

IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

Connect with Work in 2024-25

Implementation Partner: Magic Bus India Foundation



Impact Assessment By: Give Grants

Table of Contents

01	Abbreviation	03
02	Executive Summary	04
03	Introduction	07
04	Scope of Study, Methodology	10
05	Sampling Strategy	13
06	Evaluation Framework (OECD-DAC)	14
07	Findings and Analysis	17
08	SWOT Analysis	36
09	Recommendation	37
10	Photographs	39

Abbreviation

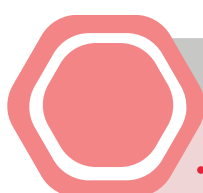
BFSI	Banking, Financial Services and Insurance
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CMIS	Content Management Interoperability Services
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
ITES	Information Technology Enabled Services
KII	Key Informant Interview
LMS	Learning Management System
MIS	Management Information System
NSDC	National Skill Development Corporation
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PMKVY	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory Of Change

Executive Summary

Category	Project Details
Project title:	Magic Bus “Connect with Work”
Project duration:	October 2022 – March 2024
Major Stakeholders:	Youth, Magic Bus Trainers, Employers, Magic Bus Programme Team, Parents, HDBFS CSR team
Location:	Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telengana, Maharashtra
Implementation Agency:	Magic Bus India Foundation
Assessment Agency:	Give Grants

The HDBFS–Magic Bus “Connect with Work” programme was implemented by Magic Bus India Foundation with financial support from HDB Financial Services Limited as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility mandate. The programme aimed to bridge the gap between graduation and gainful employment for first-generation graduate youth from low-income and economically vulnerable households, through structured employability training, digital skills development, mock interview preparation, and direct employer placement support. Targeting fresh graduates—the vast majority of whom were first-time job seekers from households reliant on daily wages, agriculture, and private salaried employment—the intervention was designed to create a structured, employment-linked pathway into India’s formal economy. **Over the course of its implementation, the programme has impacted a total of 4,900 beneficiaries.**

Training was delivered through a blended model combining classroom instruction, Learning Management System (LMS) content, and live mock interviews across a standardised 7–10 day curriculum. The programme content was aligned with NSDC Sector Skill Council frameworks and calibrated to actual entry-level job requirements in the IT/ITES, BFSI, retail, healthcare, and logistics sectors – the primary employment destinations of beneficiaries.



Methodology

Sample Size:

- 379 interviews conducted with direct beneficiaries (Youth)
- 10 Key informant interviews conducted with Trainers, Magic Bus Prog Team, Employers, Parents and HDBFS CSR team

Programme Design

The Magic Bus–HDBFS programme demonstrates exceptionally strong institutional reach, with 78% of beneficiaries learning about the programme through their college or placement cell, nearly four times the peer and word-of-mouth channel (20%). This reflects a deeply embedded institutional partnership model that leverages college placement infrastructure as the primary outreach mechanism, ensuring systematic access to eligible graduate youth at the point of labour market entry.

Enrollment was driven by a combination of intrinsic aspiration and practical economic need. The single most cited motivation was improving employability and workplace skills (85%), followed by accessing structured placement support (57%), gaining job role clarity (51%), and building foundational employability competencies (52%).

Availability of free training was a decisive factor for 29% of participants, consistent with the cohort's predominantly low-income household profile. An overwhelming 87.1% of participants were first-generation graduates in their families, underscoring the programme's reach into socioeconomic strata with the least access to professional networks, career guidance, and formal employment exposure.

Programme Delivery

Training was delivered with consistency: 96% of participants completed the standardised 7–10 day training format, with only marginal variation across cohorts. The blended delivery model, combining employability skills coaching, MS Excel and digital skills, soft skills and confidence building, mock interviews, and resume preparation, was validated as highly relevant by 95% of participants, with not a single respondent rating content as irrelevant. Programme support quality is exceptional across all nine measured dimensions, with combined Good and Excellent ratings ranging from 96% to 98%. Trainer subject knowledge stands out as the single highest-rated dimension, with 74% of participants awarding the top score of Excellent, affirming the depth of facilitator preparation across all delivery centres.

Access infrastructure was mixed: 56% of participants trained on personal smartphones, while 34% relied on institution lab computers, a pattern with implications for the quality of hands-on digital skills practice. Technical issues affected 13.5% of participants, of whom 94% cited poor internet connectivity as the cause, a structural barrier in the cohort's target geographies that warrants a systematic offline content strategy.

Impact & Sustainability

The programme has generated measurable and significant employment and livelihood outcomes. Prior to participation, 99% of participants had no prior employment experience, confirming the programme's focus on labour market entry for first-time job seekers. Following programme completion, 72% of participants are currently employed, placed predominantly in IT/ITES (51%) and BFSI (25%) sectors, together accounting for over three-quarters of all placements. A further 19.5% are pursuing higher education, and only 8% remain unemployed.

Placement speed is a standout metric: 60% of employed participants secured a job within 30 days of completing training, and 82% remain employed at the same Magic Bus-facilitated placement, a strong retention signal that reflects both the quality of employer matching and the durability of the skills transferred. Monthly incomes for employed participants are concentrated in the Rs. 15,001–30,000 range, with nearly 90% of those employed earning Rs. 15,000 or more per month, a figure that, for participants from households earning Rs. 10,000–20,000 per month, represents a transformative income contribution.

Skill development outcomes are consistent and significant. Interview skills showed the greatest gains (75% reporting major improvement), followed closely by communication skills (74%), confidence levels (70%), and MS Excel and digital skills (69%). The programme's holistic impact is captured in its two most powerful aggregate indicators: 99% of participants reported an improvement in their financial situation, and 100% reported feeling better prepared for future career opportunities, a unanimous response across all 379 respondents.

Programme advocacy is strong: 98% of participants have recommended the programme to at least one other person. This organic referral behaviour, spanning 1 to 50 individuals per participant, functions as a low-cost, high-credibility outreach channel that has not yet been formally structured or harnessed. Together, these outcomes affirm the programme as a well-designed, effectively delivered, and measurably impactful intervention in the first-employment ecosystem for India's graduate youth from underserved households.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The programme demonstrates strong performance in enabling first-generation graduates to access formal employment, reflected in high placement rates, quick job transitions, and strong retention. Its industry-aligned curriculum and effective delivery model have significantly improved employability and career readiness. However, structural gaps in digital access and skill depth need to be addressed to maximise long-term impact.

Key Recommendations:

- Strengthen digital learning by shifting critical modules to computer lab-based training instead of smartphone-dependent delivery.
- Integrate advanced, sector-relevant digital skills (e.g., advanced Excel, AI tools) to align with evolving employer demand.
- Extend training duration to enable deeper practical learning and hands-on skill development.
- Address connectivity barriers through offline-enabled content and improved institutional internet access.

Introduction

HDB Financial Services Limited (HDBFS) has partnered with Magic Bus India Foundation to implement the “Connect with Work” Project, aimed at improving employment outcomes for young first-time job seekers from underprivileged households. The programme specifically targets graduates from Tier II, III, and IV colleges across Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Delhi-NCR, focusing on bridging the gap between education and employment.

The initiative is designed to equip participants with last-mile employability skills through a structured training programme comprising 7-10 days of intensive learning. The curriculum emphasizes core employability competencies, including communication, workplace readiness, and technical proficiency in MS Excel, enabling participants to become job-ready for entry-level grey-collar roles in the formal sector.



Recognizing the structural challenges faced by youth from marginalized backgrounds –such as limited exposure to professional environments, lack of industry-relevant skills, and inadequate career guidance—the programme adopts a targeted and practical approach to skill development. In addition to training, it provides structured placement support and post-placement handholding for up to three months to ensure job retention and continuous learning.

By integrating mobilization, skill development, and sustained employment support, the programme aims to facilitate access to job opportunities, enhance employability, and create sustainable livelihood pathways for underserved youth.

The programme objectives include:

Mobilize and Engage Youth from Marginalized Communities

- Conduct targeted outreach across Tier II, III, and IV colleges and communities to identify and engage first-time job seekers from underprivileged households.
- Promote awareness on employment opportunities and guide youth towards structured skill development pathways leading to improved livelihood prospects.

Strengthen Technical and Employability Skills

- Deliver short-term, intensive training (7-10 days) focused on last-mile employability skills such as communication, workplace readiness, and professional behaviour.
- Build foundational technical competencies, particularly in MS Excel, to enhance job readiness for entry-level roles in relevant sectors.

Enable Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities

- Provide structured placement support to connect trained candidates with entry-level grey-collar job opportunities across sectors.
- Facilitate the transition of youth into the formal workforce by strengthening linkages with employers and job platforms.

Bridge the Skill Demand–Supply Gap

- Address the disconnect between academic learning and industry expectations by equipping youth with practical, job-ready skills.
- Align training delivery with employer requirements to ensure relevance and improve employability outcomes for participants.

This impact assessment report evaluates the implementation and outcomes of the “Connect with Work” Project, examining its effectiveness in enhancing employability, improving access to sustainable livelihoods, and addressing skill gaps among youth from marginalized communities.



The programme is in alignment with the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in the United Nations Agenda 2030.

Target 4.3

By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

Target 4.4

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Target 4.5

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

Target 5.8

Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

Target 8.6

By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

Target 9.1

Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.

Target 9.8

Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

Target 10.2

By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Target 17.H

Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.



