J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative Webinar

J-PAL North America (MIT)

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www.povertyactionlab.org/stateandlocal

Who we are

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Deputy Director
Initiative Co-chair

Julia Chabrier
Policy Manager
Initiative Manager

I. Introduction to J-PAL

II. The J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative

III. Randomized Evaluation in Practice

IV. Opportunities to Randomize

V. How to Apply

VI. Q&A

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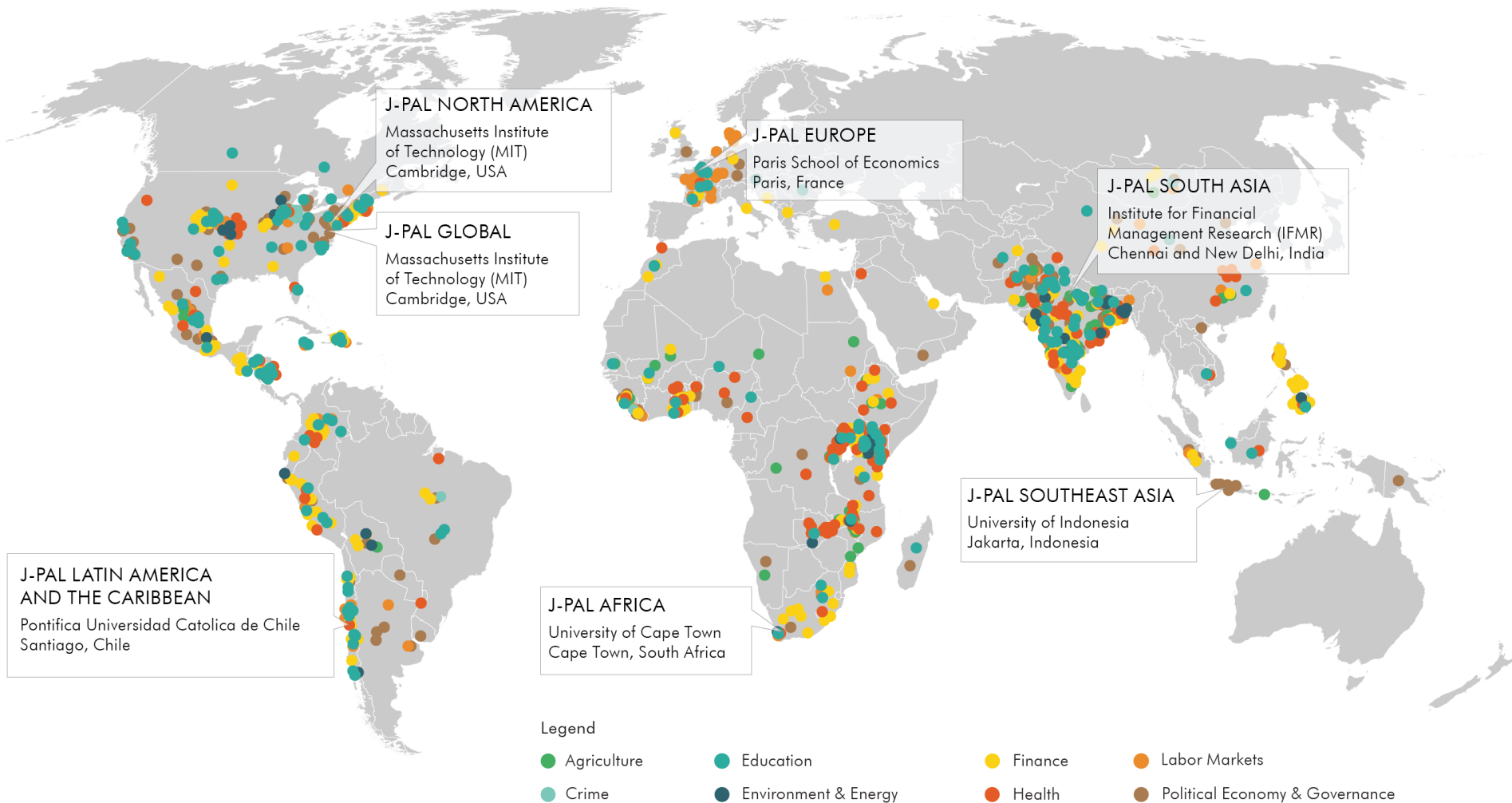
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J-PAL's network of affiliated researchers

