



# The Untapped Billion

Unlocking India's  
Demographic  
Dividend



Concept Paper  
May 2025



# TESTIMONIALS

## **Pankaj Bansal (Co-Founder & Managing Partner, Caret Capital)**

The 10 trillion dollar dream for the Indian economy is not far away provided we all collectively put our efforts to create those 100 million workers and jobs. We, at Caret Capital, thought — can we take a target of 10 million jobs and we urge other funds, other corporations to take these internal targets and work towards it. It requires the whole ecosystem from education, from skilling, from job aggregators, from job boards, from the jobs ecosystems to come together. And it won't be easy. But once we all decide, it will be possible. If you do a double-click into what ONEST can do — I'm very delighted. The way we have seen transformation at Aadhaar for identity solutions; the way we saw UPI becoming the place for financial transactions — I expect ONEST to do the same for employment, skills and training.

## **Tej Hans Raj Singh (Deputy CEO, Qess Corp Limited)**

ONEST can be one of the biggest success stories for BCPL (subsidiary of Qess Corp). The innovative open networks approach will allow us to bring our Hamara Solutions to a much broader demography. By tapping into ONEST's broader network — we can collectively drive massive, scalable impact in the employment and skilling space. We also look forward to enhancing the ONEST network through our technical services, making it more accessible and beneficial for everyone involved. Together, we believe we can create and reshape the future of work, empowering individuals, enabling businesses, and ultimately making a collective impact on the next billion job seekers.

## **Ankit Aggarwal (Founder & CEO, Unstop)**

The problem is that the right set of employers are not able to reach out to the right set of students across India and possibly across the globe. And vice-versa — a student sitting in a tier 2 or a tier 3 college or maybe a tier 4 city, they are also unable to have opportunities from their dream employers because those companies don't come to their campus. This is one big problem that we, at Unstop, are trying to solve, and this initiative of ONEST helps us do that at a much, much larger scale. Today, we are sitting at about 20 million students on Unstop and we would like to make a difference to their lives and many more.

## **Sanjay Modi (Senior Director, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation)**

What excites us most about ONEST is how the networks enable solving for job discovery, employer connect, and bridging the skill demand gap. By bringing together the right opportunities and talent, ONEST helps match individuals with careers that align with their potential. At Dell Foundation, we are dedicated to creating clear pathways to meaningful employment and ensuring they have the skills they need to be successful. That's why we are looking forward to ONEST accelerating this mission.

## **Amrit Chaubey (Head, Special Projects and Partnerships, Physics Wallah)**

At PW, our mission is to reach and teach every student across the country — especially those who lack access to phones or the internet but have the intent to learn and transform their lives. We believe that if even one child in a family gets access to quality education and makes it to a good college, it can uplift the entire household. That is why we have started partnering with nonprofits and foundations across India — to reach the students who need our support the most. The pilot we ran is just a glimpse of the larger problem we are tackling, and the potential for impact is enormous. With the right use of technology and strong collaborations, we can simplify the process and truly level the playing field.

## **Suresh Sethi (Managing Director & CEO, Protean)**

With ONEST, we are looking at a DPI-led approach. Consider yourself as a blue dot — you are a person, an individual. You have certain attributes, certain credentials, be it your educational qualifications, be it your job experience, and any other equivalent attribute for you to be able to find a fitment for a job. Now, if you're easily discoverable by various employers out there who are looking for that skill set, you are able to bridge the gap, and you can equally flip and reverse the equation where an employer can today put out a job requiring a certain skill set and anybody who matches that is able to discover it and apply for it.

## **Kanishka Chatterjee (Senior Director, The/Nudge Prize)**

As somebody who has been striving to work in the ecosystem and basically build ecosystems around specific problems, I feel ONEST is going to be successful if the ecosystem is aware and brings itself to play with the ONEST approach across the next three or four years. I hope to be the ecosystem that comes and plays with ONEST to improve India's employment and skilling.

# TESTIMONIALS

## **Ishmeet Singh (Head, Digital Bharat Collaborative, Piramal Swasthya, Piramal Foundation)**

I believe meaningful change and innovation can make a significant impact in two areas. First, empowering the underprivileged and marginalised communities through benefits delivery, whether it is a gig worker lacking access to healthcare and retirement benefits or the girl child in the rural areas unable to fund their education or livelihood training. Second, leveraging technology for scalable solutions to democratise access to employment, healthcare and education for the underserved population more effectively. Both, DPI and open networks like ONEST present a transformative potential to solve some of the most pressing challenges in these areas.

## **Thirumala Arohi (EVP, Global Head: Education, Training and Assessment, Infosys Springboard)**

With Infosys Springboard, we are excited to see that anyone who is on the ONEST network can easily discover the content that Infosys Springboard offers. They can also look at the different jobs that we are hoping to provide through Infosys Springboard job marketplace. They can discover the jobs and associate the skills needed for them, all through the power of this ONEST distributed networks ecosystem.

## **Amit Jain (Chief People Officer, Taggd & PeopleStrong)**

At Taggd, we strive to connect people to people, people to companies, and people to opportunities. We aim to fulfill 1 million jobs by 2027. Our partnership in the context of ONEST is our endeavour towards our commitment to fulfill our mission and to make our country the world's talent capital.

## **Nitin Sharma (Founding Partner, Antler India)**

There are three big reasons why I'm really excited about ONEST. One, is the obvious social impact and the need for something like this. The ability of ONEST to take a very holistic view of things from not just skills or degrees but also jobs and benefits. Taking a holistic framework for this is something that was very refreshing and I congratulate the team behind ONEST for this amazing vision. The second reason is how it leverages the power of DPI. With population scale that can only be built in India and with the power of interoperability, it seems like an idea whose time has come. It applies to verifiability and portability of credentials and skills. So, what DigiLocker did to credentials, ONEST can do to skills, registries and jobs. The third reason is what AI will do and founders reimagining education products and business models in the age of GenAI. India needs something like ONEST to leverage the power of GenAI. I think this is a big vision for the future. We've made our first investment that's connected to ONEST in a startup called Proof Of Skill and we really hope that this roadmap comes to fruition sooner than later.

## **Bhuvan Yadav (Co-Founder and CTO, Wits Innovation Lab)**

This particular sector is very unorganised, especially when you talk about blue collar workers. You still cannot find 80% of jobs online across any platform. Although some platforms have jobs — awareness is not there. But how can these platforms leverage each other? My interest, along with that of my team, is the focus on decentralisation and open networks. The real power lies in decentralising and not locking the opportunities in one centralised system — this is by enabling through the networks.

## **Rajesh Pankaj (Chief Program Officer, Veranda Learning)**

At a high level, ONEST networks can connect students, institutions, employers and funders to learning and earning opportunities. For Veranda Learning, ONEST will help us reach and acquire students from across the country by connecting them to our high quality educational programs. Being on the network also means (that) a set of students will have ready access to financial aid and job opportunities, enabling them to skill, learn and build meaningful careers without barriers.

## **Parth Lawate (CEO and Co-Founder, Tekdi)**

If you look at where we are as a country — we are the most populous nation on Earth, and we are sitting on a huge demographic dividend that, if utilised, can really catapult us into the future, to becoming a developed country. And skilling, entrepreneurship, and job opportunities is the way to solve for that. Unemployment in general, especially in the age of AI is going to be a big problem globally. What can we do to enable the ecosystem to come together to solve this problem and that's where I think an open networks approach like ONEST holds a huge amount of possibilities.

# TESTIMONIALS

## **Surendra Singh Sucharia (Vice President, Dhiway)**

We are excited by the possibilities that open and decentralised networks like ONEST can bring to life. We hope to solve for one-click access to opportunities, consent-driven personalisation of offers, and high efficiency for employers, for funders, for training institutes, and the wider ONEST ecosystem. We, at the Dhiway, also care about innovation in partnership with the ecosystem using open source building blocks. Our stack is available for anyone to use and build upon. ONEST is also built on open source protocols and standards. We hope to forward this mission together by co-creating many of these puzzle pieces together with the community.

