Submission Guidelines Document

1.1. About

IndiaAI, an Independent Business Division (IBD) under the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), is the implementation agency of the IndiaAI Mission, which aims to democratize and catalyze the AI innovation ecosystem in the Country.

Within the mission, the 'Safe & Trusted' pillar emphasizes the need for a balanced, technology-enabled, and India-specific approach to AI governance. This involves the development of indigenous technical tools, guidelines, frameworks, and standards that are contextualized to India's unique challenges and opportunities as well as our social, cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity.

To advance this vision, Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) through IndiaAI IBD will provide support for such "Safe and Trusted AI" projects to mitigate AI-related risks, ensuring fair, ethical and robust AI practices.

1.2 Call for Expression of Interest on Safe and Trusted AI

IndiaAI invites Expressions of Interest (EoI) from organizations with proven expertise in relevant fields to submit collaborative proposals for undertaking Safe and Trusted AI projects aligned with the themes outlined in this EoI.

1.3 Themes

Following is a list of Safe and Trusted AI themes against which organizations may submit their proposals to develop practical tools and frameworks, in collaboration with other partners. Please note that the focus is on creating implementable and usable solutions that promote the just and ethical development and deployment of AI across different sectors:

1. WATERMARKING AND LABELLING

The proposed tools may utilize advanced algorithms to differentiate AI-generated content from non-AI generated content, and embed unique, imperceptible markers in AI-generated content to ensure traceability and security. They should enable robust content authenticity, authentication, and provenance tracking. These tools may also incorporate sophisticated detection techniques to identify synthetic media accurately. Additionally, they may include functionalities to prevent the generation of harmful and illegal materials, ensuring compliance with ethical standards and national laws. Dedicated testing capabilities may be integrated to rigorously evaluate the performance and effectiveness of authentication and labeling mechanisms. The proposed tool may not only enhance user trust through transparency but also facilitate efficient auditing of synthetic content, ultimately supporting its ongoing maintenance and oversight.

2. ETHICAL AI FRAMEWORKS

Ethical AI frameworks provide a structured approach to ensure that AI systems respect fundamental human values, uphold fairness, transparency, and accountability, and avoid perpetuating biases or discrimination. These frameworks encourage developers, researchers, and organizations to consider the broader societal implications of their AI solutions and make informed decisions to minimize potential harm. Prominent ethical AI frameworks include the IEEE Global Initiative on Ethics of Autonomous and Intelligent Systems and the Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI by the European Commission.

3. AI RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

To enable largescale adoption of AI there is a need to develop comprehensive AI Risk Assessment and Management tools and frameworks designed to identify, assess, and mitigate cross-sectoral safety risks, ensuring failures in one area are contained and managed without affecting interconnected sectors. The tool or framework may enable effective risk assessment by, analyzing, and evaluating threats and vulnerabilities of AI-specific risks (technical, ethical, legal, societal) in public AI use cases. The proposed

tool may also provide systematic classification of AI systems or applications by risk (e.g. High risk or Low risk), enhancing transparency and accountability, with interoperable guidelines that establish a clear taxonomy for consistent identification and categorization of AI risks throughout the AI lifecycle. The tool may also provide for vulnerability management, threat prioritisation, and risk scoring, providing insights into potential threats helping organizations prioritise and address the most critical vulnerabilities. This tool must be in compliance with sovereign policies, guidelines and laws.

4. STRESS TESTING TOOLS

As AI systems become integral to critical infrastructure and services, it is crucial to evaluate their ability to withstand high-stress scenarios, including natural disasters, cyberattacks, data disruptions, or operational failures. Stress testing can provide actionable insights into system weaknesses and ensure preparedness for high-stakes situations. This theme focuses on the development of tools and methodologies such as simulation-based testing or stress evaluation metrics specifically designed to fortify the resilience of AI systems under stress.

