

Guidelines

Niche Area of Excellence (NAE) Programme

Under Scheme- Strengthening and Development of Higher Agricultural Education in India



Education Division
Indian Council of Agricultural Research
Krishi Anusandhan Bhawan II, Pusa
New Delhi-110 012

Guidelines Governing the Niche Area of Excellence (NAE)

Preamble:

National policy on education gives emphases on equal access to requisite merit, greater institutional autonomy with accountability, research, quality and responsiveness of curricula, resource mobilization and institutional excellence.

Agricultural human resource developed has played a pivotal role in transforming agricultural situation of the country. In this endeavour, ICAR contributed significantly by providing funds for critical as well overall development and strengthening of Agricultural Universities (AUs). One of the thrust areas identified for the XI Plan in Agricultural Education is building excellence in specific strategic areas in education and research through Niche Area of Excellence. For building global competitiveness in agricultural education and research, in Vice-chancellors' Conference - 2004 held at CIFE Mumbai, it was felt that each university should have one or two Niche Areas of Excellence. Consequently the programme was initiated during the year 2005-06 of X Plan period. This is one of the prestigious programme of the ICAR and the university concerned.

Objectives:

The Niche Area of Excellence programme is aimed to achieve global competitiveness in agricultural education and research through excellence in teaching, research, consultancy & other services in specific field. Such excellence should be capable of updating itself in accordance with best of global experiences and trends and of being responsive to regional, national, social and economic needs.

The basic elements of Niche Area of Excellence are quality of human resource available; adequate infrastructure; access to latest information; attitude and commitment of faculty, staff and students; recognition & interaction with best of peer groups in India and abroad; shared vision and well developed educational technology system.

Scope:

The benefit of programme shall be open to all AUs under National Agriculture Research System that includes State Agricultural Universities, Deemed Universities, Central Agricultural University, and Central Universities having agriculture faculty engaged in Agricultural Research, Education, Human Resource Development and Extension. The project proposal shall be in

specific strategic areas in the field of agriculture, veterinary science & animal husbandry, fisheries, home science, dairy technology and allied sciences, capable of updating itself in accordance with best of global experiences and trends and of being responsive to regional, national, social and economic needs. For building institutional excellence in specific strategic areas in the agricultural sector, under the ongoing centrally sponsored Plan Scheme-Strengthening and Development of Higher Agricultural Education in India, financial support will be provided to AUs for sustaining the regional, national and global advantage attained by them in one or two Niche Areas of Excellence. In future, focus may be given for attaining excellence in areas of strategic advantages such as IPRs, WTO-related areas, techno-legal specialties, Agri-business etc. New centers under emerging cutting edge technologies viz., biosensors, genomics, biotechnology, alternative sources of energy, nanotechnology etc., may be proposed. As far as possible the proposal should be of multidisciplinary in nature with focus on monitorable inputs and outcomes.

How to apply:

The pre-requisite for applying for funding under the programme is to have established leadership and excellence in a chosen area in terms of faculty and location specific relevance of the programme. The eligible institutions are required to submit five copies of the project proposal in the prescribed proforma (Annexure I) to the Deputy Director General (Education), ICAR, Krishi Anusandhan Bhavan II, Pusa, New Delhi-110 012. The application should be submitted through the executive authority where the Project In-charge (PI) is based, duly recommended with full justification. It is aimed that, at least in each SAU, one centre of excellence is developed to compete with the best in the world. The proposals should invariably reach in the month of April so that enough time is available to get the comments of the reviewers/ Subject Matter Divisions (SMDs) about its suitability or otherwise and if modifications/revisions are required to make it more need based, institutions get enough time to act upon.

Procedure for evaluation and screening:

The proposals received in prescribed format will be referred to the concerned Subject Matter Divisions of ICAR and to two known experts in the field, for comments. In case the revision is required, it should not take more than 30 days to submit the revised proposal by the PI which will be placed along with these comments before a Screening Committee. Generally following criteria will be taken into consideration for recommending the proposal:

1. The PI of the project on Niche Area of Excellence should not be below the rank of Professor/Principal Scientist or equivalent and have minimum of 5 research papers published in refereed journals with NASS rating of 5.5 and above or its international equivalence in the last five years. He/she has received a national / international level award / recognition in research/ teaching/extension in the area of proposal.
2. There should be a core faculty of at least five members whose academic and professional records must be of high standard and they should be involved as Co-PIs. Director/Dean can involve as Co-PI.
3. The project proposal is responsive to regional, national, global, social and economic needs and should not be repetition of routine research projects.

