**SOCIAL PROTECTION INITIATIVE APPLICATION FORM AND INSTRUCTIONS**

*Pilot Proposals: Round 1 (2022)*

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Proposals for pilot funding consist of (i) an application form, which includes a cover sheet (found at the bottom of this document) and narrative; (ii) a budget form; and (iii) letters of support. These materials should be submitted to spi@povertyactionlab.org by **5:00 PM ET on March 18, 2022.**

**NARRATIVE**

The narrative should clearly describe the proposed evaluation. It should not exceed five pages in length, including appendices, and use 12-point font. Please refer to the following guidelines when preparing the narrative.

1. A 100-150-word abstract of the study is required. The abstract will be added to SPI’s webpage if the project receives funding.
2. The body of the narrative must include:
	1. A description of the policy problem that motivates this research and how it fits with the research priorities identified in [SPI’s RFP Overview](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/social-protection-initiative-request-proposal).
	2. A description of the treatment, evaluation design, target population, outcome variables and plans for measurement of outcome variables, power calculations, and implementing partners.
	3. Comments with regard to gender and inclusivity of marginalized groups:[[1]](#footnote-1)
		1. A comment on whether the research proposal addresses gender issues in any way, including analysis disaggregated by gender. Please note that funded projects will be required to collect and report on gender-disaggregated data.
		2. A comment on whether the research proposal addresses the concerns and needs of marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, indigenous communities, diverse SOGIESC[[2]](#footnote-2) communities, and children. Please note that funded projects targeting these groups will be required to report on data disaggregated by disability status, minority status, and child status.
	4. A discussion of the other evaluation criteria (listed at the end of this document), if not already addressed in the narrative.
3. [Optional] Respond to the following questions regarding potential ethical risks. If the intervention will be reviewed by an IRB, and there is nothing additional to report, a response is not required.
	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, 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.
	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?
	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?
	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?
	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?

**BUDGET**

Please submit a detailed project budget using the Excel template available [online](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/social-protection-initiative-request-proposal). To reduce the processing time, please keep the following in mind when developing your budget:

1. If there is co-funding for the project, you must complete both the “Total Project Budget” and the “SPI Budget” sheets in the budget template.
2. Awards are normally paid on a cost-reimbursable basis.
3. Applications must include budget notes in the column provided in the budget template, 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. “Field Costs” should include a breakdown of the number of respondents, cost per respondent, etc.
4. Universities in high-income countries, generally defined as [OECD member countries](http://www.oecd.org/about/membersandpartners/list-oecd-member-countries.htm), can charge up to 10% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs. Independent 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. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under SPI is low and that grantees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets as direct costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget notes.
6. Any computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased, (e.g., how many laptops), as well as the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
7. Unallowable costs include those labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency.” Any costs for rent should be explained in the budget notes.
8. Please note that SPI generally does not cover PI salaries. For PIs based in low- or middle-income countries, the following applies: The request does not exceed $8,000 per year for each PI in the proposal, and does not exceed an amount equivalent to 25% of the total budget per year for all PIs in the proposal in total. However, in exceptional cases, such as where there is no primary data collection, one can motivate a deviation from these thresholds.
9. It is your responsibility that your budget follows your host institution’s policies for costs. If your proposal is selected, the budget will be incorporated into the subaward contract between MIT and the institution to receive the award (ITRA). As part of your proposal, you must submit a letter from the ITRA that states that they have reviewed your proposal and accepted your budget. Please see detailed instructions under Letters of Support #3, below. Please note that this applies to all projects, including those going through J-PAL and IPA offices. You should contact J-PAL and IPA offices in advance to make sure you are aware of their policies for proposal review.

**LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

Please provide the following letters of support:

1. Applicants for pilot funding are encouraged to submit letters of support from implementing partners if available.
2. PhD students are required to include a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate, EPoD faculty affiliate, or SPI invited researcher who is an advisor on their dissertation committee at their host university.[[3]](#footnote-3) The letter should indicate the advisor’s willingness to remain involved over the project’s lifetime. 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.” Graduate students who are applying for pilot funding must also include documented evidence of successful preparatory activities. Please note that in some cases, due to restrictions at the institution that will receive the funding awarded, the advisor may be asked to add his or her name to the subaward and IRB documents.
3. Applicants must provide a letter from the receiving institution of the award to show that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget. Please follow the MIT approved language for the Letter of Transmission as follows:
	1. **Example language for Letter of Transmission when there is a PI at the ITRA:**
		1. (On ITRA letterhead): <ITRA> is pleased to support the <Name of research> proposal and will plan on carrying out the work in accordance with the submitted budget. <NAME OF PI at ITRA> will serve as <ITRA's> Principal Investigator for this work. In this role, he/she is responsible for the implementation of this project in accordance with this proposal and with appropriate research and data protection practices. Please contact him/her with any concerns which may arise related to project implementation.
	2. **Example language for Letter of Transmission when there is no PI at the ITRA:**
		1. (On ITRA letterhead): <ITRA> is pleased to support the <Name of research> proposal and submitted budget. <ITRA> takes full responsibility for the appropriate and responsible conduct of the proposed research activities related to the scope of work for this project under the academic direction of the co-PIs: <names of co-PIs plus their affiliation - eg: Jane Doe from Duke University>. Please contact me <this will be the person who signs the letter> with any concerns which may arise related to project implementation.

**SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

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

1. A coversheet and a 5-page narrative (12-point font) saved as a single Word or PDF file titled *[PI Name]\_[Topic Name].docx(.pdf)*
2. A completed budget form, saved as a single Excel file titled *[PI Name]\_Budget.xlsx*
3. Letters of support (as described above), saved as PDF files. Please note the following:
	1. For PhD students, the required letter of support from an advisor who is a J-PAL affiliate, EPoD faculty affiliate, or SPI invited researcher may be shared with the other application materials. Alternatively, the advisor may send the letter of support directly to spi@povertyactionlab.org.

The deadline for submissions is **5:00PM ET** **March 18, 2022.**

**REQUIREMENTS**

If your proposal is accepted for award, the actual funds will be provided under a subaward from MIT to the “Institute to Receive Award” indicated on your cover sheet. This will require, in addition to your proposal:

1. A 1-2-page summary of the research being conducted, written for a general audience
2. The IRB approvals or exemptions as needed for your project along with the IRB approved protocol and copies of any IRB approved consent forms and survey instruments
3. If your selected Institute to Receive the Award has not had contracts with MIT previously, they will need to complete a number of additional steps before any contract can be negotiated between MIT and your Institute to Receive the Award. Steps include [completing a SAM.gov registration, a Subrecipient questionnaire](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1JvKUkXigbcuaHtpYYaPdX0Cuc0W5RqMs), and completing registration in MIT’s supplier portal. Additionally, MIT might require additional documents including the Institute to Receive the Award’s financial audits. **These steps can take some time to complete so please start this process early.**

**PROCESS**

We aim to set up the subaward within 60 days of receiving all your forms. Assuming IRB approval is in place, we set the period of the award to start from the start date indicated on the submitted proposal.The process MIT follows for these awards is:

1. The SPI Review Board sends an official award notification letter.
2. If not already submitted, J-PAL requests your institution’s approval of the proposal, your institutional IRB approval, a research summary, and, if your institute to receive award is not a subaward partner with MIT, the additional forms needed to establish them as a subaward partner.
3. MIT establishes a subaward to the institution to receive award.
4. Institute to receive award invoices MIT for expenses incurred for the project on a cost reimbursable basis.

**SPI COVER SHEET**

Round 1 – 2022

*Please note that all fields are required*

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| --- |
| PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S) AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION |
|       |
| CO-INVESTIGATOR(S) AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION |
|       |
| **ADVISOR (IF PI IS A GRADUATE STUDENT)** |
|  |
| ☐ I agree | *By checking this box, all J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, EPoD faculty affiliates, and SPI 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 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, J-PAL postdoc, EPoD faculty affiliate, nor a SPI invited researcher.* |
| TITLE OF PROPOSAL | COUNTRY |
|  |       |
| PARTNER(S)  | CONTACT AT PARTNER (Name, Email, Phone) |
|  |       |
| CO-FUNDER(S)  | FUNDED AWARD (PI, Project Title, Amount) for each source of co-funding |
|       |       |
| **Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any other J-PAL research initiative?** |
| ☐ Yes☐ No | If yes, which initiative and when?       |
| REQUESTED (This proposal) | **$**      | TOTALCO-FUNDED (Should match total of co-funding listed above) | **$**      |
| **GRANT PERIOD** |
| START DATE:(yyyy-mm-dd) |       | END DATE:(yyyy-mm-dd) |       |
| INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE AWARD\* |       | CONTACT FOR CONTRACTING ISSUES |       |
| IRB OF RECORD  |       | IRB CONTACT |       |
| **Do you expect that you will need to set up any sub-awards for this project?** (For example: a partner organization, or an organization doing field work, that will be separate from the subaward contract to the Institute to Receive Award) ☐Yes ☐ No  |

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

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Contribution | Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field? Does it answer new questions or introduce novel methods, measures, or interventions? Is there academic relevance? How does the study compare with the existing body of research? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying economic theories?  |
| Policy Relevance | Does the study address questions crucial to understanding pressing issues on social protection in low- and middle-income countries? Does it address the priority questions outlined in the [SPI RFP Overview](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/social-protection-initiative-request-proposal)? Will results from the intervention have broader implications? How, if at all, will the “lessons learned” have relevance beyond this test case? Is there demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? Is there potential for the implementing partner to scale up this intervention? |
| Technical Design | Does the research design appropriately answer the questions outlined in the proposal? Are there threats that could compromise the validity of results? If so, does the proposal sufficiently address those threats? What changes could the researchers make to improve the design?  |
| Project Viability | Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? What is the credibility and policy influence of the implementing partner? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review? For pilots, do researchers describe how piloting activities would inform a full-scale randomized evaluation?  |
| Value of Research | Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected lessons learned? Does the study leverage funding from other sources?  |

1. These requirements are outlined in [SPI’s RFP Overview](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/social-protection-initiative-request-proposal) document under the “Grant Conditions” section. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. SOGIESC stands for sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 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 to SPI. 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, EPoD faculty affiliate, or SPI invited researcher. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)