



An Analytical Study on Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-2030: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract:

"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page." - St. Augustine

In the modern era, tourism has become one of the fastest-growing service sectors globally, in India, and in Telangana. It is recognized for its significance in not only advancing the economic development of the nation and state, but also in generating employment and income, as well as bringing about necessary infrastructure improvements that could aid in regional development. In addition, it could support national and worldwide socio-cultural relationships. As per the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), Travel & Tourism accounted for 1 in 4 of all new jobs created across the globe (direct and indirect), 10.5% of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$ 10.3 trillion). Telangana recorded 60.75 million domestic tourist arrivals and 68,400 foreign tourist arrivals in the year 2022, (as per the Ministry of Tourism data) and the state's share in domestic tourist arrivals has declined to 3.51 per cent of the total national arrivals, placing it in 9th position among other states. This paper gives an analytical view of Telangana Tourism policy 2025-30 and their challenges and prospects, this was the first ever tourism policy introduced in Telangana on march 17, 2025 with aims to give the necessary boost for the development of tourism infrastructure through strategic concessions and incentives. This would greatly speed up the creation of new tourism projects and positions. To create Telangana as one of the world's most popular travel destinations through the use of strong branding strategies, capacity building, and institutional mechanisms.

Key Words: Telangana Tourism, Economic development, GDP, foreign tourists

Introduction:

In the modern era, tourism has become one of the fastest-growing service sectors globally, in India, and in Telangana. It is recognized for its significance in not only advancing the economic development of the nation and state, but also in generating employment and income, as well as bringing about necessary infrastructure improvements that could aid in regional development. Telangana is India's 29th and youngest state which is formed on June 2, 2014. Telangana, the Land of the Telugu Language, extends from prehistoric times to the mighty Kakatiya Empire in the fourteenth century CE. In historical literature, the nation surrounded by Srisailem, Draksharamam, and Keshwaram—also referred to as the three Lingas—is called Trilingadesha. In Telangana, the

term Trilingadesha gradually changed to Telingadesha and then to the 14th century. With the development of the QutubShahi and AsafJahi dynasties, the state's language, literature, arts, crafts, and architecture blossomed over time, reflecting the Ganga- JamunaTehji, and the old state of Hyderabad became the richest region in the entire nation. Telangana's first tourism policy, "Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-30," aims to boost the development of tourism infrastructure by offering strategic concessions and incentives. This will greatly speed up the creation of new tourism projects and position. Telangana as one of the world's top tourist destinations through efficient branding strategies, capacity-building, and institutional mechanisms. Through a combination of incentives and legislative frameworks, the strategy seeks to provide the tourism industry the much-needed boost it needs by encouraging the creation of the proper eco-systems for better investments. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, the policy would encourage eco-friendly travel behaviors.

Main Objectives of the Policy:

- Attract Rs.15,000 Crores of new investments to tourism sector in next 5years.
- Create additional Employment Opportunity for '*Three Lakh people*' in next 5 years.
- To position Telangana in top 5 States in domestic and international tourist arrivals.
- Position diverse attractions of the state at Global level through concentrated efforts on digital marketing platforms/strong social media presence / literary documentation and preservation.
- Enhance tourism contribution to 10% or higher of the State GDP.

Review of Literature:

1. **Chandramouli (2016)** evaluated the problem and challenges of tourism industry in Telangana. Such industry has multiplier effect on the economy. Tourist demands in the state depends on the demographic, socio-cultural and socio-structural developments.
2. **Venkatesh and Raj (2016)**, government should formulate and design policies for travel industry. It will help for minimizing the challenges and constraints of tourism industry in Telangana.
4. **Vijay (2017)** in his research paper analysed the various impacts of ecotourism on Koya tribal community people of Jayashankar district of Telangana state. Ecotourism is vital for economy of the region. Responsible ecotourism is the cultural integrity of local people.
6. **Jansirani and Priya (2018)** in their report examined the relation between tourism and economic development in south Indian states. The analysis concluded that tourism industry does not create any negative impact in the study area.
7. **Krishnudu et. al. (2019)** in their paper found that tourism is important industry in Telangana. It has vital role in employment and recreational activities of the people. Chowmahalla palace is a popular destination in the state. Tourist activities are increasing but cost of travelling is a concerning matter for the domestic travellers.
8. **From the article of Kumar (2020)** we found that restaurants, lodging and transport are vital for the growth of the tourism industry. Government should implement projects for improvement of tourist infrastructure.
9. **Akula (2000)** in his paper discussed the potentiality of tourism industry in Hyderabad city. Hyderabad has better transport facilities and well connected with other parts. Accommodation influence the selection of tourist

site. Role of tour operators/agencies/guides are also important.

