**Innovation in Government Initiative (IGI)**

Application Form and Instructions

**Instructions**: Proposals for IGI funding consist of (i) an application form, which includes a narrative and a cover sheet; (ii) a budget form; and (iii) letters of support. Please send proposals to IGI@povertyactionlab.org by 5PM ET (U.S. Eastern Time) on the RFP deadline (see calendar [here](http://www.povertyactionlab.org/igi)).

# (i) Narrative

The narrative (not to exceed five pages in length, including appendices, single-spaced with 12pt font) should clearly describe the proposed partnership. It should include:

1. A 100-150 word abstract of the partnership to adapt, pilot, and/or scale an evidence-informed innovation with a specific government partner(s). This will be added to IGI’s webpage if the project receives funding.
2. For all proposals, please include a short description of the following:
	1. **The problem and opportunity**: The policy problem and opportunity that the government partner has identified that motivates the partnership and a description of how this proposal will address the problem.
	2. **The innovation**: The innovation the government will explore adapting, piloting, and/or scaling as well as a brief summary of the experimental evidence on this innovation to date. Innovations can be new programs or changes to existing programs, processes, or delivery systems.
		1. Please include a brief note on the effect size(s) found in previous RCTs of this innovation, whether they were economically significant, and whether you expect the effect size to be similar in magnitude, lower, or higher in this context and why.
		2. Please include a clear rationale for why the innovation may be relevant or appropriate for the proposed context and/or institution. When possible, please include descriptive statistics about the nature and extent of the problem and aspects of local systems and institutions that make it amenable to the innovation. Specify which aspects of the existing evidence are or are not likely to generalize given the proposed implementer, context, and delivery model(s).
	3. **Scale-up potential**: A summary of how the government plans to use the IGI-funded technical assistance in specific decisions about expanding or scaling an evidenced-informed innovation.
		1. **Reach**: If the government decides to scale the innovation, how many people could it potentially reach and when? What is the average income level of the target population? IGI is particularly interested in innovations that improve the lives of people living in poverty.
		2. **Likelihood of success**: Please include your subjective assessment of how likely this scale-up is to happen (i.e. X% likely to happen) if the pilot phase goes well. What are the main factors that could prevent this innovation from scaling and how do you plan to address them?
	4. **The activities**: The proposed activities that IGI will fund and how they will contribute to achieving the end goal along with a clear timeline and milestones. We particularly encourage applications from the government implementing partners on completed randomized evaluations to scale up their innovations that are found to be effective. Applications seeking to apply evidence in a new context should include a formal scoping process to diagnose the problem and determine whether past evidence is relevant, as well as a process for adapting, piloting, and monitoring the innovation in the new context before scaling it up.
	5. **The partnership**: A brief history of the partnership with the government, their involvement in project activities, any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project, and the names and titles of the main government contact(s) and the roles they will play over the course of the project. Please note whether they are likely to be transferred during the project. Include the dates of upcoming elections and/or administration changes and discuss whether these are likely to affect the project.
	6. **The institutionalization of the partnership**: Do you hope to make this a long-term partnership? If the key contact is transferred, are there other stakeholders who are equally invested? Are you planning to enter into an institutional MoU?
	7. **Potential risks from project implementation**: What are the potential unintended consequences of this project or potential scale-up for program participants? Are there ways it could negatively affect participants if the program is scaled up and if so, what are they? Does this potential scale-up present any unintended opportunities for corruption or misuse of funds? How do you plan to monitor and prevent/address these risks throughout the project?
	8. **Crosscutting themes**: Does the project incorporate one or more of IGI’s crosscutting themes: technology- and data-enabled program delivery, implementation science, and cost analysis? Which ones does your project incorporate and how?
	9. **Implementation and cost documentation**: A comment on what efforts you will make to collect implementation costs and document implementation and scale-up processes so these can benefit other policymakers and researchers and staff at J-PAL.
3. A clear project timeline (Gantt chart preferred) including short-term markers of success.
4. Funding randomized evaluations is not IGI’s main goal. However, we recognize that in some cases rigorous evidence of effectiveness at scale is a critical input for a government’s scale-up decision. In these cases, IGI allows proposals that include partial funding for randomized evaluations. Proposals that include randomized evaluations must include additional information in their proposals. Applicants can use up to two additional pages for their proposal narrative in these cases (up to 7 pages total). In addition to the items under (ii), please also include the following details:
	1. a description of the research activities and intervention design
	2. target population
	3. evaluation design
	4. other implementing partners besides the government
	5. power calculations
	6. elaboration on the government commitment to use the results in a specific scale-up decision
5. A discussion of the other criteria that will be used by IGI to evaluate this proposal (listed below), if not already addressed in the narrative.

