AI & AgriTech Innovation Center (AIAIC)

First Call for Proposals

Smart Farms, Prosperous Maharashtra – AI for Every Acre, Innovation for Every Farmer

Background and Objectives

The AI & AgriTech Innovation Center is the flagship platform of the Government Of Maharashtra established under **MahaAgri-AI Policy 2025–2029** by the State's Department of Agriculture. The Center's mandate is to translate cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) and digital innovations into on-ground impact for farmers across Maharashtra. In partnership with government agencies, academia, startups, and farmer organizations, the Center aims to drive agricultural transformation through technology that is farmer-centric, inclusive, and scalable.

This Call for Proposals (CfP) seeks to advance the Center's mission by supporting innovative solutions that address priority challenges in agriculture. The objectives of this CfP are to:

Discover and Incubate

Discover and incubate innovative ideas and prototypes leveraging AI/ML, IoT, data analytics, and emerging technologies to address critical challenges faced by farmers agri-businesses and stakeholders across the farm and food ecosystem.

Pilot and Validate

Pilot and validate high-impact solutions in real-world conditions, showcasing measurable improvements in productivity, climate resilience, supply chain performance, and farmer prosperity.

Vibrant AI & AgriTech Ecosystem

Nurture a vibrant AI and AgriTech ecosystem by engaging startups, industry players, research institutions, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and development partners to co-create solutions aligned with Maharashtra's agricultural transformation priorities.

