



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A New Approach to Innovation in Social Service: Lien Foundation and Care Corner Singapore Bet on Internal Capabilities

Singapore, 4 August 2023 - Lien Foundation and Care Corner Singapore are announcing a joint effort to encourage innovation in social services. The \$7 million investment over five years goes towards building a core innovation engine for Care Corner that involves a new team of talents with **capabilities** typically found outside of social service, creating **capacity** by hiring personnel with deep sector expertise who will act as internal change champions and establishing a **culture** that enables developing and experimenting with new solutions to complex issues.

Why?

Ushering a change in the social service sector

Tight bandwidth, predetermined programmes

As one of the leading social service agencies (SSA) providing a continuum of care for service users¹ across different life stages, Care Corner recognises that user needs are increasingly complex, often requiring interventions that tap on an ecosystem of services. In line with the 4ST² vision for a **future-directed social service sector**, there is urgency for SSAs to be adaptable, so that programmes and solutions can evolve to effectively meet the ever-changing needs of the community.

However, conventional funding schemes are often directed towards specific programmes with strictly defined requirements which determine headcount. Funding usually does not go beyond service delivery, leaving little bandwidth and incentive to look into unmet service user needs and address long-term issues holistically.

Investing in capabilities to sustain innovation

The pressure to innovate and keep up with changing needs is not unique to the social service sector. In recent years, the pressure has markedly ramped up across industries. Taking a leaf out of the private sector playbook, the social service sector could adopt organisational structures, processes, and mindsets that support innovation. This approach empowers employees to shape programmes, instead of the common funding model in which programmes dictate manpower and resources.

¹ Service users refer to individuals or families who are engaged with the social service agency and the solutions and services they provide.

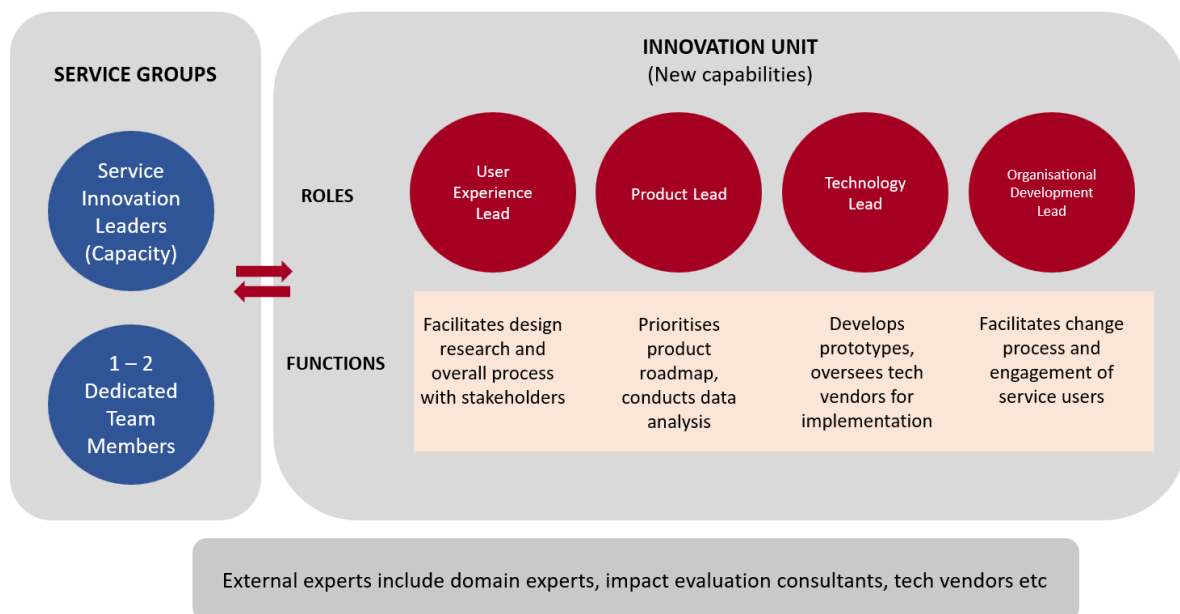
² 4ST or the Social Service Sector Strategic Thrust is a five year roadmap initiated by The National Council of Social Service (NCSS) that aims to guide the sector in achieving the vision of "every person empowered to live with dignity in a caring and inclusive society".

This initiative stems from a reflection of operational and cultural processes within our agency. With Lien Foundation's support, we aim to catalyse organisational change, and develop new capabilities and ways of working. The needs of our service users are constantly evolving, and we are mindful that over time programmes may lose relevance. By investing in our internal capabilities, we can better respond and adapt the way we serve our service users and do so with greater impact. Our hope is to also demonstrate what else is possible for SSAs wanting to embrace innovative and progressive approaches to making a bigger difference to the communities we serve.

- **Christian Chao, CEO, Care Corner Singapore**

How?

Catalysing change with the Innovation Unit, Service Innovation Leaders and structured innovation process



Collaborative work structure between the service groups and the Innovation Unit

Innovation Unit

The new approach sees Care Corner establishing an in-house team of talents to create the Innovation Unit, who work with service groups³ to form cross-functional teams that tackle user needs. This team is equipped with capabilities in the digital realm and experiences from beyond the social service sector. They bring with them not only new knowledge but also new ways of collaborating across the organisation.

³ Service groups within Care Corner Singapore refers to a team of people who work directly with the individuals receiving support and assistance from the organisation. This group typically includes social work practitioners, programme executives, and counsellors.



