



Save & Sound

70 YEARS OF CPF

7 WAYS

the CPF Board helps members feel
Confident, in Control, and Comforted

From the moment a Singaporean is born to the point he or she passes away, few organisations can say that they touch the lives of almost every resident in a country. But that is precisely what the CPF Board does.

It is more than just a social security agency. It is, in many ways, also a customer service organisation, catering to the needs of its 4.2 million members at every stage of their lives.

You may have heard the saying “the customer always comes first.” But the CPF Board takes it a notch further, making “customer-obsessed” a core value.

Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Services) Mr Wong Yan Jun has distilled its service excellence into

four key traits: Easy, Effective, Empathetic, and Empowering.

“These are the 4 ‘Es’ of our service principles. Rather than converting every customer into an expert of the complex CPF system, we focused our effort on empowering every customer to be a master of their own unique circumstances,” he said.

“By providing relevant, timely information and personalised guidance to our customers, they will feel comforted, confident, and in control, knowing that the CPF Board is enabling them to be a step closer to achieving financial security.”

Here are seven ways the CPF Board has put this core value into action over the past 70 years.

01.

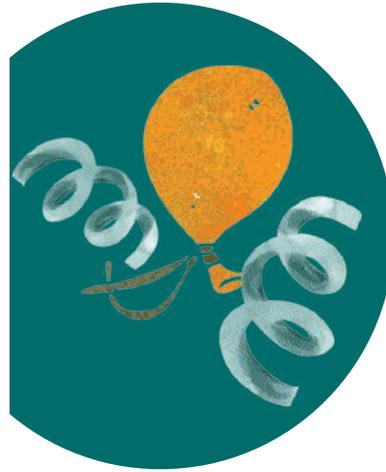
It celebrates life's milestones with you

A typical encounter at a CPF Service Centre used to go like this. A member would ask: "I heard that I can use my funds for this, can you advise me?" And the customer service staff would then retrieve information on the scheme being asked about before explaining it in detail.

While it served its purpose, the experience felt transactional. Over time, the CPF Board also observed that the needs of members changed with each life stage, whether they were young adults buying their first home, or seniors looking to grow their retirement funds.

That's when it shifted the customer service journey from transaction-based to event-based.

The "Service by Life Events" effort, launched in the early 2000s, enabled



members to zoom in on the services that they needed, shared former CEO Mr Willie Tan (2002–2005). "For our staff, it enabled them to serve our members better," he said.

This mindset change meant that CPF Board officers could serve members holistically by bundling different schemes relevant to them at their life stages, be it starting work or reaching retirement.

As it strives to empower its members even further, its efforts now focus on providing tailored support to members – considering their needs, circumstances, and preferences. The next time you hit a major life milestone, know that the CPF Board is journeying with you too.



02.

It does not stop at rejection

When a Singaporean is in financial distress, one of the first Government agencies the person often turns to is the CPF Board. Their request: “Can I make an early withdrawal of my CPF monies?”

Previously, this would have concluded as a “rejected appeal,” but this is no longer always the case.

Recognising that the root cause of their hardship could often be resolved by another Government agency, the CPF Board now takes a step further, by linking them up with someone who will be able to help them.

This could be the Housing & Development Board if they are struggling to keep up with mortgage

repayments, or the Ministry of Education if their issue is with school fees.

“This required a big mindset change as our staff needed to also know what are the other schemes available in other agencies to help citizens beyond CPF,” said Mr Augustin Lee, CEO of CPF Board (2019–2023), who mooted the initiative when he took on the role.

When an appeal comes in, the Rejected Appeals Management Protocol (RAMP) leverages the CPF Board’s extensive network of partners to help the member find a solution. As at end-2024, the Board assisted more than 29,000 members by linking them with 44 agencies through RAMP.

“We are always the ones to feel the citizens’ pain first,” said Mr Lee. There is a reason why the CPF Board is the public service’s “nerve endings.”

03.

Its staff are 24/7 CPF ambassadors

CPF staff are prepared to answer questions about its schemes – anytime and anywhere, even outside of work.

