





RESEARCH FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

The Constellation Fund, on behalf of CoLab, funds research that meets critical professional standards of ethics, rigor, and transparency. If funded for planning and carrying out research and evaluation, researchers agree to the requirements described in this document. Table 1 summarizes the requirements. Some of the requirements do not necessarily apply to non-impact evaluation research funded by CoLab, and so we delineate this distinction.

Table 1. Summary checklist

Requirement	Timing	If non-impact evaluation research	
Institutional Review Board approval	Before research begins	Required if research involving human subjects (per federal definitions)	
Trial registration	Before analysis begins, preferably before research recruitment	Not required	
Pre-analysis plan	Before analysis begins, preferably before randomization (if applicable)	Not required	
Project kick-off meeting	Within first quarter of the project	Required	
Quarterly check-ins with CoLab staff	At least quarterly through the project period	Required	
Mid-year progress report (Year 1 only)	Mid-point of first project year	Required	
Annual progress reports	Due at end of each project year per grant agreement	Required	

Annual interim financial reports	Due prior to each subsequent year's payment (actuals through most recent available month + budget narrative)	Required	
Year-end final financial reports	Due 1-2 months after close of each project year (not linked to payment)	Required	
Final narrative report(s)	Within 60 days of project end date	Required	
Final financial reconciliation	Within 60 days of project end date (with explanations for any variances from budget)	Required	
CoLab acknowledgment	In public reports, publications, and presentations	Required	
Transparent reporting	In public research reports and publication	Not required (but clear and transparent reporting still expected)	
Peer-review submission	At least six months before the project end date	Not required (but encouraged)	
Periodic CoLab Grantees Community of Practice Participation	Likely about quarterly or as indicated by CoLab staff	Not required (but encouraged)	
Data and code made available	Within 60 days of academic paper acceptance or three years of completing data collection	Not required	

Encouraged	Timing	If non-impact evaluation research	
CoLab Grantees Learning Community	Participate in periodic CoLab-organized meetings of funded research teams to learn and share cross-study insights	CoLab staff will advise	
Stakeholder engagement	Organize periodic engagement of key stakeholders (e.g., implementing organizations, public agencies, funders, lived experts, community leaders) throughout the research process and continuous learning	Encouraged	

1. Institutional Review

Why? Institutional review helps ensure research is conducted ethically, with adequate protections for participants, and in accordance with laws and policies. Institutional review boards (IRB) emerged in response to a history of studies taking place without adequate protections for participants, and in some cases causing known harm in the name of research, e.g., the [Untreated Syphilis Study at Tuskegee](#). Most research institutions require all research involving human subjects to undergo IRB review regardless of funder requirements.

- i. Researchers must provide CoLab with documentation of approval, exemption, or non-human subjects research determination from an authorized institutional review board (IRB) that is registered with the US Department of Health and Human Services; Office of Human Research Protections. Please submit the IRB's determination letter to info@constellationlab.org.
 - a. IRB approval, exemption, or non-human subjects research determination is required before the full evaluation grant award may be made and before the first study participant may be enrolled into the study.

2. Trial Registration & Pre-analysis Plans

Why? Trial registration creates a public record of all randomized trials that researchers are planning and what they intend to do, e.g., which program(s)/intervention(s) they will be testing, the comparator(s) they will use, and what outcomes they will measure. Many national and international research organizations and associations consider trial registration and pre-analysis plans the scientific, ethical, and moral responsibility of researchers because they help prevent biased non-reporting of research or findings that don't show expected or preferred results after the fact. Registration helps ensure that decision-making can consider all the available evidence.

- i. Researchers must register their trial with at least one official study registry, such as [AEA RCT Registry](#), [clinicaltrials.gov](#), or Open Science Framework (OSF) Registries, prior to any analysis and preferably before recruiting the first research participant. Please send the assigned registration number(s) to info@constellationlab.org.

We strongly encourage registering the trial with the AEA RCT Registry if there is any chance of submitting a paper to an economics journal and with [clinicaltrials.gov](#) if there is any chance of submitting a paper to a medical or public health journal. If both are possibilities, we strongly encourage registering the trial with both registries. Increasingly, major journals in both areas require prospective registration as a prerequisite for considering publication.

- a. Registration in AEA or [clinicaltrials.gov](#) is required before the full evaluation grant award may be made and before the first study participant may be enrolled into the study.

- b. Upon study completion, the trial’s registration page(s) must be updated with the results of the study and information on paper publication (as available).
 - c. Studies that do not involve random assignment are generally not required to register, but CoLab may require registration of specific studies at its discretion. Even when not required, for quasi-experimental design studies, we still strongly encourage trial registration whenever possible.
- ii. All CoLab-funded impact evaluations must include a pre-analysis plan uploaded to the AEA RCT Registry, another registry used, or submitted to info@constellationlab.org. The pre-analysis plan must be uploaded or submitted prior to any analysis taking place and preferably before the launch of the experiment (i.e., randomization activities). It may be made public or kept private if preferred. The pre-analysis plan must include the hypothesis or hypotheses to be examined in the empirical research study, the primary and secondary outcomes, and the statistical model(s) and methodologies to be used. In many cases, a complete trial registration will cover these points and can be copied and used as a pre-analysis plan.

