

Guidelines for “Punyashloka Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Special Call for Women-Led Research on Women-Led Development”

1 Introduction

The progression from the ‘Women in Development’ (WID) approach to Women- Led Development (WLD) redefines women participation beyond the work force and looks at their contribution across all sectors of development. Women-Led Development is evident in institution and situations where women take lead and engage actively in socio-economic, political, technological and cultural progress of society, community and nation at large. When women are decision-makers, their leadership potential, organizational prowess, intellectual capabilities, problem-solving skills, collaborative spirit, nurturing abilities, entrepreneurial drive, resourcefulness, and empathy strengthen the fabric of our national progress and transform Bharat’s path towards inclusive development. Women -Led development ensures equalities, in thought, words and action and initiative leading to cutting-edge innovations

As a tribute to Punyashloka Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, in commemoration of her 300th birth anniversary. ICSSR invites proposals for research projects under the **“Punyashloka Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Special Call for Women-Led Research on Women-Led Development”**. The legendary queen of the Holkar dynasty is renowned for her visionary governance and dedication to social welfare. Honoring her legacy, this Call aims to encourage women academicians and researchers across Bharat to conduct research and explore how the women-led development framework enables solving critical social problems to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat@2047

The rationales behind the Call is to foreground the diverse experiences of women across regions, sectors, cultures and time periods. By recognizing their unique contributions to socio-economic, political and cultural lives, the Call aims to highlight the critical role women play in advancing sustainable development.

This Special Call is to support women researchers to undertake study and document women’s experiences, leadership, and active role as the core focus in conducting research and developing insight and generates critical outcomes. The applicant should design and develop their proposals with an emphasis on women voices, lived experiences, community mapping, participatory rural appraisal (PRA) etc., in order to produce evidence-based research outcomes. The researchers may adopt ethnographic, case study, triangulation/ sequential/embedded design and approach for conducting research in the areas identified under this Call.

In addition, drawing inspiration from leadership of Punyashloka Devi Ahilyabai Holkar applicants are encouraged to undertake narrative inquiry, and document the life histories of remarkable women leaders from India’s past, whose contribution and innovative problem solving methods for society, economy, culture, etc., remain underexplored.

- 1.1 The applicants applying for the Call shall explore the Women -Led development in the following areas of research identified by ICSSR.
- Women-Led Social and Political Development (Documentation)
 - Economic Development, Financial Inclusion, and Entrepreneurship
 - Science, Technology, and Innovation
 - Climate Action, Environmental Sustainability, and Resilience
 - Media, Arts, Sports, and Cultural Influence
 - Education, Skill Development, and Inclusive Social Growth
 - Regional Development and Grassroots Leadership
 - Women in the Informal and Unorganized Sectors
 - Women in Leadership, Decision-Making, and Political Participation
 - Health, Well-being, and Gender-Sensitive Healthcare Systems
 - Preserving Heritage: Culture Ethics and Linguistic Traditions
 - International Relations, Business, and Corporate Leadership
 - Defense, Security, and Strategic Affairs
 - Women’s Role in Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution
 - Women and Digital Transformation: Bridging the Gender Gap in Tech
 - Philanthropy, and Community Service
 - Work-Life Balance: Challenges, Solutions, and Policy Interventions
- 1.2 The proposals should have scope for fact-based and action-oriented research covering identified research area, a very rigorous literature review leading to meticulously evolved hypotheses, objectives, research questions, scientific and systematic research methodology (specifying sampling types and sources of research data, interview schedule/questionnaires and tools and software to be employed for arriving results) with specific scope and limitation covering mitigation strategies. The research gaps should be explicitly identified, articulated and shall become the basis for the proposed research.