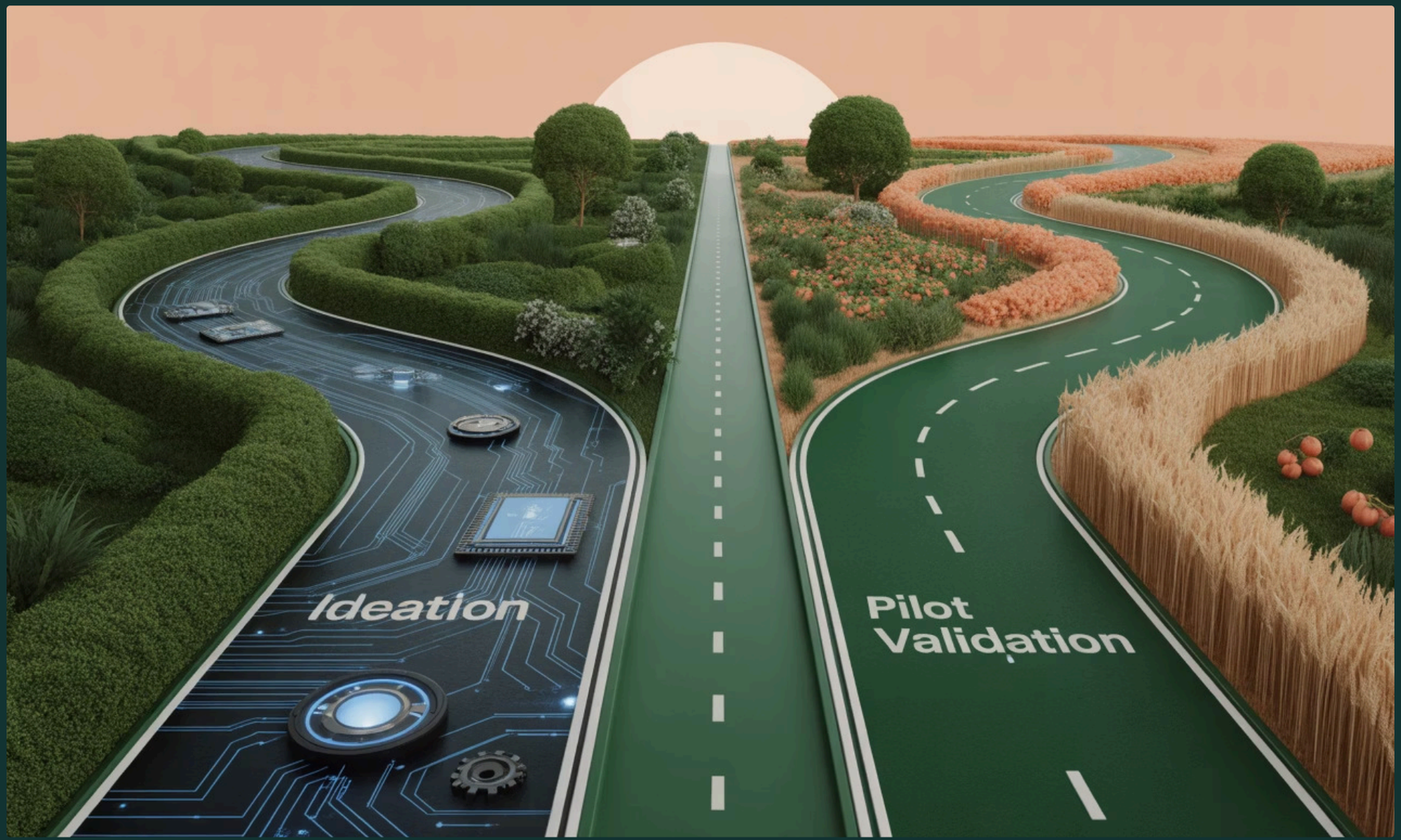
Accelerate Scaling

Accelerate scaling and adoption of successful innovations through post-selection support (sandbox environments, data access, field sites, mentorship) and integration of proven solutions into state-level programs where feasible.

Through this CfP, the AI & AgriTech Innovation Center reinforces its commitment to **"AI for Every Acre"** – ensuring technological advancements reach even smallholder farmers and lead to sustainable, equitable growth in the agriculture sector.

Proposal Tracks and Eligibility

To accommodate innovations at different stages of maturity, the CfP is structured into two tracks: (1) Discovery & Ideation, and (2) Piloting & Validation. Applicants must choose the track that best fits their solution's development stage. Both tracks are open to a wide range of applicants including startups, individual innovators, university or research institute teams, NGOs, consortia, and FPOs. Key features and eligibility for each track are outlined below:



Track 1: Discovery & Ideation

Funding Range: Up to ₹ 40 Lacs

This track supports early-stage ideas, concepts, or prototypes that address the priority problem statements.

Who Should Apply

Innovators, startups, public research institution linked researchers, at ideation or prototype stage. You may have a proof-of-concept or MVP (minimum viable product), but it may not yet be tested in real farm environments.

What to Propose

Novel approaches leveraging AI/data tech in agriculture. The proposal should articulate the idea, technologies proposed, its potential impact if successful, and a plan for development. Preliminary results or prototype screenshots (if available) can be included. Out-of-the-box ideas and new entrants to AgriTech are encouraged in this track.

Support Provided

Selected Track 1 proposals will receive seed funding or grants for research and prototyping, as well as mentorship to refine the solution. They will get access to the Center's resources such as datasets and sandbox to develop their concept further. The expected outcome by the end of the support period is a working prototype or validated concept that could be eligible for piloting (potentially in the next track or phase).

Duration

Projects in this track might run for a shorter cycle (e.g., ~6 months) focused on discovery, prototyping, and business model validation.

Track 2: Pilot & Validation

Funding Range: Up to ₹ 2 Cr.

This track is for ready-to-pilot solutions that have a developed prototype or product and need to be tested and validated in real-world conditions at scale.

Who Should Apply

Startups, tech companies, research institutions, or implementation agencies with a proven solution (at least at advanced prototype or early deployment stage). Applicants should demonstrate that the solution has undergone initial development and is ready for pilot deployment (e.g., already tested by a small user group).

What to Propose

Proposals should present a detailed pilot plan – including the solution's current development / deployment status, how and where it will be tested in Maharashtra, target user group (farmers, cooperatives, etc.), and metrics to evaluate success. The proposal must highlight previous validation (if any), and how the pilot will demonstrate scalability and impact.

Support Provided

Selected Track 2 projects will receive pilot funding and implementation support to conduct on-ground trials (typically in one or more districts or with a set of farmer groups). The Center will facilitate field pilot permissions, help connect with local partners (e.g., Krishi Vigyan Kendras, FPOs, extension officers), and provide access to its Agri Data Exchange (ADeX), Sandbox, and other digital infrastructure to integrate or host the solution if needed. Mentorship will be provided for monitoring and evaluation of the pilot. Successful pilots may be considered for further scaling through track 3 grant or investor networks post-validation.

