

J-PAL PROSA (SONDEO Y ARRANQUE) PROGRAM

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: PILOT STUDIES

Second Semester, 2025 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 PROSA's e-mail prosa@povertyactionlab.org. Successful applicants will receive an invitation to proceed with their full proposal materials. **Proposals are due by Thursday, November, 06, 2025 at 7:00 PM UTC-3.**

Pilot grants are for studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation requires further testing and pilot data. 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. The expectation is that these projects will ultimately develop into full-scale randomized evaluations. The maximum amount awarded for a pilot study is USD 75,000. These grants may also be for descriptive work that aims to inform future randomized evaluation development. However, in these cases, the budget should be closer to US\$25,000 rather than US\$75,000. **You should apply as a pilot if the funded work lays the groundwork for a future randomized evaluation because it:**

- tests the efficacy of an intervention or an evaluation design, and acquires data that is qualitative or quantitative in nature, e.g. measuring take up, and/or
- facilitates access to administrative data for designing or conducting an RCT. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to, negotiating data use agreements, conducting exploratory data analysis and cleaning, or setting up technical access mechanisms.

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 addressed in PROSA Research Agenda.**

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

Funding per Pilot award: limited to USD 75,000 or less.

FINANCIAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

PROSA can accommodate one research funding management model (Model Executed by J-PAL LAC | UVG).

- Model Executed by J-PAL LAC | UVG: According to UVG's policies and instructions for disbursement and accountability, J-PAL LAC, in partnership with UVG, manages the financial resources and research activities of the project.

Please note that **the PIs will always be the sole and exclusive responsible for the correct and careful allocation and use of research funds**, and will be accountable to PROSA and UVG under the terms of the obligations assumed in the contract.

When following the Model Executed by J-PAL LAC | UVG, you must coordinate the budget details with the J-PAL LAC office for review and approval by emailing the Senior Research Manager, Edivaldo Constantino at 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 Thursday, October 30** may not be reviewed for approval by J-PAL LAC.

We will work with you to make sure your award is made in a way that suits you, your project, your affiliated institution(s), and your needs for administrative support. For more information on budget, requirements, and process, please contact prosa@povertyactionlab.org. Further information can be provided to researchers after the grant has been awarded. Please be mindful that J-PAL requires that the reviewing IRB have IRB Organization (IORG) status with the US Office of Human Protections. [You can look up the IORG status of an IRB here.](#)

DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED WITH THE PROPOSAL (VIA [PROSA'S EMAIL](#))

Proposals for PROSA research funding for pilots consist of:

1. RFP Application
2. Budget sheet
3. Letters of support
4. Project execution schedule and description of the activities
5. Statement of adherence to policies and standards

Please submit your PROSA research funding proposal, including all required documents¹, via email to prosa@povertyactionlab.org by **Thursday, November 06, 2025, at 7:00 PM UTC-3.**

1. RFP APPLICATION

The RFP application is document broken down into the following different questions:

- a. A 100-150 word abstract of the study, which will be added to [PROSA's webpage](#) if the project receives funding.
- b. A summary of the policy problem that motivates this research, the proposal's relevance, how it fits with the research priorities identified in [PROSA's 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 partners, if available, including J-PAL regional offices, IPA country offices, or other organizations you plan to work with for both program implementation and evaluation.
- f. A comment on whether the research proposal addresses gender issues in any way, including analysis disaggregated by gender. Please note that funded projects will be required to collect and report on gender-disaggregated data.

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

2. BUDGET GUIDELINES

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

1. Your project will be implemented through J-PAL LAC (at UVG) and add 15% of direct costs for project support.
2. Every Pilot grant **MUST** have a Manager or Senior Research Associate overseeing the project. If funding for this role has already been secured through a co-funder's budget, you do not need to include this cost line in the current RFP budget.
3. We understand that the cap on overhead or indirect costs under PROSA 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 We emphasize that the materials must be in English.

1. Budgets **MUST** be stated in **United States Dollar (USD)**. If you expect to use your award for expenses outside of Guatemala, 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.
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. PROSA research funds are unable to fund any program implementation costs.
8. Please note that PROSA does not cover the salaries of PIs based in high-income countries. For PIs based in low- and middle-income countries, the following apply:
 - a. Pilot Studies: Up to USD 8,000 per LMIC researcher PI/co-PI, but the total budgeted amount for LMIC researcher PI time should not exceed 25% of the total budget.
9. 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.
10. For Pilot grants, if there is co-funding for the project, you must complete both the "Total Project Budget" and the "PROSA Budget" sheets in the budget template.
11. 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.
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. *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 to PROSA e-mail prosa@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.

4. LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Please provide the following letters of support, as applicable:

- a. Applicants for pilot funding are encouraged to submit letters of support from implementing partners if available. Please find [here](#) its suggested template.
- b. Please submit your letter of support via email to prosa@povertyactionlab.org by **Thursday, November 06, 2025, at 7:00 PM UTC-3.**

5. 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 prosa@povertyactionlab.org by **Thursday, November 06, 2025, 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 Guatemala. 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 Call of Proposals must comply with [UVG's Code of Ethics in Research](#).

Commitment to best practices: We wish to preserve the criteria of exemption and isonomy 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 PROSA calls.

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 PROSA to arbitrate the selection process, observing the procedures described herein.

Discretionality: PROSA 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 PROSA research funding proposal, including all required documents listed below, via email to prosa@povertyactionlab.org by **Thursday, November 06, 2025, at 7:00 PM UTC-3.**

- Application form
- Budget sheet and budget narrative document
- Project execution schedule and description of the activities
- Letters of support
- Statement of adherence to policies and standards

Please remember that you must coordinate the budget details with the J-PAL LAC office for review and approval by emailing the Senior Research Manager, Edivaldo Constantino at 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 Thursday, October 30** may not be reviewed for approval by J-PAL LAC.