

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME

OF

MINISTRY OF COAL

GUIDELINES

FOR

FOSTERING INNOVATION AND RESEARCH
THROUGH STARTUPS FOR TECHNOLOGY
(FIRST)

IN

COAL & LIGNITE SECTOR
(S&T-FIRST)



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Government of India
Ministry of Coal
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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (S&T) PROGRAM OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL

Background

The Coal and Energy sectors have made a major contribution to economic growth, employment generation, energy security, and industrial development. The industry supports a vast workforce engaged in various activities such as mining operations, exploration, processing, transportation, and related industries. Considering the country's energy security and massive resource potential, there is a strong need for a Science and Technology (S&T) base in the mining and energy sector to harness its full potential. Research and Development (R&D) is an essential pre-requisite for generating and building R&D knowledge and reliable databases.

The Ministry of Coal (MoC) has been supporting R&D programs in the coal and lignite sector since 1975. The scheme is continuing under the Science & Technology program of the Central Sector Scheme under the Ministry of Coal. The Ministry has taken several new initiatives to strengthen scientific research in the area of coal mining and the energy sector. There are specific S&T guidelines for the implementation of the research and development projects. The S&T Guidelines have been issued from time to time, since 1975. These guidelines have been revised in Feb 2021 by the Ministry and its Standing Scientific Research Committee (SSRC) to make it comprehensive and in line with the latest developments. Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Limited (CMPDIL), Ranchi, a Mini Ratna Subsidiary Company of Coal India Limited is the Nodal Agency for coordinating and monitoring S&T projects of the Ministry of Coal.

Further, a National Centre for Coal and Energy Research (NaCCER), currently under the administrative control of CMPDI, has been established to address the challenges of the coal sector and explore the potential for future Indigenous & sectoral expansion of coal & energy sectors

The Ministry normally supports projects of shorter duration (1 to 3 years), the findings of which, if completed successfully, can be used directly for commercial use and benefit the industry. In exceptional cases, research in newly emerging and frontline areas of Science & Engineering and projects having long-term implications are also supported

Recognizing the paramount importance of safety, economy, speed, and efficiency in fulfilling the coal and energy requirements of the country and its convergence with national goals and priorities, strong emphasis on inclusive Research and Development (R&D) programs with a significant role of Startups is envisioned.

The key components of the Science and Technology of the Ministry of Coal are:

- (i) Research and Development (R&D) component; and**
- (ii) Fostering Innovation and Research through Startups for Technology (FIRST) in Coal and Lignite Sector**

Research and Development (R&D) component: Under this component, funds are released to recognized academic or research institutes/organizations, and government organizations,

Fostering of Innovation and Research through Startups for Technology in Coal and Lignite Sector (S&T-FIRST) component: Under this component, funds are released to Startups to ensure the availability of financial support to deserving Startups.

GUIDELINES FOR FOSTERING INNOVATION AND RESEARCH THROUGH STARTUPS FOR TECHNOLOGY IN THE COAL & LIGNITE SECTOR UNDER SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (S&T-FIRST) PROGRAM OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL

1.0 Introduction

Coal remains a cornerstone of India's energy landscape, powering over half of the country's electricity generation and supporting key industries like steel, cement, and chemicals. Innovation becomes increasingly critical as India strives toward energy security and sustainable growth. Startups have the potential to drive transformative change in the coal and lignite sector by leveraging Research & Development (R&D), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), 5G applications, and Industry 4.0 technologies. These enterprises can bring agility, creativity, and cutting-edge solutions, such as optimizing mining operations, enhancing safety, improving environmental sustainability, and unlocking greater coal extraction and processing efficiencies. Their contributions will be pivotal in modernizing the coal sector, aligning it with India's vision for a future-ready energy ecosystem.

It has become necessary to explore the possibility of facilitating research and innovation in technology by making funding provisions for startups associated with the incubation centers at IITs/NITs/IIITs and other technical institutions relevant to the Coal mining industry through S&T funds of the Ministry of Coal. Accordingly, these guidelines are being issued for funding startups or a consortium of startups working in areas that are critical for the growth of the coal industry under the Science and Technology (S&T) program of the Ministry of Coal.

