**J-PAL Jobs and Opportunity Initiative: Overview and Instructions**

*Spring 2021 Round*

*J-PAL’s Jobs and Opportunity Initiative (JOI) funds randomized evaluations of strategies to improve employment outcomes. JOI is now calling for proposals from J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, and JOI invited researchers for full research projects, pilot studies, travel/proposal development grants, and policy outreach support grants.* ***Letters of interest are due by 11:59 PM ET on Monday, March 29, 2021. Proposals are due by 11:59 PM ET on Monday, April 26, 2021.***

**Background**

The International Labour Organization estimates over 172 million people were unemployed globally as of 2018[[1]](#footnote-1). High unemployment and low labor force participation are particularly acute in certain geographies, and often among subsets of the population such as youth and women. While men’s labor force participation was 75 percent in 2018, women’s labor force participation was just 48 percent[[2]](#footnote-2). More than 20 percent of youth were neither working, nor in school, nor or in training in 2018[[3]](#footnote-3).

Beyond the challenge of getting work, employment does not guarantee that people have decent livelihoods to maintain themselves and their families. In low- and middle-income countries, over 25 percent of workers lived in either extreme or moderate poverty in 2018[[4]](#footnote-4). Many workers remain trapped in low-quality jobs with low pay, unsafe conditions, or poor social protections.

Existing literature suggests several key causes for these employment challenges, including job search and matching frictions and economies that do not create enough quality jobs. Despite the wide array of programs that innovators have designed in response to this global challenge, many questions remain unanswered to guide policymakers toward the most effective solutions.

**Research Gaps in Jobs and Opportunity**

JOI approaches the problem of poor employment outcomes from the supply side, matching jobseekers to employment, and the demand side (job creation), with the future of jobs as a crosscutting theme.

**Supply and matching:**

*Skills training:* Job seekers often lack the skills required to perform jobs, so training should in theory help them to become better candidates. Training programs are a common feature of government and NGO programming, especially for youth. But these programs tend to be very expensive[[5]](#footnote-5), and some have had disappointing results when rigorously evaluated. One challenge to making conclusive statements about the success of training programs is that programs vary greatly in terms of how they are implemented and who they target. In addition, evaluations largely test interventions as a whole, not individual components. Understanding which components of a training program are most effective could be particularly insightful to help design more cost-effective programs.

Implementation features that would be helpful to test further within training programs include: (i) matching trainees to programs that are the best fit for them (for example, by helping young people navigate educational tracks that lead to better labor market options), (ii) addressing participants costs of attending to reduce dropout rates, (iii) recruiting/screening for high-quality trainers, (iv) aligning payment incentives for training providers, (v) involving the private sector in curriculum development and for on-the-job training opportunities, (vi) emphasizing soft skills training, and (vii) communicating the quality of training (See evidence from [Colombia](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/vocational-training-disadvantaged-youth-colombia), [Uganda](http://www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~uctpimr/research/Training.pdf), [Dominican Republic](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0019793918768260)*,* [Argentina](http://ftp.iza.org/dp9784.pdf), and [Ghana](http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/835751557408824890/The-Apprenticeship-to-Work-Transition-Experimental-Evidence-from-Ghana)).

*Job search:* While jobseekers face many barriers to transition into the workforce, some of the most commonly cited issues are that (i) they do not know where or how to search for jobs, (ii) they underestimate the benefits of job search and therefore end up underinvesting in it, and (iii) they struggle to communicate their qualifications to employers.

Especially in developing country contexts where information about job opportunities can be costly to acquire, reducing barriers to this information can have large effects on job outcomes. For example, programs could include [providing transportation subsidies to jobseekers so they can commute to the city center to look for work](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/e9b89f_9248112b23ea4ceba8a9d1458dd4ba66.pdf), [providing vouchers to help people attend job fairs](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0304387815001303?via%3Dihub), or [providing information in rural areas about jobs available in the city](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/impact-improved-labor-market-opportunities-marriage-and-fertility-decisions-india).

Motivating jobseekers to invest more in their search and helping them stretch themselves to look in places they might not have considered can improve their employment outcomes. Some examples of programs that touch on this topic [motivate jobseekers to make a detailed job search plan](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/job-search-planning-employment-south-africa), or [provide them with an online platform that orients them to sectors or types of jobs that they might not have considered before](https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/86/4/1411/5115940?guestAccessKey=5d4057ab-7ddf-4852-9c9f-d9cc6c9adbba).

