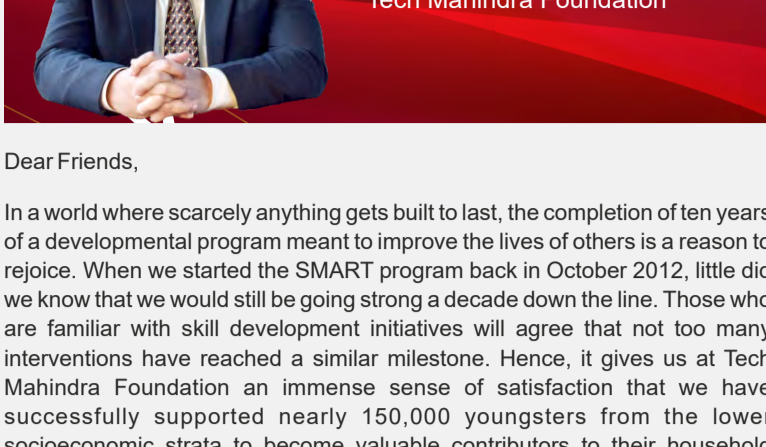




KEYNOTE



CHETAN KAPOOR
Chief Executive Officer
Tech Mahindra Foundation

Dear Friends,

In a world where scarcely anything gets built to last, the completion of ten years of a developmental program meant to improve the lives of others is a reason to rejoice. When we started the SMART program back in October 2012, little did we know that we would still be going strong a decade down the line. Those who are familiar with skill development initiatives will agree that not too many interventions have reached a similar milestone. Hence, it gives us at Tech Mahindra Foundation an immense sense of satisfaction that we have successfully supported nearly 150,000 youngsters from the lower socioeconomic strata to become valuable contributors to their household incomes by taking up jobs in the formal sector. We began with the simple goal of helping youth improve their employment prospects by enhancing their employability, and we have done exactly that over the last ten years.

If we have been able to achieve this milestone, we have all our NGO partners to thank for it - too many to list here, but each of them invaluable. An early decision we took was to reach out to relatively smaller organizations embedded within low-income urban communities and work closely with them in implementing the program. In the process, several of these organizations have gone on to become leading players in the skill development space, hence multiplying our imprint in this domain manifold. Once the SMART center model had reached a degree of maturity, we decided to up the ante in the skilling space by setting up and running the SMART Academies which are now providing cutting edge training in the essential sectors of Healthcare, Digital Technologies and Logistics. What has also worked well for us is the belief that employability enhancement is as much about the core competencies of communication, workplace readiness and technology familiarisation, as it is about imparting technical or occupational skills. Hence, nearly 70% of what a student learns at a SMART centre or Academy focuses on the foundational skills that are critical to succeeding at the workplace.

One challenge that has spurred us on through the years is to stay a step ahead of the constantly evolving requirements of the job market on the one hand, and the rising aspirations of the urban youth on the other. The SMART program has kept its pulse on both the demand and supply sides and has adapted to their changing requirements. We have regularly introduced new courses and innovative approaches, while our students have made us proud by demonstrating the ambition to pursue higher goals for themselves. Advances made in technology have permeated the world of work over the last decade, even as the reversals of the pandemic have taught us lessons in resilience and empathy like never before. In keeping with these trends, learning modules on Mental Wellbeing and Digital Literacy have found their way into the SMART curriculum - developed and regularly revised by the Learning & Development team at TMF.

As we celebrate the ten-year landmark, we know we have many mountains to climb in the journey ahead. The senior management team of TMF recently converged in Hyderabad where, among other things, we deliberated upon the future of SMART. We are well aware that the landscape ahead may be nothing like what we have encountered earlier, and we are gearing ourselves to embrace the future with the same fortitude, resilience, and the spirit of whatever it takes as we have done over the past decade.

With best wishes of peace & well-being in the new year.

