

DHANALAKSHMI SRINIVASAN

INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

(Deemed to be University under section 3 of UGC Act, 1956)
PERAMBALUR – 621212, TAMIL NADU, INDIA



Centre for Research and Innovation



SEED - MONEY



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Seed Money, Research, Innovation & Incubation Support Policy — 2026

DSIRT - SEED Money — Funding architecture, evaluation framework, governance, monitoring and the Idea-to-Impact pipeline, presented as editable charts, tables and process maps.

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POLICY SECTIONS	FUNDING CATEGORIES	MAXIMUM SUPPORT	PRIORITY AREAS

100	7	6	6–24
EVALUATION MARKS	EVALUATION STAGES	MONITORING MILESTONES	MONTHS DURATION

DSIRT Research & Innovation Pipeline — Idea to Impact

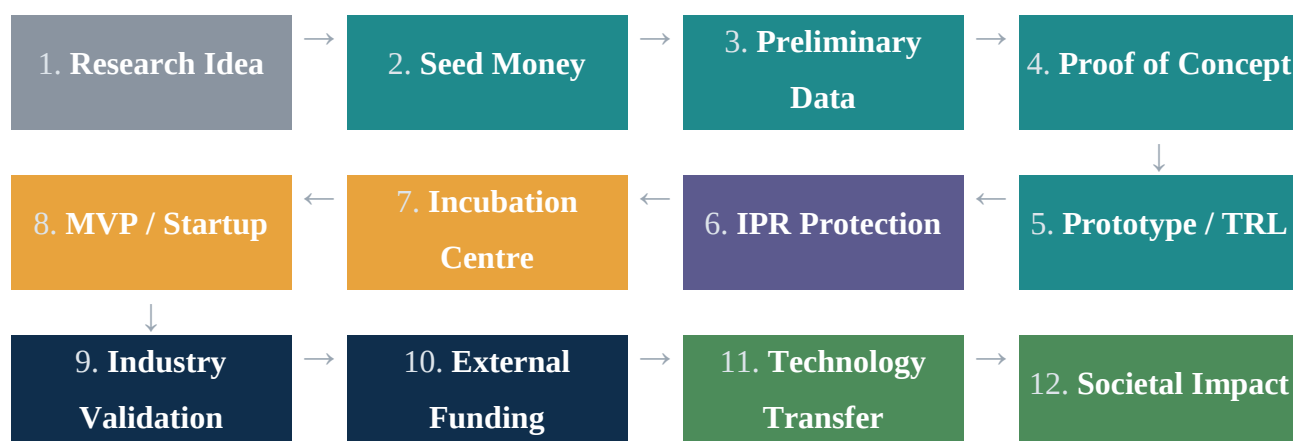


Table 1: The institutional pathway the policy establishes, from research idea to societal impact.

AT A GLANCE

The policy does not treat seed money as a stand-alone faculty grant. It binds research funding, the IPR Cell, the Incubation Centre and external-funding conversion into a single governed pipeline, with the Centre for Research & Innovation (CRI) as the operating hub.

01 Executive Summary

The Institute Seed Money, Research, Innovation & Incubation Support Scheme (the USRII Scheme) is a 42-section institutional policy that provides competitive early-stage funding to faculty, research scholars, students and interdisciplinary teams at Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan Institute of Research and Technology (DSIRT). Its distinguishing feature is structural: seed funding is positioned as the entry point of a defined pipeline rather than as a terminal grant.

What the policy establishes

- **Six funding categories** spanning ₹50,000 student innovation grants through ₹10 lakh incubation and startup support, plus an open-ended strategic project tier.
- **A 100-mark evaluation framework** weighted toward scientific merit and novelty (30 marks combined), with explicit marks reserved for IP potential, external funding potential and societal impact. The policy is comprehensive and internally consistent. Its strongest design choice is the seed-to-grant conversion KPI, which turns institutional spending into a measurable pipeline metric path
- **A seven-stage approval process** running from online submission through departmental screening, technical review, optional external expert review, committee recommendation and competent-authority approval to fund release.
- **Milestone-based monitoring** across six checkpoints (M1–M6) tied to staged fund release at 50 / 30 / 20 per cent.
- **Downstream integration** with the IPR Cell, Incubation Centre, Industry Interaction Cell and external funding agencies including ANRF, DST, DBT, ICMR, MeitY, DRDO and ISRO.
- **Six KPI domains** covering research, innovation, IPR, funding, entrepreneurship and impact, reported through an annual performance dashboard.
- **A dedicated agriculture and food-systems thrust spanning precision farming, farm mechanization, post-harvest and food processing, soil and water management and agri-business platforms, with on-farm validation treated as a recognised milestone.**

Assessment

- er than an output count. The principal open items are quantitative: annual funding limits, the minimum qualifying score, and the specific annual KPI targets are all deferred to separate notification.

02 Funding Architecture

The Scheme operates six funding categories with an additional strategic tier approved case by case. Support scales with the stage of maturity and the breadth of the team.

