MEL Application Form

Narrative

Instructions: Your MEL proposal narrative should not exceed eight single-spaced pages in Garamond size 12.5 black font. Address the prompts below in your narrative to ensure reviewers can clearly see and score your proposal along each of the following dimensions; please feel free to delete the question prompts and guidance (unless stated otherwise) in your submission but keep the question headers. Aspects that do not count toward the eight-page limit include: (1) your abstract, timeline of activities, and Project Costing Exercise, and (2) your reference list and any attached documents as requested below.

Please refer to the detailed submission instructions in the "Application Checklist" section of the MEL Proposal Guidelines before submitting your proposal. Direct any questions that remain unclear to our staff team at mel_morocco@povertyactionlab.org.

Title of Proposal

Enter Title Here

Eligible Researcher(s)

Please identify the researcher(s) who is (are) eligible for the MEL Research Seed Fund grant. This may be the principal PI and/or any eligible co-PI. Describe how the researcher(s) is (are) eligible for this funding.

PI Certification

Do not delete the following question text.

Please confirm the following certifications below:

- I certify that any listed eligible researchers have agreed to be active, engaged, and responsive PIs on this project. Eligible researchers who are involved have confirmed they will be dedicated to guaranteeing quality control on all aspects of this research and that their participation is not merely to provide access to resources and funding to other project team members who would otherwise be ineligible.
- I certify that all eligible researchers are up to date on reporting for all existing grants, across all J-PAL initiatives and labs.
- I certify that, if I receive award funding, I will submit all necessary materials for award setup within timelines, barring any extenuating circumstances.
  Yes

No

Demographic Information

J-PAL is hoping to collect information about all project teams, including demographic information, to support our efforts to promote diversity in our research network and funding opportunities. As the applicant, we kindly ask that you send the link and language below to all PIs/Co-PIs on the proposal's research team.

> J-PAL is hoping to collect information about all project teams, including demographic information, to support J-PAL's efforts to promote diversity in the J-PAL research network and funding opportunities. J-PAL is requiring all PIs and Co-PIs on research teams to complete this short form. This data will only be accessible in disaggregated, identifiable form to select J-PAL staff. Aggregate, anonymized data will be used to report to key partners, such as donors, and may be included on our website.

Demographic Information Confirmation

Do not delete the following question text.
Please confirm that every PI/co-PI has completed the questions in the above-linked survey. Your submission will not be considered until this has been completed.

Yes
No

Past and Future Submissions

Do not delete the following question text.
Have you submitted or do you plan to submit this proposal to any other J-PAL initiative or lab RFP?

Yes
No

Details about Past and Future Submissions

Suggested word count: up to 350 words. If you answered yes above, please state which initiative(s), lab(s), year/season of RFP, and the name of the LOI/proposal you submitted or plan to submit (example: ATAI 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, etc.). Additionally, please explain how the project has progressed since it was last submitted, and explain how you addressed the feedback that was provided with your last submission.

Funding Amount

Amount of requested funding in USD. Please be aware that if you need to transfer MEL funds to your host institution outside of Morocco, instead of disbursing them directly through UM6P and MEL within Morocco, a 10% withholding tax will be applied prior to disbursement, in accordance with Moroccan tax regulations. For example, proposals requesting US$75,000 will incur a 10% tax, resulting in a total of US$67,500 after tax. Please account for this in your budget submission.

Abstract

Suggested word count: up to 250 words. Write a study abstract, including the project description, research question, and intervention or treatment to be evaluated. Discuss the project's technical design, what is going to happen during the project, the practical value of your project, the conceptual value of your research, and the distributional implications of your work. Provide context about proposed partners and a timeline. Please note that this abstract will be added to the lab's webpage if the project receives funding.

Research Priority Sectors

Please indicate which MEL priority sectors your proposal relates to. MEL's five priority sectors are (i) labor and employability, (ii) education and human capital development, (iii) firms and private sector development, (iv) agriculture and rural development, and (v) social protection and economic inclusion. Please note that outstanding proposals beyond MEL's priority sectors are welcomed, provided they demonstrate a strong potential to inform decision-making on Morocco's critical development challenges.

Focus Priority Sectors Alignment

Suggested word count: up to 500 words. Please briefly describe how the project aligns with MEL's research priority sectors. If your proposal does not cleanly fit into any of the options listed, please describe how your proposal informs decision-making on Morocco's critical development challenges.

Regional Location

In which region(s) in Morocco will your research take place?

Proposed Period of Performance Project Start Date

What is the proposed period of performance start date for all project activities?

Proposed Project End Date

What is the proposed period of performance end date for all project activities? Note that all funded projects need to be completed by August 31, 2029.

Timeline

Suggested word count: up to 250 words. Please write out a timeline with key project activities.

Primary and Secondary Report Contacts

Please provide the name of the person who should receive emails about upcoming deliverables/reports. In addition to PIs, we request the name and email of a finance/grant manager who will be responsible for grant management at the institute to receive the award, if applicable.