Helping jobseekers better recognize their skills and communicate them to potential employers can improve their job outcomes and can help firms hire more qualified candidates. Examples of programs in this area include [CV and interview workshops](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/e9b89f_9248112b23ea4ceba8a9d1458dd4ba66.pdf), [encouraging jobseekers to include reference letters in their job applications](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/role-reference-letters-and-skill-accreditation-south-african-labour-market), or [providing jobseekers with certificates that rate their soft skills](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3268523).

Despite promising results from job search support programs, [these programs have been less effective when there were other important barriers in the labor market](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/policy-insight/reducing-search-barriers-jobseekers). These barriers could include a lack of job openings, high relocation costs, or mismatched expectations between jobseekers and employers.

[In the few cases where it was measured, some of the gains from job search assistance programs came at the expense of jobseekers who did not receive the programs](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/policy-insight/reducing-search-barriers-jobseekers), implying that job search assistance may have merely reshuffled who got the limited number of available jobs. While many studies showed positive impacts on outcomes such as interview offers, job offers, employment, and quality employment, not all of the studies measured or showed sustained benefits to earnings, total employment, or well-being.

It would be beneficial for future research to explore which programs lead to increases in earnings, total employment, or well-being. It would also be beneficial for future research to rigorously measure displacement effects of job search programs, and explore ways to mitigate displacement effects.

*Discrimination in hiring:* [There is strong evidence of hiring discrimination against minority and underrepresented groups in many countries](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/policy-insight/changing-resumes-reduce-hiring-discrimination). However, most correspondence studies of discrimination come from high-income countries, and it would be helpful to better understand the extent of hiring discrimination in low- and middle-income countries.

Recent studies have used randomization to explore ways to combat hiring discrimination. In these limited studies to date, removing identifying information on job applications had perverse effects on minorities if [the impacted firms were the ones already treating minority applicants favorably](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/discrimination-hiring-and-anonymous-cvs-france-cv-anonymes), or [if firms discriminated on other characteristics after some information was removed](https://academic.oup.com/qje/article/133/1/191/4060073). Strategies to test in the future include: (i) socio-cognitive de-biasing, (ii) technological de-biasing, (iii) increasing the prevalence of minority leaders as role models, (iv) intergroup contact, and (vi) legal solutions.

**Job Creation:**

*Self-employment and entrepreneurship support:* Supporting individuals to start and grow their own businesses is a popular employment policy approach in many contexts. [In much existing research, business skills training programs increased microentrepreneurs’ use of business best practices, but in most cases, there were no significant changes in their profits.](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/policy-insight/teaching-business-skills-support-microentrepreneurs) Alternative programs that are tailored to participants’ needs or foster an entrepreneurial mindset have shown more promising results than traditional programs.

Future research that tests business skills training programs with a larger sample size would be valuable contributions to the existing literature. It would also be helpful to see more studies that test alternative programs that tailor training content to participants’ needs, focus on entrepreneurial mindset, or address other constraints (like credit) in addition to teaching skills.

[Cash grants targeted to high-potential entrepreneurs can increase firm establishment and growth](https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20151404), but more research is needed to understand long-run impacts, and the impact of this firm growth on job creation. In addition, [existing research suggests that identifying which entrepreneurs have the highest potential to grow their business is challenging](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3086928), so future research that sheds light on how to best identify these entrepreneurs would be helpful.

*Regulations and firm growth:* Beyond cash grants, there are other exciting innovations that have had some impact on firm growth. For example, solutions could include [increasing small business’s market access by increasing their access to export markets](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/egyptian-rug-firms-weave-their-way-into-foreign-markets.pdf) or [addressing regulatory barriers to firm growth by helping firms to better understand the labor regulations in their country](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/TeachingLaborLaws_Bertrand-Crepon_January2019.pdf). There is limited research to date on how to help firms grow and hire more workers, and more research in this space would be a valuable contribution.

**Future of jobs:**

There is currently much concern and discussion around how automation and globalization might transform labor markets and threaten livelihoods. While there is [a growing body of rigorous research addressing the future of jobs](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/documents/work-of-the-future-literature-review-4.2.19.pdf), few of these studies come from low- and middle-income countries. Examples include [training low-skilled marginalized youth to access Internet-based employment](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/impact-tech-centered-vocational-training-and-employment-program-youth-kenya) or [using online platforms to support job search efforts](https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/86/4/1411/5115940?guestAccessKey=5d4057ab-7ddf-4852-9c9f-d9cc6c9adbba).

