

Cheistha Kochhar Nudge Awards Concept Note

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1. Introduction

In a world filled with complex social and governance challenges, simple and thoughtful interventions can create meaningful and lasting change. Nudge Theory, which originates from economics and public policy, highlights how small changes in the environment in which people make decisions can encourage better choices without restricting freedom or autonomy.

This approach has been used globally to improve public health, strengthen financial inclusion, support environmental action, and enhance governance. Nudging approaches have helped increase organ donation rates, improve sanitation behavior, encourage digital payments, and promote community participation.

Cheistha Kochhar, who lived from 1990 to 2024, was one of the earliest voices in India to champion the idea of nudging as a humane and effective approach to improving governance and citizen wellbeing. Her work brought together policy, psychology, and lived experience with a rare combination of empathy and analytical rigor. She contributed to the Aadhaar ecosystem, served at the Planning Commission and NITI Aayog, and played an important role in advancing the use of nudging approaches within Indian public policy.

Cheistha believed that policy is personal, and that the impact of public systems must always be measured by how they make people feel. Her legacy continues to inspire institutions around the world through scholarships, research prizes, dedicated spaces, and lectures at leading universities and public institutions.

The Cheistha Kochhar Nudge Awards are created to honour this legacy and to promote the ethical and thoughtful use of nudging approaches for public good in India.

2. About the Indian School of Public Policy

The Indian School of Public Policy, located in New Delhi, is India's first institution focused entirely on public policy education and practice. It prepares future policy leaders through academic rigor, practical design, and interdisciplinary learning. ISPP works at the intersection of society, government, and markets, and is committed to strengthening governance capacity across India.

ISPP serves as the institutional home and secretariat for the Awards. It provides governance support, operational coordination, documentation systems, communication support, and hosts the Awards ceremony.

3. Purpose of the Awards

The Awards aim to identify and celebrate individuals, teams, and organizations that use nudging approaches and behavioural insights to create measurable positive social impact in India.

The purpose of the Awards includes:

- Encouraging ethical and evidence based behavioural interventions
- Recognizing thoughtful design that respects autonomy and dignity
- Strengthening India's growing behavioural insights and public policy community
- Fostering collaboration among researchers, practitioners, government, and social sector organizations
- Advancing the vision of empathetic and people centred policymaking that Cheistha stood for

The Awards seek to transform remembrance into action and contribute to a broader ecosystem of learning and impact.

4. Who the Awards Recognize

The Awards recognize impactful behavioural work carried out within India by:

- Individuals
- Project teams
- Non profit organizations
- Social enterprises and start ups
- Academic and research institutions
- Corporate CSR units
- Government departments and public institutions
- International or expatriate researchers whose work is implemented in India

Eligible domains include public health, education, environment, sustainability, financial inclusion, civic participation, governance, service delivery, and other areas where nudging approaches contribute to social good.

Both completed and ongoing initiatives are welcome, as long as there is evidence of measurable outcomes.

All eligible work must be implemented within India.

5. Award Categories for the First Year

For the inaugural edition, the Awards will recognize work across three broad categories to maintain inclusivity and ensure diverse participation.

The award categories are currently under development and will be announced in due course.

As the Awards program evolves, there may be scope to introduce Special Mentions to recognize contributions that demonstrate exceptional learning value, ethical design, or potential for replication.

6. Evaluation Methodology

The Awards follow a two stage process.

Stage One: Screening Committee Review

A five member Screening Committee conducts the first level assessment. Each nomination is evaluated on nudging clarity, quality of design, evidence of impact, ethical standards, learning value, and replicability. A minimum score of sixty out of one hundred is generally required to qualify for Jury review.

The Screening Committee ensures that shortlisted entries are credible, diverse, and aligned with the purpose of the Awards.

Stage Two: Jury Evaluation

A seven member independent Jury evaluates the shortlisted entries through independent scoring and collective deliberation. The Jury includes experts from public policy, governance, academia, journalism, industry, and practice.

The Jury's decisions are final and binding.

7. Ethical Expectations

All participating interventions must demonstrate:

- Respect for autonomy
- Transparency of intent
- No use of coercion or manipulation
- Protection of participant dignity
- Evidence based claims
- Responsible handling of sensitive populations
- Integrity in documentation

These principles reflect the core values that guided Cheistha Kochhar's approach to nudging and public impact.

8. Awards Ceremony

The Awards will be presented at a formal ceremony hosted by the Indian School of Public Policy.

The ceremony will be an invitation only gathering that includes:

- Finalists
- Jury members
- Screening Committee members

- ISPP leadership and faculty
- Leaders from government, academia, and civil society
- Partners and sponsors
- Select ISPP scholars
- Members of the public policy and behavioural insights community
- Media representatives

The event will include keynote remarks, panel discussions, finalist showcases, the announcement of awardees, trophy and certificate presentation, and a networking session.

9. Recognition for Winners

Winners will receive:

- A platform to present their work to the public policy and behavioural insights community
- Opportunities for collaboration and mentorship
- Coverage through media and ISPP communication channels
- Inclusion in the annual Awards report
- The Cheistha Kochhar Nudge Award trophy
- An official certificate

Details related to any financial or grant based support will be communicated separately to awardees.

10. Long Term Vision

Over time, the Awards aim to:

- Build a national repository of nudging and behavioural interventions implemented in India
- Create opportunities for collaboration across sectors
- Support young innovators and researchers
- Promote ethical and compassionate use of nudging approaches
- Keep alive the values and vision that shaped Cheistha Kochhar's life and work

The Awards celebrate the belief that small and thoughtful nudges can transform systems and lives, and that empathy and evidence are essential partners in public policy.