J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB

Frequently Asked Questions

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.