

J-PAL INNOVATION IN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE: COVID-19 OFF-CYCLE WINDOW

March 20, 2020

Dear J-PAL affiliated researchers, IGI invited researchers, and J-PAL & IPA offices,

IGI is committed to doing what we can to help government partners in developing countries reduce the spread and negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, even if we can only help in modest ways. In case governments have reached out to you for short-term, quick-response analysis or technical assistance related to COVID-19, we want to help ease the financial constraints of taking up these projects.

IGI is immediately accepting time-sensitive, off-cycle proposals for up to US\$25,000 for short-term, quick-response technical assistance and/or analysis for government partners that has the potential to mitigate the spread and/or consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in low- and middle-income countries, particularly for low-income and other vulnerable communities. **Applicants should submit the short application form [here](#).** The IGI Co-Chairs will review any applications on a rolling basis starting **Friday March 27** and aim to issue funding decisions within 1-1.5 weeks.

This includes projects that ultimately aim to:

- Reduce COVID-19's spread and/or increase adoption of WHO-recommended prevention behaviors like handwashing and social distancing
- Reduce COVID-19's broader consequences on human health and well-being, including economic and social costs for individuals, families, workers, and businesses, for example by increasing access to or take-up of social protection programs like cash transfers, unemployment assistance, assistance to small businesses, free preventive health products and services, health insurance, telemedicine, etc.

Applications must follow [J-PAL's COVID-19 response guidelines](#) and must not increase in-person interactions. All research and technical assistance must take place remotely via phone, email, video calls, etc. and have necessary IRB approvals for any research components.

Funding can be used to support:

- Technical assistance to governments to pilot, adapt, and scale evidence-informed interventions found effective in past RCTs that don't increase in-person human interaction, such as interventions that leverage online or phone assistance or digital transfers
- Rapid descriptive and implementation research using existing administrative data and phone/online surveys, and when possible, quick evaluations or A/B tests of government interventions that don't increase human interaction. These can also include:
 - Adding questions to existing phone and online surveys to track COVID-19 response and behavioral change
 - Curating, analyzing, and sharing existing data quickly so that it can be used for decision-making by governments or other organizations responding to COVID-19

We will prioritize projects that can provide results and/or actionable information to government partners **quickly** in a matter of weeks or months (thus the small funding cap). If your budget is larger, please apply and we can assess whether a larger grant of up to \$50,000 is possible based on the project’s potential.

Thank you and we look forward to receiving your proposals.

Please direct any and all questions to our staff team at IGI@povertyactionlab.org.

Please stay home, safe, and healthy.

Warm regards,

Abhijit & Iqbal, IGI Co-Chairs

Projects will be reviewed using IGI’s existing evaluation criteria:

Policy relevance	Does the proposed project address problems or opportunities that are important to the government partner?
Scale-up potential	Is there potential for the government to scale up the innovation in the future and does it have the potential to improve the lives of people living in poverty?
Evidence-informed innovation	What is the strength of the existing evidence on the effectiveness of this type of innovation? Were the effects economically meaningful in improving the lives of people living in poverty?
Locally grounded	Did the proposal make a clear case for why the innovation may be relevant or appropriate for the proposed context based on descriptive data, knowledge of local systems and institutions, and evidence from completed randomized evaluations?
Commitment to use evidence in decision-making	Is there demonstrated demand from the government partner to use evidence from the proposed technical assistance and/or past research to make a key decision about expanding the innovation?
Viability of the partnership	Is the relationship with the government and other partners strong and likely to endure through the entire life of the project?
Implementation risks	Are the risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants minimal? How will the project ensure that in-person interaction will not increase?
Institutional support	What local institutional support is available to help ensure successful completion of the project (e.g. J-PAL or IPA office, strong local staff)?
Level of researcher Involvement	What is the level of researcher involvement in the proposed project?
Crosscutting themes	Will the project address and generate useful insights about one or more of IGI’s crosscutting themes of implementation science, cost analysis, and/or tech- and data-enabled program delivery and monitoring ?