***RCT*** *PROPOSAL NARRATIVE TEMPLATE*

***Instructions:*** *Your ATAI proposal narrative should not exceed five single-spaced pages in Calibri size 11 black font. Address the prompts below in your narrative to ensure reviewers can clearly see and score you on your plan along each of the following dimensions. Aspects that do not count toward the five-page limit include: (1) the proposal cover page template you should add to this narrative template, (2)* ***the lengthy, green italicized guidance in this template (including this text, and provided below, which should be deleted from your narrative before submitting****), (3) the final section below with sub-headers for your abstract, timeline of activities, and Project Costing Exercise, and (4) a reference list. Please refer to the detailed submission instructions in the “Application Checklist” section of the RFP before submitting. Direct any questions that remain unclear to our staff team at* [*atai@povertyactionlab.org*](mailto:atai@povertyactionlab.org)*.*

**Proposal Title: \_\_\_\_**

## Problem Statement & Motivation

*To motivate the research, clearly state the development challenge, including available evidence of the problem in this particular context. This should be policy-oriented and distinct from the project’s contribution to the academic literature.*

* *Describe the magnitude(s) and type(s) of inefficiencies and/or welfare problems this research seeks to address. Provide rationale and any available evidence.*
* *Discuss how the problem is important in relation to the transformation of rural economies. Discuss the potential contribution to ATAI’s renewed thematic framework laid out in ATAI’s Framing paper.*

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## Unique Contribution to the Literature

*What knowledge gap are you addressing, and how will it advance the field?*

* *Succinctly outline the research questions you seek to address.*
* *Explain the project’s potential to provide a unique scientific contribution. Provide a brief literature review*

## Description of treatment(s), expected profitability, and hypothesized impacts

*Describe the intervention or mechanism that you plan to test. You should:*

* *Describe how different economic actors are already behaving and interacting in relation to the practices and institutions you are studying in this context, the potential for others to engage, and their current barriers to doing so. If relevant, note evidence of any behavioral biases in your context that will be targeted.*
* *Include relevant details like current demand for inputs, prices, production costs, available output markets, expected returns, etc.*
* *Describe the theory of change that motivates your investigation. Clearly establish a plausible and promising link between the proposed approach to be tested, and the hypothesized channel for impact on smallholder farmers or others in agricultural value chains.*
* *Discuss whether you expect impacts to vary across geographic region, population, or context. Impact metrics may include yields, profits, household income, employment, health, environmental sustainability, or other productivity/welfare outcomes.*
* ***Include preliminary, pilot, or other available descriptive data in support of your hypotheses, models and/or theories of change.*** *Indicate the reliability of this existing data from this research context. You may also attach more detailed pilot data as an appendix (that does not count as part of the page limits for this proposal narrative), but* ***please highlight in this section of your narrative the key details to ensure reviewers take them into account.***

***Please note: this is particularly important if ATAI has already funded a precursor or some part of this project, given we will not provide additional funding until we see data from what we have already funded (i.e. take up, preliminary impacts from the pilot, etc.)***

Target Population and Gender Dynamics

*What population does the intervention attempt to impact?*

* *Does this approach target a specific region or demographic group, or people involved in a specific sector?*
* *If targeting smallholder farmers, classify whether they are subsistence, pre-commercial, or commercial in their agricultural practices. If reaching more than one “type” of farmer, discuss how the approach may impact these groups differently.*
* *How, if at all, will the intervention—or broader implications of the research—improve the lives of marginalized persons (low-income and/or socially excluded groups)? Discuss how you will take care to work ethically with any vulnerable groups.*
* ***How might this project address social, financial, or other barriers faced specifically by women and girls? In what specific ways does this project investigate related outcomes for women and girls****? How will you further the evidence base on this dimension?* 
  + *Discuss how your research design involves an intervention that is sensitive to women’s barriers to technology adoption and markets, and/or the design will allow you to report on gender-differentiated impacts.*
  + ***If you consider this outside the scope of your research, please provide a compelling justification****.* ***Note that you will be explicitly scored on this criterion.***

## Evaluation design and data collection

***Please acknowledge any COVID-19 related uncertainty.***

* *What are the units of randomization and analysis (e.g. individual, household, village, etc.)?*
* *What is the method of randomization (e.g. lottery, phase-in, encouragement, etc.)?*
* *Please list out the set up for treatment and control groups, and the sample size for each.*
* *What are the intermediate and final outcome indicators? How will these be measured?*
* *When will you take measurements, and how frequently? How does this map to crop cycles, if applicable?*
* *What are the foreseeable threats to the internal validity of this study (compliance, attrition, spillovers, etc.)?*
* *Is this part of a larger or ongoing evaluation? Describe the marginal contributions of the proposed ATAI budget.*

## Required collection of AT outcomes of interest

*We encourage discussion of additional relevant outcomes to detecting transitions, but you must explicitly commit to collecting data on the following subset of outcomes of interest relevant to agricultural transformation,* ***and explain how you intend to measure the underlying indicators relevant to your context:***

