# SOLUTIONS AND ADVANCEMENTS THROUGH RESEARCH FOR WATER AND AIR | Request for Proposal Spring 2025

## PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: PILOT GRANTS

*This document contains the submission instructions and application materials for pilot proposal grants.. For complete information on the SARWA RFP including research priorities, eligibility, review process, budget guidelines and more, please review the* [*SARWA RFP Overview document*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O7idYMJyk_ed1Ti3iVmpSMsUlLzQbgj7iIiFsktabuE/edit?tab=t.0)*.*

## OVERVIEW

**Pilot grants** are for studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation requires further testing and pilot data. 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 sharpen research questions.

Pilots are not required to include randomized methodology as long as they test for the logistics or first stage results of a treatment/policy intervention using administrative data or surveys or build a monitoring system. 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.

Implementation-focused pilots should have a clear research question, but the design and implementation require further testing and pilot data. For all pilots, the expectation is that these projects will ultimately develop into full-scale randomized evaluations with the potential to inform climate and environmental policy at-scale. You should apply as a pilot if the funded work lays the groundwork for a future randomized evaluation. In addition, pilot proposals should:

* have a very clear research question that assesses the feasibility of using a randomized evaluation to answer this question.
* clearly articulate the conceptual and methodological distinction between the pilot study and any future follow-on studies, and what exactly the pilot will enable researchers to learn. The narrative should include a solid justification for why a pilot is needed, what will be learned, and what a future RCT informed by this exploratory research could contribute to specific topics related to SARWA

**Note: If your research design includes randomization to assess the impact of an intervention, please apply for full RCT funding.**

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## INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals for AWL research funding for pilots (up to US$75,000) consist of

(i) Cover Sheet including basic contact and logistical information;

(ii) Proposal narrative;

(iii) Proposal budget and budget narrative; and

(iv) Letters of support

* If you are interested in applying, please first reach out to the SARWA team (SARWA@povertyactionlab.org) to discuss your proposal's potential fit to SARWA priorities.
* Please submit a complete application including all documents mentioned above as zip file with the title **[PI Last Name, First Name].zip** via email to the SARWA team and CC sgorti@povertyactionlab.org and jchacko@povertyactionlab.org.

| **Deadline: Pilot and proposal development grant applications accepted on the following dates: EOIs are due January 30th, 2025, and full proposals are due March 20th 2025.**  |
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**Funding per Pilot grant award:**  limited to $75,000 or less.

## COVER SHEET AND NARRATIVE TEMPLATE

Please submit the cover sheet and narrative template as one PDF titled **[PI Last Name, First Name][Proposal Narrative].pdf.**

### SECTION A : COVER SHEET

Instructions: Please note that all fields are required; include a response in the white space below or next to each question (*12 pt font , single spaced*) to each of the following subsections.

| **PROPOSAL DETAILS** |
| --- |
| TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL |  |
| STATE(s) OR REGION(s) OF INTEREST |  |
| PRIMARY ELIGIBLE RESEARCHERPlease identify one researcher who is eligible for J-PAL Initiative funding. This may be the principal PI and/or any eligible co-PI. Details for only one primary eligible researcher are required in cases where there’s more than one eligible researcher. Other PIs who are eligible can be added as co-PIs. |  |
| PI ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY | * J-PAL Affiliate
* J-PAL Invited Researcher
* J-PAL Post-doc
* PhD/ Graduate students
 |
| ORGANIZATION NAME OF ELIGIBLE RESEARCHER |  |
| **[FOR PHD STUDENTS ONLY]** NAME OF J-PAL AFFILIATE/INVITED RESEARCHER ON THEIR THESIS COMMITTEE IN THEIR HOST UNIVERSITY |  |
| INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE FUNDS (J-PAL REGIONAL OFFICE)\* |  |
| CO-PI(s) (Institutional Affiliation) |  |
| REPORTING CONTACT (IF ANY) |  |
| SECONDARY REPORTING CONTACT (IF ANY) |  |
| * By checking this box, all J-PAL affiliates and invited researchers who are co-PIs on this project certify that they will be active, engaged, and responsive PIs dedicated to guaranteeing the quality control on all aspects of this project; and that their participation in this project is not merely to provide access to J-PAL resources and funding to anyone else working on this project who is neither a J-PAL affiliate nor invited researcher.
* By checking this box, all eligible researchers certify that they are up to date on reporting for all existing grants, across all J-PAL initiatives.
 |
| GOVERNMENT PARTNER(s)\**(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | CONTACT (NAME,EMAIL,PHONE)*(Insert relevant information in the space below)*  |
|  |  |
| IMPLEMENTING PARTNER (s) (if any)*(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | CONTACT(NAME,EMAIL,PHONE)*(Insert relevant information in the space below)* |
|  |  |
| If you are working with any implementing partner (s), kindly specify their respective scope of work. *[word limit: 150 words maximum]* |
|  |
| PROPOSED START DATE: (yyyy-mm-dd) |  | PROPOSED END DATE:(yyyy-mm-dd) |  |
| INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE AWARD\* |  | CONTACT FOR CONTRACTING ISSUES |  |
| AMOUNT REQUESTED (IN USD) |  | AMOUNT CO-FUNDED (IN USD) |  |
| CO-FUNDER(S) | FUNDED AWARD (PI, Project Title, Amount) |
|  |  |
| PAST AND FUTURE SUBMISSIONS: Have you submitted or do you plan to submit this LOI and proposal to any other J-PAL Initiative RFP?Have you submitted this or a related proposal to any other J-PAL funding initiative? |  ☐YES ☐NO |
| If you answered yes above, please state which initiative(s), year/season of RFP, and the name of the LOI/proposal you submitted or plan to submit. Example: GI Spring 2019 Using Mobile Phones to Improve Service Delivery. 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 to [blank initiative], and explain how you addressed the feedback that was provided with your last submission. *[350 words max]*  |  |
| EXISTING RESEARCH PROJECT: Are you applying to fund additional research as part of an existing research project previously funded by J-PAL (e.g., a second proposal development grant continuing from a prior proposal development grant, a pilot grant building on a travel/proposal development, a full RCT building on a pilot, etc.)? |  |
| If yes, please provide the title and/or J-PAL grant number of your previously funded project.  |  |
| **Some projects will not be conducting research involving human subjects. However, if this project will involve research on human subjects,please fill out the two boxes below.** |
| IRB OF RECORD |  | IRB CONTACT |  |
| We are also in touch with other funders and occasionally share proposals that are relevant to their interests. If you do not want this proposal shared with them,please check this box:☐ |