J-PAL's mission is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence

EVALUATIONS

CAPACITY BUILDING

POLICY OUTREACH

J-PAL: 795 ongoing and completed projects in 72 countries

J-PAL NORTH AMERICA
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
Cambridge, USA

J-PAL GLOBAL
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
Cambridge, USA

J-PAL EUROPE
Paris School of Economics
Paris, France

J-PAL SOUTH ASIA
Institute for Financial Management Research (IFMR)
Chennai and New Delhi, India

J-PAL LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Pontifica Universidad Catolica de Chile
Santiago, Chile

J-PAL AFRICA
University of Cape Town
Cape Town, South Africa

J-PAL SOUTHEAST ASIA
University of Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia

Legend
- Agriculture
- Education
- Finance
- Labor Markets
- Crime
- Environment & Energy
- Health
- Political Economy & Governance

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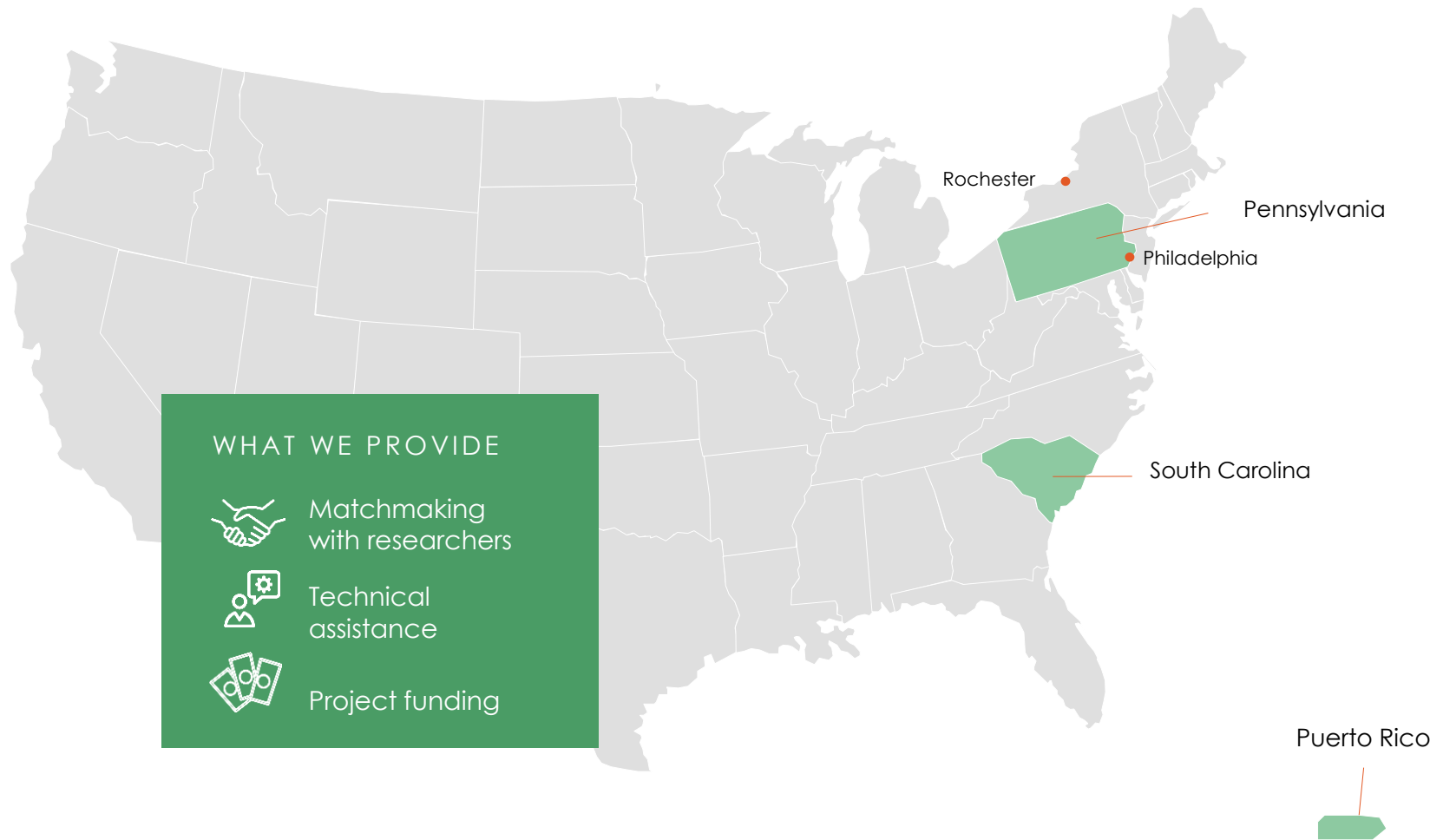
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The challenge

- State and local policymakers are actively innovating to address complex policy challenges.

