

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: FULL RCTS

This document contains an [Overview](#), [Budget Guidelines](#), [Application Checklist](#), and [Narrative Template](#) for RCTs. Please read this document carefully before submitting your proposal.

OVERVIEW

Submission instructions: To respond to this RFP, all applicants must first **submit the required Letter of Intent on WizeHive, using the relevant application link from the [RFP webpage](#), and following the [Applicant Instructions here](#)**. Successful applicants will receive an invitation to proceed with their full proposal materials.

Strong RCT proposal applicants will demonstrate:

- a clear research question that is clearly discussed in relation to one or more Initiative themes (as outlined in the Initiative's RFP Overview in the [RFP page](#).)
- **a robust research design, well-defined research instruments, and sample size estimates justified by pilot data presented in the proposal and how specific available data informs detailed power calculations for any impacts you plan to measure.** Where studies are designed to detect differential impacts for men and women, there should be available evidence that large differences in outcomes are anticipated, informing statistical power calculations and justifying related increased data collection costs to allow for gender-disaggregated comparison of impacts.
- a feasible implementation plan, and
- a strong partnership commitment from implementing organizations (e.g., agreement to research design, sharing of costing information), including indications of the potential for significant scale-up of research findings by partners or scaling organizations.

Please note: if J-PAL has already funded part of, or precursors to, this project in a past competition round for any initiative, **the project will not be eligible to receive additional funding unless some preliminary data (e.g. take-up rates from a pilot, etc.) from the previously funded work is available and shared in the proposal.** You may submit this additional material as an addendum to your submission via the online application.

Funding per Full RCT award: We expect awards will range from \$80,000 to \$200,000. **We expect projects of various sizes, and will carefully check whether the budget size accurately reflects the scope of work proposed.** Note the guidelines on allowable and

unallowable costs in the [Budget Guidelines](#) section.

Timeline: Due to prime award dates, projects should not extend beyond December 31, 2026.

Required Data Collection: We intend to require that all RCTs collect **data on a subset of** indicators. The initiative team will be in touch at the launch of funded projects to support research teams in the specific survey questions or modules to be used and will be mindful of the additional survey time required as well as open to budget modifications to incorporate the time it takes to collect these required indicators.

Project Costing Exercise: J-PAL RCT grantees are requested to collect and share detailed program cost data following the [J-PAL Costing Guidelines](#). **The [Narrative Template](#) includes details on what to include in your proposal narrative.**

Motivation: The goal of this exercise in each RCT proposal is to ensure that the research team has plans from the outset to collect cost data for all “ingredients” needed to implement a program or intervention, excluding the costs of evaluating the impact of that program. In policy outreach activities, J-PAL has found that policymakers often ask how much a program or intervention costs, and collecting detailed cost data allows for cost-effectiveness analysis. This can assist policymakers when they are choosing how to allocate resources between different programs, or deciding to replicate or scale up a program that is demonstrated to be effective¹.

Principles and expectations: While a rigorous cost-effectiveness analysis requires very granular data, J-PAL will provide grantees a basic cost collection template, alongside basic reporting templates, which helps researchers gather the figures for the various cost categories. The template includes a sheet to assist with calculation of a “total program cost,” and a sheet to calculate high-level cost figures that are of greatest interest to policymakers.

Your proposal should help us understand the potential for a very rough, back-of-the-envelope cost-effectiveness calculation. When planning your cost data collection and approach to cost-effectiveness analysis, you should consider not only the costs of any inputs offered to participants (e.g. seeds, equipment, etc.), but also the costs of facilities and utilities, implementation staff, transport, and any other costs required to conduct the program. You may find it useful to consider the following questions when constructing your plan to collect relevant cost data:

- Are there costs in identifying the participant populations? (e.g. costs of doing a census, distributing flyers or other marketing materials, or holding information sessions necessary to implement the program.)
- Are there training costs for program staff implementing the intervention?

¹ 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](#).

- Are there costs borne by participants (consider opportunity costs, subsidized components of the program, etc.)
- Are there activities that are reduced in size or discontinued as a result of this intervention being introduced? These might indicate cost savings from this intervention.
- Are there implementation monitoring costs involved, necessary to track progress or ensure compliance with plans to achieve effective implementation?