2 Eligibility

- 2.1 **This Special Call is exclusively for women researchers. Therefore, only women are eligible to apply as Project Director or Co-Project Director.**
- 2.2. Women Researchers who are permanently employed or retired as faculty from UGC Recognized Indian Universities/Deemed to be Universities/ Affiliated Colleges/Institutions under (2) F or 12(B), ICSSR Research Institutes, ICSSR Recognised Institutes and Institutes of National Importance as defined by the Ministry of Education (MoE) are eligible to apply. Applicants from these institutions should have substantial research experience demonstrable through publications of books / research papers / reports. The Project Director and Co-Project Directors must also hold a Ph.D. Degree and belong to the field of Social and Human Sciences.
- 2.3 In exceptional cases, Independent researchers with PhD degrees in Social and Human Sciences, who are not affiliated permanently with any institution mentioned in Clause 2.1 but have produced at least two sole-author books published by reputed publishers and/or 05 articles in peer-reviewed journals can

also be considered as Co-Project Directors (Only Women). Such scholars will be required to collaborate with a faculty from institutions given in 2.2 above.

- 2.4 Further, those researchers with PhD degrees who are in contractual appointment in academic/research institutions mentioned in Clause 2.1 and have produced at least two sole-author books published by reputed publishers and/or 05 articles in peer-reviewed journals may also apply as Co-Project Directors. In the event of their contract expiry, they may continue as Co-Project Directors until the completion of the project.
- 2.4 Senior and retired government and defence officers (having not less than 05 years of regular service) possessing a Ph. D. degree in any social science discipline and having produced at least two sole-author books published by reputed publishers and/or 05 articles in peer-reviewed journals can also apply as Co-Project Directors, in collaboration with a faculty from institutions given in 2.1 above.
- 2.5 Non-academic participants/stakeholders/local community may also be part of the research team in the capacity of Key Informant.

3 How to Apply

- 3.1 Applicants must submit an online application, including the research proposal, annexures, and other required documents, in the prescribed format. Any deviations from the application format will result in rejection. The application must be duly forwarded by the competent authorities of the affiliating institution.
- 3.2 Research proposals should either be in English or Hindi. Arial/ Mangal Unicode (Devanagari) font should be used to fill Application form in Hindi.
- 3.3 Researchers may apply for only one project at a time. Multiple applications by the same applicant, including those submitted under modified names or with different titles, will result in rejection. For any ongoing or completed project with the ICSSR, the cooling-off period for applying to another project will be one year for the Project Director. The date of cooling period will be calculated from the date of submission of the final report. However, this will not be applicable for minor projects/short-term empirical research projects of duration equal to or less than 12 months. For ICSSR Research Institutes, the cooling period will not be applicable.

4 Procedure for Awards

- 4.1 The procedure for the award of the projects will be in multiple phases before the declaration of final results. All applications submitted to the ICSSR will be screened and evaluated by the expert committee following a blind review process. Shortlisted applicants shall be invited for interaction/presentation at ICSSR (in person or online).
- 4.2 The expert committee(s) shall make recommendation(s) for award of studies and also suggest the budget for the proposed studies after interaction with the shortlisted applicants.
- 4.3 The merit list of selected candidates of Projects will be published on the ICSSR website.

4.4 Only the selected candidates and their affiliating universities shall be informed individually through a provisional award letter clearly specifying the formalities and documents required for joining the Project.

5 Budget and Heads of Expenditure

5.1 The duration of the research shall be of 12 months and the grant awarded under this Call will be of value upto INR 25 Lakhs.

5.2 The amount will be disbursed in installments, depending on the funds approved, phases and duration of the study, as indicated in the Award Letter. ICSSR reserves the right, based on Expert opinion, to make changes in research design, budget and duration of the project.

5.3 The detailed budget estimates along with the proportionate Heads of Expenditure for these proposals are to be prepared by the Institute / Project Director.

5.4. Allocation of Heads of Expenditure

- A. The remuneration for the Research Staff must be according to the ICSSR guidelines.
- B. The proportionate allocation of expenditure for the budget heads such as Fieldwork (Travel / Logistics / Boarding, Survey Preparation or Consultancy etc.); Equipment and Study material (Computer, Printer, Source Material, Books, Journals, Software, Data Sets etc.), Seminar/Publication and Contingency charges etc. shall be as per the ICSSR guidelines given below:

Detailed budget breakup for the proposed allocation

| Detailed budget breakup for the proposed allocation | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| S. No. | Heads of Expenditure | Value (Rs.) |
| 1 | Research Staff: Full time/part time/ Hired services | Not exceeding 45% of the total budget |
| 2 | Field work | Not exceeding 35% of the total budget |
| 3 | Research Equipment and study material (Computer, Printer etc.) | Not exceeding 10% of the total budget |
| 4 | Contingency | Not exceeding 5% of the total budget |
| 5 | Seminar/Workshop/Publication | Approx 5% |
| | Grand Total | 100% |

- * The project investigator may with the permission of the institution re-appropriate expenditure from one sub-head to another subject to a maximum of 10% of the particular budget heads. If the study necessitates re-appropriation beyond 10% it may be done only after the approval of the ICSSR.
- C. Affiliating Institutions shall be eligible to get Overhead Charges @ 10% over and above the awarded grant of the project, subject to a maximum limit of Rs. 1, 00,000/-which will be released by the ICSSR after successful completion of the project.
- 5.5 Project Staff shall be engaged/appointed as per the rules by the affiliating institution of the Project Director on a full/ part-time basis during the research work. The duration may be decided by the Project Director. The consolidated monthly remuneration/emoluments of the project staff must be according to the following guidelines:

| Project staff | Monthly Remuneration/ Emoluments | Qualifications |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Research Associate | Rs. 47, 000/- | Post graduate in any social science discipline (55% minimum) with NET /M.Phil. / Ph.D. and 2 years research experience as a Research Assistant in any Project. |
| Research Assistant | Rs. 37, 000/- | Post graduate in any social science discipline (55% minimum) with NET /M.Phil. / Ph.D. |
| Field Investigator | Rs. 20, 000/- | Post graduate in any social science discipline with minimum 55% marks. |

- 5.6 Selection of Research Staff should be done through an advertisement published on the respective institute's website. The research staff shall be selected on the basis of recommendation of selection committee, duly approved by the Competent Authority of the institution, consisting of (1) Project Director; (2) One external Expert (from outside the institute where the project is located); (3) Dean of the faculty in case of University /Principal in case of College and (4) Head of the Department of the Project Director.
- 5.7 For all field work related expenses of Project Director and Co-Project Director(s) and project personnel, rules of affiliating institutes/universities shall be followed.
- 5.8 All equipment and books purchased out of the project fund shall be the property of the affiliating institution, and a detailed stock report duly signed by the Head of the Institute / Registrar / Principal has to be submitted to the ICSSR. However, ICSSR may ask for books and/ or equipment if it so requires.

6. Joining and Release of Grants

- 6.1 The Project Director has to join the project as per the date notified by the ICSSR by submitting the requisite documents such as an 'undertaking' on an Rs.100 stamp paper duly verified by a notary, declaration in prescribed format on a Rs.100 stamp paper duly verified by a notary, Grant-in-Aid bill towards the first instalment on or before the given deadline and Registration Mandate Form of PFMS Account of those affiliating / administering institutions, which have not linked their accounts to PFMS for ICSSR grant. The joining period can be extended only in exceptional circumstances up to a maximum of three months by the ICSSR.
- 6.2 The total awarded grant for Punyashloka Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Special Call for Women-Led Research on Women-Led Development will be released to the affiliating institution in instalments as mentioned in the award letter, which will be decided by the ICSSR keeping in view upon the overall requirements of the project.
- 6.3 Final instalment will be released after receipt of recommendations of the expert for acceptance of the Final Report; Audited statement of accounts (AC) in prescribed format with utilization certificate (UC) in form 12A of GFR, for the entire approved project amount duly signed by the Finance Officer/Registrar/Director of the affiliating Institution; and at least five published research papers in the Peer Reviewed and Scopus Indexed journals. A detailed stock report duly signed by the Head of the Institute / Registrar / Principal has to be submitted to the ICSSR. The utilization certificate of institutions whose accounts are not audited by CAG/AG, will be signed by the Finance Officer and Statutory Auditor of the Institute.
- 6.4 The Overhead Charges to the affiliating institution will be released after the acceptance of Final Report along with the receipt of the final audited Statement of Accounts and Utilization Certificate in prescribed formats, which shall be verified by the ICSSR.
- 6.5 The Project Coordinator shall ensure that the expenditure incurred by him/her conforms to the approved budget heads and relevant rules. The Audited Statement of accounts with Utilization Certificate in form 12A of GFR is mandatory for the entire approved amount for the project.