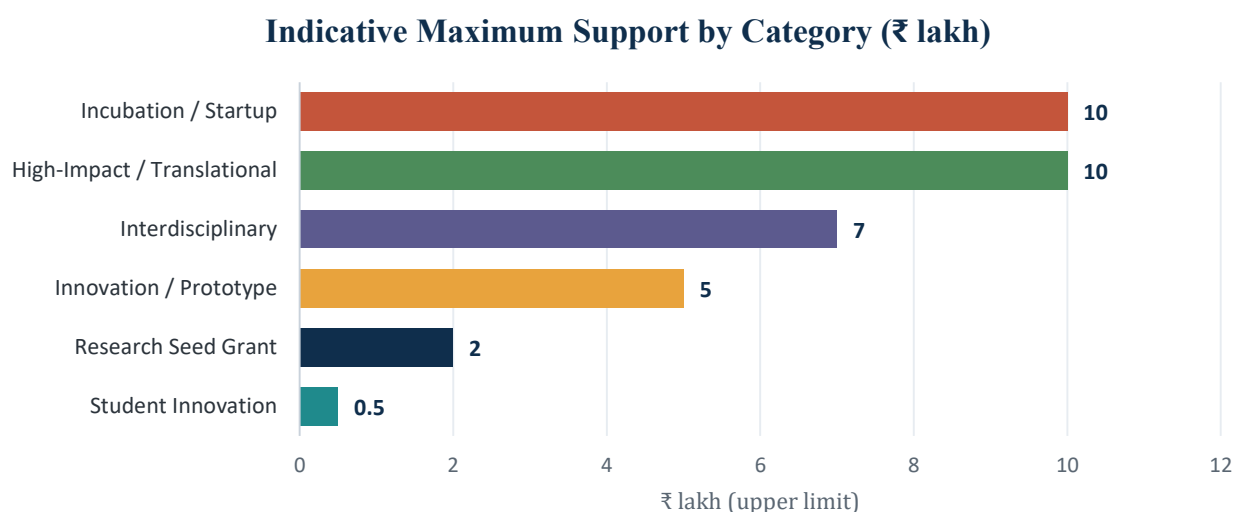


Figure 2 — Upper limit of indicative support per category. Lower bounds are listed in the table below. (KPI)

Category	Purpose	Indicative Support
I — Research Seed Grant	Preliminary research, pilot studies, experimental work, data generation, method development, new research directions	₹1–2 Lakh
II — Innovation & Prototype	Product development, proof-of-concept, prototype fabrication, AI/ML, IoT, medical devices, software and engineering innovations	₹2–5 Lakh
III — Interdisciplinary	Projects involving researchers from two or more departments, schools or disciplines	₹3–7 Lakh
IV — Student	Student research projects, hackathon outcomes, design projects, social innovations, startup-	₹50,000

Innovation	oriented projects	
V — High-Impact / Translational	Projects with significant potential for patents, technology transfer, industry collaboration, startup creation and commercialization	₹5–10 Lakh
VI — Incubation & Startup	MVP, market validation, startup formation, pilot deployment, product certification, investment readiness	₹1–10 Lakh
Strategic Institute Projects	Institutional priority projects	As approved

NOTE ON FUNDING LIMITS

Actual annual funding limits are to be notified separately by the Institute and may be revised based on availability of funds ,Periodical, Special cases revisions and approvals.

Eligible and non-eligible expenditure

Eligible	Not eligible
Equipment — research instruments, sensors, electronics, computing and laboratory equipment	Personal expenses and entertainment
Consumables — chemicals, biological materials, electronic components, fabrication materials	Routine office expenditure
Prototype development — fabrication, 3D printing, PCB, mechanical components, embedded systems, testing	Unrelated travel
Research activities — data collection, field studies, sample analysis, characterization, surveys	Personal computers unless specifically approved
Software — research, simulation, data-analysis and specialized computational tools	Permanent salary commitments
Outsourced testing where facilities are unavailable in the Institute	Construction of permanent buildings
IPR — patent filing, copyright, design registration, technology documentation	Unrelated recurring institutional expenditure

Dissemination — conference registration, technical workshops, approved research travel	Any expenditure prohibited under Institute financial regulations
Field and farm research — seed and planting material, soil, water and produce testing, trial-plot preparation, agronomic inputs, farmer field days and on-farm data collection	Purchase or long-term lease of agricultural land

03 Evaluation Framework

Proposals are scored out of 100 marks across eleven criteria. Projects are recommended against a prescribed minimum qualifying score, which the policy defers to separate notification.

