

CAREER CREED HR SERVICES PVT. LTD.

STARTUP HR GUIDE

A practical guide to building, managing
and scaling HR in a growing startup.

BUILD HR BEFORE HR BECOMES A PROBLEM

From the first employee to 100+ employees, build a people function with the right foundations, processes, technology, documentation and governance.

Career Creed HR Services Pvt. Ltd.

Build HR. Run HR. Protect HR. Digitize HR. Develop People.

Deliver Better Experiences.

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed as a practical working reference for startup founders, business leaders and HR professionals. It combines an HR maturity roadmap, operating checklists, document matrices and implementation actions so that HR can develop alongside the business.

CORE PRINCIPLE

Good startup HR is not about having more paperwork. It is about having the right controls, documentation and employee experiences at the right stage of growth.

Scope

- Designed primarily for startups and growing SMEs, especially organisations with approximately 1–100 employees.
- Covers the employee lifecycle from workforce planning and hiring through onboarding, payroll, performance, engagement, compliance and exit.
- Use the checklists as a management tool; mark items as Not Started, In Progress or Completed and assign an owner.
- Where legal or statutory applicability depends on state, establishment type, headcount, industry or other facts, treat the item as an applicability check rather than a universal requirement.

Important Legal & Compliance Note

This guide is for general informational and HR-management purposes and does not constitute legal advice. Employment and labour requirements can vary by state, establishment type, employee count, industry, worker category and other facts. Businesses should obtain professional advice for specific legal, tax or compliance questions.

Regulatory position reviewed for this edition: September 2026. Current implementation status and applicable rules should be re-checked before acting on a specific compliance requirement.

Contents

1. Executive Overview

For a startup, HR is an operating system for people—not simply an administrative function. The right HR foundation gives founders visibility over who is hired, how people are paid, how decisions are documented, how employees are supported and how obligations are monitored.

THE STARTUP HR PRINCIPLE

Build HR systems before HR problems become business problems.

What a scalable HR function should achieve

- Clear ownership: every recurring HR activity has an accountable owner and an approval path.
- Consistent employee experience: employees know what to expect from joining through exit.
- Reliable data: employee, attendance, leave, payroll and document records are accurate and accessible.
- Controlled payroll: inputs are reviewed before salary processing and statutory actions.
- Compliance visibility: applicable obligations are mapped, monitored and evidenced.
- Manager enablement: managers understand their role in hiring, performance, conduct and employee experience.
- Technology readiness: manual work is progressively replaced with structured HRMS workflows and reports.

Career Creed's startup HR approach

Career Creed describes its startup offering around HR foundation setup, HR policies and procedures, HRMS implementation, employee documentation, HR administration, statutory records, ongoing HR operations, payroll, compliance and advisory support. Its current startup proposition is designed to help businesses build structured HR systems that can scale with growth.

2. Startup HR Maturity Model

Employee count is a useful signal, but it is not a legal or universal trigger for every HR decision. Use the stages below as operating guidance and adjust them for business complexity, locations, workforce profile and hiring velocity.

Stage	Typical Team Size	Primary HR Focus	Technology & Governance
01 FOUNDATION	1–10	Documentation, basic policies, payroll inputs, hiring discipline, employee master data.	Controlled spreadsheets or starter HRMS; clear founder approval matrix.
02 STRUCTURE	11–25	Standard onboarding, leave/attendance, recurring payroll controls, recruitment workflow, employee handbook.	HRMS becomes increasingly useful; recurring HR calendar and ownership.
03 PROCESS	26–50	Documented HR SOPs, performance process, grievance framework, compliance calendar, HR MIS.	Integrated HRMS workflows; maker-checker controls and monthly dashboard.
04 SYSTEM	51–100	Specialisation, manager capability, workforce planning, engagement, analytics and governance.	Automation, role-based access, dashboards and formal review cadence.
05 SCALE	100+	HR operating model, specialist capability, organisation design, leadership development and scalable governance.	Integrated people technology, analytics, audit readiness and continuous improvement.

Stage-gate questions

- ☐ Do we know who owns each recurring HR process?
- ☐ Can we produce a complete employee file for every active employee?
- ☐ Can payroll inputs be independently checked before processing?
- ☐ Can managers explain our key employee policies consistently?
- ☐ Can we identify our applicable statutory obligations and upcoming actions?
- ☐ Can leadership see basic headcount, hiring, attrition and payroll information monthly?
- ☐ Can HR operate without every decision depending on the founder?

