INNOVATION IN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE (IGI)

Application Form and Instructions

# INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals for IGI funding consist of (i) an application form, which includes a cover sheet and narrative; (ii) a budget form; and (iii) letters of support. These materials are available on the [IGI’s webpage](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/innovation-government-initiative) and should be submitted via email to [igi@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:igi@povertyactionlab.org) by **5:00 PM ET on Friday, December 3, 2021.** Please note that applicants are required to submit a short letter of interest (LOI) and receive an email notification of eligibility prior to submitting a full proposal. LOIs are due by 5:00 p.m. US ET on Thursday November 4, 2021.

Questions? Please reach out to [igi@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:igi@povertyactionlab.org).

# COVERSHEET AND NARRATIVE

## SECTION: COVERSHEET

Please note that all fields are required.

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| TITLE OF PROPOSAL | | | | | COUNTRY |
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| J-PAL AFFILIATED/INVITED RESEARCHER(s) | | | | | |
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| J-PAL REGIONAL OFFICE | | | | | |
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| NON-J-PAL CO-PI(s) (Institutional Affiliation) | | | | | |
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| ☐ I agree | *By checking this box, all J-PAL affiliates and invited researchers who are co-PIs on this project certify that they will be active, engaged, and responsive PIs dedicated to guaranteeing the quality control on all aspects of this project; and that their participation in this project is not merely to provide access to J-PAL resources and funding to anyone else working on this project who is neither a J-PAL affiliate nor invited researcher.* | | | | |
| GOVERNMENT PARTNER(S) | | | CONTACT (NAME, EMAIL, PHONE) | | |
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| **OTHER PARTNER(S)** | | | **CONTACT (NAME, EMAIL, PHONE)** | | |
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| CO-FUNDER(S) | | | FUNDED AWARD (PI, Project Title, Amount) | | |
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| **Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any other J-PAL funding initiative?** | | | | | |
| ☐ Yes  ☐ No | | | If yes, which initiative and when? | | |
| IGI FUNDING REQUEST *(Check all the boxes that correspond to your application)* **Sector(s)**:  *Education* ☐ *Health* ☐ *Social Assistance* ☐ *Other* ☐, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Special area of interest: Cash transfers and cash benchmarking**:  *Yes* ☐  *No* ☐  **Cross-cutting theme(s)**:  *Technology and data-enabled delivery and monitoring* ☐ *Implementation Science* ☐ *Cost Analysis* ☐  **Award type**:  *Adapt* ☐ *Pilot* ☐ *Scale* ☐  **Are you requesting IGI funding for a randomized evaluation?**  *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ | | | | | |
| NOTE: In responding to the following items, please refer to Section 3 of the RFP Overview for guidance on funding amounts and suggested grant timelines. | | | | | |
| FUNDING AMOUNT | | | | | |
| Amount requested from IGI | **$** | | **Total co-funded by other funders** | **$** | |
| GRANT PERIOD | | | | | |
| Start date: (yyyy-mm-dd) |  | | End date: (yyyy-mm-dd) |  | |
| Institution to receive award and grant funds\* |  | | Contact for contracting issues |  | |
| Since an important goal of IGI is to foster institutional partnerships between J-PAL and governments, if this project is taking place in a country that has a J-PAL or an IPA office but these organizations are not the host/receiving institutions, please provide a comment detailing why: | | | | | |
| **Does your proposal involve Human Subjects Research?**  *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐  ***If yes, please fill out the two boxes below.*** | | | | | |
| IRB OF RECORD | |  | IRB CONTACT |  | |
| IGI is funded through a GiveWell-recommended grant from Effective Altruism Funds. We share all IGI proposals with GiveWell to support their learning about improving the effectiveness of government poverty reduction programs in low- and middle-income countries. By submitting this application, you agree to have your proposal shared with them.  We are also in contact with other funders interested in this topic and occasionally share proposals that are relevant to their interests. If you **do not** want this proposal shared with them, please check this box:  ☐ I/we do not want this proposal shared with GiveWell / Center for Effective Altruism | | | | | |

## SECTION: NARRATIVE

Instructions: Please include a short response to each of the following sub-sections. Questions with asterisks (\*) will be required.