2.0 The Need

Presently, a wide gap exists in the financial support required by technology-driven Startups in its initial phase which is not being addressed properly. The basic idea of seed support is providing financial assistance to potential startups with promising ideas, innovations, and technologies. This would enable some of these startups with innovative ideas/technologies to graduate to a level where they will be able to raise investments from angel/Venture capitalists or they will reach a position to seek loans from commercial banks/financial institutions. Thus, the proposed seed support disbursed to Startup is positioned to act as a bridge between the development and commercialization of innovative technologies/products/services in a relatively hassle-free manner.

3.0 Objectives

The objectives of S&T-FIRST under Research & Development (Science & Technology) program are as under:

- a) To promote the ecosystem for research, design, development, proof of concept testing, IPR creation, pilot project, and manufacturing, i.e., complete value chain for sustainability in the Coal and Energy Sector.
- b) To promote the projects with TRL-3+ to the commercialization stage.

- c) To carry out applied research involving the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of various techniques, procedures, processes, maintenance, and upkeep of equipment from the technical, techno-economic, and technological points of view.
- d) To secure intellectual property, including patents, copyrights, and trademarks as innovations are made and products created.
- e) Facilitate technical exchange and collaboration on projects having significant potential for sustained growth and value addition through close ties with industry and foreign stakeholders/partners.
- f) To create synergies among the Academia, Research Institutes, Startups, and Industry for capacity building and development of a balanced research-based mining ecosystem by organizing workshops/seminars/webinars, etc. for sharing their views, technical know-how, plans, expectations and concerns in a constructive manner, and to encourage research paper publication in reputed journals.

4.0 Focus Areas

The S&T-FIRST will be focused mainly on the following areas:

- i. Production, Productivity, Safety, and Exploration.
- ii. Environment, Ecology, Conservation, and Sustainability.
- iii. Coal mining waste to wealth. R&D to establish a circular economy and use of recycled materials in the coal industry.
- iv. Clean Coal Technologies and Coal Beneficiation.
- v. Alternative use of coal.
- vi. Renewable Energy.
- vii. AI/ML/IoT/5G based smart mining.
- viii. Technology Innovation and Indigenization.
- ix. Prospecting/exploration for strategic rare and rare earth minerals from Coal Mines.

The prime idea of S&T-FIRST is to translate research into technology (product/process/services) and not to carry out open-ended fundamental research. Investigations must lead to the innovation of a new product/process ready for demonstration/pilot scale deployment and commercialization (not limited to publication/ patent).

5.0 Coordinating Agency and submission of proposals under S&T-FIRST

The National Centre for Coal & Energy Research (NaCCER) shall be the coordinating agency under the umbrella of CMPDIL/CIL.

The following mechanism shall be followed:

- a) The NaCCER shall develop a portal or mechanism for startups to submit proposals (s) online under S&T-FIRST.

- b) The Startups/consortiums shall submit their proposals online on the S&T website (<https://scienceandtech.cmpdi.co.in/>) or in physical mode in hard copies.
- c) The NaCCER shall prepare and display a set of problem statements in consultation with the MoC.
- d) The NaCCER shall conduct a ‘Hackathon’ on a regular basis (at least once a year).

6.0 Budgetary Outlay

Funding requirements under S&T-FIRST COMPONENT will be met through budgetary support under the Research and Development (S&T) scheme of the Central Sector Schemes of the Ministry of Coal. The **S&T- FIRST** has the following provisions:

Startups Funding - For this, the applicant showing capability, intent, and promise to produce functional prototypes or to productize existing technologies will be funded up to Rs. 2 crores for each project, strictly on milestones basis. Funding supports beyond Rs. 2.0 Cr. may be considered for technology products requiring higher funding on the recommendation by TSC and approval by SSRC. Total funding for all startup projects in a year shall not be more than 30% of the total budget allocation during the year.

7.0 Administrative set-up for implementation of S&T-FIRST

7.1.1 The S&T-FIRST shall be implemented under the aegis of a Standing Scientific Research Committee (SSRC) constituted for Research & Development (Science & Technology) projects under the Ministry of Coal. The Composition of the SSRC is as follows:

Sl. No.	Particulars of the Chairman/Members of SSRC	Designation
1.	Secretary, Ministry of Coal	Chairman
2.	Advisor (Projects), Ministry of Coal	Member Secretary
3.	Financial Advisor, Ministry of Coal	Member
4.	Chairman, CIL	Member
5.	CMD, CMPDIL	Member
6.	CMD, NLCIL	Member
7.	CMD, SCCL	Member
8.	DG, DGMS	Member
9.	DG, CSIR	Member
10.	Advisor (Energy), NITI Aayog	Member
11.	Director, TERI, New Delhi	Member
12.	Representative of the Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi	Member
13.	Director, CIMFR	Member
14.	Chairman of the Technical Sub-committee of SSRC	Member