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.**²

Guidelines for completing an RCT proposal budget: Please submit a detailed project budget using the [RCT Budget Template](#) provided at the [RFP release page](#). To reduce processing time, please keep the following in mind:

- **Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) Requirements:** RCTs are provided under an award from MIT to the grantee's host institution. PLEASE NOTE: MIT now requires that at least one project PI be employed by the organization receiving the subaward and funds.
- **IRB Requirements:** MIT requires that the IRB determination must be held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT. The PI at the ITRA must be listed as the main PI on the IRB. If the institution does not have its own IRB, the institution must engage the services of a commercial IRB to review and provide oversight for the research activities. [Heartland](#) and [Solutions](#) provide review of international research and satisfy J-PAL's IRB requirements; fees can be found on their respective websites. Furthermore, MIT requires that the PI named on the IRB must be employed by the institute receiving the award. Information about this MIT policy can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Please consult with J-PAL regarding including the cost of this commercial entity in the project budget.
 - 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.](#)
- 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**

² 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 of your submission. 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.

should clearly explain the marginal contribution of the requested funds from the Initiative.

- Applications must include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget in addition to the Excel template.
 - We also strongly encourage applicants to include budget notes in the column provided in the budget template, specifying input costs for line items within the budget. Travel costs should include a breakdown of how many trips are planned, the estimated cost per trip, number of people on a given trip, etc. 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.
- 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.
- **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

- **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.** Full RCTs may cover up to \$8,000 per LMIC researcher PI/co-PI per year, but the total budgeted amount for LMIC researcher PI time in aggregate across all co-PIs should not exceed \$20,000 per year.
- **Project Implementation Costs: For full research projects, 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.
 - 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).

- Universities in high-income countries (according to the [World Bank classification](#)) 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.
 - We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs 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 narrative.
- Unallowable costs include those labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency.” Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget narrative.
- 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 application by the full proposal deadline. You must upload several documents to complete your full proposal. All templates for these documents are provided at the [RFP release webpage](#) and listed below.

1. **Proposal Narrative:** Guidance pertaining to the narrative prompts is included in the [Narrative template](#) below. Please note that this section requires detailed power calculations.
2. **Proposal Budget:** Carefully review the Budget Guidelines in this document, then use the [RCT Budget Template](#), 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) for upload to the application.
3. **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) for upload to the application. This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget—i.e. notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.
4. **Research Timeline:** Please upload a simple table, chart, or bulleted list with a timeline that outlines key project activities.
5. **Letter(s) of Support:** Please obtain a letter of support from the following, each saved as a single PDF file with the title [PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Organization Letter of Support].pdf for upload to the application:
 - a. letters from each implementing partner, indicating the details of their commitment to partner on the research, and (for RCTs,) their willingness to share relevant program cost data. Consider including letter(s) from any potential scale-up partner(s).
 - b. a letter/document stating the proposed grant host institution’s approval of the proposal materials.
 - c. **Graduate students applying as the primary PI are required to include a letter**

- of support from a researcher adviser eligible for this call. The letter should indicate the adviser's willingness to remain involved in a supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project.
- d. **Validation and Test Accuracy data:** Proposals that include **Artificial Intelligence (AI) or any new specialized technology should include validation and test accuracy data in the proposal**, showing that the technology successfully does what it intends.
6. **(Possible) Addendum:** If your proposal builds on completed pilot findings, please submit an addendum detailing the pilot results that inform your RCT design.

NARRATIVE TEMPLATE

The online application will require you to address the below prompts. The text provided below each bolded subsection helps provide guidance on what the Initiative Board is looking for to effectively evaluate your proposal.

LETTER OF INTEREST QUESTIONS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. **Primary Eligible Researcher*** – Please identify one researcher who is eligible for J-PAL Initiative funding. This may be the principal PI or any eligible co-PI. Details for only one primary eligible researcher are required in cases where there's more than one eligible researcher. Other PIs who are eligible can be added as co-PIs. [First Name; Last Name; Email Address]
2. **PI Eligibility Category*** – Indicate how the researcher is eligible for J-PAL Initiative funding. [J-PAL Affiliate; Invited Researcher; PhD Student; J-PAL Postdoc]
 - a. **PhD Student Applicants*:** If you are a PhD student, please indicate the J-PAL-affiliated researcher who serves or will serve as an advisor on your dissertation committee. [First Name; Last Name; Email Address]
3. **Organization Name of Eligible Researcher*** – Please tell us the name of the organization the eligible researcher (i.e., the professor or PhD student) is affiliated with.
4. **Organization Type of Eligible Researcher*** [University, Other]
 - a. If you choose "Other" instead of "University," please contact the initiative team to provide more details.
5. **Organization Website of Eligible Researcher**

