

SPI Award Requirements and Set Up Process

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ABOUT

This document lays out how, if your proposal is accepted for award, the funding will be provided under an award from MIT to your institution to receive the award (ITRA). Please review these requirements in detail as part of preparing your submission. The Social Protection Initiative (SPI) expects applicants to budget sufficient time and money to meet these grant conditions and processes. For questions or support, please email spi@povertyactionlab.org.

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PROCESS

It is strongly recommended that, in anticipation of receiving a J-PAL award, applicants secure approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Organization ([iORG](#)) for any human subjects protocol required to implement your project. MIT requires proof of IRB approval or exemption prior to processing any initiative award that involves Human Subjects. 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).

The process MIT follows for processing initiative awards is as follows:

1. The initiative staff send an official award notification letter.
2. For all grants except for travel grants, J-PAL will issue the funds to your institution. You will need to provide the following materials in order to receive the funds:
 - a. **IRB determination:** If your project entails human subject research, you will provide formal institutional approval of the proposal and your institutional IRB approval or exemption from your institutional IRB. Please note that the study must be reviewed by the IRB at the receiving institution or by a commercial IRB contracted by the receiving institution. The PI at the ITRA must be listed as the PI on the IRB documents. Please note that J-PAL requires IRBs to be iORG compliant (visit the [US Office of Human Protection](#) for iORG status). [Heartland](#) and [Solutions](#) provide review of international research and satisfy J-PAL's IRB requirements; fees can be found on their respective websites.
 - b. **A 1-2 page summary** of the research being conducted, written for a general audience;
 - c. **A letter of transmission** from your institute to receive award (ITRA) on formal letterhead. Please review the “Institute to Receive the Award (ITRA) Requirements” section below.
3. J-PAL requests the subaward agreement from MIT Research Administration Services.
4. MIT establishes a subaward with your institution.

We aim to complete this process within 90 days of receiving all your materials, but delays on MIT or on the part of your host institution may delay the process. We can backdate the award to cover expenses from the Award Date or the date of IRB approval, whichever is later. If a project includes non-Human Subjects work prior to the IRB approval, please let us know after receiving an award, and we may in some cases be able to cover those costs (post-award, but pre-IRB) under the award.

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES SUBMISSION TIMELINE

The deliverables and reports described below will be due based on the following timeline.

- **Before submitting the proposal:** Read the [Code of Conduct for the J-PAL Community](#)
- **Before starting research:** For RCTs and pilots involving randomization, grantees should register their trial with the AEA RCT Registry (see details below)
- **Three months after the project's start date:** For RCTs, scale-ups, and pilots, grantees submit a brief start-up report, using provided templates, describing the initial stage(s) of the funded project and whether there are any delays in the implementation of the project activities
- **Annually:** For RCTs, scale-ups, and pilots, grantees submit (1) a financial update on spending relative to the project budget, and (2) a brief narrative report, using provided templates, on project implementation. The annual narrative reports require costing data.

- **Within 120 days of research concluding:** For RCTs, scale-ups, and pilots, grantees submit (1) a final financial report and narrative report using provided templates with gender data (if applicable) and, (2) for RCTs only, completed implementation costing information (see “Implementation Cost Collection” section, below).
- **Within one year of final data collection:** RCT grantees provide a working paper or publication. If there is not a working paper or publication, grantees may provide a brief writeup of their research findings using the instructions in the provided preliminary results report.
- **Within 30 days of the award period concluding:** For travel and proposal development grants, grantees submit (1) the J-PAL Travel Expense Form, and (2) the Travel/Proposal Development Grant Report.
- **Within 3 years of the completion of data collection or within 60 days of the paper’s acceptance by a journal:** Cleaned and anonymized data submitted to [initiative] for public dissemination, in line with J-PAL’s [Data code availability policy 2020.pdf](#). PIs can submit data earlier where possible to do so (for example, where data is cleaned and treatment identifiers have been removed).

