

J-PAL's European Social Inclusion Initiative (ESII) RFP Round IV: Instructions for Full Study Applications

Please note that these instructions apply to full studies and add-on survey funding.

A complete application for pilots consists of (i) an application form - which includes a cover sheet and a project narrative; (ii) a timeline; (iii) a budget narrative; (iv) an itemised budget; (v) letters of support from implementing partners; and (vi) a budget letter of support or document from the Institute to Receive Award (ITRA).

Proposals are due on the **1st of November, 2024 at 6:00 PM Central European Time (CET)**. Please send your application documents to esii@povertyactionlab.org following the instructions below.

I. Full Study Overview

In essence, strong RCT proposal applicants will demonstrate:

- A clear research question that is clearly discussed in relation to the scope of the European Social Inclusion Initiative;
- A robust research design, well-defined research instruments, and sample size estimates justified by pilot data presented in the proposal and how specific available data informs detailed power calculations for any impacts you plan to measure;
- A feasible implementation plan;
- A strong partnership commitment from implementing organisations;
- A strong partnership commitment from implementing organisations (e.g., agreement to research design, sharing of costing information), including indications of the potential for significant scale-up of research findings by partners or scaling organisations.

Please refer to the section on evaluation criteria for a full overview of the proposal evaluation criteria.

Please note: if J-PAL has already funded part of, or precursors to, this project in a past competition round for any initiative, the project will not be eligible to receive additional funding unless some preliminary data (e.g. take-up rates from a pilot, etc.) from the previously funded work is available and shared in the proposal. You may submit this additional material as an addendum to your submission.

Funding per full RCT study: We are unlikely to be able to fund proposals over €175,000. In recognition that research in some locations or with some populations may be more costly, budgets over the €200,000 cap can be considered with appropriate justification. We expect projects of various sizes, and will carefully check whether the budget size accurately reflects the scope of work proposed.

Timeline: Funding requests should not extend beyond the **31st of December, 2028**.

II. Full Study Application Checklist and Guidelines

The following documents will be required for your application to be considered. For each of these items, you will find guidelines in the sections below.

Proposal Narrative	Required	Use the Pilot Proposal Narrative Template and save as a pdf document with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name][Narrative].pdf
Proposal Budget	Required	Use the Budget Template and save as a single Excel file with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget].xls(x)
Budget Narrative	Required	Save as a pdf document with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name][BudgetNarrative].pdf
Timeline	Required	Use the Timeline Template and save as a pdf document with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name][Timeline].pdf
Letter(s) of support		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of support from each implementing partner 	Required	[PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Organisation Letter of Support].pdf
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A budget letter of support or document from the ITRA 	Required	[PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of ITRA/Organisation Letter of Support].pdf
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [PhD candidates applying for funding] Letter of support from 	Required	[PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Supervisor Letter of Support].pdf

affiliate/invited
researcher supervisor

Please submit your application to esii@povertyactionlab.org by the full proposal deadline on the **1st of November, 2024 at 6:00 PM Central European Time (CET)**. You must attach all documents for your proposal to be considered as complete. Incomplete proposals will not be reviewed. All templates for these documents are provided on the [RFP webpage](#) and instructions for each one are included below.

Proposal Narrative Guidelines

Please use the Full Project Proposal Narrative Template that can be found [here](#). Apart from compiling the cover sheet you will be asked to answer the following questions. Please ensure that your submission is in 11-point font and does not exceed the word limit.

- **Abstract:** A 100-150 word abstract of the study, which will be added to the ESII webpage if the project receives funding. 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 150 words)

- **Problem Statement and Motivation:** To motivate the research, clearly state the social inclusion problem your project aims to tackle and how your proposed research project can help address this challenge. This should be policy-oriented and clearly state how the policy problem you are addressing falls within the scope of ESII activities.

(Suggested word count: up to 200 words)

- **Unique contribution to the literature:** Succinctly list and bold the specific research question(s) you seek to address and clearly articulate what knowledge gap are you addressing and how will it advance the field. Please explain the value of this full-scale randomised evaluation in providing a unique scientific contribution. Note that the full reference list (to be provided at the end of the Narrative document) does not count towards word counts.

(Suggested word count: up to 200 words)

- **Description of the treatments(s), expected profitability, and hypothesised impacts:** Describe the intervention or mechanism to be evaluated and the theory of change that motivates your investigation. Please clearly articulate how you plan to test for the above research questions. In answering this section you can consider:
 - Whether you expect impacts to vary across geographic region, gender, age, population, or context.

