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Zone Startups launches second cohort of accelerator programme

Mumbai-based technology startup accelerator Zone Startups India has launched Social media



the second cohort of its empower programme aimed at women entrepreneurs in technology businesses, it said in a statement.

Launched in April last year, empower is backed by the Department of Science and Technology; GIZ, a German firm that supports initiatives for sustainable development; Vodafone India; Google; **Nishith Desai Associates**; and SheCEO, a Toronto-based organisation that supports women entrepreneurs.

empower aims to identify women entrepreneurs who can build great, fundable businesses.

In the first cohort of empower, 15 women entrepreneurs were selected from 180 applicants. Of the 15, **eight eventually received funding**. Saral Designs got Rs 10 lakh seed funding, while Dazl and Shubh Puja received Rs 7 lakh and Rs 5 lakh, respectively. Three startups—Algaari Systems, Math Adventures and Project Mudra—received Rs 7 lakh from GIZ.

Ajay Ramasubramaniam, director, Zone Startups India, said there is a case for having a

dedicated accelerator programme for women entrepreneurs.

Zone Startups was set up in 2014 as a joint venture with BSE Institute and Ryerson Futures Inc, a Toronto-based startup accelerator. It runs one programme each with Bombay Stock Exchange, Barclays, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and Thomson Reuters.

Anita Gupta, associate head, The National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board, said, "As a part of Start-up India and Stand up India initiatives, the government is supporting empower which is designed to equip women entrepreneurs with knowledge, skills and networks required to scale up their startups."

Last year in November, the accelerator, along with the Government of Ontario, Canada and Ryerson University in Toronto, had [selected six ventures as winners of its Next Big Idea Contest](#).

Last year's contest was held in July with TCS, Google and HDFC Bank signing up as industry partners. The contest was first held in 2013. In each edition, five startups have been selected for soft landing at DMZ, Canada's top university business incubator.

Last year, Zone Startups along with the Canadian government launched an accelerator programme, Gateway 91, for international startups looking to enter the Indian market.

In June 2016, [Zone Startups partnered with British banking firm Barclays Plc](#) to launch and manage the Rise accelerator programme in India.

The Mumbai-based firm was also [selected by Axis Bank to manage its accelerator programme](#), 'Thought Factory', in Bengaluru.

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