Future research around the role of the gig economy in low- and middle-income countries, technology-based employment solutions, and equipping people to succeed in light of changing labor market demands would be valuable contributions to the existing literature.

It would also be helpful to better understand the multitude of barriers that women face to employment and how to best alleviate those barriers.

**Summary of Priority Research Questions**

JOI funds randomized evaluations of programs and policies aimed at improving employment conditions, building a better bridge between field experiments and underlying economic theories. While this list is not exhaustive, key open questions this initiative seeks to address include:

**Supply and matching**

1. Under what conditions do skills training programs improve employment outcomes? What is the optimal role of the private sector in skills training programs?
2. Which design features of skills training programs have the most impact?
3. What are the most effective ways to reduce the barriers (information, financial, or otherwise) that people face to access training programs?
4. What type of skills (soft skills vs technical skills) are most effective at improving employment outcomes?
5. Which programs best encourage increased and broader job search efforts among jobseekers? Does this increase net employment?
6. How can policymakers leverage both online platforms and low technology strategies to reduce search barriers for jobseekers and reduce hiring costs for firms?
7. What are the most effective ways to align people’s expectations with the realities of the labor market? How can technology platforms serve this purpose?
8. Does increasing job seeker mobility improve employment outcomes? How can policies best increase job seekers’ mobility, both domestically and internationally?
9. Which policies are most effective at reducing hiring discrimination?

**Job creation**

1. What are the most effective strategies to identify which entrepreneurs have the highest potential to grow their businesses and generate jobs for others?
2. Which design features of entrepreneurship programs have the most impact on entrepreneurs’ profits?
3. How do labor market regulations impact job creation?

**Future of jobs**

1. How can economies best prepare their workers for the changing demands of the labor market? How can economies harness technology advances to improve job opportunities for both high-skill and lower-skill workers? For example, how can programs best connect marginalized youth to internet-based employment?
2. How do unstable or irregular work arrangements and “gigs” influence productivity, inclusiveness, and career prospects of youth, women, or other subsets of the population?
3. How can economies build in protections and benefits for workers who do not have access to traditional social protections?
4. How can technology contribute to job creation and firm growth, improve matching, reduce search frictions, and influence job quality?
5. Which policies are most effective to promote female labor force participation?
6. Which policies most effectively connect job seekers with sectors in their economy, such as agriculture, manufacturing, or textiles?

The initiative will prioritize evaluations that measure cost-effectiveness, scalability, diversity and inclusion, and displacement.

If a researcher is uncertain about whether a research project is eligible for JOI, please email [JOI@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:JI@povertyactionlab.org).

**Geographic focus**

Projects in sub-Saharan Africa will be strongly prioritized (due to donor preferences), especially in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. JOI will also consider funding projects in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and especially in the Middle East and North Africa, but funding for projects in these geographies is extremely limited. The Jobs and Opportunity Initiative is unable to fund work in Europe, Canada, or the United States.

**Funds**

Three types of proposals will be considered in this round:

*Full Research Projects*: These grants are for research projects at a mature level of development. Not only must the research question be clear, but applicants must also demonstrate a commitment from implementing partners, a method of randomization, well-defined instruments, and sample size estimates. Proposals can also be submitted for funding the continuation of research projects that have already started without JOI funding (including those for which field data collection has been completed). The expectation is that these projects will result in a publicly available paper that is eventually submitted to a top economics journal. The total amount awarded to a single project, including any JOI funding for proposal development or piloting, will not exceed $400,000.[[6]](#footnote-6)

*Pilot Studies*: These grants are for studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation requires further testing and pilot data.[[7]](#footnote-7) The expectation is that these projects will ultimately develop into full-scale randomized evaluations. The maximum amount awarded for pilot studies is $75,000.

*Travel/Proposal Development Grants:* These grants cover exploratory work related to preliminary research ideas, such as conducting background research, developing partnerships, visiting field sites, and collecting preliminary data. The expectation is that these funds will be used to support costs related to PI travel to develop a proposal for a pilot or full scale randomized evaluation during a subsequent call for proposals. The maximum amount awarded for travel/proposal development grants is $10,000.

Please note, initiative pilot and travel grants may be used for activities intended to facilitate access to administrative data for designing or conducting an RCT. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to, negotiating data use agreements, conducting exploratory data analysis and cleaning, or setting up technical access mechanisms.