Duration

Pilot projects are expected to be implemented over ~9–12 months or one crop season (with possible extensions based on results), including a baseline setup, active pilot period, and endline assessment of outcomes.

General Eligibility Criteria (Both Tracks)

Geography

Solutions should be applicable to Maharashtra's agricultural context. While applicants can be from anywhere, a local partnership or plan for on-site implementation in Maharashtra is required for Track 2 (Piloting).

Entity Type

Eligible applicants include startup companies, individual innovators, students or faculty from academic institutions, research labs, non-profit organizations, farmer collectives (FPOs/cooperatives), or consortiums thereof. Private sector entities should have proper registrations; individuals/teams should have an established affiliation or be willing to partner with an implementing organization for fund management.

Team Capacity

The team should demonstrate relevant expertise to develop and execute the project (technical skills in AI/tech, understanding of agriculture domain, and project management capacity). Multidisciplinary teams or partnerships (e.g., a tech startup + an agricultural university + an FPO) are encouraged to ensure well-rounded capability.

Originality and Ownership

The idea/solution should be the applicant's own, or they must have clear rights to use it. Any intellectual property issues should be clarified in the proposal. Solutions should not infringe on third-party IP.

Ethical and Sustainable Approach

Proposals must consider ethical use of AI and data, farmer data privacy, and environmental sustainability in the solution design. Solutions should strive to be inclusive (accessible to smallholders, women farmers, etc.) and align with responsible AI practices.

If you are unsure which track to apply for, please contact the AIAIC on email ID provided for guidance. Applicants may submit only one proposal per track (but an organization can be part of multiple distinct proposals if they address different problems).

Submission Guidelines and Templates

Interested applicants should prepare their proposal following the guidelines below and submit them on or before **30 November 2025**.

Proposal Format: All proposals must be submitted in English on the portal https://aiaic.accubate.app/ext/form/11778/1/apply which will cover organizational information, technical proposal, budget proposal & declarations.

Key Submission Requirements

Registration

Applicants will need to register basic details on the portal (name, organization, contact info) before submitting. Ensure the primary contact email and phone number are correct, as all communications (acknowledgment, results) will be sent there.

Track Identification

Clearly indicate which Track (1 or 2) you are applying under. There will be separate sections in the template to highlight track-specific aspects (for instance, Track 1 might emphasize the ideation plan, whereas Track 2 emphasizes pilot logistics).

Attachments

Only attach relevant supporting documents. Do not attach lengthy technical papers or resumes – summarize key points in the proposal text. If you have a product demo video or application, you may provide a link in the proposal.

Formatting

Maintain a clear, concise writing style. Avoid jargon or explain it clearly, as the evaluators come from diverse backgrounds. Use charts or tables in the proposal if needed to convey information efficiently (the template allows embedding images or diagrams). Ensure the PDF is legible.

Deadline Compliance

Late submissions will not be accepted. The deadline is 30 November 2025. The online application submission will close at that time. Plan to submit well before the deadline to avoid last-minute technical issues.

After submission, you may be contacted during the evaluation process for any clarifications. Ensure the team's contact person is available via email/phone.

Post-Selection Support and Benefits

Projects selected under this CfP will not only receive funding but also a comprehensive support package from the AI & AgriTech Innovation Center to maximize the chances of success and impact. Being selected is the beginning of a partnership with the Center. Key post-selection benefits include:

Sandbox and Data Access

All winners will gain access to the Agriculture Data Exchange (ADeX), Sandbox – a repository of anonymized government and open datasets relevant to agriculture (soil health data, weather records, crop statistics, remote sensing data, etc.). They can also utilize the Center's AI Sandbox environment, which provides cloud computing resources, APIs, and development tools to build and test AI models securely. This technical sandbox is managed in coordination with the state's nodal agencies/projects (POCRA, SMART, MAGNET), ensuring that teams can plug into existing digital infrastructure (e.g., use of statewide farmer databases or geospatial platforms where appropriate) while maintaining data privacy and compliance.

