# SOLUTIONS AND ADVANCEMENTS THROUGH RESEARCH FOR WATER AND AIR | Request for Proposal Spring 2025

## PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: FULL RCTS

*This document contains the submission instructions and application materials for full RCT grants. For complete information on the SARWA RFP including research priorities, eligibility, review process, budget guidelines and more, please review the* [*SARWA RFP Overview document*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O7idYMJyk_ed1Ti3iVmpSMsUlLzQbgj7iIiFsktabuE/edit?tab=t.0)*.*

## OVERVIEW

**Full randomized evaluation grants** (up to US$ 250,000): 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. It is expected that these projects will lead to evidence being used in a policy decision and a paper publishable in a top economics or political science journal.

Strong RCT proposal applicants will demonstrate:

* a clear research question that is clearly discussed in relation to one or more to SARWA’s themes
* **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 the government partner, and any other implementing organizations involved, (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 in the submission package.**

## INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals for SARWA research funding for full-scale randomized evaluations in India are consist of:

1. Cover Sheet including basic contact and logistical information;
2. Proposal narrative;
3. Proposal budget and budget narrative; and
4. Letters of support.

* If you are interested in applying, please first reach out to the SARWA team ([SARWA@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:SARWA@povertyactionlab.org)) to discuss your proposal's potential fit to SARWA priorities.
* Please submit a complete application including all documents mentioned above as zip file with the title **[PI Last Name, First Name].zip** via email to the [SARWA team](mailto:SARWA@povertyactionlab.org) and CC [sgorti@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:sgorti@povertyactionlab.org) and [jchacko@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:jchacko@povertyactionlab.org).

| **Deadline: Pilot and proposal development grant applications accepted on the following dates: EOIs are due January 30th, 2025, and full proposals are due March 20th 2025.** |
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***Funding per Full RCT award:*** We expect awards will range between USD 80,000 to 400,000 for studies that can be randomized at the household or village level. **We expect projects of various sizes, and will carefully check whether the budget size accurately reflects the scope of work proposed. In case of shortfall in funding, we encourage projects to apply for co-funding from other Initiatives or funders.**

## PROJECT COSTING EXERCISE

J-PAL RCT grantees are requested to collect and share detailed program cost data following the [J-PAL Costing Guidelin](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxQLtQdR7BnhM09yQ1pla1dqZ1E/view?usp=drive_link&resourcekey=0-7I8DCE0-QMcwOhQAxtAmTw)es.**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 effective[[1]](#footnote-0).

**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?
* 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?

## COVER SHEET AND NARRATIVE TEMPLATE

Please submit the cover sheet and narrative template as one PDF titled **[PI Last Name, First Name][Proposal Narrative].pdf.**

### SECTION A : COVER SHEET

Please note that all fields are required; include a response in the white space below or next to each question (*12 pt font , single spaced*) to each of the following subsections.

Given aspects of SARWA Review review are blinded, **please refrain from using identifying language in your proposal narrative, e.g. we encourage you to use the grammatical third person when citing (co-)PIs' work.**