6. Country Where Organization of Eligible Researcher is Based or Headquartered*

7. Team Members & Roles

Please add all your project team members and indicate their role(s) on the project/application below. Please copy and paste the role exactly as it is written below so that it matches our internal database. Role options are:

- Applicant
- Primary PI
- Co-PI
- PI at Institute to Receive Award
- Reporting Contact
- Secondary Reporting Contact
- IRB Contact
- Finance Contact
- Collaborator
- Contact for Contracting (e.g., grant manager or research administrator)

If the person who is the applicant has another function related to the proposal, such as PI, indicate their additional role as well. [First Name*; Last Name*; Role or Title*; Email Address*]. *You can enter up to 10 contacts.*

8. PI Certification

- a. I certify that any listed eligible researchers have agreed to be active, engaged, and responsive PIs or advisors on this project. Eligible researchers who are involved have confirmed they will be dedicated to guaranteeing quality control on all aspects of this research and that their participation is not merely to provide access to resources and funding to other project team members who would otherwise be ineligible.
- b. I certify that all eligible researchers are up to date on reporting for all existing grants, across all J-PAL initiatives.

9. PI Certification* – Do you certify the above statements? [Yes; No]

10. Demographic Information

J-PAL is collecting information about all project teams, including demographic information, to better understand and support our research network. As the applicant, please send the language and [link](#) included below to all PIs/Co-PIs on your proposal research team. Provide your proposal name and each member's role (as you listed them on the application) when you send out the blurb. Completion of this step is required for all primary investigators on your research team. Please note that each PI/co-PI only needs to complete this survey once. If they have already submitted the survey for a previous application, they do not need to fill it out again.

If you have any technical problems with completing this step please email help@povertyactionlab.org and the initiative team directly.

Feel free to cut and paste this suggested language in an email to send to the PIs and Co-PIs on your team:

J-PAL is collecting information about all project teams, including demographic information, to better understand and support our research network. J-PAL is requiring all PIs and Co-PIs on our research team to complete this [short form](#). This data will only be accessible in disaggregated, identifiable form to select J-PAL staff. Aggregate, anonymized data will be used to report to key partners such as donors and may be included on our website.

11. **Demographic Information Confirmation*** – Please confirm that every PI/co-PI has completed the questions in the above-linked survey. You may select "Not Yet" so as to finish other questions. However, if you submit the application without "Yes" selected, your application will not be considered (until the surveys are complete). If you select "Yes" and PIs or co-PIs have not completed their surveys, their applications will not be considered until the surveys are complete. [Yes; Not Yet]

PROJECT DETAILS

12. **Full Title of Proposal***
13. **Funding Amount*** – Amount of requested funding in USD.
14. **National Location*** – In which country or countries will your research or travel take place?
15. **Past and Future Submissions to J-PAL*** - Have you submitted or do you plan to submit this LOI and proposal to any other J-PAL Initiative RFP?
 - a. **Details about Past and Future Submissions*** - If you answered yes above, please state which initiative(s), year/season of RFP, and the name of the LOI/proposal you submitted or plan to submit. Example: HPI Spring 2014 Using training activities to prevent violence from armed forces. Are the PI team, context, and research question the same as in the previously submitted proposal? [350 words max]
16. **Role of AI*** – In addition to evaluating the impact of an AI use case, will this project also use AI in the evaluation itself? For example, will the evaluation leverage machine learning for analysis, and/or will your proposed data collection leverage AI to capture outcomes of interest? Please briefly explain (no more than 100 words) how AI will be incorporated into this project. [100 words max]