For Mr Clement Prasobhan and Ms Sharon Ann Alexander, this often means at family gatherings. In fact, the couple makes it a point to do some homework before they set off for a day of visiting.

“I’ll go and find out about the schemes, because I think it’s important and something we should know...and share them with my family and friends,” said Mr Prasobhan, Senior Deputy Director of the Compliance and Enforcement Department (CED) at the CPF Board.

Instead of seeing it as working “overtime” or being annoyed, Mr Prasobhan patiently answers all his relatives’ questions. And when he is able to address them well, he feels a sense of pride.

The same goes for his wife, Ms Alexander, a senior investigation officer at CED. “I’m quite proud to be a part of the CPF Board. I think (customer service staff) are quite approachable (to customers who have enquiries),” she said.

This attention to customer service has endured decades, deeply rooted in the CPF Board’s culture. Mr Lim Han Soon, as the CPF Board’s General Manager (1987–2002), even coined the tagline “I am a CPF Ambassador” to remind staff of the importance of providing excellent work and service for customers.

He recalled seeing one of the CPF Board’s office attendants direct a CPF member to the bank across the street where he could cash his CPF cheque. “When I asked him why he did it, he replied: I am a CPF Ambassador,” said Mr Lim, commending his actions.

For the CPF Board staff, helping people understand its schemes is not just work, but part of their everyday lives.





▲ Mr Quek Yong Kuang is part of the CPF Board's dedicated anti-scam team that reviews and enhances existing security measures. (Source: CPF Board)

04.

It seeks to protect your savings from scams

Safety first, even if it means slowing things down sometimes. That is the CPF Board's philosophy when it comes to finding the sweet spot between members' convenience and security.

Similar to how financial institutions and banks are required to send real-time notifications and institute a 12-hour cooling period for activating digital security tokens, the CPF Board also has this safeguard for high-risk transactions.¹

The rationale remains the same: to alert and provide sufficient time for members to respond to any unauthorised increases to their online Daily Withdrawal Limit, or changes to important personal

information and bank account details.

“We believe it’s in members’ interest for us to strike a balance. We called it ‘throwing some sand in the gears,’” explained Ms Yong Ying-I, CPF Board’s Chairman. “It does create some inconvenience, but we believe it will help protect members from scams.”

Such moves are timely as scams are not only on the rise but constantly evolving, getting more sophisticated and insidious over time.

There has been a “democratisation of scam tactics” with the advent of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI), according to Chief Executive Officer Ms Melissa Khoo, requiring extra layers of protection to be put in place.

Besides introducing a cooling period, the default online Daily Withdrawal Limit has also been set at \$2,000 to minimise members’ losses in the case of unauthorised transactions. The

maximum Daily Withdrawal Limit for online withdrawals has similarly been lowered from \$200,000 to \$50,000 in September 2024, so that those who wish to withdraw higher amounts would have to split their transactions over the course of a few days or do so in person at service centres. Meanwhile, the CPF Withdrawal Lock allows members to disable online withdrawals.

“This is not your online banking account, so most people have been quite happy to leave the default (Daily Withdrawal Limit) at what it is, which greatly strengthens protection against unauthorised withdrawals,” added Ms Yong.

While such measures have kept the number of scams involving CPF withdrawals and losses to less than 1 per cent of all reported scams in 2024, the war against scams continues to safeguard members’ precious savings.

As scams evolve, so does the CPF Board, as it can never be too careful with its members’ funds.

05.

It ensures your Government payments reach you

Whether it is cash benefits or CPF top-ups, the CPF Board is often the main agency working behind the scenes to administer such government benefit schemes.

“Our clients are not just CPF members. The Government is one of our clients,” said Mr Lim Han Soon, former General Manager of the CPF Board (1987–2002).

Beyond being a social security savings scheme, the CPF Board also serves as the Government’s trusted agent for administering payouts to citizens. In 2024, it disbursed around \$10.1 billion in grants on behalf of Government agencies, including key components of the

Assurance Package and Majulah Package.

CPF Board’s central role should come as no surprise, given its extensive database of citizens’ financial details.