Timely submission of reports is very important. Initiative staff will send reminders to you one month in advance of reporting due dates. Please note that researchers whose projects are more than 2 months late on any reports or other deliverables to any J-PAL Initiative, including this initiative, and who have not received an approved extension, will not be eligible to have new projects funded by J-PAL.

As the need arises, we may ask initiative-funded researchers to:

- Peer-review proposals in future initiative RFP rounds in which you are not applying for funding.
- Participate in a data harmonization process to ensure consistency and comparability across studies.
- Share data collection instruments and methodologies with other grantees.
- Participate in one of the initiative’s policy outreach activities on a mutually agreed date and place. This activity could be an evidence workshop, a matchmaking conference, or a presentation to one of the initiative’s donors.
- Review summaries of your initiative-funded projects and synthesis that references your completed study.

INSTITUTE TO RECEIVE AWARD (ITRA) REQUIREMENTS

MIT requires that, for any new subaward it issues, there be a PI on the project who is employed by the organization receiving the funds (also known as the Institute to Receive the Award, or ITRA). This individual is responsible for ensuring that the research project is carried out in alignment with the proposal and in accordance with appropriate research and data protection

protocols. The individual need not be a co-author on any papers to come out of the study. For more information, please refer to the [MIT policy](#) and [J-PAL's FAQ document](#).

TRIAL REGISTRATION

For RCTs and pilots involving randomization, before starting work, researchers must register the project with the AEA RCT Registry (<http://www.socialscienceregistry.org>). Registration includes 18 required fields (such as your name and a small subset of your IRB requirements), and the entire process should take less than 20 minutes if all documentation is in order. There is also the opportunity to include more information, including power calculations and an optional pre-analysis plan. Grantees are required to submit proof of AEA registration with their three-month Start-up Report. Please note that registration is only required for RCTs and pilots involving randomization. For questions and support with the registry, please contact the help desk (support@socialscienceregistry.org).

IMPLEMENTATION COST COLLECTION

See the “Project Costing Exercise” section of the [RCT Proposal Guidelines](#) for more details. For RCTs in which the costs of implementing the intervention are non-trivial, researchers are required to collect data on program costs associated with this evaluation, which may be used as an input to J-PAL cost-effectiveness analyses. Initiative staff will ask researchers to submit cost information for the year(s) that most of the implementation takes place (e.g., the first and second years). The initiative will ask researchers for small-scale updates thereafter (e.g., researchers ran this training that cost \$X in year three or researchers hired another program staffer in year four and that is costing \$Y). The initiative requests that information be reported via the narrative report in the year that the costs are incurred to the extent possible. The initiative expects fully complete information at the end of the project. Your award includes \$3,000 to defray expenses associated with collecting these data.

Initiative staff will provide a [costing template](#) to collect this information. This costing template will give you an idea of what you will need to collect. If implementing partners' program budgets (i.e. the organizations' costs to implement the program or intervention, exclusive of research costs) are already available, please share those with us. As part of the first annual reporting cycle, we do require submission of the above costing template.

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 internal narrative reports that J-PAL grantees provide to J-PAL 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 narrative 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 determining potential pooled statistical analyses to conduct across studies and generating gender-related policy lessons. 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.

DATA PUBLICATION

Researchers are required to submit data to J-PAL from their initiative-funded projects within 3 years of the completion of data collection or within 60 days of the paper's acceptance by a journal. J-PAL has services you can access such as preparing the data and code, replicating results and tables, and uploading data for publication. In special circumstances, such as a delay in publication, researchers may request J-PAL embargo the data for up to five years, with the understanding that it will be released simultaneously at paper publication. If data is held by J-PAL under an embargo agreement, we will ask researchers each year to ask whether the dataset has been made available. If there is no response, J-PAL will keep the embargo. In the fifth year following data collection, the presumption is that J-PAL will share the data. J-PAL will again ask the researcher if the dataset can be made public. If there is no response, the dataset will be made public. Further details outlining when a dataset should be published and which data should be published are available in [J-PAL's Guidelines for Data Publication](#), adopted September 2020.