SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH INITIATIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

This document outlines the steps to submit a proposal. Please also review the "Evaluation Criteria" document for how we make funding decisions, and the "Grant Requirements" document for what's required if the proposal is funded.

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RFP OVERVIEW

Click here for the initiative's research priorities, RFP timeline, and contact information.

FOCUS OF THE RFP

The J-PAL North America Social Policy Research Initiative (SPRI), formerly the General Research Initiative, holds a request for proposals focused on randomized evaluations in North America in any sector that contributes to J-PAL's mission of reducing poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by rigorous evidence. This could include randomized evaluations across a broad range of sectors including consumer finance, crime, education, environment, government efficiency, labor, employment and training, etc. with the exception of proposals related to health. As a special focus for the current RFP round, a donor has made additional funds

available for studies that will contribute to efforts to reduce racial disparities and foster equity in life outcomes for youth and young adults. For guidance on additional information that should be provided by applicants who would like their proposal to be considered for SPRI special topic funds as well as general RFP funds, please see "Relevance to Public Policy and Issues of Poverty."

RFP TIMELINE

SPRI RFP Opens	October 5, 2021
SPRI RFP Full Proposals Due	January 12, 2022
Funding Decisions Announced	Week of March 12, 2022

Send all proposal materials to na_rfp@povertyactionlab.org by 5pm ET on January 12, 2022
Questions? Email initiative staff, na_rfp@povertyactionlab.org

PROPOSAL TYPES

Click here for criteria and funding caps for proposals accepted by this RFP.

FULL RESEARCH PROJECTS

Full research projects are typically awarded $150,000 to $250,000, with a **maximum budget of $400,000**. **The award period may be up to three years.** A full project proposal is one where applicants:
- Can propose a clear and well-developed research question
- Can provide detailed randomization design and power calculations (see below)
- Can indicate outcomes of interest
- Can provide proof of commitment from partner organizations (in the form of letters of support)

Full project proposals may be submitted for an ongoing study that has already begun without J-PAL North America funding.

PILOT STUDIES

Pilot studies may be awarded a **maximum of $50,000**. **The award period may be up to three years.** A pilot proposal is one where applicants:
- Seek to answer a particular research question but the design and implementation require further testing and development before a full project launches
- Can clearly explain how the pilot will lead to a randomized evaluation in the future, although random assignment does not necessarily need to occur during the pilot
- Pilot funds may also be used for activities intended to facilitate access to administrative data for designing or conducting an RCT.

RESEARCH MANAGEMENT SUPPORT (RMS) [FORMERLY SHORT TERM RESEARCH MANAGEMENT (STReaM)]

Researchers are strongly encouraged to apply for Research Management Support (RMS) when submitting their proposals. This program provides **around six months of research management support** from experienced J-PAL North America staff **for either full studies or pilots.** Support may include activities such as coordinating communication across stakeholders; refining randomization design and consent procedures; piloting design and implementation; and study

implementation monitoring. More information can be found on the [website](#),or by contacting [NA_RMS@povertyactionlab.org](#).

Researchers may be awarded a **maximum of $5,000 for one year.** Grants are to be used for early-stage research activities which may include travel, exploring access to administrative data, or other costs incurred while conducting field work. Travel/proposal development grants are **paid by direct reimbursement to the PI and cannot cover any activity that requires review by an IRB.**

To apply, please submit this form [[link](#)] to na_rfp@povertyactionlab.org.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Click here for guidance on who is eligible to apply to the RFP.

J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL post-doctoral fellows, and researchers invited by J-PAL North America (invited researchers) to participate in the initiative are eligible to apply for funding of any type. Applicants may submit a maximum of three proposals per 12-month period to a single initiative. PI and co-PI status are counted towards this limit.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

To apply, graduate students must meet the following criteria:
- They have a J-PAL affiliate on their thesis committee. The affiliate does not need to be based at the same university as the student. Note: having an invited researcher on a student's thesis committee **does not** satisfy this criterion**.**
  - Pre-thesis PhD students may apply if they anticipate an affiliate will be on their thesis committee and the affiliate will supervise the proposed project.
- To apply for full funding, graduate students must have previously received a grant from J-PAL for the same evaluation or have documented evidence of successful piloting activities. Note, funding is limited to $50,000 per evaluation for graduate students.