7.1.2 A Technical Sub-Committee (TSC) of SSRC consisting of the following members constituted by the Ministry of Coal will recommend proposals submitted by startups for sanction/continuity/reappropriation/extension/short-close, periodically steer and review the technical and financial progress of the projects, accept project completion report, etc. under S&T-FIRST:

Sl. No.	Particulars of the Chairman/Members of Technical Sub-committee of SSRC	Designation in the Sub-Committee
1	HOD Mining of IIT, BHU	Chairman, ex officio
2	HOD Mining of IIT, Kharagpur	Member, ex officio
3	HOD Mining of IIT- ISM	Member, ex officio
4	Adviser (Projects), Ministry of Coal	Member
5	Director (Tech), Coal India Limited	Member
6	Two Director (P&P) of subsidiary companies of CIL on rotation basis for one year [in alphabetical order]	Member
7	Director (P&P), Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited (NLCIL)	Member
8	Director (P&P), Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL)	Member
9	Director Technical (RD&T), CMPDI	Member
10	Representative of Department of Science & Technology (DST), New Delhi	Member
11	Representative of Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), New Delhi	Member
12	Representative of Director General of Mines Safety (DGMS), Directorate General of Mines Safety	Member
13	Chief General Manager (Environment), Coal India Limited	Member

TSC will be reconstituted every year, and the Chairman of the committee shall be HoD (Mining) IIT-BHU/IIT-KGP/IIT-ISM on an annual rotation basis. The delegation of power (DoP), constitution of SSRC and TSC shall be as per the prevailing S&T guidelines of MoC, except for the provisions stipulated in this guideline of S&T- FIRST.

8.0 Changes in the guidelines

Notwithstanding anything contained in the guidelines, any changes/deviations may be made in the guidelines with the approval of SSRC.

Enclosures:

1. Annexure-I: Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Funding under S&T-FIRST.
2. Annexure-II: Terms & Conditions for Funding under S&T-FIRST.
3. Annexure-III: Guidelines for Research Projects of Ministry of Coal (February 2021).

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR FUNDING UNDER S&T-FIRST

1. Implementation Mechanism & Scope of Coordinating Agency

NaCCER will implement the projects under S&T-FIRST on behalf of the Ministry of Coal in association with Startup(s) & other agencies as per requirement. The Coordinating agency will work under the overall supervision of the SSRC/TSC following the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Coal.

2. Roles and responsibilities of the Coordinating Agency

The roles and responsibilities of the Coordinating Agency are as follows:

2.1 Due Diligence: Due diligence will be carried out by NaCCER. The proposals received from the Startups/consortium will be placed in TSC along with their observation(s). The due diligence process involves

- Scrutinizing of eligibility of the Startups/ consortium
- Technical & financial due diligence of the proposals.
- Scrutinizing how the proposal has tied up all resources: space, equipment, manpower, advisors, incubation services, etc.
- To encourage proposals from the North-eastern Region and women-led enterprises
- Scrutinizing milestones, budget, and payment schedule.

2.2 Signing of Collaborative Understanding

2.2.1 Final approval of the funds will be accorded by the Standing Scientific Research Committee (SSRC).

2.2.2 After the approval of the SSRC, a collaborative understanding will be signed between the coordinating agency, Start-up(s)/consortium, and other implementing agencies, defining the terms of collaboration.

2.2.3 In case of any conflict, the decision of SSRC shall be treated as final and binding.

2.3 Fund disbursement

2.3.1 Fund shall be released into the dedicated interest-earning account created by the implementing agency for the purpose.

2.3.2 If a part or whole of the fund is kept in a bank account earning interest, the interest earned, if any, shall be reported to NaCCER. The interest, thus earned, will be treated as a credit to the implementing agency to be adjusted towards further installments of funds under the project, or to be subsequently credited to the NaCCER account for credit to the MoC on completion of the project. The funds received from NaCCER shall not be parked in a bank account that is not earning interest.

