

Position Description

Research Associate

About Nation First Policy Research Centre

Nation First Policy Research Centre (NF) is a policy research group based in New Delhi, working closely with the government of India to advance policy ideas and assist in their implementation on the ground. NF conducts rigorous, in-depth research and employs systems thinking to arrive at creative policy solutions, and works in close consultation with the government and public institutions to implement the policies on the ground. NF undertakes both extensive, peer-reviewed research for long term projects, as well as incisive, quick-turnaround research for actionable agenda.

NF achieves its aims by adopting the following roles:

- (a) To study existing and upcoming government policies, schemes and regularly provide research-based inputs & recommendations, propose policy reforms to the government,
- (b) To build a research-driven policy ecosystem that could be scaled up as a decision-making support system for political leadership,
- (c) To assist the governments and country's legislature in their research and informing more thoughtful legislations

Functionally, research at NF is manifested through its formal research as well as a Policy Observatory. The former develops background papers; situational analysis papers (problem statements); and approach papers (policy design). In addition NF also conducts impact evaluation of existing policy interventions. The Policy Observatory picks up and distils ongoing issues in country's policy world.

NF is dedicated to nation building, knowledge creation and solving India's problems. It is committed to the vision of India that is built on the foundations of *gram swaraj*, *antodaya* and *sarvodaya*.

About Research Groups

The intellectual strength of NF's research lies in its Research Groups, each engaging with a different policy domain. Research Groups are specialized unit within NF, but they make good alloys of ideas between other domains. In other words, these groups are intellectually porous, and hence, interdisciplinary. That is why we do not call them verticals but groups. We are conscious of the need for a system-based approach to solve complex problems of today

particularly in a diverse country like India, hence, use these distinctions as placeholders for domain knowledge, but not domain monopoly.

Each Research Group is headed by a Research Fellow, who will have Research Associates under her. The Research Associates will be drawn from a larger pool within NF, and therefore will be floating between the Research Groups as and when the need arises.

The evolving Research Group list is as follows:

1. Agriculture (for e.g., agriculture-technology convergence, FPOs)
2. Development (for e.g., health and nutrition, labour and migration, tribal empowerment and island development)
3. Law and Governance (for e.g., police reforms, judicial reforms, simultaneous elections)
4. National Security (for e.g., border and coastal security, Islamic terrorism, Internal Security)
5. Education and Culture (for e.g., conserving Bharatiya linguistic cultures)
6. Impact Evaluation (for e.g., to evaluate the impact of policy intervention)

At NF, like in the real world, structures and lists are ever-evolving. This means, depending upon the need of the hour, new Research Groups could be formed. The key point is necessary collaborations across groups, both formally and informally. At NF, we strongly believe in learning by doing, and intellectual humility allows new ideas to emerge, something NF is always proud of.

Position Summary: Research Associate

NF is seeking dynamic and enthusiastic young scholars to join the team as Research Associates (RAs). The RAs form the intellectual powerhouse of NF, who drive the aspirations of their team, working directly under one or more RFs. Their research leads the efforts of their team.

The appointment is full time, and permanent, based out of New Delhi. Travels will be expected.

Key Responsibilities

Research Associates are responsible for the quality and delivery of the work assigned to their Research Fellows.

General

- Commitment to the idea and philosophy of India as an embodiment of a nation and a culture
- Engage with a culturally diverse group of people both within and outside NF

- Recognize organizational values and goals
- Contribute to self and organizational learning across domains
- Organize and participate sessions, events and dialogues within the aegis of NF
- Ability to work with people of diverging viewpoints and personality
- Work closely in professional capacity with people, industries, bodies that the Executive Body of NF recommends
- Continuously monitor designs and implementation of ideas coming out of the Research Group to ensure academic excellence and integrity
- Ability to handle stress, and multiple projects at the same time