- Include preliminary, pilot, or other available descriptive data in support of your hypotheses, models, and/or theories of change.
- *Please note: This is particularly important if ESII has already funded a precursor or some part of this project, given we will not provide additional funding until we see data from the activities we have already funded (i.e. take up, preliminary impacts from the pilot, etc.).*
(Suggested word count: up to 500 words)
- **Evaluation design:** Please describe in detail your evaluation design. Details can include but are not limited to:
 - What are the units of randomisation and analysis (e.g. individual, household, village, etc.)?
 - What is the method of randomisation (e.g. lottery, phase-in, encouragement, etc.)?
 - What is the sample size? How would it be divided into treatment and control?
 - Do you expect attrition? How do you plan to mitigate it?
 - Do you expect spillovers? How do you plan to address/measure them?
 - Do you expect low compliance? How do you expect to mitigate this?
 (Suggested word count: up to 500 words)
- **Data collection and key outcomes:** Please describe succinctly your data collection plan and key outcomes measures of the study. Please include the data collection partner and your relationship with them.
 - What are your intermediate and final outcomes? How will these be measured?
 - When will you take measurements, and how frequently?
 (Suggested word count: up to 250 words)
- **Target population:** Please describe the target population(s) and describe how the targeting and engagement will take place.
 - Describe how the project plans to target individuals at risk of social exclusion.
 - Describe if and how the project plans to engage with hard to reach at-risk populations.
 (Suggested word count: up to 300 words)
- **Power calculations:** Describe your power of the research design in detail including minimum detectable effect size and why it is appropriate, take/up compliance, variance, clusters, observations per cluster, rho, etc. 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 conservatively estimated and, when possible, with a basis in some form of past field work (whether admin data of ongoing operations, a previous pilot, etc.) You may also attach tables and figures.

- What is the minimum detectable effect size? Why do you believe this is an appropriate size?

(Suggested word count: up to 500 words)

- In-country partner(s): 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. Your letter(s) of support should support this description. Please describe 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.

- 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 organisations.
- Is there indication that partners or other involved stakeholders would be interested in interim outputs or final results?

(Suggested word count: up to 300 words)

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

(Suggested word count: up to 200 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 risks, 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 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: up to 300 words)

- **Project costing exercise:** Please describe the research team's plan for how they will gather, interpret and share programme implementation cost data. 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 programme/intervention in question. Please use this section to outline the rationale of your approach to cost-effectiveness analysis in light of this reporting requirement.
 - What types of cost data do you anticipate collecting?
 - How will you partner with those organisations and staff responsible for implementing the intervention to understand and report the programme's implementation cost?
 - 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?

(Suggested word count: up to 300 words)

- **Potential for scale-up, evidence dissemination plan and cost effectiveness:** Please describe how the research team plans to engage in the dissemination of the research results to a non-academic audience, as well as the potential for scale-up, including any planned cost-effectiveness analysis.
 - Discuss how this research will lead to generalisable insights, and why this project goes beyond a specific place based policy or programme evaluation.
 - 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?
 - Discuss any planned cost-effectiveness analysis and the data that will be required for it. 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?

(Suggested word count: up to 300 words)

- **Data and working paper publication:** Discuss how the data and findings from the evaluation will be made available outlining a plan to register in the AEA registry or similar, produce a pre-analysis plan, and publish data in an open-access, online database

at the end of the evaluation. Registration and data publication are required for all supported projects, and pre-analysis plans are highly encouraged.

(Suggested word count: up to 200 words)

Budget Guidelines

It is your responsibility that your budget follows your host institution's policies for costs. As part of your proposal, you must submit a letter from the institution to receive the award that states that they have reviewed your proposal and accepted your budget. You should contact them in advance to make sure you are aware of their policies for proposal review and give them enough time to meet the proposal deadline.

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. The Paris School of Economics (PSE), which is the institute which will process the awards, requires that there is a subawardee PI at the ITRA who will be responsible for overseeing the work on the ground.

Proposal Budget Guidelines

Carefully review the guidelines below, 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) to attach to your application. To reduce processing time, please keep the following in mind when developing your budget:

- Please submit the budget in euros.
- Applicants should review J-PAL best practices on questionnaire design and data collection/management in the [J-PAL Research Protocol Checklist](#), to ensure they have budgeted for expenses associated with piloting and surveyor training, survey translation, field spot checks, and back checking.
- Projects which have secured or will require co-funding for their project should complete both Excel sheets in the Budget Template, i.e. both “Total Project Budget” (overview over all costs required to complete your project) AND “Initiative Budget” (what you are requesting from ESII) templates. If the project has other funders, the proposal should clearly explain the marginal contribution of the requested funds from ESII 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 230 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, upon signature of the contract, 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 ESII does not cover PI salaries.
- Project implementation costs: For full research projects, implementation costs are expected to be borne by the project partners. However, under some circumstances, ESII can fund implementation costs where it is a marginal addition to an existing programme 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 labelled as “incidental”, “miscellaneous”, or “contingency”. Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget narrative.

Budget Narrative Guidelines

Detail the major costs within the budget, referring to the Budget Guidelines, compile in a pdf document with the title [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget Narrative].pdf to include in your proposal. This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget -- i.e. notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.

Timeline Guidelines

Please fill out the template provided outlining in detail i) key project milestones and ii) key policy and practice milestones. Save the timeline as a pdf document with the title [PI Last Name, First Name][Timeline].pdf.

Letter(s) of Support Guidelines

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 Organisation Letter of Support].pdf for upload to the portal:

1. 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 their willingness to share relevant programme 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.
2. Budget letter of support from ITRA: A budget letter of support or document stating that the proposed grant host institution, the Institute to Receive Award (ITRA), approves the proposal materials.
 - 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.

