

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q1. What is the objective of EcoHub.IN?

EcoHub.IN aims to upscale innovative, early-stage Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs) across three priority domains (climate and clean-tech, pollution management, and circularity) and upskill their founders through a structured incubator and non-dilutive funding program to address rapidly growing ecological, environmental, and climate-related challenges as well as to create green jobs in India.

### Core Theory of Change Narrative

**If** EcoHub.IN identifies high-potential early-stage SGBs having innovative product(s) and/or service(s) to solve rapidly growing climate change or environmental pollution or circularity challenges, and

**provide** them with structured incubation, founder capability building, non-dilutive catalytic funding support, and ecosystem connections,

**then** the SGBs will strengthen their capacities, commercially scale their innovative product(s) and/or service(s), and improve their access to market(s) and investment(s);

**which** will lead to scaling up of such SGBs to solve above-mentioned challenges and in turn will add more green jobs;

**ultimately contributing to** inclusive, green and resilient socio-economic growth of India.

## Q2. What are Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs)?

Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs) are enterprises that are typically too large for microfinance, informal lending, or bootstrapping, yet too small, early-stage, or high-risk to access traditional commercial bank financing or mainstream private equity and venture capital investment. They are often described as the “missing middle”# in finance and development.

[#Missing Middle example: an emerging micro-algae biorefinery business may require ₹25 lakh in capital and business management support to scale. Banks may view it as too risky, while venture capital investors may see the ticket size as too small to generate viable returns.]

In India, the term SGB is commonly used in impact investing, livelihood and rural enterprise programs, climate and clean-tech ecosystems, environmental and social enterprise ecosystems, and CSR and blended-finance-supported incubation programs.

### Q3. How are SGBs classified?

SGBs typically exhibit some combination of the following characteristics:

- Early-stage or growth-stage businesses
- Small revenue and employee base
- High potential for growth, job creation, or social/environmental impact
- Limited collateral or formal financial history
- Operate in underserved or emerging markets
- Need flexible catalytic funding and business support

### Q4. What does "innovation" mean in the context of EcoHub.IN?

At EcoHub.IN, innovation is not limited to technology alone. We define it broadly across four interconnected dimensions - any one of which, or any combination of which, can qualify as a meaningful and fundable innovation:

#### 1. Better Business Model

A new or improved way of creating, delivering, and capturing value in sustainability markets. This could mean a novel revenue model (e.g., outcome-based pricing, product-as-a-service), a new market entry strategy, or a financing structure that makes a sustainability solution economically viable and scalable where none existed before.

#### 2. Better Customer Service Model

An improved way of reaching, engaging, and serving customers, particularly in underserved or emerging markets. This includes innovations in last-mile delivery, digital-enabled service access, or co-creation approaches that embed users in the solution design itself.

#### 3. Better Technology

A new or significantly improved product, process, or system that addresses a challenge in climate and clean-tech, pollution management, or circularity. This may also include an adaptation of an existing technology to a new context, geography, or user segment.

#### 4. Better Resource Use

An innovation that achieves more with less, thereby reducing waste, improving efficiency, recovering value from by-products, or closing material loops. This is particularly relevant to circularity and pollution management, where rethinking resource flows is central to the solution.

**In short:** If your enterprise offers a meaningfully better way to solve an ecological, environmental, or climate challenge, whether through how you operate, serve, build, or use resources, EcoHub.IN considers that innovation worth evaluating.

## Q5. What are the three priority domains of EcoHub.IN?

EcoHub.IN focuses on three priority domains with an indicative list of sectoral preference:

### 1. Climate Change and Clean-tech:

- a. Digital climate and carbon infrastructure
- b. Nature-based carbon sequestration
- c. Desalination
- d. Wastewater recycling and reuse
- e. Climate-resilient buildings
- f. Cooling and heat stress solutions
- g. Durable carbon dioxide removal (CDR)
- h. Clean energy transition
- i. Carbon project developers
- j. Nature credit platforms
- k. Ecosystem valuation services
- l. DMRV systems

### 2. Pollution Management

- a. Management of air, water, and soil pollution - pollution monitoring, treatment, and remediation systems
- b. Solutions for emerging and persistent pollutants (e.g., microplastics)
- c. Emission reduction and environmental quality improvement
- d. Land restoration / soil regeneration businesses
- e. Waterbody and wetland restoration businesses
- f. Satellite and GIS analytics
- g. AI-based biodiversity assessment
- h. Drone-based habitat monitoring
- i. Digital biodiversity platforms
- j. Biodiversity monitoring technologies
- k. Restoration of degraded ecosystems
- l. Restoration of degraded terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal ecosystems
- m. Ecological regeneration and biodiversity enhancement
- n. Nature-based solutions for environmental recovery

