

CSIR Entrepreneurs-in-residence (EIR) model



1. Overview

The entrepreneur-in-residence (EIR) model is one where a research institution (such as a university or science council) contracts or hosts seasoned entrepreneurs to support identification of promising technologies, business development, licensing and formation of start-ups.

The goals of the CSIR's EIR approach are to¹:

- Stimulate the translation of CSIR technologies and IP into marketable / 'licensable' opportunities;
- Stimulate creation of start-ups and increase licensing;
- Increase the impact from CSIR technologies through technology transfer.

2. Criteria for EIR

Criteria for entrepreneurs-in-residence include²:

"Experience

One or more of the following:

- Senior management in an early stage high technology startup
- Management in a company that specializes in spinout companies
- Experience in a seed stage venture capital firm
- Served in a business development role in a high performing university business development organization that successfully formed new ventures
- Served in a business development role, product development role, or other capacities for high technology products or services that enable substantial knowledge of the earliest stages of development for a new technology spinout company

Candidates must have demonstrated the experience of identifying early stage high technology opportunities, and translated them into businesses, products, services or contracts.

Qualifications

- MS, MBA, or Ph.D. or an equivalent combination of education and experience in companies related to high technology products and services
- 7 years of experience in developing companies, business models, evaluating and financing companies, technology product development or marketing, or other related areas
- Experience in or aptitude for technology and intellectual property
- Excellent communication and leadership skills"

¹ Entrepreneur-in-residence programme. Website: <http://www.otc.utexas.edu/Startups/EIR.jsp> Last accessed 24/02/2012.

² Entrepreneur-in-residence. Website: <http://research.uiowa.edu/uirf/pages/ventures/entrepreneur-in-residence.html> Last accessed 24/02/2012.

3. EIR Role and Expected Outcomes

The EIR's typical role is to identify specific start-up and licensing opportunities based on CSIR technology, to assess opportunities, to develop business models and business plans, to advise on proposal development, to assist in identifying suitable entrepreneurs and to facilitate start-up creation and licensing through his/her networks.

The typical objective of the EIR's involvement is to identify and assist in establishing at least one technology platform, and packaging at least one technology from that platform that can be commercialised through licensing or by a start-up company in South Africa, as well as to contribute to CSIR learning and capacity in commercialisation.

In some cases the EIR may enter a new start-up company resulting from his/her involvement with the CSIR, with the agreement of the CSIR. However, this is not the main goal of the programme.

4. Process and approach

Entrepreneurs-in-residence are selected and approved by the CSIR based on the criteria described in Section 2, and as the need arises in different units/centres. The engagement can take different forms, such as:

- a donation of time as a way of giving back to the community through development and support of entrepreneurship and technology transfer;
- mentoring of entrepreneurs heading up CSIR technology-based start-ups;
- a talk on entrepreneurship or related topics at the CSIR;
- a part-time contract, where the EIR is paid for specific deliverables.

Any intellectual property arising from such engagement would be owned by the CSIR.