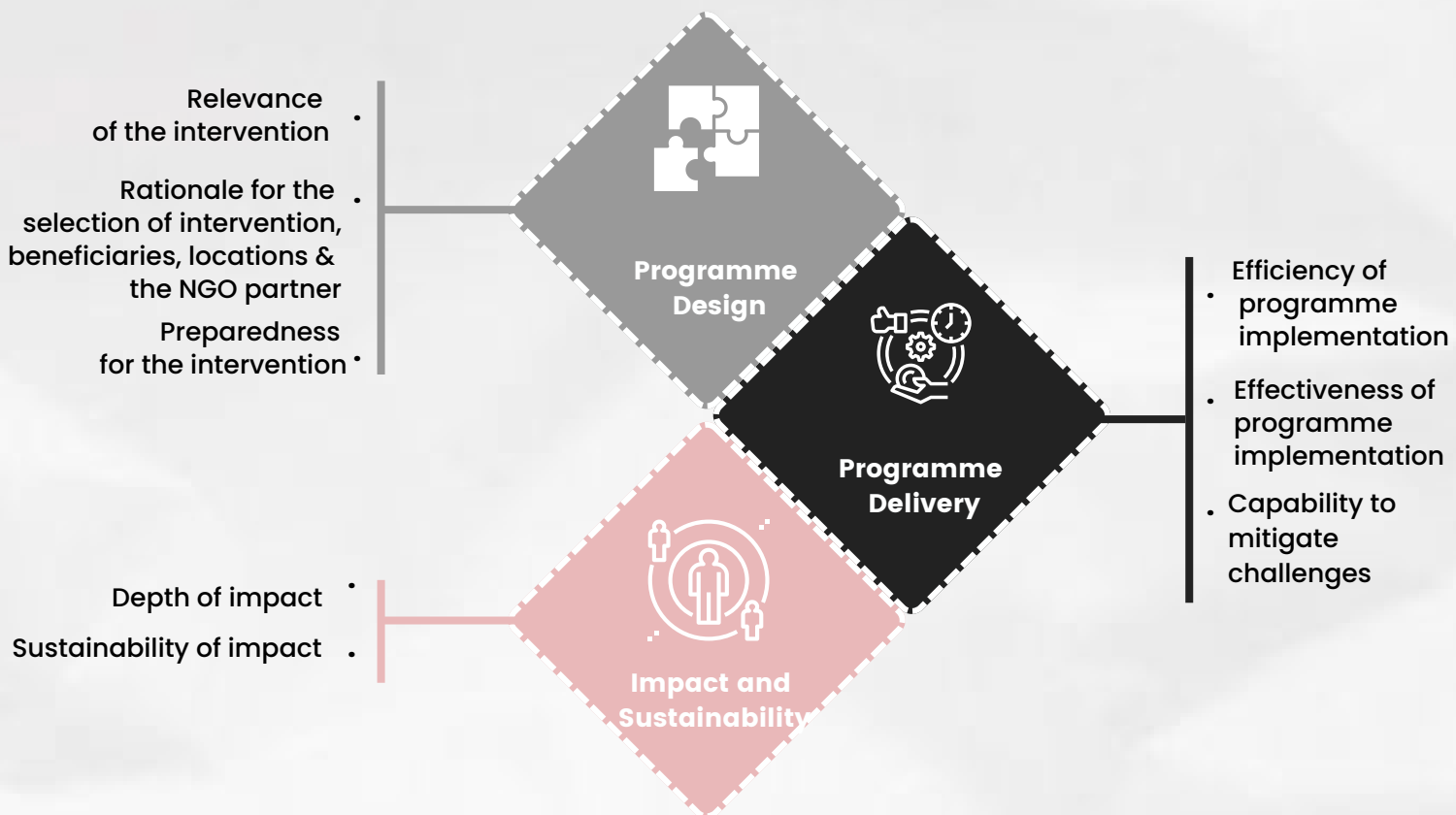
Scope of Study

Objectives



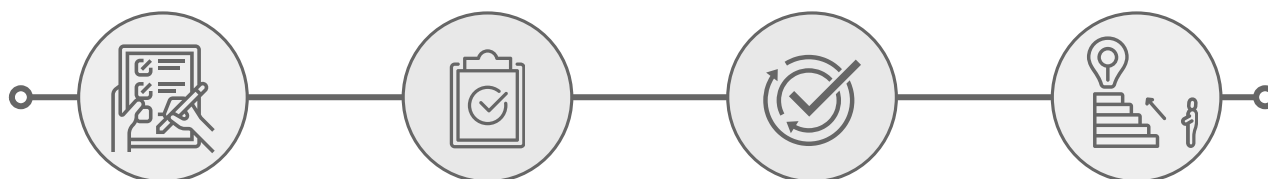
Methodology

The three point assessment framework is used in the assessment is developed by Give Grants based on the OECD-DAC framework for impact assessment. It broadly investigates the following aspects:



Theory of Change

The Theory of Change Framework (ToC) for the given programme is illustrated below:



Input

Output

Outcome

Impact

<p>The specific actions or processes that a programme undertakes to achieve its goals and objectives</p>	<p>The direct and immediate results or products of the activities undertaken</p>	<p>The changes or effects that occur as a result of the outputs and activities</p>	<p>The ultimate and long-term effect or result that a programme or intervention aims to achieve</p>
--	--	--	---

Input	Output	Outcome	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSR funding from HDB Financial Services • Programme implementation by Magic Bus India Foundation • Trainers, facilitators, and placement support teams • LMS and digital learning tools • Partnerships with colleges for mobilization and infrastructure • Industry linkages for placement opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment of youth from underprivileged backgrounds • Delivery of short-term employability training (7-10 days) • Modules on communication, workplace readiness, and MS Excel • Practical learning through mock interviews and exercises • Employer engagement and placement support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of beneficiaries gain employment in entry-level roles • % of beneficiaries improve employability and digital skills • % of beneficiaries report increased confidence and job readiness • % of beneficiaries successfully transition to the workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved employability among first-time job seekers • Increased income and financial stability of beneficiaries • Sustainable livelihood opportunities for underserved youth • Enhanced access to formal employment pathways

Logical Framework Analysis

	Project Summary	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Impact	The programme contributes to improved income levels and financial stability of beneficiaries by enabling their transition into sustainable livelihoods and formal employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % increase in beneficiary income • % of beneficiaries in sustained employment • % of beneficiaries reporting improved financial stability • % of beneficiaries continuing in formal employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-placement follow-up surveys • Case studies and beneficiary testimonials • Employer feedback and retention tracking • Programme evaluation reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment opportunities remain available in relevant sectors • Beneficiaries continue career progression • Economic and sectoral conditions remain supportive
Outcome	Youth demonstrate improved employability and successfully access job opportunities, with enhanced confidence, skills, and readiness for entry-level roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement rate for youth (%) • % improvement in employability skills • % of beneficiaries reporting higher confidence • % of beneficiaries placed in jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement records and offer letters • Employer feedback reports • Beneficiary surveys and interviews • Follow-up tracking through MIS/CMIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market demand for entry-level roles remains stable • Employers continue recognizing programme graduates • Beneficiaries remain willing to relocate or commute for jobs
Output	Youth complete structured training and participate in placement processes, leading to improved employability and soft skills development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training completion rate (%) • Attendance rate of youth • % of candidates attending placement drives • % of beneficiaries completing training modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMS assessment records • Attendance and training completion data • Mock interview and job drive reports • Programme monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth remain engaged throughout the training period • Training delivery remains consistent across centres • Employers continue participating in job drives
Input	The programme mobilizes youth and delivers structured training through digital tools, trainers, and placement support to build job-relevant skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of youth mobilized • Number of training sessions conducted • Duration of training sessions • % of planned training activities completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training centre records • Trainer onboarding reports • Programme MIS/LMS records • Mobilization reports and documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate funding and institutional support continue • Training infrastructure and digital platforms remain functional • Trainers and programme staff remain available

Sampling Strategy



389

Total sample covered



10

Key Informant Interviews



379

Beneficiaries Outreached



Employers: 2



Trainers: 2



Ngo Programme Team: 2



Parents: 3



HDBFS CSR Team: 1

Key Informant Interviews



Sample Size Rationale

- Purposive sampling.
- Beneficiary cohort is representative of the direct interventions and varied socio-economic strata.
- Sample size is representative of all stakeholders involved with program.



Limitation

- Beneficiary surveys and Key Informant Interviews were conducted virtually via Google Meet, which may have excluded participants with poor internet access and affected the depth of responses due to connectivity issues; however, this approach enabled broader geographic coverage, timely data collection, and ensured the safety and convenience of participants.
- Due to student confidentiality concerns, the Google Meet sessions were scheduled by Magic Bus, and Give Grants had no direct control over the scheduling process, which resulted in a slight extension of the assessment timeline; however, this approach ensured strict adherence to safeguarding protocols of Magic Bus and protected participant privacy.

Evaluation framework

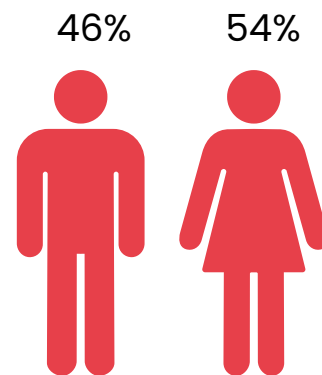
The assessment uses the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) framework to evaluate the programme across six key criteria—Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. This ensures a structured and holistic analysis of both immediate outcomes and long-term impact.

