

Application Instructions - Pilot Study Grants

Europe and MENA

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I. Overview

The third Call for Proposals of the Displaced Livelihoods Initiative, jointly managed by IPA and J-PAL and supported by the IKEA Foundation, is now open. Expressions of Interest are due Friday, May 24th, and proposals are due Friday, July 26th at 11:59pm PT. Those interested in applying are asked to first read the Initiative's [Call for Proposals](#) (CFP) document.

Please reach out to dli@povertyactionlab.org with any questions

II. Eligibility

Interested applicants are invited to carefully read through the following eligibility criteria. When in doubt, please reach out to dli@povertyactionlab.org.

Geographical Eligibility

This fund is managed jointly by IPA and J-PAL, with IPA accepting proposals for work in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and J-PAL accepting proposals for work in Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Applicants should refer to this [country-by-country](#) list to ensure that they are following the right process.

Research Team Eligibility

At least one researcher per project must be primarily affiliated with a university (e.g. PhD candidate, Assistant Professor, Professor, etc.), and either hold a PhD or be currently pursuing a PhD in a relevant discipline. The research team must demonstrate experience conducting field research and applying impact evaluation methods in sectors that are relevant to the Displaced Livelihoods Initiative.

For applications to the J-PAL-managed part of the fund, i.e. for projects in the MENA region and Europe, at least one researcher per project must be a [J-PAL affiliate](#) or an [invited researcher](#) to DLI, J-PAL Europe, or J-PAL MENA. Also eligible are PhD candidates supervised by a researcher responding to one of those eligibility criteria, and they can apply for funding of up to \$50,000.

Research teams with projects in MENA and Europe that do not fit the J-PAL-specific eligibility criteria are encouraged to fill in this [researcher interest form](#) and send it to dli@povertyactionlab.org in order to discuss possible options, including the possibility of being connected to eligible researchers.

Promising EOIs for projects in MENA and Europe, but which do not meet J-PAL's researcher eligibility criteria may be invited to complete the subsequent stages of the application process with IPA if recommended after the review of their EOI. Please continue the process outlined in this document as long as your project meets the [geographical eligibility criteria](#).

Methodological Eligibility

In line with J-PAL's mission, J-PAL will exclusively fund [randomized evaluations](#) under the Full Study grant window and expect strong links to existing, ongoing, or future experimental research for all other grant types. Promising EOIs for projects in MENA and Europe, but which do not meet J-PAL's methodological eligibility criteria may be invited to complete the subsequent stages of the application process with IPA if recommended after the review of their EOI. Please continue the process outlined in this document as long as your project meets the [geographical eligibility criteria](#).

Implementing Organizations

The Displaced Livelihoods Initiative is a research fund and only funds impact evaluations and related research activities. Implementing organizations that wish to study the impact of their programs should partner with research teams that are eligible to apply for research funding. J-PAL is available to support matchmaking with researchers. Please reach out to dli@povertyactionlab.org to learn more.

III. Expression of Interest Instructions

All applicants must first submit the required Expression of Interest on our [application portal](#) by **May 24th, 2024, at 11:59pm PT**. Successful applicants will receive an invitation to proceed with their full proposal materials within three weeks.

Choice of Grant Type

As outlined in the [Call for Proposals document](#) (see section V. Project Types), DLI considers proposals for five different grant types and applicants are invited to carefully select the grant type that best fits the stage of their research project.

By way of example, Pilot grants are typically awarded to teams to pilot research activities in a way that allows them to 1) get a sense of the take up rate of an intervention or a sense of what drives take up to ensure that take up is high enough before starting the full RCT and 2) practice the logistics of the intervention with the partner to make sure the programme can be delivered as planned, which is particularly salient for new interventions. Pilot grants will not be awarded to implement smaller or less expensive RCTs.

Research teams can expect the DLI Board to give careful consideration to the extent to which a Pilot proposal is suited to answer such questions and/or whether the information provided in a Full Study proposal credibly substantiates that researchers have completed the necessary preparatory work.

Lastly, please note that application instructions differ for each grant type and select the relevant document available on our [website](#). Should there be specific considerations that lead to your choice of grant type and that may not be immediately apparent from information provided elsewhere in the EOI, please don't hesitate to add this information in the field reserved for additional information. If you are uncertain about the grant type that best fits the current stage of your project, please reach out to dli@povertyactionlab.org.

