## StarGate ${ }^{\circledR}$ Direct transfer cloning

Instruction manual

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## 1 Introduction

StarGate ${ }^{\circledR}$ has been developed for the rapid systematic screen of the optimal expression (regarding expression host and/or promoter) and purification (regarding the fusion tag) system for a given gene of interest (GOI). To this end, the GOI is cloned in a Donor Vector from which it can be subcloned by a standardized procedure into a variety of Acceptor Vectors providing the corresponding features without the need for sequencing each individual Acceptor Vector.

If, however, the optimal expression and purification system is already known a PCR product containing the gene of interest can be directly inserted into the appropriate Acceptor Vector without the need for prior generation of a Donor Vector. This "Direct Transfer Cloning" approach using appropriately designed PCR primers is described in this manual.

## 2 Direct Transfer Cloning Procedure



In a first step the PCR fragment is generated using the respective forward (CF) and reverse (CR) primer extending the gene of interest (GOI) with the corresponding integration sites. This PCR product is in a next step integrated into the appropriate Acceptor Vector (see page 14) resulting in the final expression construct, the so called Destination Vector. The formation of the correct Destination Vector is monitored via blue-white screening on LBAgar plates containing X-Gal. The validated Destination Vector can be directly used for transformation or transfection of the expression host.

## 3 List of necessary components

## Acceptor Vector (Expression vector)

Acceptor Vectors with respective Cat. No. are listed on page 14 ff . The vector is available as $20 \mu \mathrm{l}$ aliquot [ $250 \mathrm{ng} / \mu \mathrm{l}$ ].

## Products from other suppliers

dNTP (containing dATP, dTTP, dGTP, dCTP)
Pfu DNA Polymerase and supplied buffer
T4 DNA Ligase [1 U/ $\mu \mathrm{I}$ ]
Esp3I [10 U/ $\mu \mathrm{l}$ ] restriction enzyme and supplied buffer (e.g. Thermo Scientific; The enzyme must be active at $37^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$. Do not use the isoschizomer BsmBI.)

## Complementary products <br> Cat.no

## Competent cells E. coli TOP10 (20 rxns) <br> 5-1600-020

Sequencing primers for $E$. coli vectors (not supplied by IBA Lifesciences):
5'-GAGTTATTTTACCACTCCCT-3', forward sequencing primer for pASG-IBA and pASK-IBA vectors (HPLC purified)
5'-CGCAGTAGCGGTAAACG-3', reverse sequencing primer for pASG-IBA and pASK-IBA vectors (HPLC purified)
Sequencing primers for mammalian vectors (not supplied by IBA Lifesciences):
5'-GAGAACCCACTGCTTACTGGC-3', forward sequencing primer for pESG-IBA, pCSG-IBA, and pDSGIBA (HPLC purified)
5'-TAGAAGGCACAGTCGAGG-3', reverse sequencing primer for pESG-IBA, pCSG-IBA, and pDSG-IBA vectors (HPLC purified)
Sequencing primers for yeast vectors (not supplied by IBA Lifesciences):
5'-CAATATCATATAGAAGTCATCGA-3', forward sequencing primer for pYSG-IBA vector (HPLC purified)
5'-GCAGCTACCACATTGGCATTGGC-3', reverse sequencing primer for pYSG-IBA vector (HPLC purified)
Sequencing primers for insect cells (not supplied by IBA Lifesciences):
5'-TAACCATCTCGCAAATAAATAAG-3', forward sequencing primer for pLSG-IBA vector (HPLC purified)
5'-CAACGCACAGAATCTAGCGC-3', reverse sequencing primer for pLSG-IBA vector (HPLC purified)

## 4 Direct Transfer Cloning Protocol and Recommendations

### 4.1 Amplification of GOI using PCR

### 4.1.1 Primer design

## Important notes

- In case of using a proof reading polymerase, which is highly recommended (e.g., Pfu), 3'-phosphorothioate protected primers should be used. Otherwise, proof reading activity may degrade the primers from the $3^{\prime}$-end during PCR thereby impairing annealing and consequently reduces the yield of PCR product.
- Initial hybridizing regions of primers (marked with \| in the scheme below) should have a theoretical melting temperature between $60^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ and $63^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$. The primer melting temperatures can be derived by adding the single base melting temperatures of consecutive bases using $4^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for each GC pairing and $2^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for each AT pairing (and $1^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for each GT pairing).
- The integration site that needs to be attached by PCR to the $3^{\prime}$ - and 5'-end of the GOI consists of an Esp3I recognition site. Esp3I is a type IIS restriction enzyme that cleaves the DNA in double strand outside the recognition site ( 4 bases, here NNNN (see scheme below)). Thereby the digestion with only one single enzyme can generate two different independent sticky ends with 4-base 5'-overhangs allowing directional cloning. In addition, after digestion reaction the recognition sequence is removed completely and therefore the encoded amino acid sequence is not affected by remaining restriction enzyme sites. Hence, even the expression of authentic proteins is possible.