Research

- Conduct and/or help conduct original, empirically-sound, high-quality and in-depth research on policy projects that come to the Research Group
- Help build and foster research partnerships across other Research Groups as well as with universities, industry partners and other stakeholders, in consultation with the Executive Body of NF
- Prepare impactful reports, research notes, presentations and engage with relevant stakeholders
- Coordinate and organize continuous engagements with the governments, and members of Research Advisory Council of NF to advance the agenda of NF's Research Group.
- Actively participate in, and where necessary help to organise, research seminars, workshops and other research and training activities of NF
- Organize and attend consultative sessions with stakeholders
- Help mobilize grants, projects, new programs and reshape policy thinking in NF inspired by immediate as well as long term local and global needs
- Publish in high quality peer-reviewed articles in refereed journals
- Build knowledge inventory to be used to publish opinion pieces and shorter op-eds in national dailies
- Ensure the quality management of any written work produced by the Research Group

Leadership and Administrative

- Actively participate in NF meetings and contribute to planning activities or other work to support capacity building in the organization
- Contribute to, or present research to the public to elevate awareness of important developments in the policy domain of the Research Group, and promote critical enquiry and debate within NF wherever appropriate
- Promote research, scholarly activities and outreach that will advance the academic/advisory excellence of Research Fellows and other Research Associates in research and professional capacity

- Demonstrate and promote values of NF including diversity of thoughts, knowledge creation and high standards of ethics and integrity

Selection Criteria

As an RA, you will typically have a Master's degree from a globally renowned university. In special cases, we can consider candidates with Bachelor's degree, with meaningful and relevant experience. Your academic credentials need to be excellent. You will also have a policy research and/or policy implementation experience of about one to three years, preferably in an environment which favours both rigour and efficiency. One may want to draw an analogy from the background of an excellent consultant who has her feet tied to the ground and who recognizes the value of good research; or an academic who aspires to work in an action-packed environment, who knows the need for sense of urgency in policy matters. In either case, the idea is to combine a thinker and a doer, with a little bit of sense of humour (working with government extensively will require the last one the most).

Applicants with a fertile mind and dynamic attitude looking to work in action-research environment, with an aim to make a difference in people's lives through policy, may find this opportunity to be of interest. Government, academia and industry will be the intersection of most of the work.

Essential

- A Master's in relevant subject from a globally reputed university, with outstanding educational qualifications, or a Bachelor's from an institution of global excellence with some work experience
- Ability to engage with civil society, diplomats and those engaged in international bodies for facilitating global cooperation
- An emerging teaching/research/advisory track record, demonstrated by policy experience (planning or implementation or both) and recognition of high-quality research outputs
- Experience in working with minimal supervision, and ability to prioritise tasks to achieve project objectives within timelines
- Demonstrated capacity to communicate research concepts to technical and non-technical audiences, particularly international audience
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, demonstrated by presentation of research results at conferences, internal forums and through report submissions
- Ability to read and write in English quickly and effectively
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including an ability to interact with internal and external stakeholders (academic, administrative and support staff both within and outside NF)

- One-three years of relevant experience of working in the domain area of the Research Group
- Ability to draw large scale insights, as well as possessing an eye for detail
- Entrepreneurial understanding of dynamically challenging organizations and landscapes
- Strong EQ

Desirable

- Relevant exposure in the field of interest
- Experience or interest in cross-disciplinary projects
- A demonstrated interest in research and policy innovation
- Networking skills and an ability to build and nurture external contacts and partnerships, working with government organisations as well as international organizations
- Familiarity or openness towards diverse views and managing conflict

Process

Interested candidates are requested to send an email to samparka@nationfirstpolicy.org attaching the following:

- A CV listing educational background, publications, consultations, talks, advisory experience, projects, and other applicable experience
- Two names and contact details of referees who NF can get in touch with

If your CV is longlisted, we will send you an Application Form with some key, subjective questions to know more about your skills and attitude.

