

Position: Associate – WE-Build Program

(Women candidates strongly preferred)

Location: Hubli, Karnataka (A fast-growing startup city with an excellent quality of life: minimal traffic, clean air, an airport with growing connectivity, and just 40 minutes from the Western Ghats.)

Type: Full-time (Looking for someone who can commit for at least **3 years**)

Experience: Ideal candidate will have between 2 to 5 years of work experience, with at least 2 years in a startup or entrepreneurship ecosystem, including hands-on experience in managing a project within a startup or entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Reporting to: Program Manager – YUVA Entrepreneurship, Deshpande Startups

Compensation: ₹5 LPA CTC

About the role

Deshpande Startups is seeking a mission-driven associate to own end-to-end management and execution of the WE-Build (Women Entrepreneurs Build) program.

WE-Build is designed to scout, nurture, and accelerate ambitious women co-founded startups (students and full-time founders) from non-metro India. In this role, you will be the core driver of cohort operations—leading program delivery, coordinating with mentors, managing program resources, and building a vibrant network of women co-founded startups across non-metro India.

Note: A detailed concept note on the WE-Build Program is included at the end of this document.

This role is ideal for someone who:

- Brings a strong combination of a vision-driven mindset, absolute ownership, and sharp project management and strategising skills.

- Wants to support and empower women co-founded startups building from non-metro India.
- Enjoys working directly with women founders as they validate, build, and iterate on their startup ideas.
- Can handle multiple tasks smoothly, from session calendars and expert visits to vendor and logistics coordination.

Key responsibilities

- **Programs:** Run structured cohort operations for the WE-Build Program from start to finish—including outreach campaigns, applicant screenings, onboarding, scheduling, and milestone reviews.
- **WE-Build execution:** Manage cohort delivery end-to-end, ensuring teams hit their product milestones, attend technical clinics, and access lab resources.
- **Community:** Build and nurture an active community of non-metro women co-founded startups.
- **Mentors & Partners:** Coordinate with industry experts, technical mentors, and corporate partners to schedule 1-on-1 reviews, feedback sessions, and masterclasses.
- **Data and reporting:** Keep cohort trackers, founder profiles, attendance, and project progress data up to date, and share updates regularly with internal teams and donors.
- **Impact stories:** Document founder progress, project demos, key wins, and testimonials to share with the Marketing & Communications team.

What we're looking for

- Genuine passion towards women entrepreneurship and supporting women co-founded startups.
- Strong sense of ownership, reliability, and a steady drive to get things done.
- Clear, simple communication and practical problem-solving skills.

- Ability to run events, workshops, and cohort schedules with good organization and attention to detail.
- Willingness to travel across regional college hubs for outreach, bootcamps, and partner meetings.
- Good people skills with the confidence to host sessions and represent the program publicly.

Why is this role unique?

- High-growth opportunity - Run the program in Year 1 and grow into the **Program Lead** role from Year 2, subject to performance.
- Play a central role in driving a dedicated pan-India entrepreneurship program focused exclusively on women co-founded startups, operating directly out of India's largest non-metro incubation ecosystem.
- Work closely alongside successful founders, technical mentors, and corporate CSR partners backing high-potential regional ventures.

Deshpande Startups is a leading incubator committed to empowering entrepreneurs solving for non-metro India. We support bold, mission-driven founders across sectors in non-metro India.

Ready to build the ecosystem that non-metro founders deserve?

Last date to apply: 31 October 2026

Apply now through the link: <https://forms.gle/LuWnAVmoAx9UpUHR9>

Fill out the application form with your CV and a short 2-minute video response to a prompt that helps us understand you beyond your CV. Shortlisted candidates will receive a detailed email about the two rounds that follow.

For enquiries, call: +91 96115 32933



About the WE-Build Program (Concept Note)

The problem we are solving:

42% of startups fail because there is no market for what they built. That failure rate can be reduced significantly with a strong early validation exercise. For Non-Metro Startups, the cost of skipping the validation stage is far higher than it is in Bengaluru or Gurugram. Early capital is thin, mentors are few, and there is no safety net to fall back on. For women co-founded startups, it is still harder. A build that goes nowhere does not only cost one year, it very often ends the entrepreneurial journey altogether.

Deshpande Startups has seen this problem firsthand from working with founders in Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns for over ten years. To fix this, we created **YUVA Validate**—a practical program that helps early founders stop guessing and start talking to real customers. We have already completed two full cohorts and are now running Cohort 3. 50+ founders validated their startups through customer calls, market visits, and 1-on-1 mentor sessions. Over 30% of them are women co-founders, and 25% of all the startups have proven their ideas and are now actively building their products. We-Build is built directly on this ground experience, designed to take this proven validation model and scale it exclusively for women co-founders across non-metro India.

We-Build is an exclusive residency program for Women Co-Founded Startups from Non-Metro India, and it puts validation first. Run from DS campuses in Hubballi, Karnataka, and KREST Nizamabad, Telangana, it puts every startup through rigorous validation sprints early, before they build. One Edition of We-Build is four Validate Residencies and one Build Residency taken together, run once a year. Each Edition takes 80 to 100 Women Co-Founded Startups through validation, with 20 to 25 startups in each Validate Residency, backs the top 20 of them with the Build Residency, and further backs five with equity-free capital.

Who is this Program For?

- **Women co-founded startups** (even student startups are eligible)
- Teams building from **Tier-2, Tier-3 cities, and non-metro towns** across India.
- Women co-founded startups with a promising startup idea or early POC/Prototype who want to talk to real customers, test market demand, and build rapidly.

Why focus on women co-founded startups?

In non-metro India, women co-founders have smaller networks, fewer mentors, and limited access to early capital. Because their safety net is thinner, spending months building the wrong product costs them much more and can easily end an entrepreneurial journey before it even takes off.