**Off-cycle studies** (up to US$75,000) must also explain the time constraints the project faces and the reasons for requesting expedited review.

# Evaluation Criteria

For ***all*** applications, IGI will consider the following general criteria in making funding decisions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Policy relevance  | Does the proposed project address problems or opportunities that are important to the government partner?  |
| Scale-up potential  | Is there potential for the government to widely scale up the innovation in the future and does it have the potential to meaningfully improve the lives of people living in poverty? What commitment has the government expressed to move forward with implementing the scale-up if the pilot is successful? How many people will the scaled-up program reach and over what timeframe? What is the average income level of the target population and will the innovation contribute to meaningful improvements in their well-being?  |
| Evidence-informed innovation  | What is the strength of the existing evidence on the effectiveness of this type of innovation? Were the effects economically meaningful in improving the lives of people living in poverty?  |
| Locally grounded | Did the proposal make a clear case for why the innovation may be relevant or appropriate for the proposed context based on descriptive data, knowledge of local systems and institutions, and evidence from completed randomized evaluations? Did it include a thoughtful scoping or piloting process for determining whether the innovation is relevant to the context or not?  |
| Commitment to use evidence in decision-making | Is there demonstrated demand from the government partner to use evidence from the proposed technical assistance and/or past research to make a key decision about expanding the innovation? Is the government committing its own resources, especially finances, to this project?  |
| Viability of the partnership | Is the relationship with the government and other partners strong and likely to endure through the entire life of the project? Are there any logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the proposed activities, for example, government authorization or potential transfer of key officials? |
| Implementation risks | Are the risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants minimal? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?  |
| Institutional support | Since building partnerships with governments requires long-term commitments and on-the-ground presence, does the project have necessary institutional support of the regional J-PAL office? What other local institutional support is available (e.g. IPA country office, strong local staff)? |
| Level of affiliate Involvement | What is the level of affiliate involvement? Not just in research projects, but also in proposals seeking to adapt, pilot, and scale evidence-informed programs, ongoing leadership, guidance, and advice from affiliates provides significant value to the government and J-PAL staff. |
| Crosscutting themes | Will the project address and generate useful insights about one or more of IGI’s crosscutting themes? What steps will the project take to gather program costs, document implementation and scale-up processes, and disseminate them so others may also benefit?  |

For ***research applications***, besides the above general criteria, the Advisory Board will consider the following additional criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Need for additional research | Does the proposal have a clear and convincing justification for why they need to do more research on this question and why the research that has already been done insufficient to inform a scale-up decision?  |
| 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? How does the study compare with the existing body of research?  |
| Value of research | Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected lessons learned?  |
| 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?  |
| Publishing data | Will the data collected during the evaluation be made publicly available and when?  |
| Gender and marginalized populations | Given the importance of examining the gender implications of policies, as well as the differences related to socioeconomic status and other types of social marginalization, does the proposal expand on whether and how the project will address questions of gender and marginalization?  |