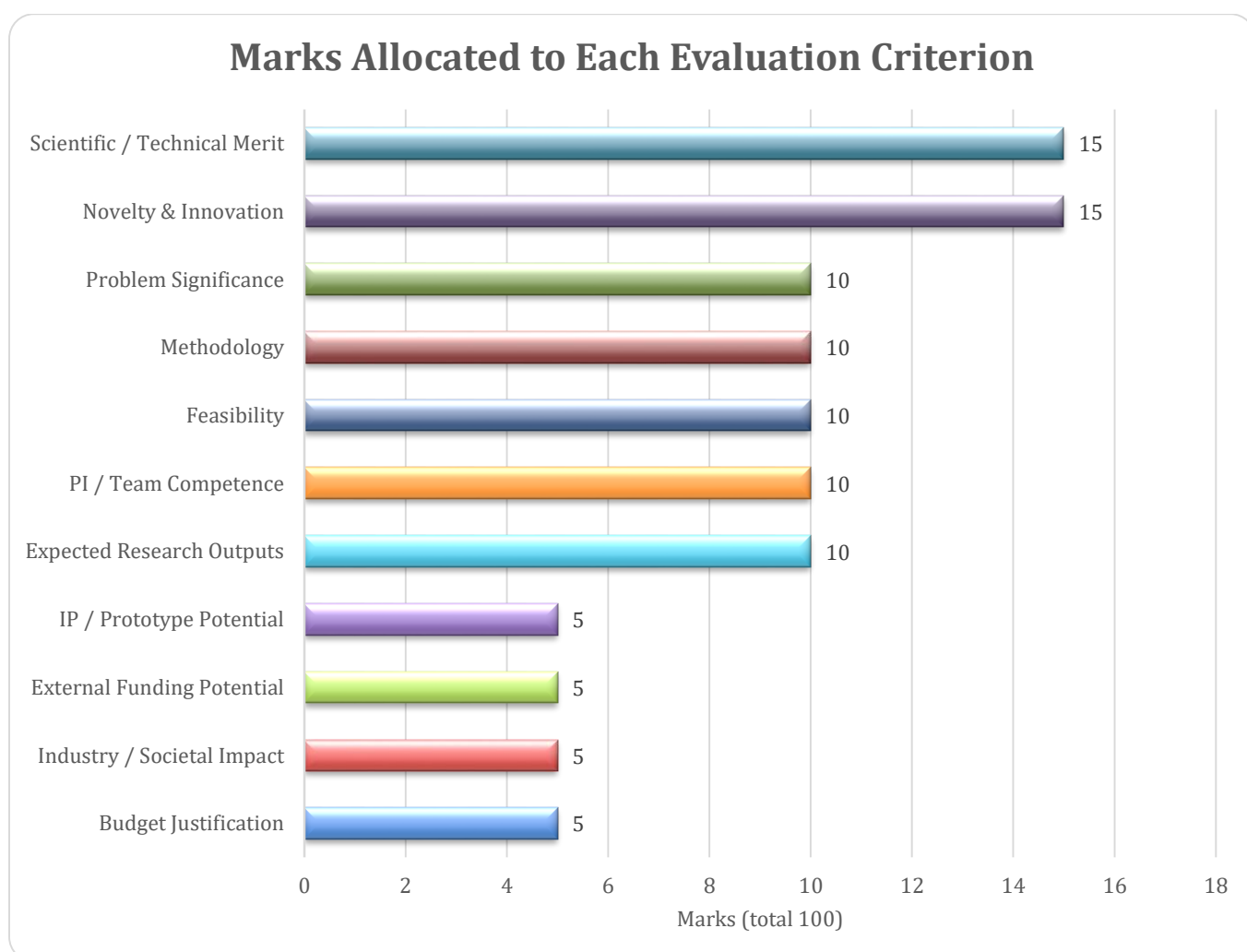


Table 2 — All eleven criteria. Right-click the chart in Word and choose Edit Data to change any value.

Scoring Weight by Theme

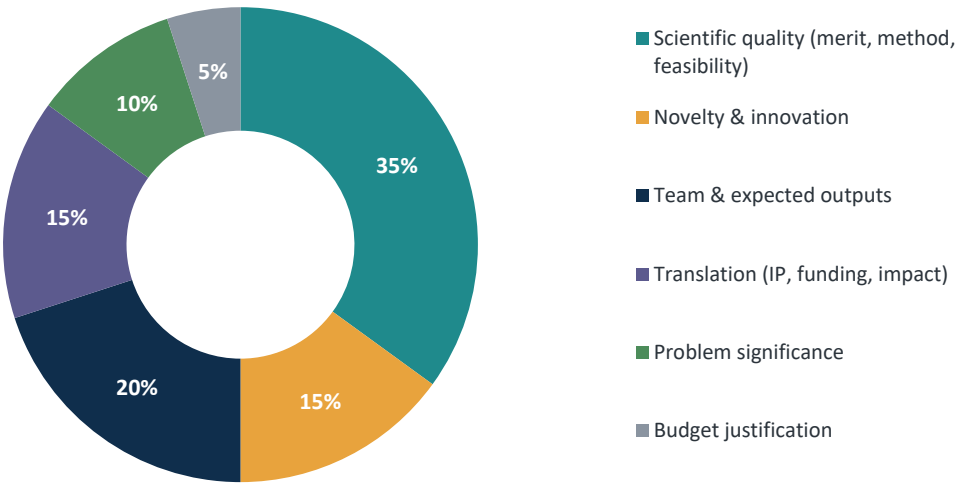


Table 3 — The same 100 marks grouped by what they reward.