3. The 10-Pillar Startup HR Framework

#	Pillar	What good looks like
01	HR Strategy & Organisation Structure	Define roles, reporting lines, workforce plan, decision rights and HR ownership.
02	Recruitment & Workforce Planning	Translate business plans into hiring requirements, JDs, sourcing, selection and offer controls.
03	Employee Documentation	Create a reliable employee master and standard joining, employment and HR records.
04	Policies & Employee Handbook	Document consistent workplace expectations, processes and responsibilities.
05	Onboarding & Employee Lifecycle	Create a repeatable employee journey from pre-joining through exit.
06	Attendance, Leave & Payroll	Establish monthly controls for time, leave, salary inputs, deductions, approvals and records.
07	Statutory Compliance	Map applicable central/state requirements and maintain evidence, calendars and ownership.
08	Performance Management	Set goals, review performance, provide feedback and connect development to business priorities.
09	Employee Experience, Engagement & POSH	Create channels for communication, recognition, grievances, conduct and workplace dignity.
10	HR Technology, MIS & Analytics	Digitise records and workflows and provide leadership with actionable HR visibility.

4. Startup HR Foundation Checklist

Use this section as a working audit. Add an owner and target date for every item that is not complete.

Organisation & Governance

- ☐ Define organisation structure and reporting lines.
- ☐ Document who can approve hiring, compensation, leave, expenses and employee actions.
- ☐ Create an HR responsibility matrix covering founder, managers, HR, payroll and finance.
- ☐ Define an HR calendar for recurring monthly, quarterly and annual activities.
- ☐ Create a secure location for HR records with controlled access.

Recruitment

- ☐ Use an approved manpower requisition or hiring request.
- ☐ Create a structured job description for each recurring role.
- ☐ Define interview stages and decision owners.
- ☐ Use a consistent candidate evaluation form or scorecard.
- ☐ Document offer approvals and joining follow-up.

Employee Documentation

- ☐ Create an employee master record.
- ☐ Collect and verify applicable joining documents.
- ☐ Maintain signed employment documentation and policy acknowledgements.
- ☐ Record emergency contact and bank/payroll information.
- ☐ Define a process for updating employee data.

Policies

- ☐ Create an employee handbook or central policy repository.
- ☐ Document attendance and leave rules.
- ☐ Document code of conduct and workplace behaviour expectations.
- ☐ Document grievance and disciplinary processes.
- ☐ Assess POSH policy and Internal Committee requirements where applicable.
- ☐ Review policies periodically and communicate material changes.

Payroll & Benefits

- ☐ Maintain an approved salary/CTC master.
- ☐ Define payroll cut-off dates and input owners.
- ☐ Reconcile attendance, leave, joiners, exits and approved variable pay before processing.
- ☐ Use a maker-checker review for payroll where practical.
- ☐ Maintain payslips, payroll registers/reports and statutory records as applicable.

Compliance

- ☐ Map applicable central and state requirements.
- ☐ Record applicability assumptions and review triggers.
- ☐ Maintain a compliance calendar with owner, due date and evidence.
- ☐ Monitor changes in law/rules/notifications.

- Keep evidence of filings, payments, registers and approvals as applicable.

Employee Lifecycle

- Use a standard pre-joining checklist.
- Complete Day 1 orientation and documentation.
- Track probation or confirmation milestones where applicable.
- Maintain employee letters/certificates in the HR record.
- Use a documented exit and full & final workflow.

Performance & Engagement

- Define role expectations and measurable goals.
- Set a regular review cadence.
- Train managers to give structured feedback.
- Provide an employee feedback/grievance channel.
- Use recognition and engagement practices appropriate to company culture.

Technology & MIS

- Decide when HRMS adoption will materially reduce risk or manual work.
- Use role-based access to employee information.
- Define data ownership and change controls.
- Create a monthly HR dashboard.
- Back up critical records and review access periodically.

5. Essential HR Document Matrix

Not every document below is universally mandatory. Classify each item as essential for your operating model, recommended, or applicable only in specific circumstances.

