

## **A Note on the Component of “Action Research”**

The Action Research (AR) component of “Action Research & Publicity (AR&P)” Scheme now subsumed under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), aims to promote action research and research studies to inform policy and improve the implementation of various initiatives in Panchayati Raj. Under this component, research studies and action research projects are taken up regarding various aspects of Panchayati Raj, such as structure and functioning of Panchayats, Gram Sabhas, Panchayat finances, devolution of powers and responsibilities of Panchayats and any other issues that affect Panchayats.

2. The component provides financial support to Academic Institutions / NGOs / Research Organization / registered Societies / Non Profit Organizations / SIRD&PRs having specialized experience in research and evaluation in the areas of Panchayati Raj. Study proposals that provide an in-depth analysis for long-term issues, assess impact and document experiences in Panchayati Raj are supported under this component. Financial assistance is only provided to such institutions / organization that have at least three years working experience in the field of social research, action research etc. The proposals received under the component are to be considered by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.
3. Copy of the implementation framework of the said component is Annexed.

### Implementation Framework of “Action Research”

- (i) Definition: The action oriented research to improve policy and the implementation of various initiatives in Panchayati Raj (PR) sector.
- (ii) Projects / Activities: Under the component 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. The types of projects or activities to be undertaken in the scheme include:
  - (a) Research studies and surveys to assess the status of Panchayats in various aspects.
  - (b) Research studies to analyze policy thrusts and their impact, concurrent assessment and suggest future measures.
  - (c) Programme evaluation.
  - (d) Action research to evaluate the impact of pilots with a view to up-scaling best practices.
  - (e) To assess the impact of campaigns launched / to be launched by the Ministry under “Action Research & Publicity” to disseminate information through the print and electronic media along with traditional forms of mass communication, so as to evaluate their efficacy at the grass-root level on various subjects related to Panchayats.
- (iii) 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, renowned / reputed individuals of impeccable credentials or any other type of organization.
- (iv) Establish institutional arrangement with an appropriate institute either through endowing a Chair or entering with a Memorandum of Understanding with concerned Department / faculty, for a fixed term to fulfill the objectives of this scheme and in the conduct of activities and projects as mentioned below:
  - (a) Assist in identification of the themes, evaluation of the proposals and scrutiny of the reports etc. for Action Research & Research Studies.
  - (b) Preparation of terms of reference of studies.
  - (c) Preparation of thematic case-studies of PRIs and individuals to enable initiation of discourse on seminal issues.
  - (d) Study the State Acts and submission of report to Ministry.
  - (e) Periodic assessment of devolution of powers.
  - (f) Preparation of model manuals, rules, capacity-building inputs etc.
  - (g) Carry out development studies.
  - (h) Organization of workshops for crystallization and dissemination of findings of research studies.
  - (i) Informing and advising the Ministry on action research issues of policy planning and implementation.
  - (j) Any other innovative ideas having consequences for meaningful realization of empowerment of PRIs.
  - (k) To submit the annual report of the work carried out during the financial year.

*Note: More than one Chair Professor may be constituted on different subjects as and when required. The Chairs will be constituted from the “Professional Services” component of “Capacity Building” scheme, until further orders. The Chair will be constituted within the premises of the Institute / Organization with which the head of the Chair is associated with.*

(v) Committees:

- (a) The *Screening Committee* for the purpose of screening of proposals and monitoring progress shall be constituted as follows:

1.	Special Secretary / additional secretary / Senior Adviser (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.	Joint Secretary of the Division concerned with the subject of the study	Member
3.	Representative of SS/AS&FA, MoPR	Member
4.	Representative of NITI Aayog	Member
5.	Joint Secretary / Adviser dealing with the scheme (In case the Joint Secretary / Adviser is the chairperson, the Director / Deputy Secretary or any other official nominated by the Secretary, Panchayati Raj will be the Member Secretary)	Member Convener

The Screening Committee shall discharge the following functions:

- Review of ongoing proposals.
- Monitoring adoption of approved recommendations from past studies.
- Periodic conduct of events for Dissemination of learning.
- Screening and short-listing of themes.
- Screening and short-listing of proposals.
- Any other duty assigned by the Secretary, MoPR.

