

Yale University Institution for Social and Policy Studies

Request for Proposals: Democratic Innovations Literature Review Series

Overview of the Opportunity

The Democratic Innovations program at the Institution for Social and Policy Studies (ISPS) at Yale University invites proposals from qualified individuals to author nonpartisan, academic literature reviews on topics related to government performance. The goal of this RFP is to produce reviews that provide evidence-based, practical guidance for officeholders and reformers interested in improving government performance in the United States, especially at the state and local levels. The reviews will serve as a resource for researchers, journalists, nonprofit leaders, and citizens seeking factual and unbiased orientations to government performance-related topics. We seek proposals for *vertical* or *horizontal* literature reviews. The difference between these two types of review is explained in the Final Deliverables section of the RFP. Completed reviews will be published in a Democratic Innovations Yale ISPS white paper series on improving representation and governance and disseminated to practitioners, scholars, and the public. This RFP is funded through the Democratic Innovations Program at Yale University's Institution for Social and Policy Studies.

Deadline: Proposals are due March 24, 2025. See *Submission Instructions and Key Dates*.

Funding Details

- **Vertical Review:** \$20,000 stipend plus up to \$5,000 for research expenses
- **Horizontal Review:** \$10,000 stipend plus up to \$2,500 for research expenses

Final Deliverables

There are two final deliverables associated with this project.

1. **A Literature Review**, which may be one of two types:
 - a *Vertical Review* (i.e., a narrow, in-depth review of one subject area) or
 - a *Horizontal Review* (i.e., a broad review of multiple subject areas)

A *Vertical Review* will comprehensively summarize the literature and consequential gaps in a chosen subject area related to government performance (see *Subject Areas for Vertical Reviews* below for a list of the highest priority subjects for this RFP). Vertical reviews are expected to be 10,000 to 12,000 words excluding tables and figures.

A *Horizontal Review* will describe the evidence base for approximately three to five interventions to improve government performance. These should be interventions for which there is either a sufficiently robust evidence base for the intervention to be reasonably considered for immediate adoption or for which the evidence is very promising but limited and should be promptly subject to addition-specific research (perhaps because the evidence is dated, has been tested at small scale or in limited contexts, etc.). Horizontal reviews are expected to be 6,000 to 7,000 words excluding tables and figures.

Irrespective of review type, a successful review will provide an accessible, accurate, thorough, nonpartisan, and unbiased description of the relevant literature on the subject or set of subjects.

2. **An Executive Summary** that explains the key theoretical principles and evidence-based, nonpartisan lessons for practitioners and reformers. A successful Executive Summary will be actionable, succinct, and engaging. The Executive Summary of a Vertical Review is expected to be around 1,000 to 1,500 words. The Executive Summary of a Horizontal Review is expected to be around 750 to 1,250 words.

Target Subject Areas for Vertical Reviews

For this RFP, we are especially interested in nonpartisan reviews in these target areas. We will however consider proposals in other areas.

Please note: the details provided in the prompts for the target areas are for idea generation purposes only. Please feel free to address the subject area in the way that you think best fulfills the objectives of the RFP as described in the *Overview of the Opportunity*.

How Government Can Deploy Artificial Intelligence to Improve Performance

- The use of AI and other advanced data analysis techniques have the potential to transform how governments evaluate and learn from their own data and processes, how they receive feedback and information from the public, and how they might enhance accountability by sharing information with the public and stakeholders. A review of this topic could include a systematic analysis of what approaches governments have tried to deploy AI and how well they have worked, an overview of theoretical and applied research on these topics, and/or a practical guide of best practices based on recent experiences and innovations. Authors should be aware of recent reviews on this topic, such as works by [Daniel Ho](#) (Stanford) and [Mark Fagan](#) (Harvard), and they may wish to build on these and/or other resources.

How Government Performance Should Be Measured

- Policymakers and advocates frequently call for accountability in the public sector and a foundation of this is measuring government performance. How should government performance be measured? How should this information be integrated into government decision-making and how should it be shared with the public? A comprehensive review of this topic could include a discussion of various methods for measuring government performance and innovative programs that use these measurements to manage government operations internally and inform the public about how their government is performing. The review could also consider the possibility of establishing standardized metrics — similar to economic indicators — that all governments could produce and share or constructing a dashboard to monitor and share information about performance on key metrics. The review could also discuss evidence on the effects of adopting performance measurement on the performance of government. Authors should be aware of reviews on this topic, such as [Courty and Marschke \(2011\)](#) and [Lewis \(2015\)](#), and they may wish to build on these and/or other resources.