1. **Abstract:** Please summarize the partnership to adapt, pilot, and/or scale an evidence-informed innovation with a specific government partner(s). This will be added to IGI’s webpage if the project receives funding. *\* [suggested answer format: 150 - 200 words]*

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1. **The problem and opportunity**: The policy problem and opportunity that the government partner has identified that motivates the partnership and a description of how this proposal will address the problem. *\* [suggested answer format: Up to 250 words]*

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1. **The innovation and underlying evidence**: Please describe the innovation the government will explore adapting, piloting, and/or scaling. Innovations can be new programs or changes to existing programs, processes, technologies, or delivery systems. Please also include a brief summary of the experimental evidence on this innovation to date. **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. If not publicly available, please upload the corresponding written document(s) on which your scaling proposal is based. Additional information on required documentation is detailed in Annex III of the RFP Overview. \* *[suggested answer format: Up to 500 words]* *[Attach file if desired]*

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1. **Intervention design:** Please briefly describe the intervention design, noting any elements relating to Covid-19 and detailing how the government plans to avoid increasing in-person interaction that could contribute to COVID-19 spread.\* *[suggested answer format: Up to 500 words]*

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1. **Depth of impact and cost-effectiveness**: Please include a brief note on the effect size(s) found in previous RCTs, whether they were economically significant, and whether you expect the effect size to be similar in magnitude, lower, or higher in this context and why. Please also describe any existing evidence of the cost-effectiveness of the innovation as previously delivered in an experimental or other setting. *\* [suggested answer format: up to 500 words]*

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1. **Local grounding**:Please include a clear rationale for why the innovation may be relevant or appropriate for the proposed context. When possible, please include descriptive statistics about the nature and extent of the problem and aspects of local systems and institutions that make it amenable to the innovation. Specify which aspects of the existing evidence are or are not likely to generalize given the proposed implementer, context, and delivery model(s). Given the ongoing COVID-19 context, please also describe in your response to what extent the innovation may be generalizable beyond a COVID-19 context.*\* [suggested answer format: up to 500 words]*

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1. **Informing government decisions**: Please provide a summary of the specific government decisions the IGI-funded technical assistance is intended to inform around piloting and/or scaling an evidenced-informed innovation. Be as specific as possible, and refer to any discussions with your government partner on how the partner intends for this work to inform such decisions. \* *[suggested answer format: 250 words]*

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1. **Reach**: If the government decides to scale the innovation after successful piloting, how many people could it potentially reach and when? And what is the average income level of the target population? You may wish to consider the following in responding to this question \* *[suggested answer format: 250 words]*:
   1. Your team’s estimate of potential reach in the geography you see as relevant
   2. Indications from your government partner about potential scale
   3. The total size of the population of beneficiaries in the country/state who could benefit from this innovation/policy/program.

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1. **Cost-effectiveness potential**: Considering any existing evidence on cost effectiveness previously described, please provide your assessment of the cost effectiveness **potential** of the innovation if delivered at scale. You may wish to consider the theory of change of the innovation and other data to inform how effectiveness may change at scale and any expected economies of scale that have a bearing on marginal cost per beneficiary. \* *[suggested answer format: 250 words]*

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1. *(For Special Area of Interest proposals only)* **Benefits received by participants:** What is the USD amount of additional benefits the average program participant could receive if the cash transfer program is improved or expanded? Please explain the basis for and assumptions underlying your estimate. \* *[suggested answer format: 250 words]*

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1. **Likelihood of success:** Please include your subjective assessment of how likely this innovation is to eventually be adopted at scale by the government. You should state this answer in terms of “X% likely to happen” and provide your rationale for this assessment. What are the main factors that could prevent this innovation from scaling and how do you plan to address them? *[suggested answer format: 250 words]*

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1. **The activities**: Please describe the proposed activities that IGI will fund and how they will contribute to achieving the end goal along with a clear timeline and concrete milestones throughout that timeline. Milestones should represent key decisions, outputs, changes in conditions, etc. that will help you know whether your work is on track to catalyzing the end goal you aspire for. Applications seeking to apply evidence in a new context should include a formal scoping process to diagnose the problem and determine whether past evidence is relevant, as well as a process for adapting, piloting, and monitoring the innovation in the new context before scaling. *[suggested answer format: 750 words]*

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1. **The partnership**: Please provide all of the following: *[suggested answer format: up to 200 words each]*
   1. A brief history of the partnership with the government to date, with a description of their involvement in project activities, any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project.

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* 1. The names and titles of the main government contact(s) and the roles they will play over the course of the project Please note whether they are likely to be transferred during the project and what steps you have taken or will take to ensure continuity of the work in the event of a transfer and/or other stakeholders who are equally invested in the partnership.

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* 1. Dates of upcoming elections and/or administration changes and discuss whether these are likely to affect the project.

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* 1. Do you hope to make this a long-term partnership beyond the duration of this proposed project? Are you planning to enter into an institutional MoU?

