

EMA launches framework to meet Singapore power sector's manpower needs

NECF will be a reference for the industry to guide its HR policies in talent attraction and retention, and staff development

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A NEW framework that seeks to boost manpower capabilities in Singapore's power sector was launched by the Energy Market Authority (EMA) at its annual Energy Forum on Thursday.

The National Energy Competency Framework (NECF) will be a reference for the power sector to guide its human resource (HR) policies in talent attraction and retention, and staff development, said EMA, Singapore's electricity industry regulator.

Institutions of higher learning and training providers can also use the framework to align their curriculum for both pre-employment training and continuing education training to benefit mid-career professionals and students who are interested to join the power sector, added EMA. Previously, such a framework did not exist for the industry.

NECF, which was developed in collaboration with the industry, the Union of Power and Gas Employees and the Workforce Development Agency, encompasses career progression pathways for 26 electricity and gas job families within the power sector.

It also provides detailed pathways and associated competencies for 14 job families, including the areas of power generation, electricity retail as well as natural gas transmission and distribution, which were prioritised by the industry, based on its current needs and impact to the power sector's future.

NECF is in line with the initiatives recommended by the industry-led Power Sector Manpower Taskforce. In December 2012, the taskforce provided several recommendations to the government, including one which advised for the adoption of "a coordinated approach to drive manpower efforts".

Christopher Lim, managing director of SP Training and Consultancy Company, a unit under Singapore Power, said that having a framework gives the industry a "systematic approach" to identify available resources and existing gaps in the industry, and to address those gaps over time.

Up till now, the industry has had a "rather fragmented approach" to training, he said. "Sometimes when you encountered the need for training, you lacked the facility to train."

The success of the framework will take time and will ultimately rest on whether employers are happy with their employees' performance, Mr Lim said. "Most importantly, if we can see more older, experienced engineers and technicians passing their knowledge on to the newer workforce, I think that is an important area of success."

Ng Keng Fai, 24, a fresh graduate of the Bachelors of Electrical Power Engineering programme at the Newcastle University, which is offered in Singapore under a partnership with the Singapore Institute of Technology, said NECF gives him a clearer vision of the direction that he can take as a power engineer, and how much work experience is needed for various stages of his career.

Mr Ng said prior to NECF, he had to speak to his seniors, or those already working in the power industry, to get a guideline of the trajectory ahead. "But those information are generally quite scattered and they do not have very concrete guidance," he said.

Mr Ng also suggested for the information provided under NECF to be improved and updated over the years to remain relevant.

Singapore LNG Corporation (SLNG) chief executive John Ng told BT that the company already has its own specific framework, but NECF provides more focus and structure for the company. "SLNG can now draw on a bigger support infrastructure in a more holistic and intentional way going forward," he said.

NECF is now live at www.powering-lives.sg. The new "Powering Lives" portal also provides information on career, internship and scholarship opportunities in the power sector, and offers postings of industry events.