

OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

ProjectVertex 2026

Build What Matters.

India's National Product Innovation Challenge. The complete rules, evaluation framework and policies governing participation.

EDITION

2026 · First

CHALLENGE DATES

31 October – 1 November 2026

DOCUMENT VERSION

1.0

Next Chapter Skills Private Limited

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SECTION 01

Welcome

Every year, thousands of student projects are built, submitted, graded — and forgotten. ProjectVertex exists to change that.

You are not here to complete an assignment. Over one weekend you will be given a real problem, the resources to attack it, and twenty-four hours to turn an idea into something that runs. What you leave with is not a certificate of attendance. It is a working product, a public repository, and a national ranking against builders from across India.

This rulebook is the complete reference for how the challenge operates: who can enter, how teams are formed, what must be submitted, how work is judged, and the conduct expected of everyone taking part. Read it once before you begin. Keep it to hand during the sprint.

We are looking for teams who can identify a problem worth solving, make sensible engineering decisions under pressure, and ship. If that is you, the next two days matter.

READ THIS FIRST

Where this rulebook and any other communication disagree, this document governs. It is version 1.0, dated for the 2026 edition. Material changes will be announced on the official WhatsApp channel and by email to every registered team lead.

About ProjectVertex

ProjectVertex is a national product innovation platform created to discover builders, ideas and future founders from colleges across India. It is organised by Next Chapter Skills Private Limited, a company that builds AI products — which means submissions are assessed by people who ship software, against the standards real products are held to.

The challenge brings together student builders, colleges, mentors and industry on one platform where ideas become working products. The competition is one part of a longer arc: the strongest teams continue through the **Student Startup Factory**, a pathway of product reviews, technical guidance and collaboration opportunities that runs well past the closing ceremony.

What makes this different

A TYPICAL HACKATHON	PROJECTVERTEX
Learn, then leave	Learn, build, and showcase
Random problem statements	Real - world product challenges
Focus on coding	Focus on solving problems
A one-time event	Entry into an innovation community
A certificate	Practical AI product experience

Event Overview

Stage 01

Builder Kickoff

A three-hour hands-on bootcamp covering LLMs, prompt engineering and AI APIs, followed by release of the challenge brief.

Stage 02

Product Sprint

Twenty-four continuous hours to design, build and demonstrate a working prototype, with engineering support available throughout.

Stage 03

Evaluation

Independent scoring out of 100 across seven published criteria, followed by a showcase of the highest-ranked teams.

At a glance

Format	Builder Kickoff plus a 24-hour Product Sprint
Team size	3 to 5 members
Eligibility	Students of any recognised institution, any discipline
Registration fee	₹399 per team, inclusive of GST
Challenge tracks	Build for People · Build for Industry
Total awards	Stipend-based internship in the technical wing for the No. 1 team, plus recognition awards
Certification	Verifiable certificate for every registered member

Important Dates

All times are Indian Standard Time. Deadlines are enforced by the platform clock, not by local device time.

Now – 31 Oct, 16:00

Registration open

Team ID issued immediately on payment confirmation.

31 Oct, 16:00

Registration closes

No entries accepted after this moment, without exception.

31 Oct, 18:00–21:00

Builder Kickoff

AI Builder Bootcamp and release of the challenge brief.

31 Oct, 21:00

Product Sprint begins

The 24-hour build window opens.

1 Nov, 21:00

Submission deadline

Repository, demo video and deck. Late submissions are not accepted.

2–3 Nov

Evaluation window

Independent scoring against the published rubric.

4 Nov

Showcase and results

Top teams present. Certificates issued to all participants.

DEADLINE POLICY

The submission deadline is hard. A repository pushed at 21:00:01 on 1 November is late. Teams are strongly advised to submit a working draft several hours early and refine it — the platform accepts edits until the deadline, so there is no advantage in waiting.

Eligibility

Who may participate

- Students enrolled in Engineering programmes (B.Tech / B.E.)
- Students in Degree programmes (B.Sc. / BCA / B.Com and equivalents)
- Students in Diploma programmes
- Postgraduate students (MBA, MCA and equivalents)

- Any student of a recognised institution in India, in any discipline or year of study

No prior experience with artificial intelligence is required. The Builder Kickoff is designed for teams starting from zero.

Who may not participate

- Individuals not currently enrolled at a recognised institution
- Employees, contractors and immediate family of Next Chapter Skills Private Limited
- Anyone serving as a judge or mentor for this edition

Team Formation Rules

RULE	DETAIL
Team size	Minimum 3, maximum 5 members. Solo entries are not accepted.
Team lead	Exactly one member is designated lead. The lead receives the Team ID and all official communication.
Cross-institution	Permitted. Members may come from different colleges, cities or states.
Cross-discipline	Encouraged. Mixed engineering, design and business teams consistently score higher on product thinking.
One team per person	An individual may appear in only one registered team. Duplicate membership disqualifies both teams.
Changes after payment	Membership is locked once payment is confirmed. Contact support for genuine corrections.