Role of Partner Organization

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 250 words).

Indicate the role, in relation to this project, of the organization(s) identified.

- **Implementing Partners:** Please provide a brief description of the implementing partner(s), 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 partnership risks.

Decision-making Motivation

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 250 words).

Provide a summary of the decision-making challenge that motivates this research and how it fits with the topics outlined in the RFP materials. How does the research meet the needs of your partner? Will results from the intervention have broader implications? How, if at all, will the "lessons learned" have relevance beyond this test case?

Target Population and Context

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 250 words).

What population(s) does the intervention attempt to impact? What characteristics do they have? Do you have any comments on this target population and context's alignment with the lab's priorities?

Innovative Intervention Details & Evaluation Design

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 1000 words).

Please describe the intervention or treatment to be evaluated. State how the intervention is either innovative or uses a straightforward intervention to study a big question. Could the intervention potentially improve one or more of MEL's priority outcomes and lead to better informed decision-making.? The intervention, or innovation, can be introducing new or making changes to existing programs, processes, technologies, etc. Please include the randomization method, treatment groups, and describe any combinations of the interventions if applicable. For pilot studies with more than two treatment groups, please list them using numerals and justify their inclusion.

Data Collection and Key Outcomes

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 550 words).

Please succinctly describe your data collection plan (if any), the outcome variables, and how you plan to measure them. Please include the data collection partner and your relationship with them. Specifically, please include your intermediate and final outcomes. When will you take measurements, and how frequently?

Mechanisms

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 250 words).

Through what mechanisms do you expect the treatment to affect outcomes of interest? How will you test these mechanisms? What is the theorized causal relationship between the intervention and the outcomes to be tested?

Pathway to an RCT and Impact

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 500 words).

How would results from this pilot or feasibility study inform a future RCT? Describe, specifically, what researchers and practitioners can expect to learn from this pilot or feasibility study. Will it pilot or ease the future piloting of an intervention? Will it provide qualitative data to inform intervention design? How could the findings meet the needs of decision-makers or development practitioners? Outline a specific plan for how you will share your findings and outputs (e.g., data). How will the implementing partner(s) and other stakeholders become aware of the findings and benefit from the data and other such outputs (e.g., descriptive statistics)

generated from this pilot or feasibility study? In what specific ways will the study prepare researchers for a full RCT project? Outline the hypothesized pathway and scope for impact. Clearly establish a plausible and promising link between the proposed approach to be tested and the hypothesized channel for impact. Indicate the reliability of existing evidence from pilot studies or relevant expert opinion in your research context. Do you expect these impacts to vary across geographic region, population, or context? Include any preliminary data available in support of your hypotheses, models, and/or theories of change.

Implications on Equity and Social Inclusion

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 300 words).

Please provide a comment on whether the research proposal addresses equity or social inclusion, in any way. Topics of social inclusion include, but are not limited to, gender, income level, location, ethnicity, race, language, citizenship status, disability, and at the intersection of those factors. Explain whether and how the project design allows us to learn about baseline differences between and differential impacts on groups mentioned above. Explain what reasons (if any) there are to expect that the intervention(s) studied may have disproportionate benefits for disadvantaged groups.

Gender Implications, Analysis, and Reporting

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 250 words).

Does the proposal address gender issues and/or disaggregate data and outcomes by gender? Where appropriate and feasible, considering local contexts, legal frameworks, regulations, and other potential restrictions, funded projects may be required to share administrative data, including gender data (if applicable), obtained during the project with the MEL.

Unique Contribution to the Field

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available (up to 500 words).

What knowledge gap are you addressing, and how will it advance the field? Explain the project's potential to provide a unique scientific contribution. Provide a brief literature review to demonstrate the uniqueness of your project. Does the study answer new questions or introduce novel methods, measures, or interventions? How does the study compare with the existing body of research? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying economic theories? Note that a full reference list can be attached as an addendum to this proposal when submitting.

Project Costing Exercise

If you are in the early stages of partnership development or project ideation, you may have limited or no information to include in this section. This will not be considered a disqualifying factor. However, please feel free to share any relevant details if available.

Please share your plan for how you will gather, interpret, and share program implementation cost data. Please write about a half-page at most that outlines the approach that you will take to collect and report costing data for the intervention you are evaluating.

- We acknowledge that it can be a challenge to distinguish implementation costs from evaluation costs, and see the value in making a plan during the proposal phase to identify and address the challenges and potential opportunities for effectively determining the full costs of the program/intervention in question. Please use this section to outline the rationale of your approach to cost collection in light of this reporting requirement.
    - Suggested prompts:
        - Discuss your rough assessment of what the intervention, in its scalable form without associated research costs, is anticipated to cost per beneficiary reached or per benefit achieved.
        - Which elements will be considered costs of implementation, and which elements will be considered evaluation costs?
        - What types of cost data do you anticipate collecting?
        - When in the data collection process would you collect each of these types of data, and how?
        - How will you partner with those organizations and staff responsible for implementing the intervention to understand and report the associated costs in these identified categories?
- Report any challenges you anticipate facing in collecting or reporting this data. How would you plan to address these challenges to make the cost collection exercise most valuable in the context of your research, given the goals of the exercise outlined above?