After shortlisting of the forms, you will be called for a minimum of one round of interview. The interviews may take place online or physically, although we strongly prefer the latter.

Successful candidate is expected to report in New Delhi immediately after selection. Selection will be on rolling basis and we hope to fill the vacancy before March-April 2021.

Note: Personal data provided by applicants will be kept confidential and used for recruitment purpose only.

Deadline

The recruitment for positions advertised here is effective immediately, and open until closed. This means that the selection will be rolling in nature. However, applications received before **31 March 2021 11.59pm IST (GMT+5:30)** will be given first consideration.

Equal Opportunity

NF is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing a workplace free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation. NF makes decisions on employment, promotion and reward on the basis of merit.

Salary & Benefits

Salary will be competitive. It will be matched with the market standards of a major private consultancy. The scale will indeed depend upon applicant's merit.

An important aspect will be the opportunity for tremendous growth in terms of salary packages and benefits. As you grow with the NF, the future benefits will continue to rise appropriately. At NF, we do not believe in structured, routine appraisals, but often allow vertical and even sectoral jump to a new domain and position. We cannot guarantee that you will be happy; but we guarantee you will not be bored.

There is a generous benefit package including funds towards conference travels, peer-reviewed publications with high impact factor, and research grants. Health insurance will be provided. NF will also make efforts to secure a suitable employment of the spouse of the selected applicant in New Delhi, if needed. There is also an allowance for relocation within India.

Why should you consider Nation First?

The position offers a rare opportunity to lead and grow in a unique initiative policy advisory and policy implementation landscape in India. It will allow you for working in an interdisciplinary environment with outstanding colleagues, as well as support for developing national research agenda.

Since the organization is in its inception stage, there will be a range of intangible benefits associated with being the 'founding' research associates. This will not only include greater flexibility with meaningful responsibilities but your career growth shall become synonymous with NF's growth. You will have a unique advantage of shaping the organization as it evolves. This means you will be able to help develop a vibrant, supportive and stimulating environment in the organization, but attracting talent from many different parts of the world. You will enjoy

a range of opportunities to create and cultivate the research agenda not just of the organization, but through it, of the nation. In many ways, you will be NF's partners.

Perhaps one of the most exciting reasons to be part of NF is to assist in nation building, advancing policy research and changing ground realities through working with government closely. This allows for a unique opportunity for a meaningful engagement with our own people, changing their lives for the better and build a better future for our children. NF promises to help build the foundations of a new India.

NF shall be true to its commitment of nurturing and supporting outstanding talents who will serve its evolving requirements and over time, even take on leadership roles.

Location: New Delhi

NF's offices will be located on 11 Ashoka Road, New Delhi. This may arguably be one of the most important roads in the country, given the impact decision making happening here has on the country. Located in the centre of Lutyens' Delhi, the office space allows for cross navigation of ideas from the political headquarters of the ruling party, and many other parliamentarians close by. There will be a continuous osmosis from political leadership will allow for considerable learning and impact. This puts NF in a uniquely advantageous position to be able to consult, advise and draw upon the collective learning of the legislators and political leaders of the country, as well as bureaucratic offices located within walking distances in the city. We hope that the office will become an intellectual oasis in the middle of where a policy thinktank should be.

Needless to say, New Delhi is one of the most vibrant cities in India. As the capital of the largest democracy in the world, and in addition to the seat of political power, it is home to some of the most premier higher education institutions of India. Culturally rich, the city boasts of celebrating an unbroken recorded history of more than a thousand years, scattered with fascinating moments of historical significance everywhere. As a melting pot of India's diversity, the city offers an intellectually stimulating as well as contested terrain of scholars and practitioners alike. The city never ceases to amaze any thinking mind, and offers rich fodder for thought daily. Perhaps engaging with Delhi in many ways prepares anyone to engage with the rising India, with both its pluses and minuses. That is indeed then, a delightful challenge.