Mere submission of proposal does not guarantee for sanction/approval, unless it is examined and duly recommended by the experts and approved by competent authority.

Screening committee:

The Screening Committee will comprise of the following:

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------|
| (i) | A Scientist/Educationist of eminence | - Chairman |
| (ii) | Dy. Director General (Education) | - Member |
| (iii) | Two Vice-chancellors of State Agricultural Universities | - Member |
| (iv) | Concerned DDG or his nominee | -Member |
| (v) | One Director from Deemed Universities | - Member |
| (vi) | A Scientist/Educationist of repute | - Member |
| (vii) | Asstt. Director General/ Scientist- In-charge of the programme- | Member Secretary. |

The Screening Committee will be constituted with the approval of Secretary DARE and DG(ICAR). The tenure of the members shall be initially of two years extendable up to one more year. The non-official members of the committee will be paid TA/DA and honorarium for attending the meetings as per the existing Council's rules.

The functions of the Committee will be to:-

- Consider and recommend the proposals under Niche Area of Excellence.
- Recommend the duration and budgetary support for the project.
- Review the ongoing projects under Niche Area of Excellence programme.
- Advise the DG, ICAR on all matters concerning this programme.

The recommendations of the committee will be put up to the DG (ICAR) through DDG (Edn.), for approval. The DG, ICAR will be competent to perform all ancillary functions including grant of interim extension to the NAE pending the recommendation of the Screening Committee.

Implementation and monitoring:

The programme is to be implemented and monitored by the DDG (Education), ICAR supported by the concerned ADG/ Principal Scientist. Annual peer review of physical and financial progress (Annexure-II) by the Screening Committee and assessment of utilization of funds are an integral part of the project. The mid-term review will be done through specific committee constituted for assessment and impact of the programme. The final review will be carried out at the end of each Plan Period along with whole scheme.

Terms and condition governing the grant:

General terms and conditions:

The schedule of terms and conditions governing grant-in-aid from the Council will *mutates mutandis* apply to the grants to Niche Area of Excellence programme.

Specific terms and conditions:

- i) Grant for engagement of Junior Research Fellow/Senior Research Fellow/Research Associates on such rates and allowances as approved by the Council from time to time shall be admissible if recommended by the screening Committee. Their engagement will be co-terminous in nature and shall end up with the termination of the project.
- ii) AUs receiving grant should ensure that they have not obtained or applied for grants for the same purpose or activity from any other Ministry or Department of the GOI or State Government (GFR- 209(1)) to avoid the duplication of funds.
- iii) Concerned University / Institution shall extend the available facilities for smooth running of the project.
- iv) Annual project report and a brief six monthly report would be submitted through Dean/Head of the Institution/Director of the Institute.
- v) Duration of the projects, as recommended by the Screening Committee, shall be final and further extension, if any, could be considered under specific cases by the above committee.

- vi) The concerned university /institution shall not transfer/relocate the PI and assign any administrative responsibility till the term of the project.

Obligations of the Project In-charge:

- (i) Sanctioned project may normally commence within three months from the date of sanction, failing which it may be withdrawn.
- (ii) PI should not be changed without the prior approval of ICAR. In case he/she accepts another position or takes up any other employment or assignment or superannuates, the successor would be of the same rank and caliber preferably from one amongst the Co-PIs who are well versed with the scope and dimensions of the project. Funds shall be withdrawn, if approval of the Council is not taken.

Operation of the funds:

- (i) After the initial approval of the project, funds for a period of one year will be released. Subsequent releases will be made based on the receipt of UCs/AUCs and half yearly and annual reports.
- (ii) Grants will be in the name of Comptroller of AU/ Head of the Institution, who in turn will arrange to further release it on approved items to the PI. A copy of release order will also be sent to the concerned PI.
- (iii) The PI should submit claim for second / subsequent installment of grant and send through the Executive Authority of the College / University/ Institute who is responsible for maintaining such accounts. The Executive Authority should certify that the expenditure claimed under different heads has actually been incurred and utilized properly during the period for which release(s) was made and further that the grant has been exclusively utilized for the purpose for which it was sanctioned. The statement of accounts should also include an adjustment account in the prescribed Proforma (Annexure-III) countersigned by the appropriate authority as mentioned above.
- (iv) Any unspent balance from earlier releases lying with the institution will be adjusted in the current year's budget. No diversion/re-appropriation of funds would be allowed under any circumstances.
- (v) All machinery, equipments, books etc. purchased out of the grants will have to be entered in a stock register maintained by the PI and the same should be checked by the Auditor of the host institution. Any movable properties acquired by the PI with the grant may be handed over to the host institution on completion of the project.

