

The Geneva Challenge 2023



Reach Out, Step Out, Help Out

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1. Abstract

Loneliness among the elderly is a significant challenge in Singapore, necessitating innovative solutions. This proposal introduces *Bonfire*, an initiative that addresses elderly loneliness through collective volunteering and community engagement. The implementation plan provides a roadmap for *Bonfire*'s success by focusing on elderly outreach, program curation, stakeholder engagement, and the integration of digital and offline platforms. *Bonfire* aims to strengthen family bonds, build new social connections, and enhance self-esteem by connecting lonely elderly individuals aged 60 and above with volunteering opportunities. The initiative emphasizes the importance of dynamic interactions and shared understanding within the community. By collaborating with the government, the private sector, and social service agencies, *Bonfire* aims to scale nationally and make a lasting impact on elderly loneliness. *Bonfire*'s comprehensive approach, stakeholder involvement, and program scalability position it as a viable solution to address the pressing challenge of elderly loneliness in Singapore.

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2. Problem Identification

2.1 Defining the Challenge

In a world that thrives on constant connectivity, it is paradoxical that loneliness continues to permeate the lives of many individuals. Indeed, loneliness is a complex phenomenon that has been defined in various ways by researchers and scholars over the years. That a plethora of academics, past and present, have explored this subject reflects its perpetuity and its impact on people across ages and from all walks of life.

The Issue

According to Perlman and Peplau, loneliness is the unpleasant experience arising from when an individual's social network is insufficient, either quantitatively or qualitatively.¹ Weiss describes it as the perceived discrepancy between an individual's desired and actual level of social connection.² Fried, illustrates it as a subjective feeling of pain that one experiences due to unfulfilled needs for meaningful connections.³ Kearns et al., identify three distinct components of loneliness: feelings, circumstances, and response. They posit that loneliness is the feeling resulting from the lack of close or intimate contact, the absence of sufficient social contact and support in one's daily life, and as a result of how one reacts to one's social circumstances – all of which can affect one's mood, disposition, or mental health.⁴

While frequently linked to characteristics such as depression, or inadequate social skills, loneliness can also occur when one perceives themselves as socially isolated despite being

¹ Daniel Perlman and Letitia A. Peplau, "Toward a Social Psychology of Loneliness," in *Personal Relationships in Disorder*, by Steven W. Duck and Robin Gilmour (London: Academic Press, 1981), <https://peplau.psych.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/141/2017/07/Perlman-Peplau-81.pdf>.

² R. Weiss, *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1975).

³ Linda P. Fried, "Designing a New Social Infrastructure to Combat Loneliness in Aging Adults," *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging* 44, no. 3 (2020): 1–12.

⁴ Ade Kearns et al., "Loneliness, Social Relations and Health and Well-Being in Deprived Communities," *Psychology, Health & Medicine* 20, no. 3 (July 24, 2014): 332–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2014.940354>.



surrounded by other people.⁵ In this regard, social isolation is distinct from loneliness as it is characterized by having limited relationships consequently resulting in limited interactions. Additionally, loneliness has been considered the social equivalent of physical pain (resulting from social disconnection) and hunger or thirst (for social connection) by Hawkley and Cacioppo.⁶

Evidently, loneliness is multi-dimensional and can manifest differently. According to Weiss, emotional and social loneliness are two dimensions which possess distinct attributes of their own. He defines **emotional loneliness** as the perceived lack of a significant someone who can provide emotional support, while **social loneliness** refers to the perceived presence or lack of quality relationships with friends or family.⁷ These were adopted by other researchers who also further identified additional dimensions such as existential and collective loneliness.⁸ In more recent studies, Landmann and Rohmann offer another dimension called **physical loneliness**. The authors define physical loneliness as the longing for physical company despite already being socially and emotionally connected to people. These feelings, they suggest, prominently emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic when physical distancing and isolation were enforced.⁹ These three dimensions of loneliness undergird the intervention of this proposed solution.

⁵ John T. Cacioppo and Stephanie Cacioppo, “The Growing Problem of Loneliness,” *The Lancet* 391, no. 10119 (February 3, 2018): 426, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(18\)30142-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(18)30142-9).

⁶ Louise C. Hawkley and John T. Cacioppo, “Loneliness Matters: A Theoretical and Empirical Review of Consequences and Mechanisms,” *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 40, no. 2 (July 22, 2010): 218–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12160-010-9210-8>.

⁷ Weiss, *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation*.

⁸ Ingrid Bolmsjö, Per-Anders Tengland, and Margareta Rämngård, “Existential Loneliness: An Attempt at an Analysis of the Concept and the Phenomenon,” *Nursing Ethics* 26, no. 5 (February 22, 2018): 1310–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733017748480>.

⁹ Helen Landmann and Anette Rohmann, “When Loneliness Dimensions Drift Apart: Emotional, Social and Physical Loneliness during the COVID-19 Lockdown and Its Associations with Age, Personality, Stress and Well-Being,” *International Journal of Psychology* 57, no. 1 (May 10, 2021): 63–72, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12772>.



2.2 Impacts and Consequences

While loneliness is commonly perceived as a personal emotion or experience, it has evolved into a complex social issue. It affects individuals regardless of age, gender, and socioeconomic background, and even labelled by some health professionals as an epidemic.¹⁰ Although the prevalence of loneliness is context-specific and differs from country to country (e.g., young adults as the loneliest demographic in the United Kingdom while loneliness is more prevalent in the older age group in Australia), there is growing evidence that loneliness has significant social implications, including negative impacts on physical and mental health, social relationships, and overall well-being.¹¹ It can perpetuate a cycle of social withdrawal, making it difficult for individuals to form and maintain meaningful connections, worsening feelings of loneliness and isolation.¹² The concept of loneliness has also gone beyond the disciplines of psychology and healthcare; it has garnered more attention globally as it is increasingly linked to external factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic, war, environmental and climate change, demographic change, social media use, among others.¹³

The World Health Organization has recognized loneliness as a legitimate public health and public policy concern. It has been considered an important social determinant of health, especially for older people, and has been proven to have a substantial impact on health outcomes.¹⁴ The negative effects of loneliness should not be underestimated, as it has wide-

¹⁰ Vivek Murthy, “Work and the Loneliness Epidemic,” *Harvard Business Review*, September 26, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/09/work-and-the-loneliness-epidemic>.

¹¹ Daniel L. Surkalim et al., “The Prevalence of Loneliness across 113 Countries: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *BMJ*, February 9, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2021-067068>.

¹² Pamela Qualter et al., “Loneliness, Interpersonal Distrust, and Alexithymia in University Students,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 39, no. 6 (June 1, 2009): 1461–79, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00491.x>.

¹³ Sonia Lippke and Lisa Marie Warner, “Understanding and Overcoming Challenges in Times of Personal or Global Crisis—Editorial on the Special Issue on Loneliness and Health,” *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* 15, no. 1 (December 7, 2022): 3–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12420>.

¹⁴ Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing, “Social Isolation and Loneliness among Older People: Advocacy Brief,” World Health Organization, July 29, 2021, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240030749>.



ranging consequences for both individuals and society. Although loneliness is typically characterized as temporary, prolonged loneliness can particularly increase the risk of various health issues, such as cardiovascular disease, depression, anxiety, and even premature death.¹⁵ Furthermore, it can have a detrimental impact on cognitive function, weaken the immune system, and diminish sleep quality.¹⁶ These health outcomes can further strain healthcare systems, ultimately leading to increased healthcare costs. The economic impact of loneliness is substantial, with higher healthcare costs and reduced workplace productivity.¹⁷ For the vulnerable elderly, loneliness is a challenge that cannot be ignored.

There is no universal solution to loneliness in the same way that there is no single cause for loneliness itself. It has prompted a wide range of responses incorporating multifaceted approaches and differentiated interventions. This is described in greater detail in Annex A.

2.3 Elderly Loneliness in Singapore

Singapore, situated in Southeast Asia, is a dense urban city characterized by high population density and skyscrapers. The city-state's evolution into a thriving metropolis can be attributed to the influence of a strong government policies that has effectively steered its development. Singapore's distinct cultural framework is grounded in Asian conservative values, traditional customs, and societal norms. Despite its economic achievements, Singapore faces the pressing issue of growing income inequality and the challenge of a rapidly aging population, prompting the implementation of strategies aimed at addressing the evolving needs of its elderly populace.

Singapore provides a compelling context for examining the influence of loneliness on older adults. Projections indicate that by 2035, approximately one-third of the Singaporean

¹⁵ Julianne Holt-Lunstad et al., "Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 227–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614568352>.

¹⁶ Holt-Lunstad et al.

¹⁷ Andrew Steptoe et al., "Social Isolation, Loneliness, and All-Cause Mortality in Older Men and Women," *PNAS* 110, no. 15 (March 25, 2013): 5797–5801, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1219686110>.



population will be aged 65 and above.¹⁸ Moreover, Singapore is characterized by a "collectivistic" cultural orientation that places significant emphasis on interpersonal relationships and the interconnectedness between individuals, in contrast with 'individualistic' cultures that prioritise individual needs and desires. Previous research has indicated that levels of loneliness tend to be higher in collectivistic societies, suggesting that the detrimental impact of loneliness may be more pronounced within Singaporean society.¹⁹

Risk Factors for Loneliness

The three dimensions of loneliness can arise from a diverse range of factors, from societal changes to personal circumstances. Emotional loneliness, for example, can be triggered by changes in relationships (or marital status) such as widowhood and divorce.²⁰ Bereavement and social isolation following the death of a loved one can lead to heightened feelings of loneliness and isolation. According to a study by Hughes et al., the loss of a spouse was identified as a significant predictor of loneliness among older adults. Meanwhile, social loneliness may emerge from major life transitions,²¹ including moving to a new location, starting a new job, retiring, or experiencing declining health due to aging.²²

¹⁸ R. Hirschmann, "Aging Population of Singapore - Statistics & Facts," Statista, May 12, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/topics/5821/ageing-population-of-singapore/#topicOverview>.

¹⁹ "'All the Lonely People': The Impact of Loneliness in Old Age on Life and Health Expectancy," Duke NUS Medical School, July 7, 2021, <https://www.duke-nus.edu.sg/allnews/media-releases/impact-of-loneliness-on-life-and-health-expectancy#:~:text=Nationally%20representative%20data%2C%20collected%20from,those%20aged%2080%20and%20above.>

²⁰ Jenny De Jong Gierveld and Theo Van Tilburg, "A 6-Item Scale for Overall, Emotional, and Social Loneliness," *Research on Aging* 28, no. 5 (September 1, 2006): 582–98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0164027506289723>.

²¹ National Academies Press (US), "Risk and Protective Factors for Social Isolation and Loneliness," in *Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System* (Washington DC: National Academies Press (US), 2020), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557971/>.

²² Sri Susanty et al., "Prevalence of Loneliness and Associated Factors among Community-Dwelling Older Adults in Indonesia: A Cross-Sectional Study," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 8 (April 18, 2022): 4911, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19084911>.



Moreover, modern lifestyle patterns, such as increased urbanization, work demands, and technological advancements, have led to decreased social interactions and, therefore, a weakening of community ties.²³ Social support networks and social participation also play a crucial role in mitigating loneliness among the elderly. Lack of social support, limited social interactions, and reduced participation in social activities have been consistently linked to increased loneliness in older adults. Although digital technologies, for example, can increase the opportunities to connect, they may also widen the divide, especially for those who lack digital skills.²⁴ Physical loneliness, on the other hand, has become prevalent as social distancing and quarantine measures were implemented during the pandemic. Although remote work arrangements have enabled flexibility and improved work-life balance, studies have shown that they may also increase loneliness among working adults.²⁵

Figure 1 illustrates our root cause analysis and relates the three dimensions of elderly loneliness to a plethora of underlying risk factors. These converge into to five high level factors – socioeconomic challenges, absence of family, low self-esteem, disconnection from family, and poor health. While it is by no means an exhaustive list, acknowledging and understanding the risk factors and correlates of loneliness, especially in the elderly, is crucial for developing and implementing targeted interventions and support systems.