## Esp31:



- Example:

If the subsequent sequence would represent a GOI (start and stop codon are left out)

$$
\begin{gathered}
5^{\prime}-\text { TTGACCTGCAACAGCTGCATAGCC-3' } \\
3^{\prime}-\text { AACTGGACGTTGTCGACGTATCGG-5' } \\
\text { LeuThrCysAsnSerCysIleAla }
\end{gathered}
$$

then the following primers have to be designed for PCR to equip GOI with the needed sites:
(CF: forward primer) 5'-AGCGCGTCTCCAATGTTGACCTGCAACAGCTGCAT-3'

```
            ||||||||||||||||||||
5'-TTGACCTGCAACAGCTGCATAGCC-3'
    3'-AACTGGACGTTGTCGACGTATCGG-5'
                            ||||||||||||||||||
                            3'-GACGTTGTCGACGTATCGGCCCTCCTCTGCGCGA-5'
                            (CR: reverse primer)
```

5' end of the CF primer (forward primer) is elongated by the AATG combinatorial site (italic and bold) and the Esp3I recognition site (underlined) and
5' end of the CR primer (reverse primer) is elongated by the reverse complement (CCCT) of the downstream combinatorial site GGGA and again with the Esp3I recognition site (underlined).

The resulting PCR product then has the following structure:

```
5' -AGCGCGTCTCCAATGTTGACCTGCAACAGCTGCATAGCCGGGAGGAGACGCGCT-3'
3' -TCGCGCAGAGGTTACAACTGGACGTTGTCGACGTATCGGCCCTCCTCTGCGCGA-5'
    MetLeuThrCysAsnSerCysIleAlaGly
```

4.1.2 PCR amplification of the GOI

## Important notes

Essential parameters for optimization are annealing temperature, duration of synthesis and template concentration.

Protocol 1. PCR-Reaction:
Mix the following reagents in a $500 \boldsymbol{\mu l}$ reaction tube and in a total volume of $50 \boldsymbol{\mu l}$ (based on standard protocols for Pfu Polymerase PCR):

| $200 \mu \mathrm{M}$ | dNTP (each) |
| :---: | :---: |
| 0.1-0.5 $\mu \mathrm{M}$ | forward primer |
| 0.1-0.5 $\mu \mathrm{M}$ | reverse primer |
| $5 \mu \mathrm{l}$ | 10x buffer (supplier) |
| 20-200 pg/ $\boldsymbol{\mu l}$ (plasmid DNA) <br> $\mathbf{0 , 1 - 1 ~ n g / \mu l}$ (cDNA library) | Template DNA |
| 2.5 U | Pfu DNA polymerase (depending on the recommendations of the manufacturer. Pfu can also be added after the initial denaturation step) |
| ad $50 \mu \mathrm{l}$ | distilled $\mathrm{H}_{2} \mathrm{O}$ |

Protocol, continued

## 2. PCR-Program:

- Use a heated lid when available. Alternatively, overlay the sample with $50 \mu$ mineral oil.
- For initial denaturation heat the sample at $94^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for 3 min .
- Start temperature cycling:

| $94^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ | 30 s | Denaturation | Use $15-20$ cycles for |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $55-65^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ | $30 \mathrm{~s}-1 \mathrm{~min}$ | Annealing | plasmid DNA and $30-40$ |
| $72^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ | $30 \mathrm{~s}-4 \mathrm{~min}$ | DNA synthesis | cycles for cDNA library |

- Perform a final $60-72^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ incubation step for 5 min in order to obtain full length products.
- Store samples at $4^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ until further analysis (e.g., agarose gel electrophoresis)


### 4.1.3 Purification of the PCR product

## Protocol

1. Purify PCR product to remove Pfu polymerase and primers.

If PCR reaction produced a single product of the expected size the product can be purified using a PCR purification kit (according to the instructions of the manufacturer).
If multiple bands are visible, it is recommended to isolate the PCR product by preparative gel electrophoresis.
2. Quantify PCR fragment

- by analytical agarose gel electrophoresis through band intensity comparison with a DNA Ruler or
- by NanoDrop measurement