Criteria	What it Assesses	Application in This Study	Key Indicators Used
Relevance	Alignment of programme with beneficiary needs and market demand	Assessed how training courses match industry demand and youth aspirations	Sector alignment (BFSI, IT/ITES), beneficiary needs, inclusivity
Coherence	Compatibility with policies, systems, and other initiatives	Examined alignment with national skilling ecosystem and stakeholder coordination	Linkages with NSDC, partner coordination, programme design consistency
Effectiveness	Achievement of intended objectives and outcomes	Measured success in training completion and employment generation	Placement rate, training completion, skill improvement
Efficiency	Optimal use of resources (time, cost, effort)	Evaluated delivery models, digital tools, and timelines	Cost-effectiveness, LMS usage, training-to-placement cycle
Impact	Long-term changes in economic and social conditions	Analysed changes in income, livelihood, and quality of life	Income improvement, financial stability, confidence levels
Sustainability	Continuity of benefits beyond programme duration	Assessed job retention and long-term employability	Job retention, career growth, skill transferability

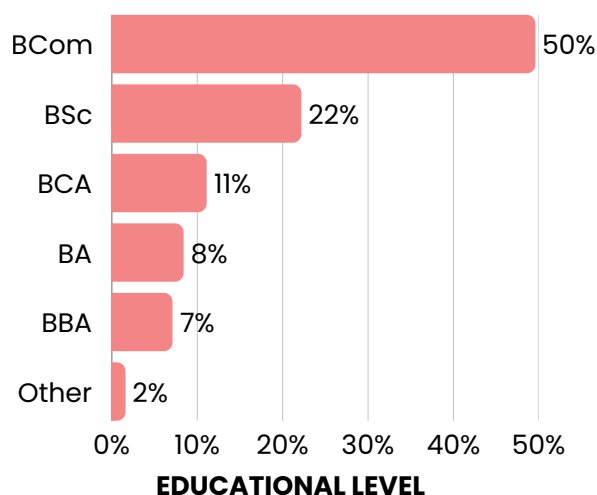
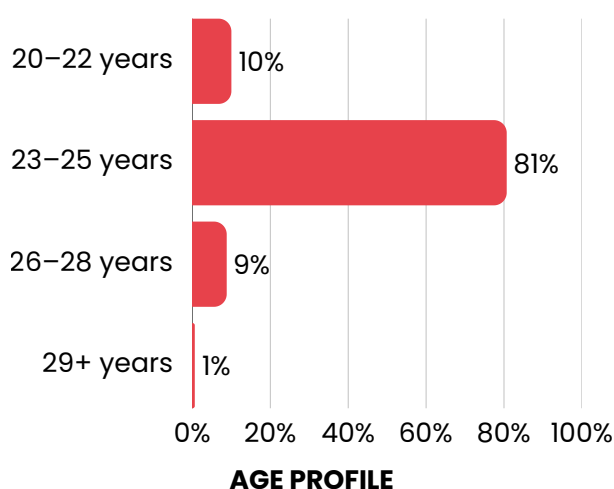
Beneficiary Profile*

Beneficiaries of the Magic Bus programme consisted of 54% females and 46% males, reflecting a gender composition that leaned toward greater female participation.

The programme primarily reached young adults in the most critical phase of their transition from education to employment. A majority (81%) of participants fall in the 23–25 years age bracket, confirming that the programme is effectively targeting fresh graduates entering the workforce for the first time. A smaller proportion (10%) are aged 20–22 years, while 9% are in the 26–28 years group and a negligible 0.6% are above 29 years.



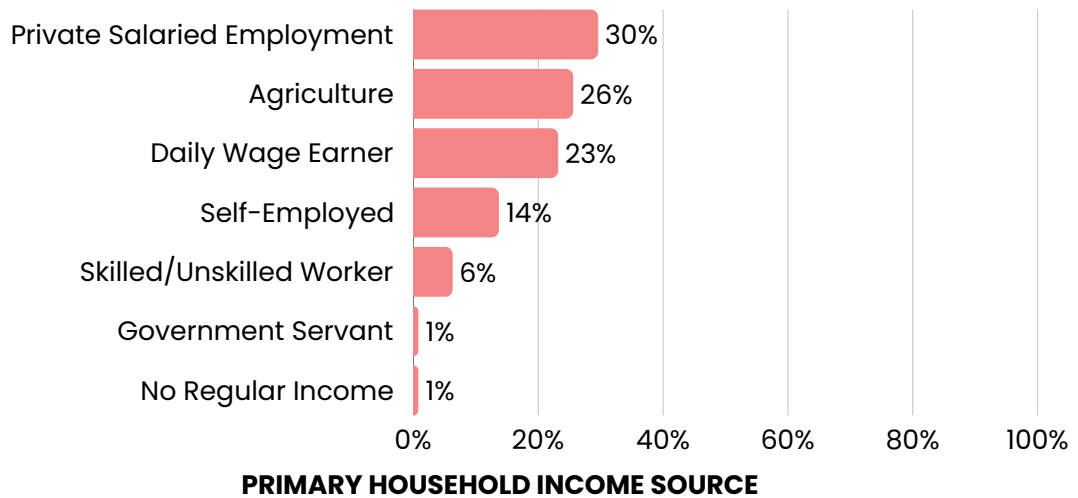
GENDER COMPOSITION



The participant cohort is dominated by Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) graduates at 50%, nearly half of all respondents, a logical alignment given HDBFS's operations in the BFSI sector. BSc graduates constitute 22%, followed by BCA holders at 11%, reflecting a significant digital and tech-oriented segment. BA and BBA graduates contribute 8% and 7% respectively, with the remaining 2% spread across B.Ed., BFA, BSW, and MA programmes.

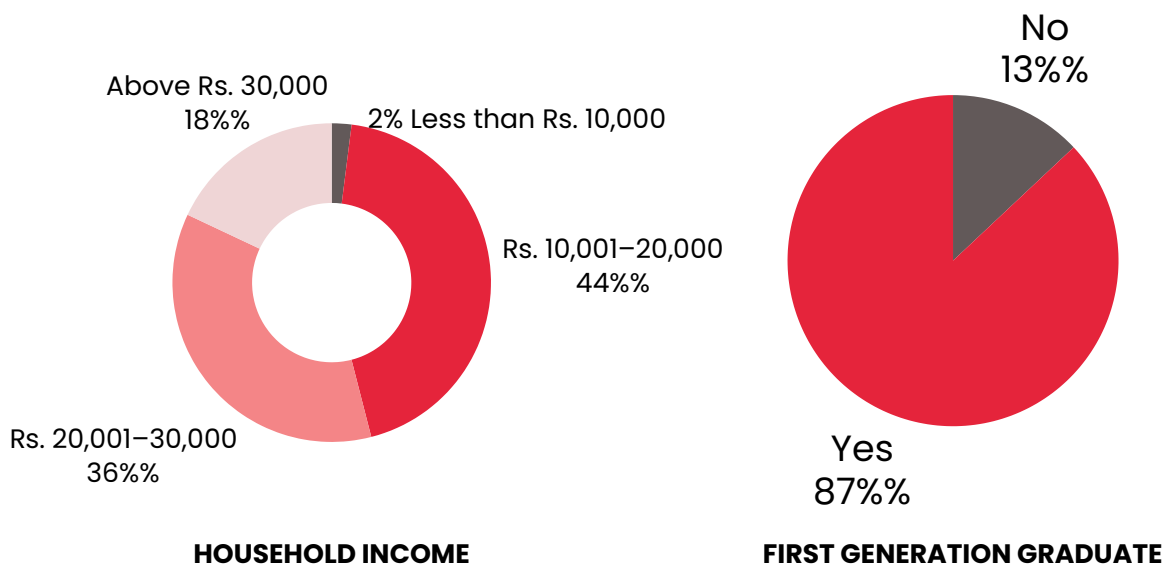
Participants come from economically diverse households. Private salaried employment is the most common household income source (30%), followed closely by agriculture (26%) and daily wage labour (23%). Together, agriculture and daily wage households account for nearly 49% of the cohort, a compelling indicator that the programme is reaching economically vulnerable families for whom youth employment is an economic necessity.

**Data are drawn from sampled respondents and may not represent all beneficiaries.*



Income data reinforces the economically modest backgrounds of participants. The majority (44%) come from households earning between Rs. 10,001–20,000 per month, while 36% fall in the Rs. 20,001–30,000 bracket. Only 18% earn above Rs. 30,000 and 2% earn below Rs. 10,000.

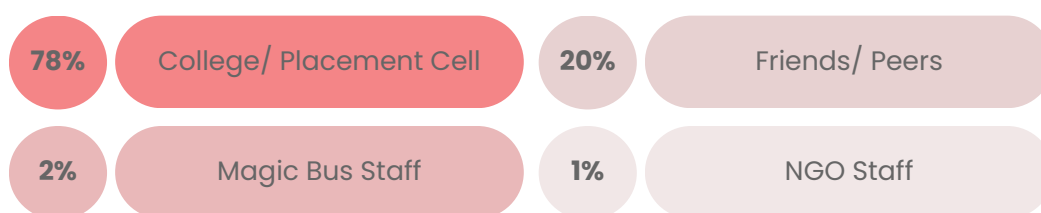
About 87% of participants are the first in their families to pursue graduation, a striking statistic that underscores the transformational significance of this programme. Only 13% have family precedents of graduation, reinforcing that Magic Bus–HDBFS is serving aspirants with the least access to professional networks and career guidance.



Findings & Analysis

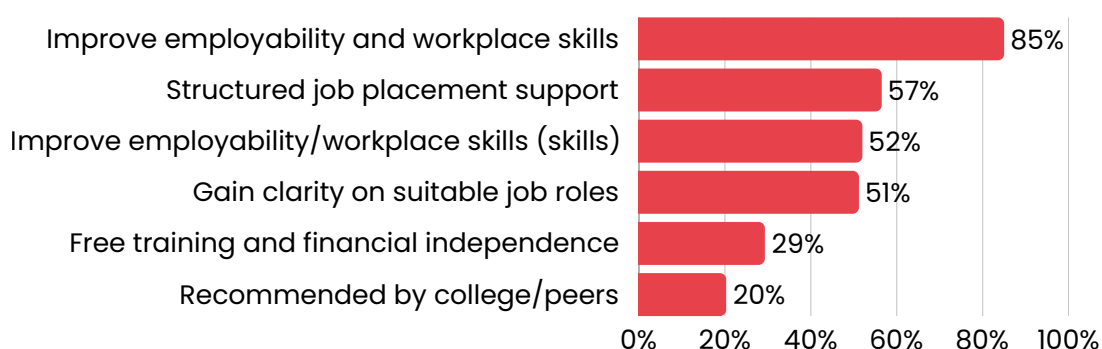
Programme Awareness

The College/Placement Cell is the dominant channel through which participants discovered the programme, accounting for 78% of responses. This reflects a strong institutional partnership strategy and validates the effectiveness of embedding programme outreach within college infrastructure. Word-of-mouth through friends and peers contributed 19%, suggesting moderate peer influence and organic reputation building. Direct outreach by Magic Bus staff and alumni referrals together account for just 1%, indicating potential to further activate alumni as programme ambassadors.