Document	Purpose	Priority / applicability	When
Offer / appointment documentation	Sets out employment terms and role expectations.	Essential	Before / at joining
Employment agreement / confidentiality terms	Protects clarity around employment terms and confidential information where appropriate.	Applicability-based	Before / at joining
Employee information form	Centralises personal, contact and payroll information.	Essential	Joining
Identity / KYC records	Supports employee verification and applicable payroll/statutory processes.	Applicability-based	Joining
Bank / payroll information	Enables salary processing and reconciliation.	Essential	Joining
Code of conduct	Defines expected workplace behaviour.	Recommended / often essential operationally	Joining + annual acknowledgement
Employee handbook	Creates a central employee reference point.	Recommended	Joining + updates
Leave & attendance policy	Sets consistent operating rules.	Essential	Before use
Work-from-home / hybrid policy	Defines expectations for remote or hybrid work.	Recommended / applicability-based	As adopted
POSH policy & records	Supports prevention and complaint-handling framework where applicable.	Applicability-based / legally important	Before applicability + ongoing
Grievance / complaint process	Provides an internal route for employee concerns.	Recommended	Ongoing
Disciplinary process	Provides consistency for workplace conduct matters.	Recommended	Ongoing
Performance management framework	Defines goals, reviews and documentation.	Recommended	Before review cycle
Compensation / benefits policy	Clarifies salary administration and benefits.	Recommended	As adopted
Travel / expense policy	Controls business expense approvals.	Recommended	As adopted
Asset issue / handover form	Creates an evidence trail for company assets.	Recommended	Joining / exit
Exit interview form	Captures structured employee feedback.	Recommended	Exit
Full & final checklist	Coordinates exit, payroll, assets and records.	Essential operational control	Exit
HRMS employee record	Provides a controlled digital source of employee data.	Recommended; increasingly valuable at scale	Ongoing
Statutory registers / records	Supports applicable statutory obligations.	Applicability-based	Ongoing

6. HR Policy Framework

Policy family	Typical policies	Purpose
Core HR	Code of Conduct; Employee Handbook; Working Hours; Leave & Attendance	Sets the everyday rules and employee expectations.
Employee Lifecycle	Onboarding; Probation/Confirmation; Transfer; Separation	Standardises recurring employee events.
Compensation	Salary Administration; Benefits; Incentives; Reimbursements	Creates consistent compensation administration.
Workplace	Remote/Hybrid; Travel; Expense; IT/Asset Use	Controls practical workplace operations.
Compliance & Conduct	POSH; Grievance; Disciplinary; Whistleblowing where relevant	Creates governance and escalation routes.
Performance	Goal Setting; Performance Reviews; Development	Connects employee contribution to business priorities.
Data & Technology	HRMS Use; Data Access; Records Retention; Security	Controls sensitive employee information.

Policy quality test

- ☐ Is the policy written in language employees can understand?
- ☐ Does it clearly define scope and ownership?
- ☐ Are approval and escalation points clear?
- ☐ Does it distinguish policy from process/SOP?
- ☐ Has applicability to the startup's locations and workforce been considered?
- ☐ Is the policy communicated and acknowledged where appropriate?
- ☐ Is there a defined review date or trigger?

7. Recruitment & Workforce Planning

Recruitment should start with a business requirement, not a vacancy. The goal is to make hiring decisions repeatable, documented and connected to workforce plans.

Recommended workflow

01 → 02 → 03 → 04 → 05 → 06 → 07

Workforce need → Manpower request → Job description → Sourcing & screening → Interview & assessment → Offer → Joining

Recruitment control checklist

- ☐ Hiring requirement approved by the relevant business owner.
- ☐ Role outcomes and success measures defined.
- ☐ Budget / compensation range approved.
- ☐ JD reviewed for clarity and consistency.
- ☐ Interview panel and decision maker identified.
- ☐ Candidate evaluation captured before final selection.
- ☐ Offer approval documented.
- ☐ Pre-joining follow-up assigned.
- ☐ Recruitment data recorded for monthly reporting.

Suggested recruitment KPIs

Metric	What it tells leadership	Use carefully
Time to Hire	How long the hiring process takes.	Define start/end points consistently.
Time to Fill	How long an approved vacancy remains open.	Separate business approval delays from recruitment delays.
Source Mix	Where candidates and hires come from.	Track quality, not just volume.
Interview-to-Offer Ratio	Selection efficiency.	Interpret by role and seniority.
Offer-to-Joining Ratio	Offer acceptance / joining reliability.	Track reasons for drop-offs.
Cost per Hire	Recruitment cost relative to hires.	Include relevant internal/external costs.
Quality of Hire	Whether hires meet role expectations.	Use structured post-joining measures.

