**GI MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH RFP**

**APPLICATION FORM AND INSTRUCTIONS – Fall 2023**

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# Background & Focus

J-PAL’s [Governance Initiative (GI)](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/governance-initiative) funds randomized impact evaluations of programs designed to improve participation in political and policy processes, reduce leakages in public programs, and strengthen state capacity.

**GI is launching an additional funding window in Fall 2023 to facilitate and sponsor multidisciplinary experimental research activities**.Grants of up to $30,000 will be awarded to research proposals that combine insights from applied economics and political science with those from other disciplines (including social sciences, humanities and, potentially, natural sciences) to answer pressing governance questions, with a preference for proposals incorporating theory, methods, and/or analytical frameworks drawn from psychology and behavioral science. We strongly recommend that approaches from other disciplines inform how research questions are formulated and answered, not just how inputs and outcomes are measured.

These grants will fund the following activities:

* *Type I:* Exploratory research, which may also include travel activities, to (a) address a general topic of interest within the field of governance and (b) propose ideas for how the topic might be explored through a future randomized evaluation that incorporates theory, methods, or analytical frameworks from disciplines outside economics and political science. Proposals do not need to include a detailed program or evaluation design.
* *Type II:* Additional research activities on top of an ongoing or recently completed randomized impact evaluation–including (but not limited to) the addition of a new survey module, treatment arm, or qualitative fieldwork–that draw from disciplines outside economics and political science.
* Both Type I and Type II activities can include other costs associated with promoting interactions and collaborations between researchers from different disciplines centered around the development of a research project in the governance space (including travel, but excluding PI salary costs).

Priority will be given to proposals authored by teams that include a researcher outside the applied economics space (this space includes PhD holders in economics as well as public policy, political science, or similar programs if their focus is on applied microeconomic methods). We also encourage proposals by eligible graduate students (see Eligibility section below). Successful grant proposals will be eligible to apply for larger pilot and full-scale grants during the Governance Initiative’s regular RFP process (see [GI RFP Overview](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/governance-initiative-request-proposals)).

# GI Research Priorities

GI’s research priorities are identified in the Governance Initiative Review Paper (full paper [here](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/review-paper/governance-initiative-review-paper); executive summary [here](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/review-paper/governance-initiative-review-paper-executive-summary)) which summarizes existing evidence in governance from primarily economics and political science, with an emphasis on field evaluations. **For this round, all multidisciplinary research proposals must relate to political participation**. If a researcher is uncertain about whether a research project is eligible for GI, please email [GI@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:GI@povertyactionlab.org).

# Eligibility

J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, GI invited researchers, and eligible PhD students are eligible to apply.[[1]](#footnote-1) *All proposals may include collaborators outside of this network.*

To be eligible, PhD students must have a J-PAL affiliate or GI 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 grant.[[2]](#footnote-2)

# Review Process

Proposals will be evaluated by the GI co-chairs and a panel of reviewers that reflects the breadth of disciplines represented in the proposals.

# Instructions

Applications for GI’s Multidisciplinary Research RFP must consist of (i) an application form, which includes a cover sheet and narrative; (ii) a budget form; and (iii) letters of recommendation where applicable (see Letters of Support section below). These materials should be submitted to GI@povertyactionlab.org by **5:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, October 5, 2023.**

# Narrative

The narrative should not exceed five pages in length, including appendices, and use 12-point font. It should include:

1. A concise statement of topic that discusses how the key research questions relate to the thematic priorities of the Governance Initiative, as outlined in the [Governance Initiative Review Paper](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/review-paper/governance-initiative-review-paper).
   1. **Proposals for exploratory research (Type I)** need only address the general topic of interest and current ideas on how the research question might be explored through a randomized evaluation that incorporates theory, methods, and/or analytical frameworks from disciplines outside applied economics and political science. They do not need to include a detailed program or evaluation design.
   2. **Proposals for additional components on top of ongoing research (Type II)** should clearly describe the ongoing evaluation and its proposed expansion and include:
      1. A 100-150 word abstract of the study, which will be added to GI’s web page if the project receives funding.
      2. A summary of the policy problem that motivates this research.
      3. A description of the treatment, evaluation design, target population, and implementing partners.
      4. Power calculations for full-scale randomized evaluations.
      5. A comment on whether the research proposal addresses gender issues in any way, including analysis disaggregated by gender. Please note that funded projects will be required to collect and report on gender-disaggregated data, as outlined in GI’s [RFP Overview](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/governance-initiative-request-proposals) document under the “Grant Conditions” section.
      6. A comment on whether the project has scale-up potential and whether the program costs and impacts may be suitable for a cost effectiveness analysis.
      7. A comment on whether you plan to publish data collected in an open-access, online database at the end of the evaluation. Note that data publication is required if the larger evaluation has received funding from J-PAL at the “full study” level.
2. Proposed partners, if available, including J-PAL regional offices, IPA country offices, or other organizations you plan to work with or currently work with for both program implementation and evaluation.
3. A discussion of how the proposal incorporates theory, methods, and/or analytical frameworks from disciplines outside applied economics and political science.
4. A comment on risks to research:
   1. Note whether you anticipate any risks, Covid-related and otherwise, during the course of the research, and how you will mitigate them.
   2. Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the study, and how does your team plan to address/overcome them? Are there any risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants and/or staff and if so, what are they?
   3. Has your team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

