



Research Methods Appendix **For Grant Applicants Proposing to Conduct a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)**

[To Arnold Ventures (AV) staff: *The Evidence-Based Policy team suggests sharing this document with grant applicants that (i) are proposing to conduct an RCT, and (ii) are not responding to an AV request for proposals (RFP). For applicants responding to an RFP, the RFP instructions apply rather than those below.*]

Please respond to the following questions in no more than 6 pages (not including requested attachments).

(1) Compelling Reason to Evaluate the Intervention: Is the applicant proposing to evaluate an intervention that meets one of the following conditions?

- **The intervention is backed by promising prior evidence, suggesting it could produce sizable impacts on outcomes of recognized policy importance.** For example, we specifically encourage applications seeking to replicate findings from prior evaluations that are especially promising but not yet conclusive due to study limitations (*e.g.*, short-term follow-up period, single-site study design, or well-matched comparison groups but not randomization). Please provide full citations to the relevant prior studies as an attachment to the proposal. As a threshold condition for “promising” evidence, applicants should show that the program can be or (preferably) has been successfully delivered under real-world implementation conditions.
- **The intervention is, or soon will be, widely adopted in practice, but has not yet been rigorously evaluated and its impact on key targeted outcomes is thus unknown.**
- **There are other compelling reasons to evaluate the intervention’s effectiveness**, such as a strong expressed interest from policy officials in using the study findings to guide decisions about continuation or expansion of the intervention’s delivery.

To meet this criterion, it is not sufficient to establish that the study addresses an important problem; applicants must also present compelling reasons to evaluate the specific intervention.

(2) 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? To address this criterion, please submit reports from prior RCTs that the researcher has conducted (send the full study reports as email attachments – no more than two reports in all).

(3) Study Design: Is the applicant’s proposed RCT design valid? For example, does it have a sufficiently large sample (as shown through a power analysis) and other elements needed to generate credible evidence about the program’s impact on one or more targeted outcomes of high policy importance? We strongly encourage designs that measure such outcomes in both the short and longer term, as appropriate for the type of intervention and study, to determine whether the effects endure long enough to constitute meaningful improvement in people’s lives. Applicants, as part of their response to this question, should specify the study’s primary outcome(s) of interest; how they will measure the outcome(s) and over what length of time; and what analyses they plan to conduct (*e.g.*, any subgroups to be examined, regression methods to be used). Reviewers, in assessing an applicant’s proposed design, will use [Key Items to Get Right When Conducting RCTs of Social Programs](#) as a reference.

(4) Agreements: Do funders of the intervention and all other essential parties (*e.g.*, program providers, data agencies) agree to support and/or participate in the RCT? Please attach letters of support.