

**NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR DEVELOPING AND HARNESSING INNOVATIONS  
(NIDHI)**

**NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0**

**PRomotion and Acceleration Young and Aspiring innovators & Startups**



**PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

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**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Science & Technology**  
**Department of Science & Technology**  
Technology Bhawan, New Mehrauli Road  
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## **PRomotion and Acceleration of Young and Aspiring innovators and Startups**

### **NIDHI-PRAYAS 2.0**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

In the idea-to-market innovation chain, while there is substantial support available for research and development (R&D) as well as commercialization, a critical gap exists in early-stage prototyping. This deficiency often leads to innovators losing interest and struggling to sustain their journey due to the lack of necessary resources at this stage.

The **Technology Translation & Innovation** Division of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has facilitated the establishment of over 200 Technology Business Incubators (TBIs), inclusive-Technology Business Incubators (iTBIs) and Centres of Excellence (CoEs) under the National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI). These startup incubators are strategically located within or around academic, technical, and management institutions, as well as technology and research parks, to harness innovations and technologies for venture creation by leveraging the expertise and infrastructure of their host institutions.

The NIDHI-PRAYAS 2.0 program is designed to bridge this gap by providing financial and infrastructure support for innovators to transform early-stage ideas into functional prototypes. The initiative aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission, fostering indigenous technology development and advancing self-reliance in innovation. By enabling innovators to experiment without the risk of financial failure, the program enhances the pipeline of high-potential technologies entering incubation programs. This, in turn, strengthens the technology commercialization ecosystem, ensuring a steady flow of high-quality incubates into established incubators.

Under NIDHI-PRAYAS 2.0, PRAYAS Centres are classified into two categories: PRAYAS Centres (PCs), which support technology-based innovations, and Advance PRAYAS Centres (APCs), which are specialized centres focused on deep technology (deeptech) innovations based on their institutional capabilities, track record, and alignment with DST priorities. The APCs are intended to support innovators working on science- and engineering-based solutions that require higher levels of technical validation, specialized infrastructure, and iterative prototyping. Through this structure, the programme facilitates the development and testing of advanced prototypes and supports progression across higher stages of technology readiness, in line with its objective of strengthening the innovation and commercialization pipeline.

NIDHI-PRAYAS 2.0 aligns with the national vision of *Viksit Bharat @ 2047*, with a focus on supporting the progression of innovative ideas from concept to early-stage prototyping, and strengthening the overall innovation ecosystem for aspiring innovators and startups. The programme is positioned as a pre-incubation initiative, providing support for prototype development prior to formal incubation. The Department of Science and Technology facilitates the establishment of PRAYAS Centres within selected incubators, subject to funding availability, performance, and other relevant considerations, to ensure effective implementation.

The intent of the prototyping grant is to support innovators working on both technology-based and deep-tech ideas or aiming to develop readily deployable advanced prototypes that progress towards commercialisation, with the expectation that supported startups will eventually be in a position to raise funding from venture capitalists/ angel-investors/ suitable financial institutions or apply to funding opportunities made available under the RDI Scheme or other similar schemes or programs.

The programme is monitored by the PRAYAS Management Committee (PMC), constituted with the approval of the Department of Science and Technology.

## **2.0 Objectives of NIDHI-PRAYAS**

- To enable and facilitate the translation of innovative ideas into functional prototypes.
- To provide a platform for rapid experimentation and iterative development to refine ideas in the journey from concept to market.
- To enable and facilitate the development of indigenous solutions addressing both local and global challenges.
- To encourage young innovators with a problem-solving mindset to pursue technology-driven and knowledge-based startups.
- To strengthen the pipeline of high-quality, innovative startups, to demonstrate their ideas in real-time environment and prototypes in operational environment.
- To build a dynamic innovation ecosystem by establishing a strong network of innovators, academia, mentors, and incubators.
- To serve as a catalyst for addressing problem statements identified by various government ministries through technological interventions

## **3.0 PRAYAS Centre and Advance PRAYAS Centres (PC)**

The NIDHI-PRAYAS 2.0 program will be implemented by selected incubators established as PRAYAS Centres (PC) and Advance PRAYAS Centres (APC). The PRAYAS Centres and Advance PRAYAS Centres will act as hubs for nurturing innovative ideas by providing physical infrastructure, technical guidance, business

mentorship, IP support and prototype funding to help innovators/startup to transform their ideas into tangible prototypes. These Centres will provide a dedicated space where innovators and startups can transform their ideas into working prototypes.

Each PC/APC will be set up at a host incubator with a furnished and well-equipped facility. The space requirement is a minimum 3000 sq. ft (preferably 5000 sq. ft). This facility will include a unified **DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan**. This space will have a fabrication lab for prototype development, a pitching lounge for innovators/ startups to engage with mentors and investors, an IPR & Legal Assistance helpdesk, a meeting space equipped with AV facilities for brainstorming and virtual collaboration, and a common co-working area for NIDHI PRAYAS beneficiaries.

Innovators and Startups seeking support under the program will apply to the designated PCs / APCs using a common application template through the NIDHI PRAYAS Portal. Each PC/APC will implement a transparent screening mechanism to evaluate applications based on the potential of the idea or innovation. Selected innovators will receive access to infrastructure available with the PC and the Host Institution, prototype funding, and mentorship. The PC/APC has to have adequate and demonstrable facilities in-place for thrust-area specific business and technological mentorship and support to its beneficiaries.

Each PRAYAS Centre (PC) / Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC) shall be led by a dedicated “**PRAYAS Program Head / Chief Innovation Officer**”, preferably having prior experience in incubation or similar startup support programs, who shall be responsible for day-to-day management of the NIDHI-PRAYAS programme at the Centre. A selection committee - constituted by the host/ incubator/ TBI, with a DST nominee as a member/ observer - will be responsible for selection of this person.

