

Partnership for AI Evidence: RFP OVERVIEW

Spring 2025 Request for Proposals (RFP)

The J-PAL Partnership for AI Evidence calls for proposals from J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL invited researchers¹, Postdocs, and PhD students to conduct innovative, policy-relevant research on the causal impact of AI-based solutions on social outcomes.

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TIMELINE FOR SPRING 2025 RFP

Release Date	April 1, 2025
Required Letter of Intent (LOI) Deadline *Selected applicants will receive an <i>invitation to proceed</i> with full proposal development	April 22, 2025
Full Proposal Deadline *By <i>invitation</i>	May 27, 2025
Anticipated Notification Date	June 2025

¹Select non-affiliate faculty who have been nominated, approved, and notified of their eligibility to submit proposals. Note: This request for proposals has been sent directly to researchers eligible to apply for the Initiative’s research grants. **Please do not circulate externally, given this restriction.** If you have questions regarding your eligibility to participate, we welcome you to inquire by emailing us at paic@povertyactionlab.org.

OVERVIEW

MOTIVATION

Please visit our [research agenda](#) where we outline the open questions and areas of focus that the Initiative will aim to target.

AI has the potential to transform our lives. It is a general purpose technology that spans sectors, and is widely accessible—in reach of anyone with a smartphone—and is constantly improving.

But as the AI technical revolution unfolds and AI makes its way into many more social programs, there is very little rigorous evidence on where and how AI can have an impact on outcomes. Without such evidence, companies, social innovators, and regulators lack the information to maximize the benefits of AI while protecting against its downsides.

Partnership for AI Evidence aims to fund cutting-edge studies of how these technologies can help—or harm—the well-being of people, particularly people who experience poverty. This is especially important given the speed, scale, and potential reach of many of the applications being rolled out. As AI begins to be employed across the social sector, randomized evaluations of AI use cases will help us understand the most effective and least harmful approaches.

If your proposal involves a country with a J-PAL office, **contact the relevant office 3-4 weeks before submission**. These offices have strong connections with policymakers, understand regional policy priorities, and offer infrastructure to support research and scaling activities.

If this project takes place in a country that has a J-PAL office but it is **not** the host institution, please detail the reasoning in the Partnership section of the application. Your answer will help us understand how J-PAL offices can be more competitive and better respond to the needs of PIs. [Annex I](#) lists the point persons at each J-PAL regional office.

GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

Partnership for AI Evidence does not have geographic priorities. We invite proposals for projects in low, middle, and high income countries.

AWARD TYPES

For the Spring 2025 RFP, we invite proposals under Full RCT Projects and Pilot Studies award types.

Full Randomized Control Trials (up to \$200,000)

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 from power calculations. Proposals can also be submitted for funding the continuation of research projects that have already started with other funding (including those for which field data collection has been completed). The expectation is that these projects will result in a publicly available paper that is eventually submitted to a top economics journal. De-identified data should be made publicly available within three years of the end of data collection (sooner if required by donors), or within 60 days of a paper's acceptance in a journal.

Pilot Studies (up to \$75,000)

These grants are for studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation requires further testing and pilot data. The expectation is that these projects will ultimately develop into full-scale randomized evaluations.

However, pilot grants can also fund more foundational work that intends to inform a future full-scale randomization, including the refinement of measurement strategies, operationalizing logistics of implementing a research design, and collecting pilot data to inform the design of future research or hone research questions. Grants may also be used for activities intended to facilitate access to administrative data for designing or conducting an RCT, including but not limited to, negotiating data use agreements, conducting exploratory data analysis and cleaning, or setting up technical access mechanisms. For measurement pilots, grants may be used to tackle a range of data collection challenges, including: deploying a novel measurement technology to test feasibility, assessing the validity and/or reliability of a new methodology to measure an outcome, identifying proxy indicators that allow for lower-cost data collection, developing strategies to minimize measurement error, etc. Measurement pilot proposals should lay out a clear path to using the measurement in a future randomized evaluation, and we may prioritize more general data and measurement efforts that will be applicable across studies. Logistic or implementation-focused pilots should have a clear research question, but the design and implementation require further testing and pilot data. Again, for all pilots, the expectation is that these projects will ultimately develop into or inform a full-scale randomized evaluation(s) with the potential to inform policy at-scale.

