

# Merstra Foundation and AIC Nalanda Launch Odisha Tourism Acceleration Program (OTAP)

BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA, INDIA, January 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On National Startup Day, the Merstra Foundation, in collaboration with the AIC Nalanda Institute of Technology Foundation, has launched the Odisha Tourism Acceleration Program (OTAP), a pioneering initiative designed to transform the tourism, travel, and hospitality sectors in Odisha.

This 16-week accelerator program aims to empower early-stage startups with innovative solutions, providing them with the mentorship, resources, and industry access needed to scale their businesses.



Guiding innovation, shaping futures: Ebin Ephrem Elavathingal mentoring startups as part of the Odisha Tourism Acceleration Program (OTAP), empowering entrepreneurs to redefine tourism in Odisha.

“Odisha is a state rich in cultural heritage and tourism potential,” said Ebin Ephrem Elavathingal, Director of Merstra Foundation. “Through OTAP, we are creating a platform for startups to not only showcase their innovative ideas but also implement them in real-world settings, making a tangible impact on the state’s tourism ecosystem.”

## Key Features

The program, which includes a mix of hybrid workshops, mentoring sessions, and showcase events, offers startups a unique opportunity to:

The Odisha Tourism Acceleration Program (OTAP) stands out from traditional accelerator programs with its unique focus on the tourism ecosystem, offering startups a chance to directly engage with Odisha’s rich cultural and natural heritage. Unlike generic programs, OTAP provides exclusive pilot opportunities within the state’s thriving tourism sector, supported by collaborations with government bodies, industry leaders, and corporates. The program’s hybrid format ensures accessibility, combining virtual masterclasses and mentorship with on-ground implementation and networking events. This holistic approach equips startups with the tools, connections, and real-world experience needed to create transformative, sustainable solutions

for the tourism industry.

Receive personalized mentorship from industry leaders.

Test their ideas through pilot projects in Odisha's tourism ecosystem.

Engage with investors and corporates, opening doors to funding and strategic partnerships.

Enhance business skills through training sessions on branding, growth hacking, team building, and financial planning.

"At Merstra Foundation, our mission

has always been to bridge the gap between innovative ideas and meaningful change. OTAP is a perfect example of how we bring this vision to life, by providing startups with the mentorship, networks, and resources they need to succeed in a dynamic and high-potential sector like

tourism."

— Ebin Ephrem Elavathingal, Director, Merstra Foundation



with OTAP its not just supporting startups we are fostering a culture of innovation tourism. This program empowers entrepreneurs with opportunities to scale their solutions and make a tangible impact"

*Ebin Ephrem Elavathingal,  
Director, Merstra Foundation*

Timeline and Key Events

Applications Open: January 16, 2025

Applications Close: February 16, 2025

Virtual Pitch Event: March 29, 2025

Demo Day: May 23, 2025

Startups selected for OTAP will participate in a carefully curated program designed to address the unique challenges of the tourism sector while leveraging opportunities for innovation and growth.

A Call to Innovators

The program is open to startups working in tourism, travel, hospitality, and related fields, particularly those focusing on sustainability, technology-driven solutions, and enhancing customer experiences. Entrepreneurs with a working prototype or early traction are encouraged to apply.

Interested startups can apply here: [OTAP Application Link.](#)

[About Merstra](#) Foundation:

Merstra Foundation is dedicated to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship globally. With a

The graphic features logos for NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission, and ATAL Incubation Centre. The central text reads "Explore, Engage & Evolve with Odisha Tourism Acceleration Program". Below this, a list of benefits includes Personalized Mentorship, High-Value Networking, Pilot Opportunities, Corporate Credits, Investment Opportunities, and Showcase Opportunities. The Merstra logo is at the bottom right, with the tagline "Transforming Tourism Innovation: Join the Odisha Tourism Acceleration Program (OTAP) and take your startup to new heights!".

mission to create impactful solutions and empower startups, Merstra serves as a bridge between groundbreaking ideas and actionable change. The foundation has been at the forefront of enabling sustainable growth through strategic partnerships and tailored programs like OTAP.

For more details about OTAP or to become part of this transformative journey, visit [OTAP Program Link](#).

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The logo for Merstra Foundation features the word "merstra" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, with the "F" in "merstra" being significantly larger than the other letters. Below "merstra", the word "FOUNDATION" is written in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.

Logo of Merstra Foundation

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