Motivation for Participation

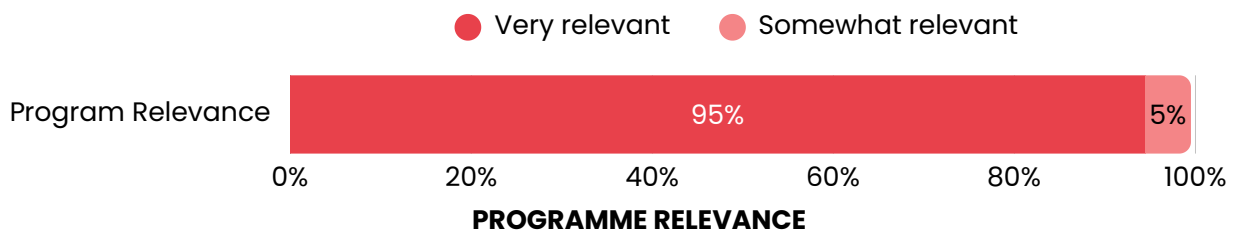
Participants reported multiple motivations for enrolling. The top motivation was improving employability and workplace skills (85%), affirming that participants were primarily driven by employment readiness. Structured job placement support and employer drives motivated 57%, while gaining clarity on suitable job roles attracted 51%. Improving basic employability skills was a key driver for 52%. Availability of free training was important to 29%, consistent with the economically modest backgrounds identified earlier.



MOTIVATION TO JOIN PROGRAM

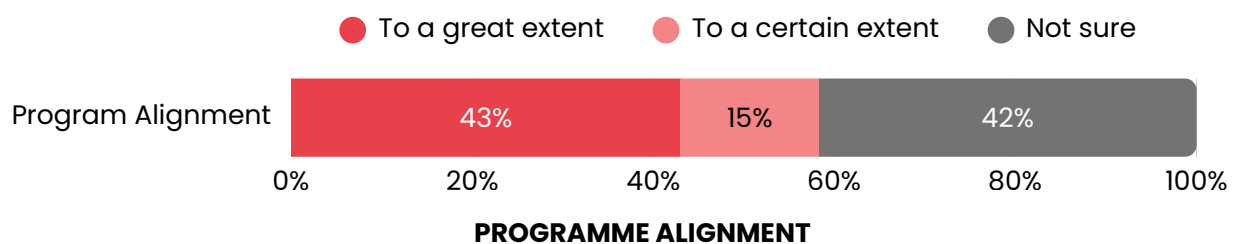
Relevance of Programme Content to Career Aspirations

About 95% of beneficiaries rated the programme content as very relevant to their career aspirations, and 5% as somewhat relevant. All the respondents rated it at minimum somewhat relevant, is a strong indicator of curriculum fit and suggests the programme's course-to-aspiration alignment is well-calibrated across its diverse vocational tracks.



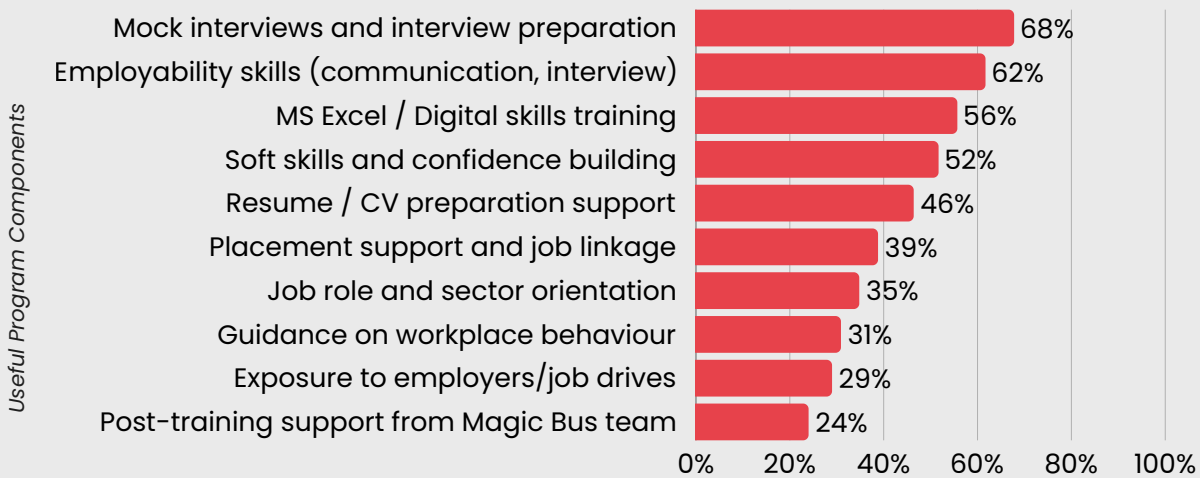
Alignment with Government Skill Development Policies

When asked about alignment with national skill development initiatives such as Skill India and PMKVY, 43.0% affirmed alignment to a great extent and 15% acknowledged it to a certain extent. However, a notable 42% were not sure, suggesting that while the programme is substantively aligned with national policy frameworks, this connection is not adequately communicated to participants. Explicitly contextualising programme components within Skill India and PMKVY frameworks during orientation sessions is an actionable improvement.



Most Useful Program Components

Mock interviews and interview preparation emerged as the most valued component (68%), followed by employability skills, communication and interview technique (62%), and MS Excel/digital skills (56%). Soft skills and confidence building were valued by 52%, while resume/CV preparation support was rated useful by 46%. Post-training support from the Magic Bus team was recognised by 24%, suggesting an opportunity to heighten the visibility of follow-on support.



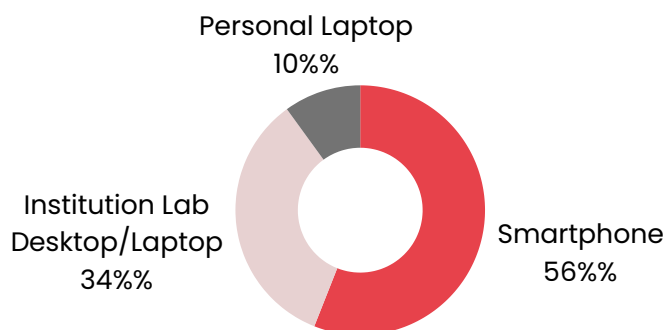
Training Delivery & Programme Components

Training Duration

The training programme is standardised in its delivery: **96%** of participants completed a 7 to 10-day programme, with only marginal variation, 2% received less than 7 days and 2% received more than 10 days. This consistency in training duration reflects strong programme fidelity across delivery partners. However, given participant suggestions for extended training, this is worth revisiting in future programme design.

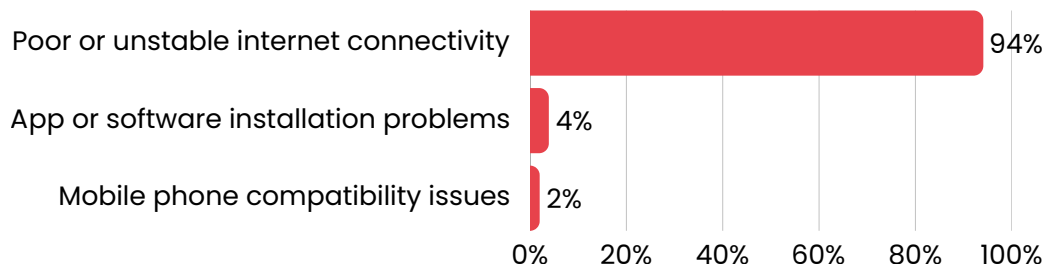
Devices Used During Training

About 56% of participants used their personal smartphones, 34% accessed training through institution lab desktops or laptops. Only 10% used personal laptops.



Technical and Digital Challenges

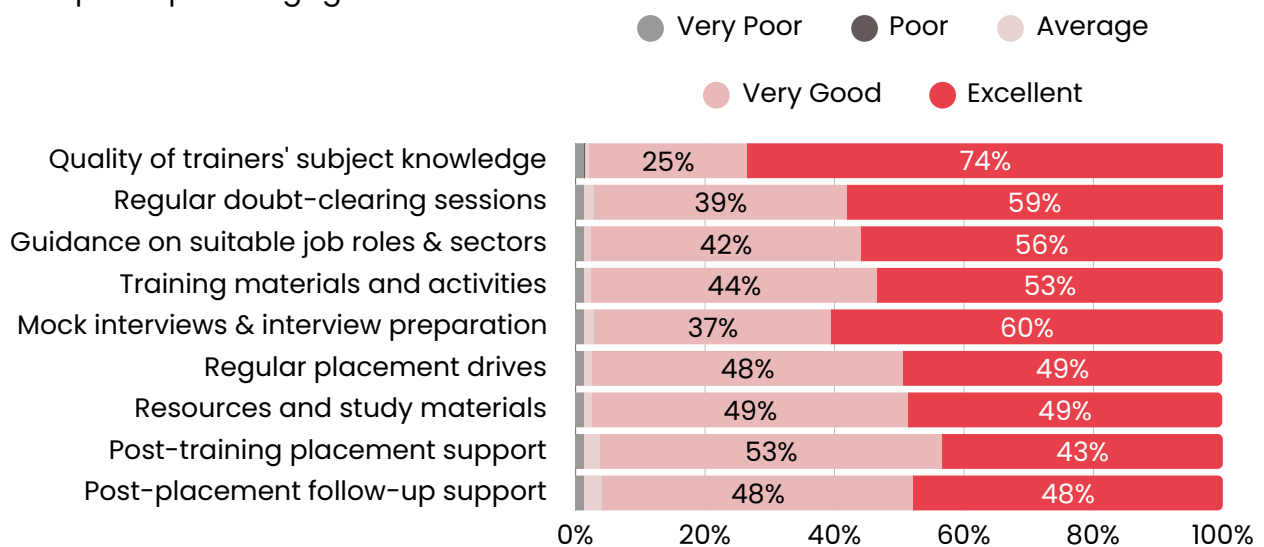
About 87% of participants faced no technical issues during training. Among the 14% who did, an overwhelming 94% of those cases were related to poor or unstable internet connectivity, a structural challenge in the programme's target geographies. App/software installation issues affected 4% and mobile phone compatibility was an issue for 2%. While overall incidence is modest, internet connectivity stands out as the single most critical infrastructure barrier requiring targeted intervention.



TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

Program Support Ratings

The Programme Support Ratings reveal exceptionally high participant satisfaction across all nine dimensions, with Very Good + Excellent percentages ranging from 96% to 98%. Trainer subject knowledge stands out as the strongest area, achieving 98% positive ratings, including 74% marking it as Excellent, reflecting participants' confidence in the trainers' expertise and content delivery. Other programme elements –such as regular doubt-clearing sessions, structured placement drives, and comprehensive learning materials, also perform remarkably well, underscoring cohesive support throughout the training process. While post-training and post-placement support remain highly rated (96% and 96%, respectively), they present marginal opportunities for improvement, suggesting that reinforcing communication and mentorship after placement could enhance overall satisfaction and sustain long-term participant engagement.

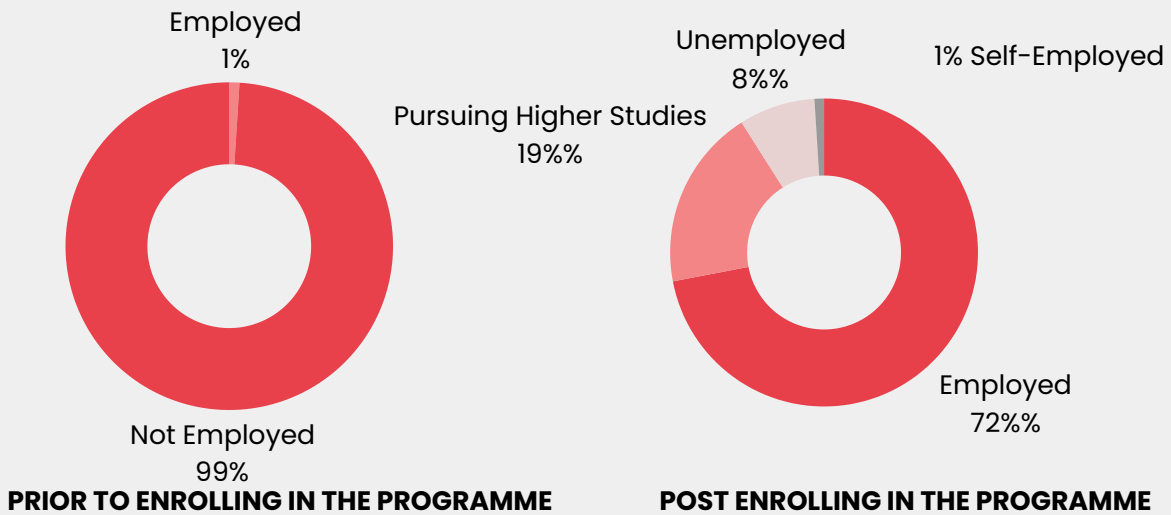


PROGRAM SUPPORT RATINGS

Employment Status Before and After the Programme

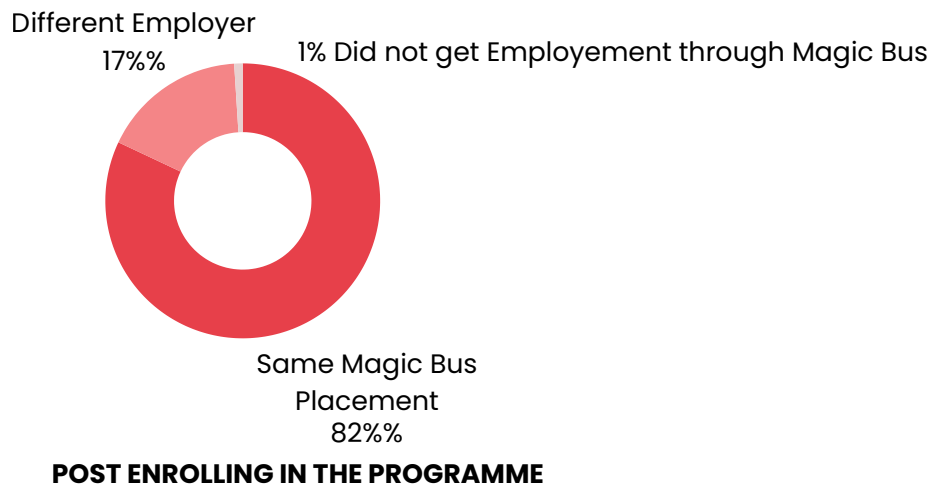
The cohort was almost entirely unemployed before joining the programme, 99% had no prior employment, with only 4 individuals (1%) having some form of prior work (2 part-time, 1 full-time, 1 self-employed).

Post-programme employment outcomes are strong. About 72% of participants are currently employed, representing a substantial placement achievement. A further 19% are pursuing higher studies, a valid and positive outcome. Only 8% remain unemployed, indicating that the programme successfully transitions the vast majority of participants into either employment or continued education and 1% are self-employed.



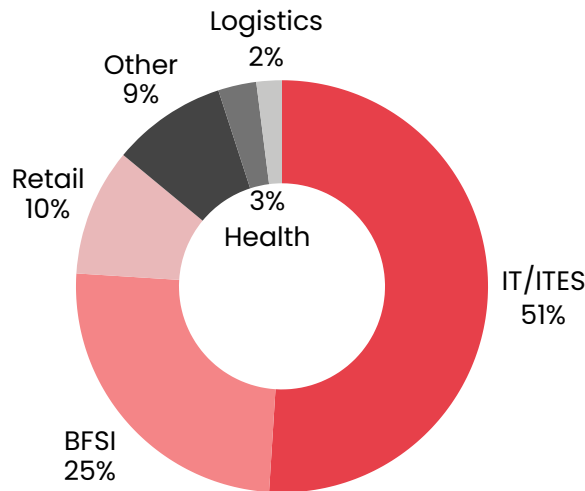
Employment Retention

Of the 273 employed participants, 224 (82%) are working at the same organisation where they were placed through Magic Bus – a strong retention metric demonstrating employer satisfaction and job-role alignment. Only 47 participants (17%) moved to different employers, and 2 secured employment independently. This high retention rate suggests that Magic Bus placements are sustainable employment matches, not merely transient opportunities.



Employment Sector Distribution

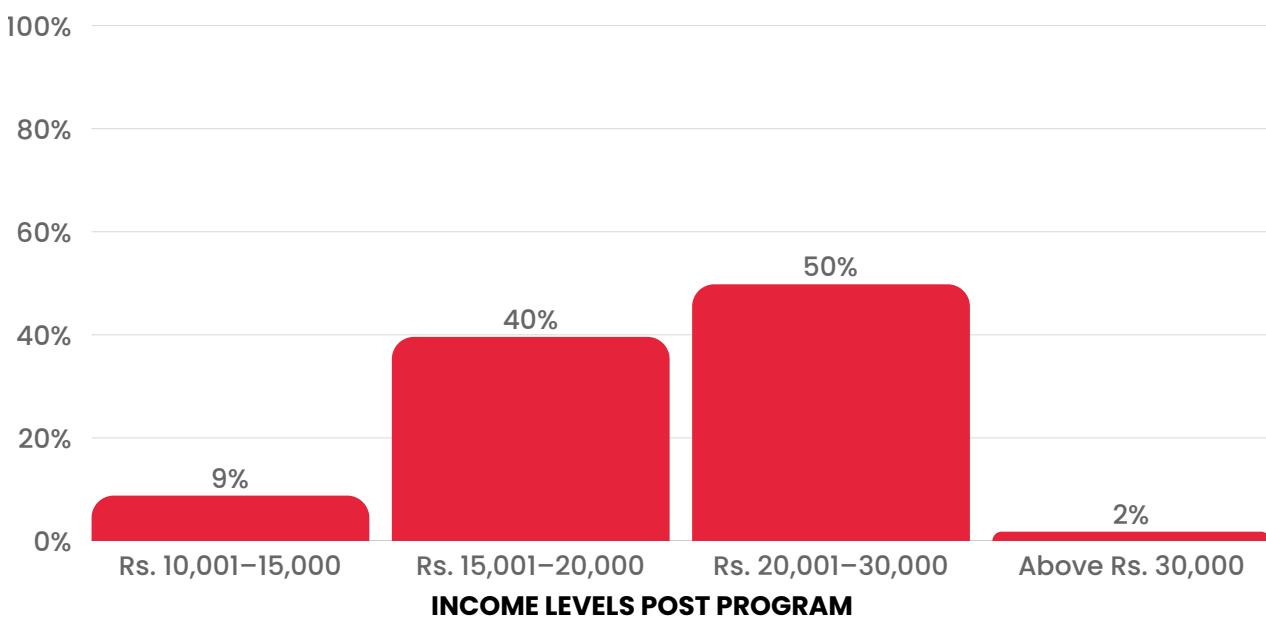
Among the 273 employed participants, the IT/ITES sector is the dominant employment destination at 51%, followed by BFSI (Banking, Financial Services and Insurance) at 25% – directly aligned with the HDBFS partnership focus. Retail accounts for 10%, Other sectors for 9%, Healthcare for 3%, and Logistics for 2%. IT/ITES and BFSI together account for 76% of placements, reflecting strong alignment with high-growth, white-collar service sectors.