| **PROPOSAL DETAILS** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL | |  | |
| STATE(s) OR REGION(s) OF INTEREST | |  | |
| PRIMARY ELIGIBLE RESEARCHER  Please identify one researcher who is eligible for J-PAL Initiative funding. This may be the principal PI and/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. | |  | |
| PI ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY | | * J-PAL Affiliate * J-PAL Invited Researcher * J-PAL Post-doc * PhD/ Graduate students | |
| ORGANIZATION NAME OF ELIGIBLE RESEARCHER | |  | |
| [FOR PHD STUDENTS ONLY] NAME OF J-PAL AFFILIATE/INVITED RESEARCHER ON THEIR THESIS COMMITTEE IN THEIR HOST UNIVERSITY | |  | |
| INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE FUNDS (J-PAL REGIONAL OFFICE)\* | |  | |
| CO-PI(s) (Institutional Affiliation) | |  | |
| REPORTING CONTACT (IF ANY) | |  | |
| SECONDARY REPORTING CONTACT (IF ANY) | |  | |
| * By checking this box, all J-PAL affiliates and invited researchers who are co-PIs on this project certify that they will be active, engaged, and responsive PIs dedicated to guaranteeing the quality control on all aspects of this project; and that their participation in this project is not merely to provide access to J-PAL resources and funding to anyone else working on this project who is neither a J-PAL affiliate nor invited researcher. * By checking this box, all eligible researchers certify that they are up to date on reporting for all existing grants, across all J-PAL initiatives. | | | |
| GOVERNMENT PARTNER(s)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | | CONTACT (NAME,EMAIL,PHONE)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | |
|  | |  | |
| IMPLEMENTING PARTNER (s) (if any)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | | CONTACT(NAME,EMAIL,PHONE)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | |
|  | |  | |
| If you are working with any implementing partner (s), kindly specify their respective scope of work. *[word limit: 150 words maximum]* | | | |
|  | | | |
| PROPOSED START DATE: (yyyy-mm-dd) |  | PROPOSED END DATE:  (yyyy-mm-dd) |  |
| INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE AWARD\* |  | CONTACT FOR CONTRACTING ISSUES |  |
| AMOUNT REQUESTED (IN USD) |  | AMOUNT CO-FUNDED (IN USD) |  |
| CO-FUNDER(S)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | | FUNDED AWARD (PI, Project Title, Amount)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | |
|  | |  | |
| PAST AND FUTURE SUBMISSIONS: Have you submitted or do you plan to submit this LOI and proposal to any other J-PAL Initiative RFP?  Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any other J-PAL funding initiative? | | ☐YES ☐NO | |
| 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: GI Spring 2019 Using Mobile Phones to Improve Service Delivery. Are the PI team, context, and research question the same as in the previously submitted proposal? Please explain whether the project received funding and what type of funding it received (Travel/Proposal Development, Pilot, RCT, Scale). Additionally, please explain how the project has progressed since it was last submitted to [blank initiative], and explain how you addressed the feedback that was provided with your last submission. *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* | |  | |
| EXISTING RESEARCH PROJECT: 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.)? | |  | |
| If yes, please provide the title and/or J-PAL grant number of your previously funded project. | |  | |
| Some projects will not be conducting research involving human subjects. However, if this project will involve research on human subjects,please fill out the two boxes below. | | | |
| IRB OF RECORD |  | IRB CONTACT |  |
| We are also in touch with other funders and occasionally share proposals that are relevant to their interests. If you do not want this proposal shared with them,please check this box:☐ | | | |

### SECTION B : NARRATIVE

Instructions: Please include a short response in the white space below each question (*12 pt font , single spaced*) to each of the following subsections. **Before preparing your proposal narrative,we strongly urge that you refer to the evaluation criteria mentioned in** [**Annexure**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YWo1A--PCcY1TDgH3dIviYNxOigbqUXG/edit#bookmark=id.3rprre42tc9v)**.**

