



**Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)**  
**A Government of India Enterprise**

**Biotechnology Ignition Grant (BIG)**

***Igniting New Ideas.....***

**Scheme Guidelines**  
**Version 6; Jul 2019; BIG Round 15**

## 1. Scheme in brief

The Biotechnology Ignition Grant (BIG) is a flagship scheme of BIRAC which recognizes and invests in innovative ideas in the biotech sector. The ideas should have clear potential to translate into commercial products/technologies. BIG supports individual entrepreneurs/ start-ups from ideation to Proof of Concept (PoC). Under BIG scheme, BIRAC provides grant-in-aid of upto INR 50 lakhs (approx USD 75,000) for a period of 18 months.

## 2. Purpose of the BIG scheme

### 2.1. BIG scheme:

- **Supports** ideation to PoC
- **Nurtures** entrepreneurship to enable translation of ideas into commercially viable products/ technologies to address unmet need
- **Enables** Biotech Startup Ecosystem in the country to become globally competitive

## 3. Types of projects supported

### 3.1 What is supported?

BIG scheme supports innovation under Healthcare, Lifesciences, Diagnostics, Medical Devices, Drugs, Vaccines, Drug Formulations and delivery systems, Industrial Biotechnology, Agriculture, Secondary agriculture, Waste Management, Sanitation, Clean Energy and related areas.

The project proposals can be submitted in any of the following seven categories:

- Devices & Diagnostics
- Drugs including drug delivery
- Industrial Biotechnology including Secondary Agriculture
- Agriculture
- Biosimilars & Stem Cells
- Vaccines
- Bioinformatics & facilities

BIRAC encourages proposals involving integration of Biotech with applied sciences that may include Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Sensors, Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Machine Learning, Automation, Robotics and related disciplines to potentially facilitate transforming healthcare, lifesciences, agriculture, secondary agriculture and other bio-based industry/ markets.

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### 3.2 What is not supported?

- Basic/exploratory research projects
- Projects having low element of novelty
- Projects involving systematic clinical trials, field trials or late stage validation/certification of the technology.

Note: BIG grant is not a research fellowship and cannot be used to support PhD or any other academic research.

## 4. Project Duration

The funding is provided for a period of up to 18 months. The project is implemented in a milestone based manner.

## 5. Support provided to grantees under the scheme

5.1 Financial	
	5.1.1 The funding support under BIG is in the form of grant-in-aid.
	5.1.2 Extent of funding is up to INR 50 lakhs.
	5.1.3 The fund allocation is milestone based and released in 4 installments: 1 <sup>st</sup> Installment: Signing of Contract: upto 30% 2 <sup>nd</sup> Installment: Completion of 1 <sup>st</sup> Milestone (M1): ~ 30% 3 <sup>rd</sup> Installment: Completion of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Milestone (M2): ~ 30% 4 <sup>th</sup> Installment: Completion of project and submission of final report (M4): ~ 5-10% Last installment is released after submission of project completion report. This is typically in the nature of reimbursement.
	5.1.4 Guidance related to planning and utilization of funds is provided in Section 11 below.

5.2 Entrepreneurial Support	<p>BIG Partners and BIRAC provide continuous mentoring support to the grantees, including but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Mentoring (Connect with Technical Experts)</li> <li>• IP Support</li> <li>• Legal Support</li> <li>• Networking and Outreach</li> <li>• Trainings</li> <li>• Regulatory Advice</li> <li>• Business Mentoring</li> <li>• Connect with Investors</li> <li>• Any other assistance on case basis</li> </ul>
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## 6. Who can apply? (Eligibility criteria)

6.1 Individual	
	6.1.1 The individual applicant should be an Indian citizen (defined in section 14).
	6.1.2. The primary applicant should be the Project Leader (as per Section 7.1 below)
	<p>6.1.3. The applicant has to be incubated in an incubator (Incubator could be located anywhere in the country and may/may not be supported by BIRAC). At the time of application, the applicant is expected to have identified preferred incubator. LoI/MoU with the incubator is required for final approval.</p> <p>(Please refer to the BioNEST page on BIRAC website for details on BIRAC supported Bioincubators)</p>
	<p>6.1.4. If the applicant is formally employed (or registered as a student) with an academic or research organization, then</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the applicant has to produce a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from competent authority of the organization clearly indicating that the organization has policies in place to allow the applicant while in service/ on sabbatical/on Extraordinary Leave:</li> <li>• accept funding support (if successful) as an individual,</li> <li>• manage the funds through a separate no-lien account in individual capacity</li> <li>• undertake BIG project in an incubator</li> <li>• to create an enterprise.</li> </ul>