## **Vijay Roy (Founder, Scholarlify)**

Every year, almost 50 million students look for different kinds of scholarships or financial support and only 20% of them get any kind of real support, be it from government or private sources. The major challenge for students is that there are multiple frictions in the scholarship process. There is a lack of awareness because scholarship opportunities are limited to tier 1 and tier 2 cities, and many of them do not know that such opportunities are available... If they apply, there are so many challenges because the application process is long — there are lengthy document requirements. Because of these challenges and frictions, students miss out on scholarship opportunities. Through ONEST, we expect to reach out to the last mile students — those students living in the remote areas through multiple seeker-sided organisations who will help us validate and reach out to those students... We look forward to a long-term association with ONEST so that we can scale our model of scholarship transfers and remove frictions so that we can maximise impact.

## **Priya Naik (Founder and CEO, Samhita-CGF)**

Partnering with the open networks of ONEST is integral to our vision of doubling incomes of ten million workers and entrepreneurs. Open networks mean multiple ecosystems of support and co-exist in the same place, creating greater potential for more innovative solutions and targeted interventions that reach millions of youth across the country. We will be collaborating with ONEST networks to enable 10 million workers and entrepreneurs to access skills, jobs, entrepreneurship training and mentorship support over multiple years to increase their incomes. With ONEST, we hope to create exponential impact at national scale. Open networks are the future and it's exciting to be at the forefront of this innovation alongside ONEST.

## **Anand Desai (Founder and CEO, Dheya Career Mentors)**

When I see ONEST, it is set to revolutionise the entire way that employment happens. But it is not just about employment. It is also about skilling, it is about guidance, mentorship. At the same time, enabling education through scholarships. So, it's a complete ecosystem that is being created and this ecosystem is set to revolutionise the way this entire space is going to evolve.

## **Shayak Mazumder (Founder, CEO, CTO, Adya)**

At Adya, we enable businesses to create their solutions on various protocols (and) open networks. ONEST is one of those protocols we deeply believe in, and we feel that it is a protocol that'll help the youth; it'll help grey collar, blue collar workers a lot; and it'll also help with overall social support in this country.

## **Dheeraj S (Founder, HireBeen)**

At Hirebeen, our vision is about more than just speed and efficiency. We are deeply committed to the Digital India initiative by leveraging technology to make jobs more accessible and creating opportunities, and connect talent with organisations seamlessly. It's about building a future where hiring is simple, fair and effective for everyone. That's why we are so excited about ONEST and the possibilities it brings. ONEST aligns perfectly with our mission of enabling jobs and opportunities across connected networks. It has fast-track hiring while fostering trust across platforms, creating a system that works for both employers and the job seekers. Potential here is immense — reducing cost and the time of application, innovative solutions through connected platforms, and a trusted ecosystem for smarter and more efficient hiring. Together, we can revolutionise recruitment and empower India's workforce to thrive.

## **Nilesh Halde (CPO, PayNearby)**

In my opinion, ONEST will help unlock the skill pull of the country to all recruiters, reducing their time and cost of recruitment. Plugging in AI-based models will also help job seekers get the right jobs and recruiters get the right candidates.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India’s demographic dividend is an incredible asset — 600 million young, ambitious individuals poised to shape the nation’s future. But potential alone is not enough. Their ability to thrive depends on seamless access to the right learning and earning opportunities. Yet, **the lack of formalisation** of opportunities keeps these opportunities remain **fragmented** and **hard to access**. Even when people do find them, the way these opportunities are delivered is often **slow, complex, and ineffective**, creating more hurdles for India’s youth.



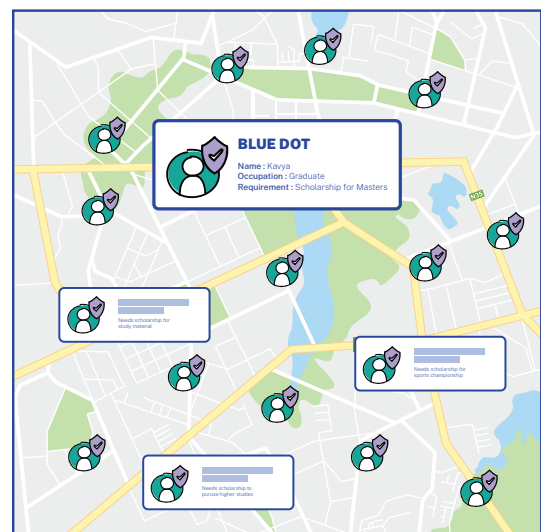
**Demographic Dividend  
(Potential)**

**Demographic Yield  
(Real Value)**

While India has built powerful population-scale systems for identity (Aadhaar), payments (UPI), credential storage (DigiLocker), and compliance (GSTN), these do not make opportunities **digitally discoverable** in a **trusted** and **timely** manner — nor do they enable individuals to make their achievements and aspirations visible in the same way. As a result, individuals **struggle to access** the right opportunities and benefits efficiently, while organisations face **higher costs, prolonged timelines, higher noise**, and **reduced trust** in candidate information. Formalisation of this space in a digital world — can bridge this gap, improving discoverability, streamlining matching, and making access more efficient and effective. Without clear signals of intent — **'blue dots'** that highlight the opportunities or make aspirations visible — hundreds of millions miss out on beneficial avenues, and India risks underutilising its greatest asset: **its people**.

## Creating Blue Dots for Employment and Benefits Delivery

Many industries have already benefited from creating similar blue dots to signal intent in a trusted and timely fashion. **Ride-hailing apps**, for instance, enable seamless matching by making drivers and riders digitally visible in real time. Similarly, **food delivery platforms** surface restaurants, delivery partners, and customers as blue dots, allowing real-time order tracking and fulfillment.



The same principle can transform how people find jobs and access benefits. What if job seekers and employers could connect instantly, and the costs, time and noise in employment can be reduced significantly? And what if benefits could reach people as quickly and seamlessly as a digital payment—direct, fast, and hassle-free? Like Aadhaar and no-frills bank accounts, which reduced the cost of eKYC to almost nothing and brought banking to more than 80% of Indians at unprecedented speed—enabling the transformation through Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) and saving the government billions of dollars. What if we could enable an **eKYC-equivalent** for candidates as **eKYA: Know Your Applicant** and job and benefit postings as **eKYP: Know Your Posting** to ensure trust? What if all of this were done in a no-frills way — **ensuring significantly lower costs, time and noise with greater trust**, among other outcomes — with relative ease? This presents the opportunity to move from high cost, low volume transactions in employment and benefits delivery to low cost, high volume, trusted transactions which can unlock India’s demographic dividend.

This is not a distant vision — roots are already taking shape.

Early pilots adopting the **ONEST (Open Networks for Employment & Skilling Transformation)** approach have demonstrated the potential of this shift.

**DigiPass for Employment: Quick, Local and Pre-Verified**

Reducing hiring time to minutes/hours from weeks/months at lower costs, while helping candidates find local/hyperlocal opportunities.

**DigiPass for Benefits: Instant and Pre-Verified**

Reducing approval and disbursement cycle times to minutes, not weeks or months, with benefits that find beneficiaries and move with them—ensuring access regardless of platform or location.





The approach was shaped by insights gained from these early pilots with ecosystem players and consists of three key building blocks that can lay a strong foundation to empower the next billion young Indians:

**01 Digitising for the Next Billion:**

Turning aspirations and opportunities into blue dots in a no-frills way — making them digitally visible, trusted, and part of the formal economy.

**02 Making Trust Fluid with Portable Credentials:**

Ensuring these blue dots (no-frills profiles and postings) are trusted in the digital world through digital credentialing and DigiAttestors, while enabling the portability of credentials.



**03 Making Exchange of Value Seamless:**

Implementing an open protocol for diverse players to exchange value within and with each other.

But how can these building blocks become a mainstay in the job and benefits ecosystems—and perhaps even in the context of skilling for employability? Because this is not just a challenge—it’s a huge opportunity for growth, innovation, and collaboration that can significantly expand the pie for the ecosystem.