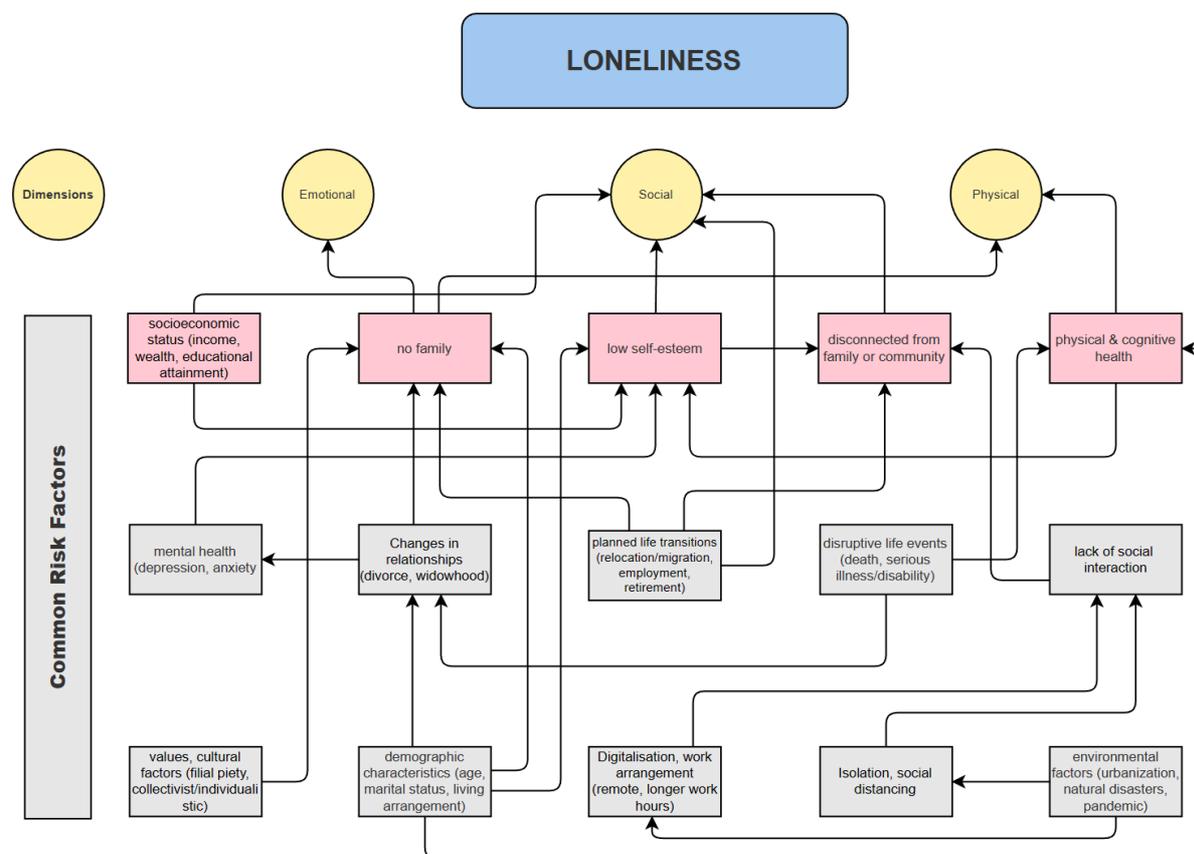
²³ Julianne Holt-Lunstad, “The Potential Public Health Relevance of Social Isolation and Loneliness: Prevalence, Epidemiology, and Risk Factors,” *Public Policy & Aging Report* 27, no. 4 (January 2, 2018): 127–30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ppar/prx030>.

²⁴ Farooq Mubarak and Reima Suomi, “Elderly Forgotten? Digital Exclusion in the Information Age and the Rising Grey Digital Divide,” *INQUIRY: The Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision and Financing* 59 (April 26, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00469580221096272>.

²⁵ Veronica Bollestad, Jon-Sander Amland, and Espen Olsen, “The Pros and Cons of Remote Work in Relation to Bullying, Loneliness and Work Engagement: A Representative Study among Norwegian Workers during COVID-19,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (October 25, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1016368>.



Figure 1: Risk Factors for Loneliness in Singapore



Elderly Loneliness as a Growing Social Challenge

In Singapore, the risk factors associated with social isolation and loneliness, such as lacking family support, experiencing low self-esteem, and feeling disconnected from the community, are prevalent. In 2016-2017, a study revealed that one-third of Singaporean citizens and permanent residents perceived themselves as lonely. This proportion increased with age, reaching 32 percent among individuals aged 60 to 69 years and 40 percent among those aged 80 and above.²⁶

²⁶ “THE SIGNS Study by Duke-NUS Researchers Identify Factors Affecting Active and Productive Ageing among Older Singaporeans,” Duke NUS Medical School, May 7, 2019, <https://www.duke-nus.edu.sg/allnews/the-signs-study-by-duke-nus-researchers-identify-factors-affecting-active-and-productive-ageing-among-older-singaporeans>.



Older adults face a higher vulnerability to social isolation and loneliness due to predisposing factors, including living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness, and sensory impairments. In 2020, approximately 10 percent or 88,000 Singapore residents aged 60 years and above lived alone, further exacerbating the risk.²⁷

The impact of feeling excluded from society is emphasized due to Singapore's collectivistic culture. In the context of Singapore, family plays a vital role in addressing the issue of loneliness among the elderly. As a predominantly conservative society with strong Asian values, Singapore places great emphasis on the family unit. The family is regarded as the fundamental unit of society, providing support and identity. Values such as filial piety, respect for elders, loyalty, and harmony are highly esteemed among the diverse ethnic groups. Singaporeans frequently celebrate family occasions with relatives and friends, such as weddings, birthdays, festivals, and anniversaries. They also take care of their elderly parents and grandparents, either by cohabitating or regularly visiting them. As a result, losing one's family to death, divorce, or estrangement is an extremely harsh experience for elderly in Singapore. Without an existing support network, the loss of family often leads to loneliness and depression.

Low-self-esteem arising from depression acts as an internal barrier which prevents the afflicted from seeking help or helping themselves. In 2013, 1 in 27 adults aged over 60 in Singapore were found to have depression.²⁸ In addition, the stigma surrounding mental illness leads to these individuals to ignore their mental health, and as result become marginalized and neglected by society. Depression, when paired with social isolation causes elderly to become even less likely to participate in the community or to seek help for their loneliness.

²⁷ "ANNUAL NUMBER OF SENIORS AGED 60 YEARS AND ABOVE WHO PASSED AWAY ALONE AT HOME IN PAST FIVE YEARS AND EXPECTED TREND," Ministry of Health Singapore, January 10, 2022, <https://www.moh.gov.sg/news-highlights/details/annual-number-of-seniors-aged-60-years-and-above-who-passed-away-alone-at-home-in-past-five-years-and-expected-trend/>.

²⁸ Syarafana Shafeeq, "IMH to Conduct Second Study on Dementia and Depression among Elderly," The Straits Times, March 1, 2022, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/imh-to-conduct-second-study-on-dementia-and-depression-among-elderly>.



However, elderly loneliness in Singapore is not only confined to those who have lost their family. Contrary to expectations, the elderly living with children in Singapore was found to display the highest levels of loneliness. Associate Professor Angelique Chan, executive director of Duke-NUS Medical School's Centre for Ageing Research and Education hypothesises that this trend is due to longer working hours, leading to a lack of social interaction between the elderly and their adult children.²⁹ While proximity and support of the family may fulfil the physical and emotional aspects of loneliness, it is insufficient to overcome loneliness. Active social participation is required.

This highlights the importance of both family and social participation when approaching loneliness in Singapore. In an interview with Coreen Chong, a senior social work practitioner in Singapore, she highlighted that the elderly must be given a role to play in society – be it caring for grandchildren, or even simple tasks such as housework. (Refer to Annex C for interviewee profile.) Without a purpose, the elderly may feel like a burden and disconnect themselves from the community. The importance of social participation on loneliness was also highlighted by a global study across four continents, which found consistently that social participation played a significant role in overcoming loneliness among the elderly.

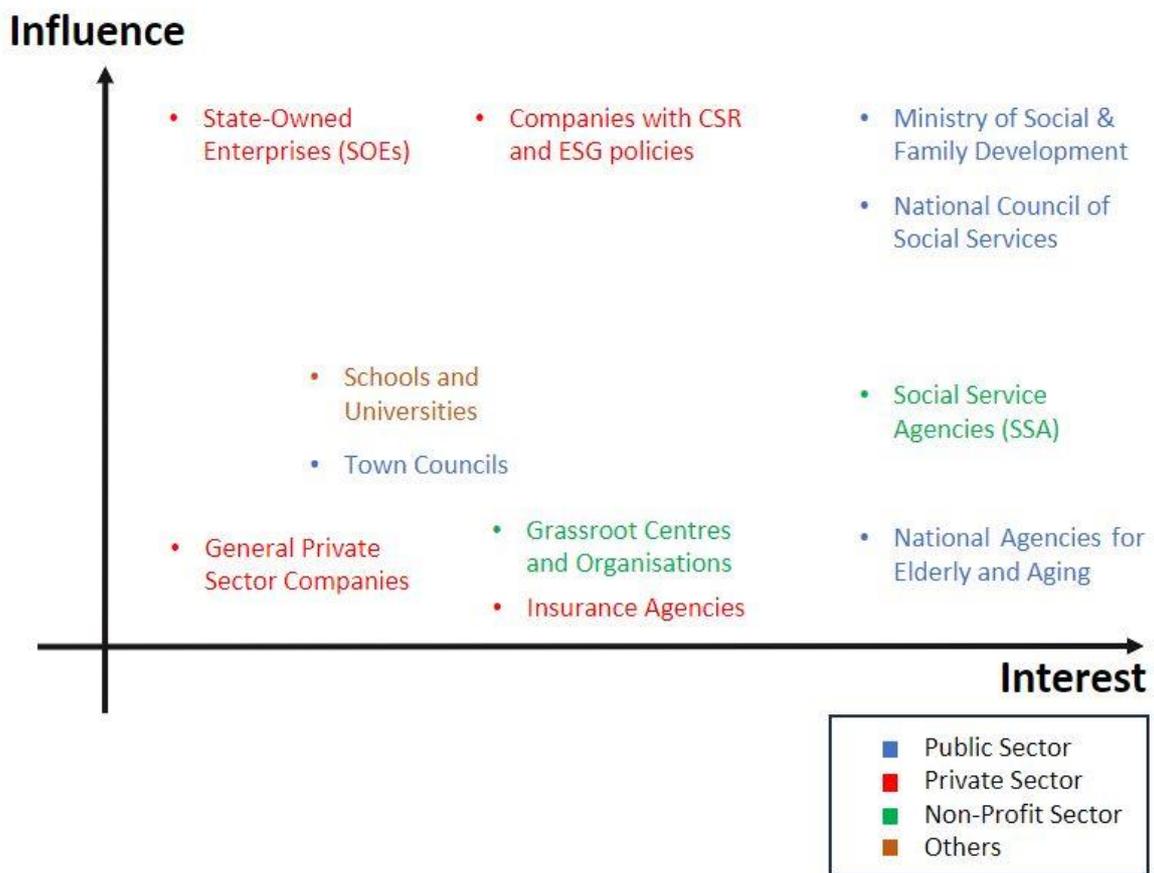
²⁹ Yan Han Goh, “Elderly People May Feel Lonely, Isolated Even While Living with Family: Study,” *The Straits Times*, August 27, 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/elderly-experience-social-disconnection-even-among-those-living-with-their-family-study>.



2.4 Mapping Stakeholders

In this proposal to address elderly loneliness in Singapore, Figure 2 maps the stakeholders that are relevant to the solution in terms of their influence and interest in tackling loneliness. They include organizations from the public sectors, private sectors, non-profit sector, and others. For a more in-depth explanation of the stakeholders, refer to Annex B.

Figure 2: Stakeholders Map



Of note are the Singapore Ministry of Social & Family Development (MSF), and National Council of Social Services (NCSS). They are key stakeholders as they have both high influence and interest in addressing elderly loneliness. Partnerships should be explored with relevant Social Service Agencies (SSAs) who engage in work adjacent to our problem.



2.5 Existing Solutions to the Problem

Recognizing the challenges posed by an aging population, the Singaporean government has made significant efforts to address loneliness and social isolation among the elderly. Initiatives fall within two categories: Self-help Programs and Outreach Programs.

Self-help Programs

Singapore promotes active aging as a means to enhance the quality of life and well-being of older adults. Active aging, defined by the WHO, involves optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security to improve the quality of life as people age.³⁰ Several initiatives have been launched to achieve this goal, including the Active Ageing Programmes (AAPs), which encourage seniors to stay active, healthy, and socially engaged through a variety of activities such as group exercise sessions, health talks, cooking classes, and intergenerational bonding events. Additionally, the AIC Wellness Programme provides resources and activities to enhance the well-being of both well and frail seniors, including cognitive games, reminiscence therapy, music and movement, and gardening.

The implementation of the 2023 Action Plan for Successful Ageing further supports active aging across multiple domains, such as lifelong learning, employment, health and wellness, housing, transport, social inclusion, respect and recognition, retirement adequacy, aged care, and research. The government is supported in these initiatives by more than 450 Social Service Agencies (SSAs) in Singapore, many of which are specifically dedicated to providing support for the elderly.³¹ These programs are considered self-help as it requires motivation and initiative from the participant to join.