10. Accordingly, Padmini (2022), foreign direct investment is vital for expansion of the tourism industry in Telangana. Travel & Tourism industry is related to the contribution to its GDP and employment generation. Tax holidays and proper tourism policy is significant for growth of the foreign direct investment in such industry.

11. Sarkar (2024) There are also challenges before the tourism industry. Lack of media coverage, lack of basic hygienic amenities, poor management, lack of trained guides, lapses in security, lack of alternatives means of transport are the challenges before the industry.

Need for the Study: As this is the first ever tourism policy there is need to understand the Telangana Tourism policy 2025-30 and create awareness among the people and to analyze the ways to create the Telangana as “India’s Most Preferred Destination”. It is important to explore what challenges are there to implement this policy. Therefore, this topic is selected for study to understand challenges and prospects of implementing Telangana Tourism Policy 2025- 2030

Objectives of the Study:

1. To understand the concept of Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-2030
2. To Know the list of Special Tourism Areas (STAs)
3. To analyze the challenges and prospects of implementing this policy

Methodology:

For this study, data is collected from secondary sources that includes research papers, journals, information from various websites on internet etc. The data has also been taken from various documents such as books, newsletters, reports, magazines as well as from existing literature to understand the importance to understand how tourism plays an important role in different directions for the overall development of state economy.

A. Concept of Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-2030

Telangana is the 29th state of India, formed on the 2nd of June 2014. The state has an area of 1,14,840 Sq Km and has a population of 3,52,86,757. Telangana was created by passing the AP State Reorganization Bill 2014 in both houses of Parliament. Telangana is surrounded by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh in the North, Karnataka in the West and Andhra Pradesh in the South and East directions. Major cities of the state include Hyderabad, Warangal, Nizamabad and Karimnagar. Telangana won the Award in Best Infrastructure category last year. Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation (TSTDC) is a state government agency which promotes tourism in Telangana, a state in the Southern region of India. Retired Director general of Police Pervaram Ramulu appointed as First chairman of Telangana State Tourism. Tourist attractions in Telangana include historical places, monuments, forts, waterfalls, forests and temples. Hyderabad, the state capital, ranked second best place in the world that one should see in 2015 which is published in the annual guide of 'Traveler' magazine of National Geographic.

NEED FOR TOURISM POLICY:

Since Telangana was created, the ecosystem for the development of tourism infrastructure has not kept pace with the wealth potential for tourism. Furthermore, since 2014, the state has not implemented a specific tourist policy. The private sector drives most of the tourism infrastructure sector, so the government needs to create more

confidence through proactive policies and administrative frameworks that boost investor confidence, attract private sector investment, and establish strategic objectives for the growth and management of the state's tourism industry. This emphasizes how urgently a comprehensive state tourism policy is needed, one that gives the private sector more latitude and facilitates the ease and speed of doing business. Telangana's first tourism policy, "Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-30," aims to greatly speed up the establishment of new tourism projects and position Telangana as one of the world's top tourist destinations through efficient branding strategies, capacity-building, and institutional mechanisms. It does this by providing the necessary impetus for the development of tourism infrastructure through strategic concessions and incentives.