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. The Paris School of Economics (PSE), which is the institute which will process the awards, requires that there is a subawardee PI at the ITRA who will be responsible for overseeing the work on the ground.

3. Letter of support from affiliate/invited researcher supervisor: Graduate students applying as the primary PI are required to include a letter of support from a researcher adviser eligible for this call. The letter should comment on the merit of the project and indicate the adviser's willingness to remain involved in a supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project, committing to supervise the project closely.

A note on the Institution/IRB approval requirements if the proposal is accepted for award

Should your proposal be accepted for an award, the allocated funds will be disbursed through a grant from PSE to your host institution. In addition to your proposal, this process will require:

- **IRB:** We will further ask that you submit information on IRB approval(s) or exemption(s). If your project is awarded ESII funding, you will need to submit the IRB approval before receiving funding. It is mandatory for grantees to ensure that the project they implement has been reviewed by an IRB with status as an IRB Organisation (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. PSE will require proof of this prior to executing the award with your institution.
- **Formal submission approval of the proposal from your institution to the initiative:** If your proposal is accepted for award, the allocated funds will be disbursed through a grant from PSE to your host institution. In addition to your proposal, this process will also require your institution to formally approve and submit the proposal to the initiative, unless this has already been included in your proposal. Prior to finalizing the award with your institution, PSE will need verification of this approval.
- We aim to complete the subaward process within 60 days of receiving all your forms and IRB approvals. We can backdate the award to cover expenses from the Award Date or the date of IRB approval, whichever is later. If a project includes non-Human Subjects work prior to the IRB approval, please let us know following your award and we may in some cases be able to cover those costs (post-award, but pre-IRB) under the award.
- **J-PAL minimum must do for initiative funded projects:** Please note that all projects funded through J-PAL initiatives are expected to comply with the “minimum must do’s” detailed in [J-PAL's research protocols](#).

Note on key grant requirements if the proposal is accepted for award

1. **Trial registration:** Within three months from the start date specified in the proposal, grantees are required to register their trial with the AEA RCT Registry. The registration process encompasses 18 mandatory fields, covering details like your name and select IRB requirements, and is designed to be completed in under 20 minutes. Additionally, registrants have the option to provide further details, such as power calculations and a voluntary pre-analysis plan.
2. **Collecting and reporting programme cost data:** ESII RCT grantees are requested to collect and share detailed programme cost data following the [J-PAL Costing Guidelines](#).

See additional resources on [conducting cost-effectiveness analysis](#). The Narrative Template includes details on what to include in your proposal narrative.

Motivation: The goal of this exercise in each RCT proposal is to ensure that the research team has plans from the outset to collect cost data for all “ingredients” needed to implement a programme or intervention, excluding the costs of evaluating the impact of that programme. Policymakers often ask how much a programme or intervention costs, and collecting detailed cost data allows for cost-effectiveness analysis. This can assist policymakers when they are choosing how to allocate resources between different programmes or deciding to replicate or scale up a programme that is demonstrated to be effective¹.

Principles and expectations: While a rigorous cost-effectiveness analysis requires very granular data, J-PAL will provide grantees a basic cost collection template, alongside basic reporting templates, which helps researchers gather the figures for the various cost categories. The template includes a sheet to assist with calculation of a “total programme cost”, and a sheet to calculate high-level cost figures that are of greatest interest to policymakers. Your proposal to ESII should help us understand the potential for a very rough, back-of-the-envelope cost-effectiveness calculation. When planning your cost data collection and approach to cost-effectiveness analysis, you should consider not only the costs of any inputs offered to participants (e.g. seeds, equipment, etc.), but also the costs of facilities and utilities, implementation staff, transport, and any other costs required to conduct the programme. You may find it useful to consider the following questions when constructing your plan to collect relevant cost data:

- Are there costs in identifying the participant populations? (e.g. costs of doing a census, distributing flyers or other marketing materials, or holding information sessions necessary to implement the program.)
- Are there training costs for programme staff implementing the intervention?
- Are there costs borne by participants (consider opportunity costs, subsidised components of the programme, etc.)
- Are there activities that are reduced in size or discontinued as a result of this intervention being introduced? These might indicate cost savings from this intervention.
- Are there implementation monitoring costs involved, necessary to track progress or ensure compliance with plans to achieve effective implementation?

¹ For more information on comparative cost-effectiveness analysis, see: <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/resource/conducting-cost-effectiveness-analysis-cea>. If you have feedback on this exercise, the template, or the underlying rationale, please submit feedback [online](#).

3. Data publication: Grantees may be requested to share data collection instruments and methodologies with other grantees. Furthermore, grantees are required to publish data collected online no later than 18 months after completion of field collection of data. J-PAL Global's research team can provide assistance with publishing data, such as with preparing the data and code, replicating results and tables, and uploading data for publication. Researchers may request a delay in publication for up to five years. For questions regarding data publication requirements, please email research-resources@povertyactionlab.org.

III. 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 ESII staff at J-PAL.