केन्द्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड

(शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के अधीन एक स्वायत्त संगठन)

CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

(An Autonomous Organisation Under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)

CBSE/ACAD/AP&AD(AC)/2026 **Date: 04.11.2026**

Circular No: Acad-73/2026

All the Heads of Schools affiliated to CBSE

Subject: Participation in National Startup Awards (NSA) 6.0 – Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur Award – reg.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched the National Startup Awards (NSA) in 2019 to recognise innovative, scalable and impactful startups across the country. The 6th Edition of the National Startup Awards (NSA 6.0) was launched on 27th October, 2026.

NSA 6.0 comprises **20 sectoral award categories and 3 special award categories,** including **Women-led Startups, Startups from the North-Eastern Region, and Student Innovators / Aspiring Entrepreneurs,** with a **cash prize of ₹25 lakh for each category winner.** The awards aim to recognise innovation, entrepreneurship, employment generation and socio-economic impact across the country.

In this regard, schools are requested to:

1. **Encourage student participation** in the Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur Award under NSA 6.0 and identify eligible students with innovative ideas, creative solutions and entrepreneurial potential.
2. **Evaluate the Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur Award:** Facilitate outreach, nominations and evaluation of eligible students in the appropriate sub-categories, in accordance with the prescribed eligibility criteria and nomination process. The award aims to promote student innovation and entrepreneurship, **with a total prize pool of ₹25 lakh across four sub-categories:**

Sub-Category	Eligibility
I. Budding Innovators	10-14 years
II. Rising Innovator	14-16 years
III. Young Changemakers	16-18 years
IV. Emerging Entrepreneurs	18 years and above

The framework envisages participation from educational institutions across country. It will be evaluated at the national level to identify and recognise outstanding student innovators.

The detailed Application and Nomination Process for the Student Innovator /Aspiring Entrepreneur Award under NSA 6.0 is available at the following link:

https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/sih/en/nsa2026.html

Further details are provided in the enclosed Annexure. Schools are requested to refer to the enclosed detailed application and nomination process and take necessary action to facilitate participation of eligible students in the initiative.

For any further clarification or coordination, the following officials may be contacted:

- Ms. Harleen Pasricha, Assistant Vice President, Startup India Hub – 9711828002
- Ms. Pratiti S, Senior Manager, Startup India Hub – 8197915918

You are requested to disseminate the information widely and encourage participation of eligible students in the National Startup Awards (NSA) 6.0, thereby fostering a culture of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship among students.

With best wishes!

(Dr. Praggya M. Singh)
Professor & Director (Academics)

Copy to the respective Heads of Directorates, Organisations and Institutions with a request to disseminate the information to all the schools under their jurisdiction:

1. The Commissioner, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, 18 Institutional Area, Shaheed Jeet Singh Marg, New Delhi-16
2. The Commissioner, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, B-15, Sector-62, Institutional Area, Noida-201309

3. The Secretary, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.
4. The Secretary, Sainik Schools Society, Room No. 101, D-1 Wing, Sena Bhawan, New Delhi-110001
5. The Chairman, Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan, N-1/9, Near Doordarshan Kendra, PO Sainik School Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751005
6. The Director of Education, Directorate of Education, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, Old Secretariat, Delhi-110054
7. The Director of Public Instructions (Schools), Union Territory Secretariat, Sector 9, Chandigarh-160017
8. The Director of Education, Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok, Sikkim –737101
9. The Director of School Education, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar –791111
10. The Director of Education, Govt. of A&N Islands, Port Blair – 744101
11. The Director of School Education, Ladakh, Room No.101-102, Ground Floor, Council Secretariat, Kurbathang, Kargil – Ladakh
12. The Director of School Education, Andhra Pradesh, 3rd Floor, B block, Anjaneya Towers, VTPS Rd, Bhimaraju Gutta, Ibrahimpatnam, Andhra Pradesh – 521 456
13. The Director, Jharkhand Education Project Council, Old HEC High School, JSCA Stadium Road, Jagannathpur, Sector-III, Dhurwa, Ranchi-834004 (Jharkhand)
14. The Director, Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (STSS), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Dharamshala, HP
15. The Additional Director General of Army Education, A –Wing, Sena Bhawan, DHQ, PO, New Delhi-110001
16. The Secretary AWES, Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army), FDRC Building No. 202, Shankar Vihar (Near APS), Delhi Cantt-110010
17. The Director, Navy Education Society, Directorate of Naval Education, Naval Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, West Block-V, RK Puram, Delhi-110066
18. JS to Chairperson, CBSE
19. Secretary/ Controller of Examinations/ All Directors, CBSE
20. All Professors & Directors, CBSE
21. All Regional Directors/ Regional Officers of CBSE with the request to send this circular to all the Heads of the affiliated schools of the Board in their respective regions
22. All Joint Secretary/ Deputy Secretary/ PPS/SPS/Under Secretary/ Assistant Secretary, CBSE
23. All Associate Professor & Additional Director, Assistant Professor & Joint Directors, Assistant Professor & Deputy Directors, Assistant Professor & Assistant Directors, CBSE
24. All Head(s)/ In-Charge(s), Centre of Excellence, CBSE
25. In charge IT Unit with the request to put this Circular on the CBSE Academic Website
26. In-Charge, Library
27. Record File

