

# PROJECT “STRENGTHENING LEARNING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZILIAN PRESCHOOLS”: PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Second Semester, 2024 Request for Proposals (RFP)

---

Please read this document carefully before submitting your proposal.

## OVERVIEW

**Submission instructions:** All applicants must first **submit the required Letter of Interest** via e-mail [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org). Successful applicants will receive an invitation to proceed with their full proposal materials. **Proposals are due by Monday, November, 04, 2024 at 7:00 PM UTC-3.**

Strong RFP proposal applicants will demonstrate:

- a clear research question that is clearly discussed in relation to RFP Research Agenda (as outlined in the RFP Overview)
- **a robust research design, well-defined research instruments, and sample size estimates justified by pilot data presented in the proposal and how specific available data informs detailed power calculations for any impacts you plan to measure.**
- a promising preschool program to be tested, that has been developed based on scientific knowledge, in accordance with the Brazilian National Common Curricular Base for Early Childhood Education ([BNCC](#)) and the National Curricular Guidelines for early childhood education ([DCNEI](#)), with previous experience of implementation at public preschools in Brazil, including training of early childhood professionals, being open to share the materials for replications, feasible to be implemented in 2 years or less, with previous evaluation of the implementing process that enabled to learn what worked or not in terms of program content, delivery strategy, duration, instruments, and other components.
- a feasible implementation plan to occur during the period of January, 2025 until December, 2026.
- a strong partnership commitment from an implementing organization (e.g., agreement to research design, sharing of costing information), including indications of the potential for significant scale-up of research findings by partners or scaling

organizations.

**Please note:** if J-PAL has already funded part of, or precursors to, this project in a past competition round for any initiative, **the project will not be eligible to receive additional funding unless some preliminary data (e.g. take-up rates from a pilot, etc.) from the previously funded work is available and shared in the proposal. You may submit this additional material as an addendum to your submission** by email [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org)

***Funding Randomized Research Project award:*** limited to BRL 400,000\*.

***Funding implementing partner award:*** limited to BRL 300,000\*.

\*Under exceptional circumstances, J-PAL Board may choose to award a higher amount of funding.

**We expect projects of various sizes, and will carefully check whether the budget size accurately reflects the scope of work proposed.**

### ***Timeline***

Release Date: Monday, September 02, 2024
Required Letter of Interest (LOI) Deadline: Monday, October 07, 2024 at 7:00 PM UTC-3  *All applicants will receive an <i>invitation to proceed</i> with full proposal development
Full Proposal Deadline: Monday, November 04, 2024 at 7:00 PM UTC-3 *By <i>invitation</i>
Results Announced to the Applicants: Week of December 19, 2024 (tentative)

***Required Data Collection:*** We intend to require that all RCTs collect **data on a subset of** indicators. The project team will be in touch at the launch of funded projects to support research teams in the specific survey questions or modules to be used and will be mindful of the additional survey time required as well as open to budget modifications to incorporate the time it takes to collect these required indicators.

***Project Costing Exercise:*** J-PAL RCT grantees are requested to collect and share detailed

program cost data following the [J-PAL Costing Guidelines](#). The [RFP Application](#) includes details on what to include in your proposal narrative.

**Motivation:** The goal of this exercise in each RCT proposal is to ensure that the research team has plans from the outset to collect cost data for all “ingredients” needed to implement a program or intervention, excluding the costs of evaluating the impact of that program. In policy outreach activities, J-PAL has found that policymakers often ask how much a program or intervention costs, and collecting detailed cost data allows for cost-effectiveness analysis. This can assist policymakers when they are choosing how to allocate resources between different programs, or deciding to replicate or scale up a program that is demonstrated to be effective<sup>1</sup>.