ELIGIBILITY

J-PAL affiliates, postdocs, invited researchers, and PhD students of J-PAL affiliates and invited researchers are eligible to apply for this Initiative's funding. Invited researchers from all initiatives or regional offices are eligible. All proposals may include collaborators outside of this network.

PhD students may be eligible to apply for up to US\$50,000 in pilot or full-scale funding. To be eligible, PhD students must have a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher on their thesis committee at their host university. This adviser must provide a letter of support and indicate willingness to remain involved in a

supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project.² If the student is pre-thesis, the letter should state “I am actively responsible for supervising this project/research and anticipate being on the student’s thesis committee.” In addition, in order to apply for up to US\$50,000 for pilot or full-scale funding, graduate students must provide documented evidence of successful preparatory activities.

Notes for All Award Types

- To prevent concentration of awards to any specific researchers, and to reduce the burden on initiative review boards, applicants are limited to submitting three proposals, inclusive of all proposal types, per 12-month period per initiative (either as PI or co-PI). **For example, if a researcher submitted two pilot or full-scale proposals in our Spring 2025 round, they can then only submit a maximum of 1 pilot or full-scale proposal in our Fall 2025 round.**
- In order to be considered for new initiative grants, applicants must be current on reporting for all their other grants, across all J-PAL initiatives. **Researchers whose projects are more than 2 months late on any reports to any J-PAL Initiative despite reminders from J-PAL and who have not received an approved extension will not be eligible to have new projects funded by J-PAL.** You may submit applications to the Initiative, but your application will not be considered for funding until your deliverables become current.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Funding requests should not extend beyond December 31, 2026.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

To respond to this RFP, please follow the directions listed below.

- 1) WizeHive, the new grant management system (GMS) J-PAL is using for our proposals, is more user-friendly. It will, however, require a new login. Please use the [Application Instructions](#) and follow the prompts in the links on the Initiative RFP webpage to create a new login. Or, if you have already successfully submitted an LOI or proposal to a J-PAL competition, simply log into WizeHive with your credentials.
- 2) Submit **a required Letter of Intent (LOI) by the deadline above.**
- 3) **If you receive an invitation to apply to the main application,** please follow the next steps outlined in the relevant proposal guidelines documents linked below.

² Please note that PhD students are eligible to submit a maximum of two travel/proposal development grant applications and two pilot/full study proposals during their time as graduate students. All else equal, priority will be given to graduate students who have not applied before. Applicants who received travel/proposal development funding as graduate students but have since moved to another institution may only apply for funding to continue that same project, and may not apply for funding for unrelated projects unless they have since become a J-PAL affiliate or invited researcher.

Please read the relevant **Proposal Guidelines** document on the [RFP release page](#) in detail *before answering the proposal questions in WizeHive*. Each of the following documents includes a checklist and guidance on what to address within each narrative prompt – guiding your completion of all required submission materials based on the appropriate proposal type.

- [Proposal Guidelines: RCTs](#)
- [Proposal Guidelines: Pilot studies](#)

4) Upon completing your proposal and uploading proposal attachments (budget, letters, etc.), submit the proposal by the deadline above.

Research Agenda

SPECIFIC THEMATIC AREAS

We aim to address questions about the impact of AI on a range of social issues in the priority areas of: 1) economic opportunity and jobs, 2) health, 3) climate change adaptation and agriculture, 4) education, and 5) financial inclusion. Below are research questions of great interest to our team.

Please note that initiative funding is **not limited** to these specific questions. These are illustrative examples and we are happy to consider projects as long as they evaluate an AI use case that is designed to provide benefits to people and address critical social challenges in one of the initiative's five priority areas.

