Governance Initiative Full and Pilot Proposal Application Form and Instructions

Round 23 - Spring 2024

# Instructions

Proposals for full study or pilot funding consist of (i) an application form, which includes a cover sheet (found at the bottom of this document) and narrative; (ii) an itemized budget with a brief budget narrative; and (iii) letters of support.[[1]](#footnote-0) [[2]](#footnote-1) These materials must be submitted to **GI@povertyactionlab.org by 11:59 p.m. ET on Wednesday, May 29, 2024.**

## Narrative

The narrative should not exceed five pages in length, including appendices, and use 12 point font. It should clearly describe the proposed evaluation 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 and how it relates to the research priorities identified in the [Governance Initiative Review Paper](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)). As long as proposals fall within at least one of these or other closely related themes, GI does not prioritize proposals from one of these research areas over another historically. However, **for the Spring 2024 RFP**, **all proposals must relate to political participation.** GI also welcomes proposals from multidisciplinary research teams.
3. A description of the **research design:** treatment, evaluation design, target population, and implementing partners. This should include a detailed **timeline** with approximate dates for when fieldwork will take place, and by when the project will be completed.
4. **Power calculations**, if available. (Required for Full studies)
5. A comment on whether the research proposal addresses **gender** issues in any way, or if you plan to disaggregate the analysis 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 document](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/governance-initiative-request-proposals) 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. (Full studies only)
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 for any project funded by a J-PAL initiative. (Full studies only)
8. A comment on whether you anticipate **any risks**, Covid-related and otherwise, during the course of the research, and how you will mitigate them. Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding) 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? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
9. A discussion of the other evaluation criteria (listed at the end of this document), if not already addressed in the narrative.
10. If the project has other funders, the proposal should clearly explain the marginal contribution of these requested funds.

*Off-cycle proposals:* Please also include an explanation of the time constraints the project faces and the reasons for requesting expedited review. Applicants must clearly justify the need to receive a decision on an expedited schedule (e.g. a newly announced policy change that will go into effect soon, creating an opportunity for an evaluation).Off-cycle proposals are capped at $50k and reviewed at the discretion of the initiative co-chairs.

## Budget

Please submit a detailed project budget using the Excel template [available online](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/governance-initiative-request-proposals) and a brief budget narrative (Word/PDF). To reduce the processing time, please keep the following in mind when developing your budget:

1. If there is **co-funding** for the project, you must complete both the “Total Project Budget” and the “GI Budget” sheets in the budget template.
2. Awards are normally paid on a **cost-reimbursable basis**.
3. **Budget narrative:** Applications must include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget and should complete the budget notes column in the template. For example, travel costs should include a breakdown of how many trips are planned, the estimated cost per trip, etc. If field costs are detailed in the budget template (number of field staff, roles, rates, etc.), they do not need further explanation in the budget narrative.
4. **Indirect costs:** Universities in high-income countries (generally defined as the US, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, Israel, and wealthy Middle Eastern countries) can charge up to 10% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs. 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.
	1. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under GI is low and that grantees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets as direct costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget notes.
5. **Best practices:** Applicants should review J-PAL best practices on questionnaire design and data collection/management in the [J-PAL Research Protocol Checklist](https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1iahelPZHoVQkhlTUsxWkJDaG8), to ensure they have budgeted for expenses associated with piloting and surveyor training, survey translation, field spot checks, and back checking.
6. **Equipment:** Any computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased, (e.g. how many laptops), as well as the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
7. **Unallowable costs** include those labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency.” Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget notes.
8. **PI salaries:** Please note that GI generally does not cover PI salaries. **New exception**: GI allows for budgets requesting funding to cover the time of PIs on proposals, as long as:
	1. The PI is based in an academic institution in a low-or middle-income country;
	2. For Full RCT proposals: The request does not exceed $8,000 per year for each PI in the proposal, and does not exceed $20,000 per year for all PIs in the proposal in total.
	3. For Pilot proposals: The request does not exceed $8,000 per year for each PI in the proposal, and does not exceed an amount equivalent to 25% of the total budget per year for all PIs in the proposal in total.
	4. For Travel/Proposal Development Grants: No PI time allowed in budgets.
	5. GI may consider a deviation from these caps in exceptional circumstances, as long as the PI is still based in an academic institution in a low-or middle-income country.
9. **Complying with ITRA:** It is your responsibility that your budget follows your host institution’s policies for costs. As part of your proposal, you must submit a letter from the institution to receive the award that states that they have reviewed your proposal and accepted your budget. If the organization allows you to submit your proposal without such a letter (due to time constraints or some other reason), please note this on the proposal cover sheet (under the “Institution to receive grant funds” field). 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.
	1. Note: A letter of transmission from the ITRA will be *required* if ultimately awarded funding (see “Requirements to note if funded” section below).
10. (Full studies only) **Cost data:** Policymakers are interested in program costs, as it is one of the key factors in their decision to support a program. Cost data also allows for [cost-effectiveness analyses (CEA)](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/research-resources/cost-effectiveness), which J-PAL may conduct (with permission from the researchers) even if such analysis is not part of an academic paper. To offset the cost of collecting program cost data, the budget template includes a $1,000 line item. CVI will provide a costing worksheet for grantees to update annually. If researchers are unable to collect detailed cost data, researchers are still required to provide estimates of total program cost, average cost per beneficiary, and marginal cost to add another beneficiary.

