VENTURE CENTER · 20 YEARS

VentureCenter@20 Startup Awards

Call for Nominations

11	Rs 1,00,000	21 Nov 2026	18 Dec 2026
awards across two tracks	cash prize per award	last date to apply	award ceremony, Pune

ABOUT THE AWARDS

Venture Center turns 20, and we are celebrating with the startups that made the journey. The VentureCenter@20 Startup Awards recognise incubatees and alumni whose technology, growth and impact stand out. Awards will be presented at the 20-year celebration in Pune on 18 December 2026.

The awards are supported by our partners. Each award comes with a cash prize, a citation and visibility in front of a wider audience comprising of investors, mentors, experts, academia, industry, government and others.

There are 11 awards in two tracks:

- **Domain Awards (7):** the best startup in each technology domain.
- **Impact Awards (4):** the startups with the strongest record on risk capital raised, scale, intellectual property and scientific output.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Each startup may apply for **one Domain Award** and **any Impact Awards** it qualifies for.

Domain Awards

#	Award	Includes, for example
D1	**Health: Regenerative Medicine, molecular diagnostics, Implants, Therapeutics & BiopharmaClean Energy & E-mobility**	Small-molecule drugs, biologics and biosimilars, vaccines, cell and gene therapies, stem cells and tissue engineering, biomaterials and scaffolds, orthopaedic, dental and cardiovascular implants, drug delivery systems, molecular and genomic diagnostics, nutraceuticals, bioprocessing, research tools and contract research services.
D2	**Health: Medical Devices & Diagnostics**	Mechanical, electronic and IT-based medical devices, surgical tools and consumables, in-vitro and point-of-care diagnostics, imaging, wearables and remote patient monitoring, hospital equipment, digital health and AI for healthcare

#	Award	Includes, for example
D3	**Health: Rehabilitation & Assistive Technology**	Mobility aids, prosthetics and orthotics, rehabilitation and physiotherapy devices, neuro-rehabilitation, aids for vision, hearing and speech, assistive software and accessibility technology, technology for elderly and differently-abled people
D4	**Clean Energy & E-mobility**	Green hydrogen, electrolysers and fuel cells, batteries and energy storage, battery recycling, solar, wind, bioenergy and biofuels, waste-to-energy, energy efficiency, smart grids, EVs and EV components, motors and power electronics, charging infrastructure, energy analytics and others in similar fields
D5	**Environmental Sustainability**	Solid, plastic and e-waste processing and recycling, circular economy, water and wastewater treatment, air quality and pollution control, carbon capture and utilisation, sustainable and bio-based materials, green chemistry, environmental monitoring, climate adaptation and resilience
D6	**Agri & Food**	Agri inputs (bio-fertilisers, bio-pesticides, seeds), soil and crop health, precision farming and agri-drones, farm machinery, post-harvest, storage and cold chain, food processing and ingredients, alternative proteins, food safety and testing, animal, poultry and fish health, aquaculture, farm-to-market and supply chain solutions
D7	**Engineering, Automation, Robotics & AI**	Robotics and industrial automation, drones and UAVs, defence and aerospace technology, IoT and sensors, digital twins, AI, machine learning and computer vision, software for industry, semiconductors and electronics, instrumentation, advanced manufacturing and 3D printing, advanced materials and nanotechnology, process and chemical engineering

Impact Awards

#	Award	What we look at
I1	**Risk Capital Raised**	Total risk capital raised since inception (government & non-government grants, Investments via angel, VC, corporate, convertible notes)
I2	**Scale**	Revenue and full-time jobs created, taken together
I3	**Intellectual Property**	Patents filed and granted (India and abroad), technology licences, other registered IP
I4	**Scientific Output**	Peer-reviewed publications, clinical studies and field trials, regulatory approvals and certifications

WHO CAN APPLY

You can apply if your startup:

- is, or has been, incubated or supported by Venture Center as a resident, associate at any time in the last 20 years (alumni welcome)
- is registered in India as a private limited company or LLP
- is operating today, with an active product, service or technology program
- is not in default on any obligation to Venture Center

Nomination rules

- One application per startup, submitted by a founder or director.
- Startups may also be nominated by the Venture Center team. Nominated startups will be invited to complete the same form.
- All figures must be verifiable. The jury may ask for documents before the final decision.

WHAT WINNERS GET

Winners (one per award)

- cash prize of Rs 1,00,000
- trophy and citation, presented on stage at the 20-year celebration on 18 December 2026
- a feature in Venture Center's 20-year communications: website, social media, newsletter and press
- introductions to investors, corporate and government partners attending the celebration

Finalists (up to 5 per award)

- certificate and citation of recognition
- invitation to the celebration and a listing on the finalists' page
- showcased at the 20-year celebration on 18 December 2026

The jury may decide not to give an award in a category if no application meets the standard.

HOW TO APPLY

Apply online through the application form: **[Link]**. It takes about 30–40 minutes if your documents are ready.

Keep these ready before you start:

1. Company details, CIN or LLPIN, DPIIT number (if any)
2. Founder and team details, and the number of full-time employees
3. Revenue for last 5 years
4. Total funds raised since inception, split into grants, equity, debt
5. Patents, publications, approvals and certifications, with numbers or links
6. A shareable Google Drive link ("anyone with the link can view") to a folder containing:

a. pitch deck (PDF, up to 15 slides)
b. documentary evidence that substantiates the data and claims in your application,
c. optional: a 2-minute video about your startup

Key dates (tentative)

Step	Date
Applications open	**Nov 16, 2026**
Last date to apply (11:59 pm IST)	**Nov 21, 2026**
Shortlist announced	**Dec 5, 2026**
Finalist selection by the jury	**Dec 9, 2026**
Winners informed	**Dec 12, 2026**
Award ceremony, 20-year celebration, Pune	**Dec 18, 2026**

HOW NOMINATIONS ARE EVALUATED

Selection is in three stages:

1. **Screening:** the Venture Center team checks eligibility and completeness, and verifies the data against our records.
2. **Shortlist:** up to 5 finalists per award are chosen on the criteria below.
3. **Jury:** an independent jury of investors, industry leaders and domain experts reviews the finalists' applications and supporting documents and selects the winners. The jury's decision is final.

Domain Awards

Criterion	Weight
Technology Strength & Innovation Intensity Depth and novelty of the technology, the degree of innovation, and how well it is protected (patents, designs, know-how)	**30%**
Value Proposition The problem solved and why the solution is better than existing alternatives	**15%**
Business & Execution Plan A credible plan to take the technology to market, and the team's ability to deliver it	**20%**
Domain Alignment & Contribution Strength of alignment with, and contribution to, the domain	**20%**
Societal Impact Impact on society, environment or health	**15%**

Impact Awards

Impact Awards are decided on verified data from the application, cross-checked against Venture Center records.

- **Risk Capital Raised:** total risk capital raised since inception, counting grants (government and non-government) and investments (angel, VC, corporate, convertible notes, debts) together
- **Scale:** revenue and full-time employees, ranked and given equal weight.
- **Intellectual Property:** granted patents count more than filed ones. Licences and foreign filings add to the score.
- **Scientific Output:** peer-reviewed papers, completed clinical or field studies, and regulatory approvals or certifications.

The jury may consider the stage and age of the startup when comparing results.

Questions? Get in touch

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