

**DELIVERED SPEECH BY MS LOW YEN LING
CHAIRMAN OF MAYORS' COMMITTEE AND
MAYOR OF SOUTH WEST DISTRICT
AT THE LAUNCH OF CDC VOUCHERS SCHEME 2022
ON WEDNESDAY, 11 MAY 2022, 1PM, TAMPINES WEST CC**

A very good afternoon to our Guest of Honour, Minister for Finance, Mr Lawrence Wong;

Fellow Mayors Denise Phua, Desmond Choo, Alex Yam, and Mohd Fahmi Aliman;

Mr Yeo Hiang Meng, BBM, President, Federation of Merchants' Associations Singapore;

Mr Kwek Theng Swee, PBM, Chairman, Heartland Enterprise Centre Singapore;

Partners and friends.

1 On behalf of the five Mayors and the Community Development Councils (CDCs), I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to the launch of the CDC Vouchers Scheme 2022.

2 We've come a long way from two years ago – when we were here to launch the inaugural \$20m CDC Vouchers Scheme for low-income households. Although it has been tough on everyone since the pandemic, we've seen how Singaporeans have risen to the occasion - to change, adapt and support each other through difficult times.

3 During the Covid-19 pandemic, the challenge to disburse funds quickly to Singaporean households to help defray their living expenses was met with a creative solution that also enabled the Government to revitalise local heartland businesses and hawkers at the same time. Our partner, GovTech Open Government Products (OGP), started the first trial of digital vouchers in April 2020 here, in Tampines GRC.

4 Today, we've moved away from paper-based vouchers to a digital voucher scheme that's providing easy redemption and reimbursement for over 1.22m households. The digital CDC Vouchers Scheme is a result of a whole-of-society effort involving organisations such as the CDCs, GovTech and merchant associations, and individuals like Digital and CDC ambassadors, shopkeepers, hawkers and volunteers.

5 This pivot from the familiar and traditional way of doing things in 2020, to the smart use of technology in 2021 paralleled how we, as a community, have evolved our responses



to the pandemic by adapting to change positively and embracing new ways of doing things. This resilience has brought encouraging results.

6 Today, many merchants and hawkers report being satisfied with the easy use of CDC Vouchers and having faster reimbursements. The positive user experience of this platform has also contributed to the overall high amount of spending recorded by households and boosted businesses at our heartland merchants and hawkers.

7 Half of those who claimed the 2021 digital vouchers have spent all the given amount of \$100. The flow of spending from the vouchers has since charged up our heartland shops and hawkers.

8 Many heartland shopkeepers and hawkers were pleased with the impact of the vouchers. For example, within the first two weeks of the CDC digital Vouchers Scheme launch last December, Ang Mo Kio Constituency Merchants Association reported a 15-20% increase in customer footfall. Over in the west, Bukit Gombak Merchant Association also saw a 10-20% rise in revenue and customers. Even traditional businesses like Heng Foh Tong Medical Hall reported brisk sales after the launch of the digital CDC Vouchers Scheme. The early success of the digital platform has attracted advocates. Hawker Chew who runs Uncle Chew Chicken Rice stall at Taman Jurong Food Centre is an eager beaver whose business got a much-needed uplift after he onboarded the scheme and began accepting CDC Vouchers. He noticed that his customers would add more sides to their orders when they were using the CDC vouchers to pay. This tendency to “jia liao” translated to a much-welcomed rise in his takings. Uncle Chew soon became an enthusiastic advocate of the CDC Vouchers Scheme. He not only “chio” other hawkers to onboard the scheme, but he also showed them how easy it was to use RedeemSG and get reimbursed fast.

9 As we move towards the post-Covid new normal, crowds are coming back to the heartlands. We look forward to the new tranche of CDC vouchers and hope that it will inject another vital boost to Singaporean households and local heartland businesses.

10 The Mayors and I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all our partners whose collective efforts have made this journey of transformation possible. In particular, we would like to thank the following organisations:

MOF for funding the various tranches of CDC Vouchers since 2020;



The three GovTech teams: (a) OGP (b) the GovTech Singpass Team and (c) the GovTech GoWhere Team;

The IMDA, and its Singapore Digital Office (SDO);

ESG and its network of Business Advisers at its SME Centres @ CDC who strengthened our outreach to merchants;

The Federation of Merchants' Associations Singapore as well as Heartland Enterprise Centre Singapore, and their 54 Merchant Associations;

Finally, I would like to thank People's Association (PA) and the Grassroots Advisers and Leaders for their instrumental ground support.

Most importantly, a big thank you to all residents, hawkers and heartland merchants for giving the digital CDC Vouchers Scheme a chance.

11 Our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all of you.

12 Throughout the pandemic, the CDCs have ramped up our role in connecting and partnering with the community to coordinate efforts and resources to meet the evolving needs of Singaporeans, especially the vulnerable. It has been challenging but we have fought hard together, to keep our economy, lives and businesses in shape.

13 We will not let up in our efforts but continue to aggregate resources and solutions to meet the evolving needs of Singaporeans. Together with the community and our partners, we will press forward to serve the needy, uplift lives and strengthen our social resilience – to build a strong and resilient Singapore, where no one is left behind.

14 Thank you.