

NitiQuest

Startup Challenge





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CHALLENGE THEMES

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Important Note

Your solution can be B2B, B2C, B2B2C, or any business model that makes sense for your idea. Don't restrict yourself—focus on solving the problem effectively and building a viable business, regardless of the model.

THEME 1: Export India's Advantage

Building from India, for the world

What This Means

India has structural advantages that make certain products or services viable to deliver globally—talented professionals at competitive costs, manufacturing scale, frugal innovation approaches, and deep technical expertise. This theme challenges you to identify what can be built from India and sold profitably to customers worldwide.

Think About

- Software products for global businesses
- Specialized manufacturing leveraging India's cost advantage
- Services leveraging Indian talent pools
- Educational products for international markets
- Cultural products for global audiences

Core Questions Your Plan Must Answer

1. **What specific advantage does operating from India give you?** (Cost structure? Talent availability? Time zones? Domain expertise?)
2. **Who exactly is your international customer and why will they buy from you?** (Be specific about geography, industry, company size)
3. **How will you reach customers 8,000 km away?** (What's your realistic go-to-market strategy for international customers?)
4. **Why can't local competitors in those markets do this better?** (What's your defensible wedge?)
5. **What are the cross-border operational challenges and how will you handle them?** (Payments, legal, currency, regulations)

THEME 2: Fixing Broken Systems

Where Indians waste time, money, and opportunity due to poor infrastructure

What This Means

India has systemic inefficiencies—manual processes that should be digital, fragmented markets that should be consolidated, opaque systems that should be transparent. These create massive value destruction daily. This theme is about identifying where structural problems cause measurable waste and building a business that fixes the underlying system.

Think About

- Marketplaces reducing supply chain friction
- Compliance platforms simplifying regulatory navigation
- Digitization of paper-based workflows
- Aggregation of fragmented services
- Logistics solutions for broken last-mile delivery

Core Questions Your Plan Must Answer

1. **What exactly is broken and how do you know?** (Map the current process, identify where value is destroyed, quantify the waste)
2. **Who suffers from this broken system and how much does it cost them?** (Time? Money? Opportunity? Be specific with numbers)
3. **Why hasn't the market self-corrected?** (Regulatory barriers? Coordination problems? Incumbent interests? Technology gaps?)
4. **How does your solution fundamentally fix the system, not just create a workaround?** (What changes operationally?)
5. **Which stakeholder will pay you and why?** (Who captures enough value to justify paying for your solution?)

IN THEME 3: The Unseen India

Building for 800 million Indians outside metro bubbles

What This Means

The majority of Indians live in tier-2/3/4 cities and villages—they're non-English speaking, earning ₹15,000-40,000 monthly, often in informal sectors, with limited digital literacy. Their needs, behaviors, and constraints are fundamentally different from urban, English-speaking Indians. This theme challenges you to build solutions for this massive, underserved population.

Think About

- Vernacular content platforms
- Financial products for irregular incomes
- Skilling for non-college youth
- Healthcare access in doctor-scarce areas
- Agricultural solutions for small farmers
- Distribution models reaching small-town retailers

Core Questions Your Plan Must Answer

1. **Who exactly is your user?** (Not "tier-2 India" but specific: age, income, location, occupation, language, daily routine)
2. **What job are they hiring your product to do?** (What specific outcome do they want? What will they actually pay for?)
3. **What are their real constraints and how does your solution account for them?** (Limited internet? Low digital literacy? Language barriers? Irregular income? Low trust?)
4. **How will they discover and access your solution?** (They don't browse app stores—what's your actual distribution channel?)
5. **What evidence do you have that you understand these users?** (Primary research? Time spent with them? Insights that surprised you?)



THEME 4: India's Strategic Bets

Building capabilities where India is dangerously dependent on imports

What This Means

India imports \$250+ billion worth of goods annually—electronics, machinery, chemicals, medical devices, energy equipment. Many of these we have no compelling reason NOT to make domestically. This creates economic vulnerability and missed opportunities. This theme challenges you to identify import categories where domestic production is now viable and build a business around manufacturing or enabling that capability.

Think About

- Electronic components
- Renewable energy equipment
- Medical devices
- Specialty chemicals
- Manufacturing automation
- Food processing machinery
- Circular economy solutions turning waste into value

Core Questions Your Plan Must Answer

1. **What specific product/component category are we importing that we shouldn't be?** (Be precise: HS codes, import values, source countries)
2. **Why is domestic production viable NOW when it wasn't before?** (Policy changes? Technology maturity? Input costs? Market readiness?)
3. **What's your technical approach to manufacturing this?** (Process, equipment, raw materials, quality standards—show you understand feasibility)
4. **Who will buy from you instead of imports and why?** (Price? Quality? Delivery? Customization? De-risk their decision)
5. **What's your realistic path from concept to production?** (Stages, timelines, capital requirements, certifications needed)

THEME 5: Open Category

Big ideas that don't fit the mold—but have massive potential

What This Means

The best ideas don't always fit neatly into predefined categories. If you've identified a significant market opportunity that doesn't align with the four themes above—but you believe has massive potential—this is your space. We're looking for bold, well-researched ideas that could create substantial value, regardless of sector or category.

This Theme Is For You If

- Your idea crosses multiple themes or industries
- You've spotted an emerging opportunity others haven't recognized yet
- Your solution addresses a global or niche problem with significant scale potential
- You have deep domain expertise in an unconventional space
- Your business model is innovative and doesn't fit traditional categories

Core Questions Your Plan Must Answer

1. **What is the problem and why is it significant?** (Quantify the market opportunity—show us the scale of value you can create)
2. **Why now? What has changed to make this opportunity timely?** (Technology shifts? Regulatory changes? Behavioral changes? Market gaps?)
3. **Who is your customer and what's your evidence of demand?** (Primary research, early traction, pilot results, customer commitments)
4. **What's your unfair advantage?** (Why is YOUR team positioned to win? Domain expertise, access, proprietary insight?)
5. **How will you build a defensible, scalable business?** (Path to ₹10 crore revenue, competitive moat, go-to-market clarity)

Note: Open Category submissions will be held to the same rigorous standards as themed submissions. A great idea alone isn't enough—you must demonstrate deep understanding of the problem, validated demand, and a credible path to building a large business.

Themes at a Glance

| # | Theme | Focus |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Export India's Advantage | Building from India, for the world |
| 2 | Fixing Broken Systems | Where Indians waste time, money, and opportunity |
| 3 | The Unseen India | Building for 800 million Indians outside metro bubbles |
| 4 | India's Strategic Bets | Building capabilities where India depends on imports |
| 5 | Open Category | Big ideas with massive potential that don't fit the mold |

Choose the theme that resonates with your passion and expertise.

Build something meaningful. Build something India needs.