- Often, policymakers have to act without the benefit of rigorous evidence about:

  - What has been tried and proven elsewhere

  - Which of their own policies and programs were most effective

Our goal

- Build the capacity of state and local governments to create and use rigorous evidence

- Share this evidence with other jurisdictions that may be facing similar challenges

- Document and disseminate best practices for feasibly implementing randomized evaluations at the state and local level

Our current partners

Rochester

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia

South Carolina

Puerto Rico

WHAT WE PROVIDE

Matchmaking with researchers

Technical assistance

Project funding

Our current partners

- **Pennsylvania** – identifying effective services for individuals with opioid use disorder

- **Philadelphia** – exploring the impact of summer youth employment on academic achievement, employment, substance abuse, and pregnancy

- **Puerto Rico** – testing a pilot program to encourage steady and formal work among Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF-C) participants

- **Rochester** – evaluating a mentor/navigator program to help adults obtain self-sufficiency

- **South Carolina** – understanding the impact of assignment of Medicaid enrollees to managed care organizations (MCOs)

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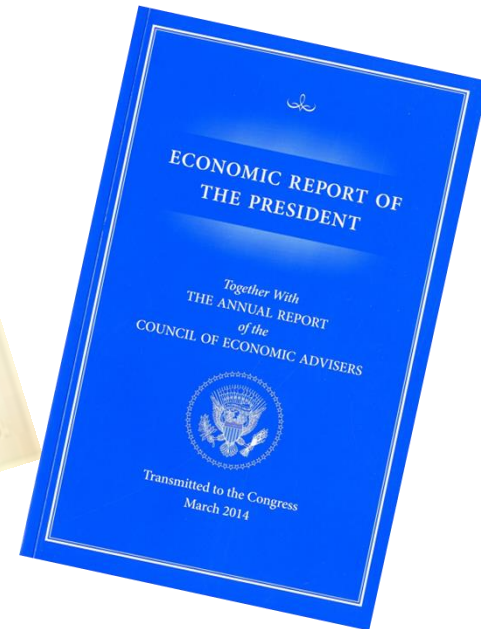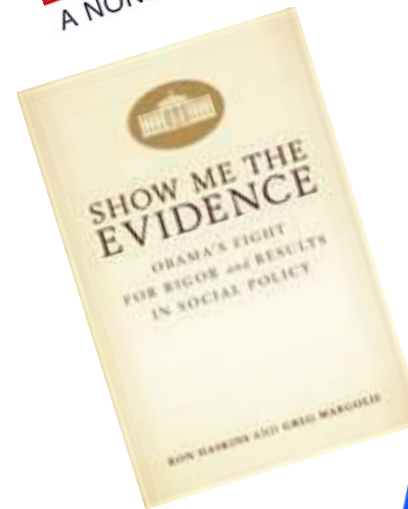
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Randomized evaluation in practice

Mary Ann Bates
Deputy Director
Initiative Co-chair

- Randomized evaluation of the Nurse-Family Partnership as part of a pay-for-success initiative by the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

