

DBT-BIRAC names 70 COVID-19 proposals for funding

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70 Proposals for funding in Vaccines, Diagnostics, Therapeutics and other Technologies



To urgently develop safe and effective Biomedical solutions against SARS CoV-2, Department of Biotechnology and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) had invited applications for COVID-19 Research Consortium. In addition, BIRAC has also created a provision to fund COVID-19 solutions that are ready for immediate deployment under a 'Fast Track Review Process'.

Under the research consortium, DBT and BIRAC have continuously been evaluating applications with an intent to support Industry/ Academia and Jointly Academia & Industry for developing Diagnostics, Vaccines, Novel Therapeutics, Repurposing of Drugs or any other intervention for control of COVID-19.

Through a rolling multitiered review mechanism, 70 proposals of devices, diagnostics, vaccine candidates, therapeutics and other interventions have been recommended for receiving financial support. The shortlisted proposals includes 10 Vaccines candidates, 34 Diagnostics products or scale-up facilities, 10 Therapeutics options, 02 proposals on Drug Repurposing and 14 projects which are categorised as preventive interventions

To be able to provide an accelerator approach for vaccine development, DBT has identified institutes which will provide animal models for testing pre-clinical efficacy and also make available neutralization assays. IIT Indore will produce Pseudovirus SARS CoV-2 which can be used for development of in-vitro assays. Enzene biosciences limited will make available Spike protein and Receptor Binding Domain protein in large quantities to vaccine and diagnostic companies as a reagent. The portfolio of vaccine candidates has further been enhanced by providing support for development of Next-generation mRNA vaccine candidate by Gennova and also separately to CMC, Vellore for a lipid encapsulated mRNA based vaccine.

Early development work for developing an Intranasal vaccine candidate for COVID-19 has also been awarded to Indian Institute of Chemical Technology.

University Delhi South Campus has initiated work towards discovering neutralizing antibodies from an existing phage display based library and are being supported under National Biopharma Mission of DBT.

To ensure complete indigenization of COVID diagnostics, support has already been provided to AMTZ and other companies to scale-up production of RT PCR kits. In addition anticipating long term need for diagnostics, DBT/ BIRAC have also committed support for different types of diagnostics platforms like: Fluorescence and Electrochemistry Mediated Rapid Detection of SARS-Cov-2 Nucleic Acid from Bennett University, Greater Noida; portable microfluidics embedded on chip rRT-PCR and microelectrode array coupled point-of care optoelectronic device for large scale screening: JNU, Delhi; Development and evaluation of aptamer based lateral flow assay kit for detection of SARS-CoV2 detection to IIT Delhi and CRISPER based diagnosis of Covid-19 using paper microfluidics from IIT Guwahati. Other companies to get funding support are Denovo, Biolabs, ShineBiotech, Prantae, Proma Therapeutics, Achira. In total, 34 companies and academic institutes will receive financial support for ensuring there is no shortage of indigenous diagnostic kits in the near future.

Department of Biotechnology has also launched a National Biomedical Resource Indigenization Consortium (NBRIC) in a Public Private Partnership model to foster indigenous innovation focused on developing reagents and resources for diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics for COVID19 which is in partnership with ABLE and CII and is being hosted by C-CAMP.

Under its 'Fast Track Review Process' Process BIRAC has created a provision to fund COVID solutions that are ready for immediate deployment. Through this initiative Startups with PPE solutions have been approved for supporting manufacturing of "Full body coverage suits" to Aarna Biomedical Products and for "Face Shields" to Alpha Corpuscles Pvt Ltd. Automated Sanitizer to MicroGO, Remote patient monitoring Stasis Health Pvt Ltd. Turtle Shell for DOZEE a sleep monitoring device, Monitra for remote monitoring of patients, Perisodhana for N-95 Mask's and Remidio for Ambu bags.