While on the PC/APC payroll, the Program Head may also hold another operational role within the same incubator (for example, overseeing mentorship, outreach, or facility management). However, the Program Head must not hold any position of or similar to that of a research-associate or any academic/research role within the host institution (HI) during their NIDHI PRAYAS appointment.

The “PRAYAS Program Head” (may also be called the ‘Chief Innovation Officer’) must be formally appointed as soon as DST sanctions the PC/APC. This appointment is a prerequisite for releasing any grants beyond the first tranche. The Program Head’s salary should come from the Section-8 company’s account/ incubator’s account receiving DST’s NIDHI PRAYAS funds. .

The PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee (PLMC) at the PC/APC may recommend additional incentives for the Program Head and their team, based on performance and milestones achieved. These additional incentives are to be sourced only from HI’s contributions and not from any DST Grant.

## 4.0 Expected Outcome

The outcome of the PRAYAS Centres / Advance PRAYAS Centre will be analyzed based on the following broad parameters.

S. No	Expected Outcomes
1	Innovators having the working prototype by the end of PRAYAS cycle
2	IP filing / No. of Startups Registered
3	External funding or investment
4	Expression of interest from Industries / corporates / manufacturers
5	Technologies advanced beyond TRL 4 towards TRL 7
6	Prototypes developed/ tested in real-world conditions/ receive early customer validation
7	IPs converted into functional prototypes

## 5.0 Support Structure and Mechanism

Each host incubator shall provide a furnished space for the PRAYAS Centre (PC) / Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC). Appropriate sign boards indicating the presence of the PRAYAS Centre (PC) / Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC) within the Host Institution (HI) shall be mandatorily displayed at prominent and clearly visible locations across the premises. Such signage shall prominently feature the DST logo, NIDHI-PRAYAS logo and include clear directional information indicating the exact location of the Centre within the campus.

### 5.1 Prototyping Grant Allocation:

Under NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0, PRAYAS Centres (PCs) will be divided into two categories i.e. Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC) (specialized centres to support DeepTech innovations) and PRAYAS Centre (PC) (tech-based centres), based on their institutional capabilities, track record, and alignment with DST priorities.

All PC/ APC, must adhere to the selection, monitoring, and progress reporting requirements established by the PRAYAS Management Committee (PMC).

However, funding limits and annual support ceilings will differ between the two categories to better align resources with Centre capacity and expected throughput.

#### Level 1: PRAYAS Centres (PC)

PRAYAS Centres will follow a standardized framework. Each innovator/startup supported by a Level 1 Centre PC may receive up to ₹20 Lakhs for prototyping. The exact quantum of grant will be determined by the PRAYAS Management Committee

(PMC) based on proposal evaluation and Centre capacity. Each PRAYAS Centre (PC) is expected to support around ten innovators per year. This number may be revised by the PMC based on a Centre's demonstrated need or capacity. DST will provide up to ₹2.00 Crore per annum to each PRAYAS Centre (PC) to meet prototyping grant requirements. The PMC will set the exact grant amounts to be received by the Level 1 PC based on the proposal submitted, centre's capacity, on the Centre's performance in the previous years and the anticipated pipeline of high-quality innovators/ startups.

## **Level 2: Advance PRAYAS Centres (APC)**

Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC), established to support Deep Tech innovations and highly scalable solutions or quickly deployable advanced prototypes, will be eligible to provide prototyping grants of up to ₹40 lakh per innovator/ startup. Each APC is expected to support around ten innovators/ startups annually. The PMC may revise this number based on regional demand, sectoral focus, or the centre's historical performance. DST will provide up to ₹4.00 crore per annum to each APC for disbursement under the PRAYAS prototyping grant. The exact grant amount available with the APC will be determined by the PRAYAS Management Committee (PMC), based on the quality of proposals, available infrastructure, and the centre's capacity to mentor and support high-potential innovators/ startups.

Preference to establish APCs may be given to centres that have successfully completed minimum-three cycles of the implementation of the NIDHI PRAYAS program (NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0) as standard tech-based PRAYAS Centres and have demonstrated a strong track record in nurturing early- stage innovations.

All PRAYAS Centres - whether Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC) or PRAYAS Centre (PC) - are eligible to receive prototyping grants for up to three consecutive fund cycles. Receipt of grant support in the first year does not guarantee funding in any of the consecutive years. Continuation of support beyond Year 1 will depend on performance evaluation by the PMC, which will assess: (a) efficient utilization of prior-year funds, (b) achievement of milestones such as the number of prototypes successfully developed and/ or progress toward market launch, etc. and (c) compliance with reporting, monitoring, and other requirements laid out in the guidelines, amongst other evaluation parameters.

The final decision regarding continued funding to PC/ APCs shall be based on performance reviews and the recommendations of the PRAYAS Management Committee (PMC), in consultation with DST. Centres that fail to meet performance benchmarks or do not comply with statutory, reporting, or governance requirements may be subject to mid- term suspension of funding, reduction in allocations, or complete discontinuation of further DST support.

The PMC retains full discretion to reclassify any PC/ APC, modify /revise grant ceilings, or adjust annual support in response to evolving national priorities or budgetary constraints. A review process will be conducted regularly to ensure that all Centres continue to meet minimum quality standards and align with DST's objectives.

## 5.2 Infrastructure and Operational support:

**One-Time Capital Support** – A maximum of ₹1.50 Crore for Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC) and ₹1.50 Crore for PCs respectively, may be provided in the first year for Fab Lab setup (equipment and infrastructure refurbishment)

**Annual Operational Support** – Each APC and PC will receive ₹30.00 lakhs per year for managing its Operational Expenses including managing the Fab Lab, covering:

- Salaries of a dedicated team to manage the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Program,/ Honorarium for technical experts
- Consumables for the “DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan” (fab lab)
- Utilities and administrative costs,
- Events/Workshops/ Bootcamp expenses
- IP Assistance & Legal services for the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program, etc.

