

Namma Bengaluru Challenge '26 Shortlists Top 15 Finalists from Record 600 Applications to Tackle Urban Climate Crisis

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UnboxingBLR, in partnership with Social Alpha and WTFund, and supported by the Government of Karnataka and the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), announced today the selection of the Top 15 startups for the Namma Bengaluru Challenge '26 (NBC '26). This flagship initiative is designed to identify, support, and scale high-impact innovations addressing Bengaluru's most pressing climate challenges in sectors like Construction, Water & Sanitation, Waste Management, and Air Pollution.



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The finalists were chosen from a record-breaking pool of close to 600 registrations, demonstrating the nation's vibrant entrepreneurial response to environmental sustainability. A technical evaluation now awaits the shortlisted startups, with an expert technical jury meticulously assessing each of the 15 startups ahead of the final round. The top selected startups will then advance to the final stage, where they will pitch live before a distinguished final jury on January 24, 2026, to compete for implementation grants of up to INR 25 lakhs each.

A Rigorous Selection Process

The journey to the top 15 involved a meticulous evaluation by Social Alpha. The criteria framework in which the evaluation happened were areas such as innovation, go-to-market strategy, implementation, etc. The technical jury will play a very crucial role in assessing each of the 15 shortlisted startups before the final round. The technical jury comprises:

- Vineet Prasani, Chief Information Officer at Social Alpha
- Vishwanath S, Director at Biome Environmental Solutions

- Sridhar L, Head of ESG at Bangalore International Airport Limited
- Jagan Shah, CEO at The Infravision Foundation
- Aarathi Kumar, Senior Manager, Executive Office at WRI India
- Suhail Rahman, Managing Director and CEO at CoEvolve Estates

The application breakdown highlighted the city's key concerns: Waste Management (44%), Water & Sanitation (32%), Sustainable Construction (18%), and Air Pollution (6%)

The Final Showdown & a Consortium for Impact

The finalists will present their solutions to the Final Jury comprising:

- Prashanth Prakash (Co-Founder and Chairperson, UnboxingBLR)
- Malini Goyal (Co-Founder and CEO, UnboxingBLR)
- Manoj Kumar (Founder, Social Alpha)
- Hari Marar (Managing Director and CEO, BIAL)
- Pavitra Shankar (Managing Director, Brigade Group)

The winning startups will receive grant funding of INR 25 lakhs and crucial support for 6-month pilot deployments with government, private sector, and civil society partners in

Bengaluru.

"NBC '26 bridges the critical gap between innovation and implementation. The Top 15 represent solutions with the highest potential for real-world impact in Bengaluru. We are now one step closer to deploying these technologies on the ground, in partnership with government and private stakeholders," **Prashanth Prakash, Co-Founder and Chairperson, UnboxingBLR.**

"The overwhelming quality and volume of applications for NBC '26 signals a powerful shift. Innovators are actively building the toolkit for urban climate resilience. Selecting only 15 startups from nearly 600 brilliant ideas was a formidable task, and we congratulate those moving forward to the final pitch," **Malini Goyal, Co-Founder and CEO, UnboxingBLR.**

"The Namma Bengaluru Challenge reflects our commitment to advancing science and technology-led solutions that can meaningfully shape Bengaluru's urban transition. In anchoring the technical jury process, our role has been to ensure a rigorous evaluation framework, one that prioritises solution robustness, pilot feasibility, impact potential, and scalability, while drawing on the expertise of distinguished subject matter experts in the ecosystem. This stage is crucial in surfacing solutions that are both visionary and deployable in real-world conditions, ahead of the final jury deliberations," **Manoj Kumar, Founder, Social Alpha.**

"Bangalore has been home to many a startup and has long served as India's natural sandbox for innovation. As India rises as a global startup hub, the city is at the heart of it, offering founders not just access to talent but an entire collaborative ecosystem. NBC presents a unique opportunity to plug into a

platform designed to bring together government, corporates and entrepreneurs to create solutions that address local challenges. With climate change and unplanned rapid growth impacting the future of cities, aligning innovation with environmental responsibility is imperative. As an organisation with deep roots in Bangalore, Brigade is focused on creating sustainable spaces that serve the needs of our individual customers and community at large. There is nothing more important than channelling this collective effort to build a future-ready Bangalore," **Pavitra Shankar, Managing Director, Brigade Group.**

NBC '26 is powered by a strong consortium of partners committed to systemic change:

Challenge Partners

- Bangalore International Airport Limited
- Brigade Group

Program Partners

- Bengaluru Climate Action Cell (Climate Action Partner)
- WRI India (Knowledge Partner)
- Brigade REAP
- CoEvolve Estates (Pilot Partner)
- Biome Environmental Solutions (Pilot Partner)
- GoodEarth (Pilot Partner)

About UnboxingBLR

UnboxingBLR (UBLR) is a Bengaluru-focused collaborative platform dedicated to celebrating and shaping the city's culture and identity. Founded in 2023 by Prashanth Prakash and Malini Goyal, UBLR brings together people, communities, and institutions to co-create Bengaluru's story, serving as a city champion, idea catalyst, and collaborative platform.

UBLR drives initiatives such as the Namma Bengaluru Challenge, an accelerator that supports startups and changemakers tackling urban challenges; BLR Hubba, a city-wide festival celebrating art and culture; the annual We Are City Data Report, a data-driven snapshot of how citizens experience and engage with Bengaluru; and Code to Culture, a podcast exploring the city and its people. Together, these initiatives highlight citizen-led innovation and showcase Bengaluru's cultural vibrancy in action.

For more information, please log on to www.unboxingblr.com.