# IGI Coversheet

Please note that all fields are required.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Title of Proposal | Country |
|       |       |
| J-PAL Affiliated or IGI INVITED Researcher(s) |
|       |
| J-PAL Regional Office |
|       |
| Non-J-PAL CO-PI(s) (Institutional Affiliation) |
|       |
| [ ]  | *By checking this box, all J-PAL affiliates and IGI 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 project; 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 nor IGI invited researcher.* |
| Government Partner(s)  | Contact (Name, Email, Phone) |
|       |       |
|       |       |
| **Other Partner(s)**  | **Contact (Name, Email, Phone)** |
|       |       |
|       |       |
| Co-Funder(s)  | FUNDED AWARD (PI, Project Title, Amount) |
|       |       |
|       |       |
| **Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any other J-PAL funding initiative?** |
| [ ]  Yes[ ]  No | If yes, which initiative and when?       |
| IGI Funding Request *(Check the boxes that correspond to your application)* **Sector(s)**: ***Education*** [ ] ***Health*** [ ]  ***Social Assistance*** [ ]  ***Other*** [ ]  **Crosscutting theme(s)**: ***Technology and data-enabled delivery and monitoring***  [ ]  ***Implementation Science*** [ ] ***Cost Analysis*** [ ]   |
| Requested | **$**      | TotalCo-funded | **$**      |
| Grant Period |
| Start date:(yyyy-mm-dd) |       | End date:(yyyy-mm-dd) |       |
| Institution to receive award\* |       | Contact for contracting issues |       |
| *Many IGI projects will not be conducting research involving human subjects. However, if this project will involve research on human subjects, please fill out the two boxes below.* |
| IRB of record |  | IRB CONTACT |  |
| IGI is funded through a GiveWell-recommended grant from Effective Altruism Funds. We share all IGI proposals with GiveWell to support their learning about improving the effectiveness of government poverty reduction programs in low- and middle-income countries. By submitting this application, you agree to have your proposal shared with them. We are also in contact with other funders interested in this topic and occasionally share proposals that are relevant to their interests. If you **do not** want this proposal shared with them, please check this box:  ***[ ]***  |

\* Please indicate the institution that will actually receive the grant funds. Since an important goal of IGI is to foster institutional partnerships between J-PAL and governments, if this project is taking place in a country that has a J-PAL or an IPA office but these organizations are not the host institutions, please provide a comment detailing why in your proposal narrative.

**(ii) Budget**

Please submit a detailed project budget **using the Excel template** available [online](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative-subpage/scale-innovation-competition). To reduce the processing time, please follow these instructions for designing and submitting your budget:

1. If the funds requested are only a part of the total project budget, then please complete both the “Total Project Budget” and the “IGI Budget” in the budget template.
2. Awards are normally paid on a cost-reimbursable basis.
3. Universities in high-income countries, defined as OECD member countries, 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.
4. All applications must include budget notes in the column provided in the budget template, specifying the 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 that are detailed clearly in the budget (e.g., # of respondents times $/respondent = total $) do not require additional justification in the budget notes section.
5. Please denote costs by the calendar year in which expenditures are taking place, not by fiscal year or year from project start date.
6. Any computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased, e.g. how many laptops and the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
7. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under this Initiative is low and that awardees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets as direct costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget narrative.
8. Unallowable costs include: costs labeled as “incidental,” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency,” and rent, unless a separate project office is to be covered specifically for this effort.
9. It is your responsibility that the budget you submit is correct and follows your receiving institution’s policies for costs. **As part of your proposal, a letter from the receiving institution of the award is required to show that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget**. If the institution allows you to submit your proposal without such a letter (due to time constraints or some other reason), please note this on the Proposal Cover Sheet (under the box for Receiving Institution).

**Please note that this applies to all receiving institutions including regional J-PAL offices and IPA country offices**. You should contact them in advance to make sure you are aware of their policies for proposal review and that you give them enough time to meet the proposal deadline.

# (iii) Letters of Support

Please provide the following letters of support along with the proposal. Letters of support are not a mere formality but rather should indicate a well-thought-out partnership between the J-PAL affiliate or IGI invited researcher, the J-PAL office, the government, and other partners.

1. All projects are required to provide a letter of support from the government and any other implementing partners. Such letters should state:
	1. The government’s support for the activities proposed
	2. How the government plans to use the results of the research or other activities to support specific scaling decisions and strengthen its policymaking. Any details about the potential reach of the scaled-up program.
	3. How it sees a long-term partnership with J-PAL to be valuable
	4. What costs will be shared by the government and an initial total budget amount (if exact costs are not available, then a broad commitment to pay for implementation or other costs is sufficient)
	5. Willingness to share program implementation cost data with project for the purpose of conducting program cost analysis

**Note:** We understand that in some cases it may not be feasible or appropriate to have the government partner include all of the items above in their letter. In such cases, please secure a more general letter of support from the government and address the remaining points in your proposal narrative.