Professor & Director (Academics)

DPIIT
#startupindia

NATIONAL STARTUP AWARDS

The 6th Edition of the

National Startup Awards
is now OPEN!

DPIIT Recognized Startups across the country are invited to apply and be recognised for building what's next!

DPIIT #startupindia

A Decade of Startup India; 5 Editions of NSA completed

January 2016
Launch of Startup India Initiative

NSA 1st edition launched in 2020
1st Edition Launched

2021
2nd Edition Launched

2022
3rd Edition Launched

2023
4th Edition Launched

2025
5th Edition Launched

16 January 2026
Results of 5th Edition of NSA was announced by **Shri Piyush Goyal**, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce and Industry, on **National Startup Day**, marking the decadal year of the Startup India Initiative

From a one-time Honor to a platform for scale

Five successful editions have established the National Startup Awards as India's premier platform to recognise, support and scale impactful startups and ecosystem enablers.

NSA 5th Edition Report

01
Investor connects and capital access

02
Corporate and international market linkages

03
Ministerial and policy engagement, and Startup India benefits

04
Mentorship and institutional support

The Awards are now a continuous enablement platform for India's startup ecosystem, carrying winners from recognition to scale.

AWARD ARCHITECTURE

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20 sectoral categories and 3 special awards

1 Agriculture, AgriTech & Food Systems	2 Biomanufacturing (NEW)	3 DeepTech & Frontier Technologies	4 Climate-Tech, Clean Energy & Sustainability
5 Consumer Industries (NEW)	6 Creative Industries, Media & Digital Content	7 Defence & Security (NEW)	8 Rural Economy, Traditional Industries & Livelihoods (NEW)
9 Education & Skilling (NEW)	10 Electronics, Semiconductors & Advanced Manufacturing (NEW)	11 FinTech, Financial Services & Inclusion	12 Food-Tech, Biotechnology & Nutrition (NEW)
13 Healthcare, MedTech & Life Sciences	14 Supply Chain & Logistics	15 Sports, Fitness & Sports-Tech (NEW)	16 Future Mobility & Automotive (NEW)
17 Ocean & Blue Economy (NEW)	18 Space-Tech, Drones & Aerospace (NEW)	19 Telecom, Connectivity & Digital Infrastructure (NEW)	20 Travel, Tourism & Hospitality (NEW)

3 SPECIAL AWARDS

Women-Led Startup of the Year

Recognizing women-led innovation, growth, scalability and impact

North-East Startup Excellence

For startups from the eight North-Eastern States

Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur (NEW)

For school and college innovators across 36 States & UTs

PRIZE MONEY

₹5.75 crore across 23 Award Categories

₹5.75 Cr
total prize money

₹25 lakh
To each category winner

20
sectoral categories

3
special categories

Budget breakdown

#	Budget Head	Amount (₹)
1	**Prize Money - 20 Sectoral Categories (₹25 lakh × 20)**	5.00 crore
2	**Special Category Awards - 3 Categories (₹25 lakh × 3)** Women-Led Startup, Startup from North-East Region, Student Innovator	0.75 crore
	Total	**5.75 crore**

STUDENT INNOVATOR / ASPIRING ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

A ₹25 lakh national platform for Young Innovators

₹25 lakh
total award pool

4 sub-categories

- Budding Innovators (10-14 years)
- Rising Innovators (14-16 years)
- Young Changemakers (16-18 years)
- Emerging Entrepreneurs (18 years and above)

36
States & UTs lead participation for students and aspiring entrepreneurs

10
nominations per State / UT, at most

Why States & UTs matter

1. **Reach**
   Schools and colleges in every district respond best to a call from their own State / UT.
2. **Quality**
   The Startup Nodal Agency scores every application and shortlists the strongest teams.
3. **Visibility**
   Nominated teams reach a national platform with DPIIT certificates of appreciation.

