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NORTH AMERICA

**NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**
April 2022

Good afternoon,

When people ask me to describe J-PAL North America, I often respond by saying we are a catalyst in the evidence-based policymaking movement. Many policymakers and practitioners are interested in understanding the impact of their programs, and many researchers are motivated to study questions whose answers truly matter for improving well-being. Often, what's needed to realize valuable projects united around these goals is a spark to kickstart or sustain a partnership—and that's where J-PAL comes in.

We provide support in varying forms: technical assistance that empowers organizations and agencies to be more effective independent producers and consumers of evidence; development of strong researcher-policymaker partnerships to evaluate promising programs; and public resources that share accumulated knowledge and best practices gleaned from the deep expertise of our affiliated researchers and staff.

In our April newsletter, we highlight this work in action. In the San Francisco Bay Area, we're partnering with homeless service organizations to understand the impact of cash transfers on housing stability. We also share several resources to support state and local governments in utilizing evidence and evaluation to design economic recovery policies through the American Rescue Plan. Finally, J-PAL North America Research Manager Jesse Gubb argues in an op-ed that national healthcare policymakers can enable vital research on improving patient care, boosting equity, and reducing costs by building more mandatory, randomized evaluations into policy innovations and avoiding voluntary models that undermine opportunities for learning.

Vincent Quan
Co-Executive Director, J-PAL North America

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Cash transfers as a tool to address homelessness? Building research partnerships to increase housing stability

Cash transfers are an increasingly popular tool to improve housing stability, but evidence of their impact is limited. Understanding which interventions are most effective is critical to support the nearly 600,000 people in the United States who experience homelessness on a given night. To address this gap, J-PAL North America is partnering with a cohort of homeless service providers in the San Francisco Bay Area to collaboratively design and implement randomized evaluations of cash transfer programs. Learn more about these partnerships, the current evidence base, and our housing and homelessness work in a recent blog post by J-PAL North America policy staff Anisha Sehgal and Caitlyn Ark.

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Resources for American

Photo: AdobeStock

Op-ed: Voluntary

Rescue Plan evaluation and evidence use

One year after the passage of the American Rescue Plan, over 380 state, local, and Tribal governments are investing recovery funds in projects to help communities hit hardest by the pandemic. As governments continue to work through how best to strengthen communities with these funds, focusing on effective evidence-based programs is imperative. J-PAL North America's State and Local Innovation Initiative offers deep expertise and a variety of resources to leverage evidence and rigorous evaluation to maximize impact. Explore these resources—including our State and Local Learning Agenda, evidence reviews, customized trainings, facilitated research partnerships, and more—in this blog post by J-PAL North America staff Masha Arzumanov and Louise Geraghty. If you are interested in learning more about partnering with J-PAL North America to pursue evaluation and evidence-use under the American Rescue Plan, we'd love to hear from you.

innovations in Medicare, Medicaid health care delivery undermine evaluation opportunities

Jesse Gubb, Research Manager at J-PAL North America, discusses the importance of randomized evaluations to identify and scale up innovative healthcare delivery payment models in a recent Stat News opinion piece. He highlights a study of a Medicare payment reform, which was switched from a mandatory model evaluated by a randomized controlled trial to a voluntary one after political pressure. Jesse demonstrates how this switch undermined opportunities for understanding the true impact of the program on both patient outcomes and cost savings. He argues policymakers should support and encourage mandatory evaluations of future innovations in order to make health care delivery in the United States more efficient, effective, and equitable.

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY

Photo: Unsplash

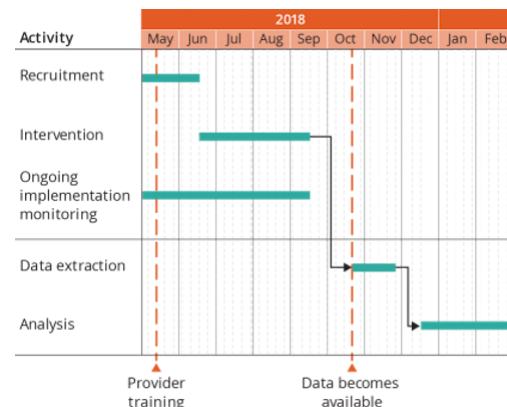## FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE

Illustration: J-PAL

Information sharing alone is not enough to drive investments in energy efficiency

Results from three randomized evaluations suggest that providing information alone to households is often not enough to encourage individual investments in energy efficiency. In one study, providing fuel economy information to potential car buyers in both dealership and online settings had no effect on consumer purchasing behavior. In another , providing information alongside a subsidy (in the form of a coupon) for compact fluorescent lightbulbs to customers in stores did not increase use of the coupon. Similarly, researchers found that sharing information alone did not increase demand for energy efficient appliances, although discounts did.

Formalize research partnership and establish roles and expectations

Once a research team and an implementing partner have been identified for a randomized evaluation, the work of establishing and building the relationship between them begins. This process involved exploring questions around the project's goals and activities to create working agreements between the implementer and research team. This research resource outlines steps to establish and build a strong working relationship with an implementing partner at the beginning of a randomized evaluation.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence featured J-PAL North America's ongoing collaborative learning sessions with California education stakeholders.

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Have an idea of content you would like to see in this newsletter? We want to hear from you! Please send your feedback to J-PAL North America Policy and Communications Manager, Erin Graeber.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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