Criterion	Marks	Share
Scientific / Technical Merit	15	15%
Novelty & Innovation	15	15%
Problem Significance	10	10%
Methodology	10	10%
Feasibility	10	10%
PI / Team Competence	10	10%
Expected Research Outputs	10	10%
IP / Prototype Potential	5	5%
External Funding Potential	5	5%
Industry / Societal Impact	5	5%
Budget Justification	5	5%
Total	100	100%

READING THE WEIGHTS

Seventy marks assess the research itself — merit, novelty, significance, methodology, feasibility, team and outputs. Fifteen marks assess downstream translation potential (IP, external funding, impact). A proposal can therefore score well on science alone, but cannot reach the top band without a credible translation pathway.

04 Proposal Evaluation Process

Seven-Stage Evaluation Ladder

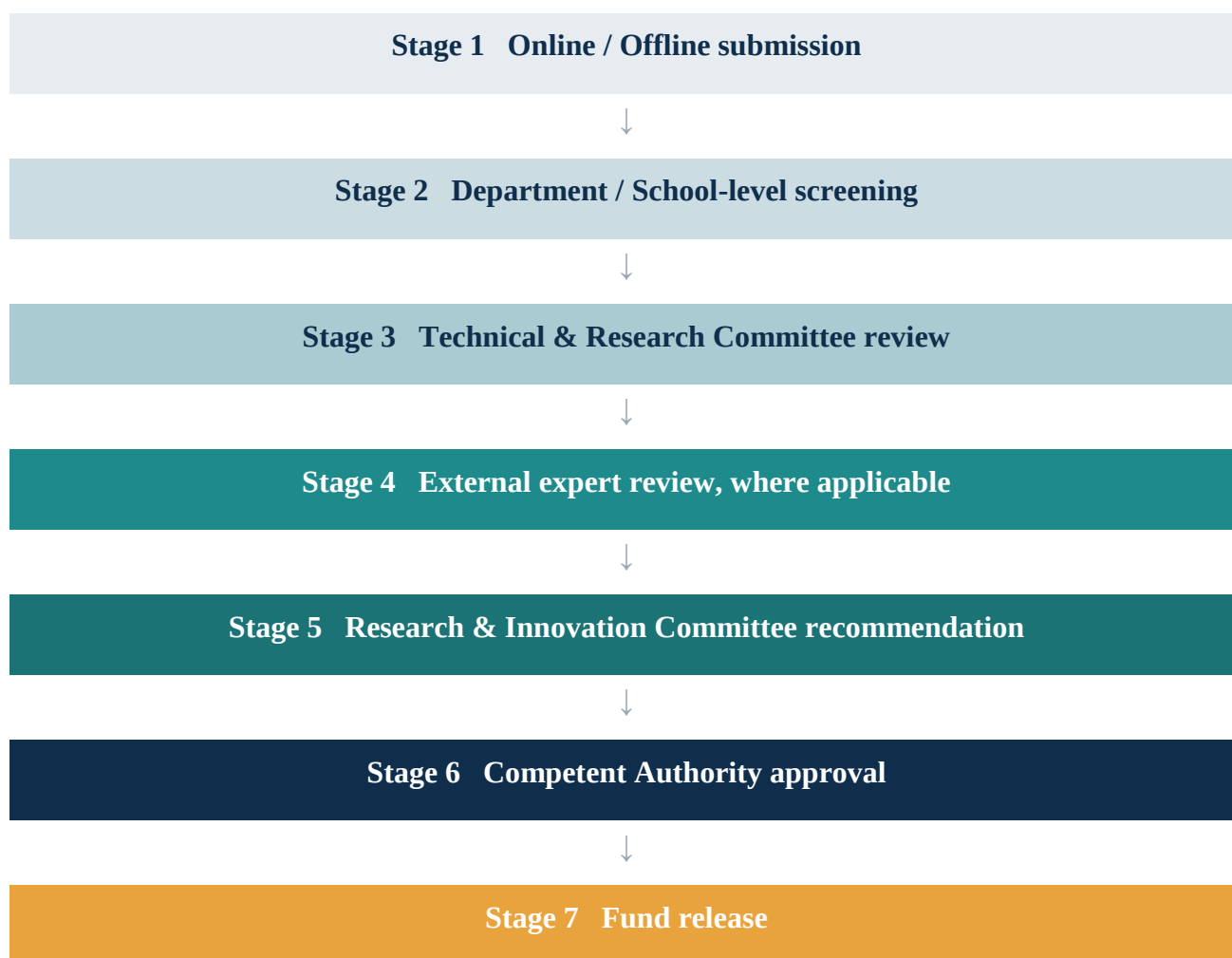


Table 4 — Every proposal passes through seven stages; external expert review applies where relevant.

