J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB
AFRICA

DigiFI Africa Request for Proposals: Proposal Development Grant Guidelines
The Digital Identification and Finance Initiative in Africa (DigiFI Africa)

INSTRUCTIONS

All applications are **reviewed on a rolling basis**. Proposals for proposal development funding consists of two stages:

> **Step 1:** Please fill out the [pre-proposal form](). We will respond to that within 3 weeks and let you know if you should submit a proposal.

> **Step 2:** On receiving a positive response to the pre-proposal form from the DigiFI team, please fill out this DigiFI Application form which we will send to you via email. Please see the guidelines below.

Applications for proposal development grants consist of (i) an application form, which includes a cover sheet and narrative; (ii) a budget form; and (iii) for graduate students, a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or DigiFI Africa invited researcher who serves as an adviser on the applicant's dissertation committee. These materials should be submitted to digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org.

All J-PAL research affiliates, DigiFI invited researchers, J-PAL postdocs, [African scholars](), and PhD students with a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher adviser are eligible to apply for a proposal development grant.

African Scholars: Some of the research funds will be earmarked for African Scholars[1]. Resident African Scholars (researchers who have completed their PhD (in economics or a related field) and who are based at an academic institution based in Africa) AND non-resident African Scholars (researchers who (a) have completed high school in Africa, (b) have completed their PhD in economics or a related field, and (c) are based in an academic institution outside of Africa) are eligible to apply for the Proposal Development grant. Targeted mentorship will be provided to resident and non-resident African Scholars who receive funds from the Initiative. Mentors will advise the scholar throughout the project, and the Scholar will be responsible for developing a collaboration plan with the mentor. Mentors can include any J-PAL affiliate or the Research Advisor at J-PAL Africa. In addition, the Initiative co-Chairs and postdoc will additionally be available for providing support. African Scholars who do not currently have a mentor can apply to be matched with one after their projects are selected by DigiFI Africa.

NARRATIVE

Proposal Development grants are intended to facilitate very preliminarily, 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.

---

[1] Researchers do not have to be affiliated with the J-PAL network or be a special invitee, but should have a strong interest in randomised control trials and willingness to build capacity in this research technique.

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 Proposal Development Grant award: a maximum of $10,000. The typical grant is $5,000 for one researcher. PIs should use the specific budget template in their submission (see details in the Budget Guidelines section, below).

Timeline: Grantees must complete their proposal development work and submit final reports within one year of receiving the award.

Proposal Narrative submission requirements: The narrative should not exceed two pages in length (excluding the COVID-19 section), and should include:

1. *A concise statement of topic.* These grants are intended to facilitate very preliminary, exploratory research, so proposals need only address the general topic of interest and current ideas on how the question might be explored through a pilot and a randomized evaluation in the future. They do not need to include a detailed program or evaluation design, but should clearly indicate how this grant will help the research team develop a strong DigiFI Africa proposal in a future competition, including a discussion of the project's connection to key topics in the Framing paper. If there is any survey component, please explicitly include the number of individuals surveyed.
2. *COVID-19 comment:* In approximately half a page, please:
   a. Note any elements of the project that relate to COVID-19;
   b. Describe to what extent findings from your intervention may be generalizable beyond a COVID-19 context;
   c. Describe any COVID-related risks to the feasibility of the project and how you will prepare for and mitigate these risks.
3. *Proposed partners*, if available, including J-PAL regional offices, IPA country offices, Government Ministries, and other organizations you plan to work with for both program implementation and evaluation. Researchers are expected to have started a conversation with Government Ministries and are interested in developing a relationship with these partners. Strong ties to implementing partners, and documents in support of these relationships (such as letters of support/MoUs) are viewed favourably.
4. Clearly indicate the *scope and sequencing* of particular proposed activities (GANTT charts or other list or table-based timeline formats are acceptable).

BUDGET GUIDELINES

Guidelines for completing a Proposal Development grant proposal budget: Proposal development grants are intended to support costs related to PI travel and project scoping activities.

Please keep the following in mind when developing your budget (and be sure to use this template, providing detailed notes in the column provided in the template):

