
OPPORTUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Incubation / Startup Facilitation Centre

WHAT THIS INSTITUTION IS

An incubation or startup facilitation centre helps early-stage entrepreneurs develop business ideas into functioning enterprises. It may be located inside a university, run by a state startup mission, or set up as an Atal Incubation Centre (AIC) under NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission. Atal Community Innovation Centres (ACICs), also under the Atal Innovation Mission, are designed for unserved and underserved regions, including tier-2 and tier-3 areas, and focus on community-level innovation rather than the scale-up support AICs provide. Some AICs and ACICs (alongside other host institutions appointed by Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)) serve as nodal organisations under the Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) Sarthi framework, anchoring clusters of school-level Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) and running the Atal Student Innovator Programme (ASIP) to build a school-to-startup pipeline. As of 2025: Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) supports ~95 bio-incubators (BioNEST scheme); Department of Science and Technology (DST) runs 150+ Technology Business Incubators under the National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI) programme. Unlike most institutions in this guide, a startup incubation centre is not present in most districts – many districts, especially rural and semi-urban ones, will have no such facility. If you have a business idea and want structured support to develop it, finding out whether one exists near you is the first step.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you want to start a business and need mentorship, co-working space, help with company registration, or connections to investors and government seed-fund schemes, an incubation centre is designed to provide that support.



GOVERNANCE

LAW / POLICY	SCOPE
Startup India Action Plan (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), 2016)	National framework for startup recognition, tax benefits, and support
Atal Innovation Mission Guidelines (NITI Aayog)	Establishes and funds Atal Incubation Centres
State Startup Policies	State-specific incentives and incubation support
DST Technology Business Incubator Guidelines	Funds university-based incubators

- **Centre:** DPIIT (Startup India) / NITI Aayog (AIM) / DST (TBIs) / Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) (A Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industries and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE))
- **State:** State Startup Mission / State Industries Department
- **Institution:** Incubation Manager or CEO runs the centre
- **Institutional oversight (by centre type):**
 - **Atal Incubation Centre (AIC):** Governing Board (per NITI Aayog AIM guidelines) includes CEO, host-institution representative, industry experts, and NITI Aayog representative; Advisory Board provides sector mentorship
 - **Technology Business Incubator (TBI):** General Council and Advisory Board constituted under DST's TBI Guidelines; Principal Investigator from the host institution chairs operations
 - **State Startup Mission Incubator:** governed per state startup policy; CEO reports to the State Startup Mission Director
 - **University / institution-hosted incubator:** oversight typically through a Faculty Coordinator, reporting to Dean of Research or Vice-Chancellor
- **Funding:** AICs receive up to Rs 10 crore from NITI Aayog over 5 years; ACICs receive up to Rs 2.5 crore from AIM over 5 years, with matching contribution from the host institution / funding partner under a PPP model; TBIs receive DST grants; state-funded centres vary by policy
- **Seed Support Investment Committee** constituted by the AIC; seed capital cap typically ₹25 lakh per startup, with documented exceptions up to ₹40 lakh under AIC norms or ₹1 crore under NIDHI-SSP. Seed capital cannot be used for AIC facilities.

KEY POSITIONS

POSITION	RESPONSIBILITY
Incubation Manager / CEO	Runs the centre; manages intake, programmes, and partnerships
ATL Sarthi cluster coordinator	A designated team member at the AIC/Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) (often the Incubation Manager) responsible for running the cluster of nearby Atal Tinkering Labs
Mentors	Visiting or part-time industry professionals and entrepreneurs who advise startups
Incubatees	Entrepreneurs using the space, mentorship, and resources
District Industries Centre (DIC) General Manager	Can indicate whether any startup facilitation exists in the district (if no centre exists)



MANDATED SERVICES

- Provide co-working space, meeting rooms, prototyping labs, and internet
- Offer mentorship: business model refinement, go-to-market strategy, pitch preparation, funding readiness
- Connect startups to investors, government seed-fund schemes, and bank loans
- Assist with company registration, trademark/patent filing, GST registration, and compliance
- Facilitate networking, market access, and inter-incubator connections
- Conduct workshops, bootcamps, hackathons, and accelerator programmes
- Where the AIC/ACIC serves as an ATL Sarthi nodal institution: anchor clusters of roughly 20-30 nearby ATIs (some larger), conduct capacity-building sessions for teachers and students, handhold schools, organise mini-hackathons, and build school-to-startup pipelines through the Atal Student Innovator Programme (ASIP)