The answer, as the pilots have unearthed, lies in enabling this transformation by innovators—by lowering the barriers to entry, equipping organisations with the essentials, and creating an environment that encourages innovation and considered progress on the back of onground learnings. Thus, **easy transformation made possible through pilot infrastructure**, combined with the building blocks of the ONEST approach, offers all ecosystem players a way to come together and solve for the many challenges around employment and benefits delivery.



***The Untapped Billion: Unlocking India's Demographic Dividend*** builds on lessons from India's DPI journey and early ONEST pilots. It explores the challenges, **innovative possibilities**, and **market opportunities** available to ecosystem players seeking to empower India's young, aspirational population through the three building blocks articulated. Preliminary estimates suggest that addressing these challenges could **unlock market opportunities worth over billions of dollars conservatively**. This paper **invites innovative ecosystem players** to actively engage in unlocking this potential, driving transformation, and enabling India's youth to fuel its demographic dividend.



# UNLOCKING THE UNTAPPED BILLION: LEARNINGS FROM PILOTS

Let's dive into the heart of this paper with a quick trip down memory lane.

*It is the 1990s, and ordering food from a restaurant still involves using a corded landline. You are expecting a gathering of ten, and your guests have diverse dietary preferences — a soup here, a paneer tikka there, and a gulab jamun elsewhere. Coordinating this meal means making several phone calls to different restaurants: confirming if they are open, figuring out what is available, and describing your location using landmarks and street names. There is no online ordering, no fast delivery, and no options for seamless choices.*



*Fast forward to 2025.*

*As a consumer, you are digitally empowered. Whether ordering a large feast or a single dish, you can effortlessly place your order online, trust the system, and have your meal delivered within minutes. Restaurants can now reliably meet your diverse, timely, and bite-sized cravings, all thanks to the digital world and the fluid trust it brings.*

Much like how food delivery services have adapted to meet evolving customer demands, India's employment and benefits delivery ecosystems have the potential to evolve similarly. But for this shift to happen, it will need us to reliably understand **what people need, when they need it, and in what proportions**. Let's understand this from the perspective of what was learnt through pilots of ONEST.

## Pilot Learnings and Possibilities

### DigiPass for Employment: Quick, Local and Pre-Verified

More than 80% of India's young population i.e., almost 500 million people lack a digital profile and can't find employment and skilling opportunities with ease. More than 80% of employment and skilling options are not discoverable digitally and are sitting as posters on poles and trees.

As a result, blue and grey-collar roles, which form more than 90% of employment in the country, typically face an average lag of up to two weeks before qualified leads are generated. The cost of sourcing and verifying these leads typically exceeds Rs. 1,000. Given the noise in the ways leads are generated, employees attrite, leading to double digit monthly attrition rates in blue collar roles. Employers, depending on their size, rely on various employment channels—job aggregators, staffing agencies, individual contractors, WhatsApp/Telegram groups, newspaper listings, social media, and physical postings—each adding to the budget. On the other hand, job seekers struggle to find suitable jobs. This results in significant information asymmetry and noise, with seekers not being able to find jobs and jobs not being able to find people. To test the hypothesis that a more digital approach—one that improves job listings, captures candidate details more effectively, and broadcasts their intent digitally—could streamline this process, ONEST pilots were conducted in Kolar and Hosur. The following was done during these pilots:

- **The creation of a 'no-frills profile' and 'no-frills job posting'**  
*Digitising candidates' profile by capturing key details and digitising jobs offered by firms.*
- **Using DigiAttestors to issue portable digitally verifiable credentials**  
*Converting physical documents into digitally verifiable credentials through DigiAttestors.*
- **One-click applications and verification of applications over an open protocol**  
*Enabling one-click applications by applicants and verification of application by providers over an open protocol (DSEP protocol) enabled through ONEST.*



Here are the key metrics compared to the traditional, more conventional employment methods:

METRIC	PRIOR TO PILOT	DEMONSTRATED THROUGH OPEN NETWORK PILOTS
Time taken to find qualified leads	>2 weeks	<1day
Cost of discovering and verifying leads	>Rs. 1,000	~Rs. 100
Type of opportunity	Far-off roles	Also local opportunities

What was observed is that there is potential not only to reduce costs and time for qualified leads in the context of local/hyperlocal opportunities, but also to improve trust with pre-verified leads when established local networks like neighbourhood retailers and other community representatives are involved in the process.

### DigiPass for Benefits: Instant and Pre-Verified

About one-third of India's scholarship budget remains unutilised, amounting to thousands of crores. The process is often cumbersome, with more than **50 steps, 10+ document submissions, and approval delays of up to six months**, with some cases taking around **14 months for disbursement**. This long wait discourages many from even applying. Pilots were conducted on the same, each showing great results.

METRIC	PRIOR TO PILOT	DEMONSTRATED THROUGH OPEN NETWORK PILOTS
Time taken to apply and approve scholarships	>6 months	2 minutes
Cost of discovering and verifying leads	>Rs. 1,000	~Rs. 100
Type of opportunity	>Rs 10,000 scholarships	Also Rs 1,000 scholarships

- **The creation of a ‘no-frills profile’ and ‘no-frills job posting’**  
*Digitising students’ profile by capturing key details and digitising scholarships offered by local philanthropists also known as ‘Bhamashahs’ in Jhunjhunu.*
- **Using DigiAttestors to issue portable digitally verifiable credentials**  
*Converting physical documents into digitally verifiable credentials through DigiAttestors and storing them in digital wallets. School principals verified original documents of students and DigiAttested them to create digitally verifiable credentials.*
- **One-click applications and verification of applications over an open protocol**  
*Enabling one-click applications by beneficiaries and verification of application by providers over an open protocol (DSEP protocol) enabled through ONEST.*



The result was a reimaged scholarship application, approval and disbursement experience. The pilot saw **2-minute scholarship approvals** with **same-day disbursement** from an average of 6+ months—a big win for the ecosystem and more importantly, a huge relief for the beneficiaries.

Yet another example of benefits finding beneficiaries was the pilot by **Physics Wallah**. Let's explore!

The Physics Wallah's pilot showed how **digital behavior signals**—like high watch time, free batch enrollment, test performance, and payment dropouts—can help identify deserving scholarship candidates. With **minimal documentation**, Physics Wallah verified and credentialed these students to **‘create blue dots with digitally verifiable credentials’**, enabling a funder like Redseer to match them against set criteria and disburse aid swiftly and confidently. The contrast with traditional models was stark: from a 10% cost and 6+ months to ₹0 and same-day disbursement.

METRIC	PRIOR TO PILOT	PILOT
Cost incurred by funder (per disbursement)	10% of disbursement	Rs. 0
Disbursal time	6+ months	1 day
Reach out strategy	Spray-and-pray	Targeted
Verification approach	Manual checks	Pre-verified

Verified profiles (blue dots) made students **digitally discoverable, removing costly outreach and improving unit economics**. This shift makes it viable to support other, equally relevant **‘sachetised’ needs**—like exam fees, essential textbooks, or mobile data—that are often overlooked due to the commissions typically involved. If **more trusted organisations like Physics Wallah convert relevant candidates into blue dots**, funders can address **high-volume demand more efficiently**, transforming how **benefits can reach beneficiaries in minutes** across the country. On its own, and driven by the success of the pilot efforts, the PhysicsWallah team will significantly scale its efforts to convert more deserving students into blue dots and connect them to funders in a targeted, cost-effective manner.

These pilot initiatives reinforce the need to surface and connect the blue dots of aspirations and opportunities to empower India’s youth. But how should one go about creating these blue dots? What are the key considerations? Learnings from pilots have been distilled into a simple framework built around three key building blocks that can serve as the foundation of this blue dot journey. Let’s dive into the details of each one with a couple of examples.



