LAI Pilot Research Proposal Application Preview

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Do NOT submit this form
Applications can only be submitted through the online portal.
See the LAI RFP page for more information.

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LAI RFP Overview

Pilot funding is available to studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation require further testing and pilot data. The expectation is that these projects will ultimately develop into full-scale randomized evaluations. The maximum amount awarded for pilot studies is $75,000, with more descriptive studies capped at approximately $25,000. These 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. Pilots can also be used to test and strengthen tools, translate the tools to different contexts, etc. Pilots should not be mini-RCTs because of issues with statistical power.

Please view the full RFP Overview for Instructions and Eligibility ([Research Agenda](#)) [here](#).

Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding

J-PAL takes safeguarding against workplace abuses and the appropriate use of funds, including any adverse effects of aid expenditure that have an undesired or unexpected result upon recipients, seriously. All Learning for All Initiative (LAI) grantees and partners must comply with the guidelines of [J-PAL's Code of Conduct](#). If your project requires your team to interact directly with children, you will be required to adhere to the [LEGO Child Safeguarding Policies](#) (regardless of funding source). If you receive funding from the LEGO Foundation, you will also be asked to follow the [LEGO Code of Conduct](#) and to take these steps:

1. Share information about child safeguarding guidelines with staff working directly with children related to your work with J-PAL. Share the LEGO and J-PAL Code of Conduct with project staff.
2. If your research falls within the scope of [General Data Protection Regulation](#) (GDPR) requirements, comply with GDPR and let the Learning for All Initiative team know right away (lai@povertyactionlab.org).
3. Confirm with lai@povertyactionlab.org that your organization has recruitment processes in place for screening relevant candidates to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children within activities related to your work with J-PAL.
4. Complete a child safeguarding training annually for any staff with direct contact with children. If you already have a robust training in place, then this will suffice. However, if you do not have one in place, we suggest this [UNICEF Online Child Safeguarding Training](#) (approx 90 minutes long). For multi-year subawards, keep accurate records of who is working on the project and the dates they completed their annual trainings. You will submit this information each year in your report.

5. Ensure all staff are aware of how to report incidents of abuse. Participants in this project or others can raise concerns with:
   - LEGO Foundation Whistleblower: https://legohouse.com/en-gb/info/whistleblower-line/
   - J-PAL: Cindy Smith, Director of Finance and Operations at J-PAL Global: cinsmith@mit.edu; LAI Manager or the LAI Policy Associate (as listed on webpage)

PLEASE NOTE: Please be mindful that MIT requires that the IRB approval must be held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT. If the institution does not have their own IRB, they must engage the services of a commercial IRB to review and provide oversight for their research activities. J-PAL recommends the third party IRB Heartland. Further information about this MIT policy can be found here. Consult with J-PAL regarding including the cost of this commercial entity in the project budget. If the project is exempt from IRB approval, we will need the exemption status but no other action is required. J-PAL requires that the reviewing IRB have IRB Organization (IORG) status with the US Office of Human Protections. You can look up the IORG status of an IRB here.

Basic Information

LAI Eligible Researcher

Please identify the researcher who is eligible for LAI funding. This may be the principal PI, or any eligible PI if there are multiple eligible researchers associated with the proposal.

All J-PAL affiliates, invited researchers from any J-PAL initiative or regional office, and J-PAL postdoctoral fellows are eligible to apply to any research or scaling proposal type. In addition, scholars based in sub-Saharan Africa can apply for pilot or travel/proposal development funding under the **African Scholars** program *(eligibility details are provided below).* **PhD students** who have a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher on their thesis committee are eligible to apply for up to US$75,000 in pilot, research, or scale funding, or US$10,000 in travel/proposal development funding. The affiliate or invited researcher can be based at the same institution as the student, or at a different institution. Alternatively, PhD students may also be co-PIs on grant applications submitted by a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher, in which case the expectation is for co-PIs to be full and equal collaborators. **J-PAL and IPA offices are eligible to apply for scale funding** in collaboration with governments, NGOs, and/or private sector actors, provided at least one J-PAL eligible researcher is fully involved as an active, engaged, and responsive PI or adviser. To gauge the involvement of a J-PAL eligible researcher, we require them to complete a PI certification confirming their active engagement. All proposals may include other collaborators outside of those mentioned as long as the principal investigator is eligible. Additional consideration will be given to proposals that involve locally-based researchers and partners, as well as those with interdisciplinary co-authors.