### 3. Circularity

- a. Resource use efficiency
- b. Smart resource monitoring platforms
- c. Energy and water optimization systems
- d. Precious metal and critical mineral recovery
- e. Resource waste reduction and resource conservation analytics
- f. Resource recovery and waste-to-worth
- g. Green product development (bio-degradable materials, low-carbon materials)
- h. Circular digital infrastructure (traceability, analytics, marketplaces)

### Q6. What type of SGB applications will not be preferred by EcoHub.IN?

EcoHub.IN is designed for enterprises that are ready to move beyond concept and into structured growth. To ensure our incubation resources, mentorship bandwidth, and catalytic capital effectively, we are clear about the kinds of applications that are unlikely to be a strong fit.

Applications that are generally not preferred include:

#### 1. Ideas or prototypes without a Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

If your innovation is still at the ideation, early prototype, or pre-product stage, EcoHub.IN is not the right fit yet. At a minimum, we expect a working MVP that has been tested in a market context and is either already deployed or ready for deployment. The program is designed to accelerate promising enterprises, not incubate concepts.

#### 2. Single-founder sole proprietorships

Building a sustainability enterprise requires complementary skills, shared accountability, and resilience. Applications from single-founder sole proprietorships are generally not preferred. We look for founding teams, or at least a lead founder supported by a clearly defined core team, with the operational depth needed to scale.

#### 3. Solutions in search of a problem

If an enterprise is built around an interesting technology or innovation but does not address a clearly demonstrated real-world need, it is unlikely to be preferred. EcoHub.IN supports innovative SGBs that solve problems people are already facing, or are likely to face soon, and for which they are actively seeking solutions.

#### **4. Products with weak or unproven demand**

There should be evidence of genuine current or projected demand, along with customers who want the product and are willing to pay for it or have shown a clear intent to adopt it. If the founding team cannot clearly identify the customer and explain why the solution matters to them now, the application is unlikely to advance.

#### **5. Non-scalable or overly narrow innovations**

EcoHub.IN supports enterprises with the potential to scale across geographies, customer segments, or market contexts. Applications centred on solutions that are too narrow, location-bound, or structurally unable to reach meaningful scale are generally not preferred.

#### **6. Tarpit products**

These are products that may appear attractive on the surface but are fundamentally difficult to build into viable ventures. Common signs include a large addressable market that is nearly impossible to access, unit economics that do not work at scale, regulatory or behavioural barriers that have historically blocked adoption, or crowded markets with weak differentiation. EcoHub.IN mentors are experienced in identifying such patterns early, and applications in this category are unlikely to be taken forward.

**In short:** EcoHub.IN is built to accelerate enterprises that already have a working MVP deployed in the market or ready for deployment, a functioning team, and a clearly defined, real-world problem they are solving for people today or in the near term.

### **Q7. Can non-Indian startups or founders apply?**

At present, EcoHub.IN is open only to Indian startups and founders. To be eligible, applicant enterprises must be registered in India or in the process of formal registration in India, primarily operating in India, and focused on creating socio-environmental impact and/or green jobs within India.

The program is specifically designed to strengthen India's sustainability innovation ecosystem across climate and clean-tech, pollution management, and circularity domains. Accordingly, all incubation activities, pilot opportunities, mentorship engagements, and ecosystem partnerships are structured around India-based implementation and deployment.

## Q8. What about mature enterprises that have already crossed the "missing middle" stage?

EcoHub.IN is specifically designed for early-stage SGBs approaching the "missing middle," not for enterprises that have already moved beyond it. If your enterprise can already access mainstream commercial bank financing, has established venture capital or private equity backing, generates revenue at a scale that no longer requires catalytic support, or has demonstrated full commercial viability and strong market traction, EcoHub.IN is unlikely to be the right program for you.

Our incubation resources, mentorship bandwidth, and catalytic funding are intended for enterprises that genuinely sit in this gap: beyond microfinance, but not yet bankable or investor-ready on commercial terms. We are looking for SGBs that have the foundations of a real business, a working MVP, a founding team, and early proof of demand, but still need structured support to scale.