**Principles and expectations:** While a rigorous cost-effectiveness analysis requires very granular data, J-PAL will provide grantees a basic cost collection template, alongside basic reporting templates, which helps researchers gather the figures for the various cost categories. The template includes a sheet to assist with calculation of a “total program cost,” and a sheet to calculate high-level cost figures that are of greatest interest to policymakers. **Your proposal should help us understand the potential for a very rough, back-of-the-envelope cost-effectiveness calculation.** When planning your cost data collection and approach to cost-effectiveness analysis, you should consider not only the costs of any inputs offered to participants (e.g. seeds, equipment, etc.), but also the costs of facilities and utilities, implementation staff, transport, and any other costs required to conduct the program. You may find it useful to consider the following questions when constructing your plan to collect relevant cost data:

- Are there costs in identifying the participant populations? (e.g. costs of doing a census, distributing flyers or other marketing materials, or holding information sessions necessary to implement the program.)
- Are there training costs for program staff implementing the intervention?
- Are there costs borne by participants (consider opportunity costs, subsidized components of the program, etc.)
- Are there activities that are reduced in size or discontinued as a result of this intervention being introduced? These might indicate cost savings from this intervention.
- Are there implementation monitoring costs involved, necessary to track progress or ensure compliance with plans to achieve effective implementation?

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on comparative cost-effectiveness analysis, see: <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/resource/conducting-cost-effectiveness-analysis-cea>. If you have feedback on this exercise, the template, or the underlying rationale, please submit feedback [online](#).

## FINANCIAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

We can accommodate two research funding management models (*Model A, Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper* and *Model B, Executed by Another Host Institution*). These models are meant to work within institutional constraints to best accommodate the needs of projects from different types of organizations involved in the research, researcher host institutions, funding amounts, among other concerns.

Eventually, the model indicated in this current form may not be the most adequate, which may only be discovered after the submission of the project for evaluation. In this case, we reserve the right to change the financial management model of the project, which must be accepted by the researcher for the project to proceed. In case of non-acceptance, the financing will not move forward.

In compliance with the prevailing legislation and the internal rules of each host institution, applicants should familiarize themselves with the available financial management models as described below, and indicate their preferred option in the proposal.

- *Model A Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper*: According to Insper's policies and instructions for disbursement and accountability, J-PAL LAC in partnership with Insper manages the financial resources and research activities of the project.
- *Model B Executed by Another Host Institution*: The host institution of the research, directly or through an accredited or authorized Research Support Foundation, will receive award funds from Insper and will execute the project.

Proposals should indicate their preferred funding modality (*Model A executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper* or *Model B executed by Another Host Institution*) in the appropriate field in the [Declaration of Awareness and Agreement with the General Terms and Conditions of the Financial Aid Contract](#). Please note that PIs with affiliation to non-Brazilian universities must adhere to the *Model A Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper*.

When following the *Model A Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper*, you must coordinate the budget details with the J-PAL LAC office for review and approval by emailing [econstantino@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:econstantino@povertyactionlab.org). The budget must be sent for review no later than one week before the application submission deadline. In the current cycle, budgets submitted after **7:00 PM UTC-3 on Monday, October 28, 2024** may not be reviewed for approval by J-PAL LAC.

In some cases, legal requirements, regulations, or internal rules of the host institution will require one of the funding models to be applied. PIs must evaluate these rules with their host institution to understand any particular requirements<sup>2</sup>. **It is the PI's responsibility to check with their institution of affiliation to verify the possibility of external management of the funding resources.**

Regardless of the financial management modality adopted, **the PIs, together with their institution of affiliation and any supporting entities, will always be the sole and exclusive responsible for the correct and careful allocation and use of research funds**, and will be accountable to J-PAL and Insper under the terms of the obligations assumed in the contract.

## **DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED WITH THE PROPOSAL (VIA [E-MAIL](#))**

Proposals consist of:

1. RFP Application
2. Budget for Research (RCT)
3. Budget for Implementation Costs
4. Budget narrative document
5. Letters of support
6. Project execution schedule and description of the activities
7. Term of approval and consent
8. Statement of adherence to policies and standards
9. Declaration of awareness and agreement with the general terms and conditions of the financial aid contract

Please submit your proposal, including all required documents, via email to [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) by **Monday, November 4th, 2024, at 7:00 PM UTC-3**.

