

Rajiv Gandhi Entrepreneurship Program - Operational Guidelines

Introduction

“Rajiv Gandhi Entrepreneurship Program - An early-stage funding program that nurtures ideas and innovations to promote innovative endeavors, startups initiated by students or entrepreneurs.”

The Rajiv Gandhi Entrepreneurship Program (RGEP) is a pivotal initiative designed to cultivate innovation and foster entrepreneurship among young and talented graduates, constituting a shift from traditional job seeking to entrepreneurship by offering them viable career options and to stimulate job creation and technological advancements, thereby promoting an innovation-driven economic growth within Karnataka.

RGEP aims at supporting innovators through a monthly stipend/subsistence grant of Rs. 25,000 for a period of 12 months, helping them survive the uncertainties during the phase of ideation. It typically concludes with a prototype/ Minimum Viable Product (MVP)/ Proof of Concept that has business potential. Innovators in the RGEP will be required to attach with designated Innovation Hubs, such as K-Tech partners and the progress of the innovator during the period of program (12 months) would be monitored by them, ensuring that all innovators are closely monitored through their entrepreneurial journey.

Stakeholders

1. **Innovators:** Applicants who are selected under RGEP.
2. **Program Monitoring Partners (PMP):** Designated K-tech Partners that would be onboarded to monitor and support the Innovators.
3. **Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society (KITS):** Shall serve as the Implementation Agency (IA).

Roles of Stakeholders

1. Innovators

- Develop business ideas: Innovators must develop a technology-based or innovation driven business idea with commercial potential.
- Regular reporting: Innovators are required to provide periodic updates on their progress, including details on the evolution of their ideas, progress toward goals, and plans for the future. These updates will be shared with their designated Program Monitoring Partners

to ensure ongoing support and guidance throughout the program.

- **Adherence to milestones:** Innovators are expected to work towards broad milestones and timelines established in collaboration with their Program Monitoring Partners. These milestones may include progress in idea development, concept validation, iterative testing, gaining market insights, and refining their business approach.
- **Participation in program activities:** Innovators are expected to participate in mentorship sessions, workshops, and networking events organized/facilitated by the designated Program Monitoring Partners and other ecosystem stakeholders.
- **Compliance with Program rules:** Innovators must comply with all program rules, including attendance at mandatory meetings, workshops, and reviews. They should also avoid receiving concurrent remuneration from unrelated sources during the program.

2. Program Monitoring Partners - PMPs

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Milestone development:** Collaborate with Innovators to develop broad measurable milestones that align with program guidelines and objectives during the Program period of 12 months.
- **Mentorship and guidance:** Program Monitoring Partners must provide mentorship to innovators, helping them navigate the challenges of starting a business, refining their ideas, and connecting them with necessary resources.
- **Progress monitoring:** Conduct monthly progress reviews with Innovators to assess their advancement towards milestones. Program Monitoring Partners must ensure Innovators remain focused and on track to meet their broad objectives.
- **Reporting:** Submit periodic progress reports to the Steering Committee, and Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, highlighting the performance of Innovators and suggesting any corrective actions needed.
 - The monthly disbursement of the stipend or subsistence grant under the Rajiv Gandhi Entrepreneurship Program (RGEP) will be contingent upon the Innovator's performance in meeting defined milestones. The progress towards these milestones will be assessed during monthly progress reviews conducted by the Program Monitoring Partner (PMP). Should the Innovator be found falling significantly short of the established goals, the PMP shall recommend discontinuation of financial support under the program.
- **Resource facilitation:** Support innovators by connecting them with essential resources, including industry contacts, access to relevant technology, expert advice, and

opportunities for collaboration.

- **Program activities coordination:** Facilitate exposure to complimentary activities (under the auspice of the PMP) such as ideation workshops, peer-to-peer learning sessions, pitch sessions and other events that help innovators refine their business ideas and showcase them to potential stakeholders.
- **Compliance monitoring:** Ensure that innovators are adhering to program rules and provide feedback to the Project Evaluation and Monitoring Committee on any non-compliance issues.
- **Termination recommendations:** In cases where Innovators are not meeting milestones or failing to demonstrate progress, Program Monitoring Partners are responsible for recommending termination of support to KITS.

3. Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society (KITS)

- **Selection of Innovators:** Invite applications from prospective Innovators to apply for the RGEF and facilitate final selection of Innovators eligible for support under the Program.
- **Onboarding of Program Monitoring Partners:** Reaching out to potential Program Monitoring Partners and mapping of Innovators to Program Monitoring Partners.
- **Fund management:** Manage the disbursement of funds to Program Monitoring Partners.
- **Monitoring of progress:** Review the progress of the program, ensuring that innovators and PMPs are adhering to the milestones and guidelines. Address any implementation challenges that arise.
- **Compliance and reporting:** Ensure that all program stakeholders are compliant with the financial, administrative, and program guidelines.