## 5.3 DST NIDHI MAKER BHAVAN

1. A dedicated Fab Lab must be set up in a APC/ PRAYAS Centre (PC) to facilitate mechanical and digital fabrication, particularly if the incubator does not already have such facilities. This fabrication facility, supported under NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0, will be known as “DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan”. It will enable innovators to engage in a full cycle of imagination, design, prototyping, testing, iterations, and validation, helping them convert ideas into reality and address various challenges.
2. The incubator will host the PC at the location/space that was specified in the proposal and approved by the PRAYAS Management Committee (PMC) / DST. Any change in the area or location will be promptly brought to the notice of PMU, as well as DST in writing and will be subject to approval from the PMC/ DST/ or its subcommittee.
3. Few suggestive equipment in Fab Lab would generally include
  - CNC Milling/Lathe Machines
  - Basic Metal/Woodworking Tools
  - Liquid Handling Robot
  - Rotary Evaporator
  - Water Purification System
  - PCB Fabricator

- Glove Box (Basic Model)
- Digital or Fluorescence Microscope (Entry-Level)
- Basic Thermal Analyzer
- Texture Analyzer (Entry Level Model)
- 3D Printer
- Softwares related to fab lab/prototyping with the perpetual license (maximum upto 25% of the approved fab lab amount).
- Computers only for fab lab equipment (maximum upto 5% of the approved fab lab amount).

*(Please Note: This equipment list is only suggestive and each PC/APC may evolve their own list on the basis their Thrust Area and other considerations)*

4. The proper capacity utilization of various equipment in the Fab Lab should be ensured and documented by each PC/ APC. All the equipment bought must be placed within the DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan, located within the PRAYAS Centre/Advance PRAYAS Centre. The equipment purchased under DST NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 should not be treated as assets of the HI.
5. The fab lab under DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan has to be setup within one year from the date of first tranche of the grant being received by the Centre. Under the case where the HI/ TBI/ Incubator fails to comply with the timelines for establishment of the fab lab under DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan, the entire amount released as the first tranche may have to be refunded. In case of unavoidable circumstances, for any extension beyond twelve (12) months for setting up of DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan, the approval has to be sought from PMC/ DST/or its subcommittee as the case may be. The decision of the PMC/DST in this regard will be final.

## **5.4 PRAYASEEs**

The innovators and startups supported under the prototyping grant will be called “PRAYASEEs.” The maximum funding support to a PRAYASEE will be up to ₹40 lakh through Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC) Centres and up to ₹20 lakh for PRAYAS Centre (PC); the final amount awarded in each case is subject to approval by the PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee (PLMC) of the respective PRAYAS Centres

The project term for each PRAYASEE will be 15 months. Under exceptional circumstances, the term may be extended by another 6 months upon approval from the PLMC. For any extension beyond 21 months, the PRAYASEE must seek approval from the PMC, DST, or its designated subcommittee, as applicable.

PRAYASEEs who have **no other source of income** may be permitted to receive a

sustenance allowance equal to 20 percent of their approved PRAYAS grant amount for the project duration. While providing a sustenance allowance is not mandatory, the PLMC at PC/ APC level, may recommend an allowance (up to 20 percent of the total PRAYAS grant amount) based on the strength of the idea and the overall project timeline, provided the PRAYASEE pursues the PRAYAS Programme full-time with no other formal employment.

**The following are the detailed guidelines for PRAYASEEs:**

**5.4.1 Eligibility Criteria of Innovators/ Startups for Applying to PRAYAS and Advance PRAYAS Centres (APC)**

1. Applicants may either be (a.) an individual innovator who does not yet have a registered startup, or (b.) an early-stage start-up.  
In all cases, the applicant must demonstrate clear ownership (or licensed right to use) of any intellectual property underpinning the proposed prototype
2. One particular innovator or startup is allowed to avail for the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 only once.
3. The innovators/startups can apply under APC for *developing prototype for Deeptech ideas*
4. The proposed prototype must be a tangible, physical product grounded in science or technology. It should be feasible to design, develop, test, and validate the working prototype within a maximum period of fifteen (15) months from the date of first tranche disbursement.
5. Individual innovators/ co-founders (in case of Startups) must be at least eighteen (18) years of age on the date of application. Proof of age and Indian citizenship (e.g., valid passport, Aadhar or Voter ID) will be required at the time of submission.
6. If the applicant works in a team with other innovators there has to be an agreement among the team about the lead innovator who would apply, and the funds will be transferred to the lead innovator's account (after selection). IP generated would vest with the innovator or with the team as per the agreement and it would be further taken for commercialization.
7. The individual innovators receiving the NIDHI PRAYAS Grant are encouraged to formally incorporate as a DPIIT registered startup within 6 to 8 months of receiving support.
8. In the case of startups:

- a. The entity must have been incorporated in India for not more than five (5) years as of the application date.
  - b. At least fifty-one percent (51%) of the equity in the startup must be held by Indian citizens.
  - c. The startup's annual turnover shall not exceed ₹1Cr in any financial year since incorporation.
9. Applicants who are employed or are full-time students in an academic or R&D institution must submit a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from their employer or institution. The NOC must explicitly permit engagement with the NIDHI PRAYAS project and confirm that any intellectual property generated will vest entirely with the innovator or startup.
10. An applicant shall not seek or accept parallel support under both NIDHI-EIR and NIDHI-PRAYAS for the same or similar idea. Evidence of prior or concurrent EIR funding must be declared at the time of application, in the form of an undertaking.
11. Total NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 grant support for any innovation should not exceed ₹40 lakh, including the support received under PRAYAS 1.0
12. NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 grant is Proof-of-concept grant for converting idea and innovations into a prototype/ advanced prototype/ MVP. Proposals for the products having crossed MVP Level will not be eligible to apply for the Grant.
13. Preference may be given to the following innovators :-
1. having bootstrapped or have co-investment commitments.
  2. having clear roadmap for commercialization
  3. Women innovators
  4. Young innovators
  5. Deep Tech Innovators/ Researchers
  6. Innovators/Startups with Patents
14. Prior Funding Disclosure and Eligibility:
- All applicants must submit an undertaking detailing all previous funding received from government grants/programs (including amounts) and from private sources (such as friends and family, angel investors, venture capitalists, etc.).
  - Applicants must specifically declare if they have previously received funding under NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0.