Chart showing Key Components of Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–2030

Category	Key Initiatives
1. Safe Tourism	- Specialized Tourist Police Units & Patrols
	- Women-Friendly Policies for Female Travelers
	- Tourism Friendly Index (TFI) to Assess Safety Standards
	- CCTV Surveillance at All Tourist Spots
2. Infrastructure Development	
a. Airport & Shopping Hub	- Promote RGIA, Shamshabad with iconic projects nearby
	- Develop Themed Shopping Malls along RRR: Wedding, Gold, Household, Furniture, etc.
	- Host Year-Round Shopping Festivals
b. Mega Malls & River Tourism	- Mega Retail Malls at ORR Exits (Luxury, Factory Outlets) on PPP Mode
	- Godavari & Krishna River Tourism: Jetties, Houseboats, Water Sports, River Festivals
c. Urban Waterfront & Connectivity	- Weekend Getaways with Adventure Activities, Kids' Zones, Local Retail near Lakes
	- Helipads and Air Connectivity in all STAs
d. Thematic & Specialized Tourism	- Promote Golf Tourism
	- Strengthen Digital Presence & Social Media Promotion
	- Conduct FAM Trips for Domestic & SE Asian Travel Communities
	- Develop Wellness & Meditation Centers at Buddhavanam (Nagarjunasagar)
e. Heritage & STA Development	- “Adoption of Monuments” by Corporates for Heritage Conservation
	- Develop 27 Identified Special Tourism Areas (STAs) in Mission Mode

- Master Planning Approach with Gap Analysis, Project Shelf, and Roadmap

The economy of Telangana is the ninth-largest in India, with a gross state domestic product (GSDP) of ₹18 trillion (US\$210 billion) and has a GSDP per capita of ₹390,564 (US\$4,600) for the financial year 2024–25. Telangana scored 0.740 on the Human Development Index during 2024. In order to attract tourists and investments, the Tourism Policy 2025–30 aims to establish Telangana as "India's Most Preferred Destination" by promoting a harmonious fusion of spirituality, heritage, culture, adventure, medical & wellness, and eco-tourism with community empowerment through state-of-the-art infrastructure and top-notch services.

Main Objectives of the Policy

- Attract Rs.15,000 Crores of new investments to tourism sector in next 5 years.
- Create additional Employment Opportunity for 'Three Lakh people' in next 5 years.
- To position Telangana in top 5 States in domestic and international tourist arrivals.
- Position diverse attractions of the state at Global level through concentrated efforts on digital marketing platforms/strong social media presence/literary documentation and preservation.
- Enhance tourism contribution to 10% or higher of the State GDP.

B. Development of Special Tourism Areas (STAs):

Based on the tourism potential of different regions/ destinations, Special Tourism Areas (STAs) will be developed across the state on mission mode. Currently 27 STAs have been identified and each identified STA will be critically reviewed through a Master Planning approach and infrastructure/tourism ecosystem gaps will be identified. Accordingly, STA specific strategy and road map will be prepared along with the shelf of projects and implementation schedule

STRATEGIES TO BE PROPOSED

Diversified Experiences to Tourists

To create new and diverse tourist attractions with authentic experience of the local cuisine, culture and traditions. Focus must be given on the following areas

- a) Eco-Tourism
- b) Medical & Wellness Tourism
- c) Spiritual Tourism
- d) MICE Tourism
- e) Sports Tourism

a) Eco Tourism Framework

Telangana's eco-tourism policy aims to make the state a leading destination by preserving ecosystems, promoting sustainability and connecting people with nature, protecting biodiversity, empowering communities, and offering educational experiences. In the first phase, 12 destinations have been identified, including Ananthagiri, Kanakagiri, and others. These locations will offer activities like trekking, boating, and safari, with accommodation provided in guest houses and resorts. The policy recommends that projects in forest areas be

managed by a separate division of the Telangana Forest Development Corporation. The policy also strives to position Telangana as a top eco- tourism destination by preserving ecosystems, promoting sustainability, connecting people with nature, protect biodiversity, empower communities and offer immersive educational experiences.