- (vi) The expenditure on the approved items under the scheme may be restricted to the amount sanctioned under each head subject to the final settlement in due course on the basis of the audit certificate of statutory auditors furnished by the university. In no case the expenditure be incurred on the items not approved by the ICAR. Except for the need based contractual engagement of man power, liabilities of salary etc. of the staff engaged for the work of Niche Area of Excellence will be borne by the concerned AU/State Government.
- (vii) Plan and estimates of the civil works (including extension if any, to existing civil work) for which grant has ever been released/utilized shall be got approved from the ICAR. Extension to any civil works already approved of by the ICAR amounts to new civil works and specific approval thereof will be necessary before incurring any expenditure on such extension work. Expenditure estimates exceeding Rs. 10 lakhs per single work needs to be vetted by the Director (Works), ICAR. Prior approval of the Council will also be necessary with reference to equipments costing over Rs. 5 lakhs. As far as possible, new works will be discouraged and emphasis would be given on strengthening of existing facilities.
- (viii) In case of expenditure of the nature of capital investment, the list of work done or items purchased are to be sent to ICAR on the closure of every financial year i.e. on 31st March.
- (ix) The guidelines including criteria thereof may be modified, as and when required, following the formal procedure and with the approval of the Competent Authority of ICAR and shall be binding on the AUs taking grant for Niche Area of Excellence. These guidelines shall be effective from the perspective date of approval from the competent Authority.
- (x) The funds released to the AUs by the ICAR in a particular year is treated /booked as expenditure by the ICAR in its accounts for that year. The AUs, however, submit UCs/AUCs to the ICAR after the closure of financial year. Accordingly, the unspent balance remaining with some of the AUs for approved non-recurring items of Civil Works/Equipments may be revalidated for utilization in the next financial year particularly in view of the fact that the process of acquisition of equipments/construction activities once already started is difficult to stop mid-way.

**PROFORMA FOR SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL FOR NICHE AREA OF
EXCELLENCE**

(Give separate one page summary at the beginning of proposal)

1. Name of the University:

2. Name of the Niche Area:

3. If the area is Multidisciplinary:

4. Reasons for selecting the Niche Area:

5. Existing strength in the Niche area:

5.1 Past achievements of the PI

(a) Research Programmes completed/in operation

Programme Title	Goal	Date of start/completion	Costing	Funding Agency	Indicate your role (PI/Co-PI)

(b) Publications (Peer reviewed research publications of NAAS rating 5.5 & above)

Authors (s) name. Year of publication. Title. Journal's name, volume, page number. (NAAS rating).

(c) Patents (if any)

Title	Application /publication number	Date of application /publication	Present status	Indicate your role (1 st /2 nd /3 rd /... inventor /others)

(d) Technologies generated

Name of the technology	Number of beneficiary	Status (commercialized or not)	Revenue generated (Rs. in lakh)	Your role in technology generation/commercialization

(e) Resources generated

Name of the major equipments/facilities	Number	Unit cost (Rs. in lakh)	Year of procurement	Funding source	Present status

(f) Students completed M.Sc. /M. V. Sc. /Ph. D

(g) Employment profile of alumni

(h) Awards/recognition

Award name	Date of award	Host institution	Purpose of the Award

5.2 Faculty available in the Niche Area (with one page bio-data for each as an Annexure)

(a) Within the Department

(b) Outside the Department

(c) Outside the University

5.3 Supporting staff available in the Niche Area

5.4 Infrastructure, equipments and other facilities available (particularly, in support of the proposed work)

Name of the major equipments/facilities	Number	Status

6. Proposal in Support of Niche Area

6.1 Goal

6.2 Objectives

6.3 Introduction

6.4 Technical programme

S. No.	Activities	Quarter	Responsibility (PI/Co-PI)

6.5 Activity milestones (yearly)

Year	Milestones	Responsibility (PI/Co-PI)