Fund disbursal

Program process

1. Call for Applications

Key Steps:

- **Announcement:** KITS releases an open Call for Applications, specifying the eligibility criteria, deadlines, and required documents.

- **Application submission:** Interested individuals submit their applications online via the Startup Karnataka web portal. The application typically includes personal details, educational background, a detailed description of the business idea, and a pitch deck outlining the problem being addressed, proposed solution, innovation, market potential, and business model.

Eligibility for innovator applicants

The innovator / applicant should

- be a citizen of India (domicile of Karnataka)
- have completed 3 or 4 years of degree (science/engineering), preference would be given to 2 years full time work experience post degree
- should not be working as an employee with any company for remuneration (contract/outsourced/permanent)
- should not have invested/hold any stake in any other Startup
- must be 30 years or younger as on the date of application
- must be solely dedicated to pursuing the proposed business idea for the program duration of 12 months after selection.

Proof of Citizenship and domicile:

- **Aadhaar card/Passport/Voter ID** for proof of Indian citizenship.
- **Certificate of Domicile/Ration card/Voter ID** for proof of Domicile.

Educational qualification:

- **Degree certificate** (Science/Engineering) indicating the completion of 3 or 4 years of study.

Startup involvement declaration:

- **Self-declaration affidavit** confirming that the applicant has not invested in or holds any stake in any other startup.

2. Initial Screening and Pre-Evaluation

Once applications are submitted, a Pre-Evaluation Stage is conducted by KITS to ensure that all applicants meet the basic eligibility criteria and that their applications are complete in terms of submission of all required documentation.

Key Steps:

- **Eligibility check:** KITS reviews all submitted applications to ensure that applicants meet the required age, educational, and experience criteria.
- **Data sufficiency:** The completeness of the application is verified, including the submission of necessary documentation such as proof of age, degree certificates, and relevant work experience.

3. Jury review and selection

After the initial screening, eligible applications proceed to a Jury Review Stage, where they are evaluated by a panel of experts. This is a critical step in the selection process, ensuring that only the most promising ideas are advanced to the next stage.

Key Steps:

- **Jury constitution:** The jury panel is composed of members from academia, industry and domain experts. The panel is divided into smaller groups based on the number of applications received.
- **Evaluation criteria:** The jury evaluates applications based on various criteria, including:
 - Novelty/Innovation
 - Potential Socio-economic Impact
 - Clarity of the Problem Statement
 - Feasibility and Implementation
 - Commercial Potential
- **Shortlisting:** After the jury evaluation and review, a shortlist of the most promising innovators is arrived at.

4. Final selection and approval by the Steering Committee

The final list of recommended innovators is presented to the Steering Committee for approval. The committee takes into account the recommendations of the jury and ensures alignment with the program's objectives.

Key Steps:

- **Steering Committee Review:** The Steering Committee reviews the shortlisted candidates and approves the final selection based on the recommendations of the jury and the strategic alignment of the ideas with the program's goals.
- **Notification of Selection:** Selected innovators are notified of their selection and are required to sign an agreement to participate in the program. This agreement outlines the

terms of their participation, guidelines, and their commitment to the program for the full duration.

5. Onboarding of Program Monitoring Partners (PMPs)

Once the Innovators are selected, Program Monitoring Partners are chosen to support the innovators based on their sectoral expertise and geographical considerations. Innovators are mapped to relevant Program Monitoring Partners.

Key Steps:

- **Allocation of PMPs:** Innovators are mapped to appropriate Program Monitoring Partners based on their sectoral focus and expertise.
- **MoA Signing:** A Memorandum of Agreement is signed between KITS, the Innovator, and the Program Monitoring Partner. This tripartite agreement formalizes the roles and responsibilities of all parties.
- **Orientation:** An orientation session is conducted to familiarize Innovators with the program's structure, the support available, and the expectations for performance and reporting.

6. Milestone setting and Initial Planning

After onboarding, each innovator works with their assigned PMP to develop a broad Milestone Plan that outlines the key stages of their entrepreneurial journey over the 12-month program duration using the template below:

Quarter 1: Idea clarification and exploration (Months 1-3)

Objective: Establish a clear understanding of the problem and explore the initial concept.

- **Problem definition**
Innovators will articulate a well-defined problem statement that their proposed solution aims to address. This statement should clearly identify the core issue and its relevance within the target market.
- **Conceptual description**
Innovators will develop a concise description of their idea, outlining the proposed solution and how it addresses the identified problem. This description will serve as the foundation for further development and feedback.
- **Initial feedback collection**
Innovators will seek preliminary feedback from potential users, mentors, or stakeholders.

