J-PAL INNOVATION IN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE (IGI)

Proposal Guidelines (Winter 2026)

OVERVIEW

This document contains an Overview, Timeline, Proposal Types and Award Sizes, Budget Guidelines, and an Application Checklist for Innovation in Governments Initiative grants. Please read this document carefully before submitting your proposal.

Submission instructions: All applicants must first submit the required **letter of interest** in WizeHive, our grant management system (GMS) **by February 2nd, 11:59 AM (noon) US ET.** Successful applicants will receive an invitation to proceed with their full proposal materials. Applicants whose proposals are confirmed to be eligible are requested to submit **full proposals by March 11, 11:59 AM (noon) US ET.** The link to submit the LOI on WizeHive is here: https://j-pal.wizehive.app/program/igi-scaling

IGI proposals must be based on direct evidence from one or more randomized evaluations, at least one of which should have been conducted by a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher and/or funded by a J-PAL initiative.

1. Details on the one or more randomized evaluations on which the project is based must be provided in writing to the Review Board in one of the following formats, rank-ordered with the most preferred format noted first:
    a. Peer-reviewed published paper.
    b. Working paper that was released publicly at least six months before the date on which a project proposal is submitted to a J-PAL initiative for funding and/or the date on which a J-PAL office initiates a request to relevant decision-makers for approval to provide substantive scale support.
    c. Working paper that is meaningfully publicly available.
    d. Working paper not yet meaningfully publicly available.
    e. Any other document in any format.

2. Regardless of format, the written document should provide sufficient detail on the design and results of the one or more randomized evaluations on which the project is based to enable the relevant decision-makers to understand and assess the quality and strength of the evidence base underpinning the proposed scale project, including both internal and external validity. Contents that would be useful for the relevant decision makers to make their decisions include:
    a. Description of context, intervention, RCT design, and data sources.
    b. Balance tables.

c. First-stage regression results (if the design requires a strong first stage).
d. Intention to treat (ITT) regression results for at least one primary outcome, robust to different specifications, including standard errors for construction of confidence intervals.
e. Checks for and responses to any threats to randomization: differential attrition, spillovers, etc.
f. Interpretation of results - An assessment of and considerations relevant to the generalizability of the evidence to the context in which the proposed project is to take place.
g. Policy implications/recommendations.

TIMELINE

Release Date	January 12 2026 (Monday)
Required Letter of Intent (LOI) Deadline *All applicants will receive an *invitation to proceed* with full proposal development	February 2 2026 (Monday)
Full Proposal Deadline *By invitation*	March 11 2026 (Wednesday)
Anticipated Notification Date	May 2026

PROPOSAL TYPES & AWARD SIZES

Adapt
Up to approximately $75,000, suggested period of performance: one year.

This type of support is for projects where the government partner has identified the potential evidence-informed solution, but more work needs to be done before they can pilot a scalable version of it. These grants can be used to support the government partner in designing and adapting evidence-informed programs, policies, or delivery mechanisms to their context and systems so that they are ready to begin piloting it. This can include collecting data about the nature and extent of a problem to determine whether potential solutions are relevant to the context (i.e., conducting a needs assessment or scoping/feasibility study).

Policy Pilot
Between $100,000–200,000, suggested period of performance: two to three years.

This type of support is for projects where the partner is ready to pilot the evidence-informed solution but would like technical support in either setting up a pilot, making sure it maintains fidelity to the evidence in terms of the program features that drove positive impacts, and/or monitoring pilot implementation quality. These grants can be used to support the government partner in piloting a scalable version of an evidence-based solution, including: preparing for the pilot (training, program manuals, etc.), conducting process evaluations to monitor implementation quality, conducting path-to-scale research (including RCTs to evaluate interventions previously tested at a smaller scale or replication trials that test previously-evaluated interventions in new contexts), analyzing pilot results and if successful, helping the partner to make a case for further scale.