LAI is invested in creating more opportunities for African scholars to develop and drive the research agenda on the African continent. African Scholars who have an interest in LAI's research agenda, and who are keen to run projects with a pathway to a randomized evaluation, are strongly encouraged to apply. Research teams including at least one African Scholar are eligible to apply. African Scholars

include individuals who have **completed a PhD in economics or another empirical social science discipline** (including PhD-level training in quantitative methods such as statistics/econometrics) **equipping them to conduct an RCT** and are **based at an academic institution (university) in sub-Saharan Africa**. These scholars are eligible to apply for travel/proposal development grants (up to US$10,000) and pilot grants (up to US$75,000), with more descriptive pilots capped at US$25,000. Targeted mentorship will be provided to African Scholars who receive funds from the initiative, have conditional/partial funding decisions, or are asked to revise and resubmit their proposals.

LAI encourages interdisciplinary study teams including both economists and researchers from other social science disciplines as co-PIs to apply.

Any researcher can submit a maximum of three proposals, inclusive of all proposal types, within a 12-month period to LAI, either as a main PI or co-PI in the proposal.

Applicants who are delinquent in their deliverables to any J-PAL initiative may submit proposals, but will not be eligible to receive additional funding from any J-PAL initiative. You may submit applications to LAI, but your application will not be considered for funding until your deliverables become current.

Projects can apply to receive different types of funding over their lifecycle and receive multiple grants over time. However, applicants who are submitting a proposal for a project that has already received LAI funding must be up to date on the project's deliverables and should be able to provide outcomes for the previously funded stage of the project, including a summary of all findings to date.

Select LAI Eligibility Category

Indicate how the researcher identified above is eligible for J-PAL Initiative funding. If you are applying through the African Scholars program, please select "Regional Scholars."

Advisor of PhD Student Applicant

If you are a PhD student, please indicate the J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher who serves as an advisor on your dissertation committee.

PI Certification

I agree that all J-PAL affiliates and invited researchers who are co-PIs on this project certify that they will be active, engaged, and responsive PIs on this project dedicated to guaranteeing the quality control on all aspects of this research; 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 an invited researcher.

Identify Team Members

[In online application portal] Click the link below to add PIs, team members, or project collaborators. Include all PIs and other team members in the application. Complete and accurate assignment of collaborator roles will help LAI management to communicate with members of the research team more efficiently.

To view your project's current list of collaborators, see the Manage Team Members tab. The person who started the application will be assigned the role of applicant which will be visible on this tab. Please do not edit that assignment.

If a contact has multiple roles, add the team member and indicate the first role, then add them again to assign another role. If you are assigned the applicant role because you are completing or starting the application and you are also a PI you will need to add yourself again and identify yourself as such. When the pop-up asks if you would like to give access to this team member, select no, and move on to assigning the additional role.

Demographic Information Step

These are the same instructions from the LOI in case you missed anyone during the LOI phase; if you AND the members of your research team have completed this during the LOI phase, it does not need to be completed again.

LAI is hoping to collect information about all project teams, including demographic information to support our efforts to promote diversity in our research network and funding opportunities. As the applicant, we kindly ask that you send the language and [link](#) included below to all PIs/Co-PIs on your proposal research team. Provide your proposal name and each member's role (as you listed them on the application) when you send out the blurb. Please complete the Manage Team Members section first before sending out the email(s) so that your team members are already in the system.

Completion of this step is required for all primary investigators on your research team. If you have any problems with completing this step please email fc_help@povertyactionlab.org.

Feel free to cut and paste this suggested language in an email to send to the PIs and Co-PIs on your team:
LAI is hoping to collect information about all project teams, including demographic information to support J-PAL's efforts to promote diversity in the J-PAL research network and funding opportunities. J-PAL is requiring all PIs and Co-PIs on our research team to complete [this short form](#). This data will only be accessible in disaggregated, identifiable form to select J-PAL staff. Aggregate, anonymized data will be used to report to key partners such as donors and may be included on our website.

Please confirm that every team member has completed the questions in the above-linked survey. Your submission will not be considered until this has been completed. Check here to indicate that all team members have completed this survey.

In what country or countries will your study take place?

In which cities, states, territories, or provinces will the project take place?

