



Stage 1: Seed Partnerships

2024-2025 Request for Proposals¹

Applications Open: September 9, 2024

Deadline for Applications: October 28, 2024

Stanford Impact Labs (SIL) enables teams of Stanford scholars to work with the public, social, and private sectors to tackle social problems using human creativity, rigorous evidence, and innovative technology. We advance this goal by catalyzing solutions-focused research and training on a diversity of social problems with the goal of achieving broad public impact. We call the teams that do this work “Impact Labs.”

SIL’s investment approach aims to support scientific insights from initial discovery to large-scale impact. When we invest, we expect to see a return on that investment—not in money, but in outcomes that improve people’s lives. We take a particular focus on investments that can improve the lives of historically oppressed or marginalized communities.

We also believe that science is more likely to be put to use when users are directly engaged in shaping the research. For this reason, SIL believes that research-practice partnerships are central to developing actionable insights and sustained impact. Our investment criteria emphasize selecting for and supporting strong, equitable partnerships where partners play important and complementary roles. For example, SIL will not make investments where the primary goal is to extract administrative data from an organization for the sole purposes of academic publication.

We encourage you to learn more about our [staged and sequenced approach](#), as well as [which stage is right for you](#).

Stage 1: Seed Partnerships

Stage 1: Seed Partnerships offers up to \$350,000 to better understand the drivers of a social problem or co-design solutions. This funding is intended to deepen partnerships in a way that creates a clear path to testing solutions and putting those solutions to use at scale. These investments will be allocated on a competitive basis to new or existing teams that clearly define the social problem they wish to assess, provide evidence of a partnership in place to facilitate the research and development process, and propose a plan of research and engagement that lays the groundwork for a future solutions-focused research and development (R&D) cycle.

We anticipate that the strongest candidates for Stage 1: Seed Partnerships funding will fall into two general categories:

- **Teams with (an) established partner(s)** collaborating on a research project to better understand the nuances of a social problem (such as in a new context or discrete population)

¹**Please Note:** This is an early release of the RFP. This document will be updated in September with relevant application and information session links.

with the goal of building evidence to design/propose a solution. Teams may also have sufficient evidence to understand the drivers of a social problem but wish to pilot a limited intervention before proposing a large-scale R&D cycle and pathway to scaling.

- **Teams with (a) new partner(s)** seeking support to develop a deeper relationship with their partner(s) and to develop a shared understanding of causes and drivers of the social problem that sets the stage for designing and testing a scalable solution in real-world settings.

At the end of the award period, we expect that successful teams will have:

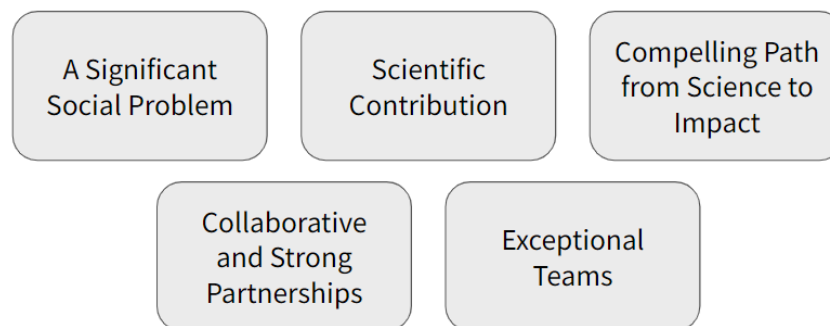
- Demonstrated a clear and nuanced understanding of the causes and drivers of the social problem in the specific contexts being researched
- Implemented a dissemination plan to share new insights with both the field of study and the field of practice
- Developed new and/or deeper relationships with both immediate partners and relevant decision-makers
- Have an actionable plan to implement an R&D cycle to test a scalable solution
- Identified key assumptions and initial insights about a pathway from an R&D cycle to impact at scale

Applicants are encouraged to propose a budget and timeframe appropriate to achieve the intended aims of their proposal. Under Stage 1: Seed Partnerships, proposals may request up to \$350,000 over a maximum of 24 months. In the past, we have funded approximately 25% of applications. We anticipate funding a similar percentage of investments in this cycle.

