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

## PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: SCALING AWARDS

*This document contains the submission instructions and application materials for scaling awards. 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

**Path-to-scale grants** are designed to provide technical support in rolling out or expanding evidence-informed solutions at-scale, based on the outcomes of a previous RCT or policy pilot evaluating the intervention in the same or new context, in collaboration with a government partner. Based on previous results, the partner would like to move forward with a scale-up and would like technical support in expanding the program more widely. This grant can support a range of activities that can include but are not limited to: conducting analysis to help them secure key approvals for the scale-up, ensuring implementation and rollout protocols maintain fidelity to the evidence in terms of the key program features that drove positive impacts, and/or setting up low-cost partner-owned monitoring systems for scaled-up programs to report periodic progress to key decision-makers.

Ideally these existing RCTs would have a published paper, but if not, they must at least have a clickable working paper. In exceptional and rare cases, SARWA may also consider Path-to-Scale proposals to fund RCTs at-scale of interventions for which there is not previous evidence from one or more J-PAL RCTs, as long as there is a demonstrated and explicit high level of commitment from the policy partner to take a future, well-defined scaling decision based on the evidence generated in the RCT. If the potential for large-scale policy impact is low, such proposals will be considered for RCTs at-scale for a Research Award rather than a Path-to-Scale Award. For these grants, SARWA expects the government partner to commit to scaling the program and ultimately reach a significant number of people.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals for SARWA research funding for full-scale randomized evaluations in India are consist of:

1. Cover Sheet including basic contact and logistical information;
2. Proposal narrative;
3. Proposal budget and budget narrative; and
4. Letters of support.
5. Existing Scaling evidence

* If you are interested in applying, please first reach out to the SARWA team ([SARWA@povertyactionlab.org](mailto: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](mailto:SARWA@povertyactionlab.org) and CC [sgorti@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:sgorti@povertyactionlab.org) and [jchacko@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:jchacko@povertyactionlab.org).

| **Deadline: Scaling 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 Scaling grant award:**  limited to $300,000 or less.

## PROJECT COSTING EXERCISE

J-PAL path-to-scale award grantees are requested to collect and share detailed program cost data following the [J-PAL Costing Guidelin](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxQLtQdR7BnhM09yQ1pla1dqZ1E/view?usp=drive_link&resourcekey=0-7I8DCE0-QMcwOhQAxtAmTw)es. **The Narrative Template 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[[1]](#footnote-0).

**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?

## 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

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.

Given aspects of SARWA Review review are blinded, **please refrain from using identifying language in your proposal narrative, e.g. we encourage you to use the grammatical third person when citing (co-)PIs' work.**