5. DEEPFAKE DETECTION TOOLS

With the increase in realism of deepfakes due to advancements in AI, it is imperative to develop deepfake detection methods that safeguard against potential misinformation and manipulation in the society. The tool may employ sophisticated Deep Learning Algorithms, incorporate provenance-based techniques, inference-based techniques, and other detection techniques that verify and analyze the authenticity of media for artefacts and inconsistencies, indicating the likelihood of manipulation. Furthermore, seamless integration of these detection tools into web browsers and social media platforms could enable automated cross-modal content verification, providing real-time deepfake detection, enhancing security and ensuring integrity of digital information ecosystem.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants from India-based academic institutions, R&D organisations, Government Organisation/body, Start-ups, and Private sector companies are eligible to apply for the projects under the mission:

2.1. Academic

The Academic Organizations should have the pre-existing Lab infrastructure (Lab having Workstations, Servers, Project Staff etc.) for project implementation and for training of students under the programme, along with relevant research publication. The Chief Investigator/Co-Chief Investigator should be regular faculty with relevant experience in the field of Responsible Artificial Intelligence.

All Institutions falling in the following categories would be eligible to participate in the programme and receive funding:

1. Indian Institutes of Technologies (IITs)
2. National Institutes of Technologies (NITs)
3. Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs)
4. Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs)
5. Central Universities/Deemed Universities under Central/State Government
6. Colleges/Institutions of National Importance/Eminence
7. Private Universities/ Private Deemed Universities/Private Colleges

2.2. Private Academic Institutions

Private Institutions that offer undergraduate/postgraduate/diploma/certificate programs in Artificial Intelligence are eligible to apply. Institutions should be approved by AICTE and/or the Institution should be accredited by NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council of UGC).

The proposals received from the Academic Institutions will be subjected to the scrutiny and evaluation by the Evaluation Committee and other proposal Review Committees for approval.

2.3. Autonomous Bodies

Autonomous bodies, including public sector organizations, non-profit organizations, and research institutions, are eligible to participate.

2.4. Start-Ups and Companies

1. The entity should be registered either with the DPIIT or should be registered under the Companies Act, as applicable for at least 2 years

2. The entity must have at least 51% shareholding with Indian citizens or persons of Indian origin. The applicant's entity should not be a subsidiary company of any foreign corporation

3. The entity should have demonstrable expertise in the field of AI

3. Selection Process

3.1 Application Process: Applicants will be required to submit the Expression of Interest (EOI) in the format attached in Proforma.

3.2 Evaluation of EOIs: A multi-disciplinary committee of experts will evaluate the EOIs. The evaluation will focus on the capability, track record, and capacity of the institutions in different aspects of AI, among others.

Shortlisted applications may be required to present their solutions to the evaluation committee for final evaluation.

4. Evaluation Criteria

1. Project Alignment with Objectives:
    a) How well does the proposed project align with the overarching goal of promoting Safe and Trusted AI development, deployment, and use?
    b) Does the proposal clearly state how the project will contribute to addressing the identified AI challenges within the Safe and Trusted AI themes?

2. Innovation and Impact:

a) Is the proposed project innovative and likely to make a significant contribution to Safe and Trusted AI?

b) Are there novel approaches, methodologies, or technologies proposed that can advance the field of Safe and Trusted AI?

3. Technical Evaluation

    a) Is the proposed project robust in terms of the methodology, approach and implementation plan?

    b) Is the model architecture proposed for the project suitable for the intended use case, including complexity, modularity, and efficiency?

4. Data Relevance

    a) Does the proposed project utilize datasets that are diverse enough to reflect the social, economic, and cultural conditions of the intended user base?

    b) How well does the data's geographical context align with the need and target area of the project?

5. Collaborative Approach:

    a) Does the proposal demonstrate effective collaboration between academic institutions, industry, civil society, and other partners?

    b) Is there evidence of prior successful collaboration between the proposed partners?

6. Feasibility and Resources:

    a) Given the rapid advancements in AI, does the project completion timeline ensure effective and timely delivery of project outputs?

    b) Does the proposal outline a realistic budget?

    c) Is the proposed budget reasonable and well justified in relation to the expected project outcomes and impact?

7. Monitoring & Evaluation:

    a) Are clear and measurable project milestones and outcomes defined?

b) Are there quantitative and qualitative metrics to assess project impact and effectiveness?