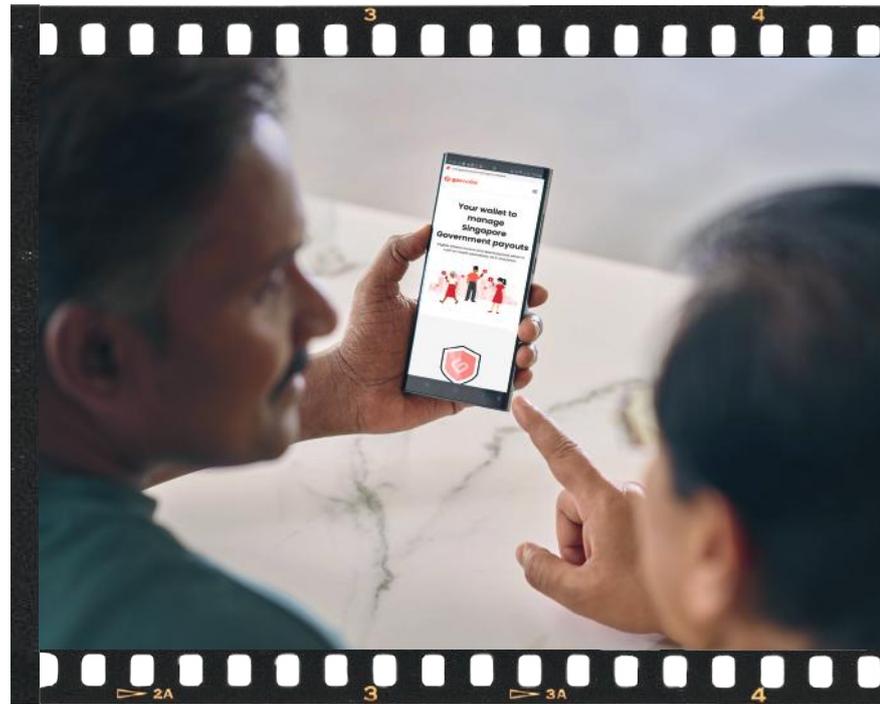
“We already have information on you related to your CPF. We know your bank account, and that it’s you and not a scammer. We’re in a much stronger position than other ministries and agencies, which logically may or may not have your bank account information. We can safely disburse monies to the correct bank account,” said Ms Yong Ying-I, Chairman of the CPF Board.

Of course, it goes beyond just administrative work – to serve the Government is to indirectly serve the nation’s broader goals and interests

too, ensuring that no citizen misses out on the national benefits they are entitled to.

Take the Baby Bonus Scheme, one of the schemes that CPF Board used to administer. “The primary objective was to (increase the birth rate to) replace the population... That’s part of the national policy that we should support. So, we serviced the Government,” explained Mr Lim.

Ms Yong added: “Other than just doing more and more transactions on behalf of the Government, what are we doing this for? How can we actually help more Singaporeans of different socioeconomic circumstances?”



▲ CPF Board, in collaboration with OCBC Bank and GovTech, launched GovCash in 2022 to replace cheque issuance for Singaporeans who are unable to use direct bank crediting so that they can receive Government payments more quickly and conveniently. (Source: CPF Board)

DID YOU KNOW?

In February 2022, about 40,000 Singaporeans could finally withdraw government cash benefits conveniently from an Automated Teller Machine (ATM).² Without bank accounts, they had previously relied on cheques to receive the payment.

It was a longstanding last-mile problem that the CPF Board wanted to solve.

“We were asking ourselves then how to get the money to them quickly. It is quite troublesome because you can’t use cheques at a store. We needed a way that allowed people to go to an ATM to draw cash even without a bank account,” said former CPF Board CEO (2019-2023), Mr Augustin Lee.

That year, the CPF Board, in collaboration with OCBC Bank

and the Government Technology Agency (GovTech), launched a solution – GovCash. It allowed Singapore citizens to withdraw their Government benefits in cash from over 500 OCBC ATMs islandwide. Using Singpass Face Verification technology to authenticate users, users only needed to key in their unique eight-digit Payment Reference Number during the withdrawal. The ease of use and security of GovCash has enabled it to receive recognition both internationally and locally, from both industry and the public service.

