



Request for Proposals (RFP)

from



SPARSH Centre and Knowledge Partner

Proposals are invited from Incubation centers, Research Parks, Knowledge Parks, Foundations, Technology Centers, Public Research Institutions, Private Research Institutions, and related organizations for **establishment of SPARSH Centres** and Knowledge partner for **Social Innovation**.

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

The mandate of this fellowship program is to identify specific needs and gaps in socially relevant areas, which can then be bridged and serviced through innovative product development and services.

This program is a unique Social Innovation platform that not only provides opportunity for clinical and rural immersion but also monthly fellowship and mini kick start grant to young Social Innovators for developing a prototype/technology. The program is implemented through SPARSH partners under the guidance and mentoring of a knowledge partner.

Till date, 14 SPARSH Centres spread over 9 states have been established which currently house a group of 64 Social Innovators working on various problems in six thematic areas of social relevance viz. (i) Maternal and Child Health, (ii) Ageing and Health, (iii) Food and Nutrition, (iv) Waste to Value, (v) Combating environmental pollution and (vi) Agri-Tech (including reducing post-harvest losses).

100+ social innovators in above mentioned thematic areas have already graduated, and several novel and interesting ideas to tackle related problems were generated. Some of these ideas were further refined and taken forward for product development. Most of the innovators who were mentored under the program have been successful in raising follow-on funding or starting their own enterprise.

Achievements

- 160+ fellowships to young innovators
- 700+ problems of the communities mapped
- 80+ prototypes developed
- 70+ Start-ups created
- 40+ IPs filed

SPARSH Centres

BIRAC - SPARSH Centres will be responsible for implementation of social innovation program of BIRAC and will provide a host of technical, IP, business and marketing mentoring to the fellows.

Under the present call, proposals are invited from interested agencies for establishment of SPARSH Centres in following thematic areas:

- Public health
- Farm to plate
- Climate resilience

Roles and Responsibilities of SPARSH Centres

- i. Overall implementation and management of program. This includes:
 - Provide desired infrastructure such as dedicated work space, common equipment and other services like mentoring, networking to the Fellows (*As explained in the operational section of this document*)
 - Monitoring the progress of SPARSH fellows and submitting the project progress report to BIRAC as per the prescribed timelines.
 - Selection of social innovation fellows in consultation with BIRAC.
- ii. Work with Knowledge Partner associated with the program and extend full support to it in mentoring and monitoring of SPARSH fellows
- iii. SPARSH Centres, if so desire, may share resources with other SPARSH Centers for optimal utilization of infrastructure.

SPARSH Knowledge Partner

For the mentoring of SPARSH centres and SPARSH Fellows, a Knowledge Partner is associated with the Program.

To a great extent, success of social venture in creating sustainable social impact depends on understanding social, economic and environmental context. Immersion to the context is essential for the innovators for this purpose and the products and/or service thus designed, developed and offered by the entrepreneurs must have relevance to the society in general and targeted people in specific. Strategic aspects such as alignment with the industry structure, market-fit and positioning are the vital aspects of the social venture to influence success of the social ventures. The SPARSH knowledge partner shall provide the necessary guidance to the fellows in this regard.

Roles and Responsibilities

- i. The Knowledge Partner will help the SPARSH Fellows to learn the processes and tools to understand societal and associated cultural dimensions as well as train them with entrepreneurial mind set, venture creation, managerial methods to become a successful social entrepreneur/ innovator.
- ii. The Knowledge Partner will engage with social innovators through-out the course of the programme and provide overall guidance through periodic lectures, field visits, boot camps, webinars etc.
- iii. It will be responsible for organizing at least three training workshops in partnership with the SPARSH Centres and in consultation with BIRAC during each cycle of the Program.
- iv. It will serve as a brand ambassador for SPARSH and will help in connections and outreach.

Eligibility requirements for SPARSH Centre and Knowledge Partner:

Incubation centers, Research Parks, Foundations, Technology Centers, Public Research Institutions, Private Research Institutions, established as a legal entity under the relevant Law of India having at least 51% Indian stakeholders (owners/partners/trustees/ members/associates etc.) are eligible to apply. It is desirable for the applicant organization to have:

- i. Operational expertise in implementing programs on innovative products/processes/technologies in above-mentioned thematic areas.
- ii. Subject/business experts to provide mentorship to fellows

Criteria for selection of SPARSH Centre and Knowledge Partner:

The BIRAC SPARSH Committee comprising of experts from various domains will be responsible for selection of the new centers and partners taking following criteria into consideration:

SPARSH Centres

1. Past experience in running similar programs
2. Infrastructure availability (Incubation facilities, tinkering/wet labs, designing & prototyping facilities, farms/ green house, etc.)
3. Accessibility to experts/mentors
4. IP, regulatory, business plan development expertise

5. Connections with the clinical hospitals, community officers, government program coordinators etc. for networking

Knowledge partners

1. Prior experience in running similar programs
2. Experience in developing and delivering courses/ tools for problem identification, designing, material selection, prototyping, experiment/ study design, investment pitching etc.
3. Accessibility to desired experts/mentors
4. IP, regulatory, business plan development expertise
5. Connections with the clinical hospitals, community officers, government program coordinators etc. for networking

Tenure of SPARSH Centre and Knowledge Partner:

Proposals are invited for a duration of 5 years for implementation of three cohorts of 20 months each.