3. Kick-off Meeting, Quarterly Check-ins, and Learning Community

Why? Regular engagement with CoLab ensures alignment on project goals, facilitates problem-solving, enables timely course corrections, and builds a collaborative learning community among funded researchers. These touchpoints support project success and allow CoLab to provide appropriate support throughout the research lifecycle.

- i. Researchers must complete a kick-off meeting with CoLab staff within the first quarter of the project to review project scope, timelines, deliverables, and expectations. We ask that the research team initiate and facilitate the kick-off meeting.
- ii. Researchers must hold at least quarterly virtual or in-person project check-in meetings with a designated CoLab staff member throughout the project period.
- iii. CoLab staff will organize periodic meetings for the full group of CoLab-funded research teams, or subgroups of teams, to support a learning community that shares lessons and insights related to common research topics or challenges. We strongly encourage all research teams to actively participate in and contribute to this learning community of CoLab-funded research teams as much as possible, and to share feedback and ideas with CoLab staff to help CoLab continuously improve the quality and usefulness of the learning community.

4. Reporting & Acknowledgement

Why? CoLab funds research primarily to benefit the public good with the aim of producing evidence to inform population-level impact on poverty and thriving. We require reporting deliverables to ensure that CoLab-funded research evidence ultimately becomes available for public use in a timely fashion and to inform CoLab's own priorities, learning, and improvements. We also expect adequate acknowledgement of CoLab's contributions, both for transparency purposes and to increase public recognition of CoLab's role as a funder of and platform for high-quality, actionable research.

- i. Researchers must submit progress and financial reports to CoLab according to the schedule outlined in their grant agreement and Payment & Deliverables Schedule. These reports include:
 - a. Mid-year progress report (Year 1 only): Due at the mid-point of the first project year, this report should include progress and changes relative to the project work plan, achievements to-date, challenges and barriers, and lessons learned.
 - b. Annual progress reports: Due at the end of each project year, these reports should document the year's achievements, deliverables, challenges or project deviations, and lessons learned.
 - c. Annual interim financial reports: Due prior to each subsequent year's payment, these reports should include actual expenditures through the most recently available closed month and a budget narrative that explains spending to date and addresses any variances from the approved project budget. Because organizations commonly finalize financial data 1-2 months behind real time, these reports support upcoming payments while allowing CoLab to monitor progress without requiring fully closed financials.
 - d. Annual year-end final financial reports: After each project year ends, researchers should submit a final financial report for that project year once their accounting records are fully closed. This report is typically due 1-2 months after the close of the project year and should include a budget narrative describing final expenditures and any variances. No payment is tied to this deliverable; however, it is required for project records and future-year compliance.
 - e. Interim report(s): These reports should be submitted to CoLab around halfway through the project (see your grant agreement for a specific deadline) and include all minimum required elements as outlined in Table 2.
 - f. Final report(s): Due within 60 days of the project end date, these reports should include all minimum required elements as outlined in Table 2.

- g. Final financial reconciliation: Due within 60 days of the project end date, this reconciliation should include a complete accounting of how grant funds were used throughout the project period, with explanations for any variances from the approved budget.
- ii. If researchers publish journal articles or white papers that include the contents of the interim or final reports, they may request CoLab's permission to submit the article in lieu of the report(s) or to not make the report(s) public (some journals require that findings they publish may not be published elsewhere). The timing of each report deliverable for each project will be included in the grant agreement or other written communication between CoLab and the researchers. Table 2 outlines the minimum requirements for interim and final reports by grant type.
- iii. The contribution of "CoLab at The Constellation Fund" should be acknowledged in any publication or public presentation regarding the project along with CoLab's logo wherever possible (logos are usually not included in academic journal publications).
- iv. For any CoLab-funded research, CoLab may prepare research briefs that summarize the study's research purpose, design, and findings. CoLab may create such briefs in a research project (to describe the project before there are findings), during a research project (with preliminary findings that have been published), or at the end of a project (with final findings). Unlike other products and publications that are created and owned by the researchers, CoLab will create and own these research briefs that summarize content from the researchers' products. CoLab will give the researchers an opportunity to review draft briefs for accuracy. These briefs will cite source documents created or published by the researchers, and the briefs will not disclose findings before they are published in a report or article.