* + *The adoption of productive agricultural assets*
  + *Any production of high value crops*
  + *Sales as a fraction of total output*
  + *Yields per hectare*

## Power Calculations

* *Please describe your power calculations (effect size, take up/compliance, variance, clusters, observations per cluster, rho). We strongly encourage applicants to be very detailed in the presentation of power calculations.*
* *What is the minimum detectable effect size? Why do you believe this is an appropriate size?*
* *Clearly state what data and assumptions you use for these estimates.* ***Always discuss take up, and do not assume take up will be 100% for the purposes of power calculations****. This should be based on some form of past field work (whether admin data of ongoing operations, a previous pilot, etc.)*

**In-Country Partner(s)**

*Who are your partners? Describe the current relationship between your research team and any local implementing partner(s), as well as the role and level of engagement of each for this project.* ***Please acknowledge any COVID-19 related uncertainty.*** *Your letter(s) of support should support this description.*

* *Investigators are strongly encouraged to seek cost-sharing from partners to demonstrate demand for the research findings. We suggest this is mentioned in the signed letters of support included with your submission.*
* *Applicants should identify both implementing partners (those involved in the evaluation itself) and scaling partners (those involved in scale-up of successful interventions), which may be the same, or two separate sets of organizations.*
* *Is there indication that partners or other involved stakeholders would be interested in interim outputs or final results?*
* ***ATAI expects proposals to include a research capacity-building component.*** *Clearly describe any capacity building outcomes anticipated for in-country partner(s), and how these will be delivered. However, we discourage the use of grant money for general workshops on evaluation methods. Instead, capacity building should be part of the practice of the evaluation itself; there should be learning-by-doing and apprenticeship of developing country collaborators. We particularly encourage support for the training of local post-graduate students, through hands-on participation in evaluation design and analysis.*

**“Pathways to Impact”**: demonstrating how this research will inform actions by policymakers and development practitioners in low-income countries

*Clearly describe the pathway to impact for this research. How will it meet the need of policymakers or development practitioners in developing countries? Clearly describe how you have engaged with potential scaling partners and end-users of this research in the design of this proposal. Clearly describe how you will engage with such stakeholders during the research.*

* *Do other populations face the same conditions as your target group, and could they potentially benefit from the innovation(s) evaluated here? How large is the population that could benefit if you are testing an intervention that could be scaled up?*
* *Is the proposed intervention likely to be cost effective when implemented at scale?*
* *How will the implementing partners and other stakeholders become aware of the results and benefit from the data and interim outputs (e.g. baseline descriptive statistics) generated from this evaluation?*
* *Outline a specific plan for how you will share your findings and outputs (e.g. data) with scaling partners and policymakers, beyond the usual meetings and academic presentations of final results.*
* *Do the results of this evaluation have wider implications? i.e. how, if at all, will the “lessons learned” have relevance beyond this test case? Also consider whether the findings could have relevance to this country’s National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP).*
* *Discuss how the data and findings from the evaluation will be made available, outlining a plan in reference to the minimum requirements outlined in the RFP (see Data Publication and Working Paper ‘Publication,’ p.14)*

## Mitigating Risks

*What risks do you anticipate during the course of the research, and how will you mitigate them?*

*---------the following sections do not count toward the five-page limit--------------*

**Abstract**

*In 3-5 sentences, describe your research question and the context of your evaluation. This may be directly added or adapted to post on ATAI’s website if the project receives funding. The abstract should include (i) a basic problem statement, (ii) the approach being evaluated, and (iii) what questions the research will answer.*

## Timeline

*In a simple table, chart, or bulleted list, include a timeline that outlines key project activities.* ***Please acknowledge any COVID-19 related uncertainty.*** *Note: the earliest start date for ATAI-funded project activities is June 1, 2020.*

## Project Costing Exercise

*The ATAI Board would like to see the research team’s plan for how they will gather, interpret and share program implementation cost data. Please write about a half-page that outlines the approach that you will take to collect and report costing data for the intervention you are evaluating. For more information on the content guidelines for this section, please see the Project Costing Exercise section of the RFP.*

*Potential questions to consider include:*

* *Discuss your rough assessment of what the intervention, in its scalable form without associated research costs, is anticipated to cost per beneficiary reached or per benefit achieved.*
* *Which elements will be considered costs of implementation, and which elements will be considered evaluation costs?[[1]](#footnote-1)*
* *What types of cost data do you anticipate collecting?*
* *When in the data collection process would you collect each of these types of data, and how?*
* *How will you partner with those organizations and staff responsible for implementing the intervention to understand and report the associated costs in these identified categories?*
* *Report any challenges you anticipate facing in collecting or reporting this data. How would you plan to address these challenges to make the cost-effectiveness analysis exercise most valuable in the context of your research, given the goals of the exercise outlined above?*

1. *We acknowledge that it can be a challenge to distinguish implementation costs from evaluation costs, and see the value in making a plan during the proposal phase to identify and address the challenges and potential opportunities for effectively determining the full costs of the program/intervention in question. Please use this section to outline the rationale of your approach to cost-effectiveness analysis.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)