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## State and local governments invited to apply for support to develop rigorous evaluations

MIT's J-PAL North America will provide funding and support to help selected partners test urgent and important policy questions.

**J-PAL North America**  
**January 9, 2019**

J-PAL North America, a research center in the Department of Economics, has announced the fourth round of its State and Local Innovation Initiative, which supports state and local governments in using rigorous evaluation to answer critical questions about what works to reduce poverty.

State and local leaders across the United States are actively experimenting with new approaches to better serve their constituents. Increasingly, they are looking to data and evidence to inform their decision-making.

Through J-PAL North America's State and Local Innovation Initiative, state and local governments can apply for support in using randomized evaluations to better understand the impact of policies and programs in their jurisdictions. Selected partners receive pro bono technical support from J-PAL North America staff, flexible project funding, and connections with J-PAL's network of leading academic researchers.

Since the initiative's launch in 2015, J-PAL North America and affiliated researchers have partnered with 12 state and local governments. J-PAL North America's selected partners are united in their commitment to generating rigorous evidence to inform their policy decisions and ultimately improve people's lives.

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The City of Philadelphia Mayor's Office, one of the initiative's first selected partners, has worked with J-PAL North America and researcher Sara Heller to evaluate the city's WorkReady Program, a summer jobs program that offers educationally enriched work opportunities to in-school and out of school youth ages 12-24. Through this ongoing evaluation, the city hopes to learn how summer jobs impact students' academic achievement, future employment, and other social outcomes like substance abuse and rates of teen pregnancy.

"Paid summer jobs for young people play an especially important role in providing early work experiences for teenagers and young adults who would not otherwise have them," explains Anjali Chainani, director of policy for the City of Philadelphia. "We want to ensure youth most in need are benefiting by earning immediate income and learning valuable skills."

In the second year of the State and Local Innovation Initiative, the County of Santa Clara's Office of Supportive Housing and local nonprofit provider HomeFirst worked with J-PAL North America and researchers from the University of Notre Dame's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities to develop a randomized evaluation of a new rapid rehousing program for single adults. The ongoing study will inform decisions to expand the program in Santa Clara County and can contribute new evidence to inform other governments facing similar challenges.

"With J-PAL's support, we are providing the community with critically important services and ensuring that those services are optimized for impact and efficiency," said Ky Le, director of the Office of Supportive Housing for Santa Clara County.

State and local governments that are interested in using rigorous impact evaluations to answer policy questions are encouraged to submit a letter of interest by April 1, 2019. Detailed instructions on how to apply to the State and Local Innovation Initiative can be found on the initiative webpage.

J-PAL North America, a regional office of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, was established with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. J-PAL North America works to reduce poverty by ensuring that policies are informed by scientific evidence.

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