	Alternatively, the applicant needs to provide an undertaking that he/she plans to terminate his/her association with the current employer and take up the project full time in the event of grant approval. A resignation/ relieving/ retirement letter will be needed as supporting document before final approval and release of the grant.
	<p>6.1.5 If the applicant is formally employed with a for-profit company/LLP,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the applicant needs to provide an undertaking that he/she plans to terminate his/her association with the current employer and take up the project full time in the event of a grant approval (A resignation/ relieving/retirement letter will be needed as supporting document before final approval and release of the grant.), or,</li> <li>Alternatively, the application should be submitted under Company/LLP category. .</li> </ul>
	<p>6.1.6. Individual who is a promoter shareholder of a Biotech company or one of the partners in a Biotech LLP will not be allowed to apply as an individual, irrespective of the percentage of shareholding of the applicant in the company. (In such a case, the application can be submitted through company/LLP route, in case the company/LLP meets the required eligibility criteria as detailed below)</p>
6.2 Company/LLP	
	6.2.1 The Company/LLP should be registered under the Indian Companies Act, 1956/2013
	6.2.2 The incorporation date of the Company/LLP should not be earlier than 5 years from the date of closing of a particular BIG call.
	6.2.3 A company is considered as 'owned' by resident Indian citizen(s) if minimum 51% of the capital is beneficially owned by resident Indian citizen(s) and / or Indian companies, which are ultimately owned and controlled by resident Indian citizens
	6.2.4 Company/LLP's application should be represented by a Project Leader (defined under Section 7.1).

	6.2.5 The Company/LLP must have its own in-house R&D facility that is functional and adequate to execute the project. If the Company/LLP does not have a functional and adequate laboratory of its own then it should be incubated at an incubator (This shall be verified and confirmed by BIG Partner ),
	6.2.6 If an applicant company, in which any promoter holding more than or equal to 20% of the shares, is a co-promoter of another ineligible company or a partner in another ineligible LLP, then the applicant will not be eligible. The only exception to this shall be situation wherein the latter ineligible company/LLP is operating in non-biotech domain. In case applicant is a LLP: An applicant LLP, in which any of the partners is also a partner in another ineligible LLP or is a co-promoter in another ineligible company, then the applicant will not be eligible. The only exception to this shall be situation wherein the latter ineligible LLP/company is operating in non-biotech domain.

## 7. Other important details

7.1 Project leader	
	7.1.1. Every proposal must clearly identify a Project Leader who will take responsibility for the technical and managerial aspects of the project execution.
	7.1.2. The Project Leader must be technically qualified to undertake the project. The Project Leader must have completed basic undergraduate training in any discipline.
	7.1.3. In the event that the proposal is shortlisted for presentation in front of Selection Committee(s), the Project Leader will be required to present the case for support. In the event that proposal is shortlisted for funding support, the Project Leader will be required to sign the project agreement.
	7.1.4. Project Leader must be a shareholder in the applicant company.
7.2 Others	

	<p>7.2.1 Applicants are expected to show documentary evidence for verification by BIG Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before Technical Expert Panel (TEP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Letter of commitment from Scientific Advisors/ Mentors to serve as <i>honorary</i> advisors (see section 11)</li> <li>○ Letter of intent of key members of the technical team</li> <li>○ Letter of interest/intent from the incubator</li> <li>○ Evidence of access to unique facility(ies) needed to execute a project</li> <li>○ Evidence of access to key samples needed to execute the project (eg: bio-fluids)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Post Expert Selection Panel (ESC): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Letter of acceptance or MoU with incubator</li> <li>○ Formal agreements/ MoUs with other key facility(ies) providers/ suppliers</li> <li>○ Any other due diligence documents requested on case to case basis by BIG Partners (e.g. technology inlicensing; IP rights clarification; NoC from Institute etc.)</li> <li>○ Undertaking by the applicant that the project with same objectives and deliverables has not received funding from any other agency.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p>7.2.2 The proposed objectives and deliverables should not have received funding support from any other agency.</p>
	<p>7.2.3 BIG support can be provided only once to any individual/startup.</p>
7.3 Individual to Company Conversion	<p>Individual applicants are encouraged to incorporate a startup during BIG tenure, preferably within a year of BIG grant. The start up will need to meet all eligibility criteria as listed above for a company/LLP under BIG and comply with the due diligence requirements. The Project Leader will also need to remain the same and need to be a promoter shareholder in the new start-up.</p>

## 8. Application process

- BIRAC issues a national call inviting applications under BIG at least twice a year (1<sup>st</sup> of January & 1<sup>st</sup> of July).
- The Call for Proposals is advertised through one or more means that may include BIRAC website, newspapers, journals and magazines.



