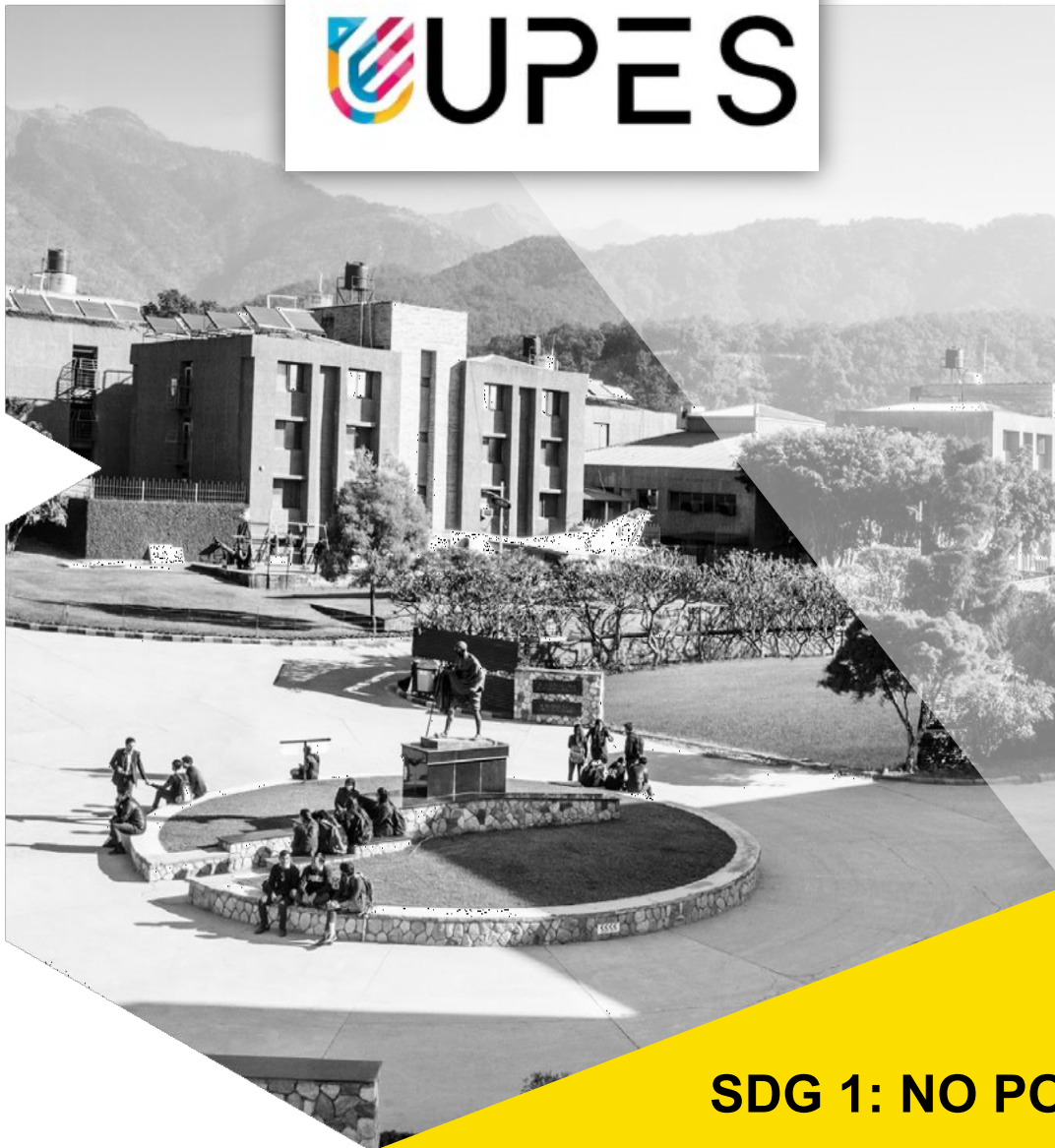




SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SDG 1: NO POVERTY

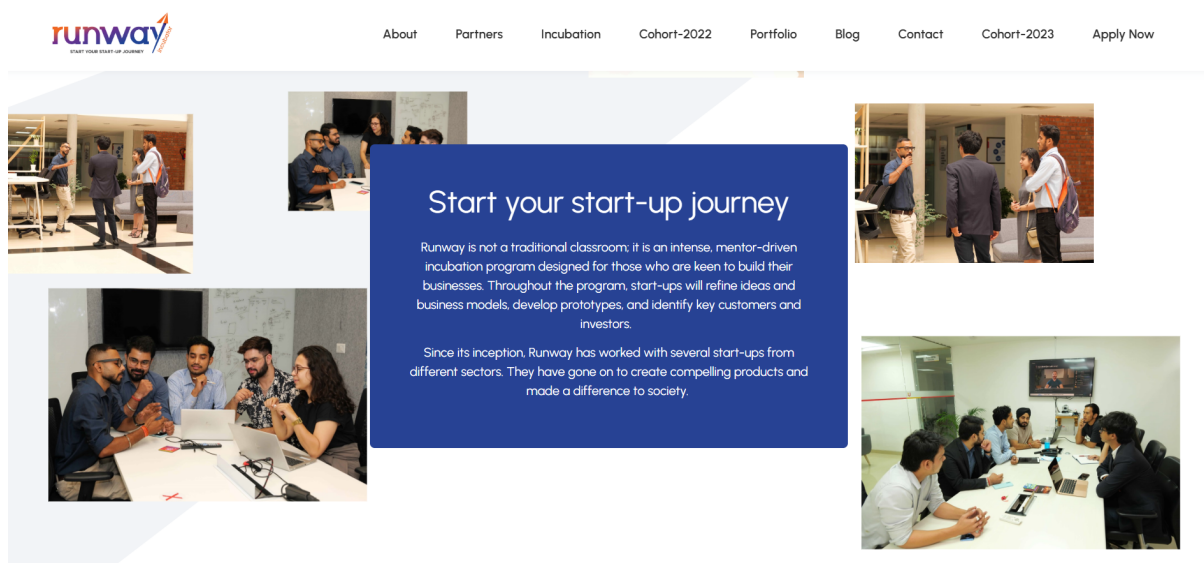
2025

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1.4.2 Does your university as a body provide financial assistance to the local community assisting the start-up of sustainable businesses?

UPES Runway Incubator: Empowering Local Entrepreneurs



UPES (University of Petroleum & Energy Studies) actively supports the creation of sustainable businesses in its local community through its **Runway Startup Incubator**. Launched in 2021 under the UPES Council for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (UCIE), Runway works with start-ups *both within and outside the university*, nurturing their ideas and providing mentorship, infrastructure, and **funding support** [1] [2]. This incubator is recognized by the Government of Uttarakhand as a state nodal business incubator, reflecting UPES's commitment to regional entrepreneurship development [3] [2]. By focusing on innovation and sustainability, UPES aims not only to prepare its students as job seekers but also to **empower them – and external innovators – as job creators** who drive inclusive economic growth [4].

A UPES Runway incubator event welcoming its first cohort of start-ups. The university's incubator program engages both internal and external entrepreneurs, offering them mentorship, workspace, and financial support to develop viable, sustainable business ventures (UPES, Dehradun).

Direct Financial Assistance (Seed Funding & Grants)



UPES provides **direct financial assistance** to start-ups through seed funding and grants. Notably, the Runway Incubator offers an **“Ignition Grant” of ₹1 lakh** to exceptional ventures as startup seed money [5]. As of 2023, **37 start-ups have received grant funding directly from UPES** to kickstart their businesses [6]. These grants – typically small seed funds akin to micro-loans – help entrepreneurs cover early-stage expenses and develop prototypes. In addition, UPES organizes startup competitions that award **cash prizes and seed investments**. For example, the university’s “Take Off” competition (2022) invited innovators from across