Potential Risks

Suggested word count: up to 750 words. Please answer the following questions below in detail:

- Are there any technical, logistical, ethical, or political obstacles and risks that might threaten the completion of the project (for example, implementation capacity, government authorization, or other funding)? How do you plan to monitor and prevent/address these types of risks throughout the project?
- Please discuss any information about the implementing partner(s) that could pose ethical, reputational, or legal risks (e.g., child safeguarding, corruption, or misuse of funds, etc.). If applicable, what proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

- Please describe any potential unintended consequences or risks of this project for program participants. What proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
- Particularly for projects working with children, what child safeguarding risks exist?
- Please describe any potential risks of this project for staff (e.g., implementing partners, research assistants, enumerators, etc.). What proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?
- Please describe any potential unintended consequences or risks of this project for community members beyond program participants (e.g., untreated members of a household, untreated neighbors, or broader communities if treatment might have spillover or downstream effects beyond the study sample). What proactive measures have you taken or will you take to assess, monitor, and mitigate/prevent any such potential risks?

Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) Information

Please note: If funds are not disbursed directly through MEL in Morocco, we will require a subawardee PI at the Institute to Receive Award (ITRA) who will be responsible for overseeing the work on the ground. Please refer to the Award Requirements and Setup Process document shared with the accompanying RFP materials to review all of MEL's award requirements in detail as part of preparing your submission.

IRB Organization (IORG) Information

The protection of human subjects is of prime concern when implementing research projects. As such, appropriate protocol Institutional Review Board approvals or exemptions are required to be in place prior to an award being issued and research commencing. MEL requires that the reviewing IRB have IORG status with the US Office of Human Protections.

Please provide the name of the institution whose IRB will review your project as well as the name, phone number, and email address of the appropriate contact for the IRB. An IRB's IORG status can be found by consulting the database of IORGs here.

- For commercial IRBs, MEL recommends Heartland and Solutions, which provide review of international research and satisfy MEL's IRB requirements; fees can be found on their respective websites. If the project is exempt from IRB approval, we will need the exemption status but no other action is required.

If this proposal receives funding, we will ask that you submit the IRB's approval or exemption; the IRB protocol that was reviewed; and copies of any IRB-approved consent forms and/or survey instruments.

Local Legal Requirements Certification

Do not delete the following question text.

All PIs and Co-PIs certify that they understand they must adhere to all local legal requirements, including obtaining local IRB approval and government research permits, where applicable.

Yes

No

Data Publication

Do not delete the following question text.

Where appropriate and feasible, considering local contexts, legal frameworks, regulations, and other potential restrictions, grantees may be required to share data. Any confidential data for which the data provider or relevant stakeholders do not authorize sharing will not be requested by the MEL. Any submitted data to MEL should be cleaned and anonymized, in line with J-PAL's Data_code_availability_policy_2020.pdf. Please confirm you plan to publish data collected in an open-access, online database at the end of the pilot if applicable. If not, please explain the reasons that prevent you from sharing data.

Yes

No

Addendum

In support of your application, please be sure to collect the following materials, merge them into a single PDF with your proposal application, and upload it through our application submission form. These supporting materials will not count against the eight-page limit of your proposal.

Letter of Support from Implementing Partner

Research projects are recommended to provide a letter of support from each of their implementing partners. This letter should indicate a willingness to work with the research team and an agreement to share program cost data with J-PAL (if applicable; through the PI) for the purpose of conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis.

Letter of Transmission

Research studies are required to provide a letter or document stating approval of the proposal materials and budget from each proposed Institute to Receive Award (ITRA).

UM6P "Know Your Counterparty" Document

UM6P requires this document as part of their background check to assess whether the ITRA is eligible to benefit from MEL's research seed funds.

Budget Template

Please fill the Budget Template detailing unit costs for both staff and non-staff expenses. If you require further information on typical costs in Morocco, please feel free to contact us. When done, please upload your budget Excel sheet as an attachment in our online application form.

Budget Narrative

Please justify the expenses outlined in your budget in a separate document and include it in your compiled PDF submission. If you are funding anyone's time, please explain what their role will be on the project and what their time allocation will be on the project. This document is required in addition to the Proposal Budget and does not count towards your eight-page limit. Notes included in the Excel sheet do not suffice.

Additional Information

Please review MEL's proposal evaluation criteria, and provide additional discussion relevant to the other evaluation criteria if not already addressed in the fields above.