Please do not abbreviate the names of the cities, states, territories, or provinces when listing them.

Amount of Requested Funding

Please ensure that the amount requested is in USD.

Proposed Subaward Period of Performance Start Date

The start date for the proposed period of funding support from J-PAL, during which invoices may be submitted. This may be different from the Project start date.

Proposed Subaward Period of Performance End Date

The end date for the proposed period of funding support from J-PAL, during which invoices may be submitted. This may be different from the Project end date.

Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any J-PAL Initiative RFP?

If you answered yes above, please include which initiative(s), year/season of RFP, and name of proposal submitted.

Example: SLII, Spring 2019, Using X to Evaluate Effects on Y (Max: 3,000 character limits).

If you have previously submitted this or a similar proposal to this initiative: Are the PI team, context, and research question the same as in the previously submitted proposal?

Please explain whether the project received funding and what type of funding it received (Travel/Proposal Development, Pilot, RCT, Scale). Additionally, please explain how the project has progressed since it was last submitted, and explain how you addressed the feedback that was provided with your last submission. [250 words max]

Primary Report Contact

Please provide the name of the person who should receive emails about upcoming reports.

Secondary Report Contact

We recommend that you add a secondary person who will receive the email alerts about upcoming reports.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Record

If the project has not received an IRB exemption and IRB review is required, please indicate the current or expected IRB of record.

Please note:
If this proposal receives initiative funding and its activities include conducting human subject research, we will ask that you submit:
- All IRB approval(s) or exemption(s)
- All IRB-approved protocols
- Any IRB-approved consent forms

Please be mindful 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.

The IRB approval must be held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT. If the institution does not have their own IRB, they must engage the services of a commercial IRB to review and provide oversight for their research activities. J-PAL recommends third party IRBs Brany and Heartland . If the project is exempt from IRB approval, we will need the exemption status but no other action is required.

Narrative

Instructions
Some fields are only required in certain circumstances; please follow the instructions on each tab, thoroughly read the cues, and access linked documentation as necessary. Include a single-spaced response to prompts where applicable. Any field that requests the upload of documentation supports multiple attachments.

Learning for All Initiative Theme(s)

Please indicate which LAI research theme or themes your proposal deliberately and directly relates to; these are described in detail in the RFP materials (found on the LAI RFP page). In general, themes should reflect the nature of the intervention, the outcomes measured, and the composition of the research team. Please be selective in your choices.
- ☐ Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (Broadly)
- ☐ Large-scale Instructional Improvement for Literacy and Numeracy
- ☐ Socio-emotional Learning (SEL) and Measurement of Holistic Skills/Breadth of Skills
- ☐ Girls' Education
- ☐ Intersections of Climate and Education
- ☐ Long-term Economic and Health Impacts of Education Interventions
- ☐ Interdisciplinary Engagement
- ☐ Locally-led Research
- ☐ Gender and Social Inclusion

Abstract

Write a 100-150 word abstract of the study. Please note that this abstract will be added to the initiative's webpage if the project receives funding. The abstract should cover what you want to do, not just the motivation for the project.

Proposed Activities

Please provide a concise statement of topic and activities. These 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. [500 words max.]

Intervention Details

A brief description of the intervention or treatment to be evaluated. Even though this is just a pilot and all the details may not be finalized, there needs to be enough detail on what intervention is being piloted/evaluated for the committee to assess the proposal. If the intervention's design and implementation has been piloted, tested, and stabilized, please provide details. [200 words max.]

Research Question

Please write out the question(s) this research sets out to answer. [50 words max.]

Unique Contribution to the Field

What knowledge gap are you addressing, and how will it advance the field? Explain the project's potential to provide a unique scientific contribution. Provide a *brief* literature review to demonstrate the uniqueness of your project. Please explain how your research proposal would address a gap that you realized exists based on your review of the literature. Note that a full reference list can be attached in the "Additional attachments" field. [200 words max.]

Research Design

A brief description of the likely final research design including treatment groups. Please describe any combinations of the interventions. If there are likely to be more than two treatment groups, please list them using numerals. However, a pilot itself does not need to be, and often isn't, a randomized trial. A pilot is designed to provide the information needed to design the randomized trial and make sure that it could be implemented effectively. What information is needed to show that a good trial can be run will vary by study. A good application for pilot funding therefore explains what information is needed and what activities will be completed to fill these gaps. [150 words max.]