### **1. RFP APPLICATION**

The [RFP application](#) document broken down into the following different questions:

- A. A timeline of the study, considering that this RFP will fund proposals feasible to be implemented in the period of January, 2025 until December, 2026
- B. A summary of the policy problem that motivates this research, the proposal's relevance, how it fits with the research priorities identified in [RFP Overview](#), and its potential to inform policy decisions.
- C. A description of the project, intervention, evaluation design, target population and context.
- D. A discussion of potential risks (technical, logistical, political and risks) that might threaten the completion of the study, and if the team has taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent them.
- E. A comment on local researcher involvement and proposed implementing partners, and other organizations you plan to work with for both program implementation and evaluation.
- F. Innovative interventions details with information about the evidence or theoretical framework that supported the development of the intervention, and also results of previous evaluations.
- G. A comment on whether the project has scale-up potential and whether the program

- costs and impacts may be suitable for a cost effectiveness analysis.
- H. A comment on whether you plan to publish data collected in an open-access, online database at the end of the evaluation. Note that data publication is required for any project funded by a J-PAL initiative.
  - I. Power calculations.

The application form will also require answering some general questions about the project.

## 2. BUDGET GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH (RCT) APPLICATIONS

Please submit to the e-mail [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) a detailed project budget using the “[RFP Research budget template](#)” available on the [RFP webpage](#). To reduce processing time, please keep the following in mind:

1. Research grants can be executed under two models: (a) managed by J-PAL LAC | Insper or (b) managed by another host institution. For projects managed by J-PAL LAC | Insper, a 15% project support fee must be added to the total direct costs. For projects managed by another host institution, the corresponding overhead must be included. Universities in high-income countries (as defined by the World Bank) can charge up to 10% of direct costs. Independent non-profits from any location and universities from middle- or low-income countries (LMIC) may charge up to 15% of direct costs"
2. Every Research grant that follow the *Model A Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper* must define an active point of contact with J-PAL LAC's team for them to coordinate research protocols, logistics, and all project related needs. This can be solved by adding in the budget (or co-funders budget) a Senior Research Associate, a Manager, or as an alternative, establishing one of the PI's/Co-PI's as the active point of contact overseeing the project.
3. Please note that PIs with affiliation to non-Brazilian universities must adhere to the *Model A Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper*.
4. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under this RFP is low and that grantees may have reasonable project support costs included in budgets as direct costs. Such costs should be reasonable and explained in the budget notes.

**Applications must include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget in addition to the Excel template.**

Furthermore, please take the following items into account when preparing your budget:

1. Budgets **MUST** be stated in **Brazilian Real (BRL)**. If you expect to use your award for expenses outside of Brazil, we will work to send grant funds to you in the currency needed, but you will be responsible for any currency risks.
2. Please include detailed budget notes in the column provided in the templates.
3. For travel airfares, indicate the city of origin and destination, if available.

4. For Field expenses, detail the main expenses (pollsters, licenses, transport, etc) and if you have a quote from a survey company (ideal), **link it to the budget**.
5. Grantees should notify the organization they wish to work with prior to submitting a grant application, as these organizations may require applicants to budget for overhead or other expenses incurred.
6. Unallowable costs include those labeled as “incidental” “miscellaneous,” or “contingency”. If you think some amount may change in the short term, be aware that rebalances of up to 10% between major lines are possible, as long as the total amount remains unchanged. Try your best to comment on each label in the budget notes.
7. Please note that this RFP does not cover the salaries of PIs based in high-income countries. For PIs based in low- and middle-income countries, the following apply: Up to BRL 110,000 per year for LMIC researcher PI/co-PI time, with a limit of BRL 45,000 per PI per year.
8. Travel insurance: All traveling grantees are required to provide proof of emergency medical insurance coverage before travel. If you already have one, covered by your university, please add that information to the notes. If not, add the cost to the airfare line, as it is compulsory to travel with it.
9. For Research grants, if there is co-funding for the project, you must complete both the "Total Project Budget" and the "Research Budget Template" sheets.
10. Any computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased, (e.g. how many laptops), as well as the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
11. Be aware that when developing a project outside J-PAL at Insper, **we can request the documentation** behind the expenses reported.
12. Applicants should review J-PAL best practices on questionnaire design and data collection/management in the [J-PAL Research Protocol Checklist](#), to ensure they have budgeted for expenses associated with piloting and surveyor training, survey translation, field spot checks, and back checking.

