How to Craft Successful Proposals to Arnold Ventures for Randomized Controlled Trials of Criminal Justice Programs

The Evidence-Based Policy and Criminal Justice Research Teams at Arnold Ventures





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Arnold Ventures' core mission is to invest in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunity and minimize injustice.

Evidence-Based Policy RCTs – By the Numbers

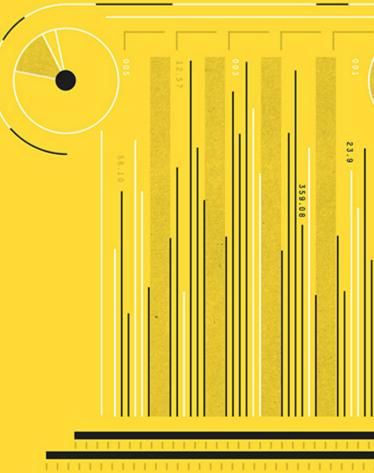
Number of RCT grants funded 107

Total funding amount **\$60,688,599**

Average RCT grant award \$567,183

Grant awards under \$500,000 **68%**

Range of all RCT grants funded by the Evidence-Based Policy team \$2,943,916



Criminal Justice RCTs since 2019 – By the Numbers

Number of RCT grants funded 15

Total funding amount **\$17,300,000**

Average RCT grant award \$1,200,000

Range of RCT grants funded by the \$50,000 - Criminal Justice team \$2,943,916



1. Promising or Widely Adopted Intervention

The proposed study would evaluate an intervention:

- ➤ That is backed by promising prior evidence suggesting it could produce sizable impacts on criminal justice outcomes of clear policy importance
- ➤ Or for which there are other compelling policy reasons to evaluate its effectiveness; e.g.:
 - The intervention is widely adopted in practice, but has not yet been rigorously evaluated and its impacts on key criminal justice outcomes are thus largely unknown *or*
 - ➤ The intervention is growing in use and likely to become widely adopted, but has not yet been rigorously evaluated

2. VALID STUDY DESIGN

- ➤ Will the proposed study generate credible evidence about the intervention's impact on one or more targeted outcomes of high policy importance?
- > Applicants should specify:
 - ➤ The study's primary outcome(s) of interest
 - ➤ How outcomes will be measured and over what length of time
 - Proposed analysis methods
- Certain quasi-experimental evaluation proposals will be considered if the applicant can make a <u>convincing</u> case that an RCT is not feasible

3. EXPERIENCED RESEARCHER

- ➤ Does the applicant's team include at least one researcher in a key substantive role who has previously carried out a well-conducted RCT?
 - The qualifying researcher does not necessarily need to have been the <u>principal investigator</u> on a well-conducted RCT, but would need to have played a substantive role in carrying one out.
 - ➤ Prospective applicants are welcome to contact us for assistance in addressing this criterion.

4. Funding and Other Partners

- ➤ Would the intervention be (primarily) funded by another party?
- ➤ Do the funders of the intervention and any other essential parties agree to the study, including random assignment?

Our Review Process

- > We accept applications on a rolling basis (no submission deadline)
- ➤ Initial submission: 3 page Letter of Interest (LOI)
- ➤ If the LOI meets needed criteria, reviewers will then request a 6 page Full Proposal.
- ➤ We aim to have our reviews of both LOIs and Full Proposals completed within approximately one month after submission.

Advice for developing a successful proposal: Promising or widely-adopted intervention criterion

- When discussing prior evidence:
 - ➤ Cite relevant studies of the specific intervention(s) providing promising evidence of effectiveness
 - ➤ Set realistic expectations about what impacts you'd expect to see based on effect sizes from prior studies
- When discussing (soon-to-be) widely-adopted:
 - ➤ Make clear case that the intervention is being (or will soon be) implemented on a wide scale with significant taxpayer investment



Advice for developing a successful proposal: Promising or widely-adopted intervention criterion

- Demonstrate intervention being evaluated is very similar in key components to intervention that's being cited as prior evidence or widely-adopted
- Demonstrate the proposed intervention has been successfully fielded prior to launching the study.
- Note that it is not sufficient to show that the study will fill a gap in the literature or evaluate a program that tries to address an important issue



Advice for developing a successful proposal: Valid study design criterion

- Ensure the study is well-powered.
- Measure important outcomes, ideally over the long(er)-term.
- Include a "pure" or treatment-as-usual control group.
- Keep the design simple and include what's necessary to answer the primary research question.



Advice for developing a successful proposal: Cost Considerations

• Expensive original data collection (e.g., surveys, site visits) should only be proposed when key questions about program impact cannot be well-measured with administrative data.

 The study cost should be commensurate with the level of evidence supporting and/or existing public investment in the intervention being evaluated.



Funded Example: Functional Family Therapy-Gangs (FFT-G)

- A previous, well-conducted RCT of FFT-G found reductions in the percent of youth arrested and those adjudicated for any offense.
- Although the study was well conducted, it had a small sample (n=129) at a single site in Philadelphia, making it a prime candidate for replication.
- ➤ With implementation support from two judicial districts in the Denver, CO area, experienced researchers are evaluating the impact of FFT-G in a new setting with a larger sample of n=400 juveniles.
- The study's primary outcomes will be recidivism (charges and adjudications) measured 18 months after random assignment.



· Applying?

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• Questions?

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· Visit our RFP here:

https://craftmediabucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/ /RFP-for-RCTs-in-Criminal-Justice-CJ-EBP.pdf