Scale
Up to approximately $300,000, suggested period of performance: three to four years.
This type of support is for projects where the partner has already piloted a version of the evidence-informed solution in their context (either in a randomized evaluation or policy pilot) or elsewhere, with sufficient justification that the solution has been responsibly adapted and contextualized. Based on previous results, the government partner would like to move forward with a scale-up and would like technical support in expanding the program more widely. This grant can support a range of activities that can include but are not limited to: conducting analysis to help them secure key approvals for the scale-up, ensuring implementation and rollout protocols maintain fidelity to the evidence in terms of the key program features that drove positive impacts, at-scale RCTs, and/or setting up low-cost partner-owned monitoring systems for programs at scale to report periodic progress to key decision-makers.

BUDGET GUIDELINES

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 accepted your budget.**[1]

Guidelines for completing a scaling proposal budget: Please submit a detailed project budget using the Budget Template provided on the RFP website. To reduce processing time, please keep the following in mind:
1. **Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) and Principal Investigator (PI) Alignment:**
    a. The ITRA must employ the PI formally named in the award. This formally-named PI will be the researcher responsible for the subaward agreement, as authorized by the Letter of Transmission. The formally-named PI must be:
        i. An employee of the ITRA, and
        ii. PI named in the Letter of Transmission, and
        iii. The main PI named in the IRB approval and IRB application

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[1] If the organization allows you to submit your proposal without such a letter (due to time constraints or some other reason), please describe this in the notes section. Please note that this applies to all projects, including those going through J-PAL and IPA offices. 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.

2. **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Requirements:**
   a. The IRB is held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT. The IRB must have [IORG](#) status and [FWA](#), or
   b. If the institution does not have its own IRB, the institution must engage the services of a commercial IRB or third party IRB to review and provide oversight for the research activities.
3. Please refer to the [Award Requirements and Setup Process](#) document available in the FAQ section of the RFP release page to review all of the Initiative's award requirements in detail as part of preparing your submission.
4. **Only projects with co-funding should complete both Excel sheets in the template,** i.e. both "Total Project Budget" AND "Initiative Budget" (i.e. what you're requesting from the Initiative) in the budget template. If the project has other funders, the proposal should clearly explain the marginal contribution of the requested funds from the Initiative.
5. Applications must include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget..
1. 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.
2. **Awards are paid on a cost-reimbursable basis.** However, MIT may agree to advance payments via a milestone payment structure to Institutes to Receive Award that are based in low- and middle-income countries on a case-by-case basis if requested by the research team. Please note that preparing an advance payment model requires additional time and additional coordination between MIT and the Institute to Receive Award.

Allowable Direct and Indirect Costs
1. **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.**
2. **Project Implementation costs are expected to be borne by the project partners.** However, under some circumstances, initiatives can fund implementation costs where it is a marginal addition to an existing program 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.
   a. 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 (e.g., if texting fees are requested as an implementation cost, the budget narrative should include a breakdown of how many texts are planned, the estimated cost per texts, number of people on a given campaign, etc.).
3. Universities in high-income countries (according to the [World Bank classification](#)) can charge up to 10% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs.
4. 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.
   a. Grantees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets as direct

costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget narrative.

5. Unallowable costs include those labeled as "incidental," "miscellaneous," or "contingency."
   a. Office Rent: Any requests for office rent should be explained in the budget narrative.

6. J-PAL will only reimburse the lowest available economy/cabin/coach flights. Please review J-PAL's travel reimbursement policies before completing your budget.

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.

1. **Proposal Narrative:** Guidance pertaining to the narrative prompts is included in the Application Questions and Review Criteria document. As part of the proposal narrative, you will be required to upload a research timeline.

2. **Reporting Requirements:** Project Costing Exercise (primarily for Policy Pilot and Scale awards and projects associated with planned or ongoing randomized evaluations): Grantees are requested to collect and share detailed program cost data following the J-PAL Costing Guidelines. **Please read these guidelines carefully to confirm that you are willing to adhere to these guidelines, as your submission assume you have**[2]. Your proposal should help us understand the potential for a very rough, back-of-the-envelope cost effectiveness calculation.

3. **Proposal Budget**: Carefully review the Budget Guidelines in this document, IGI Budget Template (available on the RFP website), 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).

4. **Budget Narrative:** Detail the major 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.