15. For incomplete projects, PRAYASEE must return unutilized amount of the grant which has been awarded to them.
16. NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 application approval will be subject to decision of the PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee (PLMC) of the PC/ APC where innovator has applied. The decision of approval or rejection or reduced amount by the committee shall remain final and binding on the innovator.
17. If an innovator has already started a venture prior to receiving the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Grant, such innovators should assign the IP ownership right to the Startup receiving the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Grant amount.
18. PRAYASEEs shall demonstrate strong commitment to the project, including:
  - a. Full-time engagement during the project duration
  - b. Active participation in review, mentoring, and evaluation processes
19. Support to a PRAYASEE may be discontinued in cases of Non-achievement of milestones, and/ or Misutilization of funds and/ or Loss of project viability. Such decisions shall be taken by the PLMC with proper documentation, and unutilized funds may be recovered as per guidelines. The PC/ APC shall communicate such instances to the PMU.
20. Intellectual Property generated under the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Programme shall vest with the innovator/startup, unless otherwise agreed through a separate contractual arrangement.
21. The Host Institution or PC/APC shall not mandate equity or IP ownership as a precondition for support under the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Programme.

**Funding Eligibility:**

- i. Applicants who have received NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 funding are eligible to apply to NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 only at an Advanced PRAYAS Centre (APC), for a maximum grant of ₹40 lakh. These applicants must possess a deep-tech idea or aim to have *readily deployable advance prototypes which would progress towards Commercialization* and should strive to eventually be capable of raising funding from VCs or applying to the funding opportunities being made possible under the RDI Scheme.
- ii. Applicants who have not received any funding under NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 or 2.0 are eligible to apply at both a PRAYAS Centre (PC) (up to ₹20 lakh) and at an APC (up to ₹40 lakh)
- iii. It must be noted that since APC is the advance level of a PC, therefore PRAYASEEs who receive funding from an APC (of any amount) are not eligible to receive PRAYAS 2.0 grants from any PC. **However, those who have received**

**funding from a PC may apply at an APC for the balance amount (i.e. up to ₹40 lakh minus the amount received from the PC).**

- iv. Applicants who have cumulatively received more than ₹40 lakh in grant funding from government schemes/programs are not eligible for NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 support.

**Please Note:** To ensure appropriate sequencing of support, applicants are highly encouraged and expected to align their applications with the stage of development of their innovation. In cases where a proposal is not approved at an Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC), subsequent applications to PRAYAS Centres (PCs) may be considered, subject to independent assessment by the respective PLMC and the suitability of the proposal for PC-level support.

### **Sustenance Allowance:**

- i. Innovators or founding teams who have no other source of income during the project term may be eligible for a sustenance allowance up to **20 percent** of their approved PRAYAS grant, provided:
  - a. The PLMC (PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee) at PC/ APC deems it necessary based on the strength of the idea and overall project timeline.
  - b. The innovator or startup team (in case of startup) commits to work full- time on PRAYAS without any other formal employment.
- ii. The PLMC's recommendation for a sustenance allowance must clearly specify the percentage (not to exceed 20 percent) and be included in the grant approval documentation.

### **Project Duration:**

- i. Each PRAYASEE project shall have a maximum duration of fifteen (15) months from the date of the first tranche disbursement from the PC/ APC to the PRAYASEE. This period is intended to cover end-to-end prototype design, fabrication, testing, and initial validation.
- ii. Extensions up to an additional six (6) months may be granted upon receipt of a formal recommendation from the PLMC of PC/APC, demonstrating genuine need (e.g., technical delays or unforeseen regulatory hurdles).
- iii. Any request for an extension beyond twenty-one (21) months must be approved by both the PLMC and the PMC. The request must include a detailed justification, revised milestones, and a budget reforecast.

### **Equity Stakes:**

As per the NIDHI PRAYAS Grant guidelines, Incubator/ PC/ APC are not allowed to

take/hold equity stakes in any PRAYASEE/ Incubatee/ Startup in exchange of any components related to the NIDHI PRAYAS Grant such as usage of facilities, fabrication, Prototyping Grant Amount etc. However, by mutual consent of Incubator/ PC/ APC and PRAYASEEs, any agreement executed between an Incubator/ PC/ APC and a PRAYASEE during the course of a PRAYASEE's PRAYAS programme must explicitly clarify that that such an arrangement is independent of the NIDHI PRAYAS Grant and is not a condition for services availed under the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 scheme.

**Notwithstanding the above, the following will not be considered under NIDHI-PRAYAS:**

- Projects related to Pure Software development, e-Commerce, Service solutions, App based solutions.
- Funding research or student internship in Academic institutions or R&D organisations.
- Innovators shall also not be supported in parallel under NIDHI-EIR and NIDHI-PRAYAS.