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1. **On-the-ground collaborators**: Since building partnerships with decision-makers requires on-the-ground presence, does the project have necessary institutional support of the regional J-PAL office and/or an on-the-ground research or implementing partner such as an IPA country office, university, and/or NGO? What is the level of J-PAL affiliate or IGI invited researcher involvement in terms of providing high-level leadership, guidance, and advice to staff and policy partners? **Note:** 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. *[suggested answer format: 250 words]*

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1. **Potential project risks:** Please answer the following questions below in detail.\* *[suggested answer format: 250 words]*
   1. Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the project (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding)? Does this potential scale-up present any unintended opportunities for corruption or misuse of funds? How do you plan to monitor and prevent/address both of these types of risks throughout the project?

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* 1. Are there any COVID-related risks to the feasibility of the project? How will your team prepare for and mitigate these risks?

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1. **Potential ethical risks [Optional]**: The domain of an IRB review does not include all ethical considerations. Please discuss, if applicable, any ethical considerations that you feel warrant discussion but are not covered by your existing or planned IRB review. It is fine to leave this section partly or entirely blank; please detail only issues that are not or will not be covered by your IRB and that are not otherwise described elsewhere in your responses to questions in this application but that you feel are potentially important enough for the review committee to be aware. For more details, see below.
   1. If the underlying intervention you are studying will not be reviewed by the IRB approval that you have secured or will secure (because, for example, the intervention is being implemented by outside entities not for research purposes), then please discuss any relevant ethical considerations around the intervention, taking into account the benefits to society of doing this research vs. the risks to subjects.

*(Can state that intervention will be reviewed by IRB, and nothing else to report here.)*

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* 1. Are there potential harms to research participants in the process of data collection and/or research procedures (for example, discomfort to being asked certain questions or breach of confidentiality), 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?

*(Can state that intervention will be reviewed by IRB, and nothing else to report here.)*

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* 1. Are there potential harms to research staff from conducting the data collection (such as, for example, exposure to political violence, unusual levels of a communicable disease, emotional wellbeing from surveying about difficult matters)? If so, what are they? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

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* 1. Are there any potential unintended consequences of this project or potential scaling for program participants or non-program participants and if so, what are they? What proactive measures has your team taken to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

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* 1. Are there any contractual limitations on the ability of the researchers to report the results of the study? If so, what were those restrictions, and who were they from?

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* 1. Beyond anything discussed and/or disclosed in existing or planned IRB submissions, are there any other ethical considerations that you feel are important for the Board to be aware that you have already thought of, and incorporated in your work?

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1. **Cross-cutting themes**: How does your project incorporate IGI’s cross-cutting themes - technology- and data-enabled program delivery, implementation science, and cost analysis? How does incorporating these themes enhance the scalability, reach, or likelihood of success, or lower cost of the intervention or cost to IGI, of the project? *\* [suggested answer format: 150 words]*

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1. **Existing data systems:** Will you leverage the use of existing administrative data systems or technology to collect data (i.e. through phone or online surveys)? If yes, please describe your plans. *[suggested answer format: 150 words]*

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1. **Implementation and cost documentation**: IGI-funded projects are typically required to collect and report (i) policy or program cost data sufficient to conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis, and (ii) implementation and scale processes sufficient to inform how a policy or program is implemented so it could be adopted at scale in a new context. Describe what efforts you will make to collect implementation costs and document implementation and scale-up processes so these can benefit other policymakers and researchers and staff at J-PAL. *\* [suggested answer format: 200 words]*

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1. **Timeline:** A clear project timeline (Gantt chart preferred) including short-term markers of success. \* *[suggested format: Please attach spreadsheet or table containing Gantt chart]*

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1. **Randomized evaluations** *(if applicable)*: Funding randomized evaluations is not IGI’s main goal. However, we recognize that in some cases rigorous evidence of effectiveness at scale is a critical input for a government’s scale-up decision. In these cases, IGI allows proposals that include partial funding for randomized evaluations. If your project includes a randomized evaluation that is intended to inform scale decisions, whether the evaluation is to be funded by IGI or another funder, please provide the following additional information in addition to the relevant preceding items:
   1. description of the research activities, treatment, or intervention

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* 1. target population and context

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* 1. evaluation design

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* 1. other implementing partners besides the government

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* 1. power calculations

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* 1. whether the research proposal addresses gender issues in any way including analysis disaggregated by gender. (note that funded projects will be required to report on gender-disaggregated data)

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* 1. data publication plans

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* 1. elaboration on the government commitment to use the results in a scale-up decision

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1. **Additional information (optional)**: Share any additional information you believe is relevant for IGI to consider, especially as it pertains to any of the evaluation criteria. (See RFP Annex II)