# BUILDING BLOCK #1: DIGITISING FOR THE NEXT BILLION

## The Kavya Story: A Long and Frustrating Job-Seeking Ordeal

Kavya (name changed), 22, spent six months job hunting after graduating in Kannur. She repeatedly submitted personal details and uploaded countless files as part of several scattered applications. On the other side of the equation, a few local MSMEs were on the lookout for profiles much like Kavya's. However, they never crossed paths despite all the mutual intent, the channels utilised (college tie-ups; job portals; job posters on trees, poles and bus stops, and more), and the spending on the part of the job providers.

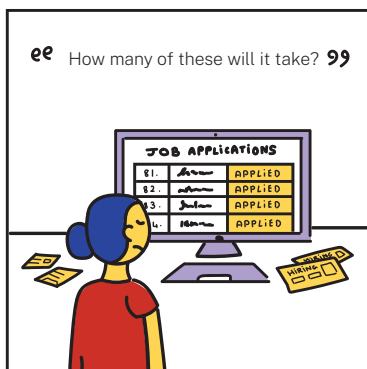


By and large, her applications were either lost amongst all the noise in the channels, were rejected simply on the basis of her college, or were futile because the vacancies were already filled. On a separate note, she herself had to turn down a few opportunities recommended by her friends because migration and language were barriers. After six months of searching, Kavya reluctantly accepted a job in faraway Bengaluru — one that neither matched her aspirations nor fulfilled her wish for a hyperlocal role close to her family — driven by the need to start earning.

Kavya's very presence as an active job seeker was simply a whisper in the wind. What compounds this is that there are countless other cases wherein individuals are **not present on the radar of opportunities**.

1.

Innumerable job applications by Kavya have been lost in a sea of noise for 6 months.



2.

Despite mutual intent, Kavya and potential employers never crossed paths.



3.

Barriers of migration, language, and lost opportunities led Kavya to settle far from her aspirations.





## The Suresh Story: Hoop After Hoop in the Pursuit of Skilling

Suresh (name changed), 28, is another example. He is a teller at a PSU bank and aspired to become an operations officer by clearing the bank exam. However, he struggled to find the right upskilling resources, relying on friends' recommendations and scattered online searches. What he received from them was a barrage of disparate choices that led to analysis paralysis. His colleagues recommended an offline coaching centre which did not fit his schedule or budget. A skilling organisation's poster on a tree eventually caught his eye, but when he reached out, he was informed that their current batch had already begun. His attempt to use YouTube for upskilling was equally frustrating due to the sheer volume of options available. He eventually took the exam for practice but plans to try again next time, hoping to have sufficient training beforehand. In the meantime, he continues working as a teller.

1.

Suresh dreams of advancing from his bank teller job. He needs to clear the banking exam to do so.



2.

Overwhelming information and lack of guidance makes Suresh feel lost and frustrated.



3.

Without a clear path, Suresh continues to work as a teller, his dream left unrealised.



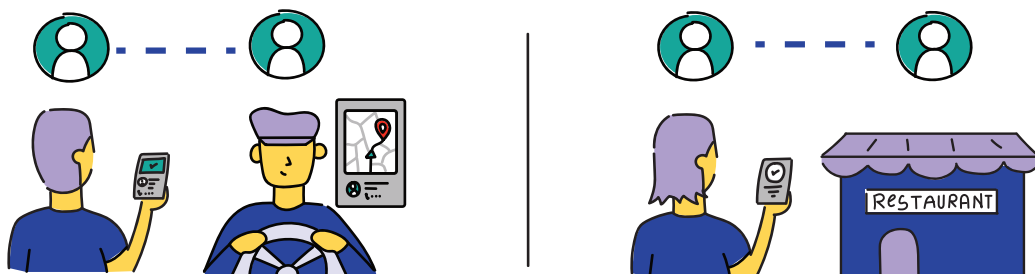
## Overview

The aspirations of millions like Kavya and Suresh are not digitally discoverable — just like most jobs, skilling opportunities, and benefits in India. The need then is to surface and connect the blue dots of opportunities and aspirations of opportunity seekers alike. This could manifest in several ways — one example being no-frills digital profiles and no-frills digital postings of opportunities to ensure greater all-round visibility to aspirations and opportunities.

## Today's Reality: Lack of Digitisation and Digital Discovery of Aspirations and Opportunities

### Aspirations and Achievements:

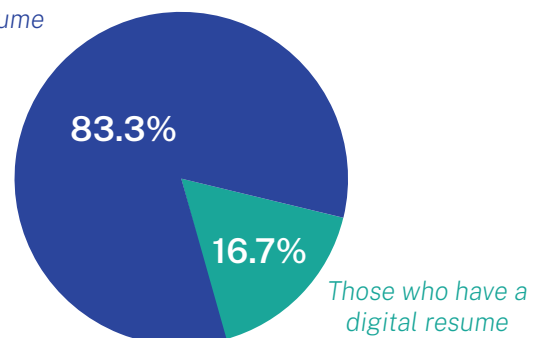
Many industries have successfully created blue dots tailored to their needs. Ride-hailing apps turn drivers into blue dots by collecting key details, verifying documents, tracking their locations, and linking phone numbers—making them instantly discoverable. Riders become blue dots by sharing their name, phone number, and location, enabling seamless matches with nearby drivers. Food delivery apps follow a similar model, transforming restaurants into blue dots by gathering essential business details, legal documents, and menu listings. Customers, too, become blue dots by creating profiles and sharing their location, ensuring quick and relevant connections.



These successes raise an important question: **What does a blue dot mean in the context of employment and benefits delivery?** Is it just about creating digital resumes? Probably not – after all, a business does not appear on Google Maps simply by uploading a document. It must go through a structured process: submitting details, providing proof, undergoing verification, and maintaining accurate information to remain visible and trusted. This process does more than just make businesses visible—it formalises them, enabling smoother operations, easier access to financial services, and greater trust from customers. If becoming a blue dot on a map takes this much effort, should the process of making individuals digitally discoverable in the employment and benefits delivery spaces not be just as rigorous where specific, contextualised attributes that are minimal have been etched out? Because despite all the progress we have made in the digital realm thus far and all the processes we have in place currently, Kavya, Suresh, and hundreds of millions of other individuals are still struggling to be discovered.

Today, over **500 million young Indians lack access to a digital resume**, for example, leaving them off the radar of opportunities. Even among the 100 million who have some form of a digital profile, most remain trapped in silos, failing to make skills and aspirations truly discoverable.

*Those who do not have a digital resume*



Young and aspirational population (aged 18-39).

## Opportunities from Organisations:

A significant number of job and skilling opportunities can still be found on trees, poles, gates, compound walls, fences, autos, buses, and hoardings. A simple walk through the neighborhoods we frequent would quickly reveal this surprising reality.



This is especially true in the job or labour market. It is estimated that 80%-90% of jobs in the country – particularly those offered by MSMEs, which account for over 60% of employment – are still physical in nature.

The lack of formalisation – exacerbated by limited digitisation, which is increasingly essential in a digital world – leads to lowered trust and missed opportunities for both candidates and organisations. At the very least, it results in prolonged processes that waste time, money, and effort due to the overwhelming noise of irrelevant applications.

## So, What Can Help?

Digitising aspirations and achievements of individuals by defining blue dots as no-frills profiles

Making them visual, vocal, vernacular, and multi-modal

01

02

03

04

Putting them on a digital map

Enabling MSMEs and small entrepreneurs to unlock greater value by formalising opportunities in a no-frills manner

## Preliminary Market Opportunity Estimates

**Rs. 45,000 crore**  
**Cost Savings in Hiring**

An estimated 500 million young Indians currently lack a consolidated digital presence in the form of a digital resume or consolidated work profile. Early pilots adopting ONEST have demonstrated an approximate cost reduction of Rs. 900 per candidate in lead generation, primarily due to the availability of streamlined digital profiles. Extending this across 500 million individuals could result in ₹45,000 crore (USD 5.42 billion) in total savings for employers. This is a conservative estimate that excludes potential savings from increased productivity and efficiency among other things.

This section touched on the ‘blue dot’ story – highlighting the importance of placing aspirations and opportunities on a digital map or the radar of opportunities. However, these blue dots hold little meaning if they are not trustworthy. Let us explore this aspect further with an example.