Outreach Programs

Outreach programs differ as they seek to help socially isolated seniors who do not have the means or motivation to seek help on their own. Befriending programs, which represents the

³⁰ WHO, “Active Ageing: A Policy Framework” (World Health Organization, April 2002), <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/WHO-Active-Ageing-Framework.pdf>.

³¹ “LAUNCH OF THE 2023 ACTION PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL AGEING,” Ministry of Health Singapore, January 30, 2023, <https://www.moh.gov.sg/news-highlights/details/launch-of-the-2023-action-plan-for-successful-ageing>.



bulk of Singapore's outreach effort, are designed to provide companionship and support to older adults who may be experiencing loneliness, social isolation, or a lack of social connections.³² The goal of such initiatives is to improve the well-being and quality of life for seniors by connecting them with caring individuals or volunteers who can offer friendship, emotional support, and engage in meaningful activities.

2.6 Gaps in Existing Solutions

Limited Reach of Social Services

Despite the support provided by the Singapore Government and SSAs, gaps remain due to the limited reach of social services, and a growing social class divide. Many of the government's active aging programs are delivered from community centres which are located within Singapore's heartlands - residential areas where most Singaporeans live, work and play. They are mainly composed of public housing estates that are subsidised, built and managed by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). The proximity of community centres to HDB flats enables strong engagement with the elderly population residing there, considering that mobility issues often affect the elderly, making long-distance travel difficult. However, while a significant percentage (80%) of Singapore's population lives in HDB flats, the remaining 20% lives in private housing – many of which lie outside of community centres' reach.

This highlights a gap in care, as elderly Singaporeans living outside of heartlands do not have the same access to Government and SSAs' initiatives. In addition, elderly living in the heartlands usually stay closer to family and thus enjoy stronger family networks. Primary interviews with social service practitioners revealed that these groups are more difficult to reach as they live on private property. There are also challenges posed by the growing class divide in Singapore, which has created a rift between those of higher and lower social-economic status (SES). Social workers have noted that there may be a reluctance of individuals of higher SES to engage in community centre programs due to perceptions of its 'lower-class'.

³² "Mitigating Stress and Loneliness Amongst Elderly and Youths," MCCY Singapore, n.d., <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/about-us/news-and-resources/parliamentary-matters/2021/nov/mitigating-stress-and-loneliness-amongst-elderly-and-youths>.



Gaps in Government Outreach Initiatives

Self-help initiatives such as recreational groups and classes are an effective means of overcoming elderly loneliness, as active and consistent participation helps to overcome all three dimensions of loneliness. Simply meeting people addresses physical loneliness. Joining these activities consistently also gives the opportunity to build real relationships with other participants, addressing emotional dimension of loneliness. In addition, active participation allows the participants to grow as part of the community which satisfies the social dimension. However, these self-help initiatives require active participation, motivation, and mobility which many elderly lack, due to depression or poor health. Those who are living outside government housing and away from community centres may also find it difficult to access these communities.

Outreach initiatives, such as befriending programs are meant to fill this gap by having befriending providers and volunteers make regular home visits and check-in calls to seniors needing support. However befriending services have limited effectiveness in overcoming elderly loneliness for several reasons.

Befriending services face significant challenges due to their heavy reliance on labour. The scale of these services is often insufficient to address the pervasive issue of elderly loneliness on its own. Insufficient volunteer availability and retention has been repeatedly reported by SSAs, making it difficult to recruit enough individuals to meet the demand. In March 2023, the MSF announced that they were seeking 4,000 additional volunteers to support the existing group of 760 volunteers for befriending activities.³³ This scarcity of volunteers not only limits the number of people that befriending services can assist but also hampers the frequency of their visits to the elderly. Consequently, the effectiveness of befriending services may be limited, offering only superficial relief to elderly individuals experiencing loneliness. While these services can address some of the physical and emotional dimensions of loneliness, they often lack the means to satisfy the social dimension. Befrienders can certainly encourage isolated members to participate in the community; however, the options available may be quite restricted, especially for elderly individuals residing far away from activity centres.

³³ Cherie Lok and Jalelah Abu Baker, “Befrienders Wanted: MSF Seeks 4,000 Volunteers to Reach More Families under ComLink Programme,” CNA, March 17, 2023, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/msf-comlink-help-families-rental-flat-volunteers-needed-3352051>.



3. Proposed Solution

3.1 Solution Requirements

To effectively address the challenges posed by limited reach and effectiveness of current initiatives, an independent solution is required. This solution should go beyond traditional befriending services and encompass an outreach initiative that tackles all three dimensions of loneliness discussed in section 1. It must prioritize face-to-face interaction, as this fosters genuine connections and meaningful relationships. Additionally, the solution should promote repeated encounters among participants, enabling deeper friendships to form over time. Furthermore, it should actively encourage individuals to engage with their community, facilitating their integration and involvement. By encompassing these key elements, the proposed solution aims to fill the gaps in existing government initiatives and effectively address the multifaceted nature of loneliness.

3.2 Launch of *Bonfire* – a Platform to Promote Elderly Volunteering

Research has shown that for societal objectives such as addressing loneliness to become self-sustainable, resilient social institutions need to emerge from within the society. Complexity theory suggests that such emergence can be achieved by promoting more dynamic interactions, which could, in turn, generate new shared collective understanding that could be spread amongst people in the society.³⁴

Hence, to address all three dimensions of elderly loneliness, we propose to create a non-profit social service agency, *Bonfire* – Reach Out, Step Out, Help Out. *Bonfire* is a platform that connects elderly aged 60 and above to volunteering opportunities together with their community, to contribute to their community. Specifically, the goals are threefold and are explained in Figure 3.

³⁴ Cedric de Coning, “Adaptive Peace Operations: Navigating the Complexity of Influencing Societal Change Without Causing Harm,” *International Peacekeeping* 27, no. 5 (August 20, 2020): 836–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2020.1797500>.



Figure 3: Goals of *Bonfire*

Purpose	Goal
Address the physical aspect of loneliness	For the elderly to physically interact and communicate with other volunteers, including immediate family members and beneficiaries, on a recurring basis.
Address the emotional aspect of loneliness	... to engage in communal activities, build trust with other volunteers and beneficiaries, and form connections and develop bonds.
Address the social aspect of loneliness	... to participate in social good through activities, instilling a sense of social purpose and accomplishment.

Bonfire's highest priority is to recruit volunteers as a family unit. Such emphasis sets us apart from other volunteering opportunities, which tend to recruit and attract volunteers on an individual basis. In interviews with SSAs such as RSVP, Hope Centre, and Whampoa Family Service Centre, there was strong support for the potential benefits of having elderly volunteers participate as a family unit as a means to strengthen connections with their closest loved ones. (Refer to Annex C for Interviewee Profiles.) While the typical approach is for volunteers to seek out such opportunities, *Bonfire* distinguishes itself with a more active approach towards identifying, reaching, and recruiting lonely elderly and their immediate family members through multiple channels.

The volunteering programs of *Bonfire* are not typically directly operated but are sourced from SSAs within the community. As many SSAs lack volunteers for their social programs, their demand is matched by the supply of volunteers from *Bonfire*.

Figure 4 shows the essence of *Bonfire* - the platform plays the role of a hub, gathering and connecting a specific group of volunteers to participate in a range of specially curated social activities promoting social good. These activities are selected to maximise recurring physical interactions and communication among the volunteers and beneficiaries. For elderly who typically hold traditional values and may not be digitally savvy, the physical interaction and communication form the foundations of a healthy encounter that alleviates loneliness.

It is important to note that while *Bonfire*'s primary target demography are the lonely elderly and their immediate family members, it does not discriminate or restrict any other individuals



from participating and volunteering to do good. The inclusion of other demography will also serve as an important source of connections with the targeted elderly.

Figure 4: *Bonfire* at a Glance

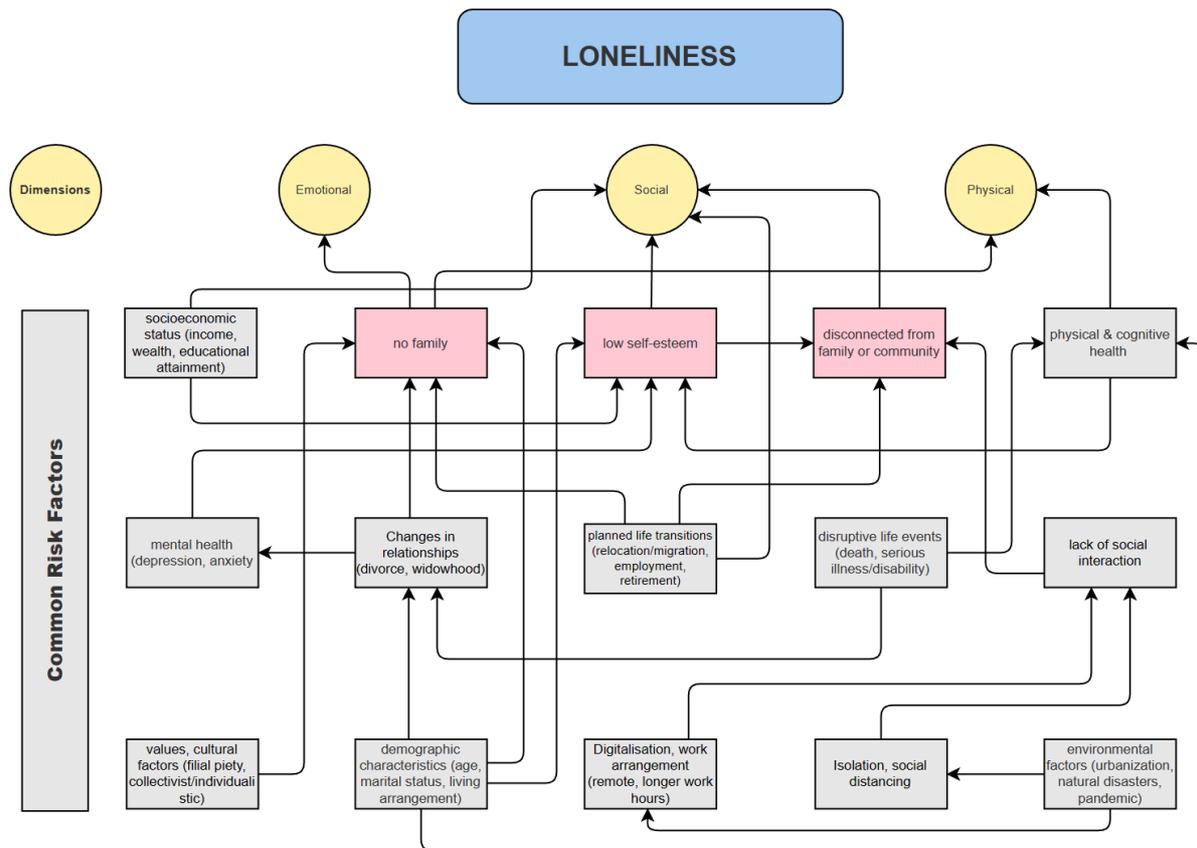


While first operated as an independent or private SSA, the aspiration is that the continued success of *Bonfire* as a hub in addressing elderly' loneliness and the needs of other SSAs could provide the government with a strong proof of concept, eventually leading to *Bonfire* being absorbed into an agency within the government ministry. This would avail increased resources and greater leverage to scale nationally.

3.3 Connecting *Bonfire* to Risk Factors for Loneliness in Singapore

As analysed and identified in section 1.4, there are various high level risk factors for loneliness. Of the five key risk factors shown in Figure 1 repeated here, *Bonfire* seeks to comprehensively address three factors – absence of family, low self-esteem of the elderly, and disconnection from family and community. The factors of socioeconomic status and health are pervasive societal challenges that are out of scope of *Bonfire*.

Figure 1: Risk Factors for Loneliness



To address weak family connections, *Bonfire*'s priority targets include not only individual lonely elderly, but their immediate family members. We seek to recruit our volunteers as a family unit. Through our activities and events, the volunteering families will have the opportunity to bond and connect as they work towards a common social cause. Their participation in our activities also provides a common topic of conversation that could be used as a channel to express their thoughts and feelings – essential elements to build trust and strengthen family ties.

In addition to strengthening existing family relationships, *Bonfire* aims to help lonely elderly build new 'secondary family' connections. This is particularly important to help lonely elderly who lack family relationships form new connections beyond traditional family kinship. Even for elderly who are part of family units, this secondary family functions as a safety net.



For elderly that experience low self-esteem, their participation in our activities will allow them to contribute to social good, providing them with a sense of purpose in their lives. The camaraderie and mutual appreciation of fellow volunteers offer them a meaningful way to contribute while alleviating loneliness.