8. Onboarding & Employee Lifecycle

Stage	Minimum control	Evidence
Pre-joining	Offer accepted; joining information shared; documents requested; HRMS/payroll setup initiated.	Pre-joining checklist
Day 1	Welcome, role context, manager introduction, documentation, policy orientation, access.	Day 1 checklist
First 7 days	Role expectations, tools, team integration, compliance/policy awareness.	7-day check-in
First 30 days	Manager feedback, role clarity, early support and issue identification.	30-day check-in
First 90 days	Probation/confirmation milestone where applicable; performance conversation; development actions.	90-day review
Ongoing	Employee record updates, leave/attendance, payroll, performance, engagement and support.	HRMS / personnel record

Employee lifecycle control points

- ATTRACT — workforce need and recruitment
- ONBOARD — documentation and joining
- MANAGE — HR operations and employee support
- PAY — payroll and benefits
- PROTECT — compliance, conduct and POSH
- PERFORM — goals and feedback
- ENGAGE — employee experience
- DEVELOP — learning and capability
- EXIT — separation and full & final

9. Attendance, Leave & Payroll

Monthly payroll operating cycle

PAYROLL CONTROL

Attendance closure → Leave reconciliation → Joiners & exits → Variable inputs → Salary validation → Payroll processing → Review → Disbursement → Payslips & records

Payroll checklist

- ☐ Payroll calendar communicated to HR, managers and finance.
- ☐ Attendance is closed against the defined cut-off.
- ☐ Leave records are reconciled.
- ☐ New joiners and exits are verified.
- ☐ Salary revisions / promotions have approved effective dates.
- ☐ Variable pay, incentives and reimbursements have documented approvals.
- ☐ Applicable statutory deductions and employer contributions are reviewed.
- ☐ Payroll is checked before release.
- ☐ Payslips and payroll reports are stored securely.
- ☐ Exceptions are logged and resolved.

MAKER-CHECKER

Where practical, separate payroll preparation from payroll approval. The reviewer should validate headcount, changes, exceptional items, statutory components and the final payment file/report.

10. Labour Law & Compliance Framework

India's four Labour Codes are in force from 21 November 2025, according to the Ministry of Labour & Employment. The Ministry also notified the Central Rules for the four Codes on 8 May 2026. Applicability and operational requirements still need to be assessed against the establishment's facts, applicable state rules and other notifications.

Code	Core area	Startup HR focus
Code on Wages, 2019	Wages, minimum wages, payment of wages and related matters.	Review wage structure, payroll definitions, minimum wage applicability and wage records.
Code on Social Security, 2020	Social security and related benefits.	Assess EPF/ESI/gratuity and other applicable coverage and records.
Industrial Relations Code, 2020	Industrial relations, standing orders, disputes and related matters.	Review employment documentation, grievance/discipline processes and applicability of standing-order provisions.
OSH & WC Code, 2020	Occupational safety, health and working conditions.	Assess workplace safety, working conditions, health and establishment-specific obligations.

Compliance operating model

Step	Action
1. Identify	Map applicable central and state laws/codes/rules based on establishment, location, headcount, industry and worker categories.
2. Assess	Record applicability, thresholds, exemptions and current implementation assumptions.
3. Calendarise	Create a due-date calendar with owner, reviewer and evidence requirement.
4. Execute	Complete filings, payments, registers, notices and records as applicable.
5. Evidence	Store challans, acknowledgements, returns, registers, approvals and supporting records securely.
6. Review	Check regulatory updates and business changes that may alter applicability.

11. POSH & Workplace Conduct

Startups should treat workplace dignity, prevention of sexual harassment and complaint handling as governance responsibilities—not simply as a policy document.

- Assess whether the organisation falls within the statutory applicability requirements for an Internal Committee and other POSH obligations.
- Maintain an appropriate prevention, awareness and complaint-handling framework.
- Make reporting channels understandable and accessible to employees.
- Protect confidentiality and limit information to people who need it for legitimate handling.
- Document actions and maintain required records.
- Provide awareness and role-specific training appropriate to the organisation.
- Do not investigate or resolve sensitive complaints through informal shortcuts when a formal statutory process applies.