1. A letter from the receiving institution of the award is required to show that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget. If the organization allows you to submit your proposal without such a letter (due to time constraints or some other reason), please note this on the Proposal Cover Sheet (under the box for Receiving Institution).
2. [If the applicant is not itself a J-PAL office] Letter from the relevant regional J-PAL office that has responsibility for the project country. This must be included even for research proposals. Please email the Executive Director from the relevant J-PAL office **at least 3 weeks** **in advance of the RFP deadline** to ensure that the office has enough time to produce their letter of support, which requires a thorough review of the proposal and budget. J-PAL regional offices can use this [template](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/files/2020/03/IGI_regional-office-letter-of-support-template_2020.doc) for their letter of support.
3. **Note:** If a J-PAL office is the receiving institution, they only need to submit letter (ii) described above and do not need to submit a separate letter for (iii). If a J-PAL office is the applicant, IGI still requires the J-PAL Executive Director from the applying office to submit a letter of support to signal their support and capacity for the project.
4. Please have the J-PAL affiliated and/or IGI invited researcher complete this short [Affiliate Letter of Support](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/files/2020/03/IGI_affiliate-letter-of-support-template_2020.doc) form and submit it along with the rest of your application.

# How to Submit Your Proposal

Please submit an email with the following attachments to IGI@povertyactionlab.org by 5PM EST ( U.S. Eastern Time) on the RFP deadline:

1. **Cover sheet and narrative:** Save the coversheet and your 5-page narrative (12pt font, single spaced) as a single Word or PDF file, titled *[PI Name]\_[Topic Name].docx (or .pdf)*
2. **Budget form:** Fill in the separate budget form and save as a single **Excel file**, titled *[PI Name]\_Budget.xlsx*
3. **Letters of support:** Submit PDF of letter(s) of support from J-PAL’s relevant regional office, the government partner, J-PAL affiliates, and any other implementing organizations. Letters of support from at least one government partner are required for all proposals.

IGI staff will address all communication regarding your proposal to the following:

1. J-PAL affiliated researcher(s)
2. J-PAL regional office Executive Director
3. IPA country director (when applicable)

Questions? Please contact IGI staff at IGI@povertyactionlab.org

# Appendix: Administrative notes on *post-award* process

If your proposal is accepted for award, the funding will be provided under an award from MIT to your host institution. Before this can happen, you will need to show IRB approval for the project if Human Subjects are involved.

The process MIT follows for IGI awards is:

* The Initiative Board sends official award notification letter.
* If not already submitted, you will need to provide formal institutional approval of the proposal and (for proposals involving Human Subjects) your institutional IRB approval.
* For proposals involving Human Subjects, in most cases, MIT will cede oversight to your institutional IRB through an Institutional Review Board Authorization Agreement (IAA) or through Reliance Smart IRB. In certain cases, approval from MIT’s IRB will also be required. We will assist with that process if needed.
* J-PAL informs MIT contracts office of the award.
* MIT establishes a purchase order with your institution.

We aim to set up the purchase order within 60 days of receiving all your forms and IRB approvals. We can backdate the award to cover expenses from the Award Date or the date of IRB approval, whichever is later. If a project includes non-Human Subjects work prior to the IRB approval, please let us know following award and we may in some cases be able to cover those costs (post-award, but pre-IRB) under the award.

**The full reporting requirements for an IGI award will be outlined in detail in your award letter.** For all projects, these will include: brief annual progress reports and semiannual financial reports, a final project and financial report including a brief narrative, timeline, and any relevant government testimony or documents showing whether evidence from randomized evaluations contributed to any government decisions, a brief annual and final report on the project from the supporting J-PAL regional office, and participating in one of IGI’s activities on a mutually-agreed date and place. In addition to these requirements, scale-up and research projects will be required to collect and report (i) program cost data sufficient to conduct a cost effectiveness analysis, and (ii) implementation and scale-up processes sufficient to promote the scale up of an effective program in a new context. Finally, full RCTs are also required to register in the AEA registry and publish data online at the end of the research period.