1. Economic opportunity and jobs (aligns with J-PAL's Firms, Labor, and Social Protection sectors)

- a. Skills and training
 - i. Can AI tools improve training and upskilling for job seekers and workers? Can AI tools make training more accessible and customized?
 - ii. Do soft skills help workers and managers better adapt to new technology? Do large language model (LLM) tools augment soft skills or substitute for them?
- b. Workforce organization
 - i. How do LLM tools affect manager-employee relationships?
 - ii. What kinds of LLM tools are better suited for highly technically skilled workers versus lower skilled workers?
 - iii. What are the best applications of AI to reduce discrimination and bias in the workplace and in hiring? How should policymakers regulate the use of AI in hiring?
 - iv. How can firms build new teams or reconfigure existing teams around AI tools in a way that increases productivity?
- c. Job search and matching

- i. How can AI and other technologies enhance matching between employers and job seekers, particularly on online job search platforms? Can AI-enabled tools help job seekers overcome information barriers to finding a job?
- ii. Can AI-enabled tools encourage increased or broader job search activities, and how does this influence employment and earnings?
- d. SME profitability and sustainability
 - i. What are the best models of AI interventions to increase the profitability, resilience, and sustainability of micro and small enterprises, which provide the majority of employment worldwide and economic opportunities for women in particular? How can we encourage small businesses to take up beneficial AI tools?
 - ii. How can AI-based service providers design online platforms, government procurement systems etc. to both be equitable and encourage the entry of new entrepreneurs, women, and underrepresented groups?
 - iii. Can AI help identify high-growth-potential entrepreneurs to accelerate job creation in low and middle-income countries? Can microfinance and other credit providers improve credit access to small businesses and entrepreneurs using AI?
- e. Welfare effects
 - i. Are there displacement effects from AI and how do they vary across sectors/industries/labour markets and by gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status? What will be the impacts of AI on offshoring jobs?
 - ii. What are the impacts of AI on differently skilled staff? Which skill/expertise levels are AI more useful for?

2. Health

- a. Disease prediction and diagnosis
 - i. How can AI be used to enhance electronic health records and predict who is at risk for various diseases and facilitate early diagnosis, particularly for non-communicable diseases?
 - ii. While this is happening to some extent in high-income countries already; how do we integrate such approaches into health service delivery in LMICs?
 - iii. How do we best leverage AI to track disease outbreaks to prevent future pandemics?
- b. Patient behavior
 - i. How can AI be leveraged to nudge patient behavior earlier and tailor recommendations using novel data sources like wearables and smartphones?
 - ii. Can AI assisted care or mobile platforms increase adoption of evidence-based health behaviors?
 - iii. How can we best leverage AI to improve the targeting of behavior change campaigns and reach individuals with more personalized, relevant health information?
- c. Health service delivery and equity
 - i. How can AI and other technologies be used to combat discrimination and biases in health service delivery in order to increase equity, particularly for minority groups receiving inadequate care?
 - ii. What innovations can reduce discrimination in the AI tools themselves?

- iii. How can we leverage AI to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of health care providers? For example, through AI-enabled diagnostic support, AI-facilitated summaries of physician notes, or AI chatbot intake?
- iv. In contexts where there are relatively few highly skilled health care providers, including rural communities, to what extent can AI be leveraged to augment the skills of existing providers within a community to better meet local health care needs?

3. Climate change adaptation and agriculture (aligns with J-PAL's Agriculture and Environment, Energy, and Climate Change sectors)

a. Agricultural and environmental management

- i. How can AI-tools be leveraged to tailor advice to smallholder farmers to adopt agricultural practices and technologies that enhance their resilience to climate change?
- ii. Can AI-supported forecasting and early warning systems improve how we predict weather, agricultural, or other shocks? Can improved early warning systems enable implementers to act early to support people before a shock occurs? What are the downstream impacts of anticipatory action on behavior, health, and wellbeing?
- iii. Can AI tools combined with sensor data provide low-cost monitoring of nature to facilitate local and/or indigenous land and ocean stewardship, improved payments for ecosystem services contracts, and carbon credits?

b. Social and economic resilience

- i. How do we ensure that people with less access to technology aren't left behind (or made worse off) by AI and technology solutions?
- ii. Can AI tools be leveraged to provide better information and tailored recommendations to people on local environmental and climate risks like pollution and extreme heat?