Health and mobility challenges also contribute to elderly loneliness as they prevent the elderly from leaving home to meet and interact with others. While *Bonfire* cannot solve health challenges, mobility challenges must be circumvented. The activities and events curated by *Bonfire* must include mobility and transport assistance where necessary to encourage such elderly to step out of their home and build new connections. On top of that, elderly that are too at risk to leave their home can still benefit from *Bonfire* as a beneficiary, allowing them to interact with other volunteers in the process. Elderly' participation in our program will also help them maintain their cognitive function, which could help prevent and slow health issues.

3.4 Targeting and Reaching Lonely Elderly Volunteers

For the proposed organisation to function, multiple channels are needed to reach out to different types of lonely elderly. In the subsequent subsections, we will explore some potential channels. A summary of the channel and its outreach can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Summary of Volunteer Outreach Channels

		Family Member Engagement	SSA Leads	Door Knocking	Private Housing & Management Companies and Councils	Roadshows
Living in public housing	Weak existing family relationship	✓	✓	✓		✓
	No existing family relationship		✓	✓		✓
Living in private housing	Weak existing family relationship	✓			✓	✓
	No existing family relationship				✓	✓

Family Member Engagements

Bonfire's highest priority is reaching out to volunteers as a family unit. The path to encourage family participation is by reaching the family members of the elderly at their workplace, schools, or frequented institutions, such as religious sites and hospitals. *Bonfire* will build awareness and reach people working in these institutions, leveraging on them to encourage families to sign-up. Employers (companies) and teachers (schools) could emphasize the importance of family cohesion and encourage their employees, students, or fellow friends to



register themselves with their elderly family members as volunteers on *Bonfire*. Reaching the family members instead of the lonely elderly themselves helps to circumvent the elderly anxiety of being a burden to their family members while providing the family members with the opportunities to show the elderly their care and wish to spend quality time together. Through this channel, we can reach out and recruit lonely elderly with immediate family members living in both public and private housing.

SSA Leads

One major challenge with recruiting lonely elderly volunteers is being able to identify these individuals. *Bonfire* will work with SSAs for a more targeted approach. SSAs, such as the People Association, or Active Aging Centres (AAC) monitor residents in public housing in each constituency. Through house visits, they understand the needs of the residents. Collaborating with SSAs will provide *Bonfire* with basic information on elderly, enabling personal outreach. Through this channel, *Bonfire* can identify and reach potential lonely elderly living in public housing, forming a base pool of elderly volunteers.

Door-knocking

Despite the excellent work done by SSAs, some lonely elderly still fall through the cracks and may not be identified or reached. Ironically, this category could experience loneliness to a greater extent. To prevent such leakages, another outreach channel is door-knocking. Such a channel will require substantial manpower, which may not be feasible at the early phases of *Bonfire's* launch. It will be a channel for when *Bonfire* has built a strong foundation of volunteers. Through this channel, *Bonfire* can reach lonely elderly that the SSAs might have overlooked.

Private Housing Management Companies and Councils

Relative to lonely elderly living in public housing, those residing in private housing are often left unidentified and unreached as SSAs do not usually have access to them. To reach out to this group of elderly, *Bonfire* will work with individual private housing management service companies and councils. Like the SSAs for public housing residents, private housing management service companies and councils have channels to connect and contact the residents living in their care and jurisdiction. Through this channel, we can identify and reach potential lonely elderly living in private housing.



Roadshows

Bonfire will conduct periodic roadshows to build awareness and encourage sign-ups. While this outreach channel may not be as targeted as others, it is beneficial to build publicity and provides an offline platform for people, especially elderly with little digital literacy, to step in and better understand our program and activities.

3.5 Engaging with Volunteers on *Bonfire*'s Platforms

In tandem with the outreach channels, *Bonfire* will develop both digital and offline platforms to engage with existing and potential volunteers.

Digital Platform

Bonfire's digital platform will consist of both a mobile application (app) and a website. Using the digital platform, *Bonfire* will collect information to better understand the challenges and preferences of the volunteers. This is used to recommend suitable programs and activities that they could sign up for. This information also allows *Bonfire* to evaluate the programs and activities, and track if the platform is progressing in the primary objective of addressing elderly loneliness.

In addition, *Bonfire* can engage more efficiently with the volunteers through the platform. Volunteers can easily provide feedback and communicate through the feedback and chat functions. Similarly, *Bonfire* can better disseminate critical information to them.

Having digital platforms also provide volunteers with the ease of registration. Simultaneously, this ease of registration makes promoting volunteer registration easier for our partners. This is shown in the example in Box 1.



Box 1

Consider Peter, a working adult living with his wife, two kids, and his father, Sam, a 60-year-old retiree and widower. As Peter and his wife are always occupied with work and their children are always away for school, Sam spends most of his time at home alone. Over time, Sam's relationship with his family becomes distant as there are few opportunities to interact and communicate with them. Peter and his wife sense the weakening family ties but are unsure of how to strengthen them. During one of Sam's routine health check-ups, the doctor explains to Peter the negative effects that loneliness can have on Sam's health. The doctor then introduces Peter to *Bonfire*, sharing with him the app and website where he can register and find out more. After discussing it with his wife and father, Peter downloads the app.

Peter creates an account on *Bonfire* and is prompted to provide basic information about himself and his family as he plans to volunteer with them. This information assists Bonfire in understanding his needs and recommending appropriate programs. Peter can modify this information conveniently through his profile page, as shown in Figure 6. Following registration, the platform suggests potential upcoming volunteer programs based on the details Peter provided. Peter can also view information about past and upcoming events on the Events tab, shown in Figure 7.

Upon deciding on the program, Peter will be asked to indicate his and his family's preferences for the different tasks involved. After successfully registering for a program, Peter will receive a confirmation email and can access program information by going to the Registered Events tab. If Peter has any inquiries or concerns regarding the program, he can reach out to the program representative using the contact information provided in the email or on the event page in his app shown in Figure 8. Any updates or information on the program will also be disseminated through email and the app. Peter can also track the program's progress and capture the beneficiaries' responses through the app. Upon completing the program, Peter can provide feedback through the app.

Similarly, if Peter chooses to register on the webpage instead of downloading the app, he will still have access to the same information and services. However, Peter can only receive any information or updates through his registered email.



Figure 6: Registration on *Bonfire*

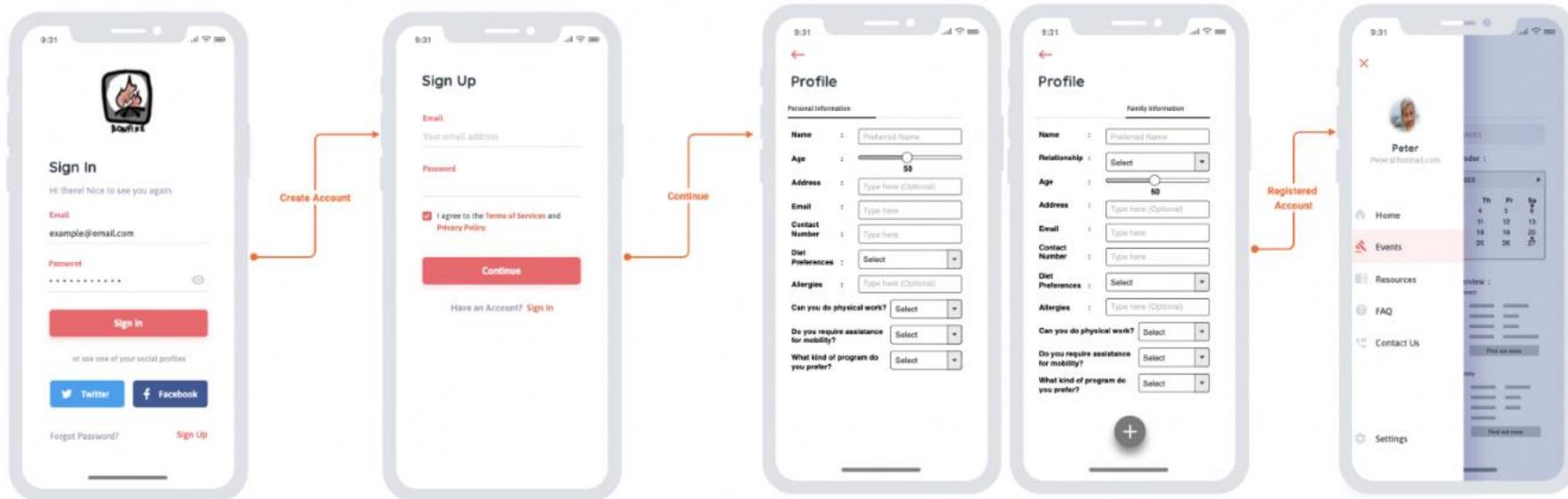




Figure 7: Registering to Volunteer on *Bonfire*

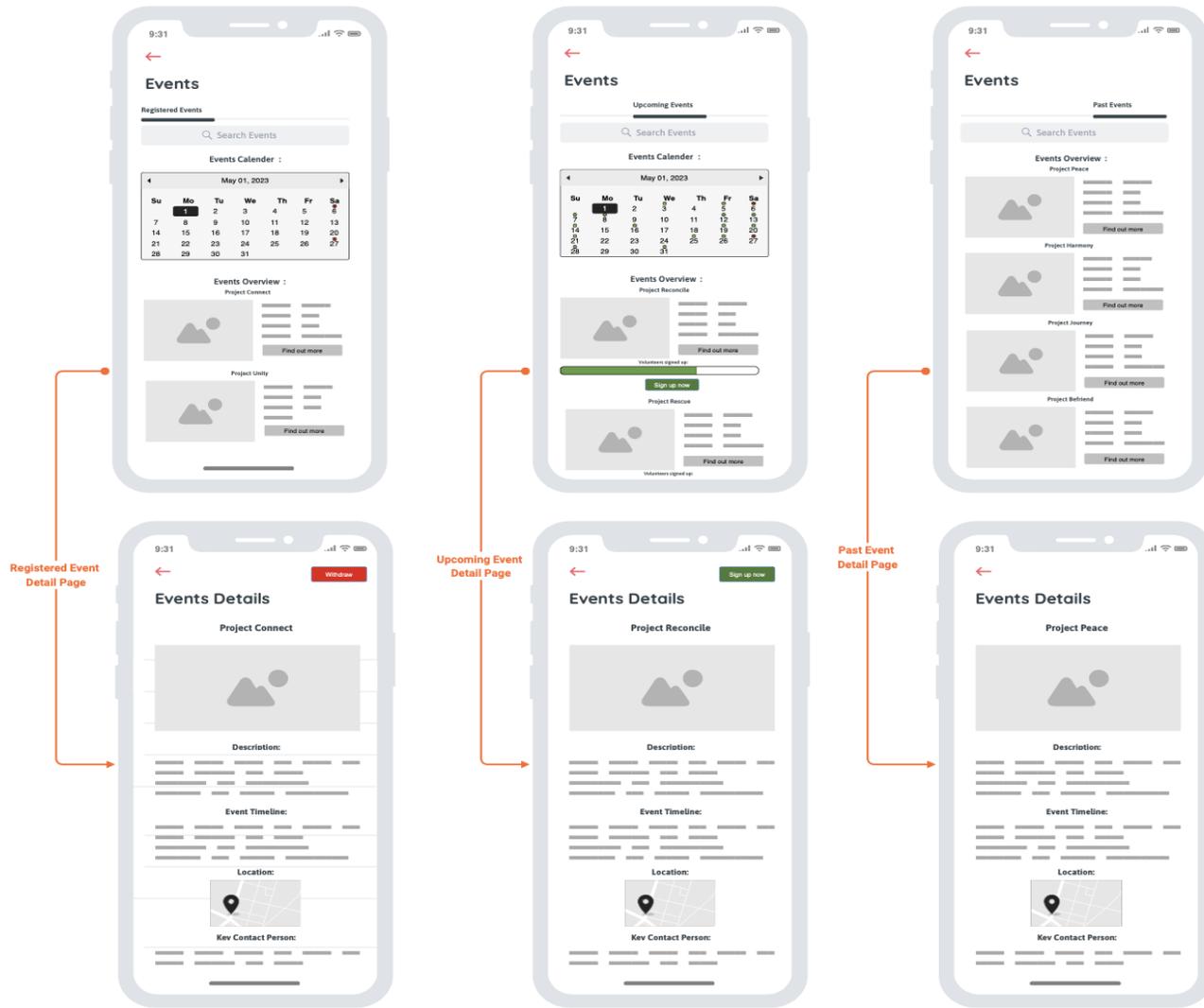
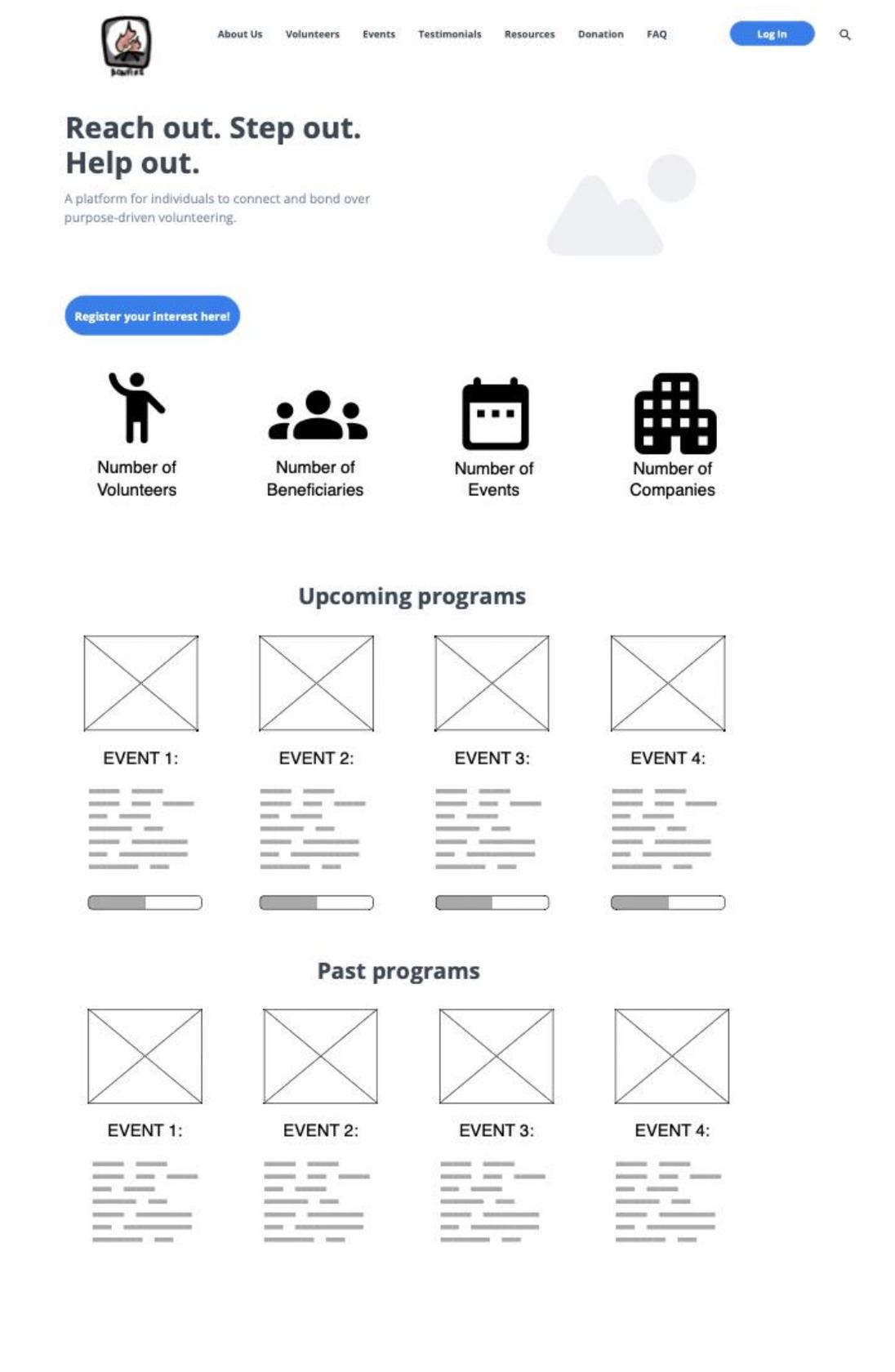




