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**NORTH AMERICA**  
**MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**  
February 2022

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Good afternoon,

When my dad was sixteen, he immigrated to the United States from Hong Kong. Like many new immigrants, he struggled with English when he started attending high school in San Francisco. He was fortunate enough to have an incredibly dedicated teacher, who invested countless hours after school tutoring him and running drills to improve his pronunciation and grammar.

After high school, my dad didn't go to a traditional four-year college. After working several blue-collar jobs—from post office worker to cab driver—he eventually landed a promising job at a life insurance company that helped clients with financial and retirement planning. The role didn't require a four-year degree and had a robust, on-the-job training program, designed to equip employees with both the technical and non-technical skills they would need to succeed.

My dad poured his heart and soul into that job, where he stayed for more than thirty years and mentored many employees in the decades that followed. At home, his successful career enabled him to provide a level of economic security for his kids (my brother and me) that had eluded him when he was younger. My dad was incredibly diligent, a great communicator (which he attributed to his high school tutor), and exceptional at connecting with his clients. He was also, unmistakably, lucky. He was fortunate to have a dedicated teacher who saw his potential and tutored him to improve his English. He had also found a job that provided a good salary and a clear pathway to upward mobility, economic security, and a fulfilling career to someone who lacked a four-year degree. His story gives me hope that we can create pathways to upward economic mobility for far more people in our country if we scale up effective education and workforce programs.

Today, I am excited to share J-PAL's [new review of the evidence on sectoral employment programs](#), which train job seekers for employment in specific industries projected to have strong labor demand and opportunities for future growth. Such programs generate impressive positive impacts on worker employment and earnings, the evidence shows, by enabling workers to gain access to higher-wage and higher-quality jobs. The magnitude and consistency of the findings point to sectoral employment programs as a promising tool to advance worker prosperity among people who face barriers to employment, such as not having a college degree. As policymakers look to strengthen workforce development programs for workers, including through the American Rescue Plan Act, this evidence can

be a valuable guidepost. I [invite you to join](#) J-PAL North America and [WorkRise](#) on March 9 for a discussion of this evidence, ongoing randomized evaluations of innovative workforce training programs, and the role of sectoral employment in improving economic mobility and closing racial equity gaps in the labor market.

In this newsletter, we also highlight results from an evaluation testing the impact of linguistic and behavioral changes to financial aid letters on college enrollment and students' navigation of financial aid systems. Additionally, we feature exciting updates from our ongoing work to connect policymakers with rigorous evidence on the benefits of high-dosage tutoring.

Vincent Quan

Co-Executive Director, J-PAL North America



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## **Sectoral employment programs offer a path to quality jobs: evidence review**

Wage inequality in the United States has skyrocketed in recent decades. How can barriers to high-opportunity employment be reduced? A [new J-PAL evidence review](#) finds that sectoral employment programs generate impressive positive impacts on worker employment and earnings, with the effects largely driven by workers gaining access to higher-wage and higher-quality jobs. The evidence review summarizes an academic analysis of four rigorous randomized evaluations, highlights common characteristics of evidence-based sectoral employment programs, and suggests open questions for future inquiry. We encourage those interested to [read through the evidence](#) and [join J-PAL and WorkRise](#) for a discussion of existing evidence and ongoing research on sectoral employment programs as a tool to advance worker prosperity on March 9 at 2:30 p.m. ET. [Register here.](#)



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## **Research Results: Improved communication helped high school students navigate California financial aid program**

Each year, over 150,000 California high school seniors receive letters notifying them that they qualify for Cal Grants—a need- and merit- based college scholarship program. However, many eligible students do not claim their awards. A recent J-PAL-funded [study](#) tested linguistic and behavioral changes to Cal Grant financial aid letters and found they led to increases in online account grant registration rates of California high school students. However, the modified letters did not have an impact on college enrollment rates. For more information, please visit the [California Policy Lab](#) website.



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## **Briefing Congressional staff on evidence-based tutoring**

Evidence continues to play an important role in shaping how decision-makers respond to the educational challenges brought on by Covid-19. On January 31st, J-PAL North America joined Saga Education and researchers from the University of Chicago to present a data briefing on evidence-based tutoring for Capitol Hill staffers. Approximately sixty staffers attended, representing the offices of Sen. Duckworth, Rep. Schakowsky, Sen. Booker, Sen. Durbin, Sen. Warren, and members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. This briefing [follows work J-PAL is doing in California](#) and elsewhere to ensure that public funds for tutoring are being directed towards evidence-based approaches to boost student achievement and combat Covid-19 learning loss.

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**FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY**

**FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE**



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## The Impact of a Comprehensive Re-entry Program on Employment and Recidivism in the United States

More people are incarcerated in the United States than anywhere else in the world. After being released, many people who have been incarcerated struggle to find jobs and earn a living wage, and more than half are arrested again within three years. Researchers [examined](#) whether a program that provides people who are incarcerated with services both prior to and after their release could improve employment prospects and reduce re-arrests. While the program increased employment and reduced the likelihood of re-arrest, earnings were low and left many below the poverty line.

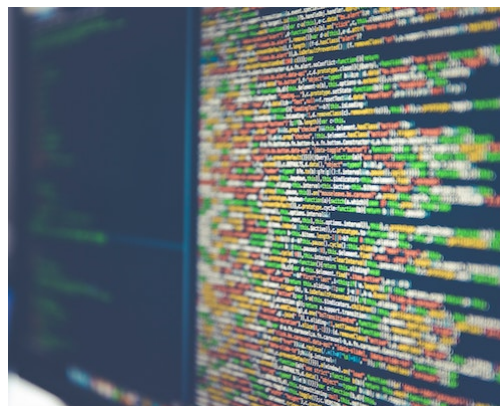


Photo: Unsplash

## Data security procedures for researchers

Data security is critical to protecting confidential data, respecting the privacy of research subjects, and complying with applicable protocols and requirements. Even seemingly de-identified data may be re-identified if enough unique characteristics are included. [This research resource](#) provides a primer on basic data security themes, provides context on elements of data security that are particularly relevant for randomized evaluations using individual-level administrative and/or survey data, and offers guidance for describing data security procedures to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or in an application for data use.

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### MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[Students need help catching up. Tennessee tries tutoring.](#)  
The Christian Science Monitor

[New York City Mayor Eric Adams Announces Record 100,000 Summer Youth Employment Opportunities](#)  
New York City Office of the Mayor

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