SELECTION PROCESS

Six Steps from Application to Winner

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6

Oct 2026

Applications

DPIIT-recognised startups apply online in up to 3 sectoral and 2 special categories

Nov 2026

Incubator evaluation

20 incubation centres evaluate applications on the DPIIT framework

Nov 2026

Incubator selection

Shortlisting in a 3:5 ratio for stakeholder review

15 Dec 2026

Sectoral Committee

Virtual review by DPIIT, ministries, incubators, Banks / FIs and AIFs

2-7 Jan 2027

National Jury pitch

10 finalists per category pitch to government, industry and domain experts

16 Jan 2027

Winners

One winner per category, announced on National Startup Day

PROCESS

Selection process: who does what at each stage

NSA 6.0: 20 sectoral categories, 3 special awards, and Banks / FIs on every evaluation panel

SELECTION FUNNEL	ECOSYSTEM PLAYER	ROLE	TIMELINE
01 Applications Received — All applications	**Startups** — DPIIT-recognised startups	Apply online in up to 3 sectoral categories + 2 special categories with the required documents	Oct 2026
02 Incubator Evaluation — 20 Incubation Centres	**Incubation Centres** — 20 incubators, category-wise	Receive applications mapped to their category and evaluate them on the DPIIT framework*	Nov 2026
03 Incubator Selection — Ratio of 3:5	**Incubation Centres** — Shortlisting	Select applications in the ratio of 3:5 and forward them for stakeholder review	Nov 2026
04 Stakeholder Review — Sectoral Committee	**Sectoral Committee** — DPIIT + Ministry/ Dept, Incubators, Banks/ FIs, AIFs	Review incubator-selected applications in a virtual session, bringing policy, domain, funding and market perspectives	15 Dec 2026
05 Jury Pitch — 10 per category	**National Jury** — Government, Industry, Domain Experts	Finalists (10 per category) present / pitches before the Jury, which evaluates and recommends winners	2-7 Jan 2027
06 Winners — 1 per category	**Startup India, DPIIT** — Apex governance	Final oversight and approval; winners announced on National Startup Day	16 Jan 2027

*Note: The Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur Award follows a separate evaluation pathway through State/UT Startup Nodal Agencies, distinct from the incubator-led selection process applicable to startup categories

EVALUATION

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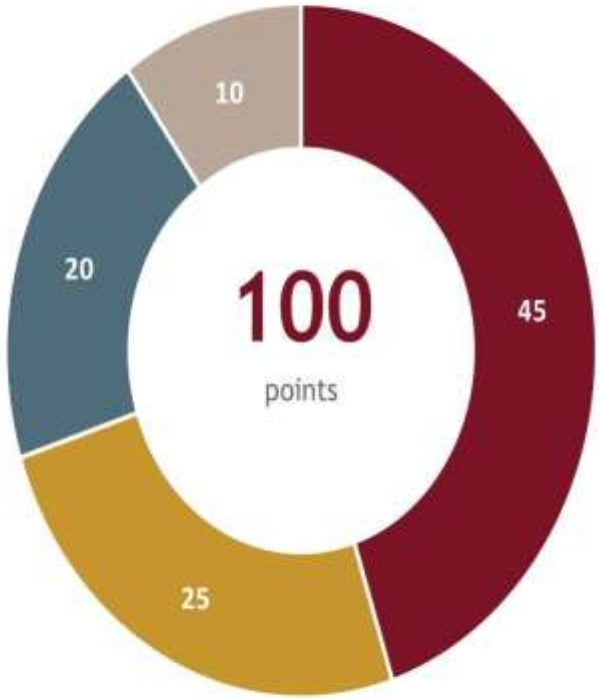
Scoring Framework: 100 points



Innovation	45 pts
Scalability	25 pts
Economic Impact	20 pts
Inclusivity & Team Diversity	10 pts

HOW TO SCORE

1	2	3	4	5
Nascent	Emerging	Established	Strong	Exceptional

Points = (Rating ÷ 5) × Max points

Example: a rating of 4 on a 10-point parameter scores 8. Scores are summed to 100, ranked within each category, and shortlisted in a 3:5 ratio for the Sectoral Committee.