India (including the local region), shortlisting 16 teams and **awarding cash prizes to the top two start-up ideas** [4]. More recently, **“The Pitch” 2025** event at UPES brought together start-ups from various institutions and domains (renewable energy, health-tech, ed-tech, etc.), where a jury of investors evaluated pitches – several ventures **secured funding on the spot** as a result [7]. Through such initiatives, UPES directly injects capital into promising start-ups, enabling them to launch and sustain their operations in the crucial early stages.

*UPES’s startup competition “The Pitch” provided a platform for early-stage entrepreneurs to present their ideas. This event brought together start-ups from UPES and other institutions – spanning solar energy, health diagnostics, ed-tech, and AI – and led to multiple teams **securing seed funding** from a jury of investors [7]. Such pitch events are one way UPES offers indirect financial assistance by connecting innovators with funding opportunities.*

Indirect Support: Mentorship, Networks & Investor Access



Beyond direct grants, UPES facilitates **indirect financial assistance** by equipping entrepreneurs with mentorship and networks that lead to funding. The Runway incubator runs an 8–10 week program focusing on business fundamentals (ideation, market research, financial planning) and product development, after which start-ups participate in **Demo Days to pitch to investors** [5]. Through this process, many ventures have attracted external investment. In Runway’s very first cohort, for instance, *8 start-ups collectively raised over ₹70 lakh from a group of angel investors* during the initial pitching round [4]. Start-ups also receive help with incorporation, legal compliance, and access to co-working space and labs – support that makes them “investor-ready” [8]. The incubator’s extensive mentor network (including UPES faculty, successful alumni, industry experts, and angel investors) provides strategic guidance and introductions that often result in funding opportunities [9]. In this way, UPES leverages its connections to **link entrepreneurs with potential investors, loans, or grants** – an indirect yet crucial form of financial assistance.