Required proposal components

Identification	Scientific content	Translation & delivery
Project title	Problem statement	Innovation potential
Principal Investigator	Background and literature review	Technology Readiness Level
Co-Investigators	Research gap and novelty	Intellectual property potential
Department / School	Hypothesis / research question	Industry relevance
Research domain	Objectives and methodology	Societal impact and SDG alignment
Team expertise	Work packages	External funding strategy
Timeline	Expected outcomes	Expected publications, patents, prototype
Budget and justification	Risk analysis	Risk mitigation

05 Monitoring, Milestones & Fund Release

Funded projects run for six to twenty-four months and are monitored through six milestones. Fund release is staged against demonstrated progress rather than released in full at sanction.

Project Monitoring Milestones

M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼
Project initiation	Preliminary data	Proof of concept	Prototype / MVP	IPR, publication or external proposal	Final outcome

Table 5 — The six monitoring milestones across the project lifecycle (month 0 to month 6–24).

Fund Release Schedule

50%	30%	20%
1st Installment	2nd Installment	Final Installment
Initiation & approved procurement	Technical milestones achieved	Reports & closure

Table 6 — Staged fund release tied to initiation, milestones and closure.

Stage	Share	Trigger
First Installment	50%	Project initiation and approved procurement
Second Installment	30%	Achievement of defined technical milestones
Final Installment	20%	Submission of final technical and financial reports and achievement of closure requirements

Review and closure requirements

Progress reviews may include	Closure requires
Technical presentation	Final technical report
Progress report	Financial statement
Financial statement	Utilization certificate
Utilization certificate	Asset details
Photographs / evidence of prototype	Publication and IP details
Publication and IP evidence	Prototype evidence
External funding submission	External grant applications, where applicable
—	Final presentation and project completion certificate

06 Technology Readiness Progression

The Scheme adopts the TRL framework to track technology maturity. Seed funding is positioned deliberately at the lower rungs, where public and industry funding is hardest to secure.

TRL 1 to TRL 9 — and where seed money acts

TRL 1–2	TRL 3	TRL 4	TRL 5	TRL 6	TRL 7	TRL 8	TRL 9
Idea / basic principle	Proof of concept	Laboratory validation	Relevant environment validation	Prototype demonstration	Operational demonstration	System complete / qualified	Commercial deployment

◀ PRIMARY SEED-FUNDING ZONE (TRL 1–5)	EXTERNAL FUNDING / INDUSTRY (TRL 6–9) ▶
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Table 7 — Seed funding targets TRL 1–5; beyond TRL 6 the pipeline hands over to external funding and industry.

07 Scope & Priority Areas

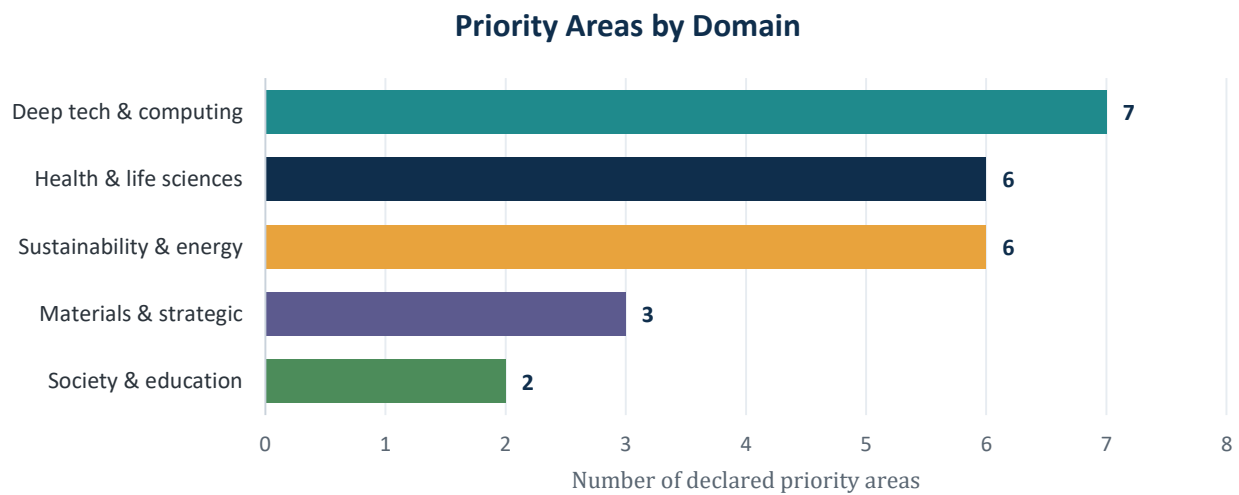


Table 8 — The 36 declared priority areas, grouped into six domains, including a dedicated agriculture and food-systems domain.

