
Frequently Asked Questions

General Recruitment

Is J-PAL recruitment ongoing, or does it just occur during the annual recruitment drive?

J-PAL recruits applicants on a rolling basis, however the bulk of our hiring is done during the winter and spring. Hiring managers act according to their own timeline and are free to post positions as needed.

In many of your job descriptions, you state that candidates should be trained in microeconomics, econometrics, statistics, and advanced math. I have taken some of those courses, but not all. Am I still able to apply?

Yes, we prefer candidates who meet the basic requirements listed in our job descriptions, but you are still able to apply without meeting all of them. If this is the case, we encourage you to discuss in your personal statement how you strive to meet our criteria.

When will I know if I'm going to be interviewed or offered a job?

Both recruitment and hiring throughout the J-PAL network are highly decentralized. Each hiring manager and professor acts according to his/her own personal timeline, and only applicants selected for interviews will be contacted. Because of the decentralized nature of the hiring process throughout the network, we are unable to provide feedback on the status of specific applications.

What types of positions are usually available?

J-PAL and its partner organizations employ more than 600 people, with most positions being research-focused. The bulk of our hiring is our research associate-level positions.

Are Project Associate and Research Associate positions entry-level positions?

While they are not appropriate for someone with a PhD, they can be appropriate for people with a master's and some experience, particularly if the objective is to gain hands-on experience with field research. They can also be good opportunities for people who are looking for a more limited time commitment of one or two years (each job posting lists the desired commitment period).

What is the pay usually like?

Terms and conditions of employment (including pay) vary by job and with the candidate's experience. In general,

field-based PAs/RAs are paid a salary similar to a small stipend for living expenses in addition to airfare, health insurance, and visa costs. US-based positions and mid-level positions at J-PAL's regional offices (e.g. research manager, policy manager) pay salaries competitive for the international development, nonprofit sector.

The job application deadline on the website has passed. Can I still apply to this position?

If a position is still posted on the website, you may still apply regardless of the posted deadline. J-PAL and IPA have very decentralized recruitment and many open positions. Hiring managers inform us when positions are filled so that we can take down the position. If the posting is still up, then they are still accepting applications.

What kinds of people usually get hired?

Since J-PAL is a research network of economists, candidates who have completed and performed well in intermediate-level coursework in economics, including microeconomics, development economics, and econometrics are preferred, especially for policy positions. For RA positions, we look for candidates with strong STATA skills and prior experience managing data collection. For positions based in developing countries, prior developing country experience is highly valued, and local language skills are desirable (and in the case of Spanish and French speaking countries, fluency is required). Most employees have either a bachelor's or a master's degree.

What do J-PAL positions lead to?

Many of those who have worked with the J-PAL network in the past have gone on to graduate studies, including at MIT (PhD in economics), Harvard (PhD in economics, law school, medical school, MPA/ID at the Kennedy School), Berkeley (PhD in economics), and other top schools. This partly reflects the quality of people who are accepted to these positions, but also the fact that our staff and others we work with acquire a range of important skills and experiences on the job.

J-PAL and many of its partners are growing organizations. Many mid-level positions are open for internal promotion. These positions may be field-based (e.g. Research Manager or Country Director positions) or US-based positions in research, policy, or training.

Check out [this video](#) of Shawn Cole, J-PAL affiliate and board member, giving a glimpse into life as an RA, and the opportunities that exist after J-PAL.

Are there any summer internship opportunities available? How do I apply?

The easiest way to find out about internship opportunities with J-PAL and partner organizations is to search our jobs database, filtering by internship - all current opportunities will be posted. [Innovations for Poverty Action](#) and [IFMR Lead](#) hold drives for summer internships, which usually begin in January. They will also

occasionally post specific internship positions at other times of the year. J-PAL typically recruits for specific internship positions in the fall, spring and summer, the postings of which can be found on this site. J-PAL does not have an internship drive in the same manner as the above organizations.

What if I'm currently employed by a J-PAL or IPA affiliate and want to apply for one of the current openings?

People with previous experience on randomized evaluations can be great candidates for other positions within the network that require more responsibility. If you are currently employed by someone in the J-PAL network and are hoping to switch to a new position, project, or location, please talk with your supervisor(s) and principal investigator(s) about your goals and your plans in addition to applying.

Who should I contact if I can't find the answer to my question on the FAQ?

For all other inquiries, contact jobs@povertyactionlab.org, and we will do our best to respond to your email within a week.

Why should I apply and how should I prepare for a Research Associate (RA) position?

