Criteria for Proposal Assessment: Innovation for MSME Development Initiative (IMDI)

OVERVIEW

Application proposals are reviewed and scored by the IMDI Review Board, consisting of the IMDI co-chairs, Prof. Arya Gaduh (University of Arkansas) and Prof. Jing Cai (University of Maryland). All Board Members submitting a proposal for funding are required to recuse themselves from this review and the review role will be replaced by J-PAL's Executive Committees.

Proposals are reviewed along several categories (see table below). Based on the scores and the comments of the referees, the review board votes on the status of the application. Funding decisions are finalized on the IMDI Review Board Decision Call. The status of an application can fall into four categories: (1) approved, (2) conditional approval (with minor revisions or clarifications), (3) revise and resubmit, and (4) not approved.

Category	Key Questions
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?
Value of research	Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected lessons learned? Is the budget ratio of staffing/consulting costs to operations relevant?

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? Are the indicators and sample size estimates appropriate, given the outcomes to be measured, and do the power calculations convincingly demonstrate the ability to detect each of the proposed impacts to be measured? Given the COVID-19 outbreak, how will the research be conducted? How will the research design utilize tools that minimize in-person contact in the intervention and data collection process?
Viability of the project	Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization, implementation capacity, or Human Subjects review?
Policy Relevance and Capacity building	Will results from the intervention have broader implications? How, if at all, will the "lessons learned" have relevance beyond this test case? Is there demonstrated demand from policy makers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? Does the study address questions crucial to understand pressing issues about enabling financial access, market access, or capacity building among MSMEs in Indonesia? Does the proposal demonstrate real capacity development potential for Indonesian scholars and implementers, particularly in ways that increase the likelihood and/or sustainability of any policy influence?
Publishing data	What research data (stripped of identifiers and subject to Human Subjects protections) will be made public within one year of data collection end date or when the relevant academic paper is published, if the latter happens sooner?

Women and Marginalized groups	Does the study consider and/ or include gender, intrahousehold dynamics, and marginalized group components? Are conditions faced by marginalized groups adequately understood and addressed? Are gender analyses and/or other heterogeneous impacts adequately accounted for in the technical design?

GRANT CONDITIONS

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

1. **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](#).

2. **Project registration (full-scale RCT only):** 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)*.

3. **Annual progress reporting and final report:**

   For full scale RCT and pilot, grantees are required to provide:

   - A brief startup report

   - Annual financial reports (for projects with duration longer than 12* months)

   - Brief annual progress reports (for projects with duration longer than 12* months), outlining any result or changes in the project including research team members, intervention design, location, outcomes measured, and timeline. If milestones are reached including completion of any survey round and intervention implementation, the report should include documentation of compliance with design, intervention take-up (where appropriate), and potential risks to the project. Results from these reports may be featured in [IMDI's website page](#).

- A final financial report to be submitted within 30 days of the end of the award period.

- A final report to be submitted within 30 days of the end of the award period. For full-scale RCT, grantees must include a publication plan which documents plans and expected timeline to publication, along with a commitment to make data and code publicly available (or if this is not possible, an explanation for why not). Results from these reports may be featured in IMDI's website page.

- For full-scale RCT, researchers are required to submit a publicly available "Preliminary Results Report" within twelve (12) months of receiving cleaned end-line data from the field. We will provide a specific template to submit this deliverable, asking for no more than 10 pages and including the following information/sections: policy issue, intervention description, research design, and preliminary results (noting that the information reported is subject to change if analysis is ongoing). Upon submission, the report must be made publicly available, and will therefore be posted to the IMDI's website page. Once a working or published paper is available, we will replace this "Project Results Report" posted on the J-PAL website with the working/published paper.

For Proposal/Project Development Grants, grantees are required to provide:

- Final narrative and financial reports to be submitted within 30 days of the end of the award period.

4. **Collecting and reporting disaggregated data by gender:** 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. 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 in Finance. We encourage researchers to include this part in the reports when applicable. We recognize that there will be cases where this reporting is not applicable, for various reasons. In these cases, the PIs can provide a brief explanation to be shared with the Gender sector.

5. **Costing data (full-scale RCTs only):** 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. IMDI will provide a costing template to collect this information. 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.

6. **Data publication (full-scale RCTs only):** Grantees are requested to share data collection instruments and methodologies with other grantees. Furthermore, grantees are required to publish data collected online no later than 12 months after the data collection end date. J-PAL Global's research team can provide assistance with publishing data, such as with preparing the data and code, replicating results and tables, and uploading data for publication. Researchers may request a delay in publication for up to five years.[1]

7. **Participate in IMDI activities:** Grantees may be requested to participate in IMDI activities at a mutually agreed time and place. Activities may include evidence workshops, seminars, conferences, or presentations to the J-PAL SEA or IMDI's donors.

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[1] See J-PAL's Guidelines for Data Publication and J-PAL's Research Transparency and Reproducibility page for more details.