Domain	Priority areas
Deep tech & computing	Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning · Robotics · Cybersecurity · Semiconductor technologies · Industry 4.0 · Smart manufacturing · Drones and autonomous systems
Health & life sciences	Biomedical engineering · Healthcare technologies · Medical devices · Digital health · Biotechnology · Assistive technologies
Sustainability & energy	Renewable energy · Water and waste management · Climate technologies · Agriculture technologies · Sustainable technologies · Sustainable Development Goals
Materials & strategic	Nanotechnology · Materials science · Defence and strategic technologies
Society & education	Education technologies · Social innovation
Agriculture & food systems	Precision agriculture · Agri-IoT and farm sensor networks · Drone-based crop monitoring and spraying · AI-based crop, pest and disease diagnostics · Farm mechanization and small-farm implements · Post-harvest processing, storage and cold chain · Food technology and value addition · Soil health and nutrient management · Micro-irrigation and water-use efficiency · Agri-waste valorization and biomass energy · Livestock, poultry and dairy technologies · Agri-business, FPO and market-linkage platforms

Who may apply

Eligible applicants	Additional conditions the Institute may prescribe
Full-time faculty members of DSIRT	Minimum service period
Eligible research supervisors	Research supervisor status
Principal Investigators associated with DSIRT	Previous seed project completion
Faculty–student teams	Submission of utilization certificate
Interdisciplinary faculty teams	No outstanding institutional research obligations

Recognized research centres	—
Eligible student teams with faculty mentorship	—
Incubated teams, subject to institutional approval	—

08 Agriculture & Allied Technologies

Agriculture is a declared priority domain of the Scheme and is treated as a full translation pathway in its own right. Agricultural innovation differs from laboratory research in one decisive respect: validation happens on a farm, in a season, with a farmer. The Scheme therefore recognises on-farm trials, farmer and FPO engagement and seasonal field data as legitimate milestones and eligible expenditure, and reads Technology Readiness Levels 4 and 5 as field-season validation rather than as bench validation alone.

Agriculture thrust areas and the funding route

Thrust area	Representative project types	Indicated route
Precision agriculture & agri-IoT	Soil-moisture and nutrient sensor networks, weather-linked advisories, variable-rate input systems, farm dashboards	Category II — ₹2–5 Lakh
Drones & remote sensing	Crop-health mapping, multispectral imaging, targeted spraying, yield estimation, plantation surveys	Category II / V — ₹2–10 Lakh
AI for crop & livestock diagnostics	Image-based pest and disease detection, weed identification, yield and price forecasting, livestock health monitoring	Category II / III — ₹2–7 Lakh
Farm mechanization	Small-farm implements, weeders, transplanters, harvesting aids, electric and solar farm equipment	Category II / V — ₹2–10 Lakh
Post-harvest, storage & cold chain	Low-cost cold storage, solar drying, grading and sorting units, storage-loss reduction, packaging technologies	Category V — ₹5–10 Lakh
Food technology &	Millet and pulse processing, functional and	Category II / V —

value addition	fortified foods, shelf-life extension, by-products	₹2–10 Lakh
Soil, water & nutrient management	Soil-health diagnostics, bio-fertilisers and bio-pesticides, micro-irrigation, fertigation control, water-use efficiency	Category I / III — ₹1–7 Lakh
Agri-waste & bioenergy	Crop-residue valorisation, biochar, briquetting, biogas, composting and circular-farm systems	Category III / V — ₹3–10 Lakh
Livestock, poultry & dairy	Herd and flock monitoring, feed technologies, milk quality and chilling, shed environment control	Category I / II — ₹1–5 Lakh
Agri-business & market linkage	FPO platforms, traceability, price discovery, farm advisory apps, input and output market linkage	Category IV / VI — ₹0.5–10 Lakh

Table 9 — The ten agriculture thrust areas and the funding category each typically enters through.

How an agriculture project moves through the pipeline

Stage	What it means on an agriculture project	Evidence at review
Seed funding (TRL 1–2)	Problem defined with farmers or the Krishi Vigyan Kendra; agronomic literature and baseline established; design concept fixed	Problem statement, baseline survey, design note
Preliminary data (M2)	Controlled-plot or shed-level data for one crop stage or production cycle	Plot data, soil and water test reports, photographs
Proof of concept (M3, TRL 3)	Device, formulation or model demonstrated under representative conditions	Bench and plot results, model accuracy
Field validation (M4, TRL 4–5)	At least one full crop season or production cycle on farmer fields across representative soil	Season-wise yield, input and loss data; farmer feedback

	and agro-climatic conditions	
IPR & publication (M5)	Patent, design registration or plant-variety filing; peer-reviewed publication	Filing receipts, publication details
Scale-up (M6, TRL 6+)	Multi-location trials and handover to external funding, an agri-startup or an industry partner	External proposal to ANRF, DST, DBT, ICAR, RKVY-RAFTAAR or NABARD; MoU or incubation entry

Table 10 — Agriculture milestones read the standard M1–M6 framework in crop-season terms.

