

European Social Inclusion Initiative (ESII)

RFP Round V: Overview and Application Instructions

This document contains an Overview of ESII, Scope of the RFP, Eligibility criteria, Project types, Evaluation criteria, RFP timeline and submission process, and Instructions to apply. Please read this document carefully before submitting your proposal.

I. Overview

Launched in 2019, J-PAL's European Social Inclusion Initiative ([ESII](#)) aims to promote evidence-based policymaking in the area of social inclusion in Europe. To achieve this, ESII helps to generate scientific evidence on what works through impact evaluations and share the body of existing evidence on successful social inclusion policies with policymakers.

With support from Community Jameel, **J-PAL's European Social Inclusion Initiative has opened its fifth request for proposals** for randomised evaluations of social inclusion programmes or policies in Europe. Proposals are due on the **31st of October 2025 at 6:00 PM Central European Time (CET)**.

II. Scope

As defined by the [European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions](#), “social inclusion is a process that ensures citizens have the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live”. Poverty and social exclusion can take many forms in Europe. Beyond financial constraints, people may face different structural barriers in accessing quality education, employment opportunities, housing, physical, and mental health assistance, and social protection policies, as well as suffering from discrimination and marginalisation.

Social exclusion arises from complex, overlapping, systemic, and multi-dimensional causes, and can create enduring cycles of exclusion for individuals and communities as a whole. The complexity and multidimensionality of social exclusion emphasise the need to find effective strategies to promote the inclusion of vulnerable and underserved individuals and communities from the early stages of life to adulthood.

The initiative is open to all policies/programmes that can advance the understanding of social exclusion and promote social inclusion in Europe. Sectors of interest include, but are not

limited to, education, labour, health, social protection, and housing. In terms of target population, ESII focuses on programmes/policies targeted to individuals suffering from marginalisation and vulnerability (including [refugees](#), migrants, nationals with migrant backgrounds and belonging to ethnic minorities, among others), with a particular focus on children and youth. In terms of geographical focus, ESII works broadly across Europe.

III. Eligibility

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

Geographical eligibility

The European Social Inclusion Initiative accepts applications for studies in any European country.

Research team eligibility

J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, PhD-level J-PAL staff, and ESII invited researchers¹ are eligible to apply for pilots, full studies and add-on survey funding. PhD students, with support from an advisor who is a J-PAL affiliate or ESII invited researcher, are also eligible to apply.

PhD candidates who have a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher on their formal thesis committee. PhD candidates are eligible to apply for full evaluation grants and add-on survey funding (up to €50,000) as well as pilot grants.

Methodological eligibility

J-PAL will exclusively fund [randomised evaluations](#) under the Full Study grant and expect strong links to existing, ongoing, or future experimental research for all other grant types. Projects that receive pilot funding are welcome to apply for additional funding in future RFP.

Implementing organisations

The European Social Inclusion Initiative is a research fund that only funds impact evaluations and related research activities. Implementing organisations that wish to study the impact of their programmes 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 esii@povertyactionlab.org to learn more.

¹Select non-affiliated faculty who have been nominated, approved, and notified of their eligibility to submit proposals. Note: This request for proposals has been sent directly to researchers eligible to apply for ESII research grants. **Please do not circulate externally, given this restriction.** For graduate student applicants whose advisers are affiliated faculty, see the Additional Guidance for Graduate Student Applicants available on the RFP release page. If you have questions regarding your eligibility to participate, we welcome you to inquire by emailing us at esii@povertyactionlab.org. **Among those eligible to apply, note that all applicants are limited to being named (as PI or Co-PI) on a maximum of three proposals to ESII per 12-month period.**

Related initiatives

Please note that two J-PAL initiatives cannot simultaneously co-fund a proposal in overlapping RFPs. However, one initiative can award funding to a project that received funds from another initiative in the past.

Notes for All Award Types

- Note that any J-PAL affiliate, ESII invited researcher, or eligible PhD student can submit a maximum of three pilot or full-scale proposals within a 12-month period to ESII, either as a main PI or co-PI in the proposal.
- Applicants that are delinquent in their deliverables to ESII or other J-PAL initiatives may submit proposals, but will not be eligible to receive additional funding from any J-PAL initiative. You may submit applications to ESII, but your application will not be considered for funding until your deliverables become current.