IV. Pilot Study Submission Instructions

After submitting the EOI and receiving an invitation to submit the Pilot proposal complete the online application and submit the materials found in the Full Study Application checklist below by **July 26th, 2024, at 11:59pm PT** through our online portal.

See information below to prepare for a Pilot Study submission: [Overview](#), [Application Checklist](#), [Narrative Proposal Guidelines](#), [Budget Guidelines](#).

V. Pilot Study Overview

These grants are for studies with a clear research question, but which require substantial upfront investments in design, measurement, and/or implementation before a full impact evaluation proposal can be submitted. Activities could include A/B testing, developing new measurement strategies or instruments, analysis of existing data, piloting survey questions, or new data development or collection.

Please refer to the section on funding criteria in the [CFP document](#) for a full overview of the proposal evaluation criteria and additional considerations.

Funding per pilot study: The award limit is currently set at \$75,000 for teams with J-PAL affiliates and/or invited researchers, and \$50,000 for PhD students who have an eligible J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher on their thesis committee. We expect projects of various sizes, and will carefully check whether the budget size accurately reflects the scope of work proposed. Note the guidelines on allowable and unallowable costs in the Budget Guidelines section.

Timeline: Funding requests should not extend beyond May 31st, 2027.

VI. Pilot Study Application Checklist

Please complete all sections in the online portal by the full proposal deadline, July 26th, 2024, at 11:59pm PT. You must upload several documents to complete your full proposal. All templates for these documents are provided at the [CFP webpage](#) and listed below.

1. Proposal Narrative: Guidance pertaining to the narrative prompts is included in the Narrative section below. Please note that this section requires detailed power calculations.

2. Proposal Budget: Carefully review the Budget Guidelines in this document, then use the Budget Template, which must be completed in its entirety and saved as a single Excel file with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget].xls(x) for upload to the portal.
3. Budget Narrative: Detail the major costs within the budget, referring to the Budget Guidelines, in a Word document with the title [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget Narrative].doc(x) for upload to the portal. This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget -- i.e. notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.
4. Timeline: Please upload a simple table, chart, or bulleted list with a timeline that outlines in detail 1) key project milestones (8-15 milestones), and 2) key policy and practice milestones (4-7 milestones).
5. Letter(s) of Support: Please obtain a letter of support from the following, each saved as a single PDF file with the title [PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Organization Letter of Support].pdf for upload to the portal:
 - A. A letter from each implementing partner, indicating the details of their commitment to partner on the research, their willingness to share progress on results and use of evidence, and (for RCTs,) their willingness to share relevant program cost information. These letters of support should not be templates provided by the research team, but the implementing partners perspective and real understanding of the partnership.
 - B. A budget letter of support or document stating that the proposed grant host institution, the Institute to Receive Award (ITRA), approves the proposal materials. Please consult the [Budget Guidelines](#) below for more detail on the requirements regarding the nature of the ITRA and the content of the ITRA's letter of support).

Note: In the case that this proposal is awarded initiative funding, we will further ask that you submit information on IRB approval(s) or exemption(s). For all rounds of J-PAL funding starting October 1, 2022, and for all projects where data collection is supposed to start after January 1, 2023, it is mandatory for grantees to ensure that the project they implement has been reviewed by an IRB with status as an IRB Organization (IORG). An IRB's status can be found by consulting [the database of IORGs](#). If you do not have access to an IRB or ethics review committee at your institution(s) that has IORG status, requests can be sent to PSE's IRB after projects are chosen for funding. Funding is contingent on approval or exemption from an IRB with IORG status.

VII. Pilot Study Narrative Proposal Guidelines

The online portal will require you to address the below prompts. The text provided below each bolded subsection helps provide guidance on what the DLI Board is looking for to effectively evaluate your proposal.

Abstract

In 3-5 sentences, describe your research question and the context of your evaluation. The abstract should include (i) a basic problem statement, (ii) the intervention or approach being evaluated, and (iii) what questions the research will answer.

Suggested word count: Up to 200 words

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 understanding the overall effectiveness of programs promoting sustainable livelihoods and economic inclusion for displacement-affected populations in relation to the policy and research priorities laid out in the [DLI CFP document](#).
- Discuss how this research will lead to generalizable insights, and why this project goes beyond a specific place based policy or program evaluation.

Suggested word count: Up to 500 words

Unique Contribution to the Literature

Please clearly articulate what you aim to understand and/or achieve with this pilot grant. Pilot proposals should include a very brief review of relevant literature. Note that a full reference list can be attached as a separate document in a later section not subject to word counts.

