

J-PAL Gender and Economic Agency Initiative: Overview and Instructions

2022 Off-cycle

J-PAL's Gender and Economic Agency Initiative (GEA) funds randomized evaluations of strategies to enhance women's economic agency. GEA is now calling for proposals from J-PAL affiliates and GEA invited researchers for full research projects and pilot studies grants. Proposals are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis, and a short Letter of Interest must be submitted by September 1. If funding is exhausted before this date, we will close the call for off-cycle proposals.

Background

Women around the world are less likely than men to participate in the labor force, with 47 percent of women in the global labor force compared to 74 percent of men as of 2019.¹ Among those women in low- and middle-income countries that have entered the labor force, they are more likely to earn less than men and be unemployed.² They are also overrepresented in informal employment, which often comes with greater risks and more limited opportunities due to limited legal protections.³

A key challenge policymakers and the private sector face is a lack of evidence about which approaches to increasing economic agency are effective and scalable, in what contexts they are successful, and why certain approaches work. This type of information can help policymakers work to ensure women's work and economic agency are at the forefront of economic development efforts. To address this challenge, GEA aims to build a strong body of evidence on policies and programs to promote women's work and enhance women's economic agency in East Africa, Central America, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

Focus

¹ International Labour Organization. 2019. "Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% of Female Population Ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate)." ILOSTAT Database. April 2019. <https://data-worldbank-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

² International Labour Organization. 2018. "World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 – Global Snapshot." Geneva: International Labour Organization.

³ International Labour Organization. 2018. "World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 – Global Snapshot." Geneva: International Labour Organization.

GEA focuses on developing research on three priority themes:

1. **Workplace arrangements and labor policies to promote formal and informal employment for women**, including: generating work opportunities targeted to women, ensuring equal access to jobs through gender-equitable hiring practices, improving workplaces to better support women (e.g., accommodating domestic responsibilities or addressing violence/harassment, etc.), and leveraging technology to improve the “future of work” for women.
2. **Enhancing women’s labor potential and work readiness (including self-employment)**, including: skills development (hard and soft skills), promotion and management training, interventions to support female jobseekers, leveraging social networks, and collective enterprise.
3. **Addressing restrictive gender norms and attitudes related to women’s work**, including: women’s work and roles, unpaid care work, public safety, violence and harassment, and occupational sex segregation.

Please refer to the [GEA framing paper](#) for more information on potential research topics and questions of interest to GEA.

If a researcher is uncertain about whether a research project is eligible for GEA, please email GEA@povertyactionlab.org.

Geographic Focus

For this 2022 off-cycle call for proposals, GEA is only accepting proposals based in Southeast Asia.

Funds

Two types of proposals will be considered in this round:

(1) Full Research Projects: 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. Proposals can also be submitted for funding the continuation of research projects that have already started without GEA funding (including those for which field data collection has been completed). The expectation is that these projects will result in a paper publishable in a top economics journal. The maximum amount awarded for full evaluations

during this off-cycle call is \$150,000 due to limited resources.

(2) Pilot Studies: These grants are for studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation require further testing and pilot data.⁴ The expectation is that these projects will ultimately develop into full-scale randomized evaluations. The maximum amount awarded for pilot studies is \$75,000.

Initiative pilot and travel grants may be used for activities intended to facilitate access to administrative data for designing or conducting an RCT. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to, negotiating data use agreements, conducting exploratory data analysis and cleaning, or setting up technical access mechanisms.

Please note that GEA was established to fund randomized impact evaluations of programs and policies being implemented in the field. As a general rule, GEA does not fund pure lab experiments. A proposal may be considered if there is a randomized field evaluation of an underlying program or policy which supplements a lab experiment.

Eligibility

J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL postdocs, and GEA invited researchers are eligible to apply for any type of GEA funding. Please note that GEA invited researchers are nominated and reviewed on a semi-annual basis, with the review based on a nominee's previous research with a particular emphasis on randomized evaluations related to women's economic agency. All proposals may include collaborators outside of this network.