4. Education

a. Teacher training

- i. How can we leverage AI to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of educators? For example, through AI-enabled lesson planning support, AI-facilitated grading, and AI chatbot-assisted tutoring? What are the benefits of the time savings for teachers?
- ii. In contexts where there are relatively few highly skilled educators, including rural communities, to what extent can AI be leveraged to augment the skills of existing teachers to better meet local educational needs?

b. Customized teaching and learning

- i. How can AI-driven educational tools be used to enhance our abilities to assess the right learning level to teach students at, to ensure the best learning outcomes (in line with the Teaching at the Right Level model)?
- ii. How can AI be used to predict which students are at risk of falling behind, facilitating early intervention?

c. Increased engagement by students, teachers, or parents

- i. How can we best leverage AI to make education and skilling more accessible, and

- reach students with more personalized and engaging learning content?
- ii. How can AI be leveraged to nudge student behavior towards better study habits and tailor learning recommendations using novel data sources like smartphones and tablets? Can AI-assisted learning platforms increase the adoption of evidence-based educational practices?

5. Financial inclusion (aligns with J-PAL's Finance sector)

- a. Designing inclusive finance products
 - i. How can AI/ML models assess the creditworthiness of underserved populations where formal credit histories may not exist? What non-traditional data sources can these models use to make these decisions?
 - ii. How can AI/ML models be used to assess the specific needs of groups in LMICs to design affordable insurance products? Can AI tools help to automate and speed up insurance claims for customers in LMICs?
 - iii. How can AI/ML models be designed to minimize bias against marginalized groups in lending and insurance decisions?
 - iv. Can AI/ML models identify borrowers who are more likely to generate higher returns to credit in a scalable and cost-effective way, enabling financial institutions to allocate capital more productively?
 - v. How can AI/ML models be used to improve the targeting of social protection programmes and humanitarian assistance?
- b. Financial literacy
 - i. Can AI-powered tools that provide customized and interactive financial education increase financial literacy levels? How do the impacts of these compare with existing financial literacy programmes?
 - ii. Can these tools enable individuals to utilize digital financial services and platforms more?
- c. Consumer protection
 - i. How can AI/ML be used to recognize predatory lending or other harmful practices?
 - ii. Can AI/ML models analyze localized data on spending habits, income sources, and financial behavior that can help to create locally relevant policies that maximize positive and minimize negative household outcomes?

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

PAYMENTS AND SUBAWARDS

RCT and pilot grants are provided under an award from MIT to the grantee's host institution. PLEASE NOTE: MIT now requires that at least one project PI be employed by the organization receiving the subaward and funds. Travel/proposal development grants are paid as travel reimbursements. Receipts are required for reimbursement.

Please be mindful that MIT requires that the IRB determination must be held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT. The PI at the ITRA must be listed as the main PI on the IRB. If the institution does not have its own IRB, the institution must engage the services of a commercial IRB to review and provide oversight for the research activities. [Heartland](#) and [Solutions](#) provide review of international research and satisfy J-PAL's IRB requirements; fees can be found on their respective websites. Furthermore, MIT requires that the PI named on the IRB must be employed by the institute receiving the award. Information about this MIT policy can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Please consult with J-PAL regarding including the cost of this commercial entity in the project budget. J-PAL also 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.](#)

Subaward Setup: For grants with human subject research, once all materials including IRB approvals/exemptions have been received, MIT typically takes 90 days to establish the subaward. Please provide conservative rather than optimistic estimates for start and end dates to reduce the likelihood of needing to submit no-cost extension requests.

Note that if travel/proposal development grants have human subject research (HSR), then IRB approval or exemption will be required before MIT reimburses expenses. According to US federal regulations, a human subject is a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains 1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual (e.g., through an interview, focus group, or survey), or 2) identifiable private information (e.g., individual-level health or education data). For more information on budget, requirements, and process, please see instructions in the relevant application forms, for which reference documents exist on the [RFP page](#).

CODE OF CONDUCT

Since J-PAL is part of MIT, everyone who is associated with J-PAL, including all researchers worldwide affiliated with J-PAL (affiliates and invited researchers), as well as all co-authors on J-PAL funded or implemented studies are considered part of the broader MIT community. It is therefore our hope and expectation that they will adhere to the [MIT code of conduct](#), as well as the [J-PAL code of conduct](#). MIT's section titled "Relations and Responsibilities Within the MIT Community" contains specific provisions regarding personal conduct, harassment, discrimination and retaliation, violence against community members, and substance use. Please take some time to review these.

