SOCIAL PROTECTION INITIATIVE APPLICATION FORM AND INSTRUCTIONS

*Travel/Proposal Development Grants: Round 3 (2024)*

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

Applications for travel/proposal development grants consist of (i) an application form; (ii) a budget form; and (iii) for graduate students, a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate, EPoD faculty affiliate, or SPI invited researcher who serves as an advisor on the applicant’s dissertation committee at their host university.[[1]](#footnote-0) The required templates are available on the [SPI webpage](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/social-protection-initiative-spi) and should be submitted via our [online portal](https://jpal.force.com/portal/FGM_Portal__CommunitySignin?startURL=%2Fportal%2Fapex%2FFGM_Portal__CommunityApplication%3Fid%3D7013m000001dX22) by **5:00 PM ET on April 4, 2024**.

In past RFPs, SPI requested that applicants submit Expressions of Interest (EOIs) ahead of submitting full proposals. Starting in 2024, we are no longer requiring EOIs–our portal will be open only for full proposal submissions between February 5, 2024 and April 4, 2024.

In the interim, to facilitate your proposal development, we have posted this reference application document that outlines all required information that applicants will be asked to provide when submitting a proposal to SPI. You are welcome to begin drafting your proposal materials using this template, as the fields and content included in this reference document will be required in the [online portal system](https://jpal.force.com/portal/FGM_Portal__CommunitySignin?startURL=%2Fportal%2Fapex%2FFGM_Portal__CommunityApplication%3Fid%3D7013m000001dX22). Please do not complete or submit these reference documents to SPI for consideration.

Questions? Please reach out to [spi@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:spi@povertyactionlab.org).

## BASIC INFORMATION

On the **Basic Information** tab, you will be asked to complete the following information.

* Researcher eligible for SPI funding
* Funding eligibility category (options: J-PAL affiliate, EPoD faculty affiliate, invited researcher, Graduate student, J-PAL postdoc)
* Advisor of the graduate student applicant
  + If you are a graduate student, please indicate the J-PAL affiliate, EPoD faculty affiliate, or SPI invited researcher who serves as an advisor on your dissertation committee at your host university.
* Team members
  + Please identify project team members and their roles. We require at a minimum that the Primary PI and any co-PIs are listed.
* PI certification
  + You will be asked to make the following certification: I certify that any listed J-PAL or EPoD affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, and SPI invited researchers who are co-PIs on this project have agreed to be active, engaged, and responsive PIs dedicated to guaranteeing quality control on all aspects of this research; and that their participation in this project is not merely to provide access to resources and funding to other project team members who would be otherwise ineligible.
* Country/countries where research will take place
* Proposed project start and end dates for travel and/or proposal development activities
* Requested funding ($)
* Funding purpose (options: travel, proposal development activities, or both)
* Previous Application(s) to J-PAL Initiatives
  + Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any J-PAL research initiative? If yes, please specify the initiative(s), year of RFP, and name of the proposal submitted.
  + If you have previously submitted this or a similar proposal to SPI: Are the PI team, context, and research question the same as in the previously submitted proposal?
* Human Subject Research
  + Do you plan to conduct human subject research during your travel/proposal development?
  + According to US federal regulations, a human subject is a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains 1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual (e.g., through an interview, focus group, or survey), or 2) identifiable private information (e.g., individual-level health or education data). If your project scope of work includes collecting this type of data, please select “Yes” in this field.
* Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Record
  + If you answered yes to the “Human Subject Research” question, you must provide the following information: If the project has not received an IRB exemption and IRB review is required, please indicate the current or expected IRB of record.
  + Please note that J-PAL requires that the reviewing IRB have [IORG status](https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/register-irbs-and-obtain-fwas/irb-registration/irb-organizations/index.html) with the US Office of Human Protections. You can look up the IORG status of an IRB [here](https://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search/search.aspx?styp=bsc).
  + If your IRB of Record is not the same as your Institute to Receive Award (ITRA), we ask that you include the ITRA and the administrative PI at the ITRA on the IRB as a site and role. If you already have the approved IRB, please modify it to include the ITRA/PI as a site and role.

## MANAGE TEAM MEMBERS

On the **Manage Team Members** tab, you will be able to manage any project team member added through the **Basic Information** section.

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

On the **Partner Organizations** tab, you will be asked to add any implementation partners (including partners in charge of delivering the intervention and partners in charge of evaluating/conducting research on the intervention), scale-up partners, or co-funders. The form will ask you for contact information of the partner organizations and to share the amount received from co-funders.

## PROJECT DETAILS

On the **Project Details** tab, any section marked with an asterisk (\*) is required, and all required fields must be addressed in order to submit a proposal. Some fields are only required in certain circumstances; please follow the instructions, thoroughly read the cues, and access linked documentation as necessary.

Include a single-spaced response to prompts where applicable.

Any field that requests the upload of documentation supports multiple attachments; however, the file size limit for any single file is 2GB.