Eligibility and Criteria

In selecting proposals, Stanford Impact Labs looks at five criteria (Figure 1). This [Evaluation Rubric](#) describes the guidance we provide to reviewers for evaluating proposals for Stage 1: Seed Partnerships. We expect that teams will be stronger in some criteria than others and we will be reviewing proposals for their holistic alignment with the [rubric](#).

Figure 1: What We Look for When Evaluating Proposals



To be eligible to apply, each proposal must have at least one [PI-eligible Stanford faculty member](#) and at least one partner outside of academia who is committed to the proposed work. In Stage 1: Seed Partnerships, the relationship between the research team and partner(s) can be in the early stages.

Reviewers will be assessing proposals and letters of collaboration for clear alignment in research aims and project goals. More information on successful Stage 1: Seed Partnerships awardees can be [found on our website](#).

If appropriate, faculty are encouraged to apply in teams when there is a clear commitment from multiple faculty to engage in the research and clarity about the capabilities and contributions of each team member. Additional PIs, Co-PIs or research team members can be named from other academic institutions or partner organizations. Labs interested in submitting multiple applications, or who are seeking to hold multiple investments at the same time, should closely [read the FAQ](#).

Application Requirements

Applications for Stage 1 will open on September 9, 2024 and close on October 28, 2024. All applications must be submitted through Stanford Seed Funding and include the following:

1. [Stage 1: Seed Partnerships application](#) (page 3)
2. [Budget](#) (page 3)
3. [A one-page budget justification](#) (page 4)
4. [Letter of Collaboration from all partners](#) (page 4)
5. [CVs for PI and key team members](#) (page 4)

Stage 1: Seed Partnerships Application

All applications must be uploaded to Stanford Seed Funding for review. Please download [this Google Doc Template](#) for more information regarding application content and formatting requirements.

The Seed Funding application form is not included within the page limit. In addition to asking for the names of your key team members and partner(s), the application will also require a written paragraph response to the following question:

“We expect that Impact Labs will be working to address some of the world’s most challenging social problems. To that end, we particularly encourage applications from individuals with lived experience of those social problems and approaches that center or deeply engage the most impacted communities. In a paragraph, please tell us how your team’s background, experience, and approach will prepare you to address the social problem you plan to work on.”

Budget

Applicants should propose a budget and timeframe appropriate to achieve the intended aims of their proposal. Budgets will be evaluated proportionately to the likely contributions of the proposed work, meaning that, all else equal, larger budgets will be met with greater scrutiny. In Stage 1: Seed Partnerships, proposals may not exceed \$350,000 or 24 months. Please download [this Budget Template](#).

While SIL investments are flexible and largely unrestricted, the most compelling budgets will be those that prioritize partner needs in allocating resources and invest in community engagement, research, program management, and data collection or analysis.

While course buyouts or summer salary for PIs may make sense in some contexts, the investment team generally views PI time as an in-kind contribution to the work of an Impact Lab. We understand that, in some schools, PIs must raise their own salaries and account for their time through grants; in those contexts, SIL is more open to providing salary support.

Awards will be funded by SIL, the PTA will be set up by the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) via the Stanford Electronic Research Administration (SeRA) System, and you, your lab, and your department are responsible for the administration of the award.

Budget Justification

Budget justifications should describe how and why funds will be allocated and utilized over the course of the project. Budget justifications will not count towards the total application page limit, but should not exceed one page.

Letter of Collaboration

Stage 1: Seed Partnerships applications must include a signed letter of collaboration from the partner(s) named in the research proposal. While there is not a formal template for the letter, we request that it includes the following from the partner organization(s):

- Partner(s)'s mission
- Partner(s)'s goals for the project and motivation for collaboration
- Any past collaboration or experience between the partner(s) and research team
- The role of the partner(s) in the project and resources required to pursue the work

CVs for PIs and Key Team Members

Applications must include the CVs for the key members of the research and partner teams. These CVs will be used to better understand the team's experience and the alignment between the research and partners for the proposed work. They will not be counted towards the total application page limit. Resumes may be submitted in lieu of CVs, where appropriate.