Target Population

What is the study population(s) and sample? If your intervention works with children, please specify the age range and/or grade level. [140 characters max.]

Gender Reporting

Does the proposal address gender issues and/or disaggregate data and outcomes by gender? Funded projects are required to report on gender-disaggregated data and outcomes, if applicable.

Outcomes of Interest

What specific outcomes will the ultimate evaluation aim to assess to determine the impact of an intervention? How will each of them be measured? Please be specific. [100 words max.]

Validation of Measurement Tools

If new or not used in the same context & population before, please describe the validation of measurement tools and comparability to existing tools. If your team includes education measurement experts or if you plan to consult a measurement expert, please indicate so. [200 words max.]

Null Results

Please describe your approach to addressing null results. Specifically, how do you plan to monitor the implementation of your project and/or what mechanisms will you test to better understand null results if they occur? Please include what data you will collect. [100 words max.]

Implications on Equity and Social Inclusion

Please provide a comment on whether the research proposal addresses equity or social inclusion, in any way. Topics of social inclusion include, but are not limited to, gender, income level, location, ethnicity, race, language, citizenship status, disability, and the intersection of those factors. [100 words max.]

Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Please answer each question below in numerical order.
1. Are there any technical, logistical, ethical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the project (e.g., implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding)? How do you plan to monitor and prevent/address these types of risks throughout the project?
2. Please discuss any information about the implementing partner(s) that could pose ethical, reputational, or legal risks (e.g., child safeguarding, corruption or misuse of funds, etc). If applicable, what proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
3. Please describe any potential unintended consequences or risks of this project for program participants. What proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
4. Particularly for projects working with children, what child safeguarding risks exist?
5. Please describe any potential risks of this project for staff (e.g., implementing partners, research assistants, enumerators). What proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
6. Please describe any potential unintended consequences or risks of this project for community members beyond program participants (e.g., untreated members of a household, untreated neighbors, or broader communities if treatment might have spillover or downstream effects beyond the study sample). What proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? 750 words limit

Policy Motivation

Please provide a summary of the policy problem that motivates this research. Include if there is demand from policy makers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area and if there is potential for the implementing partner to scale up this intervention. [100 words max.]

Locally Based Researcher

If your project involves a locally based researcher, please describe their involvement. [100 words max.]

Timeline

Please provide a clear project timeline, including short-term markers of success; a Gantt chart is preferred.

Scalability and Translatability

Please comment on the ability of this intervention to scale to larger populations and for the intervention's components and mechanisms to be translated in different contexts. Regional Scholars are encouraged to describe how the pilot can develop into a full RCT. [200 words max].

Additional information:

You're welcome to provide any brief additional comments about your form responses, or questions for us, here. Only a few sentences, maximum, please. If you have more detailed questions for us or information to share, you're welcome to email our staff team at LAI@povertyactionlab.org.

Additional Materials

If there are any documents we have not requested elsewhere that you feel may substantially strengthen your submission, please upload them here.

Budget

Instructions: Please see the LAI Budget Instructions document at the bottom of the LAI RFP Webpage and reference the information for your specific proposal type. This information is critical for application processing.

LAI Application Budget Template

Download and complete the following two templates: one for the Initiative-specific budget LAI Budget and one for the project budget: LAI Project Budget. When done, please reupload both attachments in the budget tab of the *online application portal*. Please note that these are formatted specifically for this application. Please do not remove the formatting, change any of the formatting, or create new columns.

Budget Narrative

Please justify the expenses outlined in your budget in a Word document with the title [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget Narrative].doc(x), and upload it in the budget tab of the *online application portal*.

This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget. Notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.

Allocation of External Funding

If you have other pending awards for this project, please tell us how you plan to allocate the funds received in case you are successful and receive all of these requested awards? [200 words max.]

Letters of Support

LAI Letter of Support from Implementing Partner

All pilot applicants are encouraged to include a letter of support from an implementing partner when available. All African Scholars are required to provide this letter. When applicable, this letter should indicate a willingness to work with the research team and agreement to share program cost data with J-PAL (through the PI) for the purpose of conducting cost effectiveness analysis as well as support for the randomized assignment of treatment.

Letter of Transmission

A letter or document stating approval of the proposal materials and budget from each proposed institute to receive award (ITRA).