- What knowledge gap are you addressing, and how will it advance the field?
- Succinctly list and bold the specific research question(s) you seek to address.
- Explain the project's potential to provide a unique scientific contribution if fully-developed, and the value in particular of conducting this scoping work prior to a full-scale randomized evaluation. Provide a brief literature review. Be sure to clearly articulate the distinction between the pilot research and any follow-on research you anticipate that could constitute a full-scale RCT.

Suggested word count: Up to 200 words

Overview of Pilot Research

What activities will this grant fund? What data, tools, and methods do you expect to use to address your pilot research question(s)?

- Describe the intervention that you plan to test or the strategy you will use to identify barriers to economic inclusion in displacement contexts.
- Establish a plausible link between the proposed approach under consideration and the hypothesized channel for impact on livelihoods-related outcomes.
- Describe the theory of change that motivates your investigation and whether you expect impacts to vary across geographic region, gender, age, population, type of displacement, host community status or context.

Suggested word count: Up to 750 words

Target Population

Please describe the target population(s) to be reached. For more information on DLI's target group, please refer to the section on the initiative's scope in the [DLI CFP document](#).

Suggested word count: up to 200 words

DLI Focus Areas

Please indicate which DLI focus areas your proposal relates to; these are described in detail in the [DLI CFP document](#) under Research & Learning Priorities.

Suggested word count: up to 100 words

Gender Dynamics

How will 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 evidence base on this dimension? Discuss whether your research design involves an intervention that is sensitive to women's barriers to sustainable livelihoods in the context of displacement and/or whether the design will allow you to report on gender differentiated impacts. If you assert this is outside the scope of your research, please provide a compelling justification.

Suggested word count: up to 200 words

Anticipated Research Outcome

How would results from this pilot inform a future RCT, or others' research or practice? Describe, specifically, what researchers and practitioners can be expected to learn from this pilot study.

- Will it pilot an intervention? Will it provide qualitative data to inform intervention design?
- How could the findings meet the needs of policymakers or practitioners? Outline a specific plan for how you will share your findings and outputs (e.g. data). How will the implementing partners and other stakeholders become aware of the findings and benefit from the data and other such outputs (e.g. descriptive statistics) generated from this pilot study?
- In what specific ways will the pilot prepare researchers for a full research project?

Suggested word count: up to 500 words

Potential Ethical Risks

All J-PAL initiatives rely on IRB approvals secured by the PIs for many of the ethical issues surrounding conduct of primary data collection and experimentation. For this reason, PIs on successful applications are required to secure an IRB approval before an award agreement can be signed with J-PAL.

The domain of an IRB review, however, does not include all ethical considerations. For this reason, we are providing an opportunity for the PIs to discuss any issues that they feel warrant discussion but that are not covered in their existing or planned IRB review. Specifically, please describe any ethical and/or safety-related risks, and detail how you will manage these risk, if your study could be considered more than minimal-risk (e.g. research participants are a vulnerable population, surveys will include questions on sensitive topics, the partner operates in a risky environment, etc.).

- Discuss any relevant ethical considerations around the intervention, taking into account the benefits to society of doing this research vs. the risks to subjects.
- Discuss whether there are potential harms to research participants and staff in the process of data collection and/or research procedures (for example, discomfort to being asked certain questions or breach of confidentiality) or potential harms to research staff from conducting the data collection (for example, exposure to political violence, unusual levels of a communicable disease, emotional wellbeing from surveying about difficult matters) that are not part of an existing or planned IRB approval. If so, what are they, and what proactive measures will be taken to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

Suggested word count: 300 words

Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding) and how does your team plan to address/overcome them?

Suggested word count: 150 words

Team composition: Lived Experience

Do you have any Principal Investigators or other research team members (research associates, managers, enumerators, etc.) who either currently or in the past have been displaced? If yes, what is the scope of their involvement? Otherwise, what other efforts have been made to engage individuals who have been displaced?

Suggested word count: Up to 200 words

Team composition: Local Knowledge

Is at least one of the Principal Investigators in your team based in the country where the research will be implemented? Alternatively, has at least one of the Principle Investigators completed high school or undergrad in the country where the research will be implemented? If yes, what is the scope of their involvement? Otherwise, what other efforts have been made to engage local decision-makers or stakeholders in the research?