IMPORTANT

POSH applicability and procedural requirements should be assessed against the current law, establishment facts and applicable rules. This guide is not a substitute for legal advice.

12. Performance Management

A SIMPLE PMS CYCLE

SET → ALIGN → CHECK-IN → FEEDBACK → DEVELOP → REVIEW

Element	Practical startup approach
Goals	Set 3–7 meaningful outcomes linked to role and business priorities.
KPIs / KRAs	Use measurable indicators where the role permits; avoid measuring activity alone.
Check-ins	Use monthly or quarterly conversations rather than relying only on an annual review.
Feedback	Capture strengths, gaps, evidence and agreed actions.
Development	Translate performance gaps into coaching, training, exposure or role support.
Review	Use a consistent review template and defined decision rights.
Documentation	Keep records of goals, reviews, decisions and development actions.

PMS terminology

- KRA — Key Result Area: a broad outcome area for a role.
- KPI — Key Performance Indicator: a measurable indicator used to track performance.
- Goal — a specific result to achieve within a defined period.
- Competency — knowledge, behaviour or capability required to perform effectively.
- Development plan — agreed actions that strengthen capability or address a performance need.

13. Employee Experience, Engagement & Grievance

Low-cost engagement system

- Weekly manager/team communication rhythm.
- Monthly recognition or appreciation moments.
- Quarterly employee listening or pulse check.
- Structured manager one-to-ones for critical roles.
- Transparent communication around business changes.
- Learning and career conversations.
- Clear channel for employee concerns.

Grievance workflow

01 → 02 → 03 → 04 → 05 → 06

Issue raised → Acknowledge → Fact-finding → Discuss / escalate → Action / resolution → Document & close

- ☐ The concern is logged with sufficient facts and date.
- ☐ The responsible person acknowledges receipt.
- ☐ Confidentiality is respected as far as practicable.
- ☐ Conflicts of interest are identified.
- ☐ The appropriate escalation route is used.
- ☐ Actions and closure are documented.

14. Exit & Full & Final Settlement

Step	Control
Resignation / separation trigger	Record the date, reason where provided, notice terms and approving authority.
Knowledge transfer	Define handover, open tasks, customer/vendor dependencies and documentation.
Asset recovery	Recover company property and record status.
Access closure	Revoke systems, email, HRMS and other access in line with security procedures.
Final payroll inputs	Validate attendance, leave, deductions, recoveries and other applicable inputs.
Full & final	Process applicable dues and deductions using the correct contractual/statutory basis.
Documents	Issue applicable separation documents and maintain evidence.
Exit interview	Capture structured feedback where appropriate.
Record closure	Archive the employee record securely and retain required records for applicable periods.

Exit checklist

- ☐ Resignation / separation approval recorded.
- ☐ Notice period and last working day confirmed.
- ☐ Handover completed.
- ☐ Assets recovered or exception documented.
- ☐ System access closed.
- ☐ Payroll inputs verified.
- ☐ Full & final processed as applicable.
- ☐ Experience / relieving documentation completed as applicable.
- ☐ Employee record archived securely.

15. HRMS Implementation & Management

HRMS should solve a process problem, not create another software project. Move from spreadsheets to an HRMS when data volume, workflow complexity, compliance risk or employee self-service needs make structured technology materially useful.

HRMS capability	What it should manage
Employee Master	Employee profile, role, department, joining, status and core records.
Documents	Controlled digital storage and retrieval of HR documents.
Attendance & Leave	Time, leave balances, approvals and records.
Payroll	Salary inputs, payroll processing support, payslips and reports.
Recruitment	Vacancies, candidates, interview workflow and hiring data.
Performance	Goals, reviews, feedback and development actions.
Employee Self-Service	Requests, payslips, personal data and HR communication where supported.
Analytics	Headcount, attrition, recruitment, attendance, payroll and other management insights.

HRMS readiness questions

- ☐ Is employee master data standardised?
- ☐ Are access rights defined by role?
- ☐ Are manual approval steps mapped before automation?
- ☐ Has data quality been checked before migration?
- ☐ Are payroll and statutory inputs reconciled?
- ☐ Is there a process for changes and corrections?
- ☐ Are employees and managers trained?

