

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Digital Identification and Finance Initiative (DigiFI Africa)

This document contains an [Overview](#), [Budget Guidelines](#), an [Application Checklist](#), and a [Narrative Template](#) for Proposal Development grants. Please read this document carefully before submitting your proposal.

OVERVIEW

Submission instructions: To respond to this RFP, all applicants must first **submit the required Letter of Intent on WizeHive, using the relevant application link from the RFP webpage, and following the [Applicant Instructions here](#)**. Successful applicants will receive an invitation to proceed with their full proposal materials.

Proposal Development grants are intended to facilitate preliminary exploratory research, and funding typically supports costs related to researcher travel, meetings with implementing partners, other activities to develop/strengthen relationships with governments/implementers, and activities to help understand the policy goals and constraints. Please note, Proposal Development grants may also be used for activities intended to facilitate access to administrative data for designing or conducting an RCT. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to, negotiating data use agreements, conducting exploratory data analysis and cleaning, or setting up technical access mechanisms.

The expectation is that Proposal Development funds will be used to support costs related to developing a proposal for a pilot or full-scale randomized evaluation during a subsequent call for proposals. These projects usually last for less than 6 months.

Funding per Travel/Proposal development grant award: a maximum of \$15,000. These grants are provided on a cost-reimbursement basis. If you cannot bear the costs out of pocket, we recommend that you apply for a pilot grant.

Timeline: Funding requests should not extend beyond 2027 for now due to contracting limitations. Grantees must complete their project development work and submit final reports within one year of receiving the award.

BUDGET GUIDELINES

Survey and other in-country expenses: While designed for travel reimbursements, travel grants can in some cases be used to cover expenses for in-country costs such as hiring enumerators, procuring translation or transcription services, developing instruments, and others. If these expenses are in the budget, J-PAL will provide the forms necessary to document them with your award notice, and you can claim these expenses as a reimbursement once the travel is completed. **J-PAL is not able to directly reimburse survey firms or local organizations for**

these costs. If you need a fieldwork organization to be reimbursed for such work, we encourage you to reach out to digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org before finalizing your proposal materials to confirm whether we will need you to submit pilot proposal materials instead (to avoid requiring you to rework your proposal materials, thus slowing down award set up).

Please note: If your scope of work requires reimbursing your host organization (e.g. for fieldwork conducted with a partner such as focus groups or limited surveys) 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.** MIT now requires that at least one project PI be employed by the organization receiving the subaward and funds.

Guidelines for completing a Travel/Proposal development grant proposal budget:

Be sure to use the Travel/Proposal Development Budget Template on the [RFP release page](#), providing detailed notes in the column provided in the template):

1. Travel grants are paid as reimbursements. Travel/Proposal Development grants are for a maximum of \$10,000.
2. International travel: J-PAL will put you in touch with an MIT travel agent who can book international travel and charge J-PAL directly. If you choose to buy your own ticket, we will not be able to reimburse you until your flights have been completed.
3. J-PAL will only reimburse the lowest available economy/cabin/coach flights. Please review [J-PAL's travel reimbursement policies](#) before completing your budget.
4. Grantees must complete their work and submit final reports within one year of receiving the grant award letter. Expenses will be reimbursed upon submission of an expense report. All expenses must be claimed within 30 days of your return. Expenses should be supported by receipts whenever possible, and all expenses over \$50 must be supported by receipts.
5. **If your project includes human subject research:**
 1. **IRB Requirements:** MIT requires that the IRB determination must be held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT. The PI at the ITRA must be listed as the main PI on the IRB. If the institution does not have its own IRB, the institution must engage the services of a commercial IRB to review and provide oversight for the research activities. [Heartland](#) and [Solutions](#) provide review of international research and satisfy J-PAL's IRB requirements; fees can be found on their respective websites. Further information about this MIT policy can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Consult with J-PAL regarding including the cost of this commercial entity in the project budget.
 1. J-PAL requires that the reviewing IRB have IRB Organization (IORG) status with the US Office of Human Protections. [You can look up the IORG status of an IRB here.](#)
 2. **Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) Requirements:** If your project requires paying an organization directly, MIT requires that at least one project PI have an

official affiliation with the organization receiving the subaward.

6. **In most cases, J-PAL is not able to directly reimburse any individuals or organizations other than the grantees awarded the travel grant.**
7. **Please note that J-PAL Initiatives do not cover PI salaries with the exception of PIs who completed a PhD and are based at an academic institution in a middle- or low- income country.** There are no individual PI limits, but the total budgeted amount for LMIC researcher PI time in aggregate across all co-PIs should not exceed \$3,750 per award.
8. ***Allowable Direct and Indirect Costs***
 1. Unallowable costs include those labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency.” Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget narrative.
 2. *Medical insurance:* All grantees are required to provide proof of emergency medical insurance coverage before travel. As many universities provide this to their students, faculty, and staff at no cost, this is not a reimbursable cost under this award. J-PAL can provide information on affordable coverage if needed.
 3. *Per diem:* A per diem stipend of \$25/day-in-country can be claimed to cover food and miscellaneous expenses.
 4. Universities in high-income countries (according to the [World Bank classification](#)) can charge up to 10% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs.
 5. 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.
 6. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs 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.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Please complete all sections in the online portal by the full proposal deadline. You must upload several documents to complete your full proposal. All templates for these documents are provided at the [RFP release page](#) and listed below.

1. **Travel Narrative:** Guidance pertaining to the narrative prompts is included in the [Narrative Template](#) below.
2. **Proposal Budget:** Carefully review the Budget Guidelines in this document, and then use the matching excel template, [Proposal Development 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).
3. **Budget Narrative:** Detail the costs within the budget, referring to the Budget Guidelines above, in a Word document with the title [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget Narrative].doc(x). This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget -- i.e. notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.
4. **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:

- a. (*optional*) a letter from any implementing partner(s) indicating the details of their commitment or willingness to engage in discussions to partner on the research
- b. (*required*) a letter/document stating the proposed grant host institution's approval of the proposal materials (if anything beyond PI travel is included in the scope of work).