17. **Abstract*** – Write a study abstract, including the project description, research question, and intervention or treatment to be evaluated. Discuss the project’s technical design, what is going to happen during the project, the practical value of your project, the conceptual value of your research, and the distributional implications of your work. Provide context about proposed partners and a timeline. Please note that this abstract will be added to the Initiative's webpage if the project receives funding. *[250 words max]*
 18. **Initiative Alignment*** – Please briefly describe how the project aligns with the initiative’s research focus area of piloting or evaluating use cases of AI in the fight against poverty. *[250 words max]*
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FULL RCT APPLICATION QUESTIONS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. **Subaward Setup**
For grants with **human subject research**, once all materials including IRB approvals/exemptions have been received, MIT typically takes 90 days to establish the subaward. Please provide conservative rather than optimistic estimates for start and end dates to reduce the likelihood of needing to submit no-cost extension requests.
2. **Proposed Period of Performance Project Start Date*** – What is the proposed start date for this J-PAL grant’s subaward activities?
3. **Proposed Period of Performance Project End Date*** – What is the proposed end date for this J-PAL grant’s subaward activities?
4. **Timeline*** – Please write out a timeline with key project activities. *[250 words max]*
5. **Existing Research Project Funded by J-PAL*** – Are you applying to fund additional research as part of an existing research project previously funded by J-PAL (e.g., a second proposal development grant continuing from a prior proposal development grant, a pilot grant building on a travel/proposal development, a full RCT building on a pilot, etc.)? *[250 words max]*
6. **Existing Research Project Details*** – Please provide the title and/or J-PAL grant number of your previously funded project. Please explain how the project has progressed since it was last submitted to J-PAL. *[250 words max]*

NARRATIVE

7. **Sectors*** – Which [J-PAL sectors](#) does this project most align with?

8. **Changes to Abstract*** – Write a study abstract, including the project description, research question, and intervention or treatment to be evaluated. Discuss the project’s technical design, what is going to happen during the project, the practical value of your project, the conceptual value of your research, and the distributional implications of your work. Provide context about proposed partners. Please note that this abstract will be added to the initiative's webpage if the project receives funding. If this project takes place in a country that has a J-PAL office but it is not the host institution, please detail the reasoning. Your answer will help us understand how J-PAL offices can be more competitive and better respond to the needs of PIs.

If nothing has substantially changed since the LOI submission, please copy the original abstract here. *[250 words max]*

9. **Policy Motivation*** – Provide a summary of the policy problem that motivates this research. *[250 words]*
10. **Potential Policy Impact*** – Please briefly describe the potential policy impact of this intervention (policies, programs, processes, or delivery mechanisms), including whether and how the project could inform policy or program design in this context or more broadly. 1) How will it meet the needs of your partner? 2) Will results from the intervention have broader implications? 3) How, if at all, will the “lessons learned” have relevance beyond this test case? 4) Is there demand from policy makers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? *[250 words]*
11. **Uncertainty of Study’s Results*** – Demonstrate meaningful ex ante uncertainty about the results of the study, i.e., that given existing evidence there are both reasons to believe the intervention(s) studied are promising and also reasons to doubt whether they will achieve their goals. *[250 words max]*
12. **Value of Research*** - What knowledge gap does your project address, and how will it advance the field? Provide a brief literature review to highlight its uniqueness, compare it with existing research, and explain its potential contribution, including any novel methods, measures, or interventions. Make a case for the research’s value by citing prior evidence of its promise or significant current or anticipated investment. A full reference list may be attached in the "Additional Attachments" section. *[500 words max]*
13. **Intervention Details*** – State how the intervention is either innovative or uses a straightforward intervention to study a big question. Could the intervention potentially improve one or more of the initiative’s priority outcomes and benefit people living in poverty? Please note that in the next section “Artificial Intelligence”, you will provide more detail on the AI technology that will be used in your intervention, so please review those questions before answering this one to avoid duplication of effort. *[300 words max]*