16. HR MIS & Leadership Dashboard

Dashboard area	Monthly indicators
Workforce	Opening headcount; closing headcount; joiners; exits; department/location mix.
Recruitment	Open positions; applications; interviews; offers; joiners; time to hire; source mix.
Payroll	Payroll cost; major changes; variable pay; exceptions; statutory processing status.
Attendance	Absenteeism; leave utilisation; overtime where relevant; recurring exceptions.
Performance	Review completion; goals set; overdue reviews; performance actions.
Employee Experience	Grievances; engagement pulse; recognition; key employee actions.
Compliance	Upcoming obligations; completed actions; exceptions; evidence status.
Learning	Training completed; participation; key capability initiatives.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Don't ask only "How many employees do we have?" Ask "What people risks, capacity gaps and operating issues could affect growth?"

17. Annual HR Operating Calendar

Cadence	Typical HR activities
Monthly	Payroll; attendance/leave reconciliation; employee master update; recruitment pipeline; HR MIS; compliance calendar review.
Quarterly	Workforce plan review; performance check-ins; policy/process exceptions; HR dashboard review; manager feedback.
Half-yearly	Policy review; employee data quality audit; HRMS access review; training plan review.
Annually	Compensation review; performance cycle; policy refresh; HR audit; POSH awareness/training as applicable; workforce plan.
Event-driven	New location; rapid hiring; restructuring; acquisition; remote-work change; new benefit; regulatory change.

Statutory due dates should be maintained in a separate compliance calendar based on the organisation's actual registrations, locations and applicable rules. Do not rely on a generic annual calendar for legal deadlines.

18. 15 Startup HR Mistakes to Avoid

Mistake	Risk / impact	Better practice
Hiring without structured documentation	Risk of inconsistent terms and weak records.	Use standard hiring and joining checklists.
Founder-dependent HR	Every issue waits for one person.	Create ownership and escalation rules.
Policies copied without review	Policies may not fit the business or current law.	Customise, approve and communicate.
Payroll without controls	Errors can damage trust and create compliance issues.	Use a cut-off, validation and maker-checker process.
No employee master	Data becomes fragmented across emails and files.	Maintain one controlled source of truth.
No onboarding process	New hires start without clarity or support.	Use a pre-joining and 30/60/90-day journey.
Compliance handled reactively	Deadlines and evidence can be missed.	Maintain applicability mapping and a calendar.
No performance rhythm	Problems surface too late.	Use regular goals and check-ins.
No grievance channel	Issues escalate informally.	Provide a clear route and escalation path.
No exit controls	Access, assets and payroll can remain open.	Use an end-to-end exit checklist.
Over-reliance on spreadsheets	Manual work and version errors increase with scale.	Automate high-volume workflows at the right time.
No manager enablement	HR owns issues that managers should handle.	Train managers on people responsibilities.
No HR MIS	Leadership cannot see people risks.	Publish a concise monthly dashboard.
Too many disconnected vendors	Ownership becomes fragmented.	Define one accountable operating model.
Scaling headcount faster than HR systems	Operational complexity grows faster than controls.	Build the next HR capability before the next growth stage.

19. Startup HR Roadmap: 0 to 100+ Employees

Stage	Theme	Priority capabilities	Typical ownership
0–10	Foundation	Employee master; core documentation; essential policies; hiring workflow; payroll controls; compliance applicability assessment.	Founder + HR/admin support
11–25	Structure	Employee handbook; onboarding; attendance/leave; recurring HR calendar; manager basics; recruitment tracker; HRMS assessment.	HR owner + managers
26–50	Process	Documented SOPs; PMS; grievance process; POSH framework; monthly HR MIS; compliance governance; HRMS workflows.	HR manager / HR partner
51–100	System	Specialist support; analytics; workforce planning; manager capability; stronger employee experience; audit readiness.	HR team + specialist partners
100+	Scale	HR operating model; organisation design; leadership development; talent strategy; people analytics; governance.	HR leadership + specialist teams

20. Startup HR Self-Assessment

Rate each area from 1 to 5 based on the maturity description. This is a management self-assessment, not a legal compliance certification.