5. Validation and Test Accuracy data: Proposals that include **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** or **any new specialized technology should include validation and test accuracy data in the proposal**, showing that the technology successfully does what it intends.

NARRATIVE TEMPLATE

The text provided below each bolded subsection helps provide guidance on what the Initiative Board is looking for to effectively evaluate your proposal.

Primary Eligible Researcher

Please identify one researcher who is eligible for J-PAL Initiative funding. This may be the principal PI and/or any eligible co-PI. Details for only one primary eligible researcher are required in cases where there's more than one eligible researcher. Other PIs who are eligible can be added as co-PIs.

PI Eligibility Category

Indicate how the researcher is eligible for J-PAL Initiative funding.

PhD Student Applicants

If you are a PhD student, please indicate the J-PAL-affiliated researcher who serves or will serve as an advisor on your dissertation committee.

Organization Name of Eligible Researcher

Please tell us the name of the organization the eligible researcher (i.e., the professor or PhD student) is affiliated with.

Organization Type of Eligible Researcher

Organization Website of Eligible Researcher

Country Where Organization of Eligible Researcher is Based or Headquartered

Team Members & Roles

Please add all your project team members and indicate their role(s) on the project/application below.

Role options are: Applicant; Primary PI; Co-PI; PI at Institute to Receive Award; Reporting Contact; Secondary Reporting Contact; IRB Contact; Finance Contact; Collaborator; Contact for Contracting (e.g., grant manager or research administrator); Other (please specify role or title). If you are the applicant and a PI (or another role), indicate so by adding yourself as an applicant and then again as a PI. As the applicant, you will be receiving all notifications related to this application.

PI Certification

1. I certify that any listed eligible researchers have agreed to be active, engaged, and responsive PIs or advisors on this project. Eligible researchers who are involved have confirmed they will be dedicated to guaranteeing quality control on all aspects of this research and that their participation is not merely to provide access to resources and funding to other project team members who would otherwise be ineligible.
2. I certify that all eligible researchers are up to date on reporting for all existing grants, across all J-PAL initiatives.

Demographic Information

J-PAL is collecting information about all project teams, including demographic information, to better understand and support our research network. As the applicant, we kindly ask that you send the language and [link](#) included below to all PIs/Co-PIs on your proposal research team.

Provide your proposal name and each member's role (as you listed them on the application) when you send out the blurb. Please complete the “Team Member and Roles” section first before sending out the email(s) so that your team members are already in the system.

Completion of this step is required for all primary investigators on your research team. If you have any technical problems with completing this step please email help@povertyactionlab.org or the initiative team directly.

Feel free to cut and paste this suggested language in an email to send to the PIs and Co-PIs on your team:

J-PAL is collecting information about all project teams, including demographic information, to better understand and support our research network. J-PAL is requiring all PIs and Co-PIs on our research team to complete this [short form](#). This data will only be accessible in disaggregated, identifiable form to select J-PAL staff. Aggregate, anonymized data will be used to report to key partners such as donors and may be included on our website.

Demographic Information Confirmation

Please confirm that every PI/co-PI has completed the questions in the above-linked survey. Your submission will not be considered until this has been completed. Check here to indicate that all PIs/co-PIs have completed this survey.

Full Title of Proposal *[30 words max]*

Past and Future Submissions

Have you submitted or do you plan to submit this LOI and proposal to any other J-PAL Initiative RFP?

Details about Past and Future Submissions

If you answered yes above, please state which initiative(s), year/season of RFP, and the name of the LOI/proposal you submitted or plan to submit. Example: GI Spring 2019 Using Mobile Phones to Improve Service Delivery. Are the PI team, context, and research question the same as in the previously submitted proposal? Please explain whether the project received funding and what type of funding it received (Travel/Proposal Development, Pilot, RCT, Scale). Additionally, please explain how the project has progressed since it was last submitted to [blank initiative], and explain how you addressed the feedback that was provided with your last submission. *[350 words max]*

Funding Amount

Amount of requested funding in USD.

Proposed Period of Performance Project Start Date

What is the proposed start date for this J-PAL grant's subaward activities?

Proposed Period of Performance Project End Date

What is the proposed end date for this J-PAL grant's subaward activities?

Abstract

Write a study abstract, including the project description, research question, and intervention or treatment to be evaluated. Discuss the project's technical design, what is going to happen during the project, the practical value of your project, the conceptual value of your research, and the distributional implications of your work. Provide context about proposed partners and a timeline. Please note that this abstract will be added to the Initiative's webpage if the project receives funding. *[250 words max]*

Research Focus Areas and/or Cross-Cutting Themes

Please indicate which Initiative focus areas or themes your proposal relates to; these are described in detail in the RFP materials.

Explanation of Focus Areas and/or Cross-Cutting Themes

If your proposal does not cleanly fit into any of the options listed, select “other” and describe why your proposal is a fit for the initiative. *[250 words max]*

Initiative Alignment

Please briefly describe how the project aligns with the initiative’s research focus areas and/or cross-cutting themes. *[250 words max]*

Existing Research Project

Are you applying to fund additional research as part of an existing research project previously funded by J-PAL (e.g., a second proposal development grant continuing from a prior proposal development grant, a pilot grant building on a travel/proposal development, a full RCT building on a pilot, etc.)?

Existing Research Project Details

If yes, please provide the title and/or J-PAL grant number of your previously funded project.

National Location

In which country or countries will your research or travel take place?