CHOOSING A LEAD

Pick the member who checks email and WhatsApp most reliably. Venue details, the challenge brief and submission instructions all route through the lead. A lead who misses messages costs the whole team.

Registration Process

- 1. Team details.** Provide a team name, your institution and your chosen challenge track.
- 2. Member details.** Enter name, email, phone, college, branch, year and state for each of the 3 to 5 members. Member one is the team lead.
- 3. Payment.** Pay ₹399 for the entire team through Razorpay. Card and UPI details are never stored by us.
- 4. Confirmation.** Your Team ID is issued immediately and displayed on screen. A confirmation email follows to the team lead, copied to all members.
- 5. Join the channel.** Every member should join the official WhatsApp channel, where announcements appear first.
- 6. Sign in to the portal.** Any member can sign in to the team dashboard using the email address they registered with. No password is required.

₹399 is charged once per team and includes GST. It is not a per-person fee. It covers the Builder Kickoff, full sprint participation, kickoff resources, engineering support during the build, and a verifiable certificate for every registered member. There are no further charges at any stage.

IF YOUR TEAM ID DOES NOT ARRIVE

Your Team ID appears on screen within seconds of payment and by email within ten minutes. If neither happens, check your spam folder first, then contact support with the name of your team and the phone number used. Your payment is safe — confirmation is a separate step and can be completed manually.

Builder Kickoff

The Kickoff runs from 18:00 to 21:00 on 31 October. Attendance is strongly recommended: the challenge brief is released at the end of the session, and the material covered is directly applicable to the sprint.

What is covered

Working with LLMs

How large language models behave in practice, where they are strong, and where they fail.

Prompt engineering

Structuring prompts for reliable output rather than impressive demos.

AI APIs

Calling models from application code, handling errors, latency and cost.

Shipping a product

Turning a model call into something a person can actually use.

What every team receives

- The challenge brief and problem statements
- A recommended technology stack
- Starter repositories and boilerplates
- A prompt library
- UI templates and design assets
- Free-tier AI API guidance
- The complete evaluation framework

API guidance only. No live or paid API keys are distributed. Teams are responsible for their own accounts and any usage costs incurred, which the free tiers listed are chosen to avoid.

Product Sprint Guidelines

Permitted

- Open-source libraries, frameworks and public APIs
- AI coding assistants and code generation tools
- Pre-existing boilerplate, provided it is disclosed in your repository README
- Public datasets, correctly attributed
- Asking mentors and organisers for technical help at any point

Not permitted

- Code written before the sprint opens that forms the substance of your submission
- Submitting work built by anyone outside your registered team
- Reusing a project previously submitted to another competition
- Misrepresenting what your prototype does, including staged or faked functionality
- Sharing your solution with other teams during the sprint

ON USING AI TO BUILD

Using AI assistants to write code is expected, not penalised — the challenge is about building an AI product, and modern engineering uses these tools. What is assessed is your judgement: the problem you chose, the decisions you made, and whether the result works.

Innovation Domains

Two tracks. Each begins with a problem, not a technology. Choose one at registration.

Track 1 — Build for People

Students spend three years preparing for placements and still cannot tell which skill to learn next. Build something that helps a real person move forward.

Directions teams take: career and placement assistants, productivity tools, wellness tools, personal AI assistants, learning companions.

Track 2 — Build for Industry

Small businesses lose hours every week to repetitive work nobody should be doing by hand. Build an AI-powered solution that gives that time back.

Directions teams take: operations automation, fraud detection, crop and agricultural analysis, healthcare workflows, civic systems.

Deliverables

DELIVERABLE	REQUIREMENT
Working prototype	Mandatory. It must run. A design mockup is not a prototype.
GitHub repository	Mandatory. Public, with a README explaining setup and any reused code.
Presentation	Mandatory. Maximum 10 slides.
Demo video	Mandatory. Maximum 3 minutes, showing the product actually working.

Your deck must cover

- The problem, stated concretely and with evidence it is real
- Your solution and who specifically it serves
- Target users and how you would reach them
- Revenue model and future scope
- AI architecture — models, tools and frameworks used, and why

Submission Process

1. Sign in to the team dashboard using any registered member's email address.
2. Enter your repository URL, demo video URL, deployed URL if you have one, and deck link.
3. Save. Submissions may be edited freely until the deadline.
4. Confirm the submission status shows complete, with a timestamp.

COMMON SUBMISSION FAILURES

Private repositories that judges cannot open. Video links restricted to a single Google account.