6.6 Monitorable targets

6.7 Major equipments/facilities required:

Name of the major equipments/facilities	Unit cost (Rs. in lakh)	Need & justification in context of the proposed work	Alternate use of the facility/equipment in future

6.8 Budgetary requirements

S. No.	Particular	Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Brief Justification (Details separately)
A. Recurring			
i.	Travel		
ii.	Participation in workshop		
iii.	Contractual support (no. of RA/SRF)		
iv.	Operational		
B. HRD			
v.	Organization of trainings		
C. Non-recurring			
vi.	Equipments		
vii.	Works (new/renovation/refurbishing including furniture)		
viii.	Others (books/software/animals, etc.)		
Total			

6.9 Expected outcome for the stake holders at the end of the project:

- (a) For the country
- (b) For the state
- (c) For the region
- (d) For the university
- (e) For students
- (f) For farmers
- (g) For agribusiness management/industries

7. Details of the Co-PIs (Name, designation, complete address, e-mail, mobile no., etc. One page bio-data may be annexed separately)

8. In-charge of Niche Area (Annex two page bio-data separately)

- (a) Name
- (b) Designation
- (c) Address
- (d) Telephone
- (e) Fax
- (f) E-Mail

Authentication

(Vice-Chancellor)

(Project In-charge)

**PROFORMA FOR SUBMITTING THE HALF-YEARLY/ANNUAL/FINAL REPORT
FOR NICHE AREA OF EXCELLENCE**

(Give separate one page summary including salient achievements at the beginning)

1. Name of the University:

2. Name of the Niche Area:

3. Date of start/ending:

4. Year-wise Budgetary details (Rs. in lakh):

Item	Year-1	Year-2	Year-3	Year-4	Year-5	Total
Allocation						
Release by the Council						
Expenditure						

5. Name of the PI/Co-PI with designation, and date of joining/leaving the project activities:

6. Goal:

S. No.	Approved goal	Status	Justification (if any)

7. Objectives:

S. No.	Approved objectives	Objective fulfilled	Justification (if any)

8. Introduction:

9. Technical programme:

S. No.	Activities		Quarter	Remarks (if any)
	Approved	Completed		

10. Activity milestones:

S. No.	Milestone		Remarks (if any)
	Approved	Achieved	

11. Monitorable targets:

S. No.	Monitorable Targets		Remarks (if any)
	Approved	Achievements	

12. Major equipments/facilities generated under the programme:

Name of the major equipments/facilities	Number	Approved Budget (Rs. in lakh)	Unit cost (Rs. in lakh)	Year of procurement	Further use plan	Present status

13. Salient Achievements of the programme:

14. Detailed Achievements under the programme:

i. Publications (please indicate the NAAS rating of the publications (if any):

Name of the Author(s). Year of publication. Title. Journal name. Volume no.,
Page no. (NAAS rating (if any)).

- a. Referred Research Papers:
- b. Review papers:
- c. Popular articles:
- d. Scientific bulletins:
- e. Popular bulletins:
- f. Chapters in books:
- g. Chapters in Conference proceedings:
- h. Book Published:
- i. Any other:

ii. Patents Applications/Granted (if any):

Title	Application /publication number	Date of application /publication	Present status	Indicate your role (1 st /2 nd /3 rd /... inventor /others)

iii. Success stories in one/two page only (if any):

iv. Technologies generated/transferred

Name of the technology	Number of beneficiary	Status (commercialized or not)	Revenue generated (Rs. in lakh)	Role of PI in technology generation/commercialization

v. Resources generated (if any):

Name of the Resource	Year of Generation	Present status

vi. Radio/TV talks (if any):

Name of the participant	Title of the programme	Date of broadcast	Duration	Broadcasting Radio/TV Channel name

vii. Students completed M.Sc. /M. V. Sc. /Ph. D Thesis work under the programme:

S. No.	Number of Student	Course Title	Whether completed thesis under the programme (Yes/No)	Role of the PI/Co-PI (Guide/Co-Guide)

viii. Employment profile of the alumni:

S. No.	Number of Student	Completed thesis under the programme (Yes/No)	Placement records (if any)	Role of the PI/Co-PI in students employment

ix. Entrepreneurship developed under the programme:

S. No.	Number of Student/Others Trained under the programme	Number of Student/Others opted entrepreneurship	Nature of support from institution in creating entrepreneurs	Nature of entrepreneurship	Present Status

x. Awards/recognition received by the PI/Co-PIs/other Staff/Students under the Programme:

Name/Designation of the person	Award Name	Date of award	Host institution	Purpose of the Award

xi. Linkages established within the country and abroad with various agencies:

S. No.	Linkages established with	Date of Linkage Establishment	Nature/Purpose of Linkages	Number of Beneficiary	Present Status

xii. Two-Four related photographs (with date/captions) showing the important activities in lab, field as applicable (also provide separately in jpg/jpeg format).

xiii. PPP developed, if any.

S. No.	PPP Developed with	Date of Partnership Developed	Nature/Purpose	Number of Beneficiary	Present Status

xiv. Trainings organized:

S. No.	Title of the training programme	Duration & dates of Organization	Number of participants				Justification for post training follow-up (if any)
			Faculty	Students	Farmers	Others	

15. Outcome for the stake holders:

S. No.	Outcome	Original as approved	Achieved	Justification (if any)
(a)	For the country			
(b)	For the state			
(c)	For the region			
(d)	For the university			
(e)	For the students			
(f)	For the farmers			
(g)	For agribusiness management/ industries			

Authentication:

(Vice-Chancellor)

(Project In-charge)

Review of the project proposal

1. Title of the proposal :
2. Location of the proposed NAE Centre :
3. Do you agree with the title and objectives? Please suggest Improvements (if necessary) :
4. Do you agree with the excellence rating of this centre at the National level? :
5. Are you satisfied with the technical programme? Please suggest Improvements if necessary :
6. Comments on; :
 (a) The competence of the faculty
 (b) Budget, equipments, contingency, etc.
7. Please indicate if the research in the area is new & important in the current scenario in Agricultural & Allied Sciences :
8. Please clearly indicate by ticking the appropriate (✓/x); :

Recommended	Not-recommended	May be revised
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Any other comment :
10. Tentative measurable outcomes indicated in the proposal clearly :
11. Has similar work been reported earlier or reports of similar work available :
12. Have similar projects been sanctioned in any of the ICAR institutes under SMD prior to this, please indicate :

Date:

Signature

Designation

Evaluation/Review of the NAE Progress/Final Report

1.	Title of the programme										
Evaluation grade		Below Average		Average		Satisfactory		Good		Excellent	
10 point evaluation scale *		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2.	*Is the report submitted is as per approved overall objectives & goal?										
3.	Is the technical programme (s) is executed successfully										
4.	*Overall achievements in terms of:										
4.1	Research outcomes										
4.2	Capacity building										
4.3	Students/faculty/farmers trainings										
4.4	Peer reviewed publications										
4.5	Patent applications/publications (if any)										
4.6	Gene sequences (if any)										
4.7	Technology generated/commercialized/ disseminated (if any)										
4.8	Any other achievement (if any)										
5.	Overall rating of the programme										
6.	Any other comment:										

* Please indicate appropriate rating for each item (s) by √.

7. Please indicate clearly if this programme can be sustained further?: Yes/No/NA

8. If yes, reasons for recommending the programme for further extension:

9. If extended, please suggest the desired change in the objective/technical programme, etc. (if any):

10. If extended, please indicate the appropriate budget/duration, etc. for further extension:

Note: additional sheets for detailed comments (if any) may be used.

Date:

Evaluator's Signature:

Name & Designation:

Complete correspondence address with pin code:

Contact no.:

Email:

Proforma of AUC in respect of Niche Area of Excellence

Reference No. Grant sanctioned vide letter No. & Dated :

Audit Utilization certificate in respect of the scheme entitled : **Niche Area of Excellence****Programme on-**

For the period from...to.. :

Name of the Principal Investigator :

Name of the University :

Year	Particular	Opening balance for the year brought forward from the previous year	Remittance by the council during the year	Council's share of receipts released from the scheme during the year	Actual expenditure for the year	Council's share of sanctioned grant for the year	Council's share of expenditure actually incurred and audited during the year	Closing balance at the end of the year
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Works							
	Equipments							
	Recurring Contingencies							

Certified that the expenditure under various heads had been audited and the grant has been spent for the purpose it was granted.