1. Travel costs are generally paid as cost reimbursements. Proposal development grants are for a maximum of $10,000. The typical grant is $5,000 for one researcher. Please note UCT will only reimburse economy class flights.
2. <u>International travel</u>: We will not be able to reimburse you until your flights have been completed.
3. <u>Per diem</u>: A per diem stipend of $20/day-in-country can be claimed to cover food and miscellaneous expenses.
4. <u>Survey and other in-country expenses</u>: Proposal development grants can be used to cover expenses for in-country costs such as hiring enumerators, procuring translation or transcription services, developing instruments, and others.
5. <u>Other expenses:</u> Other expenses will be reimbursed upon submission of an expense report. Expenses should be supported by receipts whenever possible, and all expenses over $50 <u>must</u> be supported by receipts. All expenses must be claimed within 30 days of completion of the project. examples of these expenses are listed below:
   a. Materials and Supplies
   b. PPE (Facemask, Sanitizer, Hand gloves) expense
   c. Local travel: In-country and getting to/from airports
   d. Expenses related to the successful execution of the project with a strong motivation in notes
6. <u>Medical insurance</u>: All grantees are required to obtain 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.
7. <u>African Scholar's salaries</u>: DigiFI does not allow for PI salaries in proposal development grant budgets.
8. <u>Expenses not allowed:</u> J-PAL is not able to cover travel or trip protection insurance, lost luggage insurance, incidental expenses, or grantees' time if they are affiliates or invited researchers. In most cases, J-PAL is not able to directly reimburse any individuals or organizations other than the grantee's awarded the travel/proposal development grant.
9. Grantees must complete their proposal development work and submit final reports within one year of receiving the award.

LETTER OF SUPPORT GUIDELINES

Please provide the following letters of support along with the proposal.

1. Government letters of support are strongly encouraged but are not required for Proposal Development Grants. It is expected that researchers have started a conversation with Government Ministries and are interested in developing a relationship with these partners.

2. A letter from the receiving institution of the award is required to show that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget. If the organization allows you to submit your proposal without such a letter (due to time constraints or some other reason), please note this on the Proposal Cover Sheet (under the box for Receiving Institution).

3. To be eligible, PhD students must have a J-PAL affiliate or DigiFI Africa invited researcher on their thesis committee. This adviser must provide a letter of support and indicate willingness to remain

involved in a supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project. Letters can be included in the applicant's submission packet or sent directly to digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org

4. African scholars[2] are required to submit a mentor agreement from their mentor prior to the disbursement of funds. Agreements are not required for the application but will need to be submitted prior to the disbursement of funds. As mentioned, DigiFI will help match African scholars with mentors where required.

African Scholars are strongly encouraged to reach out to the DigiFI staff prior to the application deadline to discuss the general direction of your proposed idea.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit an email with the following attachments to digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org:

1. A cover sheet and 2-page narrative (11pt font) saved as a single Word or PDF file titled [PI Name]_[Topic Name].docx (.pdf)

2. A completed budget form, saved as a single Excel file titled[PI Name]_Budget.xlsx

3. *(PhD students only)* A letter of support from an adviser who is a J-PAL or DigiFI Africa-invited researcher saved as a PDF file, or the adviser may send the letter of support directly to digifiafrica@povertyactionlab.org

4. *(Resident and non-resident African scholars only)* Please attach your CV, saved as [African scholar name_CV.pdf] and complete the second page of the cover letter.

The deadline for submissions is rolling until further notice.

---

[2] This includes both resident and non-resident African Scholars.

J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB
AFRICA

DigiFI Africa Cover sheet
Proposal Development Grant
Please note that all fields are required

Principal Investigator(s) and Institutional affiliation

CO-Investigator(s) and institutional affiliation

Advisor (If PI is a graduate student)

Title of Proposal	Country

PROPOSED TRAVEL DATES			
Start Date: (yy-mm-dd)		End Date:(yy-mm-dd)	

Proposed Partner(s)

Requested	$	TOTAL CO-FUNDED*	$

 * Please indicate the amount you have received in additional grants or funding for this research.

Additional information required for **resident and non-resident African Scholar applicants only**

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">**African Scholar checklist: Please confirm the following criteria for the lead PI. Please complete EITHER the Resident African Scholar eligibility checklist OR the Non-resident eligibility checklist.**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Resident African Scholar:**</td>
<td>**Non-resident African Scholar:**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❏ Lead PI is a researcher at an academic institution **in Africa**</td>
<td>❏ Lead PI is a researcher at an academic institution **outside of Africa**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❏ Lead PI has completed his/her PhD in economics or a related field</td>
<td>❏ Lead PI has completed his/her PhD in economics or a related field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❏ Lead PI completed high school in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">

❏ Does the project clearly define a pathway to a full randomised evaluation.
  ❏ For more information on the definition of a randomised evaluation see this [resource](#).
  ❏ For detailed support in better understanding randomised evaluations, we encourage Scholars to enroll in the J-PAL MicroMasters, especially the course Designing and Running Randomized Evaluations. Scholarships to cover the exam fee are available to African Scholars through DigiFI. Please register for the [African Scholars database](#) if interested.
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">**Google scholar account**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2"></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">**Nationality of African scholar**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2"></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">**Motivation for applying to DigiFI Africa**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2"></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">**Please indicate your willingness to engage with Initiative staff before funding decision**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2"></td>
</tr>
</table>

J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB
AFRICA

Please indicate your willingness to engage and participate in research mentorship programme with J-PAL Affiliate or selected academic
Do you have a mentor? (Mentors can include J-PAL Affiliates or Research Advisor at J-PAL Africa)
yes no (if not, we will match you with one)
If you do have a mentor, what is their name and which academic institution are they based?