IV. Project types

The European Social Inclusion Initiative can fund the following project types: pilot studies, full-scale evaluations, and add-on survey funding.

Pilot studies

Pilot studies may be awarded up to €50,000. ESII will accept pilots that have a clear research question and lay the groundwork for a full RCT project by assessing the feasibility of using a randomised evaluation to test a programme's impact. Proposals should explain how the pilot will lead to a randomised evaluation in the future.

Full-Scale evaluations

We are unlikely to be able to fund proposals over €175,000. Not only must the research question be clear, but applicants must also demonstrate a commitment from implementing partners, a method of randomisation, well-defined instruments, and sample size estimates. The expectation is that these projects will result in a paper publishable in a leading economics or political science journal.

Add-on survey funding

In an effort to build on existing research and promote cost-efficiency in project development, we also welcome proposals to add surveys to RCTs that have already been developed and rely primarily on administrative data for their main outcomes.

Please note that the instructions to apply for add-on survey funding are the same as the full study instructions.

Off-cycle proposals

ESII accepts off-cycle proposals for up to €50,000.

V. Achieving Impact

This initiative will be successful if it changes research, policy, and practice on social inclusion in Europe. Examples of impactful studies include those that challenge the conventional wisdom on a subject, especially the theoretical priors that academics, policymakers, and practitioners typically bring to the problem; those that inform changes to the studied programmes; those that generate evidence on under-researched contexts or topics; and those that identify scalable solutions.

To that end, in addition to publishing an academic journal article and presenting in academic fora, we expect grantees to engage meaningfully with their implementing partners, publish non-technical research summaries and briefs on the J-PAL website, participate in broader dissemination events convened by J-PAL, and engage in dialogues with policymakers or practitioners supporting or designing similar programmes². ESII staff will support grantees with many of these activities.

All supported full-scale evaluations (not pilots) will be required to collect and provide cost information on the intervention evaluated following J-PAL's costing guidelines and provided templates³. Cost-effectiveness analysis 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 effective.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated by a board of experts and academics against the following criteria.

Contribution/ Innovation	Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field? Does it answer new questions or introduce novel methods, measures, or interventions? Is there academic relevance? How does the study compare with the existing body of research? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying economic theories?
Policy relevance	Does the study address questions crucial to understanding pressing issues on social inclusion? Does it address the open research questions outlined in the European

² More information about expected policy and practice milestones can be found in the [Application Instructions](#) section.

³ More information about J-PAUL's approach to cost-effectiveness analysis can be found [here](#).

	Social Inclusion Review Paper? Will results from the intervention have broader implications? How, if at all, will the "lessons learned" have relevance beyond this test case? Is there demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? Is there potential for the implementing partner to scale up this intervention?
Technical design	Does the research design appropriately answer the questions outlined in the proposal? Are there threats that could compromise the validity of results? If so, does the proposal sufficiently address those threats? Are proposed indicators adequate to measure impact? Can expected outcomes and impacts be observed within the proposed study period and/or sample? What changes could the researchers make to improve the design? For full study proposals, are there sufficiently detailed power calculations?
Project viability	Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorisation or Human Subjects review? For pilots, do researchers describe how piloting activities would inform a full-scale randomized evaluation?
Policy implications	Will results from the intervention have broader implications? How, if at all, will the "lessons learned" have relevance beyond this test case? Is there demonstrated demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area?
Value of research	Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected lessons learned? Does the study leverage funding from other sources?
Geography	Is the study taking place in one or more European countries?

VII. RFP timeline and submission process

Timeline and submission process

Proposals are due on the **31st of October, 2025, at 6:00 PM Central European Time (CET)**. Applications should be submitted via Wize Hive (see [RFP webpage](#)). Specific instructions, checklists and guidelines for the different types of projects are available in the documents on the RFP webpage. Please consult these documents carefully before submitting your application.

Off-cycle proposals

While most of the funding will be disbursed through scheduled funding rounds, we understand that some research projects face significant time constraints and need to receive funding before the end of a regular funding round to make use of an unanticipated opportunity (e.g., a

newly-announced policy change that will go into effect soon, creating an opportunity for an evaluation). The maximum amount awarded to off-cycle proposals is €50,000. We encourage researchers in such situations to reach out directly to esii@povertyactionlab.org.

VIII. 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.