HOW TO APPLY FOR PILOT OR FULL FUNDING

Click here for the list of required documents and important administrative notes.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. Cover sheet

2. 5-page narrative
- The narrative should address each of the points listed in the "Proposal Evaluation Criteria" document. If necessary to fully address the guiding questions on Ethics and Risks, please include an addendum (details under 2A).
- The narrative should begin with an abstract of 150-200 words. The abstract should include information on the research question, hypotheses, intervention, (potential) sample size, and outcomes.
- The narrative may not exceed five pages in length.
- Please save the narrative as a Word document, titled *[PI Name]_[Topic Name].doc(x)*.

2A. Optional: Potential Ethical Risks
- If included, please respond to the following questions found **[here](#)**.

- Please save the addendum in the same document as the full narrative, using the same formatting conventions. Label the relevant section, "Addendum on Ethics and Risks."
- The addendum may not exceed 1 page in length, for a total combined document of no more than six pages.

3. Budget
- Please upload as an Excel workbook, titled *[PI Name]_[Topic Name].xls(x)*
- Please carefully review the "instructions" tab of the budget template for guidance on what to include in the proposal budget.

4. Budget narrative
- Please provide justification for the expenses requested in your budget.
- Please save the budget narrative as a Word document, titled *[PI Name]_Budget Narrative_[Topic Name].doc(x).*

5. Letter(s) of support
- Full projects are required to provide a letter of support from implementation partners. Applicants for pilot funding are encouraged, but not required, to submit letters of support.
- Letters of support should indicate willingness to share cost data, when appropriate.

6. Optional: Questionnaire for Research Management Support (RMS)
- Fill out the questionnaire here if you are interested in working with a research manager through Research Management Support.

7. [Graduate students only]: Letter of support from the J-PAL affiliate on your thesis committee
- Pre-thesis students are required to submit a formal letter of confirmation from an affiliate that explicitly states: "I am actively responsible for supervising this project/research and anticipate being on the student's thesis committee."
- Students with a thesis committee in place should submit a letter in which the J-PAL affiliate attests to being on the committee.
- Pilot or full proposals submitted by graduate students must also reference the student's prior travel/proposal development grant and /or document successful piloting activities.

REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals are reviewed by two peer reviewers from J-PAL's academic network. After peer review, the SPRI Review Board reviews each proposal and makes all funding decisions. All applicants will receive redacted comments from the referees.

Please note, for applicants who indicate they are interested in being considered for an award granted out of special topic funds provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Review Board will also share approved proposals with the Casey Foundation after final funding decisions have been made. The Casey Foundation may then choose to share supplementary

comments for PIs to consider in addition to referee comments, but these will not affect the Review Board's funding decisions.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- The same proposal (or different versions of the same proposal) may **not** be submitted to multiple J-PAL North America RFPs simultaneously unless given explicit permission to do so.
- Applicants **must have IRB approval or exemption** before MIT can establish a subaward agreement to set up funding.
- MIT requires an **official acceptance of the proposal and budget by your institution to set up the subaward.** Applicants are encouraged to submit the proposal to their office of sponsored programs or contracts department prior to the award decision to avoid delays and ensure that your institute will accept your proposal and proposal budget.
- Please see the Grant Requirements document for more detailed information about post-award requirements.

ADDITIONAL STEPS FOR OFF-CYCLE PROPOSALS

In rare cases, proposals facing time constraints due to factors outside their control may apply to the RFP off-cycle. Off-cycle proposals will face the same scrutiny as proposals submitted during the RFP round, and must include a justification for off-cycle submission.

SPECIAL NOTE: COVID-19

The following modifications are in place as of October 29, 2020 until noted otherwise.

1. **All applications must follow [J-PAL's Covid-19 response guidelines](#) in regard to in-person interactions with subjects.**
2. If your proposed project will feature in-person interactions with subjects, vendors, or partners, please note that the evolving situation could result in changes to these guidelines at a future date. **Therefore, please be sure to include the following in your application materials, which are listed in more detail in the "How to Apply" section:**
   - *Budget Narrative:* Include a discussion of what funds will and will not be spent in what timeframes if the proposed project is paused, modified, or dissolved because of Covid-19 related disruptions.
   - *Proposal Narrative:* Outline aspects of the proposed project that can be completed right away vs aspects dependent on the status of the Covid response more broadly. The proposal should also include plans for conducting fieldwork, and how this will evolve should Covid-19 prevent in-person contact.
3. Per MIT guidance, J-PAL North America will not be sponsoring travel for the foreseeable future. However, if you wish to include travel as a line item in your budget, please address as indicated in point 2 above.