### 4.2 GOI Transfer Reaction into the Acceptor Vector

## Protocol 1. Prepare a DTT/ATP-Mix: 250 mM DTT, 12.5 mM ATP

(The mix can be stored in small aliquots at $-20^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$.)
2. Mix the reagents below for insertion of the GOI into the chosen Acceptor Vector:
$7.5 \mu \mathrm{l} \quad$ Acceptor Vector (5 ng; dilute in distilled water)
$\mathbf{2 . 5} \boldsymbol{\mu}$ I Buffer supplied with Esp3I
12.5 $\boldsymbol{\mu l} \quad$ PCR product solution [2 nM]; (from section 4.1.2)
$1 \boldsymbol{\mu l} \quad$ DTT/ATP-Mix
$1 \mu \mathrm{l}$ T4 DNA-Ligase [1 U/ $\mu \mathrm{l}$ ]
$0.5 \boldsymbol{\mu l} \quad$ Esp3I [10 U/ $\mu \mathrm{l}$ ]
3. Close the reaction vessel thoroughly, mix gently and incubate at $30^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for 1 h .
4. Thaw a vial of competent $E$. coli cells on ice.
5. After incubation, pipet off an aliquot of $10 \mu \mathrm{l}$ from the reaction mixture ( $25 \mu \mathrm{l}$ ) from step 2 and add it to the thawed competent $E$. coli cells.
Continue incubation of the residual reaction mixture (15 $\mu \mathrm{l}$ ) in the refrigerator at $2-8{ }^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for backup purposes.
6. Mix gently (do not vortex) and incubate for 30 min on ice.
7. Mix gently (do not vortex) and incubate for 5 min at $37^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$.
8. Mix gently (do not vortex) and incubate 2-5 min on ice.
9. Plate $10 \mu \mathrm{l}$ (mixed with $90 \mu \mathrm{l}$ LB medium) and $100 \mu \mathrm{l}$ on LB agar containing $100 \mathrm{mg} / \mathrm{l}$ ampicillin and $50 \mathrm{mg} / \mathrm{X}$-gal.
10. Incubate plates over night at $37^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ (upside down).

### 4.3 Destination Vector Identification

## Protocol

1. Pick 3 white colonies and perform DNA mini preparation.
2. pASG-IBA, pESG-IBA, pCSG-IBA, pDSG-IBA and pYSG-IBA have Xbal/HindIII restriction sites that flank the expression cassette and, therefore, may be used for confirmation of GOI integration.
3. Due to an additional HindIII site downstream to GOI, an additional fragment of 456 bp will be generated after Xbal/Hindlll cleavage of pLSG-IBA vectors.
4. For exact calculation of expected restriction fragment length please refer to the appropriate Acceptor Vector data sheet.
5. Sequencing step for further validation

In order to validate the correct sequence of your GOI you can use the sequencing primers specific for the Acceptor Vector listed on page 7/8.

Now you are ready to transfect or to transform your host of choice with the respective Destination Vector.

## 5 Acceptor Vector Collection and Description Overview

Expression Vector (StarGate Acceptor Vector)



Table 1: IBA Expression Vector (Acceptor Vector) Overview. A detailed overview of the current Acceptor Vectors is given here. The list provides information about the expression host, used promoter, available secretion signal and cloning site including $N$ - or C-terminal tag as well as the cat.no of each expression vector. The vector name (e.g. pASG-IBA5) comprises the expression system (pASG = E. coli/tet) and the expression cassette (affinity-tag/position/secretion signal) IBA5 = Strep-tag ${ }^{\circledR}$ II/N-term/no secretion signal).
5.2 pASG-IBA


The production of a heterologous protein is often accompanied by an impaired growth of $E$. coli cells. Consequently, regulation of heterologous biosynthesis is generally recommended by the use of a promoter whose activity can be blocked by a repressor. If the foreign protein is cytotoxic, even the production of minute quantities can result in a dramatic selection against the $E$. coli cells which harbor the expression plasmid. In such cases, tight repression of the promoter is required. Synthesis of the gene product is then switched on in a controlled manner simply by adding a chemical inducer. PASG-IBA vectors which are similar to PASK-IBA vectors carry the promoter/operator region from the tetA resistance gene and are the optimal solution for such an inducible expression system (Skerra, 1994). The strength of the tetA promoter is comparable with that of the lac-UV5 promoter. Some vectors carry the ompA signal sequence for secretion of the recombinant protein into the periplasmic space which is crucial for functional expression of proteins with structural disulfide bonds.

The tet promoter can be fully induced by adding anhydrotetracycline at a concentration that is not antibiotically effective ( $200 \mathrm{ng} / \mathrm{ml}$ ). The constitutive expression of the tet repressor gene, which is also encoded on the expression plasmids, guarantees the repression of the promoter in the absence of the inducer. In a Western blot, no expression is detectable under these conditions (Skerra, 1994). In contrast to the lac promoter, which is susceptible to catabolite repression (cAMP-level, metabolic state) and chromosomally encoded repressor molecules, the tetA promoter/operator is not coupled to any cellular regulation mechanisms. Therefore, when using the tet system, there are basically no restrictions in the choice of culture medium or E. coli expression strain. For example, glucose minimal media and even the bacterial strain XL1-Blue, which carries an episomal copy of the tetracycline resistance gene, can be used for expression.