# Budget

Please submit a detailed project budget using the Excel template available [online](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/governance-initiative-request-proposals). Please keep the following in mind when developing your budget:

1. Grants are for a maximum of $30,000.
2. If a grantee plans to work with a J-PAL regional office or IPA country office, they should notify the organization prior to submitting a grant application, as these organizations may require applicants to budget for overhead or other expenses incurred. J-PAL can set up a contract to a partner organization, if necessary.
3. Please include detailed budget notes in the column provided in the template.
4. *Medical insurance*: All grantees are required to provide proof of emergency medical insurance coverage before any 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.
5. *Expenses not allowed*: J-PAL is not able to cover travel or trip protection insurance, lost luggage insurance, incidental expenses, or grantees’ time, with the exception of PIs based in an academic institution in a low-or-middle-income country. Grantees must complete their proposed work and submit final reports within one year of receiving the award.

# Letter of Support

**Type I proposals are not required to submit a letter of support from an implementing partner.**

**Type II proposals are required to submit a letter of support from the implementing partner on the underlying evaluation, as well as from any new implementing partners that will be included as a part of their new proposed research activities.**

**For both Type I and Type II proposals, if the main applicant is a graduate student,** theyare required to submit a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or GI invited researcher who serves as an adviser on the applicant’s dissertation committee. This letter should indicate the adviser’s willingness to advise the student throughout the project’s lifetime. Letters can be included in the applicant’s submission packet or sent directly to GI@povertyactionlab.org.

# Submission Instructions

Please submit an email with the following attachments to [GI@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:GI@povertyactionlab.org):

1. A coversheet and five-page narrative (12pt font) saved as a single Word or PDF file, titled *[PI Name]\_[Topic Name].docx (.pdf)*
2. A completed budget form saved separately as a single Excel file and a budget narrative, titled *[PI Name]\_Budget.xlsx*
3. Letter(s) of support from implementing partners saved as PDF files, if applicable.

The deadline for submissions is **5:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, October 5, 2023.**

# Requirements

If your proposal is accepted for award, the actual funds will be provided under a subaward from MIT to the “Institute to Receive Award” indicated on your coversheet. **Please note: MIT now requires that at least one project PI be based at or affiliated with the institutes to which award funds are allocated.** This will require, in addition to your proposal:

1. A formal letter of transmission from the Institute to Receive Award agreeing to the proposal and budget. This should be on the Institute to Receive award letterhead, and should follow or be similar to MIT's preferred language for Letter of Transmission, as follows:

***Option 1: Example language for Letter of Transmission when there is a PI at the ITRA****:* *(On ITRA letterhead)*

The [ITRA] is pleased to support the [Name of research] proposal and will plan on carrying out the work in accordance with the submitted budget. [Name of PI at ITRA] will serve as [ITRA's] Principal Investigator for this work. In this role, they are responsible for the implementation of this project in accordance with this proposal and with appropriate research and data protection practices. Please contact them with any concerns which may arise related to project implementation.

***Option 2: Example language for Letter of Transmission when there is no PI at the ITRA:*** *(On ITRA letterhead)*

[ITRA] is pleased to support the [Name of research] proposal and submitted budget. [ITRA] takes full responsibility for the appropriate and responsible conduct of the proposed research activities related to the scope of work for this project under the academic direction of the co-PIs: [Names of co-PIs plus their affiliation - eg: Jane Doe from Duke University]. Please contact me [*this will be the person who signs the letter*] with any concerns which may arise related to project implementation.

1. IRB approval, or exempt or non-human subjects determination letter from your IRB. It is the PI’s responsibility to obtain the IRB approval or exemption. MIT requires proof of IRB approval prior to executing the award with your institution and releasing funding. We also ask that you provide any additional IRB approvals along with copies of the IRB protocol and all approved consents and survey instruments.

**Process**

We aim to set up the subaward within 60 days of receiving all your forms. Assuming IRB approval is in place, we set the period of the award to start from the start date indicated on the submitted proposal.The process MIT follows for these awards is:

1. The GI Review Board sends official award notification letter.
2. If not already submitted, J-PAL requests your institution’s approval of the proposal and your institutional IRB approval.[[3]](#footnote-3)
3. MIT establishes a subaward to the institution to receive award.
4. Institute to receive award invoices MIT for expenses incurred for the project on a cost reimbursable basis.

1. Please note that GI invited researchers are nominated and reviewed on a yearly basis, with the review based on a nominee’s previous research with a particular emphasis on randomized evaluations related to governance. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If a student does not yet have an official thesis committee, they will need to submit a formal letter of confirmation from an affiliate or invited researcher to be eligible. The letter needs to explicitly state from the supervisor: “I am actively responsible for supervising this project/research and anticipate being on the student’s thesis committee.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In the case that IRB approval is not already in place when funding decisions are made, proposed start dates should reflect time needed to get IRB approval by the IRB of record, as well as time required to establish a reliance agreement and move forward in the subaward granting process. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)