- The Call for Proposals is typically open for a period of upto one and a half month.
- The BIG Scheme is implemented across the country through BIRAC's BIG Partners. The Call will mention the names of BIG Partners for the particular call. Names of the BIG Partners and their responsibilities are mentioned in Annexure 2.
- Application for BIG needs to be submitted online ONLY through BIRAC website [www.birac.nic.in](http://www.birac.nic.in).
- Applicants are advised to fill-up and submit their applications early without waiting for the last date in order to avoid last minute rush. Please note that the online system will stop accepting applications automatically at the specific date and time mentioned in the Call details.
- Applicants are advised to provide sufficient details in their applications to allow for an informed and fair evaluation/review.
- Requests for changes in a proposal once submitted will not be entertained.
- Providing incorrect information intentionally is viewed adversely and may lead to disqualification.

## 9. Selection process

BIG selection is a three tier process that involves online review (first level), presentation before Technical Expert Panel (TEP; second level) and final selection by the Expert Selection Committee (ESC; third level). Online review and TEPs are managed by and at BIG Partners' site. TEP recommended proposals from all BIG partners converge to a centralized selection committee –ESC.

- BIG Partners screen the applications for eligibility and appropriateness under BIG scheme.
- Eligible proposals are reviewed online by 3 or more subject matter experts .
- Based on expert review, shortlisted applications are called for a F2F presentation before Technical Expert Panel (TEP).
- TEP recommended applications are called for final F2F presentation before Expert Selection Committee (ESC).
- ESC recommended applications are then subjected to final financial and technical due diligence by the BIG Partner. This requires a visit by BIG partner representative(s) to the applicant's site and involves following steps:
  - Reconfirming eligibility by verification of original documents
  - Legal, technical and financial due diligence
  - Confirming applicant's claimed resources: Space, equipment, manpower, advisors, incubation services, samples etc
  - Confirming compliance strategy with regards to safety, ethics, waste disposal etc.
  - Confirming for any special guidance by ESC
  - Justification of budget (usually by verifying quotations); meeting budget caps and other requirements
  - Finalization of milestones, budget and payment schedule; defining clear measurable milestones.
- Due diligence reports provided by the partner are then examined by BIRAC, subsequent to



which a proposal is finally approved for funding support under BIG.

## 10. Signing of Agreement, Fund Disbursement, Monitoring and Review process

- For the proposals finally approved for funding support, BIG Partners sign agreements with BIG grantees on behalf of BIRAC.
- Necessary guidance notes and templates are provided to BIG Grantees by respective BIG Partners.
- All grantees are required to open a separate, auditable, no-lien bank account with a scheduled bank in order to receive the funds.
- Based on approved project milestones, respective BIG Partners periodically monitor progress and review the project. Grantees have to submit periodic reports and utilization certificates in the prescribed format to the BIG Partner.
- The project progress is also monitored by BIRAC regularly including a F2F presentation towards completion of the project.
- It is mandatory for all BIG grantees to interact with at least 2 investors during 18 months of BIG project and include the feedback in the final report.

## 11. Nomenclature and definitions

Term	Definition and clarifications
Company	An entity registered under the Indian Companies Act 1956/2013.
Indian citizen	An Indian citizen is defined as one who is in possession of a government approved proof of nationality such as a valid passport. NRIs are Indian citizens. OCI/PIO cardholders are not eligible for this scheme. As per Article 9 of the Constitution of India 1949, people voluntarily acquiring citizenship of a foreign state are not deemed to be citizens.

## 12. Indicative evaluation criteria for selection of BIG Grantees

The indicative evaluation criteria for proposals under the BIG scheme are as follows:

Criteria	Description	Illustrative weightage
Technical feasibility of the idea	Is the idea technically feasible in light of the current state of knowledge in the field and data provided to support the proposed idea? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are technical claims reasonable?</li> </ul>	15%