14. **Target Population and Context*** – What population(s) does the intervention attempt to impact? What characteristics do they have? Do you have any comments on this target population and context's alignment with the initiative's priorities? *[350 words max]*
15. **Evaluation Design** – Provide a brief description of the evaluation design, and how it fits with the topics outlined in the RFP materials. Does the research design appropriately answer the questions outlined in the proposal? Please include the randomization method, treatment groups, and describe any combinations of the interventions.
- a. Please include information about data collection and key outcomes:
 - i. Succinctly describe your data collection plan and key outcome measures of the study. Please include the data collection partner and your relationship with them.
 - ii. What are your intermediate and final outcomes? How will these be measured? When will you take measurements, and how frequently? If there are more than two treatment groups, please list them using numerals.
 - iii. Include preliminary, pilot, or other available descriptive data in support of your hypotheses, models, and/or theories of change. Indicate the reliability of this existing data from this research context.
 - iv. In the ""Additional Attachments"" section, You may also attach more detailed pilot data and results as an appendix (that does not count as part of the character/page limits for this proposal narrative), but please highlight in this section of your narrative the key details to ensure reviewers take them into account.
 - b. Details of your evaluation design can include but are not limited to:
 - i. What are the units of randomization and analysis (e.g., individual, household, village, etc.)?
 - ii. What is the method of randomization (e.g., lottery, phase-in, encouragement, etc.)?
 - iii. What is the sample size? How would it be divided into treatment and control?
 - iv. Are there threats that could compromise the validity of results? How do you plan to address those threats?
16. **Evaluation Design*** – Please answer the prompts above in the space below. *[800 words max]*
17. **Power Calculations** – Please provide detailed, convincing, and well-justified power calculations, e.g., based on current or past pilot data, existing literature, admin data of ongoing operations, etc., for any impacts that the research team plans to measure. Include and describe effect size, take up/compliance, variance, clusters, observations per

cluster, rho). Power calculations should quantitatively demonstrate that the study is well-powered enough to detect effects on the outcome(s) of interest that would be practically or conceptually meaningful. Proposals should articulate which null hypotheses are relevant for this exercise and why (in particular, not assuming that the null of zero impact is necessarily the relevant one).

Be sure to answer these two questions:

- a. What is the minimum detectable effect size? Why do you believe this is an appropriate size?
- b. Clearly state what data and assumptions you use for these estimates. Always discuss take-up, and do not assume take-up will be 100% for the purposes of power calculations.

For more detailed information about power calculations, see this resource:

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/resource/power-calculations>

18. **Power Calculations*** – Please answer the prompts above in the space below. Note that additional materials can be attached in the “Additional Attachments” section. *[700 words max]*
19. **Outcomes of Interest*** – Beyond the initiative-specific outcomes listed under the “Innovative Intervention Details” and “Evaluation Design,” please list any additional outcomes from this list to tag your evaluation with, in the case that a summary is later drafted of your evaluation. This list is the wider set of outcomes of interest for all J-PAL sectors and initiatives. Please add as many can apply to your planned study.
20. **Mechanisms*** – Through what mechanisms do you expect the treatment to affect outcomes of interest? How will you test these mechanisms? What is the theorized causal relationship between the intervention and the outcomes to be tested? *[250 words max]*
21. **Gender Implications and Analysis*** – Does the proposal address any gender issues? For example, have you taken into account how gender considerations could affect the outcomes of the intervention? *[250 words max]*
22. **Gender Reporting*** – Does the proposal disaggregate data and outcomes by gender? Pilot and RCT projects are required to report on gender-disaggregated impacts: Please briefly explain whether you will disaggregate gender impacts or why this would not be feasible. *[250 words max]*
23. **Project Costing Exercise** – The initiative would like to see the research team’s plan for how they will gather, interpret and share program implementation cost data. Please outline the approach that you will take to collect and report costing data for the intervention you are evaluating.

We acknowledge that it can be a challenge to distinguish implementation costs from evaluation costs, and see the value in making a plan during the proposal phase to identify and address the challenges and potential opportunities for effectively determining the full costs of the program/intervention in question. Please use this section to outline the rationale of your approach to cost collection in light of this reporting requirement.

Suggested prompts:

- a. Discuss your rough assessment of what the intervention, in its scalable form without associated research costs, is anticipated to cost per beneficiary reached or per benefit achieved.
- b. Which elements will be considered costs of implementation, and which elements will be considered evaluation costs?
- c. What types of cost data do you anticipate collecting?
- d. When in the data collection process would you collect each of these types of data, and how?
- e. How will you partner with those organizations and staff responsible for implementing the intervention to understand and report the associated costs in these identified categories?
- f. Report any challenges you anticipate facing in collecting or reporting this data. How would you plan to address these challenges to make the cost collection exercise most valuable in the context of your research, given the goals of the exercise outlined above?