## Letters of Support

Please provide the following letters of support:

1. **Full projects** are required to provide a letter of support from implementing partners. Applicants for pilot funding are encouraged to submit letters of support if available.
2. If available, applicants should also include letters of support from potential scale-up partners.
3. **PhD students are required to include a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher (from any J-PAL initiative or regional office)** who is an adviser on their dissertation committee at their host university.[[3]](#footnote-2) The letter should indicate the adviser’s willingness to remain involved over the project’s lifetime and should generally come from the same adviser who supported the student’s initial GI travel/proposal development grant application if applicable. Graduate students who are applying for pilot or full study funding but have not previously applied for GI travel/proposal development grants must also include documented evidence of successful pilot activities. Please note that in some cases, due to restrictions at the institution that will receive the funding awarded, the adviser may be asked to add his or her name to the subaward and IRB documents.

## Submission Instructions

Please submit an email with the following attachments to **GI@povertyactionlab.org**:

1. A cover sheet (use template below) and five-page narrative (12pt font) saved as a single Word or PDF file, titled [PI Name]\_[Proposal Title]\_Narrative.docx (.pdf)
2. A completed budget form (use template on our [RFP webpage](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/governance-initiative-request-proposals)) saved separately as a single Excel file titled [PI Name]\_Budget.xlsx **and** a similarly titled budget narrative (Word or PDF)
3. Letter(s) of support from implementing partners saved as PDF files.
	1. Letters of support from implementing partners are *required* for full studies and are encouraged for pilot proposals.
	2. All PhD student proposals also require a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher (from any J-PAL initiative), as described above.
4. A combined PDF file with all of the above merged into one document, [PI Name]\_[Topic Name]\_Combined.pdf

The deadline for submissions is **11:59 p.m. ET on Wednesday, May 29, 2024.**

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### Requirements to note if funded

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 cover sheet.

This will require you to provide, in addition to your proposal:

1. **A formal letter of transmission from the Institute to Receive Award** agreeing to the proposal and budget, if not already provided in your proposal.
	1. **The Principal Investigator (PI) of a subaward issued by MIT’s Research Services Administration must have an official affiliation with the organization receiving the subaward and funds** ([see here for further details](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OW8ngfgA1McsXxUCl7-N_XQDu6nhTvWa/view)).
	2. The letter of transmission 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:

**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.

1. **IRB approval, or exempt or non-human subjects determination letter from your IRB**.
	1. MIT requires proof of IRB approval prior to executing the award with your institution and releasing funding. We will ask that you submit the following to access your award:
		1. All IRB approval(s) or exemption(s)
		2. All IRB-approved protocols
		3. Any IRB-approved consent forms
	2. **The IRB approval must also be held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT** (the ITRA) ([see here for further details](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OW8ngfgA1McsXxUCl7-N_XQDu6nhTvWa/view)).If the institution does not have their own IRB, they must engage the services of a commercial IRB to review and provide oversight for their research activities. J-PAL recommends third party IRBs Brany and Heartland. Consider adding commercial IRB costs to the budget, if needed. If the project is exempt from IRB approval, we will need the exemption status but no other action is required.
	3. Please be mindful that J-PAL requires that the reviewing IRB have IRB Organization (IORG) status with the US Office of Human Protections. [You can look up the IORG status of an IRB here](https://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search/search.aspx?styp=bsc).
	4. Researchers must adhere to all local legal requirements, including obtaining local IRB approval and government research permits, where applicable.

### Process for receiving award if funded

We aim to complete this process within 60 days of receiving all your forms and IRB approvals. We can backdate the award to cover expenses from the Award Date or the date of IRB approval, whichever is later. If a project includes non-Human Subjects work prior to the IRB approval, please let us know following the award and we may in some cases be able to cover those costs (post-award, but pre-IRB) under the award.

The process MIT follows is thus:

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

GI Cover Sheet - Full/Pilots

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Please note that all fields are required

| **J-PAL Affiliate or J-PAL Invited Researcher Name(s) and Institutional Affiliation** |
| --- |
|   |
| **Co-Investigator(s) and Institutional Affiliation** |
|  |
| * I agree
 | *By checking this, all J-PAL affiliates and initiative invitees 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 research; 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 an initiative invitee.* |
| **Title of Proposal** | **Country** |
|   |   |
| **Partner(s)** | **Contact (Name, Email, Phone)** |
|   |   |
| **Co-Funder(s)** | **Funded Award (PI, Project Title, Amount)** |
|   |   |
| **Have you submitted this or a related proposal (incl. travel grant) in any previous GI round of funding?** |
| * Yes
* No
 | **If yes,** when and what was the proposal name?:   |
| **Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any other J-PAL research initiative?** |
| * Yes
* No
 | **If yes,** which initiative and when?:  |
| **GI Funding Request Type** (full or pilot; off-cycle if applicable)**:**  |
| * **Full study**
 | * **Pilot study**
 | * **Off-cycle**
 |
| **Amount Requested** | **$**  | **Total Co-funded** Please indicate amount received in additional grants or funding for this research. | **$**  |
| **Grant Start Date**(yyyy-mm-dd) |  | **Grant End Date**(yyyy-mm-dd) |  |
| **Institution to Receive Award**Please indicate the institution that will receive the grant funds |  | **Contact for Contracting Issues** |  |
| **IRB of Record** |  | **IRB Contact** |  |
| **Do you expect to purchase any item with a value of 500 GBP or more?** Check one: |
| * Yes
 | * No
 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Evaluation Criteria

| **Academic Contribution** | 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 governance in developing countries? Does it address the priority questions outlined in the Governance 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 policy makers 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? 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? What is the credibility and policy influence of the implementing partner? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review? For pilots, do researchers describe how piloting activities would inform a full-scale randomized evaluation? |
| **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? |

1. Please note that the total amount awarded to a single project, including any GI funding for full or pilot studies, will not exceed $400,000. Please note that, in general, full research project proposals with budgets exceeding $250,000 are rarely funded given the high quality and volume of all proposals received and GI’s limited resources. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Please note that full evaluations requesting less than $75,000 are considered full research projects and evaluated accordingly. The criteria for pilot funding apply only to proposals requesting funds to conduct piloting, or pre-randomization, activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Graduate students may apply for a maximum of two travel/proposal development grants and two grants for pilot/full study funding during their time as graduate students. Please note that applicants who received travel/proposal development funding as graduate students but have since moved to another institution may not apply for funding unless they have since become a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher, or unless the proposal includes a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher as a co-author. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. 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)