Area	1	2	3	4	5
HR Foundation	Ad hoc	Partly defined	Documented	Systemised	Scalable
Documentation	Missing / inconsistent	Basic records	Standardised	Digitised	Governed
Recruitment	Informal	Some process	Structured	Measured	Predictive / planned
Onboarding	Manager-led	Basic checklist	Standard	Digital workflow	Experience-led
Payroll	Manual / risky	Basic controls	Documented	Systemised	Auditable
Compliance	Reactive	Partial mapping	Calendarised	Monitored	Governed
Performance	Informal	Annual / inconsistent	Regular	Measured	Integrated
Employee Experience	Ad hoc	Some initiatives	Structured	Measured	Continuous
HRMS	None / fragmented	Basic tools	Core HRMS	Integrated	Analytics-enabled
HR MIS	No dashboard	Basic reporting	Monthly dashboard	Insights	Decision support

Suggested interpretation: use the scores to identify gaps and priorities, not to compare one startup with another. Focus first on high-risk, high-frequency processes and on the capabilities required for your next growth stage.

21. 30-Day Startup HR Action Plan

Timing	Focus	Key outputs	Owner
Week 1	Audit & data	Employee master; document gap review; payroll process review; applicability scan; owner matrix.	Leadership + HR
Week 2	Foundation	Core policies; standard letters/templates; onboarding checklist; employee file structure.	HR + leadership
Week 3	Operations	Attendance/leave process; payroll calendar; recruitment workflow; compliance calendar; grievance route.	HR + finance + managers
Week 4	Systemise	HRMS decision/readiness; monthly dashboard; manager communication; 90-day roadmap.	Leadership + HR

Action tracker

Action	Owner	Target date	Status	Evidence
Complete HR foundation audit	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____
Close critical documentation gaps	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____
Approve core policies	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____
Set payroll & compliance calendar	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____
Implement onboarding workflow	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____
Define HR MIS	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____
Review HRMS readiness	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____
Create next 90-day HR roadmap	_____	_____	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Done	_____

22. Build HR That Grows With Your Business

CAREER CREED

Career Creed helps startups and growing businesses bring together people, processes, technology and compliance into a structured HR function.

Where Career Creed can support

Need	Career Creed capability
Build the HR foundation	HR Foundation Setup • HR Policies & Procedures • Employee Documentation • HRMS Setup • Compliance Framework
Run everyday HR	HR Control Desk™ • Employee Records • Onboarding • Attendance & Leave • HR Letters • Employee Support
Manage payroll & compliance	Payroll Management • Statutory Compliance • HR Advisory • Compliance Calendar
Build the team	Recruitment • Talent Acquisition • Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO)
Digitise HR	HRMS Technology • Employee Self-Service • Attendance • Leave • Payroll • Performance • Analytics
Develop people	Performance Management • Employee Engagement • Learning & Development • Leadership Consulting

Start with the right next step

If your startup is unsure where to begin, start with an HR health check: understand what exists, identify the highest-risk gaps, prioritise what the business needs next, and then build a practical implementation roadmap.

GET YOUR FREE HR HEALTH CHECK™

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Appendix A — Core HR Checklist at a Glance

Area	Checklist
People	☐ Organisation structure ☐ Hiring plan ☐ Role clarity ☐ Manager ownership
Records	☐ Employee master ☐ Joining documents ☐ Contracts/letters ☐ Secure storage
Policies	☐ Handbook ☐ Leave ☐ Attendance ☐ Conduct ☐ Grievance ☐ POSH as applicable
Operations	☐ Onboarding ☐ HR letters ☐ Attendance ☐ Leave ☐ Employee queries
Payroll	☐ Payroll calendar ☐ Input reconciliation ☐ Review ☐ Payslips ☐ Records
Compliance	☐ Applicability map ☐ Calendar ☐ Filings/payments ☐ Evidence ☐ Regulatory review
Performance	☐ Goals ☐ Check-ins ☐ Feedback ☐ Development ☐ Review records
Experience	☐ Communication ☐ Recognition ☐ Feedback ☐ Engagement ☐ Grievance
Technology	☐ HRMS assessment ☐ Access controls ☐ Data quality ☐ Automation ☐ MIS
Exit	☐ Notice ☐ Handover ☐ Assets ☐ Access ☐ F&F ☐ Documents ☐ Record closure

Appendix B — Reference Sources

Primary sources used for the legal/regulatory portions of this guide:

- Ministry of Labour & Employment — Labour Codes implementation announcement / PIB, 21 November 2025: <https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/pib2192463.pdf>
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