



iGEM IISER THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A HANDBOOK ON FUNDRAISING AND ACCOUNTING



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Budget Preparation
3. Introducing iGEM in College
4. Sponsorship team
5. Crowdfunding
6. Grants
7. Approaching Government
8. Expert Interaction for Sponsorship
9. Spending Wisely and Keeping Accounts
10. Benefits for Sponsors

INTRODUCTION

Scientific research is expensive; particularly, in a developing country like India, funds are a major constraint for conducting independent research. Here is how the 2021 iGEM team from IISER Thiruvananthapuram, the first team from the Indian state of Kerala, found the money for our expenses. This handbook is not to showcase our achievements but is our sincere gratitude to all the well-wishers who believed in us and stood by us.

BUDGET PREPARATION

A proper budget is essential for any event involving money and accounts. Therefore, the first task in sponsorship is to prepare an extensive budget. Never put the right amount required in a budget, but at least three times the right amount.

The first task in budget preparation is identifying instances where we would require money. The competition's registration fee holds an irreplaceable position in any iGEM budget. It includes both the team registration fee as well as the Giant Jamboree registration fee. This formed the first section of our budget.

The next section contains expenses for purchasing laboratory reagents and using various equipment and devices. Calculation of this amount requires a clear idea of our future experiments. With this idea, we detailed each and every experiment, and thus, listed out the reagents required for the same. We calculated the prices of these reagents by surfing through catalogs from three different companies and finally arrived at an estimated amount to be kept aside for the same.

Next, we wanted to know how much money should be kept aside for the activities conducted as part of Human Practices (HP) and Outreach of the team. The HP department prepared a detailed timeline of events that would take place. This timeline served as a reference to look for possible situations where we will need money and thus calculated the amount to be reserved for HP.

The next biggest category was the travel and accommodation expenses during Giant Jamboree. It was previously informed that the 2021 iGEM Giant Jamboree would be held in Paris, but the mode (offline/online) of the event was not confirmed. Being the first team, we were skeptical about sending the entire team to Paris. However, one or two representatives from the team would be attending the Jamboree. Thus, we included the travel and accommodation charges for three individuals in the budget.

Additionally, a small section was formed for the stationery and printing charges for posters, booklets, handouts, and other print materials.

Our Budget

Team Registration: \$5500

Giant Jamboree Registration: \$2500

Jamboree Expenses: \$6200

Lab Expenses: \$6800

Outreach and Human Practices: \$1400

Stationery and Merchandise: \$700

Total: \$23100

INTRODUCING iGEM IN COLLEGE

Being the pioneering team from our college, the task of educating its people about iGEM and synthetic biology fell upon us. Through presentations, we planted the roots of iGEM into their minds and then explained our project proposal. The team started their preparation far before getting approval from the institute, and this helped the team in earning the trust of the authorities.

We first presented our project to the then Registrar of IISER Thiruvananthapuram, Prof. Srinivasa Murty Srinivasula, in the presence of our Primary PI, Dr. Ravi Maruthachalam. After incorporating the suggestions of Prof. Murty, we presented our proposal to Prof. Jarugu Narasimha Moorthy, the Director of IISER Thiruvananthapuram. Along with the project proposal, we presented our budget and requested for the Team Registration fees. We promised to meet the rest of our needs by finding other sponsors, and thus, our institute provided us with the total amount required for Team Registration. Officially, we became the first iGEM team from IISER Thiruvananthapuram.

.

SPONSORSHIP TEAM

We have to act in a very brilliant and organized manner to attract sponsors for any purpose. Therefore, a separate team was formed for contacting sponsors and procuring funds. The first task of this team was to identify potential sponsors. We prepared an elaborate list (on Google Sheets) of sponsors and their contacts, which was later shared with the entire team.

We contacted sponsors in the following manner:

- Call and talk to the company representative.
- Explain iGEM, our project, and its importance.
- Collect email ID. Even if we have their email ID with us, it is better to collect it directly from them to confirm that it is the active email ID.
- Send them a detailed email that explains iGEM, our institution as well as our project.
- Attach Marketing Brochure to the email.

Preparing a well-crafted, informative brochure for our project was key in procuring sponsors. A brochure should contain all the details necessary for a sponsor to know but should be presented concisely.