Table 2. Reporting requirements by grant and report type

Grant Type	Interim Report	Final Report
Innovation Research	Internal: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress and changes relative to project work plan 2. Achievements to-date 3. Challenges and barriers 4. Lessons learned 	Public: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abstract 2. Background 3. Methods 4. Results 5. Findings, strengths, limitations, and implications Internal: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievements and deliverables 2. Challenges or project deviations 3. Considerations for evaluation research to follow 4. Lessons learned

Research Planning	<p>Internal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress and changes relative to project work plan 2. Achievements to-date 3. Challenges and barriers 4. Lessons learned 	<p>Public:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation plan/research protocol <p>Internal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievements and deliverables 2. Challenges or project deviations 3. Considerations for the full evaluation 4. Lessons learned
Short-term Outcomes & Implementation Evaluation	<p>Public:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abstract 2. Background 3. Methods 4. Interim results 5. Interim findings, strengths, limitations, and implications <p>Internal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress and changes relative to project work plan 2. Achievements to-date 3. Challenges or project deviations 4. Lessons learned 	<p>Public:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abstract 2. Background 3. Methods 4. Results 5. Findings, strengths, limitations, and implications <p>Internal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievements and deliverables 2. Challenges or project deviations 3. Considerations for longitudinal follow-up 4. Lessons learned
Long-term Outcomes Evaluation	<p>Public:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abstract 2. Background 3. Methods 4. Interim results 5. Interim findings, strengths, limitations, and implications <p>Internal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress and changes relative to project work plan 2. Achievements to-date 3. Challenges or project deviations 4. Lessons learned 	<p>Public:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abstract 2. Background 3. Methods 4. Results 5. Findings, strengths, limitations, and implications <p>Internal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievements and deliverables 2. Challenges or project deviations 3. Considerations for additional longitudinal follow-up 4. Lessons learned

Notes:

(i) The specific section labels and contents may be adapted for the project in consultation with CoLab staff. The bullets in this table are simply meant to illustrate the nature of minimal content we expect in each report at a high level.

(ii) For public deliverables, the research team may negotiate the timing of, or in some cases commitment to, public reporting with reports if needed, for example, to comply with journal publication requirements. However, CoLab staff must provide agreement in writing to any such changes. Overall, the spirit of this requirement is to ensure that all CoLab-funded research ultimately be made publicly available so that it can be actionable to decision-makers.

Transparent Reporting

Why? Impact evaluations can yield biased results if they lack methodological rigor or quality. Yet, reporting of many evaluations lacks adequate, clear, and consistent information to assess their rigor and quality. Additionally, it is impossible to fully understand the implications of an evaluation or replicate a program if reporting does not include adequate information on the program and context studied. Following established minimum reporting standards supports good science and transparency.

- v. All CoLab-funded impact evaluations are required to report key information clearly and transparently about their study that would allow for fully understanding the study's design, conduct, results, and implications. For reporting of randomized trials, we strongly encourage conforming to the relevant [Equator Network CONSORT](#) extension for reporting randomized trials (e.g., the [extensions](#) for reporting randomized trials of social and psychological interventions, multi-arm randomized trials, cluster randomized trials, and randomized pilot and feasibility studies).

5. Peer Review

Why? Peer review through academic journals assesses the validity, quality, and originality of research for publication. It aims to maintain the integrity of science, and peer-review publication lends to the credibility of new research for non-researchers (e.g., media, funders, policymakers) because it provides a scientific vetting process. Because CoLab aims to fund world-class research, we expect that studies rise to the level of peer-reviewed publication and can benefit from the peer-review process.

- i. Researchers must submit the main results of CoLab-funded impact evaluations to a widely credible, peer-reviewed academic journal in a relevant economic, social science, or public health field at least six months before the project end date. CoLab does not require but does encourage peer-review submissions for research other than impact evaluation. Please submit the journal's/journals' final decision and feedback to info@constellationlab.org. If the researchers submit the same results to multiple journals, they only need to share the final decision and feedback from the last or successful submission.

6. Continuous Sharing, Learning, & Stakeholder Engagement

- i. *Why?* By planning for sharing emerging findings and lessons throughout the project, the research becomes more actionable for key partners, and the research process fosters greater collaboration, trust, and continuous learning and improvement among partners.
- ii. Researchers are strongly encouraged to engage relevant community leaders and lived experts throughout the research process—e.g., in informing or vetting research design, methods, and measures; continuous learning; study implementation; and interpreting and translating findings.

- iii. Researchers are strongly encouraged to organize periodic meetings, presentations, and/or memos with key project partners and stakeholders (e.g., the program implementing organization, relevant public agencies, collaborating funders, community leaders) to share preliminary findings and lessons learned. These additional touchpoints can help strengthen collaboration, ensure the research remains responsive to partners' needs and questions, and increase the likelihood that the resulting evidence contributes to policy and practice.

7. Data & Code Availability

Why? Publishing trial data, results, and code gives other researchers the chance to re-analyze the data and even replicate the trial. Replicated results that back up the original findings strengthen the results. Additionally, sometimes researchers can analyze data in different ways and for different purposes. This extends the usefulness of the data to address important questions that might not have been initially considered or prioritized, e.g., related to specific subpopulations or outcomes.

- i. Except to the extent limited by law, IRB requirements, and/or any applicable binding agreement, CoLab requires researchers to publish some or all of the data materials associated with the study (e.g., primary data, program code, data dictionaries) when one of the following conditions is met: within 60 days of an academic papers' acceptance (or by the deadline set by the journal in which the paper is accepted), or within three years of the completion of data collection. If some or all study data cannot be shared for legal, ethical, or proprietary reasons, researchers must inform CoLab in the final narrative report. (J-PAL provides useful guidance on where and how to make impact evaluation data and code available through its [Data and Code Availability Policy: September 2020.](#))