Please note that JOI was established to fund randomized impact evaluations of programs and policies being implemented in the field. As a general rule, JOI does not fund pure lab experiments. A proposal may be considered if there is a randomized field evaluation of an underlying program or policy which supplements a lab experiment.

**Off-Cycle Proposals**

JOI offers two types of funding outside of the regular RFP cycles. Eligibility for these proposals is the same as for the regular funding cycles:

*Off-Cycle Projects*: These grants are intended for research projects that face a significant time constraint and need to receive funding before the end of a regular funding round to make use of an unanticipated opportunity (e.g. a newly announced policy change that will go into effect soon, creating an opportunity for an evaluation). Proposals must clearly justify the need to receive a decision on an expedited schedule. The maximum amount awarded to an off-cycle proposal is $75,000.

*Policy Outreach Support*: These funds are intended to support conferences, workshops, events, or other policy outreach activities to disseminate evidence from JOI-funded evaluations, or other randomized evaluations conducted by J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, or JOI invited researchers that address JOI’s research priorities. These funds can be used to cover travel, accommodations, meals, venues, and related costs. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and the suggested budget range for these requests is $10,000 – $20,000.

**Eligibility**

J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, and JOI invited researchers are eligible to apply for any type of JOI funding. Please note that JOI invited researchers are nominated and reviewed on a quarterly basis, with the review based on a nominee’s previous research with a particular emphasis on randomized evaluations related to labor markets. All proposals may include collaborators outside of this network.

J-PAL regional offices are eligible to apply for *policy outreach projects* without an affiliated professor as a collaborator.

In addition, PhD students may be eligible to apply for travel/proposal development grants or up to $50,000 in pilot or full-scale funding. To be eligible, PhD students must have a J-PAL affiliate or JOI 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 project.[[8]](#footnote-8) If the student is pre-thesis, the letter should state “I am actively responsible for supervising this project/research and anticipate being on the student’s thesis committee.” In addition, in order to apply for up to $50,000 for pilot or full-scale funding, graduate students must provide documented evidence of successful pilot activities, funded either through a JOI travel/proposal development grant or other sources. Please note that PhD students are not eligible to apply for off-cycle funding.

Please note that any J-PAL affiliate, J-PAL postdoc, JOI invited researcher, or eligible PhD student can submit **a maximum of three pilot or full-scale proposals within a 12-month period to JOI**, either as a main PI or co-PI in the proposal. For example, if a researcher submitted two pilot or full-scale proposals in our Spring 2020 round, they can then only submit a maximum of 1 pilot or full-scale proposal in our Fall 2020 round.

**Applications**

***Researchers should submit a letter of interest by 11:59 PM ET on Monday, March 29, 2021. Proposal applications are due by 11:59 PM ET on Monday, April 26, 2021.*** Please submit your application via J-PAL’s [online portal](http://jpal.force.com/portal).

To facilitate your proposal development, we have hosted reference application documents on [JOI’s website](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/jobs-and-opportunity-initiative-rfp) that outline in detail all required information that applicants will be asked to provide when submitting a proposal to JOI. You are welcome to begin drafting your proposal materials using these templates, as the fields and content included in these reference documents will be required in the online portal system. Please do not complete or submit these reference documents to JOI for consideration.

**Review Process**

Proposals are reviewed along five broad criteria: academic contribution, policy relevance, technical design, project viability, and value of research.

*Full and Pilot Proposals:* Proposals are distributed for review and scoring by the members of the Review Board, consisting of the JOI co-chairs and other J-PAL affiliates chosen by the J-PAL Executive Committee.

All board members submitting a proposal in the current round of funding are required to recuse themselves from this review[[9]](#footnote-9).Based on the scores and the comments of the referees, the review board votes on the status of the application. The status of an application can fall into four categories: (1) approved, (2) conditional approval (with minor revisions or clarifications), (3) revise and resubmit during this or a subsequent round, and (4) not approved.

*Travel/Proposal Development Proposals:* The JOI co-chairs review the proposals and make final funding decisions.

*Off-Cycle Proposals:* The JOI co-chairs review the proposals and can decide to award funding, reject the proposal for funding, or include the proposal in the regular review process for the next RFP round.

*Policy Outreach Support Proposals*: Proposals are reviewed by the JOI co-chairs on a rolling basis, with decisions generally made within 2-4 weeks. The JOI co-chairs may decide to award funding, request a revise and resubmit, or reject the proposal for funding.

