

Support for the Heartlands

Background

Heartland shops form an integral part of Singapore's social fabric and play an important role in injecting vibrancy into our neighbourhoods, providing jobs, and offering opportunities for promising local businesses to grow. The government has put in place initiatives to support heartland shops to innovate and develop new capabilities. Adding to our existing initiatives, this year's initiatives are two-pronged. The first encourages the Merchants' Associations (MA) to take on more activities in the heartlands, and the second enhances the content development and visual merchandising capabilities of heartland shops.

a) Vibrant Heartlands Programme for Merchants' Associations

(缤纷邻里计划)

What is it?

Today, MAs play an integral role in organising heartland events and activities that attract residents to shop, eat, and play in the HDB estates. To further support vibrancy in our heartlands this year, the Vibrant Heartlands Programme for Merchants' Associations (VHMA) encourages MAs across the island to lead and organise more activities in heartland estates.

The VHMA offers support for a variety of activities. This flexibility allows MAs to choose activities and events based on the needs and fit for the heartland estates. These could include heartlands activities such as public art installations, workshops, and thematic festivals to create vibrancy and draw footfall to heartland shops.

How does it work?

The VHMA supports eligible costs for selected activities organised by MAs in the heartlands.

The programme comprises two tiers:

1. **Standard**: Bite-sized and pre-scoped activities from pre-qualified vendors that are more readily accessible to MAs, with grant support on qualifying costs of S\$3,000 per application. Interested MAs can select from a menu of pre-scoped activities such as children's craft workshops and thematic games stations.
2. **Upsized**: Larger-scale customisable placemaking events by MAs to deliver more unique, creative and impactful ideas, with grant support on

qualifying costs of up to S\$200,000 per application. The supportable areas are customisable to the applicant's proposal. Typical expenses include fees to appoint event organisers and marketing costs.

Projects can be conducted at public spaces or common areas within the HDB estates, subject to necessary approvals.

The programme will run from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, with all supported activities to be implemented by 31 March 2026.

Who is it for?

Interested MAs can approach the Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS) by calling 6741 3429 or emailing enquiry@fmas.org.sg. More information can be found at <https://www.enterprisesg.gov.sg/industries/heartland-enterprises/overview>.

b) Enhanced Visual Merchandising Programme (视觉营销计划)

What is it?

The Enhanced Visual Merchandising Programme will provide stronger support for heartland shops to build proficiency in content development and visual merchandising strategies. The programme includes training, consultancy, and shopfront makeovers.

How does it work?

The enhanced programme will provide more support, with grant support on higher qualifying costs of up to S\$60,000 to support heartland shops that wish to pursue larger-scale projects.

The programme scope will be expanded to allow for project customisation such as innovative and experiential concepts (e.g. interactive window displays, scent/tactile installations), and a wider range of eligible makeover items including for lightbox signages, lighting, painting, flooring, racks, and fixtures. More training topics on digital and visual merchandising strategies will also be included. Heartland shops pursuing customised projects may appoint their own visual merchandising vendor, subject to approval.

Who is it for?

Interested heartland shops must meet the following criteria:

- Business entity is registered and incorporated in Singapore
- Has a minimum of 30% local shareholding

- Has a group annual turnover not exceeding S\$100 million per annum based on the most recent audited report, or group employment not exceeding 200 employees
- The company's directors, shareholders and related companies, from the same trade, have not previously applied for the visual merchandising programme

Participating heartland shops must also:

- Operate a physical shopfront in HDB estates
- Complete the visual merchandising programme with the appointed vendor and attend the arranged training sessions; and
- Commit to use the solution for at least 12 months

Interested heartland shops can speak to a business advisor from the Heartland Enterprise Centre Singapore (HECS) by calling 6741 3429 or emailing enquiries@hecs.com.sg to receive one-on-one support and advisory on how to sign up for the visual merchandising programme.

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