### **3. BUDGET GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION COSTS APPLICATIONS**

The goal of the “[Implementation costs budget template](#)” is to estimate the costs of components necessary to implement the preschool program or intervention. Please consider the expected duration of the implementation of the program/intervention to estimate the costs.

You should include in the “Implementation costs budget template” all components necessary to implement the program, such as staff, materials, licenses and other costs specific to each program. Please consider the sample size and the research design to estimate the costs of implementation. Also consider hypothetical data about the municipality and state of Brazil in which the program will be implemented. You can hypothetically consider that the municipality has 35 preschools and 3517 children enrolled in preschools. Each preschool has 1 school director, 1 pedagogical coordinator and 10 teachers.

#### 4. LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Please provide the following letters of support, as applicable:

1. Full projects are required to provide a letter of support from implementing partners. Please find [here](#) its suggested template.
2. **For PhD Students only:** PhD student applicants are required to submit a letter of support from a J-PAL affiliate or J-PAL 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, and that the student meets the criteria of their institution to assume responsibility for the research in the role of its principal investigator (PI). 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." Please note that in some cases, due to restrictions at the institution that will receive the funding awarded, the adviser may be asked to add his or her name to the contracts and IRB documents.
3. Please submit your letters of support via email to [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) by **Monday, November 4, 2024, at 7:00 PM UTC-3.**

#### 5. SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

For J-PAL it is important to understand the sequence of steps in your project and have knowledge of the research team enrolled in it. Please submit by e-mail [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) a concise and structured one-page spreadsheet with the title of the research project, its timeline, a description of the activities corresponding to each defined time period, its milestones, and a list of the names and respective affiliation of the members of the research team. Since each type of project has a different time division, we are not providing a template from which to fill in your project information. However, we do ask that you highlight in the document when and what the funds from this RFP will be used for, should your research proposal be approved.

Please note that it can take around 90 days from the results' announcement date for the signature of the contract and the disbursement of the funds. This span also depends on IRB approval time. Also, hiring a Senior Research Associate or Manager can take up to one month. Please consider these factors while planning your activities on your Schedule and Description of Activities document.

#### 6. TERM OF APPROVAL AND CONSENT

The Term of Approval and Consent must be issued by a representative of the Host Institution with their signature, so that J-PAL has an institutional endorsement that the Host Institution knows, approves and supports the project as presented. We call a representative a person who is in a position that has standing to grant consent on behalf of the institution. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make sure to speak with the Host Institution and define with them who best represents



this role.

The content of the Term of Approval and Consent depends on the funding model used: In the model that uses Insper as the host institution, the text mainly states that the PI's Host University is aware that the researchers are allocating time to work on this project. Even if the Host University does not have an active role in the project, it is important that they are on board with the PI working on the project. Whereas in the model where the project is based at a different institution, the letter should state that the university is able to provide all the necessary elements for the implementation of the project, with respect to finance, legal, infrastructure, and others.

The wording of this document in both template alternatives is available below. This document must be dated, signed and sent via email to [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) by **Monday, November 4, 2024, at 7:00 PM UTC-3**.

**a. Example language for Model A Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper:**

i. (On corresponding letterhead) *<Name of the Host Institution of the PI>* is pleased to support and will authorize the participation of the *<Name of PI>*'s proposal on the J-PAL's project Strengthening Learning and Child Development in Brazilian Preschools RFP 2024 Second Semester considering their contract affiliation in *<Name of the Host Institution of the PI>*. Likewise, this institution agrees in relation to the administrative and financial management model indicated in the proposal, among the models indicated in the Request for Proposals (RFP). Please contact me *<this will be the person representative of the institution, identified by you, who has the legitimacy to grant consent on behalf of the institution by signing this letter>* with any concerns which may arise related to project implementation.

**b. Example language for Model B Executed by Another Host Institution:**

i. (On corresponding letterhead) *<Name of Host Institution of the PI>* is aware, approves, and is pleased to support *<Name of PI>*'s proposal and will plan on carrying out the work in accordance with the submitted budget and the administrative and financial management model indicated in the proposal, among the models indicated in the Request for Proposals (RFP). *<Name of Host Institution of the PI>* is aware of and has full responsibility for making available the infrastructure required by the scope of work described within the submitted project. *<Name of PI at Host Institution>* will serve as *<Name of Host Institution>*'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 me *<this will be the person representative of the institution, identified by you, who has the legitimacy to grant consent on behalf of the institution by signing this letter>* with any concerns which may arise related to this project's operation at *<Name of Host Institution of the PI>*.

