

Singapore Budget 2024 sets aside over S\$1 billion for AI over five years

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Press releases Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives launched to uplift Singapore's economic potential

1 March 2024

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At the Committee of Supply (COS) Debates 2024, MCI announced several AI initiatives to power Singapore's next bound of economic growth, including: a. New initiatives to nurture AI research talent;

b. An investment of over \$20 million in the next three years to increase the number of SG Digital Scholarships and overseas internships in AI roles;

c. An investment of up to \$500 million into securing high-performance compute resources for AI innovation and capability building;

d. Launching a Generative AI x Digital Leaders Initiative to provide businesses with access to GenAI expertise and resources; and

e. The publication of Advisory Guidelines on the use of Personal Data in AI Recommendation and Decision Systems.

These initiatives align with the refreshed National AI Strategy (NAIS 2.0) launched by Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Lawrence Wong in December 2023. NAIS 2.0 aims to propel Singapore as a leader in the field of AI, and to use AI for the public good, for Singapore and the world.

To support NAIS 2.0 and further catalyse AI activities, DPM Wong announced - through his Budget Statement on 16 Feb 2024 – an investment of more than \$1 billion over the next five years into AI compute, talent, and industry development.

To achieve these goals of NAIS 2.0, we have begun directing our efforts towards three systems - activity drivers; people and communities; infrastructure and environment - by working through 10 enablers. The above mentioned initiatives relate to the following enablers that are the key focus for 2024.

Enabler 1: Talent A key focus is the building of skilled AI talent in Singapore. Such talent can be categorised in three groups – (i) Creators, who are top-tier talent engaged in novel and cutting-edge AI activities; (ii) Practitioners, which include data and machine learning scientists and engineers involved in the translation and development of AI solutions; and (iii) Users of AI-powered products and services.

As an initial step to nurture a pool of top-tier AI Creators: a. The government will launch a new AI Visiting Professorship to attract world-class AI researchers to establish collaborations with Singapore. Refer to Annex A ↗ (opens in new tab) for more details.

b. The government will invest S\$7 million into a new AI Accelerated Masters Programme in collaboration with local universities to build up our own pipeline of Singaporean AI researchers. Refer to Annex B ↗ (opens in new tab) for more details.

As for AI practitioners, we will level up and triple the pool of practitioners to 15,000 over 5 years to support

growing AI demand. As an initial step towards this goal, the government will invest over \$20 million to enhance AI Practitioner training for students over three years , including an increase in the number of AI-related SG Digital Scholarships for Singaporeans to pursue AI and related undergraduate, masters, and PhD courses in top universities, and facilitate access to overseas internships in AI-related roles . These scholarships will allow students to work in the industry after graduation, while the internships will provide students with opportunities to gain industry exposure and apply their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems. This is in addition to the ramping up of our Continuous Education and Training programmes under our TeSA initiative to provide pathways for mid-careerists to transit to AI jobs. Refer to [Annex C ↗](#) (opens in new tab) for more details.

Enabler 2: Industry On the industry front, MCI announced at COS 2023 that it would be developing a Digital Enterprise Blueprint (DEB) to chart the next bound of enterprise digitalisation in Singapore, including catalysing enterprise experimentation and innovation with emerging technologies like AI.

Currently, for enterprises that are ready to experiment with and deploy more advanced digital solutions, the government has put in place enablers to support them. Various initiatives have been developed to make Generative AI (GenAI) more accessible to SMEs to unlock productivity gains. For example, enterprises looking to experiment with GenAI can gain experience with curated GenAI solutions on the GenAI Sandbox for SMEs [↗](#) (opens in new tab) .

For enterprises that are digitally more mature, IMDA has launched the Generative AI x Digital Leaders initiative to provide them with access to GenAI expertise and resources to better understand GenAI and further build their capabilities to implement customised GenAI applications with tech partners to meet their business needs. Refer to [Annex D ↗](#) (opens in new tab) for more details of this initiative.

Enabler 3: Compute Alongside programmes to prepare our people to reap benefits from AI, infrastructure must be put in place to power our AI activities. Specifically, Singapore needs reliable access to high-performance compute to facilitate AI innovation.

To achieve this goal, an investment of up to \$500 million will go towards availing high-performance compute to support AI innovation and capability building for a start, and catalyse further investments by industry. Refer to [Annex E ↗](#) (opens in new tab) for more details.

Enabler 4: Trusted Environment To enable AI adoption, we must develop a trusted environment in which there are effective safeguards to protect against the potential misuse of AI, and to ensure the technology is developed and deployed in a safe, trustworthy, and responsible manner.

To this end, the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) has finalised its Advisory Guidelines on the use of Personal Data in AI Recommendation and Decision Systems , and published it on 1 Mar 2024. Refer to [Annex F ↗](#) (opens in new tab) for more details of these guidelines.

Additionally, the PDPC also recognises that beyond such Traditional AI systems, the rise of Generative technologies also brings about new risks relating to the use of personal data. In this regard, the PDPC is also reviewing how to give guidance on the use of personal data in the context of training or as input in Generative AI applications. [Infographic on AI initiatives ↗](#) (opens in new tab)

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