



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Research on Municipal Fiscal Health and Land Policies

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy invites proposals for original research that can be applied to address the challenge of promoting the fiscal health of municipal governments in a range of contexts and institutional settings across the world. We are particularly interested in research that explores the ways sound urban planning, land-based taxation, and economic development combine with disciplined financial management to promote prosperous, sustainable, equitable and fiscally healthy communities.

Overview

Citizens across the world often rely on local governments to supply the public goods and services that define their quality of life. The provision of these goods and services entails critical investments in infrastructure—such as water and wastewater systems—that promote public health, or investments—such as transport systems and public education—that foster economic performance. Preparing for a future of urban expansion, population growth, and climate change requires strengthening the fiscal capacity of local governments.

Yet many local governments across the world experience considerable fiscal stress due to diminishing revenues, rising costs of providing public goods and services, mounting obligations, and increasing responsibilities imposed by higher-level governments and demands from local citizens. In addition, recent global trends, like changes in consumer preferences triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic or the reshoring of industries impacted by global supply-chain disruptions, are affecting the fiscal stability of localities for which policy implications may not be yet fully understood. As we navigate through these uncertainties and their effects on property values, local tax bases, and residential affordability, this RFP seeks to examine some of the most pressing questions fiscal policy officials around the world are confronting, with an emphasis on the implications for local land policy and planning decisions.

Research themes and priorities

The areas of municipal fiscal health that most interest the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy relate to land use and urban planning, property taxation, and land-based financing mechanisms that generate revenue for local governments. However, we welcome research that addresses other aspects of municipal fiscal health and public finance, such as local government budgets, economic development, debt, and intergovernmental fiscal frameworks. If those areas are the focus, the proposal must clearly explain how the proposed research theme relates to or could affect land policy.

Research topics of interest to the Lincoln Institute in this RFP include, but are not limited to:

- Impacts on land prices from current demands for real estate and public services triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fiscal implications for localities under such consumption trends (For example, what are the implications of changes in valuations of commercial and/or industrial property and their impact on municipal revenues? What places are more exposed and why?)
- Analyses of the overall tax/fiscal structure of localities, particularly the composition of their property tax base (residential, industrial, commercial), and implications of adapting to current economic, demographic, and technological global trends
- Innovative land-based financing approaches that support infrastructure investment and/or maintenance (Do cities need new revenue sources in addition to the property tax?)
- Efforts to measure the fiscal health of cities or regions—including financial flows (needs and costs that cities face), capital accounts, fiscal basis, and capacity to raise revenue—with a focus on the effects/contributions of land-based revenues and/or land policy decisions
- Approaches to measure infrastructure capacity to determine the feasibility of accommodating population growth (For example, how to budget operating expenses when planning new infrastructure and/or land use changes)
- Comparative analyses of international experiences dealing with fiscal crises (at the municipal level) triggered by economic downturns (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic). Specifically, what land policy measures can municipalities consider?
- Sources of technological innovation—related to land use management—in local service and infrastructure provision for greater efficiency and cost reduction
- The fiscal impacts of regularizing informal settlements

Submissions

Proposals must be submitted online via the web-based **application form** and must follow the formatting guidelines that appear in the appendix to this RFP. Proposals submitted by email will not be accepted. Proposals that are incomplete, received after the due date, or that do not respect the format defined in these guidelines will not be considered.

Language: Proposals submitted must be in English. However, the papers produced pursuant to the RFP awards by awardees may be prepared in English, Spanish, Portuguese, or any other language. If an applicant anticipates that the final work produced pursuant to the RFP (if selected for an award) will be in a language other than English, the applicant must indicate that on the proposal form when the proposal is submitted. This will not impact how the proposal is scored; it will only be used to allow the Lincoln Institute to plan for appropriate translation services relating to the final works selected pursuant to the RFP.

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of staff and collaborators of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. Preference will be given to policy-oriented empirical studies that employ the Lincoln Institute's resources and public databases, including Fiscally Standardized Cities, Significant Features of the Property Tax, and the Vertical Equity App.

This RFP is a competitive process. Submitting a proposal in response to this RFP does not obligate the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy to fund the proposal.