## **7. STATEMENT OF ADHERENCE TO POLICIES AND STANDARDS**

There are policies and standards that must be followed within the scope of J-PAL research. We ask

that you read them carefully and, at the end of the document, express your agreement. Please find [here](#) the document, which must be dated, signed and sent via email to [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) by **Monday, November 4, 2024, at 7:00 PM UTC-3**.

## **8. DECLARATION OF AWARENESS AND AGREEMENT WITH THE GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE FINANCIAL AID CONTRACT**

J-PAL can accommodate two models, based on applicable legislation and the internal rules of each host institution. Please find [here](#) the document, which must be dated, signed and sent via email to [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) by **Monday, November 4, 2024, at 7:00 PM UTC-3**.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES**

Ethical Issues: The proposed research activities must comply with the ethical principles and legal norms in force in Brazil. Compliance with current legal rules and regulations is the responsibility of the researchers and all institutions and entities involved. Researchers are required to respect the environment, human and animal health, and the rights to privacy, physical integrity, data protection, and non-discrimination. Failure to respect any of these rights may result in the cancellation of financial support.

Codes of Conduct and other policies: Since J-PAL is part of MIT, everyone who is associated with J-PAL, including researchers worldwide receiving grants from J-PAL initiatives, is considered part of the broader MIT community. Therefore, the researcher must adhere to MIT's community-wide policies that are available [here](#) in order to receive the grant. Please review the Code of Conduct document as it relates to J-PAL and affiliates [here](#). In parallel, all proposals governed under this Request for Proposals (RFP) must comply with Insper's Code of Ethics in Research.

Commitment to best practices: We wish to preserve the criteria of exemption and autonomy that guide the analysis and choice of competing practices, as well as to prevent potential conflicts of interest and/or violations of the rules set forth in these two above-mentioned policies. That said, persons with marriage, stable union, or kinship by consanguinity or affinity, whether in a direct, collateral, or transverse line, up to the second degree, with members of the Review Board, as well as peer-reviewers or other service providers hired for possible support to the selection process may not, directly or indirectly, qualify for this RFP. Each potential conflict of interest will be reviewed individually, and procedures will be implemented to ensure the board's evaluation remains impartial.

Submission's responsibility: The preparation of projects and their submission to the selection process under this Request for Proposals (RFP) are the full responsibility of the applicants, who shall bear all the costs thereof. By adhering to this call, the applicants acknowledge that it is the exclusive responsibility of J-PAL to arbitrate the selection process, observing the procedures described herein.

Discretionality: J-PAL reserves the right to cancel, suspend, modify, review or postpone, at any time, at its sole discretion, the selection process to which this call refers, by means of a simple notice published in the same media. No amount or compensation will be due, in any way, to any person, including, but not limited to, potential applicants who have already submitted projects, nor to institutions to which such applicants or potential applicants are or are linked, due to the participation of such applicants and their respective projects in the selection process under this call, as a result of its cancellation, suspension, modification or postponement.

### **APPLICATION CHECKLIST TO BE SUBMITTED AT THE PROPOSAL STAGE**

Please submit your proposal, including all required documents listed below, via email to [preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:preschool.rfp@povertyactionlab.org) by **Monday, November 4, 2024, at 7:00 PM UTC-3.**

1. RFP Application
2. Budget for Research (RCT)
3. Budget for Implementation Costs
4. Budget narrative document
5. Letters of support
6. Project execution schedule and description of the activities
7. Term of approval and consent
8. Statement of adherence to policies and standards
9. Declaration of awareness and agreement with the general terms and conditions of the financial aid contract

When following the *Model A Executed by J-PAL LAC | Insper*, you must coordinate the budget details with the J-PAL LAC office for review and approval by emailing [econstantino@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:econstantino@povertyactionlab.org). The budget must be sent for J-PAL LAC's review no later than one week before the application submission deadline. In the current cycle, budgets submitted after **7 PM on Monday, October 28** may not be reviewed for approval by J-PAL LAC.