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and is available in print and electronic formats from McGill-Queen's University Press. Its signature contribution is the presentation of an enabling governance framework that brings together the role of government, society and people to address some of the most complex and intractable problems of our time.

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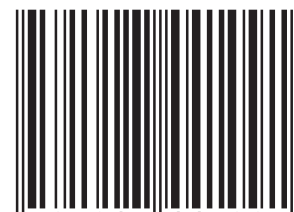
## TOWARDS NS WORLD

So where to from here? Reconfiguring and building the capacities of government for the future cannot be accomplished through the publication of a single book. It is a continuous journey which requires the ongoing sharing and synthesis of ideas, as well as the feedback, learning and course adjustments that can only be derived by testing ideas in action.

And so the journey continues and the conversation expands. Our goal is to build upon the rich partnership of the original six participating countries by opening up this exchange with others—wherever they may be located. We seek to create an international community that connects all leaders—from government, the private sector and civil society—committed to helping prepare governments for the challenges ahead.

Next stages of this work will include virtual exchanges supported by web 2.0 technologies, as well as possible thematic and regionally-based networks and events. But no matter the vehicles, success can only be achieved through the active participation and collaboration of those passionate about making a difference.

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