CEFA Singapore: An SME Financing-Readiness Checklist

Description

The Centre for Enterprise Financing Advisory is a neutral starting point for businesses that need to understand financing options and strengthen financial management. It does not turn weak cash flow into an automatic approval; the useful first step is a documented purpose, repayment source and downside case.

Start with the decision table

Situation	Decision signal
Short working-capital timing gap	Bring receivable and payable dates, not only annual revenue
Losses are structural	Financing alone may postpone the problem; test operating changes
Equipment should generate measurable savings	Match facility tenor to useful life and cash benefit
Owner cannot explain existing facilities	Build a complete debt and security schedule first
Several lenders have declined	Ask what risk fact is common before making another application

CEFA is advisory, not an approval desk

EnterpriseSG CEFA release describes a platform for financial literacy, advice and access to partners. Record the advice and independently review every lenderâ??s written terms.

Build a 13-week cash-flow view

List opening cash, weekly receipts, payroll, CPF, tax, rent, suppliers, debt service and minimum operating cash. The timing view exposes a gap that annual profit can hide.

Name the use and repayment source

A S$200,000 facility for vague growth is hard to test. Link each draw to inventory, equipment or a contract and show the cash event expected to repay it.

Stress the assumptions

Delay the largest customer by 30 days, reduce sales and raise interest cost. If the business breaches a covenant or runs out of cash, size or structure needs revision.

Use the survey as context, not a forecast

SBF Enterprise Financing Survey 2026 describes financing experiences across respondents. It cannot predict an individual approval; the companyâ??s statements, conduct and risk remain controlling.

Worked application

Illustration: a S$120,000 working-capital gap caused by a 60-day customer term is not automatically a S$120,000 loan need. Offset confirmed receipts, supplier terms and the minimum cash buffer week by week. A 13-week model may reveal a S$78,000 peak gap and the exact week it occurs.

Action checklist

1. State the financing purpose in one sentence
2. Prepare a 13-week cash-flow model
3. List every facility, security and guarantee
4. Bring recent accounts and management figures
5. Identify the repayment event
6. Run delayed-receipt and lower-sales cases
7. Compare written total costs and covenants

Keep a decision record another person can audit

The reader task is specific: decide whether cefa fits and arrive with a financing case an adviser can test. Create a short file showing the controlling fact, when it was checked, the evidence retained and who owns the next action. A changed date, amount, person, address, service screen or eligibility result can alter the outcome even when the broad rule stays the same.

#	Control	Evidence	Failure signal

1	State the financing purpose in one sentence	Authority readback	Applying with annual revenue only
2	Prepare a 13-week cash-flow model	Dated statement or screen	Calling recurring losses a timing gap
3	List every facility, security and guarantee	Calculation inputs	Ignoring personal guarantees
4	Bring recent accounts and management figures	Written approval	Shopping only by headline rate
5	Identify the repayment event	Receipt or reference	Making repeated applications without fixing the risk fact
6	Run delayed-receipt and lower-sales cases	Photo or versioned document	Applying with annual revenue only
7	Compare written total costs and covenants	Outcome check	Calling recurring losses a timing gap

The two original tools in this guideâ??a 13-week peak-funding-gap calculation and a purpose-to-repayment-source decision treeâ??do different jobs. The first structures the choice; the second tests it against a concrete case. Neither should be copied into another case without refreshing every input and recording the extraction date.

What the primary sources establish

Source	Claim used	Freshness control
EnterpriseSG CEFA release	CEFA purpose, one-stop advisory model and launch context.	Checked 2026-07-18; re-open before acting
SBF Enterprise Financing Survey 2026	SME financing conditions and reported capability gaps.	Checked 2026-07-18; re-open before acting

These sources are linked beside the claims they support. If a live service, formal notice, contract or officerâ??s written response differs from a general page, keep both and ask which newer fact or rule produces the difference. Do not choose the more convenient answer without resolving that conflict.

For adjacent questions, continue with our key employment terms checklist and company-secretary deadline guide. Each serves a separate next-step intent.

Run a final verification before committing

Start with the first decision signal in the table: **Short working-capital timing gap**. Confirm whether the present facts really support â??bring receivable and payable dates, not only annual revenueâ?•. Then test the opposite edge caseâ??**Several lenders have declined**â??because that is where an apparently simple plan can fail. Write the answer in plain language and attach the dated evidence; do not leave an unspoken assumption in a spreadsheet cell.

Next, ask another adult or colleague to reproduce the worked application without seeing the result. Give that person only the source links and inputs. If the answer changes, identify whether the difference comes from arithmetic, definition, timing or judgement. Recalculate using the live figure, retain both versions and state why the later one controls. This check is especially important when the choice depends on EnterpriseSG CEFA release and SBF Enterprise Financing Survey 2026.

Finally, rehearse the first three actionsâ??state the financing purpose in one sentence; prepare a 13-week cash-flow model; list every facility, security and guaranteeâ??and set a stop point before any payment, filing, booking, upload or irreversible instruction. The stop point is reached if a required approval is absent, a source has changed, the named person cannot confirm the facts, or the downside in â??applying with annual revenue onlyâ?• is still possible. This makes the guide usable under pressure and gives the next person enough context to continue without guessing.

Errors that change the outcome

- Applying with annual revenue only
- Calling recurring losses a timing gap
- Ignoring personal guarantees
- Shopping only by headline rate
- Making repeated applications without fixing the risk fact

Keep the dated authority pages, calculation inputs, confirmations and advice used for the decision. This article applies public information to a general fact pattern and does not determine an individual application, contract, tax position, medical need or legal dispute. Recheck the primary source immediately before acting.

Questions readers ask

Does CEFA provide the loan?

It is an advisory and ecosystem route; financing decisions and terms remain with the relevant providers.

What should I bring?

Current accounts, cash flow, debt schedule, financing purpose and evidence of the repayment source.

Is more debt always the solution?

No. Structural losses or weak controls may require operating changes before or alongside finance.

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