DigiFI Africa: RFP Frequently Asked Questions

- **Does my project fit the scope of a DigiFI grant?**

We are interested in quite a broad range of topics that relate to digital identification or payment systems (see our [framing paper](#)). For example, this may include linkages of government services with the ID, the digitisation of payments in the health/education space, digital innovations in the tax system, and reforms of the structure or delivery of social protection payments.

Please do not submit the same proposal to more than one J-PAL or IPA initiative at the same time. Before applying to DigiFI, consider whether your proposal may be better suited for other initiatives at J-PAL and IPA, such as the [J-PAL Crime and Violence Initiative (CVI)](#), the [Governance Initiative (GI)](#), or Innovations for Poverty Action's [Peace & Recovery (P&R) program](#). These initiatives share similar themes and support rigorous research that will lead to policy relevant findings. If you are uncertain about which initiative to apply to, please contact digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org.

- **I think I have a great idea, but I'm not sure if it fits or how interesting it would be to DigiFI. Could I have a call with someone from the DigiFI team?**

YES! We encourage you to get in touch (digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org). We are always happy to talk more about your ideas and to think through the process with you.

- **What do you mean by "high frequency process monitoring"?**

Government officials facing short-term political cycles may be reluctant to agree to full-fledged experiments or other large-scale studies that may not yield definitive results for one to three years. In these cases, we encourage research teams to work with the partner government to develop high-frequency monitoring systems or initial pilot studies to help select African governments track progress and challenges among a representative sample of targeted beneficiaries. The goals of the high frequency monitoring systems would include assessing efficacy of the status quo and/or changes implemented and systematically collecting ongoing dynamic client feedback, potentially using A/B tests to evaluate particular features of these systems. This may involve outbound call systems to assess whether beneficiaries receive benefits, how much time this took, whether beneficiaries faced any technical challenges, whether anyone requested a bribe, and so on. Such data could be complemented by spot checks on the administration of the scheme. Such process information can then be aggregated into dashboards for public sector administrators to use in monitoring progress on the ground. Data from these monitoring systems can then inform the design of the RCTs, while also building credibility and trust with the partner government.

- **Who will do this high frequency data process monitoring work in practice? Does the Initiative have centralised data Research Associates to support this work?**

PIs are encouraged to include a data Research Associate (RA), who will perform the high frequency process monitoring, as part of their budget. DigiFI Africa will work to support this data RA and will work to establish data learning across projects. Note that the Initiative takes data protection and privacy seriously. We encourage PIs to train their RAs in the importance of these protocols including

following local data protection laws. We also plan to have the Director do an introduction call with each RA to discuss lessons learned with respect to data protection and privacy.

- **What can DigiFI do in terms of staff support for our research in the initial stages of project development?**
  We, as staff, can assist with the following:
  - Connections to policymakers in priority countries (often in collaboration with IPA) as well as provide information on the RFP and framing paper priorities.
  - Upon request, support on policy outreach including:
    - Initial meetings with policymakers
    - Coordination with other projects
    - At a later stage, sharing of results with memos, events and conference presentations
  - Clarification on the Initiative's research priorities and on eligibility for potential projects

- **I am not a J-PAL affiliate, though I am a grant recipient from another J-PAL Initiative and am sometimes invited to apply to J-PAL competitions. Am I eligible to apply?**

J-PAL initiatives, including DigiFI, are open only to J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL post-docs, and researchers who are invited to apply for funding under a specific initiative. In addition, initiatives are open to PhD students who have a J-PAL affiliate or a researcher invited to apply for funding over a specific initiative as an advisor in their dissertation committee. PhD students are eligible to apply for a maximum of $75,000 for pilot and full RCT grants. If you have questions about your eligibility, please email digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org

- **What are the African scholar eligibility criteria?**
As in our previous round of research funding, we are excited to present funding opportunities for **resident African Scholars**. Resident African Scholars are folks who:
  1. Have a completed PhD, and
  2. Are based in an academic institution in Africa.

For *this* funding round, we are expanding our opportunities to **non-resident African Scholars**. Non-resident African scholars are those who:
  1. Have completed high school in Africa,
  2. Have completed their PhD, and
  3. Are based in an academic institution outside of Africa

- **I've received funding for my project from another external source, or from another initiative at J-PAL. Am I still eligible to receive additional funding from DigiFI?**
Yes - if you've obtained funding for this project from another external source, please indicate this in your proposal cover sheet and in your total proposal budget. If you've obtained funding from another J-PAL initiative, please indicate so as well. Please note, however, that you may not submit the same proposal to more than one J-PAL or IPA initiative at the same time.

- **Is there a limit to the number of times I can apply for funding from DigiFI?**

Yes; there is a limit to the number of times you can apply for funding from DigiFI within a 12-month period. Beginning in January 2019, any J-PAL affiliate, J-PAL postdoc, researchers invited to a specific initiative, or eligible PhD student can submit a maximum of three pilot or full-scale proposals within a 12 month period to a specific initiative. For example, if a researcher submitted two pilot or full-scale proposals in DigiFI's Spring 2020 round, they can then only submit a maximum of 1 pilot or full-scale proposal in our Fall 2020 round.