Chetan Kapoor

THE SMART STORY

The Skills-for-Market Training or SMART Program is the flagship employability program of Tech Mahindra Foundation. The journey of SMART started in 2012 with one center in Hyderabad. From training 350 youths in just one city, the program progressively expanded to 11 cities in India, and has been successful in equipping nearly 1.5 lakh youths with market-linked skills to date. Apart from regular SMART centers, we have established SMART-T for technical trades and SMART+ for training youth with disabilities.

A large part of this success is attributable to the contribution of the NGO partners who we have worked with, some of whom have been part of the journey since the early days. What makes the TMF story unique is that other than the partner-implemented SMART centres, we have also established the SMART Academies being implemented directly by the Foundation. At these Academies, students are trained on career-oriented courses that are more exhaustive and of a longer duration, leading to a better quality of placements for them.

It fills us with joy to celebrate ten years of the program. The milestones, moments, and memories encapsulated in the ten years make us look back with fondness. To celebrate this momentous year, the SMART Exemplar Awards have been instituted as a recognition to those who have served the program well in various capacities. The regional awards were held in September followed by the National Awards in November held in Hyderabad. Committed to the highest standards of integrity and transparency, winners were selected solely on merit after a rigorous evaluation process.

In SMART, communities remain at the core, since the focus is always to expand the outreach and reach the underserved catchment areas. When the youth complete the training and are gainfully employed, it is a moment of pride for us. The alumni are the true ambassadors of the program and inspire many like them to benefit from the intervention. To keep the alumni connected to the program and to instill in them a spirit of community service, we have incubated SMART Alumni Clubs which are now operational in a few cities. Other than creating a platform to give back to society, they would play a pivotal role in mentoring present students.

The journey of SMART started with a dream and today we are at a juncture where we look back with a sense of accomplishment, and are resolved to create a larger landscape for SMART in the years to come. Gratitude to each and every stakeholder who are with the Foundation to realize a collective dream of empowering disadvantaged youth and giving wings to their aspirations.

Witness our 10 years journey with many #Rise moments through this video.



PARTNER RECOGNITION

On completing 10 years of our flagship employability program SMART, the SMART Exemplar National Awards were organized in Hyderabad on the 21st November 2022 to recognize the efforts of our stakeholders in empowering the youth. The SMART program has actively worked towards providing intensive, high-quality training to equip youth from socially and economically disadvantaged communities and has given wings to their dreams. A glimpse of the winners from the awards ceremony with a few testimonials are shared.

Through SMART I am fulfilling a dream role, I am growing each day as a Leader and making a difference in people's lives in a way that gives back to Society.
- Vikram Jadhav, Best Centre Manager, Mumbai

Having been trained in Electricals myself under the SMART-T program, I have got an opportunity to discover a new me, who finds happiness in the success of students whom I train, interact and empathize with every day.
- Ramineedi Sairam, Best Facilitator, Bangalore



SMART GIVING WINGS TO DREAMS

Tech Mahindra Foundation recently celebrated the 10-year journey of its flagship employability program-SMART by recognizing the efforts of its partners and stakeholders in empowering the youth. This celebration would not have been possible without the unwavering support of the devoted and committed employees of TMF. In this piece of Samvaad, our readers will get an insight into the journey of some such stalwarts.

TRUST THE PROCESS
Sai Prasad Nerella
Program Director
Academy for Digital Technologies
Tech Mahindra Foundation

My long association of more than 10 years with the Foundation has been nothing short of wonderful. In 2012, I was part of the core team that worked towards designing the SOPs for SMART programs and worked at the SMART centre in Hyderabad till 2017. Over the years, the Foundation has provided me with diverse opportunities in the field of employability which helped me explore and improve my subject knowledge and #Rise to the position of Program Director for all the Academies (Digital Technologies) - Vizag, Hyderabad, and Mohali. In my current role as Program Director for Digital Technologies, I am constantly learning about the changing dynamics of the IT sector and accordingly creating a plan for programs. My heartfelt thanks to the Foundation and Leaders like Ms. Loveleen Kacker, Mr. Chetan Kapoor, Mr. Sajid Ali and Mr. Sudheer for putting their trust in me.

