Education Research for COVID-19 Response & Recovery (the Covid Round): Application Form and Instructions: Full and Pilot Proposals

## PPE Covid RFP

**Instructions**: A complete application for full or pilot funding consists of (i) an application form, which includes a cover sheet and narrative, (ii) an itemized budget, and (iii) letters of support. Proposals are due by **Sunday, May 30, 2021 at 11:59 pm ET.**

**Narrative:** The narrative (ideally a maximum of five pages in length, including appendices with 12pt font) should clearly describe the proposed evaluation. It should include:

1. A 100-150 word abstract of the study in third person,which will be added to the PPE Initiative’s web page if the project receives funding.
2. A summary of the policy problem that motivates this research and how it fits with the list of research priorities laid out in the RFP Overview.
3. A description of the 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 *(required for full projects and relevant pilot projects)*
5. A comment on whether the research proposal addresses gender issues in any way.
6. A comment on how you plan to disaggregate the analysis by gender. See RFP Overview document for further details on related requirements.
7. 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.
8. A discussion of the other evaluation criteria (listed at the end of this application form), if not already addressed in the narrative.
9. If the project has other funders, the proposal should clearly explain the marginal contribution of these requested funds.

Please see below for a cover sheet and proposal template.

**Budget:** Please submit a detailed project budget using the Excel template provided. *If you are applying for the additional funding opportunity outlined in the RFP Overview, i.e. if you are partnering with a cognitive sciences researcher or a psychologist, please indicate which costs these are.* To reduce processing time, applicants must please keep the following in mind when developing their budget:

1. If there is co-funding for the project, applicants must complete both the “Total Project Budget” and “J-PAL Initiative Budget” sheets in the budget template.
2. Awards are normally paid on a cost-reimbursable basis.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Applications must include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget. 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.
6. 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 that they have budgeted for expenses associated with piloting and surveyor training, survey translation, field spot checks, and back checking.
7. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under this initiative is low and that grantees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets, such as direct costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget narrative.
8. Any computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased (i.e., how many laptops), as well as the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
9. Unallowable costs include those labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency.” Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget narrative.
10. Please note that the PPE Initiative does not cover PI salaries.
11. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that his/her budget follows his/her host institution’s policies for costs. As part of the applicant’s proposal, he/she must submit a letter from the institution to receive the award that states that they have reviewed the applicant’s proposal and accept the proposed budget. If the organization allows the applicant to submit his/her 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 also note that this applies to all projects, including those going through J-PAL and IPA offices. Applicants should contact them in advance to make sure they are aware of their policies for proposal review and give them enough time to meet the proposal deadline.
12. (Full RCTs only) 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), which J-PAL may conduct (with permission from the researchers) even if such an 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. PPE 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.

**Institution/IRB Approval Requirements:**If an applicant’s proposal is accepted for award, the actual funds will be provided under an award from MIT to the Institute to Receive Award. This will require, in addition to the applicant’s proposal:

* Formal submission approval of the proposal from the Institute to Receive Award to the initiative, if not already provided in his/her proposal.
* IRB approval from the IRB of Record. This IRB will be required to establish an Institutional Authorization Agreement with MIT in order to provide IRB oversight on behalf of MIT. MIT strongly prefers that the IRB providing oversight on behalf of MIT have a Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) number. Please check to make sure your suggested IRB of Record has or is willing to [register for an FWA](https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/register-irbs-and-obtain-fwas/fwas/index.html).

We aim to complete this process within 60 days of receiving all of the applicants’ 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 award, and we may in some cases be able to cover those costs (post-award, but pre-IRB) under the award.

**Letters of support:** Please provide the following letters of support:

* Letter(s) of support from implementing partner(s) that indicate willingness to work with the research team and willingness to share program cost data with J-PAL (through the PI) for the purpose for conducting program cost analysis.
  + If available, applicants should also include letters of support from potential scale-up partner(s).
* Letter of support from the Institute to Receive Award stating that they have reviewed the proposal, agree with the budget, and support the project with the stated budget.
* [Graduate students applying for pilot funding] Letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate who serves as an adviser on the applicant’s thesis committee. The letter should indicate the adviser’s willingness to remain involved in a supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project and provide an objective assessment of the project’s merits and likelihood of success. The PPE Board also expects the adviser to provide the applicant with guidance on the proposal prior to submission.
* [Applicants working in a country with a J-PAL regional office or an IPA country office] Letter of support from J-PAL or IPA office indicating willingness to provide support on research project.