Approaches to Controlling Corruption

Many academic researchers and international non-governmental organizations have studied controlling corruption. Much of this research has been conducted outside of the United States. How can the lessons from the international context be deployed to reduce corruption in the United States, where government corruption may manifest more often through legal channels such as procurement and contracting, through favoritism, kickbacks, and bribes? What are the key lessons from the existing corruption research, and how can they be applied to the U.S., especially to state and local governments? A review of this topic could discuss research on anti-corruption measures, such as random audits, citizen juries, internal performance incentives, alternative governance structures, improved external monitoring, and public rights to information and to sue for government malfeasance or poor performance. Authors should be aware of works and reports on this topic, such as work by [Ceschel](#) et al. and they may wish to build on these and/or other resources.

Estimated Timeline for Selected Proposals

We anticipate selected authors of *Vertical Reviews* will spend approximately one year on this project while selected authors of *Horizontal Reviews* will spend approximately six months on this project.

The following are expected delivery dates of deliverables, *following the contract start date*.

| Deliverables | Horizontal reviews | Vertical reviews |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Prospectus (expanded version of the proposal) | 45 days | 90 days |
| Initial draft of the full Literature Review + Executive Summary | 135 days | 270 days |
| Trip to New Haven, CT (paid separately by Yale University), for project review meetings | 150 days | 300 days |
| Final versions of the Executive Summary and Literature Review | 180 days | 360 days |

Budget

Upon successful review of the final deliverables, authors of *Vertical Reviews* will receive a \$20,000 stipend (in total, if multiple authors jointly submit a proposal). Authors will also be provided up to \$5,000 for documented research expenses (in total for each project).

Upon successful review of the final deliverables, authors of *Horizontal Reviews* will receive a \$10,000 stipend (in total, if multiple authors jointly submit a proposal). Authors will also be provided up to \$2,500 for documented research expenses (in total for each project).

Eligible research expenses include but are not limited to hiring a research assistant, purchasing access to a database, or purchasing a software license for a research tool. Please submit a research expense budget proposal that suits your project’s needs.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include the following components in a single PDF with numbered pages:

1. A **cover letter** (1 page) that explains why you are interested in this project, your qualifications, your past experience working on similar projects (if applicable), and contact information.
2. A **proposal narrative** (maximum 5 pages) that outlines the type of review (Vertical or Horizontal) and the subject or subject areas you will discuss in your literature review and Executive Summary. Please explain why you have selected this/these area(s), what questions you will seek to address through the literature review and executive summary, and your general proposed approach to preparing your literature review and executive summary.

In your narrative, please explain how you will tailor the Executive Summary to a policymaker audience. Please also note your expected timeline for each project deliverable (if different from *Estimated Timeline for Selected Proposals*).

Please feel free to build upon existing work(s) (with citations) but please do distinguish what your unique contribution will be over and above those existing resources.

3. A **budget and budget narrative** (maximum 1 page) of your anticipated research expenses (e.g., a research assistant's time).
4. **Writing samples** (at least one policy-focused piece¹ and at least one academic-focused piece) that demonstrate your writing skills and background in the relevant subject area.
5. **Curriculum vitae.**

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. **Relevance and Quality**
 - The proposal is well-written, professional, and inspires the evaluator to want to read more.
 - The proposal outlines an Executive Summary that will be highly actionable and compelling to policymakers and reformers.
 - The proposal outlines a review that will be rigorous, accurate, and highly readable.
2. **Experience and Expertise**
 - The proposer has demonstrated expertise in the topic area(s).
 - The proposer has written strong literature reviews for our target audiences previously.
 - The proposer has excellent academic and professional qualifications.
3. **Budget and Timeline**

¹ A non-academic piece, such as an issue brief, policy report, op/ed, testimony for government hearing, or similar is preferred.

- The proposer has proposed a project that is reasonable to complete within the project timeline.

Submission Instructions and Key Dates

Please submit your proposal packet [using this webform](#). Please email any questions to Kira Wishart at kira.wishart@yale.edu.

- **RFP launch:** January 23, 2025
- **Proposal deadline:** March 24, 2025
- **Successful proposals notified by:** May 15, 2025

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity!

Non-Partisanship Statement

ISPS is committed to ensuring that all publications resulting from this RFP are non-partisan and impartial. ISPS emphasizes the importance of robust and transparent research methodologies to uphold objectivity and minimize ideological bias. Selected authors are expected to base their conclusions and views solely on evidence and analysis, independent of any political party or interest group. Our goal is to provide non-partisan, factual, evidence-based insights to support informed policy decisions for the benefit of society.