- (b) The *Research Advisory Committee (RAC)* for the purpose of approving proposals shall be as follows:

1.	Secretary, MoPR	Chairperson
2.	Representative of NITI Aayog	Member
3.	Special Secretary / Additional Secretaries / Senior Adviser, MoPR	Member
4.	AS&FA, MoPR	Member
5.	Joint Secretaries, MoPR	Member
6.	Subject / Domain Expert (as decided by Secretary, MoPR)	Member
7.	Adviser / Joint Secretary dealing with the Scheme	Member Convener

The Research Advisory Committee will be responsible for final approval of proposals and approving constitution of Project Advisory Committee.

(vi) Processing and approval Mechanism:

- (a) *Identification of Themes:*

- (i) Request for identification of themes from the respective Divisions of this Ministry, through Ministry's website for the General Public to provide their inputs, through State PR Department and through messages, newsletters etc. on the probable areas of research related to Panchayats / themes along with purpose of study.
- (ii) Short-listing of themes by the Screening Committee.
- (iii) Finalization of theme(s) by Secretary, PR.

(b) *Request for Proposals:*

- (i) Request for Proposals from empaneled / identified institutions on finalized themes.
- (ii) Invitation of proposals from empaneled / identified institutions on finalized themes.
- (iii) Request for Proposals through tendering process as per GFR.
- (iv) Proposals received from specialized institutes (other than (ii) above) on identified themes.
- (v) Any other proposals submitted by invitation or suo moto by organizations on themes relevant for the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

(c) *Selection of Proposals on specialized Subject / Theme, will be done as recommended by Screening Committee:*

- (i) Selection of proposals on specialized subject / theme as per GFR-2017 through QCBS or QBS process on recommended by Screening Committee.
- (ii) Screening of Proposals by the Screening Committee. The Screening Committee will examine the usefulness and feasibility of the proposal and the suitability of the organization and makes its recommendation to the RAC.
- (iii) The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) headed by the Secretary, MoPR will be competent to approve proposals under the scheme.

(d) *Submission of Reports:*

- (i) Any agency undertaking research projects under the component would be required to submit the draft and final reports within the stipulated time periods.
- (ii) The organization may be required to make minimum one and maximum two presentations regarding the findings of its research.
- (iii) The agency would finalize its report after taking into account comments made by the Ministry or experts identified for the purpose by the Ministry.
- (iv) 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.
- (v) The draft / final report and any questionnaire / data obtained for its preparation will be the property of Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the organization has no claim on it.

(e) *Acceptance of the Report:*

Screening Committee will be the Competent Authority for acceptance of the report.

(vii) *Funding Pattern:*

- (a) Under the component, 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 30:30:40. However, in exceptional circumstances, funds may also be released in two installments if so decided by the RAC.
- (c) The first installment of 30% of the approved cost will be released after the organization submits the following:
  - (i) The Government organizations those organizations (those organizations whose accounts are audited by CAG will be treated as Government organizations only) have to

submit a bond in the prescribed format and the private agency / individual has to give a performance security as Bank Guarantee / DD @5%-10% of the award money as per GFR-2017.

- (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 3<sup>rd</sup> / final installment of the approved cost will be released on:
- (i) Acceptance of the final report by Secretary, 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) Agency will be required to suggest the usage of findings of the study and implementation of its recommendations.
  - (v) Submission of 10 copies of the final report along with the soft copy.
- (f) Funding of Chair will be as per payment schedule agreed upon in the MoU based on applicable financial rules of Gol issued from time to time.
- (viii) Other Terms and Conditions:
- (a) 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.
  - (b) The released amount will be utilized only for the projects approved under the scheme.
  - (c) 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.
  - (d) If the organization is unable to complete the project on time, the Ministry will have the right to levy penalty at the rate of 1% of the contract value for per week of delay and subject to maximum 10% of the contract value.
  - (e) Any expenditure made on travelling for the purpose of making presentations to the Ministry will be incurred by the organization from the total cost approved and sanctioned to them.
  - (f) For large 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 and revised from time to time.
  - (g) 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 as per the Government norms applicable from time to time.

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