8. Scalability & Market Adoption:

a) Is there any proof of collaboration or partnership with industry, academic institutions, or government agencies to demonstrate the effectiveness and scalability of the AI solution provided?

b) Is there a clear and pragmatic Adoption Strategy?

5. Submission Guidelines

a) The total length of the Performa should not exceed 15-20 pages

b) Applicants are encouraged to jointly apply with a partner organizations

c) Applicants are free to apply for one or more than one project across the different themes, subject to the following:

- Specify their project preference and ensure each proposal is unique with distinct objectives and outcomes. Identical proposals will be disqualified.

- The Chief Investigator and Co-Chief Investigator should not engage in more than one project at a time

d) Provide information on all aspects mentioned in the template. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

e) Any information found incorrect will lead to disqualification of the application.

f) Applicants should read and adhere to the Terms and Conditions governing Grant-in-Aid.

g) In case of any questions, please feel free to reach out at fellow2.gpai-india@meity.gov.in

h) Proposals submitted in other research areas may not be considered in this EOI.

i) The submission must only be in PDF Format. Refer to clause 3.1 for the proforma.

6. Guidelines for Budget Allocation

Applicants are advised to adhere to the following guidelines when submitting budgetary requirements for their projects:

a) Funding will not be allocated for the purchase of hardware platforms like workstations, servers, laptops, or computers.

b) The allocation for 'Contingency' should not exceed 5% of the total project budget.

c) The allocation for Overhead' should not exceed 5% of the total project budget.

d) The allocation for 'Travel' should not exceed 10% of the total project budget.

e) A breakdown of the capital equipment and manpower allocation required for the proposed project should be provided.

f) An indicative list of consumable items (if any), must be provided in the budget.

g) Compute resource will not be provided by IndiaAI to the project applicants.

7. Operational Guidelines

a) The grant is for undertaking the specific project as approved by IndiaAI and shall be subject to the following conditions:

b) The grant shall be spent for the project within the specified time

c) Any portion of the grant which is not ultimately required for expenditure for the approved purposes shall be duly surrendered to IndiaAI.

d) For a project being executed by IndiaAI grant, Application by grantee institution for any other financial assistance or receipt of grant/loan from any other Agency/Ministry/Department for the same project should have the prior permission/approval of IndiaAI

e) The grantee institution is not allowed to entrust the implementation of this project for which grant-in-aid is received, to another institution and to divert the grant-in-aid received from IndiaAI as assistance to the latter institution

f) The investigator(s) should not enter into collaboration with a foreign party (individual/academic institution/ industry) in execution of this project without prior approval of IndiaAI.

g) The Grantee institution should indemnify IndiaAI from any legal and/or financial encumbrance arising out of any infringement of IPR/ licensing of IPR/ technology transfer/ commercialization.

h) Any dispute on any matter related to the implementation of the project, the decision of the Secretary, MeitY, or CEO, IndiaAI shall be final and binding on the grantee institution.

i) MeitY reserves the right to modify these terms and conditions governing the grant-in-aid from time to time reflecting the directions of the Government of India.

j) It is mandatory for all participating institutions/organizations to make available basic infrastructure such as Workstations/Servers (in working condition), lab staff etc. during the entire project duration. No separate hardware platforms like workstations, servers, laptops, etc. would be provided under the project.

k) MeitY reserves the right to ask for the furnishing of all Supporting Documents (like AICTE Recognition Certificate, NBA (National Board of Accreditation), NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council of UGC), Startup Certificate, etc.) based on the category as and when required.

8. Terms and Conditions

9.1 Acquisition & Management of Assets

a) The grantee institution shall maintain an audited record in the form of a register for permanent, semi-permanent assets acquired solely or mainly out of the IndiaAI grant. The applicable procedures for procurement shall be followed for acquisition of assets.

b) The assets referred to above will be the property of IndiaAI and should not, without prior sanction of IndiaAI, be disposed off or encumbered or utilized for the purposes other than those for which the grant has been sanctioned;

c) The grantee institution shall send a list of assets referred above to IndiaAI at the end of each financial year as well as at the time of seeking further installments of the grant; should at any time grantee institution cease to exist, such assets etc., shall revert to IndiaAI.