Proposal evaluation

The Lincoln Institute will evaluate the research proposals based on the following criteria:

Relevance of the research in advancing knowledge of the selected topic	35%
Applicability of expected findings to enhancing the fiscal health of local governments	20%
Quality of the proposed methodology and sources of data	20%
Qualifications of the members of the research team	20%
Use of the Lincoln Institute’s databases and research ¹	5%
Total Score	100%

Minimum qualifications

Applicants will be required to have an advanced degree in planning, economics, public policy, law, or related disciplines at the time of submission. Submissions will be accepted from research teams; however, a principal investigator must be identified and will be expected to comply with the minimum qualifications.

Deliverables and other expectations

Research deliverables are expected to result in working papers or case studies appropriate for publication by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. The works produced (working papers or case studies) must adhere to the Lincoln Institute’s format and style. The selected proposals will receive the format and style guides during the contracting process.

The works produced from the proposals selected via this process will be considered for inclusion on the Lincoln Institute’s website and/or learning platforms. Please note that the Lincoln Institute retains the sole right to determine if a working paper or case study will be published on its website.

The applicants selected through the RFP process may be invited to present the completed works at Lincoln Institute webinars, symposiums, conferences, and/or other events.

Level of funding

The Lincoln Institute will commission research projects based on their scope of work and justification of the proposed budget. Awards are expected to range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 USD. However, more ambitious projects may be considered, based on the quality of the proposal and funding availability.

Work-for-hire

The funds awarded under this RFP are contracted as work-for-hire and are not permitted to be subcontracted by recipients to third parties.

¹ See [Data and Toolkits](#), [Publications](#), and [Working Papers](#).

Ownership and third-party copyrights

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy will own all work products that result from the research commissioned via this RFP. Individuals and/or institutions who accept a research commission shall transfer and assign to the Lincoln Institute all rights, title, and interests in and to such work products, including without limitation, all rights pertaining to copyright and trademark. Creators of commissioned works will be granted a license to use and reproduce the commissioned research for their own educational and research purposes. Commissioned works can be published in third-party journals or media outlets with advance permission from the Lincoln Institute.

Important dates

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|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| • RFP announced | November 15, 2023 |
| • Deadline for submission of proposals | January 29, 2024. Extended: February 5, 2024 |
| • Awards announced by the Lincoln Institute | End of February 2024 |
| • Contracts with selected proposals finalized | Mid-March 2024 |
| • Progress Report | May 12, 2024 |
| • First draft of papers/Initial findings due | August 15, 2024 |
| • Feedback on drafts provided to researchers | Mid-September 2024 |
| • Final papers due | March 31, 2025 |

Confidentiality

The information and contents of a respondent's submission presented for the evaluation and selection processes of this RFP will be treated as confidential to the respondent, the Lincoln Institute, and any external experts invited to be on the selection committee.

About the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy seeks to improve quality of life through the effective use, taxation, and stewardship of land. A nonprofit private operating foundation whose origins date to 1946, the Lincoln Institute researches and recommends creative approaches to land as a solution to economic, social, and environmental challenges. Through education, training, publications, and events, we integrate theory and practice to inform public policy decisions worldwide.