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# BUDGET

1. Please submit a detailed project budget **using the Excel template** available on the RFP page. To reduce the processing time, please follow these instructions for designing and submitting your budget:
2. If the funds requested are only a part of the total project budget, then please complete both the “Total Project Budget” and the “IGI Budget” in the budget template.
3. Awards are normally paid on a cost-reimbursable basis.
4. Universities in high-income countries, defined as OECD member countries, can charge up to 10% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs. Independent 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.
5. All applications must include budget notes in the column provided in the budget template, specifying the costs within the budget. For example, Travel Costs should include a breakdown of how many trips are planned, the estimated cost per trip, etc. Field costs that are detailed clearly in the budget (e.g., # of respondents times $/respondent = total $) do not require additional justification in the budget notes section.
6. Any computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased, e.g. how many laptops and the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
7. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under this Initiative is low and that awardees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets as direct costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget narrative.
8. Unallowable costs include those labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency.” Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget narrative. and rent, unless a separate project office is to be covered specifically for this effort.
9. **As part of your proposal, a letter from the receiving institution of the award is required to show that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget**. This should be part of the process of acquiring the Letter of Transmission from the Institute to Receive Award. Please see detailed instructions under additional administrative requirements.

**Please note that this applies to all receiving institutions including regional J-PAL offices and IPA country offices**. You should contact them in advance to make sure you are aware of their policies for proposal review and that you give them enough time to meet the proposal deadline.

# LETTERS OF SUPPORT

1. Please provide the following letters of support along with the proposal. Letters of support are not a mere formality but rather should indicate a well-thought-out partnership between the affiliate or invited researcher, the J-PAL office, the government, and other partners.
2. All projects are required to provide a letter of support from the government and any other implementing partners. Such letters should state:
   1. The government’s support for the activities proposed
   2. How the government plans to use the results of the research or other activities to support specific scaling decisions and strengthen its policymaking. Any details about the potential reach of the scaled-up program.
   3. How it sees a long-term partnership with J-PAL to be valuable
   4. What costs will be shared by the government 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)
   5. Willingness to share program implementation cost data with project for the purpose of conducting program cost analysis
3. **Note:** We understand that in some cases it may not be feasible or appropriate to have the government partner include all of the items above in their letter. In such cases, please secure a more general letter of support from the government and address the remaining points in your proposal narrative.
4. A letter from the receiving institution of the award is required to show that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget. Please see detailed instructions under additional administrative requirements.
5. [If the applicant is not itself a J-PAL office] Letter from the relevant regional J-PAL office that has responsibility for the project country. This must be included even for research proposals. 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. J-PAL regional offices can use the letter of support template available on the RFP webpage. **Note:** If a J-PAL office is the receiving institution, they only need to submit letter (ii) described above and do not need to submit a separate letter for (iii). 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.

A short Affiliate Letter of Support is required from the J-PAL affiliated PI(s) along with the rest of your application. A template is available on the RFP webpage.

IGI staff will address all communication regarding your proposal to the following:

1. J-PAL affiliated/invited researcher(s)
2. J-PAL regional office Executive Director
3. IPA country director (when applicable)

Questions? Please contact IGI staff at [IGI@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:IGI@povertyactionlab.org).

**Additional Administrative Requirements**

If your proposal is accepted for award, the funds will be provided under a subaward from MIT to the “Institute to Receive Award” indicated on your coversheet. Once J-PAL receives all your forms and IRB approvals, and submits the request to MIT, it takes an average of 60 days for MIT to issue the subaward contract. We can backdate the award to cover expenses from the Award Date or the date of IRB approval (if applicable), whichever is later.

This will require, in addition to your proposal, budget, and letters of support:

1. Formal submission approval of the proposal from your institution to the IGI. This approval should be provided in your proposal to the IGI along with other letters of support. Please follow the MIT approved language for the Letter of Transmission as follows:
2. **Example language for Letter of Transmission when there is a PI at the institution to receive award (ITRA):** (On ITRA letterhead)

<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, he/she is responsible for the implementation of this project in accordance with this proposal and with appropriate research and data protection practices.  Please contact him/her with any concerns which may arise related to project implementation.

1. **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. A 1-2-page summary of the research being conducted, written for a general audience;
2. IRB approvals or exemption for your project if it involves Human Subjects research. MIT requires proof of IRB approval prior to executing the award with your institution and releasing funding if your project involves Human Subjects Research.
3. If your selected Institute to Receive the Award has not had contracts with MIT previously, they will need to complete a number of additional steps before any contract can be negotiated between MIT and your Institute to Receive the Award. Steps include [completing a SAM.gov registration, a Subrecipient questionnaire](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1JvKUkXigbcuaHtpYYaPdX0Cuc0W5RqMs), and completing registration in MIT’s supplier portal. Additionally, MIT might require additional documents including the Institute to Receive the Award’s financial audits. **These steps can take some time to complete so please start this process early.**