Figure 8: Event Tab of *Bonfire*





Offline Platform

Despite the benefits and advantages of a digital platform, the elderly may not have the digital literacy to fully utilise it. Hence, *Bonfire* will have offline platforms to cater to them. The primary offline platform is *Bonfire's* physical centre, centred at either the town council or the community centre of the area *Bonfire* will launch in. The public can walk in to learn more about *Bonfire* and register their interest to volunteer. If suitable programs for the volunteers are found, they will then be contacted for their confirmation.

In addition to walking in, other offline platforms include roadshows and door-knocking. These are *Bonfire's* “mobile offline platforms”, giving access to a wide range of elderly to volunteer.

Continuous Engagement and Training

As volunteers sign up and register their interests and information, *Bonfire* will conduct basic screening and checks to ensure their suitability for the various programs. For new volunteers, simpler tasks will be allocated to them in their initial phase, allowing them the opportunity to observe the program and learn on the job. They will also be paired together with either an experienced volunteer or a *Bonfire* staff that will guide them.

Prior to each program, *Bonfire* will also conduct pre-program briefing and bonding sessions for volunteers to familiarise themselves with each other. Post-program, various ad-hoc bonding sessions will also be held to allow volunteers to mingle with other volunteers from different program to increase interactions, alleviate loneliness, and at the same time, allow *Bonfire* to collect feedback.

3.6 Curating Programs on *Bonfire*

To ensure maximum impact is made to alleviate elderly loneliness, a set of criteria is applied to curate the programs for volunteering, shown in Figure 9. The figure also shows a non-exhaustive list of sample programs which represent a starting point for *Bonfire's* launch.



Figure 9: Criteria for Curating Programs

	Face-to-face encounters	Interaction opportunities	Recurring	Purposeful	Elderly-friendly task	Elderly-accessible	Language-friendly
Befriending 2.0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sorting of donation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Painting and cleaning of apartments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gardening of public spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education and knowledge-sharing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fundraising	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To provide this range of programs for the elderly volunteers, *Bonfire* will partner with the various SSAs that provide services and assistance through various programs to benefit the community. As non-profit organisations, SSAs typically experience lack of resources and funding despite government support.³⁵ SSAs rely substantially on volunteers to operate their programs and activities. However, volunteer recruitment has been one of the biggest challenges identified by SSAs. In our interviews with the SSAs, they cited a common barrier that was restricting them from expanding their services was the lack of volunteers and funding (Refer to Annex C). It is in this gap that *Bonfire* can collaborate with SSAs by providing elderly volunteers for SSAs’ various programs. Given *Bonfire’s* vast pool of volunteers and SSA’s various programs and activities, a sustainable win-win partnership can be formed.

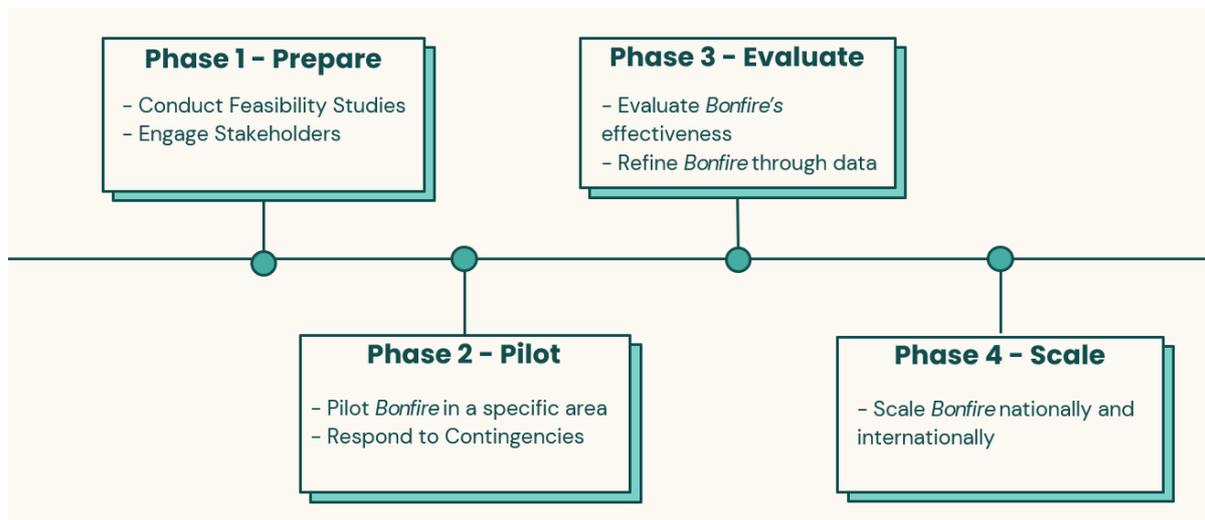
³⁵ Justin Lee, Matthew Matthews, and Andrew Lim, “SURVEY OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR,” IPS Exchange Series (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, November 2021), <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/ips-exchange-series-20.pdf>.



4. Implementation Plan

Implementation of *Bonfire* is divided into four phases shown in Figure 11.

Figure 10: Four Phase Implementation of *Bonfire*





The progression along the four phases is expected to take place over a three-year period. Figure 11 shows a GANTT chart depicting the project timeline from phase 1 to 4.

Figure 11: GANTT Chart of Implementation





4.1 Phase 1: Prepare

Phase 1A: Conduct Feasibility Studies

To ensure *Bonfire's* success as a proposal, a high-level feasibility analysis that considers various stakeholders' interests is required.

Government Support

- *Will the relevant Government Bodies support Bonfire?*

This evaluation considers Singapore's societal narrative with regards to aging. Government and political support for *Bonfire* is expected to be high.

By 2026, Singapore is projected to reach super-aged status, defined as a country with 21 percent of its population aged 65 and above.³⁶ In recognition of its aged population, the government had initiated various programs to help older Singaporeans live and age well.³⁷ In 2021, Parliamentary discussions included the importance of mitigating loneliness in the elderly.³⁸

Singapore is conscientiously preparing itself to be future-ready. Grappling with an aging population is evidently a part of being a future-ready society. It is within this wider context that *Bonfire* attempts to creatively fill a specific need for a growing demography with particular vulnerabilities. Addressing elderly loneliness will certainly gain traction amongst the relevant government bodies.

³⁶ Joyce Teo, "Initiatives in Place to Tackle Ageing Issues as S'pore Hits 'Super-Aged' Status in 2026: Health Minister," The Straits Times, April 20, 2023, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/initiatives-in-place-to-help-tackle-ageing-as-s-pore-nears-super-aged-status-in-2026-ong-ye-kung>.

³⁷ Joyce Teo, "Action Plan to Help Older Singaporeans Live Well as They Age and Work Longer," The Straits Times, January 30, 2023, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/national-plan-to-help-older-singaporeans-live-well-as-they-age-and-work-longer>.

³⁸ "Mitigating Stress and Loneliness Amongst Elderly and Youths."



Private Sector Support

- *Will they offer financial and human resources to support Bonfire?*
- *Will they advocate for causes related to the elderly?*

This evaluation considers Singapore's existing corporate social responsibility (CSR) landscape and the prominence of projects related to the elderly.

In view of Singapore's aging population, some of Singapore's leading corporations have contributed to serve the growing elderly population. Developer Capitaland has worked with SSAs to #LoveOurSeniors through Bread and Meal delivery.³⁹ Technology firm Grab has partnered with the Singapore Red Cross to help the elderly access healthcare.⁴⁰ During the pandemic in 2020, the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS) mobilised 1,000 employees to volunteer in virtual befriending with 1,000 senior beneficiaries.⁴¹

Beyond these, there is a growing CSR culture amongst Singapore's corporations that could potentially provide a resource base for new social projects such as *Bonfire*. Not only are businesses incentivised by tax deductions, their contributions fall within their Environment, Social, Governance (ESG) policies.

³⁹ "CapitaLand Hope Foundation," CapitaLand, n.d., <https://www.capitaland.com/en/about-capitaland/sustainability/capitaland-hope-foundation/our-programmes-and-projects/projects-in-singapore/loveourseniors.html>.

⁴⁰ "Grab and Red Cross Red Crescent Partner to Improve Road Safety and Disaster Response for Southeast Asia," Grab, May 18, 2016, <https://www.grab.com/sg/press/social-impact-safety/grab-red-cross-red-crescent-partner-improve-road-safety-disaster-response-southeast-asia/>.

⁴¹ "DBS and Lions Befrienders Partner to Launch Singapore's Largest-Ever Virtual Befriending Initiative," DBS, June 14, 2020, https://www.dbs.com/newsroom/DBS_and_Lions_Befrienders_partner_to_launch_Singapore_s_largest_ever_virtual_befriending_initiative.



Social Services Agency Support

- *Will they accept Bonfire's volunteers into their programs?*

This evaluation considers Singapore's existing trends in volunteerism. Interviews were also conducted with staff from SSAs that interact with the elderly such as RSVP, Hope Centre, and Whampoa Family Service Centre. (Refer to Annex C for Interviewee Profiles.)

Volunteerism in Singapore has seen a decline over the years. From 35% in 2016, it has fallen to 29% in 2018,⁴² and to 22% in 2021.⁴³ Through the pandemic, SSAs have seen volunteer numbers reduce significantly, by up to 80 percent, as they battle with burnout and fatigue. This manpower crunch has coincided with an increase in beneficiaries, which continues to grow as the population ages.⁴⁴

This literature review has been supported in our interviews with industry professionals. Staff from Hope Centre elaborated on how "SSAs are serving many but manpower is lacking." Weekday volunteering needs are especially pronounced. Staff from Whampoa Family Service Centre also believed in SSAs support, adding that SSAs will seek to "ascertain the elderly volunteers will be suitable for the task at hand". Consequently, this feasibility study points to ample room for partnerships between *Bonfire* and other SSAs in Singapore to curate specifically suitable programs.

