

Accelerating Startup Calibre and Entrepreneurial Drive 'ASCEND'

Startup India: Accelerating Startup Calibre and Entrepreneurial Drive 'ASCEND' Workshop

Introduction Startup India, an initiative by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), has launched a transformative program titled '**ASCEND**' (**Accelerating Startup Calibre and Entrepreneurial Drive**) to nurture entrepreneurial talent and drive startup growth in India's northeastern region. This initiative targets entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs, and students, fostering an ecosystem that encourages innovation and enterprise.

Northeast Startup Ecosystem: A Promising Horizon The northeast region of India is steadily emerging as a vibrant hub for startups, boasting over **900 DPIIT-recognized startups** that have collectively created more than **8,800 job opportunities**. Notably, **42% of these startups feature at least one woman director**, underlining the region's commitment to inclusivity and gender diversity. The ASCEND workshops serve as a pivotal platform to harness the region's untapped entrepreneurial potential and create a more dynamic startup environment.

Scope and Vision of ASCEND Workshops ASCEND workshops have been conducted across all eight northeastern states, including **Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram**, with the vision of:

- **Encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset** among participants.
- **Building capacities** through guidance, infrastructure access, and mentorship.
- Connecting startups with a thriving **network of ecosystem enablers**, including mentors, academia, and industry experts.

Workshop Highlights The one-day ASCEND workshops are designed as comprehensive capacity-building programs, incorporating:

- **Sensitisation and Awareness Sessions:** To introduce participants to the startup ecosystem and its opportunities.
- **Boot Camps:** Hands-on training sessions to help entrepreneurs refine their ideas and develop business strategies.
- **Knowledge Sessions:** Expert-led discussions on key aspects of running and scaling a startup, such as funding, market access, and technology adoption.
- **Panel Discussions:** Interactive forums featuring successful entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers sharing insights and strategies for startup growth.

Focus on Local and Women Entrepreneurs A cornerstone of the ASCEND initiative is its emphasis on promoting **local entrepreneurs** and empowering **women entrepreneurs** to scale and grow their ventures. By addressing the unique challenges faced by these groups, the program ensures their active participation in the startup ecosystem.

Conclusion The ASCEND workshops reflect Startup India's unwavering commitment to fostering a robust and inclusive entrepreneurial landscape in the northeast. By providing targeted support and opportunities for growth, the initiative not only accelerates the calibre of startups but also empowers individuals to contribute meaningfully to India's economic and social development. The program stands as a testament to the transformative power of innovation and entrepreneurship in shaping a brighter future for the region.

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