

A Note on the Scheme of “Action Research & Research Studies”

The Action Research and Research Studies (AR&RS) scheme aims to promote action research and research studies to inform policy and improve the implementation of various initiatives in Panchayati Raj. Under the scheme, research studies and action research projects are taken up regarding various aspects of Panchayati Raj, such as the structure and functioning of Panchayats, Gram Sabhas, Panchayat finances, devolution of powers and responsibilities of Panchayats, capacity building and training, elections, e-enablement, PESA, programmes related to Panchayats and any other issues that affect Panchayats.

The scheme provides financial support to Academic Institutions / NGOs / Research Organizations / Registered Societies / Non Profit Organizations / SIRDs having specialized experience in research and evaluation in the areas of Panchayati Raj. Action Research proposals that provide an in-depth analysis for long – term issues, assess impact and document experiences in Panchayati Raj are supported under this scheme. Financial assistance is only provided to such institutions / organizations that have at least three years working experience in the field of social research, action research etc. The proposals received under the scheme are to be considered by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.

Copy of the guidelines is attached at Annex – 1.

Guidelines for the scheme of Action Research and Research Studies (AR&RS)

1. Objectives

The Action Research and Research Studies (AR&RS) scheme aims to promote action research and research studies to inform policy and improve the implementation of various initiatives in Panchayati Raj.

2. Projects/ Activities

2.1 Under the scheme, research studies and action research projects may be taken up regarding various aspects of Panchayati Raj, such as the structure and functioning of Panchayats, Gram Sabhas, Panchayat finances, devolution of powers and responsibilities of Panchayats, capacity building and training, elections, e enablement, PESA, programmes related to Panchayats and any other issues that affect Panchayats.

2.2 The types of projects or activities to be undertaken in the scheme include:

2.2.1 Research studies and surveys to assess the status of Panchayats in various aspects

2.2.2 Research studies to analyze policy thrusts and their impact, and suggest future measures

2.2.3 Programme evaluation

2.2.4 Case studies of Panchayats and related institutions

2.2.5 Action research to evaluate the impact of pilots with a view to up-scaling best practices

2.2.6 Preparation of model manuals, rules etc.

2.2.7 Workshops for dissemination of findings of research studies

2.2.8 To assess the impact of campaigns launched / to be launched by the Ministry under “Media & Publicity Scheme” to disseminate information through the print and electronic media along with traditional forms of mass communication, so as to evaluate their efficacy at the grassroots level on various subjects related to Panchayats.

2.3 Under the scheme research/ action research may be conducted by research organizations, government and non-government, which may be academic institutes, NGO, firms, registered society or any other type of organization.

3. Processing and Approval Mechanism

a. Under the scheme, research studies and action researches may be commissioned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) as per need and proposals submitted *suo motto* by organizations may also be considered.

b. The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) headed by the Secretary, MoPR will be competent to approve proposals under the scheme.

- c. The constitution of the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) shall be as follows :

1.	Secretary (PR)	Chairperson
2.	Representative of Planning Commission	Member
3.	Special Secretary/ Additional Secretaries, MoPR	Member
4.	AS&FA, MoPR	Member
5.	Joint Secretaries, MoPR	Member
6.	Joint Secretary dealing with the Scheme	Member Convener

- d. Before proposals are approved by the RAC, these will be scrutinized by the Screening Committee.

- e. The composition of the Screening Committee will be as follows:

1.	Special Secretary/ Additional Secretary (In case no Special/ Additional Secretary is in charge of Action Research, the Joint Secretary in charge of Action Research will be the chairperson)	Chairperson
2.	Representative of Planning Commission	Member
3.	Joint Secretary of the Division concerned with the subject of the study	Member
4.	Representative of AS&FA, MoPR	Member
5.	Joint Secretary dealing with the scheme (In case the Joint Secretary is the chairperson, the Director/ Deputy Secretary or any other official nominated by the Secretary Panchayati Raj will be the Member Secretary).	Member Convener

- f. The Screening Committee will examine the usefulness and feasibility of the proposal and the suitability of the organization, and make its recommendations to the RAC.
- g. For large or important projects, wherever the number of States to be studied is high, or the issues are complex, or the report is to be shared widely, Project Advisory Committees (PACs) may be set up, after approval of the RAC. The honorarium to be paid to members of the PACs may be decided by the RAC and revised from time to time.
- h. Experts for scrutinizing the research reports and giving comments may also be contracted as per need. The honorarium to be paid to such experts may be decided by the RAC and revised from time to time.

4. Submission of Reports by Agencies

- a. Any agency undertaking research projects under the scheme would be required to submit the draft and final reports within the stipulated time periods.
- b. The organization may be required to make one or two presentations regarding the findings of its research.
- c. The agency would finalize its report after taking into account comments made by the Ministry or experts identified for the purpose by the Ministry.
- d. Extension of time limit for submitting the report would not be granted as a rule and if at all need arises (only in exceptional cases) then the organization will have to give adequate reasons backed by proper substantive evidences to claim the extension period.
- e. Due acknowledgement would have to be given to MoPR for funding the study in the report.

5. Funding and Financial Parameters

- a. Under the scheme, 100% Central assistance will be provided to institutions whose proposals are accepted.
- b. The grants will be released in three installments in the ratio of 50:30:20. However, funds may also be released in two installments if so decided by the RAC.
- c. The first installment of 50% of the approved cost will be released after the organization submits:
 - i. A bond in the prescribed format
 - ii. Details of the design of the study, methodology and project team, time lines of various stages of study. A presentation on the same may be required.
- d. The second installment of 30% of the approved cost will be released on:
 - i. Completion of fieldwork if any, submission of first draft report and a presentation by the organization on the study, if required.
 - ii. Furnishing of a certificate, verified by a chartered accountant, of utilization of more than 80% of the funds released.
 - iii. An item-wise Statement of Accounts.
- e. The 3rd and final installment of 20% of the approved cost will be released on:
 - i. Acceptance of the final report by MoPR.
 - ii. Provision of certificate of utilization of the funds sanctioned, verified by a chartered accountant.
 - iii. Submission of statement of Account indicating the actual expenditure incurred.
 - iv. Submission of 10 copies of the final report along with the soft copy on a C.D.
- f. The accounts of the grant shall be maintained separately by the recipient organization and shall be open to test audit by the authorized government agency.
- g. The released amount will be utilized only for the projects approved under the scheme.

- h. In case it is found that the grant or any part thereof has not been utilized for the purpose for which it was sanctioned, the recipient organization will be required to refund such amount together with interest accrued thereon, in lump sum.
- i. If the organization is unable to complete the project on time, the Ministry will have the right to deduct 5% of the approved cost for each month of delay.
- j. Any expenditure made on traveling for the purpose of making presentations to the Ministry will be incurred by the organization from the total cost approved and sanctioned to them.

6. Dissemination of findings

- a. MoPR will take all measures to ensure the dissemination of the study reports, including the provision of copies of reports to State Governments and other stakeholders.
- b. After the acceptance of the report, the agency may submit proposals for sharing the results with stakeholders in a workshop which would be considered by MoPR on merits.
- c. The reports generated out of Action Research and Research Studies would be posted on Panchayati Raj portal of the Ministry.