# BUILDING BLOCK #2: MAKING TRUST FLUID WITH PORTABLE CREDENTIALS AND DIGIATTESTORS

## The Raj Story: Who Can I Really Trust?

Raj (name changed), a 27-year-old security guard at a firm in Bengaluru, takes on delivery jobs in the evenings to supplement his income and send money back to his family in Uttar Pradesh. His goal is to learn basic Kannada so he can better communicate with customers. Over the years, he has picked up some English through conversations with them, but his Kannada skills still need improvement.

1.

Raj juggles multiple jobs to meet his financial and familial obligations.



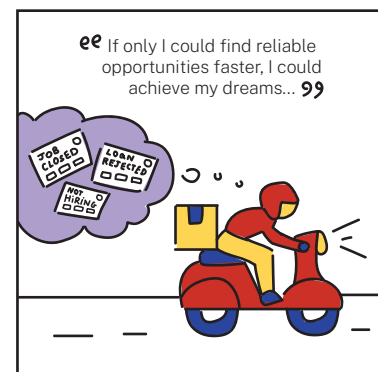
2.

Raj struggles with navigating digital and offline resources while balancing his work and aspirations.



3.

Despite challenges, Raj remains determined to pursue a better future.



Although he has considered enrolling in paid courses at local centers, he's rejected most because they didn't fit his budget. In his search for more affordable options, he's turned to YouTube, but finding the right resources has been overwhelming. With so many videos and playlists available, Raj struggles to decide which ones he can truly trust. There's little information to guide him, leaving him uncertain about whether the lessons are accurate or even worth his time.

## Overview

There are two main things to consider here:

### The Limitations of Digitisation

Digitisation alone does not guarantee trust. In ride-hailing or food delivery, a digitised location is not always accurate. Manually entering a location should serve as proof of presence, yet we're all familiar with misplaced pins and how they can cause **confusion** and **erode trust**. Similarly, in e-commerce, a digitised seller does not automatically equate to a trusted seller. That's why platforms took the next step to verify sellers and designate certain ones as trusted.

A similar challenge exists in employment, skilling, and benefits. Today, a digital profile or an uploaded certificate does not guarantee authenticity, nor does it ensure that different employers or platforms will accept it. Without a way to verify and port credentials seamlessly across instances, geographies, and platforms, individuals face repeated verification hurdles, slowing down hiring and mobility. Similarly, benefits often do not move with individuals, leaving many without continuity in essential support.

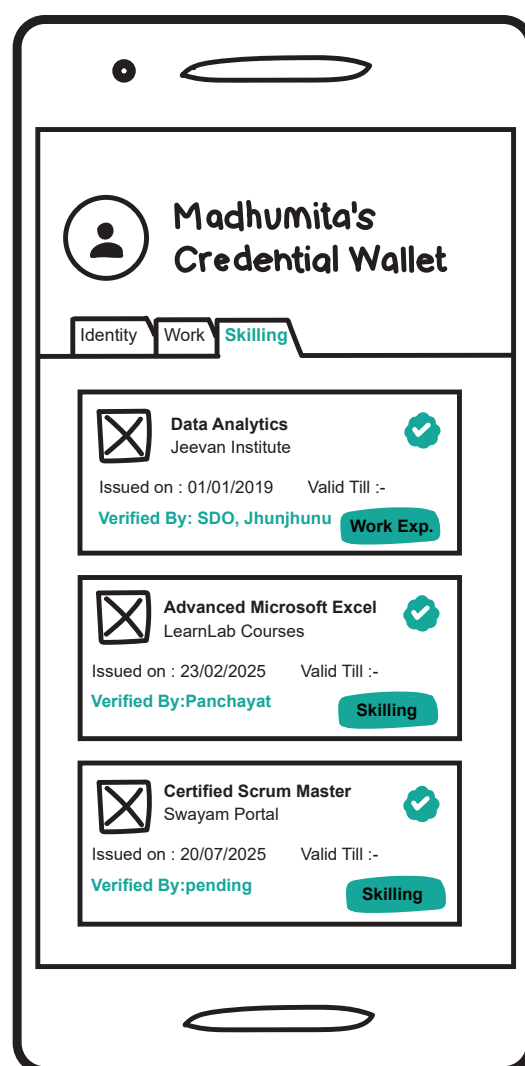
## The Need for Universally Accepted Portable Digital Credentials

Attaching digitally verifiable credentials can build trust, but universal acceptance and portability remain a challenge. A credential from one entity may not be trusted by another, forcing individuals to repeatedly prove their qualifications. This lack of portability results in duplicated effort, increased costs, and unnecessary delays – particularly for those frequently moving across jobs, locations, or sectors.

The same applies to benefits. Many entitlements remain tied to a single employer, location, or sector, making it difficult for individuals to retain or transfer them when they switch jobs or migrate. A worker moving from one city to another should not have to restart the process of accessing government benefits from scratch.

A common standard is needed to ensure digital proof of aspirations, achievements, and opportunities is widely accepted. Imagine ‘Portable Digital Credentials’ that include a digital profile where each attribute is backed by digitally verifiable credentials, stored on a digital wallet – functioning as a dynamic and truly digital resume, rather than a static PDF or Word document. With consent, it could accompany job applications, providing employers instant access to verified credentials that follow standards and streamlining discovery and verification while reducing costs.

Most importantly, this would ensure that an individual’s credentials and benefits become portable and move with them – rather than being locked in silos, lost in transitions, or requiring re-verification at every step.

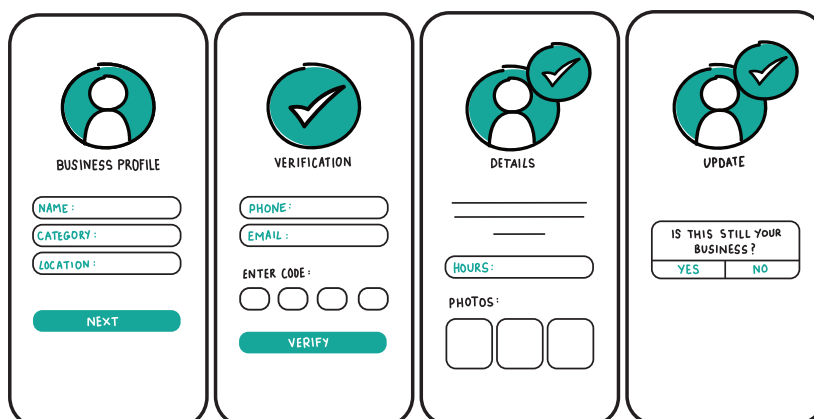


## Today's Reality: Lack of Digitisation and Digital Discovery of Aspirations and Opportunities

There is a significant trust deficit between individuals and organisations. Many Indian citizens are not fully digitally native, making digital documents and online access to opportunities and benefits a learned behavior rather than an instinctive one. While a physical resume or a job listing on a pole may not inspire confidence, their digital counterparts face similar doubts about legitimacy. Many **lack essential information**, appear **incomplete** or **unprofessional**, and offer **no means to verify the authenticity** of the person or opportunity.

Let's break this down by examining how businesses typically get listed on Google Maps – and no, it's not as simple as filling out a form and waiting for your coveted blue dot. Here's what the process actually involves:

- Create a business profile and enter key details (business name, category, location).
- Undergo verification through options like mail code, phone/email verification, or video.
- Once verified, add essential information (hours, services, photos, description).
- Regularly update profile to maintain visibility and credibility.



The bottom line is that **digitisation requires verification** to build trust and regular updates to maintain relevance – it doesn't end at creation.

As things stand, what documents are considered to be verified in a manner that is universally accepted? In benefits delivery, trust is largely placed in government-issued documents (Aadhaar, passports, driver's licenses, PAN cards), those from government-recognised bodies (marriage, income, disability certificates), notarised affidavits, and records from established financial institutions like banks.