In addition, have any of the Principle Investigators completed high school or undergrad in a [low- or middle-income country](#), as defined by the World Bank? If yes, what is the scope of their involvement?

Suggested word count: Up to 200 words

VIII. Pilot Study Project Details Guidelines

Partnership Details

Please describe the implementing partner (or partners), the history of the partnership, the partner's involvement in project activities, and any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project. Please include any potential risks to the partnership.

Suggested word count: Up to 250 words

Potential for Policy Impact

Please provide a comment on whether the research project has the potential to inform policy or program design, expansion, or implementation decisions, or whether the evaluated intervention has scale-up potential.

Suggested word count: Up to 200 words

Timeline

Please upload the [following documents](#) with a timeline that outlines: 1) key project activities and milestones, and 2) policy & practice influence milestones.

Additional Information

Please review the [DLI CFP document](#)'s section VII Funding Criteria and provide additional information as relevant to the other evaluation criteria if not already addressed in the fields above.

IX. Pilot Study Budget Guidelines

It is your responsibility that your budget follows your host institution's policies for costs, and you must submit a letter from the institution to receive the award that states that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget.

Guidelines for completing a pilot study proposal budget

Please submit a detailed project budget using the Budget Template provided at the [CFP website](#) and a budget narrative. To reduce processing time, please keep the following in mind:

- Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) Requirements: It is usual for the ITRA to be the university of primary affiliation of (one) of the eligible researcher(s) or one of the universities with which one of the other researchers is primarily affiliated. Under certain conditions, a non-university non-profit organization can act as the ITRA of an award. Please reach out to dli@povertyactionlab.org, should your team consider this set up for the proposed project. In either of the scenarios outlined in this paragraph, the Paris School of Economics (PSE), which in the instance of this fund is the institute to process the awards, requires that there is a subawardee PI at the ITRA who will be responsible for overseeing the work on the ground.
- Projects which have secured or will require co-funding for their project should complete both Excel templates, i.e. both “Total Project Budget” (overview over all costs required to complete your project) AND “Initiative Budget” (what you’re requesting from DLI) templates. If the project has other funders, the proposal should clearly explain the marginal contribution of the requested funds from DLI and the feasibility of your project, should another part of the activities remain unfunded.
- Applications must include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget. In addition:
 - We strongly encourage applicants to include budget notes in the column provided in the budget template, specifying input costs for line items within the budget.
 - Travel costs should include a breakdown of how many trips are planned, the estimated cost per trip, number of people on a given trip, etc. Any computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased (e.g. how many laptops), as well as the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
 - The Paris School of Economics sets a maximum of \$250 euros for daily accommodation and meals. Budgets should be made depending on prices in the research location.
- Awards are normally paid on a cost-reimbursable basis. However, PSE can advance payments to ITRAs if requested by the research team. Depending on the award amount, 30 to 50 percent can be provided in advance with subsequent tranche’s provided based on agreements between the research team and PSE, or the rest being on a cost-reimbursable basis. Please note that preparing an advance payment model requires additional time and additional coordination between PSE and the ITRA.

Allowable Direct and Indirect Costs

- Please note that DLI does not cover PI salaries with the exception of researchers based in a mid- or low- income country (LMIC). Full RCTs may cover up to \$20,000 per year for LMIC researcher/PI/co-PI time, with a limit of \$8,000 per PI per year.
- Project Implementation Costs: For full research projects, implementation costs are expected to be borne by the project partners. However, under some circumstances, DLI can fund

implementation costs where it is a marginal addition to an existing program to offset costs from an experiment (e.g. adding an additional treatment arm or the costs of an encouragement design). These types of costs might include travel, small participant incentives, and/or SMS fees.

- Proposals requesting funds for implementation are required to explain why the implementer cannot bear the costs in the budget narrative and must also justify the input costs.
- Universities in high-income countries, generally defined as OECD member countries, can charge up to 10% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs. Non-university non-profits from any location and universities from mid- or low-income countries may charge up to 15% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs.
- We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under this initiative is low and that grantees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets as direct costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget narrative.
- Unallowable costs include those labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency.” Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget narrative.

Note: A letter or document stating approval of the proposal materials and budget is required from each ITRA. Please allow for an adequate amount of time to acquire this letter. Given the funds will be provided by the Paris School of Economics, this letter should indicate an understanding that the agreement is governed by French law and French will be the official language of the contract. Translation costs should be accounted for in the budget, if necessary. If it is not possible to receive the letter, please justify this in the budget narrative.