J-PAL has developed this [resource](#) to answer these questions and more.

Common Application Database or Submitting Your Application

How can I apply?

It is essential that you read the application instructions listed on individual job postings. Most positions require that you complete the [J-PAL/IPA common application](#), which includes at least a CV/resume, statement of purpose (cover letter), and transcripts. Some positions also require an explanation of international and developing country experience, languages, a list of courses taken in economics, mathematics, and statistics, and letters of recommendation. Some positions also require letters of recommendation. On the common application, you can select the types of positions and locations for which you would like to be considered. If you are interested in a specific position, please also follow the instructions found on the job description, which may require you to send your documents directly to the hiring manager.

What's J-PAL's Recruitment Timeline?

The J-PAL network fills positions on a rolling basis throughout the year, with the heaviest recruitment period being between November and January. During the recruitment process, staff from J-PAL, IPA, and partner organizations review all applications. J-PAL staff,

researchers, and hiring managers will browse applicants by a rating of application strength, geographic location, and flexibility. A good general rule is that the sooner you submit your application after the position is posted, the better. The majority of finalists for specifically posted positions will be contacted by hiring managers within 1-2 months of applying for the position. Given the volume of applications that J-PAL receives throughout the year, only short listed candidates will be contacted for interviews. Candidates may receive interviews from several researchers or organizations throughout the selection process. Start dates for positions vary, but most will be in June or September.

I can't remember my login information. What do I do?

On the [J-PAL/IPA common application homepage](#), click 'Forgot your password?' and follow the instructions.

What should I do if I need help with my application?

As a first step, read through the rest of this FAQ. Should you have technical difficulties with the common application, contact jobs@povertyactionlab.org. If your inquiry requires action on our part, we will respond to you within five business days.

The system is telling me my documents won't upload. What's wrong?

If you are having trouble uploading your supporting

documents, try a different Internet browser. This should solve your problem. If it doesn't, contact jobs@povertyactionlab.org.

What do you expect for a statement of purpose?

Statements of purpose for positions at J-PAL or IPA can be written as either cover letters or personal statements like the ones you may have written for university applications. They should be at least one page long, but no more than two. In the body of the text, please discuss your experience with, and knowledge of, randomized evaluations. Make sure to include information about your work history in research, policymaking, or international or domestic development. If you have worked or lived abroad, please include this, emphasizing experiences in developing countries. An explanation of why you're interested in working for J-PAL/IPA is also suggested.

Can I apply to multiple positions?

Yes, you may apply for as many positions as you are interested in. You will be reviewed independently for each position to which you apply. If you are applying to positions in the common application, you will only be allowed to apply to multiple positions within one job category at a time. Once an application is complete (e.g. for research positions), you'll have the option to apply for positions within a different job type (e.g. Policy).

I was just informed that my application has been marked inactive. I want to apply to another position, what do I do?

You likely received this notification because you have not signed into your application for over 6 months. Signing in will re-activate your account.

What is a transcript, and where can I get one?

A transcript is a document from your university listing the courses you've taken, or are currently taking, and the grades that you've received in each course. Your university can provide you with your transcript. Please note, we accept unofficial transcripts.

How should I fill out the "Exams" section of the application if I have not taken all of the exams?

If you haven't taken any of the exams in the exam section of the common application, please list n/a (not applicable). Generally, exam scores are less important to an application than grades, CVs, and statements of purpose. Also, if you were never a student in the United States, we understand that you will not have taken these exams and will not have expected you to.

What's the difference between the "Eligible Work Permits" and "Countries Authorized to Work In" sections of the common application?

In the "Eligible Work Permits" section of the common application, select all work authorizations you currently

hold. Similarly you may be eligible to work in countries based on your citizenship, or can easily obtain visas in certain countries. Please list these countries in “Countries Authorized to Work In.” For example, if you have dual citizenship between Japan and the United States, you are authorized to work in Ghana, and you would like to work in the Philippines, you should select that you are legally authorized to work in the U.S. under “Eligible Work Permits,” list Japan and Ghana as “Countries authorized to Work In” and list the Philippines under “Countries of Interest.”

I emailed my application to jobs@povertyactionlab.org, is that OK?

In order to be considered for hire, please make sure you follow the application instructions included in each of our job descriptions. Most of our positions require you to apply for positions through the J-PAL/IPA Common Application, but again specific application instructions are found in all of our job descriptions. If you simply email your application to jobs@povertyactionlab.org, you will not be considered for hire.

