



Interacting with senior management has helped Ms Lye understand how policies are formulated, debated and implemented. PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Figuring it out

Ms Lye Su Yin, assistant director in AGD's Treasury Directorate, enjoys making sense of numbers

by mike lee

MS LYE Su Yin joined the Accountant-General's Department (AGD) after she graduated four years ago, a decision that marked the start of a fulfilling public sector career.

"To be honest, I didn't quite know what to expect prior to joining the organisation, but my experience has far exceeded my expectations," says Ms Lye, 27.

She has a double degree in Economics and Business from Singapore Management University. She applied to work at AGD because she found its work interesting and relevant to her field of study.

A department under the Ministry of Finance (MOF), AGD is the central government agency that provides financial and accounting services to the Singapore Public Service.

Its wide-ranging roles include administering and reviewing accounting and financial systems, preparing financial and management reports, managing the Government's liquidity, reviewing internal controls and the government's spending for value-for-money.

Today, she is an assistant director at its Treasury directorate, where staff do accounting and reporting of reserves and investments to fulfil the Accountant-General's statutory duty of reserves protection. They also play a role in policy formulation relating to the Government's balance sheet.

She says: "We put in place policies for optimal liquidity management. We work with MOF to monitor the performance and risks related to the Government's assets and liabilities and seek to proactively educate the public on Singapore's unique debt position through the Public Debt Report."

The Treasury directorate also launches initiatives to improve the management of statutory boards' assets. For example, the Demand Aggregation initiative enables statutory boards to gain easy access to professional fund management and investment consultancy services.

High job engagement

The variety makes her job challenging and interesting. She says: "There are so many aspects to the Government's balance sheet, and we are always working on different aspects of it."

She and her colleagues get to meet and work with diverse groups of people from both public and private sector. This includes the Monetary Authority of Singapore, Central Provident Fund, Government of Singapore Investment Corporation, Temasek Holdings, as well as commercial banks and fund managers.

"As a central agency, we are involved in many whole-of-Government projects and reviews," she says. "This helps widen my perspective and think broader in terms of implications and considerations."

She has had many opportunities to interact with senior management. "These interactions present rich learning opportunities in understanding how policies are formulated and debated, and finally implemented," she says.

Six months into her job, she presented a proposal to Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam. She says: "I remember being very nervous during the presentation, but it was eye-opening and enriching to glean some insights into how the minds of our leaders work. It was really enriching and humbling all at the same time."

Dynamic environment

The nature of her work means there is a lot of learning and training on the job. At the same time, young staff members are encouraged to voice opinions, and to navigate difficult situations independently.

"This helps to develop our independent thinking and problem solving skills, and also the ability to work in a team," says Ms Lye. "Bosses are very willing to teach and guide, helping staff to grow and mature."

As a central agency, we are involved in many whole-of-Government projects and reviews. This helps widen my perspective and think broader in terms of implications and considerations.

— Ms Lye Su Yin, assistant director, Treasury directorate, Accountant-General's Department

The AGD offers training and exposure opportunities starting from the most junior officers. Ms Lye remembers participating in the 2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Kazan, Russia, to showcase Singapore's treasury systems.

That year, she was also awarded an overseas scholarship to study for her Master of Science in Accounting and Finance at the University of Bath, United Kingdom. "Beyond boosting my technical knowledge and expertise, I also personally grew and matured in my year overseas."

Ms Lye says knowing that her work makes a difference gives her the most job satisfaction. "This was the reason I joined the public sector in the first place. As clichéd as it may sound, it's true."

She advises: "Remember why you joined the public sector in the first place, and let the cause guide your decisions, your work ethics, and inspire you to keep going."