Please note that any J-PAL affiliate, J-PAL postdoc, or GEA invited researcher can submit a **maximum of three pilot or full-scale proposals within a 12-month period to GEA**, either as a main PI or co-PI in the proposal. For example, if a researcher submitted two pilot or full-scale proposals in our Summer 2021 round and Winter 2022 round, they are only eligible to submit a maximum of 1 pilot or full-scale off-cycle proposal.

⁴ Please note that full evaluations requesting less than \$75,000 are considered full research projects and evaluated accordingly. The criteria for pilot funding apply only to proposals requesting funds to conduct piloting, or pre-randomization, activities.

Applications

In advance of applying, please **submit a letter of interest as soon as possible, no later than September 1, 2022**. Proposals will be considered on a **rolling basis**. All J-PAL initiatives, including GEA, use an online portal for all application submissions, proposal reviews, invoice submission, and grantee reporting.

If you do not already have a portal account, you will first need to register via our online portal. If you do not have a J-PAL portal account and need one created, please complete this [form](#) and specify that you want an applicant account. Account creation normally takes no more than two business days; you will be asked to verify your email address and set a password. For further information and troubleshooting, please get in touch with fc_help@povertyactionlab.org. Your J-PAL portal account credentials will allow you to apply to or review for any J-PAL initiative.

Once you have a portal account, you will need to login to our online [portal here](#). After you are logged into the portal, please [click here](#) to access the GEA Off-cycle letter of interest form. If you are not first logged in to the portal, the GEA LOI link will not work.

The GEA team will notify you via the portal once we have reviewed your LOI and you are clear to begin your proposal. In the interim, to facilitate your proposal development, we have hosted reference application documents online that outline in detail all required information that applicants will be asked when submitting a full proposal to GEA via our online portal system. You are welcome to begin drafting your proposal materials using these templates. Please, however, do not complete or submit these reference documents to GEA for consideration.

Review Process

Proposals are reviewed along five broad criteria: academic contribution, policy relevance, technical design, project viability, and value of research. In addition, GEA prioritizes proposals that have involvement of researchers from locally-based institutions.

For these off-cycle proposals, the review board will make funding decisions on a rolling basis. The status of an application can fall into four categories:

(1) approved, (2) conditional approval (with minor revisions or clarifications), (3) revise and resubmit during this or a subsequent round, and (4) not approved.

If you would like to appeal a decision of the GEA Review Board, please email the GEA Initiative Manager at GEA@povertyactionlab.org within one week of the announcement, detailing the reasons for the request for reconsideration (maximum two pages in length). This request will then be communicated to the reviewers.

Timeline

Please note that all funded activities need to be completed before the end of September 2024. Any funds not spent by that date will need to be returned to GEA. GEA prioritizes funding projects that can produce some results or outputs that will become available within a short timeframe.

Grant Conditions

Full and Pilot Grants: If your proposal is selected for funding, the terms of the award will be as follows:

1. **Letter of Transmission:** If you receive funding, you will be asked to submit a Formal Letter of Transmission from your Institute to Receive Award stating that they support the proposal and will plan on carrying out the work in accordance with the submitted budget.
2. **Research conduct:** Grantees will be required to have IRB approval or exemption from the IRB of Record. Specific instructions will be given in the Notice of Award. In addition, they are expected to adhere to MIT's community-wide policies that are available [here](#). Please note that J-PAL requires that the reviewing IRB have [IORG status](#) with the US Office of Human Protections. You can look up the IORG status of an IRB [here](#).
3. **Peer-review proposals:** Grantees may be requested to peer-review proposals in future GEA rounds.
4. **Project registration:** Within three months of the start date indicated on the proposal, grantees must register their trial with the [AEA RCT Registry](#). Registration includes 18 required fields, such as your name and a small subset of your IRB requirements. There is also the opportunity to

include more information, including power calculations and an optional pre-analysis plan. (*Full studies only*)

