

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)

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In news

The Ministry of Defence has approved a central sector scheme viz. Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) with budgetary support of Rs. 498.80 crore for the next 5 years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

About iDEX scheme

- The iDEX initiative **was launched by the Hon'ble PM in April 2018.**
- **iDEX aims** to achieve self – reliance and foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia.
- **Objective:** To provide financial support to nearly 300 Startups/ MSMEs/ individual innovators and about 20 Partner incubators through Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).

Eligibility for grants under iDEX

To avail the grants **under the grant mechanism of iDEX i.e. Support for Prototype and Research Kickstart (SPARK), the eligibility is as follows:**

- **Startups**, as defined and recognized by the Department of Industrial Policy Promotion (DIPP), now DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Any Indian company** incorporated under the Companies Act 1956/2013, primarily a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (**MSME**) as defined in the MSME Act, 2006.

- **Individual innovators** are also encouraged to apply (research & academic institutions can use this category to apply).

To avail the grants as iDEX Partner Incubators, the eligibility is as follows:

- The applicant incubator should be **registered in India as a legal entity in public**, private or public-private partnership mode, and should have received establishment or grant support from a Ministry/Department of Government of India in the past.
- The incubator must have been **in operation for a minimum of 3 years before application** for affiliation with DIO, and experience of having supported at least 25 startups.
- It should have successfully graduated at least 5 startups in the past 3 years.
- It should have at least **25 mentors for startups affiliated** with it, at least 5 of them should be relevant to defence or aerospace domain.
- **Experience of having run sector-focused accelerator programs** in at least two sectors, with investable startups having come out of each of them.
- Experience of having partnered with academia and research sector.
- Extensive corporate, investor, academic, vendor, mentor and government relationships to support start-ups.

Activities supported under the scheme

The iDEX scheme formulated by Department of Defence Production (DDP) envisages to fund DIO to take up the following activities:

- Setting up and managing the iDEX network in the form of Partner Incubators.
- Communicating with innovators/start-ups/technology centres of MSMEs through the Partner Incubators (PIs).

- Organizing various challenges/hackathons to shortlist potential technologies and entities for defence and aerospace use.
- Interfacing with the Services about key innovative technologies and encouraging their adoption into the defence establishment with suitable assistance.

Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO)

- It funds iDEX
- It was formed as a “not for profit” company as per Section 8 of the Companies Act 2013 for this purpose.
- DIO will provide high level policy guidance to iDEX. iDEX will have functional autonomy.
- The CEO of iDEX will be selected and recruited by the DIO.

Objectives of Defence Innovation Fund are to:

- Facilitate rapid development of new, indigenized, and innovative technologies for the Indian defence and aerospace sector, to meet the needs for these sectors in shorter timelines
- Create a culture of engagement with innovative startups, to encourage co-creation for defence and aerospace sectors
- Empower a culture of technology co-creation and co-innovation within the defence and aerospace sectors