| **ABSTRACT:** Please provide an abstract of the proposed research project(s). This will be added to the SARWA web pages if the project receives funding.\* *[Word limit: maximum 250 words]* |
| --- |
|  |
| **FOCUS AREAS:** Which focus areas does this project fall under? Select One or More: |
| * Clean Air * Clean Water * Water Availability/Access * Climate Change Mitigation * Climate Change Adaptation * Pollution Reduction * Energy Access |
| **THE PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY:** A summary of the context and policy problem/opportunity that motivates this research, including the available evidence of the problem in this context, and how it fits with the government partner’s priorities on clean air and water, or other policy priorities in environment, energy, or climate change identified by the government and/or in the SARWA RFP Overview. \* *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **THE INNOVATION:** A description of the intervention to be evaluated and how it could potentially improve access to clean air and water[[2]](#footnote-1) .Innovations can be introducing new or making changes to existing programs, processes, technologies, or delivery systems.\* *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **RESEARCH DESIGN:** Please describe the evaluation design, including the research question(s), sampling, randomization, and key outcome measures. Please describe how this research will advance the academic literature, including potential market failures this research seeks to address, or the underlying economic model you will use/analyze. Describe how you intend to measure key outcomes related to air quality, water quality, pollution, or water access.[[3]](#footnote-2) *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **THE TARGET POPULATION AND CONTEXT:** A brief description of the target population to be reached and any comments on the alignment with the Air and Water Labs’ goals to improve clean air and water access where it is most urgently needed. \* *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** If you are already working with any implementing partner (s), kindly specify their respective scope of work. *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **THE PARTNERSHIP:** A brief description of the government partner (and any other implementing partners involved in the project), the history of the partnership, the partner’s involvement in project activities, and any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project. Please include any potential risks to the partnership. \* *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **Power calculations: Required for full RCTs. \*** |
|  |
| **DEMAND-DRIVEN RESEARCH:** A comment on how this proposal responds to requests for support from your government partner. Please include how the government partner has displayed prior commitment or expressed demand for evidence. Please also include the potential pathways for the project to inform policy or program design, expansion, and/or implementation decisions and/or develop into a full scale RCT. \* *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **POTENTIAL RISKS:** Please answer the following questions below in detail.\*   * Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding) and how does your team plan to address/overcome them? * Are there any risks of unintended negative consequences of the intervention and/or research for program participants and/or staff and if so, what are they? What proactive measures has your team taken to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **GENDER:** A comment on whether the research proposal addresses gender issues in any way, including analysis disaggregated by gender, and any information on gender dynamics that could impact the research. Please note that funded projects will be required to collect and report on gender-disaggregated data, as outlined in the [SARWA RFP Overview](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O7idYMJyk_ed1Ti3iVmpSMsUlLzQbgj7iIiFsktabuE/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.dy0h74n41tl9) under the “Grant Conditions” section. \* *[Word limit: maximum 200 words]* |
|  |
| **POTENTIAL TO INFORM POLICY DECISIONS AND/OR SCALE-UPS:** Please summarize the potential for the project to inform policy and/or scale-ups, including describing the potential pathways for the project to inform policy or program design, expansion, and/or implementation decisions. Lastly, please mention whether the program costs and impacts may be suitable for a cost-effectiveness analysis. Refer to the project costing exercise section [here](#bookmark=kix.3y4mfoltfwki) for more details. *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **DATA PUBLICATION (REQUIRED OF FULL STUDIES ONLY)**: A comment on whether you plan to publish data collected in an open-access, online database at the end of the evaluation. Note that data publication is required for any project funded by a J-PAL initiative. \* *[Word limit: maximum 350 words]* |
|  |
| **RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS FEEDBACK:** If you have submitted a proposal for this project to an Air and Water Lab or K-CAI in a previous RFP, explain whether the project received funding, what type of funding it received (Travel/Proposal Development, Pilot, RCT, Path-to-Scale). Additionally, please explain how the project has progressed since it was last submitted to an AWL or K-CAI, and explain how you addressed the feedback that was provided with your last submission (only required for projects that have previously applied for AWL or K-CAI funding) *[Word limit: maximum 300 words]* |
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| **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** A discussion of the other evaluation criteria (listed at the end of this document), if not already addressed in the narrative. *[Word limit: maximum 300 words]* |
|  |

## BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit a detailed project budget using the **Excel template available online**. Carefully review the [Budget Guidelines in the SARWA Overview document](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O7idYMJyk_ed1Ti3iVmpSMsUlLzQbgj7iIiFsktabuE/edit?tab=t.0), then use the Budget Template provided at the RFP release webpage, 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).**

Applications must include a **brief budget narrative document** detailing the major costs within the budget in addition to the Excel template. For the budget narrative, detail the costs within the budget, referring to the Budget Guidelines in the SARWA RFP Overview document here, in a Word document with the title **[PI Last Name, First Name][Budget Narrative].doc(x)**. This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget -- i.e. notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.