**Guidelines for Usage of funds:**

- a. Outsourcing Charges for R&D or Design Eng. Or Consultancy or Testing or Expert cost
- b. Raw material or Consumables or Spares
- c. Fabrication or Synthesis charges of working model or process
- d. Business Travel and Event participation Fees (10% of the PRAYAS Grant)
- e. Patent filing Cost including PCT
- f. Contingency
- g. Sustenance or Manpower Cost (**only as recommended by the PLMC** with a ceiling up to 20% of NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Grant Amount per PRAYASEE)
- h. Field Tests/Validation/Clinical Trials/ Pilot Deployment/ Durability Testing/ Reliability Testing/ Process Optimization/ Modelling at Scale/ Pilot Production run of the prototypes.
- i. It will not be used:
  - To repay pre-existing loans or commitments of the innovator.
  - To pay usage charges to the Incubator from the PRAYAS grant. Grantee can use other funds to pay any such charges, if any.
  - To pay rent of own accommodation, creation of infrastructure facility like shed etc.
  - As a stop gap arrangement to support any other professional pursuits.

**5.4.2 Specific Criteria of Innovators/ Startups for Applying to Advance PRAYAS Centres (APC)**

**Nature of Supported Projects**

- Industry-transforming deep-tech products or processes with clear global impact and commercial potential
- Well-defined technology-development and de-risking objectives, with measurable TRL milestones (e.g., TRL 3–4 → TRL 6).
- Focus on building and testing a market-validated prototype within 15 months.
- Activities focused on generating empirical data to validate product performance, achieve regulatory compliance, and demonstrate mass manufacturing scalability
- Acquisition of scientific/technical evidence (e.g., pilot trials, validation studies) to demonstrate proof-of-concept to licensors, investors, or customers.
- Creation of registered IP rights (patents, designs, etc.) fully owned by an Indian entity

### **Preference Criteria**

Projects satisfying one or more of the following may receive priority consideration:

- Highly innovative solutions, products, or technologies that offer a distinct competitive advantage or significant technological improvement over existing alternatives in the Indian ecosystem.
- A startup / innovation which involves early-stage technologies based on scientific or engineering advancements, which are yet to be developed for any commercial applications.
- An innovation which typically produces a solution along an unexplored pathway based on new knowledge within a scientific or engineering discipline or by combining knowledge from multiple disciplines.
- Innovations that demonstrate a significant technological or market breakthrough and have no prior equivalent or precedent at the global level.
- Solutions addressing an unmet need for the first time in India.
- Complex, multidisciplinary products requiring integration of multiple engineering or scientific domains.
- Technologies aligned with national strategic priorities (e.g., defence, healthcare, clean energy, AI-hardware, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech).
- Demonstrated collaboration potential (formal partnerships, MoUs, or letters of support from academia, research labs, or industry).
- Proven track record from PRAYAS 1.0 or equivalent schemes (e.g., completed prototypes, IP filings, pilot deployments).
- Successful prototypes which now need demonstration in real-time environment and operational environment.
- Solutions, products, or technologies that have not been previously developed, commercialized, or adopted within the Indian

ecosystem.

**Please Note:** The grant from Advance PRAYAS Centres is intended to act as a pre-cursor wherein the supported startups will eventually apply to RDI Scheme/ VCs/ Angel Investors etc. based on the relevant eligibility and the terms and conditions.

## 6.0 Important Timelines:

Sr.No	Parameters	Important Points
1.	Commitment of entire prototype funds	6 months from the release of first tranche of funds by PMU
2.	PRAYASEE project completion	15 months. With a provision of extension for another 6 months approved from the PLMC.
3.	Timeline to set up a fab lab	The fab lab under DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan to be set up preferably within one year (12 months). For extension beyond 12 months, approval to be sought from PMC/DST/or subcommittee as the case may be.

## 7.0 Proposed Implementation Framework: Nodal Program Management Unit

Department of Science and Technology has currently designated the Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE), IIT Bombay, as the Program Management Unit (PMU) for the NIDHI-PRAYAS Program at the national level. The PMU will be responsible for overseeing and managing the entire NIDHI PRAYAS process, ensuring smooth implementation and monitoring of the program.

## 8.0 Program Targets and Outcomes

The program aims to support a significant number of innovators each year in translating their ideas into functional prototypes, through funding assistance extended via a network of suitably identified PCs/ APCs across the country.

## 9.0 Eligibility for Submission of a Proposal by Incubator to setup PC and APC

1. The proposal to be submitted by the incubator with a proven track record in promotion of entrepreneurship, supporting innovations and startups. The incubator is supposed to have adequate expertise and infrastructure to support advancement of innovation and its commercialization (i.e. supporting innovators for progression of their idea from TRL-3 to TRL-6)

2. The financial support for establishing a PC / APC would be extended to the recommended incubator, essentially a not-for-profit legal entity registered as a Section-8 company/ Society. DST encourages selected PC to collaborate with an industry, an academic institution and with other institutions of repute focusing on innovation, research, testing, validation, quality control, commercialization mentorship and start-up promotion to create the required eco system. For-profit incubators are, at present, not eligible for DST NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 support.

3. Preference will be given to the following :-

- Existing and operational incubators affiliated with Academic S&T and R&D institutions, and/or promoted or recognized by State or Central Government.
- Incubators having full-time CEO and Independent team managing the TBI/incubator operations.
- Deep Tech startup Incubators
- Incubators situated in cities, where no PRAYAS Centre is currently established.
- Incubators situated in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

4. Preference for APCs will be given to the PRAYAS Centres who have implemented minimum three cycles of PRAYAS 1.0, however the selection will be based on the past performance and on the recommendations of the PMC and as per the criteria laid in the eligibility.

5. The applicant incubator must provide detailed information on the equipment required and proper justification for requirement of such facility. The lab support to a PC will be provided for only the first year.

6. Following are currently not eligible to apply as a PC/ APC

- A pure R&D proposal for academic pursuits and industrial consultancy will not be eligible for support.
- The proposals which are not complete or do not meet eligibility criteria will not be considered.