EMPLOYMENT SECTOR DISTRIBUTION

Income Levels After the Program

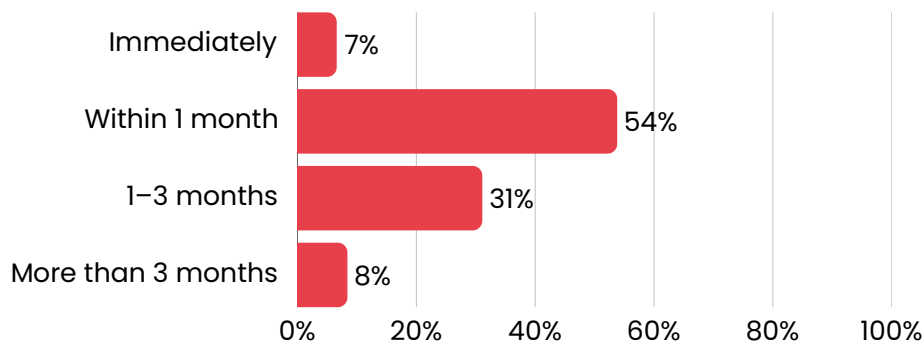
A significant income mobility story emerges. The largest group (50%) earns between Rs. 20,001–30,000 per month, followed by 40% earning Rs. 15,001–20,000. Only 9% earn Rs. 10,001–15,000 and a top-earning 2% earn above Rs. 30,000. Critically, most employed participants are earning more per month than the total household income reported by many families, representing meaningful economic contribution and financial independence.



INCOME LEVELS POST PROGRAM

Time to Employment After Training

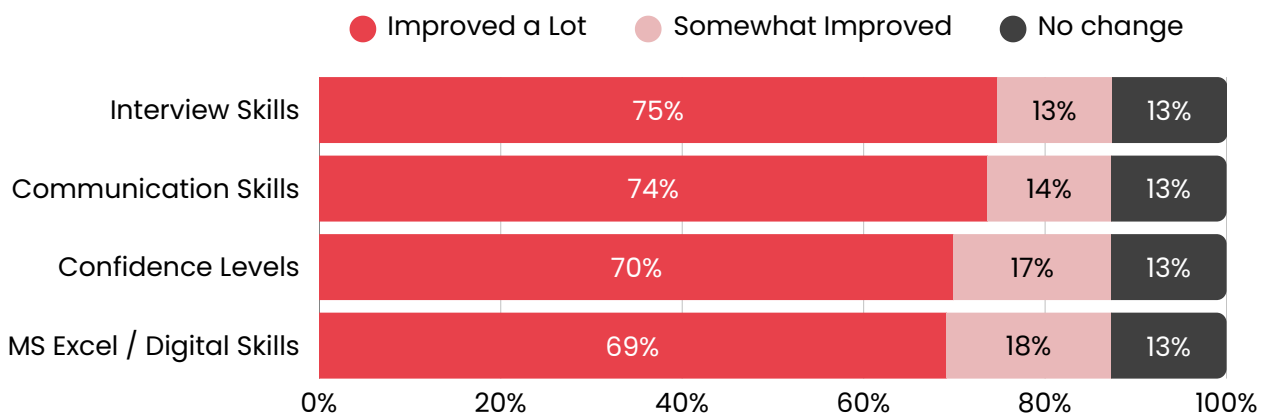
The programme demonstrates impressive placement speed. 54% of employed participants secured a job within 1 month of completing training, and a further 7% were placed immediately. Together, 60% found employment within 30 days, a fast-track placement pipeline that is a key competitive strength of the programme. An additional 31.1% were placed within 1–3 months, and only 8% took more than 3 months.



TIME IT TOOK TO GET EMPLOYED POST TRAINING

Skills Improved Through the Programme

Participants reported substantial skill gains across all measured dimensions. Interview skills showed the greatest transformation at 75% reporting major improvement, closely followed by communication skills at 74%. Confidence levels (70%) and MS Excel/digital skills (69%) are marginally lower but still reflect transformational improvement for approximately 70% of participants. A consistent 13% reported no change across all dimensions, likely representing those who already had foundational competence.



SKILLS IMPROVED THROUGH THE PROGRAMME

Employment Status Before and After the Program

An exceptional 99% of participants reported an improvement in their financial situation following programme participation, only 3 participants (1%) reported no improvement. This near-universal financial uplift is the most compelling impact metric in the entire survey, reflecting the direct economic effect of employment on participants and their households.

Skills Development Outcomes

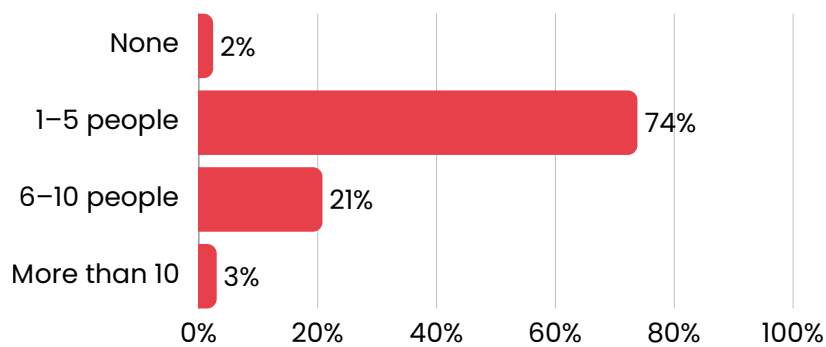
About 98% of participants confirmed they are able to apply the skills learned during the programme in their current roles, a critical indicator of curriculum-to-workplace relevance. Only 1% reported being unable to apply skills and 1% said they could only partially apply them. This validates the practical, job-ready design of the programme curriculum.

Career Preparedness

All 379 respondents, reported feeling better prepared for future career opportunities after completing the programme. This unanimous finding is a powerful testimony to the programme's holistic impact: beyond immediate job placement, participants emerge with enhanced confidence and long-term career readiness.

Programme Recommendations by Participants

The programme generates strong advocacy: 98% of participants have recommended the programme to at least one other person. The majority (74%) recommended it to 1–5 individuals, 21% to 6–10 people, and 3% to more than 10. Only 2% had not yet made any recommendations. This organic advocacy is a significant indicator of participant satisfaction and trust, and a low-cost, high-credibility channel for future outreach and enrolment.



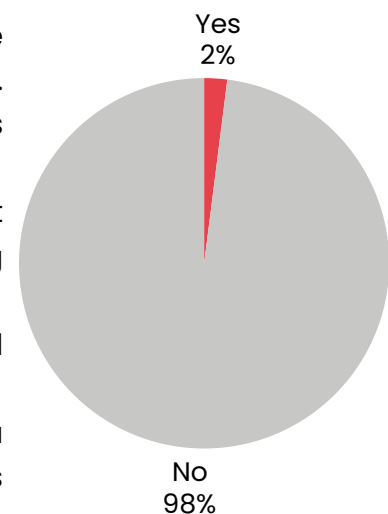
PROGRAMME RECOMMENDATIONS BY PARTICIPANTS

Challenges Faced During the Programme

About 98% of participants reported no challenges during the programme, a remarkably high smooth-experience rate. Among the small 2% who did face challenges, concerns centred around three themes:

- Internet connectivity and network disruptions – the most cited barrier, impacting the ability to stream training videos and access digital content.
- Outdated mobile applications – limiting access to digital notes and learning materials.
- Data consumption from long training videos – a financial and accessibility constraint for participants relying on personal mobile data.

While these challenges affect a small proportion, they are systemically important given that internet access is a structural inequality in the programme's target geographies.



Challenges Faced during Programme

Suggestions for Program Improvement

Of the 379 participants, 66% had no suggestions, and 22% affirmed that everything is good, together indicating that 88% of participants are satisfied with the programme as it stands. Among those with suggestions, four thematic improvement areas emerged:

- **Advanced & Emerging Technologies:** Add AI, Power BI, Python, advanced Excel and keep content updated with industry changes. Outdated mobile applications – limiting access to digital notes and learning materials.
- **Extended Training Duration:** Extend to 15–25 days with more sessions for deeper learning and better skill development.
- **Communication & Language Skills:** Stronger focus on English speaking, communication and industry-relevant interview preparation.
- **Expanded Access & Opportunities:** Expand to rural areas, add placement sectors, improve internet connectivity and reduce video data load.

Methodological Framework for Translating Field Indicators into OECD-DAC Performance Ratings

In order to provide objective, evidence-based evaluations of corporate social responsibility programs, we employ a systematic analytical framework that translates granular field indicators into standardised ratings based on the globally recognized OECD-DAC criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability.

Mapping Indicators to OECD-DAC Criteria

The evaluation process begins by designating specific questions from our impact assessment questionnaires to one of the six OECD criteria. Each question serves as an independent indicator designed to measure a specific facet of program performance.

- **Relevance:** Indicators assess the need for the solution and the appropriateness of the project design for the respondent.
- **Coherence:** Indicators examine alignment with international and national development priorities.
- **Efficiency:** Questions evaluate resource efficiency in program execution. If the program was efficient as per expectations.
- **Effectiveness:** Questions measure the progress toward achieving desired outcomes among target beneficiaries.
- **Impact:** Indicators capture shifts in beneficiaries' conditions and the scale of the program's overall contribution in the same. In the case of skill development programs, the most significant impact is shift in income generation, leading to improved quality of life.
- **Sustainability:** Questions assess the ability of program benefits to continue after the project's completion, either through the ability to apply the learning or through the recommendation of the program.

The indicators used for data collection are intentionally flexible to allow for project-specific customisation. Following the review of draft assessment tools, questions are refined based on client expertise and localised insights. This approach guarantees that the resulting OECD-DAC ratings are grounded in relevant ground realities while maintaining the integrity of the broader evaluation framework.

The conversion from independent field indicators to a standardised scorecard is a transparent, two-step process:

1. **Calculation of the Success Percentage:** For each designated question, we calculate the percentage of the total sampled population that provided a 'positive' response.

