



Request for Proposals:

Causal Research on Community Safety and the Criminal Justice System





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 3-4 year period of performance and a median budget of \$500,000.¹

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

¹ The 25th-75th percentile are: \$160,000 and \$1,100,000



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 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 recognize the need to expand and diversify the pool of researchers doing causal research in the criminal justice space. Thus we strongly encourage researchers who are new to causal research, including those from groups historically underrepresented in the research community – such as researchers of color, women, and justice-impacted individuals – to participate in this funding opportunity.

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 sample sizes and for RCTs power analyses for all relevant outcomes, to demonstrate whether the study will produce credible evidence of impact of the policy/practice/intervention. 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 Racial Equity in Research

Arnold Ventures is committed to promoting diversity and equity in research, as part of our mission of maximizing opportunity and minimizing injustice. We encourage applications led by diverse teams that come from communities and groups most affected by crime and the justice system and those with direct experiences with crime and the justice system. Beyond a commitment to supporting diverse research teams, Arnold Ventures supports equitable research practices. We encourage research projects that use inclusive and equitable research methods and frameworks, including analyses of racial/ethnic disparities and assessments of whether policy and practice have an impact on equity whenever appropriate/possible.

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.



Arnold Ventures Indirect Cost Policy

Effective February 1, 2018

I. Purpose of Policy

Arnold Ventures (“AV”) requires that any restricted resources awarded by AV to an organization be primarily dedicated to the costs necessary to accomplish the purpose of a grant. AV also recognizes that in order to successfully accomplish the purpose of a grant, grantees often need additional financial support to cover a portion of indirect costs that are not directly created as result of project activities. The purpose of AV’s Indirect Cost Policy (the “Policy”) is to:

- i. Define a cost allocation framework that can be applied consistently across all projects and partners
- ii. Provide guidance, definitions, and examples to allow grantees to classify costs accurately

II. Application of Policy

AV’s project-specific budget template, which is completed by the grantee and reviewed by AV, is used to classify expenses and apply this Policy. Each new grant request received by AV will be independently reviewed for compliance and approved subject to the provisions set forth herein. Please review section III and IV of this Policy for the calculation, definitions and examples. However, please note AV maintains sole discretion to determine the approved classification of direct and indirect costs for each grant.

Universities and University-related Grantees

For institutions of higher education, including community colleges and university-related legal entities, the Policy is applicable to all grant funding that is restricted. The policy permits these grantees to receive an indirect cost rate of 15 percent (15%) of total modified direct project costs. Tuition remission expenses are allowed as direct costs but must be excluded from the direct cost base upon which the indirect cost calculation is made.

All Other Grantees

For all Other Grantees, the Policy is applicable to all grant funding that is restricted towards a specific project. The Policy does not apply to general operating grants and certain restricted grants, as advised by AV. The policy permits non-university grantees to receive an indirect cost rate of 20 percent (20%) of total modified direct project costs.

Outsourced Costs

If a project includes a sub-award or subcontract, this budget is also eligible for indirect cost recovery within its respective budget, subject to this Policy and caps noted above.

All outsourced costs must be excluded from the primary grantee’s direct cost base for the indirect cost calculation. Please review section III and IV of this Policy for the definition and examples of outsourced costs.

III. Calculation & Definitions

Indirect Costs = Modified Direct Costs x Indirect Cost Rate

Indirect Costs:

Grantee expenses incurred for a common or joint organizational purpose benefitting more than one project and not exclusively attributable to or created for the specific project funded by AV. This includes “direct allocable” expenses.

Direct Costs:

Grantee expenses directly created by and exclusively incurred as a function of the specific project funded by AV.

Outsourced Costs:

Costs paid by primary grantee to other organizations or individuals in support of a project.

Modified Direct Costs:

Direct Costs less Outsourced Costs and Tuition Remission, as applicable

Indirect Cost Rate:

15% or 20%, as applicable

IV. Examples

Direct Costs

- Personnel expenses (salaries and federally required benefits) of internal grantee staff contributing directly to project-related tasks
- Travel expenses incurred by grantee directly related to project
- Materials and supplies directly incurred by project-related tasks

Indirect Costs

- Standard personnel expenses (salaries and benefits) for the following internal staff:
 - Executive Management (CEO, COO, CFO, Executive Director, etc.)¹
 - Central Operational Functions (Accounting, Administrative Support, Finance, Grants / Contract Management, HR, IT, Legal, etc.)
- Consultant expenses related to general operational functions (legal, audit, recruiting, fundraising, etc.)
- Equipment that can be used broadly by an organization for purposes aside from specific project (computers / laptops, telephones, office furniture)
- Rent and utility expenses
- General materials and supplies that can be used broadly by an organization for purposes aside from specific project (printing and postage, memberships and subscriptions, hardware and software, organizational insurance, etc.)
- Fiscal sponsor fee

¹ To the extent a member of an executive management team contributes to a project beyond their normal role as an organizational leader, a grantee may request a direct allocation with a corresponding justification explaining the additional contributions of such individuals

Outsourced Costs

- Sub-awards or Subcontracts
- Consultants
- Data Purchases and Software Licenses
- Participant Incentives, Stipends, and Honorariums
- Other Fees paid outside of grantee organization (e.g., IRB, peer review, editing)