2.3.3 Fund disbursement will commence as per the milestones stipulated in para 6.2.

2.4 Monitoring

Once the project starts/commences, the coordinating agency & TSC shall periodically monitor, at least once a quarter, the progress of the projects. The principal implementing agency shall submit quarterly progress reports, expenditure statements, and utilization certificates of all the collaborative agencies (including startup/consortium) in the prescribed format to the coordinating agency.

3. Financial Support to Start-up

Under the S&T-FIRST, financial support will be provided to those projects/ideas that have reached at least the "Proof of Concept (POC)" level or TRL-3+. Financial support will be provided to the startup(s) in the form of funding.

3.1 Expenditures:

Project-specific funding and expenditures as per the S&T Guidelines of MoC shall be followed.

4. Eligibility Criteria

4.1 Eligible Startup(s):

4.1.1 Startups, as defined and recognized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, working towards innovation, development or improvement of products or processes or services, or if it is a scalable business model with a high potential of employment generation or wealth creation.

4.1.2 Individual Innovators will also be encouraged to apply (research & academic institutions can use this category to apply). However, the release of the fund shall be subjected to compliance with eligibility conditions for Startups before signing a collaborative understanding.

4.2 More than one Startup can jointly submit the proposal in consortium and partnership with Academia. The release of funds shall be in a separate account of the consortium.

4.3 Collaboration with Academia / R&D Organizations will be encouraged.

4.4 After approval of projects, startups/consortiums shall be bound to complete the project as per the approved schedule.

4.5 Every proposal must identify a Project Leader (PL) duly authorized in Form-IA by a competent authority, who will take responsibility for the technical, managerial, and financial aspects of the project execution. If a proposal is selected for funding support, then its Project Leader will be required to sign the project agreement on behalf of the startups/consortium and shall continue with the Startups till completion of the project. In case of any change in the project leader, the coordinating agency is to be informed of the change for TSC's approval.

5. Application Procedure

- 5.1** Online Application Submission, Project Status Tracking, Monitoring/Mentoring, Event Promotion, Partnership facilitation, Regulatory Information, etc., will be done through the online portal of Science & Technology Research in Coal & Lignite Sector (<https://scienceandtech.cmpdi.co.in>). Applicants applying for funding under S&T-FIRST shall indicate the same in the proposals.
- 5.2** Ownership of any intellectual property generated by the participant will be as per S&T guidelines of MoC. Ministry of Coal has the first right of refusal for preferential access to these technologies for product, go-to-market, and investment.

6. Implementation Methodology

6.1 Selection & Funding Process

- 6.1.1** All applications will be initially scrutinized for the Eligibility Check and completeness by the Coordinating Agency.
- 6.1.2** In the case of more than one startup having applied for a similar nature of problem, eligible applicants will be shortlisted by the Coordinating Agency.
- 6.1.3** Shortlisted applicants will be called to give a detailed presentation to showcase their idea/product/solution to the TSC. TSC will recommend proposals for the approval of the SSRC.
- 6.1.4** The proposal recommended by TSC will be presented by the project proponents to the SSRC for approval.
- 6.1.5** A collaborative understanding will be signed between all the implementing agencies after approval of the project.
- 6.1.6** Fund will be released into the dedicated interest-earning account created by the successful startups/ consortium for the purpose of S&T-FIRST.
- 6.1.7** The start date of the project will be the date on which the first installment is disbursed to the startup/consortium.
- 6.1.8** Fund disbursement will commence against the milestones of the project as stipulated in para 6.3.
- 6.1.9** Startups will submit periodic reports and utilization certificates in the prescribed format to the coordinating agency.
- 6.1.10** NaCCER shall Coach / Mentor the project during Project implementation and two years post-completion.
- 6.1.11** Coordinating Agency shall advise Startups in Piloting, Testing, etc. Further, the Coordinating Agency may connect Startups with PSUs/Academia or any other institute/organization where the Ministry of Coal has funded testing/pilots of technology/solutions developed. NaCCER may be associated with Startups, if required.

6.2 Indicative Evaluation Criteria

The indicative evaluation criteria for applicants under S&T-FIRST are as follows:

S. No.	Criteria	Details	Indicative Weightage (%)
1	Technical Feasibility	Feasibility & reasonability of the technical claims, methodology used/to be used for validation, roadmap for technology development	15
2	Potential Impact	Environmental sustainability, Market size, customer demographic & the technology's effect on these	15
3	Novelty	USP(s) of the technology, associated with the technology, national importance if any	15
4	Commercialization Strategy	Utilization of technology to create a product/service, its positioning & value addition for the intended customers, plan/ Roadmap forgo-to-market, challenges executed, techno-commercial, upscale potential, etc.	40
5	Team	Technical & business expertise, mentors	15
Total			100%

Selected Startups/consortiums shall be offered funding for a maximum of 24 months in installments against agreed milestones.