- Co-investigators: Katherine Baicker, Michelle Woodford, Annetta Zhou
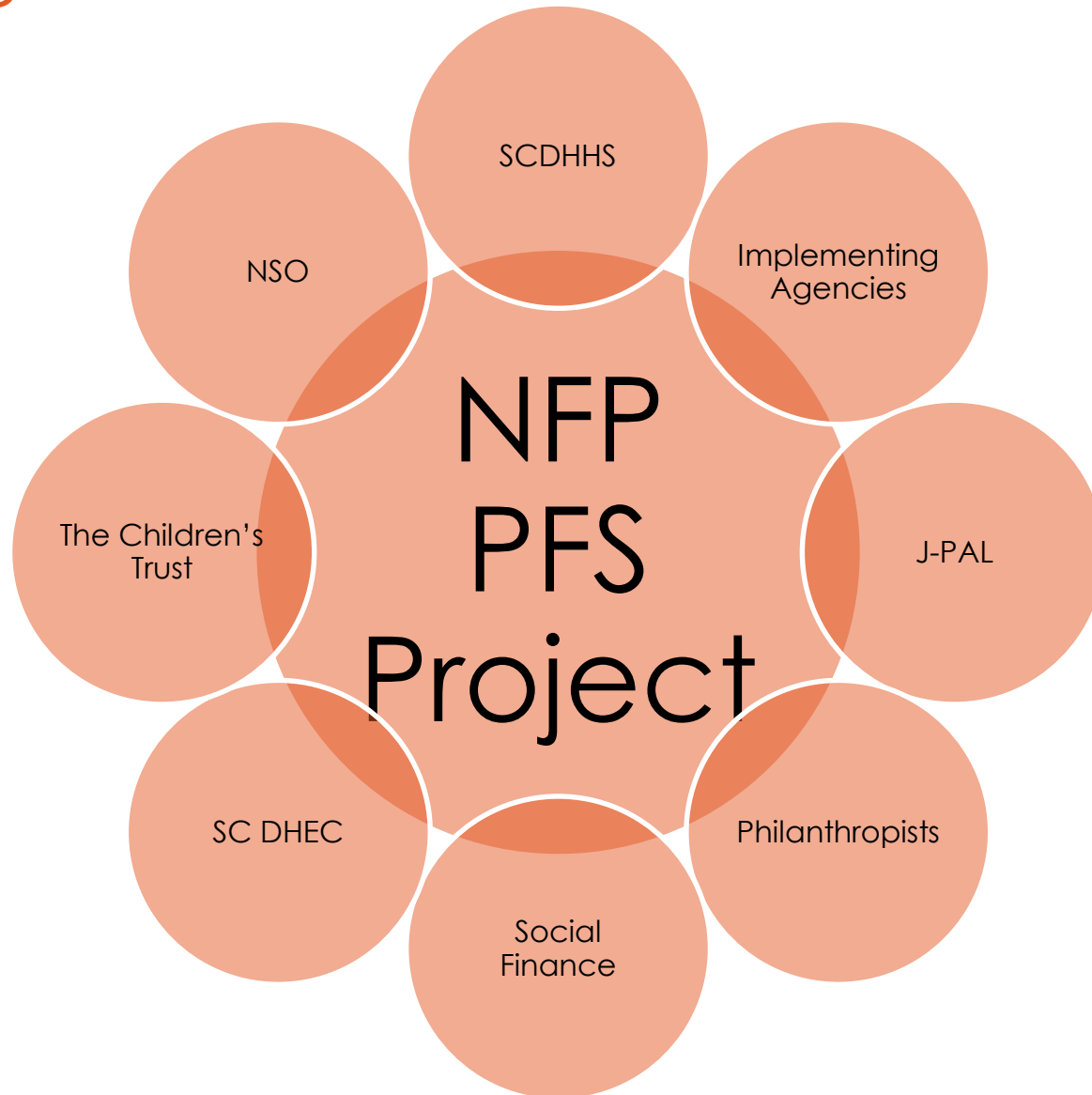
Nurse-Family Partnership

Potential to expand

- The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), served less than 600 of 11,500 eligible high-risk mothers each year.
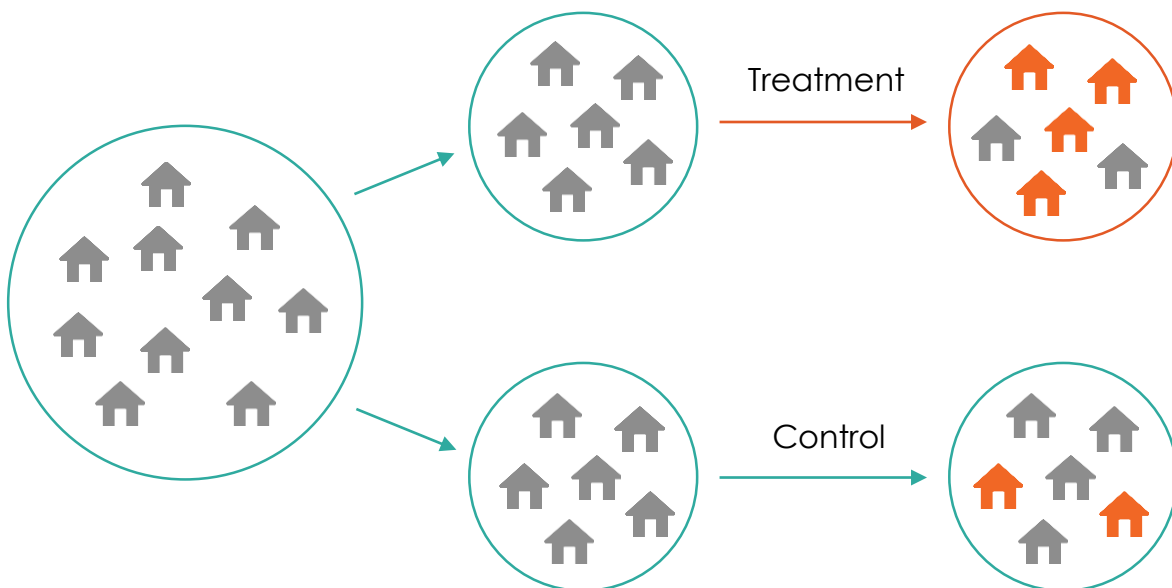
Building collaboration