In our brochure, a short description of iGEM, our institute, and our project was given. We also explained our methodology and introduced our team. It is always better to include our budget in the brochure. This will help the sponsor to get a clear idea about the magnitude of our project. Benefits for sponsors is an important section in the brochure. It explains what a sponsor gets in return for sponsoring our project. This is necessary for a sponsor to evaluate their returns on their investment. For this, we created different categories of sponsors. We had four different categories: Platinum sponsor, Gold sponsor, Silver sponsor, and Bronze sponsor. Each category avails different benefits. This helped the sponsor to decide on their amount easily.

How are we making it possible?

At iGEM IISER Thiruvananthapuram, we are on track with the **Design-Build-Test** strategy to achieve our goal of building a broad-spectrum, eco-friendly antifungal.

After we identified the problem, we went on to screen for biocontrol solutions and appreciated the presence of a broad diversity of pathogenic fungi in the environment. Using the principles of rational protein engineering and domain swapping, rationalized a novel, broad-spectrum biocontrol agent. Our in-silico activity prediction model confirmed that our enzyme is indeed more effective and broad-spectrum.

Our team is constantly refining our engineering to make it more reliable, reasonable, and scientifically accurate.

The first phase of the project concludes with an in-vivo proof-of-concept, followed by a proposed delivery mechanism.

DESIGN

BUILD

TEST

iGEM IISERTVM / Project Brochure 5

Collecting contacts of sponsors is an important duty of the members of the sponsorship team. The main thing is to identify sponsors and have a clear idea of how they can help us. Since a major part of our project lies in lab work, and most of the money goes for reagents, we directly looked for companies that could sponsor us with the required reagents. For this, we looked for every dealer who supplies reagents to the various labs inside our campus. This included talking to PhDs from various labs (as mostly they are the ones who order items for their lab) and collecting contact cards. Most companies that refuse to give money agree to sponsor reagents. Contacts of suppliers willing to provide reagents at discounted rates were also collected. Five of our sponsors helped us by providing reagents. Three of our sponsors sponsored by giving free access to premium accounts of their service. Thus, in the form of service and reagents, and money we raised ~ \$8250.

CROWDFUNDING

The next source of money is crowdfunding. This helps you collect small amounts from your parents, relatives, and friends.

We started crowdfunding with the help of an online crowdfunding platform called "Ketto". It was a time in the country when cases of mucormycosis were on the rise.

Deaths due to Invasive Fungal Infections (IFIs) on Covid-19 patients put the country in a crisis, and we believed our solution could be a cure to the problem. We tried to spread the word through all possible social media platforms. A news article was published in 'The New Indian Express' about our project on 30th May 2021. All these helped our project grab attention, and thus, through crowdfunding, we raised \$682. Before starting crowdfunding through such online platforms, a bit of background study is always beneficial. Make sure you go through the terms and conditions and also gather knowledge about their tax policies.

GRANTS

Grants have an important role in funding iGEM teams. We took extreme care in applying for each and every grant which we could.

The first thing to be taken care of is to know the requirements of each grant and be sure about their deadlines. After going through the requirements, sort out the grants which the team is eligible to apply for. In this manner, we also applied for various grants. All answers before submission were reviewed by the whole team. It is crucial to make sure that you submit the application before the deadline.

This year, our team won two grants. The first one was the impact grant, funded by the Frederick Gardner Cottrell Foundation. We won \$2500, and we directly used this for our Giant Jamboree registration. The second one was the reagents grant awarded by Beckman Coulter Life Sciences, through which we received kits worth \$2500.

APPROACH GOVERNMENT

According to iGEM, our first go-to option for sponsorship should be our institute and then the government. Thus, we decided to approach the Kerala State Government. We got an appointment to meet the Hon'ble Kerala State Tourism Minister. Our plan was to meet him and emphasize the importance of our project in the current COVID scenario and, in return, advertise Kerala Tourism.

We prepared a letter to the Minister and met him in person. The sponsorship team talked to him and gave him the letter and a copy of the Marketing Brochure. We tried our best to explain the significance of the project. We were told that even though there will be no immediate action, we will be informed later and we were given the contact of the private secretary. We were in constant touch with the private secretary; unfortunately, we didn't receive any help from the ministry.