Formula: $(\text{Number of Positive Responses} / \text{Total Sample Size}) * 100$

2. **Linear Conversion to a 10-Point Scale:** The resulting percentage is then converted to a scale of 10 by simply dividing the figure by ten.

Assessment criteria	Indicator	Percent response	Score on scale of 10
Relevance	Percentage of beneficiaries reporting that the program content is aligned with their career aspirations and professional needs.	100	10
Coherence	Percentage of participants reporting that the program modules mapped to specific government schemes (Skill India, PMKVY).	58.3	5.8
Efficiency	Percentage of participants reporting no technical interruptions or digital issues.	86.5	8.7
Effectiveness	Percentage of participants having improved confidence level regarding their employability	100	10
Impact	Percentage of participants reporting a change in average monthly income within 6–12 months of completion.	99.2	9.9
Sustainability	Percentage of peer-to-peer advocacy through more than one participant referral	97.6	9.8

OECD-DAC Performance Ratings

Relevance: 10.0

Efficiency: 8.7

Coherence: 5.8

Impact: 9.9

Effectiveness: 10.0

Sustainability: 9.8

Case Study: From Labourer's Household to Career in Banking

A beneficiary that grew up in a household dependent on skilled and unskilled labour, marked by irregular earnings and no history of higher education, became the first in her family to complete a BSc degree. Learning about the Magic Bus-HDBFS "Connect with Work" programme through her college placement cell, she enrolled to build employability and workplace skills, knowing a degree alone was not enough. She especially valued mock interviews, resume support, soft skills training, and employability coaching, which helped her become job-ready. Within a month, she secured a BFSI sector job with a monthly income of Rs. 15,001–20,000, bringing unprecedented financial stability to her family. She reported major improvements in communication, interview readiness, digital skills, and confidence, and her finances improved significantly. She has since recommended the programme to 50 others and suggests integrating AI tools to keep it aligned with evolving industry needs.

"I came in wanting to be job-ready. I left with a job."

Case Study: No Income - Now a Breadwinner in Tech Sector

A beneficiary that comes from one of the most vulnerable starting points in the cohort: a household with no regular income and constant financial uncertainty, still completed a BSc degree, becoming the first in her family to graduate, and sought structured pathways into formal work. She learned about the Magic Bus-HDBFS programme through direct outreach by a staff member, reflecting its focus on underserved youth. She enrolled because the training was free, promised financial independence, and offered clarity on suitable job roles. She especially valued MS Excel and digital skills, job role and sector orientation, and soft skills and confidence building, which gave her practical and psychological foundations beyond academics. Completing sessions on a smartphone highlighted her resourcefulness. Today, she works in the IT/ITES sector, earning Rs. 10,001–15,000 monthly, the first stable income her household has ever known. She has recommended the programme to five peers:

"I had no idea what kind of job I could get. This programme showed me the path and helped me walk it."

Insights Gained from the Key Informant Interviews

Institutional Representatives (2)

The perspectives of institutional representatives provide a ground-level account of how the Magic Bus programme integrates with college administration. These representatives are drawn from a private engineering college and a large group institution. Both institutions have established placement functions and have worked with Magic Bus for several years. Their observations carry the weight of experience. They have watched multiple cohorts of students move through the training and into the professional workforce. This long-term view allows them to speak with authority on the consistency and impact of the intervention.

A primary observation from both institutions is that this programme fills a critical gap. Colleges often have the infrastructure to host companies, but they frequently lack a structured way to build employability. Placement coordinators can find jobs, but they do not always have the resources to teach soft skills. These skills include professional communication, interview preparation, and digital literacy. The curriculum provided by Magic Bus does not compete with the college's own activities. Instead, it complements and strengthens them. One institution reported a measurable increase in their overall placement numbers because of this partnership. This suggests that the training adds real value to the existing educational ecosystem.

The most striking feedback involves the depth of behavioral change in the students. Representatives noted that improvements in confidence were visible almost immediately. These changes were not just restricted to formal interview settings. Faculty and staff noticed that students carried themselves differently in their daily interactions. This is a significant finding because it shows the impact is not just a temporary performance for an assessor. It is an internal shift in professional conduct that becomes part of the student's personality.

Regarding the design of the training, the content is considered highly relevant. It aligns well with what modern employers are seeking. However, both institutions expressed a strong concern about the duration of the course. They independently suggested that the current six to eight day window is too short. They believe that deep skill development requires more time. A recommendation was made to extend the training to fifteen days or more. This would allow students to move beyond the basics and become truly job-ready.

Coordination between the colleges and the Magic Bus team was described as excellent. When challenges arose, such as issues with student attendance or technical problems with college signal jammers, the team was proactive. They worked with the administration to find solutions rather than treating the issues as failures.

This level of responsiveness indicates a mature and collaborative partnership. There is a strong desire to see this programme become a permanent part of the academic calendar. They suggested formalizing the relationship further by including internship facilitation in the agreement.

NGO Programme Team (1)

The programme team offers the most detailed operational view of the project. The Project Manager for the southern locations provided insights into how the intervention is adapted for different environments. This perspective helps us understand the balance between strategic goals and the realities of implementation. The design of the programme itself is a result of a collaborative process. The original framework focused on soft skills, but a Microsoft Office module was added at the request of HDBFS. This shows that the curriculum is responsive to the specific needs of the funder and the current market.

However, implementing this design in the real world presents several challenges. One major issue is the conflict between training schedules and college calendars. While the programme is designed for ten days, it is often compressed into eight days to fit the institution's requirements. This means students are in class for longer hours each day. While the team is flexible enough to accommodate these changes, it raises questions about the quality of learning. It is difficult to track if this compression affects how well students absorb the material.

The team's approach to problem-solving is very participant-centered. For example, many students come from low-income households and cannot afford mobile data for virtual sessions. To solve this, the programme team provided Wi-Fi dongles during the training. This prevented a digital divide from stopping the students' progress. This kind of practical flexibility is a key strength of the operational team. It ensures that the programme reaches those who need it most without placing an extra financial burden on them.

Post-placement tracking is another important area of focus. Currently, the team follows up with candidates for three months. If a student is unhappy with their job, the team tries to find them a different role. However, this system is currently used more for managing student satisfaction than for tracking long-term career growth. There is an opportunity here to build a more robust system for monitoring retention. One significant finding from the team is the salary gap. HDBFS often offers salaries that are lower than what Magic Bus can find through other partners. This creates a difficult choice for the team, as they want to support the funder but also want the best for the graduates.

Gender outcomes remain a strong point for the programme. Female enrollment is consistently high, usually between 60% and 70%. This is not an accident. It is the result of deliberate outreach and the fact that the training is free. For many families, a free programme is the only way they would allow their daughters to participate in professional training. The success stories, such as a single parent

becoming a corporate trainer, prove that the programme has a deep impact on the community.

The post-placement tracking system with which three months of follow-up, with an offer to reroute unsatisfied candidates to alternative employers is an important structural commitment. However, the description of it reveals a limitation: it is framed primarily as a satisfaction-management mechanism for the candidate rather than a systematic retention and income-progression monitoring system. The team's observation that HDBFS offers salaries below the market minimum that Magic Bus can source elsewhere (Rs. 15,000 versus Rs. 18,000 minimum) is a significant finding that points to a tension within the programme's own funder-partner relationship that deserves explicit attention in programme planning for future phases.

On gender outcomes, the team's observation that female enrolment consistently runs at sixty to seventy percent of cohort size is notable. This gender profile is not accidental: it reflects deliberate mobilisation choices

Placement Officer (1)

The Placement Officer works at the vital intersection of training and employment. Their role is to ensure that the skills taught in the classroom match what employers actually want to buy in the labor market. The current placement portfolio is very broad. It covers sectors like IT, manufacturing, healthcare, and e-commerce. Roles range from entry-level data entry to more senior roles like accountants. This diversity shows that

the programme is capable of serving a wide variety of educational backgrounds and career goals.

In general, the alignment between the training and employer needs is very strong. Employers typically look for a degree and good communication skills. The Magic Bus curriculum focuses heavily on these areas, and the results are positive. Candidate preparation is rated highly. When compared to students who have not had the training, Magic Bus graduates show much higher levels of confidence. They are better prepared for the pressure of a professional interview.

Despite these successes, the Placement Officer identified a persistent gap. While communication skills are improved, they are not always sufficient for the most complex roles. This suggests that the training may need to be tailored for different career paths. For example, a student going into a senior finance role might need different coaching than someone going into customer support. The current duration of the training may not allow for this kind of specialized preparation.

Retention is perhaps the most significant challenge discussed by the Placement Officer. A retention rate of 60% to 70% is considered a good starting point. Most candidates stay in their roles for five to ten months. However, the primary reason they leave is money. As these students gain experience and confidence, they realize they can earn more elsewhere. The officer stated clearly that salary enhancement is the

most important factor for keeping people in their jobs longer. This is a structural reality of the entry-level job market that the programme must navigate.

Operational coordination is a clear asset for this project. The use of both virtual and physical job drives has proven to be an effective way to connect large numbers of candidates with employers quickly. The Magic Bus team is seen as a reliable partner in this process. To maintain this success as the programme grows, there will need to be continued investment in the placement team. Managing relationships with hundreds of different employers requires significant time and skill.

Parents (3)

The interviews with parents and guardians provide a window into the social impact of the programme. The interviewed families mainly rely on agriculture or informal labor. For them, formal corporate employment was often seen as something out of reach. This programme acts as a bridge to a different kind of economic future. One interesting finding is that the students themselves are the primary messengers. Parents usually learned about the training from their children rather than from the college or the NGO.

This suggests that there is a gap in how the programme communicates with families. While the students are clearly motivated, the parents do not always understand the full scope of the training at the start. One parent thought it was just a short job-readiness course, while another had a better understanding.

Despite this, once the students enrolled, the families were very supportive. This support is critical because the training often requires students to stay late or travel to different locations.

