

SOCIAL RESEARCH POLICY 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

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 the United States 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.

RFP TIMELINE

Social Policy Research Initiative RFP Opens	April 4, 2023
Social Policy Research Initiative RFP Full Proposals Due	June 14, 2023
Funding Decisions Announced	Week of August 14, 2023

**Send all proposal materials to na_rfp@povertyactionlab.org by 5pm ET on
Wednesday June 14, 2023
Questions? Email initiative staff, na_rfp@povertyactionlab.org**

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY

J-PAL North America funds Randomized Control Trials (RCTS) in the United States. J-PAL NA will fund early stage, non-randomized work if there is a clear link to how it will lead to an RCT (see pilot and travel/development grant criteria below). As a general rule, J-PAL NA does not fund pure lab experiments, i.e. randomized evaluations taking place in a controlled environment. A proposal may be considered if there is a randomized evaluation of a program or policy in the field, with real-world behaviors and consequences being studied, which supplements a lab experiment.

RESEARCHER ELIGIBILITY

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, for graduate students the total amount of funding they may receive across time is capped at \$50,000 per initiative, regardless of the number of projects funded

PROPOSAL TYPES

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.

ADD-ON-FUNDING

Add-on-funding may be awarded to projects previously funded by any J-PAL North America initiative. Funding requests are capped at **\$400,000 less the amount of all funding previously awarded to the evaluation). The award period may be up to three years.** Add-on-funding proposals may seek to:

- Add additional sites or treatment arms to an implemented evaluation
- Support additional activities on ongoing or past RCTs, such as follow-ups to measure long term effects.
- Extend the project timeline or cover additional costs due to implementation challenges

RESEARCH MANAGEMENT SUPPORT (RMS)

Researchers are strongly encouraged to apply for Research Management Support (RMS) when submitting their proposals. This program provides strategic and customized Research Management Support (RMS) to researchers in the J-PAL network to navigate early-stage complexities in the design and implementation of randomized evaluations. Support may include activities such as project management, stakeholder management, technical support, and

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

TRAVEL/PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

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 the [J-PAL North America Travel/Project Development Grant Application](#).

HOW TO APPLY FOR PILOT OR FULL FUNDING

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.
- References to previous literature are required to provide context for your research question. Chicago Author-Date style is suggested. References are not included in page count.
- 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.

ADDITIONAL STEPS FOR OFF-CYCLE PROPOSALS

In rare cases, proposals facing time constraints due to factors outside their control may apply for funding 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**.

REVIEW PROCESS

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

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.