**Submission Process:** Please e-mail [PPE@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:PPE@povertyactionlab.org) with the following attachments:

1. Coversheet and narrative saved as a .docx file titled *[PI last name]\_[Proposal title].docx*
2. Budget template saved as a .xlsx file titled *[PI last name]\_Budget.xlsx*
3. Letter(s) of support saved as a .pdf file titled *[Organization name/Advisor name/Office name]\_[Supporter].pdf*

**Education Research for COVID-19 Response & Recovery - Cover Sheet**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR | | INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION | | | | |
|  | |  | | | | |
| CO-INVESTIGATOR(S) AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION(S) | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | |
| *By checking this box, all J-PAL affiliates and initiative invited researchers who are co-PIs on this project certify that they will be active, engaged, and responsive PIs on this project 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 invited researcher.* | | | | | | ☐ |
| 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 to **any previous PPE round of funding?** | | Have you submitted this or a related proposal to **any other J-PAL research initiative?** | | | | |
| ☐ Yes If yes, when?  ☐ No | | ☐ Yes If yes, which initiative and when?  ☐ No | | | | |
| INITIATIVE FUNDING REQUEST *Check box to right if application is for pilot funding only:* | | | | | | ☐ |
| REQUESTED | **$** | TOTALCO-FUNDED\* | | | **$** | |
| GRANT PERIOD | | | | | | |
| START DATE: (yyyy-mm-dd) |  | END DATE: (yyyy-mm-dd) | |  | | |
| INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE AWARD\*\* |  | CONTACT AT INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE AWARD | |  | | |
| INSTITUTION HOLDING THE IRB OF RECORD |  | IRB CONTACT | |  | | |

\* Please indicate the institution that will actually receive the grant funds.

\*\*Please indicate the amount you have received in additional grants or funding for this research.

**Proposal Narrative Template** *(ideally not to exceed 5 pages)*

*Full and pilot proposal narratives should include these headings and address all aspects outlined above:*

**Executive Summary**

*Include a 100-150 word abstract of the study in third person. Please also indicate if you are applying for the additional funding opportunity outlined in the RFP Overview, i.e. if you are partnering with a cognitive sciences researcher or a psychologist.*

**Motivation**

*Include the main research questions and clear justification for how the project links to the Covid round priority areas and cross-cutting themes (as listed in the Covid RFP Overview document).*

**Intervention Details and Testing**

*Include a thorough description of the intervention. Explain the extent to which implementation and testing have been validated.*

***Research Design***

*Include a description of the study design, assumptions on take-up, main outcomes (and how they will be measured), and power calculations with rationale of key assumptions when relevant. Proposals that measure learning outcomes should include details on the tests they will use and should justify why those are appropriate for the specific study.*

**Risks and Mitigation Strategies**

*Include any potential risks outside of the research team’s control and how these challenges will be mitigated.*

**Potential Ethical Risks** [Optional]

*All J-PAL initiatives rely on IRB approvals secured by the PIs for many of the ethical issues surrounding conduct of primary data collection and experimentation. For this reason, PIs on successful applications are required to secure an IRB approval before an award agreement can be signed with J-PAL.*

*The domain of an IRB review, however, does not include all ethical considerations. For this reason, we are providing an opportunity for the PIs to discuss - if applicable - any issues that they feel warrant discussion but that are not covered by their existing or planned IRB review. Specifically, please consider whether you have any relevant information to provide for any or all of the following questions. It is fine to leave this section partly or entirely blank; please detail only issues that are not or will not be covered by your IRB that you feel are potentially important enough for the review committee to be aware.*

Q-1: If the underlying intervention you are studying will not be reviewed by the IRB approval that you have secured or will secure (because, for example, if the intervention is being implemented by outside entities not for research purposes), then please discuss any relevant ethical considerations around the intervention, taking into account the benefits to society of doing this research vs. the risks to subjects.

Intervention will be reviewed by IRB, and nothing else to report here.

Q-2: Are there potential harms to research participants in the process of data collection and/or research procedures (for example, discomfort to being asked certain questions or breach of confidentiality), that are not part of an existing or planned IRB approval? If so, what are they, and what proactive measures will be taken to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

Intervention will be reviewed by IRB, and nothing else to report here.

Q-3: Are there potential harms to research staff from conducting the data collection (such as, for example, exposure to political violence, unusual levels of a communicable disease, emotional wellbeing from surveying about difficult matters)? If so, what are they? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

Q-4: Are there any contractual limitations on the ability of the researchers to report the results of the study? If so, what were those restrictions, and who were they from?

Q-5: Beyond anything discussed and/or disclosed in existing or planned IRB submissions, are there any other ethical considerations that you feel are important for the Board to be aware that you have already thought of these, and incorporated in your work?

Nothing else to report here.

**Initiative Evaluation Criteria**

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| --- | --- |
| **Relevance** | Does the study address questions crucial to understanding pressing education issues in Covid response and recovery? Are the questions and proposed interventions consistent with research priorities outlined in the Covid RFP Overview document? |
| **Contribution**  **/Innovation** | 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? |
| **Value of research** | Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected lessons learned? |
| **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? Are proposed indicators adequate to measure impact? Can expected outcomes and impacts be observed within the proposed study period and/or sample? |
| **Viability of the project** | Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review? |
| **Policy Implications** | Will results from the intervention have broader implications? How, if at all, will the “lessons learned” have relevance beyond this test case? Is there demonstrated demand from policy makers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? |
| **Relevance for Disadvantaged Populations** | Does the proposal sufficiently identify and discuss the likely effects of the proposed program for girls and boys, and does the proposal take the special vulnerabilities of girls and/or boys into consideration? Does the proposal sufficiently identify and address the likely effects on other disadvantaged groups (i.e., ethnic/racial minorities, poorest students/youth, etc.). |