Agriculture-specific conditions

- **Seasonality.** Agriculture proposals should state the crop calendar they depend on. Where a single season cannot be completed within the sanctioned duration, the project timeline should be planned for two seasons at the outset rather than relying on an extension.
- **Field partners.** Projects involving farmer fields should name the village, farmer group, FPO or Krishi Vigyan Kendra involved, and record informed consent for on-farm trials and data collection.
- **Biosafety and regulation.** Projects touching genetic material, bio-fertilisers, bio-pesticides, veterinary interventions or food products must comply with institutional biosafety and ethics clearances and, where applicable, FSSAI, CIB&RC and plant-quarantine requirements before field deployment.
- **Drone operations.** Drone-based projects must comply with DGCA rules, including pilot certification, airspace zones and registration, and must budget for them.
- **Field expenditure.** Seed and planting material, soil, water and produce testing, trial-plot preparation, agronomic inputs, farmer field days and on-farm data collection are eligible. Purchase or long-term lease of agricultural land is not.

- **Attribution and benefit.** Farmer-contributed knowledge, landraces and traditional practice must be acknowledged, and any commercialisation of material sourced from farmers is subject to the Institute IPR Policy and applicable biodiversity and plant-variety law.

External funding routes for agriculture projects

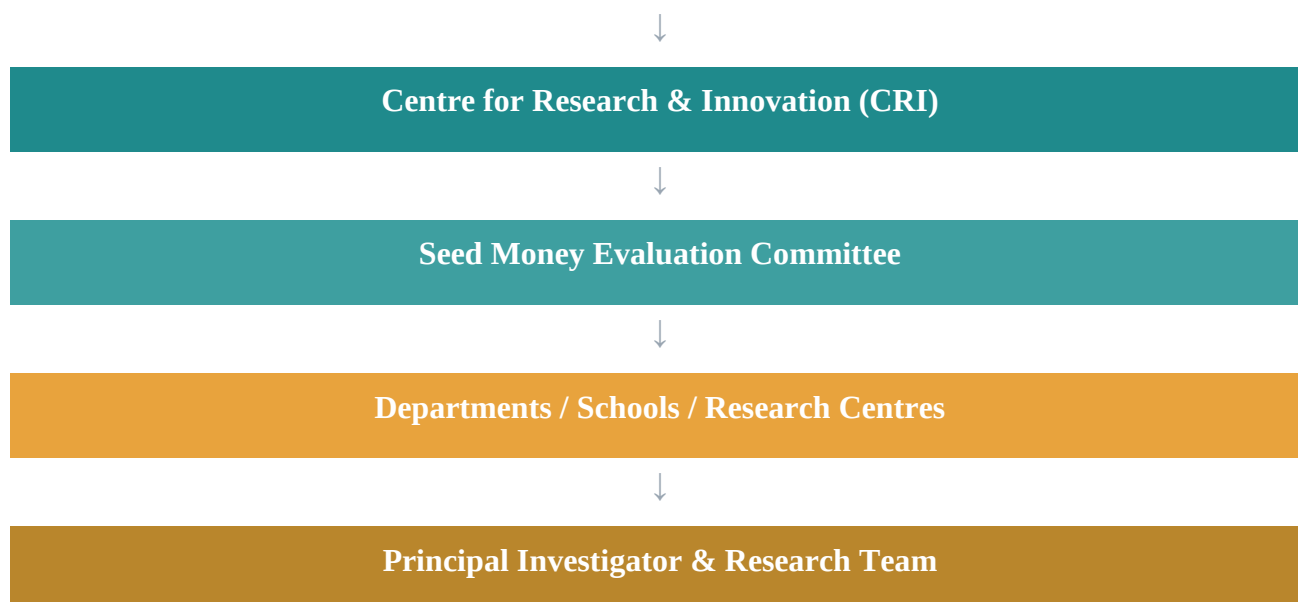
Agency or scheme	What it typically supports after seed stage
ICAR and State Agricultural Universities	Collaborative agronomic research, multi-location trials, varietal testing
RKVY-RAFTAAR	Agri-startup incubation, idea and seed-stage grants for agri-business
NABARD	Rural innovation, farm-technology deployment, FPO-linked projects
DBT / BIRAC	Agri-biotechnology, bio-inputs, bio-based products
DST / ANRF	Precision agriculture, sensing, water and climate technologies
MoFPI	Food processing, post-harvest and cold-chain infrastructure
MeitY / Digital India	Agri-IoT, AI advisory platforms, data infrastructure
Industry and agri-input partners	Field validation at scale, licensing, contract development

Table 11 — Where an agriculture project hands over once it passes TRL 6.

09 Governance & Accountability

Governance Structure





Supporting units: IPR Cell · Incubation Centre · Institution's Innovation Council · Entrepreneurship Development Cell · Industry Interaction Cell · Finance Office · Purchase Section

Figure 10 — The decision chain from the competent authority to the Principal Investigator.