5. **Letter(s) of Support**: It is your responsibility to obtain a letter of support from the following, ensuring that the language meets the conditions as listed. The review board values the partner/institution/adviser confirmation of willingness to work with the research team in review of the proposals. **The initiative team will carefully check the language of each letter and that it has been received on time.** Please upload the file as a single PDF file with the title [PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Organization Letter of Support].pdf. If any of your letters are not in English, please upload a version that has been translated to English. Given that there can be changes to government and partner support, we request that letters are no more than six months old at the time of

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[2] 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.

submission.

a. **Letter of Support from Implementing Partner:** All projects are required to provide a letter of support from the government and any other implementing partners. Such letters should state:
   i.   The support for the activities proposed
   ii. How the partner plans to use the results of the research or other activities to support specific scaling decisions and strengthen policymaking. Any details about the potential reach of the scaled-up program.
   iii. How the partner sees a long-term partnership with J-PAL to be valuable.
   iv. What costs will be shared by the partner and an initial total budget amount (if exact costs are not available, then a broad commitment to pay for implementation or other costs is sufficient)
   v.   Willingness to share program implementation cost data with the project for the purpose of conducting program cost analysis.
   vi. **Note:** We understand that in some cases it may not be feasible or appropriate to have the partner include all of the items above in their letter. In such cases, please secure a more general letter of support and address the remaining points in your proposal narrative.

b. **Scale-Up Partner Letter of Support:** Applicants must also include letters of support from potential scale-up partners (if different from the implementing partner)

c. **Letter of Transmission:** Scaling grants are required to provide a letter or document stating approval of the proposal materials and budget from each proposed institute to receive award (ITRA). Please note that MIT policy states that the project PI needs to be at the ITRA and that the ITRA should provide the IRB (either using the Institute's IRB or a third party IRB). The Project PI must be the PI on the IRB.

d. **J-PAL Affiliate or Invited Researcher Letter of Support:** Please submit a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher. The template is available on the RFP website.

e. **Letter of Support from Relevant Regional Office**
   i. Submitting this letter is compulsory for project countries where there is a J-PAL office responsible for the country. Please follow the relevant instructions below:
       1. If the applicant is not itself a J-PAL office: A letter from the relevant regional J-PAL office that has responsibility for the project country. Please email the Executive Director from the relevant J-PAL office **at least 3 weeks in advance of the RFP deadline** to ensure that the office has enough time to produce their letter of support, which requires a thorough review of the proposal and budget. The J-PAL regional office can use the

template for their letter of support available on the [RFP website](). J-PAL offices may be able to provide support in facilitating connections to policymakers, researchers, supporting key policy partnerships, and implementing technical assistance. If this is something you are interested in, please discuss it with the relevant J-PAL Executive Director as part of your J-PAL office letter of support to discuss what kind of support may be available. Any relevant J-PAL office support should be included in the project budget.

2. If a J-PAL office is the applicant: IGI still requires the J-PAL Executive Director from the applying office to submit a letter of support to signal their support and capacity for the project.

3. Contact information of J-PAL Executive Directors:
    a. South Asia: Shobhini Mukerji, smukerji@povertyactionlab.org
    b. Africa: Matt Edmundson, medmundson@povertyactionlab.org
    c. Latin America and the Caribbean: Paula Pedro, ppedro@povertyactionlab.org
    d. Southeast Asia: Lina Marliani, lmarliani@povertyactionlab.org
    e. Middle East and North Africa: Ahmed Elsayed, elsayed@povertyactionlab.org
    f. Europe: Cillian Nolan, cnolan@povertyactionlab.org

ii. <u>If there is no J-PAL office in the region, (e.g. none of J-PAL's six regional offices cover China), you do not need a letter of support from a J-PAL office.</u> However, since one of the primary goals of IGI is building long-term relationships between researchers and governments, the hurdle to get funding from IGI will be higher in such cases where there are no J-PAL offices to help institutionalize the relationship with the government partner. Therefore, the proposal should be sure to state clearly how the project will help inform policy and institutionalize the relationship with the government beyond this specific project.

6. **Existing/Underlying Evidence** - Please upload the corresponding written document(s) about the existing/underlying evidence on which your scaling proposal is based. Additional information on required documentation is outlined in the [RFP Overview]() available on the [RFP website](). Note: All IGI projects must be based on evidence from one or more randomized evaluations, at least one of which should have been conducted by a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher and/or funded by a J-PAL initiative and the results of which must be available in writing (preferably in the public domain).