5. **Reporting:** Grantees will be requested to provide a brief start-up report, semi-annual financial updates; annual progress reports; a final financial report within 60 days of completion of the award period; and (*Full studies only*) a final substantive report with preliminary results within 12 months of completion of the award period, which will be made public on the J-PAL website.
6. **Collecting and reporting program cost data:** Policymakers are interested in program costs, as it is one of the key factors in their decision to support a program. Cost data also allows for [cost effectiveness analysis \(CEA\)](#), which J-PAL may conduct (with permission from the researchers), even if such analysis is not part of an academic paper. In order to facilitate cost collection, GEA awards include \$1,000 to defray expenses associated with collecting cost data. GEA will provide a costing worksheet for grantees to update annually. If grantees are unable to collect detailed cost data, grantees are still required to provide estimates of total program cost, average cost per beneficiary, and marginal cost to add another beneficiary. (*Full studies only*)
7. **Collecting and reporting Gender-disaggregated data:** J-PAL, through its Gender sector, is making an effort to study heterogeneity in program impacts by beneficiary/participant gender more systematically. Please note that the following request only applies to J-PAL internal reports and does not extend to the academic paper or online J-PAL summary.

Many studies funded by J-PAL initiatives already collect study participants' gender. In such cases, and when outcome data are individual-specific, we request that grantees conduct heterogeneity analyses by beneficiary gender for the study's main results for internal reporting to J-PAL (to be shared in the final grant report). A single study might be underpowered to detect heterogeneous treatment effects, or null results might not seem interesting in one study, but these findings may be meaningful when included in an analysis across studies. J-PAL will use the reported results for (a) determining potential pooled statistical analyses to conduct across studies and (b) generating gender-related policy lessons. Our reporting template will include a question on this, which researchers are encouraged to fill in when applicable. We recognize that there will be cases where this reporting is

not applicable, for various reasons. In these cases, the PIs can just provide a brief explanation to be shared with the Gender sector.

8. **Data publication:** Grantees may be requested to share data collection instruments and methodologies with other grantees. Furthermore, researchers funded through this grant will be required to publish de-identified data in accordance with J-PAL's [Data and Code Availability Policy](#). J-PAL's research team can work with you to clean, label, de-identify, document, and replicate datasets collected as part of a randomized trial before publishing them in the [J-PAL Dataverse](#) or another data repository of your choice. (Full studies only)
9. **Participate in GEA activities:** Grantees may be requested to participate in one of GEA's activities at a mutually agreed time and place. Activities may include evidence workshops, matchmaking conferences, or presentations to GEA donors.
10. **Credit GEA:** Any presentations and publications, including academic papers, policy briefs, press releases, blogs, and organizational newsletters, that emerge from this project should credit the J-PAL Gender and Economic Agency Initiative. The exact wording on crediting GEA and donor support will be provided in the terms of your award.

Administrative Notes

Full and pilot grants are provided under an award from MIT to the Institute to Receive Award. For more information on budget, requirements, and process, please see instructions in the respective application form and instructions documents. These and all other materials needed to apply for full research and pilot grants are available on the [GEA webpage](#).

Related Initiatives

Please do not submit the same proposal to more than one J-PAL initiative at the same time. Before applying to GEA, consider whether your proposal may be better suited for the J-PAL Jobs and Opportunity Initiative or J-PAL/CEGA Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative. Please see more information on the other initiatives below. If you are uncertain about which initiative to apply to, please contact GEA@povertyactionlab.org.

[J-PAL Jobs and Opportunity Initiative \(JOI\)](#): JOI funds randomized evaluations of strategies to improve employment outcomes. JOI aims to

generate a body of policy-relevant rigorous research that addresses pressing labor market challenges. Knowledge gaps include questions about supply and matching, job creation, and the future of jobs. JOI aims to offer guidance for implementing organizations, governments, and donors, so that policies can be guided by scientific evidence to improve employment outcomes.

[J-PAL/CEGA Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative \(ATAI\)](#): The ATAI initiative aims to generate a body of rigorous evidence that illuminate the mechanisms underlying “agricultural transformation” for rural poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This includes evaluations of the ways that low-income populations are, or could be, gainfully employed as part of agricultural value chains beyond working as small-scale producers. This could include intermediaries engaged in trading, transport, aggregation, quality certification, agro-processing, etc. It also includes strategies to engage youth, women, and other vulnerable or marginalized groups (e.g. landless laborers) in more lucrative and/or appealing (e.g. less physically burdensome) jobs within the agriculture sector.

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