6.3 Milestone-based Fund Releases

6.3.1 Successful startups (i.e. private entity) shall be offered funding support of up to Rs. 2.0 Cr. However, the funding supports beyond Rs. 2.0 Cr. may be considered for technology products requiring higher funding on the recommendation by TSC and approval by SSRC. The fund disbursement will be milestone-based and will be released in installments:

Installment	Milestone	Release
1st Installment	Signing of agreement/ collaborative understanding	40% of the Total Fund
Subsequent Installments	Based on the completion of individual Milestone after discussion with NaCCER	50% of the Total Fund (Distributed among all milestones)
Final Installment	Completion of project & submission of final report with prototype/product and research data (focusing on Technology Completion of the project and outcome could be Technical Success or Failure)	10% of the Total Fund

6.3.2 Timelines for milestones of the project shall be decided between the startups and the Coordinating Agency after due diligence of the proposal.

6.4 Monitoring

6.4.1 NaCCER and TSC will ensure the timely and proper implementation of the project. Time and cost overruns may be granted in exceptional cases.

6.4.2 MoC shall ensure that the TSC shall meet as frequently as required but at least once in every quarter. Startups/consortiums will submit their quarterly progress report duly signed by the project leader(s) and associate finance of the institution/ organization to NaCCER. This report will be used to review the progress of the project and utilization of the released funds and will also be taken into account while considering further release of funds by the MoC/ NaCCER.

7. Fund Disbursement from the Ministry of Coal to the Coordinating agency

7.1 Funding Pattern

7.1.1 Upon approval of projects by the SSRC, the coordinating agency would communicate to the concerned startups/consortium and initiate the funding process.

7.1.2 The 1st installment will be released after the Signing of the agreement/collaborative understanding subject to submission of fund requisition. Further installments may be released based on the achievements of the set milestones which are agreed by NaCCER.

7.1.3 The funds shall be released by MoC upon receiving the requisition by CMPDI. CMPDI will submit the requisition subject to receiving the requisition by startup. The fund once received by CMPDI shall be further released to the Startup/consortium through NaCCER.

7.1.4 Payments shall be made to startups (i.e. private entity) after receipt of funds from MoC.

7.1.5 Release of further installments shall be subject to completion of assigned/agreed milestones and furnishing of Utilization Certificate.

7.1.6 Final Milestone Payment will be made after TSC accepts the final project completion report and submission of prototype/product and research data to the coordinating agency.

7.1.7 Startups shall submit Quarterly Progress Reports and expenditure statements of the ongoing projects for the quarter ending March, June, September & December, in the prescribed forms (Form III, IV&V) duly signed by the project leader and associate finance of the organization to NaCCER to reach by 30th of the month following the close of the quarter and will be scrutinized by NaCCER.

7.1.8 TSC and the coordinating agency will conduct a regular review of fund disbursement, deliverables, and other activities.

8. Pilot Opportunity

- 8.1** In case a pilot opportunity is feasible after successful project completion, this may be provided to startups in the following manner:
- a) Any Startup desirous of availing the opportunity for pilot, shall be required to submit a detailed proposal in the prescribed format as per S&T guidelines of MoC.
 - b) This proposal after initial scrutiny by the Coordinating Agency will be presented before the relevant funding agency of the coal and energy sector by startups/consortium along with other associated organizations including NaCCER.

9. Procurement Opportunity

The Coordinating Agency shall provide support for products/ services developed during a project funded under S&T-FIRST and find a market so that its development becomes financially viable over a period of time. The Ministry of Coal/CIL shall try to work with other ministries/CPSes to generate the demand and supply of the developed product and work with these organizations for technology trials. The Ministry of Coal/ CMPDIL/CIL will sensitize the concerned agencies about the products/services developed during the projects and request for consideration of the developed product with respect to their tenders, as per due rules and procedures.