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Novelty	<p>Does the proposed technology have a significant novel component?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does it differ from the existing solutions and future relevant competitors? And the differentiation has a commercial potential?</li> <li>Does the proposed technology have potential to create new IP?</li> </ul>	15%
Value proposition	<p>What is the value proposition ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will the technology have significant commercial/societal impact?</li> <li>Does the idea offer a potential solution to an unmet need in market/society?</li> <li>Does the product/technology offer import substitution with potentially high economic benefit?</li> <li>Is the target market large or addressing a niche segment?</li> <li>If the idea succeeds, does it have potential for disrupting the markets or industry or technology landscape?</li> </ul>	15%
Commercialization strategy	<p>What is the Go to Market Strategy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the applicant identified target customers for the technology/ product/ service?</li> <li>Has the applicant identified potential business partners/mentors?</li> </ul>	15%
Team	<p>Technical competence of the PI and team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the strength of PI and team sufficient to take the project to completion?</li> <li>Has the team identified relevant advisors/mentors?</li> <li>What is the strategy to cover the missing technical/business expertise gaps?</li> </ul> <p>Note: If the proposal is aimed at development of a product/technology to be used in clinical settings, it is highly recommended to have a clinical advisor onboard right from start of the project.</p>	20%

Strategy to overcome challenges	<p>Team's preparedness to identify challenges and way forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the project progression face any major barrier(s) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulatory</li> <li>Ethical and EHS</li> <li>Availability of raw material/key resources</li> <li>Requirement of unique facility(ies)</li> <li>Patent rights, technology in-licensing etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	10%
BIG project plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the proposal provide sufficient details for evaluation?</li> <li>Are the project timelines and deliverables reasonable?</li> <li>Are the project objectives achievable with the funding cap of INR 50 lakhs?</li> </ul>	10%

### 13. Budget Planning

<p>Budget heads typically involve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equipment</li> <li>Manpower</li> <li>Consumables</li> <li>Incubation space rentals and services .</li> <li>Travel</li> <li>Outsourced services</li> <li>IP costs</li> <li>Contingency</li> </ul>	
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximum of 30% of project cost can be considered for equipments.</li> </ul>
Manpower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 30% of project cost can be considered for manpower/salary head with a cap of INR 50,000 per month per head.</li> <li>Scientific advisors/ mentors to the BIG grantee cannot draw salary through BIG grant. None of the team members can receive salary/stipend/fellowship from two sources simultaneously (BIG and any other source).</li> </ul>
Consumables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These heads are flexible and need to be justified.</li> </ul>

Incubation space rentals and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rentals for incubation space or startup's R&amp;D premises</li> <li>Charges for services availed by the grantee at the incubator</li> </ul>
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For project related travel within INR 1.5 lakh</li> </ul>
Outsourced services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outsourcing cost should not exceed 30% of project cost. It may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>project related services that are not available at the Incubator/own R&amp;D premises</li> <li>Short-term consultancy to non-team members for specialized requirements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
IP Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For patent drafting, filing and related services within INR 1.5 lakhs</li> <li>Foreground IP in-licensing charges not covered under BIG grant</li> </ul>
Contingency	Contingency cannot exceed 5% of project cost and in general includes expenses towards minor variations in any of the above budget heads; meeting expenditure towards unplanned activities. It may include project related expenses incurred for setting up of company/LLP during BIG tenure, stationery charges, incidental expenses, conference registration etc.
Waivers	The above guidelines shall be followed unless there is a specific exemption by BIRAC.

## BIG Partners

The BIG Scheme is implemented through BIG Partners located across the country. BIRAC has signed MoU with these partners for implementation of the scheme. A Call for Proposals mentions the names of BIG Partners for the particular call.

Responsibilities of BIG Partner include:

- Create awareness about BIG scheme through outreach programmes, social media etc.
- Provide mentoring for proposal submission to BIG aspirants
- Receive online applications
- Screen BIG applications for eligibility and suitability for the scheme
- Conduct first level screening through online review of eligible applications and recommend shortlisted proposals for approval to BIRAC
- Conduct TEP meeting for shortlisted applicants and submit detailed recommendations to BIRAC for further approval
- Handhold and provide pitching guidance to applicants for presentations before TEP and ESC

- Conduct technical & financial due diligence of the applicants shortlisted by the ESC and submit due diligence reports to BIRAC for final approval
- Sign agreement with finally selected innovators
- Verify requirements for release of funds
- Release funds (milestone based) to separate no-lien account
- Monitor the milestones and provide continuous mentorship/handholding for activities related to IP management, legal, contracts, mobilizing resources, fund raising and other business development related activities
- Organize workshops/ seminars/ mentoring sessions for BIG grantees
- Provide a platform for interaction with Experts, Mentors and other academic/ business partners.