UPES’s partnerships amplify this impact. For example, **HDFC Bank’s Parivartan initiative** selected UPES Runway as a partner incubator, bringing a ₹60 lakh grant pool to support socially impactful and sustainable start-ups [5]. Such collaborations enable local entrepreneurs to access **corporate seed grants and CSR funding**. Likewise, events like “The Pitch” (hosted in 2025) assembled a diverse investor jury (including venture capitalists and angel networks), reflecting UPES’s mission to integrate entrepreneurship into higher education and help innovators **secure external capital for their sustainable ventures** [7]. Through mentorship, investor matchmaking, and industry partnerships, UPES provides an ecosystem in which local start-ups can obtain the financial resources they need to grow.

Government & Third-Party Funding Programs Facilitated by UPES

Runway Incubator Milestone



UPES also facilitates **third-party grants and co-funded programs** that benefit local start-ups, often in partnership with government agencies. Notably, UPES was awarded a **₹4.9 crore grant under the DST's NIDHI Inclusive TBI scheme** to establish an Inclusive Technology Business Incubator in Uttarakhand [10] [11]. Under this program, the Department of Science & Technology (DST) contributes about ₹3.88 crore (with UPES matching ₹1.02 crore) to fuel a new incubator focused on **deep-tech and sustainable start-ups** (AI, machine learning, clean technology, agritech) [11]. The **inclusive tech incubator** will provide selected local ventures not only with training and workspace but also **seed support grants** to accelerate their development [11]. At least 30 start-ups will be incubated in cohorts under this DST-UPES program, aligning with national goals of innovation and self-reliance [10] [11].

In addition, UPES serves as an anchor for several **government-funded startup initiatives**:

- **BIRAC (Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council)**
UPES hosts the BIRAC SPARSH program with a grant of ₹4.02 crore to support health-tech and biotech start-ups, advancing healthcare innovation [5].
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**
Through an Atal Community Innovation Center, UPES has received ₹2.5 crore to promote community-based innovation and entrepreneurship in underserved regions [5]. This funding nurtures grassroots innovators (including those from the local community) to develop sustainable solutions.
- **MeitY (Ministry of Electronics & IT) – Genesis Program**
UPES is a partner in MeitY's Genesis initiative, bringing in ₹2 crore to support tech start-ups in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities [5]. This expands funding access to entrepreneurs from smaller towns and the surrounding community, boosting their innovation potential.
- **Startup Uttarakhand (Government of Uttarakhand)**
UPES is *recognized as a nodal incubation center* by the state. It works closely with the Uttarakhand government's startup council to facilitate state grants, bootcamps, and "grand challenges" for local start-ups [5]. Through this partnership, several Uttarakhand-based entrepreneurs have received **state seed funding and incentives** to launch sustainable

businesses. (For instance, “Mulya Creation,” a fashion startup incubated at UPES, secured a ₹10 lakh grant from the Uttarakhand government for its eco-friendly enterprise [4].)

- **Corporate and Network Partners**

UPES’s incubator has tied up with private and non-profit partners that provide financial backing or resources to local start-ups. For example, **Indian Angel Network (IAN)** mentors and invests in incubated companies; **Techstars** and **TiE Dehradun** run startup events and workshops; and **Zoho** offers credits for software tools [5]. These partnerships expand the avenues for budding businesses to obtain funding or in-kind support. Notably, **UPES itself contributes matching grants** in many of these schemes (DST, AIM, MeitY, etc.) and offers internal resources like labs and co-working space to bolster start-up growth [5].

Through the above programs, UPES has helped channel substantial **external funding** into the local startup ecosystem. In fact, since Runway’s launch, **over 250 start-ups have been incubated, and more than ₹20 crore in cumulative funding has been raised** for these ventures via government agencies, investors, and competitions [1] [7]. The university’s role as a facilitator of these grants and seed funds is a direct contribution to the financial empowerment of local entrepreneurs.