Pilot Facilitation and Field Validation

The Center will coordinate with district agencies, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), and FPO networks to arrange on-ground pilot sites and participant farmers for testing solutions. This means that for Track 2 projects (and promising Track 1 projects ready for next stage) will have support in identifying villages or communities to work with, permissions to operate drones or devices if needed, and logistical support for conducting field activities. Government agricultural officers may be assigned as liaisons for each project to assist with local coordination and feedback collection. This "living lab" environment provided by the Center will help in robust validation of solutions under real farming conditions.

Mentorship and Capacity Building

Each selected team will be paired with relevant mentors/advisors from the Center's network, which includes experienced agronomists, AI/ML experts, business development mentors, and policy advisors. Regular mentorship sessions (virtual or in-person) will be conducted to help teams overcome technical challenges, refine their product-market fit, and navigate the public sector landscape. Additionally, training workshops may be organized on topics like user-centric design, monitoring & evaluation (M&E) for pilots, compliance with agri regulations, etc., to build the capacity of the project teams.

Networking and Exposure

The Center will provide platforms for winners to showcase their innovations. This could include demonstration days with government officials and investors, features in the Center's newsletters and media releases, and invites to present at the Annual Global AI in Agriculture Conference & Investor Summit hosted by the Center. Such exposure can open doors for follow-on funding, partnerships, and scale-up opportunities beyond the pilot phase. The Center will also facilitate connections to relevant government schemes or departments (for example, if a solution relates to crop insurance, connecting the team with the state crop insurance cell).