⁴² "Volunteerism in Singapore," SG101, n.d., <https://www.sg101.gov.sg/social-national-identity/examples/volunteerism>.

⁴³ "Voices of Youth: Volunteerism Is an Experience of Gaining, Not Giving," The Straits Times, January 10, 2022, <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/forum/voices-of-youth-volunteerism-is-an-experience-of-gaining-not-giving>.

⁴⁴ Cheryl Lin, "Volunteers Wanted: Charities Face Manpower Crunch While Beneficiaries Increase," CNA, July 2, 2021, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/charities-need-more-volunteers-covid-19-more-beneficiaries-2000336>.



Concept Testing

- *Will the lonely elderly volunteer through Bonfire?*

This evaluation considers the prevalence of elderly volunteering in different social programs. Findings from interviews with staff from RSVP, Hope Centre, and Whampoa Family Service Centre are also considered (Refer to Annex C).

Despite the general reduction in volunteerism in Singapore, elderly volunteerism is seeing a rise, albeit from a relatively low base. Local mainstream news has highlighted how some elderly are volunteering to keep watch over other lonely seniors, giving them both social connections and purpose.⁴⁵

In testing the concept of *Bonfire* in our interviews, Hope Centre supported *Bonfire*'s concept, and highlighted that despite the prevalence of Active Aging Centres in Singapore, many elderly fall through the cracks in the system and loneliness remains an issue. Another believed the concept to be a sound idea and advised for further research into whether other organizations are also doing something similar to us to prevent replication of effort. Staff from Whampoa Family Service Centre described how many elderly, especially male, do not participate in typical social activities due to its perceived purposelessness. *Bonfire*'s concept could be a fresh change to give elderly meaningful social purpose.

The various interviews have highlighted *Bonfire*'s creative approach to systematically engage with lonely elderly to bring them out of isolation, provide an environment for social connections, and empower them with purpose. From concept testing, there is confidence in *Bonfire*'s feasibility as a solution to address elderly loneliness.

⁴⁵ Sabrina Ng and Fabian Koh, "More Seniors Stepping Forward as Caregivers to Their Peers, as Singapore Approaches 'Super-Aged' Status," CNA, May 16, 2023, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/more-seniors-stepping-forward-caregivers-their-peers-singapore-approaches-super-aged-status-volunteer-red-cross-3491906>.



Budgetary Feasibility

- *How will Bonfire be resourced?*

This evaluation considers the various sources of funds of a typical SSA in Singapore. This includes extraordinary sources of funds which are earmarked for projects relating to aging, the elderly, and or future-ready society. A preliminary budget based on *Bonfire*'s projections to estimate the financial adequacy for an SSA that operates *Bonfire*. From this analysis, there are adequate sources of funds to launch and sustain *Bonfire*.

A typical SSA in Singapore draws significant government funding from the government based on its programs. This is essential for *Bonfire*'s initial startup phase in the short-term. In addition, Singapore's aging demography and intentional efforts towards healthy aging provides additional sources of funds. These include the Community Capability Trust. At \$230m, the trust supports capability and capacity building of the social service sector.⁴⁶ Another source is the Tote Board Group's Enhanced Fund-Raising Programme which provides additional funding for charities through matching dollar-for-dollar.⁴⁷ In line with the future-ready agenda, there is also the \$6m Future-Ready Society Impact Fund that supports projects such as *Bonfire*.⁴⁸

In the long-term, *Bonfire* will engage in fundraising and draw resources from the private sector and from high-net-worth donors. Companies that typically engage in CSR and with ESG policies are potential targets for fundraising.

⁴⁶ "Community Capability Trust," National Council of Social Service, n.d., [https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/community-capability-trust-\(cct\)](https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/community-capability-trust-(cct)).

⁴⁷ "Enhanced Fund-Raising Programme," Tote Board, n.d., <https://www.toteboard.gov.sg/grants/fund-raising-programme>.

⁴⁸ Jean Lau, "\$6 Million Fund Launched to Advance Social Causes in Singapore," *The Straits Times*, May 11, 2023, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/6-million-fund-launched-to-advance-social-causes-in-s-pore>.



To develop *Bonfire*, a basic preliminary budget is detailed in Figure 12. Estimates of application and website development are sourced from commercial projections.⁴⁹ By utilising office space provided by the town council or community centre in the area that *Bonfire* is serving, rental expense can be saved.

Figure 12: Basic Preliminary Budget of *Bonfire*

Expense	Estimated Amount	Recurrence
<i>Bonfire</i> App/Website Development	SGD 200,000	One-Time
<i>Bonfire</i> Post-Development Support (25% of Development)	SGD 50,000	Per Annum
<i>Bonfire</i> Management & Staff Team	SGD 700,000	Per Annum
<i>Bonfire</i> Program Cost	SGD 100,000	Per Annum
<i>Bonfire</i> Operational Cost	SGD 100,000	Per Annum
Office Space (from Town Council or Community Centres)	Nil	Nil
<i>Bonfire</i> First Year (Startup)	SGD 1,155,000	
<i>Bonfire</i> Second Year	SGD 950,000	

To serve as a comparison, a large charity as defined by the Singapore Government as having “gross annual receipts of not less than \$10 million in each of the last 2 financial years immediately preceding the current financial year.”⁵⁰ Given the budget size, *Bonfire* is a relatively small charity operating within reasonable parameters.

Phase 1B: Engage with Stakeholders

In section 1.5, various stakeholders essential to *Bonfire*’s success have been mapped. In view of their influence and interest levels, an engagement and mobilization plan has been conceptualised and is shown in Figure 13.

⁴⁹ “How Much Does It Cost to Develop an App in 2023? Cost Breakdown,” SPD Load, n.d., <https://spdload.com/blog/app-development-cost/#:~:text=Simple%20App%20Development%20Cost%20%E2%80%93%20%2440%2C00,App%20Development%20Cost%20%E2%80%93%20from%20%24300%2C000>.

⁵⁰ “Additional Requirements for IPCs and Large Charities/IPC,” Charity Portal, n.d., <https://www.charities.gov.sg/Pages/Charities-and-IPCs/Manage-Your-Charity/Additional-Requirements-for-Large-Charities-IPCs.aspx#>.



Figure 13: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Stakeholders	Influence Level	Interest Level	Potential Response	Engagement & Mobilization Plan	
Public Sector	Ministry of Social & Family Development	High	High	Support	<p>Submit and pitch <i>Bonfire</i> proposal to the supervising ministry and agencies. <i>Bonfire</i> is conceptualised first as a platform independent of but supported by the government. MSF and NCSS are essential stakeholders to oversee the execution of the implementation plan. In the long term, <i>Bonfire</i> could be directly managed by a government agency.</p> <p>Other partner agencies for elderly and aging can support Bonfire through networks of both lonely elder volunteers and SSAs with volunteer needs.</p> <p>Engage through MSF connections in a cross-ministry collaboration. While town councils are not directly engaged with elderly loneliness, they can provide local knowledge and offer communal space as familiar gathering points.</p>
	National Council of Social Services	High	High	Support	
	National Agencies for Elderly and Aging Council for Third Age Silver-Gen Office	Moderate	High	Support	
	Town Councils	Moderate	Low	Neutral	
Private Sector	State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)	High	Low	Neutral	<p>Pitch <i>Bonfire</i> to SOEs and companies with CSR and ESG policies directly to solicit involvement to address aging population and elderly loneliness. General private sector companies can be engaged through trade associations.</p> <p>SOEs and Companies with CSR and ESG policies can be first movers to work with Bonfire through offering family volunteers and financial support. They may also have programs for lonely elders to participate in. Other companies will observe Bonfire's track record with these larger corporations before offering their own staff and financial support.</p>
	Companies with CSR and ESG policies	High	Moderate	Support	
	General Private Sector Companies	Moderate	Low	Neutral	
SSAs and NGOs	SSAs that lack volunteers for programs	High	High	Supportive Neutral Oppose	<p>SSAs are of a wide variety and can be engaged directly as well as through other public sector agencies. These SSAs can offer programs for lonely elderly volunteers to participate in.</p> <p>While some SSAs may partnerships with Bonfire due to mismatch of skillsets, there will be SSAs with suitable programs. SSAs will be curated to ensure that their programs are appropriate for the elderly to volunteer in and have opportunities for social connection.</p>
	Grassroot Centres and Organisations, (E.g., Senior Activity Centres)	Moderate	Moderate	Neutral Oppose	
Others	Schools and Universities	Moderate	Low	Neutral	<p>Schools and Universities can be engaged directly or through other government agencies as a collective to school districts. Many schools have required community involved projects. Their students represent potential channels to reach lonely elderly in their homes and to create opportunities to volunteer as a family.</p>

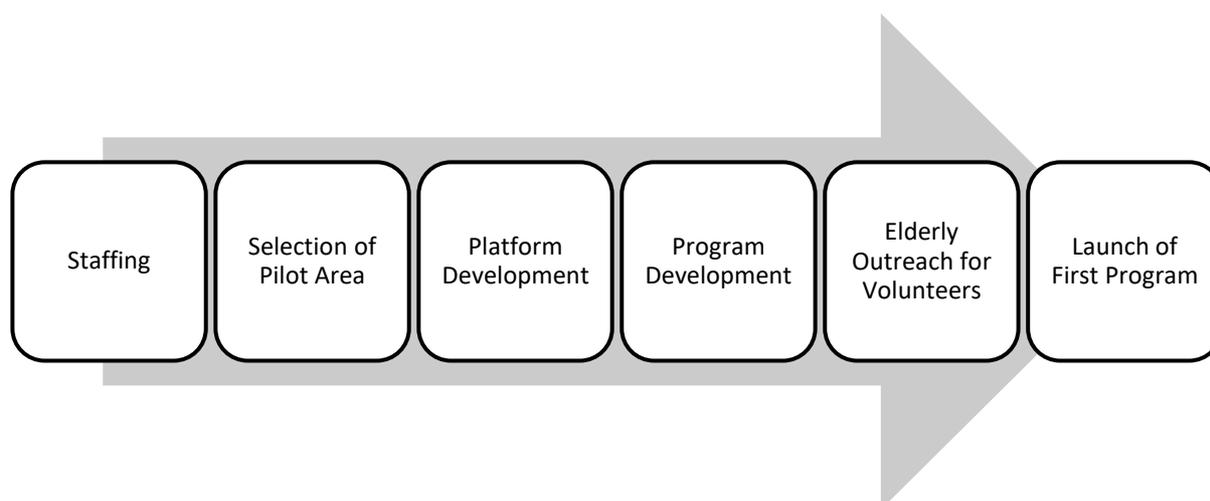


4.2 Phase 2: Pilot

Phase 2A: Pilot *Bonfire* in a Specific Region of Singapore

After engaging with the various stakeholders, an agency will be set up under the initial funding of the National Council of Social Services (NCSS). This agency will be responsible for developing and operating the platform, *Bonfire*, starting from a specific geographical region. The milestones for the pilot are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Milestones of *Bonfire* Pilot



Staffing

The team managing *Bonfire* is expected to have 12-14 part and full-time staff. In an estimated 1:100 employee to volunteer ratio, this will give *Bonfire* sufficient capacity for its pilot. Figure 15 outlines the staff profile managing *Bonfire*.

Figure 15: Staff Profile of *Bonfire*

Role	Responsibility
Director, <i>Bonfire</i>	Leads and directs <i>Bonfire</i> towards goals
Partnerships Manager	Drives partnerships with SSAs and companies for programs
Volunteers Manager	Drives elderly outreach to source and engage volunteers
IT Manager	Controls development and management of application
Fundraising Manager	Drives engagement with companies for extraordinary fundraising
Program Executive	Executes programs with partner SSAs
Volunteers Executive	Manages volunteers on a day-to-day level
Finance Executive	Manages <i>Bonfire's</i> accounting
Human Resources Executive	Manages <i>Bonfire's</i> human resource system
Administrative Support	Support general administration



To ensure *Bonfire* can source for capable manpower, talent recruitment programs such as NCSS's Sun Ray Scheme can be utilised for supplementary funding and to identify up-and-coming management talent.⁵¹

Selection of Pilot Area

Bonfire is planned to operate within specific geographic areas. This ensures that:

- The elderly will be familiar with the local community they connect with.
- The elderly will be familiar with the local SSAs' programs they volunteer in.
- The elderly, whether as individuals or as part of family volunteering, will have ease of access to the local SSAs' programs.
- *Bonfire* contributes to local community building, a key tenet for its sustainability and effectiveness in addressing loneliness.