24. **Project Costing Exercise*** – Please answer the prompts above in the space below. [500 words max]

25. **Scalability and Generalizability Potential*** – Please comment on the ability of this intervention to potentially scale and translate in different contexts. [500 words max]

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

26. **Rationale for AI*** – What is the value-add of AI within this intervention? Please describe the evidence supporting your hypothesis that the AI technology being evaluated will improve the outcomes targeted by this project. [300 words max]

27. **Context and Population Relevance of AI Technology*** – Popular AI models like ChatGPT are typically trained on global data and may not naturally reflect the linguistic, cultural, legal, or contextual nuances of specific populations. To ensure relevance and prevent harm, it is critical that AI systems used in RCTs are tailored to the needs, norms, and vulnerabilities of the local context. What efforts have you made to ensure that the model delivers appropriate and accurate responses for the population relevant for this RCT? Please describe the efforts you've made to ensure that the model does not deliver

biased, culturally-insensitive, or otherwise ineffective or harmful information to the target population. [300 words max]

28. **AI Technology Type*** – Please describe the AI technology that will be used in your intervention. Specifically, indicate whether it is based on any of the following:

- (a) Supervised learning,
- (b) Heterogeneous treatment targeting, or
- (c) Large language models (LLMs) (e.g., GPT, Claude, PaLM, etc.).

- a. If you selected that it is based on LLMs, please also answer all of the following:
 - i. Which LLM is being used and why? [250 words max]
 - ii. Will a qualified human (e.g., teacher, healthcare worker, extension agent) review and verify the AI's output before this output is used?
 - iii. If yes, please describe their role and qualifications. [300 words max]
 - iv. If no human in the loop is present, explain why the intervention is still unlikely to cause harm even if the LLM's output is inaccurate. [300 words max]

29. **AI: Validation and Test Accuracy Data*** – Proposals that include AI or any new specialized technology should include validation and test accuracy data in the proposal, showing that the technology successfully does what it intends. If applicable, please provide that validation and test accuracy data here, or attach it in the "additional attachments" section. If not applicable, please explain. [300 words max]

POTENTIAL RISKS


30. To protect children, research participants, staff, and community members, to comply with donor requirements, and to maintain a strong reputation for ethical research, J-PAL wants researchers to think carefully about the risks their research projects could face and how they will address such risks. The below questions provide an opportunity for researchers to do that. Successful applicants must provide updated answers in annual narrative reports only if there have been substantial changes since their proposal or last annual narrative report. **Please answer the following questions in detail:**

- a. **Completion*** – Are there any technical, logistical, ethical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the project (e.g., technical platform not ready, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding)? How do you plan to monitor and prevent/address these types of risks throughout the project? [200 words max]
- b. **Implementing Partners*** – Please discuss any information about the implementing partner(s) that could pose ethical, reputational, or legal risks (e.g., child safeguarding, corruption or misuse of funds, etc). If applicable, what

proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? *[150 words max]*

- c. **Child Safeguarding*** – Particularly for projects working with children, what child safeguarding risks exist? *[200 words max]*
- d. **Participants, Staff, Community Members*** – For each of the groups below, please describe any potential unintended consequences or risks of this project to them. What proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
 - i. Program and research participants
 - ii. Staff (e.g., implementing partners, research assistants, enumerators)
 - iii. Community members (e.g., untreated members of a household, untreated neighbors, or broader communities if the treatment might have spillover or downstream effects beyond the study sample) *[300 words max]*
- e. **Contractual Limitations*** – Are there any contractual limitations on the ability of the researchers to report the results of the study? If so, what are those restrictions, and who are they from? *[150 words max]*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AND INSTITUTE TO RECEIVE AWARD

- 31. **Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Record** – If the project has not received an IRB exemption and IRB review is required, please provide the current or expected IRB of record. IRB Requirements - If this proposal receives initiative funding, we will ask that you submit:
 - a. All IRB approval(s) or exemption(s)
 - b. All IRB-approved protocols
 - c. Any IRB-approved consent forms
- 32. **Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Record*** – Provide the name of the IRB of Record.
- 33. **Is this IRB of Record IORG certified?*** [Yes, No]
- 34. **Local Legal Requirements Certification*** – All PIs and Co-PIs certify that they understand they must adhere to all local legal requirements, including obtaining local IRB approval and government research permits, where applicable. Do you agree? [Yes, No]
- 35. **Data Publication*** – Please confirm you plan to publish data collected in an open-access, online database at the end of the evaluation. Data publication is required for projects funded by a J-PAL initiative, unless researchers request an exemption (which J-PAL has the discretion to deny) for legal, ethical, or proprietary reasons.
 [Data_code_availability_policy_2020.pdf](#) [Yes, No]