The changes parents observed in their children were profound. They noticed that their children became more articulate and professional in their behavior at home. One father shared a story about his daughter being very nervous before an interview. The Magic Bus team conducted a special practice session just for her. This gave her the confidence to succeed. These stories show that the programme offers more than just classroom teaching. It provides a support system that many of these families cannot provide themselves.

The economic impact on the household is the most visible outcome for parents. In every case, the child's new income changed the family's financial situation. The money is used for essential things like rent and household bills. It has reduced the family's total dependence on unpredictable income from farming. Parents described a significant shift in the household dynamic. The child is no longer someone who needs to be supported. Instead, they have become a provider for the family. This reversal of roles is a major source of pride for the parents.

A very practical suggestion came from the parent group. They noted that many colleges require students to complete an internship to graduate. They suggested that Magic Bus should help facilitate these formal internships. This would solve two problems at once.

It would help the students meet their academic requirements and give them real-world work experience. Integrating internships into the programme would make the transition from college to work even smoother.

The degree of change observed by parents during and after training is striking precisely because it extends well beyond the vocational outcome. All three parents described transformations in communication, confidence, professional demeanour, and self-presentation that were visible to them, people with limited formal education, as changes in how their child moved through the world. One father described his daughter's panic before her first interview and the Magic Bus team's response: a pre-interview practice session the day before that helped her compose herself and ultimately clear the interview. This kind of individualised, last-

Employers (2)

Employer feedback is the ultimate test of whether the programme is working. Managers from the IT and ITES sectors have hired many candidates from this project. Their overall view is very positive. They find that trained candidates are much easier to hire and onboard. The graduates have better communication skills and more composure during the interview process. This is a major benefit for companies that need to hire people quickly and efficiently.

Employers specifically praised the focus on employability skills. They noted that it reduces the amount of basic training the company has to do after a new hire starts. In sectors like customer service,

having a professional manner from day one is essential. The placement drives organized by Magic Bus are seen as a great way to meet many qualified people at once. It saves the company time and money in their recruitment efforts.

However, employers also pointed out some areas for improvement. They suggested that candidates could benefit from more technical preparation. While the students are good at general communication, they sometimes struggle with specific role-based knowledge. For example, they may not know how to handle specific performance metrics or how to negotiate their salary. Employers would like to see candidates who are ready for the specific details of the job, not just the general environment.

There were also some concerns about behavior after the job begins. Some managers mentioned issues with punctuality and how well students adapt to corporate culture. Moving from the freedom of college to the strict schedule of an office can be a shock for some. There is also a problem with candidates declining jobs at the last minute. Often, this is because of the work location, but the students do not mention this during the interview. This wastes time for both the employer and the programme.

Despite these issues, employers appreciate the support they get from Magic Bus. The team is quick to find replacement candidates if someone leaves or turns down an offer. This makes Magic Bus a more valuable partner than a standard recruitment

agency. Employers are open to working even more closely with the programme. They suggested that they could help design the curriculum or provide guest speakers. This would ensure that the training stays perfectly aligned with what the industry needs.

Both employers independently identified employability skills and interview preparation as the most useful elements of the programme design. This is not simply a courtesy endorsement, it reflects a hiring manager's pragmatic assessment of what reduces onboarding friction. For customer-facing roles in IT/ITES, where telephonic communication, basic digital literacy, and a presentable professional manner are the threshold competencies, the programme's core offering maps well onto what is required. One employer described the programme's contribution in terms of time efficiency: the availability of pre-screened, communication-ready candidates through organised placement drives reduces the recruitment burden and accelerates the hiring cycle.

HDBFS CSR Team (1)

The CSR perspective reflects the views of a team member, with the Senior Manager for the South portfolio providing a considered and experience based assessment of the programme. The initiative was designed with ambitious targets, including an 80 percent placement rate and a defined number of internal hires within HDB Financial Services. While training delivery was implemented effectively and placement outcomes were broadly positive, some targets, particularly

internal hiring, were not fully realised. These outcomes are being viewed constructively as inputs for ongoing learning and future programme refinement.

The relatively limited number of internal placements emerged as an area for reflection. This appears to be associated with compensation dynamics highlighted by the programme team. While there is an intent to facilitate placements within HDB Financial Services, there is also a strong emphasis on enabling beneficiaries to access competitive opportunities in the wider market. In situations where external roles offer comparatively higher salaries, candidates tend to prefer those options. This indicates a potential opportunity for further alignment between corporate hiring approaches and CSR objectives over time.

The respondent also highlighted certain considerations related to monitoring processes. A range of data sources are currently utilised, including MIS reports and institutional documentation. However, data privacy requirements limit direct engagement with beneficiaries. This was noted as an area where, subject to appropriate safeguards, enhanced interaction with trainees could further strengthen independent verification of outcomes and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of programme impact.

The respondent shared a positive assessment of the quality of training delivery, supported by field observations and participant feedback. At the same time, there was a recognition that the

current duration of seven days may be relatively limited in enabling deeper outcomes. There is openness to exploring an extended training format in future phases, which could support more comprehensive skill development as well as provide additional space to address aspects such as student well being.



SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS



S

- NSDC-aligned curriculum tailored to BFSI, IT/ITES, retail, and service sector demand.
- Exceptional trainer quality
- Fast placement pipeline – 60% placed within 30 days of training completion.
- High placement retention – 82% remain at Magic Bus-facilitated employer.
- Strong blended delivery model (classroom, LMS, mock interviews, resume coaching).
- 100% career preparedness and 99% financial improvement across all participants.



W

WEAKNESSES

- Smartphone-dependent access limits quality of digital skills practice for hands-on modules.
- Internet connectivity gaps affect participants, with poor connectivity accounting for 94% of all technical issues.

OPPORTUNITIES



O

- Structured alumni engagement programme could dramatically expand peer-referral outreach and provide low-cost role modelling for current trainees.
- Deepening BFSI-specific curriculum (loan products, banking compliance, digital finance) could increase sector alignment and employer satisfaction.
- Integrating AI literacy, Power BI, Python basics, and advanced Excel directly addresses both beneficiary suggestions and evolving employer demand.



T

THREATS

- Competitive entry-level job market with salary levels below beneficiary expectations, sustaining attrition risk
- Smartphone-only participants face structural disadvantages in digital skills modules if institutional lab access cannot be guaranteed.

Conclusion

The assessment highlights that the programme is a well-designed and high-performing intervention that has successfully enabled first-generation graduates to transition into the formal workforce, as reflected in strong placement outcomes (72% employment), rapid placement timelines, and high retention rates (82%). Its key strengths, such as an industry-aligned curriculum, exceptional trainer quality, and an effective blended delivery model have contributed to significant improvements in employability, income, and career preparedness among beneficiaries. However, structural challenges, particularly smartphone-dependent learning, internet connectivity barriers, and limited depth in digital skill acquisition, continue to constrain the full potential of training outcomes. At the same time, emerging opportunities—including strengthening sector-specific content, integrating advanced digital skills, and leveraging alumni networks present clear pathways to enhance programme relevance and scale impact. The recommendations outlined, especially around improving digital infrastructure, extending training duration, and strengthening outcome monitoring, directly address these gaps while building on existing strengths. Addressing external threats such as competitive job markets and expectation mismatches will be critical to sustaining outcomes. Overall, with targeted refinements and strategic re-engagement, the programme is well-positioned to deepen its impact and ensure more sustainable livelihood outcomes for underserved youth.

Recommendations

1. Redesign Digital Skills Delivery to Overcome the Smartphone Access Constraint

More than half of participants completed their training, including the MS Excel and digital skills module, on personal smartphones. This is not a minor logistics issue; it is a structural constraint on the quality of practical digital skills learning. Proficiency in MS Excel, which requires a keyboard, grid navigation, formula entry, and multi-sheet workflows, cannot be meaningfully developed on a mobile screen. The fact that 34% of participants accessed training through institution computer labs demonstrates that college infrastructure exists and is already being used, but not as the default setting for digital skills components.

2. Introduce Advanced and Sector-Specific Curriculum Modules to Match Employer Demand

While 95% of participants rated the programme content as very relevant to their career aspirations, the open-ended suggestion data tells a more nuanced story: participants consistently and independently asked for AI tools, Power BI, Python, advanced Excel, and programming languages, skills that are rapidly becoming baseline requirements in the IT/ITES and BFSI roles where 76% of placed graduates are working.

This gap is further underlined by the digital skills dimension of the programme: MS Excel and digital skills registered the lowest 'improved a lot' rate of all four measured skill areas (69%), compared to 75% for interview skills, suggesting that the current digital curriculum, while valued, is not yet achieving the same depth of transformation as the communication and interview preparation components.

3. Extend Training Duration and Deepen Practical Skills Practice

The current 7–10 day training format delivers strong foundational outcomes, but participant suggestions consistently call for a longer programme, with recommended durations of 15–25 days to allow deeper, sector-specific content and more hands-on practice. For digital skills modules in particular, the 56.2% of participants relying on smartphones face a structural disadvantage in hands-on Excel and software training. A hybrid scheduling model, ensuring that digital skills sessions are scheduled during institution computer lab hours, would improve the quality of skill acquisition without requiring additional infrastructure investment.

4. Address Internet Connectivity Barriers Through Offline Content Infrastructure

Internet connectivity is the single most significant technical barrier to equitable programme access, cited by 94% of the 14% of participants who experienced any technical difficulty. Rather than treating this as an individual participant problem, the programme should build structural solutions: downloadable offline training modules for all LMS content, compressed video formats that minimise data consumption, and pre-loaded content on shared institutional devices where possible. Coordinating with college partners to ensure reliable Wi-Fi access during training sessions, particularly for participants without personal laptops would address the root cause rather than managing its symptoms. For future programme cohorts in geographically dispersed locations, an offline-first content design standard should be adopted as a baseline accessibility requirement.

Photographs







give | grants