WHY APPLY

What Winners and Finalists gain

Prize money

Prize money for the winning startup in every category

National recognition

Winners announced on National Startup Day, 16 January 2027
Recognition & Visibility across national & international platforms

Ecosystem access

Incubators, Banks / FIs, AIFs and government across the evaluation panels

Corporates and pilots

Access to leading corporates and pilot opportunities

DPIIT schemes and benefits

Access to DPIIT funding schemes and Startup India initiatives

National Jury exposure

Finalists pitch to government, industry and domain experts

Why the National Startup Awards Matter

*Six years of recognition: where NSA 1.0 to 4.0 winners stand in 2026**

143
winners across four editions

135
still active in 2026

4
acquired by global firms

3
unicorns: BharatPe, LeadSquared, Skyroot

Recognition

National credibility that builds visibility with customers, investors and government.

Access

Links to Startup India support: Fund of Funds, Seed Fund Scheme, 80 IAC tax exemption and Credit Guarantee.

Global Reach

Startup India Global Delegations, International Virtual Participation and global showcases.

Recognition today, scale tomorrow. 20+ sectors | Agriculture to space, defence and climate tech

**NSA 5.0 is excluded as its results were announced in 2026, too recent to assess post-award outcomes*

DEBT FINANCING

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups

STRUCTURE

- Pilot operationalised in April 2023
- Exposure capped at INR 20 crore per case

KEY FEATURES

- Operationalised by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC)
- Guarantees against loans from Banks, NBFCs and AIFs

IMPACT

40+

Member institutions onboarded

550+

Loans guaranteed

~INR 1,750+ Cr

Value of loans guaranteed

Source: Data as on 30th Sep 2026.

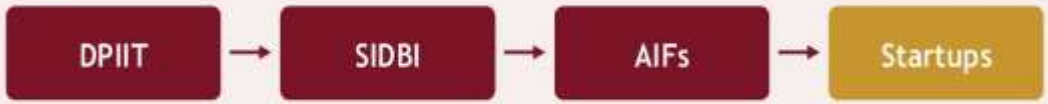
EQUITY FINANCING

Fund of Funds for Startups

KEY FEATURES

- Corpus of INR 10,000 crore for long-term financing
- Capital to SEBI-registered AIFs, which pool additional capital to invest in startups

PROCESS



Operationalised by SIDBI and monitored by DPIIT

IMPACT

160+

AIFs with ~INR 10,000 Cr committed

INR 28,845 Cr

Invested by AIFs in startups

1,483

Startups funded

Source: Data as on 30th Sep 2026.

Benefits under Section 80-IAC of the Income-tax Act

100% income-tax deduction

Eligible startups can claim a 100% deduction of income tax for 3 consecutive years.

ESOP deferment and loss carry-forward

Startups holding a valid Certificate of Eligibility from the IMB can also defer tax on ESOPs and set off and carry forward losses.

Window extended to 2030

Startups incorporated before 1 April 2030 are now eligible to apply, giving new ventures more time to benefit.

4,489

startups granted a Certificate of Eligibility by the Inter-Ministerial Board (IMB)

The benefits under Section 80-IAC of the Income-tax Act, 1961 are covered under Clause 140 of the Income-tax Bill, 2025.

Source: Data as on 30 September 2026.

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Key Dates and What's Next

Oct 2026	Nov 2026	15 Dec 2026	2-7 Jan 2027	16 Jan 2027
Applications open	Incubator evaluation and selection	Sectoral Committee review	National Jury pitch	Announcement of Winners on National Startup Day

What we ask our ecosystem partners

Spread the word

Amplify the call through your Startup and Incubator networks

Join the Jury event

Be part of the National Jury pitching event in January 2027

DPIIT
#startupindia

Scan to Apply