## 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**:

1. A letter of support from J-PAL at IFMR.
2. A letter from a government partner indicating the details of their commitment or willingness to engage in discussions to partner on the research
3. 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 (see the Guidance for Graduate Student Applicants for details).

## ANNEXURE : EVALUATION CRITERIA

For full RCT applications,the SARWA peer reviewers will consider the following general criteria in making funding decisions:

| **Criterion** | **Scale** | **Help text Excellent=4; Above average=3; Below average=2; Poor=1** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Innovation | 1-4 | Will the research make new contributions to the body of knowledge relevant to the proposed research question? Does it answer new and challenging questions, or introduce novel methods or measures? Is the policy / program being evaluated novel and innovative? |
| Technical Merit | 1-4 | Is the research designed effectively to answer proposed questions, and is the research question well-articulated? Are the indicators, timeline, and sample size estimates appropriate, given the outcomes to be measured?Consider the potential threats to the internal validity of the study. Does the proposal sufficiently address those threats? |
| Yes/No | Do the power calculations convincingly demonstrate the ability to detect each of the proposed impacts to be measured? |
| Policy Relevance | 1-4 | Has the proposal convincingly argued the importance of the evidence gap for policy? And is it likely that the study will engage and provide valuable information to stakeholders to affect change at scale? Is there potential for the study to answer questions relevant for other policymakers and practitioners beyond the implementing partner? (E.g. will the results speak to commonly used approaches?) |
| 1-4 | Path to use of results: Does the proposal discuss potential programming or scale up decisions that the research could inform? Does the partner seem committed to using results? Is there potential for this evaluation to inform a scale-up proposal to SARWA ? |
| 1-4 | Commitment to speed: Does the proposal instill confidence in the researchers’ commitment to timely sharing of interim outputs and final results with implementing and/or policy partners? Does the proposal identify explicit strategies to create opportunities for the partners and others to learn from results quickly? (E.g. use of high-frequency / non-survey data sources, strategies to measure impacts on intermediate outcomes?) |
| Alignment with SARWA Measures of Success | 1-4 | Does the proposal make a good case for why answering the proposed research question and the proposed intervention has the potential to generate benefits to society? |
| Yes/No | Tracking impacts: Does the proposal discuss air or water-related metrics will be collected? Is the methodology for calculating these impacts appropriate? SARWA requires grantees to track one or more of the following: air quality, water quality, pollution, and/or water availability/access. If the project is focusing on another environment, energy, or climate change priority for the government outside air and water, have the applicants adequately described their outcome measurement in the proposal? |
| Logistical Viability | 1-4 | Does the government partners seem appropriate for the project and is the relationship likely to endure through the entire study? Does the proposal convincingly address technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding)? Are the risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants and staff minimal? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? |
| Ethical Concerns | 1-4 | Are the risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants minimal? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? |
| Overall Funding Recommendations | 1-4 | Do you recommend this proposal for funding given your overall review?  Scoring:  Fund without hesitation = 4  Fund if nothing better (meets the bar, but is not an outstanding value for money) = 3  Would not fund (just below the bar) = 2  Strongly opposed to funding = 1 |

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.](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1D8BXQm9YTXt34pbkOH9QAF2zbmBuS_ocvGlVOiW9Vd8/viewform) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. If the innovation is not focused on air and water but another priority issue related to climate, environmental, or energy policy, please describe how it could improve the well-being of people or the planet. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. If the innovation is not focused on air and water but another priority issue related to climate, environmental, or energy policy, please describe the other environmental and socioeconomic outcomes you will measure. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)