### Social Protection Initiative Focus Areas (\*)

Please indicate which SPI focus area(s) your proposal relates to; these are described in the [SPI Evidence Review](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/review-paper/research-directions-social-protection-low-and-middle-income-countries).

* **Options:**
  + Social Assistance: Designing programs aimed at addressing poverty and/or life-cycle challenges in low- and middle-income countries
  + Social Insurance: Insuring beneficiaries against shocks (e.g., economic, health, climatic) in low- and middle-income countries
  + Cross-Cutting Design and Implementation Issues: Identifying beneficiaries, addressing take-up challenges, and delivering benefits in low- and middle-income countries
  + Political Considerations: Examining how politics affects how social protection programs operate in low- and middle-income countries

### Topic Statement (\*)

Please provide a concise statement of your research topic. These grants are intended to facilitate PI travel for preliminary, exploratory research. You only need to address the general topic of interest and current ideas on how the question might be explored through a randomized evaluation. Do not describe your detailed program or evaluation design. *(Recommended word count: 250 words)*

### Policy Motivation (\*)

Please describe the policy problem that motivates this project and how it fits with the research priorities identified in [SPI’s Evidence Review](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/review-paper/research-directions-social-protection-low-and-middle-income-countries). *(Recommended word count: 400 words)*

### Partnership Details (\*)

Please provide a brief description of proposed partners you plan to work with for both program implementation and evaluation, such as J-PAL regional offices, IPA country offices, or other organizations. Please include the history of the partnership, and any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project. *(Recommended word count: 200 words)*

### Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of your travels or proposed activities (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding) and how does your team plan to address/overcome them? *(Recommended word count: 150 words)*

## BUDGET AND LETTER OF SUPPORT

### Travel/Proposal Development Budget Template (\*)

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

1. Travel/proposal development grants are for a maximum of $7,500. The typical grant is $5,000 for one researcher.
2. Travel grants are paid as reimbursements.
3. Please include detailed budget notes in the column provided in the template.
4. *International travel:* J-PAL will put you in touch with an MIT travel agent who can book international travel and charge J-PAL directly. If you choose to buy your own ticket, we will not be able to reimburse you until your flights have been completed.
5. *Per diem:* A per diem stipend of $25/day-in-country can be claimed to cover food and miscellaneous expenses.
6. *Survey and other in-country expenses:* Travel/proposal development grants can be used to cover expenses for in-country costs such as hiring enumerators, procuring translation or transcription services, developing instruments, and others. If these expenses are in the budget, J-PAL will provide the forms necessary to document them with your award notice, and you can claim these expenses as reimbursement once the travel is completed. J-PAL is not able to directly reimburse survey firms or local organizations for these costs.
7. *Other expenses:* Other expenses will be reimbursed upon submission of an expense report. Expenses should be supported by receipts whenever possible, and all expenses over $50 must be supported by receipts. All expenses must be claimed within 30 days of your return.
8. *Medical insurance:* You will be asked to provide documentation of emergency medical and evacuation insurance through your host organization or employer. If no coverage is available you will be covered by MIT, however if coverage is provided from your home institution, MIT’s coverage is secondary to your host institution’s coverage. Outside travel insurance is not a reimbursable expense.
9. *Expenses not allowed:* J-PAL is not able to cover travel or trip protection insurance, lost luggage insurance, incidental expenses, or grantees’ time. In most cases, J-PAL is not able to directly reimburse any individuals or organizations other than the grantees awarded the travel/proposal development grant.
10. If a grantee plans to work with a J-PAL regional office, an IPA country office, or another implementing organization, they should notify the organization prior to submitting a travel/proposal development grant application, as these organizations may require applicants to budget for overhead or other expenses incurred.
11. Grantees must complete their travel/project development work and submit final reports within one year of receiving the award.

### Letter(s) of Support from Implementing Partner(s)

While only full projects are required to provide a letter of support from their implementing partner, applicants for travel/proposal development grants are encouraged to submit such letters if available.

### Letter of Support from J-PAL or EPoD Faculty Affiliate or Invited Researcher (Graduate Students Only)

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. [[2]](#footnote-1) 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.” 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.

## SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit your application via J-PAL’s [online portal](https://jpal.force.com/portal/FGM_Portal__CommunitySignin?startURL=%2Fportal%2Fapex%2FFGM_Portal__CommunityApplication%3Fid%3D7013m000001dX22). The deadline for submissions is **5:00 PM ET on April 4, 2024**.

## 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 Evidence Review](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/review-paper/research-directions-social-protection-low-and-middle-income-countries)? 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. PhD students may apply for a maximum of two travel/proposal development grants during their time as graduate students. All else equal, priority will be given to graduate students who have not applied before. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Please note that PhD students are eligible to submit a maximum of two travel/proposal development grant applications and two pilot/full study proposals during their time as graduate students. All else equal, priority will be given to graduate students who have not applied before. Applicants who received travel/proposal development funding as graduate students but have since moved to another institution may only apply for funding to continue that same project, and may not apply for funding for unrelated projects unless they have since become a J-PAL affiliate, EPoD faculty affiliate, or SPI invited researcher. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)