10. Recall of the Central Funding

- 10.1** The Implementing Agency(s) has to abide by the Terms & Conditions for funding under S&T-FIRST as per **Annexure-II**.
- 10.2** SSRC retains the right to curtail/ recall the central funding along with applicable interest calculated at 3 years SBI MCLR prevailing on the date of disbursement in case of unsatisfactory use of the fund including compromise with the quality envisaged, or partial/incomplete implementation of the project.

Annexure -II

Terms & Conditions for Funding

1. The funding under S&T-FIRST is for the specific project as approved by the Ministry of Coal. It shall be subject to the conditions listed below. The proposal originating from Startups/consortiums shall include an undertaking that they agree to be governed by these conditions.
2. The funding amount shall be
 - a. spent on the head for which it has been released within the specified time; and
 - b. Any portion of the fund, that is not ultimately required for expenditure for the approved purposes, shall be duly surrendered to the Ministry of Coal (MoC);
3. The Startups/consortiums should adhere to GFR guidelines while incurring expenditures out of the MoC's funding under the project. The Startups/consortiums shall be responsible for ensuring that all procurement of goods, equipment, and services, including works, are through a transparent and competitive bidding process as per the applicable government rules/guidelines;
4. The Startups/consortiums shall maintain an audited record in the form of a register in the prescribed proforma for permanent, and semi-permanent assets acquired solely or mainly out of the Ministry of Coal funding, and the same shall be uploaded to the company's website;
5. The assets referred to in (3) above will be the property of the Ministry of Coal and should not, without prior sanction of the Ministry of Coal, be disposed of /encumbered/utilized for purposes other than those for which the fund has been sanctioned;
6. For disposal of assets acquired under the funding of MoC, prevailing S&T guidelines shall be strictly adhered to;
7. In addition to the ownership of the facility created, preparation, and approval of the detailed project report (DPR), the Startups/consortium may seek guidance of the Coordinating Agency for obtaining all necessary statutory approvals/clearances including those for environmental compliance and quality standards as applicable;
8. The Startups/consortiums shall furnish a Utilization Certificate (UC) along with its request for the next release of funds certifying that the fund released to them for which UC has been furnished is as per the envisaged objectives of the project;
9. The Startups/consortiums shall render progress-cum-achievement reports at intervals of not exceeding three months on the progress made on all aspects of the project including expenditure incurred on various approved items during the period;
10. The Startups/consortiums shall render a yearly (financial year) audited statement of accounts to NaCCER.
11. The utilization of funds for the intended purposes will be looked into by the Auditor of

Coordinating Agency according to the directives issued by the Government of India from time to time and specific mention of it will be made in the audit report, if any;

12. The Ministry of Coal or its nominee(s) or any other Government bodies will have the right of access to the books and accounts of the Coordinating Agency and the Startups/consortium for which a reasonable prior notice would be given;
13. The Startups/consortiums should maintain separate audited accounts for the project. The fund shall be kept in a bank account earning interest, and the interest thus earned should be reported to NaCCER. All interest against funding may be adjusted against future releases. Unutilized amounts, along with interest earned, shall be remitted to the MoC after the project's completion.
14. The Intellectual property and the rights associated with it, as per S&T guidelines of MoC, shall be agreed upon between the participating organizations before the start of the project. The Startups/consortium will make all efforts to protect intellectual property generated out of the project. The Startups/consortium shall submit updated reports to NaCCER on the status of IPRs created/ commercialization during the project and after its completion. Furthermore, IPR must also reside in India so that India has access to and complete control of these rights in times of emergency to protect our national interest. The Ministry of Coal shall have the first right of refusal to such IPR.
15. The Cost of filing and maintaining IPR shall be borne by the Startups/consortium.
16. The application by Startups/consortium for any other financial assistance or receipt of funds/ loans from any other Agency/ Ministry/ Department for an MoC funded project should have the prior approval of MoC/TSC;
17. The Startups/consortium is not allowed to entrust the implementation of this project for which funding under S&T-FIRST is received to any other institution and to divert the funds received from the Ministry of Coal;
18. In case of any dispute, the decision of the SSRC, shall be final and binding;
19. The financial assistance given under S&T-FIRST shall be subject to audit by the CAG of India;
20. The SSRC reserves the right to take any stringent action such as debarment of Startups/consortiums from any future commercial activities in India, in case of any unlawful observations such as misuse of funds, misconduct, etc.

The SSRC shall reserve the right to modify the stipulated terms and conditions under the S&T-FIRST guidelines