### SECTION B: NARRATIVE

Instructions: Please include a short response in the white space below each question (*12 pt font , single spaced*) to each of the following subsections. **Before preparing your proposal narrative,we strongly urge that you refer to the evaluation criteria mentioned in** [**Annexure**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YWo1A--PCcY1TDgH3dIviYNxOigbqUXG/edit#bookmark=id.3rprre42tc9v)**.**

| **ABSTRACT:** Please provide an abstract of the proposed research project(s). This will be added to AWL web pages if the project receives funding.\* |
| --- |
|  |
| **FOCUS AREAS:** Which focus areas does this project fall under? Select One or More: |
| * Clean Air
* Clean Water
* Water Availability/Access
* Climate Change Mitigation
* Climate Change Adaptation
* Pollution Reduction
* Energy Access
 |
| **THE PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY:** A summary of the context and policy problem/opportunity that motivates this research, including the available evidence of the problem in this context, and how it fits with the government partner’s priorities on clean air and water, or other policy priorities in environment, energy, or climate change identified by the government and/or in the AWL RFP Overview. \* |
|  |
| **THE INNOVATION:** A description of the intervention to be evaluated and how it could potentially improve access to clean air and water.Innovations can be introducing new or making changes to existing programs, processes, technologies, or delivery systems.\* |
|  |
| **RESEARCH DESIGN:** Please describe the research design for the pilot, including the research question(s), sampling, outcome measures, and data collection. Please describe how this research could lead to an RCT that can advance the academic literature, including potential market failures this research seeks to address, or the underlying economic model you will use/analyze. Describe how you intend to measure key outcomes related to air quality, water quality, pollution, or water access.\* |
|  |
| **THE TARGET POPULATION AND CONTEXT:** A brief description of the target population to be reached and any comments on the alignment with the Air and Water Labs’ goals to improve clean air and water access where it is most urgently needed. \* |
|  |
| **THE GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP:** A brief description of the government partner (and any other implementing partners involved in the project), the history of the partnership, the partner’s involvement in project activities, and any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project. Please include any potential risks to the partnership. \* |
|  |
| **IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** If you are already working with any implementing partner (s), kindly specify their respective scope of work. [answer format: up to 200 words]  |
|  |
| **DEMAND-DRIVEN RESEARCH:** A comment on how this proposal responds to requests for support from your government partner. Please include how the government partner has displayed prior commitment or expressed demand for evidence. Please also include the potential pathways for the project to inform policy or program design, expansion, and/or implementation decisions and/or develop into a full scale RCT. \* |
|  |
| **POTENTIAL RISKS:** Please answer the following questions below in detail.\** Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding) and how does your team plan to address/overcome them?
* Are there any risks of unintended negative consequences of the intervention and/or research for program participants and/or staff and if so, what are they? What proactive measures has your team taken to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
 |
|  |
| **GENDER:** A comment on whether the research proposal addresses gender issues in any way, including analysis disaggregated by gender, and any information on gender dynamics that could impact the research. Please note that funded projects will be required to collect and report on gender-disaggregated data, as outlined in the [SARWA RFP Overview](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O7idYMJyk_ed1Ti3iVmpSMsUlLzQbgj7iIiFsktabuE/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.dy0h74n41tl9) under the “Grant Conditions” section. \* |
|  |
| **RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS FEEDBACK:** If you have submitted a proposal for this project to an Air and Water Lab or K-CAI in a previous RFP, explain whether the project received funding, what type of funding it received (Travel/Proposal Development, Pilot, RCT, Path-to-Scale). Additionally, please explain how the project has progressed since it was last submitted to an AWL or K-CAI, and explain how you addressed the feedback that was provided with your last submission (only required for projects that have previously applied for AWL or K-CAI funding) |
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| **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** A discussion of the other evaluation criteria (listed at the end of this document), if not already addressed in the narrative. |
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## BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit a detailed project budget using the **Excel template available online**. Carefully review the Budget Guidelines in the [SARWA Overview document](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O7idYMJyk_ed1Ti3iVmpSMsUlLzQbgj7iIiFsktabuE/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.dy0h74n41tl9), then use the Budget Template provided at the RFP release webpage, which must be completed in its entirety and saved as a **single Excel file with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget].xls(x)**.