EcoHub.IN is a scaffold for scale, not a platform for enterprises that have already scaled. We support founders at the stage when the climb is hardest, and the right support is often hardest to find.

**In short:** Too early and you are not ready for us. Too mature and you no longer need us. EcoHub.IN is built for the critical middle enterprises that are ready to scale but need the right structure, capital, and community to get there.

## Q9. What does the EcoHub.IN program offer?

EcoHub.IN is a structured platform designed to upskill ecopreneurs and help sustainability enterprises scale. It provides:

- **Upskilling Engine:** Technical, business, and leadership capacity-building
- **Upscaling Platform:** Enabling transition to commercial success
- **Mentorship Network:** Practitioners who have navigated the path
- **Bridge to Capital:** Investment readiness and strategic matchmaking
- **Non-dilutive Capital:** Catalyzing real-world deployment and scale

## Q10. What mentorship and support does EcoHub.IN provide?

EcoHub.IN provides mentorship and support across four dimensions:

### 1. Mentorship from Battle-Tested Practitioners:

Mentors who have faced identical market challenges, with experience in scaling from pilot to commercial deployment, deep sector understanding across climate, pollution, and circularity, and experience navigating regulatory, partnership, and investor terrain.

### 2. Business Model Clarity and Commercial Feasibility:

Revenue model validation across multiple market contexts, customer segmentation and adoption pathway design, understanding of pricing, margins, and unit economics, and scale architecture spanning geography, partnerships, and channels.

### 3. Creative Destruction and Agility:

Guidance to acknowledge that technology half-lives are shrinking, that what works today may be disrupted in 3 to 5 years, and to build adaptation loops from day one, with strategic foresight to pivot without losing mission.

### 4. Bridge to Capital and Upscaling:

EcoHub.IN bridges the critical funding gap by connecting SGBs to both non-dilutive and dilutive capital pathways as part of the incubation program. The goal is to create a sequenced capital journey for SGBs: first, use non-dilutive funding to demonstrate socio-environmental impact through real-world implementation; then, connect them to providers of dilutive capital to support scale. This approach helps SGBs grow without compromising ownership prematurely or stalling for lack of the right funding at the right time.

## Q11. What funding support will SGBs receive during the incubation period?

Each incubated SGBs will receive the following financial support:

- An honorarium of **₹1 lakh per month** for six months
- Non-dilutive catalytic funding of **₹5 lakh to ₹20 lakh** for real-world implementation to demonstrate socio-environmental impact potential

## Q12. Who funds and implements EcoHub.IN?

EcoHub.IN is funded by Re Sustainability Limited and implemented by the Foundation for Resilience Actions.

## Q13. What is the EcoHub.IN Alumni Community?

The EcoHub.IN Alumni Community is a living network of incubated SGBs, their founders, EcoHub.IN mentors, and ecosystem partners who have been part of the incubation journey in any capacity. It is designed to outlast the program itself: a permanent, peer-driven resource for every SGB that graduates from EcoHub.IN.

What the Alumni Community offers:

### 1. Peer Learning and Exchange:

Direct access to founders who have navigated similar challenges across climate, clean-tech, pollution management, and circularity domains. Cohort alumni share lessons on what worked, what failed, and how they adapted.

### 2. Mentor Continuity:

Relationships with mentors and practitioners do not end at graduation. Alumni retain access to the EcoHub.IN mentor network for on-demand guidance as they scale.

### 3. Deal Flow and Collaboration:

Alumni SGBs are connected to each other for potential partnerships, supply chain linkages, joint pilots, and co-bidding on projects - creating compounding value across cohorts.

### 4. Investor and Corporate Visibility:

Alumni are featured in EcoHub.IN's curated SGB database, making them discoverable to impact investors, corporate innovation teams, government agencies, and strategic partners actively seeking sustainability solutions.

### 5. Knowledge Repository:

Access to toolkits, playbooks, case studies, and research developed through the program - continuously updated by incoming cohorts and mentors.

### 6. Advocacy and Voice:

Alumni collectively represent India's emerging sustainability enterprise ecosystem. EcoHub.IN amplifies their stories, impact data, and policy needs through EcoHub.IN's platform and networks.

Graduation from EcoHub.IN is not an exit; it is an entry into a community of practitioners committed to solving India's most pressing ecological and climate challenges together.