- Incubators that have received funding for, or are directly implementing, the NM-ICPS PRAYAS and EIR scheme through their Technology Innovation Hubs (TIHs) or incubators are not eligible to apply.

## 9.1 Specific Classification Criteria for Advance PRAYAS Centres (APC) Vs. PRAYAS Centres (PC)

### 1. Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC)

- a. The incubator applying for **Advance PRAYAS Centre** should be in existence for at least five years, with proven track record of performance. The years of existence for each incubator will be counted from the
  - Date of registration as a legal entity OR
  - Date of Sanction order as Incubator/ TBI by state or Department of Central Government of India whichever is earlier
- b. Existing PRAYAS Centres supported under the earlier phase of NIDHI PRAYAS i.e. NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0, must have successfully completed the implementation of minimum three cycles of funding under the earlier NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 program with a proven track record of performance.
- c. For incubators which have never been NIDHI PRAYAS Centres, incubator should have successfully completed minimum four rounds of any Government of India funding program (e.g., MeitY, DPIIT/BIRAC, SISF) with a proven track record of performance.
- d. Should have demonstrated excellence in deep-tech prototyping, robust mentorship capabilities, and measurable commercialization outcomes during this period

### 2. PRAYAS Centre (PC)

- a. The incubator applying for **PRAYAS Centre** should be in existence for at least three years, with proven track record of performance/ incubation. The years of existence for each incubator will be counted from the
  - Date of registration as a legal entity OR
  - Date of Sanction order as TBI by state or Department of Central Government of India whichever is earlier
- b. Existing **inclusive-TBIs (iTbIs)** may apply directly as PCs, provided they meet all other eligibility conditions:-
- c. Existing PCs supported under NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 are, at present, not eligible for support as PCs under NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0

## 9.2 Categories of Support Provided To PCs/ APCs under NIDHI

## **PRAYAS 2.0**

The support will be provided to selected PCs and APCs at the following categories:

### **Support To New Centres to be established with DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan:**

#### **Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC):**

- Maximum prototyping funding support up to Rs. 4.0 Cr (maximum support up to Rs. 40 lakhs per innovator),
- maximum support up to Rs. 1.5 Cr for establishment of DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan, and
- maximum Rs. 30 lakhs for consumable and administrative cost for management of NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program & DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan.

#### **PRAYAS Centre (PC):**

- Max. prototyping funding support up to Rs. 2.0 Cr (maximum support up to Rs. 20 lakhs per innovator),
- maximum support up to Rs. 1.5 Cr for establishment of DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan, and
- maximum Rs. 30 lakhs for consumable and administrative cost for management of NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program & DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan.

**Please Note:** *Only incubators that have not received support under the NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 Programme shall be eligible to apply under the support category of 'New Centres to be established with DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan'.*

### **Support To New Centres to be established without DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan:**

#### **Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC):**

- Maximum prototyping funding support up to Rs. 4.0 Cr (maximum support up to Rs. 40 lakhs per innovator),
- maximum Rs. 30 Lakhs for consumable and administrative cost for management of NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program to APC where the APC has necessary infrastructure (labs/equipment) to implement the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program.

#### **PRAYAS Centre (PC):**

- Maximum prototyping funding support up to Rs. 2.0 Cr (maximum support up to Rs. 20 lakhs per innovator),
- maximum Rs. 30 Lakhs for consumable and administrative cost for management of PRAYAS program to PC where the PC has all necessary infrastructure (labs/equipment) to implement the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program.

**Please Note:** *Only incubators that have not received support under the NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 Programme shall be eligible to apply under the support category of 'New Centres to be*

established without DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan’.

### **Support To Centres established under NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0:**

#### **Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC):**

- Maximum prototyping funding support up to Rs. 4.0 Cr (maximum support up to Rs. 40 lakhs per innovator),
- maximum support up to Rs. 1.0 Cr for upgradation of existing PRAYAS Shala, maximum Rs. 30 lakhs for consumable and administrative cost for management of PRAYAS program to PC where the PC has already successfully implemented the NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 Program.

**Please Note:** Only incubators that have received minimum of three cycles of funding support under the NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0 Programme shall be eligible to apply under the support category of ‘Centres established under NIDHI PRAYAS 1.0’.

## **10.0 Submission of Proposal**

Proposal (online submission of application form) in the prescribed proforma, would be available at the NIDHI PRAYAS PMU Portal <https://nidhi-prayas.org/> as well as on <https://nidhi.dst.gov.in/schemes-programmes/nidhiprayas/> along with the necessary enclosures including consent for Terms & Conditions.

The proposal, along with the Forwarding Letter, should be forwarded by the Head of the Incubator along with the Endorsement Letter from the Head of the Institution.

**Please Note:** Applicant Incubators are requested to **NOT** send any physical copies of the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 applications to either DST or the PMU.

### **Contact Information of DST**

- 1.) Sh. Praveen Roy,  
Scientist ‘G’ & Head, Technology Translation & Innovation Division,  
Dept. of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India  
Contact No.: 011-26590316,
- 2.) Dr. Pramod S.,  
Program Officer, NIDHI PRAYAS  
Technology Translation & Innovation Division,  
Dept. of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India  
Contact No.: 011-26590219

## **Contact Information of Program Management Unit (PMU)**

### **NIDHI PRAYAS PMU**

Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE),  
5th Floor, Rahul Bajaj Technology Innovation Centre  
(RBTIC) Building, IIT Bombay, Powai, Mumbai 400 076

**Email:** [nidhiprayas@sineiitb.org](mailto:nidhiprayas@sineiitb.org)

**Website:** <https://nidhi-prayas.org>

**Contact No.:** 022-25767016; Ext. No.: 520 / 519

## **Acceptance and Processing of Application to Establish a PC**

The call for proposals would be at intervals as decided by DST, wherein a period of one month would be given for submission of proposal after the date of call of proposal.