Key Features: This section of Telangana's eco-tourism policy highlights key features:

- **Community-Based Ecotourism:** It emphasizes a community-driven approach, utilizing local knowledge and resources to benefit communities, with the potential exploration of "eco-villages" for grassroots sustainability.
 - **Infrastructure Development:** Visitor facilities like nature trails, eco-cottages, interpretation centers, boating, and safari routes will be designed and developed with minimal environmental impact, using local materials to enhance visitor engagement while preserving ecosystems.
 - **Education and Capacity Building:** Local communities, including guides and tour operators, will receive certified training in conservation, sustainable tourism, and customer service to ensure high-quality eco-tourism experiences.
 - **Environmental Sustainability:** All eco-tourism activities must adhere to sustainable practices, including waste management, energy conservation, pollution control, solar power, promotion of local species planting by visitors, and operating within the carrying capacity to minimize the ecological footprint
- b) **Medical and wellness tourism:** Telangana is focusing on becoming a top medical and wellness tourism destination by capitalizing on its existing medical infrastructure, affordable treatments, and wellness facilities. The strategy involves improving accessibility, affordability, quality (through global accreditations like JCI and NABH), and transparency in the sector. A key component is digitalization via a Medical Value Travel (MVT) Portal to integrate stakeholders and streamline services. A dedicated Telangana Medical & Wellness Tourism Board (TMWTB) will be set up for regulation, quality assurance, and grievance redressal. Incentives under the tourism framework will be extended to approved medical enclaves and wellness zones. Efforts to improve airline connectivity and provide airport assistance for medical tourists are also prioritized.
- c) **Spiritual Tourism:** Telangana's spiritual tourism framework aims to position the state as a key hub by enhancing infrastructure and connectivity to its numerous spiritual destinations.
- d) **Medical & Wellness Tourism Framework:** Telangana aims to become a leading medical and wellness tourism destination by leveraging its advanced medical infrastructure, expert professionals, affordable treatments, and holistic wellness options. The primary objectives are to enhance affordability, accessibility, transparency, and accountability within this sector, while also emphasizing high- quality standards aligned with global benchmarks.
- e) **MICE Tourism Framework:** Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE) recognizes Hyderabad as a key driver of business tourism due to its world-class MICE infrastructure like HICC and HITEX, and its international airport. Having hosted numerous international events, the state aims to consolidate Hyderabad's position as a premier global MICE destination. Strategies include developing new MICE infrastructure through private sector participation with incentives, aggressively promoting the state for global events (especially during off-seasons), identifying new MICE locations including for destination weddings at proposed STAs, and strengthening the Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau (HCVB) for marketing and

promotion.

f) **Sports Tourism Framework**

Telangana boasts world-class sports facilities and premier coaching academies in various disciplines. Its focus on infrastructure development, international collaborations, and blending sports with culture and nature positions it as a diverse and appealing destination for sports tourists

Strengthening infrastructure and amenities

To enhance the tourist experience, Telangana plans to strengthen infrastructure at tourist destinations by providing essential amenities like clean public conveniences, parking, restaurants, souvenir shops, information centers, first aid, clear signage, smart ticketing, mobile apps, and recreational activities. Accessibility for differently-abled individuals will be improved



with walkways, ramps, elevators, and accessible toilets. The state aims to add at least 5,000 rooms in Special Tourism Areas (STAs) and another 10,000 in the core urban region. Additionally, the promotion of hygienic and safe rural homestays in select STAs is a priority.

Promoting Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

Telangana will employ diverse Public Private Partnership (PPP) models, including BOT (Build Operate Transfer), License Fee, JV, and Equity, chosen through transparent bidding, to develop and operate tourism projects, also considering evolving global PPP approaches.

Incentives and Concessions:

To encourage tourism development, Telangana will offer investors Capital Investment Subsidies (CIS) based on the Eligible Project Cost (EPC), excluding land. Projects in Category C (Rural Telangana) and Category D (Special Tourism Areas) will receive 25% of the EPC, up to a maximum of Rs. 25 Lakhs, with a focus on rural areas.

Special incentives for STAs/Iconic Projects: To attract investment in the tourism sector, Telangana proposes to reimburse 50% of the Net State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) to investors for a period of five years. Reimbursement for Iconic Projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, Hotels and Resorts falling under Category A will not be eligible for this SGST reimbursement.