Because almost all researchers we work with are also part of other university communities, they may also be subject to their host universities' policies and procedures. Many of these policies may be very similar to the MIT policies above. Finally, many researchers are separately affiliated with other academic associations and organizations, including the American Economic Association, and they should continue to abide by the codes of conduct established by the associations and organizations to which they belong. The AEA's code of conduct is available [here](#).

If researchers and/or staff of J-PAL funded projects learn of or suspect bribery, corruption, fraud or

other abuses that are in violation of any donor, MIT, or J-PAL community policies, they must immediately inform the J-PAL Initiative team.

GRANT CONDITIONS

Full and Pilot Grants: 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. **The IRB approval must be held by the institution that enters into the subaward agreement with MIT** (the ITRA). Similarly, **the Principal Investigator (PI) of a subaward issued by MIT must be employed by the organization receiving the subaward and funds and must be listed as the main PI on the IRB** ([see here for further details and FAQ](#)). Specific instructions will be given in the Notice of Award.
2. **Letter of Transmission:** Grantees must provide a letter from the receiving institution of the award to show that they have reviewed your proposal and accept your budget. Please follow the MIT approved language for the Letter of Transmission as follows:
 - a. **Example language for Letter of Transmission:** (On ITRA letterhead)
<ITRA> is pleased to support the <Name of research> proposal and will plan on carrying out the work in accordance with the submitted budget. <NAME OF PI at ITRA> will serve as <ITRA's> Principal Investigator for this work. In this role, he/she is responsible for the implementation of this project in accordance with this proposal and with appropriate research and data protection practices. Please contact him/her with any concerns which may arise related to project implementation.
3. **Peer-review proposals:** Grantees may be requested to peer-review proposals in future Partnership for AI Evidence funding rounds in which they are not applying for funding. Acceptance of funding signals the grantee's consent to peer-review proposals upon the initiative's request.
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, 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, Partnership for AI Evidence awards include \$1,000 to defray expenses associated with collecting cost data. The Initiative 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. The Initiative requires grantees to collect and report the cost of the program they are evaluating separately from all research costs in their final narrative report. We recommend research teams regularly track costs as they are incurred to maximize accuracy. While not required, many teams also find it easier to submit cost data reports on an annual basis.

- 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 Partnership for AI Evidence activities:** Grantees may be requested to participate in one of the Initiative's activities at a mutually agreed time and place. Activities may include evidence workshops, matchmaking conferences, or presentations to the Initiative's donors.
- 10. Credit Partnership for AI Evidence:** Any presentations and publications, including academic papers, policy briefs, press releases, blogs, and organizational newsletters, that emerge from this

project should credit the Partnership for AI Evidence. The exact wording on crediting and donor support will be provided in the terms of your award.

LINKS TO ALL RFP MATERIALS

Details on the overall Initiative research agenda, as well as all submission templates and reference documents that make up the overall RFP package, are all available at:

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative/partnership-ai-evidence-rfp>.

OTHER FAQs

For questions on RFP priorities, application and review processes, eligibility, and general inquiries, please reach out to: paie@povertyactionlab.org, or visit the Partnership for AI Evidence [website](#).

For questions on award set-up and administration, please reach out to paie_grant_admin@povertyactionlab.org.

Annex I: J-PAL Leads by Region

J-PAL Regional Office	Regional Point Person(s)	Contact Information
J-PAL Africa	Rochelle Jacobs (Associate Director of Research)	riacobs@povertyactionlab.org
J-PAL Europe	Adrien Pawlik (Associate Director of Research)	apawlik@povertyactionlab.org
J-PAL Latin America & the Caribbean	Edivaldo Constantino (Senior Research Manager)	econstantino@povertyactionlab.org
J-PAL Middle East & North Africa	Amira El-Shal (Associate Director of Research)	aeshal@povertyactionlab.org
J-PAL North America	Sarah Margolis (Senior Initiatives Manager)	smargolis@povertyactionlab.org
J-PAL South Asia	Sandhya Seetharaman (Senior Research Manager)	sseetharaman@povertyactionlab.org
J-PAL Southeast Asia	Nadia Rayhanna (Senior Research Manager)	nrayhanna@povertyactionlab.org