7 Monitoring of Research Projects

- 7.1 Research undertaken by a Project Director will be monitored through the submission of periodic progress reports in the prescribed format. The project may be discontinued/terminated if research progress is found unsatisfactory or if any ICSSR rules are violated. In such cases, the entire amount must be refunded with a 10% penal interest to the ICSSR.
- 7.2 The scholar/awardee must acknowledge the support of ICSSR in all their publications resulting from the project output such as Research Papers, Journal Articles, and Articles in edited Books etc., and they must submit a copy of the same to the ICSSR during the course of or after completion of the project. In case of absence of acknowledgement by the scholars, they will be blacklisted and they will not be able to apply for any schemes of ICSSR in the future. Papers published in Conference/Seminar proceedings will not be considered as they are not peer reviewed. However, proceedings published by Scopus indexed / Peer Reviewed listed journals can be considered.

- 7.3 The ICSSR may, at any time, ask for verification of accounts and other relevant documents related to the Project.
- 7.4 The ICSSR reserves the right to change the affiliating institute if it is found that the affiliating institute is not co-operating with the scholar and it is not facilitating timely completion of the study.
- 7.5 Final report submitted by the Project Director is mandatorily evaluated by an Expert appointed by the ICSSR before considering the release of the final instalment.
- 7.6 The Project Director shall be personally responsible for the timely completion of the Project. The project proposal/final report cannot be submitted for the award of any University degree/diploma or funding by any institution by any member of the project staff, including the Project Director.
- 7.7 If the researchers do not submit the requisite documents and the final report in time or the project is not completed in the stipulated period, the scholars will be blacklisted and the legal recourse will be initiated for recovery of the released grant.
- 7.8 As per the directions of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the amount of grant sanctioned is to be utilized within the stipulated duration of the project. Any amount of the grant remaining unspent shall be refunded to the ICSSR immediately on expiry of the duration of the project. If the Project Director fails to utilize the grant for the purpose for which the same has been sanctioned/or fails to submit the audited statement of expenditure within the stipulated period, he/she will be required to refund the amount of the grant with interest thereon @ 10% per annum.

8 Completion of the Study

- 8.1 On completion of the study, the Project Director should submit:
 - A. Two hard copies of the Final report along with softcopy in both PDF and word formats;
 - B. Hard copy of abstract in 500 words along with softcopy in both PDF and word formats;
 - C. Hard copy of Executive Summary of the final report in 5000 words along with softcopy in both PDF and word formats;
 - D. Similarity index sheet (Plagiarism check) for the final report.
- 8.2 If the expert suggests any changes in the reports at the time of evaluation, the Project Director shall incorporate the changes within stipulated time and should submit the following:
 - A. Soft copy of modified final report in both PDF and word formats along with two hard copies;
 - B. Five copies of executive summary;
 - C. Soft Copies of Data Sets, along with well-defined definition of data and other important information for documentation.

- 8.3 ICSSR gets every report checked for plagiarism and the similarity report is also generated. As a policy, ICSSR does not accept reports having similarity beyond 10 per cent on similarity index. Scholars are required to get their final report checked from their affiliating institutions for similarity index and attach a certified report of the same at the time of submission.
- 8.4 The final report submitted by the scholar will be considered as satisfactory only after final recommendation of acceptance by the expert appointed by the ICSSR.