Special Tourism Areas (STAs) and Iconic Projects: As the state government has proposed to develop 27 tourist spots into Special Tourism Areas (STA), special incentives will be offered on a case-to-case basis, such as lower lease rent for land, longer SGST reimbursements and viability gap funds for the management of basic amenities

Incentive for Power Slabs & Property Tax:

To help tourism businesses in Telangana (specifically those in Categories B, C, and D) succeed long-term, the government will give them the same lower rates for electricity and property tax that factories get. Big, special tourism projects (not including fancy hotels in Category A) can also get these lower rates. This will make it cheaper for these businesses to operate.

Reimbursement of Land Conversion Charges: State will offer reimbursement of 50% of Land Conversion Charges paid to the appropriate authority towards conversion of other land use to Tourism use and the same shall be made in 12 months after the Commercial Operations Date (COD) of the Eligible Projects.

Reimbursement of Land Registration Charges State will offer reimbursement of 50% of Land Registration Charges paid to the appropriate authority towards land registration and the same shall be made in 12 months after the Commercial Operations Date (COD) of the Eligible Projects.

Incentives for Sustainable/ Responsible Tourism Projects:

Telangana will offer special incentives for sustainable tourism efforts, including green energy projects. Separate guidelines will encourage private sector investment in developing and managing tourism assets responsibly, focusing on renewable energy, conservation, plastic-free zones, water management, and sustainable transport. Tourism projects using their own green power generation will be eligible for incentives under the Telangana Clean & Green Energy Policy 2025. The total incentives are capped at the project cost, and additional special incentives (like for quality certifications or job creation) may be offered on a case-by-case basis, with detailed operational guidelines to follow.

Incentive for Power Slabs & Property Tax: Reimbursement of Land Conversion Charges: State will offer reimbursement of 50% of Land Registration Charges paid to the appropriate authority towards land registration and the same shall be made in 12 months after the Commercial Operations Date (COD) of the Eligible Projects.

Branding and Marketing: Appropriate strategies shall be formulated to promote Telangana Tourism across the country and target international markets. Comprehensive “Telangana Tourism” Portal will be created to serve as a one-stop platform for travelers, offering information on destinations, accommodation, booking, activities, transportation, local experiences etc. Extensively promote Telangana Handlooms, Handicrafts, Arts and Cuisine through food festivals, melas etc.

Telangana Darshini Program - Promote educational tours to select cultural and heritage destinations of Telangana where every school student should visit as part of their academic journey. Conduct special tours to film studios where internationally recognized movies were produced so as to create curiosity and experience among International Tourists

Sl. No.	Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total Tourists
1	2014	72,399,113	75,171	72,474,284
2	2015	94,516,316	1,26,078	94,642,394
3	2016	95,160,830	1,66,570	95,327,400
4	2017	85,266,596	2,51,846	85,518,442
5	2018	92,878,329	3,18,154	93,196,483
6	2019	83,035,894	3,23,326	83,359,220
7	2020	40,055,581	46,700	40,102,281
8	2021	32,000,620	5,917	32,006,537
9	2022	60,748,425	68,401	60,816,826
10	2023	58,447,573	1,60,912	58,608,485

Challenges and prospects

Challenges for Implementing the Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-30:

