

NEWSLETTER

GOVERNMENT PLANS TO FUND 40-50 START-UP FIRMS OFFERING SOLUTIONS TO COMBAT COVID-19

Start-up enterprises in India are leveraging cutting edge technologies to offer critical products and solutions required to combat COVID-19 pandemic. Many incubators and accelerators across the country are supporting these start-up enterprises. The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India has introduced CAWACH scheme for providing financial support to eligible start-up enterprises that offer solutions for this crisis.

Society for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (SINE), Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay) is the implementing agency of this scheme. In an interview to MVIRDC World Trade Center Mumbai, Ms. Poyni Bhatt, Chief Executive Officer, SINE shares the response from start-up enterprises for this scheme and how the scheme will enhance the preparedness of the country in fighting this crisis.

Excerpts of the interview:

1. Can you briefly explain the response you received from start-up enterprises to the CAWACH scheme and how soon we can realise the result of this programme.

CAWACH is a financing scheme for start-up enterprises that offer products and solutions addressing COVID-19. There would be selection process to choose start-up enterprises eligible for financial support under this scheme and about 40-50 applications are expected for final funding support.

SINE has invited call for proposal from interested start-up enterprises to apply for funding under this scheme. So far, we have already submitted applications from more than 200 start-up enterprises and about 1000 applications are under process. The call for proposal is open till April 15, 2020. We aim to deploy funds by the end of April or early May 2020 to the selected start-up enterprises.

2. What are the focus areas of the CAWACH scheme? In what way, the scheme will be able to help the medical community combat COVID-19?

The CAWACH scheme will financially support start-up enterprises engaged in design and production of high impact products based on frugal innovations to address COVID-19 challenges. Some of these products are ventilators, personal protection equipments (masks, shields, suits, goggles, linen and disposable gowns, gloves, lab shoes) and relevant medical accessories.

Start-up enterprises engaged in design or production of portable ventilators, respirators, resuscitators, pulse oximeters, oxygen concentrators and other peripheral medical equipments such as contactless thermometers & stethoscopes, patient monitoring system and accessories are also eligible for funding.

The scheme is also applicable for start-up enterprises designing or producing sterilizers and disinfectants and allied systems such as booths / community disinfectant stations / chambers, bio-

hazardous waste management solutions, large scale sanitization and sterilization, surface sterilization units (preferably automated & IoT enabled)

We have also invited application from companies engaged in diagnostics products and solutions, viz. Rapid Antibody & Antigen diagnostic kits, Other diagnostic kits, Genomics based mapping solutions, Reagents, Safe sample collections etc.

The scheme will also consider applications from start-ups engaged in informatics, viz. health care information systems, movement tracking and tracing, crowd management, geofencing, logistics, any containment solutions involving software / mobile applications, patient tracking / monitoring systems.

Apart from the above categories, start-up enterprises deploying the following products or solutions can also apply for funding under CAWACH scheme:

1. Any solution that addresses / mitigates various challenges faced by the country / society due to severe impact of COVID-19
2. Product / solution near-ready, ready for deployment or manufacturing scale-up or repurposing of existing products and services that can be quickly deployed

3. Share with us your future plan of action to support the government's efforts to combat COVID-19.

SINE has a multi-dimensional approach to support the government in this period of crisis. We are helping our companies to scale up their COVID-19 specific solutions by extending our prototyping and early manufacturing facilities, making connections with large manufacturers, extending support and making relevant connections for their deployment.

We are also implementing DST CAWACH centre at a rapid scale so that funding can be provided in a timely manner. There are hundreds of start-up enterprises across incubators spread over the country that are trying their best to deploy products and solutions to address this crisis.

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