Supporting Student & Alumni Start-ups with Community Impact

UPES’s financial assistance initiatives benefit not only independent local entrepreneurs but also its **students and alumni** whose startups operate in the community. Many UPES-incubated ventures address sustainability challenges and create local impact. For example, **BluSmart**, co-founded by a UPES alumnus, is India’s first all-electric ride-sharing service – it tackles urban pollution by deploying electric vehicles [10]. While BluSmart’s funding comes from external investors, its founders credit the innovative mindset fostered at UPES for their success. Similarly, UPES alumni launched **Cognecto**, an AI-driven solution for heavy industries, which raised ₹4 crore to improve efficiency in mining and construction [10]. These successes demonstrate UPES’s indirect financial support: by nurturing student innovators and connecting them to networks, the university helped them attract significant funding to scale their community-benefiting businesses.

Several **start-ups supported by UPES focus explicitly on sustainable development** and have received grants through university-facilitated channels. A notable example is **UGreen Technologies**, a climate-tech venture led by a UPES graduate that develops solutions to combat climate change. UGreen was incubated via Runway and recently **won a national innovation grant** from the Ministry of Education’s Innovation Cell and AICTE – underscoring the impact of UPES’s support in securing third-party funding [10]. Another incubated start-up, **Agri Joy LLP**, is developing automated indoor farms for hydroponic agriculture. By experimenting with high-value crops like microgreens, Agri Joy aims to improve local food security through sustainable farming; the venture has benefitted from UPES’s mentorship and lab access, making it attractive to investors and grant programs [10].

Moreover, UPES encourages entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups in the community. For instance, **Mulya Creation**, founded by a young entrepreneur from Uttarakhand, produces eco-dyed fabrics and trains local women artisans, promoting both environmental sustainability and women’s empowerment. Mulya was incubated at UPES and went on to secure **₹10 lakh in government grant funding**, with guidance from the university’s network [4]. **FitBread India** is another UPES-incubated startup that sources ingredients from Himalayan village communities to bake healthy breads, thereby creating market linkages for local farmers [4]. While FitBread’s funding needs are

modest, UPES's support in product development and business modeling has indirectly improved its financial viability and community reach.

Through these examples, it is evident that UPES extends financial assistance (directly or via facilitation) to both **non-UPES community members and its own students/alumni**, provided their ventures benefit the local society or environment. Whether a start-up is founded by a local youth with no prior affiliation to UPES or by the university's own graduates, if it aims to solve real-world problems sustainably, it can tap into UPES's incubator resources, seed funding schemes, and partner grants. This inclusive approach ensures that **financial support is available to a broad spectrum of entrepreneurs** – from a rural artisan collective developing eco-products to a tech-savvy alumnus launching a clean energy startup.

Conclusion: A Robust Support System for Sustainable Start-ups

In summary, UPES as a body does provide substantial financial assistance to help start sustainable businesses in the local community. This support comes in multiple forms – direct seed funding (e.g. ₹1 lakh ignition grants, competition prize money), indirect facilitation (investor introduction, mentorship, incubation services), and leveraging external funding (government grants and corporate partnerships). The university's Runway Incubator has incubated hundreds of start-ups across sectors like clean energy, healthcare, education, and agritech, with many ventures explicitly targeting sustainability and social impact [10] [11]. According to official reports, over 250 start-ups have been supported and more than ₹20 crore raised in funding since 2021 – a testament to the thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem fostered by UPES [1] [11].

Crucially, UPES's assistance is not limited to its campus community. By opening its incubator to external entrepreneurs, serving as Uttarakhand's nodal startup center, and collaborating on national programs, UPES extends financial and technical support to non-UPES members in the region who aspire to launch sustainable enterprises [2] [5]. At the same time, the university invests in its students and alumni, enabling their start-ups to benefit the local community through job creation and innovative solutions. From seed grants that function as micro-loans for proof-of-concept, to multi-crore government funding initiatives for scaling deep-tech innovations, UPES plays an active role in channeling financial resources into the local startup ecosystem. These efforts align with global sustainability goals and are regularly highlighted in media and rankings: for instance, the Times of India noted UPES's recent DST-backed incubator focusing on “ventures intersecting social, economic and developmental challenges with tech” [11], and industry outlets have applauded how UPES is fueling startup dreams with funding and incubator programs [7] [10].

Through its comprehensive support system, UPES demonstrates a high-impact commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure) by financially empowering local entrepreneurs. In effect, UPES is helping turn innovative ideas into sustainable businesses – providing the necessary monetary assistance, directly and indirectly, to ensure these start-ups can take off and thrive in the community [10] [5].

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