Leading the Innovation Unit is **Gina Lin**, who is also the **User Experience and Strategy Lead at Care Corner**. Gina has under her belt extensive experience in strategic design consultancy in both the public and private sectors. She spent a period of three years in Silicon Valley working closely with C-level executives. She is joined by three other specialists — Tech Lead, Product Lead and Organisational Development Lead. Under her leadership, the Innovation Unit plays a pivotal role to drive service innovation across the SSA. The Innovation Unit creates solutions such as evidence-based interventions, offline programmes and digital tools to streamline internal processes. The team also helps navigate working with vendors to assess suitable technologies and co-design better solutions.

Service Innovation Leaders

Five Service Innovation Leaders with extensive operational experience will be dedicated to driving change within Care Corner and embedded within service groups. The Service Innovation Leaders play a critical role in providing much needed management capacity to support and implement changes. They provide insights of the different service users to create solutions tailored for them. This configuration ensures ownership in implementing change from service groups.

Structured Innovation Process

A process for service innovation underpins the entire initiative, informed by design thinking but adapted for the social sector. Together, the Innovation Unit and Service Innovation Leaders work closely with stakeholders, external partners and service users to identify unmet needs, prototype, and test solutions before scaling to benefit more users.

To handle future uncertainties, an SSA needs to be agile to react well to change, and be ready to seize opportunities when they arise. Innovation comes with failure, with lots of learning and adapting along the way. Philanthropy as risk capital can play a role to create bandwidth and provide necessary expertise. We hope this approach gives Care Corner space to create, test and iterate on solutions. Through this partnership, we aim to demonstrate how an SSA can effectively upskill digitally and incorporate new mindsets and ways of working.

- **Luo Ren, Director of Special Projects, Lien Foundation**

Case in point

North Integration Pilot

Since its formation early this year, the Innovation Unit has been instrumental in expediting the introduction of a new service model via a partnership with ComLink in the North region between MSF's Social Service Office (SSO), Care Corner Family Service Centre (Admiralty and Woodlands) and HDB.



Dubbed the *North Integration Pilot*, the partnership aims to look beyond addressing symptomatic issues relating to housing and healthcare. The pilot intends to help families achieve stability and self-reliance, by shifting motivations and providing better opportunities for social mobility. In collaboration with different service partners, the Innovation Unit is conducting user journey mapping and redesigning the service model to improve the service user experience by reducing and streamlining touch points while maximising support offered by the spectrum of services in the ecosystem.

Tapping on AI to Improve Productivity and Optimise Interventions

Plans are underway to incorporate AI as part of social workers' workflow to reduce non-productive work. The tool suggests suitable interventions based on service user's input, enabling social workers to work more efficiently and better support service users.

Learning App to Equip Parents

The Innovation Unit recently introduced an app that provides assistance to parents of low-income families, offering educational content created by childhood development experts in the service group. The Unit was able to effectively design a user experience which leverages technology to complement human intervention, so as to deliver just-in-time information for the initial 100 parents who have benefitted so far.

The future for SSAs

Care Corner hopes to illustrate new ways of collaboration across the sector, facilitated by technology, design and data. They will be codifying new approaches and best practices, establishing new tools and organising sharing sessions with SSAs with similar interests. This is with the hope of lending support to other SSAs as they too embark on a transformation journey in terms of talent, skills development and solutions innovation.

With this new approach to innovation, Lien Foundation and Care Corner seek to establish a strong foundation for change. Being able to adapt to change is a fundamental aspect of any SSA's DNA and culture, but is complex to instil and takes time to bear fruit. By placing bets on developing the ability to change, with the goal of improving overall impact on service users, the hope is to contribute to the 4ST vision and exemplify what a future-directed SSA might look like.

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About Lien Foundation

The Lien Foundation is a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its model of radical philanthropy. It breaks new ground by investing in innovative models of care, convening strategic partnerships and catalysing action at the intersection of health and social care. The Foundation's focus areas include palliative care, eldercare and maternal & child health.

The Foundation has been investing in technology since 2005, starting with mobile electronic patient records for home care nurses, IngoT - an ERP system used by leading community care providers, as well as the software powering Gym Tonic, a strength training programme for seniors aimed at delaying frailty, now operating across 30 sites. Recently, the Foundation ran a decentralised grant-giving round for palliative care in developing countries, to explore new approaches that leverage the collective wisdom of industry experts. In the field of design, the Foundation has been a strong proponent for many years and has collaborated with various design partners. One of our projects recently won the 2023 President's Design Award. For more information, visit www.lienfoundation.org

About Care Corner Singapore

Established in 1981, Care Corner Singapore is a non-profit organisation providing social and health care services to build hope and promote well-being for those in need. With more than 40 service points across Singapore, the charity helps children with special learning needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds, youths at risk, troubled families, vulnerable seniors, and individuals with counselling and mental health needs. Woven into the fabric of the community, Care Corner aims to provide a holistic continuum of care to the marginalised across their life stages and major transitions.



A member of the National Council of Social Service, Care Corner has an Institution of a Public Character (IPC) status and is in full compliance with the Charity Code of Governance. The organisation received the Charity Transparency Award 2017, Charity Transparency Award 2018, Charity Transparency Award 2019 and Charity Governance Award 2017 - Special Commendation for Risk Management. For more information, visit www.carecorner.org.sg