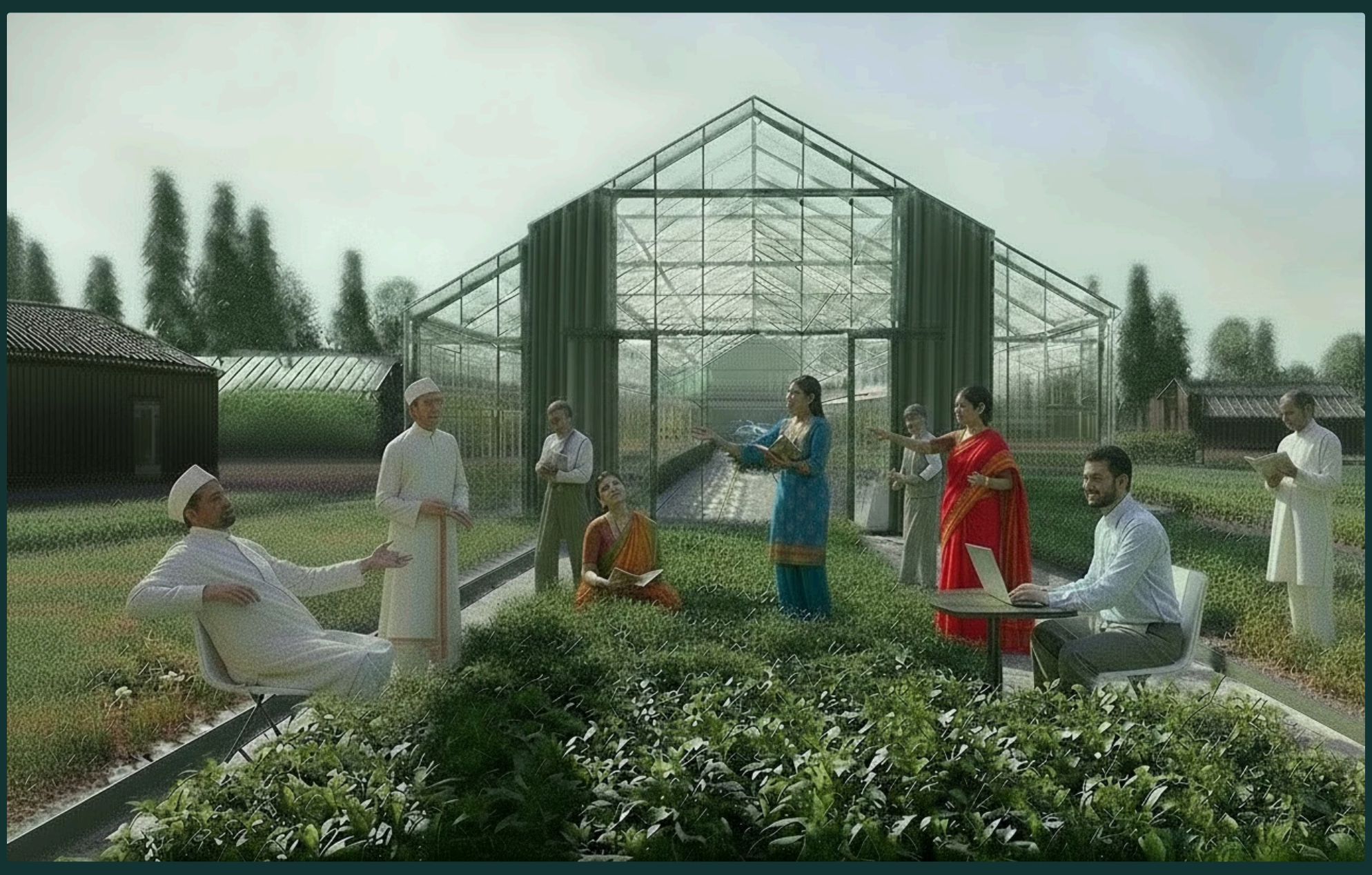
Follow-on Support and Scale-up

Successful completion of pilots does not mean the end of support. The Center may assist in developing a scale-up roadmap for top innovations – this could involve helping craft proposals for larger funding (state or central government schemes, or international grants), exploring procurement by government if the solution is proven effective, or linking the startup with incubation programs and investors. While this CfP's immediate funding covers the pilot/ideation phase, the aim is to integrate truly impactful solutions into the wider agricultural ecosystem in Maharashtra for long-term sustainability. The Center's role as a "mission implementation unit" means it will champion the adoption of proven innovations into mainstream programs wherever possible.

Monitoring and Feedback

Throughout the project implementation, the Center will maintain a hands-on approach to monitor progress. A Knowledge Management and M&E team at the Center will track each project's milestones and collect learnings. They will help teams design surveys or data collection for measuring impact (e.g., baseline and endline farmer surveys). Regular check-ins will ensure any hurdles are identified early and resolved collaboratively. This continuous feedback loop is meant to maximize each project's success and document insights that can inform future innovation efforts.

In summary, selected proposals join a collaborative innovation cohort under AI & AgriTech Innovation Center, benefiting from an enabling environment to experiment, iterate, and succeed in improving farmers' lives. We view funding as just one part of the support – equally important is the ecosystem access and expert guidance that will be at your disposal.



Timeline and Important Dates

The CfP process will adhere to the following timeline:

1

Call Launch Date

2 November 2025 (CfP officially opens for submissions)

2

Proposal Submission Deadline

30 November 2025 – All proposals must be submitted by this date.

3

Evaluation and Shortlisting

On or before 15 December 2025 – The expert panel will complete evaluation of proposals and shortlist the top candidates by this date. Shortlisted applicants may be contacted for any clarifications or virtual pitch sessions.

4

Announcement of Selection & Funding

On or before 31 December 2025 – The final selected proposals for both Track 1 and Track 2 will be announced. On or around this date, award letters and funding agreements will be issued to winners. Public announcements will be made on the website and via press release. Projects are expected to be initiated immediately thereafter.

Please note: The above dates are subject to minor changes. Any updates to the timeline will be promptly communicated on the official CfP webpage. All applicants are advised to follow the website or subscribe to email alerts for any announcements.

Contact and Next Steps

If you have questions about the CfP or need guidance during the application period, you can reach out via email to the AIAIC team at pilotcoord-aiaic@mah.gov.in. A FAQ document will also be made available online and updated periodically.

> **We look forward to receiving transformative ideas and bold solutions through this Call for Proposals. Together, let us empower Maharashtra's farmers with the best of AI and technology, ensuring prosperity and resilience in our agriculture. Thank you for your interest and commitment to innovation in agriculture.**