This initial feedback will help refine the problem statement and ensure that the proposed solution is aligned with user needs.

Quarter 2: Concept development and testing (Months 4-6)

Objective: Translate the idea into a simple, tangible concept that can be shared and tested.

- **Development of a rough concept**
Innovators will create a basic representation of their idea, such as a visual sketch, diagram, or preliminary model. This concept should illustrate the proposed solution and its functionality in a straightforward manner.
- **Concept testing with stakeholders**
Innovators will present the concept to a small group of users, mentors, or stakeholders. Feedback from this testing phase will be used to assess the viability of the idea and identify any areas for improvement.
- **Refinement based on feedback**
Innovators will refine their concept based on the feedback received. Adjustments may include modifications to the design, approach, or other key elements of the solution, ensuring that it is better aligned with user expectations and needs.

Quarter 3: Validation and Preliminary Planning (Months 7-9)

Objective: Validate the concept and begin outlining a simple strategy for future development.

- **Confirmation of concept feasibility**
Innovators will validate the feasibility of their idea, ensuring that it effectively addresses the identified problem and that there is sufficient demand for the proposed solution. This may involve basic testing or further consultation with stakeholders and mentors.
- **Preliminary planning**
Innovators will draft a simple plan outlining the next steps in the development of their idea. This plan will include a clear set of actions, potential challenges, and any resources required to advance the project.

Quarter 4: Finalization and Future Planning (Months 10-12)

Objective: Finalize the concept and prepare for the next stages of development or implementation.

- **Finalization of concept**
Innovators will finalize their concept, incorporating all feedback and adjustments from earlier stages. This finalized version should clearly represent the core idea and its potential impact.

- **Exploration of support opportunities**

Innovators will explore potential avenues for further support, such as grants, partnerships, or mentorship, which will be essential for transitioning their idea from concept to implementation.

- **Presentation and next steps**

Innovators will present their finalized concept to a group of stakeholders, including mentors, potential investors, or program partners. This presentation will outline the progress made, potential impact, and next steps required to bring the idea closer to market readiness.

Note: The general Milestone Plan serves as a framework and maybe modified to a minimal extent with the expertise of the Program Monitoring Partner but serves as the template to support the Innovators under the Program.

7. Program Execution and Monitoring

During the program's execution phase, Innovators work toward achieving their milestones, supported by their Program Monitoring Partners and other program resources. Progress is closely monitored to ensure adherence to the plan.

Key Steps:

- **Mentorship and support:** Innovators receive mentorship and guidance from their Program Monitoring Partners to overcome challenges and refine their business ideas. PMPs provide feedback and help innovators stay focused on their objectives.
- **Regular reviews:** Monthly progress reviews are conducted to assess the Innovator's progress toward milestones. Innovators are required to facilitate monthly progress reports, which are reviewed by the PMP.
- **Quarterly Reports:** Program Monitoring Partners submit quarterly reports to the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, summarizing the progress of their assigned Innovators. These reports highlight the achievements, challenges, and any deviations from the initial plan.

8. Fund disbursement

- Upon final selection of the Innovators and signing of the Tripartite Agreement, funds would be released to the Program Monitoring Partners to facilitate the disbursal of the monthly stipend/subsistence grant for 12 months, to the Innovators allocated to them.
- The Program Support Fee for 12 months would also be disbursed to the Program Monitoring Partners upon final selection of innovators and signing of Tripartite Agreement, along with the approval of KITS.

Summary of funding support under RGEP

Funding support	Disbursal of Funds
Grant to selected Innovators under the Rajiv Gandhi Entrepreneurship Program	<p>100% of the grant amount to support the Innovator (INR 3,00,000) would be released to the Program Monitoring Partner upon final selection of the Innovator and signing of Tripartite Agreement between KITS, Program Monitoring Partner and the Innovator.</p> <p>The Program Monitoring Partner will be responsible for ensuring the timely disbursal of the monthly stipend or subsistence grant to the Innovator on a consistent basis. Any delays in the disbursal must be promptly reported to KITS within three working days of such a delay.</p> <p>The release of the monthly stipend or subsistence grant will be contingent upon the Innovator’s performance and progress, measured against the predefined milestones and monthly reviews of the Innovator’s idea or innovation. In cases where the Innovator demonstrates under-performance or non-performance during the program period (monthly reviews), the disbursal of the grant will be halted, and KITS will be immediately notified for further action.</p>
Program Support Fee to Program Monitoring Partners under the Rajiv Gandhi Entrepreneurship Program	100% of the Program Support Fee per Innovator (INR 32,500) shall be released to the Program Monitoring Partner upon final selection of the Innovator and signing of Tripartite Agreement between KITS, Program Monitoring Partner and the Innovator.