36. **Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) Information** – PLEASE NOTE: MIT now requires that at least one project PI be employed by the organization receiving the subaward and funds. Please provide the name of the ITRA here. Please see this [memo](#) and [FAQs document](#) for more information.
37. **Institute to Receive Award (ITRA)*** – Please indicate the institution that will receive the grant funds.
38. **Contact at Institute to Receive Award (ITRA)** – Please provide contact information for the person who will be in charge of the contract at the ITRA.

PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONS

39. **Partnership Status*** – Have you established communication with relevant stakeholders including but not limited to government agencies and implementing or technical partners, for research collaboration? [Yes, No]
 - a. If this project takes place in a country that has a J-PAL office but it is not the host institution, please detail the reasoning in the Partner Description question below. Your answer will help us understand how J-PAL offices can be more competitive and better respond to the needs of PIs.
 - b. **Name of Partner Organization*** – If yes, indicate the name of the partner organization.
 - c. **Role of Partner Organization*** – Indicate the role of the organization on this project. If you are adding a co-funder as a partner, please add more details under the question “Co-funder Details” farther down.
[Co-funder; Scale-up Partner; Other; Research Implementation Partner; Intervention Implementation Partner; Government Partner]
 - i. If you selected "Other" above, please explain the role of your partner.
 - d. **Partner Description*** – If yes, please provide a brief description of the partner(s), the partner’s involvement in project activities, and any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project. *[250 words max]*
 - e. **Point of Contact Based at the Partner Organization** – If yes, please provide details about your point of contact at the partner organization.
 - i. First Name*
 - ii. Last Name*
 - iii. Role or Title
 - iv. Email Address*

You can enter up to three partner organizations.

40. **Co-funder Details** – If you are adding co-funders, indicate the total amount of received or committed funding, the funded proposal or project title, and the name of the primary PI for the co-funded proposal or project.
41. **Interest in Co-Funding** – Below, tell us if you are interested in applying for co-funding from [Fund for Innovation in Development \(FID\)](#) or other donors in the J-PAL network who have indicated interest in seeing promising proposals from J-PAL initiatives. We are happy to forward your proposal to such donors. If you would like to opt out of matchmaking, please select “No.”.

BUDGET

42. From the [RFP webpage](#), download and complete the RCT Budget Template. There are two tabs: one for the initiative-specific budget and one for the project budget (i.e., the initiative-specific budget plus any other sources of funding you may have). When done, please upload your completed budget in the field below. Please note that the budget template is formatted specifically for this application. Do not remove the formatting, change any of the formatting, or create new columns.
43. **Budget Upload***
44. **Budget Narrative Upload*** – Please justify the expenses outlined in your budget in a Word document with the title [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget Narrative].doc(x), and upload it here. This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget. Notes included in the Excel sheet of the budget do not suffice.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT & ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

45. **Letter of Support from Implementing Partner*** – RCTs are required to provide a letter of support from their implementing partner. This letter should indicate a willingness to work with the research team and an agreement to share program cost data with J-PAL (through the PI) for the purpose of conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis.
46. **Letter of Transmission*** – RCTs 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.
47. **Letter of Support from Potential Scale-Up Partner or Tech Partner** – If available, applicants should also include letters of support from potential scale-up or tech partners.
48. **Are you applying as a PhD Student?*** [Yes, No]

- a. If yes, include the **J-PAL Affiliate or Invited Researcher Letter of Support**
PhD student applicants are required to submit a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher who serves as an advisor on the applicant's dissertation committee. This letter should indicate the advisor's willingness to advise the student throughout the project's lifetime. Please note that in some cases, the advisor may be asked to add their name to the financial award and IRB documents. If your advisor would rather submit this letter confidentially, ask them to email it to [initiative]@povertyactionlab.org. If the advisor submits the letter by email, the PhD student will need to bypass this upload field by uploading a blank document.
49. **Additional attachments** – Please attach any relevant materials discussed in your answers to the previous questions.