The criteria for the geographical area to pilot *Bonfire* are as follows:

- High concentration of elderly, both in private housing and public housing.
- Robust network of SSAs that manage programs that need volunteers.
- Support from the local Town Council.
- Support from local grassroots organisations that reach out to lonely elderly.
- Support from local educational institutions.

Platform Development

Bonfire's platform development will be conducted through third-party developers but managed through the in-house IT Manager.

The platform will be accessible through app and website, and available in English, Chinese (Mandarin), and Malay.

Program Development

Programs are primarily sourced from SSAs in the pilot area. Across our interviews with the SSAs, one commonly discussed key success factor in elderly volunteerism is matching the elderly to appropriate programs (Refer to Annex C). Poor matches lead to disengagement and

⁵¹ "Sun Ray Scheme," National Council of Social Service, n.d., <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/social-service-careers/sun-ray>.



disempowerment. Conversely, good matching creates sustained engagement, strengthen bonds between fellow volunteers, and empowers the elderly with a sense of purpose. To ensure good matching, programs are curated based on the criteria found in section 2.4, along with examples of such programs.

- They can be physically done by the elderly.
- The programs are accessible for the elderly.
- The range of programs are in languages reflective of the local community.
- There is a range of activities that appeal to varied interests.
- The programs provide recurring face-to-face encounters that facilitate building connections that address loneliness.
- The programs are perceived as socially beneficial and purposeful by the elderly.

In order to gain traction with SSAs on *Bonfire's* concept, an initial program will first be organised by the in-house team.

Outreach for Elderly Volunteers

Volunteers are engaged from the elderly in the selected region. The lonely elderly will be sought through various channels, including:

- Digital outreach, such as social media.
- Door-knocking and letterbox flyers, particularly for isolated elderly who are not easily reached through digital channels.
- Grassroot organisations who have networks with local area elderly.
- Schools and universities, where students volunteer together with the elderly as a family.
- Companies operating in the area, where working adults can volunteer together with the elderly as a family.
- Word-of-mouth amongst the elderly, after initial programs gain traction.

Sustaining engagement with the volunteers is essential to lengthen the process for the elderly to build bonds of connection with others. Some channels of sustained engagement include:

- Putting lonely elderly into volunteer teams and creating digital chatgroups that facilitate communication.
- Provide continual updates on the impact of the team's contributions in the program. This includes elements such as pictures and beneficiary testimonials.
- Application and website updates.



- Giving flyers to provide updates to digitally illiterate elderly.

Phase 2B: Respond to Contingencies

As a new concept to systematically engage elderly to volunteer as individuals and as part of a family, *Bonfire* will inevitably face challenges. In scenario-planning, various responses are prepared for some potential contingencies, shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Contingency Plans

Issue	Action Plan
Lack of Elderly Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Families are not volunteering together</i> - <i>The elderly <u>are not</u> responding to volunteer</i> 	Extend beyond the selected region by engaging companies with CSR, island-wide. Companies can encourage staff to volunteer as a family with their elderly family members.
Lack of funds after the first year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Development costs overrun</i> - <i>Program costs overrun</i> 	Expedite private sector fundraising. Organise annual fundraising activities.
Insufficient Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>SSAs are hesitant to work with Bonfire as a new concept</i> 	<p>Create more in-house programs to give SSAs more evidence of <i>Bonfire's</i> track record.</p> <p>Encourage partner SSAs to provide testimonials and references for other SSAs to work with <i>Bonfire</i>.</p>
Accidents among the elderly during programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Higher than expected occurrence</i> 	Shift away from high-risk programs. Expand insurance coverage for elderly volunteers.
Lack of Suitable Programs for the Elderly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Insufficient programs that satisfy the internal criteria</i> - <i>Feedback from the elderly volunteers indicates poor engagement</i> 	<p><i>Bonfire</i> can channel resources to create programs for elderly volunteers.</p> <p>As <i>Bonfire</i> will operate in more than a single area in the long term, the management of programs will be on a case-by-case basis, specific only to the area where suitable programs are lacking.</p>
Lack of support from an area's stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Inability to cultivate relationships with local stakeholders to connect to elderly volunteers or to source suitable programs</i> 	<p><i>Bonfire</i> being asset-light, can shift geographical areas should obstacles prove too costly to overcome in a particular area.</p> <p>As <i>Bonfire</i> gains credibility, there can be a subsequent return to a vacated area.</p>

Mobilizing the lonely elderly is the crucial centrepiece of *Bonfire's* model. One potentially debilitating challenge that must be constantly managed is the capacity for certain groups of lonely elders to be effective volunteers. As they may come from various backgrounds and with



differing mindsets and value systems, some elders may create more problems as volunteers themselves.

In view of this challenge, Bonfire's fallback for such elderly is to reallocate them as beneficiaries in an internal program, where other more suitable elderly volunteers could befriend. In this way, this more challenging group will still receive connections to alleviate loneliness without alienation. At the same time, other elderly volunteers can engage in a program that serves others.

4.3 Phase 3: Evaluate

Phase 3A: Evaluate *Bonfire*'s Effectiveness

Bonfire's goal is the alleviation of elderly loneliness through engaging the elderly in collective volunteerism. Although loneliness is a difficult variable to measure, a clear set of targets is still required to evaluate the fulfilment of this goal. This evaluation is conducted primarily through surveys of elderly volunteers, SSAs, companies, and educational institutions. It must be conducted quarterly to ensure elderly loneliness is alleviated. The targets in the metrics should also progressively improve quarter to quarter.

Besides alleviation of loneliness, the continued trust of *Bonfire* should also be evaluated to ensure this platform can do sustainable good over the long term. The evaluation metrics are shown in Figure 17.



Figure 17: Evaluation Metrics

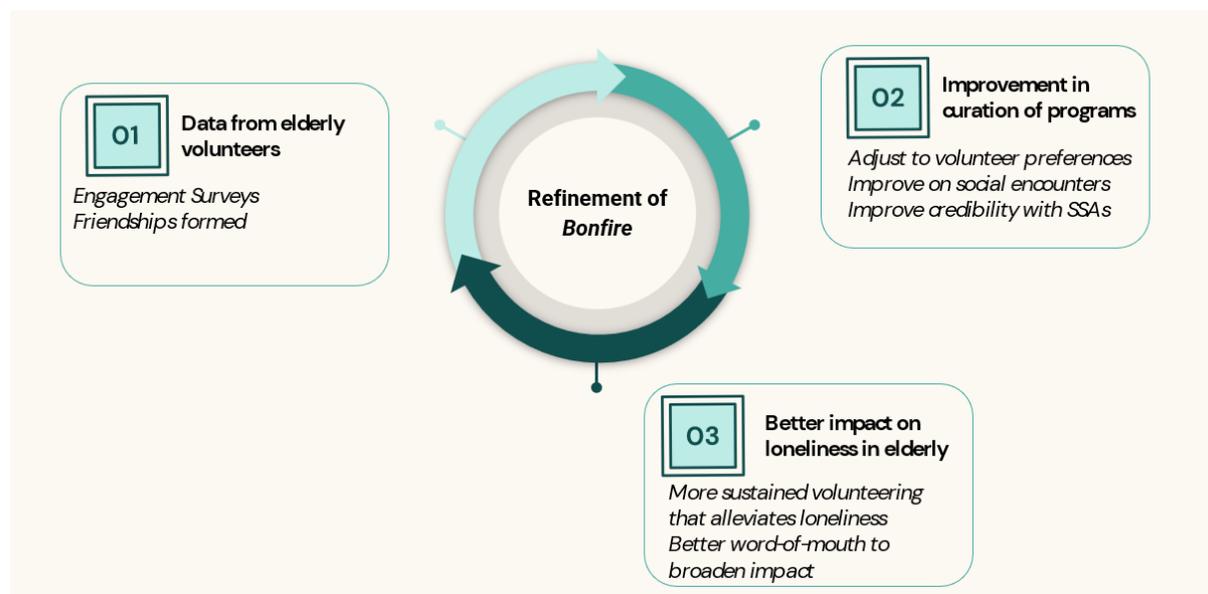
Evaluation Category	Method and Possible Metrics	Targets
Alleviation of Elderly Loneliness	Survey of Volunteers	
	1) Have you made new friends?	> 50% "Yes"
	2) Have you met them outside of volunteering?	> 50% "Yes"
	3) Do you wish to continue volunteering?	> 80% "Yes"
	Number of New Elderly Volunteers	50 per Quarter
	Number of Family Volunteers	10 per Quarter
	Retention of Volunteers	60%
	Breakdown of Private Housing & Public Housing Elderly	According to the demography of the region
Financial Giving by Private Sector	Monetary Sum Given	SGD 25,000 per Quarter
Feedback from SSAs	Survey of SSA Partners 1. Success of Programs 2. Quality of Volunteers	Qualitative Feedback
Feedback from Schools/Universities	Survey of Schools & Universities	
	1. Number of students' family volunteers 2. Suitability of Programs for Community Involvement	5 per Quarter Qualitative Feedback
Feedback from Companies	Survey of Companies	
	1. Number of company staff's family volunteers 2. Suitability of Programs for CSR	5 per Quarter Qualitative Feedback

Phase 3B: Refine *Bonfire* through Data

The data from the feedback, both quantitative and qualitative, will be used to refine *Bonfire*'s design and concept. The goals are better volunteer engagement, better program selection, that ultimately leads to greater impact on loneliness in the elderly, shown in Figure 18.



Figure 18: Refinement of *Bonfire*



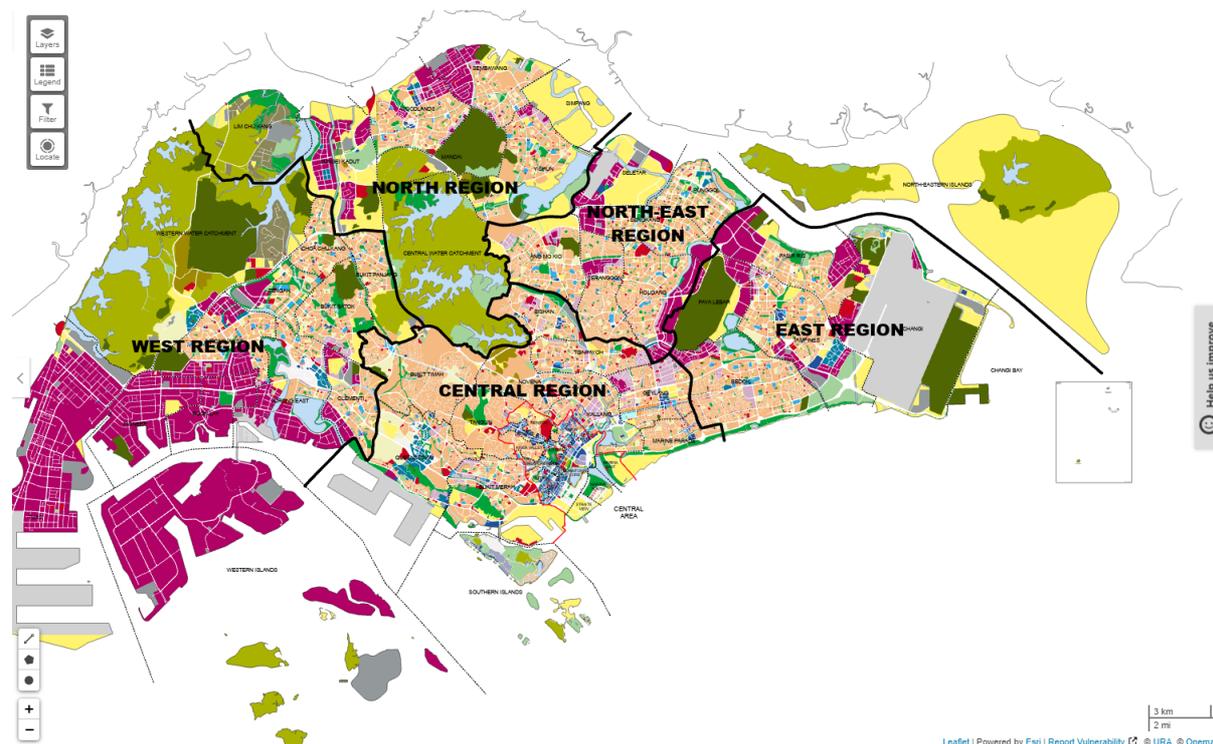
4.4 Phase 4: Scale

Phase 4A: Scale *Bonfire* Nationally

While *Bonfire* pilots in a specific region of Singapore, it is intended to be a nation-wide systematic approach to alleviate elderly loneliness. In scaling *Bonfire*, new geographical regions will be progressively targeted. This represents reaching new elderly, new programs, and new families. Figure 19 shows a map by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) of Singapore, representing the potential scaling of *Bonfire* from one region to another.