### **11.0 Evaluation of Proposal**

The evaluation of the proposals will be done on two levels: Level 1 and Level 2.

**Level 1:** The initial Scrutiny and evaluation will be done with basic eligibility and initial screening parameters, as decided by the PMC. The selected/shortlist proposals will be recommended for the second level of evaluation i.e. Presentation.

**Level 2:** The shortlisted proposals/incubators will be required to give a presentation before the PMC, as per the formats decided by the PMC/DST and other performance parameters. Based on the performance, merit and the capability of the incubator in promoting innovations, the PMC will recommend PCs/APCs to DST for possible support.

The composition of the PMC constituted by Technology Translation & Innovation Division, DST will consist of experts in the domain of R&D, technology translation, entrepreneurship, industry, academia etc.

TTI Division, DST shall take a final decision to support the APC/ PC based on the recommendations of the Committee.

The following broad parameters may be used for evaluation of the proposals (Last 5 Years) :-

- a) Innovators having the working prototype within 18 months.

- b) IP filing / No. of Startups Registered
- c) External funding or investments raised by supported Innovators/ Startups
- d) Expression of interest from industry/ corporates
- e) Technologies advanced beyond TRL 4 towards TRL 6
- f) Prototypes developed/ tested in real-world conditions/ receive early customer validation
- g) IPs converted into functional prototypes, etc.
- h) Overall impact generated by startups of the incubator
- i) Overall performance of incubators in terms of managing programs, mentoring and supporting startups

## 12.0 Pre-Requisites for Release of Funds

Once the proposal for APC/ PC is agreed in-principle by DST, the process for the sanction of APC/ PC and subsequent release of funds would be taken up after ensuring the following preliminary actions are taken by the incubator: -

- i. Assigning of a 'PRAYAS Program Head/ Chief Innovation Officer' and a suitable team for implementation.
- ii. Constitution of a PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee (PLMC)

## 13.0 Implementation

- i. After in-principle approval of the Department of Science and Technology for supporting a PC/APC, the grant would be first released by DST to PMU. Subsequently, the PMU shall release grants to each recommended PRAYAS Centre (PC) / Advance PRAYAS Centre (APC) only upon execution of a formal agreement between the PMU and the respective Centre, establishment of a dedicated bank account for NIDHI-PRAYAS funds, and confirmation that all prescribed pre-requisites have been duly fulfilled.
- ii. **A PRAYAS Management Committee (PMC)** would be constituted by Technology Translation & Innovation Division of DST, Govt. of India to advice and give recommendations for the DST to execute the NIDHI PRAYAS Program. The PMC will be selecting the PCs/APCs and will monitor their progress. Based on the recommendations of the PMC, DST may facilitate the disbursement of Funds through the PMU.
- iii. **A PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee (PLMC)** - A PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee (PLMC) would be set up in each PC Centre for evaluation and scrutiny of the projects, recommending the projects for appropriate funding, monitoring the progress and taking appropriate

decisions on continuation of funding support to the projects.

- iv. The PLMC is to be led by a designated Chairperson with the NIDHI PRAYAS Program Head/ CIO as the Member Secretary. The PLMC must include technical/ domain experts, financial/ investment experts (VC/Angel), representatives from industry/ industry associations, and successful entrepreneurs. The PLMC must have the NIDHI PRAYAS Program Officer/ Suitable officer nominated by the Head, Technology Translation & Innovation Division, would be a de-facto Observer/ Member of the PLMC.
- v. Agenda, Minutes of the Meeting and decisions of PLMC at PC/ APC Level would be mandatorily updated to PMU/ DST. Moreover, information related to selected PRAYASEEs would be made available/accessible to DST and PMU on a regular basis through the NIDHI PRAYAS portal.
- vi. Each PC/APC program management team requires adequate skills in innovation management. Hence for its proper day to day operation and management, competent manpower must be made available. Each incubator would identify a PRAYAS Program Head (or *Chief Innovation Officer* of NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Program) and a Project Coordinator/ staff with adequate knowledge and management expertise for the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program management.
- vii. The incubator would evolve a **transparent system** for selection of projects under PC program. The selected applicants shall preferably be physically present at the incubator and the **incubator should have executed appropriate NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 grant agreement with applicant.**
- viii. Each PC/APC should update details of beneficiaries, on a monthly basis on the NIDHI PRAYAS Portal managed by the PMU. The PCs/APCs are also required to have a website of its own and should update the PRAYAS related information on regular basis, also listing the equipment available at the DST NIDHI Maker Bhavan.
- ix. Each incubator hosting a PC/ APC must mandatorily ensure that PRAYASEEs are granted full access to all relevant Host Institute laboratories and technical facilities, on par with other incubatees and researchers, to support their prototyping and product development needs.
- x. To have a larger reach of beneficiaries, the PC/APC can have a blend of Physical and Virtual pre-incubation support under the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 program.

## **14.0 Monitoring**

The continuation of support and annual funding to the incubator as PC / APC is entirely performance based and will be reviewed by the PMU/DST regularly. The performance at the National level would be monitored by the PMC. As and when it is felt necessary, a team constituted by the PMU (with approval of DST)/ DST may be sent for monitoring the progress of the incubator. In case of significant shortfall in the progress, the support may also be terminated mid-term upon the recommendation of PMC. The overall functioning of the PMU would be monitored by PMC as per DST and GFR norms.

## **15.0 Priority Areas**

DST has priority areas for supporting innovations under the PC. The current focus areas are: Energy security and transition, and climate action; “Deep Technology” including quantum computing, robotics and space; Hardware-based Artificial Intelligence and its application to Indian problems; medical devices; healthcare, digital agriculture; advance defense technologies; assistive devices; manufacturing; technologies whose indigenization is vital for Economic Security and Atmanirbharta; sectors or technologies deemed necessary in the public interest; and other emerging technology areas.

