

# **Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme**

## **Details (Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme)**

The “Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme (BIG)” is a flagship scheme of the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), (a not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, Public Sector Enterprise, set up by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India), which recognizes and invests in innovative ideas in the biotech sector. Purpose of the BIG scheme: Supports ideation to Proof of Concept 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 Types of projects 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 is implemented in a milestone-based manner.

## **Objectives (Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme)**

- Purpose of the BIG scheme: Supports ideation to Proof of Concept 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 Types of projects 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.

## **Important Features (Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme)**

- BIG supports individual entrepreneurs/ start ups from ideation to Proof of Concept (PoC). Purpose of the BIG scheme: Supports ideation to Proof of Concept 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 Types of projects 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, life sciences, agriculture, secondary agriculture, and other bio
- based industry/ markets. Types of projects not supported: Basic/exploratory research projects Projects having a 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.

## **Benefits (Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme)**

- Support provided to grantees under the scheme: 1. Under the BIG scheme, BIRAC provides a grant in aid of up to INR 50 lakhs (approx. USD 75,000) for a period of 18 months. 2. BIG Partners and BIRAC provide continuous mentoring support to the grantees, including but not limited to the following:
  - Technical Mentoring (Connect with Technical Experts)
  - IP Support
  - Legal Support
  - Networking and Outreach
  - Trainings
  - Regulatory Advice
  - Business Mentoring
  - Connect with Investors

- Any other assistance on a case basis

## **Eligibility (Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme)**

- Eligibility criteria for an Individual: 1. The individual applicant should be an Indian citizen. 2. The primary applicant should be the Project Leader. 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 a preferred incubator. MoU with the incubator is required for final approval. 4. If the applicant is formally employed (or registered as a student) with an academic or research organization, then
  - the applicant has to produce a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the competent authority of the organization indicating that the organization has policies in place to allow the applicant while in service/on sabbatical/on Extraordinary Leave:
  - accept funding support (if successful) as an individual,
  - manage the funds through a separate no
  - lien account in individual capacity
  - undertake the BIG project in an incubator
  - to create an enterprise.
- 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 a supporting document before final approval and release of the grant. 5. If the applicant is formally employed with a for profit company/LLP,
  - 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.), or,
- Alternatively, the application should be submitted under the Company/LLP category. 6. An 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 the company/LLP route, in case the company/LLP meets the required eligibility criteria as detailed below). Eligibility criteria for Company/ LLP: The Company/LLP should be registered under the Indian Companies Act, 1956/2013. The incorporation date of the Company/LLP should not be earlier than 5 years from the date of closing of a particular BIG call. 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. Company/LLP's application should be represented by a Project Leader. 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 ), 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 a situation wherein the latter ineligible company/LLP is operating in a non biotech domain.
  - biotech domain. In case the applicant is an 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 a situation wherein the latter ineligible LLP/company is operating in a non biotech domain.
- Note 01: Every proposal must clearly identify a Project Leader who will take responsibility for the technical and managerial aspects of the project execution. Note 02: The Project Leader must be technically qualified to undertake the project. The Project Leader must have completed basic undergraduate training in any discipline. Note 03: In the event that the proposal is shortlisted for presentation in front of the Selection Committee(s), the Project Leader will be required to present the case for support. In the event that a proposal is shortlisted for funding support, the Project Leader will be required to sign the project agreement. Note 04: The project Leader must be a shareholder in the applicant company. Note 05: The proposed objectives and deliverables should not have received funding support from any other agency. Note 06: BIG support can be provided only once to any

individual/startup. Note 07: Biotech Start

- ups and Individual Entrepreneurs with innovative ideas having potential for commercialization are eligible to apply. Note 08: Scientists, Faculty, Research Scholars, and Graduates in any discipline incubating/ intend to incubate at a Bio Incubator.

## **Application Process (Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme)**

• Application process: Step 01: BIRAC issues a national call inviting applications under BIG at least twice a year (1st of January & 1st of July). The Call for Proposals is advertised through one or more means that may include the BIRAC website, newspapers, journals, and magazines. The Call for Proposals is typically open for a period of up to one and a half months. Step 02: Application for BIG needs to be submitted online ONLY through the BIRAC website [www.birac.nic.in](http://www.birac.nic.in). Step 03: For proposal submission, the applicant can register on the BIRAC website under "BIG User". Step 04: The eligible applicants can fill up and submit their applications by visiting the official website. Note 01: 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. Note 02: Applicants are advised to provide sufficient details in their applications to allow for an informed and fair evaluation/review. Note 03: Requests for changes in a proposal once submitted will not be entertained. Note 04: Providing incorrect information intentionally is viewed adversely and may lead to disqualification. Selection process: BIG selection is a multi-tier process involving the following steps: Step 01: Eligibility Check: BIG Partners screen the applications for eligibility requirements as laid out in the scheme document and appropriateness under the BIG scheme. Step 02: Examination by Preliminary Selection Committee (PSC): The PSC examines all eligible proposals on the following contours:

- Scheme fit
- Availability of adequate technical details which are minimally required for online review
- Plagiarism Step 03: Online review by subject matter experts: Proposals recommended by PSC are reviewed online by 3 or more subject matter experts. Step 04: Presentation before Thematic Technical Expert Panel (TEP): Based on expert reviews, shortlisted applications are called for a Face-to-face presentation before the Technical Expert Panel (TEP). The TEPs are conducted in a thematic manner where all proposals of a particular theme are evaluated together by a common committee. All proposals are scored by individual TEP Experts and the Geometric Mean of Individual Scores is used to arrive at the final score for a particular proposal.
- Proposals with score ≥60 are considered at the next step (ESC)
- Proposals with score <60 are not considered further Step 05: Scoring Cut-off decision by the Expert Selection Committee (ESC): ESC takes the final decision with regard to the cut-off score for final selection. Proposals above the decided cut-off will be considered for further due diligence. ESC may choose to have either the same or differential scoring cut off across the themes. Step 06: ESC-recommended applications are then subjected to final financial and technical due diligence by the BIG Partner. This may require a visit by BIG partner representative(s) to the applicant's site and involves the 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 regard 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. Indicative evaluation criteria: BIG Proposals are reviewed on the following parameters during online review and TEP Stage: 1. Unmet Need (max 20) 2. Value Proposition/Differentiation (max 20) 3. Technical Viability (max 30) 4. Team Strength/Passion (max 15) 5. Business Perspective (max 15)
  - Potential
  - Clarity/Team's view
  - Commercialization Potential (Yes/No) ■ Registration guidelines for BIG Scheme(Company/Individual)



## **Documents Required (Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme)**

- Documentary evidence for verification by BIG Partners: Before the Technical Expert Panel (TEP) Letter of commitment from Scientific Advisors/ Mentors to serve as honorary advisors Letter of intent of key members of the technical team Letter of interest/intent from the incubator Evidence of access to the unique facility(ies) needed to execute a project Evidence of access to key samples needed to execute the project (eg: bio-fluids) Any other relevant document Post Expert Selection Panel (ESC): Letter of acceptance or MoU with incubator Formal agreements/ MoUs with other key facility(ies) providers/ suppliers Any other due diligence documents requested on a case-to-case basis by BIG Partners (e.g. technology in licensing
- IP rights clarification
- NoC from Institute etc.) Undertaking by the applicant that the project with the same objectives and deliverables has not received funding from any other agency. Any other relevant document

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