So, who locally can help digitally credential the essential attributes of the blue dot in employment or benefits, in a way that is universally accepted? One solution can be the use of **DigiAttestors** – authorised individuals or organisations that validate and verify key details by looking at original physical documents to ensure authenticity and issue digital credentials against standards with their digital signatures to highlight that they have validated the original documents. During pilots many organisations played this role to reduce time and costs of verification and were trusted by the providers of job opportunities and benefits like scholarships.

Examples of personas that can act as DigiAttestors can be:



Thus, to bridge the trust deficit and ensure the reliability of blue dots, it is crucial to establish systems and actors that play a key role in verifying and validating digital credentials. By engaging **trusted local networks and institutions** in this process, a more authentic, accessible, and universally accepted digital ecosystem can be created that helps bring down costs and time.

### So, What Can Help?

Identifying which elements of the blue dots need to be verifiable

Co-creating standards for credentialing to achieve universal acceptance of these Portable Digital



Deploying digitally verifiable credentials and digital wallets for storing

Defining consent framework for exchanging them

Collectively agreeing upon organisations as trusted DigiAttestors to issue and verify them



## Preliminary Market Opportunity Estimates

  
**Rs. 10,000 crore**

### Business Gains from Credentialing and Related Digital Services

As discussed throughout this paper, an estimated 500 million students and young individuals in India currently lack a consolidated digital profile or resume. If we conservatively estimate that the cost of creating such a profile—including credentialing, application, and other procedural steps, many of which are currently informal—amounts to ₹200 per blue-collar candidate, this points to a potential opportunity worth ₹10,000 crore (USD 1.2 billion).

This is a conservative estimate. It does not account for the higher spending capacity of grey- and white-collar candidates, the potential for recurring value related to credentialing and profile updates, or the broader productivity gains that digital profiles could enable across skilling, benefits delivery and employment.

So far, the focus has been on creating blue dots and building trust in them. Now, it is time to explore how value exchange between these blue dots can be made as seamless and convenient as possible.



# BUILDING BLOCK #3: MAKING EXCHANGE OF VALUE SEAMLESS

## The Shikha Story: Sifting Through the Noise, Daily

Shikha has been in recruitment for over a decade, but lately, her job has started to feel like a test of patience. Each day, she sifts through stacks of resumes—some printed, some emailed, some forwarded as last-minute recommendations. Yet, despite the sheer volume, finding the right candidate feels harder than ever.

A pattern has emerged. Applications are often incomplete, exaggerated, or entirely irrelevant. It is not that people lack skills—she understands their urgency, their need to secure a livelihood. But the disconnect between talent and opportunity is growing, and it is turning hiring into a slow, frustrating process.

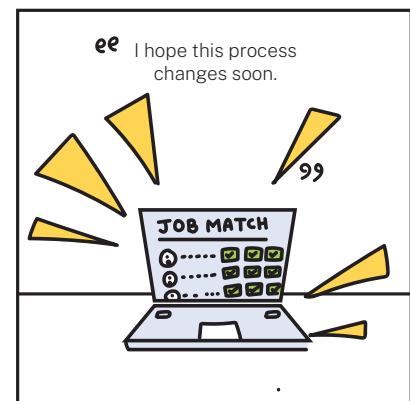
**1.** Despite the sheer volume of applications, Shikha struggles to hire the right candidate.



**2.** Applications are usually incomplete, exaggerated, or entirely irrelevant.



**3.** She dreams of having a system that simplifies hiring by providing clarity, credibility, and the right talent.



What she truly needs is a way to cut through the noise—to connect with organisations that can vouch for candidates, ensuring they are not just eager but actually equipped for the roles they seek. By year's end, she hopes to finally have a system that brings clarity, credibility, and the right talent to her desk—without the guesswork.

## The Jacob Story: A Personal Network Stretched Too Thin

Jacob has been skilling for years, and for him, it is more than just a job — it is a commitment to his students' futures. He has always been resourceful, tapping into his network to connect them with job opportunities. But lately, his reach is no longer enough.

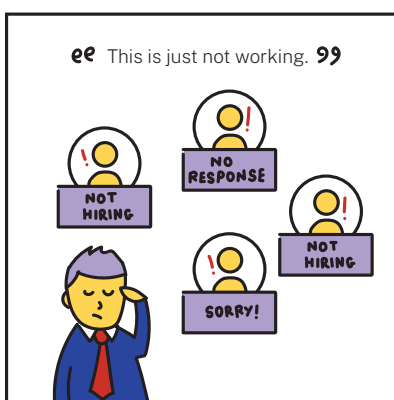
1.

Jacob has always been proactive when it comes to finding opportunities for his students.



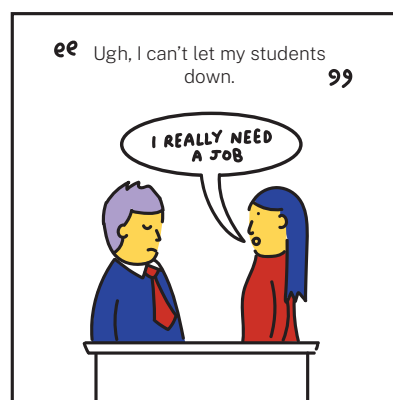
2.

But now times have changed and he simply does not have enough reach anymore.



3.

He feels as though he has let his students down. Something needs to change.



The job market is changing fast, and his usual contacts can only do so much. So, he has started reaching out cold — sending emails, making calls, hoping for a response. More often than not, those efforts go unanswered. Every missed opportunity feels like a setback — not for him, but for his students.

## Overview

Let's understand this building block using an example from the digital payments ecosystem.

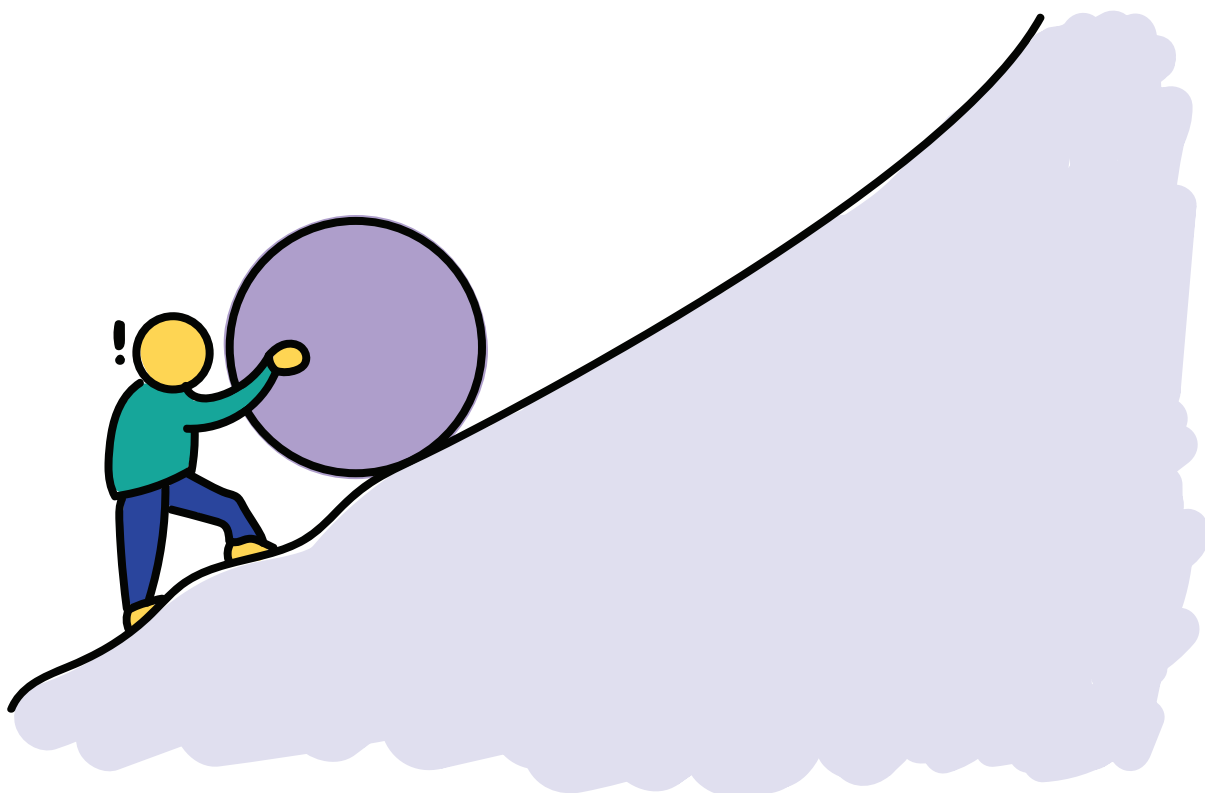
In the early days, PhonePe allowed payments **within its ecosystem** across different customers and merchants. The UPI protocol enabled it to remove payment frictions by allowing for easy exchange of money regardless of which bank account the customer or the merchant had. However, both the **customer and the merchant had to be on the same PhonePe platform**. This enabled PhonePe to enable exchange of value within its platform through the use of the UPI protocol. The real breakthrough came when another company launched the first **interoperable** UPI QR code in 2018, allowing payments across multiple UPI apps via a single QR code. This innovation made transactions smoother and more accessible since customers and merchants could now exchange money without being on the same platform. A UPI network was hence enabled, with **multiple platforms exchanging value** with each other.