**Current BIG Partners are as follows:**

S.No.	BIG Partner	Contact information
1.	Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP), Bangalore	Website: <a href="http://www.ccamp.res.in">www.ccamp.res.in</a> ; Contact Number: 080-67185100
2.	Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT), New Delhi	Website: <a href="http://www.fitt-iitd.org">www.fitt-iitd.org</a> ; Contact Number: 011-26597167, 011-26857762
3.	IKP Knowledge Park, Hyderabad	Website: <a href="http://www.ikpknowledgepark.com">www.ikpknowledgepark.com</a> ; Contact Number: 040-23480022
4.	KIIT Technology Business Incubator, Bhubaneswar	Website: <a href="http://www.kiitincubator.in">www.kiitincubator.in</a> ; Contact Number: 0674-2725466
5.	Venture Center (Entrepreneurship Development Center), Pune	Website: <a href="http://www.venturecenter.co.in">www.venturecenter.co.in</a> ; Contact Number: 020-64011026, 020-25865877
6.	SIDBI Innovation & Incubation Centre (SIIC), IIT Kanpur	Website: <a href="http://www.iitk.ac.in/siic/d/">http://www.iitk.ac.in/siic/d/</a> ; Contact Number: 0512 – 2597979
7.	Society For Innovation & Entrepreneurship - SINE, IIT Bombay	Website: <a href="https://sineiitb.org/">https://sineiitb.org/</a> Contact Number: 022-2576 7016
8.	a-IDEA , Technology Business Incubator of NAARM, Hyderabad	Website: <a href="https://aidea.naarm.org.in/">https://aidea.naarm.org.in/</a> Contact Number: 040 2458 1427



## List of Bio-Incubators supported under BioNEST Scheme of BIRAC

S. No.	BioIncubator supported under BioNEST	State
1	BITS Pillani K K Birla Goa campus	Goa
2	Panjab University	Chandigarh
3	DPSRU Innovation & Incubator Foundation (DIIF)	Delhi
4	FITT, IIT Delhi	Delhi
5	ZTM-BPD, IARI	Delhi
6	Clean Energy International Incubation Center	Delhi
7	RCB, Faridabad	Haryana
8	SIDBI Innovation & Incubation Centre (SIIC) at IIT Kanpur	Uttar Pradesh
9	TIDES Business Incubator	Uttarakhand
10	B. V. PATEL PERD Centre	Gujarat
11	Gujarat State Biotechnology Mission (GSBTM)	Gujarat
12	Ahmedabad University	Gujarat
13	SRISTI Innovation, Ahmedabad Gujrat	Gujarat
14	Entrepreneurship Development Centre, Venture Center, NCL , Pune	Maharashtra
15	Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE)	Maharashtra
16	RiiDL (Research Innovation Incubation Design laboratory Foundation), SomaiyaVidyavihar	Maharashtra
17	HTIC, Chennai	Tamil Nadu
18	IIT Madras Research Park, IIT Madras	Tamil Nadu
19	PSG-STEP, Coimbatore	Tamil Nadu
20	VIT-Technology Business Incubator (VITTBI)	Tamil Nadu
21	Shanmugha Arts, Science, Technology & Research Academy (SASTRA)	Tamil Nadu
22	Women Biotech Park, Chennai	Tamil Nadu
23	ICRISAT, Hyderabad	Telangana
24	IKP Knowledge Park, Hyderabad	Telangana
25	University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad	Telangana
26	LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad	Telangana
27	a-IDEA, NAARM-TBI, Rajendar Nagar	Telangana
28	IIIT Hyderabad	Telangana



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29	SBTIC, Hyderabad	Telangana
30	IKP Eden, Bangalore	Karnataka
31	IIHR, Bangalore	Karnataka
32	Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre (BBC)	Karnataka
33	C-CAMP, Bangalore	Karnataka
34	Mazumdar Shaw Medical Foundation (MSMF), Bangalore	Karnataka
35	SPMVV- Women Biotech Incubation facility (SPMVV- WBIF)	Andhra Pradesh
36	Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone(AMTZ)	Andhra Pradesh
37	B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science & Technology	Chennai
38	KIIT-TBI, Bhubaneswar	Odisha
39	National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education & Research (NIPER)	Assam
40	Institute of Advanced Study in Science & Technology (IASST)	Assam
41	Mizoram University	Mizoram

Please visit <http://www.birac.nic.in/bionest.php> for current list of bio-incubators supported by BIRAC. A BIG Grantee is free to choose any bio-incubator (supported/not supported by BIRAC) across the country.