



Reference document for SPARSH Social Innovators (SPARSH Fellows)



The call is open for position of “SPARSH Social Innovator (SPARSH Fellows)” at 14 SPARSH centres across India for Social Innovation Immersion

Overview of program

SPARSH is the social innovation program of BIRAC aimed towards finding innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems through biotechnological interventions.

SIIP (Social Innovation Immersion Program), a component of SPARSH scheme, is BIRAC’s social Innovation fellowship/award program aimed at creating a pool of biotech “Social Innovators” who could identify the needs & gaps within communities and then can help bridge the gaps either through an innovative product development or services. The Program is implemented through SPARSH Centers.

The immersion program is a unique social Innovation platform which provides opportunity for clinical and rural immersion and also funding support for developing the prototype through mini kick start grant apart from the monthly fellowship to young social Innovators.

SPARSH Social Innovators/SPARSH Fellows

BIRAC Social Innovators will be selected through National level application and shortlisting process in collaboration with SPARSH Centers and SPARSH knowledge partners.

Selected Fellows would be designated as ‘SPARSH Social Innovators/ SPARSH Fellows’ who would receive a fellowship from BIRAC (amounting to INR 50,000/month for 18 months) and a onetime mini-kick start grant of INR 5 lakhs per fellow which will be provided during the course of the fellowship.

The SPARSH Fellowship requires the Innovators to work fulltime and cannot be combined with fellowships from other funding organizations.

The Fellows will be stationed at one of the SPARSH Centre who would provide all the requisite support to the Social Innovators in following thematic areas:

- Maternal and Child Health
- Ageing and Health
- Food and Nutrition
- Waste to Value
- Combating environmental pollution
- Agri-Tech

Highlights of the Fellowship/Award

- ✓ Fully funded fellowship with monthly stipend of Rs 50,000 pm
- ✓ Rs 5 Lakhs mini kick start grant
- ✓ Clinical/ Rural Immersion
- ✓ Access to BIRAC network of Mentors and Investors
- ✓ Mentoring by SPARSH Knowledge partner and 14 SPARSH Centres
- ✓ Opportunities to seek funding on completion

Eligibility:

- ✓ The Social Innovation fellowship is a prestigious award which will be provided to only Indian Citizen
- ✓ Indian undergraduate (B.Tech, BE, MBBS) or postgraduate (MSc, MS, M.Tech, MPhil, MD) & PhD below 35 years from fields of life sciences, Agriculture, Engineering, medicine & human biology are eligible to apply.

Timeline:

The fellowship is for a duration of 18 months and cannot be extended further.

Selection process

1. The applications for fellowship will be invited at the national level through advertisements in national dailies and suitable magazines. The application will be submitted online through BIRAC portal. In the application form, the applicant will be asked to indicate his/her choice of the SPARSH Centre.
2. The Centre-wise list of applicants will be created and sent to respective Centre for eligibility checks and further shortlisting and evaluation.
3. The shortlisted applicants will be called for an Interview / presentation at the respective SPARSH centers before an Expert Committee which would also involve BIRAC representative.
4. The shortlisted applicants will be called as Social Innovators and will enter into an agreement with SPARSH Centre.

Operational Elements & Work Plan:

The overall administrative responsibility of the Social Innovation Immersion would rest on the partnering organization which would implement the program. The partner can select a particular theme from the bucket of themes provided by BIRAC.

SPARSH Centre can recruit 5 SPARSH fellows under a particular theme. Total number of Social Innovators at a time at a center should not increase 10.

The 18 months fellowship will start from Pre-Immersion orientation and Induction phase. The work flow would be as follows:

1. Recruitment & Selection of Social Innovator Fellows

The SPARSH Centres will complete the process of selection of SPARSH fellows within 2 months of approval from BIRAC to operationalize the program. Each partner shall recruit a maximum of 5 fellows for 18 months under a particular theme.

An ideal candidate would be one who has the basic understanding of the milieu of the particular theme in different resource settings, and drive to undertake product/technology development process independently. Any training in past on various aspects of Entrepreneurship would be desirable. Nevertheless, required training and mentorship would be provided to Social innovators during the course of Program.

2. Pre-Immersion orientation & Induction:

Once the fellows are selected, SPARSH partners are expected to brief the fellows about objectives & expected outcomes of the program as well as provide necessary tools and guidance to identify existing gaps & needs in the identified thematic area.

The centers are also responsible for training the innovators on process of systematic clinical & Community observation, needs assessment and refinement, affordable technology development & Commercialization, market and industry research and enabling rural / remote settings. For these aspects it is expected from SPARSH Centres to have clinical and rural partners and mentors of primary, secondary and tertiary levels in Healthcare and other areas. SPARSH knowledge partner will organize pre-Immersion workshop for the SPARSH fellows.

3. Immersion Program

The “immersion” component of the program would be for a period of 5-6 months. During this period the social innovators would ideally be exposed to both clinical/agricultural settings as well as rural (or urban resource poor) community settings. Within the clinical landscape, it would be desirable that the fellows gain exposure at 3 levels- primary, secondary & tertiary healthcare.