Safeguards

- **Conflict of interest** — applicants and evaluators must disclose potential conflicts; members may not participate in evaluation where a direct conflict exists.
- **Audit** — all financial transactions are subject to Institute financial procedures and audit; the Institute may review expenditure, audit accounts, verify outputs, suspend funding and recover funds.
- **Misconduct** — funding may be withdrawn or recovered for misrepresentation, plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, financial misuse, unauthorized expenditure, non-submission of reports, unapproved diversion of funds or ethics violations.
- **Research integrity** — projects must comply with research ethics, plagiarism regulations, biosafety, institutional ethics committee requirements, animal and human research requirements and data protection.
- **Procurement** — purchases follow Institute procurement rules, financial regulations, vendor selection and asset management; equipment purchased with institutional funds remains Institute property unless otherwise approved.

10 Performance Measurement

The Research & Innovation Office monitors thirty-seven indicators across seven domains and publishes an annual Seed Money Performance Dashboard.

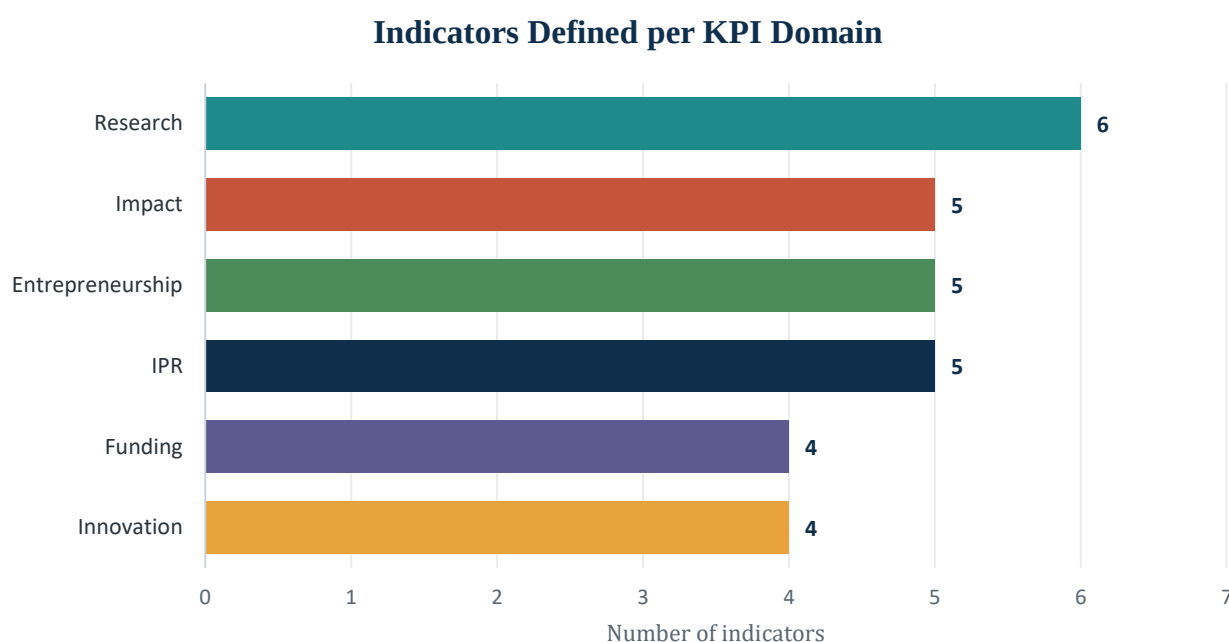


Table 12 — Number of indicators defined in each KPI domain, including the agriculture domain.

Domain	Indicators
Research	Proposals received · Proposals funded · Projects completed · Publications · Citations · Quality publications
Innovation	Prototypes · Proofs-of-concept · Technology demonstrations · TRL advancement
IPR	Patents filed · Patents granted · Copyrights · Designs · Technologies licensed
Funding	External proposals submitted · External grants sanctioned · Total external funding · Seed-to-external conversion
Entrepreneurship	Startups incubated · Startups incorporated · MVPs developed · Industry pilots · Investments attracted
Impact	Industry collaborations · Societal applications · Healthcare applications · SDG-linked outcomes · Technology deployments · Farmer and field pilot deployments · Farm units or hectares covered

Agriculture	Agri-technology projects funded · On-farm trials conducted · Farmers or FPOs engaged · Post-harvest or food-processing technologies developed · Agri-startups incubated
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11 Observations & Recommendations

Strengths

- **Structural integration.** IPR, incubation and external funding are written into the funding policy itself, not left to separate cells.
- **Balanced evaluation.** Merit dominates the score, but translation potential carries real weight, which shapes proposal behaviour without distorting it.
- **Staged accountability.** The 50/30/20 release and six milestones give the Institute leverage at three points rather than one.
- **Student inclusion.** Category IV and faculty-mentored student teams bring undergraduates into the funded research base.