Applications must include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget in addition to the Excel template. For the budget narrative, detail the costs within the budget, referring to the Budget Guidelines in the SARWA RFP Overview document here, in a **Word document with the title [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget Narrative].doc(x)**. This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget -- i.e. notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.

## LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT

Please obtain a letter of support from the following, each saved as a single PDF file with the title **[PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Organization Letter of Support].pdf:**

1. **(Required)** Letter/document stating the J-PAL SA at IFMR’s approval of the proposal materials.
2. **(Required)** Letter of support from the government partner, indicating the details of their commitment to the pilot.
3. **PhD students applying as the primary PI are required to include a letter of support from an affiliate or invited researcher who is eligible for this call.** The letter should indicate the **affiliate or invited researcher’s** willingness to be an adviser and to remain involved in a supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project. The J-PAL-affiliated researcher must be serving or be planning to serve as an advisor on the PhD student’s dissertation committee.

## ANNEXURE : EVALUATION CRITERIA

For pilot grants, the SARWA board will consider the following general criteria in making funding decisions:

| **Criterion** | **Scale** | **Help text Excellent=4; Above average=3; Below average=2; Poor=1** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Innovation** | 1-4 | Will the research make new contributions to the body of knowledge relevant to the proposed research question? Does it answer new and challenging questions, or introduce novel methods or measures? Is the policy / program being evaluated novel and innovative? |
| **Technical Merit** | 1-4 | Is the research designed effectively to answer proposed questions, and is the research question well-articulated? Consider the potential threats to the internal validity of the study. Does the proposal sufficiently address those threats?  |
| **Policy Relevance** | 1-4 | Has the proposal convincingly argued the importance of the evidence gap for policy? And is it likely that the study will engage and provide valuable information to stakeholders to affect change at scale? Is there potential for the study to answer questions relevant for other policymakers and practitioners beyond the implementing partner? (E.g. will the results speak to commonly used approaches?) |
|  | 1-4 | Does the proposal discuss potential programming or scale up decisions that the research could inform? Does the partner seem committed to using results? Is there potential for this evaluation to inform a scale-up proposal to SARWA ?  |
| **Logistical Viability**  | 1-4 | Does the government partners seem appropriate for the project and is the relationship likely to endure through the entire study? Does the proposal convincingly address technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding)? Are the risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants and staff minimal? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? |
| **Ethical Concerns** | 1-4 | Are the risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants minimal? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?  |
|  | 1-4 | Does the proposal make a good case for why answering the proposed research question and the proposed intervention has the potential to generate benefits to society?  |
| **Alignment with SARWA Measures of Success** | Yes/No | **Tracking impacts:** Does the proposal discuss air or water-related metrics will be collected? Is the methodology for calculating these impacts appropriate? The AWL requires grantees to track one or more of the following: air quality, water quality, pollution, and/or water availability/access. If the project is focusing on another environment, energy, or climate change priority for the government outside air and water, have the applicants adequately described their outcome measurement in the proposal? |
| **Overall funding Recommendation** | 1-4 | Do you recommend this proposal for funding given your overall review? **Scoring:** Fund without hesitation = 4 Fund if nothing better (meets the bar, but is not an outstanding value for money) = 3 Would not fund (just below the bar) = 2 Strongly opposed to funding = 1 |