9 Obligations of the Affiliating Institution

- 9.1 The affiliating institution is required to give an undertaking in the prescribed format contained in the Application Form to administer and manage the ICSSR grant.
- 9.2 It is also required to provide the requisite research infrastructure to the scholar and maintain proper accounts.
- 9.3 The affiliating institution shall open / maintain a dedicated bank account for ICSSR grant (Scheme Code- 0877) that is duly registered at EAT Module of PFMS portal for release of the grant without any delay.**
- 9.4 The affiliating institution will be under obligation to ensure submission of the final report and an Audited Statement of Accounts and Utilization Certificate, (in the prescribed Proforma GFR 12-A) duly certified by the competent authority of the institution including the refund of any unspent balance.
- 9.5 The affiliating institution shall make suitable arrangements for preservation of data such as filled-in schedules, tabulation sheets, manuscripts, reports, etc. relating to the study. The ICSSR reserves the right to demand raw data, or such parts of the study as it deems fit.
- 9.6 In case a Project Director leaves / discontinues the project before completion of the tenure, the affiliating institution shall inform ICSSR immediately and refund the entire amount with a penal interest @ 10% per annum. The unutilized funds pending with the institutions for all projects must be returned to the ICSSR immediately. In case the universities/ institutions do not abide by the rules of the ICSSR, they shall be blacklisted for applying in schemes of ICSSR in the future.
- 9.7 In case a Project Director dies before the completion of the project, the affiliating institution shall immediately inform ICSSR by submitting a copy of the death certificate and settle the accounts immediately by expediting refund of any unspent balance.

10 Other Conditions

- 10.1 The duration of the project includes the time for Final Report writing. In exceptional circumstances, if the ICSSR is satisfied with the progress of the work, including quality publications, an extension may be granted without any additional grant. In case, the extension is needed beyond the above-mentioned period, the matter will be put up to the competent authority of ICSSR for a decision. If the extension is required, the Project Director needs to request at least three months prior to the end of stipulated tenure

for no- cost extension with a copy of the progress report and reasons for the delay with documentary evidence. Retrospective extension will not be permitted.

10.2 The contingency grant may be utilized for stationery, computer typing related costs, specialized assistance such as data analysis and consultation for field trips etc., related to the research work.

10.3 Defaulters of any previous fellowship / project / programme / grant of the ICSSR will not be eligible for consideration. No scholar will be allowed to take up a research project along with any ICSSR fellowship.

10.4 Foreign trip is not permissible within the awarded budget of a project. However, the Project Director may undertake data collection outside India in exceptional cases and if warranted by the needs of the proposal. For this he/she is required to apply separately for consideration under the Data Collection Scheme of the ICSSR International Collaboration Division. However, ICSSR will not be bound to support such data collection from abroad and the decision of the ICSSR will be final. In either case, the completion of study should not be consequent upon such data collection support.

10.5 Any request for additional grant in excess of the sanctioned budget will not be considered.

10.6 The procurement of equipment/assets for the research project is allowed only if it was originally proposed, does not surpass the permissible amount, and adheres to the regulations of the affiliating institution.

10.7 The Project Director cannot make any changes in the research design at any stage.

10.8 Regarding Transfer of a Project/Appointment of substitute Project Director:

- A. On the request from a university/institute, the ICSSR may permit the appointment of a Substitute Project Director in exceptional circumstances.
- B. If the Original Awardee of the Project fails to carry out the study systematically and satisfactorily, ICSSR may also appoint a Substitute Project Coordinator for successful completion of the Study.
- C. The ICSSR may transfer the place of the Project from one affiliating institution to another subject to submission of the following:
 - Satisfactory progress report (s);
 - No objection certificate from both previous and the new university/institute;
 - Audited statement of account and utilization certificate along with unspent balance, if any.
 - However, no transfer of Project / Project Director should be requested in the last six months of the study.
- D. Overhead charges will be apportioned proportionally among the institutes as per the grant released or as may be finally decided by the ICSSR.

- E. In case of superannuation of Project Director and if the rules of the institution so require, the transfer of the project to a serving faculty member may be done with prior approval of the ICSSR. The credit of Project shall belong to the original Project Director.
- 10.9 Consideration under other call(s) would require a fresh proposal.
- 10.10 The Council reserves the right to reject any application without assigning any reason. It will not be responsible for any postal delays/loss.
- 10.11 Incomplete applications in any respect will not be considered.
- 10.12 The final authority related to the interpretation of these guidelines or any other issue is vested with the ICSSR.
- 10.13 **No queries will be entertained by the ICSSR until the final declaration of results against a call. Any lobbying for an award will lead to disqualification.**
- 10.14 The ICSSR retains all rights to publish any project funded by it, contingent upon the recommendation by expert(s) appointed by ICSSR for publication. Copyright for the final report and outcomes of the project shall be held by ICSSR. Any publication or dissemination of research findings shall solely be at the discretion of ICSSR.