Plasmid propagation is supported by a CoIEI ori ( pUC ) and the ampicillin resistance gene.
Note: Please refer to the corresponding data sheet for detailed information on a given vector.

## 5.3 pESG-IBA


pESG-IBA vectors are designed for high-level constitutive expression of recombinant proteins in a wide range of mammalian host cells through the human cytomegalovirus immediateearly (CMV) promoter (Boshart et al., 1985; Nelson et al., 1987). To prolong expression in transfected cells, the vector will replicate in cell lines that are latently infected with SV40 large T antigen (e.g., COS1 or COS7). In addition, Neomycin resistance gene allows direct selection of stable cell lines.

Propagation in E. coli is supported by a CoIEI ori and the ampicillin resistance gene. Some vectors carry the BM40 signal sequence for secretion of the recombinant protein into the medium.

Note: Please refer to the corresponding data sheet for detailed information on a given vector.
5.4 pCSG-IBA

pCSG-IBA vectors are designed for high-level constitutive expression of recombinant proteins in a wide range of mammalian host cells through the human cytomegalovirus immediate-early (CMV) promoter (Boshart et al., 1985; Nelson et al., 1987). The Epstein Barr Virus replication origin (oriP) and nuclear antigen encoded by EBNA-1 provide extrachromosomal replication in human, primate and canine cells and the SV40 replication origin provides extrachromosomal replication in cell lines that express SV40 large T antigen (e.g., COS1 or COS7). Thus, by means of the NeoR marker, prolonged expression of the inserted GOI occurs in such cell lines under G418 selection without the need for making stable cell lines.

Propagation in E. coli is supported by a CoIEI ori ( pUC ) and the ampicillin resistance gene. Finally, some vectors carry the BM40 signal sequence for secretion of the recombinant protein into the medium.

Note: Please refer to the corresponding data sheet for detailed information on a given vector.

## 5.5 pDSG-IBA


pDSG-IBA vectors are designed for high-level constitutive expression of recombinant proteins in a wide range of mammalian host cells through the human cytomegalovirus immediate-early (CMV) promoter (Boshart et al., 1985; Nelson et al., 1987). The Epstein Barr Virus replication origin (oriP) provides extrachromosomal replication in human, primate and canine cells which have the nuclear antigen encoded by EBNA-1 chromosomally expressed.

Propagation in E. coli is supported by a CoIEl ori and the ampicillin resistance gene. Some vectors carry the BM40 signal sequence for secretion of the recombinant protein into the medium.

An advantage compared to pCSG is the small size of the vector.

Note: Please refer to the corresponding data sheet for detailed information on a given vector.
5.6 pLSG-IBA

pLSG-IBA vectors are transfer vectors to introduce the GOI into the polyhedrin gene locus of AcMNPV DNA by homologous recombination. Co-transfection with BacPAK6 linearized AcMNPV DNA (Clontech) or circular flashBAC modified AcMNPV DNA (Oxford Expression Technologies) allows the generation of recombinant baculovirus at very high efficiency through reconstitution of an essential gene (ORF 1629) and elimination of wild type virus to great extent.
pLSG-IBA vectors provide the strong polyhedrin promoter for high level expression of an inserted GOI in insect cells.

Propagation in E. coli is supported by a CoIEI ori ( pUC ) and the ampicillin resistance gene.
Note: Please refer to the corresponding data sheet for detailed information on a given vector.

## 5.7 pYSG-IBA


pYSG-IBA expression vectors are designed for high-level expression of recombinant proteins in yeast. Cloned genes are under the control of the $\mathrm{Cu}^{++}$-inducible CUP1 promoter which means that expression is induced upon addition of copper sulfate. pYSG-IBA vectors favour correct protein folding and the production of soluble proteins - inclusion bodies rarely form.

In addition, all vectors include the yeast selectable markers leu2-d (a LEU2 gene with a truncated, but functional promoter) and URA3. Vectors including the leu2-d marker are maintained at high copy number to provide enough gene products from the inefficient promoter for cell survival during growth selection in minimal medium lacking leucine (Macreadie et al., 1991; Gietz \& Sugino, 1989). For selection after transformation, the URA3 marker should be used instead of leu2-d to enable growth of transformants.

Optimal repression under non-inducing conditions is obtained with yeast strains carrying multiple CUP1r loci, while partially constitutive expression in strains lacking the CUP1r locus ( $\triangle C U P 1$ ) is still enhanced upon the addition of copper through a trans-acting factor (Butt \& Ecker, 1987).

Propagation in E. coli is supported by a ColEI ori (pUC) and the ampicillin resistance gene.
Note: Please refer to the corresponding data sheet for detailed information on a given vector.

## 6 Acceptor Vector Expression Cassettes




## 7 References

## For up-to-date references see www.iba-lifesciences.com

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