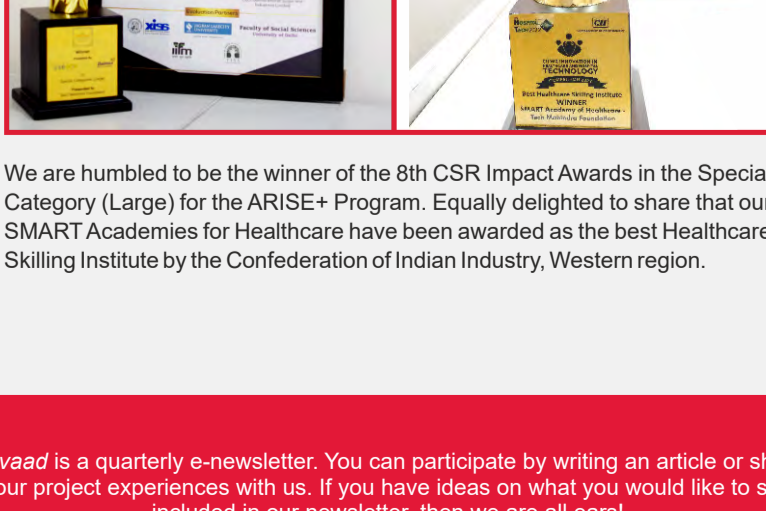
ASPIRE TO INSPIRE
Shormi Roy Choudhury
Location Head
Kolkata & Bhubaneswar Programs
Tech Mahindra Foundation

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" is so true for SMART. As the program completes ten years, I look back with pride, joy and a sense of accomplishment to my close association with the program. From handpicking organizations, setting up the first center in Kolkata, back in 2013, charting my personal journey with that of the program has been exciting. SMART has been designed in a way to provide the foundation and sector-specific skill-training to underprivileged youth. A significant point that separates SMART from similar programs is its emphasis on quality over scale, the mindfulness with which the curriculum has been developed, regular assessments, interface with parents, counseling support, tracking student retention and taking industry feedback in order to keep the courses relevant to the industry requirements. Post-pandemic, the skilling landscape has changed drastically, new avenues have opened up, traditional job roles have to be relooked at, and the importance of re-skilling and upskilling is being felt.

THINK BIG, BELIEVE BIG, ACT BIG
Imran Ahmed
Assistant Manager
Delhi - West
Tech Mahindra Foundation

It's not about the destination, it's about the journey! The run up to a core program professional at the Foundation interestingly, had its genesis unlike many, in a rather familiar set up. I started as a technical faculty at the SMART SPID Centre and went on to become the center manager. The one thing that worked for me throughout and continues to be my mantra is 'teamwork', 'constant encouragement', and 'never-ending learning'. The confidence to swiftly convert challenges into opportunities mostly is the result of being a learner from one side of the table to a seasoned CSR Professional on the other side.

ALUMNI SPEAKS



A way forward to our SMART program is the Alumni Club. Our SMART ALUMNI are the true ambassadors of the program who inspire the youth of the community to build a better future. The objective of the SMART Club initiative aims at making our students socially and morally responsible. Through this initiative, we encourage our students to understand the importance of contributing towards society. In this video, you will watch a small snippet of the work done by the alumni club from the lens of Susheela, President, Shishu Mandir SMART Alumni Club, Bengaluru.

ACCOLADES

We are humbled to be the winner of the 8th CSR Impact Awards in the Special Category (Large) for the ARISE+ Program. Equally delighted to share that our SMART Academies for Healthcare have been awarded as the best Healthcare Skilling Institute by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Western region.

Samvaad is a quarterly e-newsletter. You can participate by writing an article or sharing your project experiences with us. If you have ideas on what you would like to see included in our newsletter, then we are all ears!

Please e-mail us your thoughts and ideas at samvaad@techmahindrafoundation.org

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