If you would like to appeal a decision of the JOI Review Board, please email Initiative Manager Margaret Andersen (mandersen@povertyactionlab.org) within one week of the announcement, detailing the reasons for the request for reconsideration (maximum two pages in length). This request will then be communicated to the reviewers.

**Timeline**

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| --- | --- |
| Monday, February 22 | RFP is issued |
| Monday. March 29 | Letters of interest deadline |
| Monday, April 26 | Proposal submission deadline |
| Week of June 21 | Results announced |

**Grant Conditions**

*Full and Pilot Grants*: If your proposal is selected for funding, the terms of the award will be as follows:

1. **Peer-review proposals:** Grantees may be requested to peer-review proposals in future JOI rounds.
2. **Project registration:** Within three months of the start date indicated on the proposal, grantees must register their trial with the [AEA RCT Registry](http://www.socialscienceregistry.org). Registration includes 18 required fields, such as your name and a small subset of your IRB requirements. There is also the opportunity to include more information, including power calculations and an optional pre-analysis plan. *(Full studies only)*
3. **Annual progress reporting:** Grantees will be requested to provide a brief start-up report, semi-annual financial updates; annual progress reports; a final financial report within 60 days of completion of the award period; and a final project report with preliminary results within four months of completion of the award period (for pilots, the final project report is due within two months of the completion of the award period).
4. **Collecting and reporting program 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 analysis (CEA)](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/node/21919/), which J-PAL may conduct (with permission from the researchers), even if such analysis is not part of an academic paper. In order to facilitate cost collection, JOI awards include $1,000 to defray expenses associated with collecting cost data. JOI will provide a costing worksheet for grantees to update annually. If grantees are unable to collect detailed cost data, grantees are still required to provide estimates of total program cost, average cost per beneficiary, and marginal cost to add another beneficiary. *(Full studies only)*
5. **Collecting and reporting Gender-disaggregated data:** J-PAL, through its Gender sector, is making an effort to study heterogeneity in program impacts by beneficiary/participant gender more systematically. Please note that the following request only applies to J-PAL internal reports and does not extend to the academic paper or online J-PAL summary.   
     
   Many studies funded by J-PAL initiatives already collect study participants’ gender. In such cases, and when outcome data are individual-specific, we request that grantees conduct heterogeneity analyses by beneficiary gender for the study’s main results for internal reporting to J-PAL (to be shared in the final grant report). A single study might be underpowered to detect heterogeneous treatment effects, or null results might not seem interesting in one study, but these findings may be meaningful when included in an analysis across studies. J-PAL will use the reported results for (a) determining potential pooled statistical analyses to conduct across studies and (b) generating gender-related policy lessons in Labor Markets. Our reporting template will include a question on this, which researchers are encouraged to fill in when applicable. We recognize that there will be cases where this reporting is not applicable for various reasons. In these cases, the PIs can just provide a brief explanation to be shared with the Gender sector.
6. **Data publication:** Grantees may be requested to share data collection instruments and methodologies with other grantees. Furthermore, researchers funded through this grant will be required to publish de-identified data in accordance with J-PAL’s [Data and Code Availability Policy](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B97AuBEZpZ9zZE5ncHEzTWZnNjg/view). J-PAL's research team can work with you to clean, label, de-identify, document and replicate datasets collected as part of a randomized trial before publishing them in the [J-PAL Dataverse](https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jpal) or another data repository of your choice. Requests for data publication services can be made by sending an email to [data@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:data@povertyactionlab.org). (*Full studies only)*
7. **Participate in JOI activities:** Grantees may be requested to participate in one of the JOI’s activities at a mutually agreed time and place. Activities may include evidence workshops, matchmaking conference, or presentations to one of the JOI’s donors.
8. **Credit JOI**: Any presentations and publications, including academic papers, policy briefs, press releases, blogs, and organizational newsletters that emerge from this project should credit the J-PAL Jobs and Opportunity Initiative with the following text and link: “This research is funded by the [J-PAL Jobs and Opportunity Initiative](http://povertyactionlab.org/initiative/jobs-and-opportunity-initiative).”
9. Since J-PAL is part of MIT, everyone who is associated with J-PAL, including researchers worldwide receiving grants from J-PAL initiatives, are considered part of the broader MIT community. Therefore, it is our hope and expectation that they will adhere to MIT’s community-wide policies that are available [here](https://policies.mit.edu/policies-procedures/90-relations-and-responsibilities-within-mit-community). Please review the Code of Conduct document as it relates to J-PAL and affiliates [here](https://drive.google.com/a/povertyactionlab.org/file/d/1vIkAqn4N8UyfHGL1iHzIM977y1kbSqP2/view?usp=sharing).