| **PROPOSAL DETAILS** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL | |  | |
| STATE(s) OR REGION(s) OF INTEREST | |  | |
| PRIMARY ELIGIBLE RESEARCHER  Please 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)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | | FUNDED AWARD (PI, Project Title, Amount)  *(Insert relevant information in the space below)* | |
|  | |  | |
| 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: 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 SARWA RFP Overview. \* |
|  |
| **THE INNOVATION:**: A description of the innovation the partner will explore adapting, piloting, and/or scaling as well as a brief summary of the experimental evidence on this innovation to date, particularly in relation to AWLpriorities like clean air, clean water, and/or water availability.4 Innovations can be new programs or changes to existing programs, processes, technologies, or delivery systems. \* [answer format: Up to 250 words] |
|  |
| **EXISTING EVIDENCE:** Please share the corresponding written document(s) on which your scaling proposal is based. Additional information on required documentation is outlined in Annex 1.\* [Attach with email submission] |
|  |
| **DEPTH OF IMPACT:** Please include a brief note on the effect size(s) found in the previous RCT(s) of this innovation for these and any other relevant outcome areas, whether they were economically significant, and whether you expect the effect size to be similar in magnitude, lower, or higher in this context and why. \* |
|  |
| **LOCALLY GROUNDED:** Please include a clear rationale for why the innovation may be relevant or appropriate for the proposed context.\* |
|  |
| **SCALE-UP POTENTIAL:** A summary of how the government partner plans to use the AWL-funded technical assistance in specific decisions about expanding or scaling an evidenced-informed innovation. \*Please comment on the following: [suggested answer format: 500 words]   * Breadth of impact: If the partner decides to/succeeds in scaling the innovation, how many people could it potentially reach and when? What is the average income level of the target population? * Environmental impacts: What is your projection of the potential pollution that will be abated as a result and when, or your projection of improvements in air and/or water quality or availability, or other environmental or climate impact? * Likelihood of success: Please include your subjective assessment of how likely this scale-up is to happen (i.e. X% likely to happen) if the pilot phase goes well. What are the main factors that could prevent this innovation from scaling and how do you plan to address them? |
|  |
| **THE ACTIVITIES:** The proposed activities that the AWL will fund and how they will contribute to achieving the end goal along with a clear timeline and milestones. We particularly encourage applications to scale up evidence-informed innovations with the original implementing partner on the randomized evaluation. Applications seeking to apply evidence in a newcontext should include a formal scoping process to diagnose the problem and determine whether past evidence is relevant, as well as a process for adapting, piloting, and monitoring the innovation in the new context before scaling it up.\* [suggested answer format: 750 words] |
|  |
| **THE 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, any in-kind or financial support they have committed or provided to the project, and the names and titles of the main contact(s) and the roles they will play over the course of the project. Please note whether they are likely to be transferred during the project. Include the dates of upcoming elections and/or administration changes and discuss whether these are likely to affect the project. For private sector partners, please comment on your confidence that AWL funding would not simply displace investments those companies would make anyway because they make good business sense.\* [suggested answer format: 350 words] |
|  |
| **DEMAND-DRIVEN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** A comment on how this proposal responds to requests for support from the government partner. Please include how the government partner has displayed prior commitment or expressed demand for using evidence.\* |
|  |
| **THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP**: Do you hope to make this a long-term partnership or is it already part of one? If the key contact is transferred, are there other stakeholders who are equally invested? Are you planning to enter into an institutional MoU?\* [suggested answer format: 250 words]   * Since building partnerships with decision-makers requires on-the-ground presence, does the project have necessary institutional support of the regional J-PAL office? * What is the level of J-PALaffiliate or invited researcher involvement in terms of providing high-level leadership, guidance, and advice to staff and policy partners? |
|  |
| **POWER CALCULATIONS:** \*required of projects with a randomization component, such as replication trials and RCTs at scale |
|  |
| **POTENTIAL RISKS:** Please answer the following questions below in detail.\* [suggested answer format: up to 250 words]   * Are there any technical, logistical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the project (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding)? Does this potential scale-up present any unintended opportunities for unintended harm, corruption, or misuse of funds? How do you plan to monitor and prevent/address both of these types of risks throughout the project? * Are there any potential unintended consequences of this project or potential scale-up for program participants and/or J-PAL or partner staff and if so, what are they? What proactive measures has your team taken to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? |
|  |
| **IMPLEMENTATION AND COST DOCUMENTATION:** Please comment on what efforts you will make to collect implementation costs and document implementation details and scale-up processes so these can benefit other policymakers and researchers and staff at J-PAL. Please mention whether the program costs and impacts may be suitable for a cost-effectiveness analysis**.** Refer to the project costing exercise section [above](#bookmark=id.eww1vs2dup50) for more details. \*[ suggested answer format: 150 words] |
|  |
| **TIMELINE:** Please provide a clear project timeline including short-term markers of success; a Gantt chart is preferred. \* |
|  |
| **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) |
|  |
| **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** A discussion of the other evaluation criteria (listed at the end of this document), if not already addressed in the narrative. |
|  |

## 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), 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. A letter of support from J-PAL at IFMR office
2. A letter from a government partner indicating the details of their commitment or willingness to engage in discussions to partner on the research
3. Graduate students applying as the primary PI are required to include a letter of support from a researcher adviser eligible for this call. The letter should indicate the adviser’s willingness to remain involved in a supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project (see the Guidance for Graduate Student Applicants for details).

# ANNEX I: J-PAL REQUIREMENTS ON EVIDENCE BASE FOR CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR SCALING PROJECTS

Scaling proposals applying to AWLs must be based on **direct evidence** from one or more **randomized evaluations[[2]](#footnote-1),** at least one of which should have been **conducted by a J-PAL aﬃliate or invited researcher and/or funded by a J-PAL initiative.**

* Details on the one or more randomized evaluations on which the project is based must be provided in **writing** to the Air and Water Lab and the K-CAI Review Board in one of the following **formats**, rank-ordered with most preferred format noted ﬁrst:

1. Peer-reviewed published paper
2. Working paper that was released publicly at least six months prior[[3]](#footnote-2) to the date on which a project proposal is submitted to a J-PAL initiative for funding and/or the date on which a J-PAL oﬃce initiates a request to relevant decision-makers for approval to provide substantive scale support.
3. Working paper that is meaningfully publicly available[[4]](#footnote-3)
4. Working paper not yet meaningfully publicly available

* The written document should provide **suﬃcient detail on the design and results** of the one or more randomized evaluations on which the project is based to enable the relevant decision-makers to understand and assess the quality and strength of the evidence base underpinning the proposed scale project, including both internal and external validity. Contents that would be useful for the relevant decision makers to make their decisions include:

1. Description of context, intervention, RCT design, and data sources
2. Balance tables
3. First stage regression results (if design requires strong ﬁrst stage)
4. ITT regression results for at least one primary outcome, robust to diﬀerent speciﬁcations, including standard errors for construction of conﬁdence intervals
5. Checks for and responses to any threats to randomization: diﬀerential attrition, spillovers, etc.
6. Interpretation of results
7. an assessment of and considerations relevant to the generalizability of the evidence to the context in which the proposed project is to take place[[5]](#footnote-4)
8. Policy implications/recommendations

## ANNEX 1. EVALUATION CRITERIA

For Scaling applications,the SARWA peer reviewers will consider the following general criteria in making funding decisions:

| **Criterion** | **Scale** | **Help text Excellent=4; Above average=3; Below average=2; Poor=1** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Policy Relevance | 1-4 | Does the project address problems or opportunities that are important to the government partner and, if addressed, could generate meaningful benefits to program participants? Did the proposal make a clear case for why the solution may be relevant or appropriate for the proposed context based on descriptive data, knowledge of local systems and institutions, and existing evidence? |
| Evidence-informed solutions | 1-4 | What is the strength of the existing evidence on the effectiveness of this type of solution in achieving one or more of the Air and Water Labs’ goals to improve clean air and water access where it is most urgently needed? How big or small was the impact and was it large enough to justify program expansion given its costs? |
|  | Yes/No | (For projects with a randomization component, such as replication trials and RCTs at scale) Do the power calculations convincingly demonstrate the ability to detect each of the proposed impacts to be measured? |
| Potential to benefit people in poverty | 1-4 | Did the proposed solution improve the lives of people living in poverty in previous RCTs? Does the proposal make a good case for why the scalable version has the potential to meaningfully benefit people living in poverty? What are the average income levels of the target program participants, in both levels and relative to the national or local average? |
| Cost-effectiveness | 1-4 | Does the proposal include convincing analysis that the solution can be cost-effective, including existing cost-effectiveness estimates if available (such as cost per unit of pollution abated or cost per unit of the relevant health outcome improved)? Or, does the proposal incorporate cost collection and analysis to inform a scaling decision in its activities? |
| Scale-up Potential | 1-4 | Is there potential for the partner to widely scale up the innovation in the future? What commitment has the partner expressed to move forward with implementing the scale-up if the pilot is successful? How many people will the scaled-up program reach and over what timeframe? |
| Implementation Risks | 1-4 | Are the risks of unintended negative consequences for program participants and/or staff minimal? Has the team taken proactive measures to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks? |
| Alignment with SARWA Measures of Success | 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? |
|  | 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? |
| Commitment to use evidence in decision making | 1-4 | Is there demonstrated demand from the partner to use evidence from the proposed technical assistance and/or past research to make a key decision about expanding the innovation? Is the partner committing its own resources, especially finances, to this project? |
| Viability of the Partnership | 1-4 | Is the relationship with the partner(s) strong and likely to endure through the entire life of the project? Are there any logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the proposed activities, for example, government authorization or potential transfer of key decision-makers? |
| 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 |

1. 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.](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1D8BXQm9YTXt34pbkOH9QAF2zbmBuS_ocvGlVOiW9Vd8/viewform) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Many scale projects are based on an evidence base that is broader than one randomized evaluation. See, for example, the [Evidence to Policy case studies](https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evidence-to-policy) on J-PAL’s website. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. This timeframe ensures there is greater certainty that results do not change following initial public release. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Meaning the working paper can be found via a relatively straightforward online search, is on the researcher’s website and/or online CV, and is not in an obscure or otherwise diﬃcult-to-ﬁnd, but literally public, site. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. “Context” is deﬁned broadly here to include, e.g., geography, demographic group, capacity of implementation partner, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)