Application Process

Applications Open	September 9, 2024
Applications will be open for submission on Seed Funding on September 9, 2024. Application requirements can be found here , on page 3.	
Applications Close	October 28, 2024
All labs/teams must submit an application via the Stanford Seed Funding portal by 11:59pm PT on October 28 for consideration.	
Application Review	November 2024 - January 2025

Applications will be reviewed by staff, scholars, practitioners, and/or by representatives of communities directly affected by the problem teams are seeking to address. These independent reviews will provide critical input into the decision-making process. We anticipate that approximately five to ten applicant teams will be invited to move to the next stage of the selection process.	
Panel Interviews	January - February 2025
Teams selected through the application review will be invited to participate in a virtual interview with their partner and a panel of SIL team members.	
Award Notification	March 2025
Applicants may be contacted in the final stage for additional clarification on any questions raised by reviewers following the interview and external review process. Once all open questions are addressed, teams will be notified of their application status.	

Program Offerings and Expectations

Stanford Impact Labs helps put your science to work for society. We invest in exceptional teams making ground-breaking scientific contributions against big problems where tractable progress is possible. The best teams are deeply embedded in their field—understanding both the scientific research and the landscape of policymakers and leading practitioners that are needed to put science to work for society.

Stanford Impact Labs’ faculty and staff have seen many teams go through the journey from science to impact. We understand the roadblocks you’re facing because we’ve faced many of those roadblocks ourselves. We’ve also seen countless other teams face and overcome similar roadblocks. When we can’t help you, it’s likely someone in our network can. We’ll leverage those networks and knowledge to help you generate the most impact out of your scientific contributions.

We invest both our funds and time. Our commitment of time can take many forms, but in recent years it has included:

- **Navigating working within Stanford.** The social problems you’re trying to tackle are difficult enough. You deserve institutional partners that have your back. We’ve helped several labs navigate sub-contracting, data sharing, and research agreements in compliance with institutional guidelines.
- **Strengthening partnerships.** We help our labs set clear expectations and foster trust with their partners. For example, when one of our labs hit a roadblock, we helped them sustain their partnership as they pivoted toward a research design with much wider reach.
- **Orienting towards impactful research.** We are impact-obsessed. We work with each lab’s short- and long-term plans to put their research to work and we support teams in thinking through pathways to put their science to work for society.

The labs we invest in receive a suite of lab support and acceleration strategy services. In exchange, labs will be expected to share key learnings, tools, and practices in order to benefit the larger community of Impact Labs on campus and beyond.

Program Expectations

Candidates that are selected to receive Stage 1: Seed Partnerships funds will meet with the SIL team to develop a partnership agreement and define what success looks like through investment objectives.

During the investment period, teams should expect:

- To participate in a meeting every six months with their SIL Investment Lead to share both successes and challenges
- To participate in an in-person workshop hosted by the SIL Innovation & Partnerships team with the other Stage 1 research teams in the cohort — to strengthen shared analysis of how to operationalize and accelerate social impact
- To share the tools that your lab develops in the course of your research and partnership work including data use agreements, job descriptions, training materials for partners, tracking and reporting mechanisms, etc.
- To participate in media and narrative-building opportunities and to promote social problem-solving work at Stanford (ex: featuring your team’s work on our website, participating in a promotional video, presenting at major public events, etc.)
- To contribute to the educational environment at Stanford University, such as through new material in classes/seminars; research opportunities or internships for students; or student-focused speaking events.

We encourage applicants to budget and plan appropriately for this work, including project management or administrative support services.

Information Sessions and Office Hours

Information Sessions	TBA
The SIL team will host multiple information sessions to engage interested applicants directly about the process and answer questions. Information Session dates will be announced in early September.	
Office Hours	July 1 - October 25, 2024
The SIL team will host office hours to allow potential applicants to understand the process and ask questions about their eligibility. Sign up for individual appointments via Calendly here .	

Contact

For questions, please contact Program Officer, Pallavi Trikutam, at ptrik@stanford.edu.