Evaluation design

- Randomization after recruitment, eligibility assessment
    - Clear eligibility criteria
- 2:1 treatment/control ratio
    - 4,000 T; 2,000 C
- Integration of the study into program workflow

| Recruitment | → | Assess Eligibility | → | Informed Consent | → | Baseline survey | → | Randomization |

What is a randomized evaluation?

Before the program starts, eligible individuals are randomly assigned to two groups so that they are statistically identical before the program.

Treatment

Control

Two groups continue to be identical, except for treatment

Any differences in outcomes between the groups can be attributed to the program

Evaluation questions and outcomes

Pay for Success outcomes:

- Reduce pre-term birth (<37 weeks)
- Healthy birth spacing (>2 years)
- Reduce childhood injuries (Emergency department & hospital admits)

Additional maternal & child outcomes:

- Health
- Education
- Employment
- Crime
- Use of Social Services

Benefits of administrative data for evaluation

Compared to surveys, administrative data may:

Reduce research costs

Speed turn-around time of results

Enable long-term follow-up

Improve accuracy of findings

Practical examples of randomized evaluations

- NYC summer youth employment program (long waitlist)
  - Alexander Gelber, Adam Isen, Judd Kessler

- Weatherization Assistance Program (low take up, encouragement to apply)
  - Meredith Fowlie, Michael Greenstone, Catherine Wolfram

- H&R Block + FAFSA assistance (new component added)
  - Eric Bettinger, Bridget Terry Long, Philip Oreopoulos, Lisa Sanbonmatsu

- College scholarships (randomize "in the bubble")
  - Joshua Angrist, David Autor, Sally Hudson, Amanda Pallais

When does a randomized evaluation **not** make sense?

- Too small: sample is to small to pick up a reasonable impact

- Too early: still ironing out logistics

- Too late: already serving everyone who is eligible, and no randomization was built in

- When a positive impact has been proven, and we have the resources to serve everyone

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The J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative features a 2-phase competition

- In Phase I, state and local governments can apply for:

  – Technical support from J-PAL for a period of up to one year;

  – Flexible pilot funding of up to $100,000; and

  – Matchmaking with J-PAL's network of researchers.

- In Phase II, governments that have partnered with a researcher from J-PAL's network can apply for additional funding, in the range of $250,000-500,000, to carry out the evaluations.

J-PAL is now inviting Letters of Interest from state and local governments

- J-PAL defines poverty alleviation broadly

  – Some areas of interest include education, employment, health care, crime, housing

- To apply, submit a 3-5 page letter of interest describing

  – The policy question or challenge that motivates your application

  – Your efforts to address the challenge

  – How new evidence would help

  – Your experience with or interest in randomized evaluations

Timeline

- January 12, 2017 – Initiative convening (livestream)

- February 17, 2017 – Deadline to submit letters of interest

- March 20, 2017 – Finalists invited to submit full proposal

- April 17, 2017 – Deadline to submit full proposals

- May 2017 – Winners announced

- Go to povertyactionlab.org/stateandlocal for more information

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What does a successful research partnership look like?

An implementing partner

- Wants to better understand the impact of a program

- Working at a sufficient scale to detect meaningful changes in outcomes

- Willing to think creatively about incorporating evaluation into program operations

- Facilitates access to data

A research partner

- Respects partner's priorities and determines overlap with own interests

- Works with partner to assess feasibility of evaluation

- Willing to think creatively about designing evaluation to address practical concerns

- Helps navigate institutional or legal obstacles to data

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Thank you

To learn more, please feel free to reach out to us:

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Or visit our website at
www.povertyactionlab.org/stateandlocal