

# Shaping policies to benefit S'poreans

At WDA, Mr Foong Tai Wei finds a career that is more about purpose than profit



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— Mr Foong Tai Wei (left), individual learning portfolio manager, WDA

PHOTO: NURIA LING

by sheryl quek

FOR Mr Foong Tai Wei, 28, leaving a positive impact on people's lives makes his work at the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) meaningful.

WDA is a statutory board that champions workforce development, enhancing the competitiveness of Singapore's workforce.

Mr Foong says: "WDA's goal, in a nutshell, is to help Singaporeans get better jobs and better pay. It is a noble calling."

While he was still a student at the Singapore Management University, he realised he did not just want a job that would make money.

"At that time, I had already completed two internships in the private sector and realised I wanted something more fulfilling and purposeful," he recalls.

"I realised that by working in WDA, I would be able to influence and be involved in shaping policies that would benefit Singaporeans."

That led him to apply for the WDA Undergraduate Scholarship, which covered his tuition fees (and other compulsory fees), hostel allowance, annual allowance and participation in student exchange programmes.

## Professional development

Mr Foong — who holds a Bachelor of Social Science with a primary major in political science and a secondary major in organisational behaviour and human resources — enjoys the fast-paced work environment at WDA, taking on every task he is given with gusto.

"Young officers in WDA are often given great responsibilities, so we have to be willing to learn on the job, be open-minded, adaptable and nimble," says the individual learning portfolio manager.

He has also grown professionally, being exposed to cross-divisional projects and posted to different divisions within WDA to better understand the scope of work.

He has been working in the organisation for four years.

His latest endeavour is the Individual Learning Portfolio (ILP) project, a proof of concept study involving collaboration with the education ministry.

As a key team member of the ILP project, he was tasked to spearhead the business development and user acquisition and engagement for a prototype education and career guidance online portal.

That was a challenge for him. As someone without experience in information technology, it involved getting out of his comfort zone, says Mr Foong, who was assigned to the task in September 2013.

He rose to the challenge, and within four months, the team rolled out the prototype site to more than 18,000 participants in Singapore, he says.

The ILP is a part of the Continuing Education and Training (CET) Masterplan 2020 designed by WDA to provide a forward-looking blueprint to support ongoing efforts in restructuring the Singapore economy.

"The ILP will improve education, training and career guidance so Singaporeans can make more informed decisions on their learning and career choices," explains Mr Foong.

## Winning idea

In 2012, he championed the idea of approaching the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) to align the training of soldiers with industry-recognised standards.

"When the full-time national servicemen complete their national service, they will be certified with commercially recognised skill sets, easing their transition into a civilian career," he explains.

The project was adopted by SAF and garnered the interest of other defence agencies such as the Singapore Civil Defence Force.

For his winning idea, Mr Foong was awarded the WDA Cool Innovation Award.

As part of WDA's talent development programme, he was also recently awarded the WDA Educational Award to pursue his postgraduate studies. He hopes to study something related to transformational leadership.

He also hopes to specialise in industrial engagement, working with stakeholders such as employers, training organisations, other government agencies and unions to drive WDA's mission.

"It is a great feeling to work in an organisation that is nurturing. I am most appreciative of the many development opportunities that WDA has given me," he adds.