How can I make my application stand out?

As you can imagine, we receive hundreds of applications from incredibly bright and qualified candidates. A few things that stand out, especially in personal statements, are (1) candidates’ ability to talk about the work that J-PAL does, with a solid understanding of RCTs (or for more entry level positions, a desire to further learn about RCTs),

(2) that they've read Poor Economics, and (3) that candidates have taken, or are planning to take, J-PAL's EdX course, RCT 101x: Evaluating Social Programs.

My reference writer did not receive an email requesting a letter of recommendation. What can I tell him/her?

Have your reference check his/her spam folder, as the email sometimes gets routed there. If that doesn't work, you can resend the request by logging into your account and selecting "Resend Request" next to any pending letters. If writers still do not receive the email, have them contact jobs@povertyactionlab.org.

I've been asked to write and upload a letter of recommendation for an applicant. I'm having difficulties downloading your template, and then ultimately uploading the document.

First of all, you do not need to use our template, it is simply a guide. Please draft your recommendation letter, save in a .pdf or .doc format, and then use the link in the email sent from us to upload your letter from your computer to [NAME]'s online application. If you are having difficulties uploading, as a first step, please try to use a different web browser to upload your recommendation. If this does not work, please forward your letter of recommendation as well as the original email request from the application system to jobs@povertyactionlab.org. We will then upload the letter on your behalf.

What if I've applied for a job in the past and want to resubmit my application?

If you previously submitted an application using the J-PAL/IPA common application system and now are interested in applying for a new position that is accepting applications through the common application, we ask that you sign in to your existing account rather than creating a new username and password. You can then select the position for which you'd like to apply, and follow the application instructions. Your information (work authorizations, exam scores, etc.) will be carried over from previous applications, however you will be able to make edits to them. You will be able to add additional reference writers, should the position(s) you are applying to require letters of recommendation. Once your application is updated, click submit.

I can't save the General Information section of my application, but I've completed all of the required information. What's wrong?

Make sure that your available start date is listed in the future. Selecting a date in the past will prevent you from being able to submit your application.

Work Authorization and Visa Sponsorship

I am not authorized to work in the United States,

does this mean I can't work for J-PAL?

Unfortunately, J-PAL is rarely able to provide visa sponsorship for U.S. based positions. However, simply because you are unable to work in the U.S. does not mean you can't work elsewhere. J-PAL and partner organizations have positions throughout the world, and work authorization requirements differ from country to country. Positions that have work permit requirements will indicate this in the job description, as well as in the common application database. If you do not meet the work requirements for specific positions, you will be unable to apply for that particular position. Similarly, U.S. based internship candidates must also be authorized to work in the U.S. in order to obtain a position.

Will J-PAL LAC sponsor a visa?

Successful candidates for positions at J-PAL LAC in Chile can acquire a work permit through the Chilean Consulate in their home countries. J-PAL LAC will provide a letter to support this process. This can also be done from Chile, but it is a more complicated procedure. For positions outside of Chile candidates must prove that they are legally entitled to work in the country for the commitment period.

Will J-PAL Southeast Asia sponsor a visa?

J-PAL SEA will not sponsor a visa. Successful candidates must have an Indonesian work permit to be considered for hire.

Will J-PAL Europe sponsor a visa?

European and Swiss citizens can work in France without any visa or work permit, with the exception of Croatian citizens, who must have a work permit. Successful foreign candidates for positions at J-PAL Europe in France can acquire a visa with a work permit through the French Consulate in their home countries. J-PAL Europe will provide any necessary document to support this process.

Will J-PAL Africa sponsor a visa?

Please refer to each job position advert for details on whether the position is open to South African citizens and permanent residents only, or whether anyone can apply.

Will J-PAL South Asia sponsor a visa?

Candidates must have work authorization to work in India. This covers citizens of India, Nepal or Bhutan, Persons of Indian origin (PIO), and an Overseas Citizens of India (OCI)

I am applying for a position with J-PAL South Asia, and I used to be eligible for a PIO card. I am unable to select this work authorization in your common application. Why is that?

The PIO Card scheme has been withdrawn by the Government of India. All PIO applications, pending with the Mission for processing, are being returned to the

applicants with a request to apply for an OCI card on the same fee prescribed for the PIO card. Henceforth, applicants may apply for an OCI card ONLY, as the PIO card scheme is no longer in existence. If you had originally selected 'I am eligible for a Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card' when completing your application, please be sure to update your work permissions, as this is no longer accurate.

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