- **Execution and Coordination:** Implementing such a comprehensive policy will require effective coordination between various government departments, the Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation, local authorities, and private stakeholders. Ensuring seamless execution on the ground could be a significant challenge.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** While the policy aims to improve infrastructure, the existing gaps in basic amenities (hygienic facilities, transport, signage), especially in rural areas and some tourist spots, need to be addressed effectively and promptly.
- **Connectivity:** Improving last-mile connectivity to various tourist destinations, especially in rural and remote areas, remains a challenge. While Heli-tourism is proposed, its feasibility and affordability need to be considered.
- **Skill Development:** The policy emphasizes training local communities and guides. Effectively skilling a large number of people in conservation, sustainable tourism practices, and customer service will be a crucial challenge.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** While digital marketing is highlighted, ensuring effective and targeted promotion to both domestic and international audiences, addressing the current lack of media coverage for some destinations, will be critical.
- **Safety and Security:** Ensuring the safety and security of tourists, including women, across all destinations, as proposed through dedicated tourist police units, requires robust planning and implementation.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** While the policy promotes sustainability, ensuring strict adherence to eco-friendly practices and minimizing the ecological footprint of tourism activities on the ground will be a challenge that requires continuous monitoring and enforcement.
- **Land Acquisition and Approvals:** Developing tourism infrastructure and projects may face challenges related to land acquisition, environmental clearances, and other regulatory approvals, which can cause delays.
- **Financial Viability of Projects:** Ensuring the long-term financial viability and sustainability of the incentivized tourism projects, especially in rural and less-developed areas, will be crucial.
- **Community Involvement and Benefit Sharing:** Effectively involving local communities and ensuring they genuinely benefit from tourism development, as envisioned in the community-based eco-tourism approach, can be challenging and requires careful planning and implementation.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing effective mechanisms to monitor the progress of the policy implementation, evaluate the impact of incentives, and make necessary adjustments will be essential for achieving the policy's objectives.
- **Potential External Factors:** Unforeseen events like pandemics or economic downturns can significantly impact the tourism sector and pose challenges to policy implementation. Addressing these challenges proactively and ensuring effective collaboration among all stakeholders will be crucial for successfully realizing the ambitious goals of the Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-30 and establishing the state as a premier tourism destination. The Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-2030 presents both significant opportunities and considerable hurdles for its successful implementation.

On the positive side (Prospects):

- **Attracting Money:** The policy's good money-related offers will probably bring in a lot of private investment for tourism in Telangana, maybe even reaching the goal of ₹15,000 Crores.
- **Creating Jobs:** Because the policy encourages different kinds of tourism projects, it's very likely to create many new jobs, aiming for a big increase of 3 lakh.
- **Making Telangana a Top Spot:** The plan to create different tourism routes and improve things like roads and facilities wants to make Telangana one of the best places for tourists in India, aiming to be in the top 5 for visitor numbers.
- **Growing Green:** The policy really focuses on tourism that's good for the environment and follows global rules, which means tourism can grow in a responsible and eco-friendly way.
- **Better Tourist Spots:** The plan to make basic things better (like clean bathrooms), make places easier to get to for everyone, and have more places for tourists to stay will make visiting much nicer.
- **Building on Strengths:** The policy is smart because it uses the things Telangana is already good at – its rich culture, old historical places, and growing cities – to help tourism grow.
- **Going Digital:** By using the internet and online marketing, more people around the world will be able to find out about and plan trips to Telangana.
- **Working Together:** When the government works with private companies (using PPP), it can bring in good ideas and efficient ways of doing things to make tourism projects better.
- **Focusing on Certain Areas:** The policy will focus on developing specific areas for tourism and give special benefits to big projects there, which helps those places grow in a planned way.
- **Health and Healing:** Telangana has good hospitals and wellness centers, and the policy wants to promote these for people who travel for medical treatment and relaxation, which is a new

way for tourism to grow.

Successfully navigating these challenges through strong coordination and proactive measures will be key to realizing the full potential of the Telangana Tourism Policy 2025-2030 and establishing the state as a leading tourism destination.

Findings and Conclusions:

The Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–2030 is a comprehensive initiative aimed at positioning the state as one of India’s top tourist destinations by leveraging its cultural heritage, natural diversity, spiritual richness, and emerging infrastructure. The findings indicate that the policy is well-structured with a clear vision to attract ₹15,000 crores in investments, create 3 lakh employment opportunities, and boost tourism’s contribution to the state’s GDP to over 10%. With a special focus on 27 identified Special Tourism Areas (STAs), the policy aims to build diverse experiences including eco-tourism, wellness tourism, medical tourism, spiritual circuits, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism. Strategies include offering capital subsidies, land conversion reimbursements, infrastructure development, digital promotion, and public-private partnerships (PPP). However, successful implementation faces several challenges such as coordination among departments, infrastructure gaps in rural areas, lack of last-mile connectivity, skill development for local communities, safety concerns, and the need for sustainable environmental practices. In conclusion, while the policy is ambitious and holds strong potential to transform Telangana’s tourism landscape, its success hinges on efficient execution, inclusive stakeholder collaboration, and robust monitoring to ensure long-term impact and sustainability.

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