*Travel/Proposal Development Grants:* Recipients will be required to submit a brief progress report after completing travel and may be asked to participate in one of JOI’s activities on a mutually agreed date and place.

*Policy Outreach Support Grants*: Recipients will be expected to report on the use of these funds in regular JOI project reports. In the case that the policy outreach activities are not linked to a specific JOI-funded project, recipients will be asked to submit project and expense reports within 30 days of completion of the work plan specified in the proposal. All outreach activities must be completed within six months of receiving the award.

**Administrative Notes**

Full and pilot grants are provided under an award from MIT to the Institute to Receive Award. Travel/proposal development grants and policy outreach support grants are paid as travel reimbursements. For more information on budget, requirements, and process, please see instructions in the respective application form and instructions documents. These and all other materials needed to apply for full research, pilot, travel/proposal development, or policy outreach support grants are available on the [JOI webpage](http://povertyactionlab.org/initiative/jobs-and-opportunity-initiative).

Additionally, MIT requires that there is a subawardee PI at the Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) who will be responsible for overseeing the work on the ground. This may be one of the academic co-PI’s or it may be a non-academic PI, such as the Executive Director or Director of Research of the ITRA. This person must be formally affiliated with the ITRA. Affiliation could be as a professor, associate professor, staff, fellow, or some other type of relationship that is recognized by the university or organization. A J-PAL Affiliation or J-PAL Invited Researcher status does not constitute an official affiliation with J-PAL regional office host universities.

**Related Initiatives**

Please do not submit the same proposal to more than one J-PAL or IPA initiative at the same time. Before applying to JOI, consider whether your proposal may be better suited for the J-PAL Post-Primary Education Initiative (PPE) or the J-PAL/CEGA Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative (ATAI). Please see more information on the other initiatives below. If you are uncertain about which initiative to apply to, please contact [JOI@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:JI@povertyactionlab.org).

[J-PAL Post-Primary Education Initiative (PPE):](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/ppe) The PPE Initiative aims to generate a body of rigorous evidence through systematic research on open questions in secondary, vocational, and tertiary education. This includes research that addresses selection tracks for vocational versus general education, how to incorporate hands-on training and mentorship, necessary skills for employment and increased earnings (life skills, technical skills, and transferable skills), and other relevant issues.

[J-PAL/CEGA Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative (ATAI):](https://www.atai-research.org/) The ATAI initiative aims to generate a body of rigorous evidence that illuminate the mechanisms underlying “agricultural transformation” for rural poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This includes evaluations of the ways that low-income populations are, or could be, gainfully employed as part of agricultural value chains beyond working as small-scale producers. This could include intermediaries engaged in trading, transport, aggregation, quality certification, agro-processing, etc. It also includes strategies to engage youth, women, and other vulnerable or marginalized groups (e.g. landless laborers) in more lucrative and/or appealing (e.g. less physically burdensome) jobs within the agriculture sector.

[J-PAL Gender and Economic Agency Initiative (GEA):](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/gender-and-economic-agency-initiative) The GEA initiative aims to build a strong body of evidence on policies and programs to promote women’s work and enhance women’s economic agency in East Africa and South Asia. GEA works to develop policy-relevant insights from this research to drive programming, strategies, and policymaking on women’s work in both formal and informal employment. In addition, as there is a growing need to identify and test key indicators for women’s empowerment and agency, GEA seeks to enhance the availability and scale of improved metrics for these outcomes.

**Funding**

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1. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/256001490191438119/pdf/WPS8011.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In rare circumstances, proposals with a compelling reason for requesting more than $400,000 may be considered on a case-by-case basis. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 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-7)
8. Please note that PhD students are eligible to submit a maximum of two travel/proposal development grant applications and two pilot/full study proposals during their time as graduate students. All else equal, priority will be given to graduate students who have not applied before. Applicants who received travel/proposal development funding as graduate students but have since moved to another institution may only apply for funding to continue that same project, and may not apply for funding for unrelated projects unless they have since become a J-PAL affiliate or JOI invited researcher through the JOI special invitee nomination and review process. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In addition, no spouse, partner, or immediate family member (parent, child, or sibling) of any individual named on a proposal application may serve as a peer or board referee in the round in which the applicant’s proposal is being reviewed. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)