It is expected that during the immersion period, fellows would identify multitudes of needs and conduct detailed ethnography and need assessment studies of different communities. Rural or Urban resource poor community immersion would expose them to cultural aspects and other pain points faced by a community.

SPARSH Partners are expected to be in continuous engagement with fellows throughout this period and take periodic reviews of the fellows. Besides other support, they are also expected to provide mentoring on Intellectual Property Rights and technology commercialization issues.

BIRAC expects a written report from each of the fellows at the end of the immersion program about the experiences and summary of the Ideas generated during the Immersion.

4. Post Immersion Filtration

On completion of the immersion component, fellows are expected to do desk research to understand various solutions explored and list out all the gaps & need analysis carried out during immersion. Further to this they are expected to filter their list and narrowed down to top 2-3 ideas that align well with possible product or service strategies. This would involve a mix of business & technical learnings related to market dynamics, technology landscaping, regulatory challenges, business plan formulation and grant writing skills.

It is expected that the SPARSH partners would mentor and provide them with connect points especially with mentors from business (such from business schools) technical and regulatory fields. The partners will also identify and encourage participation of SPARSH fellows in workshops and conferences for social innovators relevant to their requirements and connect them to opinion leaders or stakeholders for individual specific meetings.

The Social Innovators will come out with detailed report on the 2-3 final ideas shortlisted by them. The detailed requirements for the next stage should also be envisaged. Fellows are expected to submit to BIRAC a detailed plan of action for taking identified gap/need to the next stage either in terms of product design or delivery component with at least two milestone stages. SPARSH knowledge partner will organize Post-Immersion workshop for the fellows in collaboration with BIRAC and SPARSH implementation partner.

5. Product Design, Prototyping and Delivery Mechanism

This stage will provide the live prototype development environment or planning a delivery implementation to the Social innovators. The detailed plan of action submitted by applicant will be reviewed by Partner and a report for release of grant should be submitted to BIRAC. On submission of the plan, BIRAC would then release the mini kick-start grant of INR 500,000 in two stages of (INR 250000 each time) routed via the partner. If two or more fellows wish to work together as a team on developing a single identified need, they can combine their mini kick-start grants. However, this must be communicated to BIRAC

in advance and a project lead for the joint project be identified and agreed upon. The team then has to submit a detailed milestone based plan to the SPARSH Centre & BIRAC for approval before the combined mini kick-start grant is released & routed via the SPARSH Centre. Once BIRAC approval has been provided for a joint project, it cannot be reversed. Wherever more than 2 Social innovators decide to work for a joint project, the combined mini Kick start grant will be provided in two milestone stages as for individuals.

It is expected that the SPARSH partner would help connect the fellows to product designers and engineers and various design labs during this period. SPARSH Centre will also provide access to its own Tinkering Labs to the Social innovators.

How to Apply

For submitting application please log in to BIRAC website www.birac.nic.in.

Last date for submitting applications: 30th September 2021.

For further queries please contact

Sonia Gandhi

Chief Manager, Investments

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Annexure 1 : List of SPARSH Centres

1. **IKP Knowledge Park P Ltd,**
Genome Valley, Turkapally, Shamirpet Ranga Reddy Dist Hyderabad 500078.
2. **Villgro Innovations Foundation**
59, 3rd Floor, 14th Cross, 9th Main Rd, Stage 2, Eshwara Layout,
Indiranagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560038
3. **Atal Incubation Centre,**
3rd Floor, Medical Biotechnology Complex, CCMB Annex 2, Genpact Road,
IDA Uppal, Habsiguda. Hyderabad 500039.
4. **Yenepoya Foundation for Technology Incubation,**
Yenepoya Deemed to be University, Deralakatte Mangalore 575018.
5. **PSG-STEP,**
PSG College of Technology, Peelamedu Coimbatore 641004.
6. **SCTIMST-TIMED,**
5th Floor, M S Valiathan Building, BMT Wing, SCTIMST, Poojapura,
TRIVANDRUM TRIVANDRUM - 695012.
7. **IIITM-K**
Technopark Campus, Karyavattom Trivandrum Trivandrum 695581.
8. **IIM Calcutta Innovation Park,**
IIM Calcutta, Diamond Harbour Road, P.O: Joka, Kolkata 700104
9. **C-CAMP Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms,**
GKVK Bellary Road, Bangalore 560065.
10. **Entrepreneurship development center,**
100 NCL Innovation park, Dr homi bhabha road, Pune 411008.
11. **Healthcare Technology Innovation Center,**
3E, 3rd Floor, IIT Madras Research Park, Chennai 600113.
12. **FIRST - IIT Kanpur,**
FA-B501, IIT KANPUR, BSBE DEPT, IIT KANPUR 208016.
13. **KIIT Technology Business Incubator**
KIIT TBI, Campus 11, KIIT University Patia Bhubaneshwar 751024.
14. **Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer,**
Deans Complex, Main Building, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi Hauz
Khas New Delhi 110019.