Similarly, in the jobs, skilling and benefits delivery ecosystem, empowering individuals to access a wider range of opportunities requires enabling platforms to communicate and exchange resources both within and across ecosystems. **A protocol serves as the bridge that connects different value types within a platform and facilitates seamless value exchange across platforms**, just like UPI does for payments as highlighted in the example above.

By enabling seamless value exchange both within and across platforms, individuals can access greater opportunities, while organisations can connect with a wider, more diverse audience to service diverse demands — both big and small.

## Today's Reality: Baahubali! Baahubali! Baahubali!

In the employment, skilling, and benefits spaces, many players operate in 'Baahubali' mode. For those of you not well-versed in the lore of the father-son duo of Amarendra and Mahendra — this refers to how one organisation tries to take on everything, regardless of the cost, time, or effort involved. A staffing company contemplating the idea of offering foundational courses and scholarships for candidates has two main options: do it in-house, which requires significant cost and resources, or attempt separate, **cumbersome 1-1 integrations** with organisations that specialise in these services. Neither approach is sustainable for companies aiming to launch new services quickly and efficiently, without disrupting existing operations or overspending. Does it even make sense to do everything by oneself when there may be more efficient options available — now that's an important question for an organisation to explore.



As India's young and aspirational population continuously evolves in their learning and earning needs, organisations will face the persistent challenge of connecting their existing services while also expanding their offerings. Without efficient value exchange – both within platforms and across platforms – individuals will remain limited in accessing relevant opportunities. The key is to unlock a broad range of services in a cost- and time-effective way, allowing seamless value exchange between blue dots.

## So, What Can Help?

Identifying use cases where the intent is to make the exchange of value seamless and efficient – whether within a platform or across platforms.

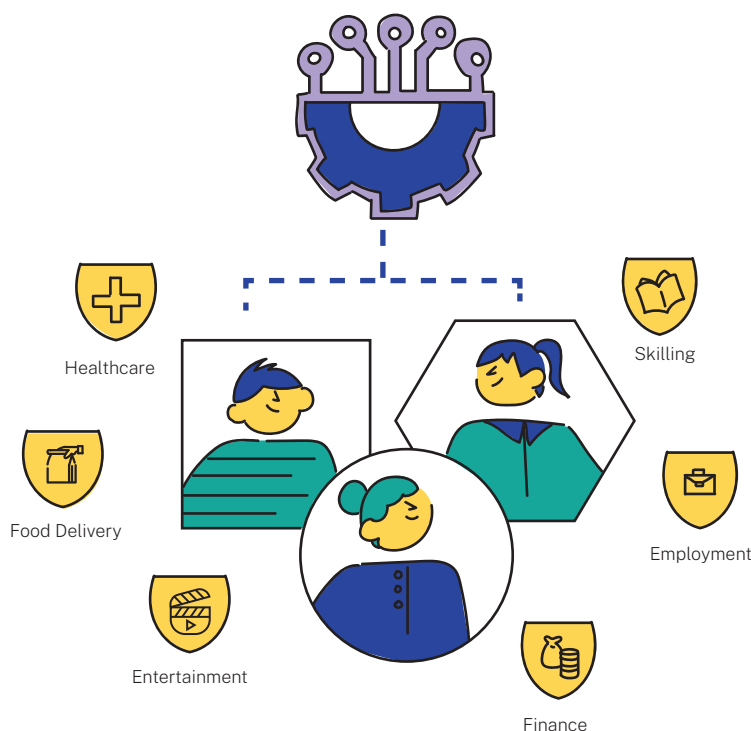
01

02

Implementing open protocols as a universal language to standardise communication, enhancing the visibility of blue dots and fostering trust within the ecosystem.



# EXPANDING THE PIE



## A No-Frills Way of Employment and Benefits Delivery

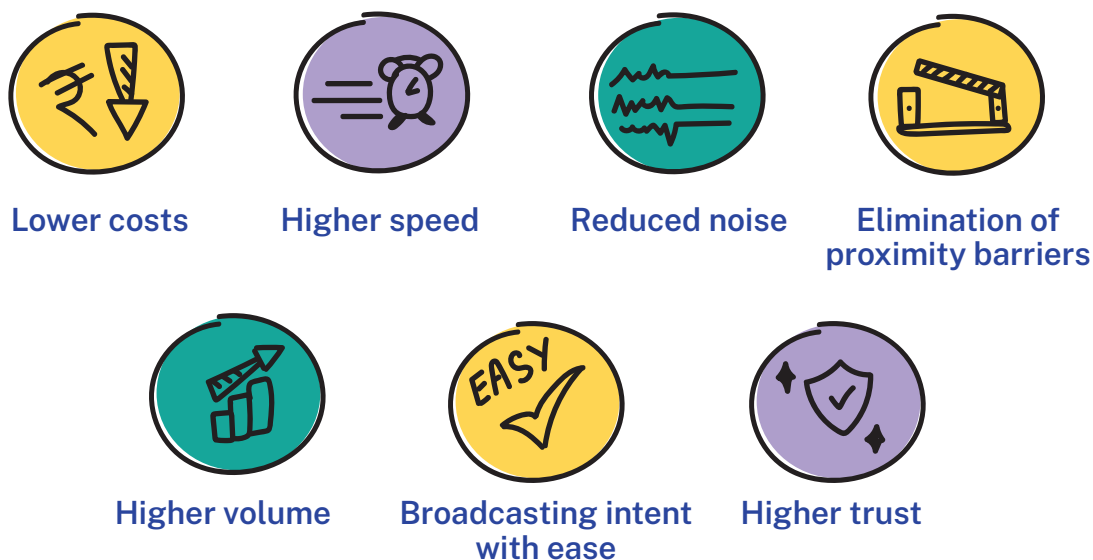
Think about how easy it is today to get benefits directly into a bank account. That was not always the case. In the early days, Aadhaar gave people a digital identity, but trust and verification were still big hurdles. Long forms, physical verification, and complicated processes used to make it tough for people to get KYC done. It would also cost the organisations a significant amount of time, money and resources. Enter eKYC – the time, money and resources needed to do digital KYC dropped to fractions. That allowed many businesses to thrive and scale at a significant rate.

However, a big problem still remained. For something like DBT (Direct Benefits Transfer) to be done by the government, opening a bank account was still a hassle.

The real game-changer was the **no-frills bank account** – simple accounts that cut through the complexity. With this, **costs dropped, approvals sped up**, and suddenly, **millions** more people could participate in the formal financial system. That is when DBT really took off, making sure welfare payments reached people faster, cheaper, and with more trust.

So why does this matter now? Because every time a system becomes simpler, trustable, and easier to access, the market does not just function better – it grows. Effectively, the markets move from high cost, low volume transactions to low cost, high volume, trusted transactions, bringing in many more people and businesses to participate in the economy and benefit from it.