J-PAL Affiliate or Invited Researcher Letter of Support

PhD student applicants are required to submit a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher who serves as an adviser on the applicant's dissertation committee. This letter should indicate the adviser's willingness to advise the student throughout the project's lifetime. Please note that in some cases, the adviser may be asked to add their name to the financial award and IRB documents.

Partner Organization(s)

Please add any implementation partners, including partners in charge of delivering the intervention, evaluating partners, and research funders. If you are adding co-funders, be sure to indicate the amount of received or committed funding.

We strongly recommend including a point of contact based at each partner organization. If the organization you are searching for is not available, please send an email to fc_help@povertyactionlab.org that includes the organization's name, the type of organization's website. We will respond within two business days, informing you when the requested partner has been created and is available to add to your application.

Partner Organization Name

[In online application portal] Please select the organization with which you will be partnering by clicking on the magnifying glass to the right of this field. Type in at least the first three letters of the organization, and click go to find it. The specificity of the results are directly related to the text input to the search box.

If you are unable to find the organization you are looking for, please complete this short form. We will create this record within two business days of your message and will notify you when the requested organization is available.

Role of Partner Organization

Indicate the role, in relation to this project, of the organization identified.

If you are adding co-funders, you will not be able to submit until you (a) indicate the amount of received or committed funding (b) add the funded proposal or project title (b) add the name of the primary PI for the co-funded proposal or project.

Point of Contact Based at the Partner Organization

List a primary contact who is based at the identified partner organization.

[In online application portal] Click on the MAGNIFYING GLASS to the right of this field, type in at least the first three letters of the contact's name, and select GO to find them.

You should ONLY select someone who is based at the organization chosen above in J-PAL's Salesforce. If you cannot locate your point of contact at this organization, please enter their contact details in the fields below.

First Name of Primary Contact

If the partner contact you want to add does not currently exist in J-PAL's system, please provide their first name here.

Last Name of Primary Contact

If the partner contact you want to add does not currently exist in J-PAL's system, please provide their last name here.

Job Title of Primary Contact

If the primary contact at the partner organization you want to add does not currently exist in J-PAL's system, please provide their job title here.

Email Address of Primary Contact

If the primary contact at the partner organization you want to add does not currently exist in J-PAL's system, please provide their email address here.

Co-funder Details:

Please complete the fields below if the identified organization has provided co-funding for this project.

Indicate the total amount of funding from this organization:

Please disclose the total amount of funding provided by this organization, for this project or proposal, in USD. This should include any committed funds that have not yet been released and any awards that have been exhausted.

Please identify the lead PI on the proposal or project that received funding from this organization:

[In online application portal] Click on the magnifying glass to the right of the field. Type at least the first three characters of the name you are searching for and click GO.

Please provide the name of the proposal or project that this organization funded

There are often variances in the name used to reference projects during their lifecycle. Please input the project or proposal title used to secure funding to ensure clarity.

Manage Team Members

[In online application portal] You can manage any project team member you added from the LOI Background tab and granted access to the proposal below.

Please do not edit or change the automatically assigned "applicant" role.

If you added a team member who does not have a J-PAL portal account and did not invite them to collaborate through the portal on this application, they will not be listed but will be visible to J-PAL staff reviewing your proposal. If you need to request changes to team members not listed, please send an email to fc_help@povertyactionlab.org with the title of your proposal, the team member's name, and indicate the necessary change(s).

If the person who is the applicant has another function related to the proposal, such as PI, navigate back to the LOI Background tab. Scroll down to the Identify Team Members section, use the "Click here to Add Collaborators" link, type their name in the search box, click the magnifying glass, select the contact to add them, and indicate their additional role.

Institute to Receive Award

Please indicate the institute that will receive the award should the proposal be accepted

PLEASE NOTE: MIT now requires that at least one project PI be based at or affiliated with the institutes that award funds are allocated to.

Clarification Questions

Additional Information for Clarification Questions

Once your proposal has been submitted, the initiative team may follow up with additional questions before sending it for review. If you received an email requesting additional information on your proposal, please clearly provide your responses to each request in the field below.

If the message you receive requested documents, please navigate to the relevant tab and upload the files to the appropriate field.

If you were asked to identify Project Team Members please navigate to the Basic Information tab, scroll to the Project Team question and use the provided link to do so.

You can add or edit Partner Organizations from the Partner Organization(s) tab.