X. Terms and Conditions

General terms and conditions

1. This Call for Proposals is not and shall not be construed to be a contract, offer, or request for an offer. Those responding to this call receive no rights whatsoever as a result of their submissions. J-PAL will not have any express or implied obligations or responsibilities to those who respond and will not otherwise be bound by any terms or conditions, except to the extent set forth in a definitive, final, written grant agreement duly executed by the recipient(s) and J-PAL. There is no commitment by J-PAL that such a final grant agreement will be executed, even if J-PAL enters into negotiations with the applicants, proposed recipient(s), or his or her institution.
2. J-PAL in its sole and exclusive discretion may reject any or all proposals with or without notice or reasons, withdraw this call at any time before or after delivery of proposals, or if no proposal is accepted, abandon the call.
3. J-PAL further reserves the right in its sole and exclusive discretion to waive irregularities or defects in any proposal, but in no event will J-PAL have any obligation to do so. Moreover, J-PAL will not be responsible for errors or omissions by anyone submitting a proposal, and J-PAL shall be the sole judge of the responsiveness, appropriateness and completeness of any and all proposals.
4. J-PAL reserves the sole and exclusive right in its discretion to modify the timeline for decision-making or otherwise modify or amend this call as it deems appropriate.
5. All responses to this call become the property of J-PAL. Regardless of any markings identifying the proposal or its content as proprietary or confidential, J-PAL reserves the right to disclose or use any information contained in the proposals and other presentations responsive to this call. The review board making funding decisions includes external academics and policymakers, who will receive a copy of the proposals.
6. J-PAL is not responsible for and will not reimburse any costs incurred in submitting materials or information pursuant to this call or in otherwise responding to this call, including but not limited to evaluating, responding, providing follow-up, negotiating, and otherwise complying with it.
7. Applicants agree to be bound by the terms of their proposal for at least sixty days from the date such proposals are due, and otherwise agree to negotiate in good faith any other terms for a definitive arrangement if selected by J-PAL to do so.
8. Applicants certify that the work product they propose to create or use if they are a grant recipient will not infringe on or violate the intellectual property rights (including but not limited to trademarks, copyrights, patents, trade secrets, moral rights) or privacy rights of any person or entity. Applicants submitting proposals, materials, or information further certify that they have or will have such ownership or use rights in such work product sufficient to allow IPA to achieve its purposes as generally provided for in this call.
9. Grant recipients agree that, if requested by J-PAL, they will provide additional information about any subcontractors, graduate students, research assistants, and other third parties engaged by the grant recipient to provide services. J-PAL reserves the right in good faith to approve any such persons in order to ensure consistency with IPA's expectations of quality and character.
10. Applicants are required to disclose to J-PAL all funders of their project. Depending on the co-funders, an applicant may be ineligible for funding from J-PAL under this call. Further information may be requested from the DLI staff at J-PAL.

Grant Terms and Conditions

If an applicant is awarded funding by J-PAL, the grant agreement may include clauses similar to the following:

1. The Grant Recipient shall at all times comply with, and ensure that its employees, officers, contractors, subcontractors and other persons or entities involved with Partner or with the Project at all times comply with all requirements and obligations that apply pursuant to national and international laws and regulations. This shall specifically include, but not be limited to: (i) applicable data privacy law(s); (ii) any anti-bribery and anti-corruption laws and regulations that may apply; (iii) any applicable laws and regulations that prevent fraud, money laundering and financing of terrorism; and (iv) any Trade Sanctions imposed by the UN, EU or US, or any similar sanctions or restrictions.
2. Specific stipulations related to the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) in the United States:
 - a. The Grant Recipient shall comply with, and ensure that its implementing partners involved in the Project (if any) comply with, FCRA and its relevant requirements.
 - b. The Grant Recipient shall keep IPA informed of the validity, as well as any changes in the status, of its FCRA registration and that of any key implementing partners. No payments shall be made by the Grant Recipient to any India-based entity that is subject to the FCRA, in relation to any period in which the entity's FCRA registration is not valid or not active.
 - c. The Grant Recipient shall be fully responsible for (non-)compliance with FCRA and other applicable laws, and is liable for any damages, losses, expenses and claims arising out of non-compliance by Partner or its implementing partner(s).
3. The Grant Recipient shall respect human rights and shall abide by applicable local laws, environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, as well as internationally agreed core labor standards.