Figure 19: Urban Zones of Singapore⁵²



Scaling *Bonfire* also implies growing its credibility and reputation through better publicity and public relations. Some steps include:

- Raise awareness on elderly volunteering.
- Raise awareness on volunteering as a family.
- Convey stories of volunteering through media channels, from social media to traditional media.⁵³
- Celebrate volunteerism through local campaigns.
- Organise thanksgiving dinners at community areas.
- Issuing awards such as “Most Consistent Volunteer”

Bonfire is first conceptualised as an independent SSA drawing funding support from the government. Yet, the wide nationwide elderly base it attempts to serve and its large potential

⁵² “Welcome to URA Space,” Urban Redevelopment Authority, n.d., <https://www.ura.gov.sg/maps/>.

⁵³ *Some Organisations See Spike in Elderly Volunteers | Video* (Singapore: CNA, 2023), <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/watch/some-organisations-see-spike-elderly-volunteers-video-3271716>.



impact offer an opportunity for *Bonfire* to be fully absorbed into an agency managed by the government under the Ministry of Social and Family (MSF). Doing so would provide more ample resources, improve cross-ministry and cross-agency collaboration, and ultimately enhance its impact on alleviating elderly loneliness.

Phase 4B: Scale *Bonfire* Internationally

The challenge of elderly loneliness is not just limited to Singapore. Many urbanised societies around the world are grappling with this challenge. The concept of *Bonfire* can potentially be adaptively applied internationally to make wider impact on global elderly loneliness. Global scaling of *Bonfire*'s concept is best suited to countries that are similar to Singapore's context, as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Focuses of Internationalisation

Focus	Rationale
Focus on similar Asian cultures with family-centric values	<i>Bonfire</i> 's distinction of elderly volunteering centred around the family can be applied to such cultures more effectively.
Focus on countries with ageing populations	Such countries have growing proportions of elderly, making society more susceptible to ageing challenges such as loneliness.
Focus on urban centres	Urban centres are more likely to see a concentration of social service programs, elderly and loneliness needs.

Ultimately, *Bonfire* in Singapore is not a blueprint but a guide for adaptive application in other contexts. In scaling internationally, several internationalisation principles should be applied:

- Engage the local government and consider their current solutions to the challenge of elderly loneliness. *Bonfire*'s concept must fit within the wider strategy.
- Assess the root causes of elderly loneliness in the international context.
- Engage with local stakeholders and social service agencies to secure buy-in with key players to create an environment for success.
- Cater to the city's demography and digital literacy.
- Ensure *Bonfire* is accessible by major segments of the elderly population through a variety of languages.
- Set clear targets that relate to the goal – to reduce elderly loneliness.



5. Conclusion

Bonfire presents an innovative solution to address elderly loneliness in Singapore by leveraging collective volunteering and community engagement. The comprehensive implementation plan outlined in the various sections emphasizes the significance of tackling this social problem and demonstrates the thoroughness of *Bonfire's* approach.

Our research establishes the importance of addressing elderly loneliness and its broader societal impacts, necessitating a multifaceted strategy. By targeting the underlying risk factors of loneliness, *Bonfire* aims to create meaningful connections and enhance the well-being of the elderly.

Bonfire's conceptual framework emphasizes dynamic interactions and shared understanding within the community. By connecting lonely elderly aged 60 and above with volunteering opportunities, the initiative strengthens family bonds, builds social connections, and boosts self-esteem. The platform acts as a hub, matching them to SSA's need for volunteers.

The implementation plan, divided into four phases, provides a clear roadmap for *Bonfire's* development over four years. Beginning with feasibility studies and stakeholder engagement, the initiative progresses to a pilot phase in a specific region. Evaluation and refinement ensure *Bonfire's* effectiveness in addressing elderly loneliness. The final phase aims to scale *Bonfire* nationally, expanding program offerings and enhancing awareness and recognition.

In summary, *Bonfire* holds immense potential to alleviate elderly loneliness in Singapore by fostering connections, purpose, and social engagement. Its collaboration with stakeholders, robust program curation, and integration of digital and offline platforms demonstrate a viable and comprehensive solution. With careful implementation and continuous evaluation, *Bonfire* can become a significant contributor to Singapore's efforts to enhance the well-being and social integration of its elderly population.



6. Annexes

Annex A: Global Trends and Interventions to Loneliness

There is no universal solution to loneliness in the same way that there is no single cause for loneliness itself. Thus, addressing this problem necessitates a multifaceted approach that encompasses individual, community, and societal levels. Differentiated interventions have been designed for different contexts (e.g., specific age groups, cultural norms, health status, etc.). These range from personalized approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapies or social skills training, one-to-one activities such as befriending, to initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, targeted social support programs, community engagement activities, and technology-based interventions.⁵⁴ Some studies find that community organizations have demonstrated success in creating group activities, volunteering opportunities, and support networks that can foster a sense of belonging and social connectedness.⁵⁵ Additionally, technology-based interventions have also been introduced. Virtual communities and online support groups, education on the use of technology such as smartphones can provide avenues for reducing social isolation and loneliness, particularly for individuals with limited physical mobility. These interventions, however, are not meant to replace face-to-face interactions,⁵⁶ but instead serve to supplement them as more research is needed to determine their effectiveness.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Olujoke A. Fakoya, Noleen K. McCorry, and Michael Donnelly, “Loneliness and Social Isolation Interventions for Older Adults: A Scoping Review of Reviews,” *BMC Public Health* 20, no. 1 (February 14, 2020): 129, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-8251-6>.

⁵⁵ Christina R. Victor et al., “The Prevalence of, and Risk Factors for, Loneliness in Later Life: A Survey of Older People in Great Britain,” *Ageing & Society* 25, no. 6 (April 22, 2005): 357–75, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0144686x04003332>.

⁵⁶ Eric Balki, Niall Hayes, and Carol Holland, “Effectiveness of Technology Interventions in Addressing Social Isolation, Connectedness, and Loneliness in Older Adults: Systematic Umbrella Review,” *JMIR Aging* 5, no. 4 (October 24, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.2196/40125>.

⁵⁷ Wenjing Jin et al., “The Effectiveness of Technology-Based Interventions for Reducing Loneliness in Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (December 8, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.711030>.



Recognizing the importance of mitigating the negative impacts of loneliness, some countries have established institutions and set policies that encourage social connectedness and contribute to social cohesion, such as affordable housing, accessible public spaces, and transportation systems. The United Kingdom has established a Commission, headed by the Minister for Loneliness, to lead the crafting and implementation of multi-agency policies that reduce stigma, raise awareness and combat loneliness.⁵⁸ In Japan, a similar minister of loneliness and isolation was appointed in 2021 to alleviate the issue, which was significantly exacerbated by the pandemic.⁵⁹ Australia, on the other hand, introduced a Seniors Connected Program, which provides phone support services and peer support networks catered to older Australians.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ “Tackling Loneliness Annual Report March 2023: The Fourth Year,” GOV.UK, March 30, 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-fourth-year/tackling-loneliness-annual-report-march-2023-the-fourth-year>.

⁵⁹ Shogo Kodama, “Japan Appoints ‘minister of Loneliness’ to Help People Home Alone,” Nikkei Asia, February 13, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Japan-appoints-minister-of-loneliness-to-help-people-home-alone>.

⁶⁰ “Seniors Connected Program,” Australian Government Department of Social Services, n.d., <https://www.dss.gov.au/communities-and-vulnerable-people-programs-services/seniors-connected-program>.



Annex B: Description of Stakeholders

Ministry of Social & Family Development (MSF)	
Description	Singapore Government ministry entrusted with the responsibility of developing and executing policies pertaining to community infrastructure, programs, and services. The National Council of Social Services (NCSS) is a statutory board under MSF. Addressing the social impact caused by elderly loneliness is a key concern due to Singapore's rapidly aging population.
Sector	Public
Influence Level	High
Interest Level	High

National Council of Social Services (NCSS)	
Description	NCSS is an umbrella organization for more than 500 Social Service Agencies (SSAs) in Singapore which provides leadership and guidance in the field of social services. NCSS aims to strengthen the capabilities of social service agencies and foster strategic partnerships within the sector. NCSS provides government funding for SSAs, who form the frontline of social work in Singapore.
Sector	Public
Influence Level	High
Interest Level	High

National Agencies for Elderly and Aging	
Description	This group refers to Singapore government agencies that has an interest in tackling social issues arising from an aging population. Examples include the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), People's Association (PA) Senior Citizens' Executive Committees (SCECs), and Ministry of Health (MOH) Active Aging Programs (AAP). These agencies work with town councils, SSAs and other government agencies to deliver public services catered for Singapore's elderly population.
Sector	Public
Influence Level	Low
Interest Level	High

Town Councils	
Description	Town councils exercise control, management, maintenance, and enhancement of the shared property within residential and commercial areas. Their primary purpose is facility management - to ensure that these properties are maintained in excellent condition for the benefit of residents. Many social services agencies use facilities controlled and maintained by the town councils for activities and events.
Sector	Public



Influence Level	Mid-low
Interest Level	Mid-low

General Private Sector Companies

Description	This stakeholder group refers to business that operation in the private sector across various industries. They are primarily profit oriented entities.
Sector	Private
Influence Level	Low
Interest Level	Low

Private Sector Companies with CSR and ESG policies

Description	This stakeholder group aims to balance profit-making with social and environmental responsibility. They have spending power and may engage in philanthropy, community development projects, employee volunteer programs, ethical sourcing, and responsible production practices.
Sector	Private
Influence Level	High
Interest Level	Mid

State Owned Enterprises

Description	State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are companies or organizations that are owned and operated by the government. These entities are established to engage in commercial activities and provide various goods and services to the public across many industries. While they can have substantial impact on national development, public welfare and economic stability, their public interest is generally on the macro scale.
Sector	Private
Influence Level	High
Interest Level	Low

Social Services Agencies (SSAs)

Description	Social Services Agencies (SSAs) in Singapore refer to organizations that provide a wide range of social services and support to individuals, families, and communities. These agencies aim to address various social issues, improve well-being, and enhance the quality of life for vulnerable populations in Singapore. While their interests are varied, several SSAs have been formed specifically to help elderly in Singapore. SSA's rely heavily on volunteer support for its initiatives.
Sector	Non-profit
Influence Level	Mid
Interest Level	High



Grassroot Centres and Organisations	
Description	Grassroot Centres and Organizations in Singapore play an essential role in facilitating community engagement, promoting local welfare, and enhancing social cohesion. They serve as platforms for residents to connect, participate, and contribute to the betterment of their neighbourhoods. These community centres operate through resident committees that are led by volunteers and are typically initiated and supported by the People's Association (PA), a government agency responsible for promoting community bonding and citizen participation. Many government initiatives for active ageing are delivered from these community centres.
Sector	Non-Profit
Influence Level	Low
Interest Level	Mid

Schools and Universities	
Description	Schools and universities play a crucial role in national social development by cultivating the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes of individuals, thereby contributing to the overall progress and well-being of society. Their academic work and advocacy on social issues can influence government policies.
Sector	Others
Influence Level	Mid-Low
Interest Level	Mid-Low

Insurance Agencies	
Description	Insurance agencies specializing in coverage for the elderly cater to the unique needs and concerns of older individuals, such as healthcare expenses, long-term care needs, and end-of-life planning. They can provide offer insurance products and solutions to provide peace of mind, and protection for the elderly population and their families.
Sector	Private
Influence Level	Low
Interest Level	Mid



Annex C: Profile of Interviewees

Interview 1

Coreen Chong, Senior Social Services Practitioner

Email: chongcoreen@gmail.com

Past positions held:

Executive Director

The Turning Point Halfway House for Recovering Addicts

<https://www.theturningpoint.org.sg/>

Executive Director

Filos Community Services in Elderly work

<https://www.filos.sg/>

Head of Student Care Services

Life Student Care Centre for Dysfunctional Families

<https://life-community.org/programmes/life-student-care/>

Interview 2

Tan Limin, Social Worker

Organization: Whampoa Family Service Centre

Email: tanlimin@kkcs.org.sg

<https://www.kkcs.org.sg/we-can-help/whampoa-family-service-centre/>

Interview 3

Tay Jia Ying Veronica Ace, Office Administrator

Organization: Hope Centre

Email: ace.tay@hopecentre.org.sg

Lee Wern Lin May, Senior Programme Executive (Seniors)

Organization: Hope Centre

Email: may.lee@hopecentre.org.sg

Abigail Chuah

Email: Abigailchuah@gmail.com

Past positions held: Ex-Centre Manager, Hope Centre

<https://hopecentre.org.sg/>

Interview 4

Savitha Udpa, Manager, Programmes & Services

Organization: RSVP Singapore

Email: Details available upon request

<https://rsvp.org.sg/>



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