Utilization of Program Support Fee:

- **Mentorship sessions:** One-on-one mentorship sessions (at least one per month).
- Monthly progress evaluation connect with K-tech Partner
- **Skill-building working/training:** Facilitate participation of the Innovator in relevant skill building workshops organized either by the Program Monitoring Partner or any other entity (at least one workshop in one quarter).
- Any other relevant support which may be offered to the Innovator in terms of access to learning platforms, pitch deck review and coaching, market research and customer validation tools, access to shared tools or software, business development assistance, market access support.

The PMP is required to send two copies each of the following to KITS,

- a. Progress report of each allocated Innovator(hard & soft copy) on a monthly basis;

- b. Utilization certificates, in the prescribed proforma, for the grant sanctioned as Program Support Fee to be placed before the Project Evaluation and Monitoring Committee meetings (bi-annual meeting).

The PMP will maintain separate No-lien savings bank accounts for the grant. The funds released should be kept in a separate bank account earning interest, the interest earned should be reported to KITS and will be adjusted against the remaining funds to be disbursed.

***Program Monitoring Partner to ensure that the grant provided shall only be spent on the earmarked purposes of its sanction within stipulated time. Any and all amounts from the grant fund that remains unutilized or unapplied will need to be refunded to KITS.**

9. Program activities and events

Innovators are exposed to relevant events and activities to support and enhance their entrepreneurial experience.

Key events:

- **Mentorship sessions:** Innovators will participate in periodic one-on-one or group mentorship sessions, focused on addressing immediate challenges and providing practical advice on areas of relevance under the Program.
- **Networking opportunities:** Innovators will be provided with opportunities to connect with industry professionals and peers. These may include informal networking meetups, virtual interactions, or small-scale pitch sessions where innovators can share their ideas with investors and experts.
- **Workshops:** Workshops will help innovators gain practical knowledge on relevant topics like refining their ideas, understanding customer needs, and developing a basic business plan. These sessions are designed to be straightforward, offering useful guidance that aligns with the program's goals.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Monitoring and Evaluation Phase is a critical part of the RGEP process, ensuring that the program is achieving its objectives and that innovators are making tangible progress.

Key Steps:

- **Ongoing monitoring:** The progress of each innovator is monitored by the PMP, with reports submitted to the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee at regular intervals.
- **Performance reviews:** The Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee will conduct performance reviews based on the monthly reports submitted by the PMPs on bi-annual

basis, once after 6 months of completion of disbursement of grant for Innovators and once before the completion of support of 12 months under the Program. Innovators who fail to meet their milestones or demonstrate insufficient progress may be recommended for termination.

11. Program conclusion and final evaluation

At the end of the 12-month program, a final evaluation is conducted to assess the outcomes achieved by each innovator and the overall outcomes of the program.

Key steps:

- **Final review:** PMPs present their final results to the Steering Committee.
- **Program closure:** The program officially closes with a final report submitted to the Steering Committee.

Support to Program Monitoring Partners

- A **Program Support Fee of INR 32,500 per selected Innovator per year** will be provided to the designated Program Monitoring Partner (PMP) to facilitate and support key activities under the Rajiv Gandhi Entrepreneurship Program (RGEP). This fee is intended to cover the costs associated with monitoring, and guiding the innovators throughout the program.

Institutional framework

Steering Committee - Composition & Role

Steering Committee composition

- This committee will be headed by Secretary, Department of Electronics, IT, Bt and S&T with members from Industry, Academia and Industry associations. The structure of the committee is given below:
 - i. The Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary/Secretary to the Government, Department of Electronics, IT, Bt and S&T-**Chairman**
 - ii. Representatives from Academia
 - iii. Representatives from Industry associations
 - iv. Industry experts(Investors/Corporates)
 - v. The Managing Director, KITS – **Convenor**

Role of Steering Committee

- Final selection and approval of Program Monitoring Partners (PMPs).
- Approve selection of innovators recommended through the evaluation process.
- To approve the funding/budget.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee:

Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee composition

This committee will be headed by MD, KITS with members from Industry associations and Academia. The structure of the committee is given below:

- i. The Managing Director, KITS - **Chairman**
- ii. General Manager, KITS - **Convenor**
- iii. Representatives from Academia
- iv. Representatives from Industry Associations

Role of Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee

- To recommend to the Steering Committee the innovators shortlisted by the evaluation process.
- To monitor the selected Program Monitoring Partners, and disburse grant-in-aid
- Any other role assigned by Steering Committee