Deployed URLs that were switched off after testing. Every year these cost teams marks they had already earned — check each link in a private browser window before the deadline.

Evaluation Criteria

Every submission is scored out of 100 against seven published criteria.

CRITERION	WHAT IS ASSESSED	MARKS
Problem statement	Is the problem real, specific and worth solving?	15
Innovation	Originality of approach, not novelty for its own sake.	20
AI implementation	Is AI used meaningfully, or bolted on?	20
Technical execution	Does it work? Is the code coherent?	20
UI / UX	Can a real user complete the core task?	10
Business potential	Is there a plausible path beyond the weekend?	10
Presentation	Clarity of the deck and demo.	5
Total		100

Awards

TIER	AWARD
National Champion (No. 1 overall)	Selection for a stipend-based internship in the technical wing, and certificate
Every registered member	Certificate of participation

Recognition awards — Best AI Product, Best Startup Potential, Best UI/UX, Best Social Impact, People's Choice and Future Founder — carry certificates and a showcase feature. Where two teams tie on total, the team with the higher Technical execution score ranks first; if still tied, AI implementation is used, then Problem statement.

Code of Conduct

One standard applies to everyone: treat other people as you would want your own team treated.

- No harassment, discrimination or intimidation of any kind, in any channel
- No abusive, demeaning or sexualised language in chats, presentations or code
- Respect the work of other teams — no interference, sabotage or unauthorised access
- Represent your work honestly; do not overstate what your prototype does

- Follow instructions from organisers, mentors and venue staff

Concerns should be raised with the organising team through the official support channel. Reports are handled confidentially.

Disqualification Policy

The following result in immediate disqualification of the entire team:

- Plagiarism, or submitting work not built by the registered team
- Submitting a project previously entered in another competition
- Falsifying a demonstration, including pre-recorded output presented as live
- Any breach of the Code of Conduct
- Unauthorised access to another team's systems, accounts or repository
- Providing false information at registration, including fabricated members
- An individual appearing in more than one registered team

Process

Where a concern is raised, the organising team reviews the submission, repository history and any supporting evidence, and gives the team lead an opportunity to respond before a decision is made. Decisions of the organising committee are final.

REFUNDS ON DISQUALIFICATION

The registration fee is not refunded where a team is disqualified for conduct or integrity reasons. The general refund position is set out in the published Refund Policy.

Intellectual Property

You own what you build

Your team retains full ownership of the intellectual property in your submission. Participating does not transfer any rights in your code, design or idea to Next Chapter Skills Private Limited.

What you grant us

By submitting, you grant a non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to:

- Access, run and review your submission for the purpose of evaluation
- Display your team name, institution, project name and summary in showcases, reports and marketing
- Reproduce screenshots and short extracts of your demo in event coverage

Beyond the challenge

Selection into the Student Startup Factory is an opportunity for continued development. It is not a funding commitment, an offer of employment, or a transfer of ownership. Any collaboration that follows is negotiated separately and agreed in writing with the team concerned.

Third-party material

You are responsible for ensuring you have the right to use any library, dataset, model or asset in your submission, and for complying with its licence. Disclose all such material in your repository README.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do we need prior AI experience?

No. The Builder Kickoff is designed for teams starting from zero and covers everything needed to begin.

Is ₹399 per student or per team?

Per team, inclusive of GST. One payment covers all 3 to 5 members, with a certificate for each. There are no further charges.

Can members be from different colleges?

Yes. Cross-institution teams are permitted and common.

Is the event online or offline?

Format and venue details are shared by email and on the WhatsApp channel once registration is confirmed.

When do we receive our Team ID?

Immediately after payment, on screen and by email to the team lead. If it has not arrived within ten minutes, check spam and then contact support.

Can we change team members after registering?

Membership locks on payment. Contact support for genuine corrections such as a misspelled name or email.

What if our internet fails during the sprint?

Submit early and refine. The platform accepts edits until the deadline, so an early draft protects you against a late failure.

Who owns what we build?

Your team does. See Section 16.

How do we sign in to the portal?

Any registered member enters their registered email address at the portal and receives a sign-in link. There is no password to remember or lose.

Contact

General and institutional

info@nextchapterskills.com

Response within 24 hours, Monday to Saturday.

Urgent and event-day support

+91 93530 36483

WhatsApp, 11:00–21:00 IST, Monday to Saturday.

Official announcements are published on the ProjectVertex WhatsApp channel and mirrored to the team dashboard. No other channel carries official information.

SECTION 19

Closing Note

This is only the beginning.

The challenge ends on 4 November. The products, partnerships and community built through ProjectVertex are designed to last far longer. Whatever your ranking, you will finish this weekend with something you did not have before: a product that runs, a repository you can show anyone, and evidence that you can build under pressure with people you had not worked with before.

Build what matters.

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