



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Causal Research on Community Safety and the Criminal Justice System



Arnold Ventures

OVERVIEW

Arnold Ventures (AV) is a nonpartisan philanthropy whose core mission is to invest in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunity and minimize injustice. AV focuses on correcting system failures in the United States through evidence-based solutions.

AVs' Criminal Justice Initiative seeks to generate new evidence to inform policies that will make communities safer and make the criminal justice system more fair and effective. This Request for Proposals (RFP) from the Criminal Justice Initiative (CJI) seeks letters of interest to conduct causal research projects of policies, practices, and interventions related to community safety and the criminal justice system.

Looking for a research idea? Check out this list of [recently-passed policies](#) in the crime/criminal justice space.

To be eligible to submit through this funding opportunity, research projects must adhere to the following criteria:

- Propose a strong causal research design, which can reliably and validly isolate the treatment effect of a policy, practice, or intervention. Examples of such research designs include difference-in-differences, regression discontinuity, instrumental variable, and randomization.
- The policy, practice, or intervention being tested is in the United States.
- Outcomes include measures of real-world behaviors (such as crime rates or criminal justice involvement), as opposed to measures collected in a controlled lab setting or measures of perceptions.

Submissions are welcome across all issues of crime and criminal justice that meet the above criteria. The ultimate goal of this RFP is to build credible evidence on policies, practices, and interventions that can improve crime and justice system outcomes and grow the number of policies and practices rigorously shown to produce improvements in community safety and to make the justice system fairer and more effective.

Arnold Ventures anticipates that project budgets will depend on a variety of factors, including the complexity of the data acquisition and analysis plans, the number of study sites, and the study timeline. While there is no budget ceiling or fixed period of performance for applications received under this RFP, we expect to support projects that align with a typical CJI research project that has a median budget of \$500,000 spread over 3-4 years.¹

We will prioritize studies that:

- Focus on interventions where there is a clear path to federal and/or state policy adoption or implementation. Is there a state or federal policy lever available to scale this intervention?
- Outcomes are measured using administrative data, where they exist.
- Are led by researchers who have not previously received funding from Arnold Ventures as the primary or principal investigator, or are early-career/junior researchers (those who received their PhD in the past 6 years).

Application Criteria and Selection Process

We ask interested researchers to submit a letter of interest for AV consideration (maximum of three pages). Applicants whose letters are reviewed favorably, based on the eligibility and prioritization criteria above, will be invited to submit a full proposal (full proposals must be invited). There is no deadline for submitting a letter of interest.

Applicants may submit a letter of interest at any time by going to [SurveyMonkey](#), creating an account, and selecting "Causal Research on Community Safety and Criminal Justice Outcomes RFP." Any questions about the RFP or the application process can be sent to: CrimJustRFP@arnoldventures.org. Applicants may use their own format, with

¹ The 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles are \$110,000, \$286,000, and \$429,000 respectively.

single or double spacing, and an 11-point font or larger. The page limit does not include attached letters of support or references. Letters of interest will be reviewed by the Arnold Ventures criminal justice team and an external review panel. All reviewers will have relevant substantive and technical expertise.

We aim to expand the pool of researchers doing causal research in the criminal justice system. Thus, we are seeking applicants from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of experiences and perspectives. We strongly encourage researchers who are new to causal research, including those who have not previously received funding from Arnold Ventures or who have been impacted by the systems we are seeking to change, to participate in this funding opportunity. All qualified applicants will be considered without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, military/veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

Applicants are asked to address the following criteria in their letters of interest.

- 1. Cover page:** Specify the proposed recipient of the grant award, which we generally expect to be a tax-exempt organization (e.g., nonprofit organization or university), including the names of the primary/principal investigators, organization/university affiliation, contact information, and title of proposed project (cover page does not count against the page limit). If an organization is not tax-exempt and wishes to apply, please contact CrimJustRFP@arnoldventures.org.
- 2. Research Questions:** Describe the key research question(s) and how answering this research question can contribute to an identified crime or justice system policy issue or problem. Where relevant, discuss how the research project has the potential to inform or influence policy/practice at the federal or state level.
- 3. Study Design and Timeline:** Describe the policy/practice/ intervention that is being assessed, the causal study design, the primary (and secondary) outcomes of interest, how information on the relevant policy and outcomes will be collected and measured, and the study timeline. Include a power analysis for all relevant outcomes to demonstrate whether the study will produce credible evidence of impact of the policy/practice/intervention. Please refer to our [power analysis guide](#) for instructions on conducting an acceptable power analysis for both experimental and non-experimental research designs. If the project depends on the cooperation of third parties to fund the intervention or to provide data, briefly describe your plans to secure letters of support, data sharing agreements, or other evidence showing necessary parties assent to the proposed study (support letters or data sharing agreements are not necessary for the LOI but will be required for full proposals).
- 4. Written Deliverables:** Provide a brief overview of planned project deliverables, including technical reports, policy briefs, and journal article submissions.
- 5. Study Team:** Outline the project team, including an overview of roles and responsibilities for key project members, and include brief bios for all key project team members (bios do not count against the page limit).

Applicants should specify the amount of funding requested from Arnold Ventures, reflecting the project timeline and the study scope, and include an approximate project budget that is consistent with AV's cost policy (*see Appendix*). Applicants should provide some detail on the anticipated drivers of project costs (e.g., personnel time, data acquisition, travel, administrative costs). We strongly encourage the use of administrative data (e.g., arrest records) to measure key study outcomes, wherever feasible, in lieu of more expensive original data collection. In addition, if the applicant proposes implementation research to complement the impact evaluation, we encourage approaches that do not greatly increase the overall study cost. In general, this RFP is focused on funding research projects where other parties have agreed to pay the cost of delivering the intervention or practice. However, we may consider supporting the costs of intervention delivery in a limited number of awards if such support would be needed to enable a rigorous impact evaluation (e.g., increase study power). Applicants seeking such funding should indicate so in their submission and provide the compelling reason for the funding request. The budget request does not count against the page limit.

Statement on Commitment to Transparency and Research Integrity

Arnold Ventures is committed to the principles of research transparency and integrity, as explained in our [Guidelines for Investment in Research](#). As a condition of any grant award, we will ask awardees to pre-register the study on the Open Science Framework website or an alternative, such as the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). Prior to the commencement of the study, we will ask grantees to make public a copy of the research and analysis plan described in the proposal. In addition, we ask applicants to make their datasets and related materials (e.g., de-identified data, programming/code and output) publicly available if permitted through data sharing agreements.