## **16.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES**

To apply for hosting PC/APC, the incubator should fulfil the criteria of eligibility as given in these guidelines under Point 9.0.

- i. The proposal should be accompanied by both forwarding letter by the incubator and endorsement letter from the Head of the Institution (in the format as prescribed in the application form).
- ii. The release of grants after the first year and each subsequent year is subject to satisfactory performance of incubator and on recommendations of PMC. For this purpose, the progress of work under PC/APC and achievement of milestones is to be sent by incubator to PMU and DST in the prescribed format.
- iii. In case of any kind of problem in the implementation of the NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 programme, the same needs to be documented properly and brought to the knowledge of the incubator’s Governing Body, PMU and to DST as early as possible.
- iv. Non-performance and non-compliance to the conditions required for sustainable PC/APC implementation may result in discontinuation of further support and refund of unspent DST grant.

- v. PMU shall provide a standardized agreement template governing: Fund utilization norms Milestones and deliverables Intellectual property rights Exit and termination conditions All PCs/APCs shall adopt this standardized framework.
- vi. All members of the PLMC, Program Management Team, and associated experts shall disclose any direct or indirect conflict of interest.
  - a. Members with a conflict shall recuse themselves from evaluation and decision-making processes. Such disclosures shall be documented and retained for audit purposes.
- vii. All reporting requirements shall be fulfilled through the designated NIDHI PRAYAS digital portal, managed by the PMU. Centres shall ensure real-time updating of PRAYASEE progress, fund utilization, and performance indicators.

## 17.0 TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR PCs/APCs

**PMU must ensure that all PCs/APCs follow the conditions as given below.**

- i. As per the latest instruction by Comptroller General of Accounts (CGA), Government of India, the grantee institution is required to register at CGA website (URL: [pfms.nic.in](http://pfms.nic.in)) to facilitate release of funds.
- ii. The Governing Body of the TBI/incubator would put in place a proper mechanism for ensuring proper implementation and execution of PC/APC. The implementation and execution shall be monitored by a PRAYAS Local Monitoring Committee (PLMC) consisting of representatives of the incubator, technical/domain experts, financial/investment experts, representative of industry/industry association, successful entrepreneurs and a NIDHI PRAYAS Program Officer at DST or any other DST Nominee as Observer/ Member.
- iii. The grant being released should be exclusively spent for the specified purpose for which it has been sanctioned within the stipulated time. Any unspent balance out of the amount sanctioned, including interest accrued, would be refunded to the Govt. of India as per directives of DST from time to time.
- iv. The grantee shall furnish utilization certificate and an audited statement of accounts pertaining to the grant as per the prevalent financial rules of Government of India to PMU or Department of Science and Technology as the case may be
- v. The grantee is required to regularly submit the following to PMU :-
  - Upload all requisite data and details in the PRAYAS portal as a part of MIS (Monthly)
  - Audited statement of accounts relating to the amount sanctioned;

- and Utilization certificate, in the prescribed proforma on half yearly basis
- Progress Report pertaining to NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0

- vi. All the assets acquired or created from the grant shall be installed in the premises of the incubator and not in any other department/Division of the host institute, unless specifically approved by the Department of Science and Technology on the recommendation of the PMC.
- vii. Assets acquired wholly or substantially from government grants shall not be disposed of without prior approval of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), except those declared obsolete, unserviceable, or condemned as per General Financial Rules (GFR). The PRAYAS Centre/Advance PRAYAS Centre must maintain a record of all capital equipment procured. When such equipment becomes unserviceable, obsolete, or unusable, disposal requires prior DST approval. Proceeds from the disposal of capital equipment must be reinvested in incubator activities.
- viii. Concerned officers of DST or its authorized representatives may visit the organization/ incubator for ascertaining the progress of work and attempt to resolve any difficulties that might be encountered in the course of implementation.
- ix. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India at his discretion shall have the right of access to the books of account for the grant received from the Government.
- x. The grantee will maintain separate audited accounts for the grant. The funds released should be kept in a separate savings bank account; the interest earned should be reported to the PMU and Department of Science and Technology and shall be returned to the Government of India.
- xi. The grantee must not entrust the implementation of the work for which the grant is being sanctioned to another institution and divert the grant receipts as assistance to the latter institution. In case the grantee itself is not in a position to execute or complete the project, it may be required to refund forthwith the Department of Science and Technology, the entire amount of grants-in-aid received by it.
- xii. DST reserves the right to terminate support to the project at any stage, if it is convinced that the grant is not being utilized properly or that appropriate progress in the project work is not being made.
- xiii. If an institution has received support from DST under specific conditions and fails to comply with those conditions, it shall be liable to refund the grant

received, in a manner prescribed by the Government. Such an institution shall also be ineligible for any further grants from DST.

- xiv. DST will not have any liability towards the manpower appointed by the grantee institution for implementation of the project.
- xv. DST will have no responsibility in case of any loss is caused to any life or property due to accident, fire or any other reasons. The Host Institute is required to take appropriate safety and insurance measures to safeguard against any loss to human life and property.
- xvi. The DST will have no liability on account of any omission or commission of regulatory/statutory requirement by the PC/APC, incubator or its incubates, their associations and their companies.
- xvii. With the submission of application for receiving NIDHI PRAYAS 2.0 Grant, the applicant agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Department of Science and Technology (Grantor) from and against, and in respect to, any and all losses, expenses, costs, obligations, liabilities and damages, including interest, penalties and attorney's fees and expenses, that the Grantor may incur as a result of any negligent or willful acts or omissions of the Grantee.

***N.B.: The guidelines and Terms and Conditions are subject to change periodically if desired so by the Competent Authority/Department, without any prior intimation to PMU, PCs, APCs or PRAYASEEs.***

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