

Grand Challenges India (GCI–BIRAC)

Request for Applications: Accelerating Innovation in Vaginal Formulations in Support of Women's Health

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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1. Eligibility

? **Who can apply under this Call?**

Applications are open to Indian academic institutions, public or private research organizations, not-for-profit foundations, startups, and industry partners. Joint applications between academia, industry, and clinical institutions are strongly encouraged.

At least one Principal Investigator (PI) must be an Indian national holding a valid Indian passport. OCI/PIO applicants are **not eligible** as lead applicants, though they can participate as collaborators but funds will not be disbursed to them.

Individual researchers or innovators not employed in a permanent position must provide an **affidavit or institutional support certificate** (from an incubation centre or host institution) confirming infrastructure and administrative backing. This must be submitted **at the full proposal stage**.

? **Can individuals apply directly?**

No. Proposals must be submitted through a legally recognized Indian organization with authority to receive and manage grant funds.

? **Are women-led teams and LMIC collaborations encouraged?**

Yes. Proposals led by women scientists and/or involving collaboration with institutions from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) will be given preference.

? **Eligibility Conditions - Company/ Startup/ Trust/ Society/ LLP**

The applicant entity must be registered under the Indian Laws and have:

- Minimum 51% equity shareholding held by Individuals having Indian nationality – in case of company; and
- Minimum 51% of the members shall be Individuals having Indian nationality – in other entity's case.
- NGOs or not-for-profit organizations must show evidence of **active operations in India** (e.g., registration certificate or SIRO recognition).

2. Application Process

? **What should my application include?**

Applicants must submit an online application including:

- Project summary and detailed technical proposal
- Budget and justification
- Institutional endorsement and contact details of the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators
- Detailed instructions are available in the *Application Guidelines Document* on the GCI–BIRAC portal.

? **Can I revise my proposal after submission?**

Yes. You can edit or revise your proposal until the closing date of the call. After the deadline, no changes will be allowed.

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? **What is the permissible limit for indirect costs?**

Indirect costs may be included up to 10–15% of the total project cost, as per BIRAC norms.

? **What are Mandatory Certificates at the Time of Full Proposal?**

Applicants should upload the following at submission:

- Institutional endorsement and NOC from the Host Institute
- Certificates of collaboration (if applicable)
- Ethical/regulatory approval status (if relevant)
- For individual applicants: incubation certificate

? **Do I need to obtain ethical and regulatory approvals before submission?**

Not necessarily. However, it is the applicant's sole responsibility to obtain necessary ethics and regulatory clearances for the project. Approvals (e.g., IEC, ICMR, CDSCO) may be pending at submission, but applicants must indicate the status of their approvals and are required to obtain them during project initiation.

? **Can foreign travel be included in the proposal?**

Yes, but only if essential to the project. Foreign travel must be clearly justified at submission; additional or unapproved travel will not be supported later without prior written approval from BIRAC.

? **Separate Project Account Requirement?**

Applicants should be prepared to maintain a dedicated, no-lien project account for managing funds if selected.

3. Review and Selection

? **How will applications be reviewed?**

All applications will undergo:

- **Administrative screening** for eligibility and completeness
- **Technical review** by subject matter experts
- **Programmatic review** by the GCI–BIRAC Expert Committee
- **Final recommendations** will be approved by the Competent Authority at BIRAC.

? **Will I receive feedback if my proposal is not selected?**

Due to the competitive nature of this call, individual feedback may not be shared. All applicants will, however, be informed of the outcome via email.

4. Funding Support

? **What is the maximum duration and funding support available?**

Projects may be supported for up to **two (2) years** with a maximum budget of **USD 250,000 (INR equivalent)**.

Short-term exploratory proposals with smaller budgets that address high-risk, innovative concepts are encouraged.

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? **Is there any financial or administrative requirement to be aware of at proposal stage?**
Yes.

→ Applicants should plan for **milestone-based fund disbursement** (as per GCI–BIRAC norms).

→ Applicants must ensure that requested budget components are in line with BIRAC norms (no allowances such as HRA, PF, or building construction costs).

? **Will grants be issued to individuals?**

No. All grants will be made to the Host Institution of the Principal Investigator. The institution will be responsible for financial and administrative management in accordance with BIRAC's standard terms.

? **Can equipment be purchased under this call?**

Yes. Essential equipment directly related to the proposed research may be included within the sanctioned non-recurring budget, following BIRAC procurement and asset management guidelines.

? **Milestone-Based Funding Release structure?**

Projects will receive funding in tranches linked to milestone achievement. Applicants should plan deliverables accordingly.

? **Non-Permissible Costs**

Applicants should note that the following will **not be covered**:

→ Construction of new buildings or permanent infrastructure

→ Liabilities such as HRA, PF, or LTA for project staff

→ Special emoluments or salaries for PIs already in permanent positions

? **Procurement and Asset Ownership**

Equipment purchased from the grant will be **in the name of the Host Institution**. Any transfer or disposal of assets will require prior approval from BIRAC.

5. Administrative and Technical Support

? **How will I know my proposal is successfully submitted?**

Once your proposal is successfully submitted, an acknowledgment email will be generated automatically by the system. Please retain this confirmation for your records.

? **Who can I contact for support?**

For portal or submission issues:

 user2@birac.nic.in

For program-related queries:

 pmubmgf1.birac@nic.in