Until 2020, India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT) conducted a Pre-iGEM competition called iBEC (Indian Biological Engineering Competition). Indian iGEM teams could participate in this competition, and the winning teams received the money required to send ten members of their team for iGEM Giant Jamboree. But due to the adverse impact of Covid 19 on the Indian economy, DBT could not conduct iBEC in 2021. We hope that in the future, DBT will continue such competitions promoting iGEM teams from India.

EXPERT INTERACTION FOR SPONSORSHIP

Interaction with previous iGEM teams

Since we were the first iGEM team from our college, during the initial days of our project, we talked to the previous iGEM teams to get an idea on how to gather such massive amounts required for the project. Each team explained how they got funds, and the main lesson we learned from them was to contact dealers who already supply lab reagents in the labs for sponsorship. They advised us to acquire reagents with the help of these dealers.

.

Meeting with HUM services

On August 12, 2021, we had a meeting with HUM services, a Trivandrum-based service provider. HUM is a community platform that aims to connect clients to professionals and service providers. We contacted them to know if HUM services could sponsor us in any way. We sent them a detailed mail about our project and also attached our brochure. They were very impressed with the project and thus wanted us to have a meeting with them. In the meeting, we explained to them our project, and they encouraged us a lot. They asked us to demonstrate our current strategy of approaching sponsors, and we did it. They advised us to change the way of presenting our project to sponsors. Instead of explaining iGEM first, they asked us to describe our project first and then add that we are doing it as part of iGEM. We accepted this strategy and included it in all our future emails and calls.

.

SPENDING WISELY AND KEEPING ACCOUNTS

Using the money that we have collected in an efficient and diligent manner is essential. Have a clear idea of what all items you have to buy for the lab. While ordering items, use the contacts who promised to give discounts. It is always good to buy all required reagents together in one go, and this will provide you with significant discounts. Be sure about the tax rates also while ordering. We checked the price with at least three suppliers when we ordered items and finalized after considering both price and quality. At times, you will have to face some unforeseen needs. We have to be ready to face such issues.

Keeping accounts is also very important. This will help you know where you spend money and also how much is remaining for further use. Always keep a certain amount as a backup. All the money funded by sponsors directly came to the iGEM Account, which was created and handled with the help of the Finance Section of our college. At the same time, our crowdfunding page was connected to the personal account of a team member. When we had an immediate need for money, we took it from crowdfunding. In the case of ordering items for the lab, after acquiring the product, the bill was sent to the finance section, and they transferred the money directly to the supplier. Everything was updated regularly on the Google sheet explicitly created for keeping accounts. It contained information about our deposits and withdrawals, both from crowdfunding and the main account. In some instances, we use money from team members, and sometimes they also sponsor certain small items. These details were also saved in the sheet.

BENEFITS FOR SPONSORS

Each sponsor who supports our project is supposed to receive the benefits worth their help. As mentioned above, we had categorized each of our sponsors, and their benefits were decided previously.

SPONSORSHIP BRACKETS

Our sponsorship packages are much more flexible than our experimental protocols. If you do not fit into any of these general categories, our sponsorship team is always there to curate a custom package.

	Platinum Sponsor > ₹ 300K US\$ 4K	Gold Sponsor ₹ 100K to 300 K US\$ 1.5K to 4K	Silver Sponsor ₹ 50K to 100K US\$ 0.7K to 1.5K	Bronze Sponsor ₹ 20K to 50K US\$ 300 to 700
In-video promotion on YouTube and social media				
Logo on official merch and Jamboree project poster				
Logo on official wiki + adverts on social media platforms				
Promotions during collaborations				
Promotion during Giant Jamboree event				
Select events/activities sponsor announcement				
Hosting webinars/events				

When the sponsors transfer us the money or reagent itself, we collect from them their company logo. If there was any additional video or advertisement, that was also collected. In the case of sponsors who will be promoted in events by the Human Practices and Outreach team, a list of events was sent to the sponsors, and they could choose the event. Their logo was added to the material and promoted. Based on the category of sponsors, social media posts were put up. Thus each sponsor was thanked for their contribution.