That is exactly the opportunity in employment and benefits delivery today. If we make it frictionless for people to be discovered in a timely and trusted manner for the right opportunities—whether for employment or benefits—it could be just as transformational. A **no-frills way for blue dot creation and portable digital credentials through DigiAttestors** could open doors for **600 million young Indians**, while also unlocking massive value for businesses through:



### Multi-Sectoral Demand: The Market Waiting to be Unlocked

Young Indians are not just looking for jobs or benefits. They are navigating a mix of constantly evolving needs—access to financial products, education, healthcare, digital services, and more. Each milestone in their journey triggers a demand for something new:

- A new employee might seek a small loan to purchase a bike, making their commute easier and unlocking better job opportunities.
- As their earnings grow, they might look for guidance on career advancement—exploring upskilling programs or certifications that can help them move up the ladder.
- With a stable income, they may start spending more on entertainment, subscribing to digital services they could not afford before.

For businesses, this means every successful employment event is not just a job placement—it is a gateway to multiple markets. When someone gets a job, it is not just about salary; it is about everything that comes with it—financial products, education, mobility, digital services, and more. That is why a system that makes people visible and verifiable in real-time does not just help with employment—it creates new opportunities for businesses across sectors.

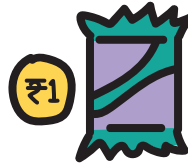
## Bite-Sized Opportunities: Flexible, Instant Value

Another big shift waiting to happen? Bite-sized opportunities. We have seen this play out in other industries:



### Micro-Finance:

Small loans and pay-later options made credit accessible.



### FMCG:

Shampoo sachets unlocked a whole new consumer base.



### Payments:

UPI made transactions seamless, driving mass adoption.

But employment and benefits still come with rigid, all-or-nothing models. Why should someone need to commit to a full-time job to start earning? Why should upskilling take months when quick, focused learning could be just as effective? Why should benefits be locked behind lengthy eligibility processes?

The answer is—they should not. By creating bite-sized jobs, micro-skilling, and instant micro-benefits, we can meet people where they are and help businesses tap into a much broader workforce. The gig economy has already shown how powerful this can be—now imagine if the same flexibility applied across industries. It is not just about fixing a broken system—it is about creating an entirely new way for businesses and individuals to engage. The potential here is massive, and the time to act is now.





# CONCLUSION

India stands at a pivotal moment. With 600 million young and ambitious individuals, the nation has the potential to drive unprecedented growth. Yet, **information asymmetry** and **fragmented access** to learning and earning opportunities make discovery difficult in a timely and trusted manner. Even when people find opportunities, **high cost**, and **slow and complex processes**—whether for employment or benefits delivery—create additional roadblocks. Without clear digital signals of intent—**‘blue dots’ that make aspirations and opportunities visible in a trusted and timely way**—millions struggle to navigate an inefficient system, and India risks underutilising the full potential of its people.

Early pilots suggest that this challenge can be addressed by making aspirations and opportunities digitally discoverable, ensuring trust through portable digitally verifiable credentials, and enabling seamless exchange through standardised protocols between individuals and organisations. The ONEST approach has already demonstrated what is possible through effective digitisation, portable digital credentials and an open DSEP protocol:

**DigiPass for Employment:** Reduced hiring time from months to hours while lowering costs and improved access to local jobs.

**DigiPass for Benefits:** Reduced approval and disbursement cycle times to minutes, not weeks or months, with benefits that find beneficiaries.

The next chapter is clear: **unlock this transformation through formalisation**, fostering a multi-network and inclusive approach of, for and by the ecosystem to tackle the complex challenges in employment and benefits delivery across India. By reducing barriers to innovation and equipping organisations with the tools to test, adapt, and refine their approaches, the ecosystem can move toward a future where access to opportunities is faster, more trusted, and significantly more efficient through multiple networks of employment, skilling and benefits delivery. The potential in this effort is immense— not just in terms of impact for India’s youth, but also in **unlocking billions of dollars in market opportunities**.

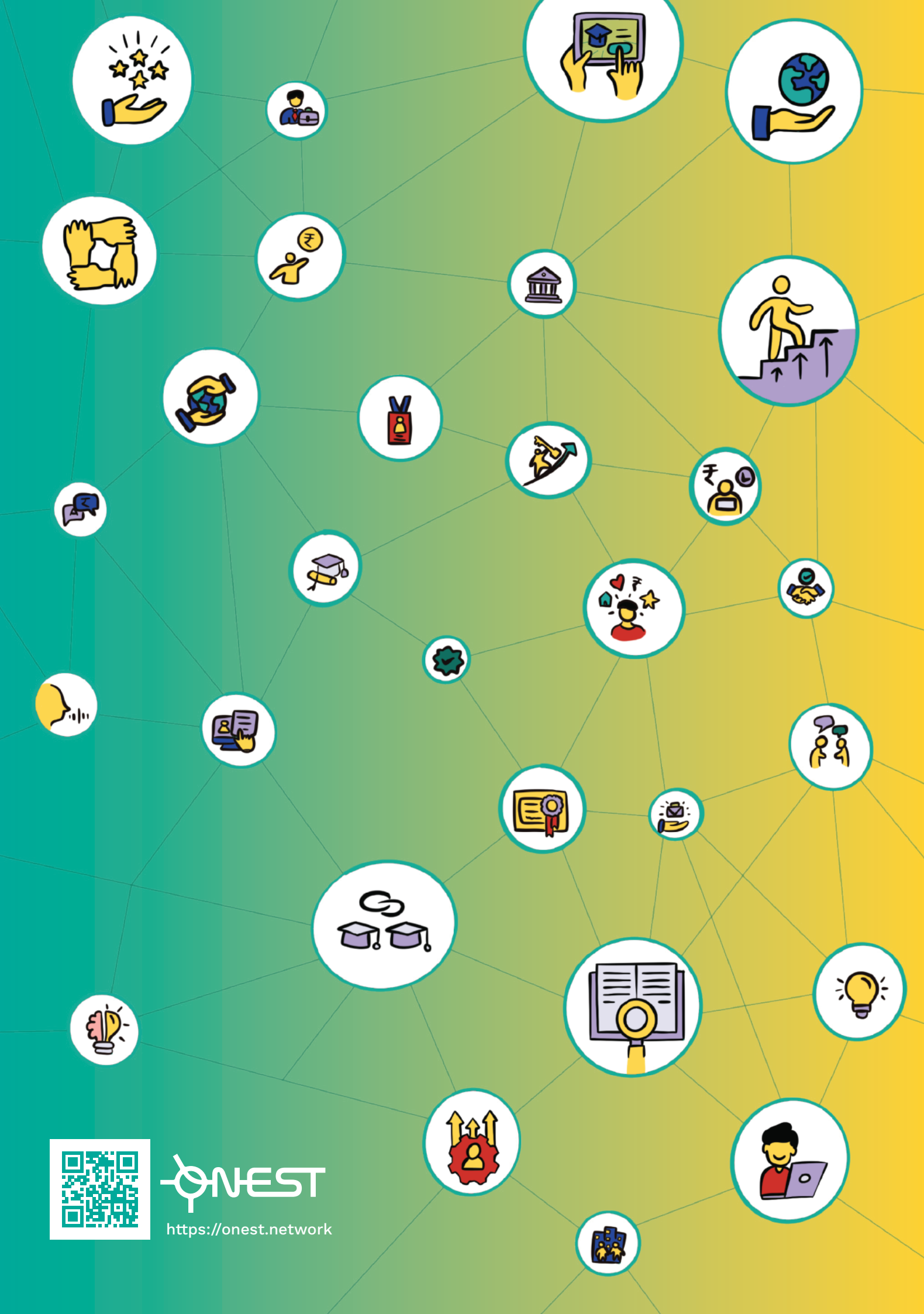
If you are building for this future—whether as an employer, benefits provider, innovator, or ecosystem player—this is your moment. Join this growing effort, shape what comes next, and be part of a transformation that benefits individuals, businesses, and the economy at large.



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