LINKED SCHEMES

- **Startup India (DPIIT Recognition)** – tax benefits (3-year income tax exemption), self-certification for labour/environment laws, procurement preferences
- **Atal Innovation Mission** – AIC funding, Atal Tinkering Labs in schools, Atal Community Innovation Centres
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)** – loans up to Rs 50 lakh (manufacturing) / Rs 20 lakh (services) with 15-35% subsidy
- **Stand-Up India** – loans Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore for SC/ST and women entrepreneurs (original scheme ended March 2025; revamped scheme announced 16 March 2026, not yet launched)
- **State startup schemes** – vary by state (iStart Rajasthan, UP Startup Policy, MP Sampark, etc.)
- **NIDHI-TBI (National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations – Technology Business Incubator)** – technology innovation-focused incubators hosted primarily by academic, technical, or R&D institutions; provide co-working space, prototyping labs, mentoring, legal/financial/IP support, and help commercialise research outputs into startups
- **NIDHI Inclusive Technology Business Incubator (NIDHI-iTBI)** – a dedicated variant for underserved regions (Tier-2/3 cities and nascent ecosystems)
- **BioNEST** – BIRAC's flagship programme for specialised bio-incubation for biotechnology, medtech, and life-sciences startups, providing advanced labs, regulatory guidance, and industry linkages
- **Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs) under ASPIRE (MSME)** – skill-based incubation for rural youth to set up micro-enterprises in traditional sectors like food processing, handicrafts, and agriculture tools, with the objective of creating local employment opportunities

HOW TO LOCATE

Portal: startupindia.gov.in – incubator directory, filter by state; aim.gov.in for AIC list. List of AICs: aim.gov.in/selected-atal.php. List of Established Incubation Centres (EICs, an AIM scale-up scheme for already-operating incubators): aim.gov.in/established-atal.php. NIDHI-TBI / NIDHI-iTBI lists: nidhi.dst.gov.in. BioNEST bio-incubators: birac.nic.in/bionest.php. List of Livelihood Business Incubators: aspire.msme.gov.in/WriteReadData/DocumentFile/Annexure-I.pdf.

Also: Ask at the engineering college or university in the district, or check with the DIC General Manager



KEY FACILITIES

A functioning incubation centre should have: co-working space for at least 25-50 startups, meeting and presentation rooms, internet and basic IT infrastructure, and a mentorship network with regular intake cycles. Some centres also have prototyping labs and seed-fund mechanisms. AIC infrastructure norms specify a minimum of about 5,000 sq ft of built-up space (without a lab) or about 10,000 sq ft (with a lab/workshop); TBIs and LBIs have different infrastructure expectations.

WHAT A FUNCTIONING INCUBATION CENTRE LOOKS LIKE

- Startups are currently working from the space, with evidence of active programmes
- The intake process is open and clearly documented – not restricted to a single college's alumni
- Incubated startups work in sectors relevant to the local economy
- At least one startup has launched a product or service and sustained itself beyond the incubation period
- The centre is accessible to someone without a privileged educational background
- Mentorship sessions and workshops have been conducted in the last 6 months

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

During service delivery. The first point of contact is the Incubation Manager / CEO. For AICs, the Advisory Board is a peer escalation. University-hosted incubators route through the Faculty Coordinator / Dean of Research.

After service. Escalation is to the parent scheme authority – NITI Aayog (AIC), DST (TBI), State Startup Mission, or DPIIT Startup India.

External. DPIIT Startup India runs a grievance portal at startupindia.gov.in. DPIIT Startup India helpline (covers AIC ecosystem and broader incubator schemes): 1800-115-565. NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission portal at aim.gov.in handles AIC-specific complaints. DST accepts TBI grievances via dst.gov.in. Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) (pgportal.gov.in) is the consolidated central route. For seed-fund or grant disbursal issues, the DPIIT Seed Fund Scheme portal has a dedicated redressal function.