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

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APPENDIX A: FORMATTING GUIDELINES FOR RFP PROPOSALS

1. **Language:** Proposals submitted must be in English. However, the papers produced pursuant to the RFP awards may be prepared in English, Spanish, Portuguese, or any other language. If a researcher anticipates that the final work produced pursuant to the RFP (if they are selected for an award) will be in a language other than English, the researcher must indicate that on the proposal form when they submit the RFP proposal. This will not impact how the proposal is scored; it will only be used to allow the Lincoln Institute to plan for appropriate translation services relating to the final works selected pursuant to the RFP.
2. **Proposal Abstract:** The proposal abstract is fundamental to assessing proposals. We encourage all applicants to submit proposals with well-written, clear, and compelling abstracts that do not exceed 1,500 characters in length. The proposal abstract must convey the core topic and proposed contribution of the research for which funding is sought. It should clearly convey the analysis, purpose, relevance, and methods of the proposed research topic. Proposals with poorly written or vague abstracts might not pass the first stage of review.
3. **Contact Information and Curriculum Vitae/Resume:** Please include contact information for the lead researcher and all other research participants (include name, job title, organization, email). All correspondence from the Lincoln Institute will be addressed to the lead researcher. Please include your curriculum vitae/resume(s), as well as your record of publications (three pages maximum).
4. **Detailed Budget:** Please outline the costs for research assistance, data, fieldwork, travel, and so forth, and attach the budget to the proposal form. Projects that have other sources of financing or will need cofinancing should state the actual or anticipated amount, the sources of cofinancing, and any conditions attached to such financing. **Please be advised that no overhead or indirect costs may be charged against funds awarded through this RFP.**
5. **Calendar of Activities:** Attach to the proposal form an estimate of a work plan with a projected schedule of activities to be completed.
6. **Project Description:** The project description should not exceed 15,000 characters in length. It should identify the following:
 - **Research objective and specific research questions:** Clearly state the purpose and objectives of the research, highlighting the main question(s) to be addressed and, when applicable, the hypothesis(es) to be tested. Proposals without an identifiable and coherent research question will not be considered. Specify the relevance of the research topic to themes listed in this RFP. Highlight and document the contribution your proposal is likely to make to the literature and/or policy debates related to the topic.
 - **Theoretical or conceptual framework:** Identify the conceptual framework that informs the research. List and discuss a maximum of three key works that help situate the proposal clearly and easily within the relevant academic and policy literature. Describe how the subject of analysis and research questions/hypotheses relate to the proposed theoretical or conceptual framework.

- **Methodology, sources of empirical data, and data collection strategy:** Clearly present the analytical methods to be used and their relationship to the conceptual framework adopted for the research. Specify sources of empirical data, assurance of access to the data, data collection strategy when warranted, and proposed uses of data to generate and support desired results, if any.
- **Expected results:** Identify and explain the expected outcome(s) of the research and its relevance for policy and knowledge production. What results are expected, why would they be relevant, and how would they be disseminated and used?
- **Description of roles and partnerships:** If the research involves collaboration with academic institutions, government organizations, the private sector, and others, please specify each participant's role on the research team, including the responsibilities and tasks assigned to the lead researcher and all research collaborators.

APPENDIX B: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Proposal Format

- **Should the project description include a budget?** No. The online application has a separate section for uploading the budget.
- **How flexible is the character count for each section?** You must adhere to the specified character count, or your proposal will not be accepted.
- **Are references included in the count of characters within the project description section?** Yes.

Budget

- **Can the budget be changed during the research?** No, unless funds are reallocated in consultation with the Lincoln Institute.
- **Does the Lincoln Institute cover institutional overhead?** No.
- **What does the award amount cover?** The award covers all direct research expenditures including personnel, research assistance, data, books, research-related travel, and software or other items deemed indispensable to developing the project.
- **Does the Lincoln Institute finance acquisition of equipment?** No.
- **Is there a maximum budget amount?** No. Total funding from the Lincoln Institute will be determined based on the scope of the project and the justification of the proposed budget.

Evaluation Criteria

- **Do I need to be a US citizen to apply?** No.
- **Do you fund only academics? What about practitioners and researchers who do not hold a PhD?** The RFP targets, but is not restricted to, academics and researchers holding a PhD.
- **Can the paper be coauthored?** Yes. Contact details for all authors must be mentioned in the proposal and a lead researcher must be designated as the person responsible for the project.
- **How many proposals do you expect to receive?** The average number of responses to Lincoln Institute RFPs ranges from 50 to 200.
- **Can I get feedback on the substance of my proposal?** No. This is a competitive process, so all participants must have access to the same information. Thus, we will not respond to individual requests for consultations about a proposal before or after its submission.
- **Can I make changes to a section of my proposal after I send it in?** Only if you do so before the final date for submission of proposals and only if you submit a complete revised version that will replace the original one. You must notify the Lincoln Institute if you wish to submit a new proposal so that we can ensure the original one is discarded.
- **Can I present more than one research proposal?** Yes.

For further questions regarding these guidelines, please send an email to:

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