There were even discussions for other government agencies to use it to disburse payments under their own schemes, though they did not come to pass, shared Mr Lee, adding: “But it has that potential.”

06.

It goes to the ground with the help of volunteers

It can be tough to answer every question, given the wide range of schemes administered by the CPF Board and their varying impact on its millions of members. To reach out to as many people as possible, the CPF Board has built a strong network of volunteers.

These individuals, who usually sign up for the role after a positive experience with the CPF Board, provide much needed support at events such as roadshows and outreach activities. Today, they number in the thousands, with over 400 of them being highly active core volunteers.

Part of this pool are husband and wife pair Mr Tham Wai Chung and Mdm Qhek Hwee Boon.



▲ CPF Volunteers Mdm Qhek Hwee Boon (left) and Mr Tham Wai Chung (right) sharing about the CPF schemes with Singaporeans. (Source: CPF Board)

Impressed by how the CPF scheme enabled him to buy a flat shortly after he graduated from university with limited savings, and even supported his wife through university, Mr Tham started volunteering with the CPF Board in 2022. He encouraged his wife to join shortly after.

Their goal is to debunk some of the myths about the CPF. “When people complain that the CPF Board locks up their money, it’s because they are not aware of the policies or schemes that they can make use of. So when we encounter unhappy residents, we tell them about schemes they can use and it changes their perspective,” he said.

The couple has even created graphical illustrations which they use to educate the public about the various CPF accounts, how compound interest works, as well as other schemes like CPF LIFE.

Mdm Qhek said a grandmother they presented to was so convinced that she decided to top up her grandson’s Special Account. “It is newfound

motivation for us when we see such positive results,” she added.

In 2024, Mr Tham and Mdm Qhek received the Outstanding Citizen Contributor award from the Government Technology Agency, for their efforts in helping CPF members navigate the CPF Board’s online tools and understand its schemes.

Noting how many volunteers take leave during weekdays or time out on weekends to turn up at CPF events, CPF Board CEO Ms Melissa Khoo said an elderly volunteer once told her: “It’s actually better for him as a volunteer, as a fellow Singaporean, to spread our message to other Singaporeans, because sometimes the message is better if it is not from *zheng hu* (the Government).”



◀ Over the years, the CPF Board has steadily enhanced customer service at its service centres. (Source: CPF Board)

07.

It goes the distance to save you time

Back in the 1980s, performing transactions at the CPF Building typically involved navigating a labyrinth of floors.

Need to generate a statement of accounts? Head to the third floor. But if you wanted to enquire or apply for any of the housing schemes, you need to take the elevator to the 35th or 36th storey.

“There were at least four to five floors that customers had to go through if they wanted to do all kinds of transactions. People joked that they had to take half-day leave just to come here,” said Mrs Sally Koh, former Director of the Collection Business Department.

A solution was launched in 1994: a one-stop service counter on the second floor. The CPF Board was the first public service organisation to implement this concept.

“Every customer should only be seated once and served by a single

► Mrs Sally Koh and Mr Leong Lick Tien (then-Deputy General Manager of Benefits & Services) at the former CPF Building's one-stop service centre. (Source: CPF Board)



Customer Service Executive (CSE) regardless of the scheme they needed help with,” explained Mrs Koh, who was tasked to lead the project.

In 2005, a priority service called Club 55 was introduced, featuring a separate queue system manned by more experienced CSEs for customers aged 55 and above.

The CPF Board’s efforts was one of the attributes that won them the Singapore Quality Award in 2004 and the Service Excellence Award in 2009.

But the crowds remained. Former CEO Mr Yee Ping Yi (2011–2014) recalled how members would head to the service centres, take a queue number, and then go off to do their grocery shopping before coming back for their appointment.

As the world digitalised, the CPF Board further enhanced its online offerings. This included a personalised interface and the ability to make top-ups via PayNow. “We truly don’t want people to queue up,” said Mr Yee.