9.2 Utilization of grants and Audit

d) The grantee institution should maintain a separate audited account for the

project. If it is found expedient to keep a part or whole of the grant in a bank account earning interest, the interest, thus earned, should be reported to IndiaAI. The interest so earned will be treated as a credit to the grantee institution to be adjusted towards future installment of the grant; IndiaAI or its nominee/s will have the right of access to the books and accounts of the grantee institution for which a reasonable prior notice would be given;

e) The grantee institution shall render an audited statement of accounts and utilization certificate to IndiaAI, every year. The audited statement of accounts relating to grants given during financial year together with the comments of the auditor regarding the observance of the conditions governing the grant should be forwarded to the IndiaAI within six months following the end of the relevant financial year;

f) The utilization of grant for the intended purposes will be looked into by the Auditor of grantee institution according to the directives issued by the Government of India at the instance of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the specific mention about it will be made in the audit report;

g) The grantee institution shall render progress-cum-achievement reports at intervals of not exceeding six months on the progress made on all aspects of the project including expenditure incurred on various approved items during the period.

h) The grantee institution will refund unspent balance in addition to the interest, if any accrued on the unspent balance in the total outlay of the project.

i) IndiaAI – IBD under Digital India Corporation or MeitY will be at liberty to take appropriate action under the Rule 212(1) of GFR 2005 relating to utilization of funds in the specified time and where such certificate is not received from the grantee within the prescribed time (reference General Financial Rules 2005).

j) Grantee Institution is not allowed to entrust the implementation of this project for which grants-in-aid is received to another institution and to divert the grant-in-aid received from IndiaAI as assistance to the latter institution

k) In case of any dispute on any other matter related to the project during the course of its implementation, the decision of the CEO, IndiaAI shall be final and

binding on Grantee Institution

9.3   **Guidelines for managing IPRs**

l) The IPR arising out of sponsored project(s) will be with grantee institution(s). While the patent may be taken in the name(s) of inventor(s), the institution(s) shall ensure that the IPR is assigned to institution(s). In cases where the funding/resourcing of researchers have been done jointly with other organizations, the IP rights would be appropriately shared among them.

m) The Government of India/Govt. bodies (including its PSUs, Govt. autonomous societies & section 25 companies) shall have the right to obtain a royalty- free license for the Intellectual Property for deployment/use of the same for non-commercial purposes. However, in case, IP is proposed for commercial usage, the terms of licensing may be mutually agreed with the grantee institution(s) possessing IPR.

n) The sharing of IP rights among collaborating agencies would be as per the mutually agreed terms and conditions among the collaborators and to be made and enclosed as part of the proposal.

o) The grantee institution shall inform IndiaAI about the patents filed/obtained and IPR arising out of the R&D project on an annual basis over the project duration and subsequent 5 years period after the project closure.

p) The grantee institution shall provide information to IndiaAI about trading/ selling/ transferring /licensing the IP rights, within a period of 6 weeks from conclusion of the agreement relating to such a commercial event.

q) As the R&D is supported by public funds, the grantee institution should ensure that the interests of India and its citizens are fully protected, while licensing patents/transfer or commercialization of technology.

r) The institution is permitted to retain the benefits and earnings arising out of the IPR for plough back to pursue research/research related activities.

s) Notwithstanding the above, IndiaAI reserves the right to take over ownership of the rights of the Intellectual property arising out of this project, in the interest of

Indian sovereignty, without any compensation to the grantee institution.

9.4 **Guidelines for publication of results**

t) Investigators wishing to publish technical/ scientific papers based on the research work done under the project, should acknowledge the assistance received from IndiaAI-IBD under Digital India Corporation and a copy of the communicated/published paper be sent to IndiaAI.

u) If the results of research are to be legally protected for the intellectual property, then its publication can be undertaken only after due care is taken for legal protection of the intellectual property rights.