For release of funds, the performance of the SPARSH centre and the Knowledge partner would be assessed periodically for their respective milestones as per the GLA. However, the overall performance of SPARSH Centre for extending the contract will be reviewed only after completion of three cycles i.e., 5 years.

A SPARSH center can recruit a maximum of 10 fellows per theme for 18 months. Centre should complete three thematic cycles in a duration of five years.

Selection Process of SPARSH Centre and Knowledge Partner:

1. The evaluation and selection of the SPARSH centres and the Knowledge Partner would be done by an Expert Committee constituted by BIRAC
2. After eligibility check, the proposals received will be evaluated by the Committee on various parameters as elaborated in the previous section.
3. The shortlisted applicants will be called for presentation at BIRAC.
4. On the basis of presentation, the SPARSH Committee at its discretion may recommend the proposals for a site visit selectively

5. Based on the presentation and recommendations of site visit (if any) committee, the Expert committee would recommend any proposal for funding
6. Once recommended for support, BIRAC would execute GLA with individual applicants after due financial and legal diligence.

SPARSH program structure:

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

SPARSH Centre can recruit up to 10 SPARSH fellows under a particular theme. Total number of SPARSH Innovators at a time at a center should not exceed 10.

SPARSH Social Innovators/SPARSH Fellows

BIRAC Social Innovators will be selected through national level application and shortlisting process in collaboration with SPARSH Centres 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 or full-time academic degree.

Eligibility for fellows: The SPARSH fellowship is a prestigious award which will be provided to only Indian citizen. Fellow could be drawn from fields such as life sciences, agriculture, engineering, medicine & human biology with educational qualification ranging from undergraduate (B.Tech, BE, MBBS) or postgraduate (MSc, MS, M.Tech, MPhil, MD) & PhD.

Selection process for fellows

1. The applications for SPARSH 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 evaluation.

3. The shortlisted applicants will be called for a presentation at the respective SPARSH centers before the Selection Committee which would also involve a BIRAC representative.

The shortlisted applicants will be called as Social Innovators and will enter into an agreement with SPARSH Centre.

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

1. Recruitment & Selection of SPARSH Innovator / Fellow

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 10 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

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.

During the filtration process, the SPARSH fellows will get an opportunity to review the technologies available with the technology transfer offices of BIRAC-NBM. If a fellow is interested in taking the already existing IP/technology in the related theme, the same can be placed for approval along with other 2-3 ideas shortlisted through immersion.

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 5,00,000 in two stages of (INR 2,50,000 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 two 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.

The mini kick start grant can be utilized for designing, prototyping, consumables, equipment, accessories, experiments for PoC, legal and IP activities related to the approved solution.

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.

SPARSH knowledge partner will organize “Venture Design Workshop” for the fellows in collaboration with BIRAC and SPARSH Centre.

Intellectual Property

The IP generated during the SPARSH program would rest with the social innovators and neither BIRAC nor partners would claim the IP rights.

Outcome

On completion, BIRAC expects the Social innovators to reach a point where they have made enough advancements with respect to generation of data or development of product/technology for enterprise creation, licensing or to apply for further funding under various schemes of BIRAC or other agencies.

The SPARSH Centre is expected to submit an outcome report to BIRAC at the end of the cycle highlighting the achievements of the SPARSH fellows in terms of awards won, patents filed, technology transferred, enterprise developed or follow on funding raised.

Milestones, timeline and budget

S. No.	Milestone per cycle for centre and partner	Timelines (Months)	% release of funds
1.	Contract Signing	0	30%
3.	Post immersion filtration and submission of dossier on final idea by SPARSH fellows	8	30%
4.	Product designing and prototyping of approved solution by the SPARSH fellows	16	30%
5.	Report submission	20	10%

Budget per cycle per SPARSH Centre (Rupees)

(A).	Budget Head	Proposed Budget
	Research Fellowship	Rs. 50,000 per month per fellow x18 months = Rs. 9 Lakhs per fellow <i>(Subject to a maximum of Rs. 90 lakhs for 10 fellows)</i>
	Kick Start Grant	5 lakh per fellow <i>(subject to maximum of Rs. 50 Lakhs for 10 Fellows)</i>

	Sub Total (A)	140 Lakhs (maximum)
(B).	Budget Head	Proposed Budget
	Management Fees for SPARSH Centre	Up to 4 Lakhs
	Manpower Cost	Rs. 60,000 x 20 = Rs.12 Lakhs (Maximum)
	Honorarium to experts, clinical/rural partners	Up to 3 Lakhs
	Workshop Conference	Up to 4 Lakhs
	Contingency	Up to 2 Lakhs
	Travel/Field/site visits	Up to 5 Lakhs
	Sub Total (B)	Up to 30 Lakhs
	Total (A + B)	Up to 170 Lakhs

Note : *Budget will be apportioned on the basis of number of selected fellows*

Budget for Knowledge Partner: The budget for knowledge partner would be determined on case to case basis depending on the Centres & Fellows assigned to them in the SPARSH program.

Submission of proposals:

Proposals are to be submitted **online** at BIRAC website www.birac.nic.in

Last Date for submission of proposals: 5:30 pm of 15th September 2023

Contact : For further information or clarification, please email on:

sparsh@birac.nic.in or investment@birac.nic.in